Conflict within the Church: A Theological Approach to Conflict Resolution with special reference to the boundary disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi

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Declaration

I………………………………………………………………..do hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own work. It has never been presented to any other University or Institution. Where other people's work has been used or quoted, references have been provided. It is in this regard that I declare that this work is originally mine.

Signature…………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………
Dedication

To the Church leaders in Malawi, a theology of Conflict resolution is an urgent, peacemaking ministry to which we are commissioned to serve God (Mtt 5:9). This dissertation calls for change. Change of the heart, attitude and behavior. It also suggests methods on how to deal with hopeless disputes and achieve genuine reconciliation and peace.

To my lovely wife, Emily and our children Salome, Isabel, Maria, Humphreys Junior and Precious Tutu who have really endured many pressures due to my long absence from the family: their prayers, and love to me have stimulated me to work even harder. It was not easy for a wife to bear the responsibility of looking after our children alone, but thanks be to God who gave her the strength.

To them all I dedicate this dissertation.
I give God the honor and glory for the good health, finances and protection He has provided me during the course of this project. God has made my dream become a reality. Thanks to Rev. Billy Gama who encouraged me to continue processing my application and appealed to Rev. Macdonald Kadawati, General Secretary of the CCAP Blantyre Synod to approve and support the studies.

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May God bless them all.
Summary

The research study acknowledges that life is possibly full of conflict, be it psychological, spiritual or otherwise. Conflict is an inescapable reality that confronts Churches and societies regardless of how loving and caring the people are. Conflict brings both the negative and positive impact on the life of Church and society. Conflict presents us with challenges and choices that reflect and shape our personal identity. Technically the challenge is not to avoid conflict, but rather to deal with it constructively. Conflict could be dangerous and destructive. Conflict could also be an opportunity for self-examination, for growth, service to people and giving glory to God. Hence the serious need for developing a theological approach to conflict resolution within the Church and society.

Generally, there are two methods to conflict resolution namely: the Law court and Atonement Models based on human and divine effort to conflict respectively. Using mere psychological and legal experience, the Law court models deal with immediate substantive offenses, injustices and inequity faced by people. The Law court methods are sometimes unproductive, unprofitable and short-lived, while the Atonement methods radically deal with deep rooted matters and sinful motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, lusts and cravings. The Atonement models are reliable, fruitful and long-lasting.

The purpose of conflict resolution must be to uproot the negative elements and destructive results of conflict, while at the same time preserving it’s beneficial,
life-giving qualities to achieve genuine reconciliation. Therefore this new theology of conflict resolution calls for radical change. Change of the heart and on how to deal with conflict in order to accelerate transformation, growth, maturity and peace.

Chapter one will provide a general background to the research study. Chapter two before looking at the case of disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods, it will firstly, cite briefly some conflicts in the history of the Church to get an appreciation of the impact of conflict in the life of the Church. Secondly, the chapter will outline the historical background of the Church of Central Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, Nkhoma Synod and the General Assembly and how the boundary disputes between the two rival Synods started in Malawi.

Chapter three will discuss the question of sin and its effects. Humanity cherishes sin in the heart (Ps 51:3-10, 66:19). Milne (1982:107) asserts that sin causes racial prejudice and antagonisms. The problem of sin is the world’s biggest problem. The study will also define conflict and its root causes using Marxist’s conflict conception. The argument of the study will base on the fact that sin brings conflict and produces great divisions among human beings. Therefore, if sin brings conflict with God, His will and between humans, God has provided a divine means to deal with the problem.
Chapter four will discuss the answer to question of sin and conflict. There are two dimensions to conflict resolution namely: the Law court and Atonement Models based on human and divine efforts respectively. Contemporary Christian conflict theories are deficient in the God ward dimensions of conflict and most theories and practices come from within the human legal or political professions. Deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, anger, revenge, lusts and cravings in opposition to God are better addressed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The study will review and critique contemporary models of conflict resolution including the atonement with a view to understand the antithesis of conflict. The study will lastly formulate a synthetic model from various aspects of atonement to bring about a better understanding of conflict resolution.

Chapter five will discuss the general application of the full concept of atonement. The question for discussion will be: how can the life, sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ that occurred almost 2000 years ago affect us today? How can the atonement conception be applied to resolve human conflict? The atonement of Christ will be ineffective unless it is applied to the lives of human beings. The actualization of the atonement could be done through power of the Holy Spirit who unites a person with Jesus Christ and in their close relationship, the penalty for the person’s sin is paid both together, so by Christ (Stott 1986:256ff). As we relate to God in through confession, repentance of sin
and sanctification, we relate to each other that removes the cause of conflict between persons.

Chapter six will discuss the application of atonement and reconciliation aspects to specific disputes in Malawi. It will also suggest recommendations on how to deal with those disputes. Christianity is not just a creed, it involves action. What is needed in Christian salvation is the practical restoration of broken relationships between God and creation, the removal of rupture within human race in order to facilitate reconciliation. Reconciliation in Malawian context means restoration, amendment, making up, settling an argument of boundary and bringing back lost relationship between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods.

Chapter seven will just deal with summary and conclusion. The theology of conflict resolution calls for change. Change of the heart and on how to deal with conflict. All human efforts in conflict are sometimes unproductive, unprofitable, and short-lived while divine efforts radically deal with deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart. Divine efforts are fruitful and long-lasting.
Key Terms

Conflict resolution, the problem of human sin, critical theory, atonement theory, salvation, forgiveness and repentance, reconciliation aspects.

Abbreviations

AC        Amnesty Committee
AFORD Alliance for Democracy
ANC      African National Congress
CCAP    Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
DPP   Democratic Progressive Party
MCP       Malawi Congress Party
PCUSA Presbyterian Church in United States of America
PIM    Providence Industrial Mission
RC    Roman Catholic
RRC   Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee
SDA    Seventh Day Adventist
TRC    Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UPC United Presbyterian Church
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Soon after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, African society has been designated as a “theatre of violent conflicts” as the result of tribal wars, ethnicity and greed, corruption as well as stubbornness (Hagg & Kagwanja 2007:12ff). In relation to the Church in Malawi, the existence of various conflicts within the Church of Jesus Christ is an inescapable reality. The influence of human sin, error, competition for scarce resources and lack of theological understanding could be the root causes of many disputes in the modern Church. Generally, conflicts in whatever form or location always reflect differences in interests, values, beliefs and aims, goals as well as perfections (Uyangoda 2000:1).

1.2 Background of Study

In relation to the Church in Malawi for example the churches that have since come on the open or exposed by the media are the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) disputes over land boundary. The Anglican Diocese of Lake Malawi disagrees on the installation of the new gay bishop, the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) and the Roman Catholic Church (RC) in Blantyre over some immoral acts and witchcraft allegations attributed to priests (Banda 2009:1-2). The Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), the Churches of Christ, the Zambezi
Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches are not exempted from the ongoing administrative, leadership and doctrinal conflicts just to mention a few. In relation to the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods' boundary conflict, various Church courts have debated and put forward recommendations and resolutions, “yet without reaching a compromise by both opposing parties of the conflict for over seventy years now” (Jere 2006:2f). The actual detail of the problem involves the Nkhoma Synod that proceeded to build 80 Churches and Prayer Houses in the Livingstonia Synod’s jurisdiction. In retaliation the Livingstonia Synod also proceeded to build 68 Churches and Prayer Houses in Nkhoma Synod’s territory contrary to the General Assembly’s Constitution that stipulates that all member Synods operate within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The Mother General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) together with overseas partners (the Church of Scotland & Presbyterian Church/PCUSA) have all along tried their best to resolve the wrangle and reconcile the two bitter Synods with no fruitful results for over seventy years.

1.3 Multiple Problems in the Church

This long unresolved problem between the Synods has recently escalated from a boundary issue to an ethnic one, between the Tumbuka and Chewa tribes, with politicking and economic interests thrown into the mix. The dispute has been characterized with anger, hatred, lying, cursing, revenge and mudslinging on the part of the leadership, disrespect of traditional authority and structures of the Church and abusing one another.
1.3.1 Political Manipulation

It is observed that the current boundary conflict in Malawi has been manipulated by both political parties and the leadership of the two Synods (Phiri 2010:06f). It is alleged that the leaderships of the Church and political parties have personal interests such as advancing their political ideologies, beliefs and agendas. Phiri (2010:06f) asserts that the idea of doing away with the current structure of the CCAP came from Nkhoma Synod. He quotes the white Dutch Reformed South African Pastor who abruptly said at Lingadzi CCAP Church Session in early 1970:

Nkhoma Synod should sever its ties with the other Synods and instead link up with the Church which is in the Lower Shire because the Dutch Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland (original owners of Fort Hare University) in South Africa operate Independently of each other and make converts in each other's hunting ground.

Phiri (2010:07f) questions the rationale of the Dutchman’s reasoning to create serious divisions among peaceful Presbyterians of Malawi. Regionalism and ethnicity are also promoted by political leaders. For example until recently, the Northern Region was the stronghold of the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) which died after the demise of its leader Dr. Chakufwa T. Chihana, a Tumbuka. Now it is said to be the second home of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) led by the incumbent President of Malawi, Dr. Bingu Wa Mntharika, a Lomwe from the Southern Region of Malawi but favored in the North because of his good policies. The Central Region is the stronghold of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) led by Mr. John Tembo who took over from the late dictator and former Life President of Malawi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Most people in the
Northern Region dislike the party because of its autocratic rule from 1964 to 1994. Political leaders always use the Church to influence their members for political power and popularity in order to get more votes during elections; hence the two Synods fight for more areas of operation.

1.3.2 Ethnicity and Tribalism

Related to politics is the lust for tribal supremacy over one another. In some countries in Africa, ethnicity, nepotism and tribalism are condemned but it is unfortunate that some people in Malawi do not want to accept reality and reform. Phiri (2010:06) observes that in 1988/89 some people in the Central Region urged Government to deport Northern Region teachers to their regions and that all teachers teach in their original regions only. Now Nkhoma Synod is advocating ethnicity and regionalism within the CCAP by saying that the Chewa members of Nkhoma Synod must go to Nkhoma Synod prayer houses. Similarly the Yao, Lomwe and Tumbuka members of Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods must go to their original prayer houses only.

Phiri (2010:07f) further argues that the promotion of this tribalism and apartheid in the CCAP is totally unchristian and by penetrating in each other’s territory in the name of following up “our tribal children” will bring in more confusion in the Church. Christian believers will then be comfortable to practice negative archaic beliefs and syncretism more easily (Phiri 2010:07f). It is difficult for one to understand how the dispute of simple introduction of Chewa Service at Matiki congregation grew out of proportion and divided
the entire Presbyterian Church. The way the disgruntled Chewa members rebelled against Matiki needs serious scrutiny. It created two ethnic congregations, the old Matiki for the Tongas only and the new Majiga for the Chewas threatening the unity of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP).

1.3.3 Economic Interests

The construction of the Dwangwa Sugar Factory in Dwangwa led to the influx of many company employees. The people wanted services of the nearest CCAP Church to meet their needs. But the Nkhoma Synod took advantage of the situation and established a congregation in the Livingstonia Synod’s territory without consultation with their sister Synod. It is no secret that there were possible economic benefits and the Nkhoma Synod wanted to benefit from the situation (Phiri 2010:06). The same thing happened in Kasungu, Nkhamenya, Khosolo, Luwerezi and Kanjuchi where Tobacco Estates were opened in late 1970s and early 1980s. Simon the Magician, was cursed for thinking that the gift of God could be purchased with money (Act 8:20-21).

During the course of the boundary conflict, a lot of energy and resources have been channeled into conflict escalation and conflict resolution at the expense of development of the Church and the rural community. Conflict robs one of immeasurable time, energy, money and opportunities in ministry or business (Sande 2004:12). Some unanswered questions with regard to the moral values, integrity and the destiny of the Church in
Malawi have been raised by both Christians and other members of society. This problem has motivated the researcher to engage this research project.

1.4 The Research Problem

As the background alluded, the problem of the study is to examine whether the controversy between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods can be illuminated to give insights into its causes and eventually its resolution. Thus the critical question becomes: Why conflicts rise among Christians within the Church?

1.4.1 The Research Study questions

This study intends to address the following questions:
Why do churches and Christian believers fight each other? What are the different approaches to conflict resolution? What theological tools can be used to uproot the causes of conflict? How can they be applied to conflict resolution?

1.4.2 Hypothesis

Since conflict comes from sin that causes divisions among humankind, reconciliation derived from theological atonement abolishes evil. If human sin is dealt with through atonement, conflict in society including the Church will not continue to exist. As we relate to God by means of salvation, we relate to each other and become more sanctified which undermines the causes of conflict.
1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to investigate the nature of conflict within the Church, with special focus on the Livingstonia and Nkhoma context and to reflect on the implications of this to Christian living and Church leadership.

1.5.1 Rationale

The objective of the research is to try to understand some aspects of the causes of serious conflict within the Church in Malawi and to explore, investigate and review some theological concepts and ideas that could be applied in conflict resolution. This dissertation focuses on providing a theological approach that could be used to resolve conflict in the Church.

Although publications referring to conflict in the Church are available in libraries and on the Internet, a comprehensive theological work on pastoral perspective has not been debated adequately. Poirier (2006:12) strongly argues that contemporary Christian conflict theories are deficient in reckoning with the Godward dimensions of conflict. When discussing anger, revenge, offence, lying, other emotions and behaviors that characterize conflict, they rarely frame these matters in terms of the sinful heart’s opposition to God. They overlook the deep and rich biblical themes about human motivation such as idolatry, lusts and cravings. When treating these sinful matters of the heart in relation to human nature, most theories typically appeal to psychological and law-court models that are less biblical and theological (Poirier 2006:12). Musopole
(1993:1) agrees by asserting that:

What Mbiti has said generally about the church in Africa as having no theology is particularly true of the churches in Malawi. They still live on “historically stale” confessions that were formulated, not only elsewhere but alas! a long time ago. Believing that the theological canon is fixed and the new theological insights have now ceased, the churches have failed theologically to engage the problems facing them now in a creative way.

The Church needs a biblically rooted and theologically integrated model with the larger corpus of Christian thought and teaching that is more ecclesiastically tailored, a paradigm aimed at building peacemaking practices in communities. Therefore this study aims at fulfilling that theological need in Malawi and elsewhere.

1.6 Theoretical (Conceptual) framework

The theoretical (conceptual) framework which will be used originates from both human and divine efforts as follows:

1.6.1 The Critical theory

This is sometimes called “Conflict theory”. Critical theory is a view that seeks to reveal the ideology and power dynamics at work in any given situation. It seeks to unearth in whose interest the situation that prevail works. Critical conflict theory is man-centered. It is a theory that peals off layers of claims to reveal the motives behind actions (Bowel & Gintis 1976:74f) for instance of both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in building Churches on each others territory. This is the reason why the critical theory is suitable for this research study. It delves beneath occurrences to seek the reasons why people act
the way they do and account for consequences thereof. Where disagreements and disputes occur, the human critical theory could be used to understand the various dialectical forces at play and eventually reveal the motivations behind (Bowles & Gintis 1976:74f).

1.6.2 The Atonement Theory

There are two principal Greek words connected with atonement: *katallassein* and *hilaskesthai* meaning “reconciliation and atonement”. Hebrew word: *kpr* means, “to cover the person or his guilt.” Atonement means the covering of sin by something that God Himself had provided, thus the covering of sin by God Himself. It is God-centered Model in orientation. It was God who continued to feel concerned for His creatures so that He provided atonement for man. The little lamb was slain as a sacrifice and the blood was for protection. The Lord God said to the people of Israel:

> When I see the blood, I will pass over you... for life is in blood. I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar”(Ex 12: 13ff, Lev 17:11).

This research study draws on this divine atonement theory because it has the power to uproot human sin which brings conflict. First, the Gospel of Jesus proclaims that Christ’s blood is the atoning virtue for the forgiving of sins of the heart and second, reconciliation rests upon the atonement models (McIntyre 1992:26-42) of salvation, sacrifice, ransom, and satisfaction, as its ground. The third aspect that involves this theory is that reconciliation means change of relation between God and mankind, and the whole human race. Real change comes in people’s attitude toward their conflict and
reconciliation through a renewed vision of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Poirier (2006:11-12) asserts that this Gospel of Jesus Christ is the engine that drives the train of reconciliation. It brings change of relationship from enmity to friendship, from alienation to communion and change of behavior and lifestyle which are most significant (Forsyth 1910:68-69). The object of atonement is much more than bringing us in tune with God; it means an actual communion with the personal nature of God. We have personal intercourse with the Holy God without guilt through the Holy Spirit. We exchange our thoughts, feelings and become absorbed in the process of sanctification (Forsyth 1910:75-76) thus undermining sin and conflict.

Lastly, the end of reconciliation is communion. Sin and conflict need the atonement theory for their removal. It is atonement of Jesus Christ alone that can subdue sin and conflict. Without meeting that need, human sin will continue to prevail and generate a lot of conflict thereby causing more devastation.

1.7 Preliminary Literature Review

1.7.1 Understanding the Meaning of Conflict

Kraybill et al (2001:3ff) argues that life is full of conflict. The challenge is not to avoid conflict but rather to deal with it constructively, channeling the energy that conflict generates in a positive direction so that just and life-giving change can take place. Conflict presents us with choices that both reflect and shape who we are as persons and communities. In moments of conflict, we make long-lasting decisions about the institutions and resources with which we construct our lives. How we respond in conflict
will either limit us or open the way to life in abundance.

Kraybill et al (2001:3ff) further asserts that the Chinese character for crisis or conflict is composed of two symbols: one is “wei” meaning “danger” and the other is “ji” meaning “opportunity.” Conflict is dangerous. Every day people die as a result of conflict. One reason is that human beings have invested lavishly in one particular response to conflict: the technology and application of violence (Kraybill et al 2001:4f). Most people believe that to prevail in war, it is necessary to invest in weapons and train vigorously in their use. Younan (1994:1f) agrees that conflict exists in human life, even in peaceful times and brings with it some constructive and beneficial processes in addition to the heavy costs, suffering and destructive forces. Conflict brings both negative and positive consequences on society.

Conflict also provides opportunities from which people can foster positive change and transformation. People in organizations and groups for instance discuss serious differences with others and find creative ways of dealing with diversity. However, the purpose of conflict resolution is to mitigate or remove the negative results and destruction of conflict, while preserving its beneficial, life- giving qualities. These efforts could be accompanied by conflict, but it is conflict waged in a way that strengthens the human community. Kraybill et al (2001:4f) concludes his argument by asserting that when we prepare with necessary skills we find that many conflicts could strengthen the human community, bring new levels of involvement, new awareness, new patterns of relationship and even justice itself (Kraybill et al 2001:4f).
1.7.2 Conflict in the Church

Louis (2007:2ff) contends that our world is filled with the bitter consequences of words that have hurt and the unresolved disputes have caused gender based violence, family abandonment or divorce, political hostility and racism to name a few. Inter-group conflicts in the Church arise from objective differences of interest, coupled with antagonistic or controlling attitudes and behaviors. Incompatibilities that prompt conflict in the Church include sin, economic, power or value differences or differences in needs satisfaction. Unresolved conflict causes serious anxiety, dysfunctions and these dysfunctions are often passed on unintentionally to the next generation.

Daman (2009:3-4f) while acknowledging that a small church is a place of deep love and care, conflict is a reality that confronts a congregation regardless of how loving and caring the people are. The difference between a loving congregation and one settling into patterns of warfare is not the amount of conflict or the intensity of conflict, but the way they respond to and resolve conflict. Loving churches resolve conflict with minimal damage to long-term relationships. Warring congregations allow conflict to fester and grow. Conflicts could affect a church of any size, when it arises it could devastate the spiritual well-being of a congregation, traumatize people and undermine the entire ministry for years to come if not checked.

1.7.3 Causes of Conflict in the Church

Daman (2009:5f) observes that there are many issues that could cause tension within the Church. There is a basic corruption of human nature; the moral character has been
polluted through sin. Sin brings conflict and produces the great divisions of humankind. Milne (1982:106-107f) relates sin with lawlessness, conflict with God and the result of sin itself generates misunderstanding and conflict. It causes conflict within all human groups whether the academics, traditional communities, social organizations and leisure. Human sin divides homes, families and churches. People have conflicts over interests, values and goals. They disagree over issues of power and authority. Conflicts could also arise because people are discouraged and morale is low. These factors undermine the ministry and unity within the Church.

Conflict could also arise because of cultural tensions. Churches become involved in tensions over music, versions of the Bible, dress code and other culture differences. Conflicts also develop over nonreligious issues such as the environment, land use policies and other political issues being debated within the community. Change inevitably leads to conflict, even when the change is unavoidable. Change creates a conflict with the past as the Church seeks to move forward to the future. The Church is one of the institutions on the earth which is criticized for being rigid and unwilling to change. Daman (2009:6f) however concludes that the Church has the potential to provide reconciliation within the congregation and the community.

1.7.4 Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the Church

People respond to conflict in various ways. Sande & Johnson (2008:16) assert that human beings deal with conflict in three different ways: Fake peace, by escaping, making things look good, pasting on a smile and shrugging one is alright. Break peace, by attacking, tearing up relationships to get what one wants. Make peace, by working it
out, aiming to resolve clashes by searching out solutions that create real justice and authentic harmony. Louis (2007:2ff) summarizes the argument by outlining the three ways on how different people respond to conflict as follows: One person will retreat into silence, another will openly confront, a third will begin to negotiate to maintain peace.

These reactions arise not only from the nature of specific conflicts but also from personal history which deeply shapes each person’s attitudes and beliefs about conflict. Influences that have special impact include relationships with siblings and childhood friends. Responses to conflict are also modeled by parents, teachers and public figures. Other social factors include serious deprivation, illness and poverty.

Younan (1994:2f) argues that the focus of conflict resolution is to deal with the conflict itself. It requires thorough and rigorous analysis: beginning with an understanding of the very nature of conflict, the nature of the parties, their respective aspirations and interests, values and needs, the perceptions which each has of the other and the dynamics of the interaction involved. Younan (1994:2ff) further contends that the resolution of conflict is made even more complex by the existence of institutional or structural obstacles, cultural differences and constantly changing conditions. People could learn important skills to help them manage and settle their conflicts more effectively. In conclusion, Younan (1994:3f) asserts that conflict resolution recognizes that a wise and durable agreement must fulfill certain basic human needs for all parties: needs for security, identity, recognition, participation and development.
1.7.5 The Positive Outcome of Conflict

Is conflict a necessary evil from a theological point of view? Is conflict good or bad? Can something positive come from conflict? Sande & Johnson (2008:23) strongly argue that conflict is not always bad. Some differences are natural and good rooted in the God-given human individuality. Many differences in human beings are not about right or wrong but they are simply the result of personal preferences. Human beings are bound to have varying opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives and priorities. Kesley (1964:230) cites from Scripture the disputes and enmity that were generated in bringing the Jewish Christians and pagan Gentiles in the early Church (Acts 15:1ff). It stirred up much conflict that some were stoned and fed to wild beasts. It is observed that the more the Christians were persecuted the more they were converted to Christianity (Acts 8). The Apostle Paul’s life could scarcely be termed free of conflict (Rom 7, 2 Cor 6:4-10). The sharp disagreement between Paul and his preaching partner Barnabas which led to their split resolution effectively doubled their missionary output (Act 15: 36-41). Poirier (2006:14) inquisitively asks:

Are conflicts intrusions into ministry, accidents and obstacles to the Gospel or are they assignments from God- the very means by which He causes us to see our poverty and the riches of His wisdom, power, justice and mercy (Ja 1:2-5)?

The Church must view parties to a dispute not as individuals with competing interests but see them as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ caught in rebellion and bondage of sin. Berkhof (1938:183ff) using the scientific theory of evolution, attributes human complexity to chance variations combined with a competitive natural struggle for life to
survive. Theistic evolution or “stop-gap” theory sees God coming in at periodic intervals to help nature overcome the existing chasms/conflicts (Berkhof 1938:183f). There could be no life without death, no sin/shedding of blood, no salvation, no development without poverty. Berkhof (1983:183f) assumes that God provides the necessary means to create something good out of sin and conflict. This principle is technically scientific. It presupposes both the negative and positive or beneficial effects of conflict for the continued existence and sustenance of nature.

Poirier (2006:76ff) asserts that in all things God ordains conflict according to His sovereignty, wisdom and good purposes. This great truth must be our central confession, our anchor in the midst of conflict, so that we can be compelled and emboldened to be true ambassadors of reconciliation. Conflict tries our true theology. It tests us and sifts our hearts, revealing what we truly believe and hold too fast. If we truly confess and believe that God ordains conflict, instead of cursing it, we can consecrate it. Instead of seeing conflict as an accident in a cosmos, we can accept it as a God-given assignment for our good and His ultimate glory. If handled well conflicts stimulate dialogue, creativity and change (Sande & Johnson 2008:23). Rather than perceiving conflict as an obstacle to our ministry, we must welcome it as an opportunity to serve.

The Church is therefore called upon to love, serve one another in the community bounded by the Good News of salvation, sacrifice, atonement of Jesus Christ, reconciliation, sacrament and discipline. Conflict is a divine assignment given to the Church to reveal to the world the Gospel message- the nature, grace, love and the character of Jesus Christ who forgives human sin, restores souls, purifies hearts,
reconciles people and makes them His sons and daughters to live in peace and harmony. Conflicts keep life dynamic, productive and interesting! In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says:

I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.

From this literature overview, it is clear to establish that conflict is an inescapable reality within the modern Church. Sources of conflict are many. Different people respond variably to conflict and there are different ways to resolve conflict. There are two models that could be used to resolve conflict namely: the Law-court and Atonement models based on human and divine efforts respectively. The cross-fertilization of human critiquing and atonement aspects could possibly provide a better theological approach to resolving conflict within the Church.

1.8 Research Methods

1.8.1 The Main method will be by literature review

This will be done on the Internet, books in libraries at Fort Hare, Chancellor College, Blantyre Synod Resource Center and Zomba Theological College. The following could also be the methods and assumptions to doing research and developing theory.

1.8.2 Interpretive/Research paradigm

A paradigm is the philosophical basis of a study. It is like bedrock on which to build the
methodology of a research. The above definition alludes to certain laid views of the work being well thought and fore-laid by a paradigm called “assumptions”. A paradigm also underpins a study by giving the worldview of a researcher’s orientation as to his ontology that is his view of reality and his epistemology. The interpretive paradigm is suitable for use by researchers whose knowledge interest is to understand what happens in a context; and the want to unearth the deep-seated meanings from participants in the situation (Drew et al 2008:17-f). The Interpretive paradigm in the research study provides that the world has multiple realities and seeks to get its picture by using insiders of the conflict to tell about their experiences (Maree 2007:33f). Interpretive paradigm uses qualitative methods that seek thick descriptions of phenomena (Marree 2007:33f).

1.8.3 Qualitative Approach

Since this research study is located in the interpretive approach, it uses qualitative methods to examine social reality. According to many scholars, knowledge is constructed by observation and articulated by personal descriptions of participants. This is pivotal to the research study because only the emic (insiders) views can detail what goes on in a context as opposed to the epic (outsiders) views. Qualitative methods also provide in-depth knowledge of phenomena that creates a holistic picture of the learning interactions of those who have lived the experiences (Corbin, Strauss 2008:47ff).

1.8.4 Case Study

This is the study design that combines observation of behavior with observation of attitudes and perceptions of research participants (Yegidis & Weinbach 1996:139). It
samples either individuals or settings in order to allow study of specific identified characteristics and their impact on the phenomenon being researched. Such case studies can involve one setting or multiple settings selected to enhance the possibility of making comparisons.

1.8.5 Instruments (Interviews, Documentary analysis)

These are specific practical measures and tools employed to access or generate data through different forms of interaction. In line with Maree (2007:33f), this study will engage in multi methods of data collection such as interviews of 20 Christian members, 10 elders from some congregations involved in disputes and 5 officials from the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods. It will also analyze Newspaper reports, Church correspondences as well as other Church policy documents to ensure validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This research study intends to fill the gap of lack of theological information that exists during conflict. Therefore this new theological approach could possibly be used to resolve conflict constructively in homes, places of school, work and worship.

The Church will benefit from the study in the sense that the results of this study would play an important role in the Church particularly in Malawi by giving its members and others some theological answers and guidance on conflict resolution today. The leadership will also get insights into organizing the Church and steering it carefully through turbulence to ensure consensus is reached peacefully after controversy.
1.10 Delimitations

The research study will be carried out within the context of the disputed Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod Churches located in Nkhamenya, Kasungu, and Dwangwa in Nkhotakota in the Central Region of Malawi.

1.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research study intends to understand better the nature, the problems of conflict and possibly arrive at solutions to disputes within the Church. The causes of conflict are sin, human motivations such as idolatry, anger, revenge, offence, and other emotions, scramble for scarce resources and lack of theological tools/skills (Scott 2008:48). These could be undermined by means of human and divine efforts. Human solutions to conflict are unproductive and short lived while divine solutions are fruitful and long lasting. Divine solutions based on the atonement aspects of salvation, redemption and confession, sacrifice, reconciliation and sanctification could abolish sin; if applied, they could also radically end conflict with God and mankind. They could rebuild broken relationships (Milne 1982:174). When Christians learn to be peacemakers, they can turn conflict into an opportunity to strengthen relationships, preserve valuable resources and make their lives a testimony to the love and power of Christ (Sande 2004:12f). Therefore conflict in that way could be a constructive and beneficial process for change, spiritual renewal and growth within the Church and society.
1.12 Research Outline

1. Chapter 1 Background to the Study.

2. Chapter 2 Conflict within the Church: Critical theory.

3. Chapter 3 Conflict with God: The problem of sin.

4. Chapter 4 Reconciliation with God: Atonement theory.

5. Chapter 5 Reconciliation between People.

6. Chapter 6 Reconciliation in Malawi.

7. Chapter 7 Conclusion and Summary.

8. References.

9. Appendices.
CHAPTER 2

CONFLICT WITHIN THE CHURCH:
CRITICAL THEORY

In this chapter before the study highlights the case of disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods, it will first cite briefly some conflicts in the history of the early Church and recently in South Africa to get an appreciation of the impact of conflict in the life of the Church and society. The study will also focus on how the Church resolved those conflicts. Second, the study will outline the historical background of the Church of Central Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods established by the Church of Scotland, Nkhoma Synod established by the Dutch Reformed Church of the Western Cape in South Africa and the General Assembly and how the boundary disputes between the two opposing Synods started in Malawi.

Here the research study will employ the human critical theory of investigation. The assumptions that lie beneath critical inquiry are that: ideas are mediated by the power relations of society (Gray 2009:25). Certain groups in society are privileged over others and exert an oppressive force on subordinate groups (Gray 2009:25). The purpose of this section is to peal off layers of claims to reveal the motives behind the actions of both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in building Churches on each other’s territory. This investigation will therefore be used to understand the various dialectical forces at play thereafter it will seek emancipation (Gray 2009:25).
2.1 A Case of Conflict between Jews and Gentiles

Gruber (1991:2ff) holds that the early Church was a Jewish Church with Jewish constituency and Jewish leaders. From sources of Scripture and Church history there is evidence that the first followers of Jesus kept both the Sabbath and Jewish festivals (Acts 2:46, 13:13-14, 17:2). The Church in Jerusalem continued as a Jewish Church for several generations. The Historian Eusebius reports that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem, until the time of Hadrian (135 AD) were all Hebrews. After the fifteenth Bishop Narcissus, Marcus was installed as the first Gentile bishop of Jerusalem (Lohse 1966:53).

2.1.1 Relationship between Jews and Gentiles

Since the Church was Jewish from its earliest days, it had great struggles to deal with the problem of Gentiles. In Matthew 10:5-6 there is strong tension reflected in the Ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Some time in the early Church a problem emerges as the Evangelist Philip went down to Samaria and proclaimed the Gospel. And it was necessary that leaders from Jerusalem come down and approve the outreach to this most Gentile people (Acts 8:14). Peter had an experience with Gentiles in relation to the Centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10:1- 11:18). After the episode Peter went up to Jerusalem to explain the event that happened to him (Acts 11:3). Peter then had to relate his whole experience to the leaders after which all agreed that God had indeed granted repentance to the Gentiles (Gruber 1991:2ff).
Later, Paul an Apostle called to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13) found it necessary to defend his ministry before the leaders in Jerusalem. This great confrontation concerning Jews and Gentiles resulted in what is called the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:1-35 and in Galatians 2:1-10. The hot controversy at this Council was whether or not believing Jews would be required to become circumcised and keep all the requirements of the law (Ritchie 1999:1-2). The Apostle Peter was able to speak up on behalf of the Gentiles. After him, James the leader of the Church gave his opinion that they should not make it difficult for Gentiles coming to the faith (Acts 15:19). This big conflict in the early Church was to do with cultural and religious practices between Jews and Gentiles. The Apostle Paul says:

For he is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:14).

2.1.2 Strong Wall of Separation

The decision of the Jerusalem Church in Acts 15:5-29 helped to widen the growing rift between the Jews and Gentile Christians. Circumcision was and is today, a critical issue for the Jews. It was a wall of deep separation between them. Before AD 70 the Christians were considered a sect of Judaism (Act 2:42, 24:5 Nazarene sect). The big political problems between Gentiles and Jews began to develop around AD 66-70 with the Jewish revolt against Rome. At this time Christians fled to Pella in Perea. Pella was located in the present Jordanian foothills about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The

Ritchie (1999:3ff) asserts that after the war some Christians may have returned, but were regarded as traitors to the Jewish cause. Not only was there a change in the Christian situation, there was also a drastic change in Jewish situation. In AD 70, Jerusalem was conquered and the Roman General Titus destroyed the Temple. The Jewish Temple, the sacrificial system, numerous customs and practices of Judaism came to an abrupt end. However, very quickly a new center of Judaism arose and continued along Pharasaic lines at a place called Yavneh near the Mediterranean coast.

The Yavneh School accomplished many constructive things. The Old Testament canon was defined and considerable work was carried on toward establishing the official text of the Hebrew Bible (Gruber 1991:30). However, Yavneh was also responsible for one other text that made the division between Jews and Christians much deeper. Around AD 90, the Birkat ha- Minim (the Heretic Benediction) was adopted and came into regular synagogue usage. The Heretic Benediction which was a condemnation of sects may not have been drafted specifically against the Christians, but it certainly included them. From this point on it would be exceedingly difficult for the Jewish Christians to sit comfortably in the synagogue while their own faith was being cursed. The final separation stage was fully set with the Bar Kochba revolt against Rome in AD 132-135. Probably because Bar Kochba was looked upon as a Messianic figure and even acclaimed as such by the famous Rabbi Akiva, the Jewish Christians could not be involved.
This war was the final blow that bitterly severed the two communities. After Rome’s second conquest of the Jews, the Emperor Hadrian renamed the City of Jerusalem Aelia Capitolina. On the Temple Mount, he constructed a temple to Jupiter and forbade Jews to enter Jerusalem (Guber 1991:31). Many of the surviving Jewish leaders went into hiding eventually the Jewish center of learning was transferred to Galilee. Contacts between Jews and Christians became much more difficult after all this.

2.1.3 The Development of the Rift

Gerrish (2000:3) observes that Church history could trace the events within Judaism that separated Jews and Christians. However, there were also events and movement within Christianity itself that contributed to the separation and even widened it. There was an early and continuing debate over the proper date for the celebration of Easter. In the primitive days, Easter was celebrated along with the Jewish Passover but in time the Church began to grow uneasy with this Jewish connection. The problem flared up in AD 167 in Laodicea and later in AD190, with several Church Synods being held to try and reconcile the problem.

Later at the Council of Nicea the problem was settled once for all and a permanent separation was made with the Jews and their Passover. Soon there arose a tendency in the early Church to deprecate the Jewish people and the Biblical position of Israel (Gerrish 2000:2). In AD 160 Justin Martyr, the Apologist through his writing did more damage to the Hebrew roots of Christianity than Origen in AD 185-254. Origen had been credited for his allegorical method of interpreting the scriptures. Through this method the
Biblical position of Israel and the Jewish people was allegorized and simply rendered irrelevant. The Church later officially considered Origen a heretic, but his influence lived on and greatly increased.

2.1.4 The Council of Nicea

Gruber (1991:30-31) holds that with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 AD, the nature of Christianity began to undergo a rapid and radical transformation. Constantine was eager to consolidate his gains and was determined to quell the various divisions within Christianity. Kelly (1968:342f) observes that two problems were particularly difficult: the Arian controversy that contested the divine nature of Christ and the continuing divisions over the proper date and celebration of Easter. In the year AD 325, the Council of Nicea was called together by the New Emperor. The Arian controversy was settled and the Council ruled that Easter would be celebrated according to Roman and Western practices (Lohse 1966:53ff).

Gerrish (2000:3) asserts that the opinion of the Council was not to be taken lightly. The Church had behind it the full power of the Roman Empire and any dissent would be looked upon as criminal. From this point on the sword of the Empire and not the sword of the Spirit would determine Church doctrine and practice (Eph 6:17). There was no doubt that this Nicea Council was an important turning point in the history of the Church (Mckim 1988:16). Israel was cast aside and the Church officially became “the New Israel.”
triumphant Church of Constantine was now effectively cut off from its Jewish roots. It would receive its sustenance from the Greco-Roman and pagan culture around it.

2.2 A Case of South Africa

Apartheid was officially introduced in South Africa in 1948, even though many people say racial segregation had a longer history that may be dated from 1912 when a major piece of legislation dividing the land was passed (Pedro 2007:41f). Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning “separateness”. It is a system of ethnic separation in which persons were classified into racial groups according to the color of their skin. The main groups were black, white, colored (people of mixed racial descent) and Indians. These race groups were separated from one another geographically, akin to the Indian “stans”—the first Nation reserves of the United States, Canada and the aboriginal reserves in Australia.

Cunningly, this ensured that black citizens, who are the majority population group in Southern Africa, did not have a right to vote in “white” South Africa (even if they lived there) since they were only eligible to vote in their “independent homeland.” The black independent homelands were the most remote, least arable and least economically viable tracts of land in Southern Africa (Pedro 2007:41f). Implementing this system from the early 1940s meant that many native South Africans were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands throughout Southern Africa. The land itself was expropriated and either put to use by the government or sold to white South Africans to establish farms.
2.2.1 Human Rights Abuses

In order to maintain this system of segregation and force black persons to remain in the black homelands, black South Africans were systematically oppressed and disenfranchised by various means. Economically, they were disenfranchised through job reservation (meaning that certain jobs and professions were not open to black South Africans), Bantu education (a system of education that trained black South Africans to do nothing more than unskilled and manual labor), inequitable access to health care and more severe restrictions on freedom of movement in South Africa. The violent, systematic implementation of this evil system were considerable and had damaging effects on the Southern African society as a whole and particularly on individual South Africans who suffered under it. The effects of Apartheid are likely to be felt for many generations to come. Neville Richardson (in Pedro 2007:54f) notes just how influential and significant this ideology of systematic oppression was and how it would affect the Church:

The church under apartheid was polarized between “the church of the oppressor” and “the church of the oppressed.” Either, you were for apartheid or you were against it; there was no neutral ground. Given the heavy-handed domination of the minority white government, those who imagined themselves to be neutral were, unwittingly perhaps, on the side of apartheid. This complicity was especially true of those Christians who piously “avoided politics” yet enjoyed the social and economic benefits of the apartheid system… While young white men were conscripted into the South African Defence Force, many young black people fled the country to join the outlawed liberation movements that had their headquarters and training camps abroad. What could the church do in this revolutionary climate? And what should Christian
Violence and killing innocent people constituted the particular character of the Apartheid regime. The security forces, the Police in particular killed and tortured people in their squads. Apartheid ought to be understood as a destructive force against someone’s race. Apartheid as ethnocentrism sought its own protection against the black population believed to be dangerous to its safety since the Afrikaners had suffered discrimination a long time previously in history. They forgot that the black population and the world would react against such gross violation of human rights.

**2.2.2 Power of the People**

The African National Congress (ANC) in retaliation abandoned its policy of non-violence and mobilized the population to civil disobedience so as to overturn apartheid. Most African National Congress (ANC) leaders went into exile; with the assistance of neighboring African countries and International community, they trained over 10,000 freedom fighters to fight back the forces of apartheid. There was much talk about “People’s power” whereby some Police informers were killed by the “necklace” method where tyres were put over the person’s neck and set on fire (Pedro 2007:52ff).

Christian Churches and other faith communities in South Africa also mobilized themselves to combat apartheid. Economic and political sanctions imposed against the South African Apartheid regime by the International community made them surrender its strategies of racial discrimination and gross violations of human rights, assassination and
killing. Both the rulers and the ANC leaders realized that confrontation would not help the country’s economy to grow, consequently they all agreed to intensify dialogue and negotiations for there are no victories in conflict.

2.2.3 Amazing Reconciliation

The International community and many organizations of the world are longing for reconciliation. They hope that their leaders will be politically matured and become flexible like the South African leaders. Legalization of the political parties, serious democratic reforms leading to historic multi-party General elections in 1994 and Nelson Mandela becoming the first black President in South Africa followed the cessation of hostilities (Pedro 2007:53f). From that time Mandela the New leader began a program of reconciliation between white, black, Indians and coloured within South Africa. President Mandela and Desmond Tutu called South Africa a “Rainbow Nation” as demonstrated by the colors in its New National flag.

From his policy emerged the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Amazingly, Mandela did not consider revenging himself on his “enemies” who tortured him for over 27 years in prison, but for the sake of all South Africans, he sought to forgive. Most people could not believe him. He also constituted the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee (RRC) to look at human rights violations during the time of Apartheid. The Committee also assisted the victims with material and moral needs in “form of compensation,” ex gratia payment, restitution, rehabilitation, or recognition (Pedro
2007:55f). The President further instituted the Amnesty Committee (AC) to act as the Restorative arm of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Committee called upon all South Africans to tell their stories about what had long been kept as secret in order to facilitate repentance, forgiveness, restitution, amnesty and reconciliation (Pedro 2007:58f).

2.3 The Case of disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi

2.3.1 Location of Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country located in South East of Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland (see attached Maps of Malawi). The name Malawi comes from the Maravi, an old name for the Nyanja Bantu people who inhabited the area around 10th Century AD. Malawi is bordered by Zambia to the Northwest, Tanzania to the Northeast, Mozambique on the East, South and West. Its size is over 118,000 square kilometers (45,560 sq miles) with an estimated population of more than 13,900,000 (Cutter 2006:142, Turner 2008). The country has three major regions and 28 districts with Lilongwe as its Capital city and the largest commercial city being Blantyre (attached Map of Malawi, Benson 2008:2). The British colonized Malawi from 1891 and they rule the country until 1964 when it gained independence under Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. In 1993 Malawi became a multiparty democratic state and in the following year Dr Bakili Muluzi was elected President. The incumbent Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika became the third President of Malawi in 2004.
2.3.2 Religions in Malawi

According to the International Religious Freedom Report (2007-09-14) of the United States of America, Department of State, approximately 80% of Malawi’s population is Christian with the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) making up the largest Christian groups. There are also smaller numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists. Around 13% of the population is Muslim, with most of the Muslim population being Sunni, of either Qadriya or Sukkutu groups. Other religious groups within the country include Jews, Hindus and Baha’is and Rastafarians. Atheists make up around 4% of the population although this number includes people who practice traditional African religions (Turner 2008:65).

2.3.3 Origin of Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods

The origin of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods dates back to 1800s when Dr James Stewart of Lovedale Mission in the Eastern Cape in South Africa attended the funeral of Dr. David Livingstone in Westminster Abbey in Britain in 1873. He felt strongly that launching a Mission in Central Africa in memory of Livingstone was imperative and on April 18, 1874 the indelible impression caught fire in his mind. He appealed to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland to support the noble cause. Dr James Stewart passionately concluded his speech by the following words:

I would humbly suggest, as the truest memorial of Livingstone, the establishment by
this Church, or several Churches together of an institution at once industrial and educational, to teach the truths of the Gospel and the arts of civilized life to the natives of the country, and which shall be placed in a carefully selected and commanding spot in Central Africa, where from its position and capabilities it might grow into a town, and afterwards into a city, and become a great centre of commerce, civilization and Christianity, and this I would call Livingstonia (Selfridge 1976:19-20).

A young ordained Medical Doctor read the report of Stewart’s speech in the newspaper and exclaimed: “This is the very thing I have been preparing for all my life!” When Dr Stewart met him later he thought: “There is the man for us.” His name was Rev. Dr Robert Laws who was to spend over fifty years in Africa (Selfridge 1976:20).

By May 1875 a pioneer party under Edward D. Young, veteran sailor, left for Africa. Other members were Dr. Robert Laws, a Medical Officer, John Mc Fadyen, Allan Simpson, Engineers, George Johnston, a Carpenter and William Baker, a Seaman (Mc Cracken 2000:47-64). Henry Henderson who was sent by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to find a suitable site for establishing a mission station also accompanied them. In South Africa, Dr. Stewart recruited four Xhosa Africans namely: Shadrach Mnqunana, William Koy, Isaac Wauchope and Mapassa Ntintili to serve as teachers and evangelists.

After some difficult traveling up the Zambezi River and on land they reached the Shire River in Malawi, the country of their destination and on 12 October 1875 they sailed onto
the Lake Malawi itself. Young called for the Old Hundreth (Psalm) to be sang in praise to the Lord their God. They eventually came to drop anchor at Cape Maclear:

Livingstonia is begun, wrote Laws, though at present a piece of canvas stretched between two trees is all that stands for the future city of that name (Mc Cracken 2000:66).

The difficulties of inhospitable climatic conditions, illnesses and deaths of the new comers forced them to move to Bandawe among the Atonga in the Northern part of Lake Malawi in 1881. They moved again to Kondowe in 1884, Rev. Dr. Robert Laws named the new Mission site “Livingstonia.” The Mission expansions were soon made among the Ngoni in Mzimba, Chewa in Kasungu, Tumbuka in Loudon and Ekwendeni. The Livingstonia Presbytery met for the first time in 1889 marking the first step the Church was taking towards self-sufficiency (Thompson 1975:7).

The Church of Scotland group consisting of a Medical Doctor, five artisans led by Henry Henderson separated themselves and they went up to Michiru, Ndirande Hills in search of a site for their mission station that would become the Center for Christian mission, commerce, education and agriculture. Soon the Mission site was identified and named “Blantyre” after the birthplace of Dr. David Livingstone on 23rd October 1876 (Selfridge 1976:32). Gradually a town was to grow up around the Mission station and today it is a city of two and half million inhabitants. It still proudly bears the name of Blantyre City (Selfridge 1976:31-32).
2.3.4 The Nkhoma Synod

The Dutch Reformed Church of the Western Cape in South Africa established the Nkhoma Synod. Rev. Andrew C. Murray first arrived in Malawi in 1885 and he toured mission fields in which his Synod would work and recommended that “it was time for them to open up a new field” (Selfridge 1976:60). After going for further training in Edinburgh in Scotland where he met members of the Livingstonia Mission Committee he went back to South Africa where he was chosen as the first Missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church to go to Malawi. He went to Bandawe on 31st July 1888 where Rev. Dr Robert Laws warmly welcomed him. He stayed there for a period of time in order to gain some experience with the Livingstonia Mission while he looked for a suitable site for his own Mission (Selfridge 1976:61). In July 1889, Rev. T.C.B. Vlok, the second missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission arrived in Malawi. With the help of Rev. T.C.B. Vlock, Murray toured the South- West of the lake and on 28th November 1889, they chose a new site in Central Region near Chiwere’s Village and called it “Mvera” (Obedience) in Dowa (Weller et al 1984:114).

2.3.5 The General Synod

As early as 1890s Rev. Clement D. Scott had suggested that there should be one Church for the British Central Africa and by 1900 the two Scottish Missionaries were beginning to explore the possibility of a United Presbyterian Church (UPC). In 1903 the Blantyre Presbytery approached Livingstonia Presbytery with the suggestion and
proposed that the Creed, Constitution and Canons should be based on those of the Presbyterian Church in India. In the following year further discussions were held during the United Missionary Conference at Mvera Mission in Nkhoma Presbytery.

In 1914 the two mother Churches in Scotland were to give permission and plans were made for the union of Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries but because of the outbreak of the First World War, all advances were postponed (most of the Ministers were busy with Army chaplaincy). When the war ended in 1918 the Missionary Conference was rearranged for 1924 and it was decided that the New Church would come into being then. The Conference met in September 1924 at Livingstonia and formally constituted the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod and Rev. Dr Robert Laws was elected as its first Moderator. Nkhoma Presbytery was reluctant to join. It only acted as an observer in the formation of the General Synod, an action which most people still question in terms of Nkhoma Synod’s seriousness in maintaining the new Church’s policies and decisions to this very day.

Later after further consultations with the mother body, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Nkhoma Synod joined the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod in October 1926 during the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of Blantyre Mission. The areas of cooperation included education and Bible translation; Blantyre and Nkhoma Synods opted to use Chichewa as lingua franca while Livingstonia Synod chose Tumbuka/ Tonga. They also agreed on a joint Hymn-book (Weller et al 1984:114ff).
Other Synods that joined the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod are Lundazi (Zambia) and Harare (Zimbabwe). The General Synod (now General Assembly) of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) usually meets once every four years to discuss relevant issues pertaining to the promotion of unity, ecumenism and overall spiritual welfare of the entire Presbyterian Churches in Central Africa. The office Headquarters are located in Lilongwe, the Capital City of Malawi and its current Moderator is the Right Rev Dr. Felix Chingota.

2.3.6 Boundary Conflict Areas

Using some aspects of critical form of research, the study will in this section continue to investigate values, assumptions and challenges faced by the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in their conventional structures. In Marxist sense, critical inquiry perspective is not content to only interpret the world but also seeks to change the phenomena under investigation (Gray 2009:25). Here the area under serious conflict is found in both Northern Nkhotakota and Northern Kasungu (see the attached Map of Malawi). Since 1970 the two Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma have been operating there without respect for the boundaries due to the opening up of economic fortunes at the Dwangwa Sugar Factory in Nkhotakota and Tobacco Estates in Nkhamenya and the surrounding areas of Northern Kasungu contrary to whatever was agreed upon by the Missionary overseers during the colonial period (as shown in the attached documents).
In Northern Nkhotakota before 1970, it was Livingstonia Mission that opened up the area as its sphere of evangelization. The move to that effect as stated above dates back to 1881 when the Livingstonia Mission relocated itself from Cape Maclear in Mangochi to Bandawe in Nkhata-Bay (McCracken 1977:66ff). In between 1881 and 1909 the Livingstonia Missionaries developed the congregation that would cater for all Tonga-speaking people along the lake from the Kavuzi Stream in the north to the Bua River delta in the South.

The boundary of Livingstonia’s sphere in the south was sealed by an agreement or understanding that was reached between Rev. A. G. Mac Alpine of Bandawe Mission and Rev W. H. Murray of Nkhoma Mission in 1904. When Bandawe congregation was upgraded into a Presbytery along with Ekwendeni in 1958, the Presbytery was divided into three congregations namely: Bandawe in the North, Dwambazi in the Center and Marawe in the South. The Dwangwa area or Nkhunga fell under Marawe Congregation and that remained the situation until the opening of the Dwangwa Sugar Estates in 1973.

Nkhoma Synod’s involvement in the Dwangwa area was an extension of its operations that up to 1970 had been confined to Central part of Nkhotakota. Following the establishment of the Dwangwa Sugar Estates, the Synod felt the need to establish prayer houses of its own in the Dwangwa area from the year 1974. The Synod felt the need because of the Chewa-speaking workers on the Sugar Estates Factory who originally came from areas under Nkhoma Synod in different parts of Central Region of Malawi. Those members had difficulties to adjust to services of worship conducted in
Chitonga, the local language. The Livingstonia minister in charge of Marawe Congregation then was Rev Chande Mhone. He was under pressure from members of the congregation who originally came from the Nkhoma Synod.

This was the intensifying of the disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods over boundary. These members began to meet informally for separate services of worship, a trend that resulted in the establishment of Majiga Prayer House by Nkhoma Synod without consulting their sister Synod the Livingstonia Synod in 1979. That Prayer House in question was a breakaway from Kayereka or Dwangwa Prayer House of the Livingstonia Synod. There were accusations and counter accusations on each side of the party without reaching a compromise and resolve their pertinent issues.

The General Synod of Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) began to be concerned about the possible emergence of conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in the Dwangwa area as early as 1982. The Synod tried to address the problem of Majiga Prayer House by negotiating its transfer to Livingstonia Synod. However the move which Nkhoma Synod supported was blocked by the members of the Prayer House themselves in 1995. Majiga Prayer House continued to grow as a branch of Nkhoma Synod, later it was upgraded into a full congregation in 1999.

Since 1999 Nkhoma Synod had gone flat out opening congregations and prayer houses at various places in the Dwangwa area such as Chigunda, Chinkhuti, Matiki, Nyavuwu, Ukasi and even up north of Dwangwa River at places like Kangoza, Chidebwe and many
more places. Nkhoma Synod had planted over 80 congregations since the conflict started over half a Century ago (Jere 2006:1f). In retaliation the Livingstonia Synod also built parallel Livingstonia/ Nkhoma congregations and prayer houses at places like Matiki, Ukasi, Nyavuwu whose services of worship were conducted in Tonga and Tumbuka to cater to their (children) members.

In the Kasungu frontier, at first there was no problem since Chilanga was formally handed over to the Nkhoma Synod though evangelized by the Livingstonia Mission. A historical record shows that Chilanga Station was established in 1888 as a sub-station of Bandawe Mission Station. Rev. Dr George Prentice who pioneered missionary work was there between 1900 and 1914. He did so with the help of most Tonga teachers from Bandawe led by Messrs Joseph Kofeya, Philemon Kamnkhwara Chinwa and Timon Tong’ondo (Weller J. et al 1984:123).

With permission from Livingstonia Mission at Bandawe and later Loudon or Embangweni, the Dutch Reformed Church Missionaries from Nkhoma or Mvera visited Chief Mwase’s villages at Kasungu from time to time in 1901. It was in 1919 that negotiations aimed at transferring the Kasungu area from Livingstonia Synod to Nkhoma Synod began. The transfer was done in 1923. Cited reasons for implementing the transfer were mainly linguistic and cultural around the fact that the Chief Mwase people were Chewa like the majority of people amongst whom the Dutch Reformed Missionaries were ministering to the south in Dowa, Lilongwe and Dedza areas.
Rev Thomas Cullen Young, a Scottish Missionary teacher at Chilanga at the time of the negotiations, played a very significant role in persuading his Mission to give up the Kasungu area in favor of the Mission at Nkhoma. He successfully lobbied Livingstonia’s Foreign Mission Committee in Scotland to see that the Chewa of Kasungu were linguistically and culturally different from the majority of people further north whom Livingstonia was evangelizing, the Tumbuka and the Tonga. In 1923 after a lengthy debate, a formal agreement was reached; consequently Livingstonia Mission and its mother Board in Scotland offered to transfer all its stations, schools and medical facilities in the Kasungu-Mchinji Zone to the Dutch Reformed Church at Nkhoma. The latter appointed Rev Andrew C. Murray as its first missionary at Chilanga in 1924. He in turn ordained Mr Lameck Kasuzi Manda as the first local minister in 1925.

Up to 1970, the main Northern-most congregations by Nkhoma Synod were Kakonje in Chief Chulu’s area and Dwangwa in Chief Simulemba’s area. These were established as early as 1925. Similarly, the Southern-most congregations of Livingstonia were Kavizinde in the Mpasadzi area and Kapululu in Simulemba’s area, both of which were established in the 1940s.

By 1967 the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods’ boundary conflict had intensified as to who between the two Synods would be in charge of Chatoloma- Chamakala area as both were then rushing in to plant Congregations and Prayer Houses for their Chewa/Tumbuka-Tonga members in the main village centers such as those of Mafumpizi, Chamakala and Kadweya. The opening of the Mpasadzi Tobacco Farming Scheme
around 1974/75 and the development of Chatoloma and Nkhamenya as Subsidiary rural growth centers has led to a scramble for congregations and space between the two Synods, especially in the area of the Milenje and Mpasadzi rivers. For example, Nkhoma Synod established Thupa Congregation in 1978 in an area that had been part of Kavizinde Congregation of Livingstonia. Similarly, the Livingstonia Synod established Kasasanya Congregation in 1990 in an area that had been part of Kakonje Congregation of Nkhoma Synod (General Synod documents 1988/1995).

2.3.7 Attempts to Conflict Resolution

2.3.7.1 The 1904/1910 Agreement on Boundary on the Nkhotakota Side

The conflict area on the Nkhotakota side is the area between Bua River and Dwangwa River. The Nkhoma Synod says the boundary is Dwangwa River while as the Livingstonia Synod says the boundary is Bua River. The distance between the two alleged rivers' boundary is almost 35 kilometers. Within this area the Livingstonia Synod has established congregations and so too Nkhoma Synod, each one of them claiming it is their jurisdiction. The fact is that if it is established that the boundary is Bua River, then Nkhoma Synod has encroached in that area. On the other hand, if it is established that the boundary is Dwangwa River, then Livingstonia Synod too has encroached in that land. The question remains which of the two rivers was the originally agreed boundary between the two Synods?
When the two Synods met in 1904 at the time Livingstonia Synod was operating all the way down to Chilanga in Kasungu and Tamanda on the Zambia border, the agreement was that the boundary starts from Chipata Mountain in Mchinji reaching the mouth of Rusa River in Mchinji from which point the boundary of the watershed between Rusa and Bua Rivers and passing through Kapirintiwa across the Rusa River on to Kungwinyemba. It did not reach the Lake Malawi area. Nkhoma Synod did not establish congregations then in the disputed area for a long time while Livingstonia Synod did establish congregations in Nkhotakota area since it was its area of operation.

2.3.7.2 The 1923 Border Agreement on the Kasungu Side

On the Kasungu side, the area of dispute is between Dwangwa River and Milenje River, again a distance of approximately 40 kilometers. Livingstonia Synod says the boundary is Dwangwa River while as Nkhoma Synod says the boundary is Milenje River. Here again both Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods have several congregations and prayer houses within this area between Milenje and Dwangwa Rivers. If it is established that the boundary is Milenje, it means all the congregations established by Livingstonia Synod south of Milenje River are an encroachment into the Nkhoma Synod territory. On the other hand, if it is established that the boundary is Dwangwa River on the Kasungu side, then all those congregations established by Nkhoma Synod north of Dwangwa River are an encroachment into Livingstonia Synod’s area of jurisdiction.
As stated earlier Livingstonia Synod was already operating all the way to Chilanga some 6 kilometers south of Kasungu District. However in 1923 the Livingstonia Synod handed over Chilanga and Tamanda Stations to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (Nkhoma Synod) under an agreement reached between the two Missions. The boundary agreement was Chisemphere area along Milenje River. On the Kasungu side the boundary is Mpasadzi River and the current problem the research study has discovered is that the handover of Kasungu and Tamanda was done without proper consultations with the local congregations and traditional chiefs who were very influential in that area which raised an amount of bitterness not entirely forgotten to this day (almost over 87 years now McCracken 2000:274-296). Riddle Henderson, for years a Missionary at Tamanda complained in 1923:

We have two fully organized congregations with over 1000 members and twice as many catechumens. These are unanimously against the change. It is to be regretted that in connection with the proposed transfer, no reference whatever has been made to the congregations and nothing has been done to explain to them the necessity for the transfer or to lessen their opposition to it (Weller et al 1984:123-124).

2.3.7.3 The 1956 Constitution (Boundaries and Barrier Act)

The three Synods of Nkhoma, Livingstonia and Blantyre which were operating as Presbyteries of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) from 1924/26, formed an Independent Church registered in Malawi in 1956 and they became Synods and were joined in the mother body known as the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod under a new Constitution enacted at a meeting of all the three Synods
held on 25\textsuperscript{th} to 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1956 at Nkhoma Synod. There are two significant matters in the Constitution that are very important in so far as the border dispute is concerned. The first is that the Constitution stated in Clause 28 (a) and (b) that:

(a) There shall be Synods of the Church whose area of jurisdiction shall in the first instance be the areas under the Presbyteries of the Church at the date of the adoption of this Constitution.

(b) New Synods of the Church may be formed by sub division agreed by General Synod or by the reception of new churches or bodies who accept this Constitution.

What critically this means is that the constitution confirmed that the boundaries of the three Synods should be the same boundaries of the three Presbyteries as at the date of enactment of the General Synod Constitution in 1956. Hence this Constitution of the General Synod did not in any way change the boundaries.

The second issue of significance is what is called “the Barrier Act.” Article 42 of the Constitution stated as follows:

Any proposal for modification of, or addition to any Chapter of the Constitution other than Chapter 11 or this Chapter X, shall before it can be enacted by the General Synod, be transmitted by way of overture to Synods. Should it receive the consent of all the Synods, the General Synod may then modify or add to the Constitution in terms of the said overture (General Synod Constitution 1956 Chap 11:42).

What again this means is that any proposal for modification or addition to the Constitution had to be proposed by way of an overture to the Synods and once all the Synods approve, it goes back to the General Synod for enactment. Since the boundary
dispute was a constitutional matter any resolutions related to the boundary had to be submitted to the Synods by way of overture. This unfortunately was not a practical solution, as the offending Synod would not approve such an overture. Hence any resolutions passed by the General Synod dealing with the border dispute were not binding until after all the Synods had approved it and the approval required 100 percent from all the Synods. If one Synod withheld its approval the resolution was not binding. It was a veto power reposed in the Synods over resolution of the General Synod. This is why it was called a “Barrier Act.”

There have been several resolutions between 1958 and 1995 almost all of them have not been adhered to because they did not receive 100% approval from Synods. For example if a resolution had been passed that the boundary is Dwangwa on the Kasungu side, it would be changed if boundary would have required the approval of all Synods, including Nkhoma Synod. The Nkhoma Synod would send back that resolution and veto it saying the boundary has not changed; it still remains Milenje or Mpasadzi. That resolution would then be null and void as a result of this veto. The Synods had created this veto power inadvertently and in the end it choked all the operations of the General Synod. It seems Synods were more powerful than the General Synod. The General Synod was desperately powerless to enforce its decisions and policies on the offending Synods in this case the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods. This is one of the reasons why the boundary conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod could not be resolved in the space of over 80 years. It is just like the big five of the United Nations
Security Council who veto powers on serious Global issues. In them lies the real super power of the world.

However, the new Constitution of 2002 has removed this, “Barrier Act,” to ensure that decisions of the General Assembly are binding once passed by the General Assembly without the requirement of approval from Synods except in one or two types of amendments or resolutions.

2.3.7.4 The 1967/68 Chamakala Agreement on the Kasungu Boundary

The border disputes on the Kasungu side continued unabated threatening innocent spiritual lives of the members and disintegration of the Church in the area. This resulted in a meeting between the two Synods Border Committees that was held at Chamakala Congregation on 3rd November 1967. The dispute area was between Dwangwa and Milenje Rivers. It was noted that both Synods had established Congregations and Prayer Houses in the area. The Nkhoma Synod complained of encroachment by the Livingstonia Synod. They realized that it would not be feasible to ask the encroaching Livingstonia Synod to dismantle or hand over their congregations. The two Synods Committees therefore resolved that their two Synods should work together in the area between the two disputed boundaries in a spirit of mutual respect, peace and goodwill. The Nkhoma Synod should not cross the Milenje Stream, likewise Livingstonia Synod should not cross the Dwangwa River and they should all work in the area between the two rivers (as per attached Maps).
When a member of one Synod would like to transfer to another Synod, there ought to be a mutual agreement between the ministers and disjunction certificates ought to be used; no minister shall receive members of either side without a disjunction certificate. In order to avoid clashes, it was recommended that all ministers sent to work at this area should always be instructed to work in this area with a spirit of good relationship and cooperation.

As usual when the proposal was presented to the Synod meeting of Nkhoma Synod, the conference rejected it on the grounds that if this area was to be a buffer zone as required by the two committees there is need that an equivalent area beyond Milenje should also be buffer zone. The question was that if Milenje River is the boundary as per the records why should the buffer only be in the Nkhoma Synod jurisdiction? There should be a similar buffer on the Livingstonia Synod side. As a result of this the recommendations were never implemented even though on the ground the two Synods were operating in this area side by side with very little conflict. Hence Nkhoma Synod’s stand was that Milenje remains the boundary and Livingstonia Synod did not agree to create another buffer north of Milenje (per the attached Maps).

2.3.7.5 The 1995/96 Resolution on the Majiga Prayer House (Nkhotakota Area)

The dispute relating to Majiga Prayer House in Nkhotakota was strictly not a boundary issue. It was a matter relating to Christians who broke away from the Livingstonia Synod
Congregation of Matiki in the Dwangwa Sugar Estate to form a Nkhoma Synod Congregation called Majiga some 5 kilometers south of Dwangwa River. Matiki Congregation being a Livingstonia Synod Congregation was conducting all its services in Chitonga language being in a predominantly Tonga area. However, because of the Sugar Estates a lot of Chewa speaking workers who were not Tonga also attended services at Matiki with difficulties. They asked the leadership if they can be allowed to conduct another service in Chichewa language. The Kirk Session met and resolved to send a recommendation to Bandawe Presbytery for approval. Because of the delay, in the meantime the non-Tonga group stated to pray at a makeshift Prayer House a distance away from Matiki. When the Matiki Congregation instructed them to stop the prayers there, they reacted by establishing Majiga Prayer House under Nkhoma Synod jurisdiction thinking the boundary is Dwangwa River and by constructing this Prayer House 5 kilometers south of Dwangwa River in Nkhoma Synod territory there would be no problem.

Livingstonia Synod however complained to the General Synod that Nkhoma Synod was taking away their Christians (sheep stealing) to form Nkhoma Synod Congregations. When the General Synod met (the writer was a Blantyre Synod delegate) in 1995 at Chongoni Lay Training Center in Lilongwe, they resolved that Nkhoma Synod should handover Majiga Prayer House and all her Christians to Livingstonia Synod. To the dismay of many people the Christians violently closed the church building and threatened to beat up the General Synod officials and delegates, carrying denouncing
placards to block the whole process of handover and reconciliation (Minutes of the General Synod 1995:13).

From that time various resolutions of the General Synod have been passed which Nkhoma Synod never implemented. On the contrary behind the scenes they continued to support them even to the point of raising it from being a prayer house to a full Majiga Congregation and posting a Church Minister to look after them to this day. In reaction to the failure of Nkhoma Synod to implement all the agreements and resolutions, Livingstonia Synod resolved to abolish all borders with Nkhoma Synod, implying that each Synod was now free to establish congregations everywhere. Since 2003 Livingstonia Synod has aggressively opened up congregations in Nkhotakota, Kasungu, Lilongwe and to all places where Tongas and Tumbukas live, building churches side by side with Nkhoma Synod in the Central Region.

2.4 Recent Efforts of the General Synod

It should be mentioned here that all these agreements and resolutions were facilitated by the General Assembly of the CCAP. For example in March 2006 with the assistance from the partner Churches in Scotland it facilitated all Synods (in Malawi) workshop on conflict management skills mostly to deal specifically with the issue of border dispute between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods. After the meeting it was resolved to constitute a Commission of Inquiry on the dispute that did its wonderful job and gave its recommendations to the Synods but unfortunately both sides never took them seriously.
Meanwhile the General Assembly has asked Livingstonia Synod to begin pulling out of Nkhoma Synod’s territory in the next three months in respect for her 2007 resolution that orders the two Synods to respect their borders (General Assembly 2007:12 Minutes). Both Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods have not as yet implemented the resolutions and they continue to adopt their respective “no border attitude” in their endeavor to evangelism in Malawi and beyond.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter before discussing the case of disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods has first cited briefly a few conflicts in the history of the Church to get an appreciation of the impact of conflict in the life of the Church. The study has also focused on how the Church resolved those conflicts. Second, the study has outlined the historical background of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, Nkhoma Synod and the General Assembly and how the boundary disputes between the two opposing Synods started in Malawi. Using critical theory of investigation, the study has in the process pealed off layers of claims to reveal the motives behind the actions of both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in building Churches on each other’s territory (Gray 2009:25f).

The study holds that the issue is changing its face from boundary dispute to Chewa versus Tumbuka/Tonga tribal conflict. However, most people attribute the disputes to the weak, corruptible and sinful character of modern Church leaders. They are accused of
indulging themselves in sin such as practicing witchcraft, money mongering, power drunk and womanizing. Sin is offensive to the holiness of God; it attracts the wrath of God. Where there is sin, the wrath of God can never be turned away (Jn 3:36, Rom 1:18). The Synods have been seriously affected and infected by sin. Malawi’s biggest problem is sin. As a result disgruntled members leave the Church and join Charismatic and Pentecostal “Holiness” Churches. Some stop giving their resources to the Church and others are not interested in attending Church Services. At the same time lack of vision, loss of theological direction and many more factors could be the driving force behind the boundary disputes. The negative attitude and behavior of some Church and political leaders could lead to the rise of serious tribal and ethnic conflict within the Church and the country.

There are also at the moment many unanswered questions that need serious attention. One question could be on the relevance of the Mission of the CCAP Church to meet the needs and aspirations of the people in Malawi today. Another question could be on the method of Evangelism whether the CCAP should continue respecting the founding fathers’ “regional and cultural borders” or go for the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods’ so called “Biblical borderless” model of evangelism. Again the other question could be on the failed policies, decisions, structures and relevance of the General Assembly whether it should continue to exist, revamped or be disbanded at all. The last serious question, would be about the future of the entire Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) with regard to its unity and ecumenical endeavors?
Having understood the various dialectical forces at play in Malawian conflict, the study maintains that the Church needs spiritual emancipation (Gray 2009:25f). How can the Church change attitudes, lifestyles and behaviors that lead to sin and conflict? What can the Church do to deal with people who refuse to be reconciled? Is it possible to achieve genuine reconciliation in Malawi? The Church therefore has to strongly face these challenges of sin and conflict and address them urgently.
CHAPTER 3

CONFLICT WITH GOD: THE PROBLEM OF SIN

In this chapter the study will first discuss the question of sin and its effects. Sin is a reality and is the root of many evil actions in many societies including the Church. Human beings unreasonably cherish sin in their hearts (Ps 66:18). Literature review on philosophical and theological interpretations of sin will also be carried out in this chapter to appreciate its complexity. Second, the study will critically define conflict and its root causes using Marxist’s concept of conflict. The argument of this study rests on the premise that sin yields conflict and produces great divisions among humankind. Milne (1982:107) asserts that sin causes racial prejudice and antagonisms. Therefore, since sin yields conflict with God and among humans, God has provided a means in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to uproot the problem. Therefore the Church has the potential to develop the biblically rooted and theologically integrated model within the larger corpus of Christian thought and teaching to deal with sin and conflict.

3.1 Understanding the Meaning of Sin

Milne (1982:103f) holds that Scripture uses a wide variety of terms to refer to sin, which is not surprising since the dominant theme of the Bible is humanity’s rebellion against God and God’s gracious response. The most common Old Testament (OT) term is chatta’t(Ex 32:30) and its cognate term chet (Ps 51:9) which occurs several hundred times. They all direct attention to sin as an action that misses the mark and consists in a deviation from the right way of living. Shagah (Lev 4:13) expresses the thought of going
astray.

*Avel* and *avon* indicate that it is a serious want of integrity and rectitude, a departure from the appointed path. *Pesha’* (Pr 28:13) refers to sin as a revolt or a refusal of subjection to rightful authority, a positive transgression of the law and a breaking of the covenant (Milne 1982:103f). And *resha’* defines sin as a wicked and guilty departure from the law. Furthermore, sin is designated as guilt by *asham*, as unfaithfulness and treason, by *ma’al* as *vanity*, by *aven*, and as perversion or distortion of nature (crookedness) by *avan* away from God and opposition to God, a transgression of the law of God and conflict with God (Milne 1982:104-105).

Sin in the Old Testament (OT) is portrayed in many metaphors as an aggression, a failure to achieve a goal, a rebellion, a deception, a seduction, corruption and much more (Mac Gregor 1989:573). The corresponding New Testament (NT) major Greek words for sin are *hamartia*, *adikia*, *paraptoma* and *paranomia*, pointing to the same ideas of missing the mark, failure, fault, unrighteousness or injustice and concrete wrong-doing (Mtt 1:21, 1Cor 6:8). *Parabasis* (Rom 4:15) refers to breach of the law (Milne 1982:103ff). *Anomia* (1 Jn 3:4) similarly expresses lawlessness. *Asebeia* (Tit 2:12) reflects the strong sense of godlessness while *ptaio* is more the moral stumble (Jas 2:10).

### 3.2 Philosophical and Theological Interpretations of Sin

In view of the fact that sin is real and that no human beings are free from it, is the reason why philosophers and theologians grapple with the problem of sin or in terms of
philosophy- the problem of evil. This study will briefly review some of the important philosophical interpretations of evil or sin so as to elucidate the complexity of the problem of sin with a view to establishing the link between conflict and its doctrinal premise.

3.2.1 The Dualistic Interpretation of Sin

This is one of the views that were current in Greek Philosophy. In the form of Gnosticism: spirit is good and matter is evil and this teaching found entrance into the early Church (Berkhof 1938:227ff). It assumes the existence of an eternal principle of evil. It also holds that in mankind the spirit or soul represents the principle of good and the body that of evil. There are objections to this premise for several reasons. The notion is that there exists something outside God which is eternal and independent of His will. This theory robs sin of its ethical character by making it something purely physical and independent of the human will. It also does away with the responsibility of man by representing sin as a physical necessity. Berkhof (1938:227ff) asserts that the only escape from sin lies in deliverance from the body. This assertion is far from Scripture which teaches that God is concerned with both our spiritual and physical conditions of our being (Deut 28:1ff, Jn 3:16-20, 3 Jn 2). A human being is composed of soul, spirit and body, so deliverance must involve soul, body and spirit. Sin is simply lawlessness. It is against God and His will. Sin does not only involve body but the whole human being. The Apostle Paul says:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes 5:23).
3.2.2 The Interpretation that Sin is merely privation

Berkhof (1938:228ff) asserts that the existence of sin in the present world must be considered as unavoidable. It cannot be referred to the agency of God and therefore must be regarded as a simple negation or privation, for which no efficient cause is needed. The limitations of the creature render it unavoidable. This interpretation makes sin a necessary evil, since creatures are necessarily limited and sin is an unavoidable consequence of this limitation. Its attempt to avoid making God the author of sin is not successful, for even if sin is a mere negation requiring no efficient cause, God is nevertheless the author of the limitation from which it results.

Berkhof’s interpretation of sin as privation is weak and not balanced. It tends to obliterate the distinction between moral and physical evil, since it represents sin as little more than a misfortune which has befallen man. Consequently, it has a tendency to blunt man’s sense of the evil or pollution of sin, to destroy the sense of guilt, and to abrogate man’s moral responsibility. But God created man with a volition and freewill. Man is free to obey or disobey God and His Word. Man has the potential to avoid sin, run away from it or engage in sin. Whether a man will do good or evil simply depends on his free and independent will.

3.2.3 The Interpretation that Sin is an Illusion

For Spinoza and Leibnitz (in Berkhof 1969:227-230ff), sin is simply a defect, a limitation of which man is conscious. Leibnitz on the other hand regards the notion of evil, arising from this limitation as necessary. Spinoza holds that the resulting consciousness of sin is
simply due to the inadequacy of man’s knowledge, which fails to see everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is in unity with the eternal and infinite essence of God. If man’s knowledge were adequate, so that he saw everything in God, he would have no conception of sin; it would simply be non-existent for him.

But this interpretation, representing sin as something purely negative, does not account for its positive results to which the universal experience of mankind testifies in the most convincing manner (Berkhof 1969:228f). Consistently carried through, it abrogates all ethical distinctions, and reduces such concepts as “moral character” and “moral conduct” to meaningless phrases. In fact, it reduces the whole life of man to an illusion: his knowledge, his experience, the testimony of conscience, and so on, for all his knowledge is inadequate. Moreover, this interpretation goes contrary to the experience of mankind, that the greatest intellects are sometimes the greatest sinners, Satan being the greatest sinner of all.

Berkhof (1969:228f) here ignores the idea of Milne who defines sin as lack of conformity to the spiritual and moral law of God, either in word, action, disposition or state (Milne 1982:103-ff). Contrary to Berkhof, Strauss (2010:3) asserts that whatever a man does or thinks which is not an act, or a thought proceeding from faith in God and guided by God is sin. Sin is not an illusion, it is a reality. People do sin against God and fellow mankind (Is 53:34). Actions and thoughts must be inspired and guided by God and His will. This view is in line with scripture.
3.2.4 The Interpretation that Sin is a want of God- consciousness, due to Man's sensuous nature

This is the view of Schleiermacher (in Berkhof 1969:228-229f). According to Schleiermacher, man's consciousness of sin is dependent on his God-consciousness. When the sense of God awakens in man, he is at once conscious of the opposition of his lower nature to it. This opposition follows from the very constitution of his being, from his sensuous nature, from the soul's connection with a physical organism. It is therefore an inherent imperfection, but one which man feels as sin and guilt. Yet this does not make God the author of sin, since man wrongly conceives of this imperfection as sin. Sin has no objective existence, but exists only in man's consciousness.

But this interpretation makes man constitutionally evil. The evil was present in man even in his original state, when the God-consciousness was not sufficiently strong to control the sensuous nature of man (Berkhof 1969:229f). It is in flagrant opposition to Scripture, when it holds that man wrongly adjudges this evil to be sin, and thus makes sin and guilt purely subjective. And though Schleiermacher (Berkhof 1969:228f) wishes to avoid this conclusion, it does make God the responsible author of sin, for He is the creator of man’s sensuous nature. It also rests upon an incomplete induction of facts, since it fails to take account of the fact that many of the most hateful sins of man do not pertain to his physical but to his spiritual nature, such as idolatry, sorcery, adultery, avarice, envy, pride, malice and others (Gal 5:19-21, 1Cor 6:9-10). Moreover, this interpretation leads to debatable conclusions for instance; that asceticism by weakening the sensuous nature necessarily weakens the power of sin; that man becomes less sinful as his senses fail
with age; that death is the only redeemer and that disembodied spirits including the devil himself have no sin.

3.2.5 The Interpretation that Sin is Selfishness

Erickson (1998:597f) holds that sin is essentially selfishness. This view was first held by Augustus Strong and Reinhold Niebuhr in a different form contending that pride, hubris is the major form of human opposition to God (Erickson 1998:597f). Some people who take this position conceive of selfishness merely as the opposition of altruism or benevolence; others understand it by the choice of self rather than God as the Supreme object of love. Now this interpretation especially when it conceives selfishness as a putting of self in place of God is by far the best of the interpretations. Though all selfishness is sin and there is an element of selfishness in all sin, it cannot be said that selfishness is the essence of sin. Sin can sometimes be defined with reference to the law of God; a reference could be found in 1 John 3:4-5: “In fact sin is lawlessness, in Him is no sin at all.”

Moreover, there is a great deal of sin in which selfishness is not at all the governing principle. For example a hunger-stricken father in one of the rural Malawian villages sees his family pine away for lack of daily food and in his desperation resorts to robbery and theft; this can hardly be called pure selfishness. It may be that the thought of selfishness was entirely absent but to save his family from starvation. Enmity to God, stubbornness and hardness of heart, impenitence and unbelief are all heinous sins but cannot be simply be qualified as selfishness.
3.2.6 The Pelagian Interpretation of Sin

Erickson (1998:649) holds that the Pelagian interpretation of sin is quite different from scripture and other scholars such as Augustine. The only point of similarity lies in that the Pelagian view also considers sin in relation to the law of God and regards it as a transgression of the law. Pelagius takes his starting point in the natural ability of man. His fundamental interpretation is that God has commanded man to do, that which is good; hence the latter must have the ability to do it. This means that man has a free will in the absolute sense of the word, so that it is possible for him to decide for or against that which is good, and to do the good as well as the evil (Riada 2008:2-ff). The decision is not dependent on any moral character in man, for the will is entirely indeterminate. Whether a man will do good or evil depends on his free and independent will.

Erickson (1998:649ff) observes that Pelagianism held that good and evil are located in the separate actions of man. Sin consists of only in the separate acts of the will. There is no such a thing as a sinful nature, neither are there sinful dispositions. Sin is always a deliberate choice of evil by a will that is perfectly free, and can just as well choose and follow the good (Riada 2008:2ff). Adam was not created in a state of positive holiness but in a state of moral equilibrium. His condition was one of moral neutrality. He was neither good nor bad, and therefore had no moral character, but he chose the course of evil and thus became sinful.

Riada (2008:3-5f) holds that as much as sin consists only of separate acts of the will, the idea of its propagation by procreation is absurd. A sinful nature, if such a thing should exist, might be passed on from father to son, but sinful acts cannot be so propagated.
This is in the nature of the case impossibility. Adam was the first sinner, but his sin was in no sense passed on to his descendants (Riada 2008:5). Erickson (1998:649) further observes that Pelagianism argues against Augustine’s concept of “original sin”. They hold that children are born in a state of neutrality beginning exactly where Adam began, except that they are handicapped by the evil examples which they see round about them. Their future course must be determined by their own free choice.

The universality of sin is admitted by Pelagians because all experience testifies to it. It is due to the imitation and to the habit of sinning that is gradually formed. Strictly speaking, there are on the Pelagian point of view no sinners, but only separate sinful acts, thus making a religious conception of sin in the history of the human race utterly impossible (Erickson 1998:649-650).

There are several objections to the Pelagian interpretation of sin of which the following are the most important. The fundamental position that God holds man responsible only for what he is able to do; is absolutely contrary to the testimony of conscience and also to the Word of God (Rom 3:23). It is an undeniable fact that, as a man increases in sin, his ability to do good decreases. He becomes in an ever greater, the slave of sin (Riada 2008:2ff). According to the interpretation under consideration this would also involve a lessening of his responsibility. But this is equivalent to saying that sin itself gradually redeems its victims by relieving them of their responsibility.

The more sinful a man the less responsible he is. Against this position, conscience registers a loud protest. Paul does not say that the hardened sinners whom he describes in Romans 1:18-32 were virtually without responsibility, but regard them as worthy of
death. Jesus said of the wicked Jews who glorified in their freedom, but manifested their extreme wickedness by seeking to kill him, that they were bond-servants of sin, did not understand his speech, because they could not hear his Word and would die in their sins (Jn 8:21-43). Though slaves of sin, they were yet responsible.

Riada (2008:3f) observes that to deny that man has by nature a moral character is simply bringing him down to the level of the animal. According to this view everything in the life of man that is not a conscious choice of the will, is deprived of all moral quality. But the consciousness of men in general testifies to the fact that the contrast between good and evil also applies to man’s tendencies, desires, moods and affections, and that these also have a moral character.

Riada (2008:4) contends that in Pelagianism, sin and virtue are reduced to superficial appendages of man in no way connected with his inner life contrary to the testimony of the following passages: Jer 17:9, Ps 51:6-10, Mtt 15:19, Jas 4:1-4. A choice of the will that is in no way determined by man’s character is not only psychologically unthinkable, but also ethically worthless (Berkhof 1969:234f). If a good deed of man simply happens to fall out as it does and no reason can be given why it did not turn out to be the opposite, in other words, if the deed is not an expression of man’s character, it lacks all moral value. It is only as an exponent of character that a deed has the moral value that is ascribed to it.

The Pelagian interpretation of sin can give no satisfactory account of the universality of sin. The bad example of parents and grandparents offers no real explanation. The mere abstract possibility of man’s sinning, even when strengthened by the evil example, does
not explain how it came to pass that all men actually sinned. How can it be accounted for that the will invariably turned in the direction of sin and never in the opposite direction? It is far more natural to think of a general disposition of sin.

3.2.7 The Roman Catholic Interpretation of Sin

Although the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent are somewhat ambiguous in the doctrine of sin, the prevailing Roman Catholic view of sin (Berkhof 1969:235ff) may be expressed as follows:

Real sin always consists in a conscious act of the will. It is true that the dispositions and habits that are not in accord with the will of God are of a sinful character, yet they cannot be called sins in the strict sense of the word. The indwelling concupiscence, which lies back of sin, gained the upper hand in man in paradise and thus precipitated the loss of the *donum superadditum* of original righteousness, cannot be regarded as sin but only as the *fomes* or fuel of sin. The sinfulness of Adam’s descendants is primarily only a negative condition, consisting in the absence of something that ought to be present, that is of original righteousness, which is not essential to human nature. Something essential is wanting only if, as some hold, the *justitia naturalis* was also lost (Berkhof 1996:235f).

Objections to this view are perfectly evident from what was said in connection with the Pelagian interpretation. In so far as it holds that real sin consists only in a deliberate choice of the will and in overt acts, the objections raised against Pelagianism are pertinent.

The Roman Catholic idea that original righteousness was supernaturally added to man’s natural constitution and that its loss did not detract from human nature is weak and an
un-scriptural idea. Human beings must be responsible and accountable for their attitudes, lifestyle and behavior. The study holds that human beings sin as a result of rebellion and disobedience to God and His will. Therefore, sin can be described as missing the mark or target which blinds people to the consciousness of God. The essence of sin is simply failure to let God be God or failure to acknowledge God as God.

3.3 The General Features of Sin

3.3.1 Sin has an absolute character

In the ethical sphere, the contrast between good and evil is absolute (Berkhof 1969:231ff). There is no neutral condition between the two. While there are undoubtedly degrees in both, there are no gradations between good and evil. The transition from the one to the other is not of a quantitative but of a qualitative character. A moral being that is good does not become evil by simply diminishing his goodness, but only by a radical qualitative change by turning to sin and conflict.

Sin is not a lesser degree of goodness, but a positive evil. He who does not love God is therefore characterized as evil. Sin has made humanity in conflict with God and his will. Scripture knows of no position of neutrality. It urges the wicked to turn to righteousness and sometimes speaks of the righteous as falling into evil; but it does not contain a single indication that either the one or the other ever lands in a neutral position. Mankind is either on the right side or on the wrong side (Mtt 10:32-33, 12:30, Lk 11:23, Ja 2:10).
3.3.2 Sin always has relation to God and His will

Berkhof (1969:231-232) observes that the old scholars realized that it was impossible to have a correct conception of sin without contemplating it in relation to God and His will and therefore emphasized this aspect and usually spoke of sin as “lack of conformity to the law of God.” This is undoubtedly a correct definition of sin. But the question arises just what is the material content of the law? What does it demand? If the question is answered it will be possible to determine what sin is in a material sense. Now there is no doubt about it that the great central demand of the law is love of God (Jn 15:12, 1 Jn 3:11).

And if from the material point of view moral goodness consists in love to God, the moral evil must consist in the opposite. It is separation from God; opposition to God, hatred of God and this manifests itself in constant transgression of the law of God in thought, word and deed thus generating conflict with God. The following passages clearly show that Scripture contemplates sin in relation to God and His law either as written on the tablets of the heart or as given by Moses (Rom 1:32, 2:12-14, 4:15, Jas 2:9, 1Jn 3:4). Sin always has a relation to God Personally, His Word and His Will.

3.3.3 Sin includes corruption, pollution and guilt

Erickson (1998:623f) holds that another result that affects our relationship with God is guilt. Guilt is the state of deserving condemnation or of being liable to punishment for the violation of a law or a moral requirement. It expresses the relation which sin bear to justice or to the penalty of the law. But even so the word has a twofold meaning. It may
denote an inherent quality of the sinner namely his demerit, corruption, ill desert, or guiltiness which renders him worthy of punishment.

It is not inherent in man but is the penal enactment of the lawgiver who fixes the penalty of the guilt. It may be removed by the satisfaction of the just demands of the law personally or vicariously. While many deny that sin includes guilt, this does not comport with the fact that sin was threatened and is indeed visited with punishment and clearly contradicts the plain statements of Scripture (Mtt 6:12, Rom 3:19, 5:18, Eph 2:3).

By pollution, one understands the inherent corruption of the inner being to which every sinner is subject. This is a reality in every life of every individual. It is not conceivable without guilt, though guilt as included in a penal relationship is conceivable without immediate pollution (Berkhof 1969:233ff). Yet it is always followed by pollution. Every one who is guilty in Adam is as a result also born with a corrupt nature. Man by nature is corrupt, polluted and guilty of sin. Liability to God’s punishment is another result of our sin. The pollution of sin is clearly taught in such passages as Job 14:4, Jer 17:9, Mtt 7:15-20, Rom 8:5-8, Eph 4:17-19). Sin indeed includes corruption, pollution and guilt of the human nature is liable to punishment.

3.3.4 Sin does not consist exclusively in overt acts

Sin does not consist exclusively in overt acts but also in sinful habits and in a sinful condition of the soul. These three are related to one another as follows: the sinful state is the basis of sinful habits and these manifest themselves in sinful deeds (Milne 1982:103ff). There is also truth, however in the contention that repeated sinful deeds
lead to establishment of sinful habits. Erickson (1998:632-633f) argues that sin has internal consequences for the person who commits it. One of these is its enslaving power. Sin becomes a habit or even an addiction. Sin produces restlessness. One sin leads to another sin. The sinful acts and dispositions of man must be referred to and find their explanation in a corrupt nature. Sin results in an unwillingness to face reality. The harsh dimensions of life and especially the consequences of our sin are not faced realistically in particular the fact of death (Heb 9:27). From this discussion, it substantiates the fact that the state or condition of mankind is sinful and he requires to be saved (Mtt 5:22-28, Rom 7:7ff, Gal 5:17-24).

3.4 The Transmission of Human Sin

The relationship between Adam’s act of disobedience and subsequent human sinning is the question of original sin that has two related meanings. First it refers to Adams’s sin in Eden: the original sin could be transmitted to all descendants thus causing more conflicts and disorders. Second, the Bible teaches that Adam’s sin involved the entire human race. In Romans 5:12, Paul asserts that through Adam’s disobedience, sin and death became realities for all men (Rom 5:14-19, 1Cor 15:22). Adam set himself in conflict with God through his action making all men in conflict with God and the entire creation.

3.4.1 Different Theories to explain the connection

Some views deny the causal connection of the sin of Adam with the sinfulness of the human race either wholly or in part. The following are some of them:

3.4.1.1 Realism (Milne 1982:105) interprets Paul’s reference in Romans 5:12 in a radical
and literal manner. “All sinned” implies that all were present and involved when Adam
sinned; universal generic human nature which encompasses the individual, personal
natures of all men, was present in some way ‘in Adam,’ so that when he sinned every
man and woman sinned with him (Heb 7:4-10). Levi was really present “in the body” of
his forefather Abraham (Milne 1982:105).

3.4.1.2 Federalism (Milne 1982:105) argues that in view of the parallel drawn between
Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12-19, 1 Cor 15:22-49) our universal solidarity with Adam is of
the kind that Christ has with those he redeems thus representative or federal, headship.
Today federalism means a particular political system; theologically the term derives from
the covenant that God made with the human race in Adam (Latin word: Foedus meaning
covenant). This covenant (often called the covenant of works) Adam breached by his sin
with dire consequences for those he represented. In Christ the covenant was renewed
and under it his perfect righteousness becomes the means of blessing and salvation for
all those he represents (Gen 2:15-17, Jer 31:31ff, Rom 5:12-21, 1 Cor 11:25).

3.4.1.3 The Semi-Pelagians and the earlier Armenians teach that man inherited a
natural inability from Adam but is not responsible for this inability, so that no guilt
attaches to it and it may even be said that God is somewhat under obligation to provide a
cure for it. The Wesleyan Armenians admit that this inborn corruption also involves guilt
(Erickson 1998:649).
3.4.1.4 The Theory of Mediate imputation

This theory denies that the guilt of Adam’s sin is directly imputed to his descendants and represents the matter as follows:

Adam’s descendants derive their innate corruption from him by a process of natural generation, and only on the basis of that inherent depravity which they share with him are they also considered guilty of his apostasy. They are not born corrupt because they are guilty in Adam, but they are considered guilty because they are corrupt. Their condition is not based on their legal status, but their legal status on their condition.

This theory first advocated by Placeus, was adopted by the younger Vitringa and Venema, by several New England theologians and by some of the New School theologians in the Presbyterian Church (Berkhof 1969:243). This theory is objected for the following reasons: If this theory were consistent, it ought to teach the mediate imputation of sins of all previous generations to those following, for their joint corruption is passed on by generation. It also proceeds on the assumption that there can be moral corruption that is not at the same time guilt, a corruption that does not in itself make one liable to punishment. And finally, if the inherent corruption that is present in the descendants of Adam can be regarded as the legal ground for the explanation of something else; there is no more need of any mediate imputation (Erickson 1998:345ff).

3.4.1.5 Calvinism (Calvin 1562:210) in general terms holds that there is a definite connection between Adam’s sin and all persons of all times. In some way his sin is not just the sin of an isolated individual but is also our sin. Because we participate in that sin
we all from the beginning of life, perhaps even from the point of conception, receive a corrupted nature along with a consequent inherited tendency toward sin. Furthermore, all persons are guilty of Adam’s sin. Death, the penalty of sin, has been transmitted from Adam to all humans that is the evidence of every one’s guilt. Thus, whereas in the Pelagian view God imputes neither a corrupted nature nor guilt to humanity and in the Armenian view God imputes a corrupted nature not guilt (in the sense of culpability), in the Calvinist Scheme God imputes both a corrupted nature and guilt.

Erickson 1998:651) strongly holds that the Calvinist position is based upon a very serious and literal interpretation of Paul’s statements in Romans 5:12-19 that sin entered the world through Adam and death through that sin and so death passed to all people because of all sinned. Through one person’s sin all became sinners.

The study here argues in support of what the Bible teaches about sin. Whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23). Sin may be committed in ignorance, but it is no less a sin. Sin committed in ignorance may not receive as great a punishment as sin committed willfully and deliberately, nevertheless all sin is punishable and must be punished (Strauss 2010:3). Therefore, sin is basically conflict with the nature of God and His will. Morris (1983:146-147) calls sin an impenetrable barrier, shutting off blessings from God. Sin is real and the world’s most undesirable problem which brings destructive consequences. Sin has massive effects upon relationships between humans. One of the most significant effects is the proliferation of competition. It makes one increasingly self-centered and self-seeking leading to conflict. Sin also produces insensitivity. Sin separates. It yields
enmity and conflict. Sin keeps us away from the Holy God; for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

3.5 Defining the Meaning of Conflict

Having discussed the problem of sin, the study will now focus on the question of conflict, its causes and impact on the life of the church and society. The Webster’s Pocket Dictionary (1980:31) defines “conflict” (verb) as to fight, clash and struggle. As a result the word is usually thought of negatively as in the sense of conflict experience. While the Merriam-Webster Thesaurus Dictionary (1989:113) designate “conflict,” firstly as a noun synonym contest, discord, argument, controversy and dispute. Secondly, “conflict” as a verb means to clash, to be at odds, to differ, to disagree, to vary, to disturb and to interfere. Therefore, conflict is a disagreement, a fight or clash through which parties perceive a threat to their values, needs and interests or concerns.

3.5.1 Long History of Conflict

Moran (1993:1-2f) holds that historically conflict has been with us since time began. Cave dwellers settled disputes by bashing each other over the head with large clubs a technique many risk managers wish they could resurrect when dealing with underwriters. In medieval times, conflicts were resolved by storming each other’s castles. Stormers used catapults battering rams and arrows. Stormees used moats, raised drawbridges, boiled oil and cursed at each other until their emotions ran high (Moran 1993:1-2f). As
civilization progressed for example, humans use fired pistols, guns and bombs. If one is killed, it proves that the killer’s superiority and honor has been satisfied. Today people have means of resolving conflict through the courts and lawsuits (Moran 1993:2f) such as our national courts and the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Therefore it is suggested that conflict could either be fought out in a destructive manner by use of force, or it could be handled constructively in a peaceful way by non-violent as well as through theological methods.

3.5.2 Conflict Perspectives

The Marxist conflict theory (Marx 1971:45f) argues that societies are comprised of individuals and groups (social classes) who have differing amounts of material and non-material resources. The wealthy verses the poor and the more powerful use their power to exploit the weak. Two methods by which this exploitation is done are through brutal force and economics. Padgitt (in Skocpol 1980:79) asserts that Marxism argued that through a dialectical process, social evolution was directed by the result of class conflict. Marxism (Marx 1971:45f) further argues that human history is all about conflict, as a result the strong and rich exploit the poor and the weak. From such a perspective money is made through the exploitation of the worker. It is argued thus that in order for a factory owner to make money, he must pay his workers less than they deserve (Marx 1971:52). This could be the drive behind capitalism that advocates for social and economic liberalization to make more profits. The solution Marxism (Marx 1971:47f) proposes to this problem is that of armed, violent revolution and a radical change of the culture,
customs and values of a society. However some other scholars such as Ragunathan (2006:8) argues that the radical changes would almost inevitably bring about loss of individual freedoms and creation of autocratic rule at gunpoint thereby generating more conflicts.

3.5.3 Different Modes of Conflict

In conflict theory, Marx (1971:62) holds that there are different modes of conflict. One mode of conflict is that of warfare and revolution. Warfare and revolutions take place due to the rocky “collations among a variety of social classes.” Another mode of conflict theory is that of strikes. Modern society has created a main social divider between workers and managers. When workers feel that they have been treated unfairly, they go on strike to regain their right to power. The last mode of conflict in conflict theory is that of domination (Marx 1971:64). Different social classes tend to form different ideologies based around promotion of their own class' welfare. Different groups will struggle in conflict over what they think is right, what the norms are and their ideologies. Higher classes have more abstract ideologies while subordinated classes ideas reflect the want in their own lives. The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, where the ruling material force is the ruling intellectual force.

3.5.4 Assumptions of Modern Conflict

According to Ragunathan (2006:8) the following are four assumptions of modern conflict
theory:

3.5.4.1 **Competition.** Competition over scarce resources (money, land, food, leisure, sexual partners and so on) is at the heart of all social relationships. Competition rather than consensus is characteristic of human relationships in all societies including the Church of Jesus Christ today.

3.5.4.2 **Structural Inequality.** Inequalities in power and reward are built into all social structures. Individuals and groups that benefit from any particular structure strive to see it maintained at whatever cost.

3.5.4.3 **Revolution.** Change occurs as a result of conflict between competing social classes rather than through adoption. Change is often abrupt and revolutionary rather than evolutionary.

3.5.4.4 **War.** Even war is a unifier of the societies involved, as well as possibly ending whole societies. In modern society, a source of conflict is power: politicians are competing to enter into a system; they act in their self-interest not for the welfare of people.
3.6 General Causes of Conflict

3.6.1 The Problem of Human Sin

Once again the major factor that causes conflict is the problem of sin. Spiritually, the devil is seen as the major player to cause sin, tension and conflict. Even then the notion that the devil seduces men and women does not diminish the concept of human responsibility in causing conflict problems. Sin is the cause of animosity and misery on humanity. Berkhof (1969:227-230f) describes sin as one of the saddest as well as one of the most common phenomena of human life.

Milne (1982:107) asserts that sin brings conflict and produces the great divisions of humankind. It causes racial prejudice and antagonisms. Sin creates social divisions and so leads to group and class conflict. It causes conflict within all human groups whether educated community, tribes, social class, or religious groups or Churches. Sin divides families and Churches (Milne 1982:107). Sin from the human heart builds the great international power blocks. Conflicts erupt as the result of sin leading to break down of relationships. Unresolved conflicts cause serious psychological problems and bitterness.

Again from both the Old and New Testaments (OT & NT), the Word of God introduces a specific idea that humanity is in the grip of sin (Rom 5-8). Some theological scientists call it “the doctrine of original sin”. Conflict started in heaven when Satan (Hebrew: Satan means an adversary), a high angelic creature who before the creation of human race,
rebelled against the Creator and became the chief antagonist of God and mankind (Unger 1960: 472). Reference could be made to the prophecies of Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-15, but some scholars refuse to apply this scripture to Satan under the contention that they were addressed to the King of Tyre. Others argue that the prophecies far transcend any earthly ruler and that there could be a close connection between Satan, his tyrannical government and the satanic world system (cf Dan 10:13, Eph 6:12). In their full scope these passages paint Satan’s past career as Lucifer and the Anointed Cherub in his pre-fall splendor, ministering before God (Unger 1960:472).

Beauty, achievement and pride overruled him and he organized an angelic rebellion against God (Ezk 18:18ff, Rev 18:1ff). God expelled him with the host of evil spirits and demons from heaven down to this earth and God pronounced curses on Satan and those who follow him forever (Rev 12:4f). Satan caused the fall of the human race (Gen 3) and his judgment was predicted in Eden (Gen 3:15). He is nevertheless only a creature, limited, and his power is permitted by divine omnipotence and omniscience.

Seeds of disobedience and rebellion were passed on to humanity through our first parents Adam and Eve. By disobedience of Adam our representative, the original sin has spread through the entire human race. This problem of sin created a big gap between God and mankind. Erickson (1998:638ff) holds that humanity has a two-fold problem as the result of sin and the fall. On the one hand, there is a basic corruption of human nature; on the other our moral character has been polluted through sin.
3.6.2 Issues of Doctrines, Traditions and Practices

Serious controversies and divisions have occurred in the church for years on issues of doctrine, tradition, practice and procedures as well as on the right and wrong modes of worship. Somebody for example is going to direct the choir and somebody else isn’t. Some morally weak elder as result of sin, is put on the preaching program and some members grumble etc. all these factors create tension in the church today. Daman (2009:5f) observes that there are many issues that could cause tension within the Church. Indeed people have conflicts over interests, values and goals. They disagree over issues of power and authority. Conflicts could also arise because people are discouraged and morale is low. These could undermine the ministry and unity within the Church. Conflicts could also arise because of cultural tensions. Churches become involved in tensions over music, versions of the Bible, dress code and other culture differences. Conflicts also develop over nonreligious issues such as the environment, land use policies and other political issues being debated within the community.

3.6.3 Mismanagement of Change

Change inevitably leads to conflict, even when the change is unavoidable. Change creates a conflict with the past as the Church seeks to move forward to the future. The Church is one of the institutions on the earth which is criticized for being rigid and unwilling to change. Daman (2009:6f) concludes that the Church has the potential to provide reconciliation within the congregation and the community. Osman (2007:1-5) argues that politically, conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa in general stems primarily from inequality; worsened by mismanagement of change and economic decline. Conflict has
been explained as stemming from the problem of governance and poor leadership in the Church, the problem of resources as well as from bad economic policy and lack of sustainable development.

3.7 Human Sin brings Serious Conflict

3.7.1 Conflict within the Heart

It is therefore conceived in this study that conflict is a normal phenomenon in human beings. The Prophet Jeremiah describes the human heart as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that no one can know about it (Jer 17:9). The human heart is the seat of emotions and the deepest recesses of the inner person and the basis of character, embracing the mind, will and emotions. Human beings cherish sin in the heart (Ps 66:18). The Apostle James contends that quarrels, wars, and fights come from the lusts within the human members/ hearts (Jas 4:1-4). Therefore just as the heart is the seat of sin, sin will generate conflict from within the heart. If the sinful nature is opposed to God, humanity in sin will be in conflict with God and His will.

Since sin and conflict are the result of a free but evil choice of mankind (Gen 3:1-6, Isa 48:8, Rom 1:18-32, 1 Jn 3:4), reconciliation must possibly require human response. McIntyre (1992:39-41) holds that atonement model being at the heart of God must be advocated to mitigate the impact of sin, conflict and their effects. Atonement has both a divine origin and a human response. This is fundamental for the personal nature of Jesus who is both God and man (Mc Kim 1988:14f).
3.7.2 Human Conflict with Nature

Humanity loses harmony with the natural order and our God-given stewardship of the environment gives place to sinful plundering. Humanity is in conflict with God and His creation. This is manifested in exploitation, the needless destruction of the world without thought for the created green beauty or the intrinsic worth. It is also manifested in pollution, the selfish and rapacious use of raw materials, contaminating seas and oceans and the very atmosphere, all often in the interest of economic profit, luxury and self-indulgence. All this has seriously affected the global climate change causing serious life threatening disasters such as perpetual droughts, floods, earth tremors and tsunamis. What answer can Christian theology give to such catastrophic phenomena such as climate change and global warming?

The argument of this research study is that the corrupted human nature inherited from Adam and Eve is of great evil. It is therefore the source of all personal and corporate sins. Human nature is full of sin, inconsistency and contradictions leading to conflict. Conflict comes from that corrupted human nature. David in Psalm 51:5 acknowledges this when he said: “Behold I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Humans are born in conflict prone situations. Also in Psalm 58:3 he says:

The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

3.7.3 Divisions and Conflict between People

Sin yields conflict and produce great divisions among people. The Church in Malawi can
be said to be affected and infected by sin. People leave Churches due to frustration and loss of trust on the leadership. Sin builds the great international power blocks. Sin creates social divisions and so leads to group and class conflict, it separates the “haves” from the “have-nots.” Sin divides families, churches and nations (Milne 1982:107). Sin also produces exploitation; we “use” our neighbor. We exploit him to bolster our self-esteem, to justify our evil schemes and to support our weakness. We make people the scapegoat for our own frustrations and sense of guilt. This exploitation can even be expressed in open physical or psychological violence; in the male/female relationship, it has been expressed historically in male domination; the use of women for men’s selfish ends, denying them essential equality and dignity. Even in loving our neighbor we seek the benefits of one’s response; our giving is a getting (Milne 1982:108). One of the bitterest fruits of this separation from our neighbor is the habitual experience of divergence or misunderstanding, even when there is a genuine desire to know and to be known.

Humanity is engaged in serious warfare against God that necessitates atonement if ever he is to be saved. Man is inclined by nature to sin and not so disposed to goodness. Man cannot communicate well to his Creator. Fellowship is never entirely complete nor fully satisfactory (Milne 1982:107). Mankind by nature is a rebel against divine rule, incapable of subjecting himself to his will. In other words, “the carnal mind is an enemy of God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Therefore sin is the world’s number one problem which needs immediate solution.
3.8 The Positive Outcome of Sin

Is sin necessary? Is sin good? Can something positive come from sin? Sande & Johnson (2008:23) strongly argue that sin and conflict are not always bad. The Apostle Paul is adamant whether it is proper for us to continue sinning so that grace may increase. He writes in Romans 6:1f:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!

Poirier (2006:75) holds that God ordained peace, sin and conflict for His redemptive purposes from the beginning of creation. Following Adam’s sin, God cursed the serpent declaring: “I will put enmity between you and the women and between your offspring and hers”(Gen 3:15). It is God who puts enmity between the sons of God and the sons of the devil (1 Jn 3:7-10). Therefore the entire redemption work of Jesus Christ deals with sin and conflict in the creation order. It is conflict work. From the very beginning of sin and redemptive history, the Christian believers’ everlasting hope was made to rest in the triumphant conflict work carried out by Jesus Christ (Poirier 2006:75ff). Jesus Christ is the divine answer to the problem of sin. He hears the cries of the sinful, the oppressed and of those denied justice. He loves His enemies and sinners. He is patient, tolerant and kind to people in the hope that it will lead them to repentance, justification, adoption, transformation and glory. God therefore ordained sin and conflict by His set purpose and foreknowledge and He handed His own Son over to wicked men (Act 2:23).

In relation to the theology of sin, suffering, discipline, the writer to the Hebrews addresses the necessity of a God-ward perspective to suffering in conflict (Heb 12:7-
14). Rather than spurning hardship, he urges us to endure it as God’s fatherly discipline. He calls us to embrace an attitude of learning and rejoicing in the midst of our suffering, hardships and conflict. He concludes:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

Paul also calls us to rejoice in our sufferings because “we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). Conflict is therefore the crucible for changing lives. It is indeed the refining fire by which God burns, breaks, and molds peace-fakers and peace-breakers into peacemakers (Poirier 2006:77).

Here the Church has two challenges to deal with namely: the problem of sin in the human heart and the method how to transform conflict within the heart. Since the heart is the center of life, new models must be constructed on how to transform the human heart and rebuild broken relationships between antagonists.

The great truth central to our Christian confession could be that in the midst of sin and conflict, the Church is compelled and emboldened to be the true ambassador of Christ and reconciliation thereby to persevere and become the peacemaker. Issues of sin and conflict try the Church’s true theology. They test us as Christian believers and sift our hearts, revealing what we truly believe and hold too fast. If we truly confess and believe that God ordains conflict, instead of cursing it, we can consecrate it. Instead of seeing conflict as an accident in a cosmos of chaos, we can accept it as a God-given
assignment for our good, growth and His ultimate glory. Most significant rather than perceiving conflict as an obstacle to our ministry, we can welcome it as an opportunity to serve others.

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the question of sin and its effects. Human beings cherish sin in their hearts (Ps 66:18). Hearts are the wellspring of all thoughts, desires, words and actions. It is the source of conflicts (Lk 12:13-15, Ja 4:1-3). People keep fighting to achieve their desire, dwelling on their disappointment and allowing their desire and disappointment to control their lives resulting in self-pity and bitterness toward those who stand on their way utterly destroying important relationships and drawing them away from God.

The argument of this study rests on the premise that sin yields conflict and produces great divisions among humankind. Sin causes racial prejudice and antagonisms (Milne 1982:107). Sin and conflict conjure all sorts of connotations. According to the Bible, sin is real and the root of many sinful actions including conflict in the Church and society. Sin is offensive to the Person, character of God, the holiness and justice of God. Sin is simply lawlessness. Conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals and desires. To sin is to be in conflict with God, for God hates sin. Sin frustrates God’s purposes, goals and desires. Sin attracts the wrath of God. Therefore the world’s biggest problem is sin, since sin yields conflict.

Unresolved conflict can lead to many types of “prisons” and can exact penalties we
never anticipate. In addition to robbing time, property or money, prolonged conflict can damage one’s relationships and destroy one’s reputation. It can also imprison one in a dungeon of self pity, resentment and bitterness. Ongoing hostility can destroy one from the inside and alienate one from God (Sande 2004:90ff). Moreover the anxiety and negative thinking generated by conflict can spill over and hurt people who are close to one such family members or coworkers. Just like sin, conflict separates. Conflict isolates. Sin and conflict are the substance of the entire biblical narrative. They are the focal point around which many of the stories of redemptive history have unfolded, demonstrating the antithesis between the children of God and the children of the devil, the city of God versus the city of man.

There are many conflicts that require a lot of time and effort to resolve (Sande 2004:99f). How can the problem of sin and conflict be resolved? Does the church have adequate and practical theological answers to the problems of sin and conflict? What can our Christian theology offer? Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace calls upon the Church to carry out the divine assignment of peacemaking to the world. The Church must prophetically challenge the entire membership to break from sin and the desires that fuel conflict. The Church members must be seriously engaged in conflict resolution and become instruments of reconciliation and peace. In the next chapter the study proposes to provide an answer to the question of sin and conflict.
In this chapter the study will firstly discuss the answer to question of sin and conflict. Poirier (2006:12f) asserts that contemporary Christian conflict theories are deficient in reckoning with the God ward dimensions of conflict. Most theories and practices come from within the human legal or political professions. This chapter will secondly review and critique contemporary scholarly models of conflict resolution including the atonement with a view to understanding the antithesis of conflict. Driver (1986:37) defines a theory as inclusive of an intentional concern for consistency and logic with a view to protect itself from other less adequate formulations. Deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, anger, revenge, lusts and cravings in opposition to God are better addressed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Sande 2004:117). The study will lastly formulate a synthetic model from various aspects to bring about a better understanding of conflict resolution.

The argument of this study is that there are two models to conflict resolution namely: the Law-court and the Atonement models based on human and divine efforts respectively. Grasping the gospel of Jesus Christ’s atonement provides a better answer to the question of sin and conflict. Atonement brings an answer to the problem of sin. A full conception of the atonement model could be one which reverses the fall, expiates
human sin and brings closer relationship with God. God’s grace as revealed in the gospel of Christ is the driving force behind peacemaking and reconciliation (Sande 2004:117).

4.1 The Law-Court Model

It developed from the early theorists and practitioners that came from within the legal and political professions (Poirier 2006:12f). The Law-court Model dominates current theory and practice of conflict resolution for the simple reason that it is an alternative to our formal civil justice system. Mediation, negotiation, arbitration and litigation are some of the ways that assist people in resolving conflict (Moran 1993:2f). Sande (2004:270) calls them alternative ways to resolve disputes developed since early 1980s. Starting from the home where children quarrel and fight over biscuits, to an African village where people fight over land for livestock and cultivation, then to national political parties who dispute and fight over the conduct and results of elections, people exhaust the following principles to resolve their conflict to no avail.

4.1.1 Negotiation and Mediation

Negotiation is a personal bargaining process in which parties seek to reach a mutually agreeable settlement of their substantive differences. Although some people are able to negotiate for themselves, many rely on attorneys or professionals to advise them or act on their behalf (Sande 2004:270). Negotiation has several advantages when compared
to more formal methods of resolving disputes. It is usually faster, less expensive and less
time-consuming and more private and flexible than arbitration or litigation. Because it is
entirely voluntary, negotiation reduces the likelihood that one party will lose everything
while the other party wins.

The primary disadvantage of negotiation is that it sometimes allows a more
knowledgeable or powerful person to take advantage of a weaker person, thus resulting
in injustice. In addition if attorneys are involved, negotiation may cost a lot of money.
Mediation is similar to negotiation, except that it involves the assistance of one or more
neutral mediators who work to facilitate communication and understanding between the
parties (Murray 2000:3-5ff).

Disputing parties discuss ideas, information and options in order to reach a mutually
acceptable agreement. A Mediator helps the parties explore various solutions to their
differences, but the parties retain control of the results and are not obligated to follow the
mediator’s advice. A Mediator may be a paid professional, a respected individual from
the community, or a personal acquaintance of the parties who agrees to help them
without charge (Sande 2004:271f). The presence of a neutral mediator tends to reduce
the possibility that one party will take advantage of the other. Mediation has several other
advantages when compared to arbitration and litigation. Moran 1993:2-3ff) argues that
because of mediation’s informal nature, it is relatively flexible, private, inexpensive, and
time efficient. It facilitates understanding and allows parties to maintain their dignity while
dealing with sensitive issues. Consequently, it is less likely to damage a relationship than
is a more adversarial process. As a voluntary process, it is also likely to allow both parties to win on some of their concerns and arrive at a settlement that both sides will be inclined to preserve. However mediation has several disadvantages. Either party may refuse to participate in the process. Imbalances of power may still affect the results. The process may become deadlocked. That is wasting the previous investment of time and money. Also the results of mediation are not legally enforced unless the parties incorporate their settlement into a legal contract.

4.1.2 Arbitration

In arbitration, parties agree to present each side of their dispute before one or more neutral arbitrators and in most cases to be legally bound by the arbitrator’s decision on the matter. Unlike mediators arbitrators do not attempt to help the parties communicate with each other or assist them in negotiating a settlement. Instead like judges, they gather evidence and render a binding decision. Most countries and states have laws that allow parties to appoint their own arbitrators; these may be unpaid volunteers or trained professionals from organizations like the American Arbitration Association or the Peacemaker Ministries.

The primary advantage of arbitration when compared to negotiation and mediation is that it always produces a resolution to a dispute, even if one or both of the parties do not like it. In contrast to litigation, arbitration is relatively private and informal and is usually less expensive. Also because most laws allow only limited grounds for appealing an
arbitration decision, arbitration has the capability to produce a final, legally enforceable result more quickly than litigation. When compared to negotiation and mediation, the primary disadvantage of arbitration is that relationship problems are ignored which often perpetuates or aggravates personal estrangement.

Arbitration also has disadvantages when compared to litigation. It is less guarded by procedural rules. Because many arbitrators lack formal legal training, arbitrated decisions are sometimes less consistent and predictable than courtroom decisions. Also, if one party refuses to abide by the arbitrators’ decision, the other party may still need to resort to the courts to enforce it. The third party is a person or organization whose authority the conflicting parties recognize for example again; the Commissioner of Labor is the arbitrator in disputes between trade unions and employers (Moran 1993:2-3ff).

4.1.3 Litigation

Litigation utilizes the judges, juries and procedural rules of the civil court system. Compared to other methods of resolving a dispute, litigation has several advantages. A court has the authority to require all parties to appear and to abide by its decisions. With its foundation of statutes and case law, a court is also able to render more predictable decisions on many issues. In addition, court decisions are a matter of public record, recognized in other jurisdictions and subject to full appellate review. However, litigation has many disadvantages. In addition to being expensive and time-consuming, litigation is constrained by formal procedures, encourages public attention, offers limited remedies
(usually money or injunctions) and often allows one party to win completely while the other party loses everything. Court technicalities restrict communication and understanding between parties, often leaving them frustrated and angry (Sande 2004:273-274ff).

A court is usually forced to deal with the symptoms of a problem rather than its real causes, leaving the parties in an ongoing state of antagonism. As a result of these factors, litigation is likely to increase bitterness between parties and further damage any personal relationship they had previously enjoyed. The side effects of litigation to a lesser degree of other secular methods of conflict resolution are even more serious when viewed from a spiritual perspective (Poirier 2006:210ff). The more adversarial a process is, the more likely it is to provide a poor witness of Christian love and obedience to God. The adversarial process aggravates critical attitudes and encourages complaining and self-justification. It obstructs confession and repentance, thus prolonging destructive habit patterns. Moreover, as parties’ hearts are hardened by these factors, they are likely to experience more conflict in the future.

In relation to Law-court paradigm in general Smock (1997:1ff) strongly argues that innovative approaches to managing conflicts in Africa and the world could be used to prevent prolonged wars and killings. He further outlines empirical findings linked to “broader theories” of peacemaking such as the Innovative American Diplomatic Initiatives. Herman Cohen (in Murray 2000:4) asserts that the United States has a special image in Africa and plays a unique role in peacemaking and peace-building
through her embassies and multilateral agencies. Another example is African Mediation: the use of Heads of States who have the proximity to the disputes and understanding of historical context. Unfortunately, African mediators often do not have the necessary information available to be effective thereby time is extended and mediation is prolonged (Murray 2000:3-5).

4.1.4 Consensus

The Consensus aspect requires that everyone either approve or accept, or at least not oppose the solution. It does not require everyone to approve a particular decision (Murray 2000:1). Consensus building is based on different groups and individuals sharing and understanding their respective perspectives. From this joint understanding the focus is on building a mutually acceptable solution by starting from common (shared) principles and then working on issues they hold in opposition. No votes are taken, any agreement be voluntarily accepted (or not opposed) by all. Consensus is therefore a resolution or settlement concept that is most applicable to conflicts at societal, community and national levels (Murray 2000:1). The Consensus aspect always engages many large conflicts on the International level.

4.1.5 Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid contributes to peace rather than exacerbating conflict. Aid givers do independent assessments of needs, study the effects of targeting and distribution
methods. Commitment to independent monitoring and evaluation, promoting inter-
communal trade and exchange is encouraged to enhance reconciliation in Africa and the
world. Culture of peace reinforces progress toward peace and reconciliation (Uyangoda
2000:2-4).

Most modern Social Scientists (Moran 1993:2-3f) argue that in conflict resolution, there
must be great need for dialogue, negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation
between conflicting parties. Human efforts to resolve conflict through courts and lawsuits
are not long lasting, resumption of hostilities starts at any opportune time (Moran 1993:2-
3f). By using human effort, people learn important skills on how to manage and settle
disputes but to no avail. The above human efforts in conflict resolution seem to be short
lived, unproductive and unprofitable.

4.1.5 Advantages of Law-court System

There are several advantages to using the Law-court model of conflict resolution. The
Law-court system brings a greater degree of sophistication in dealing with substantive
and technical legal issues that Christian believers face day to day. Matters of due
process, equity, justice, restitution, and reparation assume a needed central role.
4.1.6 Disadvantages of Law-court System

The Law-court Model mediation tends to focus on immediate problem solving rather than looking deeper at personal issues, feelings and relationships. It frames the matters in dispute mostly in terms of offences, injustices and interprets outcomes merely in terms of restitution that needs to be made. But it fails to address the matters of the heart such as anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and unrepentance that fuel conflict. Again the Law-court Model of mediation tends toward event-oriented resolution rather than mediation over an extended period of time (Poirier 2006:13). Thus it neglects to address the sinful habits and behaviors that recur in people’s lives. It fails to allow for the ongoing change, growth and renewal necessary to break these habits.

The Law-court Model also directs the mediation process toward issue settlement rather than aiming at the reconciliation of relationships. Coupled with this objective is reliance upon the outside expert (the hired mediator) who comes in, mediates a dispute and then leaves. Thus this process overlooks the ongoing help and assistance so necessary in reconciling and building long term relationships. To put it more vividly current conflict resolution practice looks more like four hours in the emergency room than a month of home recuperation therapy (Poirier 2006:13).

What is needed then is the Conflict resolution theory developed for and practiced in the context of the local Church. God is always concerned with our spiritual solution to conflict. The Apostle John on Chapter 4:24 says that God is Spirit and those people who
worship Him must do so in spirit, honesty and truth. We need the following atonement model to settle the spiritual dimension of conflict. This Christian conflict resolution model must be theologically rooted and ecclesiastically integrated.

4.2 The Atonement Model

Atonement is a model that describes how human beings can be reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Atonement basically makes our salvation possible and the foundation of many Christian doctrines (Erickson 1998:799). How can sinful human nature which causes conflict be changed? Stott further asks: Is it possible to make a sour person sweet, a proud person humble, or a selfish person unselfish (Stott 1958:99)? The Bible declares that the miracle of salvation permanently takes place in human beings (Mtt 1:21, Act 2:38). It is part of the glory of the Good News. Human sins must be forgiven effected by the priestly death on the cross; eternal life is received through union with Christ specifically His divine nature and character.

4.2.1 The Origin of Atonement

The Hebrew word kpr translated as “atonement” literally means “to cover” or “covering” of sin (but continues to exist). The word first appears in Genesis 6:14 as the word “pitch” which was used to cover the ark of Noah to protect it from the waters of the flood (cf Gen 3:21 Seely 2001:1f). The word “pitch” in Genesis 6:14 correspond with “protection” derived from “expiate” or “propitiate”. Expiation means the removal of sin (offence) for
the reuniting of the person to the will of God. The expiation or propitiation of the Lord is protection from the inundation of evil (Seely 2010:2f). The word “atonement” was invented in the 16th Century by William Tyndale who recognized that there was no direct English translation from the Hebrew concept (Seely 2001:2f).

Tambasco (1991:11-12) asserts that atonement presupposes the restoration of fellowship and unity between God and creation. Atonement is a relational word and it points to one of the central facts of what Jesus Christ is all about. The word is composed of two parts “at” and “onement” in order to reflect the dual concept of Christ's sacrifice: the remission of sins and reconciliation of man to God (Wiseman 2008:1f). Later atonement came to mean making amends for an offense or offering satisfaction for a wrongdoing or injury. Atonement therefore is God’s action and humanity’s cooperation in reuniting humanity with God through union with Christ, whose blood released in death, is sacrificial symbol of his life fully joined to God (Tambasco 1991:70).

Tyndale’s concept of atonement overcomes the limitations of the word reconciliation whilst incorporating aspects of propitiation and forgiveness (Seely 2001:2-3). There are two principal Greek words connected with the concept of reconciliation, one of them being translated by it. They are *katallassein* and *hilaskesthai* meaning “reconciliation and atonement” (Strauss 2010:2). God has decreed from the beginning that death must follow sin, not only physical death which is separation of the soul from the body, but also spiritual death or eternal separation of the whole man from God (Gen 2:16-17, Rom 6:23). Since all men have sinned (Rom 3:23, 5:12), it follows that all must die because
the righteousness of God demands that sin’s penalty be paid. Sin is offensive to the holiness of God, that it excites His holy wrath. Where there is sin, the wrath of God can never be turned away (Jn 3:36, Rom 1:18, Eph 5:6). The wrath of God is nothing like the uncontrolled passion in men but rather His holy and just indignation against sin (Strauss 2010:2-3). Because of two great fundamental facts namely: the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man; the atonement has made it an absolute necessity that sinners be pardoned and brought back to God.

This research study holds that when we have the true conception of the holiness of God, we will have the true conception of sin, and when we have the correct view of sin, we will have an adequate view of the atonement (Strauss 2010:2). It is human sin that makes the atonement necessary. Sin therefore calls for atonement and reconciliation. In Christian theology atonement refers to the forgiving or pardoning of sin through the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion, which made possible the reconciliation between God and creation (Erickson 1998:799).

4.2.2 Atonement in the Old and New Testaments

Atonement is an Old Testament (OT) concept where it denotes the covering of sin from God’s sight. Atonement in the Old Testament (OT) is the means of reconciliation through the shedding of the blood (Biggar 1996:64). Therefore atonement means the covering of sin by which God Himself had provided, thus the covering of sin by God Himself. It was God who continued to be concerned for His creatures so that He provided atonement for
man. The atonement lamb selected for the Passover had to be without blemish (Ex 12:2-5). The Jews proclaimed the Day of Atonement as a day of liberation and humiliation for the remission of sins by the shedding of blood (Ex 12, 13). The little lamb was slain and the blood was for protection. The Lord God once spoke to the people of Israel who were in slavery:

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I struck Egypt (Ex 12:13).

Tambasco (1991:12-13) holds that the “blood” of the atonement “covers” the sin of the offender in the sight of God. It is a sacrifice of life on the part of the sacrificial lamb “for life is in blood” (Lev 17:11). Again the Lord God said:

For the life of a creature is in the blood and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for ones life. Therefore I say to the Israelites, “None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood (Lev 17:11-12).

The atonement of Christ is both pre-figured and predicted in the Old Testament (OT). There are about 333 specific Old Testament (OT) pictures of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (Wiseman 2008:1-3). For example it is seen in the coats of skin prepared for our first parents (Gen 3:4), in the offering of Abel (Gen 4:4), in the Exodus (Ex 12), in the Levitical sacrificial systems (Wiseman 2008:1), in the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), in the sin offering (Ps 22), in the substitution Savior (Is 53), in the cut off Messiah (Dan 9:26) and in the smitten shepherd (Zech 13:6). McIntyre (1992:40) holds that the atoning virtue was thought to reside in the blood of the victim.
The word *katallassein* (reconcile) is peculiar to the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. He uses both words, but the other words for “atonement” are “expiation” and “propitiation” also found in other New Testament (NT) writings. The letters of John says:

> He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn 2:2). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:10).

Again the word “expiation” means what is accomplished in the sacrificial act. What is accomplished in the act is the removal away of sin or the offense. In Orthodox understanding “expiation” is an act of offering that seeks to change the one making the offering (Bernstein 2008:139-146). The Greek word that is translated both into “propitiation” and “expiation” is *hilasmos* that means to make acceptable and enable one to draw close to God. Thus the Orthodox emphasis would be that Christ died not to appease an angry and vindictive Father, or to avert the wrath of God but to remove the sin barrier and change people so that they may become more like God *imagio dei* (Bernstein 2008:139-146).

Reconciliation is the Apostle Paul’s great characteristic word and thought in the New Testament. The atonement is the only basis of reconciliation of man to God without which “you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17). The Apostle Paul asserts:

> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received reconciliation (Rom 5:10-11).
4.2.3 Different Interpretations of Atonement

The meaning and impact of atonement are rich and complex as a result various interpretations of the atonement have risen over the centuries. Given the abundance of biblical testimony to the fact of atonement, various theologians choose to emphasize different texts. There is no agreed formula like the Chalcedonian statement that acts as the standard expression of the orthodox faith in the Christological controversy. The aim of Chalcedon was to consensually disown heresies that threatened the person of Christ and the nature of the Trinity. Here different theologians are left to pursue their quest for a satisfying theory in their own way (Morris 2010:1). Every theory helps us to understand a little more of what the cross means and in any case we are bidden to give a reason of the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15). The atonement theories attempt to do just that task (Morris 2010:1).

Milne (1982:164-170) argues for a view of atonement that comprises three main interpretations. Stott (1986:167ff) calls them “three main answers” summed up in the words of salvation, revelation and conquest. What God in Christ has done through the cross is to rescue us, disclose himself and overcome evil. Driver (1986:37) holds that modern Western Christianity has produced three major theories of atonement namely: Objective, Subjective and Classic. By “Objective atonement,” scholars reflect on what the atonement accomplishes outside of one, the removal of a concrete barrier “out there” such as God’s wrath against sin. God becomes the object of reconciliation and Jesus Christ; on behalf of human beings is the subject (Driver 1986:38). While on “Subjective
atonement” the scholars concentrate on what the atonement accomplishes inside of one, changing the person from hatred and rebellion to love and obedience, so that God is seen as the subject of reconciliation and people are the objects (Girard 2010:1).

The “Classic” theory seeks to understand the atonement in terms of cosmic drama of conflict and victory. Scholars who saw the “purpose of the cross” as to satisfy the justice and holiness of God, defeat forces of evil and live a victorious Christian life advocate the Classic theory of the atonement. Aulén (1931:35) inquisitively asks: “For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven?” The immediate answer to his question comes: “That He might destroy sin, overcome death and give life to man” (1 Jn 3:8).

The discussion in this section will stress on how the work of Christ on the cross has effected his peoples’ salvation; and the three principal theories of the atonement are categorized in terms of stress on the “objective attainment” of salvation by Christ and by contrast, of stress on our “subjective response” to what Christ has done. Here the study will examine the three interpretations of atonement; at the same time it will critique the incompleteness and inadequacy of each one of them by itself (Erickson 1998:798) in order to set the stage for suggesting a fresh look at our understanding of the atonement from a decidedly different perspective.
4.2.3.1 Objective Interpretations of Atonement

The early Church fathers, Tertullian and Cyprian are associated with theories of objective atonement. In the writings of Tertullian the fundamental conceptions of satisfaction and merit applied to penance. Satisfaction is the compensation which man makes for his fault. Sacrifice and forgiveness were also associated with their objective nature of Jesus redemptive work (Aulén 1931:97). The idea of merit is associated with the performance of that which is commanded, the observance of law, and if such observance in general is meritorious in its special sense the term is applied to acts that are *supererogatoria*, going beyond what is strictly obligation. Tertullian (in Aulén 1931:97-98) writes:

> The Lord has ordained that forgiveness is to be granted for a price: He wills that the remission of the penalty is to be purchased for the payment which penance makes.

This covers: fasting, penance, voluntary celibacy, martyrdom, and so forth. It is possible for men to earn an over-plus merit. The conception that a person must make an offering or payment to merit and satisfy God’s justice gained ground in their understanding in the 4th Century AD. It must be emphasized that it was on the basis of the Penitential system that the Latin theory of atonement grew up radically in the Western Church (Aulén 1931: 98-99f).

The objective theory of the atonement was first fully developed in *Cur Deus homo?* of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 11th Century; a book universally regarded as typical expression of the Latin theory (Aulén 1931:99). Anselm’s main objective is to reject the view, on the one hand, of a forgiveness of sin that would be a bare remission
of penalty; on the other, of an optimistic view of man’s capacity to perform all that was needed. He argues that human guilt necessitated a sacrifice; but no animal sacrifice could possibly be sufficient, a man must be offered for men. The sacrifice must be undefiled; but there is no man without sin. In order that the sacrifice may be reasonable, a man must be offered, and that in order that it may avail to cleanse men from sin, a sinless man must be offered. Since there is no man who was not born of sinful seed, the Son of God is born of the virgin and becomes man, taking on Him our nature but not our sin and so makes the sacrifice for us (Aulen 1931:100-107).

Anselm sets out to show the seriousness of sin and that God could not overlook sin; it had robbed God of his honor, leaving him the alternatives of punishment or receiving adequate satisfaction for the dishonor done to him (Milne 1982:164-170). Anselm is not forthcoming on how this merit is appropriated by us (Milne 1982:164-170). Christ by his obedience even to the point of death offered a fully adequate, vicarious satisfaction for the infinite offense of human sin. Through God’s action in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, justice and right relationships are restored. Jesus Christ died on the cross as a sacrifice for humanity’s sin. He sacrificed his life for us. Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury (1032-1109) in this book the Cur Deus homo? asks the following questions:

Could not God have saved man by a mere act of His Omnipotence, just as easily as He could create the world? Could not He the Merciful God simply have pardoned the sin of man without demanding satisfaction? And if a mediator was necessary why did He choose His only begotten Son for the work of mediation and not some other rational being (Berkhof 1969:173)?
Anselm deliberately rejects as unsatisfactory the recapitulation theory, the Ransom-Satan-theory and that the death of Christ was merely a manifestation of the love of God for man; since these do not explain the necessity of atonement adequately (Grudem 1994:581f). In his opinion, the absolute necessity of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ must be grounded in an imminent and necessary attribute of the divine nature. He finds the ultimate ground for it in the honor of God (Grudem 1994:581f). The exact position of Anselm could be understood only in the light of his conception of sin and satisfaction (Berkhof 1969:173). He holds that Christ's death was a sacrifice by which God's honor was satisfied and His holy judgment propitiated. He argues that humanity is fallen and God in His holiness could not overlook sin. Mankind owes God complete obedience. When he fails to render this, he sinfully robs the Sovereign Creator of the honor which He is due because sin is an infinite affront to the divine glory which cannot be remitted simply by the exercise of mercy. God must vindicate Himself in keeping with the demands of His own holy nature; hence an adequate satisfaction must be offered (Grounds 1960:72).

Anselm (in Berkhof 1969:173) argues that there were two and only two ways in which the divine honor could be vindicated namely by punishment or by satisfaction. God did not pursue the way of punishment since this would have spelled ruin for the human race and would have defeated His very purpose. He chose the way of satisfaction that included two things: that man should now render to God the willing obedience which he owed Him and that he should make amends for the insult to God’s honor by paying something over and above the actual debt. But since even the smallest sin as committed against an
infinite God outweighs the whole world and all that is not God, and the amends must be proportionate, it follows that these are beyond the power of man (Berkhof 1969:173).

Hence only God is able to provide it; only a man can properly make it. The solution lies with one who is both God and man. It must be dualistic in nature. Jesus has two natures in one person: divine and human therefore He is qualified to take up the divine act of the atonement through his body. Owing to his perfect life, Christ had no need to die; His death is therefore an act of infinite merit that becomes available for us as the means of his making satisfaction for our sin. A gift to provide the satisfaction rather than a punishment surpassing all must come from God himself. God only could make true reparation and His mercy prompted Him to make it through the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. Only the God-man could satisfy these requirements and thus do justice to the honor of God (Berkhof 1969:173).

Anselm believed that in atonement God is the object of Christ’s atoning work and is therefore reconciled through the satisfaction made to both His holiness and justice. Driver (1986:50ff) observes that Anselm’s view is generally described by the technical terms: “objective” and “satisfactionist.” It is called objective because the primary reason for the death of Christ was to remove the barrier between humanity and God that had been created by sin. Its objectivity lies in the fact that this barrier is not viewed as being in human beings. Rather, this barrier is conceived of as being either in God or in the moral order of things between God and humanity. The barrier is clearly located outside
the sinner (Driver 1986:51). Christ’s work is seen as directed primarily toward this barrier that is an object reality quite independent of our subjective feelings about it.

This view is also called satisfactionist because Christ’s death is understood as satisfaction rendered to God. The term comes from Latin, meaning “to do enough” or “to do what needs to be done.” Christ’s death allows God to forgive people’s sin within the scope of justice and regularity that the moral structure of the universe requires. Thus satisfaction is the prime category for understanding the work of Christ (Driver 1986:50-51).

Some of the most important assumptions of the objective theory could be found in the letters of the Apostle Paul (1Cor 15:3-4, Gal 2:20, Eph 1:7-8). The Protestant Reformers of the 16th Century agreed with Anselm that sin is a very serious matter but they saw it as the breaking of God’s law rather than as an insult to God’s honor (Morris 2010:3). They took those assumptions and developed them into the modern form of Penal Substitution aspect. The moral law that they held is not to be taken lightly. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23) and it is this factor that is the problem for sinful man.

Milne (1982:165) asserts that Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD) was an excellent exponent of the objective theory of atonement and he regarded the atonement as a propitiatory sacrifice. His whole life demonstrated the paramount need for a true doctrine of the atonement and the disasters that overtake the Church when it had lost touch with the Biblical gospel of truth. As an Augustinian monk Luther wrestled for years with the
problem of his personal salvation, striving to merit it by various penances, prayers and
good works that the Roman Catholic Church prescribed (Milne 1982:165). Only as he
wrestled with scripture and with Paul’s teaching on righteousness by faith in Christ
(justification Rom 1:17) did light breakthrough—bringing peace. His slogans by faith alone,
by grace alone, by scripture alone, brought confrontation with the Roman Catholic
Church authorities (Milne 1982:165). He spoke of the cross as placating both the law and
the wrath of God and thus setting love at liberty to do its work. “Christ,” he asserted, “is
punished on our account.”

In connection with the penal substitution theory, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) began
to assume the concept of salvation (soteriology). He held that salvation is the application
of the work of Christ in the lives of human beings (Erickson 1998:902f). Melanchthon
explained that by Christ’s death the just demands of the law have been met, the wrath of
God has been appeased and the soul of the sinner liberated from the curse and all
crucial needs of the human person have been met (Morris 1955:180). What is needed in
salvation is the restoration of broken relationship between God and the creature and the
removal of ruptures within human race. That involves conversion, forgiveness,
reconciliation and adoption (Erickson 1998:903f).

John Calvin (1509-1564) further formulated this penal substitution doctrine in his
Institutes of the Christian Religion (Calvin 1562:11). He agrees with Anselm that
atonement is rooted in the nature of God. He contends that not divine honor but divine
justice must be satisfied. If mankind is to be redeemed from the curse of sin and death
and especially from the wrath of His Creator, a sacrifice must be offered! Christ took
upon Himself and suffered the punishment while by the righteous judgment of God
impended over all sinners and by this expiation, the Father has been satisfied and His
wrath appeased (Calvin 1562:11).

It seemed clear to most Reformers that the essence of Christ’s saving work consisted in
taking the sinner’s place called “the Penal substitution”. They interpreted the penal
substitution theory in a forensic manner, resulting in a legal declaration of righteousness,
but not actual internalized holiness. It is imputed not imparted in the Christian believer.
Others believe in a real change of Christian life. Morris (2010:3) holds that Christ
suffered and endured death which was the wages of our sin for our righteousness. He
bore the curse that we sinners should have borne.

Grudem (1994:579) agrees that the death of Christ was a “Penal substitution” in the
sense that he bore our penalty when he died. This has been the Orthodox understanding
of the atonement held by Evangelical theologians in contrast to other views that attempt
to divert from the idea of the wrath of God or payment of the penalty that we deserve
(Grudem 1994:579). This view of the atonement is sometimes called the “theory of
vicarious atonement.” A Vicar is someone who stands in place of another or who
represents another. Christ’s death was therefore “vicarious” because he stood in our
place and represented us. As our representative he took the penalty that we deserve
(Grudem 1994:579). Many modern Protestants accept the objective or penal substitution
theory that deals with the problem of sin. They believe that Jesus’ sacrifice brought the
possibility of forgiveness to everyone including people who lived since the crucifixion and people who will be born in the future.

Williams, G. (2008:172ff) argues that contemporary criticism to penal substitution theory is very strong. The first criticism to this theory comes from the Socinians who point out that it is fundamentally unjust and immoral to transfer punishment that was due to the sinner onto a party who was innocent. The criticism further states that there must be a fundamental continuity between the way God acts and the way he commands us to act. Williams, G. (2008:173-174) judges that this continuity is disrupted by penal substitution atonement because it depicts a God who Himself exacts punishment, yet at the same time commands His people not to do so. Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek, so how could God punish in a way that exacts satisfaction? If God denies us retribution He must eschew it Himself (Mt 5:38-42, Rom 12:17).

The key argument used by opponents of penal substitution is ruled out by Jesus own teaching on how we should relate to one another (Jn 15, 17). The Apostle Paul distinguishes sharply the different ways that justice should operate between human beings on the one hand and between God and creation on the other. Individual human beings should not take revenge because God is going to do so (Rom 12:14-21). People are rewarded or punished not because of their character but because of some specific overt act that they have done. Retribution thus operates on a less than fully personal level and it deals with externals (Williams, G. 2008:180). The Biblical accounts of retribution make clear that this is a false antithesis since according to scripture,
punishment is imposed both for acts and character behind them, the acts serving as evidence of the character (Mtt 25:31-46).

Williams, D. (2008:231) argues that although the theory was put forward in response to the justice of God, another view of salvation that advocates serious relationship with Christ solves this problem. Just as a husband and wife are treated as one unit by virtue of their closeness in relationship so are Christ and the Christian also treated as one unit. Just as the Christian believer shares the life of Christ so Christ shares the punishment of Christian believers both experiences are common (Williams, D. 2008:231).

The second criticism is that objective or penal substitution theory cannot make sense of the life of Jesus Christ. If Jesus needed to die this death, why did he need to live this life? It may be true that the link between penal substitution, the life and ministry of Jesus has not always been made sufficiently clear, and it certainly can be made (Williams, G. 2008:182). An Illustration could be as follows: Jesus is Israel and He is exiled. Exile is the punishment for Israel’s disobedience and Jesus takes it on Himself as the new Israel. Having borne the penalty for sin, he then rises to life and brings forgiveness. From this historical basis, the penal substitution explains how the curse borne by Jesus was not just the curse of the Jews, but the curse of all those under bondage of sin. And so the doctrine of the atonement is very clearly tied to the life of Jesus as the New Israel (Williams, G. 2008:183).
The third criticism is that the objective theory provides no basis for moral and spiritual renewal in the life of the Christian believer. To give a reply to that criticism is that we need to remember that Pauline theology links between the definitive death of the believer in Christ and the on-going death to sin of the believer day by day (Rom 6:3-11). This view of being united to Christ in his death is integral to penal substitution. Union with Christ explains the justice of the transfer of sin to Christ. If we die with him, as he bore our penalty we must reckon ourselves dead to sin. The foundational doctrine of union with Christ forges an indissoluble link between penal substitution and personal sanctification (Williams, D. 2008:231ff).

The fourth criticism is that objective or penal substitution is tantamount to child abuse, a charge leveled by some feminist theologians. The claim appears to be that the infliction of pain on a child by a parent is unjust and that penal substitution mandates such infliction. Williams, G. (2008:185) holds that there is an immediate problem with the criticism; namely that when the Lord Jesus Christ died, he was a child in the sense that he was a son, but not in the sense of being a minor. As an adult, Jesus had a mature will and could choose whether to cooperate with His Father, so we are in fact looking at a Father and an adult Son who will together for the Father to inflict suffering on the Son, as can be conceived in the Trinitarian action of God (Williams, G. 2008:185). For many feminists, their criticism results in the rejection of Christianity because the religion undeniably involves the view that God purposed the sufferings of His Son Jesus Christ.
Williams, G. (2008:185ff) observes that the reason for the child abuse problem as understood by feminists, remains with any theory of the atonement that maintains Divine Sovereignty, even in a limited for. Unless we remove the suffering of the Son from the realm of events over which God rules then God wills it. We need to therefore question about the criticism itself. Is it valid and justifiable? It is not so with regard to objective or penal substitution atonement (Williams, G. 2008:187ff). According to objective theory, the cross has the character not simply of suffering but of necessary penal suffering for a good end. According to objective theory, the necessity of punishment arises from God’s own nature and His divine justice, holiness and Government. He is bound only by who He is, by faithfulness to Himself and His will.

Lastly, this study objects to the way objective theory of atonement magnifies sin and the legalistic tendency of the mediaeval theology. It is too narrow and individualistic to represent the whole testimony of Scripture. This conception recognizes that either satisfaction or punishment is mandatory when sin has been committed. It therefore seeks a rationale for atonement in the very essence of God’s nature and creation (Aulén 1931:108). The triumph of this theory of atonement in terms of satisfaction lies in its compatibility with the Western legal structures which formed the underpinning of Medieval Christendom and the Orthodox mainstream Protestantism (Driver 1986:61). One example of this compatibility between Western juridical structures and the Anselmian view can be found in the Church’s traditional approach to the exercise of discipline. While the New Testament clearly points in the direction of the restoration function of discipline (Mtt 18:15-20), in the Church’s tradition discipline has generally
been perceived as just retribution, pedagogy, and defense of the Church’s honor (Driver 1986:61).

In fact the Roman law provided the conceptual categories for the Church’s sacrament of penance. Terms such as punishment, merit, satisfaction and absolution that have characterized Roman Catholicism’s penitential system have come directly from Roman legal theory and practice. The widespread Christian defense of the practice of capital punishment offers another example of recourse to secular Western legal concepts for our way of understanding how God deals with sin and the appropriate way for the State to deal with crime.

The Biblical data pertinent to these issues are hotly debated among Christians (Driver 1986:61). However, it is very important to observe that Anselm’s formulation has really supplied the matrix for both the Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy and his satisfaction theory in its essence continues to find staunch protagonists where Scripture is accepted as the authoritative word of God (Grounds 1960:72f). Much as the objective or penal substitution view is applauded, it still needs other aspects to answer some questions such as *sola gratia, sola fide*, (grace alone, faith alone) and concepts.

**4.2.3.2 Subjective Interpretations of Atonement**

Some form of the Subjective or Moral view of atonement is held widely today especially among scholars of the Modern liberal school of thought that has risen since the 19th
Century (Morris 2010:2). In all its variations this interpretation emphasizes the importance of the effect of Christ’s redemption on the sinner. This concept was first developed by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) in strong reaction to the view of Anselm. Erickson (1998:803) argues that Anselm’s thought of the incarnation was necessitated by the fact that our sin is an offense against God’s moral dignity and consequently, there must be some form of compensation to God.

Abelard rejected the traditional view that Christ had come to pay a debt to the devil as well as Anselm’s theory that Christ had come to offer a satisfaction to God. Abelard held a different view of sin. For him the essence of sin is more in people’s evil intentions than their actions (Driver 1986:44). It consists in agreeing to the evil inclinations of the mind. Abelard saw the work of Christ as providing both an example of as well as an occasion for, teaching about the love of God. Through the power of Jesus’ example people are moved to love God, whose forgiveness is based on limitless love and is given in response to the intercession of the risen Christ. Abelard on the other side emphasized strongly the primacy of God’s love and insisted that Christ did not make some sort of sacrificial payment to the Father to satisfy his offended dignity (Berkhof 1969:175f). The love of God was the supreme driving force that made Jesus Christ die on the cross for sinners. He emphasized that Christ is the great Teacher and Example who arouses responsive love in men; this love is the basis on which reconciliation and forgiveness rest. He quotes Luke 7:47-48:

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”
Abelard treats this love awakened in men as meritorious, for even he cannot escape from the traditional objective theory of merit. According to this theory, Jesus tried to help us obtain salvation by giving us a perfect moral example of how to live (Aulén 1931:112). When we look at the cross we see the greatness of the divine love, which delivers us from fear and mindlessness. We respond to love with love and no longer live in selfishness and sin (Morris 2010:2f). Other ways of putting it include the view that the sight of the selfless Christ dying for sinners moves us to repentance and faith (Morris 2010:2f). If God will do all that for us, then we ought not to continue in sin. So we repent and turn from it and are saved by becoming better people. Abelard hoped that his teachings and example would inspire us to lift ourselves out of sin and enter into true communion with God. In Abelard’s theory, while retaining the traditional concepts of Christ’s death as a sacrifice offered to the Father everything is subordinate to the controlling power of that the cross; by demonstrating God’s love, He draws out man’s love almost automatically (Berkhof 1969:175f).

While Anselm developed the idea of the reconciliation of God in the death of Christ with the use of legal categories, Abelard thought of a reconciliation of humanity with God expressed in terms of the moral disposition of the two parties toward each other. So the ethical dimensions of Christ’s life and death receive more emphasis. Instead of the honor of God and the conservation of God’s legal rights in relation to humanity, essential elements in Anselm’s theory, Abelard underscored the love and ethical righteousness of God. While Anselm elaborated his theory with the whole human race in mind, Abelard
described the work of Christ on behalf of the elect who will sooner or later believe in the saving work of Christ (Driver 1986:45).

Abelard understands that reconciliation takes place in people’s free response to the revelation of God’s love in the life and death of Christ does not mean that it is the result of human effort. Although their decision to love God is free, it is because from the beginning they have been the objects of the divine decree of election to salvation. In so far as humans are reconciled by means of their free personal appropriation of Christ’s reconciling act, it is subjective. But, though his teaching bears a more “subjective” character; the emphasis is laid on that which is done by men. Abelard feels compelled to assign a place to the merit of Christ that he says makes complete the merit of man by the virtue of His intercession for them (Aulén 1931:112).

A fierce opponent of Abelard was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD) who revived the conception of atonement as a means of ransoming man from the power of the devil. He took Abelard to task especially for his rationalistic interpretation of atonement and he maintained that the example of Christ makes us saints just as little as the example of Adam made us sinners. Bernard was quite willing to admit the greatness and importance of the example of the love of Christ but only as founded in His redemptive work.

In this study’s view, Bernard had one thing in common with Abelard: he stressed the love of Christ as manifested in His human life and the passion death on the cross. However he saw in this not merely a revelation of the love of God, but the saving manifestation of
Christ’s own dignity. Bernard’s view may be regarded as a Western counterpart of the
doctrine of Irenaeus and Athanasius that the incarnation was the transforming entrance
of God into humanity. He did not emphasize the physical result of the incarnation, as
bringing life and immortality, but its psychological effect as inspiring patience and love
similar to that of Christ (Berkhof 1969:175). The implication is that the Father did not
require the death of His Son, but accepted it as an oblation, it served to redeem us from
sin, death and the devil and to reconcile us to God.

On the other hand, Berkhof (1969:178ff) holds that Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) added
to the Abelardian moral influence views that are objective in nature. Aquinas held that
Jesus Christ was our substitute. He bore our punishment for our sins on the cross. The
death of Christ reveals the great love of God, it sets mankind an example of obedience,
humility, and constancy; it not only delivers us from sin, but also merits justifying grace
and eternal bliss and offers a strong motive for refraining from sin (Berkhof 1969:178ff).

Aquinas (in Berkhof 1969:178-179ff) argues that the passion of Jesus Christ effects the
salvation of sinners in four different ways: meriting the blessings of salvation, which are
passed on to sinners. As a superabundant satisfaction well pleasing to God, the benefits
of which are communicated to the faithful Christian in virtue of the mystical union. As a
voluntary sacrifice with which God is delighted, sinners are redeemed from slavery and
punishment. Though man was reduced to spiritual slavery by the devil, the latter had no
rightful claims, and therefore did not receive the ransom. Thomas Aquinas (in Berkhof
1969:178ff) added that superabundant satisfaction of Christ does not save man,
however, apart from baptism and penance; and the reason for this lies in the necessary ‘configuration’ of the members to the Head in the mystical body of Jesus Christ (Berkhof 1969:178ff).

Thomas Aquinas has not been spared from criticism; many scholars hold that his conception reveals considerable similarities to those of Anselm. They are in some respects inferior and in others superior to them. They are inferior as they do not manifest the same logical coherence and fail to ground the necessity of the atonement in divine nature making it dependent simply on the will of God which might even have dispensed with satisfaction altogether (Berkhof 1969:179ff). They are superior, however in their approach to the idea of penal satisfaction, that is, of satisfaction through punishment; in their greater emphasis on the merits of Christ in which the later distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ is anticipated and in the introduction of the idea of the mystical union to the account for the transmission of the merits of Christ to Christian believers (Berkhof 1969:179).

Most of the modern liberal scholars such as the 19th Century German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the 20th Century American “social gospel” theologian Walter Rauschenbusch made the subjective view enjoy widespread popularity. They hold that God is and has always been a loving and forgiving God. Therefore there is no need to propitiate God or to appease his anger or to offer him some satisfaction (Schleiermacher 1928:316f). The problem is in human beings. They are self-centered; rebellious, turned in upon themselves and closed to God. For
Schleiermacher the penalty of sin or the “justice of God” is found in the evils of human society. A race that has turned away from God experiences all sorts of suffering due to poverty, war, famine and crime. In the experience of these evils humanity feels God’s wrath (Schleiermacher 1928: 315-324ff). The death of Christ is the example or dramatization that brings home to us God’s love for humanity. The power of example in Christ’s cross makes us willing to accept the forgiveness that God always wanted to give us.

Schleiermacher (1928:315-320ff) affirms that Jesus Christ redeems the members of the believing community by communicating to sinners an inner experience of God-consciousness like his own (Grounds 1960:74ff). He asserts:

Redemption is the impartation of Christ’s God-consciousness to men whereby they come into life-fellowship with Christ (Mozley 1962:165).

Milne (1982:166) holds that Schleiermacher in his “Gospel for Modern Man” focused on the communication to man of a mystic sense of oneness with God. Schleiermacher saw Jesus as the archetypal man, the Spiritual head of the human race, the perfect human whose uniqueness and perfection consists in his unbroken sense of union with God. He maintains:

The redeemer assumes believers into the power of his God-consciousness, and this is his redemptive activity (Milne 1982:166).

Driver (1986:47ff) observes that Walter Rauschenbusch further developed the implications of the view of divine wrath of the understanding of the death of Christ. Rauschenbusch believed that Jesus did not bear our sins in accordance with some
abstract legal formula. Rather, Jesus bore them by direct experience when he was persecuted and killed by the forces of religious bigotry, political power, injustice and violence. Due to the corporate nature of sin and solidarity of evil and guilt, all people everywhere are equally guilty and in need of forgiveness. But Jesus' death was not merely a passion submission to the powers. In his life and death of absolute opposition to them Christ became the highest revelation of God's love and exposed the power of sin in all its ugliness (Rauschenbusch in Drive 1986:47). On the other hand, in his conflict with the worst manifestations of the power of evil, Jesus responded with absolutely self-denying love. So the cross is also the highest revelation of divine love (Driver 1986:47).

Criticism to Schleiermacher is that he too fails to reckon with the seriousness of sin and the guilt before God that it involves. He regards sin as the lower state of human development. Schleiermacher fails to make a connection of the ideas of sin, guilt, punishment and atonement (Mozley 1962:165). An objective expiation has no place in the understanding of Schleiermacher. After the death of Schleiermacher in 1834, Richard Rothe developed Schleiermacher's mystical view of redemption and gave it a deeper ethical content in 1870 (Mozley 1962:166). It was passed on to Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889). According to him Jesus Christ suffered death in fidelity to His unique vocation as the Founder of God's Kingdom. For him the religious focus of Christianity is the idea of justification or the forgiveness of sins. Ritschl (in Mozley 1962:166-167) identified the two: forgiveness is not based with the Socinians on the equity of God, or with the theologians of the "Illumination" on His love, but upon the work and Passion of Christ (Mozley 1962:166-167).
Ritschl (in Mozley 1962:167) made the most intricate and perplexing foundation for modern theology of ethics. He insisted that the focus of Christianity, the idea of the Kingdom of God, forgiveness of sins or justification must apply primarily to the ethical life of the Christian community. The ethical character of Ritschl’s thought is made clear by his identification of Christ’s Priestly Office with His loyalty to His vocation, so that he affirms:

> If His Priesthood is to be regarded as availing for others, it can only be in virtue of this fact (Mozley 1962:167).

Ritschl (in Mozle 1962:167) lays stress everywhere on activity rather than on endurance. His understanding of the atonement is categorized among the Modern subjective theories of atonement.

Morris (1955:180) observes that Karl Barth (1886) and Emil Brunner (1889) have also treated atonement with value to a subjective influence. They both restored objective significance to the death of the cross. Brunner even interpreted atonement as “the expiatory penal sacrifice of the Son of God.”

Here the study holds that Subjective theory of atonement also contains strengths and weaknesses. Again it is said that the theory is largely humanistic in orientation. The theory lacks inner spiritual, moral depth and coherence that is so characteristic of Anselm’s view. Abelard stresses on the principle that love is central and all-controlling attribute in God, similarly he ignores the demands of His justice and holiness (Berkhof
1969:175ff). Subjective theory of atonement also does no justice to the clear witness of scripture that attribute to Jesus, not merely as perfect man, but as God incarnate and thereby undercuts his role as Mediator (Milne 1982:166).

Moreover, the subjective or moral influence theory furnishes no adequate reason for the sufferings of Christ for sinners. If God could have forgiven sins without demanding satisfaction, why did He give up His Son to bitter sufferings and a shameful death? Was it not a very dubious revelation of love seeing that He could have awakened the sinner's love in many other ways? Inevitably, subjective theory bypasses the entire Biblical witness to Christ’s death as the mystic act which redeemed sinners once for all. While the subjective theory of atonement does call attention to the reality of the effect of Christ’s death upon us, it does not tell us the reason why the death of Jesus was necessary in order to reveal the love of God (Driver 1986:48). Was there no other way to show this love? The subjective view, in its strictest logic, does not really quite answer the question: why Jesus had to die? Subjective theory of atonement therefore is narrow; it fails to address the deep cosmic and spiritual, the corporate and systematic dimensions of evil in the life of the Church.

Morris (2010:2-3) observes that many scholars wonder how it explains the crucifixion, since Jesus could have given us his teachings and also provided a perfect moral example without dying on the cross. This Moral love influence theory of atonement robs the sufferings of Christ of their redemptive significance thereby reducing Him to a mere teacher who influences men by His teaching and by His example (Berkhof 1969:176ff).
One possible explanation could be that his death though not strictly necessary, helped to draw attention to his life and therefore made his mission more effective. Unfortunately, many people continue to ignore the example that Jesus set, and still commit immoral acts. Thus if the purpose of his mission was to inspire everyone to live without sin so far it has not yet fully succeeded.

The thrust of the subjective view of atonement is on personal experience. It is important that we respond to the love of Christ seen on the cross, that we recognize the compelling force of his example. The atonement advocated from that understanding has no effect outside the believer. It is real in the person’s experience nothing else. Unless the death of Jesus Christ really does something, according to the entire testimony of Bible scriptures, it is not only in fact a demonstration of love. The love and example aspects must seriously be put into practice. Taken by itself, the Subjective or Moral influence theory is not adequate for salvation. It needs other views of the atonement to complete it.

**4.2.3.3 Classic Interpretations of Atonement**

It is sometimes called *Locus classicus*, advocated by the fathers of the early Church between the 2nd and 6th Centuries (Driver 1986:38-39). This is the oldest theory of the atonement developed in the Christian Church. The Church fathers taught that the whole of world history is one great drama with three acts: God’s original creation, human sin and the reign of sin, finally the restoration of the world to God’s original intention through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Edwards 1986:14f). Jesus Christ
recapitulated human experience and died as a ransom and his death was conceived from incarnation through to crucifixion, resurrection and all events are part of his atonement.

The work of redemption is the restoration of all things under the headship of Christ (Eph 1:10). Both the books of Isaiah and the Inter-Testamental literature bear out witness that the propitiatory death was necessary for redemption (Is 52:13-53:12ff). They all contend that the death of Jesus Christ is a full price paid for our salvation either to God or to the devil (Edwards 1986:14f). This understanding sees mankind’s liberation from the tyranny of sin, law, death, wrath and the devil as the heart of Christ’s work.

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) taught that Jesus Christ as the Second Adam recapitulated human experience and died as a ransom. On the concept of recapitulation Irenaeus followed Pauline theology in utilizing the first and second Adam theme found in the Apostle Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians and Romans (Reeves 2010:3-4). Irenaeus believed that humanity was represented federally and covenantally in Adam and that the Garden of Eden was eschatologically alluding to the reality of the second Adam. Irenaeus explains:

That as in Adam we do all die, as being of an animal nature, in Christ we may all live, as being spiritual, not laying aside God’s handwork, but the lusts of the flesh, and receiving the Holy Spirit (Reeves 2010:3-4).

When Adam fell in the Garden humanity fell with him and the only redemption is based upon the work of the eschatological Adam. Therefore for Irenaeus the protological Adam
was indicative of the eschatological Adam (Reeves 2010:3). Eschatological focus within redemptive history displays Irenaeus’ understanding of the nature of revelation and the culmination of it in Christ Jesus. Irenaeus’ understanding of salvation is revealed in light of his biblical theology, especially within the view of recapitulation. He believed that as the culmination of redemptive history, the incarnate Son of God recovered what was lost in the first Adam. Some scholars erroneously accuse Irenaeus of articulating a view of universalism in his doctrine of recapitulation (Reeve 2010:4ff). However, Irenaeus held recapitulation to be the “summing up” of all history and humanity in Christ Jesus as the conclusion of the drama of redemption (Reeve 2010:4ff).

Furthermore, his belief is that in Christ the saved are justified through his eschatological work since he is “both waging war against our enemy and crushing him who had at the beginning led us captives in Adam and trampled upon his head,” (Beaven in Dennison 2002:9f). Thus he draws a parallel with Christ and the promised seed of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. Therefore, the summing up of all things is the fulfilling victory of Christ, the reverse of the curse and the salvation for those who are covenantally in Christ as opposed to Adam (Beaven in Dennison 2002:9f). This understanding of the soteriological and eschatological elements within redemptive history was Irenaeus’ evangelical, apologetical and theological emphasis. Irenaeus used this doctrinal understanding within his ministry to spread the gospel and to edify and defend the early Church (Reeves 2010:4-5).
The research study critiques Irenaeus in the sense that he stands mid-way between the East and the West. He makes a powerful contemplation of mankind being enslaved by the powers of darkness and looks upon redemption as deliverance from the power of Satan, though he does not look upon it as a satisfaction due to Satan. His conception on the death of Jesus Christ satisfying the justice and holiness of God thus liberating mankind is stimulating. At the same time he gives great prominence to the recapitulation theory (Mozley 1962:213). Christ recapitulates in Himself all the stages of human life and all the experiences of these stages, including those that belong to our state as sinners (Berkhof 1969:165).

The Classic interpretation advocated by Irenaeus is very significant to the development of the doctrine of atonement in the next centuries. He made profound statements that gave a point of departure by the next generation of theologians. He laid significant foundation for both Ransom and Victor's theories of atonement as well as the doctrine of eschatology. Origen (185-254 AD) explained further the Ransom theory of atonement. He argued that the ransom provided by Christ was paid not to God but the devil. Athanasius (296-373 AD) emphasized man's deliverance from ignorance and corruptibility by the triumph of the cross.

Augustine (354-430 AD) too stressed the value of Christ’s death as a satisfaction offered to God’s justice and he decisively influenced the vocabulary of Western Christianity by his free use of terms like the fall, original sin and justification and he treats salvation as the work of Christ in relation to the Church (Grounds 1960:72f). A celebrated scholar
who summed up the old interpretation of atonement was John of Damascus (675-749 AD). He held that Christ’s death was a ransom to God, it was as a kind of fishing-expedition which snared the devil and as a victory which destroyed death, liberated captive sinners and brought to light life and immortality.

The Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulén (1879-1978) has set forth the principal features of the classic theory under the dramatic term Christus Victor (Christ is Victor) in a book first published in 1931. In this Christus Victor (Aulén 1931:20f, 115ff), he describes provisionally his idea of salvation as “dramatic.” The central theme of this view is divine conflict and victory; Christ-Christus, the Victor fights against the devil, sin and death (cf Rom 8:38-39, 2 Cor 10:4-6). Jesus Christ comes as mankind’s Champion who triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the “tyrants” under which he is in bondage; and in Christ, God reconciles the world to Himself (Aulén 1931:20ff). The cross is seen as the struggle between Jesus and his enemies or between God, in the person of Jesus and his enemies. Behind the Romans and Jews were spiritual powers, principalities, powers and rulers of this present age.

Driver (1986:39-40) observes that classic view draws upon the Pauline references to the cosmic struggle against the powers, the flesh, the law and the rulers of darkness. Aulén argues that Jesus came to defeat the evil forces that gained control over mankind by his Easter victory (Milne 1982:166-167). To win our salvation Jesus Christ needed to overcome Satan, sin and death and He successfully accomplished the task by his death and resurrection (cf Heb 10:13, 1 Cor 15:2-5). From Aulén’s conception two things must
be emphasized: first, this view of atonement is simply unpacking the full Biblical idea of redemption (2 Tim 2:3-4).

According to Aulén (1931:20) this view describes a work of salvation, a drama of salvation at the same time atonement in the full sense of the word, for it is a work wherein God reconciles the world to Him and is at the same time reconciled. The background of the view is dualistic; God is pictured as in Christ carrying through a victorious conflict against powers of evil that are hostile to His will. This constitutes atonement because the drama is a cosmic drama, and the victory over the hostile powers brings to pass a new relation, a relation of reconciliation between God and the world; and still more because in a measure the hostile powers are regarded as in the service of the will of God the Judge of all and the executants of His judgment. Seen from this perspective, the triumph over the opposing powers is regarded as reconciling of God Himself; He is reconciled by the very act in which He reconciles the world to Himself (Aulén 1969:4).

Second, this view of atonement is very clear and distinctive in character quite different from the objective and subjective theories that are characterized by abstract, technical and judicial approaches (Aulén 1931:21). While objective theories of atonement tend to emphasize almost exclusively Christ’s death and subjective theories underscore the importance of Christ’s life, the classic view sees Christ’s saving work as a continuous divine operation. In addition to the death of Christ, classic view stresses the incarnation as a whole. Jesus’ resurrection is viewed as “the manifestation of the decisive victory
over the powers of evil, which was won on the cross; it is also the starting point for the
gift of the Spirit, for the continuation of the work of God in the souls of men” (Aulen

The classic view sees sin primarily as submission to evil powers and the resulting
enslavement at their hands. This is in contrast to objective views in which sin is
understood basically as transgression of divine law and to subjective views in which the
focus is more on spiritual and moral immaturity. Sin, in the classic view, is corporate as
well as personal. Here tendencies toward individualistic understandings of sin and
salvation are less apparent than in either the objective or the subjective theories. In the
classic theory God is clearly viewed as the author of the saving work of Christ. In some
subjective views such as those of theological rationalism, God tends to become a benign
partner whose atoning and forgiving work “is made dependent upon the ethical effects in
human lives” (Aulen 1969:139).

For objective views such as Anselm’s, God appears primarily as an offended plaintiff or
judge since the emphasis falls on people’s guilt and the subsequent penalty. Therefore
Christ, as God-man, offers satisfaction to God on behalf of humanity. But according to
the classic theory, God through Christ is clearly the Reconciler (Driver 1986:40f). 
Although the humanity of Jesus is never in doubt in the classic view, Christ’s suffering
and death are not ascribed to him “as human” but rather “as God” since his work
consists in the conquest of all powers who are in opposition to God. Aulén cites Luther
as saying: “This is not the work of any created being, but of Almighty God” (Aulén 1969:109).

The classic theory’s triumph is on the reality of man’s bondage to sin and demonic powers that also strikes a cord in the contemporary consciousness (Milne 1982:167). This classic conception has in reality held a place for the first thousand years in the history of the Christian Church whose importance it would not be easily exaggerated (Milne 1982:167). It was neglected during the period of Enlightenment whose interest was on the contrasting objective and subjective theories of the atonement. The Classic view was considered as mythological, primitive and the lowest of all (Aulén 1969:23-31) but thank Gustaf Aulén and other scholars who attempted to revive it in the 21st Century.

This study however contends that the classic theory of atonement is not immune from contemporary criticism. The first criticism is similar to that of subjective theory, that the classical theory emphasizes autonomous individualism characteristic so much of the modern Middle class in the West. The thrust of the theory is on personal life. This is in sharp contrast with the African perspective which is community oriented. Secondly, it cannot embrace vital aspects of the Christian faith namely: it cannot account for the cosmic scope of the whole work of Christ on the cross; and it undermines the need for spiritual renewal in the life of the believer. Sin is not only enslavement, it is also the disobedience that renders us unrighteous and under condemnation and the moral uncleanness that brings us under divine wrath. In other words, our problem includes past
sins and guilt; the problem of the past finds no answer in the classic understanding of atonement (Milne 1982:167).

On the criticism that it emphasizes autonomous individualism, the reply to such criticism could be that classical theory itself relies on a denial of individualism. The more individualistic the classical theory becomes, the less tenable it is, since it holds precisely that the guilty individual is not punished for his or her sins as an individual. Rather corporate categories are powerfully at work in this historic doctrine of classical theory.

The second criticism is that the classic theory provides no basis for spiritual renewal in the life of the Christian believer subsequent to conversion. To give a reply to that criticism is that we need to remember that Johannine theology links the love of God with the love of our brother (1 Jn 1:10). He holds:

Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 Jn 4:7-8).

The spiritual growth and maturity in the life of the Christian believer are measured by how they relate one to another. They need to produce characteristics that show that they are really Children of God. Jesus Christ gives a warning in Matthew 7:16:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistle? Like wise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
The third criticism is that classical theory is emphasizing more on spiritual warfare. God is the God of War who conquers our enemies; in the extreme end it could be tantamount to tyranny and dictatorship to the powerful elite and rebellion to the marginalized. On the contrary, classical theory is in line with some scriptural testimonies (Rom 8:31-39, Eph 6:13-18, 2 Tim 4:6-8). The Apostle Paul urges the Church in Ephesus to fight and defeat the enemy with the whole armor of God. He says:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:11-12).

This classic conception of the atonement becomes relevant only in African context where belief in evil powers, demons, witchcraft, and mysterious spirits is prevalent. Aulén (1931:21ff) argues that this was the original belief of the earliest Christian believers. It is also the basic belief of many modern Eastern Orthodox Christians and in recent years it has become popular among some Evangelical Christians.

The classical view of atonement in itself is not adequate. However combined with other views it might find a finally powerful place in any satisfying theory. It is important that the devil, all hosts of evil are defeated and sin and death are conquered. Although this has not always been worked out into set theories, it has been there in our Easter hymns of victory over the years (Morris 2010:3). It forms an important element in Christian devotion and it points to a reality that most Christians must not lose. Jesus Christ has conquered!
4.3 Construction of New Synthesis of Atonement

After examination of the three interpretations of atonement and critiquing the incompleteness and inadequacy of each one of them (Erickson 1998:798) in order to set the stage for suggesting a fresh look at our understanding of the atonement from a decidedly different perspective, the study will now construct a full understanding of atonement. The point of departure is that the biggest problem of mankind is sin. Scriptural witness sees the sinner as estranged, lost and hopeless, cast out into the outer darkness to perish in hell forever. All concepts are needed such as sacrifice, repentance, confession, forgiveness, justification, sanctification and union as well as victory (Morris 2010:4). All atonement theories are needed, each drawing attention to an important aspect of our salvation. The study therefore contends for an inclusive blend of atonement concepts, one aspect complementing the other and we dare not ignore or surrender any. When all these aspects of atonement are considered collectively, we will no more begin to comprehend a little of the vastness of God’s work in Jesus Christ on the cross (Morris 2010:4ff).

Forsyth (1910:199) hold that to deal with the difficulties when summing up atonement theories we must recognize that they are “three aspects of the work of Christ which have been held by the Church”. These three strands are wonderfully and prophetically entwined in 1 Corinthians 1:30 where it is said, “Christ made unto us justification, sanctification and redemption.” Stott (1986:167ff) calls them “three main answers summed up in the words of salvation, revelation and conquest.” What God in Christ has
done through the cross is to rescue us, disclose himself and overcome evil. The central message is that God made a way of restoring relationship broken by sin without compromising His justice and holiness. If He had ignored sin or simply forgiven it, He would no longer be holy as He would be condoning sin and that God would be having a relationship to what was sinful (Williams, D. 2008:229). Sin committed cannot just be forgotten but must be expiated. God cannot simply put sin aside; it must be propitiated. Due to the fact that an act cannot just be undone, the proportional penalty for sin has to be paid so that it can be justly cancelled (Milne 1982:155-f).

Sin therefore has to be uprooted from a person before salvation wherein a relationship with God can now be enacted. There has to be salvation from sin as well as salvation to life, salvation from the negative to make possible salvation to positive (Williams, D. 2008:230). These intertwined aspects of atonement that Christ made into us justification; sanctification and redemption could be used to fill the existing gaps. Williams, D. (2008:229) holds that Forsyth and other scholars knew “the shortcomings of the alternatives” for example in the subjective theory. No theory of atonement seems to claim overwhelming support from the universal Christian scholars. Now the research study will discuss the following aspects of atonement that could be used to formulate a full understanding of salvation.
4.3.1 Union, Sacrifice and Justification Aspects

Williams, D. (2008:231) maintains that salvation brings about closer relationship with Christ, the key affirmation of the classic theory that immediately solves the problem. For by virtue of the closeness of their relationship Christ and the Christian believer are also treated as one unit. Thus it is not so much that punishment is transferred from one person to another in a substitution or that one representative is punished instead of the rest, but as it is, the unit as a whole bears the punishment due to the sin of the whole unit. Just as the Christian believer shares the life of Christ, so Christ shares the punishment of the Christian; both experiences are common. The union of the Christian believer with Christ is punished and the Christian believer lives eternally in union with Christ.

The relationship between the Christian believer and Christ is so deep and close that the believer enjoys communion and peace with God. The Apostle Paul once said “it is not I who live but Christ in me.” It must be noted too that there are passages that seem to support this position (Gal 2:20, Jn 14: 12, Act 1:8). Comparing the union between Christ and members of his Church to the union between a husband and a wife, Paul said: “This is a profound mystery” (Eph 5:32). He was referring to the fact that knowledge of this union is inaccessible to humans except through special grace and revelation from God. The Apostle Paul continues to assert:

The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but it is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory (Col 1:26-27).
On the one hand, the union is effected by the Holy Spirit. He is the bond and the Seal (Eph 3:16, 4:30) between Jesus Christ and the Christian believer. There is a close relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit more closely than realized. Murray (in Erickson 1998:963-964) says: “Christ dwells in us if his Spirit dwells in us and he dwells in us by the Spirit.” It is not a physical bonding as in the welding of two pieces of metal. It is in some way a union of two persons, a Christian believer and Jesus Christ. Then on the other hand, this intimate relationship with Christ enables new life through sharing in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

While penal substitution theory has little space for the resurrection except as a proof that God had accepted the sacrifice of the cross, the classical theory therefore unites them as two aspects of a process of atonement. This would be penal substitution aspect of satisfaction, sacrifice and forgiveness uniting with the classic aspects of recapitulation, ransom and victory. Satisfaction can be offered then only by one who is God incarnate. The aspect of sacrifice emphasizes that a person must make an offering or payment to merit God’s justice. In this theory, cost and personal deprivation are certainly involved in the way the people of God used the expression both in Old and New Testaments.

There were four main types of offerings namely: the sin offering, guilt offering, offerings of cereals, animals, liquids, burnt offerings and peace offerings (Young 1975:21-22). The writer of the Epistle to Hebrews speaks at great length that the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant, according to which the Priests and the High Priest offered a constantly recurring and incomplete sacrifice with the once for all sacrifice of Christ who offered up
for himself (Heb 5-10). Many of the purposes of sacrifice described in Hebrews are applied to the atonement: to cleanse the worshipper from unrighteousness thus total removal of sins, to seal a covenant of renewed obedience, to be an offering to God for service, in which first of all Christ offers Himself and in which subsequently the worshipper may also participate; to establish communion between God and those who worshipped him (Young 1975: 62).

The sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross is very effective. How effective is it to a modern man and woman? Macquarrie (1977:193ff) observes that Jesus sacrificial offering of Himself on the cross made our salvation possible pervading liturgy. In dying on the cross Christ was both victim and Priest, offering Himself to the Father as the Passover sacrifice. The effect of Christ’s sacrifice is for the total removal of sins. The death of the victim implies the death of sins, thereby making our salvation possible (2 Cor 5:21). The Apostle John holds:

   He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn 2:2). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:10).

Again David stated in Psalm 130:4 “There is propitiation with Thee.” Propitiation means “mercy seat” in Hebrews 9:5 and the mercy seat in the Old Testament was a golden lid or the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Strauss 2010:6). Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood of the innocent victim to atone for the broken law. The tables of stone on which were written the holy law were kept in the Ark. The sprinkled blood covered the broken law and made possible a
meeting place between God and the sinner (Ex 25:21-22, Lev 16:2, 13-14). The mercy seat was made of pure gold and covered the whole Ark (Ex 25:17). Jesus Christ, the pure Son of God, is the sinner’s “Mercy Seat,” and His blood removes all our sin (Strauss 2010:6).

Strauss (2010:6) maintains that according to scripture the mercy seat in the Tabernacle was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ fulfilled the type and symbol perfectly. The problem with this sacrificial aspect will still remain: how are we saved through Jesus’ life and death? What does a sacrifice do for God? Why would God want a “sacrifice,” before God could be merciful to sinners? How could God’s mercy be dependent on a sacrifice? In Jesus Christ’s propitiatory work, there is no thought of God placating Himself or of appeasing His own anger. God’s feeling toward humankind has never changed (Strauss 2010:7). There never was a time in history when God did not love his people. God always has desired to bless mankind with salvation and joy but the sin of mankind place an obstacle in God’s way, separating the sinner from Himself. The death of Jesus Christ did not change God’s view on sin (Mozley 1962:81).

The sacrificial aspect of atonement holds that the way of salvation is a way of suffering, love and sacrifice. Sacrifice means self-deprivation, self-limitation, suffering and death. When a sacrifice was offered the killing or tearing of the life of an animal was involved in place of the worshipper. Christ’s self-offering to God the Father was to make peace with the Father or appeasing an offended God (Mozley 1962:79). That implies the sacrifice and sufferings of Christ take away sins and conflicts once for all. It also means that for
whom the sacrifice was offered live sacrifically (Rom 12:1). Because of the union with Christ, it is possible for Paul to say that he makes up the sufferings of Christ and he rejoices in suffering (Col 1:24), for him they are a common experience. At the same time a Christian believer keeps the law perfectly.

It has been a Reformation principle that a Christian is legally declared righteous as in the idea of justification, rather than made righteous. Justification means a person has been acquitted; all charges leveled against him have been cancelled. He has been redeemed from punishment and he is a freed from the demands of the law. A person may be declared righteous without the inward reality as the Israelites in the wilderness or unbelieving spouses (1 Cor 7:14). For Barth (in Berkouwer 1952:75), we are both completely sinners and completely righteous; justification does not eliminate sin, but forgives it; we remain in total depravity.

Justification then centers on the forgiveness of sins enabled by the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, which was the adequate penalty that had to be paid to satisfy the justice of God (Mozley 1962:79). Justification is a declaration in legal or forensic sense, that the person is no longer liable to any penalty. No charge can be brought against God’s elect (Rom 8:33). Because Christ has paid the penalty for sin, it can no longer be exacted from the sinner, or the punishment would be exacted twice which would be unjust. This is made real by the union with Jesus Christ. Justification is only a step in a progress towards righteousness and not an attainment of holiness. This forensic
Sanctification must be taught as the necessary consequence of justification. Sanctification is regularly linked with initiation. Conversion does not just forgive sin; it removes it. A person needs both cleansing from defilement of sin and deliverance from its power. Sin produces guilt and pollution dealt with by justification and sanctification. David’s great Psalm of repentance describes his longing for both cleansing and the creation of a new heart (Ps 51). Driver (1986:191) holds that justification in forensic sense does not do anything to the believer, it is an action done for him or her. The real relationship with the saving Christ does sanctify. Sanctification means that a person is set apart as holy. The righteousness and justice of God measure Holiness. When a person is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, that person has also been sanctified by Christ (Acts 26:18 Heb 2:11), through His one offering for all time (Heb 10:10-14, 13:12) and also by the Holy Spirit (2 Thes 2:13, 1 Pet 1:2).

This initial sanctification does not guarantee that the Christian believer’s life will be without sin. The Church at Corinth had made mistakes and sexual sins in almost every area of life and yet they had been sanctified in Christ and were called “saints,” (1 Cor 1:2, 30, 2:17, 5:1-13, 6:9-12). This is a spiritual problem which many serious Christian believers struggle with today (Rom 7).
Williams, D. (2008:231-232) asserts that knowledge of what is right does not lead to conformity to what is right. Through objective or penal substitution, the Apostle Paul (Rom 7, 8), Augustine, Luther and others went through agonies of spirit because they were unable to attain a righteous life, then they went through agonies of body trying to suppress trials and temptations, all to no avail. It was intensely warming for them to realize that salvation did not have to be earned by attaining perfection but it was by the grace of God (Eph 2:8). However this meant that although saved, justified and declared righteous, they still sinned.

They all established that a Christian is at once justified and a sinner, in other words a Christian is a saved sinner. This also implies that human righteousness is no longer necessary for the desired relationship with Christ to occur. Although holiness and purity are essential in Christian life, it could be achieved by what Christ has done, not by human effort. After the relationship has been established, a Christian believer can improve but this is a result of that relationship, never a cause of it. In the union relationship with Christ and with his death, a Christian believer effectively dies with him (Rom 7:14, 8:10-11) so that the power of sin is broken. The Christian believer is thus enabled to live a life acceptable to God.

Nevertheless the objective or penal substitution theory taken alone does not give a strong motivation for a change in lifestyle. It may even produce the opposite (Rom 6, 7). If forgiveness has been achieved, why change? Both the objective or penal substitution and classic theories if seen alone appear to view the atonement as something done
almost apart from humanity. It seems to have too little to do with the people for whom
Christ died and rose. Again it is pointed out that the gift of salvation by grace has to be
appropriated but there is a great desire within people to do something tangible so that
they know for sure that they are saved. What Christ did on the cross must be seen to
affect the lives of Christian believers. Without at least a measure of repentance
(Metanoia), a change in life, there is not really any reconciliation without which it
becomes what Williams, D. (2008:232) calls “the cheap grace.”

4.3.2 Confession, Repentance and Love Aspects

Objective or penal substitution aspects of confession, repentance and forgiveness could
celebrate the lack in the moral influence aspects. These are meat and potatoes of
a broader theory and by incorporating other aspects into it one can provide answers to
the objections made against them. The most important aspect of the moral ideal was
Jesus’ love for sinners (McGrath 2001:207). Though it is difficult to imitate the life,
suffering and death of Jesus Christ in our daily life, it is significant to note the inspiration
one gets through his atonement on the cross. Jesus said to his disciples that the cup he
drinks they would drink and the baptism he is baptized they would be baptized with (Mk
10:39). Again he announced that if any man would come after him, “let him take up his
cross and follow me” (Mk 10:21).
McIntyre (1992:50-51) holds that the death of Jesus Christ is an example to us mostly because of His total obedience to the Father’s will. We need to live exemplary lives as followers of Jesus Christ. He contends that God is all love and it is immoral for him to demand a sacrifice. God could not take pleasure in the death of His only begotten Son as to make it the grounds for the forgiveness of sins. No such grounds were needed since God is love and is quite ready to forgive irrespective of any satisfaction. Sin is not an objective barrier between mankind and God, but it is a subjective state of mind that is overcome by love awoken in the sinner’s heart by the death of Christ. Therefore, redemption is that greatest love kindled in us by Christ’s passion. All He requires is penitence in the sinner and He is eager to pardon the penitent. At the same time it may be said that we are justified and reconciled to God by the blood of Christ (Berkhof 1969:175).

Jesus Christ revealed the love of God by assuming our nature and by persevering as our Teacher and Example even unto death. This great love calls for and awakens a responsive love in the heart of the sinner and this is the ground for forgiveness of sins (Lk 7:47). The newly awakened love redeems us into liberty of the sons of God so that we obey God freely from the motive of love. Thus, the forgiveness of sins is the direct result of the love kindled in our hearts and only indirectly the fruit of the death of Christ.

This gap in the moral influence is resolved by appreciating the serious need for metanoia, repentance, is a change of life in response to the demand of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15, Mk 16:15-16, Mtt 1:21). Repentance (Greek word- metanoia) is
another tool to remove sin used by the preaching of John the Baptist (Mtt 3:1-8, Mk 1:15). Baptism in water unto repentance is accompanied by the confession of sins (Mtt 3:6, 1Jn 1:8-9). Berkhof (1969:183ff) asserts that since sin brings conflict, all sinners (not the righteous) are called upon to *metanoia*. Where there is sin, the wrath of God can never be turned away (Strauss 2010:3).

Generally *metanoia* denotes the inward change of mind, affections, convictions and commitment. It means that one belief has to be changed to another belief. Jesus Christ desires every sinner to change his mind so that they will not perish (2 Pet 3:9, Act 20:21). This change of mind is the foundation of the Christian’s new life (Heb 6:1, Dunn 1996:1007). *Metanoia* is both God’s gift and man’s responsibility; it is dualistic just as Jesus is both God and man. It can also be a means to achieve maximum reconciliation between people. The “turning around” in previous values and lifestyle is highlighted by the stories of the rich young man (Mk 10:17-22) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:8). *Metanoia* therefore points to the inward conscious change of the believer (Berkhof 1969:183) to become like a child that is to acknowledge one’s immaturity before God, one’s inability to live life apart from God (Dunn 1996:1007-8), to accept one’s dependability upon God. The apostates crucify afresh the Son of God on the cross (Heb 6:5-6, Berkhof 1946:482).

This now brings in the full subjective aspect of the atonement. However while the subjective theories of atonement presupposes a serious change towards righteousness or conformity with what is right, if taken alone they yield two possible problems namely: how it is that such a lifestyle becomes possible while it seems not possible before this
commitment and how failings in the Christian life particularly past sins could be dealt with. Williams, D. (2008:233) suggests that this problem could be solved in two ways. First as a Christian believer, one is not obligated to keep the law as he had been previously. This is not solution as even under no actual obligation the law still indicates what God’s desires are in principle. A Christian believer knows what is right, what is expected of him, but seems powerless to obey (Rom 7:7). Second, complementing the loss of the need to keep the law because of union with the death of Christ, union with the life of Christ means that the power of resurrection is also available to the Christian believer. The Apostle Paul asserts:

He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through
his spirit which dwells in you, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in
you (Rom 8:11).

The argument here is that the Spirit who enables the relationship between Christ and the Christian believer by virtue of his essential presence will also give power over trials and temptations and to do the works of God. It is the union with the victorious resurrection of Christ that is the means of that metanoia, repentance, for it is the only way of empowering a lifestyle desired by God the Father. Real obedience is possible only because of this union with Jesus Christ. Works are not the means of salvation but the result of the same union with Christ; they follow and demonstrate the existence of the faith that unites the believer to God.

The Apostle Paul, Augustine and Luther, Calvin as well as other scholars strongly insisted that salvation is a gift of God and that the Christian believer could not contribute
anything to salvation (Driver 1986:189-190). It is all by the grace of God. It is the intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that is at heart of salvation; forgiveness enables but does not enact it. The sacrifice to enable forgiveness is totally the action of God not due to people and therefore there is no such a thing as salvation by human works (Eph 2:8-9).

4.3.3 Satisfaction and Forgiveness Aspects

Nevertheless, if the death of Christ fully dealt with sin, why is it that Christian experience is still one of sinning? The Apostle John observes:

If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 Jn 1:8-10)

Williams, D. (2008:233ff) holds that sin after commitment to Christ is different from that one committed before, as in the latter was dealt with by sharing in the death of Christ. Once that death has occurred, sin is no longer relevant, for a dead person cannot be punished. However, once new life is possessed by close relationship to Christ, death is in the past and so that possibility is no longer valid. Sin must still be dealt with as God is holy and the continued relationship cannot tolerate a lack of holiness. The death of Jesus Christ and hence of the Christian believer is still a means of forgiveness (Milne 1982:159).

The Apostle John writes: “He is the expiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2). There is no need for further punishment. This
assumption cannot therefore be considered as automatic as before; John notes the advocacy of Jesus Christ to God the Father so that forgiveness may be applied. It is the efficacy of the cross of Christ that enables forgiveness. This is an event for which the subjective theories often have very little space except to see it as the culmination of a perfect life; for example to be followed in principle and as an expression of perfect love.

Williams, D.(2008:234ff) observes again that it is hard to see why a perfect life had to end in such a way, hardly an attractive example to follow; on the contrary, it is readily seen as necessary if sins were really to be dealt with. Without this, past sins would remain and repentance would be ineffective for salvation. The purpose of the work of redemption on the cross is the restoration of all things under the headship of Christ (Eph 1:10). Christ's death on the cross brought total deliverance from bondage of sin, redemption and reconciliation to God and all people who believe in Jesus (Tambasco 1991:63). At the same time even the new life itself can be seen as means of dealing with sins. Union with Jesus Christ enables obedience to prophetic demands. Dealing with past sins could not be effective without *metanoia*, repentance. Open and deliberate sin, a refusal to repent would sever the intimate relationship with Jesus Christ completely. The writer to the Hebrews warns:

> It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit. And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. If they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame (Heb 6:4-6).
A further criticism to the objective or penal substitution theory is that it appears to drive a wedge between Christ and His Father. The Father’s desire is to punish, which is prevented only by the love of the Son. It was this problem which impressed Aulén (1931:115ff) who therefore saw in the victory of the Son over death that the atonement must be the work of the entire Trinity (cf 2 Cor 5:19). Driver (1986:190-191) observes that salvation was a Trinitarian action resting on the union of the Divine Persons. God the Trinity desires that all mankind be saved (1 Tim 2:4, 2 Pet 3:9). The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning the serious problem of sin and discloses that Jesus is the solution (Jn 16:7-15). This incidentally, can be taken to mean that the doctrine of salvation likewise rests on union, which is the emphasis particularly underlying the classic theory.

It is evident that the difficulties of the objective or penal substitution theory are the again resolved by the fact that a Christian believer is in union with Christ. The classic theory thus relates to the unity of the Trinity. Traditional Trinitarian theology while concurring that all acts of God are acts of the whole Trinity, opera Trinatis ad extra indivisa sunt, usually includes an idea of appropriation, by which specific actions of God are attributed to specific Persons. If this is applied to the atonement, forgiveness is a work of the Son, giving eternal life is a work of the Father (as is in any case, stressed in the classic theory) and repentance is a work of the Spirit. A similar division can apply to the idea of time in relation to salvation in that forgiveness relates to the past, eternal life to the future and change of life to the present.
4.3.4 New Theology: Prophetic Model

The goal of the atonement is confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin leading to union with Christ, sanctification and enjoyment of eternal life and peace. First, the construction of the new theology of confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin in relation to conflict and reconciliation is very significant. These aspects are what Poirier (2006:113ff) calls “the seam through which reconciliation is sewn”. Whenever conflicting parties realize their errors, mistakes or sin; it will always breaks the circle of sin and conflict. Here the research study holds that a better understanding of the atonement entails three aspects namely: the forgiveness of sins, essentially forensic justification, the giving of eternal life by intimate union with Christ and repentance. Repentance commences a process of sanctification. Simple forgiveness (Greek word *aphesis*) is the means to uproot the problem of sin between persons. Forgiveness, *aphesis*, conveys the idea of sending away or letting go (cf Mtt 4:20, 5:24). The answer to the problem of sin will only be obtained through heartfelt confession, repentance and forgiveness. The Bible teaches that God completely forgives sin by His grace alone: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”(Heb10:17). There are to be no limitation to forgiveness (Lk 17:4, Mtt 18:22).

Second, the roles played by the office of Christ in relation to salvation. There are three roles in the office of Christ that again need explanation and application in terms of our salvation here namely: Christ as a prophet confronts the Church with the serious need for change of moral life and its spiritual transformation. The church must preach its
The union between Christ and members of His Church is compared to the union between a husband and a wife, Paul said that it is a mystery” (Eph 5:32). This union is effected by the Holy Spirit. He is the bond and the Seal (Eph 3:16, 4:30) between Jesus Christ and the Christian believer. There is a close relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit more closely than is realized. God desires an extreme mutual inter-course of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, *perichoresis* to be effected. In 1 Corinthians 12:13f, Paul asserts:

> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Jesus Christ dwells in us if his Spirit dwells in us and he dwells in us by the same Spirit. The union with Christ produces a “new and right” attitude of mind as being fundamental to that radical change of behavior that ought to express itself in the lives of all who belong to Christ (I Pet 4:1, Eph 1:4). Calvin (1989:524) saw repentance and forgiveness as a result of that union; this puts the initiative onto the election of God. Driver (1986:190-195) observes that repentance is not just sorrow but includes a turning to God and then issues a changing life. Although repentance is not a cause of forgiveness, this does not happen without it. It is sometimes impossible to be aware of the depths of sin,
and on Psalm 19:12 David is pleading for forgiveness of secret faults. Union with Christ is made possible through the means of forgiveness.

The most important point here is that a blend of atonement theories may be seen as theologically more satisfying in many ways. For instance penal substitution may well be criticized as excessively individualistic and so could be balanced by the corporate emphasis of the classic theory, which could also bring cosmic aspect to the atonement, a factor missing in the prescriptions for personal sins advanced by the other theories. Then the objective theories relate to God’s transcendence, the subjective to His immanence, two poles which as with other aspects, Christian theology has wanted to hold in tension.

These considerations support a brand new model of the atonement with three aspects: forgiveness of sin, union with Christ and repentance basically corresponding to the penal, the classic and the example theories. These aspects must be emphasized because they were the three most common models in the early Church. Even if other theories have been put forward, they can be treated as variants of the three basic ideas.

Letham (1993:174ff) rightly contends:

The idea of satisfaction or penal substitution does not exclude other theories. It is compatible with the conquest theory and can also see subjective change occurring in human beings as a consequence of what Christ did on the cross.

This synthetic model could be as an aspect of a broader theory and by incorporating other aspects into it, one can provide answers to the objections made against them (Williams 2008:233ff). The challenge of the Church is to achieve a better understanding
of this atonement model that could make people break from sin and conflict and grow to become more like Christ. One aspect of the model cannot do without the other dimensions of the theory. Support to this idea could be found in the traditional concept of the “office” of Christ where it is the priestly work of Christ that enables forgiveness; the Kingly work gives eternal life and the prophetic role demands change.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the study has discussed the answer to the question of sin and conflict. There are two models to conflict namely: the Law-court and atonement solutions based on human and divine efforts respectively. Contemporary Christian conflict theories are deficient in reckoning with the God ward dimensions of conflict (Poirier 2006:12f). Most theories and practices come from within the human legal or political professions. What is needed is the spiritual conflict resolution model developed for and practiced in the context of the local Church. We need the atonement model in order to deal with spiritual matters of conflict. The atonement, through confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin and union with Christ, uproots the problem of human sin. The atonement model to conflict resolution addresses better the deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, anger, revenge, lusts and cravings. To be a peacemaker, one need to deal honestly with one’s contribution to sin and conflict (Sande 2004:135). The Apostle Paul once said:

> If a man cleanses himself from sin, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Tim 2:21).
The cleansing process is inspired by Jesus’ promise that He has forgiven our sins and wants to purify us from the idols and habits that cause conflict (1 Jn 1:9). He calls us to cooperate in this process of repentance, self-examination, confession and personal change. This study contends that a full understanding of Jesus Christ’s promises, life, death and resurrection effects salvation, thereby satisfying the issues of the law, justice and the holiness of God. It is the engine that drives the train of reconciliation (Poirier 2006:12-13f). The answer to the problem of sin is Christ’s atonement. Full atonement effects redemption, regeneration and forgiveness undertaking the solution to the problem of sin, as union with Christ undertakes the solution of the problem of the sinner and propitiation undertakes the problem of an offended. This is what it means to be reconciled with God through the atonement.
In this chapter, the study will discuss the general application of the atonement model. The atonement is the only basis of reconciliation of man to God without which “you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17). The problem of sin can be resolved through the means of atonement. The question for discussion will be: how can the life, sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ that occurred almost 2000 years ago affect us in our situation? Is it possible to reconcile conflicting parties within the Church? How can the atonement conception be applied to resolve conflict? The atonement of Christ will be ineffective unless it is applied to the lives of human beings. Biggar (1996:64f) holds that through the means of atonement mankind is forgiven, ransomed, redeemed, adopted and sanctified by Christ’s blood sacrifice on the cross as an expression of God’s grace and love for sinners. It is from God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that reconciliation is actualized between people.

Reconciliation is the Apostle Paul’s great characteristic word and thought in the New Testament. There are three aspects related to reconciliation. First, the goal of atonement is described as bringing reconciliation. Second, reconciliation rests upon atonement as its means (Tambasco 1991:13). The third aspect is that reconciliation is relational. In salvation conception, reconciliation brings change of relationship between God and mankind, the whole human race. The goal of the change of relationship is intimate
personal communion between God and people leading to cessation of conflict and the enjoyment of peace (Forsyth 1910:68-69). The atonement is actualized by the Holy Spirit who unites a person with Jesus Christ and in their intimate relationship, the penalty for the person’s sin is paid both together, so by Christ (Stott 1986:256ff). The Holy Spirit is the one who relates the atonement to the Christian, giving him or her eternal life that is Christ’s by nature. As we relate to God through confession and repentance of sin, forgiveness and sanctification, we relate to one another that removes the causes of sin between persons.

5.1 Actualizing the Offices of Christ

Tambasco (1991:105) holds that the Greek term for peace eirēnē is literally a relational word and synonym for reconciliation. Eirēnē translates the Hebrew word shalom which expresses wholeness or fullness of relationship. It is certainly more than the absence of war, when people hold each other at bay simply because they are not strong enough to win war but continue in feelings of hatred and hostility. Shalom is personal inner harmony, a sense of well-being between peoples. This harmony extends beyond human relationships. It is a harmony enacted between God and humanity and a harmony with all of creation. True shalom exists when one is at peace with oneself, with God, with neighbor and with creation (Jn 14:27, Rom 5:1-5). It ultimately embraces and encompasses all dimensions of Christian life. This peace or reconciliation comes from God through Christ showing once again that it is the divine initiative (Tambasco 1991:106). The establishment of the offices of prophet, priest and king in Israel was the
means of relating to each other: an individual person and the nation as a whole to God (Milne 1982:151).

Williams, D. (2010:124ff) observes that even if the system did not result in ideal society, part of the problem was the character of the individuals who filled the Old Testament roles. While accepting the offices and their failings, Israel looked forward to their being enacted perfectly. They looked towards the coming of a perfect King (a second David 2 Sam 7:12) and a perfect Priest (a new Aaron Heb 9; 10) and a perfect Prophet (a new Moses Deut 18, 34:10, Hos 12:13). It was the coming of Christ that enabled the solution to become effective. He is the one who fulfills the Old Testament roles performing them perfectly. Jesus Christ as King has the authority to adopt Christian believers into the relationship with Him and one another. He once said:

As my Father appointed a Kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat
and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of
Israel (Lk 22:29-30).

The Kingly authority of Christ is perhaps seen in the resurrection in which Christ was victorious as a King over the forces of sin and death, over “principalities and powers” (Col 2:15, Eph 6:12). In the resurrection, Christ has demonstrated that He is really eternal life and can overcome sin and death (Act 2:31, 13:35). Because of His divine nature, it was not possible for Christ to be held by the power of death (Act 2:24).

In any monarchical system, the actions and character of the King directly affect the people. If he is victorious the people benefit, if he is defeated, so are the people. Therefore
because Jesus Christ is King, he gives the benefits of eternal life to his people. Eternal life is not naturally a possession for mortal people, but only of God (2 Tim 6:16). It becomes the possession of Christian believers only in their union with Christ (Jn 17:3). The Apostle Paul argues this in Romans 6:5 that because Christian believers are united with Christ in his resurrection they have eternal life:

> For we have been united together with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection

Because eternal life is Christ’s by nature, a Christian believer has got eternal life immediately after the union (Jn 3:36, 5:24). Although this will come to fruition in the eschatological resurrection, it is the possession of believers as soon as they enter into a relationship with Christ as King and have adoption as children of God.

### 5.1.1 The Role of the Holy Spirit in Relationships

The work of Christ on the cross is the presupposition of the redemption of human character by means of forensic justification: forgiveness of sin, the giving of eternal life through intimate union with Christ and repentance by sanctification (Mackintosh 1920:297f). It is the Holy Spirit who enables this intimate relationship. Jesus Christ spoke of new life received by new birth and connected that with the work of the Spirit (Jn 3:5-6). The fundamental role of the Spirit is enabling intimate relationships between persons. The Holy Spirit plays this noble role as a person. He bears witness, speaks, teaches, guides, converses with Christian believers about the things of God and what He has heard from Jesus Christ (Jn 14:26, 16:12-13, Act 10:19-20). The role of the Holy Spirit is
to soften hearts. The Holy Spirit moves powerfully in the conflicting parties softening the heart to truly hear and believe in what Christ has taught through the word. He moves people to closely relate to one another in love.

A relationship to Christ as King is not one-sided; receiving its benefits involves a response. In return citizens of the kingdom are expected to be loyal to their King, obey his laws and serve the kingdom. The King desires that citizens live in harmony and does what he can to facilitate this. To maintain law and order the King creates and enforces structures that oversee smooth running of the Kingdom. In times of conflict, the king enforces his laws of justice to provide human harmony and reconciliation. The subjects have to follow the example of their king, internalize and apply the law in their lives. They obey his law, his will and in this obedience come order.

Here, there are probably two aspects in relation to reconciliation. First is what Christ has done to facilitate reconciliation between individuals in His action as prophet, priest and king. Second there is the action of the Church in relation to offices of Christ and empowered by the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who internalizes the relationships between Christian believers by promoting brotherly affection, love, reconciliation and peace (Jn 15:26, 16:13-15, 1 Cor 13, 1 Jn 3:11-24).
5.1.2 The Role of the Church in Relationships

Belonging to the kingdom involves conformity to the King and his will. Thus, a relationship to Christ as King does not just give harmony with God only but should result in harmony between people and with the environment. Basically, salvation, union with Christ and repentance should result in a changed lifestyle. As the prophet of Christ, the Church must actually internalize and practice what it preaches by encouraging people to change and become friends (Jn 15:13-15). One of the duties of the early Apostolic Church in obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ was to facilitate fellowship, sharing and to provide social services to the community (Act 2:32-35, Act 6:1-6). What is expected in Malawian and other conflicts is real change more especially at all levels of the economy. Real union is possible through conformity to the will of God. This is possible only if confession and repentance of sin, forgiveness, sacrifice, love and union are facilitated between parties. Such a deliberate radical change in lifestyle and behavior is the purpose of the prophet; whose role is to demand change as well as reformation very paramount in salvation.

This is what Jesus Christ gives to Christian believers. All people who relate to Him will likewise be given eternal life and overcome sin and death. Just as the King exists and rules for the benefit of his subjects, Christian believers enjoy eternal life and Kingdom benefits enhanced by their relationship to God and one another. It is therefore the prophetic role of the Church to actualize and promote good relationships between Christian believers in society so that they can live in peace. The Church must
prophetically be called upon to become a reconciling agent and peacemaker. The writer to the Hebrews exalts Christian believers to make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness (and peace) no one will see Lord (Heb 12:14). Jesus Christ once said:

Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called sons of God (Mtt 5:9)

As with any prophet, Christ communicated the will of God not only by words and teaching but also by deed, so that in imitation of Christ’s obedience to his Father come the obedience of his adopted children as well (Phil 2:5-10). This gives a role to Christ’s life and ministry that neither the penal nor the classic theories can really provide. Jesus Christ as Prophet points out the failings of the people by what he says and demands repentance and lifestyle acceptable to God (Milne 1982:152). The Christian believer is not in the position of Ancient Israel seeking to obey the words of the prophet, but is in union relationship with Jesus Christ the King. From this union, the requirements of God are internalized to the Christian believer as the Prophet Jeremiah says:

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jer 31:33).

The Apostle Paul argues that Christian believers are not compelled outwardly to keep the law but that they should please God by walking according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4-8). The Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. Jesus Christ promises his disciples:
But I tell you the truth, it is good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer (Jn 16:7-10).

This conception solves the basic problem where obedience is required by an external law only. In the Old Testament people could obey the rulers according to the letter of the law but still be disobedient. They could fulfill all their religious obligations outwardly but not please God (Isa 1:10-18). This was again true in the time of Jesus, when at least some Pharisees while meticulous in keeping every detail of the law and tradition, yet displeased God.

Williams, D. (2010:90f, 126ff) holds that the basic sin is not necessarily the transgression of a set of commands but a lack of personal relationship with God. It is only this not disobedience to the law that results in condemnation. Obedience to law comes only after the removal of that basic sin by establishing a personal relationship. The Old Testament law was given as a result of the covenant between God and Israel; Christian believers today are not subject to it. They could generally obey it particularly as it clearly reflects the will of God, but doing so does not save them. It is the relationship with God which brings salvation, because obedience does not come naturally to people, the internalization of the requirements of God by the direct prophetic action of Christ to each Christian believer through the Spirit ought to imply that the Christian believer should be more obedient.
A prophet was not only one who received the message from God and was commanded to deliver it. He was also empowered to give that message. The prophets received the Spirit of God, for that purpose and Christ was enabled to obey God in all things in the same way. The prophetic demand for obedience received by the Christian believer is not an empty demand, but in personal union with Christ, the Christian believers in Malawi and elsewhere also receive the ability to obey what God commands (Milne 1982:151). The prophetic role of the Church is to speak the mind and will of God, to demand change of attitude, lifestyle and behavior among its ranks and the wide society.

Just as two people will assist each other as they work together, so the union with Christ enables the Christian believer get the needed assistance, Christian believers are not alone in their struggle. Through union with Christ, there must be a gradual deepening of relationship and a growing agreement. This is generally known as sanctification, the increasing holiness of life that must be evident in the Christian believers. People do not naturally please God, and so are not naturally in a relationship with Him. The Apostle Paul argues:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom 8:7-8).

This implies that if the relationship of adoption is to happen, there has to be salvation from sin as well as salvation to life. This involves the priestly role of Christ. This does not mean that the priestly work of Christ is limited to His death for us. He continues to represent us before God (Heb 9:24), where He intercedes for us. In the ascended Christ’s presence with God, we are represented in Him before the Father. Sacrifice in the
priestly sense does have a positive side in that it is intended to do real good. Priestly action has another aspect as well. A priest is an intercessor and as such can ask God to act as Creator and re-create. This is an aspect of ministering on behalf of the environment to God. It incidentally follows that such priestly work should rest on personal harmony with animals and inanimate creation (Milne 1982:152ff).

There are two kinds of aspects that facilitate reconciliation namely: first the ones that Christ has done through atonement to assist mankind uproot the problem of sin such as sacrifice, forgiveness, and confession of sin, restitution and sanctification; second are the means that the Church could do to assist conflicting parties to move toward reconciliation and peace for example the common experience, love, pastoral prayer and intercession, church discipline and administration of sacraments.

5.2 Aspects to Remove the Problem of Human Sin

Emil Brunner (in Stott 1986:198) says:

Reconciliation presupposes enmity between parties. To put it more exactly:
reconciliation, real reconciliation, an objective act of reconciliation, presupposes
enmity on both sides; that is, that man is the enemy of God and that God is the enemy
of man.

He goes on to explain that our enmity towards God is seen in our restlessness, ranging from frivolity to open renunciation and hatred of God, while His enmity to us is His wrath. Moreover “God is present in this anger, it is actually His anger”. The point of departure
here is that reconciliation presupposes that one tries to ensure that a person who is angry, distressed and does not seek reconciliation be motivated to renounce his/her enmity (Mtt 5:23). Erickson (1998:901ff) holds that sin is the problem that needs to be removed once for all if people are to live in harmony with each other and enjoy peace. The purpose of Jesus’ death was to rescue people from self-centeredness, human conflict, sin and death.

Stott (1986:340) defines salvation as a rescue operation undertaken for people whose plight of sin is so desperate that they cannot save themselves. In particular, Jesus Christ died to rescue us “out of the present evil age.” Since Christ inaugurated the new age, the two ages overlap. He died to rescue us from the old age and secure our transfer into the new, so that already we might live the sanctified life of the age to come. This life is one of intimate union relationship with God, fellow human beings and creation. But the “subjective atoning” (the change in us) comes first and only then “God is objectively propitiated” (Stott 1986:142).

The discussion will now answer the question of how the problem of sin could be uprooted in Malawi and other places of conflict. Is reconciliation possible between conflicting parties? What could be the tools to be used to resolve conflict? The following are some aspects and tools that the Church and conflicting parties could use to uproot the cause of sin and resolve conflict. These aspects are very significant and must always be at the heart of reconciliation.
5.2.1 The Need for Sacrifice

God is concerned with the spiritual dimension of conflict. The human sinful motivation of conflict such as idolatry, lusts and cravings, sins of bitterness, envy, pride, and covetousness can be uprooted by the atonement. The extreme suffering of Christ for sin on the cross could be described as sacrifice. Where there is no shedding of blood there could be no forgiveness of sin. No death, no life. Life is in the blood. The concept of atonement first advocates the need for extreme sacrifice, an aspect in Objective satisfactory theory of atonement. The aspects sacrifice is significant in salvation. It is the first step to gaining freedom from sin and conflict. Sacrifice is associated with the primary reason for the death of Christ. The purpose of sacrifice is to uproot the barrier of sin between God and humanity which has been created by sin. Christ’s work is directed primarily toward this barrier that is an object reality.

The aspect of sacrifice teaches that a person must make an priestly offering or payment to merit and satisfy God’s justice and holiness (Aulén 1931:98-99f). This requires application of objective understanding of atonement aspects such as: self-denial, fasting discipline, surrendering scarce resources, penance, voluntary service and martyrdom. Because Christ suffered as a sacrifice, we also need to offer our bodies and lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1). Real repentance receives the sacrifice that pleases God the most – the sacrifice of His Son. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:16-17). Retaliation during conflict and persecution is prohibited by Christ himself (Mtt 5:11, 38). We are blessed when reviled
and persecuted and falsely accused for the sake of Christ. We must not resist an evil person and not repay evil for evil but we must repay good for evil (Rom 12:12-20). We must love our enemies and bless those who curse us (Mtt 5:44).

It is the responsibility of every Christian believer to restore the spirit of sacrifice, love and friendship between people who are hostile to one another. Another aspect is that the intervention of Christ as a Priestly Mediator in the crisis of sin brings *shalom* (peace) between God and humanity (Mozley 1962:206). His sacrificial offering resulted in the change of the problem of sin and relationship between God and mankind thereby bringing regeneration by his blood (Mozley 1962:202).

Taking from the example of Jesus Christ, people in conflict must consider self-deprivation, self-limitation, suffering and even death as their calling to resolve conflict. The argument is that we merited nothing to receive salvation, we took no initiative but that God reached out to us in our sinful state. Christ suffered for our redemption. For without the shedding of blood there would be no freedom. Just as Christ paid for our peace with God, we likewise need to pay highly for the cost of our peace with our enemies. We must actually cultivate spirit of self-deprivation and sacrifice in our daily Christian life if we are to be reconciled to God and our neighbor.
5.2.2 The Need for Confession

The words “confess” in both Hebrew and Greek: *yada* and *homologein* have, as in English a twofold reference (Torrance 1996: 219-220). Confession is the second step in gaining freedom from sin and conflict. There is confession of faith in the Lord Jesus and confession of sin. On the one hand, confession means to declare publicly a personal relationship with and allegiance to God. It is an act of open joyful commitment to God in the presence of the world, by which a congregation or individuals bind themselves in loyalty to God and Jesus Christ. Confession of Jesus Christ is linked intimately with the confession of sins. To confess Christ is to confess that “He died for our sins” and conversely to confess one’s sins in real repentance is to look to Christ for forgiveness (1 Jn 1:5-10). Although addressed to God, confession of faith in Jesus should be made publicly “before men” (Mtt 10:32, Lk 12:8, 1 Tim 6:12) by word of mouth (Rom 10: 9f) and may be costly (Mtt 10:32-39, Jn 9:22, 12:42).

Salvation is received by faith in the name of Christ. Work before faith is impossible for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). People must practically respond to what God has given by grace. Even if Christ is received by faith, the relationship has to be developed. While there is much stress that salvation comes only as an act of grace and that a person can do nothing to earn salvation since he is dead spiritually, there is also much that people can do. If there is a positive result in a person it must also be a gift of God. There is great need for confession of “Jesus as Lord” as well as “confession of sin” that includes a commitment to modified lifestyle and behavior.
The requirement of salvation demands change and desires to do good things after a “new heart” which comes with “a willing mind,” (Jer 31:31ff, 2 Cor 5:17). When a person has received life, there is the possibility of action and growth can then come from both God’s grace and from the resulting human response and activity (Jas 2:22ff). To confess implies to acknowledge an error, wrongdoing, or sin that a person has committed with guilt. The Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) engaged in disputes in Malawi must understand the seriousness of sin hence the need for confession.

The aspect of confession of “Jesus as Lord” and of “sin” is very significant if the barrier of sin is to be removed in the lives of many people. Such a practical act of confession in salvation is itself a sacrifice. Confession of sin shows humility and fosters inward determination to forget what happened in the past and forge ahead towards genuine reconciliation (Keathley et al 2008:180). There is only one sin for which the Father does not promise forgiveness: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:28, Mtt 12:32).

### 5.2.3 The Need for Repentance

The repentance (Greek word- *metanoia*); as a practical human action could be one of the aspects used to remove sin. Repentance is the third step in gaining freedom from sin and conflict (Sande 2004:118). John the Baptist preached it (Mtt 3:1-8, Mk 1:15). Berkhof (1969:183ff) asserts that since sin brings conflict, all sinners not the righteous are called
upon to *metanoia*. The apostates crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and cannot be renewed to repentance (Heb 6:5-6, Berkhof 1946:482). Dunn (1996:1007ff) argues that *Metanoia* is both God’s gift and man’s responsibility; it is dualistic just as Jesus is both God and man. The “turning around” in previous behavior and lifestyle is highlighted by the stories of the rich young man (Mk 10:17-22) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:8). *Metanoia* therefore points to the inward conscious change of the believer (Berkhof 1969:183) to become like a child that is to acknowledge one’s immaturity before God, one’s inability to live life apart from God (Dunn 1996:1007-8), to accept one’s dependability upon God.

People engaged in unpleasant quarrel and conflicts are challenged to renounce their sin and repent. They must address their personal, heart troubling issues that give rise to conflict. Both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod and all congregations that are engaged in disputes over boundary must offer restitution and reparation for their damage. In light of Scripture they must confront their selfish ambition, vain conceit and other impure motives. All parties in conflict must look out for the interest of others. A biblical change of attitude, lifestyle and behavior is characterized by seeking God’s interests in God’s Word, a thirst for God’s justice, and mercy, a hunger for God’s will, wisdom and peace (Poirier 2006:163). The Apostle Paul sternly warns about the problem of sinful behavior in Galatians 5:19:

> The acts of sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, idolatry, and witchcraft; pride, arrogance, hatred, discord, fits of rage, selfish ambition, jealousy, impurity, debauchery, dissensions, faction, envy and drunkenness, orgies and the like, I warn you as I did before, that those who like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
Where there is sin, the wrath of God can never be turned away; it costs life (Strauss 2010:3). The Church and conflicting parties must engage themselves with the message of repentance of sin if they are to retain their saltiness and integrity in Malawi. The Prophetic demand for change of behavior and lifestyle must be obeyed. We must all repent and believe in the Gospel for time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mk 1:14-15). The Apostles of Jesus Christ are always true to Jesus Christ’s Great Commission and the unfaithful churches must repent (Acts 2:38, 3:17, 17:30, Rev 3:5, 16).

5.2.4 The Need for Forgiveness

Another aspect used to remove the problem of sin between persons is forgiveness (Greek *aphesis*). Forgiveness is the fourth step toward gaining freedom from the bondage of sin and conflict. The most common term used in the New Testament (NT) for forgiveness is *aphesis*. It conveys the idea of sending away or letting go. Hodgson (1951:62) defines forgiveness as an activity in which the injured man can be engaged irrespective of the continuing attitude of his injurer. It may be that the man who has done the wrong cannot be forgiven until he has repented of it, but the injured party need not wait for that before doing the forgiving. Forgiveness has the power to uproot and get rid of emotions of sin that bring conflict.

Hodgson (1951:63) argues that even while the villain is triumphantly gloating over the success of his misdeed, his victim can be so enduring the pain he has caused as not
only to absorb and cut short its power to produce further evil, but to make it contribute to the increase of creation’s goodness. Stott (1986:87) questions that why should our forgiveness depend on Christ’s death? Why does God not simply forgive us without the necessity of the cross? Why can’t God practice what he preaches and be equally generous? The answers to such inquiries could be taken from what the word God speaks about the holiness, nature and the character of God. God refuses to condone sin and His wrath needs satisfaction by way of the penalty.

At the cross in His holy love God through Christ paid the full penalty of our disobedience. He bore the judgment we deserve in order to bring us forgiveness we do not deserve. On the cross the divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled. God’s holy love was “satisfied.” If we sin against one another, we are required to forgive one another. We are warned of dire consequences if we refuse, God also will not forgive our sins (Mtt 6:14-15). Jesus taught us to pray: “Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” With the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Mtt 7:2). Therefore forgiveness is to us the plainest duty; to God it is the profoundest of problems.

The Bible teaches that God completely forgives sin by His grace alone. In Mark 11:25-26 we read:

   And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

The initiative to forgiveness is with God and it comes in place of punishment offered to sinners who repent (2 Cor 12:13, Col 2:13). Hodgson (1951:64) holds that to say, “I can’t
forgive so and so until he is sorry” is both un-Christian and untrue. Our Christian duty is to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ that when a person repents he must find forgiveness, already effected, ready and waiting by the grace of God. Right understanding of forgiveness is one way in which the power of sin in the world can be neutralized, absorbed and be brought to nothing.

Forgiveness must be practiced between people (Hodgson 1951:62-63). There are to be no limitations to forgiveness between Christian people. It is to be seven times and until seventy times seven (Lk 17:4, Mtt 18:22). Forgiveness is unlimited. It must be the way of life for every Christian. Therefore forgiveness as well as justification in the conception of salvation is the tool that reveals the love of God (Eph 2:7-9). God in His mercy forgives sinners and adopts them as His children. In His love God not only declares in forensic sense sinful individuals but also makes them righteous in the process of sanctification (Eph 2:8-9). The Church must preach and teach the message of repentance and forgiveness of sin if people are to receive salvation and healing of the souls (Ps 51: 1-13, Mk 2:5-17 Mtt 9:5f, Ja 5: 13-18).

5.2.5 The Need for Restitution and Reparation

Restitution and reparation are the last steps toward gaining freedom from sin and conflict. If repentance, confession, regeneration and salvation are not accompanied by restitution and reparation then whatever follows becomes hypocrisy. If they are done with sincerity, they should culminate in change and an improvement of behavior. These are
aspects in both the subjective and classic theories of atonement. They complete one another. For example in the Old Testament (OT) God demands restitution to be taken as a condition for restoration (Ex 21:19ff, 22:2-7, Lev 25ff.), in the case of land, it was returned to the original owners and in the year of jubilee in Israel all slaves were freed at the sound of the horn on the tenth day of the seventh month. The jubilee was an institution which effected both justice and mercy. In Israel the jubilee was year began on the Day of Atonement when the annual sacrifice for sin was made by the shedding of the blood of thousands of animals.

In Christ’s death, the year of jubilee was fulfilled (Isa 61:1-2, Lk 4:18-21) and a sacrificial/restitution price as may be suggested, was paid. The main objective was economic restoration and personal liberation which shows some elements satisfactory theory of atonement. Repayment or redressing of the wrong is not compulsory otherwise it only leads to negligence and carelessness. The essence of the concept is to restore the broken relationship and bring about salvation and peace between people in the Church and society.

Restitution and reparation aspects demand that the perpetrator must compensate the victim or be compensated for the irreparable damage of psychological human degradation and barbaric treatment he or she suffered under the inhuman treatment of the opponent and vice versa (Abe 1996:8-10). In the New Testament, Zacchaeus after the encounter with Jesus was willing to pay back four times the amount he took (Lk 19:1-10).
5.2.6 The Need for Sanctification

The Church and conflicting parties must ask God for the serious heartfelt process of sanctification through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification must be taught as the necessary consequence of justification. There is no justification without sanctification or the view of faith is defective. A forensic declaration of holiness in justification must be followed by the life of the Christian actually becoming holy. It is distinct from justification; sanctification is commonly understood as the process by which a person becomes better, more excellent. Sanctification is the inward process of making holy. The holiness of Jesus is “impacted” in the life of the Christian believer. In sanctification Christ comes in the heart of the sinner starts the process of developing and growing, purging and pruning (Williams, D. 2010:125f).

In sanctification the Holy Spirit sanctifies by drawing the attention of conflicting parties to Christ. One of the chief roles of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and in this process a person is motivated to improve in his or her spiritual life. The Holy Spirit also empowers a person to overcome temptation and sin. He also guides and gives direction into what are correct decisions in moral and ethical choices. Most importantly the Holy Spirit gives a burning desire to please God, effectively a new motivation. So He enables resistance to sin and conflict. The union with Christ is sealed by power of the Holy Spirit through sanctification (Eph 4:30, 1 Jn 2:20, 27). Jesus Christ is our holiness (I Cor 1:30). He is the only full Holy Person and we can share in it by believing in Christ (Ferguson

Driver (1986:27-28) asserts that the benefits of justification such as forgiveness of sins, receipt of the gift of eternal life and an assurance of a place in heaven, should be separated from sanctification that are the development and improvement of our life on earth. Salvation is not limited to heaven only but includes new life in this world. Sanctification pertains to the most crucial needs of the human beings today. Justification is negative, being rid of sins; sanctification is positive, developing life of Christian people in the present situation. The Church must pray for more sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit to conquer the challenges of sin and conflict.

Salvation as well as the forgiveness of sin is received by faith in the name of Christ. Work before faith is impossible for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). People must practically respond to what God has given by grace. Even if Christ is received by faith, the relationship has to be developed. While there is much stress on that salvation comes only as an act of grace and that a person can do nothing to earn salvation since he is dead spiritually, there is much that people can do. If there is a positive result in a person it must also be a gift of God.

Because the Spirit of Christ, who is in and with us, potentially or actually, in time and eternity, is the “experienced” spirit of the perfected man Jesus Christ, the possibility of our ultimate perfection is established. This requires a turning away from all self-
centeredness which excludes others, and freely relating with love, worship, and respect
to God, humankind, and our environment, in due proportion. This is the proper end of all
human existence, a morally and religiously colored eudemonism, a true and worthy
“hope of happiness” (White 1991:54).

White (1991:54-55) holds that God in Christ does the great things we cannot do
ourselves, yet by God’s grace we live a life of response and obedience to the act in
Christ. We always follow the example of Jesus Christ. The most obvious analogies could
be drawn from intimate interpersonal relationship where we gain some inkling of the
process required. For even between fellow human beings, limited on both sides by the
masks and constraints of imperfect spiritual and physical expression, a close relationship
can significantly change one or both parties. More specifically, in a parent-child
relationship, the experience of the one may draw the other through into the same
maturity, whether it is in the business of learning to swim, drive a car, or learning to pray.
This kind of relationship is not achieved merely by imitation of an external exemplar; it is
precisely by the dynamics of close personal union at every level of being that this occurs.
It is not just by one individual’s efforts to follow another, but some sort of “incorporation”
into another person that we are changed (White 1991:55). Just as our identity,
individually and collectively, is chiefly determined by the interaction of self and other
selves, so will our capacity to change also be determined in the same way.
5.3 The Positive Aspects to establish Relationships

Stott (1958:71) asserts that man’s highest destiny is to know God, to be in personal relationship with Him. Since God is a relational God, the establishment of positive relationships and partnerships is at the heart of God. Our chief claim to nobility is that we were made in the image of God, therefore capable of knowing him. Jesus Christ said to his disciples:

   Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (Jn 15:13-15).

In relation to proper understanding of salvation the following could be some aspects to establish positive partnerships and relationships between persons.

5.3.1 The Common Experience Aspect

White (1991:64) asserts that key aspects of human experience common to virtually individual life are precisely the features that equip individuals to share a common humanity. These include self-consciousness, awareness of other persons, an awareness of finitude, death and individuality, sexual identity, suffering, sin, temptation and imagination. To experience them as an individual under any particular circumstance is to be able in principle, to relate to other human individuals of similar phenomenology. In this case for example the death of Christ as full penalty for sin would be ineffective unless it
is applied to the believers who have experienced related or similar phenomenology. To relate effectively will then depend, not on the wide range of particular circumstances experienced but on the emotional, mental and spiritual penetration achieved within those kinds of essential experiences (White 1991:65). Birds of the same feather flock together.

The principle of common experience of salvation and allegiance to Jesus Christ between two estranged individual parties could possibly enhance reconciliation. This is based on the fact that people share in the same personal nature and blessings of God. The nature of God that is mysteriously shared in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit further imputes deeply God’s nature in believers. In turn Christian believers who have the common nature of God will automatically have no cause for conflict. Christian believers who share the same experience of salvation and allegiance to the same God and the Lord Jesus Christ will therefore live in harmony and peace by the sanctification power of the Holy Spirit.

Practically when believers become more sanctified, they will easily embrace one another in love, completely transformed by the peace of God and joy in the Holy Spirit thus making reconciliation between people a reality. A common faith in Jesus Christ was able to bring together those on the opposite sides of the big divisions in the first Church: Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, men and women, the poor and the rich, landowners and foreigners (Gal 3:28cf Jas 2:5-6).
5.3.2 The Love Aspect

According to Stott (1986:212), Christianity offers no glib answers to agonizing questions of the prevailing injustices of the world, personal tragedies, floods, earthquakes and accidents which cost thousands of lives, hunger and poverty on a global scale, tyranny and conflicts, disease and death, the cold vastness of the universe and the sum total of the misery of the centuries. How can these horrors be reconciled with a God of love? Why does God allow them to happen? Christian theology does offer evidence of God’s love, just as historical and objective as the evidence that seems to deny it in the light of which the world’s calamities need to be viewed. The evidence is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, apart from Christ and his cross the world would never have known what true love is. The Apostle John is saying that only one act of pure love, unsullied by any taint of ulterior motive, has ever been performed in the history of the world, namely the self-giving of God in Christ on the cross for undeserving sinners (Jn 3:16, 1 Jn 4:10-11 cf Rom 3:9-10). If the cross may be called a “tragedy,” it was a tragedy that illumines all other tragedies (Stott 1986:213).

The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:1ff says that his confidence in the availability of reconciliation is firm even in the midst of suffering because the foundation of it all is in the love of God shown in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Greek phrase ἡ ἀγαπὴ τοῦ θεοῦ (the love of God) in verse 5 can mean our love for God or God’s love for us (Tambasco 1991:107). He first assures us of the reality of God’s love for God has poured
out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us (verse 5). Second, God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

According to Tambasco (1991:107), one of the most satisfying aspects of the gospel is the way in which it combines the objective and the subjective, the historical and the experimental, the work of God’s Son and the work of the God’s Spirit. We may know that God loves us, Paul says, both because he has proved his love in history through the death of his Son, and because he continuously pours it into our hearts through the indwelling of his Spirit who confirms his own inward and personal witness, as he floods our hearts with knowledge that we are loved (Stott 1986:213). It is similar to our experience of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God’s children. A witness He bears when we pray, He enables us to cry Abba Father, because then we know ourselves to be God’s justified, reconcile, redeemed and beloved children (Rom 8:15-16, 1 Jn 4:7).

In the entire New Testament, the Christian community is the locus of both divine and human reconciliation manifested in fellowships and becomes the temple of God. In reality, in the New Testament both temple and sacrifice are spiritualized and applied to the life of the new people of God. In the writings of both Paul and Peter, as well as Hebrews, sacrifice becomes a motif for understanding the nature of life in the Christian community-praising God, doing good to others and living in communion with others, which includes the dimension of economic sharing (Rom 12:1-2, 1 Pet 2:4-10, Heb
Christian salvation means nothing unless it develops into a love relationship that is at least harmonious and peaceful among people. The Apostle John says:

For that love covers a multitude of sins and there is no fear in love (1 Jn 4:10-20).

It is the responsibility of every Christian believer to restore the spirit of love and friendship between people who are hostile to each other. Another aspect is that the intervention of Christ as a Mediator in the crisis of sin brings shalom (peace) between God and humanity (Mozley 1962:206). His sacrificial offering resulted in the change of the problem of sin and relationship between God and mankind thereby bringing regeneration by his blood (Mozley 1962:202). The two individual persons or parties have to flexibly change in order to accommodate each other in mutual love (Scott 2008:70).

The Apostle John maintains:

If someone says “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 Jn 4:20-21).

The aspect of unmerited love is also significant in salvation. Love is the means that assists conflicting parties to move towards reconciliation. The argument is that we merited nothing to receive salvation took no initiative but that God reached out to us in our sinful state. Christ suffered for our redemption. Without the mercy and love of God there could be no forgiveness of sin (Jn 3:16). Just as Christ paid for our peace with God out of His love for creation, we too need to pay highly for the cost of our peace with our
enemies. The Church must actually cultivate the spirit of love and servant hood if she is
to be reconciled to God and neighbor.

5.3.3 The Prayer and Intercession

The other aspect that enhances to establish positive relationship between people could be prayer and intercession. Prayer, worship and deep intercession are the means of expressing our feelings and thoughts to God about the situation in which we find ourselves. In prayer, worship and intercession we bring to the consciousness of God; all our hopes, fears, frustrations, the selfishness, courage and our cowardice, the love and joy that we find within ourselves. The full horror of pain inflicted by the powers of evil in the Malawian Church can be challenged only through prayer for there is nothing impossible with God (Jer 32:17 Lk 1:37, Mtt 19;26). People who do not pray together cannot walk together. The Prophet Amos asks: “Can two walk together, unless they agree?” (in prayer Amo 3:3).

The Ministries of reconciliation and peace call for serious prayer and intercession. Poirier (2006:272) asserts that Churches and faith communities must seriously think of how and what to pray for. Pastoral prayer ought to be shaped by the Gospel of peace just as the Psalmist encourages us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and Church:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; May those who love you be secure. May there be
peace within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my brothers
and sisters, I will say, Peace be within you (Psa 122:6-8).
The Churches in Malawi must regularly pray in worship services for reconciliation and peace - peace within the individual Church, among her officers and leaders. The Church must pray for reconciliation and peace in marriages, families, neighborhood, work environments, schools and universities, cities, and countries of the world. And not forget to pray for peace for missionaries. Conflict troubled and eventually divided the first mission team in the New Testament when Paul and Barnabas sharply disagreed over the selection of Mark as fellow missionary (Acts 15:36-41). Conflict weakens and divides many Churches and missionaries today. They desperately need our prayers for reconciliation and peace.

The agenda for prayer within Malawian Churches could reverse all negative tendencies such as the castigation of one another, character assassination, jealousy, witchcraft, poverty and violence that the politicians and Churches leaders inherited from colonialism and dictatorship. This ministry of Prayer and Intercession attracts the hostility of the devil, yet the Lord Jesus once said:

> I saw Satan fall like lighting from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you (Lk 10:18-19).

There is great need for national soul researching, fasting, repentance and asking for forgiveness from God and one another. Our Christian colleagues in South Africa for example did it to facilitate healing of past wounds and national reconciliation. One Volume of the TRC in South Africa reveals:

> Reconciliation is not about being cosy; it is not about pretending that things were other
than they were. Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing reality, is not true reconciliation and will not last (Pedro 2007:160).

The entire Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) is called upon to engage prayer and intercession without ceasing for individual Church ministries (Jn 14:14, 1 Thes 4:16-17). Pastoral prayer is therefore one of the means that could assist conflicting parties to move toward reconciliation, friendship and peace.

5.3.4 The Church Discipline

Poirier (2006:220ff) holds that Church discipline is another means of assisting conflicting parties to move toward reconciliation. The Church is called not only to a ministry of reconciliation, but a ministry of nurture to those within her gates. We do not conceive of discipline as a normal aspect of the Christian life such as a summary of disciplined Christian living consisting of self-discipline, regular and frequent encouragement, admonition, warning, prayer, preaching, heeding God’s Word, pursuit of righteousness instead we have reduced discipline to a singular act of punishment and relegated it to the termination of fellowship within the Christian community or excommunication. The best definition of discipline could be that we are all under discipline, for everyone in Christ is a disciple of Christ, and disciples are simply people under discipline. The Church Reformers in the 16th Century gave great impetus toward the recovery of Church discipline citing three things upon which the safety of the Church is founded and supported namely: doctrine, discipline and sacraments (Poirier 2006:224). All Reformers
saw discipline not only as a mark of the essence (esse) of a true Church, but as something necessary for its well-being (bene esse).

There are three things upon which the safety of the Church is founded and supported: doctrine, discipleship and the sacraments. Disciples of Christ are people under Christ’s discipline, even as Christ Himself was under His Father’s discipline during His earthly pilgrimage. Christ learned the discipline of obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8f, 12:5-13f). For Jesus Christ, discipline rests upon a profound view of God’s holiness and sin. Church discipline is not about having a censorious or hypercritical attitude toward the less righteous. It is about taking human sin seriously. Sin is against God, neighbor and self. Sin is lawlessness and it is the seed of conflict and destruction. If unchecked sin mocks God, turns the Church into a hothouse for more sin and consigns the sinner to hell. We must not fail to take sin seriously nor neglect the exercise of discipline.

As God’s people under God’s discipline, we are people bound to God’s covenant word. We ought to conform our lives to the Lord by learning self-discipline. Our standards, morals, goals, desires, and entire philosophy of life change when we enter Christ’s Church and hear God’s word. We no longer take our cues from the culture or our own individual wants and desires, but we are now led by God’s word. Church discipline brings order and sanity, it promotes reconciliation and peace.
5.3.5 The Church Sacraments

The last aspect for our discussion that could positively establish relationship between persons is regular partaking of the sacraments. Erickson (1998:1015-1024) holds that the sacraments are the means of grace by which salvation and reconciliation are brought about and effected. If we desire to receive salvation and reconciliation, we must receive the sacraments. Erickson (1998:1021) argues that Sacramentalists, in an attempt to avoid the accusation that they view sacraments as magical, as having an automatic effect in and of themselves; stress that sacraments are objectively efficacious, that they confer the grace needed, but that a certain disposition is required of the recipient. The recipient must remove any obstacle to reception of the grace of God. In other words, the sacrament will avail, *ex opere operato*, if it is not resisted or objected to by the recipient. This makes faith, even saving faith rather passive. It is an intellectual acquiescence. The type of faith that is required in order to receive the grace of God is much more active (cf Jas 2:18-26). Active faith of the Apostles in Acts calls for a positive seizing upon God’s promises and for total commitment (Erickson 1998:1021).

5.3.5.1 The General Protestants’ View

Protestant Churches have traditionally referred to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as “sacraments of the gospel” because they dramatize the central truths of the Good news. Sometimes they are called “sacraments of grace” because they set forth visibly God’s gracious saving initiative (Stott 1986:258-259). Both expressions are correct since the
primary movement that the gospel sacraments embody is from God to man, not man to God. The application of water in baptism represents either cleansing from sin and the outpouring of the Spirit (if it is administered by sprinkling or pouring) or sharing Christ’s death and resurrection (by immersion) or both. We do not baptize ourselves. We submit to baptism, and the action done to us symbolizes the saving work of Christ.

In the Lord’s Supper, similarly, the essential drama consists of the taking, blessing, breaking and giving of bread; the taking, blessing, pouring and giving of wine. Stott (1986:258-59) asserts that the Christian community is a community of celebration. The Lord’s Supper that is equivalent to the Passover celebrates the liberation from the situation of the past. The Lord’s Supper is a continuous Christian life festival. It is therefore central to the Church’s life of celebration. The bread and the wine of this Christian festival oblige us to look back to the cross of Christ and to recall with gratitude what he suffered and accomplished there for us.

We do not (should not) administer the elements to ourselves. They are given to us; we receive them. And as we eat the bread and drink the wine physically, so spiritually by faith we feed on Christ crucified in our hearts. Thus, in both sacraments we are more or less passive, recipients not donors, beneficiaries not benefactors. At the same time, baptism is recognized as an appropriate occasion for the confession of faith, and the Lord’s Supper for the offering of thanksgiving (Stott 1986:258-259). Hence there is an increasing popular use of “Eucharist” (eucharistia, thanksgiving) as a name for the Lord’s
Supper. And since “sacrifice” is another word for “offer,” it is not surprising that the term “eucharistic sacrifice” came to be invented.

5.3.5.2 Calvinistic View

Calvin taught two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. He differed from sacramentalists who believed that the sacraments were a means of receiving justifying grace (Zachman 2006:132f). Rather, they are the badges, or marks, of Christian profession, testifying to God’s grace. Calvin was a paedobaptist, believing that infants were the proper objects of baptism. He differed from Catholic and Lutheran paedobaptists in arguing that baptism did not regenerate infants (Warfield 1981:97ff). Rather, it symbolized entrance into the New Covenant, just as circumcision did for the Old Covenant. His argument for infant baptism draws many parallels between the two signs. Whereas Luther and the Catholic Church believed that Christ’s body was literally present in the Eucharist and Zwingli taught that the Lord’s Supper was a mere memorial, Calvin took a middle ground between the two positions.

The elements were a symbol and therefore could not be the thing they signified; the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation confused the symbol and the substance (Warfield 1981:97ff). On the other hand, Zwingli’s memorials divorced symbol and substance completely. Calvin taught that when one receives the bread and the wine, which are literal food and drink, in a spiritual sense he receives the spiritual food and
drink of the Christian believer. Christ is spiritually present when the Eucharist is received in faith (Zachman 2006:137f).

Baptism is an initiation. It is a sign of our union with Christ by it our breach with sin. We die to sin and we can no longer live in it for we are baptized into Christ’s death (Rom 6:2-3). Baptism is also a means of discipline. It marks a man, woman or child as distinct and separate from sin and the world. It marks our belonging to a new people—God’s family. Baptism is a badge of being a disciple— a person under Christ’s discipline. The Lord’s Supper is an ongoing and maturing sacrament. When it is administered, each communing member is called to examine and judge himself or herself as sinners needing Christ (1Cor 11:27-28). The Lord’s Supper then is a regular means of conforming our lives to Christ’s discipline and a major part of that process is the recognition that we are members of one body, one faith, one Spirit, one Father and one Lord (Eph 4:4-6). We are disciples who sup not only with the Lord but also with each other, and by it we express our unity in discipline. This implies therefore that sacraments are the means of facilitating and enhancing salvation, reconciliation, fellowship and peace.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the study has discussed the general application of the atonement model. The atonement is the only basis of reconciliation of man to God in sin and conflict. The atonement of Christ will be ineffective unless it is applied to the lives of human beings.
Biggar (1996:64f) holds that through the means of atonement mankind is forgiven, ransomed and redeemed by Christ’s blood sacrifice on the cross as an expression of God’s grace and love for sinners. Sacrifice, confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin, sanctification and restitution are some of the tools used to uproot sin. Sande (2004:118) describes them as steps in gaining freedom from sin and conflict. It literally means to change the way one thinks, behaves and acts. The evidence of sincere repentance is willingness to thoroughly examine oneself in order to uncover mistakes and sins. Common allegiance to Christ, love, prayer, Church discipline and sacraments also facilitate relationship and reconciliation with God and with neighbors. By the partaking of the sacraments Christians enjoy fellowship; become united with Christ and one to another in love.

It is by the means of the God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that reconciliation is actualized between people. There are three aspects related to reconciliation. First, the goal of Christ’s work is described as bringing reconciliation. Second, reconciliation rests upon atonement as its means (Tambasco 1991:13). The third aspect is that reconciliation is relational. In salvation, reconciliation brings change of relationship between God and mankind, the whole human race. The goal of the change of relationship is intimate personal communion between God and people leading to cessation of conflict and the enjoyment peace (Forsyth 1910:68-69). The Holy Spirit is the one who relates the atonement to the Christian, giving him or her eternal life that is Christ’s by nature. As we relate to God through confession and repentance of sin,
forgiveness and sanctification, we relate to one another that removes the causes of sin between persons.

Our salvation is multifaceted involving each aspect of the office of Christ in regard to the problem of sin. Human sins must be forgiven effected by the priestly death on the cross, eternal life received by union with Christ specifically his divine nature, manifested in his Kingly victory over sin, evil forces and death in the resurrection (Aulén 1931: 20ff, 115ff, Act 2:24) and the union presupposes an obedience to the prophetic demands of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15). All the three roles of priest, king and prophet must interact in the Ministry of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi; none should be overlooked because they are essential for complete application of the atonement. Packer (1995:126) holds that the system of the Augustinians holiness was “hard-working” and simply yielding to God for sanctification is ineffective and it amounts to laziness. Without effort, sanctification is unlikely to achieve any results; otherwise it will produce “nominal” and immature Christian believers in our Church.

The Church must prophetically be engaged in warfare; she must be fighting against the devil and spiritual forces of darkness (Eph 6:12-17, 1 Pet 5:8-9 Jas 4:7) and against her own desires (Gal 5:17). Victory must be certain as a result of the progressive action of irresistible grace. Sanctification must therefore be an ongoing practical process of completing salvation. For initial salvation, only faith must be needed, but for final salvation works or effort must also be encouraged. A strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14) for it is the “pure in heart” who will see God (Mtt 5:8).
Salvation pertains to the most crucial need of the human person—reconciliation with God and neighbor. In salvation aspect people must decide on whether to forgive and reconcile with their one-time adversaries. To achieve reconciliation and peace people must draw from God’s atonement, confess with heart-felt remorse the wrong done, and prayerfully forgive or be forgiven, one from another. To be a peacemaker, one need to deal honestly with one’s contribution to sin and conflict (Sande 2004:135). The Apostle Paul once said:

If a man cleanses himself from sin, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Tim 2:21).

The cleansing process is inspired by Jesus’ promise that He has forgiven our sins and wants to purify us from the idols and habits that cause conflict (1 Jn 1:9). He calls us to cooperate in this process of repentance, self-examination, confession and personal change. We need to change, develop a lifestyle and behavior which facilitates good relationships and partnerships. This study holds that a full understanding of Jesus Christ’s promises, life, death and resurrection effects salvation. However salvation is a gift received by grace but holiness is genuinely necessary for final salvation. Works are also necessary for final salvation, reconciliation and peace. Mackintosh (1920:310) observes that if the Church’s raison dèter is the doing of God’s will on earth as it is done in heaven, the Church must rightly be called “a society for the improvement of morality.”
CHAPTER 6

RECONCILIATION IN MALAWI

The reasons for both the Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods to build congregations and prayer houses in each other’s territory are not convincing, they are not Gospel truth. It was said that they were following their “children”, to preach to them in their “own mother language” because they do not understand Tumbuka, Tonga and Chewa. What must be established is that the CCAP like other Churches elsewhere have been seriously affected and infected by sin. The problems of sin and conflict are deeply rooted in Malawi. Sinful motivations which lead to disputes are truly idolatry, lusts, and cravings. Most people attribute the disputes within the Church due to the weak and corruptible character of church leaders. These are manifested in the Church due to political, economic and power drunkenness of Church leaders. As a result disgruntled members leave the Church and join Charismatic and Pentecostal “Holiness” Churches. Some stop giving their resources to the Church and others are not interested to attend Church Services. At the same time lack of vision, loss of theological direction and many more factors could be the driving force behind the boundary disputes.

The Church needs spiritual emancipation. How can the Church in Malawi change people’s attitudes and habits that lead to sin and conflict? Is it really possible to achieve genuine reconciliation in Malawi? Can atonement model say anything? How can the concepts of confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin, union with Christ and
sanctification be applied to resolve these specific disputes in Malawi? Whatever motivating factors behind the question of conflict between the rival Synods, it calls for an urgent practical solution to be applied within the Malawian context. Where do we begin?

First, the study begins by asserting that salvation is the application of atonement in lives of human beings (Erickson 1998:902). The argument is that the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods engaged in boundary disputes must really practice what atonement aspects advocate (Ja 1:22). Christianity is not just a creed, it involves action. What is needed in Conflict resolution is the restoration of broken relationships between God and creation, the removal of rupture within human race in order to facilitate reconciliation. Second, we must apply reconciliation in Malawian context to mean restoration, making amendments, settlement of an argument of boundary dispute and bringing back lost relationship between God and the CCAP Synods and among them.

Here the research study will discuss the application of confession, forgiveness, restitution and union with Christ, drawn from objective, subjective and classic aspects of atonement in uprooting the problem of sin which brings conflict and conclude with relevant recommendations.

6.1 Toward the Theology of Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the atonement, we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Mtt 5:9, Lk
by reminding them of their baptism and what it signifies:

   The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ and His divine solution. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink( 1 Cor 12:12-13).

The key idea is that whatever conflict exists between people in Malawi, God has already provided a divine solution for resolving conflict. He has given the Church a theological model that meets not only their interests, but God’s as well. Thus behind opposing positions lie shared and compatible interests (Scott 2008:44). The theology of conflict resolution is a theology of change. This change involves radical change of the heart, attitude and behavior through repentance, confession and forgiveness of sin. Repentance, confession and forgiveness of sin are indeed the meat and potatoes of reconciliation (Poirier 2006:277ff). Christian salvation has to include this new method of uprooting sin which causes man’s separation from God and neighbor. Union with Christ is union in His peace (Rom 5:1-2). The call for reconciliation and peace must be the challenge for the Church to be united with Christ in His life, death and resurrection. Consequently, in Colossians Paul grounds the command to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” in reality that “as members of one body you are called to peace.”

Therefore a full understanding of the atonement aspects drawn from objective, subjective and classic ideas namely: the forgiveness of sins, essentially forensic justification, the giving of eternal life by intimate union with Christ and a repentance that commences a
process of sanctification, could be a means of resolving the problem of human sin. The central truth of salvation is that God already made a way in Jesus Christ on the cross to rescue humanity, overcome evil and restore the broken relationship between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi without compromising his justice and holiness.

Sin committed during conflict between the two opposing Synods in Malawi cannot just be forgotten, but must be expiated. God cannot simply put the sin aside; it must be propitiated (Milne 1982:155-f). This theology makes Christian salvation meaningful and Christian believers fully human. Through Christ’s atonement; the aspects of salvation when fully interpreted, applied and complemented in various forms; a state of sin, estrangement and conflict between congregations of the bitter Synods in Malawi could be replaced by one of righteousness, peace and fellowship.

6.2 Application of Reconciliation Approach

For reconciliation to be possibly achieved in Malawi, the study will now briefly reflect and practically apply specific atonement concepts and ideas such as confession, forgiveness, restitution, regeneration, union with Christ and sanctification to resolve the problem of sin which yields disputes in Malawi. It is imperative that the Church must practice these aspects to assist conflicting parties to move toward reconciliation and peace.
6.2.1 Confession in Malawi

Since the ground for conflict within the Church is sin and guilt. In the midst of conflict we must teach afresh our members the nature of true repentance and confession of sin. Every conflict we are in must be the opportunity for self-examination. The Church must work and pray that through the preaching of the Gospel, people could apprehend God’s mercy in Christ and be able to distinguish between regret, real repentance and confession. Attitudes are windows to the idols of our heart (Poirier 2006:119). Our sinful attitudes reveal the deeper disorder of our worship, true confession of sin to a brother or sister requires us to first confess our sin to God. The grace of repentance and confession is given to a person if he draws closer to God and embraces His mercy in Christ. In other words a person who truly confesses his sin to his brother makes much of the application of the atonement for himself. He knows the penalty of his sin has been for by Christ and thus the guilt of his sin can no longer condemn him. Rather clothed in Christ’s righteousness, he is free to approach the throne of grace to receive mercy.

Both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must uproot the sinful attitude which is internal ground for their sins by confession and enter into proper harmony with one another and God. People in conflict often have little room in their thoughts for God. People may use His name but they use it in vain. This tendency to leave God out is evident in the frequent sense of despair we feel in conflict. The Apostle Paul urges the Church in Philippi to urgently reconcile Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:4ff). They must confess their sin one to the other and grant forgiveness only when they both set their
hearts and eyes on the Lord who gave His life for them, is with them and promises them peace (Poirier 2006:121).

The word of God says that true repentance requires an acknowledgement of sin and guilt to a brother (Mtt 5:23-24) but there is no suggestion that confession of private sin must be made to an individual presbyter (Torrance 1996:219-220). It is an avowal of faith in Jesus Christ that can have both the present and eternal eschatological consequences. All congregations in dispute must publicly renounce the personal relationship with evil and liberal allegiances. One cannot have two masters. The Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods must renounce apartheid, tribalism and regionalism within their ranks. Confession in objective understanding means more than mental assent. It implies a decision to pledge oneself by faith in loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord, Messiah and the Son of God who came in the flesh, died, resurrected and ascended into Heaven (Mtt 16:16, 1Jn 4:12, Rom 10:9ff, Phil 2:11).

Reconciliation in Malawi should aim at dealing with the past wrongs in this form of confession of Jesus as Lord and confession of sin. This confession would presuppose the acknowledgement that what Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods did by encroaching into each other’s territory of operation was unacceptable. It was as a result of sins of the flesh such as dishonesty, lewdness, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfishness dissensions, revelries and lack of self control (1 Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). It was really a break of God’s moral law and a breach of all the earlier Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod agreements. The conduct of the two Synods
of the CCAP led to loss of trust among the neighboring congregations. These two opposing Synods must confess sins committed against God and neighbor “for he who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy,” (Prov 28:13). The Apostle John says: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9).

Scriptures also indicate that it is possible to confess sin on behalf of other members of the family, Church, nation and the ancestors (Neh 1:6-9, Dan 9:4-11, Ezr 10). Confession for the whole nation of Israel was done during a special fasting day, when they donned mourning clothes, poured soil on their heads and confessed their own sins and the transgressions of their forefathers. Through this objective method, they both humbled themselves before God and acknowledged their guilt towards their neighbor. This could be done in other fields of life such as in politics, economics and the academic fields of Malawi.

Confession of sin becomes difficult for some people. Adam and Eve tried to shift the blame to somebody else (Gen 3:13f), Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve and even God! Confession requires that people humble themselves and bow down their knees before God and neighbor. Similarly, the entire Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi in its confession must identify itself before many witnesses with the good confession of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. The Malawian Church’s confession of faith and sin will be a sign to demonstrate that “the old
man is dead with Christ” and it is possessed by its Lord, whom it is commissioned to serve.

In her confession, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi (CCAP) must be urged to participate through the Holy Spirit in the vicarious intercession of Christ “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Heb 3:1) who has already confessed our sins on the cross and given praise to God (Heb 2:12, Rom 15: 9, Ps 18: 49, 22:22). This is the only way to rid oneself of the burden of guilt and truly become free. God Himself in his own Son has removed the ground of offence and we receive the reconciliation. It is through the means of expiation that sin of alleged attempted murder of some Livingstonia Church- ministers by Nkhoma Synod’s leaders in Malawi is removed. Confession of sin is one of those factors that distinguish Christianity from other religions and ideologies. Idols do not demand confession; they do not know the concept of guilt or sin but demand unquestioning, blind obedience. Idolatry is a nice easy religion.

6.2.2 Forgiveness in Malawi

The Livingstonia Synod who still cherish the bad experiences in which the former Principal of Nkhoma United Theological College, Rev. S. K. Msiska narrowly escaped death when an angry mob organized by some Church leaders from Nkhoma wanted to kill him, must let go all bad feelings about Nkhoma Synod. In the spirit of reconciliation, the Livingstonia Synod must execute the practical aspects of forgiveness by means of the Holy Spirit. In order to die to all sin which truly blinds the Church to God, she must
confess her own sin before God and people (Stott 1986:256f). This gives the opportunity for both Synods to accept God’s great promises for their life. Biblical forgiveness is modeled upon God’s own forgiveness of us in that we promise the offender not to hold his offense against him.

Morris (1983:139) argues that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to live among men and show us how we ought to live in full humanity. He sent him to die as an atonement to put away sin that brings conflict. Forgiveness is about people created by God to live in relationship with Him and one another. The word of God teaches that God completely forgives sin by His grace alone. The sins of disobedience and rebellion of Nkhoma Synod to General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), that were committed during a dispute at Majiga Prayer House in Nkhota kota (attached General Assembly Minutes 1995) must not be remembered at all.

All Christian believers are urged to forgive one another and live in peace within the Church for there is no limitation to forgiveness (Lk 17:4, Mtt 18:22). The Church in Malawi must learn to forgive one another because God does not keep a record of sins. Forgiveness is granted not from a position of weakness but of true moral strength and clarity of vision. Because biblical forgiveness alone recognizes the heinousness of sin against a Holy God, it alone understands the immensity of the gift given in the individual Church’s uttering the words: “I forgive you.”
Poirier (2006:147) asserts that this gift of forgiveness is full payment for sin that Christ has given us. The forgiveness that is won by Christ comes at the price of his death for real offence, for true guilt. God designs forgiveness to take place within His covenant community -the Church the family of God. Forgiveness is possible when the Holy Spirit works in our heart, directing our faith to the person who wronged us for the glory of God. We must grant forgiveness to our enemies and they must accept our forgiveness. In that case we will reflect the depths of our identity as lovers of God, people and restorers of broken relationships in the Church and society. We must be accountable to God and to one another!

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) congregations in Malawi must forgive their opponents because the prophetic ministry demands repentance and forgiveness amongst believers. Forgiveness alone as an aspect of objective atonement, however even if accepted, is not reconciliation, but a willingness to be reconciled: the two parties or individuals have indeed to be brought together in the spirit of love and peace.

6.2.3 Restitution in Malawi

If repentance, confession, regeneration and salvation are not accompanied by restitution then whatever follows becomes hypocrisy. If it is done with sincerity it should culminate in change and an improvement of behavior. For example in the Old Testament (OT) God demands restitution to be taken as a condition for restoration (Ex 21:19ff, 22:2-7, Lev 25ff), in the case of land, it was returned to the original owners and in the year of jubilee
in Israel all slaves were freed at the sound of the horn on the tenth day of the seventh month. The jubilee was an institution which effected both justice and mercy. In Israel the jubilee was year began on the Day of Atonement when the annual sacrifice for sin was made by the shedding of the blood of thousands of animals.

In Christ’s death, the year of jubilee was fulfilled (Isa 61:1-2, Lk 4:18-21) and a sacrificial/restitution price as may be suggested, was paid. The main objective was economic restoration and personal liberation which shows some elements satisfactory theory of atonement. Repayment or redressing of the wrong is not compulsory otherwise it only leads to negligence and carelessness. The essence of the concept is to restore the broken relationship and bring about salvation and peace between people in the Church and society.

Restitution and reparation aspects demand that the perpetrator must compensate the victim or be compensated for the irreparable damage of psychological human degradation and barbaric treatment he or she suffered under the inhuman treatment of the opponent and vice versa (Abe 1996:8-10). In the New Testament, Zacchaeus after the encounter with Jesus was willing to pay back four times the amount he took (Lk 19:1-10). To promote reconciliation in Malawi between Christian believers, the principles of restitution must be applied not only between the two Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, but in all economic sectors of the population. For example, Livingstonia Synod claims that the boundary between the DRC Mission and the Livingstonia Mission from Mchinji to Kungwinyemba, to be the Bua River, because all Tonga-speaking are found
there so Nkhoma Synod could not come to that area. But according to the Nkhoma Synod the boundary here must be the Dwangwa River. Hence the area of dispute is between the Bua and Dwangwa Rivers, a distance of about 35 km. In the spirit of restitution, the land be given back to the original owners or be shared among the surrounding congregations on both sides that have no place to build their church structures (see attached Maps of Malawi).

On the Kasungu side for example, in 1923, the Livingstonia Mission voluntarily handed over out of good will the Chilanga and Tamanda Mission Stations to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission and they agreed on the boundary between them. The Livingstonia Synod says the boundary they had agreed upon is the Dwangwa River while the Nkhoma Synod says the boundary they had agreed upon is the Milenje River. Hence, on the Kasungu side the area of dispute is the entire area between the Dwangwa River and the Milenje River, a distance of close to 45 kilometers (see attached Map of Malawi). Again in the spirit of restitution and reparation; after consultation with traditional chiefs, the land could be returned to the original owners or be shared among the surrounding congregations of both sides of the contention. All land that was taken over illegally and built upon by Nkhoma Synod including Church structures, schools and other investments must be handed over to the original owners of the land.

The same principles of restitution and reparation could be applied to the Livingstonia Synod. All land taken over illegally and built upon by Livingstonia Synod including Churches structures, schools and other investments must similarly be handed over to the
original owners of the land. The perpetrator Churches must propitiate their opponents for the gross humiliation meted out to their congregations for the sake of peace.

6.2.4 Sacrifice in Malawi

The aspect of sacrifice teaches that a person must make an offering or payment to merit and satisfy God’s justice and holiness (Aulén 1931:98-99f). Practically the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must sacrifice Church building structures, schools and health facilities in all disputed areas in Kasungu and Nkhotakota for the sake of reconciliation just as the pioneer missionaries did in 1924.

This requires application of objective understanding of atonement aspects such as: self-denial, fasting discipline, surrendering scarce resources, penance, voluntary service and martyrdom. In the boundary dispute, the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must be prepared to suffer and pay for the cost of being Disciples of Christ. Christian believers from Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must discipline and deny themselves some rights to suffer shame and ridicule for their belief in Christ (Kenoisis theory Phil 2:5-12). Retaliation during conflict and persecution is prohibited by Christ himself (Mtt 5:11, 38, Rom 12:12-16). Christian believers in Malawi are urged to rejoice with hope in tribulation, bless those who persecute you, repay no one evil for evil and have regard for good things in the sight of all men and live peacefully with all men (Rom 12:17-18). Because Christ suffered as a sacrifice, the Church also needs to offer herself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1).
6.2.5 Union with Christ in Malawi

Union with Christ is an inclusive term for the concept of salvation and reconciliation. The basic idea refers to the believer and Christ as being “in one another” (Eph 1:3-8, 2:10, 1Co 1:4-5). Union with Christ is union with His body, soul and spirit. The other side of the relationship is that Christ is to in the believer (Col 1:27), Christ’s presence in the believer. All that the believer has spiritually is based on Christ’s being within. In what sense can Christ be said to come in the person and he in Christ? The Churches in Malawi are part of the divine essence, the ecclesia. The relationship between the Christian Church in Malawi and Jesus must be deep. The relationship is not so much a matter of the Church’s living the way Jesus would have her to live as it is a matter of Jesus’ taking over and actually living the Church’s life. Paul once said “it is not I who live but Christ in me” (Gal 2:20, Jn 14:12, Act 1:8).

Our union with Christ must be like the union between two friends, married couple or between a teacher and student. A psychological oneness results from sharing the same interests and being committed to the same ideals. This could be called a sympathetic oneness (Lewis C.S. in Erickson 1998:963). It is an external bond. One influences the other primarily through speech or example for instance the teacher influences the student through instruction imparted. If all Christian believers enjoy the mutual indwelling and presence of Christ there could be no conflict in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi. When believers share in the experiences “with Christ” in suffering (Rom 8:17), crucifixion (Gal
2:20), death (Col 2:20), burial (Rom 6:4), quickening (Eph 2:5, resurrection (Col 3:1), glorification and inheritance (Rom 8:17), they would not engage themselves in sin that brings hostilities of any kind.

The Holy Spirit is the bond of this union. Not only is our union with Christ brought about by the Holy Spirit, it is a union of our spirits. The alleged victimization of Christian members by some employers on tribal reasons and different Synods allegiances at Dwangwa in Malawi will automatically cease by the presence of the Holy Spirit (attached documents 1996). Our union with Christ is vital. His life actually flows into ours renewing our inner nature (Rom 12:2, 2 Co 4:16) and imparting spiritual strength. There is a literal truth in Jesus metaphor of the vine and the branches. Just as the branch can not bear fruit if it does not receive life from the vine, so we can not bear spiritual fruit if Christ's life does not flow into us (Jn 15:4).

For the Church in Malawi to fulfill both this aspect of the union and the first Missionaries’ vision of a united Church in Central Africa, it must strive for that oneness at whatever cost. The Livingstonia Synod must not open congregations and Prayer Houses in Nkhoma and Blantyre Synods. Similarly the Nkhoma Synod must stop opening new congregations and Prayer Houses in Livingstonia and Blantyre Synod. It must be the duty of the Church to advocate for the process of the union within the Church, assist and promote sanctification as well as love in society. Union with Christ is therefore union in His peace. The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) must be one Church, united in body and spirit, daughters of the Kirk.
6.3 The Role of the Church in Conflict

God has given the Church His divine mandate and assignment to undertake reconciliation and peacemaking efforts (Mt 5:9, 2 Cor 5:18-20). The Church could play a major prophetic role in conflict resolution by demanding change of attitude, lifestyle and behavior. Another role could be priestly by offering mediatory prayers of peace. In conflict resolution process, conflict provides opportunities to glorify God; serve people and grow to be like Christ (Rom 8:28-29). In response to God’s love and in reliance on His grace, the Church must commit herself to responding to conflict in accordance to the principles of God. The Church could do the following to fulfill that divine prophetic calling in Malawi:

6.3.1 The Church and the Holy Spirit

First, the Church must be in good relationship with the Person and character of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must come in, fill and dwell in the Church (Jn 15:8ff, Act 2:1-11 Eph 5:18). The Holy Spirit is the one who relates the atonement to the Christian believer, giving him or her eternal life which is Christ’s by nature. The Holy Spirit will persuade people in the Church in Malawi to act in response to God’s Word. The Holy Spirit will play a major transformational role in personal conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment. He personally speaks, teaches and bears witness; He guides, converses with Christian believers about the things of God and what has heard from Jesus Christ (Jn 14:26, 16:12-13, Act 10:19-20).
The Livingstonia, Nkhoma Synods and the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian engaged in boundary disputes in Malawi must be inspired by the Holy Spirit in order to develop a new relationship within the ranks of its leadership. It is the Holy Spirit who effects the change of mind, attitude and behavior. He effects change because he is the source of it, author and active agent (Murray 1961:99). Jesus Christ promises his disciples:

But I tell you the truth, it is good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer (Jn 16: 7-10).

The Holy Spirit inwardly works for the relationship with God which brings salvation. Obedience to God does not come naturally to people; the Holy Spirit internalizes the requirements of God to each Christian believer by the direct conviction of sin and imputation of the righteousness (Milne 1982:151). The Holy Spirit softens the heart to effect salvation, healing, and peace.

Just as two people will assist each other as they work together, so the union with the Holy Spirit enables the Christian believer to do the works of God. Christian believers are not alone in their struggle against sin and conflict. There is a gradual deepening of relationship and a growing agreement by the Holy Spirit. This is generally known as sanctification, the increasing holiness of life that should be evident in the Christian
believers. People do not naturally please God, and so are not naturally in a relationship with Him. The Apostle Paul argues:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom 8:7-8).

Jesus Christ spoke of new life received by new birth and that is connected with the work of the Spirit (Jn 3:5-6). The CCAP congregations must radically be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to be obedient, to grow and engage each other in mutual love (Act 19:1-6, Eph 5:18). The fundamental role of the Holy Spirit is to empower Christian believers for works of Ministry. He also enables intimate relationship between persons. The Church must take practical steps through the power of the Holy Spirit to facilitate good quality relationship amongst Christian believers in Malawi. The Church must encourage its members through the Holy Spirit to identify and put their gifts into use for their edification. The Church must also encourage members to organize family group Bible studies, hospital visitations, and healing ministries, get together and fellowship to enhance intimate relationships in Malawi.

6.3.2 The Church and Sanctification

Kevan (1973:81) asserts that one of the glorious fruits of sanctification consists in victory over sin. The life of sanctification is a conflict in which believers become “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37). Sanctification (sanctus) means “holy,” it is a process hence sin is still present and hence conflict still occurs in the Church. The obvious response for the Christian believer in Malawi is to promote the development of sanctification in the
Church. Scripture does not emphatically teach that sin is completely eradicated from the believer in this Christian life, it is a continuous process. For example the boundary conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod’s in Malawi could still be resolved individually by striving to live a daily sanctified life in order to overcome sin. It is the fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). Sanctification is the result of the synergy between God’s action in union with Christ and human effort. In subjective understanding of atonement God demands for holiness prompted by the sight of the sacrificial example of Christ. Scripture does not emphatically teach that sin is completely eradicated from the believer in this Christian life, it is a continuous process.

The coming of the Holy Spirit into one’s life sets up a victorious battle against sin, which nevertheless lasts throughout the whole of the believer’s life on earth (Gal 5:17). Just as in Classic interpretation of atonement the purpose of the cross is to satisfy the justice and holiness of God, defeat forces of evil and live a victorious life (Aulén 1931:35). The evil forces behind ethnicity, nepotism and tribalism in Church and society in Malawi could be defeated by the power of the cross. This is objective because the primary reason for the death of Christ was to remove the barrier between humanity and God that had been created by sin. What the Church in Malawi must do is to accept and believe in this reality: all sin committed between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in regard to boundary conflict has been far removed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:23-24).

Kevan (1973:81) describes sanctification as the bestowal of divine grace sufficient for a continued triumph over sin: it is the effectual working of God which makes it possible for
the believer not to sin. An increasing sanctification in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods and elsewhere, will bring nevertheless, an increasing awareness of sin. An increased sense of sin is a normal feature of revival and sanctification. Christian believers in Malawi must strive for sanctified life in order to conquer sin, conflict, the devil and death thereby living a victorious life (Aulén 1969:20ff).

6.3.3 The Church and Love

Abelard (in Berkhof 1969:175) holds that the love of God (Greek- ágape) is the supreme driving force that made Jesus Christ die on the cross for sinners. In relation to subjective theory of atonement, Christ is the Great Teacher and Example who arouses responsive love in men, this love is the basis on which reconciliation and forgiveness rest. The Churches engaged in disputes in Malawi must look at the cross in order to see the greatness of the divine love which delivers Christian believers from fear and mindlessness (Morris 2010:2f). The Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod and all Christian believers must eliminate their problem with love and no longer live in selfishness.

In the Parable of Luke 15:11-32 the prodigal son was graciously forgiven by his father. What motivated the enduring, long-suffering father to embrace the rebellious, self-centered son was deep love (the Greek word for love: ágape), love is an aspect of subjective or Moral theory of atonement. Despite his sin, the father welcomed him home with dignity, accorded him his full rights as a son and crowning it with a magnificent party. This symbolizes God’s gracious attitude to sinners and how lost sinners are treated in the Kingdom of God.
The arrogant letter written by Rev. S. L. Chiumya the Parish Minister in Charge of Majiga to Rev. G. A. Kachaje the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod arguing against the resolutions of the General Assembly (attached General Assembly Minutes 1995) that local elders of Majiga Prayer House would neither attend nor accept the handing over ceremony of their Prayer House to Livingstonia Synod. That the local Church leaders and members had nothing more to do with Nkhoma Synod and the General Assembly on the matter of handing over of Majiga Prayer House could be withdrawn only after they could have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Love covers a multitude of sins. We love because He first loved us. No one can claim to know God when he hates his brother (1 Jn 4:7-12). Cain murdered his brother because he was wicked and his works were evil and his brother righteous (1Jn 3:12). For it was out of love for the world that God sent His only begotten so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16).

The Church of Ephesus in Revelation was told to repent because it had lost its first love and God hates it (Rev 2:4). The Apostle Paul said that love or lust for money is the root of all evil. Some people love money more than man. Behind this border dispute is craving for more congregations and Prayers houses where more Sunday collections will be realized. Jesus Christ exhorts us to love our enemies. An enemy is on the other side of the fence. He is in absolute opposition and his actions are extremely hateful. He shows hatred and hostility, he is an antagonist, one you are at war with. The problem of enmity is not dealt with just by forgiveness, but by positive relationship. In the case of salvation, the penal sacrifice of Christ removes enmity, but it does not generate a
relationship. Therefore just as in subjective interpretation of atonement, love must also be supreme in the reconciliation process between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod's in Malawi.

Therefore the aspects of penal sacrifice of Christ, positive relationship and love in subjective sense complementing each other could be used to remove the enmity between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi (1 Jn 4:7). It is the responsibility of every Christian believer in Malawi to restore the spirit of sacrifice, love and positive relationship between people who are hostile to each another.

6.3.4 The Church and Social Issues

The Church in Malawi has a social responsibility to develop a theology on current issues affecting the country and the world. The very effectiveness of the Church must be as the priestly mediator of the power of God. The prophetic role of the Christian Church in Malawi is to influence society by practicing the Christian principles. Phiri (2010:06) asserts the Church in Malawi is slowly losing her God-given spiritual and moral authority of performing this responsibility to society. Unfortunately, the CCAP border dispute is not only a threat to the existence and unity of the Church but also to the national unity, cohesion and peace. How can the Church validly act in society when its house is not in order? To mitigate this problem of sin that brings conflict within the Church, she is called upon to do soul searching within itself, seriously preach and teach sound doctrine (2 Tim 3:16-17), and put people in touch with God. The Church could therefore perform her
duties by playing priestly and prophetic roles and pointing out the social issues that negatively affect people and provide solutions.

Some of the social issues could be education, health, politics or alleviation of poverty and many more. The Church as a teaching institution can also be involved in civic education and advocacy on HIV/AIDS, Human Rights issues, hunger eradication and Conflict resolution endeavors to promote peace and security in communities among others. Whenever there is a problem between Government and the Opposition, the Church must come in to mediate the political impasse. Political and traditional leaders must be engaged in debate on current issues affecting their constituencies. During drought or other natural disasters, the Church must mobilize the whole population to come together in stadiums to pray and intercede for the country and to ask for God's supernatural mercy. Before the Church risks losing the confidence of the population, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) must rise up and resolve the ongoing boundary disputes once and for all. The Church must prophetically start preaching about love, tolerance, unity and peaceful co-existence among Christian believers and non-believers in society. Deliberate strategies and programs must be drawn to address pressing issues of conflict in line with scripture.
6.4 Recommendations for Reconciliation in Malawi

Before the study makes its own theological recommendations based on the divine effort to conflict resolution, it will first look at some recommendations given by the Commission of Inquiry based on human effort to conflict resolution.

6.4.1 Human Solution to Conflict: General Assembly Recommendations

Some aspects used were from the Law-court System such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, arbitration, and settlement aspects. The recommendations were tabled at the January 2007 Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Assembly (General Assembly Minutes 2007:07) held at St Michaels and All Angels Church in Blantyre, Malawi. In essence the contents of these recommendations had four options which called upon all Synods to respect their respective borders and to proceed to hand over congregations and prayer houses in each other’s territory.

6.4.1.1 First Option

The first option was that the boundary between the Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods should be Mpasadzi River in Kasungu going down to Dwangwa River, then proceed Eastward following the Dwangwa River, then turning Southwards at about 5 km from Lake Malawi, then turning Eastwards at a place halfway between Bua River and Dwangwa River up to the Lake. The spirit behind this proposal was to acknowledge the
wisdom of having separate administrative areas for the Synods in accordance with the comity arrangement agreed upon by the first pioneer Missionaries. The first Missionaries appreciated the fact that the three Malawian Synods trace their origin to the Reformation of the 16th Century AD. Their reformed doctrinal bases were the same. In light of this, it would be counter-productive and a waste of scarce resources to have the two Synods operating in the same area. Instead of duplicating efforts one would be more advised to channel extra resources for evangelization in other unreached areas.

This option is consistent with the current Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The only challenge would be the question whether congregations in dispute will be willing to be handed over. There would be real possibility that some of the congregations to be handed over will either choose to become independent or join some other denomination. Thus both Synods would lose them.

6.4.1.2 Second Option

The second option would be the dissolution of Synods paving way for the Presbyteries to assume more administrative role than ever did. This will be a “Borderless Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP),” where Synods will cease to exist as centers of administration in the three regions of Malawi and in the States of Zambia and Zimbabwe. There will be need to amend the current Constitution, restructure the Presbyteries for radical transformation of the entire Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and for effective administration of congregations within a given area. All the five General
Secretaries in the Synods will become Officers of the General Assembly in Lilongwe, heading various ministries such as Evangelism, Education, Health, Training and Scholarships, Properties and Financial Management, Ecumenical Relations at National level. All Presbyteries will report directly to the General Assembly on all policy issues, administrative matters, lands and spiritual development of their congregations. Congregations will be regrouped in order to form presbyteries according to their proximity or jurisdiction.

This implies that a Chewa speaking congregation may be in the same presbytery with a Yao or Tumbuka speaking congregation. Training of ministers will be overseen by the General Assembly Office in collaboration with Presbytery offices. Existing Theological Colleges will further be developed through the General Assembly Office to cater for candidates on a national level, giving freedom to candidates as to where they can train. Ordination of ministers will be done in Presbyteries and an overall record of all ministers of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian will be kept in the General Assembly Office. Properties owned by individual Synods will eventually be conveyed to the General Assembly. As this may involve deregistration of Synods in favor of the General Assembly, fees for the exercise could be exorbitant. Care will have to be taken to ensure that conveyance and legal fees do not stifle the process. This whole process will need time and patience.

The advantages of this option of the recommendation is that it strengthens the oneness of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and it restores the ability of the
General Assembly to be an effective unifying force of the Church. It makes it possible for the calling of and appointing of ministers to be done at a central point to respond to the ongoing ecclesiastical, social and linguistic needs and diffuses conflicts around these issues. The only difficulty on this option will be for individual Synods to give up some autonomy, properties and resources.

6.4.1.3 Third Option

The third option will be the promotion of the existing structure of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) with current fixed boundaries. The only allowance given as a new innovation is permission to establish congregations across one’s territory: that is where a particular Synod notices the need for spiritual care for its “children” and will ask its sister Synod for permission to settle its adherence away from home to feel at home. This would include sending a Minister from the home Synod across the border, having consulted the sister Synod in whose territory the new congregation is being established.

The advantages to this option will be no amendment to the Constitution. It promotes increased communication and trust between the Synods allowing them to work together. The disadvantage is that it is based on the fragile premise that there will be enough trust and desire for the “hosting Synod” to grant the permission. If trust breaks down, the problem may erupt again.
6.4.1.4 Fourth Option

The last option is that there should be a boundary demarcated as described in option one. In addition there must be a buffer zone stretching northwards from this boundary up to Milenje River and stretching southwards from the same boundary up to Dwangwa River. This option is slightly different from option one in that it acknowledges the fact that there is an interaction different people at the borders. Instead of having a strict straight line as boundary, there must be the possibility of the interaction of people from different tribes by providing a buffer zone.

In the 1967/68 Chamakala Agreement on the Kasungu boundary the provision of a buffer zone acceptable to the Livingstonia Synod on condition that Nkhoma Synod was not going to establish congregations beyond Milenje River. The Chamakala Agreement was not acceptable to Nkhoma Synod because they argued that since Milenje River was the boundary, then the buffer zone should go beyond Milenje River. Nkhoma Synod has now accepted that contrary to their views Milenje was not the boundary. The boundary is Mpasadzi River, down south. Therefore the area between Mpasadzi River and Milenje River can now be proposed to be the buffer zone.

The advantages of this option are that it is consistent with the current Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). It allows a going back to the previous agreement between the Synods before the current disputes cropped in. It also accommodates the wishes of both Synods with regard to “claimed boundaries” (Milenje
for Nkhoma and Dwangwa for Livingstonia). The disadvantages against this option is that it is questionable if congregations to be handed over beyond Milenje (in case of Nkhoma) and beyond Dwangwa (in case of Livingstonia) will actually agree to be handed over. There is a real possibility that some of the congregations to be handed over will either choose to become independent or join some other denomination. Thus both Synods would lose them.

However all the above recommendations were not accepted by the rival Synods. Since they used the Law-court Model of mediation, the system never bore fruits. This human effort to conflict resolution tended to focus on immediate problem solving rather than looking deeper at personal issues, feelings and relationships. It framed the matters in dispute mostly in terms of offences, injustices and interpreted outcome merely in terms of restitution that needed to be made.

The recommendations failed to address the matters of the heart such as anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, and unrepentance which fueled conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods. This Law-court Mediation System of resolving conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods tends toward event-oriented resolution rather than mediation over an extended period of time (Poirier 2006:13). Thus it neglects to address the sinful habits and behaviors that recur in the particular people's lives. The recommendations failed to allow for the ongoing change, growth and renewal necessary to break the negative habits.
The Law-court mediation process tends toward issue settlement such as the boundary disputes rather than aiming at the reconciliation of relationships. Coupled with this objective is reliance upon the outside expert (the hired mediator: Church of Scotland experts) who comes in, mediates a dispute and then leaves. Thus this process overlooks the ongoing help and assistance so necessary in reconciling and building long term relationships. To put it more vividly the current conflict resolution practice used by the General Assembly looked more like four hours in the emergency room than a month of home recuperation therapy (Poirier 2006:13). We are yet to see what will be the next approach to be taken by the General Assembly.

The research study will now make the following recommendations based on the divine atonement solution.

6.4.2 Divine Solutions to Conflict: Atonement based Recommendations

6.4.2.1 Abolition of Political Regions in Malawi

The Divine System of conflict resolution calls for inward change of the human heart. The radical change comes through the means of atonement of Jesus Christ. The aspects of repentance, confession, forgiveness of sin and union with Christ make it possible to uproot the sinful tribal tendencies in the heart that bring conflict. Malawi’s regional political boundaries exploited by colonialism, dictatorship and greed could be abolished only through reconciliation. For example the North which is dominated by the Tumbuka, Ngoni, Tonga and the Nkhondes; the South dominated again by the Mang’anjas, Yaos,
Lomwes and Senas and the Centre dominated by the Chewas and the Ngoni could start engaging one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Boundary divisions were originally used by the colonial Government for administration purposes only, but soon after independence the previous Governments put political overtones to them worsening the situation. The current Government has added to these three: the Eastern Region for yet other political and tribal reasons. Unfortunately the CCAP Church was also divided in the same line of political and tribal affiliation.

In the early Church in the first Chapters of Acts the problem of boundary divisions between the Jews and Gentiles, men, women and children was dealt with by listening to the counsel of the Holy Spirit and praying together, sharing the word of God- becoming one in mind, purpose and fellowship. The acceptance of salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ helped to eliminate tribal and ethnic tendencies and behaviors in the Church (Acts 2:1-42, 4:12, Gal 3:25-28).

Phiri (2010:06) strongly argues for the rejection of the idea of removing borders between the three Synods. He observes that if borders are removed, there will no longer be one CCAP but CCAP of the Chewa, CCAP of the Man’ganja and CCAP of the Tumbukas which will be the aggravation of tribalism and weakening the national unity. He further asserts that the Church leaders who promote divisions within their Church are neither holy nor patriotic. The Apostle Paul contends that all Christians are united in one family. They are sons of God; they need not segregate one another:

You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. For as many as of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26-28).
However the boundaries in Malawi that must possibly be abolished could be the political and ethnic ones; to be replaced by the national identity which will cut across all the political divides in order to enhance national unity, reconstruction and reconciliation. For the sake of promoting reconciliation, unity and peace, civil societies, faith communities and all citizens in all areas of the economy in Malawi must take the challenge of civic educating the population on the dangers of tribalism, ethnicity and political regionalism.

The research study recommends that the CCAP Churches must stop designating political regional boundaries in its operations. They could make up their own informal religious borders in opposition to the existing ones. For example Blantyre and Nkhoma Synods always cross the political boundary into Ntcheu District in Central Region and Monkey Bay in Southern Region respectively to pastor their tens of congregations with no problems. The Church must facilitate this interactive arrangement in obedience to the word of God. The Church has a divine mandate to become a true peacemaking Church. The leaders must recover the Gospel of peace and start hearing afresh that God wants Christians to cultivate the culture of peace. The Church in Malawi therefore must take up the challenge to motivate Christians to change their negative attitude and behavior and pursue the path of reconciliation.
6.4.2.2 Redefining the Churches’ Missions

God is the God of new things and new order. He commands the Church to re-dedicate herself to the new order and new challenges facing society. In the Old Testament, the Prophet Isaiah asserts that God makes things new:

Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it (Is 43:18-19)?

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ once said:

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch pulls away from the garment and the tear is made worse. Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins or else the wineskins break the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined.

But they put new wine into new wineskins and both are preserved.

Redefining the vision and mission strategy of the Church, serious hearing the gospel anew could be the only thing that will renew the Church and compel her to be an ambassador of reconciliation and peace (2 Cor 5:14-20). There must be a complete change of attitude, lifestyle and behavior. It is imperative that the Church must redefine their mission in Malawi. Jesus Christ calls upon the Church to preach the gospel with passion and love in order to change and transform lives. As God’s instruments, the Church has the kerugm, Malawi is their mission field, as diakonia, service in the social sphere; as koinonia, where the fellowship and unity of believers will give credibility to the Gospel proclaimed and the service rendered to the society.
Alternatively, due to the fact that, there were no real landmarks to define borders of the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods, the borders which were established were only through verbal agreement. The authorities must engage surveyors to mark informal but interactive boundaries of the Synods for instance the border in Kasungu could be Mpasadzi River. The Synods must be flexible to allow Church members cross the borders for informal interactions. In Nkhotakota, the border could be half way between the Bua River and the Dwangwa River in the strip of a land along the Lake and by way of compromise the area between the Bua and Dwangwa. Both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must be prepared to sacrifice some of their territory and congregations; they must pay a price and love their opponents for the sake of reconciliation and peace. Sacrifice and love are supreme in atonement conception. In Matthew 5:43-44 Jesus Christ urged His disciples to love their enemies:

You have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But
I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who
hate you and pray for those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use and
persecute you.

Following the example set by Jesus Christ, God calls upon the Church in Malawi to renew their commitment to the discipline of suffering and endurance. As agents of reconciliation and peace they must recover the tenets of the Good News. The Church in Malawi is the light and salt of the world. If it loses its saltiness what will it become? The Church must become both the instrument and redeeming structure for salvation, reconciliation and peace in Malawi. She must commit herself to peacemaking efforts. Congregations, faith communities and civil societies involved in disputes resolution need
to revisit their definition of mission and strategy in love. Therefore all Synods must possibly be flexible and inclusive in their approach in order to promote reconciliation.

6.4.2.3 Memorandum of Understanding

There must be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to effect the cessation of hostilities and advocate for reconciliation. There must be need for clear understanding of the vision, mission and terms of reference for the Church. The Church must draw up a policy of inter-Synod interaction and participation of activities with mutual respect as equal servants of God. The MOU must be agreed upon and signed by the two contending Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma facilitated by the General Assembly. Any Synod must be free to send reports to the General Assembly and other interested parties on any non-compliance. Parties who fail to comply with the principles of the MOU must be rebuked to correct those who are misguided, train the immature and discipline the offender. The General Assembly must take disciplinary action against the offending Synod.

Theologically the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has a parallel in the institution of the Lord’s Supper. As God’s people we are bound to God’s covenantal word. The Lord’s Supper is an ongoing and maturing sacrament. When it is administered, each communicating member is called upon to examine and judge himself or herself as sinners needing Christ. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 holds:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; when he had given thanks,
He broke it and said: Take eat this is my body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.

The Lord’s Supper, then, is a regular means of conforming our lives to Christ’s discipline. A major part of that process is the recognition that we are members of one body, one faith, one Spirit, one Father, and one Lord. We are disciples who sup not only with the Lord but also with each other and by it we express our joy, fellowship and unity.

6.4.2.4 Rebuilding of Relationships in Malawi

There must possibly be a deliberate Action Plan and Strategy on rebuilding the lost trust and relationship between Christian believers at all levels of the entire Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi. It has to begin at the Lilongwe Headquarters Offices where the spirit of mistrust, division and mismanagement has to be completely eliminated. There must be fellowship, pulpit exchange and joint Evangelization Programme at Synod, Presbytery and Congregation levels of both the Livinstonia and Nkhoma Synods. Historical records (as attached) indicate that the first founders Rev. Dr Robert Laws of Livingstonia and Rev William C. Murray usually exchanged visits and pulpits without problems. On congregational and prayer house level the members could assist one another during weddings and funerals.
During the course of research study, one contentious issue which was repeatedly mentioned by respondents was tribalism. The negative attitude of some Chewa Church leaders towards the Tumbuka for example when a Tumbuka member dies in Lilongwe, the Chewa members do not accord him or her full funeral service as is done for a Chewa member who is given all the required services. The negative ethnic attitude towards the Tumbuka and vice versa has lead to more frustration and conflict among the congregants.

To arrest these pastoral care problems, there must be well organized structures at all levels of the congregations and prayer houses which could be charged with the responsibility of looking after the welfare of all members without distinction. Other programs such as Partnership of congregations, visits between women’s guild, youth groups and choirs could be encouraged. In so doing tribalism, nepotism and ethnicity will be eliminated on both sides of the conflict. Due to the regular interaction and the rebuilding of trust and relationships, people will be forced to learn each others culture and language such as Tumbuka, Tonga and Chichewa more easily.

In the early Church the problem of discrimination based on race or tribalism was solved through inspiration of the Holy Spirit and teaching on reconciliation. Tribalism still exists in present Europe, but its effects have largely been transcended. Severed relationships could be rebuilt when the Holy Spirit works in our heart, softening the heart, directing our faith to the person who wronged us for the glory of God. The Apostle Paul argues:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the
middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross thereby putting to death the enmity (Eph 2:13-16).

God is a relational God. He is interested to see our relationships grow. For ensuring that our relationships are flourishing we must be prepared to grant forgiveness to our enemies and in turn they must accept our forgiveness. We must forgive because God first forgives us (Mtt 6:14). In that we will reflect the depths of our identity as lovers of God, our neighbors and restorers of broken relationships in the Church and society. We are indeed our bothers keeper!

6.4.2.5 Documentation

All Synods must possibly have a deliberate policy of serious record keeping of the activities taking place in the congregations. During the course of the research study it was discovered that there are only very few documents important decisions that have been made over the years of conflict. People just speculate and guess what they remember was said or what happened for example at the boundaries in Kasungu. This weakness could be one of the reasons why the conflict has taken such a long time. The need for documentation is an illustration of the value of scripture. God says in Deuteronomy 4:6:

Be careful to keep and observe the statutes for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes.

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David the King of Israel urges young men to cleanse their way by taking heed according to God’s word (Ps 119:11-ff). “For the word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The Apostle Paul argues:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17).

As God’s people, we are bound to God by His covenant word. Our standards, our moral and ethics, goals, desires and entire philosophy of life change when we enter into covenant with God through Jesus Christ. The Church therefore must be urged to use this aspect of documental covenant as a means of facilitating reconciliation and peace in Malawi.

6.4.2.6 Practical Theological Training

The word of God is given by inspiration and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16). As a spiritual progress, the Church must possibly continue to train members in simple practical theology of conflict resolution and other relevant issues of interest. Churches must mobilize resources to sustain the training of future leadership both on part-time and full time in reputable colleges and
universities. Emphasis must also be made to the training and ordination of women and young ministers to exercise their gifts and ministry within their churches in Malawi.

Again one of the duties of the early Apostolic Church in obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ was to practically fellowship, share and deliver social services to the community (Act 2:32-35, Act 6:1-6). To avoid further escalation of conflicts and divisions, Churches must adopt a transferring or rotating system of leadership in all Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi. Restricting Church leadership to its original and sending Synod is becoming irrelevant.

6.4.2.7 Prayer and Intercession

The Ministry of reconciliation calls for serious prayer and intercession. Prayer is communion with God, it unites, communicates deep things of God. In simple terms prayer is talking to God. Since God is the Divine Person, through serious prayer and intercession people make contact with the Living God. They “cast all their care and anxiety upon God” (1 Pet 5:7) making “their supplications, requests, petitions, prayers with thanksgiving known to God for all men” (2 Tim 2:1-2). Prayer is the means of expressing our feelings and thoughts to God about the situation in which we find ourselves in the Church in Malawi.

In intercession we bring to the consciousness of God; all our hopes, fears, frustrations, the selfishness, courage and our cowardice, the love and joy that we find within
ourselves. To stimulate reconciliation and peace, Churches must be prepared to engage
prayer in favor of individual Churches, their leaders and the nation. For example the
boundary conflict between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods goes beyond political
and physical dimensions. It is a spiritual warfare between God and the devil, humanity
and demonic forces of darkness of this age (Aulen 1931:20f). The Apostle Paul holds:

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the
devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against
powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness
in the heavenly places (Eph 6:11-12).

The Apostle James agrees by urging all Christian believers “to submit to God, resist the
devil for he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7). The word of God on 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5 says:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down
strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the
knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The full horror of pain inflicted by the powers of evil in Malawi can only be challenged
through prayer for with God all things are possible (Jer 32:17 Lk 1:37, Mtt 19:26). The
agenda for Prayer and worship within Malawian Churches could reverse negative
attitudes such as character assassination, jealousy, witchcraft, poverty and violence
which the politicians and Churches leaders inherited from colonialism and dictatorship.
This ministry of Prayer and Intercession attracts the hostility of the devil, yet the Lord
Jesus once said:

I saw Satan fall like lighting from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on
snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm
The National Day of Worship which is always observed during every Republic celebrations in Malawi is commendable but lacks seriousness because the prayers are characterized by hero worship of past and present politicians. Again there is great need for national soul researching, fasting, confession, repentance of sin and asking for forgiveness from God and one another. The entire Church in Malawi is therefore urged to engage prayer and intercession without ceasing for both our Church ministries and political rulers that reconciliation may be effected even between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods (1 Thes 4:17).

6.4.2.8 Public Apology

There must be a complete turning around of the heart, newness of the heart, a change of attitude and behavior. The Public apology approach to reconciliation accelerates healing of wounds between people. It would be a powerful, moving and memorable occasion if the conflicted congregations organized a public apology ceremony or rally so that people could come together and just say: “Sorry,” to each other, “I am not angry with you anymore!” Public apology parallels the public confession of baptism. Jesus Christ made a public confession not because of sin but in order to fulfill all righteousness and identify with the sinners (Mtt 3:14-15, Lk 3:21).

All Christian believers are urged to make a public confession of baptism, die to sin, be buried with Christ through baptism and rise up with Christ from the dead by the glory of
the Father and walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-10). In the same understanding the
Nkhoma Synod must apologize the Livingstonia Synod and be prepared to withdraw
from all the areas under controversy. Similarly Livingstonia Synod must apologize
publicly to the Nkhoma Synod and be prepared to withdraw from all the areas under
dispute, in accordance to God’s principles. The approach would integrate classic and
object aspects of atonement whose purpose are to uproot sin, satisfy the justice and
holiness of God, defeat forces of evil and live a victorious life.

6.5 The Benefits of Conflict

The question that keeps recurring in mind is whether there could be benefits of conflict.
Is conflict good? What are some of the examples from scripture? Can something positive
come from conflict? Conflict is not always bad (Sande & Johnson 2008:23). Some
differences are natural and good rooted in the God-given human individuality. Many
differences in human beings are not about right or wrong but they are simply the result of
personal preferences. Human beings are bound to have varying opinions, convictions,
desires, perspectives and priorities.

As one of the benefits of conflict we read from the Old Testament that God gave King
Solomon supernatural wisdom to rule Israel in times of conflict and bring stability (1 Ki
3:16ff). A case in point was when he was able to make a profound judgment when two
women came forward with both a dead child and a healthy child to ask him if he could
pronounce whose child had died and whose was alive. The evil woman insisted that the
healthy child should be killed so that everybody would lose. The other woman in tears pleaded with the King to let the healthy child live and surrendered to her opponent despite the loss. King Solomon then knew that the woman who wanted the healthy child killed was not the mother, so he demanded that the healthy child be given to the rightful mother. In that dispute Solomon made such a wise judgment that all Israel praised God for him.

In the New Testament we read of disciples’ dispute about who was the greatest among them. There was a fight for leadership and positions of influence before their Master Jesus Christ. This was typical of humanity. God creates something good out of nothing or ugly situation. The argument is that the Church in Malawi must have benefited a lot as a result of the boundary disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods. Another theological benefit could be Christian discipline, growth and maturity in the faith. The Apostle Peter on 2 Peter 1:5-7:

But for this very reason giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love.

Kesley (1964:230) cites from Scripture the disputes and enmity that were generated in bringing the Jewish Christians and pagan Gentiles in the early Church (Acts 15:1ff). It stirred up much conflict that some were stoned and fed to wild beasts. It is observed that the more the Christians were persecuted the more they were converted to Christianity (Acts 8). The Apostle Paul’s life could scarcely be termed free of conflict (Rom 7, 2 Cor 6:4-10). The sharp disagreement between Paul and his preaching partner Barnabas
which led to their split resolution effectively doubled their missionary output (Act 15: 36-41). Poirier (2006:14) inquisitively asks:

> Are conflicts intrusions into ministry, accidents and obstacles to the Gospel or are they assignments from God- the very means by which He causes us to see our poverty and the riches of His wisdom, power, justice and mercy( Ja 1:2-5)?

### 6.5.1 Conflict: Revelation of God’s Sovereign Purpose

The Church must view parties to a dispute not as individuals with competing interests but see them as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ caught in rebellion and bondage of sin. Poirier (2006:76ff) asserts that in all things God ordains conflict according to His sovereignty, wisdom and good purposes. This great truth must be our central confession, our anchor in the midst of conflict, so that we can be compelled and emboldened to be true ambassadors of reconciliation. Conflict tries our true theology. It tests us and sifts our hearts, revealing what we truly believe and hold too fast. If we truly confess and believe that God ordains conflict, instead of cursing it, we can consecrate it. Instead of seeing conflict as an accident in a cosmos, we can accept it as a God-given assignment for our good and His ultimate glory. If handled well conflicts stimulate dialogue, creativity and change (Sande & Johnson 2008:23).

### 6.5.2 Conflict: An opportunity to glorify God

Rather than perceiving conflict as an obstacle to our ministry, we must welcome it as an opportunity to glorify God, to bring Him praise and honor by showing who He is and what
He is like and what He is doing. The best way to glorify God in the midst of conflict is to
depend on and draw attention to His grace, mercy, forgiveness, strength and wisdom He
gives us through Jesus Christ.

6.5.3 Conflict: An opportunity to serve

Sande (2004:29ff) asserts that conflict provides us an opportunity to serve others. Jesus
calls us to love our enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you
and pray for those who mistreat you (Lk 6:27-28). Instead of reacting harshly or seeking
revenge, God calls us to be merciful to those who offend us, just as He is merciful to us
(Lk 6:36). We must continually breathe in God’s grace through prayer, worship, word,
and Christian fellowship; we must breathe out His love, mercy, forgiveness and wisdom
to others through our words and actions. God may also use us to help others learn
where they have been wrong and need to repent and change behavior.

6.5.4 Conflict: An opportunity to grow

Conflict also provides an opportunity to grow to be more like Christ (1 Cor 11:1). God’s
highest purpose for us is not necessarily to make us comfortable, wealthy or happy, but if
we have faith in Him, He has plans to conform us to the likeness of Christ (Gen 1:26-27).
Conflict is one of the many tools that God uses to help us develop a more Christ like
character. God may use conflict to expose our sinful attitudes and habits in our life.

Conflict is effective in breaking down appearances and revealing stubborn pride, a bitter
and unforgiving heart or a critical tongue. To grow we must draw on His grace and practice new attitudes and habits. Just like an athlete who develops his muscles and skills through strenuous training, we will see greater growth when we repeatedly think and behave properly in response to challenging circumstances. When people provoke and frustrate us we must practice love, forgive them and develop patience. When we are tempted to give up on someone let us exercise faithfulness. Conflict provides a rich mixture of such trials, each of which can strengthen and refine our character. God uses conflict to stretch and challenge us in carefully tailored ways to conform us to the likeness of Christ.

Conflict keeps life dynamic, productive and interesting! In the Gospel of Luke Jesus says:

I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.

The Church is therefore called upon to radically love, serve people in the community bounded by the Good News of salvation, sacrifice, atonement of Jesus Christ, reconciliation, sacrament and discipline. Conflict is a divine assignment given to the Church to reveal to the world the Gospel message- the nature, grace, love and the character of Jesus Christ who forgives human sin, restores souls, purifies hearts, reconciles people and makes them His sons and daughters to live in peace and harmony.
6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the application of some concepts and ideas of atonement and reconciliation in relation to specific controversial issues in Malawi. Why did the death of Jesus Christ take away sin by way of the cross? How did His atonement uproot sin and conflict? Did the atonement of Christ say anything to the boundary disputes in Malawi? Is genuine reconciliation possible in Malawi? The message of salvation is the application of atonement of Christ. Atonement of Christ uproots sin from the heart. It makes satisfaction for sins and removes the penalty from the sinner who trusts in Him. Confession, repentance and forgiveness aspects of atonement uproot sin from the heart of human beings. It declares that through the work of Christ, there is reconciliation and peace between God and mankind, and that God has made it possible for Him to receive and restore mankind to friendship with Himself.

Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once for all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ in bringing reconciliation between estranged parties (Murray 1961:161). Firstly, reconciliation as an act consists of the removal of the ground of disharmony; as a result it is the resumption of relations of harmony, understanding and peace. Secondly, reconciliation contemplates the termination of the separation and re-entrance upon proper and harmonious relations between opposing and estranged parties in Malawi.

In Scripture reconciliation is accomplished by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. It presupposes a relation of alienation and it effects a relation of favor and peace.
This new relation is constituted by the removal of the ground for the alienation. The two individual estranged persons or parties have to flexibly change in order to accommodate each other in love (Scott 2008:70). The Apostle John maintains:

If someone says "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 Jn 4:20-21).

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must actually practice what it preaches by encouraging people to become Christian friends (Jn 15:13-15). The Good News of Jesus Christ is about confession, repentance and forgiveness of sin, regeneration and sanctification. It proclaims freedom to sin-bound men through the ransom (Mk 10:45) which Christ’s death effected (Kevan 1973:105). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1) because the “blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7). The atonement aspects of confession, repentance and forgiveness deal away with sin, regeneration and sacrifice, restitution and love are also very significant in conflict resolution because they drive parties toward reconciliation.

Both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must possibly take the example of Jesus to show some aspects of sacrifice and love in their handling of the case of the boundary. Just as Christ paid for our peace with God we too need to pay highly for the cost of our peace with our enemies (Tambasco 1991:107). Both the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods must sacrifice and give back the land they encroached to the original owners.
and vice versa in the spirit of brotherly love. It is the supreme love of God that inspired and moved Jesus to suffer the penalty of death for our salvation (Jn 3:16, Rom 3:24-26). The Church in Malawi must possibly engage itself in the complete objective, subject and classic atonement aspects of repentance, confession, and union with Christ, restitution and reparation in order to facilitate reconciliation in the situation of sin and conflict. Reconciliation means an act consisting of the removal of the ground of disharmony; as a result it is the resumption of relations of harmony, understanding and peace. Reconciliation through Christ is the only answer to the problems of conflict. Therefore reconciliation between conflicting parties is very significant in Malawi.

The Church in Malawi must therefore be urged to remove the ground of disharmony, to resume the relations of harmony by cultivating the spirit of sacrifice, love and service in her life to be reconciled to God and neighbor. If full understanding of atonement and salvation are enacted in human beings then there would be the restoration of the imago-Dei and enjoyment of fullness of humanity (Pedro 2007:162).

The Church in Malawi must exercise these theological insights according to the demands of the Word of God. Let the Church in Malawi prophetically lead by teaching and by example. Christian life is a very practical life of harmonious relationship, sharing, fellowshipping, mutual love and service in the name of Jesus Christ. It must be the duty of the church and individual Christian believers to practically live a life of love, harmonious relationship and union with Christ, sanctification and service to the Church.
and society in Malawi and elsewhere. This is possibly the meaning of reconciliation in Malawi.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The research study will now make a summary and conclusion. The first thing to recognize is that this study calls for change. The Church must radically change the way she views her calling and how she deals with conflict. The second thing is that there are two theories on how conflict in the Church and society could be dealt with, namely: the Law-court and the Atonement models. These models are derived from human and divine efforts respectively.

All human efforts in conflict resolution usually use mere psychological and legal experience to deal with substantive offenses, injustices and inequity that people face. Human efforts are sometimes unproductive, unprofitable and short-lived, while divine efforts radically deal with deep rooted matters and sinful motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, lusts and cravings in opposition to God. Divine efforts through atonement of Christ are fruitful and long-lasting. Divine solutions radically change the heart, attitude and behavior of human beings. Atonement is the only answer to the problem of sin in the Church and society. Grasping the theology of divine atonement provides a better answer to the question of sin and conflict.
7.1. Dimensions to Conflict

7.1.1 Human Solution to Conflict

Most theories and practices come from within the human legal or political professions (Poirier 2006:12f). People always learn important skills on how to manage and settle their conflicts to no avail. Different human responses to conflict are modeled by parents, teachers, public figures and environment. Younan (1994:2ff) contends that conflict resolution could be made more complex by the existence of institutional or structural obstacles, cultural differences and constantly changing conditions. Most modern Social scientists argue that in conflict resolution, there must be great need for arbitration, dialogue, negotiation and settlement between conflicting parties (Murray 2000:3-5). People resolve conflict through the courts and lawsuits models (Moran 1993:2f). All these human efforts to conflict resolution are not long lasting, resumption of hostilities starts at any opportune time.

7.1.2 Divine Solution to Conflict

God is always concerned with the spiritual solution to conflict. How can sinful human nature and character which fuel conflict be changed? Stott further asks: Is it possible to make a sour person sweet, a proud person humble, or a selfish person unselfish (Stott 1958:99)? The Church must change, view parties to a conflict not as individuals with competing interests but as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ caught in rebellion
and bondage of sin (Poirier 2006:12ff). Deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart such as idolatry, anger, revenge, lusts and cravings in opposition to God are really better addressed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible declares that the miracle of salvation permanently takes place in human beings (Mtt 1:21, Act 2:38). Human sins are forgiven effected by the priestly death of Jesus Christ on the cross; eternal life received by union with Christ specifically his divine nature, manifested in his Kingly victory over sin, evil forces and death in the resurrection (Aulén 1931:20ff, 115ff, Act 2:24) and the union presupposes an obedience to the prophetic demands of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:15). God’s plan of salvation is first to reconcile us to himself and progressively to liberate us from sin and our self-centeredness and bring us into harmony with our fellow men. Jesus Christ offers to change not only our standing before God but our very human sinful nature and character (Mk 1:15). In John 3:3-8 Jesus Christ spoke to Nicodemus the necessity of being born again in order to see and enter the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul’s statement: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things have become new,” (2 Cor 5:17) sums up the New Testament’s message of the need for a new heart, a new nature, a new birth, new creation and new eternal life (Stott 1958:99).

The doctrine of salvation is multifaceted and must be internalized in human life. For the salvation to be meaningful in our ministry all the theories of atonement such as objective, subjective and classic aspects must be interactive and drawn from each other. One should not be overlooked because they are essential for the full understanding of the
death of Christ. The full understanding of salvation must result in the restoration of broken relationships between people and God. Christianity must be practical way of living; a life of worshipping God, sharing, fellowshipping, mutual love and service in name of Jesus Christ.

The Church is called upon to radically change, love, serve the community by declaring the Good News of salvation, discipline and sacraments. We owe our forgiveness of sin and reconciliation chiefly to the death of Jesus Christ, but it is by power of the His Spirit that we can be set free from sin, self-centeredness and that we can be united in a fellowship of love in the Church. Jesus Christ our Prince of Peace calls upon us to serious carry out the divine assignment of peacemaking to the world. The Church in turn must prophetically challenge her members to be engaged in reconciliation, restoration and peacemaking efforts. Conflict if handled well stimulates dialogue, creativity and change. Sin and conflict therefore provide a golden opportunity for reflection, confession, repentance spiritual renewal and radical transformation in the Church and society. This is the glory of the Good News.

This type of the atonement model reverses the fall and expiates human sin; it brings change and closer relationship with God. This spiritual solution to conflict seems rather to have been ignored or untried by the society including the Church. It must be our prayer that the Church in Malawi will access the riches that God has made available to us, but which we seem hesitant to use.
7.2 Summary

Chapter one provided a general background to the research study. Chapter two before looking at the case of disputes between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods, it first, cited briefly some conflicts in the history of the Church to get an appreciation of the impact of conflict in the life of the Church. Second, the chapter outlined the historical background of the Church of Central Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, Nkhoma Synod and the General Assembly and how the boundary disputes between the two opposing Synods started in Malawi.

Chapter three discussed the question of sin and its effects. Sin is an inescapable reality and it is the root of many evil actions in many societies including the Church (cf Ps 66:18). The study also defined conflict and its root causes using Marxist’s conflict conception. The argument of the study based on the fact that sin brings conflict and produces great divisions among human beings. Milne (1982:107) asserts that sin causes racial prejudice and antagonisms. The problem of sin is the world’s biggest problem. Therefore, if sin brings conflict with God, His will and between humans, God has provided a means to deal with the problem.

Chapter four discussed the answer to question of sin and conflict. There are two dimensions to conflict resolution namely: the Law-court and Atonement Models based on human and divine efforts respectively. Contemporary Christian conflict theories are deficient in the God ward dimensions of conflict and most theories and practices come
from within the human legal or political professions. Deep rooted issues and motivations of the human heart in opposition to God are better addressed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The study reviewed and critiqued contemporary models of conflict resolution including the atonement with a view to understand the antithesis of conflict. The study lastly formulated a new synthetic model from various aspects of atonement to bring about a better understanding of conflict resolution.

Chapter five discussed the general application of the full concept of atonement in relation to human need. The question for discussion was how can the life, sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ that occurred almost 2000 years ago affect us today? How can the atonement conception be applied to resolve human conflict? The atonement of Christ will be ineffective unless it is applied to the lives of human beings. The actualization of the atonement could be done through power of the Holy Spirit who unites a person with Jesus Christ and in their close relationship, the penalty for the person’s sin is paid both together, so by Christ (Stott 1986:256ff). As we relate to God in through confession, repentance of sin and sanctification, we relate to each other that removes the cause of conflict between persons.

Chapter six discussed the application of atonement and reconciliation aspects to specific disputes in Malawi. It also suggested recommendations on how to deal with those disputes. Christianity is not just a creed, it involves action. What is needed in Christian salvation is the practical restoration of broken relationships between God and creation, the removal of rupture within human race in order to facilitate reconciliation.
Reconciliation in Malawian context means restoration, amendment, making up, settling an argument of boundary and bringing back lost relationship between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods.

Chapter seven has just dealt with summary and conclusion. The theology of conflict resolution calls for change. Change of heart and on how to deal with conflict. All human efforts in conflict are sometimes unproductive, unprofitable and short-lived while divine efforts radically deal with deep rooted matters and motivations of the human heart. Divine efforts are fruitful and long-lasting.

7.3 Conclusion

Since the study has tried to understand the nature and problems of conflict, its impact on the life of the Church and has provided a theological solution for its transformation, the researcher hopes that if the above observations and recommendations could be applied, the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods and others in conflict could possibly change to become partners with God in the reconciliation of the world. The Apostle Paul asserts:

Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18).

This study in that understanding therefore is intended to make not only a theoretical but a little practical and relevant theological contribution to the current debate on conflict within the Church and society.
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Mhone, S. P. 2008/03/30. Exclusive Personal interview carried on Conflict Areas: Blantyre.


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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Maps

1.1 Map of Malawi showing the International, Regional and district boundaries: Malawi is surrounded by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. It was copied from the 2008/08/23 online: www.institute.ac.uk/sciences/worldguide/maps.2/

1.2 Map of Central Region of Malawi showing disputed Church areas of Kasungu and Nkhotakota. It was copied with permission from Blantyre Synod Offices: General Synod files 2007/6/08.

1.3 Annex 3 Map of South Rukuru Watershed, Dwangwa and Milenje Rivers can also be seen in the background. It was copied with permission from the Blantyre Synod Offices: General Synod files 2007/6/08.

Appendix 2: Church Documents


2.2 Memos, Letters and other confidential communications from all Synods. They were copied with permission from the General Secretary of Blantyre Synod 2007/6/08.
Appendix 3: Names of People and Congregations

3.1 List of Synods’ officials engaged in consultations and dialogue.

3.1 List of Livingstonia Synod’s congregations under controversy.

3.2 List of Nkhoma Synod’s congregations under controversy.
At a meeting held at the village of Chinkwiri on the 29th July, 1904, the boundary between their respective spheres was agreed upon as follows:— "From the highest point of Chipata mountain the boundary line passes through the highest points of Kafana, Kajjoka (a small know south of Chinkwiri's) Kpale, Kwanjati, thence to the mouth of the Rusa River; from which point the boundary is the International boundary between the Rusa and the Ruzi rivers passing the Kapirimahiwa, across the Rusa on to Mbwana".

Signed on behalf of the Livingstonia Mission

GEORGE PRESTICE.

JNO. K. H. HENDERSON.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE B. R. MISSION

W. H. MURRAY

H. J. LINDEBERG

Chinkwiri, 20th July, 1904.

The last word "Mbwana" to be changed to "Muswirwomba" by request of Dr. Pontius. See his letter September 4th, 1904.

Got as kend

W. H. MURRAY

A. J. LINDEBERG.
COPY OF EMAIL LETTER SENT TO CCAP SYNODS AND GENERAL SYNOD ON 10 MAY 2005 CONCERNING THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN LIVINGSTONIA AND NKHOMA SYNODS

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

In my email last week I undertook to see what I could find in the Cape Church Archives about the transfer of the Kasungu Mission to the DRCM in 1923.

Inter alia two files with correspondence and extracts of minutes exist, and the most relevant of these documents are the following two. I shall bring copies of the documents when I come to Malawi this coming week end.


In this Memorandum it was agreed as follows:

BOUNDARY OF KASUNGU: Will remain the tribal boundary as at time of transfer, more or less the Miengo stream between here and Lound.

2. Copy of: MINUTES OF FOREIGN MISSION COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, meeting in Edinburgh on 18th December 1923:

extract from Minute 6717. Livingstonia: Transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda.

BOUNDARIES: That between Kasungu and Loundon will follow the approximate tribal boundary as represented by the schools occupied by Kasungu and Loundon.

3. THE OPINION AND SUGGESTIONS OF DR GEORGE PRENTICE
A third observation may be of interest. Dr George Prentice started Kasungu Mission in 1897 and built up the work there for a quarter of a century. By the time of writing he was near to retirement.

a) From a copy of a letter by Prentice to Dr WH Murray of Nkhoma written from Kasungu earlier that year (15/8/1923) the following remark is taken:

What the Commissioners must mainly decide is what is to be the line between you and Loundon. Kasungu Magistral area has a share of both. You may think the Dwangwa far enough North. In that case you would lose a nice piece of work on the Mpiaste.

b) The next day (16/8/1923) he wrote another letter to Murray in which the following several options are mentioned:

- If you took the Boma district Boundary as yours that would take you about forty miles north from the station
- A suitable boundary for distance would be a line running east and west through Chisemphere...That would make the distance between here and Loundon
- A nearer boundary is the Dwangwa river, 1.5 miles north of the station
- The Chisemphere line would take in all my work...If you have notes of our old journey, it may be marked Milenje
REMARK:
It would appear that his personal preference was the Chisemphere option, approximating the Milenje stream.

c) On 28/8/1923 he wrote about possible new places within the Kasungu sphere where to open schools:
- If the Government would sell you Ngara, that would be good.
- otherwise, near to the old site of Chimutu village... It would work Sante and right up to Manambo.
- there is another fine site at Ndanika... just about halfway between here and Koyakola.

REMARK:
As it turned out, the final decision of the 1923 agreement appears to be that the boundary would be along the line of Chisemphere/Milenje stream. This would have meant that part of the Kasungu sphere would have included the Mpasadzi valley and as far as Chisemphere, but probably not a place like Nkhamenyu. The Milenje is a tributary of the Dwangwa, but follows a more north westerly course towards the Zambian border.

This is the historical background. Perhaps it may help, perhaps not, I don't know. Many things have happened since. What is important is of course not so much the matter of boundaries, but the much more fundamental matter of the essential unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

We shall be praying for you and especially for the meeting tomorrow.

Yours in Christ

Martin Pauw

(sgd) Dr CM Pauw
Secretary, Foreign Partnerships and Mission

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POSTSCRIPT
As a matter of interest, it seems Dr Prentice retired soon after the transfer and settled on a farm near Lusaka in Zambia. When I lived in Lusaka between 1973 and 1983, the farm was still known as "Kwa Prentice", even though it by then belonged to a Zambian farmer. It is situated about 20-25 km out on the Great East Road.

Dr Prentice died and was buried in Lusaka and I one day came across his grave, still clearly marked, in what is known as the Pioneer Cemetery in the middle of the City of Lusaka.
United Free Church Mr. - 
Foreign Mission Committee.

At Edinburgh - 18th December 1923.

Which day the Foreign Mission Committee being met and constituted.

Inter alia.

6717. Livingstonia: Transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda.

Read letter from Dr. Laws, of date 16th October, enclosing a copy of a Joint Minute arranging the terms of transfer from the Livingstonia Mission to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of the stations at Kasungu and Tamanda, as follows:

Minute of Meeting of Commissioners from the Dutch Reformed Mission and Livingstonia Mission to deal with the transfer of the stations of Kasungu and Tamanda from the Livingstonia Mission to the D.R.C.M.

The Meeting was held at Kasungu on the 9th October 1923.

Sederunt - The Revs. J. A. Retief, G. de Coligny Murray, and Mr. G. F. van der Riet - Commissioners of the D.R.C.M.; and Revs. Mr. G. Stuart, Dr. Prentice, and Dr. Laws - Commissioners from the L.M.C.

Dr. Laws was called to the chair, and opened the meeting with prayer.

The following Minute of the D.R.C.M. Council was read:

"Kholoma, 20/9/23. As the Livingstonia Mission Council expresses its willingness to open negotiations in regard to the transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda to this Mission, and as we know that our Home Committee is desirous of seeing this transfer taking place, and is prepared to provide the personnel, this Council decided to reply to the request of the L.M.C. Council that we now accept the offer of transfer of Kasungu and Tamanda so graciously made more than two years ago.

"We appoint Revs. J. A. Retief, G. de C. Murray, and Mr. W. F. v.d. Riet as a Commission to negotiate with the Commission appointed by the L.M.C. about the terms of transfer.

"In reference to our joining the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian we would prefer to consider the matter entirely on its own merits.

"The Minute of Council on that matter is as follows:

"The formation of the Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian by the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia evokes great interest in this Council.

"We accept and approve of the idea of a native Church of Central Africa. After careful deliberation upon the question of uniting with Livingstonia and Blantyre in the formation of such Church and our forming part of it, we realise that we are not prepared immediately to undertake that important step.

"In order to proceed with the matter a Commission is appointed, with instructions to open negotiations with the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia and our Home Committees and to report as speedily as possible to our Local Council."

True Extract.

W. H. Murray,
Supt. D.R.C.M.

Thereafter Dr. Prentice submitted a statement of his views to the meeting and the D.R.C.M. Commissioners intimated that, as stated in the Council Minute they were empowered to take over Kasungu for the Cape section of the D.R.C. Mission and Tamanda for the Orange Free State portion of the Mission, with its headquarters at Madimoyo.

Details were taken up seriatim:

Land: Kasungu Estate, over 640 acres, and Kalamire plot, of 2 acres, are held in free simple, the cost being approximately £300 for
the former and 350 for the latter. The title deed for the former is in Edinburgh, but a copy is in this country, and the deed for the second is in this country.

The D.R.C.M. Commissioners ask for duplicate certified Minutes giving authority for the transfer of the two stations to be sent from the Foreign Mission Committee in Edinburgh lest such should be required for business purposes by their Church.

The cost of transfer deed, fees, and annual land tax to be met by the D.R.C.M.

Tamanda Estate has been purchased from the North Charterland Exploration Company, but has yet to be surveyed. It is proposed that the North Charterland Company be asked by Dr. Laws to have the deeds (when survey is completed) made out in name of the Trustees of the D.R.C. in the Orange Free State. The expense of the survey, other costs, and annual quit rent to be met by the D.R.C.M. of the Orange Free State.

Buildings. The buildings at Kasungu consist of school-church, dwelling-house, ladies' house, hospital and various out-buildings connected with these. All are of brick, and in good condition. These are transferred. Bricks have been made and cement procured for the building of a new church. The cost of these has been met from a building fund subscribed for by the natives themselves and friends of Dr. Prentice. The balances of this fund and the building material will be taken over by the D.R.C.M. as Trustees for the Native Church to carry out the work for which it was intended. A dam, wells, dipping tank, well-stocked orchard, and garden have been provided by Dr. Prentice out of his private resources, and are a valuable asset for health, and in consideration of the value of these to the future occupants of the station, the Commissioners recommend to the D.R.C.M. that a consideration of 275 be paid over to Dr. Prentice personally for same.

At Tamanda there is a good brick house, a large strongly-built wood and grass school-church with various other buildings, which are to be taken over by the D.R.C.M. Bricks have been made and material accumulated for the building of a church and other proposed houses.

Owing to the necessity for getting accommodation speedily for the ladies, money collected by the natives and a sum advanced by the Overtown Institution have been used for these, amounting, so far as is known to approximately £60. The part of this raised by the Native Church for the completion of the work intended. We recommend that the sum provided by the Overtown Institution should be repaid by the D.R.C.M. of Orange Free State.

All schools, school furniture, and school material in use in connection with both stations, so far as they are the property of the Livingstonia Mission and not of the natives, are handed over free of charge to the D.R.C.M.

Stocks of Scriptures provided by the National Bible Society of Scotland will be taken over by the D.R.C.M. at both stations, and the usual selling price, less transport of the same remitted to the National Bible Society.

Unused school books, slates, and other material, not desired by the D.R.C.M., will be sent on to and paid for by the D.R.C.M. will be paid for at cost price.

As the D.R.C.M. intend to continue Kasungu as a medical mission, hospital furnishings and the present stock of drugs and surgical instruments except such as may be needed by the Livingstonia Mission and those that are Dr. Prentice's private property or replacements of the same, will be transferred free of charge to the D.R.C.M.

Boundaries. That between Kasungu and Loudon will follow the approximate tribal boundary as represented by the schools occupied by Ka-
sungu and Loudon.

That between Tamanda and Chasaru to include the sphere at present worked from Tamanda, and, if possible, to take in Kazungu's people at present under Chasaru, as may be mutually arranged between the Mission.

Certificated native teachers will receive their present rates of pay, and increase will be according to the scales of the D.R.O.M.

There are two Theological students, Yona Lengwe and Lamak Mundwa Manda, who have taken, the former the first, the latter his second year, in the course for the native ministry at the Overton Institution.

As Yona Lengwe belongs to the Chitambo district, and worked for some time with Rev. Mr. Hoffat there, and as he is desirous of working among his own people, it is considered best that he and his wife and family should go to Livingstonia and complete his course there, and afterwards with the sanction of the Presbytery, go to take up work as an native pastor with Mr. Hoffat at Chitambo.

Lamak belongs to the Kazungu district, and it is agreed he should finish his theological course at the Overton Institution, returning for work at Kazungu between sessions. With the consent of the Presbytery of Livingstonia he should finish his course and proceed to license and (if desired by the D.R.O.M.) to ordination under the Livingstonia Presbytery, and then be transferred as a licensed probationer or ordained assistant, to the D.R.O.M. Presbytery as may be agreed upon.

As it is thought advisable that Dr. Prentice for health reasons should leave the country as soon as possible it is agreed that:

1. The D.R.O.M. Commissioners telegraph to their Committee at once, asking that if the Rev. A. G. Murray accepts the call to Kasungu he be sent immediately to take over the work.

2. In the event of the Rev. A. G. Murray not accepting, and the D.R.O.M. not being able to make temporary provision for a staff at Kasungu, then Mr. J. Smith of Tamanda would be sent there to keep the work going till the Rev. G. de C. Murray returns from furlough at the

The Minute of Council on that matter is as follows:–

The formation of the Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian, by the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia evokes great interest in this Council.

We accept and approve of the idea of a Native Church of Central Africa. After careful deliberation upon the question of uniting with Livingstonia and Blantyre in the formation of such Church and our forming part of it, we realise that we are not prepared immediately to undertake that important step.

In order to proceed with the matter a Commission is appointed with instructions to open negotiations with the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia and our Home Committee and to report as speedily as possible to our Local Council."

True Extract
(Signed) W.H. Murray,
Suppt. D.R.O.M.

Thereafter Dr. Prentice submitted a statement of his views to the meeting and the D.R.O.M. Commissioners intimated that as stated in the Council Minute they were empowered to take over Kasungu for the Cape section of the D.R.O.M. Mission, and Tamanda for the Orange Free State portion of the Mission, with its headquarters at Madzimoyo.

Details were taken up seriatim:–

Land. Kasungu Estate over 640 acres and Kaimira Plot of 2 acres are

- 3 -
Bible Society.

Unused school books, slates and other material not desired by the D.R.C.M. as school material will be sent on to and paid for by the Loudon Station of the L.M.

Slate pencils, chalk and other unused material on hand taken over by the D.R.C.M. will be paid for at cost price.

As the D.R.C.M. intend to continue Kasungu as a Medical Mission, hospital furnishings, and the present stock of drugs and surgical instruments, except such as may be needed by the Livingstone Mission and those that are Dr. Prentice's private property or replacements of the same will be transferred free of charge to the D.R.C.M. boundary. That between Kasungu and Loudon will follow the approximate tribal boundary as represented by the schools occupied by Kasungu and Loudon.

That between Tamanda and Chasufu to include the sphere at present worked from Tamanda and if possible to take in Kazembe's people at present under Chasufu, as may be mutually arranged between the missions.

Certificated Native Teachers will receive their present rates of pay and increase will be according to the scales of the D.R.C.M.

There are two Theological Students Yona Lengwe and Lamek Mankwala Manda, who have taken the former the first, the latter his second year in the course for the Native Ministry at the Overtown Institution. As Yona Lengwe belongs to the Chitambo district and wrought for
some time with Rev. Mr. Moffat there, and as he is desirous of working among his own people it is considered best that he and his wife and family should go to Livingstonia and complete his course there, and afterwards, with the sanction of the Presbytery, go to take up work as a native Pastor with Mr. Moffat at Chitembo.

Lamek belongs to the Kasungu district, and it is agreed he should finish his theological course at the Overtown Institution, returning for work at Kasungu between sessions. With the consent of the Presbytery of Livingstonia he should finish his course and proceed to license, and (if desired by the D.R.C.M.) to ordination under the Livingstonia Presbytery, and then be transferred as a licensed probationer, or ordained assistant, to the D.R.C.M. Presbytery as may be agreed upon.

As it is thought advisable that Mr. Prentice for health reasons should leave the country as soon as possible it is agreed that:

1. The D.R.C.M. Commissioners telegraph to their Committee at once, asking that if the Rev. A.G. Murray accepts the call to Kasungu he be sent immediately to take over the work.

2. In the event of the Rev. A.G. Murray not accepting, and the D.R.C.M. not being able to make temporary provision for a staff at Kasungu then Mr. J. Smith at Tamanda would be sent there to keep the work going till the Rev. G. de C. Murray returns from furlough at the end of May 1924. It is advisable that whoever is coming to Kasungu should go round as much of the district as possible with Mr. Prentice before he leaves.

In the event of Mr. J. Smith coming to Kasungu the L.M. agrees to
be responsible for his salary until the end of May 1924.

It is proposed that the schools at Kasungu should not be opened until the end of March, and the L.W. agrees to meet the current expenditure up to that date, provided that there is a credit balance left on hand at the close of 1923, but this balance must not be exceeded and any part of it not required will be handed over to the Local Treasurer, Livingstonia.

Should the income for 1923 be expended at 31st December 1923, then the D.R.O.M agrees to become responsible for the current expenses (apart from Mr. Smith's salary) while Mr. Smith remains at Kasungu.

Help for the administration of the sacraments will be afforded from Kongwe or London as may be mutually arranged.

The D.R.O.M Commissioners will arrange for the occupation of Tamanda as soon as possible to admit of Mr. Smith going to Chasfu, by as arranged by the Livingstonia Mission Council, or Kasungu.

In accordance with the desire of the D.R.O.M Council the matter of Union with the Synod about to be formed in 1924 is dealt with separately.

The above Minute has been read and confirmed.

(Signed) Robert Laws, Chairman.

Chas. Stuart.

G. de G. Murray.

J.A. Rabilf.


George Prentice.
THE CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA PRESBYTERIAN GENERAL SYNOD

MINUTES OF THE FORUM OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DWANGWA DISPUTES: MEETING HELD ON 27TH SEPTEMBER 1996 AT CHAM SECRETARIAT CONFERENCE ROOM IN LILONGWE.

1. OPENING:

The special Forum of the Standing Committee of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Synod, on Dwangwa Dispute met at Christian Hospitals Association of Malawi (CHAM) Secretariat Conference Room in Lilongwe on 27th September, 1996 to consider "who was disobeying General Synod decisions and to take appropriate actions". The meeting was opened at 10.15 a.m. by the Chairperson Rev. R.G. Chimowa (Moderator of Blantyre Synod) who read from Philippians 2:1-12 and thereafter asked the Rev. D. Chibwoka (Vice Moderator of General Synod and General Secretary for Synod of Zambia) to pray.

2. WELCOME REMARKS:

The Chairperson, Rev. R.G. Chimowa welcomed all members present and expressed special thanks to Livingstonia Synod members who agreed to attend the Forum regardless of their "Sabbatical leave". The Chairperson assured members of the Forum that the issue at hand was the Dwangwa Dispute and the developments that lead to Livingstonia Synod’s temporary withdrawal from active participation in General Synod programmes. He urged members to discuss in harmony, openness and brotherly spirit in order to let General Synod remain as the "salt" of the World and the uniting force of the Malawian society.

3. ROLL CALL:

The five Synods of the C.C.A.P. General Synod were represented as follows:

Blantyre Synod: Revs. R.G. Chimowa – Moderator, Box 413, Blantyre, S.T. Chitsulo, Deputy General Secretary, Box 413, Blantyre.
Mr. M.S. Mwagisi, Elder, P.O. Box 24, Mzilomwe.

Livingstonia Synod: Rev. Dr. O.P. Magunda, General Secretary, Box 112, Lilongwe.
Mr. J.H. Mwasinga, Elder, Box 162, Chilumaba.

Nkhoma Synod: Revs. S.P. Chalera, Moderator, Box 2014, Ch Livingstonia Synod: Rev. Dr. O.P. Magunda, General Secretary, Box 112, Lilongwe.
Mr. J.H. Mwasinga, Elder, Box 162, Chilumaba.

Harare Synod: Mr. J.D. Juma, General Secretary, Box 454, Oweru, Zimbabwe.

Zambia Synod: Rev. D. Chibwoka, General Secretary, Box 530019, Lusaka, Zambia.

General Synod: Rev. J.J. Mphatso and K.R.M. Nyirandu, Senior Clerk and Deputy Clerk respectively.

4. APOLOGY:

Apologies were received from Mr. G.D. Chadza standing Committee member from Nkhoma Synod who was out of the country on duty. The Moderator and Elder from Zambia Synod and the Moderator from Livingstonia Synod – because of communication breakdown.

5. REVIEW OF RELEVANT MINUTES ON DWANGWA
The Rev. A.M. Chipiko read minutes of the Sub committee Meeting on Dwangwa held on 9 - 10 September, 1995 beginning from item number 5 on page under the heading "Closing" and minutes of the Standing Committee meeting held at St. Peter's Church on 17 - 18 July, 1995 beginning from 5 minute number 2.1/96 - Under fragile unity of the G.C.A.P.

On minutes of the Sub-Committee members were updated with the following quotations:

1. Message from the Parish Minister Rev. S.I. Chiungya to Rev. G.A. Kačale,
   a. The local elders would neither attend nor accept the handing over ceremony,
   b. They had nothing more to do with Nkhoma Synod and General Synod on the matter,
   c. They would discuss the matter on their own and inform Nkhoma Synod about their discussions.

2. Fact finders: "Following the murmours about the closure of the prayer House a team of members from Nkhoma, Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods rushed to the site to find the truth."

The team found that:

I. "There was no single parishioner from Majiga Prayer House who came for worship.

II. Only parishioners from the Livingstonia Synod side around Dwangwa and united people were present standing outside the church.

III. Gun logs were fixed and nailed to all the doors of the prayer House, prohibiting anyone from entering inside. The ways leading to the Prayer House were also blocked with gun logs.

OBSERVATIONS:

After a lengthy analysis of the situation, several observations were made:

a. For whatever reasons and no matter how good they might have been to the owners closing the church was found to be a serious breach of Church discipline.

b. In closing the church to public worship that Sunday (10 September, 1995) meant that even the Parish Minister if he was part of it was prohibited to function in the disputed Church.

c. The Presbytery and Synod of Nkhoma, if they did know and if they were not part of the actions taken by the local people then they were also prohibited from functioning in the closed church.

Resolutions:

After prayerful and honest discussions and in order to maintain the unity of the members handling this matter on that day, the following resolutions were made:

a. To give the matter another chance

b. Nkhoma Synod was urged to take up the matter seriously and urgently with their children and report to General Synod Secretariat before too long.

c. Nkhoma Synod team members were asked to immediately advise their children to open the church and remove the logs from ways leading to the church.

d. There would be no service of worship in that prayer House that Sunday because it was already afternoon and because members who came to attend the function had dispersed.

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e. No one should be allowed under all circumstances to undermine the unity of the G.C.A.P.

f. On the question of employers who were alleged to victimise parishioners either on tribal reasons or Church differences it was strongly said that the behaviour should be stopped if it was happening. The management should be informed about the working relationships.

Continuing with relevant minutes the Rev. Chipiko read minutes of the Standing Committee meeting held at St. Peter's Church beginning from section where
15th November, 1995

The General Secretary
Synod Office
P.O. Box 112
ZUZU
Fax: 332 344

Dear Sir,

DWANGWA DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

We have read your letter to General Synod, copied to us, with profound sadness and apprehension. When the executive members of Nkhoma Synod met, soon afterwards, they resolved to register Nkhoma Synod sincerely pray to settle the matter as follows:

(a) Nkhoma Synod totally agree with the Livingstonia Synod's points of grievance in your letter to General Synod.
(b) Nkhoma Synod, sincerely apologize to Livingstonia Synod in love and prayer, for the nature of letter from us and signatory.
(c) We were, and are equally sorry about the locked Church building; the nature of the handover must believe it, this is normal; we believe time is a great healer; the house and people belong to Livingstonia Synod as from 28th September, 1995. We therefore, beseech you, Brothers and Sisters to persevere at this stage in order to give the Holy Spirit and time, a chance to heal the wounded feelings of witches Christians.

We have faith in the power of the Word that said, "From to day onwards you belong to Livingstonia Synod". Do not mind their absence from the scene; they set the word and message very well. Nkhoma Synod has already reported to us that, things have changed; witches Christians are no longer making any attempt to contact them.

Nkhoma Synod is prepared to come over to Zuzu to meet you to arrest your fears.

We pray to hear from you with Christian greetings.

I remain Sincerely yours,

A.A. SASU
Rev.
GENERAL SECRETARY
NKHOMA SYNOD OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Rev. Dr. K.J Mgawi
Josaphat Mwale Training Institute,
P.O. Box 1 Nkhoma

Rev. B.S. Chitheka
Madisi CCAP, P.O. Box 4, Madisi

Rev. W.Z. Malamba
Lilongwe CCAP, P.O. Box 132, Lilongwe

Rev. S.P. G. Chirwa
Chikuluti CCAP, P.O. Box 34, Lilongwe

Rev. S.S. Banda
Mvera CCAP, P.O. Box 34, Mvera

Rev. A.M. Katani Mwale
Kaning’a CCAP, P.O. Box 31339, Lilongwe 3

LIVINGSTONIA SYNOD OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Rev. M. Mezuwa Banda
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia

Rev. Matiya Nkhoma
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia

Rev. B.R.C. Mwakasungula
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia

Mr. Moses Mkandawire
CCAP Synod of Livingstonia

Mrs. L.A. Sambo
Kakhulajino CCAP, Box 22, Nkhamenya

Mr. Harry C.T. Mwankhoma
Box 112, Mzuzu

DISPUTED CONGREGATIONS AND PRAYER HOUSES
KASASANYA CONGREGATION (LINGSTONIA SYNOD)

1. Rev. F.B.J. Mfune  Resident Minister
2. Franco Munthali  Session Clerk
3. Blastone Lungu  Church Elder
4. Adriam Chisi  Church Elder
5. Maxon Ngoma  Church Elder
6. Misheck Jere  Church Elder
7. Godrick Moyo  Church Elder
8. Langstone Lungu  Church Elder
9. Mai Charity Khosa  Church Elder
10. Nafter Moyo  Church Elder
11. Andrew Nyirenda  Church Elder

KAKONJE CONGREGATION (NKHOMA SYNOD)

1. Rev. W.D.M. Gande  Resident Minister
2. German Phiri  Session Clerk
3. Lotani Phiri  Retired Church Elder
4. Foster Mwambo  Retired Church Elder
5. Austin Chizombo  Church Elder
6. Alison Mtambalika  Church Elder
7. Alison Mtambalika  Church Elder
8. Isaac Kazunga Church Elder
9. Patson Phiri Church Elder
10. Storey Chikoko Church Elder
11. Galiamu Phiri Church Elder
12. Senior Chief Chulu
13. Village Headman Mtengula
14. Village Headman Chakhalakumacho

THUPA CONGREGATION (NKHOMA SYNOD)

1. Rev. Kalemba Saka Resident Minister Thupa
2. Stafford Banda Church Elder
3. John Chilowezi Retired Elder
4. Frazer Banda Church Elder
5. Kawalaza Kasalika Church Elder
6. Hudson Kwenda Church Elder Mpapa
7. Chimalizeni Banda Church Elder Bloch H
8. N.B. Guwende Church Elder Mlaliki Thupa
9. Arthur Chakwaya Phiri Retired Church Elder
10. Rusk E. Botomani Church Elder Bloch H 2
11. Isaac Phiri Church Elder station
12. Green Phiri Church Elder Mathu
13. Stephano Kabaghe Retired Church Elder Vizende
14. Henry Huwa  
   Church Elder  
   Block H
15. Henderson Kanzingeni  
   Church Elder block H1
16. W.H. Nyirenda  
   Retired Church Elder Chizungu
17. Gogo Sub T/A Nyanja
18. Village Headman Nyanja

MATIKI CONGREGATION – ILLOVO DWANGWA SUGAR CORPORATION
(LIVINGSTONIA SYNOD)

1. Ben Gumbo  
   Church Elder
2. Thabesi Banda  
   Church Elder
3. Walter Ngwira  
   Church Elder /Vestry Chairman
4. Orton Njikho  
   Church Elder
5. Foster Phiri  
   Church Elder
6. Brown Muyira  
   Church Elder /Vestry Chairman
7. Michael Tchuwa  
   Church Elder /Vestry Chairman

MAJIGA CONGREGATION (CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD)

1. Rev. Thondolo  
   Resident Minister Msenjere
2. R.J. Million  
   Church Elder Majiga Trading
3. Samson Mwale  
   Retired Church Elder
4. E.M. Malenga  
   Church Elder Dwangwa
5. M.M. Kamphandira  Church Elder Msenjere
6. J. F. Phiri  Church Elder Matumbi/Treasurer Msenjere
7. S.W. Mongeya  Church Elder Chigunda
8. R. Banda  Church Elder Kapupo
9. Rodrick G. J. Nyirenda  Church Elder Majiga /Masasa
10. Zephani Banda  Church Elder Majiga

DISPUTED CONGREGATIONS AND PRAYER HOUSES IN CENTRAL REGION OF MALAWI

NKHAMENYA AND KASUNGU AREA

Nkhoma Synod Congregations and Prayer Houses between Dwangwa and Milenje River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Congregation/Prayer House</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kakonje CCAP (Reverend)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Chiswe</td>
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<td>Kanono</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Kalimira</td>
<td>8 Mutchenda (Mutchedwa)</td>
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<td>20 Chisinga</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Viyombo</td>
<td>22 Nkhanga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Nkhoma Synod Congregations and Prayer Houses North of Milenje River

1 Nkhamenya
2 Chipata
3 Kamwamphimbi
4 Mthawira 10 Bwaila
5 Mulozi 11 Kaswawa
6 Chanjobvu 12 Chagumba
7 Kagwamphande 13 Visoyo
8 Phwazi 14 Makonje
9 Changa‘njo 15 Kamtata
Livingstonia Synod Congregations and Prayer Houses between Milenje and Dwangwa River.

Kavipini                          Mndera
Vyeyo                            Dwangwa
Mlindang’ombe                     Mnyamazi
Kawale                            Kapululu (Reverend)
Kapalanjiwa                       Chigumukire
Kalowa                            Kankhande
Nchezi                            Chafisi
Mutuwanjobvu                       Kaluwe
Msikawanthu                       Kavipula
Ndakondwa                         Mafumphizi
Chamakala (Reverend)              Jati
Chenjewazi                        Bowe
Juni                               Kavizinde
Kaviyombo                         Kavunguti
Mtchenda                           Chatoloma (Reverend)
Chizungu                          Muula
Kawayemba (Kamunyemba)             Kadweya
Kambere                           Nkomazi
Kalimanyungu                      Kalumamba
Mathandani (Reverend)             Kasasanya (Reverend)
Mpasadzi          Sopa
Kalimira          Magwemba
Kambulu          Kawiluwilu
Kakuku            Nkhalo
Chakhomi (Chakhozi) Swaswa (Nswasa)
Chimwankhwere     Katundu
Lusito            Kanolo
Sesa            Sesa, Changaluwe
Chulu DEC

Livingstonia Synod Congregations South of Dwangwa River
Kasungu
Lilongwe

DISPUTED CONGREGATIONS AND PRAYER HOUSES IN THE NKHOTAKOTA AREA,
CENTRAL REGION OF MALAWI

Nkhoma Synod Congregations North of Dwangwa River
Chinkhuti          Chidebwe
Ching’anjio        Chikunda (Chigunda)
Kapupu (Kapuku)    Mshapepe
Kangoza           Khuyu
Chasato           Kanjeche

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Nkhunga  Nyavuuw- Dwangwa Estate

Nkhoma Synod Congregations and Prayer Houses between Bua and Dwangwa River

Matiki  Liwaladzi
Ukasi  Kabiza
Majiga  Matelezi
Khonde  Msenjere
Walembera  Nyamvuw

Livingstonia Synod Congregations and Prayer Houses between Dwangwa and Bua River

Chisita –Dwangwa Estate  Liwaladzi
Walembera  Matumbi
Katimbira  Bua
Mowe  Mulala

Livingstonia Synod Congregation South of Bua

Nkhotakota Boma