



MISJONSHØGSKOLEN  
SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

GOD'S ACT OF RECONCILING SINFUL HUMANITY WITH HIMSELF  
“A Christian view of Reconciliation”

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BY  
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## Abstract

The present thesis explores how reconciliation and conflicts in the world should be understood in the light of the Christian faith and how this discussion relates to the real problem of conflicts in the world.

The first chapter aims at setting the context for the discussion by presenting the main issues of the conflicts in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, with special reference to the West Wollega Zone congregations and their relation to the theme of reconciliation.

The second chapter explores the overall historical and theological context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. The discussion relates this passage to other Pauline passages and narratives from the Gospels on the topic of reconciliation.

The third chapter investigates in detail God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself through the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. The exegesis points clearly what God has done for sinful human beings through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and what are the implications of the proclamation of God's act and the acceptance of this among the people who hear the message. The way God reconciles sinful humanity with himself is very important to help us to relate better to conflicts around us through the Christian perspective.

The fourth chapter looks into the nature of conflicts and how to cope with conflicts in light of the Christian faith. It looks at how the Christian faith addresses the problem of conflicts in the world through the perspective of faith in the person of Jesus Christ. In this respect the Christian Church, Christian ministers, the fellowship of believers, and the individual Christians in the light of God's mission are God's ambassadors to the problem of conflicts in the world. It is the Christian task to do the work of reconciliation motivated by Christ's love waiting his second coming to make all things new. This chapter also points out that the shallow biblical and theological understanding of the people in the referred area is the main source for the most conflicts in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia.

## **Dedicatory**

To special Friends,

To my wife Bizunesh Shibesh,

To my children Amanuel, Feyisa and Kena,

To the glory of Jesus Christ.

*The end of this Degree will begin a new chapter in my life. Our task is to proclaim the message of reconciliation and urge people to respond in faith to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. To fulfil our mission, Christian ministry requires devotion to the Lord and to devote our selves to one another. Devoted ministers love their congregation as Jesus loves his Church. So, we have to be devoted to our Lord and to loving each other to be fruitful in our ministry.*

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## Abbreviations

<i>cf</i>	Compare
ch	Chapter
chs	Chapters
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Etc	Etcetera
f	The following verse.
i.e.	that is
ITOR	Indigenous Traditional Oromo Religion
Jd	Jude
MHS	School of Mission and Theology
Mth	Masters in Theology
NIB	New International Version (UK)
NIV	New International Version (1984) (US)
NKJ	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
ONS	Onesimos Nesib Seminary
OT	Old Testament
PhD	Doctorate Degree of Philosophy
Rsv	Revised Standard Version
v.	Verse
vv.	Verses

## Declaration

I hereby declare that the present Master Thesis, submitted for the Master program course at the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger:

1. Has not been used in any other exams at other domestic or foreign departments, universities, or colleges;
2. Does not refer to the work [text, picture,...] of others without citing the source, and the right to publish it;
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“A Christian view of Reconciliation”

School of Mission And Theology (MHS), May 2014.

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DANIEL MERDASSA

Signature in block letters

Place and Date: \_\_\_\_\_.

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Chapter One  
INTRODUCTION

Reconciliation is an important healing process in the life of human beings, most especially for those who are affected by conflicts. Reconciliation is an integral part of our existence as created human beings who are called to live in peace and to care for creation.<sup>1</sup> Living this reality is a daily exercise which we will deal with until we reach our destiny in heaven because of our fallen nature. There is need of reconciliation not only among human beings but also between the creatures and the Creator. Therefore, a study about reconciliation in this hostile world can hopefully contribute to improve the existence of peace, justice, truth and security in the various contexts and cultures.

We face many conflicts in our daily lives as human beings as individuals, families, groups, or communities. Conflicts affects all and it brings changes to our lives and the context we live in, but we are created to live in fellowship with God and with one another. Since conflicts have no boundaries, they are resented in many situations in the wider society and in the Church life.

The conflicts in the Church as well as in the society have a vertical dimension with God and a horizontal dimension with people. They affect the spiritual, social and economic dimension of the Church and the society. The only solution for healing these conflicts at once in both directions is God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with Himself.

**1.1 The theme: God's Act of Reconciling Sinful Humanity with Himself**

The theme of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2, God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself, is very relevant and important for all human beings who live on earth. This theme is a challenge and an important aspect for Christians who have to give an account for why there are conflicts, and a need for God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself both vertically and horizontally. In this regard the Christian faith is the most challenged religion to give an account of how to reconcile people with God and people with people once God has allowed the existence of conflicts in this created world.

This is not a challenge that only religions have to confront, but it is a challenge that all

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:15, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till and keep it".

individuals, families, groups, societies and nations have to face in their real life. Thus, God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself helps us to understand better the reality of conflicts and how to deal with it. When Christians face conflicts, they should attempt to solve them on the basis of the theological and biblical teaching. For this reason, this thesis aims at presenting a model for God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself based on the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. It is part of the current theological model to determine the type of activities the Church engages in trying to solve ongoing conflicts in the Church and the society. The thesis attempts to develop a biblical and theological model that will make a real difference to the future of the Church.

This particular passage which is the object of this study, is one of the most important texts in the New Testament. It is the centre of Christian teaching and preaching. It is a section which certainly demands further research and reflection.<sup>2</sup> In this regard David L. Turner calls this passage “one of the most memorable sections of the NT”.<sup>3</sup> R. P. C. Hanson says it is “one of the characters of the Christian ministry in the New Testament”.<sup>4</sup> Barrett calls this section (5:11-21) “one of the most pregnant, difficult, and important passage in the whole of Pauline literature”.<sup>5</sup> Calvin's comment on 5:18 is also arresting: “Here, if anywhere in Paul's writings, we have a quite remarkably important passage and we must carefully examine the words one by one”.<sup>6</sup> God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself is the most concrete way in which the new relationship of God with human beings is expressed in Christ.<sup>7</sup> For Paul the essence of his apostolic ministry is the proclamation of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself through the death of the sinless Christ. Therefore, this meaning challenged me to study deeper this theme in relation to the Christian faith. The project has been motivated by what I have seen and experienced in Ethiopia being part of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

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- 2 I. Howard Marshall. “The meaning of 'Reconciliation'” in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essay in Honour of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert A. Auelich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 117.
  - 3 David L. Turner. *Paul and The ministry of Reconciliation in 2 COR 5:11-6:2*, available from [http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/ntesources/ntarticles/ctr-nt/turner-2cor5-ctr.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/ntesources/ntarticles/ctr-nt/turner-2cor5-ctr.pdf); Internet cite; 1989.
  - 4 Turner, *Paul and The ministry of Reconciliation in 2 COR 5:11-6:2*, Internet cite.
  - 5 C. K. Barret, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*: (Great Britain: Cambridge, 1973), 163.
  - 6 Jean Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 77.
  - 7 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 117.

## **1.2 The Problem Statement**

Studying Conflicts and their historical facts can help us better relate to the challenges we face nowadays in Church and the society. From this learning experience we can also help the generations to come in how to deal with conflicts. In view of our fallen state, conflicts are an integral part of our life, one must learn how to deal with it in a daily basis. Conflicts can also promote changes and increase communication and cooperation between people when it is constructively managed. However, it can also lead to chaos and destruction when it is not effectively managed. Conflict is a reality presented to all human beings, even also between other living beings such as animals. The existence, types, and the extent of the conflicts can vary from one context to another once conflicts can affect every aspect of life.

The existence of a conflicting situation on earth is an indication of the necessity of reconciliation and it can present us a framework to eradicate, to limit, or even to transform conflicts into peace and safety. Conflicts have two dimensions: they can be towards God and or towards our fellow human beings. Conflicts among the human beings, in special may also have several political, economic, religious and social aspects related to it. To solve such conflicts in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia (EECMY), which they really need to deal with, reconciliation presents itself as the only primary option to bring it into a peaceful end.

## **1.3 The Significance of the Project**

Some facts that enhanced my interest in writing this thesis on God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself can be explained as follows:

1) The primary significance of the project is to develop Paul's theology of reconciliation. God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself is a fundamental tool to bring eternal salvation vertically and restoration of peace and justice horizontally in the whole world. It is necessary to restore friendship where there is enmity, to establish people's dignity, and to create a sense of belonging.<sup>8</sup> Wherever there are conflicts, the priority action is to bring reconciliation so peace can be made. Reconciliation will certainly cause a profound impact on religion, economy, politics and the social life of any given society.

2) The second reason is the ideological problem. Ethiopia is a country with many ethnic and linguistic groups. Each of these groups have their own cultural values which

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<sup>8</sup> Tor Arne S. Berntsen, *Life After Violence: Towards a Shared Moral Discourse on Reconciliation in Northern Uganda*: (Dissertation submitted to the School of Mission and Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) Volume 18, 2013), 6.

defines the identity of their people. In view of the fact that the country has multi-linguistic groups, it has motivated the current Ethiopian government to adopt a Federal Constitution that allows ethnic communities located in one geographical area to form a regional government. In this respect the country exists in a state of unity and diversity at the same time. Consequently, our diversity enables us to have different perceptions and views of the world we live in, these individual perceptions of world-views inevitably clash, because we all have different goals and desires. Hence, it is inevitable that conflict occurs and that it can grow to a more serious level of violence in the form of property destruction, dislocation of whole communities to other places and even loss of human lives.

This ideological friction can be a cause for several political, economic, religious and ethnic conflicts. Moreover, conflicts can create a context of hostility and mistrust among the communities. Furthermore, it can create a loss of hope and a lack of vision for our own communities and the country. Sometimes this is the reason why many Ethiopian students are afraid to come back to Ethiopia after the completion of their studies abroad.

3) The third reason is the present religious diversity. Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic country. In this context three big religions interact: Christianity, Islam and the Indigenous Traditional Oromo Religion (ITOR). Within Christianity there are also the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), Catholic and Protestant<sup>9</sup> Churches. The results of it are big differences in doctrine, ethnicity and language among them.

This diversity enables us to have different perceptions and views of the world we live in. When these perceptions of our individual world-view clash with each other because of different goals and desires, then conflict occurs. In this relation there are tensions on the one hand between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and on the other hand between the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Indigenous Traditional Oromo Religion.

For example, in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Oromo ethnic group is the dominant group and they have decided to lead the Church in their vernacular language, the Oromo language. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, implicitly the state Church, is controlled by the Amhara and Tigre ethnic groups, both of them are the dominant groups in the current regime. The language of the Church is Amharic which has been the official national language of the political leaders for many centuries until today.

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<sup>9</sup> When I say protestant I am referring to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

More than 52% of the Ethiopian population are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church religion. For that reason, they want to influence the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus with the national official language related to political perspectives and want to lead the Church with Amharic language. These diverse perspectives between EOTC and EECMY Churches comprises culture, language and doctrinal conflicts. In the Oromiya region there are also many Oromo people practising the Indigenous Traditional Oromo Religion parallel with Christianity or Islam. The Indigenous Traditional Oromo religious belief is based on the view that there is only one Waaqa (God). This Indigenous Oromo Traditional Religion regards Christianity as a western religion which is influencing Oromo culture and religion. This also brings cultural and religious conflicts with it.

4) The fourth reason for choosing this topic is related to my experience in the Lutheran Church: The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. It is a Christian Church which is experiencing rapid spiritual and numerical growth in Ethiopia nowadays. From my experience the numerical growth of any religion brings also with it a growth of conflicts and problems which need special attention. Conflicts constitute a very strong issue to deal with specially for the Christian Churches today. For that reason, to study and to develop “God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself” in Churches is necessary, because it touches an important part of the Christian and ecclesiastical life. In this respect, this paper will focus on the conflicts of EECMY at West Wollega Zone congregations with the special emphasis on the Onesimos Nesib Seminary.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, in my view, the Bible has much to contribute to the theme of reconciliation. We need to depend on God's act of reconciliation to manage conflicts in a constructive way. We, as Christians, have a great potential to transform a conflicting situation into a situation of peace and security. But there are some challenges such as: the lack of experienced leaders, theologians, evangelists and the means to give training for the uplift of the spiritual, social and intellectual condition of the people at the local levels. Qualified leaders, theologians and evangelists can manage to solve conflicts in constructive ways based on the Bible, on God's act of reconciliation. Reconciliation can build trust and restore relationships among the conflicting individuals, groups and communities. Furthermore, it can build a vertical bridge between God and human beings.

There are many reasons and motivations which can encourage contemporary Church

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<sup>10</sup> Onesimos Nesib seminary is one of the regional EECMY seminaries in Ethiopia at the western part of Ethiopia. It is the only theological seminary which holds Bachelor Degree at the West Wollega Zone.

leaders, New Testament students and Scholars to work profoundly to develop Paul's theology of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 for the present Church life.

#### **1.4 The Aim**

The main aim of the present thesis is to develop a model of reconciliation based on God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with Himself in aiming for a peaceful relationship with God and with each other. The practical aim of the research is to help the people who are struggling with conflicts in the world and show what Christians can offer in relation to that. It is necessary for the people, who are in conflicts or when conflicts come, to have a sound understanding in how to deal with conflicts in view of the Christian faith. The paper also aims to contribute academically to the field of New Testament Theology with a reflection on this very relevant and ever actual theme.

The present thesis does not have a field work, but it is born out of the practical life in Ethiopia. It has come from my interest and questions concerning the people and why conflicts are increasing in the ecclesiastical life from time to time.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

Regarding the present thesis, the study will not examine in detail all words in the text. Rather the goal is to develop God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself in the literary context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. In this way, the syntax of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 and the content of the passage will require careful attention. There is also a brief survey of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself elsewhere in Scripture in relation to the passage. Especially, besides 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2, Matthew 5:24, and the four other Pauline passages that speak directly about reconciliation such as 1 Corinthians 7:11, Romans 5:1-11, Colossians 1:15-22 and Ephesians 2:11-22 should also be considered. Although, because the doctrine of reconciliation involves individual, corporate, cosmic, and eschatological dimensions, these make a discussion on the topic very challenging theologically, which I will also address.<sup>11</sup>

The first chapter of this thesis presents the introduction. Chapter two will deal with the overall historical and theological context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. Chapter three will deal with the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 which governs the main aim of the paper with special references to God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself. Chapter four

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 117.

will deal with the message of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 applied to the Ethiopian context. My hope is that these reflections can be a contribution for reconciliation for many Christians who are confronted with conflicts, specially in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, but also elsewhere in the world. Finally I will present the general conclusion for the thesis.

### **1.6 Sources**

The present thesis will make use of literature related to the theme of reconciliation in the Bible, especially those related to the field of New Testament Theology. Some books which I will use are a result of researches made on the referred theme and also for recommendations by my academic advisor, Jostein Ådna. Concerning the Greek letters I will use the “Teknia Greek fonts” and accents in the present thesis.

### **1.7 Summary of the Chapter**

The present Chapter is an attempt to describe the thesis “God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself” in 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 in the field of New Testament Theology at the School of Mission and Theology – MHS. I have also briefly discussed the challenges of the research for Christians in Ethiopia and also shown how conflicts are the most common problem in the world.

In the following chapter, I will try to discuss how the overall historical and theological context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 is related with the other Pauline passages and narratives from the Gospels on the theme of reconciliation.



## Chapter Two

### THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-6:2

#### **2.1 The Historical Context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

This section will briefly present the historical background and the contextual analysis of the epistle.

##### *2.1.1 Background*

Many scholars divide 2 Corinthians according to its content into three sections, chs.1-7, 8-9, and 10-13.<sup>12</sup> They consider also 2 Corinthians to be a composite document from several pieces of letters.<sup>13</sup> This is because of its change of tone, technique and style between chs.1-9 and chs. 10-13.<sup>14</sup> For more information about the background please see DeSilva from pages 575-578.

##### *2.1.2 The Authorship*

From the early Church to the present, there has been an agreement among scholars that the authorship of 2 Corinthians is attributed to Paul.<sup>15</sup> The letter itself in 2 Cor 1:1, 7:3-4 and 10:1 points the authorship to Paul. Paul's authorship is also accepted by: Polycarp of Smyrna mid-second century A.D; Irenaeus of Lyons, towards the end of the second century A.D; the anonymous letter to Diognetu, late second century A.D; Clement of Alexandria (200-215); Tertullian of Charthage, 195-220 A.D; and Cyprian of Carthage, 246-58 A.D. Lastly, Marcion's canon (ca.150) and Muratorian canon, late second century A.D, reflect Paul's authorship of 2 Corinthians. In this view, he is stated as the author both by the letter itself and by the early Church fathers. Thus, 2 Corinthians became widely known throughout the early Church only during the second half of the second century A.D.<sup>16</sup> Today almost all the scholars accept Pauline authorship of the epistle.

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12 Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 114.

13 David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*: (England: Downers Grove, Illinois, 2004), 576.

14 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 661.

15 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1.

16 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*,3.

### *2.1.3 The Date*

It is argued that 1 Corinthians was probably written in May A.D. 54 in Ephesus,<sup>17</sup> which after a short time the report from Timothy on the situation of the Church there forced Paul to go to Corinth rather than to go to Macedonia.<sup>18</sup> Then after his visit to Corinth he went back to Ephesus from where he wrote and sent the sorrowful letter to Corinth what has been lost. After that, Paul established the basic form of 2 Corinthians 1-9 which was sent to the Corinthians in the Spring of A.D. 55.<sup>19</sup>

The last part of the epistle, 2 Corinthians chapters 10-13, Paul wrote at Illyricum before his third visit to Corinth where he spent the winter of A.D. 55-56.<sup>20</sup> Dieter clearly stated that this final section of the letter was written during the summer and fall of 55 C.E.<sup>21</sup> This information argues that the date of 2 Corinthians is A.D. 55. But other scholars argued that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians probably in A.D. 55 and after a year he wrote 2 Corinthians in A.D. 56.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, the date of 2 Corinthians is probably around A.D. 55 or A.D. 56.

### *2.1.4 The Recipients*

According to the accounts in Acts we know that some Jews in Corinth accepted the Gospel and left the local synagogue(s). There were also the proselytes, those who converted into Christianity and left the local synagogue. There were also Gentiles those who accepted the Gospel and converted to Christianity. These Gentiles were known among the convert proselytes and Jews as God-fearing people.<sup>23</sup> They also put their faith in Jesus Christ and were baptised (Acts 18:1-4, 7-8, 17).<sup>24</sup> There were also pagan idolaters those who accepted the Gospel and put their faith in Jesus Christ. From this it is clear that the existing community of Jews, Proselytes, Gentiles and pagan idolaters were the recipients of the epistle.

### *2.1.5 The Broad Context*

In order to have a better understanding of the context of the letter, here I will present the subject matter related to the surrounding passages to see the broad context. Almost all

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17 Jerome Murphy. *O'Connor, Op, The Theology of the second letter to the Corinthians*: (New York: Cambridge, 1991), 15.

18 O'Connor, Op, *The Theology of the second letter to the Corinthians*, 15.

19 O'Connor, Op, *The Theology of the second letter to the Corinthians*, 16.

20 O'Connor, Op, *The Theology of the second letter to the Corinthians*, 17.

21 Dieter Georgi, *The opponents of Paul in second Corinthians*:(Philladelphia: Fortress, 1986), 18.

22 French L. Arrington and Rogerb Stronstand, *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament: an international commentary for spirit-filled Christians*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 915.

23 Arrington and Stronstand, *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament* 799.

24 DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 563-564.

commentators divide 2 Corinthians into three sections from chs. 1-7, 8-9 and 10-13.<sup>25</sup> The first section from chs. 1-7 presents the very wide and broad context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. This section also has three sub-divisions: 1:1-11 is an introduction; 1:12-2:13 is Paul's recent conduct and 2:14-7:4 is the detailed description of Paul's apostolic ministry. Therein Paul's apology in 2:14-5:10 ends with a very serious question for reconciliation to accept Paul as a worth minister of the Gospel from 5:11-13,<sup>26</sup> and with God from 5:14-6:2, and with Paul from 6:11-13, and 7:2-4 also the appeal for reconciliation.<sup>27</sup> In ch. 6:3-10 Paul explained how he had practised his apostolic ministry.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this whole portion can be understood as a letter of a tension between conflicts and reconciliation.

### *2.1.6 The Immediate Context*

While identifying the immediate textual unit I will briefly discuss the subject matters in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, 5:11-6:2 and 6:3-10. In 5:1-10 Paul explains the importance of living in faith which gives confidence in the face of death.<sup>29</sup> From that topic in 5:11-6:2 Paul goes to address the ministry of reconciliation. Then finally he comes to 6:3-10, where he explains how he has exercised his apostolic ministry. From this survey we can conclude that 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 has a clear beginning and ending. It is a genuine self-contained textual unit.

### *2.1.7 The Structure*

2 Corinthians can have the following structure:<sup>30</sup>

1. Introduction (1:1-11)
2. Explanation of Paul's recent conduct (1:12-2:13)
3. Digression from Travelogue: Description of Paul's apostolic ministry (2:14-7:4)
4. Return to Travelogue: Good News from Titus (7:5-16)
5. The Macedonian collection for the saints in Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)
6. The affirmation and defence of Paul's apostolic ministry (10:1-13:14)

In addition the “Digression from Travelogue: Description of Paul's apostolic ministry” (2:14-7:4) can also have the following outline:

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25 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 114.

26 Ralph P. Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*: (Waco, Texas: World Books, 1986), 165.

27 Iva Vegge, *2 Corinthians a Letter about reconciliation: A Psychological, Epistolographical and Rhetorical Analysis* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 45.

28 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 464.

29 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* 365.

30 Arrington and Stronstand, *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament* 922-923.

- 3.1. Paul's Grateful confidence (2:14-17)
- 3.2. The greatness and glory of Paul's ministry (3:1-4:6)
- 3.3. The trials and triumph of apostolic ministry (4:7-5:10)
- 3.4. The nature and function of apostolic ministry (5:11-7:4)

Furthermore, from 3:4. "The nature and function of apostolic ministry", can be divided into four sections.<sup>31</sup>

- 3.4.1. The motivation of apostolic ministry (5:11-16)
- 3.4.2. The message of apostolic ministry (5:17-6:2)
- 3.4.3. The suffering of Apostolic ministry (6:3-10)
- 3.4.4. The intimacy and joy of Apostolic ministry (6:11-7:4)

From this structure I have developed the theme of the present thesis: "God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself" based on 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. I have also modified and subdivided the passage into three sections. Because it makes our study more suitable for our particular project. The subdivisions are:

- 1) Motives for the ministry of reconciliation (5:11-15)
- 2) The message for reconciliation (5:17-21)
- 3) The appeal to persevere in God's grace (6:1-2)

### *2.1.8 The Form*

The genre/form of 2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4 is rhetorical. In this passage Paul used different topics reflecting the rhetorical tradition of defence speeches.<sup>32</sup> There are series of rhetorical analysis we can see in this section in how Paul's defence could function as a unified response to a fairly hostile situation.<sup>33</sup> It can be clearly seen in his defence that he uses the rhetorical arguments to persuade his readers.

## **2.2 The Theological Context of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

In this section I will briefly discuss the theological emphasis in the content of the text and its terminology. I will also briefly present the relation of this passage to other Pauline passages and narratives from the Gospels on the topic of reconciliation.

### *2.2.1 The Terminology*

The Greek terminology, *καταλλαγή*, the theological word-group of reconciliation is used only by Paul before anybody used it.<sup>34</sup> The origin of the word remains unexplained and it is

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31 Arrington and Stronstand, *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament* 923.

32 DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 580.

33 DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 582.

34 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 117.

not used in Lxx as well as in apocrypha in this theological manner. The word-group ἀποκαταλλάσσω, appeared with a new and unique meaning by Paul. It is Paul's way of explaining the significance of the cross.<sup>35</sup>

### *2.2.2 Reconciliation*

The term reconciliation has many definitions among the scholars. Marshall defined it as the interpersonal relationship along with forgiveness.<sup>36</sup> Others define it as the fundamental creature/creator relationship.<sup>37</sup> Also other scholars define reconciliation as the bringing together of two parts in enmity with each other to a state of peace and cooperation.<sup>38</sup> Reconciliation is a healing relationship, for that reason, it will always be an ongoing process. It transforms relations in the sense that friendly relations now have replaced the former hostility.<sup>39</sup> According to Paul reconciliation is present wherever enmity is overcome and unity is restored.<sup>40</sup> It includes men and women, Jews and Gentiles regardless religion and politics.<sup>41</sup> In general the motif of the reconciliation includes the horizontal and vertical dimensions for the process of healing to the occurred conflicts to bring restoration. Thus, with ideas of horizontal and vertical dimensions, reconciliation is used explicitly and implicitly in the Gospels and in the Pauline letters.

### *2.2.3 The Gospels*

The Greek verb διαλλάσσω is mentioned only once in the New Testament and is found in Matthew 5:24 as an imperative aorist passive.<sup>42</sup> It has to do with anger and how an offended person gives up his/her enmity.<sup>43</sup> A person who is on the way to the altar to offer his/her offerings in front of God has to repent and to forgive the fellow brothers and sisters before the offerings will be made. The enmity shall be ended up in any case, whether it is justified or not, he/she shall be reconciled. Διαλλάγηθι, this imperative aorist passive can be translated as (“to be reconciled”), here it has two implications. Firstly, anyone has to be reconciled with an offended person in order to come in a position to make an acceptable offering to God, in a way that horizontal reconciliation heals unhealthy life situations among the society. It

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35 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 117.

36 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 117.

37 James D. G. Dunn, *The theology of Paul the apostle*: (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 229.

38 Dunn, *The theology of Paul the apostle*, 328.

39 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 436.

40 Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology: Second edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516: Paternoster, 2001), 992.

41 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology: Second edition*, 992.

42 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 118.

43 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 118.

substitutes enmity with friendship, war with peace, and anger with love.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, our repentance and forgiveness with one another helps us to make our offerings faithfully. Man's practise of repentance and forgiveness makes progress to the absolute forgiveness and the righteousness of God. Then, reconciliation restores the relationship between God and human beings vertically and heals unhealthy relationship among people with one another horizontally.<sup>45</sup> For that reason, in reconciliation God opened the closed door and revealed himself for us in Christ. The occurrences of reconciliation in all other parallel passages are in Paul's epistles. However, by the New Testament era the Greek verb καταλλάσσω was becoming more common than the verb διαλλάσσω to render reconciliation with the same meaning.<sup>46</sup> But why καταλλάσσω was more preferable than διαλλάσσω remains unexplained. I assume that Paul uses the verb καταλλάσσω (“reconcile”) and the noun καταλλάγη (“reconciliation”) in his epistles because of their popularity at that time.

#### *2.2.4 Other Pauline Passages*

In the case of the other Pauline epistles the καταλλάγ-root appears as a verb in 1 Corinthians 7:11, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 and Romans 5:10, and as a noun in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, in Romans 5:11 and 11:15. It also occurs as a compound verb in Colossians 1:20, 22, in Ephesians 2:16 as ἄπο+κατα+ἄλλαξεν and ἄπο+κατα+ἄλλάξη. So, this use is very helpful in considering these prominent places (1 Corinthians 7:11; Romans 5:1-11; Colossians 1:15-23; Ephesians 2:11-22) in relation to 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. The date of the epistles are: 1 Corinthians is A.D 54,<sup>47</sup> Romans A.D. 56-57,<sup>48</sup> Colossians between the late 50s A.D. and the end of first century<sup>49</sup> and Ephesians in the period between 60-90 A.D.<sup>50</sup> In this way, I will discuss them briefly in chronological order.

##### *2.2.4.1 1 Corinthians 7:11*

The Greek verb καταλλάσσω appears in Paul's epistles in Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 7:11, 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19, and 20.<sup>51</sup> From these verses 1 Corinthians 7:11 suggests a horizontal advice concerning marriage. Paul gives advice for a woman who has left her husband. She

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44 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 436.

45 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 436.

46 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 119.

47 Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 31.

48 C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the epistles to Romans*: (T. & T. Clark Limited, 59 George street: Edinburgh, 1975), 16.

49 Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*: (Grand Rapids, Michiga: BakerAcademic, 2007), 12.

50 Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesias*: (T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1998), 20.

51 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 121.

must live unmarried or she must be reconciled with her husband and go back to him. The issue here is about a woman who was offended by her husband and took a decision to separate from him. Then Paul urges her to leave her offended state to a state of forgiveness to restore her marriage relationship with her husband. The verb καταλλάγητω, the imperative aorist passive, is mentioned for her to be no longer bitter against her husband.<sup>52</sup> She has to forget or lay aside what he has done when he offended her, to put aside her own wounded thoughts and feelings and she should attempt to persuade her husband until he shall be convinced to lay aside his own feelings to come to their mutual relationship together. The initiative action to be reconciled with her husband is from her side. She is the key person to open the closed door of reconciliation with her husband and to bring the conflicts to an end. This is a very specific horizontal way of reconciliation between a wife and a husband regarding the marriage institution.

However, what is the relationship between 1 Corinthians 7:11 and 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2? The differences are 1 Corinthians 7:11 demonstrates the horizontal reconciliation between a wife and a husband, and 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 demonstrates about the vertical reconciliation between sinful human beings and the righteous God. Still, on the one hand the Greek verb mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:11 is καταλλάγητω, it is imperative aorist passive, and on the other the Greek verbs mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 are in the participle aorist active and participle present active except καταλλάγητε, which is an imperative aorist passive and similar with καταλλάγητω which has been mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:11.

Logically both of them have similar facts of actions. In 1 Corinthians 7:11 the wife got offended by her husband and she is encouraged to leave aside her own thoughts and feelings to be reconciled with him. She is to leave all of her wounded thoughts to restore the mutual relationship with him. She then is asked to abandon what happened to forgive and accept him. Even if she was offended by him, the initiative of reconciliation is to be made from her side, in Matthew 5:24 this is illustrated in a very clear way. Here, as in the passage from 1 Samuel 29:4, the word used is διαλλάσσω, it is practically identified in meaning with καταλλάσσω. The command is given by Christ to the one who is angry with his/her brother/sister, not to offer his/her offerings until he/she first has been reconciled to his/her brother/sister. Christ said when you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, (the brother who was the offended one, he is the one to be reconciled) leave there your gift before the altar, and go first to your

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52 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 121.

brother/sister and be reconciled with him/her and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24). Clearly it means that he/she should do something to remove his brother's or sister's anger and so bring about reconciliation. Hence the Greek verbs, *Καταλλάσσω*, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 have similar results of action. They absolutely suggest that “God's act of reconciling with sinful humanity” takes place by God before any sinful human action. God's act is primarily the initiative in reconciliation with sinful humanity.<sup>53</sup> All have sinned (Romans 5:12), so we were sinners, enemies of God. We did wrong deeds against God, offended Him, but God reconciled himself with us through Jesus Christ. He abandoned all of our trespasses. All the initiative acts of reconciliation are taken from God to reconcile sinful human beings with himself.<sup>54</sup> It was God who was offended by the sins of human beings, it was also God who did the act of reconciliation through Jesus Christ by what he had done on the cross. In Romans 5:1-11 Paul argues that those who have been justified by faith in Christ can have absolute hope regarding their future acceptance by God on the Day of Judgement.

#### 2.2.4.2 Romans 5:1-11

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul uses a verb twice in 5:10 as *κατηλλάγημεν*, (“we were reconciled”), and *καταλλάγεντες*, (“having been reconciled”), where both of them are in the passive form pointing to the result of justification. Justification is one of the central themes in the Pauline theology, and *καταλλάγην*, (“reconciliation”), (v. 11), is here related to this central theme of God's salvation through Christ. Man is mentioned here in the passive form to indicate that human beings are the beneficiaries and receivers of salvation through Christ. This strongly suggests that God takes the initiative in the act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself through Jesus Christ. It shows the vertical and divine reconciliation between God and human beings. In Romans 5:1-11 the language of atonement, justification and reconciliation is integrated together seamlessly.<sup>55</sup> God put to death His Son on the Cross out of His pure love for His creation and Jesus obediently confirmed it through his absolute act of atonement which grounds our justification as shown in Romans 3:25f; 5:8f, and 8:3.<sup>56</sup> Those who have been justified are now in a state of peace with God through Jesus Christ (v. 1). Consequently, having been justified by the blood of Christ while they were sinners (v. 8), they will be saved by Christ from the final wrath of God (v. 9). Those who, while they still were enemies, they

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53 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 122.

54 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 122.

55 Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans: A Commentary translated by Schott J. Hafemann* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 82.

56 Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans: A Commentary translated by Schott J. Hafemann*, 82.



were reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ and will be saved by His life (v. 10).

The noun καταλλάγη appears again in Romans 11:15. In Romans 11:11-16 Paul is discussing whether the Jews have fallen away from Christ permanently.<sup>57</sup> He denies very strongly that they have fallen apart from God. It was the falling away of the Jews that led to the extension of salvation to the Gentiles, and the effect of the latter will be to make the Jews envious and so turn to Christ.<sup>58</sup> Then Paul uses in the passage a very rhetorical argument to convince his readers referring to the results of their falling away from Christ and turning back to Christ. Their rejection led to the reconciliation of the world, and their acceptance will lead to the resurrection from the dead.<sup>59</sup> Romans 11:15, 32 and Colossians 1:19-20 make it possible to recognize that God's act of reconciliation has worldwide dimensions.<sup>60</sup> It affects Gentiles and Jews in the same way as it represents the event which establishes the creation anew.<sup>61</sup>

#### 2.2.4.3 Colossians 1:15-23

The Greek compound verb which appears twice in Colossians 1:15-23 as an infinitive aorist active, in verse 20 as ἀποκαταλλάζαι, and as ἀποκατήλλαξεν in verse 22 as indicative aorist active. This composite form is unusual.<sup>62</sup> However, this is clearly related with καταλλάσσω which Paul uses distinctively to state God's atoning act through Christ in behalf for humans. The passage has four sections, 1:15-17,<sup>63</sup> 18, 19-20 and 21-23.<sup>64</sup> It states Christ's identity in relation to God, as Lord of creation, head of the Church and as the reconciler of all things and people. The text is one of the greatest Christological passages in the NT and it speaks about Christ's cosmic role as God's agent in creating, sustaining and reconciling the world with God.<sup>65</sup> Paul uses the verb ἀποκαταλλάζαι/ἀποκατήλλαξεν in the context of God's creation of all things by and for his Son.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it suggests that God intended that the Son should have the first place in all things, because God in his fullness resolved to dwell in him

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57 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125.

58 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125.

59 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125.

60 Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans*, 82.

61 Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans*, 82.

62 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125.

63 E. K. And F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the epistle to Ephesians and the Colossians: The English text with introduction and notes*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan, WM. B. Eerdans, 1975), 192.

64 Bruce, *Commentary on the epistle to Ephesians and the Colossians: The English text with introduction and notes*, 200-210.

65 Bruce, *Commentary on the epistle to Ephesians and the Colossians: The English text with introduction and notes*, 192.

66 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125.

and to reconcile all things to him through him.<sup>67</sup> Also God intended to reconcile all things to him horizontally and then with Himself (God) vertically.

The last section, from verses 21-23, suggests the central purpose of Christ's peace-making work forever for every creature under heaven. Only Christ can act as the reconciler and nobody else.<sup>68</sup> The Colossians were once strangers and hostile in mind, doing evil things and separated from God, but in Christ they have been reconciled to God and they have become recipients and participants in the great mystery of Christ's salvation. Through this great change those who were far away from God have been brought back to Him and those who were enemies of God are now in peace with Him. God's work of reconciliation through Christ's death aims at presenting the Colossians as "holy, blameless and irreproachable before Him" (v. 22). In verse 1:16 Paul suggests the supremacy of Christ over everything. Here there is no question of the reconciliation of inanimate nature, but rather Paul's thought is in relation to the rulers and powers.<sup>69</sup> Also the idea given in Ephesians 2:16 is basically similar with what is mentioned in Colossians 1:16.<sup>70</sup>

#### 2.2.4.4 Ephesians 2:11-22

In this passage the Greek verb ἀποκαταλλάξῃ (v. 16) appears once as a subjunctive aorist active. Here Christ's work is suggested as a peace-maker breaking down the barriers both between Jews and Gentiles horizontally and with God vertically. Thus, through reconciliation Christ made peace (vv. 14-18) by the means of his blood, so God has overcome the alienation and brought hostility to a final end. Reconciliation does not depend on man's response, but in what Christ has done. It was not man's faith that brought reconciliation with God. However, to receive and to live in it is man's responsibility. Reconciliation is the only single essential question that every man and woman, Christian and non-Christian, educated and uneducated, white and black, share with each other.

### 2.3 Summary of the Chapter

I can conclude this chapter by stating some important points in relation to καταλλάγη ("reconciliation") as follows:

The apostle Paul uses the active Greek verb καταλλάσσω to indicate that God is the initiator, the beginning and end in reconciliation. God himself decided to reconcile sinful

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67 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 125-126.

68 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 126.

69 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 127.

70 Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 127.

human beings with Himself through Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

In the work of reconciliation, Christ acted between human beings and God, Christ is the agent to facilitate and to accomplish by his will God's purpose. Christ through his own sacrifice on the cross, that is through his death and resurrection, brought reconciliation with God. This achievement through Christ was elaborated using various prepositions such as ἐν Χριστῷ (“in Christ”), δὲ αὐτοῦ, (“in him”). Etc. Also, human beings are described in a passive form in Romans as beneficiaries of the work of Christ. The act of reconciliation was completed through the atonement once for ever. Reconciliation is what God has done through Jesus Christ for human beings.

In the next chapter, I will make a detailed exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 for a better understanding of the passage as a support to the theme of the present thesis focusing on the aspects of reconciliation.

## Chapter Three

### DETAILED EXEGESIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-6:2

In this section I will present a detailed exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. Regarding the exegesis, the study will not examine all words in the text one by one, instead it will focus on the main keywords, phrases, dependent and independent clauses and verses which in my view are the most relevant and essential to our understanding of the reconciliation in the Church as well as in society. The main purpose of this chapter is to support the main objective of my thesis, focusing on the aspects of reconciliation which can create peace, justice, truth, forgiveness and salvation in the Church and in society. Similarly, I will give careful attention to the Greek syntax and argument of the passage. Concerning the Greek translation I will take most of them from NRSV translation with some amendments. For the exegesis I will follow the subdivisions I proposed in the end of the section “2.1.7 Structure.”

#### **3.1 The Complete Greek Translation of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

<sup>V11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people, but what we are is known to God, and I hope also is known to your consciences. <sup>V12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to hold those who boast in outward appearances and not in heart. <sup>V13</sup>For if we are out of our mind, it is for God, if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>V14</sup>For Christ's love controls us, because we are convinced that one died for all, therefore, all died: <sup>V15</sup>And he died for all, in order that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. <sup>V16</sup>Therefore, from now on we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>V17</sup>Therefore, if anybody is in Christ, there is new creation and the old has passed away; look, the new has come. <sup>V18</sup>All these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. <sup>V19</sup>That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting in us the message of reconciliation. <sup>V20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making His appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>V21</sup>The one who knew no sin for our sake He made him to be sin, in order that in him we might become the righteousness of God. <sup>V6:1</sup>And working together with God, we exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>V6:2</sup>For He says, “at an acceptable time I listened to you and on the day of salvation I helped you, Look, now is the acceptable time, Look, now is the day of salvation”.

Having this complete Greek translation from now on I will proceed to the detailed exegetical analysis of the text according to its subdivisions.

### **3.2 Motives for the Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-15)**

In Εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου (“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord”); οὖν is a transitional particle which introduces a new section.<sup>71</sup> It gives a close connection between verses 10 and 11. Following the transitional particle Paul resumes the significant phrase for the rest of the verse 11, which is “knowing the fear of the Lord”. Τοῦ κυρίου is an object genitive which shows someone who has full control or power over something. In the LXX φόβος κυρίου, the (“fear of Lord”) is used concerning the right relationship to God (Job 4:6; Psalm 2:11; Isaiah 29:13).<sup>72</sup> This is the fear that leads to the true wisdom which is the wisdom of God (Job 2:28; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Proverbs 9:10 and Sirach 1:18, 27). This Old Testament background is explained in the verses preceding 2 Cor 5:11. Paul's fear of the Lord is the clear assurance that he will stand before the Judgement seat of Christ. It is not a kind of terror to be in front of the Judgement seat of Christ, rather, it is a confident desire to be at his home with the Lord (Romans 5:8). For Christians to stand in front of the Judgement seat of God is not a fear because of the life they are living in the Spirit with Christ (Romans 8:15). In this way, the fear which Paul suggests here is that fear which depends on God's love. It is the fear which pleases God, the fear of reverence. Christians fear God because they love and trust Him, and not because they are afraid of God. Their fear is dependent on God's love and trust which can motivate them for doing God's will such as persuading people to be reconciled both with God and with each other. In this respect Paul explains the reality of his life and ministry which are characterized by the fear of God. It is that fear which motivates Paul for the ministry of reconciliation. It is a responsibility based on God's love.

Paul's persuasion of people Ἀνθρώπους πείθομεν, (“We persuade people”), arose from the awareness of his responsibility before Christ (v. 10).<sup>73</sup> The fear of the Lord which he has experienced has a responsibility which urges him to do God's will. Πείθομεν, is probably a conative<sup>74</sup> present that in a sense can be translated as (“we try to persuade”) which is one of his responsibilities in the ministry that he has been serving. The present tense shows that it is an incomplete action, an action that is not yet fully accomplished.<sup>75</sup> Πείθομεν can be comparable with Acts 18:4 (Ἐπειθέεν), 19:8 (Πείθων), and 28:23 (Πείθων), where Paul has been urged to persuade people. What motivated Paul to persuade Ἄνθρωποι (“people”)? It was the fear of the Lord by which the Lord bound him to the ministry to persuade people.

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71 Vegge, *2 Corinthians a Letter about Reconciliation*, 181.

72 Vegge, *2 Corinthians a Letter about Reconciliation*, 182.

73 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 413.

74 The conative present is a variation of the present tense as an action in progress.

75 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 413.

Why does Paul try to persuade ἄνθρωποι, (“human beings in general”) regardless of their nationality, colour, language, race or gender? Firstly, for the truth of the Gospel. His point is for the Messiahship (Acts 17:2-3), and Lordship (1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5) of Jesus Christ.<sup>76</sup> In the case of ἄνθρωποι it would address people in general, both Jews and Greeks (Romans 1:16). His attempt is to convince both Jews and Greeks for the truth of the Gospel and to bring them to faith in Jesus, which is the sole ground for reconciliation with God and with each other. Secondly, His attempt was to persuade the Corinthians of the truth concerning himself, namely, his apostolic credentials, his conduct (1 Corinthians 3:1-6; 4:1-6) and that his motives are pure and sincere (1 Corinthians 1:12). For the benefit of the Gospel to be successful, in the goal of his apostolic ministry, Paul needs both Christ's approval (2 Corinthians 5:9) and human acceptance (2 Corinthians 6:13). On the one hand, it is because if he had been rejected by the Corinthians for his conduct and apostolic credentials, it would have been a hindrance for the progress of the Gospel among the Corinthians and elsewhere beyond Corinth. On the other hand, if his speech would have been accepted by the Corinthians and enlarged elsewhere, it would have been a benefit for the progress of the Gospel among the Corinthians and beyond Corinth as well (2 Corinthians 10:15-16; Romans 15:24). However, human hindrance can be an obstacle to some extent for the progress of the Gospel, it does not totally block and eradicate the expansion of the Gospel on the earth. Here as far as the truth of the Gospel expanded, Paul's acceptance and faith in Christ expanded as well. In a similar way, there are no boundaries to persuade people to reconcile with God, it means that the work of reconciliation must be done elsewhere vertically and horizontally. The ministry of reconciliation consists of God's reconciling work through Christ and the proclamation of the work of Christ to persuade people for the truth of the Gospel.<sup>77</sup> In other words, it consists of what God has done to reconcile sinful humanity with Himself through the atoning work of Christ and the proclamation of what God has done and the acceptance of this among people who hear the message.<sup>78</sup> Yet, whether the Corinthians recognized Paul's apostolic credentials or not, what he was is well known to God.

Θεῷ δὲ πεφανερώμεθα (“but what we are is known to God”). Δὲ is an adversarial particle to indicate the position of Paul's opponents. Even if the opponents did not recognize Paul's apostolic credentials, or rejected his conduct and the Gospel of Christ he preached, or

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76 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 413.

77 Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*: ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1993), 695.

78 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 123.

misunderstood him, his character and motives are exposed and well known to God.<sup>79</sup> Θεῶ πεφανερώμεθα, (“What we are is known to God”) is not just a response to criticism for hiding something like in 4:2.<sup>80</sup> For Paul, the indicative perfect passive Πεφανερώμεθα, (“we are known”), is an indication of being able to come before the Judgement seat of God openly (5:11c) and Πεφανερώσθαι, with a clean conscience (5:11d). “What we are is known to God” means that we are well known to God, or our motives are plain to God, or it means that before God our lives lie open.<sup>81</sup> The perfect tense suggests that this is an accomplished state which helps Paul to stand openly before God. This thought introduces the integrity of Paul's ministry both before God and man.<sup>82</sup> He knows that a person can deceive himself or another person but it is impossible to deceive God because He knows everything. So, if Paul could stand in a clear conscience before God, he does not have anything to hide or cover up from the eyes of the Corinthians. Furthermore, if the fear of the Lord is well established in Paul's mind and heart, he does not do anything to spoil his standing before God to preach a false Gospel before men and women. Likewise, as he is and will be transparent before God, so he is the same before men and women.<sup>83</sup> Rationally Paul may try to convince people to think as he wishes them to do and to live because all human beings are well known to God as they are. God can judge the purity and impurity of everybody's motives before His Judgement seat. For this reason, Paul approached the Corinthians in a pragmatic way to convince them within their real situations. He has hope for his ministry.

Ἐλπίζω δὲ (“And I hope”) means that faith in Christ is not only about witnessing verbally our integrity in relation to God, but it is also a practical action we must live with God. Hence, he hopes that he will appear to the consciences of Corinthians in the same way as he appears to God. Here we can notice two points: first, that it is not enough for Ἄνθρωποι to act honourably and witness boldly before men/women unless their hearts are right before God.<sup>84</sup> Second, boasting is valueless and empty without practical action from facts that support it. If combining these two points together Ἄνθρωποι, (“men in general”), want to believe that their hearts should be right before God and their boasting shall be supported by their words and deeds which will prove them true. In this rational way Paul attempts to persuade the Corinthians for Christ and through Christ to God. By implication for Ἄνθρωποι

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79 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 414.

80 Vegge, *2 Corinthians – a Letter about Reconciliation*, 185.

81 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 414.

82 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 122.

83 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 122.

84 Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy*, 72.

pure hearts, true words and right deeds are necessary to bring and reconcile them with Christ.

Καὶ ἐν ταῖς συνειδήσεσιν ὑμῶν πεφανερῶσθαι (“also is known to your consciences”). Καὶ is an adverbial conjunction which links the preceding independent clause to the next. Paul moves from indicative perfect passive, what we are is known to God, to the infinitive perfect passive, also is known to your consciences. In the first he explains about his consciences before God and in the latter his main target is the consciences of the Corinthians.<sup>85</sup> He has brought the Gospel to them with a clear conscience before God and hence there is no ground for his opponents to accuse him. In this respect the Corinthians should know his trustfulness for them. The way he uses Ἐλπίζω, (“I hope”), followed by Πεφανερῶσθαι, (“is known”), suggests the idea of to believe or to think. It seems that as he has confidence that the Corinthians will follow the correct path.<sup>86</sup> He has a clear conscience before God and he has an approval from God for his ministry (1 Corinthians 9:1-2). For this reason, those who reject him and his ministry will be responsible for condemnation in the light of 2 Corinthians 5:10, whereas those who want to follow Jesus are atoned and have not to reject the one who God has approved. It is this observation that moves Paul to commend himself again.

V. 12. Οὐ πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν ὑμῖν (“We are not commending ourselves to you again”). The fact that Paul said too much about himself seems for the Corinthians that he is concerned of his good name. When he says, Οὐ πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνομεν, (“we do not commend ourselves to you again”) he seems to be answering them (v. 12). But he is talking about the Corinthians as he gave up everything for the sake of their opportunity and glory. He is also implicitly rebuking them that they shall forget their wrong attitudes concerning Paul's apostolic credentials and accept him in honour because he is doing it for their own benefit and not from his own interest.<sup>87</sup> Here we are taught that the ministers of Christ should run their ministry for the benefit and glory of the Church and not for their own benefit and interest. Paul rightly claims that his overall concern is for the Church.<sup>88</sup> He has no hidden agenda in his commendation for his own interest. He was open before Christ and transparent for the consciences of the Corinthians. Here we understand that a minister's true commendation should be something he/she shares with the Church and that can bring advantage for all rather than keeping it personal. This verse gives the interpretation that the

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85 *Martin, World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 123.

86 *Martin, World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 123.

87 *Calvin, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy*, 73.

88 *Calvin, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy*, 73.



ministers who work in God's Kingdom should work on the reconciliation of the Christian community as well as in the given society to bring peaceful transformation justice and a secure life which can be advantageous for all.

Ἄλλ' ἀφορμὴν διδόντες ὑμῖν καυχήματος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (“but giving you an opportunity to boast about us”). Καυχήματος is translated as a ground for boasting and/or as an object of boasting.<sup>89</sup> What was the basis of Paul's pride to his converts at Corinth? It was the Corinthians' experience and knowledge of his life and ministry that was embedded in their consciousness and consciences.<sup>90</sup> The adverbial clause διδόντες (“knowing”) indicates that they knew the value of his missionary and pastoral attempts and accomplishments with the memory of his apostolic suffering for the cause of Christ. They got such information through the letter Paul had written to them (2:14-17). Through his ministry they came to faith in Christ and then to God. That was Paul's main purpose. When he saw their conversion and the fruit of his sufferings for the cause of Christ, he gave the opportunity to the Corinthians to boast on behalf of them. Paul's missionary work and pastoral endeavour was not for his own advantage, but rather for the advantage of others. It was to embed Christ's knowledge in the consciousness and the consciences of the people and bring them to Christ in Corinth as well as beyond Corinth regardless boundaries and nationalities.

The implication is that Christ's ministers should give an opportunity and advantage for people bringing them to Christ and keeping them in their faith. The ministers, in their ministry to proclaim the true Gospel of Christ, should provide the advantage which can be an opportunity in reconciling them with Christ. In the work of reconciliation the beneficiaries are those who will be reconciled with God and with each other rather than the reconciler, where the glory is for God. The pride should be for the reconciled parts on behalf of the reconciler and their boasting should only be in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Ἴνα ἔχητε πρὸς τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ καυχωμένους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ. (“So that you may be able to hold those who boast in outward appearances and not in heart”). This dependent clause indicates the basis and result of their boasting by ἵνα, (“so that”), Paul proceeds to the reality of the contrast between external and internal attitudes. “Hold those who are boasting in outward appearance and not in the heart” means to control those who are making outward show as a disguise and to regard sincerity of heart as of no importance. For those who are

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89 Horest Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 2 ἐξ-Ὀώνιον*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 276.

90 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 415.

really wise Christians there is never boasting except in God. If not so, Christians reflect just an empty show and pretence because there is no sincerity and uprightness of heart. The stand of Paul is with the position of “in heart” which is transparent before God and people as a witness to the conscience.<sup>91</sup> For Christians superficial acts, appearances, and to pretend counts for nothing, but the uprightness and sincerity of hearts counts for everything. In the first and second letters to the Corinthians, Paul criticises those who are pretending themselves as apostles or Christians without being it in reality in their life and their actions.

The interpretation of this phrase is: A Christian action and life shall be sincere before God and people to bring people to the true Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Through the Gospel of Christ people shall be reconciled with God and with each other with transparency and uprightness of hearts avoiding social segregation, political exploitation and religious differences among themselves. They should work for peace, justice, truth and a secure life which will lead them to real transformation. Reconciliation can bring peace and it is required for development because peace and development goes hand in hand. Where there is reconciliation there is peace which leads to the development of spiritual and social life.

V. 13. Ἐἴτε γὰρ ἐξέστημεν, θεῷ εἴτε σωφρονοῦμεν, ὑμῖν (“For if we are out of our mind, it is for God, if we are in our right mind, it is for you”). The indicative aorist active verb Ἐξέστημεν, is translated as (“we are out of our mind”), which seems a contradictory meaning, but not in reality with an indicative present active Σωφρονοῦμεν, (“we are in our right mind”). Many scholars have different perspectives concerning 2 Corinthians 5:13, it is the only time where the verb Ἐξέστημεν is translated as we are out of our mind in the epistle and in the other Pauline letters.<sup>92</sup> In the rest of the New Testament books (Matthew 12:23; Mark 2:12; Luke 8:56; Acts 2:7, 12; 9:21; 10:45; 12:16) the verb is translated as (“to be amazed”).<sup>93</sup> Also, the related noun Ἐκστασις is translated as (“amazement, trance and vision”).<sup>94</sup> In Acts 10:10, 11:5 and 22:17 it is used to describe the event in which both Peter and Paul were not in their right mind because of a vision or a trance.<sup>95</sup> In this very similar way, Paul describes here the ecstatic spiritual experience of being out of his mind for God.<sup>96</sup> According to Barrett, the ecstatic spiritual experience of Paul probably refers to speaking in

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91 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 416.

92 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 126.

93 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 126.

94 Novum Testamentum Graece, post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle. Edited by Barbara et Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, 28<sup>th</sup> edition, Revidierte Auflage. Stuttgart: (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 58.

95 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 126.

96 Martin, *World Biblical commentary Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 126.

tongues or similar spiritual vision.<sup>97</sup> A person who speaks in tongues holds a private conversation with God, so the benefits of it are for the individual and not for the community unless there is public translation and instruction to build up the Church as well<sup>98</sup> (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 14:3; 2 Corinthians 10:8). When Paul speaks out of his mind, it is for God, for the glory of God and when he speaks in his right mind, it is for the benefit of the Church in Corinth. The two verbs Ἐξέστημεν and Σωφρονοῦμεν seem contradictory in meaning but not in reality to each other: the former describes a state which is directed towards God, while the latter is related to those whom Paul ministers too.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the Corinthians should boast of having such an apostle, who speaks vertically with God and horizontally to Ἄνθρωποι for the glory of God and for the building up of the Church.

The interpretation of this verse is, a true minister is the one who has communication both with God and the people to the benefit of the Church. As a result, People shall come to Christ and through Christ they shall be reconciled with God and with each other regardless of boundaries and nationalities. Christian ministers should work with God to be progressive in their ministry and for the development of reconciliation.

V. 14. Ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς, (“For Christ's love controls us”). Paul connects verse 13 with 14 using γὰρ (“for”) to explain why he has devoted himself to the services of God as well as for the Corinthians. He explains also why it is not possible for him to please himself. Here, it is important to understand what kind of genitive Τοῦ Χριστοῦ refers to make this independent clause very clear. Ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ could be a subjective genitive (“Christ's love of us”) or objective genitive (“our love for Christ”).<sup>100</sup> The majority of the scholars support the former whereas the minority of them support the latter view.<sup>101</sup> Supporting the former view that Christ's love for Paul is reasonable in respect of Paul's love for Christ. The personal genitive after Ἀγάπη indicates a person having or showing love not to the one who is receiving it. In this way Christ is not the object of the believer's Ἀγάπη.<sup>102</sup> Christ is not the one who needs love from the believers. Christ showed his love on the cross as an evidence of self-sacrificial love.<sup>103</sup> This love motivated Paul to devote himself for the service of God as well as for the Corinthians. On the basis of Christ's

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97 Barret, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 166.

98 Barret, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 166.

99 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English text with introduction, exposition and notes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 190.

100 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 128.

101 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 418.

102 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 418.

103 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 419.

love in 5:14 *Συνέχω* must be translated as (“control, hold fast”), it demonstrates holding something together to prevent it from falling apart. Unless the hardness of our hearts to the great love Christ has shown on the Cross on our behalf being submitted to death for our sake it should hold our absolute devotion to Christ.<sup>104</sup> The immeasurable love of Christ which he gave towards us on the cross is attested by His death. The knowledge of this love should constrain our feelings so that we love Christ in return. Many scholars suggest that the meaning of *συνέχει* in this verse is the (“constrains”) which completely dominates someone but some others suggest that the meaning as (“restraints”) which means the love of Christ leaves us no choice.<sup>105</sup> Plummer says that the love of Christ restrains us from self-seeking and self motives.<sup>106</sup> These double meaning of *Συνέχει* (“constrains” and “restraints”) can be rendered by the meaning (“controls us”).<sup>107</sup> In this respect, Christ's love is a compulsive stem in the life of the believers because it is so interesting and exciting. It is a dominating power which positively eradicates wrong choices leaving them no other option but to live for God and Christ. Likewise this dominating power effectively motivates them for Christ's service. Furthermore, this powerful chain of love bounds *Ἄνθρωποι*, (“human beings”), together regardless their nationalities, boundaries, colour or gender.

The implication of this independent clause is that as there are no boundaries of Christ's love, also there are no boundaries for Christ's ministry to reconcile people with Christ and through him with God. Christ by his love, *Ἀπέθανεν*, (“died”) for all on the cross. When Christians love Christ that is the immediate result of the love which streams from Christ to the hearts of the believers.<sup>108</sup> He is the source of love and life, because Christ's love brought us to repentance and faith, through them we have peace and salvation. Consequently, Christ is not an option but a necessity for all human beings to be reconciled with God and with each other.

*Κρίναντας τοῦτο, ὅτι εἷς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἄρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον* (“Because we convinced that one died for all, therefore, all died.”). In connection with the controlling power of the divine love of Christ, Paul explains another famous statement: “died for all”. The death of Christ for us has a deep meaning which can be understood only in terms of substitution when Paul says one died for all, therefore, all died. In this view, *Κρίμα*

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104 Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, 74.

105 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 419.

106 The information is taken from Harris, Murray J. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005, 419.

107 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 419.

108 Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 192-193.

(“judgement or convincing”) is the recognition that the death of Christ means the death of all. NIB, NIV, RSV rendered Κρίμα, (“judged” by “convinced”). According to these translations we can say that we are convinced that one died for all, therefore, all died. It means the death Christ died for us as a substitute on behalf of all convincing us. It is the last climax conclusion that Paul had reached and the rational ground of his security in Christ. One died for all or on behalf of all, this means that Christ substituted all believers by his death on the cross. He took the death all believers should have died and suffered because of their sin. On this ground the believers' only justification shall be identified with Christ in his death. In this regard Paul's theology of justification is understood as a weapon directed precisely against the religion of self-reliance and self-achievement.<sup>109</sup> Only Christ's death is the adequate controlling power of Christ's love to prevent the falling apart of believers from Christ and from each other.

In the plan of salvation the doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement for man's sin is of a basic importance. In the Old Testament the forgiveness of sin is related with sacrificial offerings for making atonement (Lev 1:4).<sup>110</sup> Atonement in some occasions are also made out of sacrificial offerings by paying money (Exodus 30:12-16) or as a life offering (2 Samuel 21:3-6).<sup>111</sup> In such cases to make an atonement means to prevent the divine punishment from God by the payment of a ransom. This truth is developed in the New Testament. All are sinners (Romans 3:23) and hell awaits them (Mark 9:43). But God's will is to save the sinners by bringing salvation through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of His Son.<sup>112</sup> Salvation does not come just by waving a hand or slaughtering blameless bulls. It is only through what God has done in Jesus Christ. For this reason, Paul clearly states that as “one died for all, therefore, all died”, it means that with Christ all died from sin and in His resurrection all came to life with Him, so that, reconciliation brought about the death of Christ (Romans 5:10).

Reconciliation with God is inseparable from the reconciliation with believers. Where there is reconciliation there is justice. Because “For the LORD is a God of justice” (Is 30:18). We see justice in God's character. Justice, peace and reconciliation go together.<sup>113</sup> The rupture

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109 James D. G. Dunn, “The Justice of God: A Renewed Perspective of Justification by faith”, *in idem, The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essay (WUNT 185): (Mohr Siebeck, 2005)*, 196.

110 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 113.

111 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 113.

112 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 114.

113 David Atkinson J. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*. (Leicester, England Downers, Illinois, USA: Inter-varsity, 1995), 655.

with God necessarily leads to disorders in the relationships of the believers. God's character is just and righteous, but man's character is in opposite as humans are both unjust and unrighteous. This is why there is not only so much injustice in the world today, but why man's justice is and will always be inadequate and very often biased. Proverbs 28:5 says, "The evil does not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely". God's people alone can understand justice because they know the character of God and His perfect justice as it relates to sin, judgement and death. So "when justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous" (Proverbs 21:15). Paul mentions that Christ through his sacrifice on the Cross brought about our reconciliation with God. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". He made peace between us and God. Christ is the one and only Mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5), the one who makes reconciliation horizontally and vertically. This implies that Christians have to experience what Christ has done on the cross. They are to live in peace with all, preach the good news for personal salvation, love their enemies, overcome evil with good, and deeply respect God's creation and become ministers of reconciliation.<sup>114</sup>

V. 15. Καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ("And he died for all"). Paul closely connects vv. 14 and 15 by reminding of the previous dependent clause from v. 14 Ὅτι εἷς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν ("that one died for all"). Again in v. 15 we encounter a similar independent clause Καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν ("and he died for all"). Hence he lays down a basic foundation for his doctrine of reconciliation.<sup>115</sup> Verses 14 and 15 show Paul's motives for the ministry of reconciliation and will set a solid stage for 5:16-21. Christ died for all means for the benefit of all. Why did Christ die on behalf of all? The absolute and short answer is to reconcile the whole world with God in order so to inherit the eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 5:21; 6:22; Galatians 6:8).

Ἴνα οἱ ζῶντες μηκέτι ἑαυτοῖς ζῶσιν ἀλλὰ τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντι καὶ ἐγερθέντι. ("in order that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them"). So that if everybody will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them, they can be reconciled with God. The result is that God will give them deliverance from bondage of the devil, preservation from challenges in their life, and release from sin which is perfect salvation and reconciliation. How amazing is that God has committed to us in weak and ordinary jars of clay, our work is proclaiming this message of

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<sup>114</sup> Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 656.

<sup>115</sup> Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 129.

reconciliation to men and women that through faith in Christ they too can be reconciled with God. In the next section (5:16-21), we are going to look briefly on the message of reconciliation that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ.

### **3.3 The Message of Reconciliation (5:16-21)**

Ὡστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· (“Therefore, from now on we regard no one from a human point of view”). In v. 16 the conjunction Ὡστε, (“therefore”) introduces an independent clause indicating a consequence of what is affirmed in vv. 14-15 concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus and the controlling power of Christ's love in Paul's life and his living for Christ.<sup>116</sup> Ἡμεῖς can represent Paul and also reflects a distinctive Christian outlook. Κατὰ σάρκα in Pauline expression could mean from a human point of view simply as a man (1 Corinthians 1:26; 2 Corinthians 11:18; Ephesians 6:5; Philippians 3:3f.). So Paul's expression here is that after his salvation in Christ he stops making superficial acts to judge others on the basis of outward appearances such as national origin, social status, intellectual capability, physical attributes, charismatic endowment and pneumatic display.<sup>117</sup> Also Paul indirectly warns the Corinthians believers who should not make a superficial assessment of others and their spiritual father, Paul, on the basis of inappropriate criteria. The message of this clause is that reconciliation shall bring salvation. Consequently, salvation in Christ eradicates inappropriate criteria which can be a cause for division and conflict.

Εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν, (“Even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.”). Ὡστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα, (“So that, from now on we know about no one from the flesh”) is anthropological, whereas εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν, (“Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know him thus no longer”) is Christological. The former part is the explanation of ideas whereas the latter part is the real confirmation of the former ideas. Εἰ καὶ (“even though”) is a conjunction which depicts an actual situation of the past, “Even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.” There were those that knew Christ after the flesh, but from now on we know him no more in that way. He is risen and our communion with him must be spiritually by faith in his word (Romans 10: 6-9). We must seek him with great reverence and humility, and with trembling regarding to his glory, for He is risen. God has highly exalted him, and given him a

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116 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 426.

117 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 427.

name above every name, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him. We must seek him with a heavenly mind. (Colossians 3:1-3; Philippians 3:20)

What is required is to appreciate him as “the whole Christ” by the spirit and faith.<sup>118</sup> In the new creation, this is how Paul views the Corinthians according to their standing in him in the new eschatological situation and how he expects them to view him and his ministry. The model for both Paul and the Corinthians is the crucified and risen Lord in whom Paul wishes his work to be judged by that criterion (vv. 14-15).<sup>119</sup>

In short, the message of reconciliation in this verse is that in Christ there is no division whether we are Jews or Gentiles. Believers are saved and reconciled in Christ with each other and they are new creation.

V. 17. Ὡστε (“therefore”) now suggests a further consequence of the Christian's identification with Christ in his death and resurrection vv. 14-15 and also from now on we regard no one from a human point of view (v. 16) but as a man in Christ, ἐν Χριστῷ (v. 17). The dependent clause εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ (“if anyone is in Christ”) suggests that if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation which means a new creation belonging to the eschatological realm of the new Heaven and new Earth in which everything is new.<sup>120</sup> The expression ἐν Χριστῷ, (“in Christ”) summarizes briefly the significance of man's redemption in Christ. It speaks of the security in Christ, the acceptance in him, the assurance for the future in him, the inheritance of glory in him, the participation in the divine nature in him, and it speaks the knowledge of the truth of being free in the truth in him who himself is the truth.<sup>121</sup> Some scholars regard ἐν Χριστῷ, as the central or unifying motif in Pauline theology. Because the interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ, comprises the largest number of uses, that can be the ecclesiological, eschatological, soteriological, the representative and the personal.<sup>122</sup> That “in Christ” means it can be in a “private and personal union with the risen Christ” or in corporate “in the body of Christ” the Church. There are several places in the Scripture that refer to the believer's being “in Christ”. For example, redemption in Christ (Romans 3:24); alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:11); speak the truth in Christ (Romans 9:1); all of you are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28); He has chosen us in Christ (Ephesians 1:4); boast in Christ (Philippians 3:3); brothers and sisters in Christ (Colossians 1:2), mature in Christ (Colossians 1:8); Church

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118 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 151.

119 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 151.

120 Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202.

121 Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202.

122 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 431.



of God in Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:14); given to us in Christ (2 Timothy 1:9); salvation that is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10; 3:15); Etc. All this can be summarized as: united in faith to the risen Christ.

To be “in Christ” means we have accepted his-sacrificial love on the cross as the ransom for our own sin. The Bible says, that in our natural sinful state we are enemies of God (Romans 5:10). But when we are being in Christ and accept his-sacrificial love he has done on the cross on our behalf, he changes accounts with us. He exchanges our sins for his perfect account which is totally pleased by God (2 Corinthians 5:21). A Divine Exchange takes place on the cross which means our old sinful nature in exchange for his perfect one (2 Corinthians 5:17). To enter the presence of God, we must hide ourselves in the righteousness of Christ. To be “in Christ” means that God no longer sees our sins but He sees the righteousness of His own Son (Ephesians 2:13). Only by being in Christ our sin is paid and our relationship with God is restored. Only by being in Christ in faith the new creation shall be achieved. New creation ought to be by being in Christ by faith in that Christians are new creatures, not only that they have a new name, wear a new livery, but that they have a new heart and new nature.<sup>123</sup> The great aspect here is the change which the grace of God makes in the soul: the old things are passed away such as old thoughts, principles and practices and all these things are made new. The regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul and all things have become new. The renewed man acts by new principles and by new rules with new ends and in the new company of Christ.

Καινὴ κτίσις (“new creation”), is definitely God's act in the creature. When Paul tells the Corinthians of being a new creation is that it is only possible by being in Christ. In Galatians 6:14f Paul suggests the possibility of a new creation which is not by circumcision or uncircumcision, it is only by the cross of Christ. As well, to the Ephesians he says combining these two concepts of “in Christ” and “new creation” in a single phrase: “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Ephesians 2: 10).<sup>124</sup> Again, a Christian is one who has clothed himself “with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24) which contrasts with the old one. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he/she is a new creation. Even in the independent clause τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν (“the older has passed away”), the indicative aorist active, παρῆλθεν, (“passed away”) points back to experience of

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<sup>123</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 432.

<sup>124</sup> Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202.

new creation. Ἴδου γέγονεν καινά, (“look, new has come”) also shows that the old things became and continue to be new.

Ἴδου, (“look”), is an imperative which introduces the previous reality of the indicative aorist active, Παρῆλθεν, (“passed away”). He uses it to make the Corinthians very conscious and aware of what is going on. Ἴδου serves to enliven the narrative to awaken attention.<sup>125</sup> It urges the heart of all those whose thoughts are still in the world to become by God's grace to be the members of the world to come. There is a radical continuity between the old and the new where the old has become new. This truth should be applied to the believers' present earthly life and to their glorified life. Christian conversion which comes in Christ produces radical changes in that life which is not longer lived κατὰ σάρκα, but κατὰ πνεῦμα.<sup>126</sup> In this respect, Paul suggests that a change of attitude towards Christ produce a change of attitude towards other people and a change of conduct from self pleasing people to Christ pleasing people, and from egocentricity to theocentricity.

V. 18. Τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (“All these things are from God”). Paul is here affirming the divine origin of everything is from God. He looks back to the new attitude of verse 16 and the new creation in verse 17 where from the first to the last all things have been the work of God. A new cleansed soul, a new body, a new worship, new promises, a covenant and a new life, all things are absolutely new. For instance: instead of a material temple, we have got a spiritual temple; instead of tables of stones, we received a fleshly heart; instead of circumcision, baptism; instead of manna, Lord's own body; instead of water from the rock, blood from Christ's side; instead of Moses' and Aaron's rod, the cross of Christ; instead of the promised land, the Kingdom of God; instead of the thousands of Old Testament priests, one High pries, Jesus; and instead of lambs, one blameless spiritual Lamb, Jesus.<sup>127</sup> For these instances Paul states the change: spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16), fleshly heart (2 Corinthians 9:7); baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13); Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:23-24); blood from Christ's side (1 Corinthians 11:25-26); the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14-15); the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50); High priest Jesus (Hebrews 4:14; 8:6); one blameless spiritual Lamb, Jesus(1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23). 1 Timothy 2:5 suggests that the sole Mediator between man and God is Christ through whom all these things are performed. For this reason Paul uses an adversative particle δὲ to indicate a transition of all these pragmatic and dramatic changes from vv. 16-17 were God's doing

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125 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 2 ἐξ-Ὁώνιον*, 173.

126 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 434.

127 Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 204.

through Christ and His free gift.<sup>128</sup>

Τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμῶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ (“Who reconciled us to himself through Christ”). God is not only the initiator of reconciliation but also the finisher of it. God Himself reconciles us to Himself through Christ while we are still sinners. The total act of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 has two aspects: 1) what God had done for sinful human beings through Christ and 2) the proclamation of what God has done and the acceptance of this among people who hear the message.<sup>129</sup>

When Paul says that God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, it means that God has dealt with the sins which aroused His wrath and that there is no barrier on His side to the establishment of peace and a friendly relationship.<sup>130</sup> These made three main important points: 1) The putting away of God's wrath against human transgressions was achieved by what Christ did. It is impossible to achieve this opportunity by any means of human merit. 2) The action which took place in Christ was the action of God who Himself acted in Christ. The plan of reconciliation was designed by God and also the designed plan was accomplished by God Himself without any human contribution. 3) The objection of the action is described both as the world and as us. This suggests that God is the subject, the dower of the action whereas human beings are the object, the receivers of the action done for them by God through Christ.

Καταλλάσσω was used in ancient Greek literature with two major senses, that of exchange of goods or things and that of eliminating hostility and creating friendship.<sup>131</sup> The word stem καταλλαγ, and a compound form ἀλλάσσω, (“change, alter”), originally meant (“exchange”).<sup>132</sup> In this respect, καταλλαγή means exchange whether it is an object or something abstract. It denotes the exchange or substitution of war for peace, of anger for love, or enmity for friendship.<sup>133</sup> As the Pauline theological term speaks about God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself, “reconciliation” denotes a transformation of relations in the sense that friendly relations replace former hostility.<sup>134</sup> Reconciliation restores a proper Christian relationship with God (vertical aspect) and with fellow human beings (horizontal aspect), and it destroys the double alienation with God and with human beings which sin has produced. Reconciliation comes about in making peace: “And through him

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128 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 435.

129 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 123.

130 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 123.

131 Stanley E. Porter, *Estudios de Filología Neotestamentaria 5*. Córdoba, Spain: (Ediciones el Almendro, 1994), 13.

132 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 2 ἐξ-Ὁῶψιον*, 261.

133 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 435-436.

134 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 436.

God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20).

Why does man need to be reconciled to God? First, man needs to be reconciled with God because of man's sin. God's wrath has come upon mankind because of man's sin (Romans 1:18). Second, man needs to be reconciled with God to restore the broken personal relationship between God and man. There is alienation (Ephesians 2:12), estrangement (Colossians 1:21), isolation (Ephesians 4:18), wrath and hostility (Romans 5:9; 8:7), enmity, enemies (Romans 5:10; James 4:4) and obstacles and barriers (Jeremiah 6:21). Consequently, reconciliation is the healing of a relationship which was injured by man's disobedience to God's commandment.

The second question is: How can a person be reconciled to God? The answer is through Christ. This means that God's wrath fell upon Christ instead of upon us. Paul states that Christ, through his sacrifice on the cross and his death, has brought about our reconciliation with God. He made peace between us and God (Romans 5:1). For this reason, Christ is the one and only Mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5).

Καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς, (“And gave us the ministry of reconciliation”). How amazing it is that God has committed Himself to us weak and ordinary people. Our work, in this respect, is to proclaim this message of reconciliation to men and women that through faith in Christ they too can be reconciled to God. God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ (Colossians 1:19-20). In Christ our sins are forgiven and our punishment is taken away. Christ was the sacrificial lamb who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; Romans 8:1). In other words, the message of reconciliation is simply the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, what is then our responsibility? God has given us this message. He has given us the responsibility of proclaiming this message to the world. We are God's witnesses and his representatives on earth. To be the ambassadors of a king is a great honour. But to be the ambassador of the King of Kings and Lord of lords Jesus Christ is incomparably greater (1 Timothy 6:15). As Christ's ambassadors, our job is to persuade people or men and women and to proclaim the message of reconciliation to reconcile them with God. This ministry, the message of reconciliation, is the ultimate issue, it is the one thing our world needs in all circumstances and in every generation.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Hughes, *Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 206.

In general, verse 18 suggests four essential points concerning καταλλαγή, (“reconciliation”):

1) God is the initiator and goal of reconciliation.<sup>136</sup> God designed a plan for reconciliation and God himself accomplished the designed plan. Reconciliation consists of personal and corporate goals. In the personal goal every individual has to be reconciled with God. The corporate goal is the presentation of the believers as holy, blameless, and irreproachable before God (Colossians 1:22).

2) Christ was God's agent in achieving reconciliation.<sup>137</sup> To bring about reconciliation God acted through Christ alone (Colossians 1:20). God reconciled us with himself through Christ. Christ crucifixion is a stumbling-block to the Jews and to the Greeks it is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). To those who are called and saved he is the wisdom and the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Those who are called and sanctified, who received the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, can discern more glorious characteristics of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucifixion than in all his other works of God. Note here that those who are saved are reconciled in accordance with God to the doctrine of the cross.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, the message of reconciliation means the message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18).

3) Human beings and the whole created universe are the objects and the principal beneficiaries of God's reconciling action.<sup>139</sup> Christian reconciliation does not rest upon man's action. It is what God has done for them through Christ. It is not man's faith that brought reconciliation from God. It was God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself, to receive and to live in it and to proclaim the message is man's responsibility. In this way, reconciliation includes both unbelievers to receive it and believers to live in it.

4) Reconciliation is an accomplished fact on God's side, yet it must be embraced on the human side.<sup>140</sup> On the one hand reconciliation is a fact, God already accomplished it. He already took away the great obstacle to fellowship which is sin, but on the human side reconciliation is not yet accomplished. It is an ongoing process because many people are still under the wrath of God. The wrath of God is a fearsome and terrifying thing. Only those who

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136 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 436.

137 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 437.

138 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the whole Bible: Genesis to Revelation/by Matthew Henry; edited by Leslie F. Church*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1961), Cited from Bible Works.

139 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 437.

140 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 438.

have been covered by the blood of Christ shed for us on the cross, can be assured that God's wrath will never fall on them: "Much more surely then, that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God" (Romans 5:9). For this reason God gave us the ministry of reconciliation to rescue the people from the wrath which awaits them.

V. 19. Ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον κατάλλασσων ἑαυτῷ ("That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself"). God has drawn near to us in Christ, and so Christ has been made to us the true Immanuel and His advent is the drawing near of God to men.<sup>141</sup> Why does God want to reconcile sinful humanity with Himself? Because sin is impossible to abolish within human capacity. Sin leads us astray from God and He was displeased with us all. We were far away from the righteousness of God. The only solution to end up the hostility between God and human beings is Christ. Through Christ we who were strangers are legally adopted as sons and daughters into God's family (Romans 9:4). Hence, in reconciliation there will always be an essential bond between a person and Christ's work. In this way reconciliation is possible only through Christ because where Christ is active also God is active.

Κόσμον ("the world") here refers to the world in its most inclusive sense as the universe (Romans 1:20). Jesus Christ created all things. Colossians 1:16 says, "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rules or powers all things have been created through him and for him". Similarly all things should be reconciled with God through him (Colossians 1:20). However, in regard of reconciliation, the movement from ἡμᾶς (v. 18) to κόσμον (v. 19) is not from anthropological to cosmological, rather it is from the narrow to the wider anthropological focus.<sup>142</sup> It means the proclamation of the given ministry being related to Paul and his colleagues in particular.<sup>143</sup> "God reconciles the world to Himself through Christ" means God acts in Christ to overlook the sins of mankind in general, so that on His side there is no barrier to the restoration of friendly relationship.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, "He entrusted the message of reconciliation to us" means the ministry was given to Paul and his colleagues and further to us to make it an ongoing process for the next generation. In this sense we can say that it is from narrow to the wider anthropological focus.

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<sup>141</sup> Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, 78.

<sup>142</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 443.

<sup>143</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 444.

<sup>144</sup> Marshall, *The Meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 123.

Μὴ λογιζόμενος ἀυτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν (“Not counting their trespasses against them”). Since transgressions are no longer counted against human beings the way was open for reconciliation, nothing remains but for men to take it freely.<sup>145</sup> This way of reconciliation was opened by granting the forgiveness of sin on the basis of Christ's death. This opened the possibility for people to know and to come to this opportunity. That is the reason why Paul comes back to the ministry of reconciliation.

Καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς, (“And entrusted in us the message of reconciliation”). To make reconciliation an ongoing process, God entrusted it to us, committed it to us (Galatians 4:7) and put it in our mouths the “λόγος”, the message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18) about reconciliation. The commission to offer this reconciliation to us is given through the ministers of the Gospels. Today the ministers of the Church are to restore ἄνθρωποι to God's favour in the right manner by bearing witness to them through the Gospel of how God has been reconciled to us by His grace. Then, the ministers of the Christian Church are the responsible people for testifying and proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation to restore unbelievers to Christ and strengthen the believers in their faith in Christ.

To sum up, this verse identifies Christ as the person in whom God is revealed and through whom God effects reconciliation, a reconciliation which results in the forgiveness of sin and the preaching of the cross entrusted in Christ's ministers.<sup>146</sup>

V. 20. Ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν (“So we are ambassadors for Christ”). The Greek verb πρεσβεύω is translated as (“to be an ambassador for someone or to be a representative for someone”). In 2 Corinthians 5:20 πρεσβεύω is used in an extremely decisive passage within Pauline theology, namely, in the context of the discussion of the work of reconciliation.<sup>147</sup> Being an ambassador involves a commission for a special assignment, representing a sender and exercising the authority of the sender.<sup>148</sup> Paul speaks as an ambassador of Christ and as such calls on the addressees on behalf of Christ to accept God's act of reconciliation in Christ. This necessarily confirms that God has given us authority “for the ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18). Here it is not meant that eternal salvation depends on the testimony of a person. It means that God Himself speaks to people through His appointed

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145 Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 177.

146 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445.

147 Horst Blaz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 3 Παγιδεω-ὠφέλιμος*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 147.

148 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445

ministers. Christ himself has also commended his apostles to speak to us in the passages like Luke 10:16 and Matthew 18:18. Therefore, those who speak the message of reconciliation are both representatives of Christ and actual spokesmen for God depending on the authority given to them. The ministers of the message of reconciliation shall minister to Christ on behalf of Christ.

Ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦτος δι' ἡμῶν (“Since God is making His appeal through us”). Paul's ministry comes from God's initiative.<sup>149</sup> Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty. Faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors, sent to treat with sinners peace and reconciliation. They come in God's name, with His entreaties and act, Ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ (“on behalf of Christ”) doing the very thing he did when he was upon this earth and what he still wills to be done.

Καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ (“Be reconciled to God”). As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be reconciled to God. It is the great end and design of the Gospel, that the word of reconciliation can persuade sinners to reconcile with God. Through His ministers, God exhorts the sinners to accept His offer to be reconciled to Him, to all His attributes, to all His laws, and to all His providences. To believe in the Mediator is to accept the atonement, and comply with His Gospel in all the parts of it and in its whole design. God urges them to accept the fact that reconciliation has been accomplished and to complete the action by taking away the barriers from their side.<sup>150</sup>

To sum up, everybody who proclaims the message of reconciliation in Christ shall be faithful to the message (v. 19) to be an ambassador of Christ and the mouthpieces of God (v. 20) in dignity and humility.

V. 21. Τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν (“The one who knew no sin”). A similar thought is expressed in Romans 5:18 where the righteousness of Christ is contrasted with the trespasses of Adam. Is Jesus a sinless person? Yes, Jesus lived throughout his whole life without sin. 1 Peter 2:22 says, “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth”. 1 John 3:5 says, “And in him there is no sin”. In John 8:45-47, Jesus said of himself, “But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God.”

How is it possible for Jesus to be a sinless person? Jesus was a sinless person because he is the Son of God. The sinless state of Jesus proved that he was from God. In Isaiah 53:9 we

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149 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 148.

150 Marshall, *The Meaning of “Reconciliation”*, 123.



read the prophetic statement that Jesus, the Messiah and Christ would live a life without sin.

That is why Ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν (“For our sake he made him to be sin”). Only Christ can bear the sins of the others. He bears the guilt which we were accused in front of God's Judgement seat. A sinless Christ became a sinner on behalf of us without any transgression which contradicts the law of God. He exchanges our sin with his own righteousness.<sup>151</sup>

The interpretation of the second occurrences of ἁμαρτία (“sin”) in v. 21 is that it has the specific meaning of “sin-offering” in the OT (Exodus 29:14, 36; Leviticus 4)<sup>152</sup> This offering was required when an Israelite sinned against God or his neighbour. In the Septuagint sin-offering is called ἁμαρτία.<sup>153</sup> In the NT Paul uses the term ἁμαρτία for sin. In the NT the Son of God became a man like all men except he did not sin but remained in absolute obedience to God (Romans 5:8).<sup>154</sup> This total freedom from the guilt of sin made the Son of God to become the absolute sacrifice for sin desired by God (Romans 5:9). In the NT the phrase “for the sake of sin” from the technical expression of the language represents the OT expression of “sin offering”. Thus, Paul's argument of Romans 8:3 agrees with the theological concept of 3:25 with close parallel of 2 Corinthians 5:21.<sup>155</sup> This means, for the sake of the sacrificial death of Jesus, God no longer considers the sin of the sinners for those who are in Christ.

Ἴνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ (“In order that in him we might become the righteousness of God”). The conjunction ἵνα (“in order that”), here indicates a purpose by implication, it introduces the result of how ἄνθρωποι become the righteousness of God. The thought of hostility which sin brings towards God is overcome in the act of Jesus' identification with the human situation with the goal of righteousness, that is, the existence of reconciliation.<sup>156</sup> Righteousness means something imputed in us through Christ. The only way we become righteous before God is the same way Christ became sinner on behalf of us. He took away our sin and gave us his righteousness. Now we are righteous not because we have satisfied God, but because we were judged in relation to Christ's righteousness, which we received in faith.

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151 Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 180.

152 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 855.

153 Horest Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀπὼν-Ἐνώχ*: (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 66.

154 Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans: A Commentary translated by Schott J. Hafemann*, 119.

155 Stuhlmacher, *Paul's letter to the Romans: A Commentary translated by Schott J. Hafemann*, 120.

156 Jack Lewis, P. *Interpreting 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 An Exercise in Hermeneutics: Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity volume 17*. (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen, 1989), 125.

### **3.4 The Appeal to Persevere in God's Grace (6:1-2)**

In the previous verses Paul has just described the nature of his ministry. Now he urges the Corinthians to receive God's grace in a whole hearted way.

Συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ (“And working together with God”). The Greek participle present active verb *συνεργοῦντες* is translated as (“working together with”), but this phrase requires a complement. Then, the question is: together with whom? The best option for the complement of *συνεργοῦντες* is God.<sup>157</sup> Barrett argues that the complement refers only to God in this phrase.<sup>158</sup> In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 it says, “And we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith”, and in 1 Corinthians 3:9 it says, “For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building”. The New living Translation also, translates *συνεργοῦντες* as (“As God's partners”). In this sense the context of 6:1 supports “with God” as a complement. From vv. 18-21 Paul starts to describe God in how the message of reconciliation flows, it shows that 6:1 is a continuation from ideas of the preceding verses which depicts and supports the idea of “working together with God”.

Παρακαλοῦμεν... ὑμᾶς (“we exhort you”). Whom was Paul exhorting? The answer is: the Corinthians.<sup>159</sup> According to Barrett it can also refer to all Christians.<sup>160</sup> I support both ideas because exhortation is necessarily important for both the Corinthians and Christians in general to encourage them not to disregard this marvellous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it in vain. According to this view reconciliation includes both bringing back the ἄνθρωποι to Christ and keeping them in Christ. This time, Paul is not bringing the message of reconciliation for the first time to the Corinthians, rather he urges them to not receive God's grace in vain. The blessings are that they come back to Christ as a new creation, with new attitudes and new life (5:16-17), received reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of sin (5:18-19), and acquisition of a right stand before God (5:21).<sup>161</sup> He urges the Corinthians to receive now and/or forever that God's grace is a stream of life that is constantly flowing and so always available for necessary refreshment of life.

Μὴ εἰς κενὸν τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ δέξασθαι (“Not to receive the grace of God in vain”). Why does Paul say “not to receive the grace of God in vain”? The adjective *κενὸς* can

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157 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 165.

158 Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 183.

159 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 165

160 Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 183.

161 Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 458.

be translated as (“empty in the sense without any basis, without truth or power, in a sense without effect, without reaching its goal or without result”). Then, when he says not to receive the grace of God in vain, it means to not receive the grace of God without any basis, without truth or power, without effect, without reaching its goal, without result, to receive it without profit, or without the intended effect being achieved. It refers to when grace is accepted but it never attains its goal, when it comes to nothing.<sup>162</sup> This can reflect the idea found in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4: 1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15 where somebody after receiving the message of the Kingdom of God with joy falls away from it during the time of difficulty or persecution. For that reason, Paul urges the Corinthian Christians as well as all believers to not fall from the grace of God or, to put it in a positive expression, he urges everybody to receive God's grace for effective spiritual growth.

But how can the Corinthians and all believers let God's grace come into nothing? The answer might be very complex, but in general the following aspects could probably be included as necessary:

1) When the God-given opportunities for bringing spiritual benefits for all and for the building up of the Church turns into self benefit and therefore an obstacle for the unbelievers. The New Living Translation says, “Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5).

2) When Christians and Christian ministers fail to exercise the ministry of reconciliation (5:18) and to accomplish their role as Christ's ambassadors (5:20).

3) When Christians conform themselves with false ministers (11:13-15), or embrace a different Gospel (11:4), or fail to repudiate paganism (6:14-18), or fail to protect personal sin (7:1; 12:20-21), or when they do God's work independently instead of working with God (6:1a).<sup>163</sup>

V. 2. Λέγει γάρ· (“For he says”). The translation of λέγει can be either “he [God] says” or “it [Scripture] says”. The best option here is “God says” because Paul wants to give extra information of what was written in Isaiah 49:8 which says, “Thus says the LORD” in which it is the LORD God who speaks not the servant.

Καιρῷ δεκτῷ ἐπήκουσά σου (“At an acceptable time I listened to you”). Καιρός can be translated as (“an appointed time”) or as (“a proper time”). Paul is talking about a

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<sup>162</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 459.

<sup>163</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 459.

particular time which is related to a particular situation. So the question is why Paul is emphasizing the urgency of time and its expediency. Paul is claiming that the prophecy has been fulfilled and the καιρός (“proper time”) was acceptable when God in His mercy accepts ἄνθρωποι (“people in general”), in grace. It is an acceptable time to take the grace of God and to be reconciled with God. In other words, it is a proper season of grace which speaks of the acceptance of ἄνθρωποι by God.

In this proper time God has heard and helped His people. The grace of God came for the Corinthians in Jesus Christ who brought salvation first for Israel and then for all. Paul, an ambassador of God, was also with them with the message of reconciliation in God's grace. This also shows the concept of Jesus as the servant, who is responsible for the implementation of the reconciliation in an acceptable time suggested by Isaiah 49:8. All these things remind the Corinthians to participate in the proper time of grace to get help from God which is σωτηρία, (“salvation”).

Καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας ἐβοήθησά σοι (“And on a day of salvation I helped you”) To whom does Ἐβοήθησά (“I helped”) refer to? It is clear here that it refers to God as Isaiah 49:8 indicates. It is only the grace of God which can help on the day of salvation. Receiving and persevering in God's grace is not in vain but for salvation on the day of salvation.

Ἴδου νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἴδου νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας (“Look, now an acceptable time, Look, now a day of salvation”). In this final independent clause Paul clearly urges the Corinthians to accept God's grace. He encourages them strongly to not lose the opportunity. Paul is not afraid about the shortness of time but he is strongly emphasizing the importance of God's grace. It is because he reached the Corinthians with the Gospel, with the message of reconciliation, which provides new creation through Jesus Christ in its double νῦν (“now”) in 5:16. Then, he urges them to accept God's grace for the day of salvation in its double ἴδου νῦν (“Look now”). There is a time frame for salvation, with its before and after, for each individual, as well as for all humankind and creation as a whole.<sup>164</sup>

To sum up, this final section suggests emphasizing on ἴδου νῦν “Look now” the significance of salvation. The Corinthians have been the recipients of it and they have to live in it from now on.

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164 Martin, *World Biblical Commentary: Volume 40 2 Corinthians*, 169.

### **3.5 Summary of the Chapter**

The main aim of this chapter is to emphasize the importance of seeking understanding about the significance of reconciliation in relation to the Christian faith, though this understanding is somehow limited to us. In this respect, Christian faith in view of God's own revelation in human life and its theological reflection can help us to see reconciliation in a very deep perspective in the Church as well as in the society. This understanding does not seek someone or something to criticize. It rather seeks a diagnosis which helps us to relate better to our own selves, to the surrounding people, and the world, since reconciliation is a central part of life.

In this sense the detailed exegesis in 2 Corinthians 5:11-15 helps us to see the motives for the ministry of reconciliation. The motive of the ministry is nothing else than God's love that motivates Christians into the ministry of reconciliation. When this ministry is discussed, it gives attention to the proclamation of a Christology which persuades people for the truth of the Gospel. This brings peaceful transformation, justice and secure life which can be an advantage for all. Therefore, Christian ministers should work with God to be progressive in their mission.

Also, the detailed exegetical analysis of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 presented can help us to understand about the message of reconciliation in relation to the Christian faith. In the exegetical analysis processes I found out that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Consequently, the analysis indicated that reconciliation with God through Christ eradicates any inappropriate criteria which can be the cause for division and conflict vertically with God and horizontally with fellow human beings. Furthermore, the analysis pointed out that being in Christ means being a new creation which is only possible through the message of reconciliation. In this regard without the message of reconciliation there is no salvation, peace, justice and security. Explicitly the message of reconciliation means the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally, in 2 Corinthians 6: 1-2 I described in detail about the appeal to persevere in God's grace. In this respect, I analysed how Paul used Old Testament references and how he identified Jesus as God's servant and as the promised Messiah who brought salvation first to Israel and then to the entire world.

In the following chapter, I am going to show how our interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 is applied to the situation of the EECMY in the West Wollega Zone congregations with the special emphasis on the Onesimos Nesib Seminary.

## Chapter Four

### THE MESSAGE OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-6:2 APPLIED TO THE ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT

In the present chapter, I will give some applications to the conflicts in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus as a possibly way to solve these issues and consequently so that proper reconciliation may be achieved. The paper will focus on the West Wollega Zone congregations with special emphasis on the Onesmos Nesib Seminary.

#### **4.1 Reconciliation with God**

2 Cor 5:18-21 deals with two clearly defined topics which are: what God has done for sinful humanity through Jesus Christ and the responsibility of reconciliation entrusted by God to Christ's ambassadors. These topics teach us two things: Firstly, that people must accept what God has done for them; Secondly, that peacemaking is a mandatory task description for the Church to undertake until Christ will come again. Maintaining peace and security within the Church and the society is a great concern and an important role of the Church, it is because the Christian religion has been embedded in its belief and culture basic traditional values of peace. If reconciliation with God will have existed in the proper way among EECMY believers, they can fill the spaces of conflict between themselves and bring peace, justice and reconciliation to the whole people of Ethiopia. For the present discussion my main emphasis will be on West Wollega Zone, especially on the Onesmos Nesib Seminary, that is because ONS is a good network to reach all areas of West Wollega Zone.

##### *4.1.1 An Ethiopian Proverb*

Ethiopia is divided into nine ethnically based regions and ruled by two city administrations in the current regime. West Wollega Zone is one of the Zones in the Ethiopian Regions of Oromia which is one of the nine ethnically based regions of Ethiopia. It is bordered on the west by Kelem Wollega Zone, on the north by the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, on the east for a short extension by East Wollega, and in the South-east by Illubabor. Its highest point is the Mount Welel.

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia, West Wollega Zone has a total population of 1,350,415, of whom 671,538 are men and

678,877 women; with an area of 10,833.19 square kilometers.

The three largest ethnic groups living in West Wollega Zone are the Oromo, the Mao and the Amhara respectively by their population size. The Oromo language “Afan Oromo”, is the main spoken language. According to the 2007 Census the majority of the inhabitants declared themselves as protestants with 59.55% of the population, 20.19% professed the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity and 19.66% are Muslim.<sup>165</sup>

West Wollega Zone is the region where I come from. Among the West Wollega Zone Oromo there is a well known proverb which has a good implication for reconciliation. The proverb in Oromo language is as follows: “Kan wal hin lolle Ergamoota qophaa dha kan hin araramne seexanoota qophaa dha” which can be translated as “No quarrel among angels whereas no reconciliation among devils”. Human beings are neither angels nor devils. Therefore, the proverb suggests that where human beings are there is quarrel or conflict. The proverb also suggests that the only prior solution for the quarrel or conflict is reconciliation.

Why is this proverb popular among the Oromo people in the West Wollega Zone? It is because there are conflicts within the Church and the society which need reconciliation as a way to solve them. The Oromo people have their own traditional way to reconcile their people in any case of conflict. They have two systems to conduct reconciliation without the help of Christianity: one is the Abba<sup>166</sup> Gada<sup>167</sup> system and the other one outside the Abba Gada system with the invitation by the elders.

According to the Abba Gada system the people use their own way and cultural background for reconciliation when murder or illegal deliberate killing of a human being occurs, or when the guilt of a murder takes place between the two parts accidentally. Luba<sup>168</sup> (priest) is the authorized person to conduct the reconciliation system and by bringing together the two parts to reconcile. The helpers of the Luba who are involved in this matter must be not less than 5 people.

There are important things that should be prepared ahead of the time in this process. The sheep for the sacrifice and a curtain are very important in this situation. The Sheep is

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165 The information is taken from the brief presentation of the Environmental Competence Building program of NMS in Ethiopian, West Wollega in 2014.

166 Abba is an Oromo language which means father.

167 Gada means a system of democratic government based on age or era grading; socialism and Abba means father. Then Abba Gada means father of an era or the president of a general assembly during his presidential period in Oromo culture.

168 This Luba (Priest) is not a biblical priest the connotation is cultural.

used so they insert their hands into the stomach of the sheep while the sheep is still alive, and wash their hands with the blood of the Sheep to clean up their hands so that they may not have harm in their hands. During this time a curtain should be placed between the two parts so they may not see each other before the ceremony is conducted. Then, they will be told to shake their hands through the stomach of the sheep and the curtain will be opened in two so that they may see each other. Then, the Luba will say, "The Guma is removed".<sup>169</sup> Then, the enmity between them is over, and the relatives from both sides come together to eat and drink as such.

This ceremony takes place under the shadow of a big branched tree, and on the side of a river. The big tree and branches symbolize that these people will grow and multiply in the future and the river has the meaning of washing away all things, taking away the enmity of these people so that there will be no more any feelings of hatred towards each other.

Reconciliation in a biblical sense means to restore the relationships between people and God vertically, and among people horizontally through the redemptive work of Christ. The enmity between God and sinful human beings are removed by the death and resurrection of Christ, and it is appropriated by the sinner through faith (Acts 10:43, Ephesians. 2:16). No more sacrifices of sheep or goats are required for reconciliation.

As mentioned above, the Oromo people also have their own traditional way to reconcile their people in any case of crime among themselves outside the Abba Gada system. Differently from the ceremony conducted by the Luba of his time, the elders of the community/society come together to discuss how to bring these people as friends by restoring their previous relationship. The important things for this ceremony will be prepared accordingly ahead of time.

The life of the Oromo people is characterized by communion. For instance it is a tradition to drink coffee together. So, when enmity exists between individuals, neighbours or societies, it affects the communal life as a whole. If the conflict remains for a long time, it can even lead to a violent outcome. For this reason, the work of reconciliation is very important. The Oromo people are very strict in handling the work of reconciliation because a quarrel or conflict is not only an offence against a fellow brother or sister, it is also an offence against the creator or Waaqaa<sup>170</sup> (God) for believers and (black god) for ITOR. Consequently, such

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<sup>169</sup> Guma is removed means there is no avenger to kill somebody in return for the killing he/she or they have done to you, your family, or friends.

<sup>170</sup> The word "Waaqaa" in Oromo language can mean God (biblical), sky or the black god (whom the ITOR) considers as creator. In this context it can be God or black god.



offence can be settled to reconciliation specifically with some kinds of traditional reconciliation. In both the Abba Gada system and in the system of the elders, the Oromo people believe that the root cause of the evil should be removed by the animal blood, but in Christianity forgiveness and reconciliation is by the blood of Christ. For this reason Christian reconciliation differs from Indigenous Traditional Oromo Religion way of reconciliation.

As the proverb emphasizes on reconciliation, the question is: How can we bring radical change through the message of Christian reconciliation in the society? How do we relate radical evil with radical forgiveness? Many Ethiopian preachers preach salvation in Jesus boldly and clearly, but they are silent about the themes of justice, peace, truth and forgiveness between the people and how it affects the society. The understanding of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself includes that the Church, as well as individual Christians, individually need to be radically different from the way the traditional Church has become paralysed by being too closely tied to political powers, and therefore, being unable to be prophetic about justice, peace, truth and forgiveness. So, how will be the Ἐκκλησία, (“Church”) or (“Congregations”) in West Wollega Zone with the collaboration of ONS make a difference in West Wollega Zone as well as in Ethiopia with respect to reconciliation, peace and justice? In what follows I will propose some very helpful reflections to proclaim the message of reconciliation in such context.

#### *4.1.2 Conviction*

The Greek noun Ἐλεγμός is translated as (“correction, reproof; conviction, punishment”).<sup>171</sup> In 2 Timothy 3:16 Ἐλεγμός can be understood as conviction of the truth for which God has inspired the Scripture for a useful purpose. This meaning is related with the present thesis because it points to persuade or to convince somebody to do something. Paul says, “we are convinced that one died for all” (2 Corinthians 5:14b), one who is convicted is convinced of sin or error. In this sense conviction is something about which we are convinced. It usually deals with those who are convinced of sin. If we use it correctly, it is to describe the work of our conscience in making personal decisions between right and wrong in relation to the Scripture. In Acts 24:16 Paul says, “Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience toward God and all people”. This points that to bring people to reconciliation we need to have a clear conscience and transparency in the Church as well as in the society. God has given us this responsibility to create an awareness of a clear conscience and transparency in the given society.

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<sup>171</sup> Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀσπὼν-Ἐνώχ*, 427.

The Bible clearly teaches that the conscience is not a perfect indicator of right and wrong. It can be weak (NIV, 1 Corinthians 8:12), it can be defiled (KJV, Titus 1:15), it can be seared with a hot iron (NIB, 1 Timothy 4:2), and even dead (NLT, 1 Timothy. 4:2). However, when nurtured by the Scripture and submitted to God in a pure heart, it can help to guide us in many circumstances. In LNT John 16:8, which links the Spirit's activity with moral judgement, it says, "And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgement". This special work of the Spirit is seen in the initial conviction of people, which leads them to recognize themselves as sinners in God's sight.<sup>172</sup> It can tell us that things are wrong before we know why they are wrong. It can act as an early warning system against sin. It can help us to establish personal convictions that guide us as we walk through the pitfalls of this life. A convinced conscience brings radical change from the local level. It leads the individuals, groups, Church and the society to the personal and communal decisions of what is right and what is wrong. In a similar way, conviction points a convinced conscience which leads to repentance.

It presents us with the question: How is it possible to reach the Church and the society around West Wollega Zone to create clear consciences and transparency for conviction? The best answer is through Onesimos Nesib Seminary students. ONS is one of the regional theological seminaries in West Wollega Zone. This seminary teaches students from all areas of the West Wollega Zone. The aim of theological education is to train and prepare leaders and ministers for the Christian communities who in turn will bring change, inspire new life, renew and transform the congregations. Jesus emphasized teaching as a way to bring transformation into the whole world (Matthew 28:20). The verb διδάσκω, ("teach") appears 97 times in the NT.<sup>173</sup> Two of them are in 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 11:14. So that teaching in biblical understanding is the main way to bring changes in the Christian Church. By doing so, teaching will bring transformation in the Christian community and among the leaders of the Christian community. In this manner they can become the source of power for the Gospel ministry and to solve the problems of local Christian ministers and all believers by giving biblical teaching. The Corinthians who accepted the teaching of Paul became reconciled with God and Paul. This can be applied for today's believers too. ONS can begin the teaching with the elders of the congregations, local level ministers, higher level leaders to let them be aware of this issue. The basic tasks are to equip believers with the understanding of their faith

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172 Donald Guthrie, BD, Mth, PhD, *New Testament Theology*: Vice-Principal and Lecture in New Testament, London Bible College (London: Inter-Varsity, 1981), 909.

173 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀποστολῶν-Ἐνώχ*, 317.

commitment and to motivate them to share it with others, which demands clarity of thought and conviction. Many believers, especially young people, seem to be very mature Christians and charismatic in their practices of worship but they are very shallow in biblical and theological understanding of sin, repentance, peace, justice, truth and forgiveness to bring real reconciliation and therefore real transformation. In my view the shallow biblical and theological understanding of the people, especially young people, is the main source of all conflicts in the society.

However, to create effectiveness among the believers' transparency is needed. This will be done through a clear plan and clarification of the action plan to all ministers and members of the congregations using good communication and relationships. In this case, understanding, acceptance and conviction will be created among them. When understanding and conviction are created, as a result effectiveness will be reached and people will come to repentance.

#### *4.1.3 Repentance*

In the NT the Greek noun *Μετάνοια* is translated as (“a change of mind, repentance, turning about, conversion”).<sup>174</sup> Its verb *Μετανοέω* is translated as, (“repent, have a change of heart, turn from one's sins, change one's way”).<sup>175</sup> This defines repentance as a change of heart, mind, direction or attitude from one's sins. The preaching theme of John the Baptist was the repentance accompanied by a confession of sin (Matthew 3:6).<sup>176</sup> Jesus also continues John's theme of preaching but adds significantly to it “the time has come” (Mark 1:15). Jesus called the sinners not the righteous to *Μετάνοια* (Luke. 5:32) and heavens rejoices over their repentance (Luke 15).<sup>177</sup> In our passage Paul says “we try to persuade people” which can give the meaning of changing one's heart or attitude (2 Corinthians 5:11b). Accordingly, unfaithful congregations must repent (Revelation 3:5, 16). In this sense, what about the congregations in Aira<sup>178</sup> and West Wollega Zone? What about the young people? Is there division, conflict, hatred in the congregations as well as in the society? Is repentance significant for them? Do they know what repentance means?

There is no place in the world where we cannot find conflict; conflict exists where

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174 Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature: Third edition (BDAG)*:(Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 2000), 641.

175 Novum Testamentum Graece, post Eberhard et Erwin Nestle. Edited by Barbara et Kurt Aland, 117.

176 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1012.

177 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1012.

178 Aira is a village found at Birbir Dilla Synod in West Wollega Zone. In Aira parish there are about 11 congregations.

there is life. Conflict is a natural phenomenon after the fall between ethnics, clans, groups or individuals who live in the same environment with each other. Even we can face conflict and quarrel among a family. This kind of interaction might lead to change or destruction depending on how people respond to it and handle it on time.

Conflict does not occur in a vacuum. When it emerges, it carries the dimensions of the cause and the effect. In this paper I identify six major factors that can be categorized as the causes for conflict in the West Wollega Zone congregations with special reference to Aira. The factors are: 1) When there are sin practices among the believers; 2) When a group or an individual seek positions for their own interests; 3) When pride and shame are part of the cultural practices; 4) When the official language discriminates the vernacular languages; 5) When the tradition favours only a clan or sub-clan relationships; 6) When the implicit state Church get more preferences than the other denominations by the government. We cannot avoid being caught in conflict whether as an individual, groups, families, Churches, communities, society or state. It is part of our existence in the world to experience conflicts of any kind. What matters is not the existence of the conflicts, but how we manage and handle them peacefully. It will determine the quality of our belief and leadership whether in the Church or in the society. Μετάνοια (“repentance”) can be said of that inward change of mind, affections, convictions and commitment rooted in the fear of God and sorrow for offences committed against Him. This results in an outward turning from sin to God and His services in the whole of life when accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ. It never regrets (2 Corinthians 7:10) and it is given by God (Acts 11:18).<sup>179</sup> Paul taught us that the motive of the ministry of reconciliation is nothing else than the fear of God which depends on the love of God that motivates Christians into the ministry of reconciliation. In the same way as he taught us the fear of God for the ministry of reconciliation here he teaches us about repentance which is rooted in the fear of God for His services in all aspects of our life. The believers need to repent from the mentioned errors and not only hear the teaching about how to bring change.

Most importantly in relation to repentance is how the concept of sin should be understood in a deeper biblical and theological understanding. Sin is something that goes deeper than the visible act of wrongdoing. It includes insulting a fellow man or woman, putting a stumbling-block on their way, hating him or her in our heart.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>179</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1012.

<sup>180</sup> Natan Theophilos. *Blood as means of reconciliation: The Work of Christ in the Oromo context*, Norway, MHS, Mth, 2006, 92.

rejecting to do good is also a sin, “For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (NLT, Ephesians 2:10). For that reason, especially the young generation has to work with a new thought and a new heart to bring radical change and to handle the conflict in a constructive way.

When conflict is handled poorly, it leads to destruction, which can involve loss of life, mistrust, loss of relationships, division of congregations and loss of faith in Christ which is the most important aspect for the existence of the communities or individuals. When it is handled constructively, it promotes changes, cooperation, alerts people about the problem to raise moral and psychological maturity and to promote the spiritual, economical and social development within the conflicting society. Thus, I am convinced that Aira and West Wollega Zone are areas where Christians and Christian ministers need to rethink their actions and repent from them and live under God's forgiveness.

#### *4.1.4 Forgiveness*

In the NT there are four words which denote the idea of forgiveness.<sup>181</sup> The first word is Ἀπολύω (“set free, release, free, send away, of, divorce, forgiveness”) but only signify forgiveness in Luke 6:37.<sup>182</sup> The second word is Πάρεσις (“passing over, deliberate disregard, letting go unpunished”) which is only found once in Romans 3:25.<sup>183</sup> The third word is Χαρίζομαι (“that which is freely and graciously given, favour bestowed, gift”) which is used by Paul in his letters in the sense of “to forgive sins” frequently. (2 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13, 3:13 Etc.).<sup>184</sup> Its use in Paul's thought suggests the graciousness of God's forgiveness and that He gives us everything freely (Romans 8:38). The fourth word is Ἄφεσις (“the act of freeing and liberating from something that confines, release; the act of freeing from an obligation, guilt, or punishment, pardon, cancellation).<sup>185</sup> Also it can be translated as release, liberation and forgiveness.<sup>186</sup> All these words denote that in the NT forgiveness is a common and an important theological key word. The initiative of this complete forgiveness is from God. Paul's use of Χαρίσασθέ in 2 Corinthians 12:13 and Χαρισάμενος in Colossians 2:13 show it clearly. For instance, Colossians 2:13 NLT says, “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins”. The initiative of

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181 Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 460.

182 Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 117-118.

183 Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 776.

184 Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 108.

185 Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 115.

186 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀσπὼν-Ἐνώχ*, 181.

forgiveness is from God and it is ready as it is shown in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). The only not promised forgiveness is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:32 and Mark 3:29).

An interesting question is: How does the forgiveness of sin become appropriated for the sinners? In the NT we encounter the combination of forgiveness with repentance, especially in the apostles preaching. They proclaimed Christ as saviour who promised the forgiveness of sins through repentance (Acts 2:38). In this respect people were strongly told to repent from what they had done against God. Does it mean then that Christian forgiveness needs human effort to carry out the work of forgiveness? Since repentance is the work of God to change one's heart (Acts 11:18) and through it turn back to God, it can only happen when one believes in Christ. They are gifts from God. In Romans 5:10 Paul equates the state of sin and enmity, and also that he identifies the death of Jesus for sinners, by virtue of which they are justified, with the reconciliation of God's enemies by the death of His Son.<sup>187</sup> In this sense the death of Christ is the basis for God's act of justification which takes place when men and women believe in Christ, and it is itself the act of reconciliation which becomes effective for men and women when it is preached to them and they accept it. This shows that conviction, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are interrelated to each other.

Forgiveness implies a wish to not punish or coerce anyone from the wrong he/she has done. So, reconciliation denotes that people who had conflicts have come back peacefully to their former relationship. In this regard I strongly recommend the Christians in West Wollega Zone as well as in all Ethiopia to forgive and reconcile with each other in order to bring change and transformation. My emphasis is on the reconciliation motif which is a basic premise for the peace motif.

#### **4.2 Can Reconciliation with God teach us something about Reconciliation among men?**

The main point of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself is that sinners shall be saved instead of being condemned by God for their sin and for being his enemies. After that, this reconciliation with God have consequences to improve the life of the people in their cultural, religious, economic, social and political system. The society should be improved according to God's act of reconciliation which binds them all together. The social and moral values of the community are kept by the willing observance of God's act of reconciliation. Their violation, on the other hand, entails serious consequences for social and natural

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<sup>187</sup> Marshall, *The meaning of "Reconciliation"*, 124.

imbalances within the community. The absence of God's act of reconciliation causes corruption, murder, other abuses and economic poverty in West Wollega as well as in all Ethiopia. It must be conveyed in a way that every member of the community is expected to observe and accept God's act of reconciliation willingly without coercion.

Which part of the society's culture is more problematic for reconciliation is a basic question to answer here. I am an Oromo and I know the Oromo culture. In Oromo culture pride and shame is a mark among men. In Amhara and Tigre culture, it is a strong mark among men. This view is not limited to the pride and shame of the Ethiopian men only on the regional level, but it appears as a national and official problem. As mentioned in chapter 1, section 1.3.3, the Amhara and Tigre ethnic groups have been the Ethiopian national political leaders for centuries until today. In this way the pride and shame culture has also relation with gender and power in Ethiopia. This cultural characteristic is a huge obstacle in the moral values of the society. In this paper it is the second main problem for reconciliation to be discussed. It needs the awareness, conviction, repentance and forgiveness to put God's act of reconciliation into practice from the local people in order to bring change. In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 Paul teaches pride as wrong and that it can defile many good and valuable things. In 2 Corinthians 1:14 and Philippians 2:16, Paul teaches that our pride should be for the sake of the others from the good deeds we do. In addition he teaches in 1 Corinthians 1:31 that pride should only be in the Lord. It is not because of our identity, power or gender; it is rather because of our true relationship with Christ. This kind of radical cultural change should be started from the bottom and then come to the top because most of the problems are with those who have power, and those who are on the top level. It should be started from the local people to make real transformation for the promotion of salvation and peace from the bottom to the top. This might be a new way of reconciliation to bring relational restoration in the society.

#### *4.2.1 Relational Restoration*

Reconciliation is a term that accompanies relational restoration. It is biblical and encompasses theologically the idea of conviction, repentance and forgiveness. The meaning of it refers to the process or the act by which people who have been apart and divided from one another come together in reconciliation and restoration of their relationship. Reconciliation is a process of peace building, it deals with the healing of painful relationships between the conflicting parts. It builds the parts' relationships through justice and peace. As a process, relational restoration builds peace and restores a community's spirit so that people can live in a peaceful environment.

There are many categories from which conflict can arise such as personal conflicts that come from within. These are conflicts within oneself. It involves the feelings and emotions of a person. There can also be a family conflict between wife and husband, between children and parents and between children themselves. There can also be conflicts between groups and individuals. Sometimes conflicts occur between individuals and groups who are related to one another because of different social factors such as land, share administration, political interaction and money debts which might lead to division. All these situations show that a conflict can be manifested in many forms depending upon their types. However, in Matthew 5:24 and 1 Corinthians 7:11 as mentioned in chapter 2 sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4.1, I described in detail how horizontal relationship between people should be restored. The Lord's prayer also teaches us to forgive and to restore the distorted relationship among us (Matthew 6:9-15), vv. 14-15 are an added comment or exposition of the prayer about forgiveness in v. 12. They suggest a clear direct connection existence between God's forgivingness and human forgivingness in the way God's forgivingness is always prior. These verses strongly teach us that it is impossible to enjoy God's forgiveness without in turn extending our forgiveness to others.<sup>188</sup> Paul uses the reference in Colossians 3:13 "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others" (NLT). Matthew 18:23-35 teaches us also to forgive one another and to live together in peace. All these passages teach the congregations to experience relational restoration in their own situation to build peace that is properly theirs in Christ.

Reconciliation has three biblical dimensions. Firstly, it is the reconciliation with God where Christians ought to create harmony with the Lord mending the conflicts that divides people from God. This kind of mending relationship involves personal feelings and emotion. It embraces conviction, repentance and forgiveness of the wrong being done. Secondly, it is the reconciliation with the self. The personal and internalized conflicts can enable an individual Christian to reconcile himself/herself with God who forgives the wrong committed. In order for this kind of reconciliation to take place repentance is prior. Thirdly, it is the reconciliation with the neighbour and the human community. This kind of reconciliation is important in terms of one's relationship with other people. As a conflicting person is reconciled with God and with himself/herself, it is indeed essential that he/she has to be reconciled with people living with him/her. Once a person is reconciled with his/her

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188 Donald A. Hagner, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 33a Matthew 1-13: (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1993), 152.



neighbour, he/she starts to live the new life of being forgiven and forgiver at the same time.

These dimensions of reconciliation are important elements in Christian theology which is rooted in the Bible. Therefore, the term reconciliation aims at building and restoring the community's relationship so to develop peace, justice and truth promotion in a society affected by conflicts.

#### *4.2.2 Peace, Justice, and Truth Promotion*

In Christian perspective, peace, justice and truth are interrelated to each other. They are ground for reconciliation. So, under this section I will discuss how reconciliation can build and develop peace, justice, and truth promotion in a society affected by conflicts.

##### *4.2.2.1 Peace*

Peace is the value and outcome which the process of reconciliation seeks to achieve.<sup>189</sup> Peace building is a time consuming and progressive process entailing all activities undertaken to build and enhance peaceful situations as to overcome the conflicts within the communities. It is the process of attaining and maintaining peace within the conflicting communities without initiating violence. As a process of conflict transformation, peace building cannot be stopped. It continues to the post-conflict situation in order to attain sustainable peace within the community.

Doing peace is not an easy task. It requires more than just courage, commitment, good intention and self-sacrifice. It requires strategies, methodologies, organizational skills, a good message, a capacity for communication and it also involves adequate funding to apply such a task. Anyone who is involved in peace building processes has to be at peace with himself/herself. This is a universal concept which embraces biblical and theological principles in doing peace.

Working for peace in local communities and in cities implies building a change of mentality which is referred to as conflict transformation. I believe that it is the task of every individual, group, and community to maintain peace within the society. We are all responsible for the well-being of our society as committed citizens of the particular region such as of the West Wollega Zone. Maintaining peace in an area as West Wollega Zone requires the participation of all Christian ministers to motivate all Christians as to limit the intensity of conflict in the society. This is so because peace building ultimately requires a fundamental

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189 Berntsen, *Life After Violence: Towards a shared Moral Discourse on Reconciliation in Northern Uganda*, 33.

change in people's thinking. To create true peace in the society, awareness, transparency and admittance are needed rather than coercion and force. I believe this kind of radicalism should start from the local people and develop to the top. Proper awareness and admittance which is based on biblical teaching and theological understanding brings the society to maturity to tackle their internal conflicts.

Peacemaking and reconciliation are a mandatory task for the Church. They are parts of the Church's job description which have to be carried out by every Christian as long as the Church continues to exist on earth. Not only building peace is a mandate for the Church but also for the society in general. God, wants His people to live in peace with each other (NLT, 1 Corinthians 7:15; 2 Corinthians 13:11). This universal concept embraces peace in oneself, peace with the neighbour, peace with the creator and peace with the creatures. It is as life giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce conflict, increase justice in direct interaction with the social structure and which respond to real life problems in human relationship such as clean water, good diet, good health, good education, good agriculture techniques, good road, good houses, Etc. A similar type of relation of offender and offended is described in Matthew 5:24.

The aim of reconciliation is the establishment and maintenance of peace.<sup>190</sup> Ephesians 2:15 says, “He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace”. Peace is essentially a quality possessed by Jesus and promised by him to his disciples (John 14:27; 16:33). Paul argues much about peace and calls God the God of peace in Romans 16:20. Accordingly, it is mandatory for Ethiopian Christians as the children of God to build peace among our society starting from small groups to transform all over the Ethiopian context as Jesus started his ministry with a small group of twelve disciples and spread all over the world. We are Christ's ambassadors and as Christ has given a ministry to us; in a way that, it is our responsibility to put it into practice in our specific given community. Sharing the Good News that we have peace with God in Christ is the central missional task of the Gospel bearers.<sup>191</sup> Peace is an essential quality of God as the result of the condition of peace among the believers in the presence of God. Peace with God is God's will for all humanity. In the NT alone we can find the occurrences of Εἰρήνη (“peace”) 92 times.<sup>192</sup>

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190 Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 491.

191 A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*: ed. Harold Netland and Charles Van Engen (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2000), 736.

192 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀσπὼν-Ἐνώχ*, 395.

To sum up, in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 in Christ, God engaged the work of reconciliation and entrusted the Christian community with the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>193</sup> In Romans 5:1-11 and Colossians 1:15-23 Paul describes that God makes peace by the blood of Christ and that Christ is the head of the Church. Thus, in Christ all things are held together, and in him God has effected peace and reconciliation on earth and in heaven. Jesus made peace between Gentiles and Jews, men and women, free persons and slaves. In effect, he has made peace among all nations regardless their boundaries. Peacemakers are blessed by Jesus as children of God (Matthew 5:9). Therefore, peacemaking, working for development such as health, education, security, long life, healing broken relationships and salvation in Christ are all the responsibility of Christian ministers and all Christians. James also affirms that true justice is a harvest reaped by peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace (James 3:18).

#### 4.2.2.2 Justice

Reconciliation builds the parts' relations through peace and justice. Without justice one cannot truly understand the practice of forgiveness.<sup>194</sup> In Matthew 5:6, 10 Jesus is speaking of justice and he blesses those who long and struggle for justice.<sup>195</sup> This implies that justice is what God requires of Christians. Justice does not agree with corruption, mismanagement and unfair social factors. Believers must attempt to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Justice calls to restore empathy and mutuality between parts as the foundation for ongoing efforts to live peacefully together.<sup>196</sup> As a process, reconciliation requires therefore a proper remembrance that seeks simultaneously to forgive the conflict of the past and at the same time remembering rightfully in order to live peacefully together in a just society.<sup>197</sup>

Christ, who knew no sin of his own, was made sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in him. As mentioned in chapter 3 section 3.3 v. 21, in NT the Phrase “for the sake of sin” for the language expression represents the OT “sin offering”. In this respect, for the sake of the sacrificial death of Jesus God no longer counts the sin of the sinners for those who are in Christ. Our reconciliation to God is only through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit. We have to do the task of building peace, justice, truth and reconciliation until our Lord Jesus returns, till there it is a mandatory job description for Christians. To build these values in the society is our

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193 Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, 736.

194 Berntsen, *Life After Violence: Towards a shared Moral Discourse on Reconciliation in Northern Uganda*, 34.

195 Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 19.

196 Berntsen, *Life After Violence: Towards a shared Moral Discourse on Reconciliation in Northern Uganda*, 34.

197 Berntsen, *Life After Violence: Towards a shared Moral Discourse on Reconciliation in Northern Uganda*, 34.

responsibility as both citizens of the West Wollega Zone and the ambassadors of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) waiting for his return to bring complete peace and justice on earth.

#### 4.2.2.3 Truth

Ἀλήθεια (“truth, truthfulness, reality”) is true even if no one believes it. For instance, God is one even if the polytheistic religions do not believe it. If we are concerned for truth we must be committed to it against the current conflict though always ensuring we do so in love (Ephesians 4:15). In Pauline theology Ἀλήθεια is important for the motivating force of the proclamation of Jesus conceptual expression.<sup>198</sup> In the Bible truth is rooted in the being and the nature of God in all of His ways (Revelation 15:3). God is truth. Isaiah 65:16 which refers to a true God says, “So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes” (NKJ). God's nature is truth (John 14:6; 15:26; 17:3). God's truth is closely linked with His righteousness, it ensures His faithfulness and trustworthiness.<sup>199</sup> The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel (Romans 1:17) because of all human beings are under God's wrath (Romans 1:18) and for this reason they are all in need of God's righteousness revealed in the Gospel in order to be saved (Romans 5:9). We are called as ambassadors of Christ as well as citizens of our specific areas to live the truth and to promote the truth. As faithful Christians we have to teach it on the basis of the biblical and theological understanding for transforming a conflicting context into a peaceful context. In a society where there are sinful practices among the believers, greediness for position, honour of pride and shame culture, favour of clan or sub-clan relationships, and other factors that can be a cause of conflict, true Christian ministers are called to demonstrate truth in life and word that reflects the nature of God's character. In this way love, fellowship and unity will be established in the society.

#### 4.2.3 Love, Fellowship and Unity

Love, fellowship and unity are inseparably essential parts of the Christian life. They are values that closely connect the believers to each other in Christ regardless their nationalities, boundaries, colour, age, gender, language, Etc. In this respect, in the next subsection I will discuss briefly how reconciliation establishes love, fellowship and unity among the conflicting groups in the community.

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<sup>198</sup> Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀποκάλυψις-Ἐβραῖος*, 59.

<sup>199</sup> Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 867.

#### 4.2.3.1 Love

“For Christ's love controls us” (2 Corinthians 5:14a), Paul wrote not that we have loved God, but that God loved us and sent His Son as a ransom for our sin. Since God loved us we also ought to love God and one another to accomplish the given ministry as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20a).

Ἀγάπη (noun), Ἀγαπάω (Verb), and Ἀγαπητός the three word group occur a total of 320 times in the NT.<sup>200</sup> Love is a biblical and theological key term in the Bible that often is used to sum up the whole Gospel, the whole meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the whole content of the Christian message.<sup>201</sup> Christian message and deeds without love count for nothing (1 Corinthians 13). In this sense Christian love is totally different from the love which the world usually calls love. The Greek noun Ἀγάπη (“love [primarily of Christian love]; concern, interest; sacred meal, love-fast [of the early Church: Jd 12]”) makes the concept of Christian love very clear. In any Christian congregation, love is a principle which protects unity and encourages growth.<sup>202</sup> It is one of the first Spiritual fruits (Galatians 5:22). In Christian view it binds believers together in a common purpose as they progress in their knowledge of Christ (NLT, Philippians 2:1-2; Col 2:2 *cf.* John 17:22-23). It has actions which promote growth and change. Ephesians 4:16 in NRS says, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love”. The Christian body is built up in its work smoothly as its members coordinate their love deepened for one another. The Bible orders the believers again and again to live a life of love. But the model and the dynamic of such radical love is not to start from the bottom heart of human nature. It is from the nature and activity of God. That is what Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 5:14a. Christ's love is beyond our control.<sup>203</sup> It has an action which controls us together regardless of clans, ethnicities, nationalities, languages, gender, Etc. It has power which motivates Christian ministers for the given ministry, namely, reconciliation in this hostile world.

What characterizes the body of Christ, the new creation of God (2 Corinthians 5:17b), is Christ's love and fellowship in which each minister finds identity and fulfilment through others. It is Christ's distinct love which binds the Church with the bonds of love and drives

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200 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀποστολῶν-Ἐνώχ*, 9.

201 Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles: and other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 52-53.

202 Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 11.

203 Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles: and other Essays*, 55.

the Christian ministers to reach beyond the self to others as well. God calls each Christian minister to this fellowship of love and agreement and as the result to bring others to the fellowship. Paul uses the phrase “entrusted in us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19c), to explain how Christ's love works through the Christian ministers to build the community of faith. A community of faith is a house of mutuality, a building for service, a building up through love and agreement. Lack of love and agreement are causes of conflict and for destroying the life of the Church. This time we see conflict and division among Christian ministers, between Christian ministers and conflict and division among the believers. It is the deficiency of love and agreement. Where Christ's love is, there is reconciliation between God and people and among believers. The aim of reconciliation is to restore and establish Christ's love in the society we live in. Without love and agreement among believers and between the believers and the ministers, this goal of radical and dynamic change of reconciliation cannot be achieved in the society.

To sum up, the main theme of reconciliation among the Christians is to develop the real concept of Christ's love and to avoid conflict, disagreement and division in order to create and establish love in the society. Reconciliation and love together lead a society to start their own fellowship.

#### 4.2.3.2 Fellowship

The Greek noun Κοινωνία is translated as (“community; fellowship; participation”) and its verb as (“have a share; give a share; take a share; have fellowship”).<sup>204</sup> So, to have Κοινωνία “fellowship” means to have a share in, to have a close mutual relationship, to participate in and to be in communion with someone in something.<sup>205</sup> In Christian understanding the basis for fellowship is the believer's participation in love (2 Corinthians 5:14a) in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17a). Matthew 5:24 talks about horizontal and vertical reconciliation in the context of making offerings. In 1 Corinthians 7:11 Paul argues about horizontal reconciliation between wife and husband. In 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2, he describes vertical reconciliation between God and sinful human beings. In Ephesians 2 he argues both about vertical and horizontal reconciliation between God and sinful human beings and between human beings. These passages portray how reconciliation brings about how the fellowship with God can be restored and the consequences of that restoration for the human relationships.<sup>206</sup> This

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204 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 2 ἐξ-Ὁῶψιον*, 303.

205 Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 379.

206 Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 379.

highlights that Christian fellowship can only be founded on the basis of love and truth. Conflict, disagreement, division, hate, gossip, Etc., are the causes to distort the quality of Christian fellowship. Reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, justice, truth, love, fellowship and unity are the good qualities of the Christian fellowship.

How can we improve Christian fellowship in order to improve the life of the society? Generally, it is a big challenge to society to accept that the Church has a solution for the others while herself she is within a great problem. Concerning this question Paul teaches us that Christian ministers are Christ's ambassadors to proclaim the message of reconciliation, to administer, to lead, to facilitate fellowship by exhortation, to rebuke, to give counsel and by further exposition of the meaning of the Gospel which they had come to believe. Christian ministers are called to improve Christian fellowship which in turn will improve the life of the society. As Paul teaches us, new created believers should improve the vertical dimension of their fellowship with God what leads to the true fellowship with fellow brothers and sisters in the Church as well as in the society. New created believers are initiated at all levels to develop Christian fellowship on the basis of participation in Christ's love to heal the distorted fellowship in the community. Thus, through reconciliation division, disagreement, isolation, conflict and alienation which are the results of sin and which separates the sinners from God shall be overcome in the deepest level by a good quality of Christian fellowship. This Christian fellowship is the basic ground for the unity of Christians as well as of the society.

#### 4.2.3.3 Unity

Unity is the state of being undivided or unbroken. Ἐνότης (“oneness, unity”) appears only twice in the NT, in Eph 4:3, 13.<sup>207</sup> God provides reconciliation for sinful human beings not only to live salvation but also to live with others in peace, love and unity (Ephesians 4:2-3). Unity is already present, but it must be preserved because it can be lost. The bond of peace, i.e., the bond which consists of peace, produces the unity. In this respect reconciliation is to establish unity between God and human beings to achieve salvation and unity with other believers. Jesus in John 17:20-23 emphasized unity in his prayer for his followers before he went to the cross. In this way Christian unity comes from God and is based in Christ Jesus. Saying Christian unity comes from God does not imply that we have no responsibility in keeping unity among ourselves as Christians. We need to work for a harmonious relationship in our homes, in the Church and in the society. Unity does not happen automatically. It takes

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207 Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 1 Ἀποκων-Ἐνώχ*, 456.

time and comes gradually. We are responsible to pursue the things which make for peace, justice, truth and the building up of one another. Romans 14:19, NKJ, says, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another”. But having said all these things, it means that true Christian unity is not something that we can achieve by our efforts. True unity which is based on Christ comes from God. So we must seek God and live in Christ to achieve it. The reality of Christian unity is a fundamental spiritual truth, tied together with the foundational purpose of the Church's mission in the world.<sup>208</sup> As Christians we have to see each other in the light of the cross. Christians are those who Christ died for on the cross; thus he exchanges his righteousness for their sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He called us to extend that love and compassion and not to create quarrel and conflict in order to achieve true Christian unity in our society. New created Christians can bring radically positive changes in society as well as enjoying their common salvation.

### **4.3 Restoration for Salvation**

Most importantly, what makes Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus different from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Traditional Oromo Religion is the way in which the theology of salvation is developed in EECMY. The theology and teaching of EOTC focuses on giving credit to the mediating role of angels, veneration of saints and Virgin Mary, and salvation based on good deeds.<sup>209</sup> ITOR believes that there is only one black god (Waaqaa) and he does everything. In EECMY the theology and teaching of salvation is pointing only to Jesus Christ in all regions in Ethiopia. However, as mentioned in section 4.1.2, many believers, especially young people, seem to be very mature Christians and charismatic in their practices of worship, but they are very shallow in their biblical and theological understanding of sin, repentance, in promoting peace, justice, truth and in receiving and giving forgiveness to bring real reconciliation and then real transformation in the society. But, as stated in section 4.1.2, the main problem in the West Wollega Zone congregations and in the EECMY is that this shallow formation of the young is a hindrance for ministering real reconciliation and, hence, real transformation.

So, what is salvation according to EECMY understanding? Salvation is only through the atoning work of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15) and our righteousness is only by the exchange of Christ's righteousness for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). I believe that this is a mark of

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208 Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 988.

209 Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origin of The Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*. (Sweden, Stockholm, 1978), 15ff.



any Lutheran Church. So if they have a shallow understanding of sin, repentance and forgiveness, they have also a shallow understanding of salvation by Christ's atoning work and in the understanding that the exchange of Christ's righteousness by faith is our righteousness. Then, what is the appropriate solution? The solution is to extend a channel through ONS students to the areas of West Wollega Zone to uplift the biblical and theological understanding of the congregations to improve the maturity of whole communities. Starting with this small unit, I believe that we can create a good awareness among the society by giving a holistic pastoral care which includes the physical, moral and spiritual life of the people in order to bring the society to the real understanding of salvation.

Spiritual maturity brings the believers to understand the concept of sin in the deepest level as Paul says, "we exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). Furthermore, maturity leads to conviction to decide between right and wrong deeds. Consequently conviction leads to repentance which helps to forgive and to receive forgiveness. They must acknowledge their sin in order that they might be forgiven. More than that, they could see that sin against fellow people is like sin against God and then they could come to ask for forgiveness. In my view forgiveness is both a spiritual and a moral response for both spiritual and moral wrongdoings.

As Jesus teaches us in Matthew 5:24, when there is forgiveness, there is reconciliation in both dimensions, vertically and horizontally. In EECMY understanding the main aim of vertical and horizontal reconciliation is to achieve salvation. Salvation liberates us not only from conflict but also from seen and unseen spiritual, moral, social and economic problems.<sup>210</sup>

By what I have written above in this chapter, I have tried to identify and discuss some ways in which the conflicts among Christian ministers, between Christian ministers and believers, and among believers of West Wollega Zone and EECMY congregations can come to a peaceful solution through the Christian view of reconciliation.

#### **4.4 Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter I have suggested some basic recommendations for how to solve the conflicts in the areas of West Wollega Zone in a very effective and constructive way. So, that through ways and other related points the conflict of West Wollega Zone and EECMY Christians could be solved.

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<sup>210</sup> Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 27-31.

## Chapter Five

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

I see in my journey on the theme of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity with himself, how a shallow biblical and theological understanding of the people can affect the life of the Church as well as the life of society in relation to conflicts. As I have reflected on these matters, God helped me to see my own self and other people in a whole new perspective. It is interesting to note in this respect how much we can know about God in our conflicts, especially the truth of how much we are powerless before sin. Simply because in this process we come to know who we really are and how much we depend on God to bring reconciliation in our conflicts.

Reconciliation, in a biblical sense, is about to restore the relationship between God and the people vertically and among people horizontally through the redemptive work of Christ. Conflicts and quarrels can deeply challenge us when they confront us, they can really hurts us but when they are solved constructively this process can also shape us. The ministry and the message of reconciliation gives us the hope to change a conflicting reality into a peaceful context so that it can be constructively addressed. God called us and entrusted us the message of reconciliation for this purpose. Conflict does not block totally the plans God have for His people. God is the only one who can transform conflicting situations into peaceful ones, the only one who can make all things works for the good of those who love Him because He is God.

In Jesus, God call us to bring reconciliation where there are conflicts, to overcome them with the message of reconciliation entrusted to us. The act of God's reconciling sinful humanity with Himself helps us to see reality in a new perspective and understand what our situation is about and setting us ablaze with Christ's love to bring healing to this conflicting society. Not as a command, by force or by coercion but by the fact that Christ's love motivates us to be Christ's ambassadors in our given society. It is not a reaction to God's love for us in Jesus Christ, but it is God's own love working through us. As the apostle Paul says, Christ's love controls us. Christ's love acts beyond ourselves to reach others.

Conflicts matter, and Christianity assures us it is a temporary reality. Jesus has conquered and overthrown sin, conflict, death and the powers that turns life into misery

through his death and resurrection. He holds the last word concerning this world, for Jesus is the beginning and the end. However, conflicts are very present in the world. It especially indicates that we need reconciliation in both dimensions vertically and horizontally. And also it is our responsibility to proclaim among people the message of reconciliation. Jesus has sent us out to be God's ambassadors in this broken society. Through the Christian faith we see that night is not over, but we already see that the day is dawning.

In general, I hope that what I have been reflecting throughout this thesis may be of help and show some or most of the realities of the conflicts Christians are facing today in West Wollega Zone as well as in EECMY congregations in Ethiopia. I believe also that it can be a tool to help to identify the conflicts that are related to reconciliation elsewhere which are similar to West Wollega Zone. My aim is that this paper may help and guide Christians to cope with conflicts in their situations according to the Scripture.

From my own personal experience as a pastor in congregations, as an instructor at ONS, I have seen that the deep understanding of God's act of reconciling sinful humanity will shape and renew the life of West Wollega Zone congregations. Therefore, I do hope that the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 and the recommendations here expressed may help the ministers and the whole Christians in promoting proper reconciliation in congregations nowadays.

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit guide us to faithfulness and to the will of God to be reconciled to each other in order that we can serve God and one another in love, peace, and justice both materially and spiritually.

I end this thesis with a prayer that sums up my aims in writing this thesis and what have for long helped me to relate with our conflicting reality:

*“And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'”*

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (New Living translation)

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