

**THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN POST
WAR LIBERIA:
AN ASSESSMENT OF HOW CHRISTIANITY CAN PLAY A
ROLE IN MENDING SOCIETAL FRAGILITY**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Eric Zakpa Mccaric Gbotoe, declare that the thesis, "*The role of Christianity in post-war Liberia*: a study that evaluates a cross section of strategies and policies which theologians can employ to contribute towards the development, the sustenance of peace and foster reconstruction plans among perpetrators and victims of a brutal civil war" is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at any other institution.

It encompasses views, ideas and citations of individuals and writers whose assistance was solicited and acknowledged accordingly.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Almighty God for His guidance and protection. I also dedicate this dissertation to my foster parents, Mary and Ron Holscher, for giving me an enviable education which many underprivileged children like me would have wished to acquire, to my dearest wife Mrs. Laura T.J. Gbotoe for her encouragement and matrimonial support, to my late parents and the victims of the Liberian Civil War whose deaths are the inspirational factor of the study and to my brothers and sisters, especially Patience B. Gbotoe, for their ongoing support. Finally, I dedicate this work to my children, Ophelia and Eric Jr, especially Ophelia whose actions sometimes seemed distracting but actually encouraged me to continue the work.

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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Americo-Liberians	Settlers who were, from the beginning, essentially more American than African in outlook and orientation. They retained preferences for western modes of dress, southern plantation-style homes, American food, Christianity, the English language and monogamous kinship practices.
Ascension	The action of rising to an important position or a higher level.
Alluding	Suggest or call attention to indirectly; hint at.
Belligerency	Aggressive or warlike behaviour.
Connotation	An idea or feeling which a word invokes for a person in addition to its literal or primary meaning.
Constellation	A group of stars forming a recognisable pattern that is traditionally named after its apparent form or identified with a mythological figure.
Collaboration	The act of working with someone to produce something.
Dynamics	The branch of mechanics concerned with the motion of bodies under the action of forces.
Ecology	The branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms with one another and to their physical surroundings.
Engendered	Cause or give rise to a feeling, situation or condition.
Exclusivism	The action or policy of excluding a person or group from a place, group, or privilege.
Exhilaration	A feeling of excitement, happiness or elation.
Galvanise	To shock or excite (someone) into taking action.

Term	Definition
Hortatory	Tending or aiming to exhort.
Indigenous	Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.
Indistinguishable	Not able to be identified as different or distinct.
Magnanimous	Generous or forgiving, especially towards a rival or less powerful person.
Missiology	The area of practical theology that investigates the mandate, message and mission of the Christian church, especially the nature of missionary work.
Monopolised	(Of an organisation or group) Obtain exclusive possession or control of a trade, commodity, or service.
Monolithic	Formed of a single large block of stone.
Mulattoes	A person of mixed white and black ancestry, especially a person with one white and one black parent.
Nascent	Just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential (especially of a process or organisation).
Nepotism	The practice among those with power or influence of favouring relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs.
Plasticity	The quality of being easily shaped or moulded.
Pluralism	A condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist.
Polarise	To divide
Progression	The process of developing gradually towards a more advanced state.
Promulgate	To promote or make widely known (an idea or cause).

Term	Definition
Propagation	The reproduction or spreading of something.
Pugnacity	Having a quarrelsome or combative nature.
Repercussions	An unintended consequence of an event or action, especially an unwelcome one.
Reciprocity	The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, especially privileges granted by one country or organisation to another.
Serviceable	Fulfilling its function adequately; usable.
Solidification	To make solid, compact, or hard; to make secure, substantial, or firmly fixed.
Stakeholders	A person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.
Utilitarianism	The doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority; the doctrine that an action is right in so far as it promotes happiness and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct.
Verisimilar	Having the appearance of truth; probable.

ABSTRACT

The research question this paper attempts to answer is: “What role can Christianity play to effectively lessen the animosity that engendered the years of hostilities in Liberia and facilitate the healing of wounds”. In other words, how can they contribute significantly to the overall development of the society in which they exist? The question looks deeper into how the church can collectively work with government bodies and other stakeholders to foster peace and stability and respond with prudence to sources of conflict. It is about how the church can help to mend the fragility of the Liberian society that often leads to civil unrest.

In answering the question, a collection of literature relating to the subject matter coupled with citations from interviewees has been reviewed and analysed. To accomplish the objective of the study, the biblical foundation of maintaining societal peace and development has been examined and the background, history and root causes of the civil unrest in the Liberian society has been evaluated, coupled with the views of respondents. A comparison has been made and a conclusion has been reached based on the findings.

Thus, grounded on the results obtained from the research, the researcher attempts to establish that the church must consistently convene congresses whereby delegates from different backgrounds can discuss significant issues affecting the country and thus forge a way forward. In other words, the church must seek to promulgate its principles and teachings through the following dimensions:

- Truth: Making the case for the truth of Christ in a pluralistic society;
- Reconciliation: Building the peace of Christ in a divided and broken society of Liberia;
- World faiths: Bearing witness to the love of Christ among people of other faiths in the Liberian society;

- Priorities: Discerning the will of God for evangelisation in the country ravaged by war. Repositioning the church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity; and
- Partnership: Partnering in the body of Christ towards a new national equilibrium.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	1
APPENDIX B	207
.....	45
CHAPTER ONE: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN POST-WAR LIBERIA	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 Background.....	6
1.2.1 Preliminary stating of the problem.....	7
1.2.2 Types of conflict	8
1.3 Research Objectives	8
1.5 Significance of the Study	11
1.6.1 Research design	1314
1.6.1.1 Literature –based	1314
1.6.1.2 Field based.....	14
1.7 Theoretical Framework	15
1.8 Literature Review	16
1.8.1 Gort et al. (2010).....	16
1.8.2 Gort et al. (2002).....	17
1.8.3 Moyaert (2011)	18
1.8.4 Federico Lenzerini (2014).....	19
(Lenzerini 2014:224).	19
1.8.5 Grifford (1995)	19
1.8.6 Mason & Meernik (2006).....	20
1.8.7 Mason (2004)	21
1.8.8 Murithi (2009).....	21
1.8.9 Ranger (2008).....	22
1.8.10 Clarke (2011).....	22
1.8.11 Appleby et al (2015).....	2322
1.8.12 Woolverton (2005).....	23
1.8.13 Phiri et al. (1996).....	23
1.8.14 Conclusion.....	24
1.9 Chapter Divisions.....	24
1.9.1 Chapter Two.....	24
1.9.2 Chapter Three	25
1.9.3 Chapter Four	25
1.9.4 Chapter Five	26
1.10 Conclusion	26
CHAPTER TWO: THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF PEACE	27
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Concordance: Galtung’s Concept and Biblical Peace	29
2.2.1 Old Testament concept of peace	29
2.2.1.1 Hebrew term “shalom” —peace	29
2.2.1.2 Peace as the revelation of God.....	30
2.2.1.3 Peace as the fruit of trust in God.....	30



2.2.2 The New Testament concepts of peace	<u>3234</u>
2.2.2.1 Paul’s message of peace to the Romans	32
2.2.2.2 Mark’s version of peace.....	33
2.2.2.3 Peace broker—Matthew 5:9	36
2.2.2.4 Societal unity—the vein of peace	37
2.2.2.5 Strive for peace.....	38
2.3 Essential Facets of Biblical Peace	39
2.3.1 Tolerance	39
2.3.2 Diversity	40
2.3.3 Love.....	41
2.4 Reciprocity.....	42
2.5 Utilitarianism	44
2.6 Peace Practitioner’s Conception	46
2.6.1 Negative peace	46
2.6.2 Positive peace	47
2.6.3 Centralities of Galtung’s peace concept	48
2.7 Responsibilities of the Church in Relation to Peace	48
2.7.1 Social responsibilities.....	49
2.7.3 Economical responsibilities.....	53
2.8 Conclusion	<u>5756</u>

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORY AND SOURCES OF CONFLICT – PERSPECTIVE ON LIBERIA

3.1 Introduction	<u>5958</u>
3.2 Overview of the Liberian conflict	<u>6059</u>
3.3 Theory of Conflict	<u>6160</u>
3.3.1 Definitions of conflict.....	<u>6362</u>
3.4 Transient History of the Conflicts in Liberia	<u>6564</u>
3.4.1 Fernando Po Island Saga 1930.....	<u>6867</u>
3.4.2 Rice demonstration—1978	<u>6867</u>
3.5 Sources of Conflict.....	<u>7069</u>
3.5.1 Black on black apartheid	<u>7271</u>
3.5.2 Monopolisation of power	<u>7372</u>
3.5.3 Electoral irregularities.....	<u>7473</u>
3.5.4 Abuse of power and unfair distribution of resources	<u>7473</u>
3.5.5 Nepotism.....	<u>7574</u>
3.5.6 Corruption.....	<u>7675</u>
3.5.7 No freedom of expression	<u>7978</u>
3.5.8 Injustices	<u>8281</u>
3.5.9 Precarious justice	<u>8382</u>
3.6 The Liberian War and Its Impact	<u>8584</u>
3.6.1 Poor sanitation and water	<u>8887</u>
3.6.2 Economic impact.....	<u>8988</u>
3.6.3 Unemployment	<u>9089</u>
3.6.4 Inflation—higher cost of living.....	<u>9190</u>
3.6.5 Economic crises—prostitution and human trafficking.....	<u>9291</u>
3.6.6 Mercenary recruitment and brain drain	<u>9291</u>
3.6.7 Child labour	<u>9291</u>
3.7 The Church in Liberia—Historical Background	<u>9493</u>



3.7.1 Religious populations	9594
3.7.2 Denomination and religious practice	9796
3.7.3 Religious ethnicity	9796
3.7.4 Religious affirmation	9796
3.7.5 Religious facilities.....	9897
3.8 Conclusion	9897

CHAPTER FOUR: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS102101

4.1 Introduction	102101
4.1.1 Research setting and Ebola	103102
4.2 Population of the Study.....	103102
4.2.1 The permutation of the respondent population.....	104103
4.3 Total Population of 40 People	105104
4.3.1 Personal data	105104
4.3.1.1 Respondents’ age variation	105104
4.3.1.2 Respondents’ qualification variants	105104
4.3.1.3 Respondents’ religious background	106105
4.3.1.4 Respondents’ religious responsibilities	106105
4.4 Correlations of Respondents’ Response and Perception	107106
4.4.1 The church’s humanitarian programmes in Liberia	107106
4.4.2 The church and social development in Liberia.....	108107
4.4.3 The church’s role towards good governance.....	109108
4.4.4 Causes of deep-rooted social cleavages in Liberia.....	111110
4.4.4.1 Social class	112111
4.4.4.2 Ethnicity in Liberia	113112
4.4.4.3 Religiosity	115114
4.4.4.4 Major divides in Liberia	116115
4.4.5 The role of church in conflict management and prevention	119118
4.4.5.1 Catholic Justice and Peace Commission	121120
4.4.5.2 Casualty of the weak	122121
4.4.6 Reconciliation (TRC) and the quest for justice	123122
4.4.7 Challenges that breed conflict	125124
4.4.7.1 Education of servitude.....	126125
4.4.7.2 Poverty reduction	127126
4.4.7.3 The legal system	127126
4.4.8 The church in the face of repression and social injustice	128127
4.4.9 Perception in context.....	129128
4.4.9.1 Perception average percentage for the motion	129128
4.4.9.2 Perception average percentage against the motion	129128
4.4.9.3 Perception average percentage of neutral respondents’	130129
4.5 Analysis and Discussion of the Research Findings.....	130129
4.5.1 Haunted history	131130
4.5.3 Denial of reality.....	136135
4.5.4 Political violence	137136
4.5.4.1 Justification of violence	139138
4.5.4.3 Greed and egocentrism	141140
4.5.4.4 Failed leadership.....	142141
4.5.5 Feeble reconciliation and justice	143142
4.5.5.1 Culture of impunity and quest for justice.....	144143



4.5.6 United front	<u>145144</u>
4.5.6.1 Peace, unity and justice	<u>146145</u>
4.5.6.2 Peace and development	<u>147146</u>
4.6 Conclusion	<u>148147</u>
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	<u>150149</u>
5.1 Introduction	<u>150149</u>
5.2 Peace Building	<u>153152</u>
5.2.1 Peace fora—Phiri et al (1996)	<u>153152</u>
5.2.2 Reconciler and unifier—Rogers et al (2008)	<u>155154</u>
5.3 Leadership	<u>157156</u>
5.3.1 Engage leadership on cardinal pillars—Adekoya (2015).....	<u>157156</u>
5.3.2 Accountability— Stückelberger and Mugambi (2007)	<u>158157</u>
5.3.3 Transparency—Transparency International (2004)	<u>159158</u>
5.3.4 Biblical traits of a good leader—Philips 2008	<u>162161</u>
5.3.5 Responsible leader—Philips (2008)	<u>163162</u>
5.3.6 Reliable and committed leader—Ashimolowo (2013).....	<u>165164</u>
5.4 Advocacy	<u>166165</u>
5.4.1 Biblical basis for advocacy—Ludy (1982)	<u>166165</u>
5.4.2 Advocacy for the needy—Barlett and Taylor (2009)	<u>168167</u>
5.4.3 Advocacy against social ills—Roger et al (2008)	<u>169168</u>
5.5 Unity and Development	<u>170169</u>
5.5.1 Unity of the church	<u>170169</u>
5.5.2 Development—Martin (1992).....	<u>173172</u>
5.6 Framework	<u>175174</u>
5.6.1 The appreciation of intercultural living—Keast (2007).....	<u>177176</u>
5.6.2 Human relationship—Baldock (2011)	<u>177176</u>
5.6.3 Economic efficiency—Bakama (1992).....	<u>177176</u>
5.6.4 Civil responsibility—Leppert and Sullivan (2004) and Belliles and McDowell (1995)	<u>177176</u>
The church must use its resources to propagat values that stimulate the awareness for social justice, social activity, social understanding, national unity and tolerance. It must initiate a social platform that paves the way for the understanding of principles of conversation as it relates to national devotion and democracy (Leppert & Sullivan 2004:63-66, Belliles & McDowell 1995:54-58).....	<u>177176</u>
5.6.5 Development of talent—Ilo (2014)	<u>178177</u>
5.6.6 Conclusion.....	<u>178177</u>
5.7 Limitations.....	<u>182181</u>
5.8 Recommendations for Further Study	<u>182181</u>
5.9 Summary of the Study	<u>184183</u>
WORKS CONSULTED.....	<u>188187</u>
APPENDIX A	<u>206205</u>
Interview Questions	<u>206205</u>
APPENDIX B	<u>207</u>
Consent Letter.....	207

CHAPTER ONE: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN POST-WAR LIBERIA

1.1 Introduction

The title of this study is *The role of Christianity in post-war Liberia*. It is a study that attempts to examine and investigate how Christian faith and spirituality can play a role in a campaign for social peace, justice, development and unity. The study is an assessment of serviceable theology in the development of the people, preservation of peace and reconstruction of a country torn apart by war. The title describes a study that evaluates a cross section of strategies and policies which theologians can employ to develop and sustain peace and foster reconstruction plans among perpetrators and victims of a brutal civil war.

It is about how religious leaders can explore the dynamics of cross-faith interaction to effect or project social transformation. Over decades, religious scholars have underscored the role of Christian religion as a social institution that advocates for the betterment of the society (Phiri, Ross & Cox 1996). However, this study is about how Christians in Liberia can play a similar role to shape or transform the society in which they exist.

This research refers to the mutual efforts that Christians can take to effectively lessen the animosity in Liberia engendered by years of hostilities and facilitate the healing of wounds. In so doing, Christians can significantly contribute to the overall development of the society in which they exist. The research describes a study that attempts to promulgate or develop standards that will guide the church to work collectively with government bodies and other stakeholders in fostering peace and stability and to respond with prudence to sources of conflict.

Hence, the title of the study is interpreted from a fabric that concentrates on how the church in Liberia can position itself as a key pillar on which the nascent democratisation process in the land is rested and nourished. The proposed study portrays a peace-building operation, evaluation and reconstruction structure which Liberian Christians can exploit to contribute their quota to the dynamic promotion of optimal human development; development by empowering the weak, influencing

the moral-political climate, developing cooperation and providing sustainable humanitarian support.

In short, the study examines the long-standing commitment of the church to human development and peace building in Liberia by analysing factors that have worked well and those that have not worked well in maintaining peace and stability in the country. The study also identifies opportunities for collaboration between the churches and the state.

1.2 Background

It is perceived that Liberia as a country was built on Christian principles (Taylor and Francis Group 2012:2821). Historians argue that the country emulates the United States of America in drafting its governing principles based on Christian norms (Waugh 2011:19). The Bible is often used in swearing in government executives into offices, usually concluding with the phrase “so help me God”. The action alludes to the Christian belief that God is omnipotent and the source of all wisdom.

Historians have traced the root of the country to the Portuguese explorers who established contacts with native Liberians in early 1461 and named the area the Grain Coast because of the plethora of grain available there (Marinelli 1964:22-23). The grain became known as Melegueta Pepper. Post-Portuguese explorers were the British who instituted commercial centres on the Grain Coast but the Dutch destroyed these posts a year later (Marinelli 1964:22-23). There were no further reports of European settlements along the Grain Coast until the coming of the freed slaves in the early 1800s.

According to Kraaij (2014:10), at the early stage of the 19th century, groups of freed slaves and mulattoes from the United States of America emigrated to the west coast of Africa (Liberia past and present) He further affirms that in 1847 the slaves sought independence from the organisation that facilitated their immigration to Africa and named the country Liberia. The name literally means, “the love of liberty brought us here”. Kraaij placed the initial number of these emigrants at 3 000 men, women and children.

1.2.1 Preliminary stating of the problem

Huband (1998:xvii) asserts that the country was plunged into a series of conflicts right after its birth. In his view, the seed of hostilities that polarised the country for centuries was “planted” by the Americo-Liberian who subjugated the masses they met on the land. Though the indigenous population in the area far outnumbered the emigrants, they were excluded and not recognised as citizens. The practice gave birth to “black on black apartheid” and division. Consequently, the indigenous population strongly resisted the exclusion and oppression that resulted in a series of armed conflicts leading to the destruction of lives and properties (Sampson & Lederach 2000:165-167).

According to Boe, (2007:17) it was not until 1904 that the indigenous population was finally recognised as citizens, but they were still not enfranchised (they were still excluded from voting). The Americo-Liberians, who considered themselves the elite of the country, monopolised political power. The political party in the country was the True Whig Party to which they all belonged. “The True Whig Party dominated all sectors of Liberia from independence in 1847 until 12 April 1980, when indigenous Liberian Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe (from the Krahn ethnic group) seized power in a *coup d’état*” (Huband 1998:xvii). Doe’s ascension to power was greeted with jubilation from the indigenous population (Johnson 2007:5-8).

However, Doe, who was considered the hero of the indigenous population, was later accused of gross human abuses including nepotism—employing the majority of his tribal men in lucrative areas of government. Another point of tension during his reign was the 1985 election which he allegedly won but observers labelled as full of irregularities and not free and fair (Roberts 1995:188-189). This led to an attempted coup in the same year.

Doe and his loyalists’ reprisal on the associates of the coup planners opened another chapter of bloody violence in the history of the country. In 1989, Charles Taylor used the kinsmen of the executed coup plotters to start a war in the country.

Approximately 250 000 citizens were killed in the war. The war destroyed the entire infrastructure of the country (Boe 2007:19).

It is with this background in mind that the study attempts to promulgate a framework in which the church can contribute towards the maintenance of peace, development and reconstruction in a devastated nation. The study endeavours to define a strategy that outlines the involvement of the church as a social force for transformation and development.

1.2.2 Types of conflict

Three types of conflict that occurred in Liberia:

- a. Political conflict;
- b. Ethnic conflict; and
- c. Religious conflict (Muslims and Christians sporadically clashed).

1.3 Research Objectives

Peace, development and reconstruction in this study refer to the maintenance of peace and stability, development and reconstruction through the propagation of Christian norms and values. It includes a progression that is based on a framework that offers an opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge and skills to citizens within Liberia. Hence, this research examines the church's past and current approach to the maintenance of peace, development and reconstruction. It analyses its pros and cons and evaluates the impact of ethnic division, violence, underdevelopment and the role of the church. The dissertation attempts to explore the history, interdenominational cooperation and opportunities for dialogue between victims and perpetrators.

Furthermore, the research examines and analyses the fundamental development programmes of some churches in other developing countries and relates these findings to the situation in Liberia. The study raises issues that are theoretically

important, practically relevant and potentially doable and promulgates a development scheme within the context of Liberia.

1.4 Problem Statement

Liberia's civil war lasted for 14 years (1989 - 2003) during which about a quarter of a million people lost their lives. Since the end of the atrocious hostilities, the country has still been polarised by social, economic and ethnic dissection. During the Liberian crises there were reports of mass killings, extra-judicial assassinations, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, widespread destruction and looting of property and use of the children in conflict (Percy 2013:74-78). Moreover, the squabble later took on an ethnic dimension as politicians exploited the national division within the country to score a point or send a message to opponents.

Today, the scars of these occurrences resonate in every family, ethnic group and religion. It is not the focus point of the researcher to highlight these vices as appealing, but to bring to focus the argument for lasting peace and stability. It is meant to buttress the question: "how can the church of Liberia help to build a legacy of lasting peace in the country based on its missiological principles and norms that are completely opposite to the message of abhorrence? How can the church bridge this gap to sustain lasting peace and contribute towards the development and reconstruction of the state?"

The church has an obligation to meet the spiritual needs of its congregants; however, it cannot accomplish this goal in a volatile region. Consequently, it is imperative that it contributes towards the stability of its surroundings. In today's world of increasing violence, conflicts, injustices and gross human rights abuses, the church has to play a significant role in the maintenance of peace and stability. War frequently has serious repercussions on the existence of the church as can be seen during the medieval times when Nero maimed and killed scores of Christians (Kraus 1997:169). A similar fate befell believers during the 15 years of war in Liberia.

Many Christians were murdered not on religious grounds, but due to the instability of their environs. A constellation of Christians who took shelter in the Lutheran Church were massacred by armed men during the Liberian hostilities (Huband 1998:170-177). Hence, albeit their theological differences, the churches of Liberia need to make it their undertaking to prevent tribal, socio-political and religious conflicts. Though Liberia had not experienced an extensive religious conflict, Christians and Muslims clashed in 2003 (White 2013:184). The incident left approximately 20 people dead with a huge destruction of infrastructure. With religious conflicts on the rise on the continent (in places such as Nigeria, Central African Republic and Kenya), the church has to play a role to prevent such a catastrophe in Liberia.

According to the World Bank's report, Liberia is classified as one of the poorest and most underdeveloped nations in Africa (Woden 2012:14,28). The report further stipulates that 80% of the country's populace live below a dollar (American currency) a day. This means that this proportion of Liberians barely make ends meet for survival. They cannot afford access to basic human needs. Usually they are not connected to the supportive community or social structures that buttress the efforts of humankind in meeting their needs.

Researchers indicate that this proportion of the populace faces enormous challenges ranging from a lack of decent education, unemployment, illiteracy and poor sanitation. Analysts argue (Woden 2012:158) that these challenges are global problems; but, it can be deduced from the ongoing discussion in the background of the study that these problems have some indistinguishable features that are synonymous or pertinent to Liberia, characterised by a severe lack of access to basic services and resources as a result of the civil war that destroyed lives and infrastructure.

Therefore, the research question is this: "how can the church help maintain peace and stability and foster development and reconstruction in the impoverished communities of Liberia in which it exists?"

1.5 Significance of the Study

The role of Christianity in the solidification of democratic processes within a nation is essential as it helps to defend the fundamental rights of people against injustices and gross human rights abuses. Mutua (2009:265) termed these violations as signs of or a breeding ground for violence. According to some authors (Juergensmeyer & Kitts 2011:21,31,49) religion has been instrumentalised or become a mask of violence. It is important to note that the church has to play a pragmatic role to forestall these bloody conflicts.

The participation of the church in the maintenance of peace and development is vital because it is an institution or a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values that addresses the most profound issues (such as faith, fear, insecurity and harmony) of humanity. The churches of Liberia, regardless of their denominational differences, have to work together within a framework that provides for a cultural commitment to critical peace-related values that drive for social justice, reconciliation and development. The formulation should promulgate peace as the bedrock of a prosperous state.

With its reference to a magnificent source of truth and codification of norms, the church should always serve as a compass that directs an individual and community to live side by side in peace and harmony. In so doing, the church can galvanise resources for the betterment of the society in which it exists. Thus, in a polarised and fragile society like Liberia, the church needs to play an active role in healing and reintegrating victims and abusers within a progressive framework as projected by the study and other intellectuals on the subject matter. In every post-war situation, healing and reintegration are vital to psycho-social recovery in local communities.

The study is necessary because it projects a structure that guides the church to use its physical presence to discourage violence, corruption, human rights violations and other behaviour deemed threatening and undesirable. It projects an accessible volume of observations that recommends practical tools and initiatives aimed at strengthening existing factors, building competencies and focusing on indicators of a

thriving nation. It defines the factors that are imperative to the peace, development and reconstruction of Liberia.

It envisages a composition that defines the partnership of the church with other stakeholders to empower the needy people of Liberia. The alarming signs of the time are the figures that show a pervasive level of violence, poverty and the disparities between the elite and poor.

The study is, therefore, crucial as it propagates a common platform for vital reflection and dialogue as a key factor of peace.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

The thesis examined the perceptions of selected interviewees in answering the question; what role can Christianity play in fostering peace, contribute towards the development and reconcile a nation ravaged by war. The section described; (1) the research methodology of the study, (2) explanation of the method used in incorporating interviewees perspective into the study (3) explicate the procedure used in designing the instrument and method of collecting the data, and (4) provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyse the data.

A survey was administered to selected interviewees from the Liberian population. The term 'survey' is used to imply the methodology used to collect data from the interviewees utilising the questionnaires designed for the study. The questionnaires were used to obtain data from individuals about their understanding of the war, causes of the Liberian war, historical contribution of the church in Liberia, mechanism needed to prevent future calamities. The questionnaires coupled with the library-based research were important tools for collecting and analysing information from selected individuals and books. The methodologies (library-based and questionnaires) are widely accepted tools for conducting and applying basic research methodology.

A selected group, made of 31 Liberians participated or responded to the questionnaires. The researcher analysed and drew conclusions by disaggregating the

responses into various sub-groups. For example, the responses to each question were tabulated, examined and conclusion was made. Guided by the scope of the research and its objectives the questionnaires were designed as 'Closed questions' intended for the research. The method was chosen because of the easy nature of analysing the questions and allow confidentiality to be assured.

The study also leans toward a participatory research that tends to incorporate the perspectives of interviewees into a practical tutelage or framework for the Church's participation in developing a nation ravaged by war, foster peace and unity. The participatory research (Whyte 1991:247) in this case enables the researcher to propagate a framework that requires communal interaction, building of communal relationships on common values of tolerance, unity, and love. Participatory research described in this study according to Whyte (1991:248) involves scientific arguments that advance ideology into practice.

It is recommended that the Churches need to work more closely together, not only in the capital, but also at a provincial level. The study looks at how churches can be enterprised to participate with other interested parties beyond ecclesial circles.

In the case of empirical research, series of books and other relevant literature (textbooks, journals, websites, newsletters and recordings) have been reviewed from which the researcher promulgates an academic argument and gives relevant suggestions for academic debate. The reason for choosing these two methodologies is that they aid the author in seeking facts and information that give him a better understanding of the subject studied.

1.6.1 Research design

As stated above, the research design for the project is twofold: library-based and field-based.

1.6.1.1 Literature -based

The literature-based research includes the analysis of literature. This includes a content analysis of tapes, film and archives.

1.6.1.2 Field based

Field-based research includes personal interviews that use open and closed questions and questionnaires.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The study employs the theory of reciprocity which can either be positive or negative. “Positive reciprocity” refers to the types of give-and-take exchanges that add value and enrich relationships. “Negative reciprocity” refers to the “destructive” responses, usually referred to as “payback”. Often, these positive and negative aspects seem to follow a cycle (Trompf 1994).

The human development approach emphasises that when humanity is given a proper education, training, skills and messages within a friendly-environment interface its results would be compelling. This means that the life of humanity is inseparable from its surroundings. Environment tends to have an influence on its perceptions and relationships with other beings. Therefore, if human society continuously preaches peace and harmony, the inhabitants would cultivate the habit of living together side by side (Page & Page 2008).

Based on this theory and many others, it can be said that for humanity to prevent problems, it has to be cautioned of its teaching, doctrine and the message it passes on to the younger generation and promote practices that foster peace and development (Whitcomb & Merrell 2013:6).

The emphasis of this theory is on how development within a given society is affected or seen as propelled by the dynamic relations between individuals and the multiple levels of the ecology of human development, all changing interdependently across time. It can be argued in light of this study that peace and development would emerge if only a potential plasticity of human development is aligned with developmental assets. In other words, the human development and ecological developmental assets are inseparable, coupled with a moderate religious doctrine of peace.

1.8 Literature Review

This section is a literary analysis and criticism of books that are relevant to this study and it considers their content, style and merit. The primary opinions for this research are the contributions or writings of Gort et al. (2010), Moyaert (2011) and Phiri et al. (1996). Based on their and others' contribution to Christians' roles in the maintenance of peace, development and reconstruction of post-conflict nations, the researcher examines a peace and development framework that can be used as a structure for developing and providing opportunities for the needy.

In the broadest sense, the study explores gaps that were not addressed, but with more focus on Liberia. The "peace, development and reconstruction" discussed in this context refer to the implementation of a framework which theologians can use to develop and sustain peace and foster reconstruction plans among perpetrators and victims of the Liberian Civil War.

The following sections discuss some of the main literature which the study wishes to analyse.

1.8.1 Gort et al. (2010)

Gort et al. assert that Christianity exists and interconnects with its cultural ambience in a number of ways. In this aptitude, the authors discover the diverse opus of the affiliations and interfaces of Christianity from a broad spectrum of backgrounds with its cultural setting: politics, society, aesthetics, religion and spirituality, and with itself. It is construed that these settings have a bearing on the proclamation of the church's message and its affairs.

Gort et al discuss three main topics.. First the argument, examines the interaction of Christianity with culture. Second, it examines the interaction of Christianity with other religions and spiritualities and, third, it examines the interaction of Christianity with itself. This source is relevant to this study because it argues that the church has a critical role to play in the progression of its settings. The transformation of its cultural settings is imperative and the relationship it has with other religions

and the manner in which it runs its affairs is vital. Gort et al. do not only examine these factors as social and theological processes, but also as an embodied practice needed for the progression of a given society.

In addressing these issues, the writers fall short of explicitly stating the obligations of the church towards its settings. The writers do not see developmental programmes as part and parcel of the church's mission. Therefore, the argument states that since the church is part of the community, it should embark on a missiological and serviceable programme aimed at enabling people to identify, analyse, plan and take action to solve their problems so that they can live a fulfilled life as intended by God. The church is commissioned by Christ to be the salt of the world. This means that the church has an obligation to exert a positive influence over the community in which it exists. That is why this study projects a framework in which the church of Liberia can play a meaningful, persuasive, effective and relevant role in the maintenance of peace, development and reconstruction in a fragile state.

1.8.2 Gort et al. (2002)

The study has also reviewed the contribution of Gort et al. (2002) in which the writers express that religion fuels many conflicts in the world. But the question is this: what role does it play? In the face of economic, ethnic and political conflicts around the globe, religious conflict plays a secondary role in their escalation. The argument is that conflict often takes on religious tendencies when it erupts within society. This has occurred in the cases of Syria, The Central African Republic, Liberia and Egypt.

These conflicts were political in nature due to economic isolation and exclusion, poor service delivery, poverty and human rights abuses, but later descended into religious altercations. However, the writers argue that when conflict occurs within a society, pundits look up to spiritual leaders to play reconciliatory roles in resolving the aggression. In other words, through religion people often come to understand that they are part of a greater whole and realise that they must work at restoring

good relationships with others in situations of deep conflict, especially after direct conflict has ended.

The writers hence represent five religious traditions that provide broad perspectives on the role of religion in conflict and reconciliation.

Despite these issues, the authors have not addressed the role religion should play in preventing calamity or bloody war. There is a maxim that says: “prevention is better than cure.” The study thus explores the gap to examine the major role religion should play in preventing or averting civil conflicts.

1.8.3 Moyaert (2011)

Moyaert acknowledges some of the challenges facing contemporary theologians. According to the writer, religious identity is a barrier to interreligious dialogue or coordination. Ostensibly, religious conservatism rooted in identity serves as an obstacle to openness in dialogue. The fear is that one cannot maintain one’s uniqueness in an unrestricted dialogue. The writer further asserts that Christianity, for instance, uses its theological doctrine as a basis for engagement: Christian reflection on interreligious dialogue begins with a theological reflection on religious plurality that assumes that one cannot engage seriously in interreligious dialogue without a sound theology of religions (Moyaert 2011:11,85,197). This means that Christians often use their religious values or theology as a premise to interreligious dialogue.

The writer also assesses various models of Christian theology (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and particularism) by asking how these models relate to the dialogical tension between openness and identity. She argues that Christians need to overcome the conventional theological approach and move in the direction of hospitality-oriented theology. The argument is that Christianity has to find a “common ground” and build a cooperative relationship with others within the society. To that end, she turns to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, whose philosophical and hermeneutical insights give a new turn to the discussion of the criteria, possibilities and particularly the limits of interreligious dialogue.

Despite the denigration of Christian's conservatism, the writer does not address how these weaknesses influence the cooperation of religious bodies in finding solutions to societal problems like war, natural disasters and others. Similarly, the writer does not offer a way forward as to how the issues should be addressed nor does she foster a working framework. In contrast, this study attempts to establish arguments as means of addressing the weaknesses of Moyaert's argument.

1.8.4 Federico Lenzerini (2014)

This writer addresses the issue of tolerance in a unique way as a core value of humanity. According to Lenzerini, tolerance is the acceptance of others with mutual respect and understanding. Using the United Nations' (UN's) Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, the writer argues that tolerance is "an active attitude" and a "responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law" (Lenzerini 2014:224-225). It is further argued that the member states of the UN are obliged to "support and implement programmes that educate people on tolerance, human rights and adopt non-violent approaches in dealing with issues. The main facets of the argument are that society must adopt openness to other cultures, be able to appreciate the value of freedom, be respectful of human dignity and differences, and be able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means" (Lenzerini 2014:224).

However, the writer's argument is imbalanced as it does not take into account the fundamental doctrines of the church. This study, therefore, defines tolerance from a scriptural perspective. The purpose of the biblical approach is to clarify the explicit or identify the phenomena of tolerance of how they are perceived by the church. The argument is not to diminish the principles of the UN, but to take a religious route as opposed to the secular argument.

1.8.5 Grifford (1995)

Grifford explicates the role Christian churches have played in Africa's democratisation movements during colonial rule in the 1980s. He points out how churchmen organised and presided over national conferences aimed at defending

the right of the people. Christian leaders played an active role because Christians comprise arguably the most significant segment of African society.

In some countries, pastoral letters have challenged dictators; in others, churches have provided an essential support for the status quo. The book comprises both theoretical analyses and case studies. The theoretical discussions include the history of church-state relations; theology and democracy; Pentecostalism and democracy; and the problems of consolidating democracy. The 13 case studies sketch the historical context and then critically examine developments up until late in 1993.

The book establishes a foundation for African historians and political sciences in the social-political role of Christianity. Nevertheless, most of the arguments are related to the colonial era of Africa. However, the African society has evolved and so has its settings. This study will therefore argue from a contemporary perspective of Africa by closely examining the socio-political role of Christianity in Liberia.

1.8.6 Mason & Meernik (2006)

In this book, Mason et al. focus on the overheads, benefits, consequences and prospects of rebuilding nations emerging from violent conflict. The writers recommend that the understanding of conflict and conflict resolution has to be built on the foundation of conditions conducive to sustain peace. They outline the conditions for building a sustainable peace. These include:

- The role of economic development;
- Democratisation;
- Respect for human rights;
- The potential for renewal of conflict;
- Identification of signs of conflict; and
- Other critical topics.

They further note that in the world of growing violence and gross human rights abuses, policy makers need to realise the tremendous costs and benefits in fostering developed, democratic, secure and peaceful nations. In their view, it is imperative that all these facets integrate as the core of the society.

The limitation of their argument in relation to this study is seen in the writers' main focus on peace building as a general theory. They do not point out the feasibility of their argument in polarised nations torn apart by war – like Liberia and other places.

1.8.7 Mason (2004)

Rowman provides a comprehensive exposition of why people participate in something as perilous and fuzzy as a radical group. Mason presents an analysis of grievances that tend to inspire peasant participation in political movements and further explores the factors of leadership, resources and strategies required to mobilise the poorer population for collective action.

The writer cautions that a repressive response to collective action by a depressed group can easily descend into a catastrophe. Thus, the writer proposes a nonviolent strategy as an approach of settling disputes because there is no certain victory for the parties. Mason reaches a tacit agreement that the emerging trends toward political democratisation and economic globalisation make revolution in the countryside more or less likely. It is in this background that this study examines whether the involvement of the church in strengthening democratic processes would, in any way, help to prevent violence and war.

1.8.8 Murithi (2009)

Murithi explores the principled facets of peace building. According to the author, persistent violence and war around the globe elicit the need for a stable and violence-free society.

In his view, the Rwandan and Srebrenica genocides demonstrate the challenge of promoting peace in a world of increasing hostilities. He thus questions the role that ethics plays in promoting and consolidating peace within the society. In his

arguments, he presents a synthesis of moral philosophy and international relations as a basis of negotiating, mediating and reconciling a fragile society.

He provides an understanding of peace as a developmental tool rooted in major ethical issues that are unavoidable in the spread of democracy in its true sense. He further points out that the ethics of peace building are intrinsic to the societal effort to maintain peace in volatile regions. To substantiate his argument, Murithi presents a historical background of wars such as the Biafran of Nigeria, Sierra Leonean crisis, and South African apartheid. This study thus approaches his concepts or arguments from a religious perspective, focusing mainly on Liberia as its setting.

1.8.9 Ranger (2008)

Ranger gives a general overview about the rapid growth of Christianity on the continent. He attempts to establish the role Christianity has played in the development of African democracy. He asserts that the church used its evangelical framework to affect the politics of the continent. The writer takes the historical view and focuses it specifically on the events that affect countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Mozambique. The assertions are mainly based on findings from the African perspective.

However, relating his arguments to the study, the study formulates a framework as to how the church can use its evangelical tools to affect the democratization of Liberia for a stable and peaceful society.

1.8.10 Clarke (2011)

Clarke views peace building as a means of long-term stability, peaceful and violence-free communities grounded in justice, freedom of expression, protection of the weak and voice for the voiceless.

His argument is aligned to the study as both concepts attempt to establish a democratic framework that helps the needy and vulnerable. However, this study will mainly focus on Liberia as its setting.

1.8.11 Appleby et al (2015)

Appleby et al cited Paul VI, who argues that development literally means peace. The Pope coined the famous phrase “development is the new name for peace” (Appleby et al 2015:183). According to him, most of the world’s conflicts are saturated in developing nations whose inhabitants live below the poverty line.

Higgins argues that the disparity in the distribution of resources or wealth among people of the same nation often leads to conflict and violent confrontation. He is of the opinion that sustainable development for all is the yardstick for averting crisis.

Therefore, relating Higgins’s argument to the study, the researcher will examine how the church should employ its resources and missiological doctrine to formulate a sustainable development framework as a means of consolidating national peace and unity. As it is known globally, Liberia has endured a series of intermittent wars over the past 15 years. The study aims to find out how the church can facilitate poverty reduction and spur the attainment of a human development strategy.

1.8.12 Woolverton (2005)

Woolverton views the church as an institution that should take a leading role in steering the social revolution of peace and development while, at the same time, leading humanity to the path of living side by side in harmony. He argues that the church should seek the implementation of priority programmes that would help to improve the lives of its surroundings. It is in this regard that the study projects a framework that underlines the contribution of the church.

1.8.13 Phiri et al. (1996)

Phiri et al. wrote about the outcome of conferences that took place at the University of Edinburgh. The writers aim at elucidating the role of Christianity in development, peace and reconstruction of southern African countries. These countries have been engulfed in social injustices, oppression, sporadic confrontations and other human rights abuses. The book not only examines the role of Christianity in social processes, but also as embodied practices involving missiological principles as a means of

propagation. The writers argue that the call to live a transformed life and do “good” in Christ is the bedrock of development and peace. The writers, therefore, explicate the role Christianity has played, and continues to play, in defending the right of humankind, propagating the peace message and, at the same time, performing its spiritual duties.

Incongruent to Phiri et al.’s argument, the study mostly focuses on Liberia. It is to argue that the role of Christianity within a given society involves more than just preaching the Gospel, but focusing on the implication of the Gospel in terms of the societal pattern of the respondent’s setting. Paul entreats the church to be an “imitator of him as he is also in Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). It is legitimate, in regard to this study, to say that Paul wants the church to take a sequence of actions that present the Gospel in a practical and concrete manner. That is, the church should not focus solely on overemphasising its spiritual role and ignoring the welfare of the society in which it exists. It should be society-oriented to tackle problems within the society before it becomes disastrous.

1.8.14 Conclusion

This study, therefore, aims to explore the gaps from the Liberian perspective of the writers mentioned above. It attempts to answer the questions that were not addressed by the writers which include how Christians in Liberia can contribute towards a sustainable development scheme and foster peace among divided communities.

1.9 Chapter Divisions

The chapters of the study will be divided as follows.

1.9.1 Chapter Two

Chapter Two of the study looks at the brief history of Christianity in Liberia, its current population and the biblical foundation of peace and development as a premise of the argument. The chapter also examines the social, political and

economic responsibilities of the church in regard to peace and development and examines its current approach.

The chapter also discusses some elements of peace and the development approach adopted by Christians in some other post-conflict nations.

1.9.2 Chapter Three

Chapter Three of the study discusses some noticeable signs and features that fuel conflicts within a nation. For Christians to help maintain peace and foster development within the society, they need to note the signs and actions that have the propensity of plunging a nation into civil conflict.

It carefully analyses and relates the concept to the causes of the civil war in Liberia and considers ways and means of averting this social evil from befalling the country again.

The study examines the main channels and factors that are central to national development and peace building.

In short, the chapter focuses on the following pivotal questions:

- What has Liberia learned from the civil war?
- How can Christians help to prevent a repeat of such civil hostilities?
- What are the potential benefits of Christians' contribution to sustainable development programmes and peace initiatives?

1.9.3 Chapter Four

Chapter Four critically analyses and interprets the findings of the study, highlighting the theoretical framework of the study.

It also contains the qualitative findings of the study, in relationship to the interview questions, while seeking to answer the main objective, as to how Christianity can

play a meaningful role in the maintenance of peace, development and reconstruction in a post-conflict nation.

1.9.4 Chapter Five

Chapter Five summarises the findings of the study, makes suggestions from the findings, draws conclusions from the findings, makes recommendations and makes a projection for further study.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has acted as an introduction for the study. It has provided a background of Liberia to explain how its civil war came about and how the main research question of the study relates to Liberia. The chapter has explained that the research aims to see how Christianity can play a role in promoting peace, development and reconstruction in post-war Liberia. The chapter has also discussed why the study is significant and which sources were used to inform the study. In the next chapter, the study will explore the biblical foundation of peace.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF PEACE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter combines the theological concepts of peace and Christians' involvement in social development. The church is an institution guided by biblical principles and teaching. It has sets of goals and objectives to accomplish among humankind. According to the bible the church is commissioned to influence the society with its beliefs and values and apply them to the important social issues that affect society (Warren 1995:27). This is a significant part that defines the church's missiological functions.

As part of the missiological function it has to influence the social fabric of the society in which it exists through its teaching and beliefs. The church as institution represents the founder who is Jesus Christ. Its primary goal is to embody Christ among humanity; which includes preaching a message that promotes peace, love and unity within a nation (Warren 1995:47).

The bible placed in the hands of Christians the responsibility of guiding the society towards the will of God by contributing towards the elements that affect society; the laws, economics, politics, and the moral and culture of the society. An predominant themes given to humanity through the Bible are the preservation of life, the equality of humankind, and the preciousness of peace (Ott & Wilson 2010:61-63). These are propelling forces behind the church's social campaigns. According to the Bible, the absent of Christians involvement in societies often leads to a systematic erosion of values like equal dignity and equal rights. that both religious and secular people cherish (Ott & Wilson 2010:34).

The ideology of peace in the Bible explains that "God is the source of all peace" (Romans 16:20) and of such His followers must be preachers of peace, peaceful and peace brokers among humankind. The social purpose of biblical peace, viewed in light of this study, is a cognitive development towards a designed end, guided by obedience to the will of God. It is a typological exposition that believers' way of life must reflect the attributes of the God they serve. Peace in this term is about

promulgating Christian doctrines aimed at preventing or stopping violence, saving lives and healing shattered communities. In this view, peace is seen in its wholeness as a revelation and presence of God. This peace is inherently subject to doing the will of God and living a harmonious life that accentuates the doctrine of God among fellow humans.

On the other hand, according to Galtung (1996:1-3), social peace is not just the absence of violence but the structures and elements that create positive, harmonious life among humanity. He further asserts that in upholding the essence of peace, a variety of peace models have been developed to help peace practitioners implement a peace concept in their organisations, most of which have similar principles, goals and strategies.

In further addressing the issue of peace, Galtung explicates peace as “an umbrella concept, a general expression of the human desires, of that which is gone, [and] that which is ultimately to be pursued” (1996:1-5). He solidifies the argument that humanity will always be heading for goals, with some of them being very concrete while some of them are more abstract and diffuse. In this case, he avers that “peace” seems to be one of the terms that are used for a generalised goal. However, if one philosophises on the norms of Galtung’s argument, it can be construed that the broader view of his concept has a biblical connotation. The connotation that takes pundits to the biblical teachings that humanity must endeavour to live in peace with each other.

Similarly, in Fast’s (2002) view, it is ideal for peace practitioners to use a broad range of community partnerships in implementing a multi-faceted model to prevent violence or reconcile belligerent parties. For instance, the Accra Peace Accord (United States Institute of Peace nd) was used to end the bloodiest civil war of Liberia. Similarly, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (Thompson 2000:146) in the 60’s halted the proliferation of a nuclear weapon and kept nations with such weapons apart. It is also worth mentioning the models that ended the Biafran war of Nigeria (ResourceDat), the Sierra Leone civil war (United States Institute of Peace nd), and the Rwanda and Burundi conflicts and so on.

2.2 Concordance: Galtung's Concept and Biblical Peace

The biblical concept of peace that relates to Galtung's assertion pervades or permeates both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. According to Esler (1998:231), the Hebrew term "shalom" is often used to denote peace in the Old Testament. It implores humanity to seek peace with God through good relationships as well as to strive for interpersonal harmony. This orientation leads to Armstrong's (2007:7) argument that "shalom" is the Israelites way of finding peace in a tragic world. In the face of intense destruction of their communities, consequences and challenges, they sought healing and harmony in the will of God.

Likewise, Lockwood (2000:31) puts it that the Greek term "erene" in the New Testament signifies the concept of peace bestowed on humanity through Jesus Christ. It stresses that believers are inspired to make an effort to live in peace with one another and endeavour to achieve the nascent tranquillity as peace brokers. The next sections discuss these concepts of peace.

2.2.1 Old Testament concept of peace

2.2.1.1 Hebrew term "shalom" – peace

According to Thompson (2000:1-2), peace is both a gift of God and the fruit of human work that must be considered on the basis of central human values, trust, justice, freedom and love. Therefore, his argument heightens the Old Testament doctrine of peace as it relates to this study: as a perpetual tranquillity, harmony, security, prosperity or well-being of humankind as a result of good relation with God.

Another analogous assertion is Knight's (1984:90-91) view that the term "shalom" predominantly refers to peace with God and peace with man (Genesis 34:2; 1 Kings 5:15; Psalm 85:8). In relating this to Galtung's affirmation, one could make a tacit argument that biblical peace is a desired status tied to a covenant between God and humanity.

This brings to thought Baum and Wells's (1997:1-4) observation that the premise of earthly peace is primarily found in the will and purpose of God: the Lord of justice, love and peace. The writers further argue that the peace in the Old Testament indicates the presence of God and serves as the foundation of harmonious life in society (Isaiah 45:7; Leviticus 26:6). Inferring from this argument, one can say that peace was the yardstick used by the Jews in accepting aliens among them as stipulated in Genesis: "these men are at peace with us, let them dwell in the land and trade in it...let them marry our daughters" (Genesis 34:2). In other words, the passage portrays the harmonious effect of peace in society as grounds for acceptance.

2.2.1.2 Peace as the revelation of God

The Old Testament portrays peace as the revelation of God among humanity who Lockwood (2000:30-32) describes as the God of order and peace. Therefore, in an exclusively biblical domain, peace is the revelation of God to humanity in the context of human activities (Baum & Wells 1997:4). As the scriptures say, "and the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness is quietness and trust forever....." (Isaiah 32:27-18).

Relatively, the passage points to the gift of God that forestalls violence. According to Hayes and Irvine (1987:360), peace is the fruit of the spirit. The passage and argument enlighten Christians that peace with God is the highest form of inward tranquillity that often affects or reflects on the outward person.

2.2.1.3 Peace as the fruit of trust in God

According to Steinmann (2009:108-109), humanity can enjoy true peace by trusting in God the creator. His argument is backed by David's exhortation to Solomon: "trust in Yahweh (Lord) with all your hearts and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). The passage shows that "trust in Yahweh" is fundamental in evoking and enjoying the "everlasting peace" (Knight 1984:184) He promised to believers (Isaiah 54:10). The level of trust believers put in Yahweh shows the quest for His will and reigns among humankind.

The exhilaration of peace in the Old Testament is often bestowed on an entire community that reveres Yahweh. Thus, according to Knight, “it is our human responsibility to speak out and resist atrocities” (1984: ix, 3) that do not depict or represent God’s children.

On the same note, Baum and Wells (1997: vii) point out that it is part of the church’s calling or obligation to spread the message of peace and reconciliation as commissioned by the inspired word of God. Trusting in the Yahweh of peace signifies that believers are peaceful people and peacemakers (Thompson 2000:7). In the Old Testament, believers are encouraged to become publishers and ministers of reconciliation in a world of increasing violence.

Walther’s (Plass 1994:231) maxim that “a fruitful tree does not produce fruit because someone ordered it to grow fruit but because, as long as there is still some life in it and it is not dried up, it cannot help but produce fruit” can also be used in this discussion. It argues that peace is an automatic fruit of human trust in God. Peace is imminent in as much as humanity trusts and reveres God.

It is the church’s duty, therefore, to preach a message that is opposed to the cataclysm that engulfed its globe. The Old Testament’s concept of peace shows that peace among humankind is a meritorious work. In other words, it is earned as a result of good relation and trust in God. It is apposite; therefore, that from the ongoing introduction, for one to argue in this study that peace in the Old Testament term is not just the absence of violence, war or belligerency, but a cognitive influence or development of humanity through the word of God.

Goudzwaard et al. (2008:239) observe that peace is the pitch or fruit of Christians’ cordial relationship with God and with fellow human beings. The Old Testament entreats Christians to live a proactive life replete with good works in direct light of the Bible. Christians are to pursue a transcendental tranquillity and harmonious life among believers and non-believers. It accentuates Christians’ core belief as a religion of peace.

2.2.2 The New Testament concepts of peace

The monolithic principles of the Old and New Testament teaching on peace nurture humankind to live in peace with both God and “man” (humanity). The teachings epitomise God as the source and foundation of real peace. Humanity lives in a vast and complex world; thus, believers need the peace of God as tutelage in their lives. The peace of God helps believers to adopt the mentality of “let it go” or a forgiving spirit or endeavours them to settle issues amicably and devoid of belligerency. As Esler argues, “the followers of Jesus are called to relate to each other and everyone else with whom they come in contact, peacefully and harmoniously, offering them friendship and sharing with them their vision and their goods” (1998:230-233).

Understanding the peace of God provides a wonderful insight for comprehending God correctly in light of human activities. According to Lessin (2011a:3), peace is the gift of God. One may consider Lessin’s point as a commentary to Paul’s description of God: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you His peace at all times and in every situation” (1 Thessalonians 3:16).

2.2.2.1 Paul’s message of peace to the Romans

Similarly, Dunn (1988:750-756) argues that Paul’s letter to the Romans admonishes them that societal imperturbability can only be achieved through a forgiving spirit, reconciliation and an understating of the Christian doctrine of peace:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord”. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink”. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).

The hortatory message of Paul called on believers to emulate the example of the biblical character Joseph. Joseph forgives his siblings for the evil they committed against him without vengeance. Instead, he repays their evil with good and shows them unconditional love (Westermann 1986:144-146).

Joseph's stand or approach points to the fallibility of humanity and teaches that gaffes should not serve as a breeding ground for violence. Paul's teaching is that Christians should apply the principle of peace in their daily lives as Joseph did. As a human being, one will be tormented or faced with hostility from both believers and unbelievers, but one should resolve to forgive others.

When looking at Joseph's action, it is evident that believers should seek to live in accordance with the word of God in order to achieve peace and tranquillity. In this context, peace controls or averts the incalculable damage of violence. It is hard and difficult to achieve peace in a human context, but the passage teaches Christians to practise their bestowed righteousness or grace by showing the Christ-like behaviour of forgiving trespassers. According to Goudzwaard et al.'s (2008:106) commentary, whoever seeks first the kingdom of God and its righteousness will enjoy the splendour of this world, including peace. The commentary shows that biblical peace is the portal to enjoying God's blessing among humanity.

Peter writes, "do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). Again, it is observed that Peter points to the distinguishable feature of Christianity as a religion built on the foundation of peace. It implies that humankind is created in the image of God and should aim to live or represent the creator at times.

2.2.2.2 Mark's version of peace

Baum and Wells (1997:6-7) assert that Jesus lays a golden principle that believers should seek to live an exemplary life and be at peace with everyone. This message commensurates with Paul's exhortation to the Romans and thus builds a solid premise for the church's involvement in the promulgation of peace. In Esler's (1998:230-231) argument, the principle gives or elaborates on the church's missiological responsibility to influence its setting with the message of tolerance, acceptance and peace. The principle signifies that the verisimilar foundation of the church should be grounded in the message of peace in light of the Gospel.

Esler (1998:232) further coins that conciliation is a major facet of peace. According to Esler, “peace and peacefulness are held up as the impartial ideas for the followers of Jesus whose teaching clearly rejects violence between people” (1998:230). The message teaches Christians to overcome pugnacity with magnanimous attitude. The message aims to unfetter the minds of Christians from animosity to embracing the concept of oneness or unity. It portrays a spirit of oneness that repudiates the destruction of lives and property in spite of disagreement.

Another side of the argument is that it shifts the attention of believers to follow the footsteps of the ‘Prince of Peace’. This title of Jesus points to Him as the ‘greatest peacemaker’ of the world, one who made peace on behalf of the world, and He who preached peace to humankind (Isaiah 9:6).

Furthermore, Leaney (1988:137) observes that Jesus called believers to peacefully relate with people of all walks of life: “But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27-8). This passage unearths another cardinal principle of peace. Jesus encourages the church to preach in the world of unremitting violence and belligerency.

It is fitting to argue from the passage that Jesus’ didactic peace is indeed a pristine solution to the cataclysm in the world of today. The presumption is based on the intuition that loving one’s enemy helps to “quench the fire of abhorrence” and rather breeds “brotherly love”. The teaching edifies Christians to overcome choleric outbursts in the event of provocation, but rather use the situation of winning souls for Christ. Goudzwaard et al. say that, “First when it comes to analysing the concrete problems of society, contrary to the western rationalism of the enlightenment, biblical faith suggests that ways of justice, solidarity, love one’s neighbour, reconciliation, peace and care for the earth are not human constructs but rather in the creator” (2008:29).

The quote of Goudzwaard et al., coupled with the passage, aims to help Christians develop into mature individuals who strive for the growth of the body of Jesus

Christ by being the “salt of peace” to the world. Jesus purposed to establish the Gospel in the hearts and minds and social life of Christians, so that biblical peace grips their hearts to overcome the temptations and trials of pugnacity or dissension.

By implication, it is necessary that peace grows within believers to aid them in assimilating or conciliating with their enemies. It can be further argued that the passage reveals two related ideas that are critical to achieving peace or avoiding confrontation. It reminds Christians to approach issues with placidity and learn to accommodate the errors of others. In so doing, believers would achieve the missiological goal of preaching or spreading the message of peace.

Jesus calls on believers to not only preach reconciliation but also to embody it in society. One can discern that Jesus wants the church to be a true representation of His kingdom: a model of what human society would look like under His rule. The concern is that the church cannot call the world to peace if it falls short of being the model of peace.

Thus, believers need to banish all malice, anger and bitterness from both within the church and the society at large. Instead, the church has to build a community of joy, love and peace. The admonition to love one’s enemy shows that the path towards peace is a long and slippery slope and sophisticated and challenging journey that can only be achieved through the application of biblical principles or norms. Approbation may be raised in the argument that preventing violent conflicts and establishing comprehensive lasting peace in some of the world’s most turbulent regions requires the proclamation of loving one’s enemy.

The argument is grounded in Thompson’s conviction that “God is sovereign and that God’s rule is loving and just. In creating human beings in God’s own image, God has bestowed upon each and every person an intrinsic dignity and an infinite value. This human dignity is nourished and developed in the community. Humanity is God’s people—a family called to love and care for another” (2000:2).

In short, for the message to be effective and achieved, the church should model itself as the beacon of peace. The predominant theme in this account is that man is a

creature that harbours anarchy in his chest. The church has to apply the antidotes of the biblical principle of peace to heal and lessen hostilities in society.

2.2.2.3 Peace broker – Matthew 5:9

Besides the prevention of an outbreak of violence in society, the Bible provides Christians with the platform to play a peace broker role. Playing such a role draws believers' hearts not only to the serenity of the environment, but also to the one who graciously provides it. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:8), Jesus acknowledges that there are many obstacles to overcome in achieving peace; thus, a person who takes it on themselves to achieve peace among belligerent parties will be rewarded. This is an important action that does not go unnoticed by God the Father (Davies & Allison 1988:459).

In Matthew it says, "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The passage illustrates the necessity of reconciling belligerent parties towards sparing the destruction of lives and properties. According to Luz, "Blessed are the peacemakers" is a biblical panacea for peace processes around the globe: violent conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict settlement, conflict resolution and conflict transformation (1989:241).

The fundamental lesson in the passage encourages Christians to adopt a proactive strategy to pre-empt violent confrontation in society. The church has to devise a means and strategy to position itself to implement long-term and holistic peace plans to successfully build robust and sustainable peace in areas threatened or torn apart by war and conflict.

The world is faced with an incessancy of intractable conflicts from region to region. The church's missiological position gives it an obligation to play a role that reflects its biblical doctrines. It has to position itself as a bridge that mends fences of belligerent groups to achieve peace. The maintenance of peace as seen in the passage is a divine activity that should not be repudiated by the church, but rather be considered as a transcendental command embedded in a covenant of God.

By inference, one could argue that the church has to prioritise its religious role in keeping peace as enshrined in the Bible. It cannot disclaim God's command and be acquiesced to political or social decisions that have the inclination of plunging a society into war, but rather play a leading role in maintaining peace at all times. The suggestion is aligned with Thompson's view that "Christians should show concern about what public policies do for and to people. There should be no gap or gulf between faith and everyday life. Christians are called to live their faith in the world and this means politics, economics and social policy are significant cast" (2000:2).

2.2.2.4 Societal unity – the vein of peace

In the preceding arguments, the Bible encourages believers to speak to the hearts and minds of humanity as the golden gate toward achieving peace. It is appropriate to argue that it is the hearts and minds that conceive and harbour abhorrence that is executed in action.

As already discussed, Jesus discourages rivalry among humanity. He entreats humankind to exhibit a multiracial, multinational and multicultural society (Buscaglia 1984:109). The teaching was, and still can be, a built-in reminder that the result of violence is often catastrophic for humanity. Additionally, in imparting the Lord's wisdom to the congregation dispersed among the gentile nations, James reminds the church to take the opportunity or make an effort to influence the thinking and behaviour of its settings and society at large (Martin 1988:135). James argument that, "peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18) demonstrates the church's fundamental obligation to always preach a message that stimulates empathy for maintaining peace in all spheres of life as a bounty of righteousness among "man". The passage defines the wondrous identity of the church as an agent of peace in Christ. According to Davids (1989:91), the core message of the passage points to the inevitability that all actions geared towards peace will surely be rewarded.

Likewise, Thompson believes that, "building a peace, combating poverty and despair, practising freedom and human rights are not moral imperatives but rather

natural priorities. They can shape a world that will be a safer, more secure and more than just home for all of us" (2000:164).

2.2.2.5 Strive for peace

According to Sandole, who cited Waldrop (1992) that humanity lives "in the world where everything else is connected to everything else" (2013:191). Thus the church has a responsibility of promoting sustainable and durable peace by communicating the pre-eminence of Christ as the Lord of peace. As scripture says, "through him, God reconciles to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20) and "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

"Striving for peace" (Price 2005:316) implies that the church should not wait for peace, but rather actively seek it through its Christological doctrines. In its biblical doctrines, it has to preach or speak, coordinate and cooperate with other stakeholders to spread the message of peace in the dynamic context of its environs.

The significance of the passage is apparent, not only in the theological arena, but also in the secular, social and entirely in the world of humanity. It portrays that peace is the fertile ground for cooperation, development and, above all, the existence of humanity. The proliferation of biological and weapon mass destruction makes it clear that the need for sustainable and durable peace is unavoidable. In this light, Thompson asserts that "without the courage to raise our voices and to get our hands dirty in the struggle to change society, compassion lapses into mere sentimentality, and wisdom is academic in the worst sense. Compassion, wisdom and courage give a spiritual dimension to the seeing, judging and acting that are essential for social analysis" (2000:3).

In striving for peace, as Paul puts it, there is a need to understand the underlying deep-rooted causes and conditions of conflicts and offer "antidotes" to the problem through its missiological doctrines. "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). The argument is that the church would enjoy peace if its

surrounding is at peace: “and seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away in captives, and pray to the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace” (Jeremiah 29:7).

2.3 Essential Facets of Biblical Peace

The deliberated biblical passage in the ongoing discussion laid out the essential marks or facets of peace. The passages contain elements or evidence that genuine peace entails unity, diversity, tolerance, love and charity. The primary argument is that an intolerant view or divided society on religious grounds is often prone or susceptible to violence (McGraw 2010:218).

2.3.1 Tolerance

The command to “love those who hate you” (Matthew 5:45) signifies that tolerance is a worthwhile element that hones the effectiveness of peace in society. The argument is echoed by Stanton and Stroumsa (1988:175) who argue that coexistence means competition free of violence and anarchy. The argument points to intolerance as one of the major causes of worldwide violence and anarchy that engulfs the globe. Abhorrence has often been the root cause of inconceivable atrocities, senseless murders and mutilations around the globe with an emphasis on the “Liberian war that degenerated into tribal war due to tribal rivalry” (Ellis 1999:54).

In the first reaction to these circumstances, one would wonder how far humanity can go with intolerance. It is in this vein that Jesus points to the shortcoming of humankind. If the church wants peace in the world, it is of the utmost importance that the church teaches or preaches the message of acceptance or tolerance in its settings or environs.

Humankind has to seek redress and reconciliation, respect the viewpoints of others and display open-mindedness at all times to others. In this case, if the church adopts the principle as demonstrated by Christ it would help maintain peace. Tolerance also serves as a platform for the church to broaden its vision and boundaries of perception.

The practice would help the church to learn or be aware of the values of others and use the word of God against the weaknesses of those values, not in a condescending manner but as a means of winning souls for God. In the Gospel, Christ broadens believers' minds and deepens their hearts to practise unconditional love towards others. In essence, tolerance helps to drive out deep-rooted abhorrence from the minds of humanity and build a society of togetherness and "mutual respect" (Forst 2013:28-30).

2.3.2 Diversity

Humanity needs to endure the existence of other opinions or behaviours even if one dislikes or disagrees with them. Coexistence has the inclination of building a society that requires opposite views, people of different backgrounds, characters and, above all, schools of thought. This can be seen within Thompson's (2000:182) opinion that contemporary Christianity needs to emulate the example of the early church that was characterised by the philosophy of inclusion. The early church included people of different backgrounds and cultures, Jews and non-Jews within its fold, without segregation or exclusion.

Disagreement is a societal element that cannot be obliterated among humankind. It points to the fact that every individual has a different personality, understanding, perception and personal ambition. Conduct of any kind very seldom reveals the source of its motivation, consequently, it takes time and patience to try or discover it. The point is, behind every action of a person there is a hidden emotion which can only be understood when the motive is given careful thought. Therefore, one cannot use disagreement as a podium for an attack on an individual or community. The central message of biblical diversity is that, in spite of human differences, humanity would "meet at a point of cohesion" for a stable and peaceful society. In other words, the peace of the society is paramount despite people's differences and disagreements.

As explained by Eliade (1987:12-22), humanity will continue to live in a pluralistic society where the do(s) and don't(s), sacred and profane, like(s) and dislike(s) vary

immensely from community to community. The diversity emphasis in Eliade's observation reflects the dynamics of a broader society. In light of this study, Christians need to incessantly preach and teach the message of coexistence in achieving peace in society.

It highlights a society devoid of clashes due to grievances and misunderstandings and portrays a society that seeks to "find common ground" about issues that have the propensity of destroying lives and properties. Societal peace is often achievable through the acceptance of one another despite differences in opinion and ideology. In achieving peace, Christians have to exert an influence that reaches into the nations of the world, regardless of tribe, race, tradition and culture.

The Bible talks about the sphere of influence that guides the world towards peace through God's word and norms. The church has to play an indefatigable role in preaching a message of peace aimed at implementing a long-term peace plan. Based on the biblical teaching, the denominations have to take a contemptuous stand against violence. As Goudzwaard et al. say, "we are called to use our creativity to contribute to solutions, to open ways that might help others to escape from the paralysis and open themselves up to a new vision" (2008:200).

2.3.3 Love

Love as a facet of peace is a phenomenon in which believers should play a role. If believers act in love they can influence a situation that is meant to kindle disputes or violence (Thompson 2000:2). In other words, it is a role that helps community members to overcome setbacks or life-posing challenges that often lead to confrontation. History shows that through the ages there are many dark times, but love exhibited towards fellow humanity conquers all.

Worldwide media incessantly reports on violence and bloodshed perpetrated with gruesome deeds justified by belligerent parties. Nevertheless, genuine love in Christianity is a love that aims to quench or suppress the waves of aggression by

preaching and practising Christ's commandment of "true love" (1 John 3:11). It does not only express emotion and sentiment in times of violence, but also encourages Christians to get involved in proclaiming a message that implants a heart of love in people that triumphs over hatred which often results in violence. Love in this vein is the replacement of what Goudzwaard et al. (2008:29) term "the law of self-preservation at all costs" with the "law of love one's neighbour".

The damaging result of dissension is visible in society; nations are polarised, racial tension is on the rise and the moral standards are dropping. These incidences call for the church to play a role that bridges the gap through love. The doctrine of love allows humanity to better understand human nature. It does not only make people turn a blind eye to others' mistakes or shortcomings, but also, with love as a facet of peace, tends to understand the pillars of relationships, intentions and results of actions.

A more profound knowledge and insight of love enables humanity to forgive one another's shortcomings. The endless wars and uprisings in the world paint a picture of bitterness and hatred. Katongole (2011:78-79) provides a reflection that injustices, oppression, crime against humanity, violence, poverty and cruelty have become the order of the day in the world. These phenomena are results of bitterness and hatred in the society. They give rise to abhorrence.

Christians are given the challenge and mandate from the Bible to collectively respond to these situations where cruelty reigns supreme and thus poses a grave threat to the existence and dignity of humankind. It is through the practice of love, sympathy, compassion, humility and a willingness to forgive others that obstacles to living in harmony with others in society can be removed and overcome. In some of Paul's epistles (1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:22-23), he confirmed or buttressed Jesus' command (John 13:34) that love is the greatest of all. It tells humanity that love is the epitome of all the commandments. When practised carefully, love has the tendency of lessening the animosity in society.

2.4 Reciprocity

Reciprocity in this study is used to refer to the proclamation of the word of God with the aim of impacting or achieving behavioural change. The proclamation in this sense aims to achieve what Goudzwaard et al. (2008:128) term a "positive reaction". According to Goudzwaard et al., it teaches humanity to live in accordance with the biblical principles or precepts. The driving force behind this objective is to ensure that the lives of believers are reflections of what the Bible teaches or Christ-like behaviour. According to Neusner and Chilton (2008:2), reciprocity is a foundational and a conceptual framework context of consistency for shaping and evaluating one's actions towards one's environs.

In another argument, Becker (1990:73) describes reciprocity as a constructive response to a progressive action. In other words, humanity tends to respond positively to action that is deemed rewarding or progressive. Humankind often exhibits a positive attitude towards actions that are perceived as rewarding. By implication, one can argue that humanity and its environs are inseparable. Inhabitants of a particular environ are likely to adopt a constructive or negative approach to a variety of issues based on the perception and the precepts of the surroundings. This is also reflected in Walsh and Davies's (1984:186) assertion that Christian organisations have a responsibility to act together to transform society.

In this study, the researcher thus attempts to define reciprocity as positive behavioural patterns adopted or cultivated as a result of biblical teachings or practices. It is a definition that describes the actions and efforts believers take to control and avert calamities in the society by teaching good norms and standards. These norms and morals affect the behavioural pattern of inhabitants. They are external influences that seek to make a visible impact on the lives of people, especially by combating bitterness and resentment in society. The church has to assume a role that seeks to enlighten the minds of people in order to discover the truth and to find the right path to follow amid different teachings that call for their attention (Walsh & Davies 1984:185).

In the vein of peace, society is habitually taught to forgive one another's shortcomings. To be willing to forgive is as precious as it is difficult. As much as a

forgiving heart uplifts one's spirit, an unforgiving attitude can serve for a galore of hatred and subsequent destruction. The power of thought and teaching are of great importance. Therefore, the researcher argues that the church should embark on positive teaching that aims at evoking positive thought that inspires and unfetters minds from ignorance and hatred and stimulates one's spirit to respond to the moral standard of the society. Hearers should respond positively to the message and develop a creative mind and bring about rational thinking.

The theory of reciprocity is used here as a premise to stress that the continual preaching of a peace message from the church should help to lessen the hatred in its settings and achieve placidity to some degree. It brings to focus Hanna's (2006:27) assertion that "human beings are not only logical but also rational or psychological", that is, people often act for a reason. Hanna's argument shows that actions and perceptions are inseparable.

In other words, human beings have the proclivities to give back in a cooperative manner. In inference, it is probable to say that human beings are susceptible to outside influences.

2.5 Utilitarianism

Plass states that peace is "the greatest blessing on earth, which comprehends all other temporal blessings which can be a fruit of the rightful ministry. For where this peace is conducted, war, strife and bloodshed will probably stay away. But where this is not done, it's surpassing that war or at least constant unrest, the desire and intention to fight and shed blood will follow" (1994:1029). This scholarly argument or exhortation can be discussed in light of cause and effect. This argument is parallel to the theory of utilitarianism.

In the theory of utilitarianism, happiness and pain are evoked by the actions taken by humanity. According to West (2008:1) who cited Blackwell, utilitarianism is an ethical theory that places the position of right and wrong solely on the outcome of choosing one action over the other. Against this background, it is easy to note that Plass's assertion is directed towards the teaching of tolerance and societal plurality.

He pins the route to achieving temporal peace on biblical teachings devoid of abhorrence that often leads to bloodshed and calamity. Instead, the biblical teachings must be replete with the message of acceptance.

In Plass's view, societal peace can only be achieved through the choice or action of teaching humanity the principles of forbearance in light of the Gospel. The argument extends an invitation to humanity that peace can mainly be achieved on the merit of religious activity or message that aims to stimulate the minds of hearers to choose the path of peace and harmonious life over hatred. He further argues that "where there is peace there is half a heaven on earth" and "where there is no peace there is half a hell" (Plass 1994:1029).

Plass implies that humanity is more bound to enjoy prosperity or development in a peaceful society than a fragile community. In reference to his allegory, "half a heaven on earth", he means that the society that chooses the path of peace is often spared destruction and war. He points to the biblical message of peace that leads to transformation as a key pillar of a society that is seeking development and prosperity. It is a society that embraces pluralism and open-mindedness over intolerance.

In the same way, Paul (1 Timothy 2:1-7) urges Christians to pray for governmental authorities to choose the path of peace and abide in its doctrine that cements peace in the society they lead. The simplification is that if Christians abide or build a peaceful society in light of God's will, humankind would certainly enjoy God's precious gift of peace and progress.

The chances are that in a society where the government respects its people and gives them a decent life, the culture of peace will cement among the people. In view of this study, actions of humanity may be deemed right in as much they promote peace and harmonious life in society and may be considered wrong if their consequences bring about pain, violence, hatred or resentment and war. This argument buttresses Guma and Milton's (1997:65-67) observation that blessings, happiness and peace in human lives or societies are not instantaneous but are the outcome of choices and decisions.

Christians have to pursue a path and teaching that aim to shape the minds and perceptions of hearers in relation to peace. From Plass's (1994) observation, it is illustrious that the peace of humanity depends on their relationship with God, whose peace transcends the peace of this world (John 14:27). This is to say that Christians' dissemination of peace takes its orientation on the figure of Jesus Christ. The merging effect is that Christ is the source of all Christians' doctrine of peace. As Walsh and Davies say, "peace on earth which man throughout the ages has sought after can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order" (1984:48).

2.6 Peace Practitioner's Conception

Galtung (1964:1-4) asserts that for humanity to achieve peace in the world of increasing violence and incessant confrontation, a tolerant understanding of the nature and causes of violence are required. Galtung further (1996:168) defines violence as being the outcome of humankind acting below the "somatic and mental realisation" of their actual state of mind.

The exposition is that violence is the outcome of humanity being made to act irrationally. The explanation frames peace and violence in the universal sense where violence is not just the absence of confrontation but a structure that emboldens actors to carry out the actions. Galtung looks at the violence that is nursed and bred by societal structures.

The illustration is similar to Jeong's (2000:65-70) argument that very often interpersonal violence, conflicts and confrontations in society are built on structures such as poverty, hunger, discrimination, apartheid, social injustices and racism. Therefore, Galtung and Jeong's point is that the escalation of societal violence is based on social factors. It is, thus, prudent that humanity pays close attention to these factors when carving a sustainable peace. Galtung in his promulgation categorised two peace concepts: negative peace and positive peace.

2.6.1 Negative peace

In Galtung's (1996:2-4) assertion, the idea of peace as "the absence of organised collective violence" between major groupings of the society (tribes, gangs, nations, churches, towns, villages and races) is called negative peace. This peace process often keeps members of the society from clashing. It looks at tranquility or serenity in the absence of confrontation. The process mainly focuses on the cessation of hostilities caused by organised violence. The concept considers the magnitude of violence that causes grave human suffering especially civil conflicts, nations against one another and army mutiny. These sorts of conflicts usually have unfortunate consequences or disastrous effects on members of society. Galtung, thus, terms the absence of such organised violence as negative peace.

2.6.2 Positive peace

The integration and cooperation between societal groups geared towards tackling the sources of conflict in society is termed positive peace (Galtung 1996:2). Positive peace focuses on the causes and structures of conflict with the objective of putting a long-term mechanism in place to avert cataclysm. It is termed positive peace because "prevention is better than cure", that is, preventing the destruction of lives and properties is more plausible than finding a solution to end conflict.

In "positive peace" (Galtung 1996:3-5), society endeavours to implement or facilitate the presence of positive relations. Society collaborates in solving issues or finding remedies to structures and factors that have the potential of causing conflict. It is a proactive move to avert catastrophe.

Galtung further argues that society can "reduce negative relations to a minimum via an increase of positive relations" (1996:2-14).

Galtung's elements or factors of positive peace include:

1. Presence of cooperation;
2. Freedom from fear;
3. Freedom from want;

4. Economic growth and development;
5. Absence of exploitation;
6. Equality;
7. Justice;
8. Freedom of action; and
9. Pluralism.

2.6.3 Centralities of Galtung's peace concept

The brief description of Galtung's concept of peace illustrates the key characteristics of keeping and maintaining peace in the contemporary world. The centralities of his concept are in conformity with the biblical doctrine of peace. According to Walsh and Davies, "we must say and reaffirm that violence is not in accord with the Gospel, violence is not in conformity with the dignity of people'" (Walsh & Davies 1984:219). On the hand, in Galtung's view, promoting and sustaining durable peace requires the communication, coordination, cooperation, collaboration and intervention of individuals, organisations and cultural or religious bodies within the society.

This prognosis of maintaining and keeping peace clearly conforms to the biblical teachings of peace as discussed earlier in this chapter. It can thus be perceived from his argument that inhabitants of a given society, including the church, have a called duty to make a political, social and economic contribution as a platform of transformation.

The biblical doctrines of peace and Galtung's peace concept point to the intricate conditions conflict causes in the environs of humankind. The indistinguishable features of conflict usually cause grave destruction.

2.7 Responsibilities of the Church in Relation to Peace

In the foregoing discussions, it emerged that there are indeed passages in the Bible that legitimise the participation of the church in peace processes. In the broadest sense, the arguments point to the social, political, and economical responsibilities of the church as it relates to the subject under view (Walsh & Davies 1984:196-203).

2.7.1 Social responsibilities

The social concern of preventing violence and conflict in society is in resonance with biblical norms and principles. These norms are also echoed in Galtung's ideology of peace, making it easier to draw a parallel line between both promulgations. It follows from this background that the church has a social responsibility to speak against vices as a pre-emptive measure of ensuring lasting peace (Walsh & Davies 1984:219).

The church cannot accept violence, especially the use of arms which is uncontrollable once it is let loose and causes indiscriminate death. The church cannot condone violence because it very often provokes escalation and engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to free.

This is crucial because the position of the church in society hones its responsibility in effecting social change. Besides, its core values place it in a position of playing an essential role in finding solutions to social vices. According to Thompson (2000:87), there is a need for collaboration between politicians and religious leaders who embody and proclaim the value of peace to raise their voices against vices. It highlights that the church should preach against social evil such as:

1. Apartheid;
2. Causes of election-related violence;
3. Xenophobia;
4. Gender-based violence;
5. Racial discrimination; and

6. Tribal and religious conflicts.

In the same vein, it is the responsibility of the church to reach out to the less privileged societies who are often galvanised in time of violence and most affected in societies. In addressing the issue of social responsibility, Jesus taught the church to be the exemplary pillar of the world. Thompson (2000:58) argues that poverty in itself is violence against human dignity which, at times, causes people to vent their frustration through confrontation.

The passage in the Gospel of Matthew highlights that there is no better way that the church can remain relevant than playing a commendable role or practising its core values:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled on by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and hide it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and worship God (Matthew 5:13-16).

It is noted in the passage that the substance of faith is the basis for societal unity and love and serves as a breeding ground for tolerating one's enemies as though they were brothers. It shows "that the most intense hatred can be overcome by love, that a free human being can break the historic cycles of violence and injustice that deeply divides" (Thompson 2000:113).

In a perspicuous term, the obligation of the church as it relates to peace is rooted in brotherly love which it is commissioned to preach and teach at all times. Thompson says it this way: "Be compassionate as your father is compassionate" (2000:187). The media's reports of wars and violence across the globe paint a picture of perilous times, thus the "light and salt" of the world, the church, has a commitment to preach and teach a doctrine that aims to shift human perception from selfishness, greed, injustices and oppression to a sense of togetherness in the society. This can be achieved through preaching to the conscience of humanity at all times (Walsh & Davies 1984:185).

The conscience is considered as the centre of instruction (1 Timothy 1:5). Keeping a clear conscience is a moral pathway to peace, summed up in the integrity of abiding in the will of the Supreme Being. It is essential to the development of the profound and good character of humanity. The “food for thought” here is that through developing, educating and preaching the word of God, one stimulates a clear conscience of its hearers. Thompson (2000:187) puts it in another way. He says that the church is called not to preach only to itself, but to seek to change the social, political, economic and cultural structures of human existence. It is a change that would aim to turn the societal oppression of justice and violence to peace.

Arguably, there have been many different approaches to executing the social responsibilities of the church (Thompson 2000:186-199). But the question is how does this approach contribute towards peace and development in society? The argument is neither about a “total world affirming” (as if nothing were evil) nor a total denial (as if nothing in it were good). Stott (1984:25) explains that it is about the church recognising its potentiality in today’s world of increasing challenges.

According to Stott (1984:25), the vision of the church’s influence on society is best described in terms of reform. He asserts that the effectiveness of the church in society depends on its combination of holiness and worldliness. That is, it has the obligation to get involved in the life of the world. To this effect, Stott argues further that every Christian is called to be both a witness and a servant of the word of God (1984:25).

2.7.2 Political responsibilities

In the New Testament, Jesus did not set aside the law of the Prophets (Moses and others) when he said “you have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy’” (Matthew 5:43-48), but rather set a new legalistic guideline that the “law” and other biblical principles primarily hang on the love of God and the love of fellow beings. Stott (1986:149) argues that this admonition in fact sets a “universal declaration of human rights responsibility”.

As the maxim goes, experience is the best teacher; Jesus' teaching is thus based on His experience as a victim of human rights abuse by political powers. He became a refugee baby in Egypt (Matthew 20:13) and was falsely accused of machination to overthrow the king (Matthew 27:11-44). He was unjustly condemned, brutally tortured and finally crucified. These ordeals, miseries, agonies and abuses still permeate the political societies of today. In short, human transcendental entitlements or rights are regularly abused by political powers.

The Bible is thus replete with unavoidable calls that the church (believers) should not ignore or separate itself from the social occurrence, but rather seek to uphold human dignity as enshrined in the Gospel (Thompson 2000:201). It is laid on the church to fight for the rights of the abused or oppressed and act impartially to every circumstance. This argument is backed by the principle that humanity is one another's keeper (1 Timothy 5:21; Romans 2:10; Galatians 6).

The legalistic premise of the law of the prophets and Jesus' teaching (Matthew 22:4) highlight a particular duty or responsibility to serve the poor and defend the powerless. In Stott's view, "there are no [other] responsibilities or duties than to serve the poor and defend [the] powerless. Mankind can be saved only if everyone takes an interest in everybody else's affairs" (1986:150). In probability, the church is the sign of God's authority among humanity. It should seek to be a community in which human dignity and equality are invariably practised and human responsibility for each other are accepted, devoid of discrimination and favouritism. It has the mandate to exercise its presence in communities by advocating for equality and justice and preaching against class stratification which is often used as a tool of oppression.

The point is that if Christians cannot develop a relationship of respect and trust across social barriers, they can hardly blame the world for failing. They should rather seek greater respect and cooperation in every segment of human society. In relation, one could infer that the degree of peace in societies today has to be measured by the dignity it affords the underprivileged and the powerless.

The combination of both biblical principles with continual reality in society is key or vital in maintaining peace. The Bible emphatically stated in its testaments that no one in authority or power should impose their will on society and neither should a particular group violate the rights of an individual or minority. The Moses legislature (Moses laws) carefully protected the weak and vulnerable as a means of keeping peace in the society (Goudzwaard et al. 2008:198-200).

Therefore, if humanity accepts the inviolability of all forms of human rights, then there is no justifiable reason to acquiesce to any form of violence or conflict in society. An exception has to be vigorously and stiffly argued as peace is directly opposed to war. It is in accordance with scripture to argue that the church is a key player in maintaining and upholding the peace in society.

Given the intrinsic danger conflict poses on society and people's lives, the role of the church in standing for the truth should not be compromised by any non-biblical factors. An attempt to condone gross human rights abuses in society has the proclivity to tarnish the image of the church (Goudzwaard et al. 2008:192-197).

2.7.3 Economical responsibilities

Considerably in the Bible, the production of the soil often relates to the needs of society (Stott 1984:156). In modern society, a particular community that produces commodities for its consumption reflects an economic activity (Ferguson 2011:13-14). Similarly, the Israelites were instructed to harvest their crop and share with the needy at the time. The principle of sharing with the needy was echoed by Jesus and the Apostles. It throws light on the discussion that the fortunate ones should endeavour to help the less privileged (Thompson 2000:195).

Thompson further stresses the duty of believers to partake or provide necessary and useful services to improve the lives of the needy or the disadvantaged in society. Believers have to cooperate with other stakeholders in society to fight the

egocentricity of the time, that is, to render services to society as a means of combating the economic inequality that engulfs societies around the globe.

The premise under this thread shows how God admonishes the Israelites to create an environment in which everyone could have access to equal opportunities. It helps members of the society to develop their potential for the common good of the society. In other words, the church has to fill the moral indignation with a sense of oneness and contribute towards the empowerment of the oppressed.

It is typically human to be susceptible to environmental conditions, resulting in the adaptation or attitudinal change. A national disaster can easily cast a shroud over a community and unfair distribution of resources in the society can result in strikes and conflicts. This shows that human thoughts are often controlled by outside influences which consequently need human intervention or human solutions (Thompson 2000:58-59).

Around the globe there are economic crises, war-torn nations and people dying by the millions as a result of plagues, famines and other disasters. There has been so much violence and so many instances of hunger, illness and other destructive elements. Countless people suffer as a result of these disasters and many more give up hope for the future. In times like these, it becomes necessary for the church to partake or provide necessitates for the needy.

”For any transformation to become possible, the excessive influence of wealth and concentrated power in major political arenas must be brought to account. Wherever political and economic decisions ignore community rights to food, water, a clean and healthy environment, and a dignified life, change is necessary. The excessive focus on “economic growth” as a measure of development put forward by major financial institutions and supported by U.S. policy and is inadequate. Quality of life assessments and documented development success stories in places where the majority of people still live on less than \$2.00 a day point to the need for other tools to measure well-being. Renewed, more just relationships between human beings and the rest of creation are essential, as are new personal, family and community lifestyles encouraged and supported by state, national and global policies, structures and systems. The global economy cannot be based on the unsustainable use of resources or the assumption that constant growth in the North is an ultimate good. We must move toward a steady-state economy that limits the use of all natural resources to the planet’s capacity to regenerate.

Many faith communities are actively helping their members learn to live more simply, share their abundance and develop a sense of respect for the earth and responsibility for the use of natural resources. Some religious traditions have a long history of sharing property and wealth and of mutual accountability. At the same time, many secular communities have worked to build examples of more just, sustainable and viable models of business and community organization, including producer and worker cooperatives, land trusts, community-owned utilities, and workers owned firms, community development financial institutions, community supported agriculture, local currency and barter systems. Some of these are beginning to assume a scale that could have a major positive impact on our common future. These and other yet-to-be-discovered forms of sustainable economic organization can make an important contribution to a future that is freed from dependence on fossil fuels, that encourages socially and environmentally responsible lifestyles and that nurtures human security for all. Concrete examples like these can provide a solid base of experience from which to develop effective national and international policies.

The first critical step is to bring together the many religious organizations committed to ecological justice with the many faith-based groups working for economic justice, multiplying the capacity of both groups to understand the critical connections between fundamental economic decisions and policies and the future of the planet. A second is to bring together these faith communities and secular groups interested in and working on projects and policies that move toward more ecologically appropriate local, regional and global economies. Such a strategic alliance would enable all participants to share their experiences, to make alternatives much more visible and plausible in the public mind and to create new synergies for advocacy and social change. Bringing the strengths and experiences of faith communities into a collaborative relationship with secular groups active and expert in this field would create new momentum for the kind of critical change that is both needed and possible" (Faith-Economy-Ecology).

In places like Liberia where unemployment stands at 85% (Theodora) and the illiterate rate stands at 65%, the church is called to participate and contribute towards optimal human development, for there is a maxim "that the idle mind is the devil's workshop". It implies that it is easier to convince idle and hopeless individuals to join a belligerent group than a well-to-do person who can read between the lines.

As it was in the case of the Liberian war, more hopeless and uneducated people were conscripted into different armed groups to cause cataclysm. The result of such misfortune still resonates in the Liberian societies. The participation of the church is

vital to the overall development of the state which, in turn, may lead to a peaceful society.

An alarming element in recent times is the research that places Liberia as 25th on the list of Fragile Nations (OECD nd). By definition, “fragile nations” means nations that are easily susceptible to the outbreak of violence. The disclosure is aimed at educating the public to put mechanisms in place to forestall the outbreak of violence and conflicts. The findings further suggest that the unfair distribution of resources and immense human suffering are some of the underlining factors that may fuel such disaster in Liberia.

The church, therefore, has to exhibit or seek to implement a framework that denounces violence and conflict.

2.7.4 Restitution

To support the contention for lasting peace in the nation ravaged by prolonged civil war the principle of restitution needs to be implemented as a tutelage. This describes a tutelage that is concerned with “the award of a generic group of remedies which arise by operation of law and which have one common function, namely to deprive the defendant of a gain rather than to compensate the claimant for loss suffered” (Virgo 2015:17).

Restitution in this case depicts a tool of corrective justice. It is used to correct injustice between the oppressor and the victims. The essence is that legal obligations are required to impose mandatory restitution on the defendant. In a society, where scores of citizens were killed in a civil war, a system is needed for the victims to bring a restitution claim against perpetrators who committed gruesome deeds to the citizens of the state. The restitutionary remedy would rectify the wrong that engulfed the nation (Burrow 2011:9,26).

2.8 Conclusion

In explicit and inferential arguments, the chapter has attempted to establish, examine and identify biblical principles and theories that call for Christians' involvement in the maintenance of peace and the opportunities associated with sustainable peace (Thompson 2000; Galtung 1964).

The pertinent characteristics of the principles and objectives that constitute Christian ideas of peace have been closely examined and linked to Galtung's (1964) peace promulgation.

In keeping with the objectives and scope of the study, the researcher has projected peace as an unavoidable phenomenon necessary for human existence, preservation of human lives and dignity of humanity. Hence, curtailing violence and a cataclysm of the world is a burden on everyone, including the church (Baum & Wells 1997).

The chapter has also painted or illustrated positive and negative effects of preaching or proclaiming a message that instigates violence against the effects of a message of love and tolerance. In terms of reciprocity and utilitarianism, the message of love and tolerance could lead to building a peaceful society. In contrast, a message of hatred could polarise a society and breed violence that often leads to bloodshed. The chapter, therefore, has argued that the church should take a giant step to lead humanity to the God of "shalom and erene" (Becker 1990; Eliade 1987; Hanna 2006).

The chapter has further argued that societal peace is in direct proportion to human's relationship with God. The argument is backed by Jesus' teaching to the disciples, "I give you peace which the world cannot give you" (Plass 1994).

In essence, the chapter has brought to focus that the church is the agent of peace among humankind, tasked with the responsibility of preaching a message that creates empathy or consciousness within humanity to live side by side in harmony. In short, peace in a biblical term is a complete denunciation of violence and hatred or any form of conflict. In literal terms, it is the situation where the action does not

provoke a reaction but seeks compromise and redress to issues of grave concern (Sott 1984; Thompson 2000).

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORY AND SOURCES OF CONFLICT – PERSPECTIVE ON LIBERIA

3.1 Introduction

According to Esteban and Schneider (2004:2-3), “a polarised nation is a broken nation”. The argument posits that a divided nation is prone to embrace the culture of perpetual violence and anarchy within its fold. This phenomenon is aligned or synonymous to Achebe’s ideology that “when things fall apart, the centre piece cannot hold” (1958:114). These philosophies demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship. The assertions can also explain that disunity within a particular society or state has the inclination of giving birth to complex social issues that often bring into existence a host of social conflicts. Hence, Ngaima (2014:1-3) argues that the failure to recognise the fundamental issues that cause conflict and division can lead to greater catastrophe.

Thus, an effective and thorough assessment from a truncated historical survey is paramount in projecting the role of Christianity in post-war Liberia. The brief historical survey aims to uncover what caused “the centre piece to fall apart” (Achebe 1958) in Liberia. In an effort to discover the root causes of Liberia’s civil unrest, the historical events below tend to explain the normative implications of the crises for the understanding of scholars and analysts as to why the country “records one of the worst catastrophes in the history of humankind” (Cheru 2002:196-198).

The opening statement in this thread provides an apt illustration that “a deeply divided nation is disposed to catastrophe” (Esteban & Schneider 2004:2-8). It also implies that when everyone within a divided nation tends to pursue different agendas, goals and objectives that are sometimes incompatible, violence is imminent.

This chapter thus takes a firm step towards identifying the fundamental and avoidable issues of previous violence in Liberia. The illuminating factors of these discussions and arguments herein are geared towards laying the groundwork for insightful understanding, exploring, analysing and tackling of potential conflict. Examples are included to illustrate points of thoughts or arguments. The

catastrophic consequences of the Liberian conflict in the '90s unearths that no “matter what realm of interest it represents, conflict constitutes a disastrous mode of settling the scores” (Ngaima 2014:1-4). It draws the attention of insightful thinkers that humanity must always be alerted to inflammable factors that could kindle or ignite a disastrous confrontation. The researcher wishes to use the analogy that conflict is like a volcano that does not erupt over night, but gradually gathers pace before exploding to the surface.

3.2 Overview of the Liberian conflict

This chapter attempts to discuss reflections on the problem of the study. It discusses the different categories of conflicts that emerged under different political, social and economic conditions within various dispensations of Liberia’s history. The causes of these conflicts and uprisings are different and it is a thoughtful analysis that would aid a peace broker or the church to properly understand them. In so doing, the researcher offers a plan or strategy to quell, manage and resolve these conflicts in the short term and tackles their long-term root causes.

The historical events or information in this chapter are not intended to serve as a definitive discussion of Liberian history and culture. However, it is intended to give pre-emptive information to theologians who seek to explore the missiological means of unlocking the inescapable mystery that leads to gruesome conflicts. Arguably, “human ability to address or pre-empt and forestall violence, mostly lies in understanding potential factors of conflicts” (Burton 2007:132).

There are many strategies for tackling long-term causes and conditions of conflicts, but insight is central in averting bloodshed within a country. It is certainly indisputable that the role of the church is imperative in maintaining peace and contributes to national development as a major stakeholder within the country.

In virtue of its status as a country, Liberia is replete with an abundance of history and testimonies about pugnacity. In contrast to its status as a country formed on Christian principles, it has gone through numerous and countless conflicts (Ali & Matthews 1999:91-99). Based on the indubitable fact of “an early tension” (Waugh

2011:20-21) between the free slaves and the natives, Kotia (2012:1-3) traced the cause of the bloody civil war to unresolved ethnic and political differences.

The country was established on the principles of freedom and democracy that mirrored that of the United States of America (Waugh 2011:21), but after one and a half centuries of its existence, the country descended into destruction in which both democracy and human rights were compromised. Kotia (2012:2) asserts that though Liberia was instituted on the principles of freedom, democracy and a permeation of society, leading lives on biblical doctrine became a myth as the country descended into a series of conflicts that led to bloodshed.

The culminating argument is that due to greed, selfishness and obsession with power, the so-called Christians started living disharmonious lives to their doctrine that triggered a series of confrontation (Burton 2007:235). The early confrontation gives a logical argument that there is a streak of tragedy in the country's history that needs attention. The chapter describes a contradictory position of the pioneers who promoted their religion over the secret societies of the indigenes they met on the ground. Nevertheless, they failed to use their beliefs to create a homogenous society for both the natives and the free slaves to harmoniously live together. Instead, they viewed everything as a matter of politics and used their supremacy to suppress the weak.

3.3 Theory of Conflict

Considering the observed idiosyncrasies of the Liberian history, coupled with Kotia's (2012:2) assertion that unresolved conflicts led to bloodshed in Liberia, necessitating an argument within the framework of Durkheim's theory of conflict is admissible. According to Durkheim (Wood & Wood 2004:93-98), conflict is imminent in a society that is not held together by positive solidarity, but by force that is rooted in greed, selfishness and egocentrism. Durkheim's theory (Bartos & Wehr 2002:13) demonstrates that frustration, injustices, oppression, exclusion and persistence torment over the rule of law and good governance and are a portal or recipe for conflict or violence in a society.

Similarly, in an un-embryonic term and in citing the Marx's theory of conflict, Brecher and Harvey (2002:124) argue that if societal inequality or factors that cause gaps among society are not properly addressed, they could inflame or cause confrontation between the less privileged and the wealthy. Using the Marx's theory of conflict, one can infer that the characteristics or eccentricities of conflict find relevancy within the Liberian context because conflict often erupted as a result of inequality that existed from the disproportionate share of societal resources that gave an advantage to one group over the other.

The presupposition is that as long as the embroilment of political power struggle and ethnic tension remains unresolved, it would continue to have a profound impact on the groups. On the basis of a Marx's approach (Lipset 1990:12-14), it can be argued that the lack of comprehension of the root causes of conflict creates a vacuum and presents a situation where there are no strategies, policies or mechanisms for dealing with ongoing conflict in fragile states or societies such as Liberia. This chapter is, thus, not an array of recounting Liberian history, but an attempt to give insight to the church so that it can play a role as a beacon of peace, hope and development.

The researcher aims to argue that in building a peaceful society, humanity needs to endure the pain of recounting the history of disastrous times with the objective of eroding away the factors that initiated the problem. Fruitful discussion gives insightful thinkers the ability to draw a link between the elements and factors that caused the problem. In other words, the inability to "forge a sense of serving something grounded in mutual respect for aptitude, ultimately manifest itself in the vulnerability of slave-based societies to violent uprisings" (Kaarsholm 2006:186). In a country like Liberia, "the elite minority class controls and denies the masses the opportunity to express their ability" (Ali & Matthews 1999:97) which gives rise to resentment, division, and subsequently leads to violent uprisings. The perpetual historical pattern of violence in Liberia expresses the need of the church's participation in quelling potential uprisings by pre-emptively gearing efforts through its missiological principles towards eliminating or curtailing carnage.

The dominant factors of the war and the aftermath of the catastrophe call for the church to play a missiological role that would aim to promote peace and contribute towards development. The church needs to play a role that stands against plundering, elite supremacy, subjugation, pillaging, dispossession and the deliberate oppression of the vulnerable (Brierley 2006:48).

It can be stated that the involvement of the church in tackling inequality, which Esteban and Schneider (2004:2-8) point to as the core of conflict, is necessary for the transformation and growth of the church and the building of a peaceful society of tolerance, love and respect for humanity. Like Christ who breaks down the wall of partition, hatred, conflict and polarisation, the church's effort to spread this message to the masses is significant in stamping its presence among humankind (Brierley 2006:49-51).

3.3.1 Definitions of conflict

There is a tremendous variance in conflict definitions that include a range of definitions for specific interests and a variety of general definitions that attempt to be all-inclusive. However, for the scope of this study, the researcher is inclined to employ the definition of Wilmot and Hocker. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2007:8-9), "conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals." A tacit argument from their exposition is that there will always be a "social collision" between constellations of incompatible goals or interests.

Another suggestive definition that fits within the scope of the study is the definition of Rahim. Rahim (2011:17) defines conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities. It is worth noticing that Rahim (2011:16-18) focuses on the concept of armed conflict as an organised, collective and violent confrontation between at least two groups of either state or non-state action.

Rahim (2011:15-19) further argues that for conflict to occur, it has to exceed the threshold level of intensity. In simple terms, incompatibilities, disagreements or differences must be serious enough before parties experience conflict. Rahim's supposition accentuates the pervasiveness of conflict that is scourged on the masses by the intransigence of those who control the apparatuses of power and the mechanisms of wealth. Arguing further, Rahim's threshold of conflict could be seen as "the writing on the wall" of forthcoming danger.

The question, therefore, is why were the "thresholds of looming conflicts" noted by Dolo (2007:15-18) ignored by stakeholders in Liberia? In other words, as the intensity level of the conflict increased in Liberia, why did the church and other stakeholders fail to play a role in tackling the causes of disunity? Why did they not create a basis for harmonious society for the progressive amelioration of the poverty and inequality? It is indisputable that in the past Christianity in Liberia has attempted to contribute to national issues; nevertheless, the hysterical effect or causes of the war and the trenches of contemporary violence call for different ways of intuitively handling these evils that are inclined to destroying lives and properties.

The essence of the definition can be simplified within Dolo's (2007:15-18) context that conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur within societal structures. The researcher ventures to argue that when relating Wilmot and Hocker's (2007:8-9) definition with the situation of Liberia, there is intellectual evidence that the "incompatible" goals of leaders with that of the masses, or the perhaps the tribal rivalries in which one group competes with another coupled with societal stratification, led to countless conflicts (Dolo 2007:15-20). The centrality of Wilmot and Hocker's definition (2007:5-9) further bolsters the point of fragmenting the thresholds of the Liberian uprisings into the following categories:

1. Political incompatibility: One party system, dictatorship;
2. Economic incompatibility: Corruption, unemployment, nepotism;
3. Social-cultural incompatibility: Societal rivalry, tribalism;

4. Terrestrial incompatibility: Land disputes.

These categories show that conflict or civil uprisings are human-inflicted conditions on the society. In politics, when the ability of a leader to meet the needs of citizens is supplanted by his personal gain, then incompatibility is likely to cause uprisings among displeased citizens. It also postulates that it is not enough for the church to only become an avenue for material aid, but it must position itself to speak and stand against the entrenched social inequality with a transcendental motivation.

The missiological duties of the church and human rights proceed from an identical source. The argument can be expanded from Lessin's (2011a:3) point that it is the bounteous and omnipresent God who bestows the inviolable rights and liberty on humankind and, at the same time, gives the inalienable obligation of the church to maintain peace and "uphold the dignity of humanity" (Thompson 2000:201).

In this case, the deduction of the church's involvement in societal issues, especially peace and development, always lies near the heart of every theological discussion. The transcendental obligation of the church in averting conflict or effecting peace among humankind demonstrates God's purpose and will among humanity and, as such, is not a human construct (Baum & Wells 1997:1-4).

It is a disservice to the society for one to argue that the church should exist aloof of societal, political and cultural issues that tend to affect humanity. Even though there is no fixed answer, the fundamental question about the church's involvement in social change, social stability and social development must remain relevant. Societal turmoil in history has always led to the destabilisation of the environment in which the church exists, making it imperative that the church becomes involved as a stakeholder.

3.4 Transient History of the Conflicts in Liberia

The unique history of Liberia that witnessed the repatriation of free slaves on the continent explicates that, to a large extent, the misery of the country is not necessarily due to lack of food, resources and inadequate human capital, but due to

overwhelming incompatibilities between the two sets of people (Waugh 2011:21-26). These primary thoughts buttress Dolo's (2007:18) arguments that tension between the indigenes and the free slaves dated from the first interaction between the groups before the coup in 1980.

According to historians, the settlers showed contempt towards the culture or way of life of the indigenes that they met on the ground (Steinberg 2011:42). They segregated themselves from integrating with the people and instead coerced the indigenes to adapt to their way of life as masters (Steinberg 2011:41). The lofty attitude of the settlers sets the stage for a systematic exclusion and marginalisation of the indigenes from the economic, political and social arena during the years of Americo-Liberian dominance (Percy 2013:75).

The oppressive period is widely viewed as one of the root causes of the continual instability and upheaval in the country (Ngaima 2014:7). Though many of the conflicts took a tribal, cultural and terrestrial route, they constitute part of the quest for equality and human dignity. When the Americo-Liberians implemented the forceful acquisition of land from the indigenous owners, they compounded the fragile relationship between the groups (Percy 2013:73-75). It was met with resistance from the indigenes which resulted in protracted conflicts. This early conflict among the settlers and indigenes set the stage for a prolonged division and resentment among the people of Liberia.

The labyrinth of clashes reflects Marx's (Munck 2013:48-49) concepts of conflict that societal inequality is the "bedrock" of cataclysm or mayhem. The early conflict or incompatibility engendered distrust between the two groups making it intricate or difficult for both parties to live harmoniously. In Dolo's (2007:14-18) view, the national symbols¹ and slogans² indicate that the relationship between the indigenes and the Americo-Liberian had been an exclusive one.

¹The coat of arms of Liberia and the national flag.

²"The love of liberty brought us here"

The assertion is that the preamble³ of the constitution conforms and encourages division among the populace (Kieh 2008 citing Boley 1983:28). For instance, the national anthem and the slogan on the coat of arms reflect the cultural values of the settlers and categorically ignored the locals. The early or historical marginalisation of one group over the other was in fact a harbinger of the lachrymose time ahead.

According to Dolo (2007:14-19), since the Declaration of Independence in 1847, the relationship between the settlers and indigenes had been confrontational. Though the natives were not considered citizens, they were coerced to pay taxes. This explains why the settlers encountered difficulties and persistent problems with incorporating the native population into the political, social and economic life of the nation. These issues exploded into crises from time to time.

The coercive method used in collecting taxes from the unemployed natives who were not, in fact, considered citizens at the time is another burning issue that fuelled division (Steinberg 2011:44-45; Waugh 2011:24). The continual pattern of oppression found adequate ground in a Marx's argument that the division of a society into oppressors and oppressed fuels tension and confrontation within communities—Liberia was not an exception to this theory (Brecher & Harvey 2002:123-124; Lipset 1990:11-16).

In contradiction to the claims that the constitution was drafted from biblical principles, it was used or employed as a tool for the effective domination and exploitation of the masses (Waugh 2011:26-30). It set the masses apart and treated them as subordinate and inferior to the minority elite.

The marginalisation of the masses drew a battle line where the settlers fought to maintain their dominance, interests and control of state resources on the one side while the natives struggled to dislodge and mitigate the minority rule and gain their freedom and independence on the other side. From the ongoing discussion, a perfunctory understanding can disclose the main issues of conflict as oppression

³ "We the people of the Republic of *Liberia* were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America"

versus freedom and injustices versus fights for justice. The next sections will explore certain instances of conflict in Liberia to illustrate this point.

3.4.1 Fernando Po Island Saga 1930

The dehumanising situation culminated when the free slaves allegedly arrested and traded offenders of various crimes as slaves to work on plantations at Fernando Po Island (Gifford 1993:11). This spectacle provoked nationwide demonstrations that led to the overthrowing of President King, who was believed to be the catalyst of the policy (Waugh 2011:28).

Considering the chronicle that brought the free-slaves to Liberia, it is unfathomable that those who cried and fought for freedom from slavery would bring in slavery on their so-called land of liberty. These issues might merely be a part of history, but what would one point to as contributing factors to the disastrous war of Liberia if that was the case?

3.4.2 Rice demonstration – 1978

Another event that exerted influence on the Liberian history in Ellis's (1999:51) view is a peaceful demonstration in the late 70's organised by the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) which turned into a violent confrontation with security forces (Percy 2013:76). The demonstration was meant to persuade the government to subsidise the high food costs, especially rice prices, but ended in a bloody massacre of innocent citizens (Dolo 2007:22).

This incident preceded the coup in the '80s which opened another chapter of violence in the country's history (Ali & Matthews 1999:93). The researcher is aware that broaching these hideous acts against humanity could raise concerns over what the narrative aim of this study is. However, in order to diagnose a medical problem, one needs to give the practitioner a picture of the event. Therefore, it is also important to recognise that these problems have had and continue to have a bearing on the unity, integration and perspective of the Liberian society.

The objective of broaching these incidences is to aid people. Healing can come from knowing the abuse-saturated stories that divided the nation and thereby repudiate the social prejudices that lead to catastrophe. The study seeks to define the role of the church that guides a given society towards an inclusive social ethos. The study also aims to lay a foundation for an ecclesiological role that seeks to deal with the structural factors that caused a wave of hatred and deep-rooted resentment and terror within the country.

Injustice is a fitting description of the perpetual repression and growing political unrest in Liberia which motivated the group led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe to stage the successful coup of 12 April 1980. During this coup Tolbert was assassinated. The coup was welcomed in every quarter by the indigenes (Ellis 1999:42-44; Ali & Matthews 1999:98). They considered it as a portal to redemption and freedom from the repression of the elite (Peercy 2013:76-77). The composition of Doe's cabinet created an impression in the minds of the suppressed that the power had shifted in their favour, but this hope lasted for a short period of time.

However, the joy of the masses was short-lived and the triumph of the coup turned into another stage of the nightmare. The catalysts for frustration, displeasure and criticism were the introduction of the tough military rules, disrespect to the rule of law and the trend of eliminating opposition. After a tough military rule, the country eventually held an election in which the entire population was enfranchised for the first time (Dolo 2007:19).

Nevertheless, according to pundits and political commentators, the first democratic election in the history of Liberia was marred by intimidation, manipulation and electoral irregularities (Ali & Matthews 1999:91-93). According to an article in the *LA Times*, "They really have to work hard to live up to the tradition of democracy in Africa. The fact that he (Doe) only allocated himself 51% of the vote showed remarkable restraint" (Powers 1985).

The opposition did not take the result of the election in good faith. A co-partner of Doe in the coup attempted to overthrow him a month after the election (Peercy

2013:77; Ali & Matthews 1999:92). The post-election rebellion was violently quashed and subsequently followed by repressive attacks on the members and allies of the failed coup planners. Most of the political figures fled the country and those who were arrested were put in prison. The reprisals took vengeance on the tribe of the failed coup planners, especially the Manos and Gios of Liberia (Kieh 2008:134). Researchers have documented series of torture, indiscriminate killing, solitary confinement and massacres during these periods.

Similarly, the dominance of the Krahn tribe, Doe's native ethnic group in every facet of government, is seen by many as the beginning of another sectional ruling class (Ellis 1999:56). This argument is further elaborated on by Percy (2013:74-77) who argues that the Krahn dominance brought about a poignant reminder of the sad times the masses went through in the hands of the settlers. It is further argued that nepotism ultimately resulted in a vicious circle of alienating perceived enemies (Ali & Matthews 1999:92-94).

This further ignited or added fuel to most of Liberia's history of ethnicity along the settler-indigene dichotomy which undermined the social, economic and political relations in Liberia. The bad governance did not only have pernicious impacts on the country, but also eroded the trust and confidence of the masses in the leadership and political system and impaired the interpersonal conviction in official system.

3.5 Sources of Conflict

Peace practitioners point to structures and policies that perpetuate injustices, inequality and oppression as the major sources of violence within a state (Munck et al 2013:47-49). It is further argued that some forms of violence are protests against the dominance of the wealthy minority group which uses the governing structures to initiate or perpetuate injustices among the vulnerable citizens (Dolo 2007:16).

The pernicious effects or the stark reality of poverty as a result of violence calls for the denunciation of war by the church as a way of fulfilling God's purpose among humankind (Thompson 2000:58-59). The world is at a threshold whereby humanity in a contemporary age continues to experience war that causes grave human

suffering, agony, misery, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment and disease which contribute to a high rate of illiteracy.

These unfortunate situations suggest adequate ground for the involvement of the church to apply its norms or missiological principles in helping to curtail violence which in itself is a means of furthering God's purpose of peace among humanity (Sande 2004:25-27). It is the purpose of God that the church promulgates the message of equality, justice and freedom and denounces the culture of violence.

Additionally, it is important to note from the terse history of Liberia narrated in this study that there are two main issues that developed there. The first relates to the armed conflicts that occurred as a result of unresolved grievances and the greed of leaders. Greed is one of the integral factors that caused the war. The second is the unfair distribution of resources or economic opportunities. One can argue that the greed of a few individuals to enjoy the country's splendid resources at the expense of the masses created a deep-rooted bitterness and grievance among the people.

As the inequality persisted, the attitude of the elite hardened towards the vast majority of the masses who were treated in a condescending and humiliating manner. The humiliation of the masses was reinforced by government policies, including obligatory community labour, coercive tax payments by the unemployed and other forms of injustices that stripped them of their human dignity (Steinberg 2011:44).

Citing Marx's theories once again (Brecher & Harvey 2002:123-124; Lipset 1990:11-16), it is observed that inequality is the most common source that entrenches grievances. Accordingly, inequality is a variable that encapsulates the causes of conflict (Ali & Matthews 1999:98). The historical grievances of the Liberian masses exploded into series of armed conflicts that impaired development and destroyed the lives and infrastructures of the country.

This argument is aligned with Auvinen's (2003) findings that inequality provokes conflict by intensifying the experience of the relative deprivation on the part of the underprivileged. In the case of Liberia, the policy of segregation and exclusion was

indicative of the tensions that contributed to political violence and eventually descended into civil war (Waugh 2011:96).

Therefore, according to the above discussion one can see that the contributing factors of the Liberian conflict include but are not limited to: black on black apartheid, election irregularities, monopolisation of power, social stratification and the abuse of power in various forms (Dolo 2007:17-18). These factors will be discussed in the following sections.

3.5.1 Black on black apartheid

According to Waart et al. (1998:339), apartheid was a social system in which black people and people from other racial groups did not have the same political and economic rights as white people and were forced to live separately from white people. However, in the case of this study, the researcher has termed similar practice in Liberia as “black on black apartheid” whereby the elite settlers denied the inferior group any economic and political rights (Kieh 2008:134). The indigenes were not recognised as bona fide citizens of Liberia and, as such, were not enfranchised (Kieh 2008:47).

The experience is cited not only for its extremely divisive nature, but also to point to the scars of this unfortunate evil: a poor health care system, poor school facilities, and bad road networks in indigene-dominated areas. The system increased the powerlessness and vulnerability of the locals. Attempts to “cast out” the locals from all sectors of governance created a range of discriminations, humiliation and sometimes physical injuries and psychological trauma. It is thus legitimate to argue from a Marx’s point of view (Brecher & Harvey 2002:123-124; Lipset 1990:11-16) that there is indeed a limpid nexus or direct relationship between suppression and conflict.

The argument is that as suppression and oppression increase, so does the risk of violent confrontation. It does not mean that all forms of inequalities or suppression are the causes of violent confrontation, but the researcher wishes to argue that the

human-induced suffering and agony of others as a way of demoralising their integrity is likely to cause a reaction.

The “black on black” apartheid depicts a human-induced suffering that is meant to separate the two groups: one of the groups is considered superior over the other (Kieh 2008:133-135). The superior group restricted and denied the inferior group their God-given right to freely partake in the society. There are horror stories of how the implementation of the forced isolation led to series of sporadic clashes. The superior had the upper hand due to their tie with their former slave masters.

3.5.2 Monopolisation of power

A monopolisation of power is explained as an exclusive control of power by a handful of individuals within an organisation or country. Similarly, Liberian history shows that less than 5% of the country’s population held onto power for over a century, subjugating and excluding the majority from participating in government organs (Steinberg 2011:44). The only party that existed within the country at the time was the True Whig party to which all the elite belonged (Ellis 1999:45-46).

Ali and Matthews argue that “any appraisal of what causes, perpetuates, and sanctions division must recognise that political, social and economic operate along the line of human grouping” (1999:96). Doe, who broke the yoke of subjugation, also misused the power in many ways. Commentators brand him as a dictator who repressed oppositions and rivals. The culture of the abuse of power by government officials called for a transformation in the political, ideological and social systems of Liberia.

The failure of government to transform the country’s institutions into inclusive structures and a state of freedom and justice would continue to accentuate the disparities and increase the power of the dominant group (Ellis 1999:63).

The misuse of power throws the obligation into the hands of the church to be aware of the growing disparities between the poor and the wealthy, powerful and dominant group. The arbitrary imposition of dictatorial rule on the people with no

respect for the rule of the law provoked violence (Ali & Matthews 1999:92-98). To witness the emergence of a vibrant civil society, stakeholders, including the church, must promote peace and development in a pragmatic way that accords respect to every citizen.

It is the business of any history of opinion to take into account the subtle and direct factors that affected the lives of the masses and forge for a long-lasting solution. In the discussion of peace and unity there is a range of issues which seem to be forgotten, especially the root causes of the division and conflicts.

3.5.3 Electoral irregularities

A breach of electoral rules, customs and procedures often leads to violent confrontations and war. In elections where parties are dissatisfied with the outcome or results there is a likelihood of conflict and uprisings (Huband 1998:36-38). In Liberia, where the result of the first democratic election was marred by manipulation and thwarted in favour of the incumbent President Doe, election irregularities led to an attempted coup by proponents of the opposition camps (Huband 1998:36-38).

According to analysts, Doe and his allies took revenge on the failed coup plotters (Huband 1998:40-41). It is also assumed that the rebellion in the '90s in Liberia was seen as a way in which some citizens could vent their displeasure at Doe's rule and was aimed at achieving justice for the executed 13 statesmen (Steinberg 2011:64-65). The key players in the civil war were those who absconded from the repressive attacks of Doe's reign (Steinberg 2011:65).

3.5.4 Abuse of power and unfair distribution of resources

The abuse of power is an act of using one's position of power in an inappropriate way (Lee-Chai & Burgh 2001:58). This can take many forms, such as taking advantage of someone, corruption and mismanagement, nepotism, suppression of freedom of speech, unfair dismissal, manipulation of due processes, injustice, suppression and oppression of opponents and rivals, the use of excessive force on armless citizens, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of citizens.

There are also government policies and strategies that are considered an abuse of power when they go against the rights of citizens (Endicott 2009: 236-238). When the trend of abuse is manifested in the political structure and framework of the state, then there is a greater disposition to place dictators at the heart and centre of the abuse of power. The dictator, thus, increasingly uses undemocratic processes and structures to intimidate and eliminate rivalry.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that the abuse of power and unfair distribution of resources are interrelated (International Monetary Fund 2007:3-9). They are expressed or seek to deny humanity the right to decent and happy lives. They are a negligent or deliberate failure to uphold basic human rights. The widespread of abused power creates a spectacle that subsequently leads to violence.

Many of the historical propositions of abuse put forward in this chapter call for immediate attention. It is not by chance that the church should concern itself with social peace, but because the Bible teaches Christians to stand against structures in which violence is entrenched. It must stand against those that tend to protect the privileges of the minority at the expense of the poverty-stricken majority (Knight 1987:ix, 3).

3.5.5 Nepotism

Nepotism is a practice among people with power or influence who favour relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs at the expense of qualified candidates or without following due processes of hiring (Fage, Gray & Oliver 2003:856). In the face of huge unemployment, elected officials mostly seek the interest of relatives and close allies. A glaring example of this is the dominance of the Krahn tribe, especially close relatives of President Doe, in strategic positions in his government (Ali & Matthews 1999:96).

Nepotism marginalises the masses and gives advantages to few individuals to enrich themselves at the expense of the impoverished communities. It promotes extreme poverty and inequality that leads to increasing levels of marginalisation, oppression

and violence. Nepotism causes the dominance of one group over the other or an entire community (Skrentry 1996:56).

In the case of this study, nepotism is a deprivation that causes people to suffer due to unfair treatment. This form of abuse undermines the unity and cohesion of society. For instance, the moment that brought Doe and his colleague to power cracked due to the dominance of his tribe in government institutions. The displeasure in the moment led to factionalism and subsequent rebellion against Doe's government (Kieh 2008:135). The elite within the faction mobilised a section of their region and ethnic loyalists to surreptitiously overthrow a sitting government. The aforementioned discussion discloses that the grievances of the leadership of the rebellion group are politically motivated.

Because they were blocked from ascending to power or achieving their political promotion, the rebellion group vented their displeasure through armed conflict. In short, the rebellions which emerged to overthrow the government were driven by the aspiration of gaining political power and the prospect of economic gains and, later, it was nursed by an ethnic sense of perceived political, economic and cultural oppression (Kieh 2008:133-135).

The aftermath of the Liberian conflict shows that rebellion, driven by ethnicity, is violent-oriented and tends to commit unspeakable atrocities against humanity (Moron 2006). Such conflict is not guided by military tactics. It is often motivated by revenge with the quest of undemocratically changing the government of the enemy tribe. An obvious example of this is the Liberian crisis where crimes against humanity were committed by rivalry tribes. The Mandingoes, Krahn, Gio and Mano were prominently figured in the war of Liberia. Each tribe sought to inflict disastrous casualties on rivals (Mwalimu 2010:896).

3.5.6 Corruption

According to an International Monetary Fund (2007:9) report, corruption is an abuse of public office whereby state resources or facilities are misused to enrich or give unfair advantage to individuals, their family or friends. This form of abuse of power

has many dimensions related to political, economic, social and environmental effects. Economists (International Monetary Fund 2007:8-27) argue that it has a strong negative impact on the growth of a nation and undermines the fight against extreme poverty and tends to dwindle the means of providing essential services to the masses.

In politics, corruption impedes democracy and the rule of the law. The argument backs the point that corruption is manifested through political intolerance, problems of accountability for public resources and a lack of transparency (International Monetary Fund 2007:11-12). Corruption also leads to a depletion of national wealth and tends to have a devastating effect on the much needed facilities and amenities such as hospitals, schools, roads and water infrastructure. It causes an imbalance that widens the gap of inequality between the super rich and the poor.

The effect of the disproportion tends to breed civil strikes and hatred and subsequently leads to insecurity as the resentment of the marginalised increases. Corruption is a social crime that spurs underdevelopment (International Monetary Fund 2007:3). It is a crime against a free society with devastating effects on a country's effort of improving the standard of living of its citizens. In Liberia, corruption is believed to have been one of the factors that led to the downfall of past regimes. It undermines and weakens government structures, worsening poverty, reducing productivities, hindering development and marginalising the vulnerable (International Monetary Fund 2007:2-3).

According to the Secretary General of the UN, "The country's income or fund is diverted for private gain and depletes the few resources available to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities"(UNHCR Report). Foreign aids that are meant to fund diverse projects are diverted for private enrichment and, thus, halts the development of major infrastructure or projects. Corruption enables the circumvention of government rules and regulation putting lives and properties in danger.

Based on statistical data (Elliot 1997:97), it can be argued that corruption exists in nearly all the countries in the world. However, the degree to which this social menace impacts the lives of ordinary citizens around the globe varies from country to country. In a developing country like Liberia, the knowledge of corruption is pervasive in every sector of the society. It is nurtured by the culture that encourages the display or acquisition of affluence without any regard to how the wealth was obtained.

In another vein, the lack of liability plays a crucial role in nursing corruption and in so doing builds a pillar of resistance to any form of reform needed to create a liberal and free society (International Monetary Fund 2007:-913). It is widely held that corruption entails soliciting bribery, conflict of interest and other illegal means of earning wealth using one's position or office. In Liberia, analysts argue that corruption is widespread; bribery is systematic and entrenched at all levels of government. The impact tends to jeopardise the welfare of citizens. Historians point to Doe's regime in the '80s as the turning point of the country's history (Waugh 2011:27-34).

The high rate of bribery encourages government officers to ignore established standards meant to collect revenue for the state. Officials focus on satisfying the needs of those who paid bribes and delay or indirectly deny those who do not pay bribes, thereby creating an uneven society (International Monetary Fund 2007:6). This phenomenon is a nationwide issue that exists within Liberia. Most interestingly, the General National Audit (GAC) report of 2010 indicted that the current government is the most corrupt government in the history of Liberia (House 2008:414).

In biblical terms, Jesus' encounter with Zaccheaus (Luke 19:1-10) places or stresses the quality of a corruption-free society. It teaches the church that stands in the image of God to strive to discourage an unfair accumulation of wealth. Jesus' public or divine appointment stimulated a response from Zaccheaus the tax collector who promised to return the wealth he amassed through devious means. Furthermore, it

teaches the church to preach the Gospel in a way that unfetters the minds from social vices or any action that tends to abuse the right of citizens (Gregersen 2005:151).

Therefore, the church should dedicate its commitment towards defending biblical norms that advocate for the weak. As it was seen, Jesus' divine appointment stimulated an unusual response from Zaccheaus who realised that his unspeakable means of enriching himself did not only sin against God but also deprived his fellow humanity of decent living conditions. Zaccheaus repented and promised to return the illegal wealth in his possession to the rightful owners.

3.5.7 No freedom of expression

According to Burchell (1998:29-30), freedom of expression is a universal right that accords individuals the right to express their views and opinions, seek information and impart ideas through any media without interference or proscription.

However, in places like Liberia this fundamental human right is frequently abused by people in power through strategies that include censoring, restricting press legislation, harassing journalists, intimidating opposition and silencing critics. Sometimes, the proscription extends to minorities who disagree with the ruling elite (Williams 2002:323-324).

According to Esser and Pfetsch (2004:12), freedom of expression is a tenet of enlightening the public of societal ills through different forms of media. It is an expression of opinion or view on the violations of norms by those in positions of authority or power. It is an opinion that stands against a particular action that is seen as unjust or disproportionate. Past and present governments of Liberia have abused this fundamental right of citizens by unlawfully jailing or silencing individuals or groups that tend to express a critical opinion of their way of governing (Dunn et al. 2014:9).

The governments create an environment that suppresses free-rein criticisms and thus tends to muzzle political dissent with seditious libel law. In other words, political oppositions with strong discourses are labelled or charged for treason and

imprisoned for opposing leaders. To gain insight into the dynamics of censorship or the prevention of freedom of speech in Liberia, it is more useful to look closely at some attacks that were perpetrated against silenced critics (Dunn et al. 2014:8).

For example, a score of Liberians was killed when police opened fire on a largely peaceful demonstration in 1978 in Monrovia (Williams 2002:64). The killings were widely viewed as disproportionate to anything that the protesters had done. The massacre generated enormous outrage internationally, leading to a much stronger rejection of the “black on black” apartheid that was practised in Liberia. Another example on record is the beating and arrest of peaceful protesters from the University of Liberia in the ‘80s under the Doe regime (Dunn et al 2014:8).

A state-controlled media plays a big role in countering criticisms or views of opponents and often the incumbents hog the airwaves and violence towards oppositions or critics is tolerated or sponsored (Brown 2014:6-10). Sometimes, ethnic components or loyalists are used to trump on the rights of those who are critical of the ruling or their kin. Journalists are often arrested and face multiple criminal charges, including public incitement against the government, encouraging public violence, chaos and disorder.

Liberia under the military rule is a case in study of the way restrictions to freedom of speech are intended to quash dissent and brand opponents as enemies of progress and the state and how what may or may not be published is heavily policed (Wulah 2009:524). The government uses legislative agency to mask the control of information as a way of protecting officials who enrich themselves and commit diverse crimes. This expands to cover up administrative errors and abuses and to prevent the circulation of information that could trigger public concern or criticism.

It can be argued from the background of various clashes and violence that the imposition of constraining and restricting freedom of expression is more likely to be contested (Cyr 2001:286) and if not managed well could lead to civil war as was in the case of the Arab spring (Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria). In countries ruled by

law, freedom of expression is vital or significant in preventing or keeping in check the moral function of government. It possibly even helps to avert atrocities.

However, the culture of freedom of expression continues to face complex and dynamic challenges in societies like Liberia which are marked by perpetual conflict, grievance and distrust. There is a maxim that where the rights of an individual end the rights of others begin. This is an indication that freedom of expression that aims to degrade, humiliate and attack the personality of others is often branded as hate speech or abuse of others' rights.

Extreme hate speech has the potential of kindling conflict among citizens, especially religious bigotries who view some expressions as an attack on their belief and religion. An expression of speech that attacks the personality of others kindles or provokes a reaction. An expression of speech can be considered sacrilegious if it attacks a particular belief or way of worship. In 2003 in Liberia, a religious argument in the vicinity of Paynesville Monrovia degenerated into religious conflict and left at least 25 people dead (Levitt 2012:175).

Relating freedom of expression to biblical doctrine, it can be said that it is the pivotal postulation on which the proclamation of God's word revolves, because it encourages Christians to express their views on the ills of society and uphold the value of bringing to light the actions that deprive a society and promote inequality. The phenomenology of freedom of expression in the Christian faith is built on the premise of nurturing God's revelation in Christ among humanity (Culpepper 2011b:313).

This means that at its centre are series of events that culminate in Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection. Freedom of expression is perfectly illustrated in Christ's redemption of humanity as an advocate who propitiated man's sins. In other words, it is the quest to establish the Gospel in the hearts, minds and social life of people so that the truth and righteousness may remain and flourish among humanity (Culpepper 2011a:127-150). The Christian view of liberty of expression, based on the

life and teachings of Jesus ascribes to Him the spiritual attributes of a human rights campaigner.

3.5.8 Injustices

Injustice is the unfair treatment of individuals or the abuse of human rights. Social injustice includes repression that prevents people from achieving their potential. In an explicit argument, injustice is an act of being unjust or oppressive towards innocent citizens. It includes the victimisation of people within a state, the gross violation of human rights and inequality. Injustice is a form of an abuse of power that breaks the governing laws of a state and international norms to perpetrate or inflict multiple abuses on innocent people (Simson 1995:1-9).

On several occasions Amnesty International indicted Liberia for various forms of injustices meted out on ordinary people (Nilson 2003:1990-1999). Despite international laws and campaigns against various forms of injustices, a deeply rooted, unshakable and unfair treatment and inequality exists at the heart of the institutions that Liberians rely on for survival. The most horrific injustices in the Liberian history were committed by the “black on black” apartheid that ensured opulence among the minorities of the Americo-Liberians and poverty, oppression and perpetual suffering among the indigenous majority (Waugh 2011:24-29).

The Americo-Liberians did everything in their power to control the indigenes through institutionalised injustices that forced them to change their surnames in order to be incorporated and recognised as citizens and made them live in townships that lacked basic facilities such as safe drinking water, electricity, proper school systems and basic roads (Mongrue 2011:69-73; Waugh 2011:27). These people were often arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned.

The indigenes were victims of tyranny as they were made to live in fear. As a result of the evil perpetrated on the people, the common saying “leave the people thing” was adopted among the indigenes as a way of cautioning children against vying for political positions. The people viewed the coup as long sought for justice, but the culture of discrimination and injustices that permeates the country continues under

the regime of the “so-called” liberator (Kieh 2008:136). The continuation of this culture of torture, assault, unfair trial of citizens, unfair dismissal and discrimination culminated in the civil war.

Thus, the church has a role to play in keeping in check the repressive culture that continues to deprive citizens of their dignity and human integrity (Martin 1988:135).

Through its missiological principles, it has to seek to influence the public opinion of citizens to peacefully reject oppression and to create awareness towards defending the values of equality and justice. It has to render its missiological services in the cause of its doctrine without measuring the sacrifices. It must try to prove that biblical truth, love and faith with the divine guidance are capable of moving and breaking down the “Jericho wall” of human imposed injustices (Black 1981:156).

The church, which is viewed as one of the physical manifestations of God’s presence among humanity or the agglomeration of saint among whom the truth of God is revealed, has a potential factor in addressing the myriad of societal injustices that exist in its fold (Engelbrecht 2005:171).

3.5.9 Precarious justice

The history of Liberia documents the arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution of individuals for vaguely-defined crimes or behaviours that are not inherently criminal. According to DeRouen and Heo (2007:501-505), various regimes abuse the rights of citizens who are considered suspects of alleged crimes. They argue that when suspects are arrested, they face prolonged solitary confinement and ill-treatment. They are forced to confess and are denied lawyers at the crucial stage of interrogation and trial.

In Liberia, the universal law that gives everyone the right to a fair trial before a court of law is often bridged and people are detained without due process let alone a fair trial (Europa Publications 2004:606). The pervasive culture of gross human rights abuse is believed to be politically motivated and allows security forces loyal to the elite to carry out hideous crimes against innocents with impunity. The security

forces usually enjoy unrestricted freedom when executing or obeying the instructions of superior top government officials (Dolo 2007:63-67).

Historians have cited the disappearance of opposition members, critics and advocates and the execution of suspects. According to records, an innumerable amount of executions occurred during the Americo-Liberian era and the Doe and Charles Taylor regimes (Waugh 2011:40-49). The cruelty of the judicial system that was manipulated for political purposes eroded the confidence and trust of the people who sought other means of justice.

It is professed that the judicial system is instituted to ill-treat and demoralise the poor. It also emerged that the body charged with the responsibility of investigating cases to uncover the truth for fair trial of suspects was tainted. In some instances, government or authority increasingly made use of a range of oppressive laws to silence individuals who are considered a threat to the regime, contributing to the intensifying climate of intolerance in the country.

In a proper or democratic system of rule, a sentence is a penalty or order by the court as punishment, deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation (Kieh 2008:136-137). However, in a repressive environment like Liberia it is used to silence, demoralise, demonise, weaken and get rid of competitors and oppositions. Liberia has a record of framing the opposition for plotting against the sitting president (Dolo 2007:65-68). These sorts of allegations are not often verified by independent human rights groups or advocates. The continual harassment of innocent citizens on political grounds was a warning of the disastrous time ahead. The unfair trial of citizens leads to wrongful conviction (Kieh 2008:135).

To enjoy sustainable and long lasting peace in Liberia, it is on the shoulders of stakeholders to ensure that those charged with the responsibility of steering the affairs of the state obey human rights and seek to uphold the dignity of every citizen, regardless of their ground, tribe, disabilities and political orientation. The participation of the church in defending human rights is not merely defined by humans, but also has a biblical connotation.

The Bible teaches Christians to adopt a frame of mind that stands for the truth, especially as it relates to the abused of humanity. It calls on Christians to stand for the weak and vulnerable in society and preach against oppression (Psalm 82:3; Isaiah 1:17; Galatians 3:28). These passages and many others call on Christians to work with relevant stakeholders in society to promote the precepts of respect for human values as enshrined in the Bible (Sott 1984:150).

The biblical teaching that calls for the respect of human rights also aligns with democratic principles of equality, justice and freedom of expression. Thus, it serves as a foundation for consolidating peace that drives development within a state.

3.6 The Liberian War and Its Impact

The narrated historical events in Liberia clearly show “the writing on the wall” in the midst of incessant human rights abuse. The “writing on the wall” depicts an imminent clash in a society of inequality and gross human rights abuse. The unfolding situation that led to the civil unrest in the country confirms Martin Luther King Jr’s assertion that there comes a time when humanity gets tired of being oppressed, suppressed, subjugated and humiliated (Carson 2000:75). It explains that the continual humiliation of people could lead to a protest or uprising as a way of registering their displeasure.

When humanity is tired of being oppressed and suppressed, as in the Liberian Civil War, it can be explained by the illustration of a boiling point. The boiling point of a liquid is the temperature at which its vapour pressure is equal to the gas above it. This means that for water to boil, it needs a source of high temperature that is constantly applied. In other words, the constant heating of a liquid increases its temperature that causes it to boil (Collier et al. 2010:13). In the case of the Liberian war that killed multitudes of people, the boiling point is “the social injustices and inequality that engulfed the nation” (Otterbein 2004:9).

According to Otterbein (2004:7-9), war is an armed conflict with devastating effects and carnage. It is a human-inflicted situation that destroys lives, properties and the entire environment as a whole. Liberia witnessed nearly 15 years of civil upheaval

that divided the country among several belligerent groups that committed hideous crimes against the people of Liberia. These crimes included the raping of women, the forceful conscription of children and the murder of innocent people (Ngaima 2014:46). Many people lost their lives, became disabled, were injured and had their facilities and infrastructure destroyed. It made relatives, family and friends lose loved ones, making some children orphans, some wives widows, some husbands widowers and some breadwinners to depart prematurely.

According to a report, Liberia lost about 250 000 citizens during the civil crisis (Kaydor 2014:23). Proportion wise, the death toll represents 1:14. This means that for every 14 Liberians (out of a population of 3.5 million), one person lost his or her life in the war. The magnitude of destruction during the civil war was enormous and appalling. It was described by observers as one of the worst civil conflicts ever in the history of humanity (Dunn et al. 2000:169). The war sent waves of reprisal attacks and killings that resulted in a series of massacres throughout the country. The UN Compound, Carter Centre, The Lutheran Church and Bomi County massacres are cases in point (Huband 1998:170-177).

There is no clear list of the detailed obligations which devolve on all Christians, but if a church finds itself in a prevailing situation as the one described above, it should become involved in seeking the country's progression and contributing towards the maintenance of peace. The trend that called for the involvement of the church in societal disputes is manifested in the Gospel (Baum & Wells 1997:1-4). It is the Gospel that formulates a philosophy that guides humanity in integrating and living harmoniously. It is deduced from apparent things that the church which serves as a house of morality, hope and reformation has a role in preaching a message that keeps the society in check and abates rivals.

Child soldiers out of ignorance abnegated the dignity of Liberian citizens through torture, rape, looting and many others (Grovers 2012:277-279). These unemotional soldiers burnt down properties that were contested, including private homes and public offices, business centres, schools, hospitals and banks. They eventually burnt

homes they previously occupied when they were ready to advance to other territory. This resulted in a complete destruction of the entire country.

According to the foregoing discussion, the hostilities “brought to light” countless or considerable numbers of problems that imposed immersed suffering and hardship on the Liberian populace. The world expressed outrage at the appalling conditions perpetrated on innocent people. It destroyed the political, institutional, social and economic infrastructure of the country. The entire populace, one way or the other, was affected and traumatised by the war. It undermined the stability and security of the region. It crossed over to several countries such as Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea. The conscripted generation of child soldiers were taught the horror of war and instructed to carry out unspeakable acts against innocent people (Grover 2012:276-280).

In these times of peace, the church has to play a crucial role that is aligned with its doctrine. It must aim to promote stability as a foundation of recovery, reconstruction and long-term development. The church must seek to propagate a message and project a framework that offers a genuine opportunity for the country to overcome or move beyond the years of hostilities, destruction and despair. It is crystal clear that the role of the church cannot be underestimated as it is seen as an institution of hope.

On Sunday mornings, multitudes pour out and ensconce themselves in churches with feelings of optimism and hope despite the undoubted challenges facing them. The church cannot ignore the fact that it has to make a meaningful and timely contribution to promote peace as a way of protecting civilians under imminent threat of violence, to support the provision of humanitarian assistance, to help promote human rights and to assist in the continual reintegration of former members of armed groups. The next sections discuss the challenges that people face in a post-war Liberia. The church must be aware of these challenges so that it can provide meaningful support to struggling Liberians.

3.6.1 Poor sanitation and water

Liberia in a post-war era is facing a grave problem of supplying safe and drinkable water to the population. The massive destruction of properties and looting of public facilities disrupted the basic supply of social services like water. The Liberia United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) findings indicate that the supply of "safe drinking water coverage fell from 37% in 1990 to 17% at the end of the war in 2003, rising to 25% in 2008. Access to sanitation fell from 17% in 1990 to about 7% in 2003 and increased to 15% in 2008" (International Monetary Fund 2008:14).

It is apparent from the report that access to clean and safe drinking water in rural areas is limited. Most of the people get their drinking water from wells, streams or rivers. These unsafe and unclean drinking waters expose the population to high mortality rates in the event of an outbreak of an epidemic like cholera and other waterborne diseases (International Monetary Fund 2008:13-14). In most cases, the outbreak often increases the vulnerability of women and children to grave health conditions.

Furthermore, the extreme poverty in these rural areas exacerbates or deteriorates the conditions and thereby overextends the already limited or malfunctioning health and social infrastructures. The UNDP report (www.irinnews.org/report/Liberia) estimates that 80% of water wells and sanitation facilities were destroyed and vandalised by warring factions in the Liberian Civil War (International Monetary Fund 2008:118). Additionally, the tropical rain also contributes to the hazardous conditions of the society. The heavy downpour of rain causes erosion and pollution of coastal waters from oil residue, raw sewage and other residential waste (Brinkerhoff 2008:13). During the raining season, Liberia tends to experience a high rate of waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera and infectious hepatitis.

"Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource which is essential to sustain life, development and the environment" (Marquette 2009:35). The debate about

infrastructural development will continue to reflect on the carnage of the civil war that undermines the country's developmental prospects (Brinkerhoff 2008:1-9).

It is obvious from the historical perspective that the carnage undermines or compromises the government's capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver services to the needy. An effective developmental and national recovery depends, therefore, on all the stakeholders to ensure the supply of fresh water to the needy communities throughout the country. The length and cruelty of the war compounded the suffering of millions of Liberians who, even before the war, had little or no access to basic human needs such as safe drinking water and sanitation.

The appalling conditions of the rural inhabitants demand a concerted effort to tackle the issues. The issue of the supply of drinkable water to the population transcends politics and individualism (Katongole 2011:78-79). It is evident that communal progress unequivocally needs the inescapable efforts, attention and contribution of institutions within the country, which includes the church. Moreover, the theology of the church and its missiological role are the divine lines that make the church an important driver in keeping people out of poverty, including the provision of amenities for the needy.

"Care for the needy" is an important teaching that the church cannot avoid or repudiate as it is a foundation of biblical love. It is obvious that this important teaching and others have had bearing on the conscience of Christians who continue to reach out to impoverished communities. Nevertheless, in these troubling times of the country's history, this normative theology must ever seek to give a tangible expression in the society that is widely believed to be predominantly Christian (Thompson 2000:2). The statistics of the country with a predominantly Christian population give an upper hand to the church in this matter.

3.6.2 Economic impact

The civil crisis is described by some commentators as the worst ever in the history of a West African country, not only because of the unspeakable casualties and the death toll, but also because of the indescribable, infrastructural damage it caused to

individuals and the state (Dunn et al 2014:169). The war had a significant impact on the country's economy and its people. The cost of the war was enormous, ranging from a drainage of wealth, a disrupted market and a depressed or impeded economic growth (Levy & Spilling 1998:40).

The immense destruction impedes the country's prosperity capacity of dealing with the poverty that engulfed the nation. During the war, most businesses were destroyed and industrial equipment was looted, putting a huge cost on business owners or investors. Some of the investors whose businesses incurred incalculable damage during the war are still feeling reluctant to return to the country. Iron ore production has resumed at a slow pace (Levy & Spilling 1998:39-41).

3.6.3 Unemployment

Culturally, a "well-to-do" member of a family tends to help the less privileged ones. There are traditional terms used to portray oneness within the family including extended relatives. However, the horror of the war and its economic impact is still visible within every family who barely make ends meet, let alone manage to help relatives. The means of sustainability are proving difficult for households due to a high rate of unemployment and other factors (Wodon 2012:4-6).

Prior to the war, Liberia heavily depended on the export of timber, rubber, ores, other minerals, cash crops and its maritime registry programme for revenue. Though some foreign investors have managed to return to the country, the country is slowly recovering from the total economic collapse during the war. The significant fall of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), left a legacy of extreme poverty that makes two-thirds of the country's populace live below the poverty line. It has also led to severe capacity constraints with a large number of unemployed people in the country (Levy & Spilling 1998:39-41).

Liberia's unemployment rate is among the highest in the world. In this regard, President Sirleaf expressed a concern about the high rate of unemployment in the country especially among the youth. In an interview, she expressed her perturbation that the situation of massive youth unemployment could be used as a "spring boat"

of destabilising the country. As the maxim goes, “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop” (Stone 2006:228).

President Sirleaf said, “Peace and security in Liberia is still an issue because of the young people who are unemployed, and until we can address that, there’s always hanging over us the chance that there may be a resumption of conflict” (Reuter News). This assertion is indeed the underlying factor that fuelled the war, especially the conscription of vulnerable youth to fight for various warring factions. The conscripted youth used the opportunity to massively loot and cause mayhem.

3.6.4 Inflation – higher cost of living

Apart from unemployment, there are other economic factors that affect the country’s growth and development (International Monetary Fund 2013:6). Since the end of the war in Liberia, the country continues to struggle with a high rate of inflation that tends to augment the already dreadful living conditions of ordinary people. The prices of basic commodities on the market are skyrocketing which is causing grave concern as it contributes to the unpleasant condition of poverty in the country.

This analysis does not seek to portray the country’s economy prior to the war as problem free, but rather aims to argue or highlight the severe, unsustainable structural imbalances the war created in the economy sector of the country (International Monetary Fund 2013:4-8).

The researcher seeks to use the evidence as a way of echoing President Sirleaf’s concern that peace and security within a nation do not only depend on an adequate military capability but also on economic stability (Reuters News). The argument is that there are economic factors that are highly interconnected with the factors that determine the stability of a given a nation.

Hence, the higher rate of unemployment among the youth is a point of concern giving the country’s history of youth conscription during the war.

3.6.5 Economic crises – prostitution and human trafficking

The unfavourable economic conditions lead to some dispiriting occurrences like human trafficking in search of greener pastures, prostitution among young women, child labour and a high rate of burglary and drug smuggling (US State Department of State 2010). Young people are deceitfully trapped and made to believe that they will be given good jobs in a distant land.

The promise then turns into a situation of exploitation and abuse. A glaring example of this is the case of the seven young Liberian girls who were taken to Lebanon with the hope of acquiring good jobs for the betterment of their lives in the wake of high unemployment but were made into “sex slaves” instead by their so-called employers (All Africa News).

3.6.6 Mercenary recruitment and brain drain

Another point of concern is the massive recruitment of Liberian youth in the Ivorian crisis due to a lack of sustainable jobs (Dickovick 2014:84-85). Cook’s (2011:22) statistical report shows that a considerable number of Liberian youths were hired as mercenaries to fight for both Pro-Gbagbo and Anti-Gbagbo groups. The recruitment of young Liberians in the Ivorian war due to a lack of jobs is an alarming factor that the country needs to address.

In the same vein, “brain drain” in the country is another catastrophic effect of the war. For the fear of their lives, many experts and specialists sought asylum abroad and some are still hesitant to return to Liberia. The mass departure of these highly skilled labourers had an economic impact on the country. It caused inadequate skill labour and at some point the country had to call on teachers, nurses and other highly-skilled labourers from other countries like Ghana and Nigeria (Dolo 2007:114, 189).

3.6.7 Child labour

The economic impact is also causing high rates of child labour among citizens. Parents and family members are using their children in various ways as breadwinners. Families take advantage of their poor living conditions and lack of jobs to send their children to work on farms, do quarry work, work for business owners and to do hard labour in fishing and construction (Sislin & Murphy 2009:47).

The church as a bedrock of faith through its doctrine should seek to fill the void created by the catastrophe of the war. In these critical times, people look up to the church for Bible-based answers of love, care, support, comfort and counselling which institutions have fallen short of in providing for the needy. In other words, the researcher argues that the church should see the development of the society in which it exists as a means of confronting societal problems. It should seek to identify a framework that defines its involvement in moving the society forward (Thompson 2000:58-59).

The response of the government alone to the mountain of problems created by the war is not enough to alleviate the problems of economic disparity that include a lack of clean drinking water, high rates of unemployment and human trafficking. Over the past decades, many mega churches have sprouted up across the country. Most of these churches, including the conventional ones, are led by visionary, business-minded and charismatic leaders. These leaders use modern technology, websites, graphic designs and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and others) to broadcast their services and activities to the public (Stevens 2012:37-39).

This form of outreach has helped the church in galvanising resources. Many look up to the church as a transcendental institution ordained to install a lifeline in a broken society. The prophet Isaiah clearly enunciated that the church has a social role to preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives and seek to set the minds free from anxieties. The prophet's message underlines the ideology that the church must be involved in every facet of life of humanity (Capucoa 1965:154).

The narrated agonies of the Liberian populace illustrate critical times in the country's history and call for the involvement of everyone, including the church, in responding to the deepest needs of the suffering masses. One question that keeps coming to mind is what role Christianity can play in post-war Liberia to promote peace and contribute towards the progression, recovery and reconstruction of the nation. The responsibility of building a progressive and peaceful nation weighs heavily on the church as a model of peace among humanity (Capucao 1965:150-155).

The argument is that the church should seek to serve as a source of stability, motivation and spiritual leadership in the community that expresses a higher level of religiosity. The main point is that many of the "underclass" in Liberia tends to have some sort of connection to different denominations, yet they come from some of the extremely poor societies, are unemployed, lack skills and, at the same time, are plagued by violent crimes daily (US Embassy Liberia). What role can the church play in the lives of these people as a way of quelling or helping to manage these disquieting situations so that they do not become a spring board for national disaster again? The argument does not portray the church as a sole problem-solving institution, but clearly adheres to the biblical norms that urge the church to play a leading role in society.

3.7 The Church in Liberia – Historical Background

Before the advent of Christianity in Liberia, the country was strongly entrenched with African traditions, native religions and secret societies. Most of these secret societies were characterised by spirituality and rituals. It is claimed that it was the Europeans who first made contact with the indigenes. They did not make an effort to spread their religion among the people (Levy & Spilling 1998:80-86).

However, the repatriated free slaves whose arrival led to the formation of the tribal lands into a country were predominantly Christians. A group of intellectual Christians directed the affairs of the newly discovered land. After a while, they declared an independent for the country Liberia, which was signed by churchmen in the Providence Baptist Church on 26 July 1847 (Levy & Spilling 1998:89).

To prove their Christian background or heritage, the free slaves named the capital of their country Christopolis, meaning the “city of Christ” (Ranger 2008:229). The name was later changed to Monrovia in honour of a former American President, James Monroe, who made an immense contribution to the formation of the American Colonisation Society which was responsible for the repatriation of the emancipated slaves to Africa (Levy 2005:81).

Additionally, Liberia commemorates a fast and prayer day that is set aside to mobilise national prayer for the spiritual cleansing and healing of the nation. The holiday has a biblical connotation (2 Chronicles 7:14). However, it is a day that venerates the founding fathers that discovered the land (Dccclil 1852:500-504).

The Liberian constitution was drafted on Christian values that provide for the respect of human rights and freedom of religion. It is binding on the leaders of the state to implement these precepts that uphold the dignity of humanity. The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. The constitution clearly prohibits or proscribes the abuse of power, oppression, subjugation and many others. In addition, it lies on the shoulder of government officials to endorse a policy that promotes human rights and the rule of the law (Lee & Lee 2010:126-128).

3.7.1 Religious populations

According to a recent census (2008) of Liberia, Christianity encompasses 85.5% of the country’s population. The percentage shows why it is so common to come across Christian inscriptions on public and private facilities, businesses, homes and offices. On the other hand, the Muslim population is about 12.2% and the indigenous religious beliefs population is about 0.5% (US Embassy Monrovia).

Previously, the African religious belief dominated the landscape of the country. The effort of various churches made the religion deep rooted and widely spread in the Liberian society.

Besides the major religions in the country, there are smaller religions like Hindus, Bahas, Sikhs and Buddhists. According to Juergensmeyer and Clark (2012:710-712),

most of the religious bodies incorporate elements of indigenous religious beliefs with their mode of worship. The integration made the religious bodies widely acceptable across the country.

3.7.2 Denomination and religious practice

The conventional or main denominations in Liberia include the Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and AME Zion and a variety of Pentecostal churches. Many of the churches are affiliated with churches outside the country while others are independent (Gifford 1993:57).

Christianity is widely spread throughout the country while the Islamic faith is predominantly practised among the Mandingo and the northern tribes of Liberia (Juergensmeyer & Clark 2012:708-711).

3.7.3 Religious ethnicity

The Mandingos are traders who reside throughout the country and practise their religion, but they are mainly concentrated in the northern parts of the country. The Islamic religion has many converts among the Vais as compared to other tribes in the country. The country is also home to a Fula community, who are predominantly Muslim, some of whom have acquired citizenship.

Ethnic groups in all the regions participate in the indigenous religious practices of secret societies such as the Poro (for men) and Sande (for women). These secret societies teach traditional customs and skills to initiate youth into adulthood. In some cases the Sande societies practise female genital mutilation (Olukuju 2006:33).

3.7.4 Religious affirmation

In the country, high-ranking government officials are required to take an oath in conformity with their religious beliefs when assuming their new offices. They kiss or lay their hands on the Bible or Quran as the holy word of God that expresses the physical manifestation of God's presence. It also portrays God as the omnipresent judge who judges humanity according to its actions. Likewise, prayers are held in these gatherings to seek the guidance of God. The country observes Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas (US State Department of State 2010:59).

The government mandates that public businesses and markets, including Muslim businesses and shops, must remain closed on Sundays and major Christian holy days, an issue that Muslim leaders in the past brought unsuccessfully to the National Legislature and the Supreme Court (Fox 2015:79).

3.7.5 Religious facilities

Public schools offer religious education, particularly Christian education, but not as a mandate. The government subsidises private schools, most of which were affiliated with either Christian or Muslim organisations. Due to the influence of traditional religion and secret societies there are often reports of ritualistic killings (the act of killing for body parts for use in traditional rituals) in all parts of the country.

The government treats ritualistic killing cases as homicides and tends to investigate cases for prosecution, in accordance with the law of the country. However, in some cases, investigations are generally hampered due to a lack of community cooperation and credible witnesses. The witch doctors play an influential role in these secret societies (<http://www.liberiapastandpresent.org>).

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to disclose how often humanity resorts to the lowest form of behaviour that leads to bloodshed. The chapter has also highlighted the incidents of injustices, human rights abuses, abuses of power, greed and corruption as ways of exposing the country's superficial and ugly past as a violent nation that lacks respect for the vulnerable (International Monetary Fund 2007; Waugh 2011). From the exclusive history of "black on black" apartheid that discriminates, subjugates, and oppresses to the reign of Doe and his unique history of silencing his oppositions and the gross human abuses under the reign of Taylor, one can see that the country is a polarised nation filled with hate (Kieh 2008).

The chapter has briefly discussed the horrific experience of the atrocious Liberian war and the difficulties the people went through in listening to news of various forms of attacks, especially from the BBC or from watching television to see scores of

fellow compatriots perishing from rebel attacks. Williams says that, “It was intricate in seeing satellite footage or images of villages, towns and cities in Liberia being destroyed by belligerent constellations” (Williams 2002:115). However, continual skirmishes of elections, perpetual corruption, economic turmoil, especially a high rate of youth unemployment and other violence in a highly polarised society signals disquieting signs of insecurity. According to one testimony, “Some of us whom seem to be alive from the brutal civil conflict, count our blessings that though we were exposed to such extremist we managed to survive” (Researcher’s comment). These incidences confirm recent findings that place Liberia 24th on the list of fragile states in the world (fund for peace)

These scenes of violence that played out in the country’s history show the evil streak in society that makes people destroy others’ lives through savagery parading as a just cause. These kinds of violence initially started out as a disagreement and later flared into a galore of immense destruction. The disagreement between Doe and his comrade Quiwonkpa became a national issue and is one of the many cases of reference (Steinberg 2011).

The country’s history tells the rest of the world that Liberia is a confused and self-loathing nation that perpetrates violence against each other because they do not share the same political ideology, culture and view. A liberator turned dictator and 5% of the elite enjoying the country’s resources portrays violence and abuses as an inherent part of Liberian life (Dolo 2007).

In the face of these atrocities, one would wonder about the country’s religious background or perhaps the high percentage of Christianity within the country (85.5% of Liberians are Christian). What happened to the unique history that renders the country as a Christian nation, whose capital was once called the “city of Christ”, or “Christopolis”?

People are often thrilled to share a unique history with the USA that respects human rights and tolerance (Ranger 2008). However, violence and intolerance can be perpetual and innate in such a society. Though countries have a constitution and

institutions that define and protect its citizens, these mechanisms are often abused or ignored by people in power. Hence, negligence of these powerful elements derails a nation-building process. There is a discrepancy of what people claim to believe or stand for as a nation that tends to emulate the example of America (Ngaima 2014).

The economic and social gaps in Liberia are wider than ever and thus incline to aid the breeding of a polarised identity that remains in the hearts and minds of many Liberians. Constant cases of corruption involving the political leadership allow people to embellish violent views. Although historical events discussed in this chapter are inherently corrupt, the current leadership's inability to deal with the corrupt system is once again proliferating abhorrence among the people (Dolo 2007; International Monetary Fund 2007).

There is a "low level civil war" in the society, discernible through various forms of violence including the 2011 elections, the youth rampage, the forceful land acquisition from the Mandingoes in Nimba county and the arrest and imprisonment of journalists. The value of life would continue to diminish if collective effort is not made towards quelling or curtailing violence. The prolonged war has fractured the country's sense of unity and togetherness (Kieh 2008).

It is fitting to argue that quelling violence and healing in Liberia requires a strong cooperation between Christianity as the largest religious body and the leadership of the country. The church has to condemn attacks, abuses of power and, at the same time, urge citizens and leaders to rally on the ideals on which the constitution and democracy are founded. There should be a fundamental respect for human life and property without discrimination.

However, lawlessness, coupled with societal division, requires more than just preaching the Gospel, but rather seeking to contribute to the complex underlying issues which include unemployment, poverty and crime. These problems are structural, rooted in years of colonialism and "black on black" apartheid that kept the majority of Liberians in desperate poverty and denied them any democratic means to improve their plight.

The manifestation of violence and tension in Liberia are symptomatic of the general decline of the society. Disrespect for others is evident from the top down, from the lack of accountability to hatred of those who are different. For as long as this is not changed and people's values are diminished, society will remain deeply troubled and history is doomed to repeat itself (Rahim 2011). In the face of these challenges, what role can Christianity play in post-war Liberia as a way of stamping its presence as a model of peace? The next chapters will attempt to answer this question.

CHAPTER FOUR: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this section, the researcher integrates the analysis of written theology on Christians' involvement in the maintenance of peace and development with that of the knowledge of the subject matter acquired through qualitative field research. It is a combination of the responses acquired from interviews with the knowledge or information gained from literature written by theologians on the discipline.

The purpose of this section is to identify those aspects of Christian theology that endorse or foster peace and development among the people of Liberia. The views and arguments are not essentially theological statements, but rather a conglomeration of findings geared towards defining a framework for theological thinking and an opportunity for Christians to pursue a deeper Christian reflection on the peace and development of Liberia.

Christian theology has, also, often been successful in challenging society's injustices, discrimination and horror meted out on humanity. Glaring examples include the theological process that led to the repatriation of free slaves (David 1989:108) to Africa (the liberation and repatriation of free slaves to Liberia) and the Kairos Document (Melton 2005:317) which challenged and hastened the end of structural apartheid in South Africa and others.

Thus, the qualitative approach serves the theological analysis of the study well as it primarily focuses on the interviewees' perspectives and seeks to discover what they are experiencing. However, there are divergent views in the understanding of Christians' involvement in the maintenance of peace and development. The broad spectrum of interviewees' arguments show how they interpret the subject under review given the proliferation of conflicts in the country's history, coupled with the past and present economic and political situation in the country. The procedure adopted here, captured and expressed the perspective of the participants as authentically as possible, relating their words, discerning their meanings and conveying them through extensive illustrations in answering the research question.

All citations in this section are from the oral and written interviews outlined below unless specified as published sources. The methodical approach combines data selected from three major sources:

- Literature or texts on peace and development;
- Theologians or preachers; and
- A broad spectrum of Christians of various backgrounds.

Based on the insights and input of interviewees, the researcher has made a cogent deduction by structuring the proceeding arguments under two main themes:

1. Theology and peace; and
2. Peace and development.

4.1.1 Research setting and Ebola

Initially, it was the disposition of the researcher to primarily conduct most of the interviews in Liberia, especially in the rural areas. However, due to the outbreak of Ebola in the region, the researcher improvised by conducting interpersonal interviews with some Liberians in South Africa and with those in Monrovia and other major cities through Skype and other electronic media.

According to scientists, Ebola (Hewlett & Hewlett 2008: 3,313) is a contagious disease that spreads through direct contact with body fluids such as blood, sweat and others of an infected human or animal. It has also been discovered that fruit bats are believed to be the normal carrier of the virus without being affected by it. Thus, as a precautionary measure, South Africa proscribed the movement of people between affected countries, which includes Liberia.

4.2 Population of the Study

The targeted population of the study was 40 Christian candidates selected from different denominations and diverse cultural backgrounds based on their understanding of the country's history. The understanding in this study refers to

both experience and acquired knowledge. Out of the targeted population, 31 (Which means that 77% of the targeted population) accepted the invitation to be interviewed. Some of the interviewees were given the opportunity to respond through writing and others through oral interviews.

The majority of the interviewees are fluent in English and evidently spiritual. The researcher's definition of spiritual herein refers to Christians who are baptised, read their Bibles, pray and attend Christian gatherings or church services. Aside from the interviews, the researcher also had a series of conversations with Liberians of different backgrounds to enhance the discussion under review. The sections that follow discuss the characteristics of the respondent population.

4.2.1 The permutation of the respondent population

A breakdown of the respondents is given in the tables below.

Respondents	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Present population	31	77.5% turnout of targeted population
Male respondents	14	45.2% turnout
Female respondents	17	54.8% turnout
Absentees	9	22.5% absentees

The table below shows the percentage of respondents that wanted to have written or oral interviews.

Respondents	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Written interviewees	16	51.6% of the turnout
Oral interviewees	15	48.4% of the turnout

4.3 Total Population of 40 People

The permutation illustrates the distribution of the targeted population for the study according to gender, of which a majority or 55% of the turnouts were female and 44% of the turnouts were male. Moreover, 48% of the turnout population was interviewed orally while the other 52% responded to the questions through writing.

4.3.1 Personal data

An effort was made to obtain some personal information from the interviewees which has a direct bearing on the survey. To this effect, the study considered the age, denominational background, qualifications and responsibilities of the respondents in their various churches.

4.3.1.1 Respondents' age variation

The respondents fell into the following age ranges.

Age range	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
25–35	8	26%
36–45	12	39%
46+	11	35%
Total	31	100%

4.3.1.2 Respondents' qualification variants

The respondents fell into the following qualification variants.

Academic award	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Certificate	7	22%
Diploma	5	16%
Bachelor	8	26%
Masters	4	13%

Academic award	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
PhD	3	10%
Other	4	13%
Total	31	100%

4.3.1.3 Respondents' religious background

The respondents fell into the following religious backgrounds.

Denomination	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Charismatic (Pentecostalism)	9	30%
Missional churches	6	19%
African Ind. churches	5	16%
Others	11	35%
Total	31	100%

4.3.1.4 Respondents' religious responsibilities

The respondents fell into the following religious responsibilities.

Responsibility	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Youth ministry	8	26%
Women's league	6	18%
Men's league	4	16%
Pastoral	10	31%
Other	3	9%
Total	31	100%

Tables 4.3.1.1–4.3.1.4 portray the age range, qualification, denominational background and religious responsibility of respondents. Table 4.3.1.1 shows that a majority of the interviewees were young adults. Table 4.3.1.2 also illustrates that at least all of the interviewees had some form of education, articulated their views well and had a fair understanding of the topic. Table 4.3.1.3 explains that among the turnout for the interview, 30% of the respondents came from a charismatic background while 19% came from the missional churches with 16% coming from an African Independence religious understanding.

The variation is geared towards the accumulation of diverse views. The last table, Table 4.3.1.4, shows that the interviewees tend to play some role in their various churches. This information is vital to the study because the understanding and views of the respondents are fundamental in making judgments and reaching a meaningful conclusion. The researcher was fortunate in securing the participation of a good selection of people from different traditions and confessions.

4.4 Correlations of Respondents’ Response and Perception

This section correlates the citation and perception of interviewees in order to reflect their views and arguments in this study. The collected answers from the research questions are presented herein to help the readers understand the issues and arguments that tend to have a bearing on the analysis of the study.

4.4.1 The church’s humanitarian programmes in Liberia

When asked about the church’s humanitarian programmes in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The church has played a considerable role in the country.	27	90%
The social role of the church benefitted few individuals and thus the social	2	5%

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
programmes of the church are discriminatory as they target mainly Christians.		
Neutral	2	5%
Total	31	100%

In addressing the question about the role that Christianity has played in Liberia, respondents sounded virtually unanimous in their responses. Ninety percent (90%) or 27 people admitted that the church has placed emphasis on human values and, as such, has provided for the sick and needy, educated the masses, provided health facilities and enlightened the population through its doctrines and charity programmes. The group further stressed that the church provided skills in agriculture and trade and made an impact on the culture and the way of life of the societies within the country. Five percent (5%) argued that the church's social programmes only benefit a few individuals. The same 5% claimed that the church's humanitarian programmes were discriminatory, as they mostly target or benefit members. Another 5% were neutral.

4.4.2 The church and social development in Liberia

When asked about the church's role in social development in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The church operates more like a business organisation than a non-profit organisation. Its facilities are more expensive than state-owned facilities.	20	65%
The church's initiatives are purely geared towards charity or helping the society.	9	30%

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Neutral	2	5%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.2 illustrates that in social development the church is widely seen as a business organisation that seeks to make profits rather than seeking the interest of the society. Sixty-five per cent (65%) of the interviewees expressed that the church-owned institutions (schools, hospitals and others) are among the most expensive institutions in the country. According to the respondents, the practice of charging higher fees by Christian institutions is a basic premise that contradicts the Gospel-based response to human needs. The group further argued that the practice sets the stage for societal discrimination and consequently the stratification of the community.

For instance, Christian-owned schools and hospitals are rated among the best schools and hospitals in the country. However, admitting and offering quality services to only rich people encourages inequality and suffering of the impoverished masses. The respondents believed that if the church intends to help humanity according to its doctrine, then its programmes must target the entire population of the country and not only the rich people.

Incongruent to the above argument, 30% of respondents argued that the church's programmes are virtuously initiated to meet the needs of humanity and are not profit-oriented. This group argued that the high fees charged are attributed to the high cost of operation. In the same vein, 5% of the respondents were neutral and could not contribute to this debate.

4.4.3 The church's role towards good governance

When asked about the church's role towards good governance in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The church's role is ambivalent (it is both negative and positive). It forms alliances with the elite class.	17	55%
It is through the partnership of the church with other stakeholders that brought about the proliferation of the Unification programme that halted the semi-apartheid in the country.	12	40%
Neutral	2	5%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.3 shows that 55% of the respondents were of the opinion that the church in historical Liberia played an ambivalent role between the oppressors and the oppressed. It is believed that the church in general at that time lacked the doctrinal will to tackle the symptoms or causes of conflicts in Liberia. Instead, it frequently took a political stand that promulgated the ideology of the ruling elite. Owing to the alliance or interrelation between the church and the ruling class, church leaders and theologians were not concerned about social justice, the elite domination, oppression and exploitation that created massive misery among the masses.

The respondents pointed to the fact that a majority of the elite was Christian who tainted the image of the church through inconceivable cruelty. According to the argument, the church failed to unite the society on the true scriptures that oppose the maltreatment of humanity. It was often prone to political manipulation and interference. Getting a "bird's-eye view" of the situation, it was said that most of the elite used the church premises in determining how to rule the country.

However, 40% of the interviewed population argued otherwise that it was the church, in collaboration with government that initiated or implemented the unification programme under President Tolbert's reign. The unification programme

(David 2014:108) was meant to unite the indigenes and the Americo-Liberians. According to the respondents, the church sought to eliminate the population distinctions that existed within the country through the unification programme by reaching out to the underprivileged communities.

In contrast, 5% of the interviewed population remained neutral on the argument on the grounds that everything that took place in the past is part of history that needs to be forgotten for a better today and tomorrow.

4.4.4 Causes of deep-rooted social cleavages in Liberia

The historical events narrated in Chapter Three of this study have placed Liberia as one of the prime conflict areas in Africa (Adebajo 2002:20-24) or even in the world. This assertion is buttressed by the findings that labelled the country as one of the most fragile states in the world. Historically speaking, it is a country that has been embroiled in a series of conflicts, where the civil war culminated in the division of the country (Adebajo 2002:20-26). In Chapter Three, the researcher has unearthed that the cycle of division and hostilities in Liberia started centuries ago and pressed forward deep into the current generation (Adebajo 2002:19-23). It consists of a continual shift in the distribution of resources between constellations of the Liberian society.

Arguably, the pattern of hostilities suggests that the induced barbarism that the country witnessed will not come to rest until social integration and social equilibrium between the major forces in the society is achieved. It has become a truism to say or argue that Liberia is endemic with conflict due to its history.

In this section, the researcher seeks the views of respondents on the societal discrepancies that cause conflict, especially in Liberia.

4.4.4.1 Social class

When asked about social class in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The differences in life opportunities between the elite and underdog population are the foundation of the country's troubles.	24	80%
It is the nature of humanity to shift blame or point a finger at others.	5	15%
A neutral view that over the last 80 years integration and intermarriages have blurred the differences that existed between the groups.	2	5%
Total	31	100%

In **Table 4.4.4.1**, the respondents overwhelmingly disclosed that the stratification of the Liberian society is one of the major causes of conflict within the country. To put this in perspective, 80% of the interviewed population asserted that the differences in life opportunities between the elite and the underdog population are the foundation of the country's troubles. They argued that though the elite are in the minority, they continue to control the country's political institutions, economic resources and hold prominent status in the country. It was further expressed that the upper class often uses its power in its own interest at the expense of the weaker masses (Richards 2005:15-25).

Moreover, the group argued that the country can only achieve lasting peace if the social justice system reflects a greater equality of opportunity, a more egalitarian social order, and a diffusion of economic and political power from the few to the

many. In other words, justice that incorporates equality and human dignity is the way forward to peace.

However, 15% of the respondents argued that it is the nature of humanity to shift blame or point a finger at others. In this African setting it is easy to find a scapegoat to problems and miseries. It is often believed that someone is the cause of failure and misfortune. In the developed world, people apply scientific and intellectual minds to their problems and tend to find a lasting solution. Failing to concede that social class is contributing to the woe of the country, the respondents pointed to cultural factors as the bedrock of violence in the country.

The interviewees believed that superstitions, allegations of witchcraft and cultural supremacy are the contributing factors of violence. Many people are so tied to their culture that they fail to think out of the box. They fail to integrate with other people and see themselves as better than the rest. The rest of the respondents (5%) expressed a neutral view that over the last 80 years integration and intermarriages have blurred the differences that existed between the groups.

4.4.4.2 Ethnicity in Liberia

When asked about ethnicity in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Ethnic alliances continue to be encouraged in the country.	20	65%
The damage and negative consequences of the conflict were not as a result of tribalism.	8	25%
Neutral	3	10%
Total	31	100%

In **Table 4.4.4.2** it is deduced that since the coup in the '80s by Sergeant Doe, the continual dominance of one group or tribe gave birth to ethnic solidarity. According

to 65% of the respondents, the issue of ethnic alliance continues to be encouraged in the country (Ferguson 2010). The ethnic cohesion is often manipulated ideologically to serve political purposes.

The alliance at first starts as a way of cooperation and finding a common identity among themselves and it later explodes into tribal conflict in the event of any feud between ethnic groups. The tribal conflict that emerged in Liberia crossed over to the Ivory Coast between the Krahn and Gio. The respondents made an inexorable assertion that the failure to achieve a national cohesion, identity and unity among all the tribes in the country is indeed another time bomb that could explode one day.

The interviewees highlighted persistent verbal attacks and denials that the Mandingoes are not legitimate citizens as a clear example of this. The country has to discourage political ideology that tends to manipulate the minds of the people or certain tribes as victims. The respondents further asserted that a systematic and concerted attempt to extinguish the spirit of tribalism is needed in the country, not as a way of condescending a particular tribe or culture, but a national assimilation that makes people see themselves as one people and not a fragmented group.

In contrast, 25% of the respondents argued that the damage and negative consequences of the conflict were not as a result of tribalism. According to this constellation, tribalism helps to build shattered families and entire communities that were uprooted through communal love. It also helps to build the social, political, economic and traditional governance systems that were destroyed.

Through communal unity, tribalism tries to mitigate the experiences of the marginalisation the people faced, the devastating effect of the war and monumental challenges that remain. It tries to eradicate poverty and address unemployment, especially among the youth, which remains the centrepiece of the tribal identity. Ten per cent (10%) of the participants remained neutral and did not know exactly what to say.

4.4.4.3 Religiosity

When asked about religiosity in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The current religious tension between Christians and Muslims needs immediate attention.	15	50%
Due to moral decadence in the country, it is prudent to advocate for a religious state that would rule through its doctrine.	14	45%
The debate is not necessary for national progression and of such ought to be neutral.	2	5%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.4.3 portrays that though religious differences have never been a primary cause of conflict in Liberia, respondents drew the attention of the researcher to the current development in the country. Half of the respondents (50%) mentioned that the current religious tension between Christians and Muslims needs immediate attention. In recent times, Christians in Liberia have written a proposal to legitimately (by law) make Liberia a Christian state.

The group argued that this proposal has the propensity of breeding religious intolerance that could lead to or kindle conflict. The respondents believed that this is an inconceivable proposition that would further divide the already polarised society that is often prone to violence. The respondents further noted that the current constitution in one way or another mirrors the Bible that promotes human rights, tolerance and love for one's enemies and neighbours.

If one is to avoid the restlessness, disquiet and disgust of violence, one must endeavour at all times to promote and uphold the values and ethics that underlie a free and liberal society that protects both the minorities and the majorities. The respondents focused on some of the contradicting factors that could ignite the gall of Muslims if they perceive that their rights are being abused by the Christian majority.

The degree of rationality behind the proposal was never meant to promote a united nation in which everyone tends to have a sense of belonging. The alienation that pushes through the interest of one group over another could easily lead to violence. The Christian population in the country has to come to terms with the phenomena of modern society and pursue the ideology of collective interest.

Nevertheless, 45% of respondents argued on moral grounds that due to moral decadence in the country, it is prudent to advocate for a religious state that would rule through its doctrine. The call for a religious state relates directly to the realm of social ethics and is not meant to suppress any group of people or religion. It does not in any way mean to instigate violence. Christianity wishes to play a role that would eliminate the moral bankruptcy that is experienced in the country. The current political climate has lost the moral edge to restore the country to its conventional human values. Five per cent (5%) of the same populace argued that the debate is not necessary for national progression and as such ought to be neutral.

4.4.4.4 Major divides in Liberia

4.4.4.4.1 The Americo-Liberian and the indigenous divide

When asked about the divide between the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous population in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
More attention must be given to the divide between the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous, the tribal and the	19	60%

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
religious.		
Even if the issue of the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous is removed, it would not be the end of all the troubles within the country.	12	40%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.4.1 indicates the divisiveness created by the political, cultural and historical experiences recorded in the collective memory of different population groups within the country. The respondents argued that conflicts are inevitable when the culture of divisiveness becomes the norm of the society. The deepest danger concerning the divisiveness is not the level it has reached, but the extent to which it is being justified, primarily by people who explode the situation for self-esteem. Most of the responses of interviewees (60%) suggested that the overriding division which commands more attention is that between the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous, tribal, and religious.

The Americo-Liberian forms the national elite in terms of political power, economic resources, social status, educational level and communication sophistication. They have used the power to entrench themselves in all fields. Although they make up 5% of the country's population, most of the country's economists, lawyers, politicians, engineers and medical doctors are from this background.

However, 40% of the respondents argued that if the issue of the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous is removed, it would not be the end of all the troubles within the country. They asserted that it is unfounded to leave the other levels of conflict out of the equation. Despite the toppling of the Americo-Liberian-led government in the '80s, the problems did not cease but rather multiplied.

4.4.4.4.2 The indigenous divide

When asked about the divide between the indigenous populations in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The indigenous divide is based on economic and cultural dominance as a source of conflict.	25	80%
The relationship between ethnic groups within the country has always been an ambiguous one without absolute unity.	6	20%
Total	31	100%

In **Table 4.4.4.2**, most of the respondents (80%) pointed out that the indigenous divide is based on economic and cultural dominance as a source of conflict. This perception also confirms Ferguson's (2010:134-136) affirmation that dominance, marginalisation and exclusion fuelled the conflict. The indigenous are also divided into 16 ethnic distinguishable tribes. Some of these divides have had considerable historical significance, for instance, between the Kwa-language speaking cluster and the Mande speaking tribes. The causal links to this ethnically diverse society come from a variety of potential perspectives.

However, respondents argued that the ethnic conflict stemmed from ancient rivalries and unresolved grievances. For instance, land disputes continue to serve as a factor that incessantly rekindles these kinds of conflicts. In this case, competition over resources and societal status is at the heart of ethnic conflicts in Liberia. Between all these groups there is a clear-cut stratification in social class. As mentioned, the Americo-Liberian form the upper class and the indigenous people form the lower class.

Ethnicity proves to be a main strategy designed to preoccupy, destroy and disorganise communal unity. Within the underdog population groups, there were distinguishable divides that emerged from under various regimes such as Tubman, Tolbert, Doe and Taylor. During the Doe reign, tension rose between the Krahn and other tribes who clamoured for a greater share in the responsibility of running the country. It is believed that under the Doe reign, income discrepancies favoured the Krahn tribe. The emergence of the Krahn tribe as a potential upper class annoyed many and supplied the powerful sources of the conflict. The fear of being dominated materially by another underdog tribe led to a planned coup and counter repression.

However, 20% of respondents argued that the relationship between ethnic groups within the country has always been an ambiguous one without absolute unity. There has never been a unanimous compromise on cultural differences in order to achieve national unity. There have always been disagreements that erupt into sporadic clashes. The proponents of this tribal violence failed to consider the long- and short-term implication or the suffering they inflict on thousands of people. The argument is not about the abolition of tribal identity, but the rejection of tribal norms and principles that sow division among Liberians. The structuring of the society on the ethnic line tends to breed discrimination and tribalism. The structural violence has triggered violence which is exemplified by the division of the society based on ethnicity.

4.4.5 The role of church in conflict management and prevention

When asked about the role of the church in conflict management and prevention in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The unfolding events in the country prior to and after the coup led to the formation of the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) in 1982. They have a stakeholder	22	70%

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
role in national issues.		
The LCC is not a major stakeholder in national issues.	9	30%
Total	31	100%

In **Table 4.4.5**, according to 70% of respondents, the unfolding events in the country prior to and after the coup led to the formation of the LCC in 1982 (Olukuju 2006:38). The LCC was formed with the aim of promoting fellowship among Liberian Christian organisations, facilitating discussions and advocating on religious and national issues. It also has the objective of mobilising resources to support development initiatives. Interviewees further pointed out that the LCC has an Interfaith Mediation Committee.

The committee comprises the LCC and National Muslim Council of Liberia. The Interfaith committee have participated in all levels of negotiations to peacefully resolve the Liberian civil conflicts. The most recent negotiation includes the Accra Peace Conference on Liberia, where the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was formulated, endorsed and signed. The councils continue to work together to promote religious tolerance throughout the country. Currently, the LCC has 19 member churches and 10 member organisations.

However, 30% of respondents differed from the suggestion that depicts the LCC as a major stakeholder in national issues. They argued that the organisation has failed to attract many Christian bodies and churches. The country has nearly 86% of its population as Christians, replete with Christian bodies and churches. Only a minute number of these bodies are members of the organisation. After three decades of being in existence, the organisation has failed to achieve national unity among Christians, what more among non-Christians.

To achieve national relevancy among Christians, it has to attract many members and make its presence known among believers. The comments of the respondents revealed that the organisation has failed to attract many members due to church politics and a lack of trust in the way the organisation handles its own affairs.

4.4.5.1 Catholic Justice and Peace Commission

When asked about the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The JPC has played an influential and impressive role in Liberia since its establishment in 1991.	29	95%
The JPC operates more like a political institution than a religious body.	2	5%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.5.1 shows that despite the existence of the LCC, 95% of respondents pointed to the influential and impressive role the JPC has played in Liberia since its establishment in 1991. It is a Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by the Catholic Church in Liberia to respond to a gross and long history of human rights abuses and injustices that engulfed the nation. Among mainline and charismatic churches in Liberia, the Roman Catholic Church has shown a commendable concern to relate Christian faith to human rights (Mekenkamp et al. 1999).

Since its establishment, the organisation has monitored and reported on human rights abuses in Liberia. It accomplishes its aims and objectives by continuing to provide legal aid, coordinate human rights and report programmes of suppression. It also makes an effort to achieve long-lasting reconciliation in Liberia through its conflict resolution and peace building programme, which includes training,

workshops and the promotion of dialogue and tolerance at the local level, using existing traditional mechanisms where possible.

A major achievement of the organisation is its resistance against human abuse under Taylor’s reign. It strongly challenged and indicted the Taylor government for abuses perpetrated against the Liberian people. One of the outstanding figures of the organisation who challenged the Taylor government when no one else dared to was Bishop Michael Francis (Dolo 2007:42). He fearlessly and continuously indicted Taylor for crimes against humanity. Francis did this despite that fact that Taylor was a tyrant who never hesitated to eliminate his critics. Although the bishop was never a sinless saint without controversy, his bravery to “bell the cat” in the face of imminent danger to his life earned him heroic status among many quarters in Liberia. However, 5% of respondents argued that the JPC was more like a political institution than a religious body.

4.4.5.2 Casualty of the weak

When asked about the casualties in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
Women participated in ending the war. In times of war it is the vulnerable that suffer the most.	23	75%
Neutral.	8	25%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.5.2 shows that 75% of respondents were of the opinion that the participation of women in ending the war was crucial and timely. According to the discussants in this category, in times of war it is the vulnerable that suffer the most. This happened in the Liberian Civil War as women and children were mostly victimised or affected. Women were raped, tortured, killed and humiliated in all

forms. The respondents argued that the cultural orientation that women are inferior to men breeds a wave of violence against women.

Despite this, the women were paramount to the ending of the war. The Christian women in Liberia joined forces with the Muslim women to call for an end to the war. They protested daily by sitting in a public square and refused to perform their matrimonial duties. In extreme cases, they denied men sexual intercourse as a way of expressing their displeasure with the ongoing war.

The protest attracted many women around the country. It stimulated a conversation that was geared towards finding solutions to the conflict. The action of the women implicitly or explicitly had some impact on the dimension of the war. Observers argued that initially 1 000 women were assembled in front of the municipal office in Monrovia to demand for an immediate end to the hostilities between the rebels and government. The number steadily increased to become a nationwide phenomenon.

In a statement to the government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), the women and other factions demanded an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and appealed to the international community to monitor it. They also called for a dialogue between the warring parties for the restoration of peace in Liberia. They were compelled to step forward due to the high death rate and the appalling living conditions of Liberians across the nation. The people continued to experience food shortages, inadequate medical supplies and gross human rights abuses. As mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and daughters they distressingly pointed to the consequences of the war and appealed for redress. Their involvement is justifiable as there was no end in sight to the violence across the country.

4.4.6 Reconciliation (TRC) and the quest for justice

When asked about the reconciliation process in Liberia, the following was revealed.

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage

Respondent views	Frequency (amount of people)	Percentage
The interviewed population expressed its opinion on the mode of reconciliation that took place in the country. The TRC mode of reconciliation that follows the South African method gives blanket amnesty to perpetrators without justice for the victims.	19	60%
This form of reconciliation does not afford justice to the victims of the war and thus ignored their plight.	12	40%
Total	31	100%

Table 4.4.6 shows that 60% of the interviewed population expressed its opinion on the mode of reconciliation that took place in the country. The term Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is a restorative justice system set up in South Africa in order to reconcile the perpetrators and victims of the institutionalised human rights abuses that occurred in the country. It allows victims to narrate their stories of abuses and perpetrators to admit to committing hideous crimes against victims. If the perpetrators admit to their crimes they are given amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution. In short, reconciliation in this manner presupposes the following (Ransley & Spy 2004:15,137):

1. That the cause of the conflict is identified by stakeholders who work towards avoiding it in the future;
2. That the perpetrators must admit guilt, express remorse for the crime committed and be willing to obviate or shun the cause of the conflict;
3. That the victims must be willing to forgive, compromise and bear the scars of the conflict; and

4. That both parties must agree to restore full fellowship or live harmoniously guarded by the rule of law.

This reconciliatory mode is implemented to facilitate peace in the society.

Liberia's mode of reconciliation follows the South African pattern as a way of burying the hatchet and unifying a deeply divided society. The striking thing about this mode of reconciliation is that it portrays a biblical form of reconciliation (Boesak & DeYoung 2012:63). It mostly leans towards the biblical teaching of forgive and forget than social justice that prosecutes perpetrators for crimes against humanity. It has been observed that the scars and consequences of the war visibly resonate with the life of the victims.

To some pundits, the hardship and long-term suffering caused by the war has some elements of cultural traits. The reality is that the victims have no choice but to live on. The point is that the elite, war lords and some stakeholders continue to show some sense of superiority over the ordinary people who endure the same factors that caused the war: injustices, corruption, nepotism and inequality. Hence, the question is how far has Liberia come with reconciliation? Are they fulfilling the presuppositions enumerated in the TRC? Forty per cent (40%) of the respondents were of the opinion that this form of reconciliation does not afford justice to the victims and, thus, ignored their plight.

4.4.7 Challenges that breed conflict

According to 65% of respondents, "In a country that is replete with resources, everyone who lives in it is entitled or has the right to a standard of living [that is] adequate for [the] well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security". The act of unifying a country that experienced atrocities should not only be concerned about the past. Steps must also be taken to address the burning issues of the present and the future. No amount of talking, writing and theorising can achieve lasting peace in the country unless stakeholders seek to obviate the factors and challenges that breed conflict.

If Liberia is to enjoy peace, everybody must have the chance to compete with everybody else. Politically, all groups must have the same rights to strive for power and influence in society. Economically, everyone must have the same chance of empowerment, job opportunities and enjoy fair distribution of state resources. In other words, there must be equality of dignity and equality of opportunity. History has shown that Liberia is a conflict-ridden society; the most prominent is the conflict between the upper class and the lower class.

However, this is not the only conflict. If one were to remove the top layer of conflict, other layers would immediately gain prominence. This other conflict occurs between political parties, between the leadership and the ordinary people, between different ethnic loyalists and between conventional thinkers (traditionalists) and proponents of secular thinkers. The failure to tackle the elements that provoke these sorts of divides is likely to kindle conflict.

However, 35% of respondents expressed optimism that the country will no longer go down the path of full-blown war. However, these respondents held pessimistic views about the current and future leadership's ability to deal decisively with the elements that cause conflict. They argue that the past and present governments have failed to initiate reform that satisfies the aspirations of every Liberian, neither have they addressed the fundamental issues of equality.

4.4.7.1 Education of servitude

Analysing the educational system in the country, 80% of respondents argued that the educational system in the rural areas perpetuate servitude. Students from the rural areas do not stand a chance to compete with students from urban schools due to the disparities in the resource distribution and quality of teachers. The differences also play out in the job market. It is difficult for students who are graduates from perceived inferior schools to acquire jobs ahead of those from the so-called best schools. As a result, there is a kind of academic inertia among children in the rural areas. Hence, the system of education prevents the rural inhabitants from competing on an equal basis in an industrial society. On the other hand, 20% of the respondents

argue that education is not about the institution or place where one earns a degree or certificate but it is about learner making a meaningful contribution in the society that matters.

4.4.7.2 Poverty reduction

The current United Nations' report stated that the government failed the masses in implementing a poverty-reduction strategy or failed to direct the country's resources towards the reduction of poverty in the country (Front Page Africa 2015). However, this is not something new in Liberia. It is something that has always been in the country. One does not even need statistics to demonstrate or to note the glaring economic disparities between the elite, middle class, the super rich and the impoverished masses (Kieh 2008:147).

The past and present governments' inability to fairly direct the country's resources to deal with poverty in the country while a minority group enjoys luxuries reflects the fundamental injustices the ordinary people are subjected to. There were glaring disparities according to the respondents. Most of the interviewees (90%), described West Point as one of filthiest townships with no proper infrastructure and a place which stinks because of poor sanitation. However, a few kilometres away from this township there are rich areas such as Graystone, Mamba Point and Sinkor. The difference in living conditions between these areas are testimonies to how a few people continue to enjoy the country's resources while the masses continue to face hardships.

4.4.7.3 The legal system

When asked about Liberia's legal system, 70% of respondents said that they mistrusted the country's legal system. According to this proportion of the respondents' population, the legal system has been manipulated to justify the cruelty against the innocent in the country from Charles D.B King's days to Barclay, Tubman, Tolbert, Doe, Taylor and now. The government's failure to prosecute indicted corrupt officials shows how it has no moral basis because it shields and protects those who systematically deprive the masses of their fundamental rights.

It is not a secret that on numerous occasions government officials have been found wanting of various degrees of corruptions, but the government ignored the call to prosecute them. Instead, they are removed from office quietly without reprimanding them. A report has surfaced that some officials in the health ministry embezzled part of the aid that was sent to Liberia during the Ebola epidemic (Reuters News, Monrovia 2015). How heartless can one be to embezzle the fund that was meant to save the lives of fellow compatriots who were at the verge of death from the dangerous Ebola disease? A quarter of the respondents (25%), argued that ill in government is a universal trend that cannot be eradicated but rather minimised. The rest of the respondents (5%) believed that no amount of talking or writing can make a difference.

4.4.8 The church in the face of repression and social injustice

Considering the fact that most of the interviewees were Christians, a question was asked as to what role the church was currently playing in the face of the challenges in the country. Sixty-five per cent (65%) of respondents expressed that in Liberia experiences have shown that some churches in the past and present continue to be part and parcel of the problem and not part of the solution. The Christian faith has been used as a political platform. During elections, various candidates file into the churches for divine prophecy and God's intervention on their behalf.

Moreover, many of the political leaders and stakeholders in the country belong to various churches. The religious leaders in those churches fail to confront them and, therefore, they are implicated in wrongdoing. To some respondents (35%), the perpetual silence of many church leaders on grave issues in the country reflects their collaboration with suppressive leaders who are also members of the church. The perceived collaboration makes the church have no critical moral base of integrity to challenge the evils in the society, as long it remains in the pocket of politicians.

In the past, the church reflected the painful division of the Liberian society. There were leaders from pre-coup churches who openly supported the True Whigs party's policy of suppression and exclusion.

4.4.9 Perception in context

The researcher made an attempt to calculate the perception average of respondents' opinions during the study. In other words, the researcher's term "perception average" refers to the overall views of the respondents' as being either for, against or neutral about the study. The perception average percentage for the motion means that the comments or views that were expressed were explicitly optimistic about the situation in the country as it relates to this study.

Similarly, the perception average percentage against the motion means that the comments or views expressed were explicitly pessimistic about the situation in the country as it relates to this study. The neutral views are those comments that did not contribute to the debate.

4.4.9.1 Perception average percentage for the motion

The following percentages indicate how many respondents were optimistic about the questions asked in the interviews. It takes the total of the percentage of respondents who were for a motion and then divides it by the amount of motions (17 motions in total). The percentage is then the amount of respondents who were for the motion.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{For motion} &= 90\% + 65\% + 55\% + 80\% + 65\% + 80\% + 60\% + 80\% + 70\% + 95\% + 75\% + \\ &60\% + 65\% + 80\% + 90\% + 70\% + 65\% / 17 \\ &= 73\% \end{aligned}$$

4.4.9.2 Perception average percentage against the motion

The following percentages indicate how many respondents were pessimistic about the questions asked in the interviews. It takes the total of the percentage of respondents who were against a motion and then divides it by the amount of motions (17 motions in total). The percentage is then the amount of respondents who were against the motion.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Against} && \text{motion} && = \\ &7\%+30\%+40\%+15\%+25\%+45\%+40\%+20\%+30\%+5\%+40\%+35\%+25\% / 17 \\ &= 21\% \end{aligned}$$

4.4.9.3 Perception average percentage of neutral respondents'

The following percentages indicate how many respondents were neutral about the questions asked in the interviews. It takes the total of the percentage of respondents who were neutral about a motion and then divides it by the amount of motions (17 motions in total). The percentage is then the amount of respondents who were neutral about the motion.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Neutral: } 3\%+5\%+5\%+5\%+10\%+5\%+5\% / 17 \\ &=6\% \end{aligned}$$

4.5 Analysis and Discussion of the Research Findings

This section of the chapter analyses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives which aim to answer the main research question: what role can Christianity play in post-war Liberia? In other words, what role can Christians play in post-war Liberia to contribute towards the peace, development and reconstruction of the country? As illustrated in the preceding chapters, this section combines a qualitative approach with the information acquired from literature on the discipline.

In order to answer the main research question of the study, the following issues are discussed and analysed based on the findings:

- Haunted history
- Paradoxical image
- Denial of reality
- Political violence
 - Justification of violence
 - Fanatical politics
 - Greed and egocentrism

- Failed leadership
- Feeble reconciliation and justice
 - Culture of impunity and quest for justice
- United front
 - Peace, unity and justice
 - Peace and development

These issues are deduced from the research findings as correlated views and perceptions of respondents and information from the sources of literature have been used. Given the contrasting views and understanding of respondents, an analysis is made to reflect the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework of the study is also highlighted as a guidance tool in making meaningful arguments.

4.5.1 Haunted history

It is observed from the trends and patterns of the data gathered (**Table 4.4.4,1** to **Table 4.4.4.4.1**) that the history of the country plays a vital role in shaping the perception and mindset of the people. The history of the ethnic divide and social stratification continue to have a bearing on the integration of the populace which confirms Ngaima's (2014:81) affirmation. According to Ngaima (2014:7-27), Liberia's troubling history affects its societal cohesion as a nation. This brings to mind the exhortation of Jesus to His disciples to build their foundation on a solid rock:

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

If one applies the analogue to a layman understanding, it is obvious that a foundation plays a vital role in the durability and lifespan of a structure as it faces the test of time and nature's relentless attacks. In order to have a sturdy structure, a solid foundation is paramount. In the case of this study, it is deduced that the historical background of Liberia has a great influence on its citizens. The respondents provided the latest instalment of a historical lesson that said that the citizens adamantly refuse to learn or admit in public the ill of the society. The

arguments from the interviewees brought to light that the country's divided past is still present; it is unending. It seems, in many ways, that Liberia is congenitally unable to acknowledge and fundamentally effect changes.

In recent years, especially the years during the civil war and the post-conflict Liberia, there have been many valuable meditations on the policy structures that shaped the society and brought it to its knees and continue to define today's social imbalances. There has been historical analysis and contemporary commentary from Dolo (2007), Kieh (2008), Ellis (1999), Peercy (2013), Williams (2002), Ngaima (2014) and many others on the subject matter.

All of these, and many other, writers have produced prolific and intellectual work describing and showing the culmination of how the past has taken the country to where it is today, with its persistently unequal scales of opportunity. Throughout the history, social division has indeed found fresh manifestations: from an unequal development scheme, job opportunities and the exploitation of the masses to the injustices and brutality of the innocent. The following reflections have taken place through the years in the country. It is probable to say that the country or nation has been built on shaking ground that continues to sink with time and conditions.

The country has a haunted history of how human dignity has adversely affected and promoted structural violence. The structural imbalances triggered an avalanche of violence. This is exemplified by the Fernando Po saga (Huffman 2010:181), the 1978 rice riot (Williams 2002:64-66), the university student demonstration (Human Rights Watch 1986), the 1985 attempted coup and, ultimately, the brutal civil war.

A shaking structure shows a state of crisis which means that failure to address the fundamental issues that divide the nation points the country to another round of conflict. For some, the country is still in crisis because the leadership cannot meaningfully use the resources it has to improve the living conditions of the masses. To others, the country is going through the birth pangs of the freedom or democracy it neglected. However, no matter how one may see or comprehend it, Christianity has a called duty to contribute to this part of the world society.

4.5.2 Paradoxical image

Respondents' perception and discourse (Table 4.4.3, Table 4.4.4.3 and Table 4.4.5) reveal a paradoxical image or background of Liberia. The paradox lies in the fact that within the perception of a country built on Christian precepts (Dolo 2007:18-19) the force of disunity and destruction steered the country towards one of the worst human catastrophes. This is to say that the teaching of "love your brother as yourself" was replaced with hate and violence in the heart of God's children.

Christian love, as shown in the Bible, is central to Christianity. The Bible tells the story of God's ongoing concern for creation and humanity and, in so doing, "climax His love for humankind through the sacrifice of His son" (John 3:16). It is the teaching of God's love that guides Christians in their interpersonal relationship with people. In his commentary, Vacek (1994) argues that the love of God is the centrepiece of all human relations.

If a country is predominantly Christian (86%) and founded on Christian principles (Liberia Export-Import Trade and Business), one may ask to what extent the believers were responsible for the atrocities committed by the government and individuals. Perhaps the question could be rephrased to allow for a proper inquiry into what extent Christians were responsible or complicit in the vicious terror on each other, perfected as a technique of controlling state power and resources and reaching culmination in the 1989 upheaval—surely among the most unspeakable crimes in history.

The population and the statistical number of Christians in the country and, in part, their complicity to the unfortunate events during the civil war made these questions have significance and poignancy. With regard to the responsibility of Christianity to the Liberian society, there are still other, equally disturbing questions. Christians are in a position to expose the ill of humanity, including governments, to analyse actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions and to confront them according to biblical truth.

Historically, the church unwaveringly taught on the two themes of God's love and God's justice by which He seeks to redeem creation and humanity. The power of God's love when it is preached to humanity tends to control the purpose and attitudes of Christians in society. It has the divine power to effect liberty, comfort the weak or oppressed souls and steer the boat of peace (Lawson 2006:76-150).

The church is an institution charged to proclaim and practise this doctrine among humankind. For Christians who understand the Bible, love provides the leisure, the facilities and the platform for seeking the truth that often lies hidden beneath the veil of social injustice, greed, false ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history were narrated by respondents. Considering the divinity of the Bible and the responsibilities it lies or puts on the shoulders of Christians, one can easily envisage that the responsibilities of Christianity are much deeper than what the Bible calls "love your neighbour or enemy" given the unique doctrine that it presents to Christians and the relationship that humanity enjoys with God.

The issues of brotherly love raised or taught in the Bible are as pertinent today as they were thousands of years ago. One can hardly avoid asking to what extent the Christians of Liberia bear responsibility for the savage assault on each other, largely for the helpless rural population, as the country forfeited the teaching of being one another's keeper. Building an argument based on numbers, it can be said that many Christians stood by in silence and apathy as the catastrophe slowly took shape over the past dozen years, therefore, on what page of history does the Christians population in the country find its proper place? Only the most insensible can escape these questions.

Furthermore, added to this growing lack of concern for true brotherly love, a real or contrived naiveté about Christian actions that reached a startling proportion is discovered. For example, Christians' failure to uprightly oppose the elite's exclusion and marginalisation of the masses, the violence of the '80s and the social ills that continue to divide the country portray a paradoxical image of a country known as a Christian nation. Unless intended as an irony, this portrayal shows either an

enormous disparagement or the inability, on a scale that defies measurement, to comprehend elementary phenomena of contemporary history.

Similarly, what would one make of the actions of churches that vividly side with politicians that commit atrocities? The Bible, which is regarded as the inspired word of God, uprightly forbids oppression, suppression and wicked leaders. It surpasses belief that unless the church looks at the matters from a more historical point of view, and places them in the context of its doctrine, it would continue to play a role that is in direct opposition to its norms and teachings.

To create the basis for decency, prosperity and democratic government in Liberia as an underdeveloped country, the church has to examine the factors and elements that almost led the country to the brink of extinction or a failed state. The Bible emphasises the duty of the church towards God and fellow beings as revealing God to all nations through His word (Matthew 20:28).

All this supposes that the church of Liberia subordinated its culture to the will of humanity and thus forfeited to seek the common good of the society and preach to the human faculties in such a way that promotes tolerance, unity, love and social cohesion. Let it be noted that it is not the researcher's aim to portray the church as an authority to determine the characters and behaviour of citizens, but rather that it failed to establish the conditions and means that are capable of fostering the Gospel of peace and unity among the people of Liberia.

In other words, the church has no proper role in the political, economic or social order, but has a religious mission to serve or structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine purpose of God. The promotion of unity and social cohesion according to God's will belongs to the innermost nature of the church because it is bound to no particular cultural, political or economic system in the sphere of humanity.

It is necessary for the church in its culture of truth to do everything possible to prevent it from being manipulated to acquiesce to an ideology that subjugates and deprives others through political and economic instruments of their God-given

rights. Through its missiological teachings and principles, it is possible for the church to effect freedom of humanity from the misery of ignorance. The missiological doctrine of the church that is most consonant with our times is that it must work diligently to stand against great human rights abuses that permeate the society of today. In a country that has been torn apart by tension, misunderstanding, division and suspicion, the fact of the matter is that the church's unity platform is a great comfort to humanity which the word of God demands.

4.5.3 Denial of reality

A tradition of violence is discernible throughout the history of Liberia. It is a nation that declared independence when the country was still relatively young. It encountered the difficulties of handling conflict without proper preparation. Just after a few years of declaring independence with much optimistic ideology, violence arose in the country and since then the nation has refused to face the reality and has piously thrown a veil over the facts.

Liberia has always been ridden with violence since it became a nation, but the truth was covered over by moralistic Christianity. In the moralistic term, it is perceived that abusing the rights of the "heathens" was not a crime. The testimonies of interviewees attest to the reality that violence against innocent people was never regarded as a crime (**Table 4.4.3** and **Table 4.4.7.2**).

It was noticeably discovered in the comments of respondents that the church often takes a radical and uncompromising stand against well-selected social ills or sins and ignores the rest. It vociferously preaches against adultery, fornication, drunkenness and theft, but is completely silent about the sin of discrimination, corruption, political assassination and unfair distribution of the country's wealth in favour of the elite. The church is silent on the institutionalised sin of oppression, marginalisation, subjugation and exploitation.

4.5.4 Political violence

The study has discovered that most of the violence that occurred in Liberia was politically instigated among the people (Adebajo et al 2002:184). It shows that tension in the sphere of the Liberian society could not evoke cooperation among opposing forces but rather provoked conflict as parties competed for fair and equal rights. The stronger party used political means to harm or weaken the other in order to dominate, resulting in aggression. Domination in this scenario demands powers in order to influence the conditions and actions against the weaker party through force.

The weaker group continuously counteracted the influence and dominance of the powerful group through resistance (Ngaima 2014). In other words, the weaker group incessantly rebelled against the dominance to regain its freedom, equal rights and dignity. A strong population group entrenched itself in a position of political power, economic privilege and social prestige. It constantly undermined the competitiveness of other population groups by oppression, discrimination and humiliation and withheld life-enhancing facilities.

In so doing, it used the power of the state, legislature, administration, judiciary, police and the army in its interest at the expense of the underdog population groups. A glaring example of this was the declaration of Decree 88A under the Doe regime (Kappel & Korte 1990:50-62). The decree gave the military government the power to suspend the constitution and rule the country with military laws. The underdog population's refusal to be submissive to the dominance gave rise to spiral violence. Intellectual findings that point to the portent of conflict were not heeded, particularly in a system where the freedom of speech and political will were suppressed. The 1980, 1985 and 1989 civil war indicates the resistance to dominant power by the weaker group.

From another viewpoint, it can be explained that the mentioned misfortunes that befell the country in the '80s point to the struggle for power and dominance within the social system of Liberia. The underlying reason for the violence is that no group

was willing to submit and cooperate with the dominant party as it is seen in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, the weaker group succumbed to the elite of Zanu PF. Zanu PF enjoys luxuries at the expense of others. The case of Zimbabwe paints a different picture from that of Liberia, where the subjects and underdogs refused to be oppressed (Chiwome & Mguni 2012:256).

This goes to say that in the Zimbabwean's perspective, the elite that benefits from the existing distribution of power and privilege entrenched in the political, economic and social order feels threatened and, thus, used the powers of the state to quench every rebellion that springs up among the people. The continual success of this repressive method results in despair, frustration and a mass exodus to neighbouring countries.

In the case of Liberia, the repression exploded into destructive violence that smashed everything that symbolises the existing system. The conflicts in Liberia were not only fought physically but also on an ideological level. There were several intellectual arguments to legitimise the political struggle for power between the parties. The parties employed the means of propaganda to disseminate their ideas to the populace in order to gain loyalists.

However, there were some forms of ambiguities noted in the struggles. In the ideological battles the struggle leaders promulgated a theory that the struggles were meant to liberate and afford decent living conditions to the suppressed. Hence, the rebellions were more destructive, impaired and entirely destroyed everything in their path, including the lives they came to improve. The deductive argument is that political violence in the country's history gave rise to rebellious violence and subsequent repressive violence that was to restore calm for a given period of time. The tension also bred tribal rivalries among the underdog population groups.

Another factor that entered the fray is the international interests of America, which nearly all the writers on the subject allude to as a key to the conflict (Sally 2006:94-99). During the Cold War America made allies with countries around the world, including Liberia. A letter that was allegedly authored by the then Minister of State

of Presidential Affairs addressed to President Doe explains how the defence of America's interest intertwined in the Liberian conflict (Fahnbulleh 2004:81). It further discloses that the Liberian conflict was a multiparty conflict. It resulted from the societal imbalance which developed over a long period of time and set off a chain of reactions as a means of reshuffling the plain field to a new equilibrium. The lesson learnt from the interviewees is a hard truth that the escalating rhythm cannot be stopped until the cause and social domination is removed.

4.5.4.1 Justification of violence

The study has discovered that the deepest danger concerning the Liberian violence was not the level the violence had reached, but the extent to which it was justified by perpetrators who committed atrocities against humanity. According to Hook (1978:14), in the sphere of humanity, man often defends or justifies his actions of cruelty. Bringing home his assertion, the Liberian society did not only have an inclination towards violence but had also glorified it. The veneration of Matilda Newport in the country's history is a case in point. Matilda Newport is gloried in the country's history as a hero who killed score of indigenes during the scramble for land (Welch 1960:198).

To a certain extent, the country has justified violence for a long time. The tool of justification is mainly used to brainwash loyalists to participate in the cause that is deemed worthy. It is used by repressive violence in upholding its cause against the masses. The repressors use the machine of propaganda to justify the cruelty meted out against the innocent. The perpetrators use structured apparatuses that are considered by the elite as a normal function of government that is meant to protect its people. For instance, the Doe reign justified the killing of 13 prominent members of the Tolbert reign as a necessary way of uprooting corruption and other forms of ill in government (Streissquth 2006:30).

It housed the deeds of a repressive reign from the eyes of the world. In the justification of violence, the enemy is portrayed as the main subject or trouble in the country. The radical or main opponents are depicted as negatively as possible. They

are seen as people representing the interest of a certain proportion of the populace, but as people misleading or instigating violence against the government. Through the tool of propaganda, they are blamed for all of the ugliest deeds of violence that occurs in the state. They are sometimes framed as coup plotters or charged for treason for crimes that are not billable under the Liberian law. The false accusation of Thomas Weh Sen as a coup plotter who wanted to overthrow Doe is an example in point of this (African Defence Journal 1982:12).

There is no understanding in the protest or calls for change. Any call for change in government policy warrants an immediate response from the repressors as a way of quenching an uprising. The aftermath is then justified to the eyes and ears of the world as a necessary step taken to protect the rest of the citizens and maintain peace and restore calm. It is immediately portrayed as an attack on the safety of the country and its people. In this case, violence escalates to a level that makes it an acceptable way of life in the country.

The reform policy outlined in Minister Rancy's letter was continuously pointed to as one of the justifications of violence under the Doe reign (Kappel & Korte 1990:50). The tool of propaganda is so active that the country took a dangerous path. Those in power continuously misled the country as it took the root of imminent danger. The people were made to believe that the government was working for the security and peace of the country, while it actually followed a path that bred violence.

To what extent has violence worked or changed the Liberian society? In a post-war analysis of respondents' views, the violence would have achieved its goal if the balance of power had shifted to the ordinary people who suffered the most during war, but the corruption that empowers the elite still reigns supreme in the country. Research findings (International Monetary Fund 2008:171-174) continue to point to the government's failure to tackle burning issues that kindled the war. The vast majority of the populace continues to watch a few people enjoy the country's wealth and resources. Those who instigate violence are in top positions and do not bother to prioritise the interests of the people who followed them.

4.5.4.2 Fanatical politics

The respondents' views (Table 4.4.4.3) pointed the study in the direction of an uncompromising call by Christians to mix politics with religion. According to the interviewees, it is dangerous to mix politics with religion which at the time lead to religious strife and conflicts. The respondents simply inferred that the separation of religion in favour of the rule of the law is essentially beneficial to the entire populace of the country. It is argued that in numerous instances the attempt to fight a just war on behalf of God against His enemies portrays Him as a monster who demands the total destruction of His enemy.

A few examples of this include the crusades, the conquest of Latin America, the Inquisition and the religious war in Germany which made those respective countries lose many lives (Peters 1971). Liberians cannot afford any religious war, for the Bible teaches Christians to firmly and rigorously resist the temptation of fighting a war on behalf of God. The Bible warns Christians against condoning acts and ways that sanction the furtherance of injustice, alienation, enmity, hatred and violence (Juergensmeyer et al 2013). The call to Christianise or make Liberia a Christian state by law could inflame the escalation of violence and social turmoil.

4.5.4.3 Greed and egocentrism

It is observed from the respondents' (Table 4.4.4.1, Table 4.4.4.2 and Table 4.4.7) opinions that the grinding violence and gross human rights abuses that engulfed the nation stemmed from greed and egocentrism. Politicians employed all means and ways necessary to remain in power for self-gain and, as such, committed grave acts of injustices against the people they were entrusted to lead. The culture of self-enrichment is so pervasive in the country that government institutions are used as a means of amassing wealth at the expense of the masses. This is exemplified in the perpetual corruption and embezzlements of public resources (International Monetary Fund 2008).

Undoubtedly, these institutionalised crimes are clearly the scourges that evoked suffering and unbearable hardship for the masses. According to Alexander

Solzhenitsyn's (Gerson 1991:200) assertion, "violence does live by itself", but is often triggered by lies and falsehoods. A lie in this sense could mean the act of cheating (corruption and embezzlements) or unlawful enrichment that creates hate and delusion among the populace. The failure of those in authority to address the problem of poverty and the immense hardships of the people breeds sporadic uprisings and consequently explodes into a full-blown revolution or civil crises such as the case of Liberia.

The respondents squarely laid the blame of the country's cycle of violence at the feet of the officials who selfishly enriched themselves and committed electoral fraud to get into office by thick and thin and corrupt judges and prosecutors who denied justice to victims of killings, rape and other crimes (Baughan 2013:24,47). The respondents also argued that police officials who were placed into office as civil servants to uphold the law aligned themselves with politicians to accomplish their selfish aims.

Some of the interviewees were of the opinion that the grim and bloody violence in Liberia will continue for as long as justice remains elusive and selfish leadership continues to steer the affairs of the country. Additionally, it was argued that the hope and initiatives for lasting peace will continue to be a mere illusion as long as government institutions and offices remain embroiled in corrupt practices, thus making it extremely hard to tackle the needs of the masses. Unless these problems are effectively addressed by stakeholders, Liberia will continue to be haunted and engulfed by violence.

4.5.4.4 Failed leadership

Amidst the galaxy of dynamic leaders around the world, the incessant conflict in Liberia reflects the consequences of failed leadership. The term leadership echoes around the corridor of every institution known to humankind. However, within Liberia the inability of past leadership to handle and prevent conflict shows that the dearth of sound, mature and capable leadership is acute.

This assertion is buttressed by the general reason that the rise and fall of a country reflects the kind of leadership it has had. In other words, a country can rise to a greater height depending on its visionary and pragmatic leader. Human history gives abundant testimony to the fact that no generation, set of people or country can rise above the level or quality of its leadership (Aitken & Higgs 2010).

The bloody violence and deep division within Liberia point to a weak, immature and selfish leadership. Only a strong, wise and decisive leadership can steer a nation towards a progressive and cohesive state. Lawlessness and anarchy in the world's view are signs of a dearth of proper leadership. When a leader of a society lacks the vision to lead a contemporary world, it often leads to uncertainty, poverty and a total collapse in the system (Adeniyi 2007:178-179).

4.5.5 Feeble reconciliation and justice

The kind of violence witnessed in the '90s still compels every Liberian to question the long-term practicality, long-lasting assumptions and implications of the mode or path of reconciliation the country followed after the war. There is no doubt that the Christian religion promotes reconciliation in the form of forgiving and forgetting (Beam 2009). But can there be true and long-lasting peace in the absence of justice and closure for the victims who are still traumatised from the effects of the unspeakable atrocities committed during the war (Daly & Sarkin 2007:180-191)?

Arguably, there can be no genuine peace and reconciliation in the absence of justice. The point of argument here is that all types of conflict cannot be resolved in the same way. The manner of peacefully resolving domestic violence will be different from resolving conflict between neighbours that resulted in a bloody clash. This is to say that any peace accord or reconciliation that ignores justice and allows the continuation of injustice and oppression is not sufficient. The general ideal appears to be that in a society of impunity, stakeholders have to ensure that those responsible for gross human rights abuses face the law.

The problem is that in the event of bloodshed one does not only confront the issue of guilt, but also the issue of violence that engenders human suffering, maims, kills and

tortures innocent people. The respondents' views in this study suggested that after all the spectacles that surrounded the TRC process, its report was swept under the carpet, which in itself suggests that the problem still remains (Schwelling 2014:357-360). The implementation of the recommendations could have suggested the building up of a new society based on accountability.

However, the failure to implement the report continues to increase the sense of dissatisfaction among the ordinary people who were affected most during the war. It is vitally important to note that the human society can neither enjoy peace and stability nor prosper without investing in the institutions that uphold the principles of peace. Both the state and the citizens are intermediate groups that must make their contribution towards peace and stability in the country.

4.5.5.1 Culture of impunity and quest for justice

A true reconciliation considers the renunciation of injustices and oppression that are inherent to the social order such as discrimination, detention without trial, harassment of ordinary people, stratification of society, unequal access to economic resources and opportunities and the use of police to implement brutality on the people. Hence, any true reconciliation in the nation must devise mechanisms against the menace that characterised conflict and undermined the social justice and equal dignity in the first place.

Reconciliation must be seen as a quest towards achieving and implementing justice in a post-conflict nation. It can be argued that reconciliation means the ordering of social relationships in such a way that parties within the society enjoy the benefits of being a member of the society by removing the elements that cause disunity and conflict. In this vein, one can say that the fragile social harmony that characterises the post-conflict in Liberia can be best mended by affording closure to the victims through justice. Justice in this sense will go a long way in combating the culture of impunity that permeates the country.

The dynamics of the Liberian conflict called for inescapable justice and action against perpetrators of the gruesome crimes committed. Retribution against the perpetrators

is a democratic process that helps to obliterate or obviate the culture of impunity and hold groups and individuals accountable for their actions while deterring others at the same time (Rothe et al 2013). Failure to implement retribution against perpetrators weakens the reconstruction and recovery process of the country. The emphasis in this argument is on accountability as a legal foundation.

4.5.6 United front

The study has also discovered that the church is not united in its affairs. It is noted from the survey that the church (**Table 4.4.5**) of Liberia is highly divided. From the ongoing discussions and findings, one does not need to be omniscient to discern the threat, danger and challenges conflict poses to the existence of humankind. The fragility of the Liberian society is also affecting the composition and unity of the church. The underlying argument is that there are many fragmented groupings within the church that are affecting its unity.

The disunity is affecting the church's attempt to influence society towards unity. The scripture constantly exhorts Christians to unite in fellowship: "How good and pleasant it is when Christians dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1). The Apostle Paul says that Christians must "maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). The exhortations go a long way to say that the unity of humanity can achieve exploit and greater things (Duerling 2013:396). As the maxim goes, "in unity we stand, divided we fall". Beyond the endless calls or exhortations for unity, the scripture also condemns disunity.

The processes of fellowship leading to unity and peace in the nation are vital if the church is to effect renewal and revival in the society it dwells in. Peace and conflict are ultimately antithetical because the aspiration to maintain peace or a stable nation is in opposition to the doctrine of conflict. The challenge remains desperate and urgent. The church has to unite in its responsibility of not only preaching the word, but also providing the practical resources needed to uphold the dignity of humanity.

It is through unity that the church can portray itself as a zone of freedom that provides space for democratic practices as it struggles against the monopolisation of

state resources and abuses of power and defends the interest of the masses. The appointment of Bishop Ronald J. Diggs of the Lutheran church as vice president of the interim government during the civil war shows the people's reliance on the church for direction in every sphere of the society, especially in times of crisis (Williams 2002:138). Undoubtedly, his election to participate in the political climate of the country is epitomised by the church's contribution of facilitating peace deals between warring factions of the war.

This demonstrates that the church had to play an impartial role in cementing the political norms that accord every citizen their fundamental rights. The call of the bishop to the country's second highest office shows the unique position of the church to influence the political developments, provide direction for social cohesion at a time of national fragmentation and gather support for a long-lasting peace. The enormity of the problem facing post-war Liberia in the transition to democracy is daunting. It is on the shoulders of the church and other stakeholders to sustain and consolidate a vibrant democracy by harnessing resources that pave the way for equality and a fair distribution of the country's wealth.

Democracy or rule of law will not be a reality nor can it be sustained without the involvement of reputable institutions like the church. The silence of major stakeholders would encourage the deplorable conditions and human rights abuses which the country is currently facing to lead to the exacerbation of the already fragile state the country is in.

In addition to this, the study has also discovered that the relationship between Christianity and Islam is of considerable importance for the future of vibrant democracy in Liberia. The working together of interfaith groups in the past in mediating between warring factors is an indication that the unity of the country depends on tolerance (Williams 2002).

4.5.6.1 Peace, unity and justice

Peace, unity and justice within the nation demonstrate that religious leaders can transcend the divide which separates the two major religions and work together to

defend the interest of the masses, defend human rights and achieve reconciliation and long-lasting peace. For peace to prevail, the citizens or religious groups in the country have to continuously work together (Franken & Loobuyck 2011:309). Democracy should be seen as the acceptance of religious pluralism, tolerance and co-operation between citizens in bringing about democratic transformation in society.

Despite the religious differences, there is a sense about the appropriateness for religious bodies to work together for the common good of the society. The reality of conflict in the Liberian society and the desire and the need for peace is beyond doubt, if stakeholders fail to work together in the interest of the masses. Conflict in this part of the world is provoked by the fundamental structures of the society (Dolo 2007; Kieh 2008). The conflict is related to the search for change and justice.

The collective view of the interviewees revealed that if peace is to be realistic in the contemporary society of Liberia, then it must be related to the changing reality of society's search for social and economic justice. This is to say that for many inhabitants in Liberia, peace is synonymous with oppression, exploitation and subjugation of one group by another. In other words, there will be no peace if the existing structures do not meet the needs of the people, but rather become oppressive. If this happens conflict will continue to exist among the people. The discussion and pursuit of peace will continue to be an elusive goal as long as the causes of conflict are not removed.

Putting the argument in another way, one could say that the exploitation and marginalisation of the people by those in power is an affront to the dignity of the masses and, therefore, it represents the biggest threat to peace in that country. The past culture of oppression and discrimination in the country are clear violations of human dignity and human rights. So long as these trenches of crimes in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres prevail, there can be no peace.

4.5.6.2 Peace and development

From the study a clear nexus has been identified between peace and development. In the previous arguments, the researcher has noted the social and economic disparities

that existed within the country. It is not the existence of these disparities that is the sole cause of conflict in the country, but the types of relationships that are built on these disparities and inequalities tend to ignite the tension that leads to conflict. It is observed that these sorts of societal evils open the way for the exploitation, manipulation and oppression of the poor by the elite or rich.

The fact of the matter is that certain impulses promoting conflict emanate from the elite who want to continue controlling the country's wealth at the expense of the "have nots". There is sufficient ground to argue that the elite pose a more serious threat to the peace of the nation than the weak. There is a constant upheaval in the political and economic situation of the country. The rich use the economic and monetary policies of the country for their mutual benefit rather than meeting the needs of the masses.

Therefore, how can one expect national peace from a country that fails to fairly distribute the resources of the nation? Undoubtedly, until the country's political system is based on social equality and economic justice, the quest to promote peace in the country would grow on infertile soil. To achieve total peace in the country, stakeholders have to revisit the oppressive structures of the country and restructure them for the common good of the entire nation.

In this case, development will not only be a new name for peace, but also serves as grounds for a united and prosperous nation. It is through inclusive development that real peace can become a context to achieve a society based on social and economic justice. In conclusion, human induced poverty and grave suffering are threats to the prosperity and the tranquillity of the nation.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the qualitative findings of the study. It has introduced the study population and presented the information gathered from the respondents. Furthermore, the chapter has analysed and discussed the research findings of the

literature review and the information from the respondents. The next chapter will make recommendations based on the findings to attempt to answer the research question.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The study has attempted to explore the “role of Christianity in post-war Liberia”. In other words, it asks what role Christianity can play in a fragile society to promote and maintain peace and, at the same time, contribute towards the development of a country that was ravished by civil hostilities. The researcher set out objectives that explore ways and means in which the most popular religion in the country can create hope in the face of desperation and anxiety.

The study has sought to discover how Christianity can employ its doctrine and resources to break down the social fragility that is derailing the progression of the nation. As the largest religion in the country, it is in a position to influence political developments, provide social cohesion at a time of national fragmentation and gather support in the struggle for justice and democracy. It is about Christians opting to promote democratic political structures and principles that defend human rights and maintain peace (Ranger 2008:170-173, 178).

The study has examined the dynamics of how Christianity can play a role in promulgating a “message of social diversity in a divided society” (Kurian & Lamport 2013:850). It is about how the largest religion in the country can necessitate a transformation in which the citizens would embrace social cohesion and uphold the rule of the law in a country that is often prone to violence. The church is mandated by its doctrines to promote and protect the society through its message. It is a religious institution charged with the responsibility through the inspired word of God to uplift and uphold the moral standard of the society. It has the responsibility to call a “spade a spade” and provide direction that conforms to the norms and values of God’s word (Witte 1993:150, 240, 300).

Moreover, the study has considered how Christianity could develop a progressive standard that reflects the Liberian society as a Christian nation. The task of the modern Christian is to understand the perspective of Christ and its application in today’s complex society (Shepherd 2009:183). It is generally accepted that the church

in contemporary society promotes the rules of laws that protect and respect religious freedom and the basic human rights of all (Paeth 2008:173).

In addition, the study has investigated how Christian faith and spirituality can play a role in a campaign for social peace, justice, development and unity. The study is an assessment of serviceable theology in the development of the people, preservation of peace and reconstruction of the country.

In Chapter Two of the study the researcher has attempted to lay the missiological foundations on which the argument for the embodiment of Christ's peace to the world is highly emphasised (Storrar et al 2011:140-146). The corollary of the arguments in the chapter is that biblical peace entreats Christians to look at peace from a multi-dimension. It depicts the fundamental, interrelated dimensions that enumerate how biblical peace can be embodied among humanity.

The chapter has argued that the church's involvement in the struggle for economic justice for all citizens within the country, the struggle for human rights and freedom against political oppression and exploitation and the struggle for human solidarity against social alienation of one group from the others, is vital to maintaining lasting peace in a country of severe human division. These points are substantiated by a myriad of social factors that have destabilised the country for decades (Storrar et al 2011:143-147).

It has been deduced from the study that there can be no economic justice without political freedom; likewise, there can be no improvement in the country's socioeconomic conditions without overcoming the culture of societal stratification and alienation (Dolo 2007:14-16). From a biblical standpoint, the church has a responsibility to set forth a vision that promotes peace and progression within the society it exists. This can only be achieved from the promulgation of tolerance, the protection of the weak and care for the needy, forgiveness and reconciliation. The church must serve as peace brokers and unite the people (Storrar et al. 2011:147).

Arguing from Ranger's (2008) perspective, the researcher suggests that the church of Liberia has to emulate the role Christianity played in the development of democracy

and maintenance of peace in other African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Mozambique. The churches in these countries, according to Ranger (2008), used their evangelical framework to affect the countries' politics.

Furthermore, Chapter Three gave the historical background of the problem, and as well attempted to establish the major factors that contributed to the incessancy of the country's conflict. Chapter four on the other hand, discussed the findings of the study. The researcher has categorised the factors as economic, political and social elements. It has also been discovered that the peace and survival of the country should be based on equity or equality, common interest and cooperation of all citizens irrespective of their social status. Moreover, it has been found that an immediate correction of the inequality and redress of existing injustices and a narrowing or acceleration of eliminating the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" is necessary (Butler & Watt 2007).

The Bible admonishes Christians to listen to the cry of those who long for peace, the hungry and exploited who demand bread and justice, the victims of discrimination and those who were stripped of their dignity (Storrar et al. 2011:139-150). In this sense, Christians are encouraged to give support to the effort that promotes peace, brotherhood and justice for which its doctrine stands. While there is a desire for peace and stability in the country, it is still faced with grave social, economic and political evils that are a menace to peace (Culpepper 2011b:81). These evils are offences to the Christian conscience and thus call for the intervention that seeks to obviate their impact on society.

The researcher's conviction is that where there is peace there is a prospect of development and a better realisation of cooperation. In contrast, economic and political unrest tends to affect the whole (Galtung 1996). It is not the business of the church to suggest unethical remedies, but rather to rouse dull consciences and to turn the attention of Christians to the moral background and implication of decisions and actions. Such thought and action must be biblical in character in order to hold

the perpetrators accountable. In view of this fact, the church has to claim the right to be heard.

Therefore, chapters one to four have set the premise or platform for this study and this chapter will define the framework of the study and give the personal reflection of the researcher. The researcher has adopted a twofold approach as a common denominator on which the arguments in the chapter are categorised. The first section defines the role Christianity can play in the promulgation of peace and the second section looks at the developmental role the church can affect for the betterment of the Liberian society.

5.2 Peace Building

5.2.1 Peace fora – Phiri et al (1996)

The church of Liberia needs to facilitate community discussions about peace, especially because the country has been ravaged by violence (Johnson 2004:30). The community peace forum would aim to discuss issues that have the propensity of plunging the country into violence. The issue of maintaining peace and preventing violence within a society can be approached by various people and institutions from innumerable starting points.

However, peace in the Christian tradition involves the embracing of values, ethics and norms based on biblical teachings that repudiate or disavow violence and project solutions for confrontation. Thus, a community peace forum would project peace as a friendly cooperation between communities and citizens of the country (Storrar et al. 2011:130). The causes of civil strife and violence will be discussed and amicable and long-term solutions will be noted and implemented. This is to say that peace can only be achieved through a constant and unflagging effort by the society.

The emergence of a peaceful society is preconditioned or dependent on the willingness of the people to live side by side as a homogenous community. According to scripture, the homogeneity of humanity allows or makes room for lasting peace in the society. It helps to lessen the bitterness engendered by societal

elements that cause conflict (Niebuhr 2008). It is part of the church's missiological duty to educate the society and create awareness against elements of division and violence that cause great human suffering and hardship. It is important for the church to educate the society to break the yoke of violence in favour of positive relationships, mutual love and respect.

As the church proclaims the Gospel it has the ability and responsibility to teach society to unite and cooperate as a way of achieving a progressive society (Niebuhr 2008). In virtue of its mission, the church is obliged to bear the symbol of peace in the society it exists, without which humanity is estranged from God who sent Jesus as the Prince of peace into the world (Nash & Whitehead 2014: 70-73).

The emphasis here is that the church's proper function is to spread a doctrine of peace to the world and in so doing extend or expand the Kingdom of God. The clearer sense of the task is that the church is ordained to serve as an ambassador of the Gospel of peace as it is proclaimed in the Bible. As Jesus stated, He was commissioned as the Prince of peace to bring humanity the peace that surpasses all human conceptions of peace and social justice (Shenk 2006:70). In this case, it has to position itself as a peacemaker, reconciler and a conciliator and seek to proclaim the message of peace in community fora.

This leads one to bear in mind that the inspiration of promoting and achieving peace as a Christian comes from the Gospel. It points to the prophetic function of the church to the society it exists and can be fulfilled by urging everyone to maintain law and order, peace and security. This will allow individual Christians to make the most of every opportunity to promote peace and unity. It is through the message and practice of peace that humanity is given a new vision of how order may be restored and other improvements made in their social conditions (Shenk 2006:1-2).

It cannot be ignored that during the wars in Liberia, Christians made significant contributions towards ending the conflict and restoring peace. They prayed for the parties involved in the war. However, now that there is no more war the church has to embrace its main responsibility to proclaim and teach the Gospel of peace that

seeks to deliver humanity from the power of darkness and transform the society into a peaceful community. Thus, there devolves on the church the task of preaching peace to the far and near (Katongole & Rice 2008:98, 137).

The conclusion is inescapable that only by concentrating on the task of proclaiming, teaching and being the ambassador of peace will the church truly perform one of its duties of rendering a lifesaving service to society.

5.2.2 Reconciler and unifier – Rogers et al (2008)

The church is a reconciled community of God, that is, it is the community of people who, through His grace, have been reconciled with Him (Dyrness & Kerkkainen 2008). The church has been reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus and has received His peace in its heart. To this effect, it has to preserve the bestowed ministry of reconciliation and serve humanity in a spirit of brotherly love and peace. This means that the church of God should be characterised by the spirit of reconciliation, peace and love. It can further be explained that the church is simply forbidden by its doctrine to promote violence, condone it and justify the cause of conflict (Thirdway 1981:5-10).

The church has to position itself in the society that its message is aimed for. It must teach that unity and reconciliation outweighs earthly division or conflict and it must promote the diversity that cannot be obliterated (ThirdWay 1981:5). The New Testament portrays a diversity of unity which the church of today should emulate to render its services to humanity. The church has the responsibility to use its teaching and doctrines to mend the fences of animosity among conflicting parties. It has to confess or teach its profound, inviolable unity in Christ and experience and make unity visible in the broken society of Liberia.

In a country that has been torn apart by tension, misunderstanding, division and suspicion, the message and teaching of the church should be seen as a great comfort to the oppressed and point of correction to the oppressors. The promotion of unity in the society is significant to the confirmation of Christ's doctrine of peace among humankind (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2005:60,77). The creation narrative in the

Bible which traced the entire human race back to one pair of progenitors called the unity of humanity born and expanded from one family (Ormerod & Clifton 2009:1-5). The narrative teaches humanity that the human race is one family and it must stand against elements of disunity and division. Therefore, the church must serve as the agent of unity.

The spiral of violence in the country that the people had witnessed calls for the church to face and tackle the fundamental source of this division. The church's call for peace and unity is built on the legitimacy of its doctrine as a social institution with transcendental powers to promote social change (Ormerod & Clifton 2009:6-10). The task of overcoming social divisions and rebuilding relationships or reconciling conflict-ravaged Liberia is something that should be seen by church leaders as a key part of the church's role. As reflected in the Bible, the task of reconciling conflict-ravaged society is a call for which the church is uniquely qualified and should not ignore.

It has the ability to understand it better than other actors in society and it is well situated to address these kinds of societal problems and turmoil. The phenomenon of reconciliation that is widely taught in the Christian Bible needs to be made practical among humanity at all times (Cameron 2012:115). It is also believed that the term reconciliation is a very Christian or biblical term. The researcher is not arguing a position that reconciliation is only a religious concept, but its significance and relevancy could be misunderstood if it is not viewed from this perspective.

The church must engage with communities around the country to reconcile those people perceived as enemies. At the same time it must seek to confront the elements that have the potential of causing conflict and division within the country. The biblical passage that says "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" encapsulates the important formula for reconciliation (Cameron 2012:89-101). The church must seek to transform the peace granted to it in Christ into peaceful relationship among humanity.

This consideration makes it clear that the New Testament should be used to provide impulses for the church which it can use to carry out its responsibility for peace in a ravaged society. The unfolding events in the country demand that the church orientates its thinking towards a new way of handling or responding to violence. The orthodox method of maintaining peace by separating communities at war can no longer suffice in today's world (Rogers et al. 2008:43). It is rather necessary for the church and other stakeholders to cooperate in order to come closer to the goal of achieving long-term peace in society (Cameron 2012:120-130).

For the Bible makes it Christians' obligation to stand against violence and uphold the norm and values that promote peace (Rogers et al. 2008:71-73). The church has to prove its commitment to peace through viable and efficient initiatives of reconciliation, not by just discussing it. The word reconciliation means change. The word requires some change that brings people who were once estranged together to live harmoniously or side by side in peace. The church must thus seek to implement strategies and plans that would restore good relationships among citizens (Rogers et al. 2008:60,72,81-82).

5.3 Leadership

5.3.1 Engage leadership on cardinal pillars – Adekoya (2015)

Once it is established that a regime has no moral legitimacy and is, in fact, a tyrannical regime, a regime full of corrupt officials, oppressors and abuses of power, the church should not only call for a change of leadership, but also take the lead to voice its opinion about holding officials accountable for societal ills and vices committed. The historical brutality that the country experienced means that the church needs to get involved at times in the social affairs of the state (Dolo 2007:25).

The church is looked up to by the populace in the midst of crisis for moral guidance. It has the responsibility to take these circumstances seriously and, at times, confront the root causes of conflict (Rogers et al. 2008:59). In order to provide this, the church must challenge the leadership of the country to uphold the rules and laws of the country. It has the message of truth that inspires and motivates people, the truth

which it can also use to challenge abusive regimes (Storrar et al. 2011:139). It must use its message of hope to challenge the citizens to wake up and stand against oppression (Cone 1997:15-25s).

The church must not only preach the message of peace, love and unity, but also through its actions, programmes, campaigns and divine services take the lead to challenge those who thoughtlessly and wildly seek to lead the country into adversity (Cone 1997:60). This call is stemmed from the God-given truth, love-motivated goodness, and Christ-like virtues that the church must preach and conserve among humanity.

Moreover, the Christian doctrine of peace and unity is a unity of mutual love which is both spiritual and practical (Cone 1997:40). It is concerned with the well-being of others and renders services. Social action for peace, justice and unity are part and parcel of the church's social services. The struggle to unfetter the minds of Liberians from violence and conflict will inevitably be a difficult task but that does not mean the church should abandon its bestowed responsibility (Storrar et al. 2011:130-142).

5.3.2 Accountability – Stückelberger and Mugambi (2007)

Scripture and human history show the absolute need of leadership. God Himself ordained the leadership of the people. However, due to human factors the leadership may go astray and become a burden to the people. An example of this is King Saul whose leadership was regretted by God due to iniquities. Saul was anointed to lead the people of Israel in his capacity as King. However, King Saul abused his power by living contrary to the standards and norms of the triune God (Waite 2008:20-24).

The standards, norms, values and responsibilities were set as structures for checks and balances and were addressed mainly at preventing the abuse of power and protecting the dignity of the office in which he was placed. God set the standards, values and norms to basically maintain law and order and enforce obedience to His will (Waite 2008:33-41). Both the king and the people were expected to act within the limits of the law, based on the sacred principle of the rule of God's word. This

caused a strong sense of accountability by the leadership of the people. King Saul's failure to uphold the rules and meaningfully discharge his duties led to his rejection as king of the people (Waite 2008:68).

One of the great advantages of the rule of law and accountability is that it makes it easier and possible to effect changes without violent upheaval. The changing of King Saul did not only affect the structure of his office and its public administration, but also installed a sense of checks and balances on his performance as king of the people. The removal of Saul from office highlights the basic principle of accountability of public administration.

True democracy cannot survive by merely perpetuating a ritual of voting, but needs a set of precedence that holds leadership accountable for their actions. In ecumenical circles there is a general agreement that the church cannot align itself with any political party (Hegstad 2013:33, 50). However, it has the responsibility and duty to stand for the norms and rules that mitigate politically-induced violence or ferocity. This responsibility is manifested in the word of God that no one is above the law. The growing tension between the failing responsibility of government officials in the implementation of the rules and failure to selflessly discharge their duties, coupled with the increasing consciousness of the citizens to stand up for their rights, illustrates the latent and potential flame to incite conflict (Dolo 2007:24).

The basic proposition is that the church as an institution of high moral values needs to hold leadership accountable for any action deemed illegal within the framework of the country's law. It has the obligation to hold leadership or officials accountable to provide information, explanations and or justifications for their actions in the execution of their functions. In democratic systems it should ensure that there is always the duty for public officials to give account for their activity, judgement or evaluation. It helps to avert the abuse of power (Marger 1999:341).

5.3.3 Transparency – Transparency International (2004)

The purpose of leadership within the human sphere is to advance the interest of its followers (Philips 2008:17,23,65). The governing body of the country has the

obligation to lead by example through its governing principles and practices. To promote and uphold the ethics of governance, the transparency of officials holding public offices is key (Alai & Vaughn 2014:9). The masses need to have a better understanding of their role and see consistency with their mandate. Information pertinent to their activities, decisions and execution of their job should be accessible and transparent (Alai & Vaughn 2014:8-9).

They should openly communicate with the parties involved or interested members of the public without secrecy or hidden agendas (Transparency International 2004:1-3).

In a democratic country of rule of law, transparency is an essential foundation or pillar that opens up dialogue among citizens (Transparency International 2004:6-7). It is a prerequisite of good governance that enhances the credibility of officials in power (Transparency International 2004:8-9). Transparency in this sense encompasses actions for debriefing and reporting. In other words, the notion of transparency refers to the elected officials' timely, reliable, clear and relevant public reporting on their status, mandate, strategy, activities, management, operations and performance (Transparency International 2004:11-15). In addition, it includes the obligation of public reporting on audit findings and conclusions and public access to information about the leadership.

If one contemplates the process of peace in light of the above arguments, it becomes crystal clear that stakeholders have to play an unambiguous role in upholding the norms and standards of the society to quell violence. It expresses the procedures and processes needed to check power and ensure that the assigned responsibilities are meaningfully discharged. In order to check the power of officials, the church in collaboration with other stakeholders should seek to defend the constitutional devices that protect and guide public officials (Cheema 2005:204,214).

The fact is strikingly apparent that the phenomenon of transparency as a facet of good governance expressed here is synonymous to the biblical teaching of truth. The

Bible teaches Christians to stand for the truth in society without cooperating or condoning wrong vices (Byabazaire 1989:107).

The teaching of truth admonishes Christians to have the conviction and courage to stand against vices that tend to demean the dignity of humankind. By implication, standing for the truth means that the Christian conscience should not acquiesce to a situation that tends to destabilise the peace and stability of the country (Byabazaire 1989:18, 111-113).

A survey of the historical events and political systems in the country makes it clear that collective effort is needed to quell and curtail the violence that derails the progression of the country. One might be inclined to question the religious role of the church in this regard, however, the teaching of standing for the truth can be seen as a public call on officials to preclude secrecy and make public their mandate, missions, strategy and relationships with various stakeholders.

This ethical teaching of transparency is aligned with the Christian norms of truth elaborated in the Bible (Wilcock 2013:127). One could promulgate that the church must play a role that seeks to tackle social vices that could kindle conflict and breed corruption. In the Christian tradition of truth it is taught that Christianity must seek to speak to the heart and conscience of humanity to pursue the doctrine of God (Wilcock 2013:128-130). The church must not seek advantage, good reward and honour from the world, but do God's work among humanity as a way of preaching His word.

On this subject, the researcher wishes to infer that transparency inspires leadership to give an account of the resources entrusted into their care. It helps to curtail mismanagement and changes the spirit of self-enrichment into the spirit of solidarity and commitment. It is thus imperative that the church and other stakeholders play a role that keeps in check the moral standard of the society as a way of reducing the ills and vices that have the potential of flaming the fire of violence. The spectrum of this social involvement is wide, for the church, in contrast to political and other

institutions, has a sacrosanct commitment to consistently uphold the dignity of humanity (Odoeme 2013:107).

Transparency enhances the relationship between citizens within the country and facilitates discussions on burning issues as a way of finding a long-lasting solution (Transparency International 2004:6-10). It makes leadership approachable in discharging their duties and responsibilities with the vision or values of meeting the needs of the communities at large. In the Bible, transparency springs a deeper level of sharing among humanity and fosters a deeper a fellowship (Wilcock 2013:127-130). To free the society from the misery of violence, the church must preach, teach and propagate its message of openness to gain acceptance in the hearts of the people.

Therefore, the duty of the church, in being constant with the idea of transparency, is to work diligently to give a better expression of Christianity that can curtail human-induced suffering, hardship, suppression and oppression and uphold peace.

5.3.4 Biblical traits of a good leader – Philips 2008

The essence of distinctive leadership within a community, society or country is to guide and lead the people towards a common goal (Philips 2008:387). The Old and New Testaments profile some personality traits that people should observe in selecting their leaders. Interestingly, the scriptures make a clear distinction between the ability to lead and the outward appearance of a person. Leaders in the Bible are selected from all walks of life, family pedigree, educational backgrounds and job descriptions ranging from warriors to farmers and doctors (Finzel 1998:71,90).

However, the leaders have a few things in common which Christians of today could use in electing, selecting or putting officials into power. The biblical leaders are responsible, reliable, committed and unified with their followers. They work towards a common interest, serve the people and rarely abuse their position or authority (Blackaby & Blackaby 2004:100-104). These leadership traits arguably keep the people together in peace and unity.

This argument is not that the leaders are infallible, but that their flaws do not affect the fundamental living conditions of the people and do not plunge the community into self-destructive war. In the previous chapter of the study, the researcher has highlighted the contemporary structures that are considered factors of conflict in Liberia (Kieh 2008:71). The argument is that the issue of peace in Liberia is closely related to the existence of structures, institutions and the kind of leadership the people elect to lead the country. The underlying issue of peace and conflict in Liberia is the basic question of institutionalised power and privilege and, therefore, the mere pious hope for peace in the country cannot suffice until change is effected or implemented in the country (Ellis 1999:27).

This change refers to the basics on which leaders are elected into office. In Chapter Two of this study it has been deliberated that the church has an obligation of maintaining peace among humanity. The analysis makes it abundantly clear that it has to get involved in promoting the teachings that maintain peace and unity. In this case it has to propagate the biblical ethics of electing and selecting leaders.

5.3.5 Responsible leader – Philips (2008)

It is discernible from the ongoing arguments that one of the major elements or conditions of maintaining peace in Liberia is to ensure that there is a proper balance between power and responsibility (United States Institute of Peace 2009:60-69). In pursuit of oneness and peace within the country, it is important that officials meaningfully discharge their duties in accordance with the law of the country. The church must thus teach or seek to influence the perception of the citizens to elect a responsible leader. It has been noted that in a society like Liberia the elements that ignite conflict are measured or influenced by the decisions or direction the leadership steers the country's affairs to. A responsible leadership in this sense is about scrutinising potential leaders about their policy that takes into account the interest of all Liberians rather than promoting the interest of a segment of the populace.

In combating the issue of electing irresponsible leadership, the church needs to cognitively develop the minds of Liberians to make the right choice. This can be achieved through activism or a series of intellectual discourse. The church must teach the citizens to elect a responsible leader that has the ability to afford everyone the social, economic and cultural rights that are indispensable to their dignity. In the same vein, the church should be on the lookout for irresponsible leadership whose greed, exploitative means and ill decisions could derail the progression of the country.

Instead of establishing justice, harmony and the well-being of the people in his realm, an irresponsible leader will be the fountainhead of disorder, which ultimately undermines his rule and sets the country on the path of destruction. The country's historical narratives highlight this basic truism about Liberia as a war-ravaged nation. The church should not be intimidated by the immensity of the problem. Its motivation to maintain peace and unite a fragile society like Liberia is derived from a creative power and the redemptive love of God in which it is privileged to partake in societal affairs through Christ.

The church can assert its influence through individual members, small groups and as an institution. The Bible is also replete with a confirmation of what ill leadership is. The biblical authors in passages point to the ensuing insurrection as a direct consequence of ill leadership. In biblical terms, when leadership perverts justice through violence, oppression and subjugation, the prophets raise their voices of protest and announce God's consequence for the inhumane action (Horsley 1999:140).

This makes the prophets unpopular with the authorities who are blind to the reality of the situation and persecute those who prophetically expose their oppressive deeds. The church of Liberia should stand against irresponsible leadership without fear or favour and seek to expose the leadership's vices as deterrents to others. It must play its prophetic role in the 21st century and stand for the truth. It is through the inspiration of God's love that it can achieve or attempt to overcome conflict, hatred and violence.

5.3.6 Reliable and committed leader – Ashimolowo (2013)

The church should take the lead to educate the masses about electing a reliable leader who is competent and able to do the job with humility. Reliability is one of the biblical traits of a good leader. God appointed Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon and many others as leaders of his people due to their commitment in their previous work. God considered their sense of reliability as a way of trustworthiness (Finzel 1998:78-82).

God saw their commitment and reliability as a great motivating power and was convinced that their humility and way of life made them ideal leaders of the people. Similarly to biblical times, the church as the follower of Christ must promulgate a message that tends to enlighten the masses to understand leadership from God's perspective. This perspective shows that a good leader is somebody who they can trust and who is able to drive the country forward in a holistic and sustainable fashion. The trend of Liberian history shows that good leaders are hard to find and thus the masses must catalogue the qualities or traits of a good leader as a yardstick to choose or elect the leadership of the nation.

The Bible defines a good leader as a person who has a clear vision about the future of the country or people they lead, with a defined roadmap and set out steps of achieving it (Laufer et al. 2006:33). In the context of the Liberian situation, a good leader should be seen as a unifier or person who is willing to serve the nation or masses. Not only should the person have the requisite intellect, but also the potential to conceptualise his vision for the entire nation with the ability to articulate the vision and win the trust of the people. These are key characteristics to building a mature democracy that upholds the rule of the law as a major facet of peace in a nation.

The will to build a peaceful and strong nation is found in leaders who are willing to serve rather than be served (Greenleaf 2002:5-10). It is the commission of the church as peacemaker and representation of the Prince of peace that should drive it to play a role or educate the people towards building a nation of oneness; a nation where

social cohesion exists despite the differentiation in culture, tribe, religion and origin. It is out of perseverance that the church can ultimately win the hearts of the masses and make an 'indelible mark in the sand'.

The church should not be timid about the unfolding events in the country for it possesses the innate quality of conveying hope (Bruce 2014:151-153). It is its business to bring humanity back to God where there is hope, peace and joy. The impact of the country's history is so severe that most people, even though they profess and call themselves Christians, have grown accustomed to live their lives in compartments and resent the involvement or intrusion of the church into politics or ordinary social relationships (Ellis 1999:45-51). But the task of the church to influence the social fabric of humanity cannot be achieved in isolation. The interests of the various sections of the society are one and indivisible.

Therefore, any attempt to govern or lead the nation in the interests of a section or of people of one ethnicity and class in the end would lead to disaster. The more discontent is driven underground the greater the explosion will be one day. The church, thus, has a task to convince or influence the moral fabric of the society that the ethics of peace, love and unity, as taught in the Bible, are not only sound for Christianity, but are sound for political, social and economic issues as well. Humanity should not condemn crimes such as slavery, rape and inequality because of Christian teaching, but because it is moral for humanity to collectively stand against moral decadence in society.

5.4 Advocacy

5.4.1 Biblical basis for advocacy – Ludy (1982)

Through its findings in the preceding chapters the study has shown the gross human rights abuses that engulfed Liberia for years (Dolo 2007; Ellis 1999). The chapters have detailed the prosecution, detentions, discriminations, torture and death of citizens under various dispensations of the country's history. These kinds of inhumane treatments of humanity call for the church to raise its prophetic voice in

standing for the oppressed and taking an uncompromising step against abuse of every form and nature (Ludy 1982:130-131).

In his argument, Nordsokke (2011:22-28) asserts that the church has a responsibility to speak for the voiceless and the marginalised and that its ministry should be inclusive of all people. According to Nordsokke, "Therefore, it has to be prophetic, lifting up the dignity of the excluded and marginalised, denouncing the powers that seek justice and life only for themselves, announcing ways of promoting human values and well-being for all" (2011:28).

Nordsokke's argument emphasises the biblical teaching that Christians are called to seek justice (Micah 6:8), plead the cause of the poor (Proverbs 31:8-9) and stand in the gap for those who are suffering (Ezekiel 22:30). Advocacy in this sense does not imply that the church must join or form a political party but it needs to challenge and speak against authorities and powers that dehumanise other human beings (Ludy 1982:133). The church needs to emulate Jesus' example when He openly spoke against the injustices and oppressions (Luke 11:42).

As followers of Jesus, who associated Himself with those who were on the edge of society, the church has to do likewise and portray a God of peace. The Bible teaches humanity that He accepted the anointing by the "sinful woman" (Luke 7:36-50) and rebuked His disciples when they stopped people bringing children to Him (Luke 18:16). He also healed the blind, the sick, the demon-possessed and other "outsiders" of the church at the time. The man who was chained outside the city and the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (Mark 5:1-20; Mark 5:25-34) are all cases in point. These narratives admonish Christians that the church must use a Godly response to issues of grave concern to the society.

Historically, the church of Liberia in the past has been discredited for its involvement with power because of the way prominent church members and leaders were actively involved in political matters of the country. Instead of applying the Gospel in influencing the fabrics of the society it became part of the problem. The church needs to learn from its past (Gifford 1993:106-110).

Undoubtedly, the researcher wishes to allude to Martin Luther's theory of two kingdoms (the earthly and heavenly kingdom); that indeed Christians are citizens of the heavenly, but they cannot live in the world aloof. According to its teaching, the church is called to be the "salt and light" to influence the world. This is an inescapable responsibility of the church embedded with transcendental command and the exemplary life of Jesus.

He warned His setting at the time against the hypocrisy of the ruling Jewish powers: "Be on your guard against the yeast [teaching] of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). He was vocal and criticised their ignorance of justice and mercy, their use of power for personal gain and their means of leading the people astray (Luke 11:37-53; Matthew 9:9-13; Matthew 12:1-14).

Similarly to the society today that is replete with abhorrence and violence, in Jesus' time the Jews and the Romans could not "see eye to eye". It was reported that some Jewish Zealots killed Roman soldiers and the incessant hatred between the two groups made the Jews look up to the coming of a messiah who would redeem them from the oppression and subjugation and re-establish their earthly kingdom.

However, Jesus took another path and introduced a different phenomenon to the dynamics of the situation and taught them how to love their enemies instead of hate. He said "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," (Matthew 5:44) and "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). The two spectacles in Jesus' teaching addressed both the oppressed and the oppressor. He entreats the oppressor to have mercy and asks the oppressed to love those that persecuted him. Christians are to do likewise to assert an influence that seeks to restore peace and tranquillity in times like these (Dickey 2012:141-144).

5.4.2 Advocacy for the needy – Barlett and Taylor (2009)

Human beings are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). This goes to say that humanity is of equal value and should have equal respect. Jesus' exemplary life and teaching show that God loves everyone and has a special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed because they often experience suffering and

injustice. His concern for the poor and oppressed and His desire for justice is part of His character as shown throughout the Bible. A glaring example is the redemption of the oppressed from Egypt to the Promised Land (a vision of freedom, peace, equality and justice for all). He exerted His mighty hands to accord liberation to the enslaved and the oppressed from a repressive regime (Barlett & Taylor 2009:332-334).

The Exodus narrative teaches humanity about the compassion of God and His desire for justice and freedom for humankind. It can be inferred that Christians should thus emulate this example and wake up from the tradition of apathy and stand against injustices. It is also discernible that compassion and justice are often found together in God's actions and commands: "The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land'" (Exodus 3:7-8).

This indicates that believers should express special concern for protecting those on the edge of society. In the New Testament, James teaches Christians to treat all people equally, in particular, not to insult the poor or ignore their needs (James 2:1-26). It can also be said that the strength of the church can be seen when it operates at all levels of society and influences its surroundings. It is vital that each expression of the church is connected to the wider body of believers for support and that they work together to extend God's Kingdom.

5.4.3 Advocacy against social ills – Roger et al (2008)

The church should deeply concern itself with the social ills that tend to degrade the citizens of the country. Liberians continue to face an increasing level of social crimes that affect each and every member of the society. It is thus important for the church to partner with stakeholders to fight these crimes with its teaching and resources at its disposal because the people of Liberia deserve better (Human Rights Watch nd). The crimes of corruption, injustices, abuses of power, and other forms of human

rights abuses are not new to the Liberian society for they have been the common state of affairs.

The church should make a preferential option for the weak and deprived; it should be sensitive for the cause of those who suffer and should stand with the marginalised. The reason is simply because the cause of the deprived is deemed justice in the Bible (Ludy 1982:130-134). For the Bible constantly portrays God as taking up or hearing the cause of the marginalised and thus calls on the church to do the same. This does not imply that the church should side with any organisation, group or people fighting to destabilise the country or instigating civil unrest (Butselaar 2001:40). This consideration makes it clear that the New Testament provides the church with the necessity to orientate the thinking of humanity to live side by side. The church's specific contribution to peace must consist precisely in acting as an ecumenical body and not as a representation of any particular interests (Butselaar 2001:10-15).

Liberia is very similar to South Africa in its history of segregation, oppression of the masses and social stratification (Turner et al. 2002:375). Since then, ecumenical bodies and religious NGOs continue to play a role in speaking against ills that have the propensity of plunging the nation into civil unrest (Ilo 2014:157,212). Though the church in this area does not intend to Christianise the country neither impose its beliefs on the citizens, Christians continue to contribute to the stability and rapid growth of the country's economy. The argument here is that there is a link between evangelisation and peace. This is because the evangelisation of humanity can take place in a stable environment (Ilo 2014:145-151-162).

5.5 Unity and Development

5.5.1 Unity of the church

The church has undoubtedly played an enormous role in the lives of individuals, groups and the entire country (**Table 4.4.5**). Its doctrines and teachings make it an influential and powerful instrument of justice, development, harmony and peace (Storrar et al. 2011:138-148). Therefore, the efforts to maintain peace in a war-

stricken Liberia can be influenced by the contributions of the largest religious organisations.

However, the church's effort in making a meaningful impact in a highly divided nation has been hampered by the ambivalent and precarious relationship that exists between denominations and churches (**Table 4.4.6**). There is a disproportionate history of disunity among denominations across the country, traced back to the country's formation (Gifford 1993). This is exacerbated by each party of the society or church bodies that feel vindictive in taking action and holding onto certain perspectives that affect the confluence of believers.

The issue of skirmish and rigidity is particularly highlighted by the composition of the Liberian political configuration. In Liberia, the members of the conventional or orthodox churches were predominantly of the upper class that controls every facet of government and the country's economy (Gifford 1993) while the members of the Pentecostal and African Independent churches were predominantly from the indigenous backgrounds and lower classes. As discussed in the previous chapters, abuse of power stands out as one of the major reasons for the violence in Liberia. It is not merely the dislike citizens have for each other, but the sting of power that lies behind the hatred that causes the violence (Kieh 2008; Adebayo et al 2002:11).

Whatever the stated motives of division, the main point is that they have to find common ground in working together as an agent of peace and unity. It can be further argued that the unity of the church would serve as the unity of the country, given that the majority of the country's religious population favours Christianity (United States Department of State 2010). The conciliation of the church in this sense refers to the mutual commitment among Christianity that concentrates on making a collective impact. The effort to overcome the entrenched division would motivate the populace at large.

Christians are motivated by the redemptive love of God in Christ to play a role in society that reflects the doctrines of God (Katangole & Rice 2008:98,137). The Bible inspired believers to attempt to overcome conflict, hatred and violence. To do that

effectively the church has to unite. In unity, the church would attempt to break the roots of conflicts in the Liberian society. Conflict or violence is a blatant denial of the Christian faith. It denies the effectiveness of the reconciling work of Christ, through whose love all human diversities lose their divisive significance. Conflict does not only destroy lives and properties, but also denies the common humanity in creation and the belief that humankind is made in the image of God. Conflict falsely points humanity to human-induced ideology rather than looking up to Jesus Christ who is the Prince of peace (Abramowitz 2014:34).

It is through unity that the church of Liberia can uphold and extend the right conscientious objection to the root of violence. In unity the church can emphatically condemn violence and social vices that tend to destabilise the Liberian society. Unity would strengthen the church voice in opposing the ruthlessness and indiscrimination that engulfed the Liberian society (Dolo 2007:22). It is the conviction of the researcher that through unity the church would meaningfully participate in the renewal of history. This call for unity is not only for religious fellowship but a call that seeks to encourage Christians to cooperate with all citizens in the fields of economic and social settings.

It is a call that seeks to suggest that the church should increasingly cooperate with other stakeholders to show itself as a renewal of hope and the giver of newness of life through its doctrines and teachings. To achieve this, the church must encourage more congregations to join the LCC (Civil Peace Service Great Lakes of Africa nd). The LCC must also seek to expand its offices to the counties. The expansion would help the church to share information about peace-building initiatives and, at the same time, serve as a needed instrument of common action.

The collective initiative and effort would help the church to disseminate the message of peace and harmony across the country. The cooperation would keep in review the needs that may arise and require the church's intervention in preventing civil unrest. Through cooperation the church would appropriate resources and expertise to tackle civil unrest in the country. In the same way, it can be argued that through collective efforts or initiatives the church could buttress the initiative of the JPC in Liberia (JPC

Liberia nd). The JPC is on record for making immense contributions to mend the fragility in the Liberian society.

It has harmonised the interest of splinter groups within the society through its work and projects. It held government (the Charles Taylor reign) accountable for human abuses and maintained that justice and the rule of law should be exercised to afford the citizens their rights. The simplification of the argument is that it is the principal duties of any state authority to superintend and co-ordinate the respective rights of citizens. In other words, it is the duty of state authority to ensure that the right of every citizen is respected, recognised, coordinated, defended and promoted (JPC Liberia nd).

This understanding gives the basis for the JPC's project and work in Liberia. Taken cumulatively, the work of the JPC of standing against tyrants should be seen as a work of struggle for social change and justice as part of the means of applying the work of redemption which has been won in Christ. It can thus be said that any theology that engages itself with the concerns of the poor and oppressed must deal with the complex sociological, economic, and political realities (JPC Liberia nd). This explains that the church must work together to tackle the broader issues of the society.

5.5.2 Development – Martin (1992)

The ongoing discussions and arguments make it crystal and vividly clear that the church has an inescapable responsibility to help politicians and local decision-makers to reduce poverty and inequality in a country ravaged by civil unrest. The battle against poverty, inequality and unemployment in Liberia ought to be the battle of every stakeholder (Martin 1992:186). The researcher wishes to echo that the church should be moved by love to use its resources in order to mend the gap between "the haves" and the "have nots" because poverty is the main problem facing the populace (Martin 1992:180-187).

Therefore, it is important for the church to gear its efforts towards tackling this scourge that has permeated the landscape of the country for so long. This is

achievable by encouraging communities to recognise the need to promote efforts to eradicate poverty, to uphold equality and to focus on achieving higher levels of employment and support for social integration.

The church and other organisations have the responsibility to participate in all the efforts, led by the government and other institutions, against poverty. The aim should be to ensure that social welfare and sustainable developmental programmes for the country affected by poverty are implemented. The major stakeholders herein can achieve this objective by forming joint ventures with the intention of creating policy frameworks that are crucial in combating poverty, exclusion and unemployment.

In doing so, these ventures will provide consistent developmental programmes for members of communities around Liberia. The argument here is that the process of eradicating poverty and inequality in a deeply polarised nation like Liberia requires the participation of all major stakeholders.

It is arguably clear that social justice is more than an ethical imperative; it is the groundwork for national stability and prosperity. It is everyone's duty to help make Liberia a better and safer place, especially for the vulnerable members of the society. Hence, the church should seek to continuously address the core issues rooted in poverty, unemployment and the inadequate provision of services to communities across the nation. Through the help of the church, communities would have the opportunity to enjoy a better life by fighting human trafficking, domestic abuse and abuse of power and foster a foundation for a peaceful society.

The church must strongly consider the issues of helping the needy for it is regarded as a symbol of freedom, prosperity, justice and a beacon of hope (Dear 2005:115). At a time when Liberia is recovering from war, the church's role should reflect on its transcendental virtues and mandate of changing the world in which it exists. The needy and less privileged should not be excluded from the nation's bounty but also be regarded as beneficiaries of the nation's resources for they also represent an opportunity for the county itself.

The cooperation of major stakeholders in this regard would increase chances of successfully implementing the poverty eradication programmes. The church has the potential of becoming a major catalyst for grassroots economic development in the country (Martin 1992:186-190). History teaches that no civilisation or developing nation can survive with large proportions of inequality and injustices. A country can only achieve its aims and objectives when the interests of various sections of the community are indivisible.

It is the task of the church to convince the nation that the teaching of the Bible is not just for doctrinal matters but is a foundation for coexistence and unity (Martin 1998:114-117). If the church is to play a meaningful role in combating a war spirit, it must try to attack its source. It is, therefore, discernible from the preceding argument that the real causes of any war lie further back than the particular dispute or incident that sets a spark to the inflammable material that has often been accumulating for years (Hamburg & Hamburg 2004:158). The church is thus called to use its influence to remove inhuman or oppressive conditions that depress and impoverish human life. In a country that has been torn apart by war, division and human-induced cruelty, the word of God demands that the church's invisible unity in Christ be preached among the people to lessen animosity (Wiersbe 2002:389).

5.6 Framework

The unfolding phenomena emerging from Liberia in relation to the Ebola crisis make it imperative for everyone to get involved in moving the nation forward (Berger 2015:10). Institutions like the church have to consolidate the effort of other stakeholders in providing medical facilities and training of expertise in the area.

It is only through collective effort that the country would fully recover from the devastation of the civil hostilities that claimed the lives of fellow compatriots (250 000 people) about a decade ago. The panic created by the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in the country and its neighbouring countries cannot be subdued without putting mechanisms in place to curtail the disaster. The violence that followed suit due to the epidemic, coupled with the resonant scars of the cataclysm that occurred

in the land in the past, rekindled or triggered a poignant reminder of how the desperation of humanity can easily lead to clashes or civil unrest (Associated Press 2014).

The apprehensive report of the World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the disease took an appalling turn to affect more people than imagined due to a poor health system, lack of medical amenities and experts. The disquieting report marks another ineradicable tragedy in the land (Berger 2015:10).

It is in this vein that the researcher wishes to argue that the collective effort of stakeholders would go a long way to save lives, provide sustainable solutions to the fragile situations and subsequently maintain peace in the country.

It is promulgated that a developed nation is a peaceful nation (Hancock & Mitchel 2007:39). Hence, the church could use the following and many other developmental frameworks as means of outreach in the society:

- Schools;
- Clinics;
- Support for agriculturists;
- Micro loans for small business owners;
- Help in the reduction of infant mortality;
- Youth employment scheme; and
- Many others.

The driving forces of violence occurring in the Liberian society call for the church to rise to the occasion and lead the country through turbulent times that often arise when the country goes through civil unrest (Dolo 2007:21). The church must often seek to strategically and tactically align its involvement in societal affairs with the mission, vision, values and culture of the Bible. The involvement of the church will necessitate the transformation of lives, the growth of the church and the nurturing of

the society towards the conformity of Christian values that uphold peace and tranquillity in the nation. The involvement of the church in societal affairs in relation to peace can be summarised under the arguments discussed next.

5.6.1 The appreciation of intercultural living – Keast (2007)

The appreciation of intercultural living implies a “trans-valuation attitude” whereby acceptance or tolerance is recognised as the way of life in a society that is deeply polarised. The church cannot exist in isolation. It must, thus, contribute to the peace of the society in which it exists. It must encourage objective and purposeful thinking that look at the Liberian society as a pluralistic community rather than a monistic environment (Keast 2007:12-20).

5.6.2 Human relationship – Baldock (2011)

The societal engagement of the church in relation to this study involves the propagation of the values of respect for humanity, friendship, societal cooperation, and courtesy. In the societies where these virtues are demonstrated, peace is cemented as steering wheels of progression (Baldock 2011:40-55).

5.6.3 Economic efficiency – Bakama (1992)

The study has disclosed in the preceding arguments that there are higher risks of civil war breaking out when there are social grievances such as inequality, abuse of power and unfair distribution of resources in a country. These social grievances are ignited by the lack of democracy. To achieve long-term peace and stability in the country, the church and other stakeholders have to initiate economic programmes that expose the populace to the importance of workmanship, occupational efficiency, occupational appreciation and personal economic progression.

5.6.4 Civil responsibility – Leppert and Sullivan (2004) and Belliles and McDowell (1995)

The church must use its resources to propagate values that stimulate the awareness for social justice, social activity, social understanding, national unity and tolerance. It must initiate a social platform that paves the way for the understanding of principles

of conversation as it relates to national devotion and democracy (Leppert & Sullivan 2004:63-66, Belliles & McDowell 1995:54-58)

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5.6.5 Development of talent – Ilo (2014)

Too often the talent and skills of the young generation are ignored or overlooked. Undoubtedly, talent is the epicentre of a country's economy. Skilled labour moves a country forward through the private and public sectors. The church should help to remedy talent shortages by improving skills, retooling or relocating talent to effectively fulfil the strategic imperative of national growth. The presence of skilled labour stimulates a better equilibrate supply in the labour market that leads to growth.

However, Liberia as a war-ravaged country is struggling with persistent, widespread unemployment and huge untapped labour pools that cause shortages and skills gaps that dampen economic growth. In this case, the church should aid creativity by stimulating the skill of learners by uncovering hidden talents that would contribute towards national development (2014:34-56).

5.6.6 Conclusion

It was an ordinary December 24, Christmas eve in 1989, for most people in Liberia, but not for the people of Butuo in Nimba County, Liberia. On this fateful day, the people of Butuo witnessed the genesis of the country's bloody history (Kieh 2008). The army's brutal use of force, in an effort to crush the rebellion, exposed how deeply the country was divided. Some historians argue that the Butuo situation was reminiscent of the 1985 foiled coup. It is argued that the government responded to the coup with an unwarranted force.

Thousands of Liberians flooded across the region and beyond for their lives. The researcher was a teenager in Liberia during this time and still has memories of the refugee days. To this day one can still notice the harm of the bloody civil war. Many

are orphans, widows, homeless, disabled and hopeless. These factors make “history ... long to forget and longer to forgive” (Dolo 2007:16).

Every Liberian has a different story from the extremely brutal and unnecessary civil war that decimated the country’s infrastructure, destroyed a generation, caused mass displacement around the globe and created wounds that will take long to heal. To some, the war was more humane than a brutal dictatorship. So what does this have to do with the church? Surely the causes and devastations of the war will continue to be a subject of debate for generations. It is in the interest of Liberians to look passed the raucous of the country’s history and understands the true nature of the country’s division (Ellis 1999:56).

The church is a religious body founded on the doctrine of the Bible. The Bible is made up of 66 books, but it has one main subject. Christ is the pith of all biblical teachings or themes of scripture. The Old Testament is regarded as a historical narrative that encapsulates the teaching of Christianity that is fulfilled in the New Testament. The New Testament teaches about the deity of Christ as the redeemer, victor, saviour, reconciler and peacemaker (Ilori 2002:34).

The Bible teaches Christians to follow or emulate the example of Christ who reconciled the world with God. The church is thus tasked to take this message of peace to the world. On the basis of the biblical teaching, one may conclude that the Gospel of peace means the propagation of God’s will reflected in the outward living of His followers. In other words, the church has to practise the forgiveness Christ bestowed on Christians which ultimately leads to harmonious living (Katongole & Rice 2008).

The church must be biblically directed to make an informed contribution. The insight expressed by Galtung reappears here in a completely different form. In his argument, the peace activist postulates that for the society to maintain peace it must deal with the elements that tend to cause social conflict or unrest. The insight can be inferred that the issue of peace must be handled or shared by Christians and non-Christians alike. It can be further explained that the issue of peace is a national

concern and, thus, it can only be achieved when various groupings and structures within the nation cooperate. The thesis thus reflects on the orientation that the country's past and present condition requires societal cooperation in maintaining peace and stability.

This assertion is on the basis of the consideration that the provision of human needs paves the way for peace. In other words, the church and other stakeholders should seek to uphold the culture and values that aim at eliminating causes that lead to unrest. This is to say that the church must lead the way to promote conceptions, practices and cultures that look deeper than the symptoms by taking into account the issues of justice, freedom and development. It must stand against the structures and system that facilitate the marginalisation of the masses and enable individuals to become super rich.

The church must mobilise grassroots support using the most abundant of its teachings and doctrine. One does not have to be a trend analyst to track the trajectory of the country in the absence of a fair distribution of resources, justice, freedom and development. In the realm of national politics, where the abuse of power through the military, police and economic policy serve as means of igniting violence, the stability of the country is at stake.

Therefore, peace and stability cannot be achieved in a country where political power is mainly the antecedent of economic enrichment at the expense of the ordinary people. The argument that "poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity anywhere" (Abrahamian et al 1995:26) gains credence here because without the fair distribution of national resources, the peace and stability of the country is in danger. In the face of grave suffering of the people, the advantage of the few elite is likely to breed discontent that may lead to civil unrest.

The church of Liberia exists in a society where the masses are victims of violence and have yet to receive justice. The church must take the courage and resilience to fight for the justice and dignity of the citizens of Liberia in line with its teaching and doctrine. It must dedicate resources towards affording justice to those who are

victimised, raped and brutally murdered in cold blood by state apparatuses. The church's missiological doctrine and teaching puts it in the position to speak out against injustices and abuses. Around the country there are many densely populated slums with grave hardship and intense human suffering. The country cannot continue in a situation where one-third of its population is developed and two-thirds is underdeveloped. Moreover, the church must not watch in silence and apathy at the troubling situation within the country that often leads to human catastrophe, but play a role that gives hope, transforms lives, seeks justice for victims and gives opportunity to the needy.

From the findings and discussion above it is legitimate to argue that the church in the past has had both positive and negative influences on the democracy of Liberia. Christian churches have served as benevolent agents of welfare and catalysts of political reform. But they have also served as allies of repression and censors of human rights. Christian theology has helped Liberia to cultivate democratic ideas of equality, liberty, and responsibility, but members and leaders have also helped to perpetuate repressive ideas of elitism and the oppression and exclusion of the masses. Christians have to change their attitudes and actions concerning respect for fellow beings to bring about unity, peace, freedom and democracy.

The church has to become a liberation and ecumenical movement that will continue to challenge the society to lend greater aid to the poor and the oppressed and give greater support to the cause of political reform and renewal in a country ravaged by incessant conflict. The church must take up the challenge to develop a more coherent and consistent teaching on democratic law and politics that are fundamental to maintaining lasting peace and stability in the country. The stakeholders in the country such as leading politicians, clerics, academics of a variety of political positions and Christians should come together to debate the role Christianity should play in the new dispensation of the country in shaping the democratic government of the country to reflect the will of the people and, at the same time, pave the way for lasting peace.

The church must consistently convene congresses whereby delegates from different backgrounds can discuss significant issues affecting the country and thus forge a way forward. Finally, the church must seek to promulgate its principles and teaching through the following dimensions:

- Truth: Making the case for the truth of Christ in a pluralistic society;
- Reconciliation: Building the peace of Christ in a divided and broken society of Liberia;
- World faiths: Bearing witness to the love of Christ among people of other faiths in the Liberian society;
- Priorities: Discerning the will of God for evangelisation in the country ravaged by war; and
- Integrity: Repositioning the church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity.

5.7 Limitations

The limitations in this research were the inadequate availability of literature on the topic and the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic that prevented interpersonal interviews. The literature used did not explicitly describe the involvement of the church in societal affairs especially in mending social fragility that often leads to uncivil unrest. These problems were compounded by the unwillingness of interviewees to give detailed explanations to the questions. According to respondents, the topic is reopening “old wounds”. An interpersonal interview would have given the study a wider set of opinions from across the country. The unwillingness of the respondents to openly discuss the topic limited the ability of the researcher.

5.8 Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher wishes to recommend that further study is required to follow up on the extent to which the people of Liberia are willing to forgive and forget the past

and forge ahead with long-lasting peace and unity. A study should look at the extent to which the nation has healed or become reconciled. It should also study whether an initiative for lasting peace and stability can be sustained. Furthermore, a study is required to investigate the fragility index of the country. In other words, it must study how easy it would be for the country to be plunged into war again.

5.9 Summary of the Study

The study has exploited the challenges, ways, and means the church can employ to help a country affected by conflict and fragility to find a path towards sustainable peace and development. From the findings of the study, the researcher has promulgated a framework through which the church could contribute towards alleviating the extreme poverty within a generation and boosting shared prosperity throughout the country. Implementing the framework means sharpening the focus on the causes of fragility and conflict within one of the world's poorest and most war-ravaged countries. The church has a major task of curing the resonant scars of the war that permeate every facet of Liberian life.

The findings of the research portray that the country is highly divided based on many factors such as ethnicity, economic disparities and social status in the society. The failure to tackle these elements puts the country in grave danger of repeating the 1989 inerasable history of bloody unrest in the country. When the scourge of "black on black apartheid" was smashed in 1980, many thought the country seemed to have a bright future ahead of it. Many years later, the debate of comparing life under the different dispensations of the country still continues.

Those who supported the war argue that the living conditions in the country after the war are worse than ever. The life expectancy in the country is among the lowest in the world. Epidemics and other human-induced phenomenon continue to compound the suffering of the people.

Charles Taylor's reign, which led the country right after the war, was outstandingly incompetent, corrupt and replete with human rights abuse and injustices. Of course, a former warlord's rule could not promote integrity. Unemployment since then has skyrocketed at 85% of the population, but President Sirleaf, of the United party (UP)-led government, continues to lose millions of public funds to corruption, which is a simple manifestation of a breakdown of the state. The government's ignorance and failure to properly tackle corruption is appallingly bad. Due to corruption and

mismanagement, everything that is a government function is in shambles: education, healthcare, infrastructure and security (IMF 2007).

The incessant corruption and mismanagement have witnessed the intensification of the hardships of the masses. This reflects the reason why the country continues to experience conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment. Experience has shown that achieving sustainable development in Liberia would require a participatory model that brings stakeholders together to respond to the high volatility, high risks and causes of conflict. The citizens, including the church, can witness convincingly to peace by pointing to the biblical orientation that unites a society.

This is to say that the prophetic witness of the church in social and political order depends on the church being a community of persons rooted in the word of God, that is, activism in the world in which human worth and mutual responsibility are acknowledged and realised and from which love and unity go out in work of service to the society. If one studies the role of the concept of peacemaking in the entire Gospel of Matthew, it becomes clear that peacemaking is not merely one of the tasks of a Christian, but an essential quality that moves a society forward. It emphasises keeping the doors of negotiation open to save lives and properties.

Every conflict takes place in an inherently unique situation driven by personalities and circumstances. Not surprisingly, each also has unique lessons to convey. In this study, the following range of conflicts that occurred in Liberia has been discussed. Clearly, there is an urgent need to understand the political and cultural dynamics that played out in the Liberian conflict situation if one is to deal effectively with their confrontational aspects or, perhaps more importantly, to capitalise effectively on their harmonising elements. Almost anywhere one turns, one finds a political and cultural dimension to the Liberian conflict which the society is woefully ill-equipped to deal with.

Sadly, the country's policymakers and other stakeholders' failure to apply their minds to the causes of conflict and division continues to derail the progression of the nation. This was demonstrated by the civil unrest that fundamentally portrays a

country's incapability of dealing with social, political and cultural differences in a hostile setting. Not only was it ill-equipped to counter or quell the violence manipulated by the political elite for their own purposes, it was made a way of life among the people. Because of this inherent failure to comprehend and tackle the societal division, the country is often on the edge which is why confrontation or misunderstandings turn into conflict to settle differences.

The civil unrest in the country is some of the more recent manifestations of where polarisation can lead a country. Unless a complementary response to these conflicts is deduced with an effective strategy of cultural engagement, the society will continually remain fragile and volatile. In other words, Christianity in Liberia should incorporate religious concerns into the practice of peace building. This involves making religion part of the solution in some of the intractable, identity-based conflicts that plague the landscape of the country.

This can be translated into practice from a variety of strategies depending on the context of the conflict. Since every conflict is unique, the approach Christianity takes to resolving it should be built around the role the church plays in the lives of the people. The church as a peacemaker must have the credibility with the parties to the conflict, and this is most often gained through a long-term local presence or by partnering with a local individual or institution that commands such a presence. Successful conflict prevention or peace-building requires long-term commitment by stakeholders in the country.

Christians should play an effective role in reducing the bitter after-effects of war and strive to heal the wounds caused by conflict. The country has suffered from conflict for many years which has claimed the lives of innocent Liberians. Despite the formation of the country on Christian principles, norms and subscription to democratic practices, the roots of the cataclysm remain.

To quell and curtail the animosity in the country, the church has to seek and promote the protection of citizens, respect for different religious customs and practices, recognition of human rights and promotion of accountability. Citizenship

should be the basis of rights and responsibilities and promote a society or place that repudiates any discrimination because of religion, race or culture. To implement this framework in real life, every member of the communities must play an effective part. The church must create an awareness of what is happening in the society. It must also spread the culture of peace.

The war has left all Liberian citizens with strong feelings. There is not one family that was untouched. Some have lost brothers, parents, other relatives or friends. Some still carry envy, hatred, bitterness or a spirit for revenge. Grunchy argues that “there is no future without forgiveness” (1995:34). Hatred and bitterness result from unresolved anger. The church must promote a spirit of forgiveness for wrongs and teach on the management of anger and freedom from any hatred and bitterness.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Designed questions for the focus group on the role of Christianity in post-war Liberia.

Introduction of the interviewer: I am a PhD student who is conducting research on the topic of the role of Christianity in the development, peace and reconstruction of post-war Liberia. I will be grateful if you could be one of my co-researchers (interviewees) for this topic.

1. I am sure you have heard about the global topic, development and peace building. What is your understanding of development and peace building?
2. What is conflict?
3. What are some of the challenges and issues facing Christians and non-Christians today in Liberia?
4. In your understanding, what are the effects and conundrums associated with the challenges and issues you just mentioned?
5. In your opinion, how can Liberian Christianity contribute towards development in this country (Liberia)?
6. Do you believe that some actions taken by leadership can plunge the country into violence?
7. How can Christians help to advocate for a nonviolent or violence-free community?
8. What are some benefits of a peaceful society?
9. In your view, what are some of the impediments to develop in this country and what role can Christianity play to help solve these problems?
10. What is the church's current approach to peace and reconciliation?

11. In your view, how do your religious beliefs influence your relationship with others?
12. Do you believe that religious belief sometimes fuels religious conflict? What should Christians do to avert such a catastrophe?
13. What development framework would you propose that Christians in this country should adopt to affect the overall development and stability of the country?
14. What part would literacy play in the development and stability of this country?
15. What is your understanding of peaceful reconstruction of a post-war country?
16. In your view, can Christians' active involvement in social-political issues help to avert conflict in this country?
17. During the war, what active or notable role did Christians play in ending the conflict?
18. What collective role are Christians currently playing in moving the country forward?
19. There are many faith Gospel churches today in Liberia with various forms of institutions. How do you think these groups can work together to affect development and help maintain peace in this country?
20. What bitter roots do you think affect your immediate society today? How can they be dealt with in a Christian spirit?
21. "Liberia cannot enjoy the healing of her wounds while there is no true peace within and between individual Liberians". If this is true, what do we need to do to achieve total reconciliation and build lasting peace?
22. Do you believe that the church can exercise its spiritual duties and at the same time contribute towards the development of the society?

23. In your view, what are some of the influences that make people choose a route of violence and how could the church help to prevent these situations?
24. Can the Bible's teaching help Christians play a significant role to maintain peace and foster development? Share some of the scriptures you think are relevant.
25. What is your understanding of unity? Is it possible to achieve a united nation in Liberia? If yes, how? If not, why?
26. If you were "developing a peace initiative on forgiveness and reconciliation" what are the relevant biblical scriptures you will use as a premise to your argument?
27. How are the teachings of your church about violence, destruction of lives of and properties?
28. How should the church address the issues of cultural, language, or ethnic division and achieve unity?
29. In your view, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the church when it comes to social development? Why? And how should it improve?
30. With the growing sentiment among communities for poor service delivery, corruption and other human abuses, how do you see these as warning signs of danger or unrest? What part should the church play in addressing these issues or taking them up with appropriate authority?
31. What is your personal philosophy of peace and development as a Christian?
32. In our time, how will you describe the effect of electronic media in relation to violence? Is it positive or negative?
33. In your view, what are some of the factors that constitute human rights abuses in our society?

34. If you realise that your prophet or apostle is doing or teaching something that promotes violence and hatred what will you do?
35. How often do you go to church? Or how active are you in the church? Do you have influence in your church? In your capacity, how will you influence the teaching of your church in regard to peace and development?
36. What is your understanding of the Bible? How do you regard the Bible in regard to peace and development?
37. How will you feel or do if someone who abused your right, or murdered your beloved family member(s) in conflict sought for your forgiveness and reconciliation?
38. In your own view who do you consider a peaceful Christian?
39. What will you propose as a guideline against violence?
40. To conclude this interview, what is your advice on the subject matter "*The role of Christianity in post-war Liberia*"?



LETTER OF CONSENT

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Contact Details : 0813196184

Student Number : 11293846

The title of the study : ***The role of Christianity in post-war Liberia***

I herein write to state that I Pastor. Nebo Vinton, a Liberian national in Pretoria, has consented to be interviewed by the researcher in relation to his research. I wish to also state my participation is voluntary and the researcher assured me anonymity in the event where necessary.

Similarly the researcher has assured me that my name will not be fiction in referring to me and that all answers and information given to him will be treated as confidential.

Signed at PRETORIA on this.....23rd ... of ...MAY...2014.

Subject's signature.....

Researcher signature.....