PREVENTING AND RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS IN ADVENTIST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Observation has shown that students, faculty and staff living in our Adventist educational institutions experience interpersonal conflicts that need to be prevented or constructively resolved by responsible educational leaders who have leadership skills and knowledge in managing conflict. The following scenario indicates that they do exist conflict situations on Adventist campuses that need the attention of educational leaders:

- ▶ A student has conflict with parents at home; he thinks to withdraw from the conflict by committing suicide.
- ▶ A young lady on the campus has been hurt by somebody she loves. She seems to withdraw from church worship services and chapel exercises.
- ▶ Some employees of an educational institution feel they are mistreated and so choose to leave the organization to escape further injustice.
- ▶ A student has told the chaplain that the disciplinary committee has given him unjust punishment.
- ▶ One of the top administrators in an educational institution is in dilemma that will require a decision that will please some and displease others.
- ▶ Some students and faculty are engaged in destructive behaviour such as sabotaging institutional plans and activities, setting buildings on fire, leaking college/university secrets to outsiders.
- ▶ An employee who has been in conflict with the school administration feels that no one cares to listen to his concerns fairly and so he resorts to secular courts to seek justice.
- ▶ Dissatisfaction is so high that faculty and students are passive and immobilized. They withdraw from attending committees, church worship services, do not respond to letters or leave room when certain matters are discussed.

As we think of the above human conflict situations that some individuals have experienced, we can see the need of establishing a conflict ministry as a response of God's love, peace and justice to human suffering on campus setting. Unfortunately, however, observation indicates that while such peace-making ministry is needed, it is sometimes not there, and if it exists, its mechanism seems to be unjust and wavering. It is therefore, the purpose of this paper to call upon Adventist educators, administrators, and chaplains to foster faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts. To achieve this purpose, the paper will show how fostering faith and principles of justice in the Christian ministry of conflict management can prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts. The paper proposes that when faith and justice are fostered and integrated faithfully in our beliefs, values, practices and learning process in dealing with human conflicts, interpersonal conflicts can be prevented and resolved healthfully.

How is this paper relevant to the theme of the 34th Seminar on the Integration of Faith and Learning? The theme of the seminar is about "Conveying Biblical Beliefs and Christian Values through Adventist Education" and the paper is about "Preventing and Resolving Interpersonal Conflicts in Adventist Educational Institutions." While Adventist educators have traditionally interpreted the integration of faith and learning as the process of linking up Christian faith with

every course taught in the classroom, Ron du Preez maintains that the integration of Adventist faith and spiritual values should not only remain in the classroom but should also be assimilated into every practice of the entire life of the educational institution[1]. As I concur with Ron du Preez's view, this paper becomes relevant to the seminar theme in the way it attempts to show how faith and justice as elements of Christian values can be practically fostered and integrated in the educational institutional life of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts that students and workers encounter in our educational institutions. As the primary goal of Adventist education is to restore the character of God in human relationships, the paper is relevant because it strives to build faith in the God of justice who desires to see his character of justice being reflected in us as we enter into the ministry of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts which is part and parcel of the work of nurturing and personal evangelism through the ministry of reconciliation. At the end of reading this paper, one will have increased knowledge in the field of conflict management and that faith and justice are valuable ingredients in the process of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

2.0   PREREQUISITES FOR FOSTERING FAITH AND JUSTICE

Before we travel on the road of fostering faith and justice as valuable ingredients in the process of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts, we need to examine various prerequisites for fostering faith and justice.

2.1   Prerequisite Number One: Understanding the Meaning of Conflict and Conflict Ministry

In order to succeed well in fostering faith and justice to enhance the process of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts, we need to have a clear understanding of the nature of conflict. To understand the nature of conflict involves understanding the meaning of conflict, conflict ministry and inevitability of conflict. Various experts in the field of conflict management have defined the term conflict in different ways. I will cite some of those definitions and comment on them and lastly I will suggest my own definition of conflict.

In his book, *When the Saints Come Storming*, Flynn defines conflict as a clash of differing points of view, of opinions, of values.[2] This definition stresses controversial conflicts where by one's position of facts, opinion and information are incompatible with those of another.

A conflict, according to Stagner, is a "situation in which two human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both."[3] This definition evolves around conflict of interest, a situation that exists when individuals or groups experience incompatibility of advantages to be attained.

Shaw chuck says, "Conflict arises when the actions of one party threaten the values, goals or behaviours of another party."[4] This definition focuses on attacking what belongs to someone.

The last definition comes from my own perspective. I define conflict as a situation that an individual or group creates when one does not accept one's positive or negative creativity. The

key words in this definition are: accept and creativity. The term "accept" implies loving, liking, appreciating, believing, receiving and tolerating something that another person has or offers. What someone offers may come out of one's creativity. I define creativity as one's ability or spiritual gift to introduce something new into another's sphere of influence and or environment. Since God has created human beings differently in his image, every person has that element of creativity that can be offered to another people's worldview in the process of developing or transforming ones environment and sphere of influence. So when we do not accept our neighbour's creativity, we create a conflict.

I have used two adjectives, that is, positive and negative to describe the noun creativity. These adjectives suggest three forces that may influence creativity. They are: the Spirit of God, spirit of Satan and spirit of secularism. Whatever we want to introduce as new things into people's environment or sphere of influence may be motivated by either the Spirit of God, Satan or secularism. In the Christian context, what is positive is that which is in harmony with Christian values drawn from the Scripture and what is negative is that which is against Scriptural based Christian values. In this paper, all definitions described above, including my definition, will be implied in connection with interpersonal conflict.

Meaning of Conflict Ministry

Having presented the meaning of conflict, let me define conflict Ministry. According to McSwain and Tread well conflict ministry is "the multiple actions of a person seeking to apply the Christian principles of forgiveness, love and reconciliation to conflict in such a way that Christian growth results for the person involved"[5]. While McSwain and Tread well have left out the words faith and justice in their definition, I see faith and justice implied in their definition because there can be no peaceful conflict resolution without justice and the parties involved, including the conflict management minister or consultant, should have faith in the God of Justice. From a Biblical Christian perspective, conflict resolution is considered a ministry because it is an opportunity for a Christian to witness for Christ through serving others or carrying their burdens of conflicts. The action of God of Justice seeking to reconcile the world to himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, is the supreme manifestation of the ministry of God to resolve human conflicts. As Jesus ministered as the Chief reconciler of human conflict, so God has delegated the same ministry to Christians. It is for this reason the Apostle Paul says God has given us the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18 NIV). It is for the same reason also McSwain and Tread well call those who engage in resolving conflicts as" Conflict Ministers."[6]

2.2 Prerequisite Number Two: Conviction in Biblical Mandate for Conflict Ministry Engagement

If we accept conflict resolution as a Christian ministry, then one should have a Biblical mandate to engage in it by fostering faith and justice in order to bring about interpersonal conflicts to a peaceful conclusion. So we pose a question: As Christians do we have Biblical mandates to engage ourselves as ministers of conflict ministry? Yes, the first is in Mathew 15:18-20. Here, Jesus Himself, the Chief Shepherd of conflict ministry, offers strategies for conflict resolution. The mandate has four resolution strategies:

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(a)   To seek private reconciliation
(b)   To seek the wisdom from the third party that may include one or two reconciliators
(c)   To seek the wisdom of the whole church through its leadership
(d)   To treat the non-repentant person as a non-believer.

It is very important for the parties involved in conflict to know and practise the four procedures of interpersonal conflict resolution because of the following reasons:

Firstly, faith and justice ought to be exercised first on a personal and private level. This suggests that each individual has the right and duty to initiate the practice of faith and justice in personal conflict by making sure that his/her faith and rights are respected and protected.

Secondly, the procedure teaches that we are not alone in the ministry of seeking peace with God or with our fellow human beings. Christian faith and justice supports the search of other resources out side ourselves to facilitate reconciliation.

Thirdly, when the individual's faith and justice are injured, the consequences affect the whole community of believers. So the body of Christ, together with its leadership, should be involved in administering or protecting faith and justice.

The second mandate says "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Mathew 5:9 NIV). We shall respond to the call of fostering faith and justice in order to bring peace if we understand why peace is so important to God. It is important because it is part of His character, for He is the "God of peace" (Romans 15:33 NIV). For this reason, if we foster faith and justice to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts, we aim to restore peace, the character of God, in our educational institution; for there is no peace where injustice dominates.

The third mandate to engage in conflict ministry is based on the concept of Biblical Christian stewardship. Sande calls the concept as "stewarding conflict"[7] Drawing the idea from Jesus' parable of a faithful steward (Luke 12:42-48), Sande concludes that in the ministry of conflict resolution, Christians are called to be faithful stewards in managing God's affairs and people's affairs that are in conflict. As faithful stewards, Sande argues that we are in partnership with Christ, our Master, in managing human conflict according to the Masters will, interest and conveniences and not according to our desires, conveniences or benefits[8]. So when we foster faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts let us do it confidently that God has given us a management opportunity of managing interpersonal conflict situations faithfully as stewards of conflict.

2.3 Prerequisite Number Three: Understanding Interpersonal Conflict

Having established a Biblical Christian basis and mandate for conflict ministry engagement, and having explained the meaning of conflict, let us examine the meaning of interpersonal conflict that God might call us to respond to. Interpersonal conflict is conflict between and among individuals. It may be caused by human differences in needs, desires, interests or thinking. Biblical examples of this type of conflict are Jacob and Esau over the issue of birth right (Genesis 27), Paul and Barnabas over goals and purposes (Acts 15).

2.4 Prerequisite Number Four: Positive Belief in the Inevitability of Conflict

Before one is committed to ministry of fostering faith and justice in preventing and resolving conflict, he/she should clearly understand his/her own perspective regarding the nature of conflict. There are two views commonly held by people about the nature of conflict. According to Schrock-Shenk, the first view is positive and states that conflict is natural, inevitable and an integral part of life.[9] Every individual or organization experiences conflict and so Adventist educators and their institutions are no exception. This view is based on the fact that because of sin, human beings are imperfect and still live in an imperfect world. It is because of the imperfection in us that sometimes human beings enter into conflicts with one another. People, however, do not only come in to conflict because of their imperfections. We sometimes enter into personal conflict because of our differences in creation. Sande asserts that

Since God has created us as unique individuals, human beings will often have different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives and priorities. Many of these differences are not inherently right or wrong; they are simply the results of God given diversity and personal preferences.[10]

So the fact that I disagree with your opinion does not mean that I am imperfect or sinful. People who hold the positive view towards conflict respond positively to conflict situations because they believe conflict in its self is neither good nor evil. They argue that it is the way people handle conflicts that may be sinful. So they do not avoid conflict. They engage in it as an opportunity to witness for Christ as they use their talents and spiritual gifts to make people grow in peace, unity, love, justice and reconciliation. They are comfortable to foster faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflict. Shaw chuck, one of promoters of positive thinking towards conflict, says:

> It is not sin for people in the Church to be in conflict, but when conflicts are ignored or poorly managed they result in sinful behaviour. When conflict spills over into character assassination ('the woman made me do it'), physiological or physical destruction (as David to Uriah), lying (as Ananias and Sapphira to Peter) it is sin. When love is lost to hatred, gentleness to maliciousness, truthfulness to dishonesty, humility to selfishness, it is sin. But conflict free of such behaviour is not sinful, it maybe scary, embarrassing and dangerous but yet without sin.[11]

The second view is negative toward conflict. People who hold this view see conflict as sinful, wrong and dangerous. People with this attitude towards conflict seem to be uncomfortable with people in conflict and try to avoid conflict situations whenever possible. If they are confronted with conflict situation, they ignore or delay to respond to it or run away from it. If they are leaders and their responsibility demands them to address the conflict they may do it or specifically assign someone to deal with the problem, not with intention of delegating, but with the intention of withdrawing completely from conflict.

Regarding the above two views, Susek has summarized the attitudes and behaviours of people in those schools of thought into two terms: he calls the first positive group as "peace makers" and the second negative group as "peace keepers."[12] He describes the peacekeepers as people who

Tend to be passive, preferring to avoid conflict ... On other hand, peace makers tackle conflict head on, determined to bring peace based upon truth, mutual understanding and forgiveness. Though this can be initially painful, if it's done with the proper mix of justice, mercy and grace, it is the only hope for making peace. While peace keepers try to sweep things under the rug, peace keepers try to sweep issues out the door.[13]

With these two views about conflict before us, we ought to examine our personal attitude towards conflict. How do you personally react to conflicts? Do you see conflict as an inevitable part of human life that can bring personal or organizational growth or do you see conflict, as a devil's weapon to destroy or delay God's work and so committed Christians should avoid it at all costs? Depending on which attitude we have about conflict, this paper stresses four important points:

Firstly, the way we view conflict will strongly influence positively or negatively our conflict ministry, strategies towards fostering faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Secondly, the Bible does not teach that all interpersonal conflicts are evil; it teaches that some disagreements are positive and beneficial while others are direct results of our selfish motives (James 4:1-2).

Thirdly, what destroys interpersonal relationship is not the mere existence of a conflict: but is rather the failure or ignorance to resolve conflict constructively through the eye of faith and justice. Accordingly, this paper brings good news that when faith and justice are fostered interpersonal conflicts can be prevented and resolved healthfully.

Fourthly, if we desire to foster faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts, we should view conflict as an opportunity to glorify God through personal evangelism, serving others and growing in reflecting justice, the character of God

2.5 Prerequisite Number Five: Understanding Faith in the Context of Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict.

We ought to understand the meaning of faith in the context of dealing with interpersonal conflict before we decide to foster it. We shall consider two aspects of faith: the general faith and the specific faith.

General faith: Hebrew 11:1 defines this type of faith as "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" *The Dictionary of Bible Imagery* describes this faith as the" unshakable belief that God will do everything he has promised to do even before there is viable evidence to the effect."[14] In the context of dealing with interpersonal conflicts, this implies that the opposing parties should themselves hold on such a faith that God will intervene in their conflict in order to resolve it peacefully according to His promises. For the minister of conflict or consultant in conflict management, he/she should also enter this ministry by similar faith that God will help the minister to reconcile the opposing parties.

During the process of dealing with the conflict, the conflict minister will move by this unshakable faith to foster similar faith in the hearts and minds of those participants who seem to doubt and tend to withdraw from the conflict.

Specific faith: In its specific meaning, faith has various interpretations. We shall consider two definitions. First, faith as a trust and belief. According to Ellen G. White "faith is trusting God, believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good."[15] Sometimes God may allow interpersonal conflicts to come on our way to benefit our Christian growth. If we do not have such faith of believing that God knows best what is to our advantage, then conflicts may make us lose confidence in God that He does not love us because of bringing us into such and such conflict.

Second, faith may be defined as power to endure suffering for the sake of Christ. This aspect of faith is seen in the life of Moses where the Bible records that he "preferred to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy sin for a little time" (Heb 11: 26 NIV). Conflict may make us do sinful acts if we lack the kind of faith that makes us endure conflict situation including injustices done to us. The general faith and specific faith as defined here are the two aspects of faith that this paper requires us to foster in order to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in Adventist Educational Institutions.

2.6 Prerequisite Number Six: Understanding Justice in the Context of Dealing with Interpersonal Conflicts

In a Biblical Christian perspective, justice is classified among the moral attributes of God that make Him a good God or moral being. Erickson classifies God's basic moral qualities as purity, integrity and love.[16] He further categorizes God's moral purity into three elements: holiness righteousness and justice.[17] This paper focuses on how justice, one of the moral purity of God, can be fostered to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts. Before we discuss how justice can prevent and resolve conflict, let us understand its meaning. In his book, *What the Bible Teaches*, Torrey informs us that the words "righteous" and "just", also, "righteousness" and "justice" in the English Bible have similar meaning as the words used in Hebrew and Greek in the Old and New Testament.[18] He therefore says that "the righteous and or justice of God is that attribute that leads Him always to do right"[19] Erickson adds more light to the meaning of justice by saying that "the justice of God means that he is fair in the administration of his laws. He does not show favouritism or partiality"[20] Since God is just, Grudem concludes that He is "the final standard of what is right"[21]

On the difference between God's justice and human justice, Van Gemeren states:

> Justice, as it related to God, is the aspect of righteousness that pertains to His wise and fair judgement..... Justice, as it relates to human beings, is that quality of integrity by which one deals with people in accordance with God's standard. Justice is not determined by social status, prior relationship, hearsay, appearances or likes and dislikes.[22]

While the meaning of justice and righteousness seem to be the same, Erickson says they differ in application. He comments that God's righteousness is His "Personal or individual righteousness. His justice is His official righteousness, His requirement that other moral agents adhere to the standards as well. God is, in other words, like a judge who, as a private individual, adheres to the laws of society, and in his official capacity administers that same law applying it to others".[23]

With these definitions of justice in mind, what then is their implication of justice or righteousness in the context of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts? One implication is that when conflict management ministers know that God practices justice and righteousness on earth as Jeremiah 9: 24 confirms, their faith in God as God of justice will increase. As a result, such faith will produce good works of justice n their ministry, that is, they will deal with cases of interpersonal conflicts justly. The other implication is on the side of the parties in conflict. Their faith in God of justice will motivate them to treat one another fairly.

3.0 ROLE OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT PREVENTION

In this section, I shall explore the role of faith and justice in preventing interpersonal conflict. In order to prevent or resolve conflict it is very helpful to know its source. In analysing the causes of conflict, one should understand that interpersonal conflicts in Adventist educational institutions, as in any other organisation, are not caused by one single isolated source. They can be brought about by interrelated various sources. This suggests that in conflict situations, one cannot just pinpoint one source of conflict and rely on it completely in analysing the conflict. One has to explore the possibility of more than one source. However, in the course of searching for the cause of conflict, one has to look for the primary source. We shall examine three possible causes of interpersonal conflicts bearing in mind that some of these causes may be primary source of conflict or may join together to create a conflict. We shall see how fostering faith and justice can prevent such causes of conflict.

3.1 Preventing Conflicts Caused By Institutional Changes

One possible sources of interpersonal conflict is institutional changes. Three examples of education institutional change may be given as follows: change in leadership may affect relationships between faculty and students. Established privileges, rights and expectations may be threatened for all those involved. Second, an institution that has been growing slowly may experience conflict when enrolment increases. Because of this change, students may be compelled to share a space that was used by one person. Third, change in established policies, standards, norms and worship programs may cause tension among campus family members. These changes may create interpersonal conflicts in institutional members.

Role of Faith and Justice

What will be the role of faith and justice in preventing interpersonal conflicts that may be caused by change? First, institutional leadership should excise true faith instead of presumptuous faith in the anticipation and process of change. True faith will plan for expected changes in the institution and pray for wisdom for implementation and acceptance of changes. But presumptuous faith will move without the consideration of planning when the Scripture says "submit your plans to the Lord, trust in Him and He will act" (Psalm 37: 5). On the role of justice, leadership that has faith in God of justice will involve people who will be affected by the

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changes in the planning process for the expected changes. Participatory leadership recognises the right of people to be listened to and so it lessens the chances of conflicts that may be caused by changes as compared to dictatorial or one man voice leadership. Concerning the values of participatory leadership in relation to change, D'Souza observes:

> People resent and resist when they are not involved in planning change.... when workers have a voice in planning change, they are more likely to accept the alteration and support what they helped to create.[24]

3.2 PREVENTING CONFLICTS CAUSED BY CLOSED POWER SYSTEM

According to Terry Wise, a closed power system is a situation in leadership and management whereby leadership and administrative powers in the organisation are in the hands of one person or few individuals.[25] these powers may be secured by seniority or academic or financial or social ability and standing. People with such powers feel they are the only ones to run the educational institution and others are unable to run it. And when those who are considered followers challenge their style of leadership, they become victims of persecution. If they are employees, they may be demoted; transferred, denied some rights and privileges or even dismissed from jobs. If they are students with no employment relationship, they may be victims of getting unfair grades or undergo arbitrary discipline measures.

A closed power system creates two factional groups: The powerful group and the powerless one. Communication in closed power system is a one-way channel. The powerful group gives directives or orders to the powerless, and the powerless are expected to receive the orders with minimal or without feedback. When such communication lines exist, conflicts exist also.

Role of Faith and Justice

Interpersonal conflicts caused by closed power system can be prevented if leaders in Adventist educational institutions foster faith in the fundamental doctrine of spiritual gifts. Faith in this doctrine demands the acknowledgement, utilization and integration of people's spiritual gifts for the development of the body of Christ. According to Ephesians 4:12, the purpose of using every individual's gift is "to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ". How can a Christian leader claim that he/she believes in the Holy Spirit while he/she excludes other people's gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them to build the church and its educational institutions?

Alluding to the role of spiritual gifts in relation to building any community, the Catholic Bishops of Malawi, in their document on human rights, unitedly voice that:

> African society has traditionally recognised that what is true of the church is also true of any society: Its strength resides in recognizing the gifts of all and allowing these gifts to flourish and be used in building up of the community...
> No one person can claim to have a monopoly of truth and wisdom. No individual or group of individuals – can pretend to have all the resources needed

to guarantee the progress of a nation.... The contribution of the most humble member is often necessary for the good running of a group.[26]

Applying the above declaration to preventing interpersonal conflicts rooted in closed power systems, we can conclude that there should be an intentional shift from closed power system to integrative power system. Lee observes that integrative power is:

> Power with another power. Power that joins with power of another resulting in greater power.... Integrative power is compatible with the church's position on the "priesthood of all believers", as well as with the democratic or participative type of governance that is characteristic of most congregations.[27]

Having seen the role of faith in preventing interpersonal conflicts brought about by closed power system, let us see the role of justice. While lack of faith in the doctrine of spiritual gifts leads one to deprive the right of God's people to use their spiritual gifts to build Adventist educational institutions, faith in the God of justice empowers one to practice the principles expressed in one of the universal declaration of human rights which states that "everyone has the right to take part in the government of one's country, directly or through freely chosen representatives."[28] Reflecting the character of justice of God means being fair in including all potential human resources in the development and running of Adventist educational institution. When this is done, it helps prevent interpersonal conflicts that can result from closed power system.

Justice can also help us prevent interpersonal conflicts because it makes us understand the difference between power and authority. Harris Lee sees power as "the ability to do something or prevent something from being done" and authority as "the right to decide or to act". I agree with Lee because normally authority is derived from commonly acceptable prescribed law, policy, moral principle or Biblical injunction. Ability may be derived from seniority, position, status, talent, spiritual gift or physical energy. For instance, a teacher, by virtue of his/her position, has the ability to give a student a C grade, while he/she deserves a B grade. However, according to prescribed academic policies or Christian ethics he/she has no right to do so. In fact, a keen student may question, "By what authority do you give me a C grade while I deserve a B grade? Justice demands us to use our power within the authority given. When we do so, we free ourselves from interpersonal conflicts caused by a closed power system.

3.3 PREVENTING CONFLICT CAUSED BY FINANCIAL STRESS

Personal conflicts caused by financial stress may be brought about by several ways. They may be caused by scarcity of money, financial violence, or unfair distribution of remuneration, just to mention a few. Scarcity of money may occur when there is low recruitment of students and so income may not come at the level expected. This may lead to meagre salary for employees in the college/university or school, redundancy of some of the employees or cutting of some of the employees' allowances and other benefits. Such situations bring conflict between employees and financial administrators.

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Sometimes interpersonal conflicts occur by financial violence. I define financial violence as the misuse of administrative financial power to withhold the employee's salary or make deductions from his/her salary without prior agreement with the employee. For example, in one of the conferences in the Eastern Central African Division, the office of the treasurer withheld one pastor's salary because he delayed to send trust funds and other financial reports to the conference treasury office. Such disciplinary measure may have good intensions of motivating the worker to send financial reports on time, but it creates painful interpersonal conflict because the employee is deprived of his salary, a symbol of his survival.

For the past few years, there has grown conflicting views among teachers and lecturers in some of the African Adventist educational institutions and church administrators over the issue of fair distribution of remuneration. Some Adventist educators have been advocating that financial policies should be made to allow teachers and lecturers to get professional allowances as conferences, union or division administrators and directors are given travelling allowances. While some educational institutions have agreed to the proposal by establishing policies to that effect, other educational institutions are still debating. In the midst of such debate, interpersonal conflicts arise that result in financial stress.

Role of Faith and Justice

How can faith and justice be applied to prevent interpersonal conflict rooted in financial stress? First, is to foster faith in Biblical counsels about fair and adequate provision of remuneration to employees. James admonishing the rich employers of his time writes.

> And now, you rich people listen to me. Weep and wail over the miseries that are
> coming to you.... You have piled up riches in the last days. You have not paid
> any wages to the men who work in your fields. Listen to their complaints! The
> cries of those who gather in your crops have reached the ears of God, the Lord
> Almighty (James 5: 1 – 4)

Faith in the Biblical principles of just and fair remuneration that James is teaching in the above verses demands an obligation to financial administrators of Adventist educational institutions to design policies that provide fair remuneration that is adequate to provide all type of employees with dignified and decent living conditions for them and their families. Such financial administrative action, motivated by faith in Biblical injunction on fair and adequate provision of remuneration to employees, will prevent interpersonal conflicts caused by financial stress.

Concerning the role of justice in preventing interpersonal conflicts caused by financial stress, let us consider one employment law in the Old Testament about just wage to employees. In Deuteronomy 24: 14 -16, Moses writes,

> Do not cheat a poor and needy servant, whether he is a fellow-Israelite or a
> foreigner living in one of your towns. Each day, pay him for that day's work; he
> needs the money and has counted on getting it. If you do not pay him, he will
> cry out against you to the Lord, and you will be guilty of sin.

In the above text, we can learn various principles if integration of faith and learning that are applicable to contemporary employer and employee relationship. Let us consider two: One is about distributive justice. According to Thiroux, distributive justice "concerns itself essentially with equitable distribution of good and bad to human beings on a just and fair basis". [29] For instance, if it is good and fair to give travelling allowance to some church employee to enhance their work services, why should it not be good and fair also to give teaching allowances or professional allowance to employees in the academic circles who may not be rewarded for their travelling aspect of service but for their time and energy of marking and preparing examinations, plus other activities they do to enhance their teaching profession? This paper advocates that distribution of remuneration based on employee's needs, abilities and merits prevent interpersonal conflicts more than distribution of remuneration that is based on administrative positions. This is true because Christ, the source of all resources, died to meet human need, not human position.

The second principles is about giving wages at the right time and withholding it on mutual agreement between the employer and employee. It seems that the rich employers of James time withheld arbitrarily workers' wages and delayed to give them their wages on time. This created sufferings in their livelihood. Davies contends that,

> Wages expected and deferred may mean to a needy labor pinching hunger, not only to him, but also to feeble wife and helpless babies. A gloom and sleepless night may follow. Bitter and angry feelings may be engendered. Faith in human integrity may be lost.[30]

This type of interpersonal conflicts did not happen to laborers who leaved only in the time of Old and New Testament as their wages were delayed or arbitrarily withheld without their consent. It happened also to the pastor whom I cited above. Justice demands punctuality and regularity in payment of remuneration as one-writer comments:

> Punctuality in the payment of wages is as positive a divine requirement as Sabbath observance or tithing. It is not an act of benevolence, but of justice.[31]

Interpersonal conflicts among employees in Adventist educational institution may be prevented if employers adhere to principles of distributive justice, punctuality and employee's consent to salary deductions. Unless it is part of authorized redemptive disciplinary procedures of an organization and the employee has been informed of them in his/her terms and conditions of employment, it is against labour laws of Tanzania government to withhold or deduct employee's salary without his/her consent. The law states: "An employer shall not make any deduction from an employee's remuneration unless the employee in writing agrees to the deduction in respect of debts."[32] Because of ignoring or being ignorant of this labour law, some treasurers have caused financial stress and suffering to their employees by withholding or deducting their salaries without their consent. The above two principles have been echoed differently by Catholic Bishops of Tanzania in their statement on just and fair wages where they say:

> Every person's work has an economical value, equivalent at least to what the person needs to live decently. This is the basis of all human economy and is a statement in another form of the basic right of human person to live. Any contract entered into between employer and employee can ignore this at the

peril of the community and, in fact, a contract that fails to take it into account is invalidated by the law of nature.[33]

4.0 FUCTION OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN PERSONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Having seen how faith and justice can be utilized to prevent interpersonal conflicts in Adventist education institutions, this section shows how faith and justice can be used to resolve interpersonal conflicts. We shall discuss the functions of the faith and justice during the cycle of conflict.

4.1 FUNCTIONS OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN THE CONFLICT CYCLE

According to Palmer, the conflict cycle is the developmental stage through which conflict passes as tension grows and the behaviors of the parties in conflict become destructive and the conflict remains unresolved.[34] When two or more people enter into conflict, things are done or said that threaten the territory (values, goals, interests, needs, behaviors, beliefs, etc.) of another person. The threat causes the other party to react in order to protect his/her territory. This process of tension, action and reaction sets in motion a cycle of behaviors and feelings that Norman Shaw chuck, in his book, *How to Manage Conflict in the Church*, says once it begins, it passes through five stages. [35] If we desire to resolve interpersonal conflict, it is important to discover at what stage conflict has reached. Understanding the cycle will help us foster faith and justice appropriately in the context of these stages. Accordingly, we shall now see the function of faith and justice in these stages.

4.1.1 BUILDING FAITH AND FAIRNESS IN THE TENSION DEVELOPMENT STAGE

The tension development stage is the first conflict cycle where the parties involved feel tension developing in their relationship. *The British Medical Association Complete Family Health Encyclopedia* defines tension as "a feeling of mental and physical strain associated with anxiety."[36] Before a conflict opens out, tension develops first. Such condition is an indicator that a person is feeling threatened or hurt or is experiencing loss of some kind. This is the level where we can deal with conflict more effectively because very little harm has been done to the parties. This is the first level where parties who believe in the model of Jesus of resolving conflict (Mathew 18: 18 - 20) can seek private reconciliation.

At this stage the parties still trust each other and communication is still possible. This is the level whereby each party has the right and duty to initiate the practice of faith and justice by ensuring that their faith and rights are respected and protected. Furthermore, at this stage, faith can enable one to overlook minor offences if one believes in the counsel of Proverbs 19:11 that "a man's wisdom gives him patience, it is to his glory to overlook an offence." However, if the matter is too serious to be overlooked, then justice will encourage fair and honest communication till reconciliation is achieved. If conflict is not handled constructively at this stage, by building faith and justice, it will go to the next stage, called " Role Dilemma Stage."

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4.1.2 FAITH AND JUSTICE IN THE ROLE DILEMMA STAGE

At this stage, the parties become perplexed about the situation for they wonder what is going on between them. It is at this stage parties begin to question their role and the role of other people in the conflict. As they search for their role in the conflict, parties involved begin to ask themselves: "who and what is causing the conflict?", "Am I part of the problem?". At this stage, Palmer states "communication often breaks down because now issues seem very threatening and the participants are uncertain about how they should relate to one another in the conflict." [37]

What would be the function of faith and justice in such a situation? The parties that reach this stage might need the testimony of two or more people whom they trust as per Jesus' model (Mathew 18:16) of resolving interpersonal conflicts. They should, however, believe strongly in this model as a way of resolving their conflict. Justice will require the reconciliators entrusted with duty of mediation to identify fairly the issue involved and determine justly the alternative ways and negotiations that should be made to resolve the conflict. The mediator(s) should empower the opposing parties to clarify their roles and accept their duty in ending the conflict in a way acceptable to all parties. However, when that is not done effectively, the conflict can move to the third stage.

4.1.3 FUNCTION OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN THE INJUSTICE COLLECTION STAGE

The third stage is called the "Injustice collection cycle" because it is the time parties begin to gather up injustices done to one another like wrongs done, blames, abuses, etc. At this stage, parties are ready to fight and confront each other. Instead of dealing with issues, they attack each other's personalities. Expressions like these begin to emerge: "you are unfair to me", "it is you who are unreasonable and unspiritual".

This is the stage where the mediator who believes in the God of hope and impossibilities is needed. The mediator should instil hope and faith in God who controls our affairs that are in conflict. Concerning this unlimited power of God, Sande remarks: "Gods sovereignty is so complete that he exercises ultimate control even over painful and unjust events."[38]

In fostering justice at this stage the mediator should enable opposing parties to respect each others personality as they express their views. Furthermore, the mediator should encourage freedom of expression that does not include hostility, violence, abusive language and anger. Instead, the parties should be encouraged to express their concerns in a loving way for as Ellen White affirms, "justice is the foundation of His (God) throne and the fruit of His love."[39] People who love others will not do injustice to them.

4.1.4 FUNCTION OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN THE CONFRONTATION STAGE

When conflict is not resolved at the injustice collecting stage, it enters the confrontation stage. This is the stage where parties become wild emotionally and increase their reaction against each other. Each party's values, beliefs, culture, work, character etc. is attacked. This is the stage where the mediator is most needed to foster faith and justice to resolve conflict constructively and healthfully. The role of faith and justice is similar to that explained in stage three. In addition

to fostering faith and justice, parties are encouraged to send "I- messages" instead of "you-messages" as follows:

"You- messages"	"I- message"
"You were late again to come to class."	"I am unhappy to see you coming late again to class."
"You lazy students. We will never meet the dead line if you don't work harder and faster."	I am afraid that if we do not work harder and faster, we will not meet the deadline, and the college will loose a lot of money"
"You made me angry"	"I am really very annoyed by what you said about me"

D'Souza says that "I- messages" are more effective in resolving conflict because "they are non-judgemental and put the responsibility for corrective action on the other without antagonising"[40]. Concerning loving and caring confrontation Paul advises, "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you" (Eph.5: 29 NIV). Our practice of this counsel expresses our faith in the word of God.

4.1.5 FUNCTION OF FAITH AND JUSTICE IN THE ADJUSTMENT STAGE

As confrontation becomes so taxing, conflict parties seek for ways to make adjustments to end the confrontation. Adjustment may take two forms: negative or positive.
Negative adjustment cause parties to withdraw from each other or from the environment. For example, married couples may end their relationship by divorce or separation. Teachers may resign and move to other educational institutions if they have experienced interpersonal conflict with administrators. Students may move to another university/school to end a personal conflict between them and their teacher. Members in the committee may not attend to avoid other parties in conflict. Church members may leave the church by going to worship into other churches where they cannot meet with the opposing parties or they may decide not to attend worship service at all. These situations are normally results of poorly resolved personal conflicts that disregard integrating faith and justice.

When a conflict is managed well through the process of fostering faith and justice, it takes the form of positive adjustment. In the positive adjustment, positive behaviours of resolving conflict are seen. For example, parties become interested in bringing in additional information. Issues are more clarified to set up mutual agreements. Repentance, confession and forgiveness become part of celebrating the end of conflict. If resolutions are made, they are honoured. So faith and justice should be highly stimulated at this stage to breed positive adjustments.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed prerequisites for fostering faith and justice in order to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts. It has shown ways of integrating faith and justice in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts. It has emphasized that since the purpose of Adventist education is to redeem and restore people into the image of God, preventing and healing interpersonal conflicts through building faith and justice by word and practice is part and parcel of that education. Accordingly, I call upon all Adventist educators, administrators, chaplains, counsellors and students in Adventist Educational Institutions to integrate faith and justice in our educational ministries in order to prevent or resolve interpersonal conflicts on Adventist campuses as we prepare ourselves and others for the New Kingdom where people will live in a reconciled community and God's justice, love and peace will resolve eternally human conflicts.

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