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**INCULTURATION OF THE CONCEPT OF ATONEMENT IN AFRICA: A  
CASE OF THE WANGA PEOPLE OF KENYA**

by

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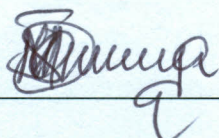
**KERICHO CAMPUS**

**DECLARATION**


I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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## DEDICATION

To the Lord, God, Almighty who, in His own will and wise counsel, atones us from all sin, and to the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the agent of atonement.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Absolution** – Declaring the offender free from sin, mainly done by a priest.
- Atonement** – Removing an offence by way of sacrifice. At times this may be, by way of payment; and so bringing the offender and the offende together; reconciliation.
- Confession** – Admitting of one's sin.
- Contextualization** – The ability of indigenous concept, after having been determined as relating to biblical concepts of the same nature, to take on biblical form and meaning (contextualization of the word). The ability of the missionary to live and work in the receptor culture; without seeing it as inferior to their own (Contextualization of the Witness). This will also mean developing indigenous church leadership (contextualization of Church leadership).
- Euro-American Missionaries** –The Gospel carriers from Europe and North America, who brought Christianity to Luhyaland. They carried it embodied in the European and American culture.
- Historio-Cultural** – The nature of this study is historical; yet it is also cultural. It will, therefore, be referred to as historico-cultural.
- Inculturation** – Honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time.

- Wanga Culture** –The living patterns of Wanga people; these include their music, science, myths, proverbs, stories, riddles, their art and all literary works.
- Penance** – Payment of any kind that substitutes for one's sin.
- Restitution** – Paying back to the offended what one may have acquired wrongfully.

## GLOSSARY

- Abaluhya** – (Plural) a section of the Western Bantu of Western Kenya.
- Abaaftwa** –The dead people.
- Abawanga** – (Plural) people belonging to one of the sub-ethnic groups of the Abaluhya; who live in Mumias District of Western Kenya.
- Abachuuma** – Specific circumcision age set.
- Abakuuka** –The great grand fathers; sometimes referring to the living dead.
- Amabaanga** – Menstrual blood; at times refers to foetal blood.
- Amatsayi** –Sacrificial blood.
- Amalasire** –Blood from animal; at times cooked or eaten raw.
- Amanyasi** – Concoctions of plants and grass mixed so that one takes for cure.
- Ebisoni** –The living dead.
- Ebishieno** – Evil spirits.
- Efikonjio** –Broken pieces of a pot.
- Eshiembekho** –Sacred forest; Sometimes referring to the cemetery.
- Eshinokhonokho** –A generational curse.
- Eshisinyo** –Shame brought about by sin.
- Eshikhasio** – Special meeting for elders.
- Eshisanda** –Calabash.
- Emakombe** – Abode of the living dead.
- Emisilo** – Taboos.
- Khwitisa** – To make oneself clean, or pure, after committing an offence.

- Luhya** – (Adjective) used to describe the language, or any other element, of the indigenous people of Western Kenya.
- Nababa** – A ritual for casting away bad omen that brings unexplainable death and diseases to the community.
- Nabongo** – Title for Wanga king.
- Namwiima** – Special grass thatched house used for performing rituals.
- Oluluhya** – Any of the dialects spoken by sub-ethnic groups of the Luhya community.
- Omuwanga** – (Singular); an indigenous person who lives in Mumias District in Western Kenya.
- Omuluhya** – (Singular) an indigenous person (*Omundu*) who belongs to one of the Bantu groups of Western Kenya.
- Omulukha** – The atonement ritual.
- Omwisalisi** – The Luhya and by extension Wanga traditional priest.
- Omufumu** – The un-dower/undertaker of curses.
- Obusee** – Chyme found in the stomach of a remnant animal.
- Omufumu** – The person who reveals the evil spirits, sometimes called *Omuchesi*.
- Omulakusi** – The seer; the prophet.
- Omulonji** – The creator; the one who moulds.
- Omwirima** – Special Wanga club used for oath taking.
- Omwiimo** – A memorial service.
- Okhufuwa** – A special offering for the living dead.
- Omusilo** – Taboo.

- Omusambwa** –Ancestral spirits.
- Wanga** – (Adjective) used to describe the language or any other element of the indigenous people of Mumias District-Western Kenya.
- Were** – God; at times referred to as Nyasaye.
- Ἡλωσκομαι** – Make propitiation.
- Καταλλαγε** – Exchange for, or reconciliation.
- Λυτρον** – Ransom, or redemption.
- רִפְּךָ – (*kaphar*) sacrifice or offering.
- יום כפּוּר – (*yuom kipur*) day of atonement.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- NIV** – New International Version
- OT** – Old Testament
- NT** – New Testament
- SIL** – Summer Institute of Linguistics
- MHF** – Mill Hill Fathers
- CMS** – Church Missionary Society

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to address the problem of inconsistencies between faith and practice of Christianity among the Wanga people; which has resulted in less commitment of the *Abawanga* to their churches. This has further led to the *Abawanga* moving from Christianity to other religions such as Islam; and at times back to the Wanga traditional religion, to seek religious satisfaction. This study proposed inculturation of the ritual and its interpretations as the most appropriate way to solve the problem. This is because inculturation will make Christianity an internalized religion hence becoming a faith that is fully lived, able to answer 'religious' questions among the *Abawanga*. The literature review of this study looked at the following aspects of atonement, namely; atonement among the *Abawanga*, and atonement in the bible. Being a relational concept, the interpretation was bound to be relation based. Yet this relationship ought to have its value founded on the bible; thus the bible must relationally speak to the Wanga religio-cultural form of atonement by way of inculturation. It is, therefore, necessary that the missionary as the chief evangelizer, understands the finer details of the Wanga culture; and the usage of various concepts such as, atonement; that form this culture. It is also important to understand their functions and the value attached to these details, because, if this does not happen, the missionary may not be able to provide the necessary guidance, needed by Wanga converts. This study approached atonement as a cultural issue, and as such used Neiburh Richard's reflections of Jesus verses culture as a theoretical framework. This study was also, Christological in nature, based on anthropological research, specifically ethnography. Thus, the preferred method of research was qualitative. The qualitative data collected was analyzed using emerging themes; found in both ethnographic and focus group interviews. Ultimately, the idea was, to inculturate the biblical understanding of the concept of atonement, into the Wanga religio-culture so that Christian faith is internalized. The major findings showed that atonement rituals are some of the major rituals practiced among the *Abawanga*. These rituals involve the shedding of blood from animals and birds. At times special plants were used, as a replacement for animal blood. The study also found out that, there were specific people designated for leading this exercise. According to this study, if these rituals were conducted in accordance with the laid down procedures, then it was assumed that people had good relationships among themselves; and with their God.

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Luhya-speaking groups have occupied the East African region for nearly 500 years; when they displaced long established foraging and herding peoples. The *Abaluhya* sub-ethnic groups, most of whom probably originated from central Africa, were originally clans; with diverse historical origins that grew large and then split into sub-ethnic groups. In general, the *Abaluhya* are divided into 21 sub-ethnic groups, three of which are found in Uganda. This study will focus on the Wanga, who form one of these 21 sub-ethnic groups (<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Luyia-Kinship.html>).

Mosley (2007: 1) observes that the Wanga people are one of the sub-ethnic groups of the *Abaluhya* of Western Kenya. They mainly occupy Butere, Mumias and Kakamega districts. Today, the Wanga people number around 0.6 million and retain the Nabongo as their cultural monarch. The Wanga ancestors came from Egypt, as part of the migration, moving to central Africa and later settled in Kampala area that formed the Buganda Kingdom. A Muganda prince, called Kaminyi, a son of Ssekabaka Mawanda fled after a conflict within the state house to Tiriki area, in the current Western Province where he became a ruler and was succeeded by his son, Wanga who established the Wanga Kingdom with the title of Nabongo in the 18th Century. It is Wanga who established the Wanga community in Mumias area.

Fedders and Cynthia (1984: 99) further observe that the Wanga language is one of the dialects of the *Luhya* people. But although there are variations in the *Luhya* dialects, the essential elements in the *Luhya* rituals and culture, in general, are essentially the same.

### 1.1 Evangelization of the Abawanga

The Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches, through their respective evangelistic arms, the Mill Hill Fathers (MHF), and the Church Missionary Society (CMS), were responsible for the first evangelistic activities in Wangaland. Baur (1990: 102), on the one hand, reports, that the Mill Hill Fathers moved into Mumias town in 1904. By 1916, Rev. Father Stam, the great Luhya apostle was posted to Mumias Parish; making it the second largest Parish after Kakamega Parish. Chandran (1994: 54) records that, by the year 1914 the Anglican Church was already in operation in Mumias. He further observes that the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church were partners in evangelism and always collaborated together in missionary work. He gives this as a reason for the choice of Mumias town for both the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches as their base of operation. Nthamburi (1991: 16) says that the Pentecostals were not left behind. In 1922 they pitched tent in Wangaland in a place called *Musanda*. It is, therefore, evident that Christianity is not a new religion in Wangaland; it is now more than a century old.

### 1.2 Inculturation in the Wanga Religio-Cultural History

To many people, inculturation means nothing more than a translation and translocation of symbols; finding suitable symbols or rituals from a given culture to express the Christian message (Ndegwa 2007: 37). Waligo (1986: 12) defines inculturation as the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and the biblical message of salvation understood by the people of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people and expressed by the people's language.

In an effort to reach the Luhya community, and in particular the Abawanga, missionaries used the concept of inculturation. For example, Lee Appleby assumed the Luhya name "*Bakhoya*," learnt the Luhya language and Luhya culture; before making any attempt to translate the Bible in this language. It is worth noting that the standard Luhya Bible translation was done in the 'King's dialect of the Luhya language. The king being '*Nabongo*' of Mumias the translation is, therefore, in the Wanga dialect of the *oluluhya* language (Chandran 1994: 52). The translation of the Bible in Wanga dialect was the initial attempt to inculturate the Christian faith among the Abawanga.

Baur (1990: 102-105) says that the Catholics went ahead and authorized Luhya dances and symbols to be used in conducting the Holy Mass. Although the language and Luhya symbols were used in this new Biblical faith, Baur expressed doubt in the seriousness of the *Abaluhya* believers, particularly the *Abawanga*, in embracing the Christian faith. He notes that the early Swahili and Arabic traders gave Mumias a distinctive Islamic character. He warned that later, Christian evangelization might not be easy. Chandran (1994, 177) confirms Baur's fears when he claims that by 1990, many Christians were turning not only to the Islamic faith but were reverting back to the traditional Wanga religion, especially in times of calamities. This is mainly because of seeking for answers, which seemingly were thought not to be available in the Christian faith. This makes this research viable and relevant in seeking the reasons as to why Christians in Wangaland should look for religious fulfillment from other religions like Islamic and traditional Wanga religion.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to Ndegwa (2007: 40-41), inculturation should form part of the process and the end result of the missionary's task of evangelization in any given culture. Ndegwa says that, this is so, because of the intensive and extensive nature of this concept. The process of inculturation in every culture should ideally be done by the people themselves under the guidance of an interested evangelizer who could be a priest or any other trained theologian. Ndegwa's expression is what Burke (2001: 193) calls 'inculturation from the bottom up, 'where people produce cultural raw material, while the theologian produces doctrinal material. The result of such a process is that all gospelled concepts become culturally relevant. In this way, Christianity is able to embrace, interpret, explain, and use symbols and concepts from the peoples' culture. Inculturation, therefore, makes Christianity the people's religion. Unfortunately, missionaries made little effort in inculturating the Christian faith to the Wanga community. Instead, the Wanga culture, just like any other African culture, was looked at as inferior and its institutions seen as incompetent.

Having looked at inculturation in the foregoing perspective, the problem then comes from the missionaries' encounter with the Wanga culture. The result of this encounter is the new things, such as institutions and concepts, from the Euro-American culture that had to come in place. Evangelizers however, forgot that what they were in essence teaching the Abawanga was the biblical message inculturated in their own cultures. For example, the concept of atonement was taught using Western theories such as, the ransom, the government and the moral theories (Grudem 1994, 570). Although Abawanga had their own theories of atonement, the Euro-American theories were unfamiliar with them. What was needed was a gospel that was inculturated into

the Wanga religio-cultural understanding of the concept of atonement. This would have made the biblical faith to become a lifestyle of the Wanga people.

To address the problem of these knowledge gaps that are missing within the Christian faith among the Abawanga, purposeful inculturation of biblical faith concepts need to be done. This study, therefore, singled out atonement as a biblical concept of great importance that needed to be inculturated among the Abawanga.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives derived from this study were as follows:

1. To investigate the concept of atonement in the traditional Wanga thought and practice.
2. To survey the biblical understanding of the nature and process of atonement.
3. To assess the impact of the Euro-American Christian teaching of the concept of atonement in the Wanga community.
4. To relate the Wanga perception of atonement to the biblical perception of the same.
5. To show that inculturation is an important and dynamic ongoing process that every evangelizer must embrace.

#### **1.5 Premises**

This research started from several premises as follows:

- (i). The Abawanga have their own ways of instilling into their community the concept of atonement.

- (ii). The biblical understanding of atonement resonates with the Wanga understanding of the same concept.
- (iii). There has been little attempt by missionaries to use the African worldview; that is, African mind, thought and religious heritage, in inculturating biblical faith in Africa, and in particular the Abawanga.
- (iv). There are some elements in the Wanga understanding of atonement that are similar to the biblical understanding of atonement.
- (v). There is need for inculturation of biblical concepts in all cultures for the success of any mission work.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The guiding questions in this research were:

1. What is the Wanga understanding of atonement?
2. Why is atonement necessary in the traditional Wanga thought and practice?
3. What is the nature and process of atonement in the bible?
4. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the biblical and Wanga traditional ways of atonement?
5. How does the traditional Wanga concept of atonement impact the Christian evangelistic enterprise, in this community?

## **1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study**

This study endeavored to lay bare the notion of atonement, as used in the contemporary Wanga thought and practice; so that missionaries and other religious

workers may use this as a window of evangelizing the community. This research was, therefore, helpful in the following ways:

1. To the Church, in her evangelistic mandate to the Wanga community; the Clergy are able to understand the concept of atonement as they do theology within the Wanga community.
2. This study endeavored to create an integrated theology that would incorporate the biblical and the Wanga thought and practice of atonement. This is an addition to the knowledge that already exists in the area of the theology of atonement and the theology of inculturation, for the world and students of theology.
3. The study provided a roadmap towards a contextualized theology that takes African traditional themes and concepts; carefully studied them, and applied them to the African Christian life.
4. Atonement is a conflict management concept. As such, the government of Kenya officials, none-governmental organizations, and any other interested parties, may use this research as a window to conflict management among the Abawanga, in particular, and the Abaluhya in general.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation**

The study was an inter-disciplinary study, looking at the history and theological aspects of atonement. In this study, theology of atonement was the main approach. Other disciplines were used in so far as they yielded and related to theological issues associated with atonement. Such issues as reconciliation, forgiveness, restitution, incorporation, membering and dis – membering processes were all explored in this

study. Although this study looked at atonement from the biblical perspective, in general, the main focus was on the New Testament.

The study covered the geographical areas of Mumias and Matungu districts; which are inhabited by the Wanga community. These districts are found in the Western Province of Kenya. The researcher chose the Abawanga, because the standard Luhya bible translation is in the Wanga dialect; yet the Christian faith is not deep rooted among the Wanga people. The study was interested in the underlying reason for this scenario.

The nature of the concept of atonement is basically cultural; and as such, the researcher, though conscious of the young people, did not include them in the population of the study, because of their lack of chronological experience. Instead, this research targeted people aged at least forty years and above; both male and female. Apart from this, the researcher intentionally included theologians in this study so as to establish the theological impact of the concept of atonement among the Abawanga. The study covered the period between 1920 to date.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.9 Introduction

In an effort to understand Abawanga, in particular and the Abaluhya in general, as well as the biblical perception of atonement, the researcher reviewed related literature. This included, a brief history and meaning of inculturation in Africa and Europe, atonement among the Abawanga and atonement in the bible, specifically the New Testament.

### 1.10 Inculturation of Christian Faith

Christianity is a historical religion and inculturation is part of the church's history. As a by-product of this historical process, inculturation forms a certain accumulation of cultural elements, beginning with the cultures of the bible and going through the long list of successive inculturations. Shorter (2011:4) submits that, inculturation is the accumulation of the church's cultural patrimony. Shorter goes ahead and says that, because of the unique history and character of Christianity, elements from the church's cultural patrimony are always included in the synthesis brought about by inculturation. It is this research's position that African Christianity should not fear absorbing some of these Jewish cultures, because they form the humanity and historicity of Jesus Christ, who in the view of this research is the subject of inculturation. Indeed, it is the understanding of this study that people of every culture, the Abawanga included have to absorb part of the bible culture. This is part of the reality of inculturation, especially where these elements are essential to Christian identity.

### 1.11 Meaning and History of Inculturation in Africa

The meaning and history of inculturation is wide and varied, spanning over a long period of time. As such, this study is not able to adequately handle it in its fullness; therefore, this study looks at language, Church institutions and worship as the major themes of inculturation.

Even though inculturation as a terminology may seem recent within the Christian theology and even language, in reality inculturation is as old as the church. According to (Waliggo 1986: 11), inculturation has been misrepresented throughout history to mean adaptation, indigenization and reformulation. Waliggo contents that none of these terms represent inculturation. According to him, inculturation is the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. This study agrees with Waliggo in his definition and understanding of inculturation. What this means to this study is that the gospel of salvation and generally Christian life and doctrine must be understood in every thought-patterns of each people for Christianity to qualify as a lived faith.

In support of Waliggo, (Bediako 1997: 59 – 65) argues that Christianity in Africa will not survive based on its network of schools and parishes, hospitals and other institutions; not economic or political support, but survival of Christianity will be based on how it engages African cultures. Bediako's argument raises one of the most fundamental questions at the centre of this study. That is "a Christian faith which is authentic and truly African." If this is true, then Africans will be able to make Christian ideas part of their worldview. To the understanding of this study, the above

can only happen if the Christian vision of life fulfils African needs, atonement being one of the fundamental African needs.

According to (Waliggo and Nkeramihingo 1986: 12), Christianity succeeded to survive several centuries in the Coptic speaking communities of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Kingdoms of Nubia where it had been translated into the local languages and adopted to some local cultures. In support of Waliggo and Nkeramihingo this study argues that, simple rules of communication require that the speaker adopts himself/herself to the audience for understanding to take place. This then requires that the speaker learns the audience language. This is because language is the train that carries meaning and expression. Meaning and expression of atonement ritual must then be carried by way of language. Vatican II recognized this important truth when they recommended that language of worship be the peoples language, thereby directing that worship be carried out in the language that people can understand and relate with (Flannery 1984: 41 – 45 ). Mugambi and Magesa (1990: 12 – 14) submit that it is only through the peoples language that Christian message is passed on. People therefore desire a Jesus Christ who speaks their own language.

What the above speaks to this study is that the meaning of atonement as a ritual is carried within the language of the people. It must therefore be understood within the expressions of the Luhya language; which in this case is the language of the Wanga people. In the words of (Mbiti 1991: 63 – 65), atonement is an expression of identity in any given community. Bediako (1997: 17 – 25) submits that a religion that does not give people a form of identity lacks the facts of ideal religion. He goes a head and claims that Christianity has offered the much needed identity to its followers. Thus the

Wanga forms of atonement which in the understanding of this study is religio – cultural must be able to provide identity to the Wanga community. It is therefore important that these atonement rituals be carefully studied to establish the kinds of identity they provide. If these identities are in agreement to scripture, then they should be retained and if not then they should be discarded.

Commenting on monasticism and celibacy in the history of African Christianity, (Gonzalez 1984: 136 – 138) says that these came because of the felt needs of the time to bear witness to Christ. This he claims was part of the inculturation process, as Christianity translated itself into the Eastern and African faith. (Bellagamba 1988: 67) supports what Gonzalez says by submitting that; celibacy of the clergy was promoted based on the demands and conceptions of the time. Based on what Gonzalez and Bellagamba are saying, one cannot fully appreciate any evangelistic enterprise unless one first appreciates the aspirations and the needs of the “people of the time” thus it is important that the issue of atonement rituals and their impact of the Christian faith among the Abawanga of today be fully studied with a view of inculturating some into Christian faith and throwing out those that do not conform to the scriptures. This arises based on the premises that, just as celibacy, atonement ritual is a felt need among the Abawanga.

According to (van der Walt 1994: 465 – 470), institutions are very important for any meaningful spreading of the word of God. Institutions facilitate the transfer of scriptures from one community to another. He therefore argues that people who lead these institutions are themselves one with the institutions they lead. Waliggo (1986: 18 – 24) supports Van der Walt, when he says that the gospel spread so fast in Congo

because, missionaries accepted to ordain African clergy rather fast, compared with other parts of Africa. He calls this the first level inculturation. Whereas these two, Van der Walt and Waliggo speak of institutions and their leadership, this research asks the question “were these leaders inculturated together with their rituals?” what seems to come out clearly from the argument of these two is that people are important. However their worldviews are important too. This world is what informs this study; because one can not separate people from their worldviews. Atonement being part of the Wanga worldview this study submits that it is important that the Wanga atonement ritual be linked to their belief system. (Nasimiyu in Namwera 1990: 23 – 28) supports this research in her claim that not all that is seen within a community is not evil and therefore what is moral within specific offices and institution should be upheld as part of Christian practice.

In conclusion, inculturation will make Christian faith a faith that is lived and owned by a people of a specific culture, context and time. This will happen because Christian faith will become applicable to the day to day living of the people. In this way Jesus Christ will speak to the people in a language and expressions that are appropriate to them.

### **1.12 Inculturation of Christian Faith in Europe**

Europe was one of the first continents to receive Christian faith; inculturation has therefore had a long history on this continent. This study is therefore not able to exhaustively deal with inculturation issues in Europe. However, as a way of

introducing the inculturation of atonement rituals among the Abawanga of Kenya, this study will only have a brief treatment of inculturation in Europe.

According to Shorter (1988:137) the New Testament provides evidence for the first insertion of Christian resurrection faith into the cultures of the Mediterranean area and for the beginning of a dialogue between that faith and those cultures. However, this study does not see Shorter's claim becoming a principle that animates and brings together those Mediterranean cultures, transforming them into a new creation all together. Instead this study agrees with Bediako's (1997: 91 – 93) claim that the New Testament is itself a product of the first attempt of inculturation. Thus the dialogue begins with the culture of Hellenistic Judaism.

As gentile converts increased (Acts 14:1) it became necessary to evangelize gentile cultures; the Graeco-Roman cultures of the Mediterranean. Pelikan (1985: 38 – 40) observes that in all these cultures, the expectation of a Messiah was evident. These cultures therefore, sought to identify the questions in those traditions to which Jesus Christ as Messiah provided the answers. Shorter (1988:139 – 140) for example, says that there were talks of the pagan Odyssey as a type of Christ and Socrates as a type of the biblical Moses among the Greeks; these two were thought to be liberating figures among the Greeks. Indeed, based on Pelikan and Shorter's discussion, these two represent not only liberating figures but a liberating thought, which to this study forms an entry point into the Greek culture. It is therefore the starting point of inculturation. In support of Pelikan and Shorter, Mettei (2011:3) suggests that Odyssey was included in the Greek Pantheon that the apostle Paul talked of in Acts 17:22-31. Although he suggests Odyssey among other Greek gods to be used as an

illustration for the liberating power of Jesus Christ, the unknown God must become the ultimate: Jesus Christ. As such, the apostle Paul in the inculturation process, names Jesus Christ as the unknown God of the Ephesians. To this study, this is inculturation per-excellence, because the formerly unknown God is now incarnate; living with the Ephesian populace and thus making Christianity a faith that is lived.

The other question that inculturation sought to answer was the issue of language. Mattei (2011:3) argues that the poor and illiterate masses were by far the largest component in the Europe. The Christian message therefore, inculturated itself among the illiterate masses, speaking in their own languages and thus finding a place within European cultures. He goes on and claims that, the “Latin” that was used for evangelism was humble and degraded. This statement of Mattei shows that this may have been a poor man’s language/low class language. In most cases low class people are illiterate. This study agrees with Mattei’s argument. Indeed any language is a vehicle in which people’s world view is embodied. It is therefore important that language becomes the first aspect of inculturation.

Symbolism took a centre stage in the inculturation of Christian faith in Europe. According to (Arbuckle 1990: 26 – 41), in any given culture, symbolism gives meaning of things around people; and that is what culture is all about. He goes ahead and submits that the clerical vestments used by the clergy were not initially used by the Apostles and early Church fathers; they serve symbols of representation of the Priestly community. This according to Arbuckle was European way of recognizing the Priests. To this study, once meaning and significance of things are known, then people are able to develop that sense of belonging. This being the case, then

symbolism in Christianity gives identity to the adherents. Symbolism therefore is not just a sign but a means of communication.

The next question that inculturation sort to answer in Europe was the question of hermeneutics. According to (Schreier 2004: 30 – 42) interpretation of scripture must be tempered with culture for people to be able comfortably understand it. He says that, communication is appropriate when it is achieved without a violation of the hearer's cultural code. He gives an example of the 1950 Kyoto Cathedral which had stained glass windows installed. One of them depicted St. George in the act of killing the dragon. This according to Schreier caused an uproar in Japan, because in Japan a dragon is the symbol of the Empire while in Europe it is a symbol of evil. To have this symbol on this Cathedral therefore meant that Christianity destroys Japan. This scenario painted by Scheiter shows the importance of specific elements within a given culture in relation to Christian faith. It is therefore important that atonement rituals among the Abawanga be carefully studied for any meaningful biblical exegesis relating to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ to be understood.

All having been said and done, inculturation is a very important ingredient in the spreading of the gospel; yet culture cannot be ignore because in the foundation upon which the principles of inculturation are based. It takes the dynamics of these two; scripture and culture with all they entail about identity and change to have the making of a local theology which in the view of this study is lived theology. How this interaction of scripture and cultural elements takes place is the subject of this study, particularly atonement rituals.

### 1.13 Atonement among the Abaluhya

To understand the need for atonement among Abawanga, one has to have a closer look at the words and terminologies used to describe sin among the Abaluhya. According to Saliku and Anagoli (2007: 6-11), the Abaluhya use various words to conceptualize sin; which include *amakosa*, *obwononi* and *tsimbi*. The words tend to lean on the results of sin in the context of the idea of relationships. These words, in themselves, are not definitions, but rather descriptive terms. Magesa (1997: 149) observes that in the African context, such words lead to seeing sin through its consequences rather than its nature. Hence the extent of evil is emphasized at the expense of its nature. Atonement is, in this case, regarded as something that comes in, not to correct the situation but to restore the situation that was interfered with.

Were (1967: 53), Adeyemo (1979: 52), and Osogo (1987: 26), observe that another word that is used to refer to sin in African communities is *taboo*. This word could literary mean forbidden things. Among the Abaluhya, this is known as *omusilo*. These writers say that the word *taboo* carries the negative idea of a '*thou shalt not*'; bearing relationship to that, which is customarily not done. They suggest that sin, among the Abaluhya, is perceived within the boundaries of *emisilo* (taboos), in the sense that once a particular *omusilo* is broken, sin has been committed. By breaking the *omusilo*, Osogo, says that atonement engages the spiritual world; because taboos affect not only the living but the living dead as well.

Among the Abaluhya, the process of atonement began by noticing the unfamiliar phenomenon; occurring to an individual, a family or to the whole community (Wagner 1970: 220-245). To warrant a serious attention, this particular phenomenon

must be a recurring one, as opposed to a once for all occurrence. This would stir up a reaction from the concerned family or community to start the atonement process.

According to Wagner (1970: 220- 245) and Samita (1992: 228-232), the way of atonement is the way of peace. They reckon that atonement is done, or performed, as an act of reconciliation; in pursuit of the peace that must be maintained between the living and the living dead. Wagner gives an example by way of a story about the peace rituals of the Avalogoli. The person who has sinned, against the ancestors, takes a sheep and places his hands on the sheep's back, uttering some words; and then he invites the elders, who repeat the same ritual. In this way, the sacrificer identifies himself/herself with the victim, as does the community through the laying on of hands by the elders. The blood of the sheep is divided into three portions, for the sacrificer, the elders and the ancestors. For the ancestors, the blood is poured down, while for the sacrificer and elders, the blood is either drunk raw or cooked and eaten; as the stomach contents are smeared on the body of the offender.

Wagner (1970: 220) and Sitati (2003: 40-45) contend that among the Abaluhya, unexplained deaths, for example children's deaths, would raise questions within the community. Such questions include, but not limited to questions like, "Is there sin anywhere? Why is this happening?" Answers to these questions would then determine the next course of action. The lineages of both parents would be strictly scrutinized to see if they may be the cause of this regrettable phenomenon. Once the cause has been identified, accusations, or questions would then be brought, first by close relatives. The affected family would begin to talk and ask questions; forming the beginning of the atonement process.

Ray (2000: 72) and Wagner (1970: 253) say that if a person intentionally or unintentionally killed another person, the offenders stayed outside the gate. Upon arrival at home, and shouted saying they had 'bloody hands'. The cleansing process would then begin. From their observation, individual offenders, too, had the responsibility of initiating the atonement process.

Osogo (1987: 54-58) and Wandiba (2006: 37-49) observe that among the Abaluhya, animals became sacrificial victims. Thus a cow, or a sheep, slaughtered in sacrifice is also a form of communication between the human or natural and supernatural. Grains and plants were also used as atoning elements. According to the above scholars, the departed share the feelings with their kins that are still alive. They cannot be at peace seeing their living kins change form, only to end up in the *bad emakombe*. They would love to see them join the *good emakombe*.

According to King (1986: 65 – 66), atonement is a form of deterrent for the calamities that may befall the people, or the clan in the future. Such atonement, he claims, covers all stakeholders and distance is not a hindrance. Whether one is present, at the time of the atonement act or not, does not matter; wider consequences are possible. Hence, someone living in New York would be associated by an offered sacrifice performed on Mt. Elgon in Kenya; and thereby be involved in its consequences. A good example, he says, is the Luhya circumcision sacrifices that are performed before the actual physical cut. These are purely atonement acts, geared towards asking for protection during the exercise; so that no bad omen befalls the boys.

Makila (1978: 44-45) and Mugambi (1976: 101), giving a detailed description of the final sacrifice and atonement practices of a dying man among the Abaluhya, mention

that a sick man instructs his brother to kill the oxen before his death. According to these authors, the sacrifice serves as his last sacrifice, offered to God, the spirits, or ancestors; for his welfare and that of his family and friends. It also serves as a means to detect, and punish, people who are believed to be responsible for the person's illness and subsequent death.

As Mbiti (1991: 149) testifies, the Abaluhya for a long time, have had specific natural places set aside for religio-cultural purposes and indeed, there is no limit to these. They include groves and forests, trees, rocks, rivers and Lake Victoria. These places are regarded as the meeting points between the heavens or sky and the earth; and, therefore, of the visible and the invisible world. Such places were not to be put to common use, because doing so would desecrate them. There are people assigned to look after these special places; and as such, the importance attached to them cannot be under-estimated. Mbiti concludes that these places may have been objects of worship or had special relationship to either the ancestors and/or God.

Osogo (1987: 54-59), Were (1967: 57-63) and Wandiba (2006: 37-39) have observed that the Abaluhya, perceive sin as any anti-social act that disrupts the harmony and injures relationships, in the community. They further say that, among the Abaluhya, sin is described as existing both in its nature and its consequences. Thus, in describing sin, the Abaluhya tend to look at the outcomes, and how these outcomes affect the equilibrium within the community, as well as humanity and relationships; which, therefore, produces evil as its consequences. For example, natural calamities are said to be the products of sin. Atonement, therefore, becomes an act of balance that restores the order that sin has previously disordered.

Wandiba (2006: 37-39) stretches the Abaluhya understanding of sin beyond its nature and consequences. He observes that sin is perceived as incarnate in persons, who are then termed as evil or bad. Sin is, therefore, perceived as rooted in personal ontology. This understanding accordingly, frustrates the essence, nature and meaning of atonement among the Abaluhya. By way of looking at the contributions of these scholars, this study will be able to find out if the consequences of the Wanga atonement include the living dead.

Sangree (1966: 49-54) points out that among the Abaluhya, there were specific and pre-determined types of atonement. A good example is the atonement made for the circumcision candidates; which was said to have been there from the beginning. The only explanation given is that it was from the roots; meaning from time immemorial. This type of atonement was community initiated.

According to Wagner (1971: 290), Makila (1978: 48 – 51) and Bottignole (1984: 78), traditional ethics, which regarded every transgression as a 'social sin', was based on respect for life and individuals within families and clans. The seriousness, with which the council of elders debated, judged and atoned for the communal sin shows the seriousness with which environment, and life in general, was taken. Some trees were not to be cut; river stones were not to be taken away, while some forests were not to be destroyed. Among the Abaluhya, such sacrifices were performed twice a year; just for the sake of the environment. This, according to this study, is a leadership initiative. Unlike in the bible, where atonement is mainly a humanity issue, the Wanga atonement wholly includes plant and animal life. This scholarly work of Wagner and Makila, informed this research on the extent to which, this kind of atonement finds space within the biblical atonement.

Sacrifice, in its ritual use, means “making sacred, an offering that becomes divinized (Osogo 1987: 54-58; Wandiba 2006: 37-49; and Ray 200: 72), whatever is sacrificed crosses over from the living to the living dead, and thus becomes divine: hence animals are sacrificial victims.” Thus a cow, or a sheep, slaughtered in sacrifice; grain and plants, given in sacrifice, become a form of communication between the human or the natural and the supernatural. In this respect, only selected people are allowed to perform the *omulukha*; in which the *omufumu* is responsible for the performing of the atonement rituals.

#### 1.14 Atonement in the Bible

Based on the righteousness and the justice of God, people ought to pay for their sins, as taught in the Bible (Ezekiel 18:1-30). No effort, put forth by any human being, could/can meet the righteousness and justice of God. God, therefore, allowed a sacrificial system among people beginning with the Old Testament; the Jewish community where an animal was sacrificed in place of a wrongdoer.

The Hebrew word for atonement is *kaphar* (כָּפַר), which means, ‘to cover or cancel.’ It is very close in pronunciation and meaning to the Swahili word *kafara*, which means a sacrifice. The Greek word for atonement is *katallage* (καταλλαγή), which means, ‘exchange for, or reconciliation.’ These two scriptural terms explain atonement as ‘the covering over of sin, and the reconciliation between God and man; which was most effectively and adequately accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Unger 1988: 258).

### 1.15 Atonement in the Old Testament

Atonement is an Old Testament ritual that was carried out on the Day of Atonement (*yom kippur* יום כפור) as explained in Leviticus 16: 21: 22: 1ff. On this day, sin was removed from Israelite families and the community as a whole; and their relationship with God was renewed. This ceremonial ritual was done once a year; and it was preceded by prayer, confession, fasting and repentance. In addition, there were three animals to be slaughtered. First, an ox for the cleansing of Aaron the Priest, and his family; secondly, two goats were used in the cleansing of the sins of the people. The fourth animal was the scapegoat. Before it was sent off to the wilderness, the elders of the people put their hands on its head, a symbol of transferring their sins over to the animal. The animal was then sent away from their land, symbolically 'carrying all the sins of the Israelite community and taking them far away.' It was believed that, with their sins taken away and destroyed, these sins were forgiven and forgotten by God. Once the ox and sheep were slaughtered, and their blood sprinkled on the altar, it was seen as covering or atoning the victim from the wrath of God, thereby, meeting the righteousness and justice of God (Lev.16:27-35).

### 1.16 Atonement in the New Testament

Whereas in the Old Testament, the ritual is repeated annually, in the New Testament Jesus Christ, the son of God has been made the final sacrifice for sin once for all. In this teaching lies the belief that all sacrifices, in the Old Testament sacrificial system, were only a foreshadow of the complete and perfect sacrifice; which Jesus Christ made on the cross at Calvary (Heb.10:11-15).

Therefore, His death is a sacrifice that removes the guilt of humankind and reconciles them with God; by providing the inward cleansing (Heb.5:8; Rom.5:19; Phil.2:8). Based on these scriptural texts, Grudem (1994, 569), describes atonement as, the work Jesus Christ did, through His life and death, to earn the salvation of humankind. This description appears to capture a broader sense of atonement; for, in most cases, it is used to refer only to Jesus' dying and paying for the sins of the humankind.

Olowola (1991:4-5) sees biblical atonement as a fundamental means by which sins of humanity are dealt with; through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice is substitutionary; because Jesus becomes the perfect and complete substitution for man's punishment. He takes on those sins on Himself in the place of, and on behalf of humankind (cf. Matt 20: 28; Mark 10:45). Gonzalez (1985: 132) says that, within biblical understanding, atonement is used as a reference to the redemption; achieved by Jesus Christ, by his crucifixion and resurrection.

Angeles (1985: 24) stretches this concept further by explaining it, as bringing together in reconciliation; or to remove obstacles preventing a union or acceptance. He adds that it could mean the act of making reparation of expiation. To this end he cites Romans 5:11 as the only scriptural verse that uses the word atonement, in the King James Version of Bible translation. Otherwise all other scripture references, in other versions, use the term reconciliation; in describing the biblical concept of atonement. These scripture references include; the Gospels of Matthew (1:21; 20:28; 26:28), Mark (14:24), Luke (22:20), John (1:29; 10:14-15; 14:6), and the epistles to the Romans (5:6-11) 2Corinthians (5:14-15), Galatians (3:14).

In forgiving sins, in the Old Testament period, God acted in perfect righteousness since God anticipated the coming of Jesus Christ, as a sacrificial lamb, who would, in no way, pass over or cover sin temporarily; but would take it away for ever, as shown in John 1:29 (Chafer and Walvoord 1975: 60-62). Erickson (1999: 816) says that, in an attempt to consider the full value of Christ's atoning death, a number of facts are revealed in the scriptures. However, because of our finite minds these facts can only be looked at in line with four important truths. One, Christ's death was a sacrifice for our sins as 'individuals' (Heb 9: 26; 10: 5-18). Two, Christ's death was a universal sacrifice for the sins of humankind (I John 4:10). Three, Christ's sacrificial death brought the sinner back to God (2 Cor 5:18-19) and four, by Christ's sacrificial death, sinners were cleansed from sin (Mark 10:45). Apart from these truths dictating the way for the faith community, they highly direct the type and depth of faith of the Wanga Church. The syncretistic or non-syncretistic nature of Christianity, among the Wanga populace, rests on how these truths are interpreted.

### **1.17 Theoretical Framework**

In its effort to understand the biblical concept of atonement, the Euro-American Christianity developed various theories of atonement that take denominational dimension. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, subscribes to such theories as the satisfaction theory, which was advanced by St. Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. This theory states that Jesus appeased God by being a ritual human sacrifice, thus satisfying God's demand for the removal of human sin (Anselm n.d: 8 – 15). They also subscribe to the ransom theory, advanced by Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. In this

theory, God deceitfully pays off Satan with a bribe (Erickson 2005: 798-818 and Grudem 2005: 568-582).

The conservatives and some of the mainstream protestant churches subscribe to the penal substitution theory, which was advanced by the reformation theologians such as Luther and John Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this theory, God's mercy replaces His wrath after the infinite sacrifice of Jesus (Wolfhart 2000: 403-434; Garrett 1995: 33-44). According to Thiessen (1979: 235-240), and Schleiermacher (1976: 451-466), the protestant word-faith movement (what is today known as Pentecostal Churches) subscribes to the ransom theory.

Grenz (1994: 443-458) observes that there are liberal Christians and '*post-Christians*' who subscribe to the moral theory sometimes referred to as the non-violent theory. In this theory, Jesus' death is an example for the rest of humanity to emulate. Being a moral act, atonement comes from the arbitrary choice of God. This theory was advanced by Abelard, a feminist theologian in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. There is also acceptance theory advanced by Don Scotus, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. In this theory, Jesus voluntarily allows Himself to be executed. According to these two scholars, this act of Jesus defeated the power of evil and released humanity from its sin.

Inculturation of the biblical concept of atonement depends largely on the interpretation of the various theories advanced by the Euro-American missionaries, who were responsible for evangelizing the Abawanga. It must be noted, however, that the Abawanga though intuitively having their own theories, may not have been consciously aware of these theories. Probably, they also did not understand them; this

is because these theories were already inculturated within the Euro-American Christianity and not the Wanga '*Christianity*.'

Since atonement forms part of the culture of any given community, it is important that any biblical interpretation, of the same, be done in a manner proper to the recipient culture. Waliggo (1986: 12-18), Nkeramihigo (1986: 65-70) and Bediako (2002: 23-49) are African scholars who subscribe to this school of thought. This study endeavored to establish what is salvific in Wanga culture was and what needed purification and transformation. Thus, the study employed Niebuhr's concept of culture and Christ. Niebuhr looks at Christ from four angles, Christ as being against culture, Christ for culture, Christ and culture and Christ as the transformer of culture.

These four angles can also be regarded as paradigms which, to a great extent, determine the functional definition of atonement. For example, the Christ against culture theory states that, all cultures have some elements that are sinful and as such, someone has to redeem them by way of removing these sinful elements (Niebuhr 1975: 47). To understand Niebuhr's argument, one needs to look at the history of sin and its effect on humanity. The Adamic sin affects us on who we are, as well as what we are because of our cultural identity. Culture therefore, becomes sinful, not by intent or design, but by human nature. It is from this original sin that Christ saved sinners. This being the case then, the Wanga atonement rituals, which are part of their culture, have some sinful elements and need redemption by Christ.

In Niebuhr's thought, Christ of culture theory declares culture as generally good (Niebuhr 1975: 87). In this case, the biblical meaning of atonement is already

embedded within the Wanga culture. Now that culture is good, Holy Scriptures need to constructively interact with this *good* Wanga culture.

The Christ above culture theory suggests that all cultures look up to Christ as an example (Neibuhr 1975: 118). In this case, biblical atonement becomes a standard for all cultures to follow; and the Wanga culture is no exception! Hence Wanga practice of atonement needs to be elevated to Christ's atonement for it to be truly Wanga and truly Christian. Christ and culture in paradox paints a picture of a culture, which is in conflict with Christ. Here, some elements in culture and all their ingredients have nothing to do with Christ (Neibuhr 1975: 149-150). As such, all these elements of culture need to be redeemed. There was need to overhaul those elements. Wanga atonement practices and rituals need to be looked at closely and be reconsidered in the light of the gospel teachings.

Christ as the reformer of culture sounds positive. That is, somewhere along the line, sin entered and corrupted culture (Neibuhr 1975: 194). Christ, therefore, seeks to correct the corruption that might have crept into culture and restore the original state of the culture. The Wanga atonement should, therefore, seek to bring back what was initially corrupted; in this way, Wanga atonement is corrective in nature, just as the biblical atonement is.

### 1.18 Summary

A closer look at the whole concept of atonement reveals a kind of transaction that exists between the world of the living, the ancestors' world and the spirit world. Atonement, manifested in its ritual and sacrificial systems, accomplishes a two to

three-way transaction, between otherwise separate and partially opposed realms, the visible and the invisible world. In this transaction, the animal and plant victims become symbols of mediation.

In the traditional African understanding, animals, plants and grains are partakers of both worlds. The animal, particularly, lives in the human world, but its life belongs to the spiritual world. This being the case, then, this research established that the animal combined certain features that linked the natural to the supernatural; otherwise finding acceptance in both worlds would be difficult. Further, this was part of the ingredients that forms traditional Wanga view of atonement. The efficacy of any atonement exercise would thus highly depend on the participation of the living dead and the living.

In the New Testament, atonement must be viewed as a restorative agent that brings together God and His people; by way of Christ's sacrificial life and death. Through Christ's atoning death, the atonement that results in restored relationships is not a human achievement but the work of God within humanity. Having looked at the Wanga religio-cultural symbols of atonement, it may be observed that God had remotely prepared them through this culture; thus pointing to Christ as the atoner per excellence.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.19 Introduction

This section presents qualitative research, as the method of choice for this study. The qualitative research mainly includes data collection, research participants, the researcher's role, data analysis and categorization. Others include, themes and patterns (coding), validation and verification. This study was evaluative and sought to find out the value and meaning of the concept of atonement among Abawanga. This work was treated as basic and formative evaluation, in line with Patton's advice (2003: 214-217). It is hoped that this would be enriching to missionaries and sociologists; who may want to live and work among the Abawanga.

### 1.20 Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative. This is because it was concerned with traditional concept of atonement among the Abawanga, a topic that could only be appropriately tackled by way of qualitative analysis. According to Creswell (1998: 1-2), qualitative research refers to an inquiry process of understanding a social, or human problem based on building a complex, holistic, picture which is formed with words, reporting detailed views of respondents and conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods in data collection and analysis, as compared to quantitative inquiry. It relies more on text image data (Creswell 1998: 179). This means that the designs, techniques and measures that were used were not necessarily geared towards the

production of discrete numerical data. Furthermore, this research took place in the natural setting of the interviewees. It employed the multiple methods that were interactive and humanistic; which are characteristic of any qualitative research.

Creswell (2003: 181) regards qualitative research as emergent rather than tightly prefigured. Here then, the researcher changed questions and refined them as he learned what to ask and whom to ask. The researcher, therefore, varied methods of biodata of respondents. Based on biodata, qualitative research method was, therefore, used to explore and deepen the understanding of the concept of atonement in the Wanga community.

### **1.21 Rationale for the Choice of Research Design**

The rationale for employing qualitative design was based on the convincing reasons that Mugenda and Mugenda (1999: 197-203) outline:

- (i). When the research topic needs to be explored; in this case, by using the qualitative method, researchers are able to collect data and explain phenomena, more deeply and exhaustively.
- (ii). The need to emphasize the researcher's role as an active learner, who seriously considers the emic view of the respondents. Qualitative researchers, therefore, believe that studying social systems and problems should include giving voice to those who are being studied; as a way of empowering them to freely communicate their ideas.
- (iii). The need to study the existing tangible realities raise questions that render prediction and controls outcomes questionable. Researchers can, however, gain a deep understanding and hence be able to interpret these realities.

iv). The need to give respondents a chance to state their problems, in the way they understand them and participate in seeking solutions to those problems as well as effecting such solutions.

### **1.22 The Study Population**

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999: 9) define population as the entire group of individuals, having a common observable characteristic. Simply put, population is the aggregate of all that conforms to a given specification. Although the Abaluhya have twenty-one sub-ethnic groups, this research focused on the Abawanga; who constitute one of these groups. The researcher chose the Abawanga because, the standard Luhya Bible translation is in this dialect of the greater Luhya; and yet Christianity was not rooted in this community.

### **1.23 Data Collection and Entry**

For administrative and logistic purposes, the researcher sought permission letters from Ministry of Education and the District Officers in order to facilitate the smooth running of the study. This was of great assistance; since the researcher had planned to use the services of two research assistant in gathering some of the information needed.

### **1.24 Sampling Techniques and Size**

The study used simple purposive sampling technique, whereby the informants were picked because of their experience in working in the Wanga-based churches. Knowledge of Wanga language was an added advantage; since some of these data

was collected using *oluluhya* language. For example, a priest or pastor, who was forty years of age, and had more than ten years experience of working among the Abawanga, could give valuable insights as regards the appropriate perception of the concept of atonement in the Wanga and biblical thought and practice without confusing the listener. For the traditionalists, age and experience, through participation in community rituals of various kinds was considered.

The study comprised seventy-two (72) informants and three focus groups. These included four (4) Clergy from the Roman Catholic, eight (8) from the Anglican Church and eight (8) from the Pentecostal Churches. Ten (10) lay preachers (except for the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches who had three, the rest had two each. This is because the two churches cut across the Wangaland) and thirty (30) ordinary church members from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Pentecostal churches and the African instituted churches. These were purposively sampled as follows; ten (10) males and ten (10) females. The remaining ten (10), (5 male and 5 female) were young adults aged between 20 and 30 years of age. As much as the researcher would have liked to include the youth in this study, this was not possible because of the chronological experience of the youth. Twelve (12) members of the Abawanga community who are traditionalists, also formed part of the informants. They were distributed as follows; six (6) male and six (6) females. The sample also included twelve (12) community elders, six (6) from each of the two districts.

## 1.25 Focus Groups

The researcher intentionally used focus groups, as a means of extracting some of the information that may not have been forthcoming at the individual level. Atonement, being a communal concept, it was only fair that interviews be conducted at group level so that communal participation might be reflected. Commenting on how people view the method differently, Silverman (2003: 8) says that, focus group has grown from being a controversial method to high acceptance in certain industries. It has fallen out of favor for sometime, but now it is enjoying a resurgence that probably makes it the fastest growing research method.

A focus group discussion is a carefully planned discussion, designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest; in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Participants share and respond to comments, ideas and perceptions; using a synergistic approach to produce a range of opinions, ideas and experiences; thus generating useful information. This method of gathering information, is recommended for discovering new information, examining people's habits, obtaining different perspectives on the same topic in participants' own words; and gaining information on participants' views, attitudes, beliefs, responses, motivations and perceptions on a given topic (Litosseliti 2003: 2). Silverman (2005: 12) counsels that, focus groups can be used especially when the researcher is exploring, investigating, or attempting, to understand motivations. He further says that it should be avoided if the researcher wants to draw exact percentages, discover complex relationships or project the extent of future actions.

Focus groups typically consist of between six and ten participants; but they can range to as few as four people, depending on the research purpose (Litosseti 2003: 3). Again, depending on the purpose of the study, as many as six groups can meet; but Litossetti recommends a minimum of three groups. The focus group is usually facilitated by a moderator who guides the discussion; using a number of predetermined and carefully developed open-ended questions with minimal intervention. For the purpose of this study, the researcher had three focus groups, namely; the Clergy, male and female lay preachers. Respondents who formed these groups were different from those interviewed above.

The Clergy's focus group comprised those who had served for more than ten years in the ordained ministry and were forty years of age and above. The assumption was that at this age, they had a commendable experience, living and serving in Wangaland; and could give insights as regards both traditional Wanga and Christian perception of the concept of atonement.

### **1.26 Research Instruments**

Qualitative interviews and participant observation were used for data collection. According to Spradley (1980, 12), a participant observer is interested in taking note of the behavior, speech, instruments and artifacts of the people. This method enabled the researcher to get first-hand experience with the respondents, record information as it occurred as well as explore any topic that the respondents might have felt comfortable to discuss.

An interview is defined as an oral administration of a questionnaire; and as such, it can be termed as face-to-face encounter (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999: 83). A face-to-face interview was used because of its effectiveness in developing information (Weiss 1992: 3). This research used open-ended, interview guide questions with informants; where clarification was needed, the researcher asked for it. There were separate interview guide questions for the clergy, lay preachers, church members and Wanga traditional adherents. This is because different groups play different roles in the Church and by extension Wanga community which greatly enriched the researcher with the information needed in understanding of the concept of atonement.

### **1.27 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

Reliability and validation were fundamental in gathering of data. Reliability, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999: 95), is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data, after repeated trials. Creswell (1998: 208) goes on to assert that for a qualitative study, where interviews are implemented, effectiveness is in establishing rapport so that the important information needed is elicited.

The instrument used in this study was cross-checked by two lecturers, with experience in research, from the Department of Theology and Pastoral Studies, at the Daystar University. They cross checked the clarity of the questions, the level of difficulty, and the appropriateness of the questions. This cross-checking helped the researcher to find out if the interviews and observation memos would yield consistent data. For the questions that were found wanting, the researcher rephrased, deleted and adjusted,

depending on the target population. This, in itself, helped in the process of uncovering some of the hidden ambiguities that were found in the instrument.

Second, the instrument was pilot-checked by three Wanga people within the city of Nairobi. These three were forty years of age and above. They had more than five years' experience of the Wanga traditional ceremonies and their general modern functions among the Wanga people. The qualification said above, concerning the elders, was not considered here; since this was a city context, and getting elders of such qualifications was not practical. These people were interviewed to check the degree to which they felt the instrument was reliable; and was able to measure the traditional understanding of the concept of atonement among the Abawanga. The researcher also consulted with the informants in the process of analyzing data; and the same approved or disapproved the final findings.

### **1.28 Data Analysis Procedure**

In qualitative research, data analysis aims at bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999: 117) state that, in qualitative analysis, the researcher obtains detailed information about the phenomenon being studied; and then tries to establish patterns, trends and relationships from the information gathered. Data collected was analyzed and itemized in respect to the objectives of the study.

This research endeavored to expose thoughts and ideas contained in the answers given during the interviews. To do this, the researcher used open, axial and selective coding. In open coding, the researcher did the manual analysis and discovery and then sorted

out key concepts and their properties until a key concept was determined. Axial coding then followed, whereby further determining of relationships between categories was established. Finally, in selective coding, the researcher went after more information only after identifying the categories. This helped the researcher evaluate the understanding of the traditional value and meaning of the concept of atonement among the Abawanga. This being a qualitative narrative, the researcher presented the categories and themes using narrative narration.

## CHAPTER TWO: ATONEMENT IN TRADITIONAL WANGA

### 2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, atonement was discussed as a cultural practice among the Abawanga. Here, it was also laid out how the problem was going to be tackled by giving the background to the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the objectives, the premises of the study, the research questions, the rationale of the study, the scope of the study, and the definition of terms. In the previous chapter also, the researcher reviewed the related literature and proposed the qualitative approach as the most appropriate method of study for this particular topic.

This chapter seeks to give detailed information on the concept of atonement in the traditional Wanga thought and practice. The objective of this chapter is to investigate the concept of atonement in the traditional Wanga thought and practice. For this objective to be realized, this study examined several aspects of the concept of atonement in traditional Wanga thought and practice. These include the relationships that exist between atonement and sin on one hand, and evil and guilt on the other hand. The study also incorporates the understanding of sin, evil and guilt in relation to the natural and the supernatural worlds. In the Wanga religio-cultural practices, these relationships also define the boundaries of the concept of atonement.

A clearer understanding of the above said relationships helps in establishing the necessity of atonement among the Wanga people. The necessity of atonement further pushed the researcher into finding out how it is taught to the succeeding generations; and who qualifies to teach, so that the originality of thought and practice are kept. The

traditional elements of atonement are also investigated so that a clearer meaning of the concept of atonement among the Wanga people could be established.

## 2.2 Atonement, Sin, Evil and Guilt in the Wanga Culture

In order to investigate the concept of atonement in the Wanga thought and practice, the researcher sought to understand the Wanga's perception of sin, evil and guilt in the Wanga culture. The perception would thus lead to a clear interpretation of atonement as understood by the Wanga. According to Muniafu (An Anglican Parish Priest), the Wanga people perceive sin as an offence against *Were* (God) and humanity; because all sins are either an open transgression against another person or the failure to do what should be done for others. To the Abawanga, sin is any anti-social act that disrupts harmony in the society and human relationships. Taking the example of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Adeyemo reasons along Muniafu's line of thought; pointing out that this community recognizes sin, as an act that upsets the equilibrium of the society or of personal relationships (1979, 52). Apart from upsetting the equilibrium of the living, sins also disrupt the balance of the living dead. Having upset the equilibrium of the society, then definitely, sin touches on *Were's* requirements for humanity, attracting His wrath to the errand members of the Wanga community.

Omusula, one of the informants in this study, classified the living dead into four major categories (personalities). These are;

*Abaafwa, abakuuka, ebisoni and ebishieno* (different categories of the living dead)

The *abaafwa* are the ordinarily dead. This may, as well, refer to all the living dead, irrespective of their status. However, in the realms of sin, evil and guilt, Omusula explains that the *abaafwa* are somewhere in the middle; they do not have a ranking yet, because they are recently dead. The *abakuuka* are the living dead who are a generation or two, after the *abaafwa*. Just like in the situation of the living, these would be at the grand-parents stage of life. Subsequently the *ebisoni* (plural) are next in line. The *ebishieno* are long dead, they may not be remembered, and so they are put together in one category as 'the *ebishieno*.' The *ebishieno* are said to have been in a bad relationship with the living at the time of their death. They, therefore, became a bad omen at the time of their own death, resulting in their changing of status from being the living dead to bad spirits. The *ebishieno* are the ones responsible for cursing the living, should they break the *emilukha* (taboos) of the Wanga people.

Since sin is perceived as destructive and spoiling human relations, as well as making the higher powers frown at people (Arinze 1970:34), African societies have specified means of dealing with sin. This exercise is procedurally carried out in case of the occurrence of sin in order to avoid curses from the living dead and casting of spells from the *ebishieno* (bad spirits), as well as restoring of harmony and tranquility within the people.

The upsetting and disrupting of the society's balance is what atonement seeks to address. Atonement then becomes an act of balance that brings back the order that sin has previously disturbed. If this view is embraced, then atonement takes on a universal definition. This is because sin has stirred up the community's equilibrium; bringing about the undesired within the society. Atonement, therefore, must address

itself to the society's need of returning back the status of the community which has been messed up by sin.

In regard to the above findings, atonement also, becomes an act of reconciliation that is meant to heal, not only the broken relationship with God, but also with fellow living human beings and the living dead. Reconciliation becomes a reconstruction tool to bridge the natural and the super-natural. Appropriate relationships will lead one to the good place at his or her death.

Looking at the relationship of sin to atonement from the Wanga perspective, Niebuhr would comfortably state that the whole Wanga culture needs to be atoned for the equilibrium of the whole community has been messed up. Christ must therefore be above the Wanga culture, so that it looks up to Christ as an example (Niebuhr 1975: 118). Moreover, the Wanga perspective of sin puts culture (their) in conflict with Christ, especially in matters involving other mediums such as the *abaafwa*, *abakuuka*, *ebisoni* and the *ebishieno*; hence the Wanga atonement practices and rituals need to be looked at closely and be reconsidered, in the light of the gospel teaching which states that Christ alone is the medium of atonement. Biblical atonement has therefore to become a standard for the Wanga culture to follow.

### 2.3 Existence of Sin

Among the Abawanga everything appertaining to sin revolves around the firm belief of the existence of sin. According to Omusula, sin among the Abawanga is described as existing both in its nature and its consequences. In its nature sin resides within the

people and can be viewed in the people's actions. In its consequences, sin brings about evil and guilt. For example, if one commits incest, the Omusula says,

*Omundu oukholanga amakhuwa aka eshiruchi omwene oyo areranga isoni khwitaala.* The person who commits incest brings shame not only to themselves but on their families and to an extent the whole home.

Apart from seeing sin in its nature and consequences, the Abawanga seem to push this further to the abode of sin; which is, in fact, a personality, who is also part of the nature and consequence of sin. According to Wakhungu, one of the informants of this study, some specific sins are hereditary. He says,

*Omundu owe tsimbi arula butoro, shichila tsimbi tsindi tsiruulanga khumusule kwabwe owe tsimbi.* The sinner can be seen from childhood because some of the sins are hereditary.

Webele, another informant from Ekhabukoshe, adds to what Wakhungu says, though in a different dimension and explains that, sin is in the blood of the sinner. He says,

*Tsimbi tsimenyanga mumatsayi ka omundu, abandu bandi bebulwa mumatsayi ka tsimbi. Tsimbi tsiarakwa mubo.* Sin lives in the people's blood, some people are born in the blood of sin, and as such one can do nothing about it.

Wekesa expresses it in terms of the spirit and says,

*Omusambwa kwali kwa samwana kwamutula.* The spirits that possessed the person's fathers have possessed him or her also.

Although the word '*omusambwa*' (singular) may mean good spirits, more often than not, it is used to mean bad spirits that are associated with sin and evil. These spirits are individualistic in nature. What this means is that sin emanates from the individual person. Here then, sin can be said to be ontic, as such, sin is located in the human self rather than exclusively in social institutions and practice. In Bromiley's words, sin is individual reasoned out and intentional actions that brings forth evil in the society Bromiley (1988: 522). Enns (1989: 310) goes on and says that sin is enshrined within a person's thoughts and intentions. Although Wekesa admits that sin among the

Abawanga is also within the individual, he, however, claims that, these individuals are aided by the *ebishiemo* so as to sin. This research therefore establishes that among the Abawanga, a person is regarded a sinner, if he or she has the *ebishiemo*. This brings in the question of the role of spirits in bringing about sin. Atonement comes in not only to cleanse the sinner, but to chase away bad spirits that cause people to sin.

In view of what Wekesa says, this research establishes that the Wanga believe in the progressional characteristic of sin. Thus, sin proceeds from generation to generation. It is only in this way that the bad spirits from the father can be able to possess the child, and be noted to be with similar characteristics.

In addition to the above, this research establishes therefore, that, in the Wanga religio-cultural world, sin is attached to a wrongdoer; who is ultimately, the human person. The point here is that, sin does not exist in human experience, except as perceived in a person. It is the person who is sinful, whether this person is aided by invisible forces or not. For, even when invisible forces intervene, in human life to cause harm, it is because they are 'used' by sinful people. This further proves that in the Wanga culture sin is perceived as ontic.

Based on the above findings, then the conservatives and some of the mainstream protestant churches prescribe penal substitution theory, which was advanced by the reformation theologians such as Luther and John Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The application of this theory must be based on the understanding that all people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That means that sin finds its dwelling within every person and as such every person needs the mercy of God, instead of His wrath. The mercy must be expressed in the removal of the sin which is in the person;

in this case, it is done by way of atonement (Wolfhart 2000: 403-434, Garrett 1995: 33-44).

Now that the Wanga culture sees sin as ontological, it is people, or personalized beings, who are evil; precisely because they actually entertain bad intentions, utter bad words, or engage in wrong deeds. In other words, they are incarnations of evil powers, at least for the time they behave in anti-life manner. This frustrates the smooth running of the Wanga community by breaking its norms and taboos. Prescribed atonement addresses the individual person, rather than the Wanga community as a whole. In regard to Neihbuhrs atonement theory then, all of the Wanga culture needs to be redeemed. This is because culture resides in humanity, where sin abides. Reasoned this way, then, Christ has to be above humanity for him to be able to redeem the human-kind which is from below and unable to remove sin and evil that besets it.

Though Omusula admits that sin lives in the person, he also says that sin manipulates some earth forces and thus manages to live in this forces. Such forces include wind, darkness and even trees! Sin also lives in insects and birds. The manifestation of these sins would be seen in the character and behaviors of the things mentioned above.

Omusula says,

*Ebishieno, ebia oluhya lundi bimenyanga mumuyeka, efinanyenze efindi fiamenya mulwanga lweshialo shino, kata orundi rwamenya munyanza. Nochenda mushitsuru mushiteere onyaala okhuhurira olwimbo nekhane norushieno. Orushieno rwene orwo rumenyaanga khumisaala nende mubifwetere nende efibikhwa. Emisaala chindi onyala okhuhurira nichwiupa omulosi.* Some of the evil spirits live in the wind, some in the universe and some in the water mass. If one takes a walk in the forest and hears a song, one should take care, it could be an evil spirit singing; of such kind live in the anti-hills that are found in the forest. Some who live in the trees manifest their presence by whistling.

Looking at the foregoing description of the activities of the bad spirits, sin in the Wanga culture resides in the universe. Thus everything in the universe has to be cleansed from the corruption of sin. The environment too can not go un-cleansed, because it houses sin. The universal satisfaction theory of atonement, which was advanced by St. Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, is more appropriate in this situation. The Roman Catholics subscribe to this theory; based on the fact that Christ's atonement cleanses the universe and all that are in it. Apart from being ontological, Christ's atonement is universal (Erickson 2005: 798-818; Grudem 2005: 568-582).

#### 2.4 The Meaning of Sin

Based on what Wekesa, Webele and Omusula informed this research (cf 2.2), sins are intentional concrete, historical actions of individuals or groups in violation of the laid down Wanga law. Now that the *abakuuka* (living dead) are said to have contributed to the formation of this law during their life time, it turns out that the Wanga law is also eternal. This is because the *Abakuuka* are said to live eternally. Sin among the Abawanga are in two major categories; these are, major sins and minor sins. According to Anangwe, killing is a major sin while deceitfulness is a minor sin. Anangwe says that, killing involves removal of the person's life and as such there is no atonement for such sins. The only remedy is by way of killing the offender to retribute for the offended and the family of the offended at large. The implication for this research is that major sins, merit eternal damnation because they seriously violate the intrinsic good. Minor sins on the other hand do not violate the intrinsic good. For example, a lie spoken, either to save life or not, is sin but this can be forgiven, because it does not violate the intrinsic good. The Wanga go ahead and subdivide sin

into different small categories that include actual sin, habitual sin, formal sin and material sin.

## 2.5 Etymological Understanding of Sin

To understand the radical seriousness of sin, in the Wanga community, one has to take a closer look at the words and terminologies used to describe sin in the African traditional societies. For example, among the Abaluhya, sin is termed as, *amakosa*, *obwononi*, *tsimbi* and *obutobera* (Saliku and Anogoli 2007). Masinde expresses the act of sinning as, *okhukhola obubi*. This phrase means, acting badly or unproved behavior or committing sin. The sinner is described as, *omukholi owe tsimbi*. This means, the person who acts badly or one who involves himself or herself in an unproved behavior or one who commits sin.

The above descriptions, in themselves, are more descriptive than definitive terms; and they tend to lean on the results of sin, in the context of the idea of relationships and everything associated with them. Magesa (1997: 149) observes that what is elsewhere conceptualized and explained as sin may be better expressed in African religion by the concept of 'wrong-doing', 'badness' or 'destruction of life'. To this study, it seems that Magesa's description of sin leads to seeing sin in its consequences rather than its nature; whereby the extent of evil, which is the result of sin is emphasized at the expense of the nature of sin. What this researcher observes is that, both sin and the sinner need atonement. Atonement for sin will ensure that the former state of things return, while to the sinner atonement re-assures freedom from the sinful consequences.

Another word that is used to refer to sin in African societies is *taboo*; which refers to forbidden things or things not done. Adeyemo (1979:52), observes that the word *taboo* carries the negative idea of a “thou shalt not,” bearing relationship to that, which is customarily not done. In its original sense, *taboo* was connected with the breach of ritual laws. A number of African scholars seem to suggest that sin, in African societies, is perceived within the boundaries of *taboos*; in the sense that once a particular *taboo* is broken, sin has been committed. Aguandia (2005:23), for example, observes that sin in the African cosmology has a lot to do with the breaking of the community taboos, and the disturbance of the harmony of the spirit world, through misbehavior and misconduct. If such sin or evil is to be atoned for, then the Wanga culture is to be regarded as essentially good. It is only that some people have intentionally decided to break the laid down taboos and break the moral codes of the community which are not bad! According to Neighbuhr, then, atonement comes in only to bring back what the society has disabled in the course of living.

## 2.6 Classification of Sin

According to Bromiley (1988, 522-523), sin is classified into specific categories; individual, religious and social sins. Individual sin is further divided into two, the formal and material sins; that is, formal sin is a deliberate and voluntary action that produces evil, whereas in the material sin the act may be materially wrong from an objective standpoint, but the agent may not have satisfied the conditions of responsibility required by formal sin. In the first incidence, Nabakolwe’s focus groups points at an individual who willingly and voluntarily goes on to steal people’s property. This action according to this research is deliberate and thus amounts to

formal individual sin. In the second incidence, a child who in the course of playing accidentally breaks another child's limb is said to have committed a material sin. This sin according to the Nabakolwe's focus group is not severely punished. The parents and to some extent, the clan of the child who broke the limb are only required to pay the medical bill. When the injured child is healed a meal is prepared for both of them to share, bringing the whole exercise to a happy reunion.

On the other hand religious evil has to do with people; either intentionally or unintentionally going against the will of *Were* (God). According to Webele, if a person or people break the *emilukha* (taboos) of the Abawanga, *Were* visits them with calamities such as flood and famine. This study establishes that this punishment comes about because this has to do with the Wanga belief system.

The social sin on the other hand is a collective, intentional concrete historical action of a group of people who violate the cord of regulation of the Abawanga. Webele mentions cattle rustling as one such sin. Here a group of people intentionally decide to go and forcefully take other peoples' cattle. He goes ahead and says that such sins may be hereditary. He mentions such sins as lying and killing, which he describes as *obwekholo* (of the clan). He says that,

*Abandu bebulwa mumatsayi kobwiri okhuula berekho omundu kho bahuluushe. Nibashiri okhwira matsayi kasera seranga butswa.* People born in the blood of the killers must also kill. Before they kill their blood is hot and can not rest.

Blood among the Abawanga signifies life, and therefore what Webele is saying is that social sin is hereditary. Social sins can also be observed in specific clans or groups of people as opposed to others. This study maintains however, that there can be no such sin as belonging to a particular clan, yet it is true that sins can be inherited sin.

## 2.7 Individual Sin

If individual sin has to be understood as a conscious construct, then personal actions seem obvious at first, especially if violence is looked at as a defining concept focus of sin. Surely, for a child to be raped, the potential rapist must act and act consciously! By 'consciously' this research means, this act must be very direct; whereby this abuser or rapist must consciously, or acting purposely for that matter, take this girl forcefully and rape her thus committing sin.

In the above example, one person is acting alone as an individual! There are times when a person acting in his capacity as head of an institution takes actions that result in evil. Mwanga who is the village elder of Panyako village says that, should an elder allow people to either graze or collect firewood in the *eshiembekho* (special forests), without traditional cleansing ceremony, this would bring a curse not only to the concern people but to the whole clan. What Mwanga is saying in this situation is that leader's decisions have far reaching implications, not only on the immediate families but the society as a whole. At times this may be bad institutional policies; such as denying a dying person food because it belongs or it is being taken to the *Nabongo*. Mwanga says that no-one was to be given food that was being taken to the king, probably for his own or for his friends' consumption. Of course, the resulting evil is death! This evil is purely to be blamed on the sinful action of the officer who was taking food to the *Nabongo*; bypassing the hungry person who later dies out of hunger. Polings (1996: 120) gives a good example of what is pictured in the thoughts of this study. He says that, the government may require that, to receive her check, a mother on welfare works twenty hours a week as a volunteer. If something prevents her from fulfilling this requirement, the social worker may not be able to give her, her

money. In this case, no clear individual action and intentions are causing evil. In such case then, it is not the issue of individualistic analysis of actions but, it must be realized that some personal decisions occur within a web of decisions which are sinful and that may end up producing evil consequences.

The evil consequence in this case is what may result from the mother's missing of this cheque. This may be that she might not be able to treat her sick child, thus leading to the death of this child; which is evil, for this death would have come up as a result of lacking the money to take the child to hospital.

Atonement of such evil must, therefore, take on a special and specific form. Wasiche, an informant of this research states that, atonement process for such a sin must be directional in nature; such that individual atonement and individual – community atonement must be prescribed. It becomes individual, to the person who sins intentionally and without community policies. It is community-individual to persons who sin by way of effecting policies on behalf of the community. Atonement for the later would be what most Pentecostal congregations, in Kenya today, would term as repenting on behalf of the community. However, this second example can only be effective where the decisions are consciously taken. This is because to this study, an officer is personally responsible for how they effect government or organizational policies. One is able to influence the organization or the government so that bad policies that cause sin can be changed.

## 2.8 Religious Sin

This research's understanding of religious sin is hinged on a belief system; where sin finds power or is sanctioned by a set of religious and practices, this sin is wrapped and masked by abstract claims to virtue, love and justice. The Wanga people believe in their God called Were' and as such every Wanga person has a desire to do good so as to please Were (Were 1969: 63). People are therefore inclined to do good. If Abawanga are good oriented, and are inspired by a vision of having good within themselves, then a commitment to justice in such a community cannot be lacking. A good example is their greetings. In these greetings they ask,

*Muleembe? Peace! The general answer is, "Muleembe muno or Muleembe muno wesi." A lot of peace to you too!*

*Muleembe* is not just a greeting but also a form of asking about the well being of the community, which includes the justice of the Wanga community! The concept of justice must then find its roots in religion! The expression here is that every person is religious! Yet evil also has roots in religious beliefs and practice. This speaks of evil as being manifested within the personal and social structures, which coincidentally are religious.

The unexplainable thing in evil is that the word evil is itself a religious concept, that is, its definition requires reference to the religious worldview of good and evil. Nyanje who is an ordained minister with the Anglican Church sees sin as an act of organized opposition to God's love; a power that is against God's rule under the sun, and an opposition to Christ's power revealed by way of the cross. What Nyanje is saying in essence is that, sin cannot exist apart from religion. It is with this assumption that this study recognizes that it is within religion that a belief system is

established. When one goes against the established belief system, then one is said to have committed sin. In the Wanga case then, their culture carries with it the Wanga tenets of faith and as such if one broke any of these then one is assumed to have corrupted the culture. Here then, atonement must serve as a cleansing agent of what otherwise is religiously dirty. The act of cleansing is done only on the part of the culture that has been corrupted. In Neibhr's school of thought, the cleansing is to be done only on the part that has been corrupted by the sinful act. Here then, it can be understood that not all aspects of culture is bad, only the corrupted one needs atonement. That is, a set of beliefs that have been messed up with are the only ones to be cleansed and not the whole belief system.

## 2.9 Social Sin

Thinking sin as social is seeing sin as associating. Being social does not mean being friendly or widely regarded, but as organized by economic forces, institutions and even ideas or ideologies. What this study objects to, is the silence of the church and society (social institutions) to tackle this issue. When people from high social standing experience violence, it is always said that they need protection. When vulnerable people of the low social standing such as, children, women, men and the disabled, experience violence, the answer is obvious, "that is how things are". Does this mean that this is the price of democracy? Stretched with the thought of atonement, does this mean that, a hypocritical atonement should be made, or is atonement based on class?

How does one explain, the case of a woman raped in the Wanga city of Mumias, which is reported to the police but which is not given any serious attention! Church leadership has, time and again, refused to listen to a child who has been sexually abused. Such thoughts drive this research to conclude that, social analysis must include the economic forces, institutional forms and ideas and of course ideologies of modernity which the Wanga people like any other people in Kenya cannot escape.

Speaking of economic forces, one must be referring to modes and ways or manufacturing or production; the material requirements for everyday living being thus the division of labour based on gender and class; the implications of which affect the micro and macro-economic trends not only at an individual Wanga level but at community level as well. This then shows that industrial forces must determine the atonement process.

Concerning the social arrangements, one would think of the mediating structures, which are closely related to the daily lives of the people. This means, interaction levels of different ranks of people on a day-to-day living. These social arrangements include, among others, families and clans of the Wanga community; their education systems, local and Wanga national political processes. These social systems influence the Wanga people's behaviour both implicitly and explicitly. The Wanga people believe that out of these influences, evil emerges and as such atonement becomes a requirement. Consequently, this type of atonement must involve both the individual and the social system, which may or may not be directly involved.

In matters of ideas and ideologies Tracy (1987: 48) says, that these refer to the unconscious, but systematically functioning attitude, values and beliefs; produced by and in the material condition of all uses of language, all analyses of truth and all claims of knowledge. This approach speaks of big ideas and concepts like the matters of intelligent quotient (IQ) and arguments of “the perfect ones”. These ideas, determine personality functions within the Wanga society.

Now that these may be basically human, chances of error and sin are high. Ideas and ideologies then, may lead to “humanly determined selective discrimination”; which means that people determine or even dictate what one is able or not able to perform within the Wanga community. In itself this is sin, because they may not have correctly placed the individual where he/she is able to perform, resulting in the negative performance, the implication of which is suffering-evil upon a social system. This system, therefore, cannot escape prescriptive atonement. A good example is politics, whereby, bad politics leads to community or even national disintegration, which then leads to hatred or even war. The loss of life requires atonement! Wanga leadership is, therefore, vulnerable to this sin and as such requires socially dictated atonement which the society receives leadership from the appointed person, who in this case is the *omufumu*- seer. The *Omufumu* in the quest for healing the society must appeal to history; this is because history carries the people’s knowledge and wisdom. Anangwe says that,

*Omufumu okhuula alenje shinga akabakuuka befwe bakhlonga emilukha kho abolele abaandu omulukha kukhoyere okhukholwa. Eshifune shiene, ni khale khaale.* The seer must refer to what our fore fathers were doing in the past before prescribing the kind of ritual to perform. This stems from long, long history.

What this research establishes is that social atonement does not only affect the living society but the society of the living dead as well. These events are orally recorded, these oral records are then passed on from one generation to another by way of mouth. The concept of atonement in all its forms is passed on in the same manner; there is room for the officiator to refer to how a similar sin was dealt with and either do likewise or act depending on the situation.

## 2.10 Sin against the Divine

Shisia, an informant of this research, gives a good example of sin, which is committed against the divine. He says that, when someone commits suicide, the person is deemed to have committed sin against God, not only against God but also, the *abasuule*, the *ebisooni*, the *abakuuka* and the whole of the *abafwa* community (God, the greater living dead, the forefathers and the fraternity of the living dead). According to Shisia, the Abawanga believe that the person has "poured blood on the ground." Blood never belongs to a person but the community, part of which is now in the realms of the living dead. What Shisia is saying is that life according to the Abawanga is in the blood. What therefore has happened is that the person who commits suicide removes one of the Wanga lives. At the same time he is informing this research that the Abawanga treat life as corporate rather than individual. Life therefore belongs to the Wanga community much more than it belongs to an individual Wanga. If someone commits suicide, the person destroys not only individual life but the Wanga community life, whereby, community includes the living dead as well. In this study then, life is seamless, from the living to the living dead.

From the above discussion, this research establishes that life belongs to both here and hereafter; this brings in the aspect of the supernatural. One of the names of God in the Luhya language, that is spoken by the Abawanga is *Were omulonji* (God who moulds or creates). In view of this name, then, all the blood of the Abawanga belongs to *Were*. Based on these postulates, suicide constitutes sin against the spiritual world; the result of which is evil that corrupts the universe, the abode of the living and affects the divine world at the same time. The effect in the divine world is a specific one; because the living dead would not be happy seeing their kin join the bad *emakombe*. They would, therefore, require that atonement be carried out to rescue the situation.

According to Anangwe and Webele, the atonement for the above category of sins is more elaborate than any other atonement mentioned before. This is because it has more serious, elaborate and wide spread consequences than the any other sin. They claim that, a person who commits suicide is said to have brought *omunyiri* (cold) in the family. This brings shame, not only to the person, but to the whole family; and, by extension, the clan as a whole.

The consequences of the sin of suicide include; young men being discouraged from marrying girls from this family and clan. People from the said clan, where the person who commits suicide comes from, are not allowed to hold public office (s). They are also barred from attending and or performing certain rituals. The reason being that the family and the clan have *eshinokhonokho* (suicide is from now on hereditary) of dying by way of suicide. If one marries from this family, chances are that one's wife or husband and even children may also commit suicide. It must as well be noted that the person who commits suicide does not go to the good *emakombe*, which is known as

*mwikulu*; instead, the person roams in the middle space of the universe, known as *mulwanga lweshialo*. It is believed that, the person causes people to have bad dreams, brings strange sicknesses, persuades other family members to commit suicide and may as well cause poor crop harvest.

For this evil to be cleansed, Webele and Anangwe advice that, a white sheep and a cock are slaughtered, particularly at the place where suicide took place. The bloods of these elements are poured at the spot. The cock is wholly eaten right at the suicide spot, the bones and the feathers are burnt and the ashes scattered all over the place where the sin was committed. The mutton is shared among the families concerned; whereby the head and the skin of the sheep are given to the senior member of the family by birth. *Amanyasi* (concocted mixture from plant life) is carefully mixed, pounded into powder and mixed with water, then given to everyone to take. This, according to Webele and Anangwe, shields family members from bad dreams as well as the spells that the deceased may send. If the deceased took their life on a tree, then, the tree is uprooted. Not even its roots are spared! If this happened in the house, the house is burnt down. No one is allowed to use any of the rafters that may remain after the fire, either for cooking or anything else. According to Angwe, if anyone uses this wood for cooking or anything else, then the *ebishiemo* (demons) will come disturbing the person. The implication for this study that Abawanga do not condone induced death such as suicide.

After the exercise, people return home using another route; and no-one is supposed to look behind. It is believed that if a person does so, the spirit of death will get hold of them. Those who participate in the ritual are not supposed to enter the home using the

official gate; instead, a temporary or makeshift gate is made for them to use. The corpse too is not brought in by the main gate; which would mean welcoming the spirits of suicide. More so, the dead person is buried outside the home, for such person is an abomination. Such a person is not to be remembered, and no-one is to be named after anybody who dies by way of suicide. It is thought that the spirits of suicide will enter such a child. By the nature of such kind of sin, its atonement is known as *omwikalo*; which means, shutting up or closing up on anything to do with the person, including the spirit of the person. Thus the *Abawanga* have nothing to do with the person and anything pertaining to him or her. It is believed that, only after this person has been locked up in the 'middle space' that the spirit world is appeased and thus allows the normal life to proceed.

In resolving this riddle Griffin (1976: 6- 7), argues that certain kinds of losses cannot be explained away by appealing to the limits of humans understanding. The issue then becomes whether the reality of such sin should be affirmed. That is, should we affirm that some things happen which really do not "turn out for the best?" Do events occur without which the universe would have been a better place, all things considered? Griffins goes ahead to argue that sin is something other than the good that appears sinful, or suffering that good sometimes requires. According to Griffins, the biblical Job's friends argued that, he falsely perceived evil because of his sin and pride. If Job could see from God's perspective, his friends argued, what appeared sinful to him would have a good purpose and suffering that seemed evil would turn out to be good. Griffin's argument in every sense advances evil as a consequence of sin.

Looking at Griffins argument concerning genuine sin raises the question of theodicy. As a religious and a theological study, this research raises the question of the existence of sin alongside the Holy God. This research, however, must start first with human experience rather than logical argument. Along with the biblical Job, who gives a clear picture of what this study sees as the consequence of sin, there are children who have been killed by their parents, adult survivors of sexual abuse, and some people who have died after years of drug abuse. All these have been witnessed in some villages: That violation and destruction of the human body and soul that leads to loss, for which there is no adequate justification, from Christian theology, disturbs the African mind. This then leads to everyday confusion concerning the nature of sin. At this level and stage, atonement becomes religious duty to Wanga society. That is, some sin cannot be explained nor can it be wished away, except by way of atonement.

In answer to the above dilemma, Poling (1996: 113), lists several factors that may lead to the said confusion. First, persons with power refuse to acknowledge the evil they have done. Polling goes ahead and claims that these powerful people disguise their evil behaviour as necessary. Second, good sometimes appears to be evil, and he gives an example of a rebellious child, who seems dangerous to a possessive parent; yet the end result is an improved parent-child relationship. Third, actualising values sometimes requires suffering, which may seem evil. Fortune (1995: 9) in support of Poling gives an example of civil disobedience for a just course, which is a voluntary act, yet at times this act causes much suffering which is not desired. However, some people have chosen to endure the suffering for a larger purpose

## 2.11 Dealing with Sin among the Abawanga

Sin is perceived as destructive and as spoiling human relations; as well as making the higher powers frown at the people (Arinze 1970:34). For this reason, the Abawanga have specified means of dealing with or removing sin. There are special procedures carried out, in the occurrence of sin, in order to avoid curses from higher spirits; and also to restore harmony and tranquility among the people. According to Karakacha, only sacrifices, which are mostly bloody, involving immolation of animals can restore the destroyed harmony and resume broken ties. In most cases the animals sacrificed are cows, sheep, and goats, all without spots. There is a general understanding among all the Wanga people, that the animal to be sacrificed had to meet certain characteristics; and a particular process had to be followed on the material day. Every step and procedure ought to be followed keenly, lest the sacrifice loses its meaning, efficacy and effect. The sacrifice could be a totally black or white goat, cow or chicken, without any spots; and the animals and chickens were either strangled to death (so that the blood could be collected and poured as a libation from a half guard at the foot of the tree) or carefully slaughtered (so that the blood would be collected and poured at the designated place and or people). The animals and birds, which were then roasted over the fire, are eaten and the left-overs burnt and ashes disposed appropriately

## 2.12 Categories of Sacrifices

There are a number of categories of sacrifices among the Wanga people; but only two of these categories will be dealt with in this study. These are appeasement sacrifices and substitutionary sacrifices. An appeasement sacrifice is usually prescribed by *omfumu* or *omulakusi*-(Wanga traditional prophet), in response to an inquiry on what can be done to save the situation, during a crisis like an epidemic, famine, drought, or serious illness. On the other hand, a substitutionary sacrifice is offered when a person is believed to be under the wrath of the divinities, or some malignant spirits, as a result of an offense/wrongdoing. This wrath can lead to death; but if a substitutionary sacrifice is offered according to prescription, then it would save the afflicted person.

Waseka's focus group gives *okhufuwa* as an example of an appeasement sacrifice. *Okhufuwa* is giving a gift to the living dead, with an aim of seeking favor from them. Such favors include, deterring specific calamities, like injuries during circumcision or restraining the floods or even strange sicknesses from attacking the people.

### 2.12.1 Appeasement Sacrifice

Mungoni, a member of Wekesa's focus group, says that, the sacrifice of *okhufuwa* is done periodically, as a kind of annual or biannual anniversary celebrations. Circumcision is one of the best examples of such rituals; which is in contrast to the knife cleansing ceremony (which is done at the clan level) done at the family level. The family slaughters a white sheep, at the grandfather's grave, and if the grandfather is not dead, at any renowned ancestor's grave. The officiator, who in most cases is

chosen by the family, slaughters a white, sheep in the *namwima*- family shrine, and pours some blood from the sacrifice to the four sides of grave. He then mixes a special concoction called *manyasi*-plant concoction for the candidate and the people present to drink. Then he utters the following words,

*Kuuka Mungoni, eshiayo shino neshishio. Ewe kuuka, olalola obubi nohomba okhusinyishila eshishhebo eshia omwana uno tawe. Mulekhuule yenjile murumbi obulahi* .Grandfather Mungoni, this is your sacrifice. Do not feel bad for the circumcision of your son; let him be circumcised without any complications.

After this, both the candidate and the family members step in the chyme (obusee) of the slaughtered sheep. Traditional beer, called *kwete*, would then be served. However, before anyone drinks of it, the officiator gaggles and spits it on the four corners of the grave. Food is, from now on, served to everyone present and the candidate starts to play circumcision bells called *tsinyimba*, in preparation for circumcision.

### 2.12.2 Substitution Sacrifice

Substitution sacrifices are offered when a person is believed to be under the wrath of the divinities or some malignant spirits as a result of an offense/wrongdoing. This wrath can lead to death; but if a substitution sacrifice is offered, according to prescription, then it would save the afflicted person (Adeyemo 1979: 35).

According to Mungoni, an informant to this research, if people or a person sins, so that evil spirits are continuously attacking the person or the people (the attacked are said to be sick out of the spirits' wrath), the ritual is done at the graveside of the sick person's grand father, who probably may be dead at this time. Although in most cases, the attack may result into sickness, in some cases, the spirits may not be evil

but good spirits looking for recognition either from the people or the person concerned. Good spirits are identified by the good they are able to do through the possessed persons. Mungoni gives an example of good spirits as those that help people to foresee the future. The spirits according to him are so strong that at times they make the person lose normalcy. In case of good spirits, then the situation is referred to as *omusambwa kwamutila*, (possessed by the spirits); normally a white chicken, goat or sheep depending on the dead person specifications, is slaughtered at the graveside. If it is the evil spirits (*eshishieno or eshimakombe*), the black sheep or goat is slaughtered. The ritual appeases the living dead so that bad omen does not befall the person, and by extension, the clan.

However, before all these processes are carried out, a small house known as *namwima*, is constructed (on the grave), where the slaughtering takes place. Within the *namwima*, a calabash, known as *eshisanda*, and broken pieces of pots, known as *efikonjio*, are put. These will later serve as plates and bowls for the *namwima* meal. After the slaughter, some blood is poured on the *eshisanda* and sprinkled on the grave. The lead elder utters these words,

*Kuuka Mungoni, eshiayo shino neshishio nende abashio aba mulininabo. Olalola obubi nohomba okhusinyishila omwitsukhulu wuwo uno tawe, nochama rusia eshishieno shino khumubili kukwe. Our grand father Mungoni, this sacrificial animal is yours together with those with you in your world of the living dead. May it please you that our son, who is also yours, be circumcised without any bad omen.*

After these words have been uttered, the people present, starting with the demon possessed person would step in the chyme (*obusee*) of the goat. The substance would be smeared on the head side of the grave; then the officiator gaggles the traditional beer and spits it on the four corners of the grave. A portion of it is also poured in

*namwima*, as part of the libation. The officiator, who in most cases is the *omufumu*, then plays magic guards, referred to as *okhupa etsinyengo*. This is done to appease the spirits that control this person/people so that they may leave them. The affected person/people dance to the tune of *tsinyengo*, at times falling down in frenzy. The *omufumu*, after determining that the demons have left them or that, they have been recognized officially, will inform the other people in attendance. The people keep quiet for some time before *omufumu* informs them of the spirit's decision; which in most cases is positive. After this has been done, the people can now begin to eat and drink, believing that this and many other strange diseases have been dealt with.

### 2.13 Qualities for Sacrificial Elements

The animals sacrificed are cows, sheep, and goats; all must be without spots. Some birds, like chicken *isindu* (quails) are also used as sacrificial elements. There is a general understanding among all the Wanga people, that the animal to be sacrificed has to meet certain characteristics,, and a particular process has to be followed, on the material day.

As regards the qualities and process of sacrificing, every step and procedure has to be followed keenly, lest the sacrifice loses its meaning and effect. The sacrificial victim has to be one colour (preferably black or white) goat, sheep or ox; and no spot should be found on this animal. Omukoko informs this study that, according to Abawanga,

*Ingombe ya opili shiimalaanga omusango tawe.* Spotted cows are never used for a sacrifice.

Accordingly, sacrificial animals should not be lame, while the plants, should be green, and if possible, be obtained from one of the *eshiembekho*- (recognized forests) of the Wanga people.

Just as the sacrificial element was supposed to be whole, the ritual or sacrificial processes were expected to be complete. In some cases animals were strangled to death so that the blood could be collected and poured out as a libation. In other cases, animals were to be slaughtered and some of the blood drunk uncooked. The same was true for the birds such as, chicken and *isindu* (quail). As for the plant life, leaves, roots or barks were pounded and mixed well; before being taken as *manyasi*, or burnt to ashes so, that they are taken in the form of ashes.

#### 2.14 Gradation of Sins among the Abawanga

The Abawanga categorize sins into two main levels, the major and the minor sins. The major sins include violation of tribal taboos such as incest, murder, witchcraft, theft, rape and adultery, particularly with the married people. Pertaining to the latter, Omulama says,

*Okwikushe nokukwo, nebutswa okwikaale shinokukwo tawe.* Do not open the door that is shut, it does not belong to you.

This is a phrase that is used to warn circumcised young people against having sex with married women. They are allowed to have sex with unmarried women and this is not punishable. In case of murder he says,

*Olamalilana omwikho tawe, eshisheno shiomwikho shioma omurwe.* The evil spirit from the murdered relative is hard headed and it is not easy to exorcise.

These acts of disobedience to the taboos and norms warrant severe discipline that varies from restitution, to capital punishment; through poisoning and starvation to

death. Once involved in this category of major sins, one is regarded as a social outcast; and his/her salvation lies in the willingness of the people to accept the person back to fellowship in the community.

Minor sins, in the Wanga community, may refer to what Wamukoya terms as, daily failures of individuals, such as cheating, bitterness, selfishness, lying and domestic quarrels, among other family and inter-personal misunderstandings. While being warned and encouraged to get rid of these behaviors, the Abawanga still look at these behaviors as acts that are bound to happen, whenever people engage with each other in the community.

### **2.15 Atonement for the Major Sins**

Each major sin is unique and is dealt with uniquely Anangwe gives an example of how killing, as one of the major sins, is atoned for. He divides killing into two, intentional killing and accidental killing. According to him, killing a person, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is the worst of sins that one can commit; because nobody is supposed to kill another person under any circumstances. This evil, though committed by one member of the family, affected all other members and at times the whole of his or her clan; depending on who was killed and circumstances under which the crime was committed. The sin of murder, therefore, resulted in the greater evil of death as it required a life- for- life sacrifice. A lamb with special characteristic of being either black or white is slaughtered as a means of repaying for the blood that was poured.

If someone kills a person accidentally, or in the process of self-defence, this person is not supposed to come in to the homestead. He instead beacons, with his hands and sends for either of his parents. If both of them are dead, then the eldest living brother is called. The person explains what has befallen him or her. Any of these three members of the family sends for *Omuchesi/Omufumu* to come and do the atonement. "At dawn the next morning, the person together with a spotless sheep is led into a designated place in a bush near a river. He then stands and the sheep is strangled in his 'shadow' while he places his hands on its head. Then the sheep's intestinal substance (chyme) is taken and sprinkled on him. The man is shaved clean and after chanting some few other words, he proceeds to the river and take a bath. From the river, the *Omulakusi* prays and asks the spirit of the dead person not to come and disturb him. He then blesses him and they together proceeded home, where *Omulakusi* also offers prayers. After eating, the *Omulakusi* is given two hens from the hands of the man. One of the chickens (black) is to be thrown into the bush along the way as the *Omuchesi* goes home, while the other is to be strangled and its feathers removed and scattered along the way, in order to repulse the spirit of the dead person. Finally the murderer pays 10 to 14 cows as a way of restitution to the bereaved family. If the murdered person was young, then all the 14 cows are to be given, but if old then the elders decide the number of animals to give.

It is only by being atoned for that the offender can live. Otherwise, he has to die because he shed a person's blood. By not entering the homestead, it is believed that the spirit of the dead person will not enter/posses his household. Today, the same ritual is also done to the following people: a driver who has knocked and killed a

pedestrian, one who has seen a person being killed, and even one who comes across a person who has been killed on the way.

As for intentional killing, the murderer is never forgiven! If in a family one member kills another, there is no atonement enough for such a case as to keep the killer within the community. The whole society warns the concerned families to leave. A grace period is however, given depending on the situation. This does not mean that they will not vacate the home; as they have to leave, they cannot live within the Wanga community! One of the informants of this research, Mr. Anangwe says,

*Omundi omwiri owa chimuniai alareranga eshinokhonokho muluhya. A murderer set a bad precedence in the community which will never end.*

It is believed that the act will become repetitive year after year and specifically on the date and month it is committed; someone else will always commit murder on the said date. This research therefore establishes that murder is a sin that needs to be dealt with for once and for good as this helps in stopping this sin so that it doesn't become repetitive.

If the murderer and his or her family do not obey the orders, the whole village is marshalled and all members of the community, young and old, men and women; come wailing, with machetes and fire. They kill and destroy everything on sight; and if there is any person in the homestead, he or she is only spared if they run away. In a nutshell, all life is destroyed from the homestead. Then the members are driven far away from the home never to return again.

After they have driven away the family, the whole community carries out a cleansing ceremony at the home. A bull is slaughtered and prayers for cleansing are offered, and

the home becomes desolate. No one can cultivate the land; which remains a grazing field for animals.

Looking at the atonement described above, Niebuhr's theory of Christ against culture stands out prominently. This is because there is a part of culture that is evil and needs cleansing; should anything to do with the murderer be left, then a bad omen befalls not only the family of the murderer but the clan as a whole. This being the case then, the whole culture has to be renewed! The equivalent of this is Anselm's theory of universal atonement of Christ. Here, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; all of them, therefore, need atonement. Despite these, this research found out that sin is perceived as repetitive; the nature of atonement in this community has to be repetitive also.

### **2.15.1 Atonement for Minor Sins**

Whereas major sins may require major atonement, minor sins only need *minor* atonement. Atonement rituals for the minor sins are not as elaborate as those for major sins. Webele, an informant for this research cites one example of *ishila* (slim) as an example of such ritual. After the birth of a child, the parents are not supposed to have sex outside their marriage. If this happens, it is believed that the child catches diarrhea, slims and eventually this may lead to death. This situation is what is referred to as *ishila*; where children suffer for the sins of their parents. To remedy this situation, *amanyasi* (special creepers plants) are prepared by one of the elders and the two parents are advised to take and then warned not to engage in sexual misbehavior or the child may die.

## 2.16 Existence of Evil

The Abawanga's understanding of evil, just as seen in the case of sin, revolves around the belief of its existence. Apart from seeing sin as ontological, Kachisa claims that the Abawanga see sin in its consequences. He says,

*Omundu omukholi owetsimbi areeranga obwonooni mwitala lie nende kata muluhya* the person, who commits sin, brings evil in their home and the wider clan."

Wekesa, a prominent elder among the Abashikwa, a sub-clan of the Abawanga who lives at Emakokhwe village along Nzoia River, supports this thought by saying that evil is as a result of sin committed by the people. It is this sin that brings peculiar diseases such as,

*Eshipoli, oluyingwa, olumbe okhuula khu olufu* .Schizophrenia, paranoia and untreatable illnesses that eventually lead to death.

Sin also brings about unexplained drought, floods and earthquakes. Thus, in describing sin, the Abawanga tend to look at the outcome and how this affects the equilibrium of society and relationships, which, therefore, produces evil. Natural calamities such as those named earlier, are said to be the product of sin and as such regarded as evil. Looked at from this perspective, this research submits that, it is evil that atonement seeks to wipe out and not sin. Unlike sin which may be ontological, evil covers large geographical area, and affects many people. Mass atonement is therefore, recommended; and *nababa* is one of those prescribed atonements for evil. *Okhuupa nababa*- a whole clan or clans beat metal objects at night running towards the nearby river, chanting some words like,

*Oluumbe lukhumuluure nende omuyeka omubi nende efishiemo mutsie munyanza* Wasting diseases and infirmities, bad wind and spirits go to the lake!

According to Webele, one of the informants of this study, atonement removes the evil that may have come about as a result of sin which brings in the idea of sin as

dwelling, not only in the people but in the environment as well. This study therefore establishes the universality of sin as part of the Wanga's perception of sin. This being the case then, atonement has to take on a universal perspective.

This research found out that the Wanga cultural atonement is not only concerned about the people, but also the environment. Although Niebuhr's theory deals with cultures, it does not deal with the atonement of the environment. Here, the penal substitution theory, which was advanced by the reformation theologians, such as Luther and John Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, may give the way forward. In this theory, God's mercy which encompasses both the humankind and the environment replaces His wrath, after the infinite sacrifice of Jesus (Wolfhart 2000: 403-434; Garrett 1995: 33-44). According to this theory, the Abawanga plus their environment and anything that may appertain to them, are affected by this evil and should be atoned for. Atonement is thus, seen as covering, not only humanity, but all things that appertain to humankind. Moreover, sin and the evil spirits are only dealt with at the cross of Christ and as such, these two should not be sent to the lake.

## **2.17 Describing Evil**

According to Unger (1988, 382), evil is divided in two categories, moral evil and non – moral evil. Moral evil results in the transgression of the moral law or disobedience to the will of God. This evil proceeds directly from human sin. Unger continues to say that it is the failure of rational and free human beings to conform in character and conduct to the will of God. None – moral evil, which Unger refers to as natural evil is disorder in the physical world. For example, human suffering produced by physical or

ontic evils can be said to be none- moral evil. These disorders include famines, floods and earthquakes. From this perspective, this study gathers that, evil distorts reality takes away the 'good'; from the creature. Ondera, one of the informants to this study agrees with Unger when she uses one of the Wanga wise sayings,

*Tsimbi tsibulaanga obwonooni nabo bwonooni okhufwa, Kafwanabusa shinga tsikhwi. Shichila tsikhwi tsibulaanga likoshe.* Sin gives birth to evil and evil leads to death, just like firewood produces ash.

What Ondera is saying is that evil comes about as a result of sin. This study therefore establishes that evil is the practical manifestation of sin. Looking at these manifestations, Poling (1996: 110) sees evil as the abuse of power that destroys people and nature. He further argues that evil is organized by economic, institutions and ideologies forces, but mystified by appeals to necessity and truth. He believes that evil is sanctioned by religion, but masked by claims to virtue, love and justice. Whatever Polling calls virtue, love and justice is what this study sees as reality which evil distorts and takes way from humankind and thus producing the suffering that people undergo.

### 2.17.1 Evil against the Universe

As a result of sin committed by the Wanga people, the universe is adversely affected. To Wanga, the universe includes the earth, forests, rocks and rivers, while the sky forms the upper part of the universe. The space between the sky and the earth is called *olwanga lweshialo*. Andanje who is one of the informants of this study, claims that, according to the Wanga, the universe is the major place, where the actions of the living dead take place; they live, function and have their being in this realm. At times, the *living* have committed sin, resulting in the destruction of some of the above

mentioned geographical features. The results are calamities such as unexplained death, drought, earth quakes and floods. The evil that occurs depends on the type and magnitude of sin committed. In such an event, then the atonement that is prescribed does not only cleanse the environment but it also has to do with appeasing the ancestor. This study singles out rain making ritual as one of such a type of atonement.

### 2.17.2 The Rain Making Ritual

Rain making ritual is one of the cleansing ceremonies held to appease the living dead for the evil that may have beset both the universe and the cosmos, causing famine and drought. According to Wandere, an elder from Ekeru sub-location, the rain making ritual is performed in the *eshiembekho* (national forest) found in the present day Matungu District.

All the Wanga clans are informed of the atonement day by the ruling *Nabongo* at that time. *Nabongo* does this in his capacity as the Wanga king; because the situation affects the whole of his kingdom. Each clan is required to select a specified number of elders, in most cases dictated by *Nabongo* and his council of elders. They are to assemble at the designated place on the day decided by *Nabongo* in consultation with his council of elders. Andanje another informant to this study explains, that though, in most cases, the national forest is the most preferred place, the reigning *Nabongo* is at liberty to choose any officially recognized forest, (because every clan had their own *eshiembekho*; these are the forests that the reigning *Nabongo* could choose from.) so long as it will be convenient for the people.

On the appointed day when the ritual is to be conducted, Wandere says that, the elders set out their journey to the forest at night led by the senior elder, selected by Nabongo. Andanje, one of the informants of this study, warns that, just in case someone who is not qualified to enter this forest comes alongside the elders, he shall become blind. On inquiry from Wandere, this research establishes that this has never happened. The implication for this research is that the Wanga are trying to pass across the message of the sacredness of the forests. They too are stressing the importance of this atonement to the Wanga, since it does not only involve the living but the living dead as well. The seriousness of this covenant demands that whoever breaks it must be prepared to face serious consequences such as death.

The lead elder has to have some qualifications. He must be *omufumu* or *omulakusi* (seer or forth teller), he must be married, must have at least a son or must have had a son. He must also be a medicine man and a respected elder of one of the Wanga clans. Finally, he must be at least seventy years of age; which is determined by following the circumcision age sets Makila (1975: 64-72).

Having been identified, this elder leads other elders into the (*eshiembekho*) forest which is home to fierce animals such as lions, leopards and snakes. Andanje tells this researcher that these animals are at times domesticated; for special purposes. The lead elder utters some words that pacify these animals so that they become harmless. He admits that he does not know the words uttered; because he has only attended this atonement once in his life time, (So far no other person interviewed attended such a function).

There is a special club called *omwirima*, which every elder has to carry; and it is used either for cursing or blessing. It is also used to help stop bad omen from befalling a community; and casting spells away from the community. In the *eshiembekho*, the elders offer a white sheep to *Were* and request for rain. They also leave a live white goat and white chicken for the living dead. They gather *amanyasi* from the forest that they will give to the elders for all the people to drink. The *amanyasi* is also smeared on the *omwirima*, which the elders lick as they take an oath never to reveal anything discussed while in the forest, before drinking raw blood in association with the living dead.

On returning from the forest, the elders strangle a chicken, roast and eat it before going back to their respective homes. The feathers and bones that remain are burnt and the ashes scattered in the *eshiembekho*. On their way home, no one is allowed to talk or greet anyone until the following morning. Heavy rain is expected after this ceremony.

Having looked at the rain making ceremony, it is important to note that specificities are part of the Wanga atonement rituals. This then proves Neighbuhr's argument of removing specific elements within culture that are not gosselled and only leave the gosselled. Some of the things in this specific ritual that are not gosselled include the strangling of the chicken and the *omwirima* which is used for casting spells. Christ, therefore, has to come in as the reformer of the Wanga culture. The reformation should, therefore, seek to remove the ungosselled elements and replace them with the gosselled ones, based on the bible.

## 2.18 Guilt

According to Tenney (1982: 852 – 853), guilt is understood both as a moral or legal concept and as a feeling. As a moral or legal concept, guilt refers to the breaking of some laws or commandment or some accepted code or standard of value. One does not have to acknowledge culpability to the adjudged guilty in this sense. On the other hand, guilt as a feeling refers to the sense of distress, such as reproach, self-blame, remorse and anxiety. This feeling stimulates remedial and expiatory action. This study is not concerned with the legal aspect of guilt but the feeling aspect which stimulates the remedial and expiatory action.

Traditionally, the Wanga community believed in shaming the person who may have sinned by breaking the laid – down taboos and morals. As stated above, these morals and taboos are the standards of value to the Wanga community. Okusimba, an informant of this study from Mulukhuna says that, the shaming include, composing a song that is sung during circumcision or any other event, so that everyone knows what the person might have done. At times it could be a public embarrassment, whereby the elders or the appointed people would hatch a plan so that when the concerned person comes, he/she would be publicly ridiculed or denied participation in a public function. It would then be known that the concerned person has sinned and needs to be atoned for before participating in the said community action.

Okusimba goes ahead and informs this study that *eshisinyo*, (guilt) cannot be left to go without atonement; because it goes down to generations. He insists that one cannot be guilty unless he or she has sinned; a feeling that is only removed by atonement.

Oronda another informant from Elukoye, expresses guilt as *isoni*. This according to her is a strong feeling of shame. This feeling is so strong that at times it may spur personal doubt and to some extent bring in personal rejection.

From what Okusimba and Oronda have said, guilt is perceived as the conviction of sin that the Wanga have; which may be at a personal or community level. To this study, this guilt is good and necessary, because it raises the awareness of sin and the need for atonement. It speaks of the consciences that are alive. The study also establishes that guilt is important in that it reinforces and gives motivation for the keeping of the Wanga moral and taboos. If this feeling is not experienced, then people will break the moral laws and taboos at will. Guilt also establishes the place of atonement among the Wanga people; it is only when one feels guilty that one can seek for atonement services.

Although Okusimba and Oronda are of the view that guilt should be atoned for, Nabakolwe's focus group contends that guilt is removed by the passage of time; mainly through the passing of many generations. They say that guilt is not very serious and does not require elaborate rituals; at times the clan elders are able to deal with it secretly. One example that the Nabakolwe's focus group gave to this study is that, a husband is not supposed to kiss his pregnant wife. If this happens, then the said husband would have broken one of the Wanga taboos and as such atonement is to be carried out. In such a case time is given, so that the child to be born becomes the determining factor. This is because they believe that the child will be abnormal; if the child is normal, then the kiss did not have an effect.

It is apparent from the two informants above that guilt is a condition brought about by sin. Although the two groups don't agree on the mode of the removal of guilt, what however comes out explicitly is that guilt must be dealt with, either by way of atonement or natural healing, which takes time. This then brings in the question of whether the Wanga cultural atonement is a once for all activity or a progressive activity.

### 2.19 Necessity of Atonement in Wanga Culture

In an effort to understand the concept of the atonement in traditional Wanga thought and practice, one cannot ignore the necessity of atonement in this community. This is because the meaning and essence of the concept of atonement among the Abawanga is embedded in its function. The word *omusango* according to Omusuula means, making an agreement. He expresses it as;

*Okhusaanga khu likhuwa nohomba eshikhole nabulebe.* Coming to an agreeing on anything within people's conversation or agreeing to an action to be taken.

He claims that, this agreement has to do with adding to another power; which means appeasing the greater powers, be they living or living dead. *Omusango* is not about one particular individual, but families and communities. As such atonement has to do with making treaties and covenants that spell out terms of relationships between the living, the living dead and the spirit world.

The Wanga people viewed atonement as a mediation between the living and the living dead. The researcher establishes in this study that, the sacrificial victims have two lives. Whereas these animal victims exist in the living world, their lives are very much

valued in the living dead's world also. What this speaks to the research is that the Wanga never die but they just change form, from this earthly body to another body. Otherwise they would not be able to eat and drink this blood that is offered to the living dead as libation! This act shows that the departed share the feelings with their kin, who are still alive. They are not at peace seeing the norms and taboos being broken by their living kin; because 'these living dead' understand the consequences of this action for their living kin. In this way, then, mediation is essential, so that the living is in good terms with the living dead.

Looking further into the future, atonement is seen as a form of deterrent for the calamities that can befall the people, or a clan. The said atonement according to Omusikoyo, who is one of the research informants from Elukhuna, deterrent atonement, covers all stakeholders and distance is not a hindrance. Whether one is present at the time of the atonement act or not does not matter; Omusikoyo thinks that wider consequences are possible if this is not followed to the letter. For example, a Wanga living in London would be associated by an offered sacrifice performed in Matungu Forest in Kenya; and thereby be involved in its consequences.

### **2.19.1 Cleansing of Circumcision Knife**

A good example of a ritual that shows the necessity of atonement is the circumcision knife cleansing ritual. This ritual according to Luseno, is called '*okhwosia oluchembe*, meaning, 'to clean the circumcision knife.' In the Wanga community, this specific circumcision ritual is performed before the circumcision exercise begins. According to Luseno, this atonement is purely an act geared towards asking for protection during the circumcision exercise so that no bad omen befalls the boys.

During the performance of this ritual, all the circumcisers of the concerned villages gather in a designated place, everyone must have all the knives that they will use during the circumcision exercise. All elders are supposed to attend; they are to arrive in groups based on their circumcision age set. Circumcision age set is what determines both chronological and wisdom age; as well as when one can be allowed to participate in some specific practices of the community, like this one Wekesa describes. Wekesa explains that, there are twelve 'circumcision ages sets, though he could only remember four of them, *abamaina*, *abakinyikeu*, *abassawa* and *abachuma*.' Though Wekesa could only remember four, Wagner (373-375) and Makila (2003, 116), mention the remaining eight as, *kikwameti*, *kananachi*, *nyange*, *kolongolo*, *ebakale ndalo*, *likubali* and *angaya*. Every circumcision age set takes about six years. Wekesa explains that, in general, one is considered old enough to participate in Wanga ceremonial rituals after witnessing at least four circumcisions periods. Each circumcision period takes about ten years. This study therefore establishes that it is very rare for a person to be able to experience a full circle of circumcision, because this takes about one hundred and twenty years, thus the last person who may have experienced the first circumcision period may probably not be living.

Wekesa goes ahead and says that; after everyone has arrived, traditional beer which would have been prepared beforehand is served, but no one is allowed to drink before the *Omufumu/Omuchesi* (seer); who must himself be a circumciser. Each circumciser surrenders one of his knives to this *Omufumu* who gathers them together; gaggles the traditional brew and then spit it on the knives. He then utters the following words,

*Abakuuka befwe, nende ebisoni biefwe, kano nako nakenywe. Mulalola obubi nomba okhusinyishila eshishebo shino tawe. Mulekhuule abaana bano benjile murumbi eshisiche mulembe.* Our grand fathers and all our forefathers, do not be angry at this circumcision, we plead with you that you may allow this young men to be safely circumcised.

The *omufumu*, while uttering these words, invokes the name of the circumcision age set of that particular circumcision period, for example *abachuuma*. After this, the elders and the circumcisers have a big feast, which then marks the beginning of the circumcision ceremony.

From the above description, this research establishes that the Wanga people view atonement as an a *priori* act. Otherwise, how could they have known of the coming calamity should the circumcision go on without the blessings from the living dead? Atonement, therefore, in their mind is an anticipated thought, a *priori* learning.

## 2.20 Classifications of Blood in Wanga Culture

Although plants are used as sacrificial elements; animal sacrifices are the most prevalent in the Wanga culture. It is believed that, it is only by blood that sin, evil and guilt are taken away. According to Nabakolwe's focus group of Kholera sub-location, the *Abawanga* believe that life is within the blood of people or an animal. This animal's blood life is regarded as the equivalent of the human life that is being atoned for. Nabakolwe's focus group says that, it is mandatory for every *Muwanga* to treat blood with respect, as one may not know what or which type of blood one is dealing with; hence care must be taken. On this blood classification, Masinde says that, blood in the Wanga community is classified into three categories; *amalasire*, *amatsayi* and *amabaanga*.

*Amalasire* is the general blood that flows through an animal. However, some specific people are referred to as having *amalasire*. According to Nabakolwe's focus group, all night runners have *amalasire*. This group says,

*Omundu omulosi abetsanga nende amalasire. Ne ifwe amalasire kefwе shikali akobulosi tawe.* A person who bewitches others has *amalasire*; our blood is not the blood of witchcraft.

It must be noted that what the Nabakolwe's focus group is talking of is not blood but the night running action that is associated with the person who owns this blood. The life of this person, which is expressed by his / her blood, is not exemplary; he/she misuses his/her blood by way of witchcraft. This is to mean that; *amalasire* is not an honoured blood, it flows through the person who performs undesired acts such as sorcery and witchcraft. Such people are not highly regarded in the Wanga community. *Amalasire* is therefore, not of high value as observed by the Nabakolwe's focus group.

Olwanda, one of the informants of this research from Eluche sub-location says that, *Amalasire* too, is blood from cattle that is edible, either raw or cooked. Blood is eaten, especially during drought and in situations of less food. It is also eaten during oathing, as a way of binding two people or communities. According to Olwanda, blood is at times eaten to bind the living and the living dead in special ceremonies such as circumcision and marriage. In such situations, obligations for the covenants are laid down, with dire consequences for anyone who breaks them.

This study establishes that the *amalasire* is very important in that it is through *amalasire* that a covenant is established. This blood binds people to a specific function within the Wanga community. Thus the keeping of state secrets is enhanced.

This kind of blood is also used in casting out demonic spells among the Abawanga. This is because it is animal blood that is used in the atonement rituals. *Amalasire* too distinguishes people of bad character from people of good character. *Amabanga* on the other hand, is a polite way of expressing the starting of life in a womb; that is, referring to the unborn. According to Masinde, one of the informants from Lubinu, if someone says that,

*omukhasi oyo yatilile amabanga.* That woman has blood.

What the person would be saying is that, the woman is expectant. Omukamani from Ekhaimba adds on what Masinde said by saying,

*Isalache yomusiani wenywe yalekha hano, kho mwitse mubukule amabanga kenywe.* Your boy's blood has been found here, so come and take your blood.

What Omukamani is saying is that a certain boy made the respondent's girl pregnant and so the family of the boy should come for their child. From what Omukamani is saying, this research establishes that the Abawanga are a patriarchal community and children belong to the father. Therefore, if a man makes an unmarried woman pregnant, his or her family must take full responsibility for the child. This is clear evidence that the Wanga community view *amabanga* as having life; that the life of a person is in his or her blood.

On the account of the sacredness of life *amabanga* is also sacred, because it involves life, and for that matter, "new life." Masinde comments that, this is the word used in the new Luhya bible translation in the nativity stories of the gospels of Luke 1-2; Matthew 2-3 and John 1-2, to show that Mary was expecting baby Jesus. This word also means menstrual flow of blood in women. As such, this blood can not be used for sacrificing because it carries life that is not yet actualised.

*Amatsayi* is sacrificial blood; which is carefully removed from an animal earmarked for a sacrifice. This is done by way of strangling, so that all blood is siphoned from it, or by carefully slaughtering the animal. Apart from this, blood from circumcision candidates is also called *amatsayi*. Thus the Wanga expression,

*Amtsayi aka abafulu katatsile hasi okhusasania oluhyia lwefwe nende abakuuka.* The blood of those circumcised dropped down to unite us with our grand fathers.

After circumcision, the blood of the *abafulu* (immediately circumcised boys) is to be kept for three day before being disposed in a secret place. This is so because it is regarded as sacrificial blood. This gives the reason why the blood of Jesus Christ is referred to as *amatsayi*, among the Abawanga. Thus the characteristics of the *Wanga amatsayi*, qualify the biblical translation of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, for it too cleanses humanity from all sin, evil and guilt.

## 2.21 Passing the Concept of Atonement on

The practice of any given concept, in any community, depends on how such concept is passed on from one generation to another. Originality of thought and practice will naturally depend on how it is taught to the succeeding generations; the Abawanga are no exception. It is important that selective vetting of whoever teaches such important community doctrines be made and specific qualifications be required of them, so that the quality of the concept is retained. The most important, however, is how they teach; teaching methods as a vehicle of passing on this information is vital. These methods function at micro and macro levels.

### 2.22.1 Micro-Teaching Methods

Micro-level teaching methods have to do with person to person and family to family teachings; where a father or mother passes on family information to the son or the daughter. Either of the parents sits down with their children and teaches them the concept of atonement. Omurunga an informant from Township sub-location suggests that this type of teaching was done in a secluded place. It could be in the forest, where the medicine-person goes to look for medicinal plants (*amanyasi*), in the kitchen where women have most of their chores performed. It could also be by the river side where women go to fetch water or men go to water the cattle. Here, the parents engage children at a personal level; the passing on of the said information is very intimate and important.

The other option is where both parents sit down with their children and teach them atonement, according to their family. These types of atonements are specific ones as they have to do with the said family only. According to Mungoni, a traditionalist from Munganga sub-location, parents are to instruct their children on the *amachina akelitaala* (family stone altar), so that the family altar is maintained. If this does not happen, then, the said family will start experiencing strange happens that may cause harm to its members. Family secrets are passed on through this way also. These secrets may include some sins that may need atonement in future, either deterring some spells or wanting to revenge for something that may have happened before these children were born.

Another way in which micro-teaching took place is observation, either participant or non-participant observation. Wangulu, an informant from Emayoni sub-location, informs this research that every morning a *Muwanga* father gets up, he is to visit the family altar and utter a blessing for the family. The father also beseeches *Were* to bless and protect the family from the attacks of the enemies. The first born son is always to accompany the father; at whose death he is to take over the responsibility as a family priest.

The next method used, at a micro-level, is participation in family atonement exercises. Wangulu, an informant to this research, who comes from Mulukhuna says that, it is the duty of the parents to send their children to atonement rituals and especially those that have to do with the said family. *Nababa* is a good example. Wangulu informs this researcher of what is uttered during *nababa*,

*Olumbe lwiranga abandu olulali nolunyasi noho omusaala tawe, olumbe lweshiranda, nende lwokhwisero lutsie munyanza. Eshifwabi nende oluswa fikholomoshe nifitsia munyaza. Orushieno nende efinanyenze fiosi fitsie munyanza.* Illnesses, deformities and diseases that are untreatable, those that don't have yet known medicines; those that make people stay in their sick beds for a long time should be taken to the lake. All forms of immoral behavior should follow and go to the lake and finally the evil spirits should also go to the lake and stay there never to disturb the people any longer.

Every parent must send their children out to join other families in chasing the above mentioned and particularly the evil spirits, by way of *nababa* to go in the sea. By participating in this ritual, children come to know of this atonement practice.

This research established that the Wanga community regards the lake as a place where bad spirits which are responsible for evil and immoral behaviors live. These are therefore, supposed to be dealt with in the lake. In the biblical atonement, evil is dealt

with at the cross of Jesus. It must also be noted that evil can not be sent to the lake because there are people who live and work in the lake; Christ Jesus loves these people and would not like to see them attacked by the evil spirits brought in by those who live on the land.

People were also taught about atonement at the micro-level by way of sayings or what can be referred to as speech teaching mechanism. Here, Wanga proverbs, stories and riddles are used to teach people who may not be aware of the importance of atonement. Wawire, an informant from Khalaba, gives examples of such literature,

*Eyoluswa beraanga eyene.* The cow that does things that are not good is the one that is slaughtered.

Although the reference is to a cow, this is just a figure of speech to mean a person who does inhuman actions. Such a person engages themselves in abominable things such as incest. According to Wawire, if one is found to have committed incest, there is no atonement for such a person. If the elders are convinced that indeed the person committed such a sin, a hunting plan is hatched. This is not an ordinary hunting expedition! In this plan the culprit is convinced to come along with other young men for the hunting exercise. The young men are under oath and strict instructions to kill the culprit in the hunting field. Once they reach the hunting field, the culprit is strategically positioned and killed. The girl is equally killed by way of poison by the elderly women. Wawire goes ahead to explain that if these two are not eliminated, then bad omen will befall the Wanga community. Such sin can not be atoned for. Following the story of Wawire, this research submits that in the Wanga community there are some sins that can not be atoned for. This brings in the death penalty in the

Wanga legal system; because such a victim must be done away with. This takes away not only the sinner but the sin also.

### 2.22.2 Macro-Teaching Methods

At the macro-level, there are formalized ways of teaching to young and old people about atonement. Special sessions are arranged, especially for the young. After circumcision, boys are taught various aspects of Wanga life, one of which is atonement. Not only does this occur during circumcision time but at adolescent age also. Here both boys and girls are formally taught about atonement. The boys are taught by the male elders and the girls are taught by female elders. These teachings, according to Anangwe, one of the informants of this research, from Emakhwale, took place at specific sessions, for the boys it could be in the forest; while they undergo healing, after circumcision, while for the girls it is held in the sleeping quarters. At times, this can take place in special meetings called *eshikhasio*.

Atonement can also be taught by way of public naming and shaming; mainly through songs. This is done particularly during circumcision season. One of the examples of these is the following song;

*Osindikha busa abene khwamanya khwabikha omundu. Oyoo Ni nanu oyoo Nikhaanda. Yakhola ariena yanyasia eliani, liani shi? Likondi. Do not speak about it, we know ourselves; someone messed up with relish. Who is this? It is Khaanda! What did he do? He had sex with an animal! Which one? The sheep!*

From the above song, the young ones and those who do not know, would start inquiring of what can be done to save Khaanda; and then, teaching about atonement begins from such a conversation.

People are also taught about atonement during functions such as *omwiimo* (memorial services). During this function, *Owokhusens omusee* is called in to teach the people. *Owokhusena omusee* is sometimes referred to as *Owokhuswala omusee*. This is a person who knows, the family, clan, Wanga history, literature and culture; and who is able to teach by way of prose without much difficulty.

Such a person as, described above is called in, to teach about the importance of atonement among the Abawanga. This person teaches by way of recitation of different proses. Anangwe says that the elders pre-arrange the appearing of this teacher on stage so that it would seem that he has appeared almost from nowhere, done the recitation and disappeared without trace.

The other way of teaching is by way of observation, active or non- active; where everyone participates in the atonement ritual. Such rituals are the *nababa* and the *okhufuwa* collective atonement rituals; where everyone actively participates. Through such rituals people came to know of the importance of atonement. There are others where, some people are told only to observe and not to actively participate; such as the cosmic forms of atonement described before.

### **2.23 The Qualifications of the Wanga Atoner**

Atonement being such an important doctrine in the Wanga community requires that only outstanding men and women be considered for the job of an atoner. According to Omusula, an informant from Elukaka village, these qualifications are divided into three: individual, family and the wide community qualifications.

### 2.23.1 Individual Qualifications

Marriage is very important in the Wanga community; as one is never allowed to participate, leave alone lead, in any traditional activity of the community without it. Karakacha, one of the elders of *abamuniafu* clan, of the Wanga people from Elubari village is very vocal over marriage; he says that, it is only after marriage that one is considered an adult in this community. That is to say, children cannot lead people in atonement functions! He also says that, the first individualised atonement *Okhwinjisia omukhasi* (welcoming the wife) takes place after marriage; whereby, the husband by the guidance of a chosen officiator gives *amanyasi* to his new wife, as a way of initiation into the new family. The wife in return offers her husband porridge. It is believed that the *amanyasi* offers protection to this new member of the family, while porridge speaks of sustainability. This is the first atonement act for this new family.

### 2.23.2 Societal Qualifications

Atonement officiators should be people without blemish in the society, living exemplary lives. These people must be strict followers of societal norms and taboos. This means that they must, as a matter of fact, have their own family shrines that can be seen by the community. One example given by Khisa, one of the informants of this research from Khabukoshe village says,

*Okhuula oseene omwimo kwa kuuka kho osene omwimo kwa papa nohomba kwa omundu wundi.* One must have performed a memorial service for one's grand father first, before doing one for the father or any other person.

If one did not perform the memorial service of one's grand father as mentioned by Khisa, then, it is a taboo to perfume or be allowed to participate in any of such services.

For one to be allowed to lead in the atonement rituals, it must be established that the individual is a God fearer. Both Omusula and Washiali (informants to this research), agree that anyone who qualifies as an atoner must have a family altar made of special stones in his home from where *Were* talks to him. The making of the family altar is referred to as,

*Okhuraaka amachina okhurula khushikulu shia Masaba. Amachina kataru, ka Kuuka, Papa nende abalibao.* The shrine is made up of three stones dedicated to the grand father, the father and those who will live after then.

If the planting of the stones has not happened then, one cannot be allowed to lead others in a ritual that one has not undergone. The *amachina* planting exercise gives proof that one is a God fearer and that he/she is now able to know the plans of God for the day.

These people must also be experts in their field of operations. Omurunga, a Church elder from Mumias, confirms to this study that one can not be allowed to practice medicine if one does not have a proof of training from the elders who are themselves experts in the field of medicine. At times it is believed that a person can inherit from their parent; a kind of 'lineage theory.' Here Omurunga says that the gods are responsible for such a phenomenon. It is said in this case, the person got filled with traditional clan spirit that enters fellow clan member so that they are able to perform the said specialised duties such as the practicing of medicine;

*omusambwa kweikholo kamutula.* The spirit of the clan caught him.

Technical knowledge is the most affected in this 'god' theory that involves specialists; such as artisans, circumcisers, farmers and intelligent hunters.

#### 2.24 Sacrificial Places

Among the Abawanga, the place where atonement rituals take place matters a great deal. The efficacy and the working of the rituals are, in most cases, determined by the place where this particular ritual takes place. For personal and family rituals, the concerned family chooses the place where atonement is to be done. Chitechi and Anangwe (Wanga traditionalists) informed this study that, three special stones, collected from *Mount Masaba* (Mt. Elgon), are planted in every traditional *Muwanga* home. They should be planted on the east of the main house. It is on these stones that the husband offers prayers and libations every morning; that atonement rituals, in most cases, will take place. At times, this can also take place either in the house or in front of the house of the affected place, such as the place where the suicide was committed. The other place is the forest, or by the riverside. This type of ritual must be of community interest for it to take place in public places. Whatever the case, atonement is only done at designated places.

#### 2.25 Wanga Atonement and Niebuhr's Christ and Culture Theory

Looking keenly at the necessity of atonement, among the Wanga people, reveals that something foreign has interfered with the people's culture. It has gripped the society so much that they cannot, on their own, free themselves from it; they need another higher and equally foreign power to free them from this foreign thing that has

unbalanced them. What this research has understood from this phenomenon is that, sin, evil and guilt have infiltrated the Wanga culture and as such some of the things that form the Wanga culture are rendered as bad. Niebuhr would thus say that, only this bad sinful, evil and guilt culture is worth removing and not the whole culture. That is, only the bad actions produced by these bad people, in a partially bad society, that produces evil, sin and guilt need atonement, and not the whole culture.

From what this research has observed above, somewhere along the line, sin, evil and guilt have entered and corrupted the Wanga culture. Christ, therefore, seeks to correct the corruption that might have crept into culture and restore its original state. The Wanga atonement should, therefore, seek to bring back what was initially corrupted by sin, evil and guilt. By doing so, Wanga atonement would become restorative in nature, just as the biblical atonement is.

In the New Testament, atonement must be viewed as a restorative agent that brings together God and the Wanga people; by way of Christ's sacrificial life and death. Through Christ's atoning death, the atonement that results in restored relationships is not a human achievement but the work of God within humanity. Having looked at the Wanga religio-cultural symbols of atonement, which involves blood, just like Christ poured his blood for humanity; it may be observed that God has remotely prepared the Wanga people through this culture.

Among the Wanga people, atonement removes sin, evil and guilt, which are anti-Christ by nature. These acts that produce sin, evil and guilt, in the Wanga culture are

the elements that need to be redeemed by Christ (Neighbuhr 1975: 47). These are the actions that this study argues that the Abawanga cannot get themselves out of.

The *eshinokhonokho* (repetitive nature of evil events and general curse) concept of the Wanga community is the fitting explanation of the history of sin and its effect on humanity. That is, the sin which was committed by the grand parent is committed by the father and subsequently the son; this can be equated to the biblical 'Adamic' sin. The Adamic sin affects the people not only on who they are, but also on what they are; this is because of their cultural affiliation with Adam. Culture, therefore, becomes sinful, not by intent or design, but by human nature. It is from this original sin that Christ saves the Wanga. Here is where guilt is categorized; this being the case then, the Wanga atonement rituals, which are part of their culture, have some sinful elements and need redemption by Christ. A good example is, where killers (offenders) would be killed instead of being forgiven.

Concerning Neighbuhr's thought, Christ of culture theory, the Wanga culture is generally good (Neighbuhr 1975: 87). This is evident in the way the rituals of atonement are carried out in this culture; it is by way of blood, which is the way of the bible too! The biblical meaning of atonement is thus already embedded within the Wanga culture. Now that Wanga culture is good, Holy Scriptures need to constructively interact with this good Wanga culture.

Among the Wanga people, there are several elements of atonement which include bloody and none – bloody ones. The rituals too have several processes, and if not appropriately followed then the efficacy of the said atonement is put to question. This

being the case then, Wanga atonement has to look up to Christ for the perfect atonement (Neibuhr 1975: 118). In this case, biblical atonement becomes a standard for all cultures to follow; and the Wanga culture is no exception! Hence Wanga practice of atonement needs to be elevated to Christ's atonement for it to be truly Wanga and truly Christian.

Christ and culture in paradox paints a picture of a Wanga culture that is in conflict with Christ. Here, some elements in culture and all their ingredients have nothing to do with Christ (Neibuhr 1975: 149-150). A good example is the *namwima* processes of atonement; all that is said and performed in the *namwima* contradict Christ. As such, all these elements of culture need to be redeemed. Wanga atonement practices and rituals need to be looked at closely and be reconsidered in the light of the gospel teachings.

## **2.26 Summary of Wanga Atonement Process**

It was generally agreed by all the respondents that atonement is one of the rituals practiced among the Wanga people. Atonement comes in as a result of sin, evil and guilt. The practice of the concept of atonement recognizes the existence of sin in this community. Therefore, atonement becomes one of the ways of dealing with sin. Atonement in the Wanga community is divided into two categories, major and minor atonement. These atonements are guided by the level of the sin committed, the place where sin was committed and the magnitude of sin committed based on the Wanga norms and values that are responsible for guiding this community. Atonement is also

guided by the structure of evil; which is classified as, personal, religious and social. Based on these, then a specified atonement is prescribed.

The respondents underscored the importance of atonement by claiming that, no one was supposed to atone for anyone's sin if they are not from the Wanga community. That, atoners had to have prescribed qualifications set by the Wanga people, without which, the efficacy, validity and authenticity of the said atonement is put to question. As such, much care is taken in matters of selecting people who are to teach the young *Abawanga* or those who join the Wanga community by either default or marriage the concept of atonement. In all these, atonement becomes a unifying factor among these people.

## 2.27 Conclusion

Sin, evil and guilt are the three things that are responsible for bad relationships among the Wanga community. These do not only spoil relationships among the living but with the living dead as well; which is addressed through atonement. What this speaks to this research is that without the three elements above, atonement has no use; it becomes a parasitic concept.

Atonement is very important for the peaceful co-existence of both the natural and the supernatural world. It brings together people and spirits, who would otherwise be potential enemies. Atonement, therefore, is the bridge for both the living and the living dead to reach out to each other. It plays a mediatory role that unites the natural and the supernatural. Atonement can be said to be the place where justice meets mercy. Here the offender, repents and restitutes to the offended and in return, the

offender is accepted while the offended receives justice. Atonement in this case restores the balance of nature; bringing back the situation that prevailed before, so that life harmoniously continues.

In view of what this research found out, the Wanga traditional concept of atonement rotates around the Wanga culture and as such, the practice of atonement is also culturally – imbedded. Therefore, the cultural aspect of the concept of atonement proves the researcher's premise; the Abawanga had their own ways, of instilling into their community the concept of atonement, which to a large extent controlled their lives.

## CHAPTER THREE: BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ATONEMENT

### 3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, the researcher investigated the concept of atonement, in its thought and practice among the Wanga people. In this chapter, the main concern is, to survey the biblical understanding of the nature and process of atonement. This then, links the Wanga perception of atonement and the biblical perception of the same. This is the chapter that determines what is gossiped and what is not, in both the Wanga and the Christian perception of atonement. As such, it is in this chapter that the foundation of inculturation is determined.

For any attempt at inculturating atonement among Wanga to be successful, a detailed biblical understanding of atonement should be done. It is only through such study that a meaningful translation of the concept of atonement can be carried out from the biblical perspective into the Wanga perspective; producing an authentically acceptable Wanga Christian atonement theology. For this reason, the objective of this chapter is to look at the biblical understanding of the nature and process of atonement. To attain this objective, this study looked at the five biblical categories of atonement; which include obedience, sacrifice, reconciliation, propitiation and redemption. As for the process of atonement, this study looked at how this was carried out in the Old Testament and how it relates to the New Testament. The extent of atonement is also important, for it enabled the study to establish the coverage of atonement in relation to the said process. This is because, in the Old Testament, the process was, by and large determined by the extent.

### **3.2 The Nature of Atonement**

According to Wallace (1981: 67 – 70), atonement is concerned with the ways which according to the scripture, characterizes Christ's vicarious undertakings and accomplishments. Murrey (1969: 34) argues that these undertakings and accomplishments that Wallace talks about are embodied in five major categories. These are obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption. He singles obedience out, as the most basic and inclusive of these five categories. This study submits that, obedience is the motivation behind the four other categories mentioned by Murrey. Without this, the vicarious undertakings and accomplishments of Christ would not have been possible. The nature of atonement also includes its extent; because the five mentioned categories have specific realms of operation.

### **3.3 Obedience in the Bible**

Douglas et-al (1993: 852) look at biblical obedience as God's demand that His revelations be taken as a rule for humanity's whole life. In God's promulgation of the Old Testament, the emphasis was on obedience, as a requirement, if people were to enjoy God's favour. Even though Douglas et-al talk of obedience being a rule requirement for people to enjoy God's favour, this research also notes that obedience, in the Old Testament, was given as a gift to humankind in order that they may enjoy God's favour. According to Anderson (1979: 216 – 225), both Jeremiah 31:33; 32:40 and Ezekiel 36:26 talk of God doing good to the people, with whom He has established a covenant. The Lord promises to inspire humankind to fear and respect Him so that they will not turn away from Him in future. Anderson goes ahead to say

that this fear and respect is motivational, based on the future position of humankind. That is, humankind will be placed in a position of favour before God. This study establishes therefore that, this time obedience is given not as a rule requirement but as an act of grace. The life of obedience must therefore, be a life lived in imitating God in His holiness and Christ in His humility.

Based on Douglas et-al's (1993: 852) definition of obedience, Mozley (1962: 74) cites Isaiah 52:13; 53:12 as the most appropriate passage in scripture that provides more instruction on the topic of atonement, in terms of obedience. He says that, it is in the capacity of servanthood that Jesus Christ, the person in view, is introduced; and it is in the same capacity he executes his expiatory function. Carson (1994: 663 – 664) says that, this obedience is expressed by way of pouring out the life of the servant for the sake of humankind as found in Isaiah 53: 1-11. Commenting on the same scriptural passage, Nsiku (2006: 845) says, that the title *servant* derives its meaning from the fact that Jesus is the father's servant, not the servant of the people (Isaiah 52:13). A careful scrutiny of Nsiku's argument shows that Nsiku establishes the source and direction of Jesus Christ's servanthood and not the servant's function. What Nsiku seems to be saying is that Jesus Christ's servanthood stems from God and not people; which implies subjection to and fulfilment of the father's and not the people's will.

In support of the above scholars, Erickson (2005: 792) submits that, the concept *servant* defines Jesus Christ's commitment and obedience in the execution of His atonement duties; as an obedient servant to His master, who is the Lord. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ confirms what the Old Testament foretold about Him in terms

of His obedience to the father: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38)." Looking at obedience, as a demand of Christ's atoning work, Barnes (1960: 134) quotes Philippians 2:7-8; in this scripture St. Paul claims that though Jesus was God, He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant. Barnes therefore equates Paul's argument to Isaiah 52:13-53, where the servant is portrayed as suffering. According to him, these two scriptural passages represent the climactic event of Jesus' commitment; through death on the cross, as an act of obedience.

Based on the above discussion, this research submits that, the view of obedience must not be looked at quantitatively. This submission comes out of the conviction that obedience did not and does not consist simply in the sum total of formal acts of obedience. It is important however to note that obedience springs from the dispositional complex of motive, intention, direction and purpose. Since the Lord was truly human and fulfilled the father's will in human nature, humankind must appreciate the progression in knowledge, understanding, resolution and will; which was necessary and was expressed in the discharging of the father's will, in its increasing demands upon Christ, until these demands reached their climax upon death on the cross. According to Gaebelein (2009: 49), this explains the word in Hebrews 5:8, 'He learned obedience from the things which He suffered; at no point was He disobedient.'

### 3.4 Sacrifice

According to Murrey (1969: 35), there is abundant evidence in the New Testament to show that Christ's giving of himself is to be construed in terms of sacrificial offering. He derives this claim from Pauline epistles, particularly, 1 Corinthians 5:1-7 and Eph. 5:2. In these scriptures, St. Paul says that Jesus Christ became the paschal lamb that was sacrificed for humankind. Accordingly then, it is not only the express statements mentioned from these scriptural passages which support the thesis, but also references that can only be interpreted in terms of the altar of sacrifice, like Hebrews 13:10-13. In this scripture, the bible talks of Jesus Christ as the one who was sacrificed outside the camp; meaning, out of the Jewish holy city of Jerusalem.

According to Erickson (2005: 822), the notion of sacrifice (which touches on Christ Jesus) spoken of by St. Paul in the New Testament is derived from the Old Testament. The allusion to the sacrificial ritual, of the Levitical economy, makes it apparent that, the latter provided the type in terms of which the sacrifice of Christ was to be interpreted. Consequently, this sacrifice was necessary to atone for the sin, which inherently deserved punishment. The Old Testament sacrifices were thus expiatory of guilt; which is particularly true of the sin offerings; in line with some of the New Testament passages, like Hebrews 13:10-13 which is mentioned above. In line with expiatory sacrifice, Bernes (1962: 258 – 265), says that the idea of expiation is the removal of the liability accruing from sin by way of sacrifice. This research submits that sacrifice, therefore, becomes the provision whereby this liability is removed. It is the substitutive endurance of penalty and transference of liability from the sinner to the sacrificial victim.

In support of the above argument by Erickson and Barnes, Matthews (1993, 305) says that the Old Testament sacrifices were truly typological of the sacrifice of Christ. Isaiah 53:10 expressly applies to the self sacrifice of the servant; which was figuratively represented by the trespass offering. In New Testament passages, as indicated before, the Levitical offerings provided the analogy after which Christ's sacrifice is to be understood; but of more significance is the fact that the sacrifice of Christ is the archetype after which they were patterned. They were patterns of the things in the heavens and only figures of the true (Heb 9:23, 24) Christ's offering is the heavenly example. This is the additional confirmation that what was signified in shadow, by the ritual offerings, namely expiation, was transcendentally and really true in the sacrifice of Christ.

This study, in support of the above scholars, submits that the Old Testament sacrificial system was a fore shadow of Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice, which is later revealed in the New Testament. Here, then, the foreshadow portrays the outline of the reality. It is, however, this truth that the sacrifice of Christ is the heavenly reality, that insures the efficacy, finality and perfection of Christ's sacrifice in contrast to the obvious shortcomings of the levitical offerings (Hebrews 9:9 -28). Heb.10:14 states, 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' This being the case then, Christ's sacrifice must have eternal effect. This is manifested in Niebuhr's (1975: 46 - 48) theory of Christ above culture. It must be understood that in this particular theory, Christ has to be above all culture for Him to offer a sacrifice that has eternal efficacy, which includes all cultures and yet above all of them.

### 3.5 Propitiation

The language of propitiation is also applied to the work of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament (1 John 2:2; 4:10). In this scripture, St. John portrays Jesus Christ as the propitiator of the sins of the world. According to Mozley (1962, 36-40), plausible attempts have been made to interpret propitiation in terms of expiation and thus avoid the importance of propitiation. He says that, the erroneous belief of these attempts has been successfully demonstrated by scholarly and painstaking study of the biblical data. The reason for the attempt to relieve the work of Christ, of strictly propitiatory character is obvious. To propitiate means to pacify, to conciliate, to make propitious; which presupposes that the person propitiated is angry and needs to be pacified. If Christ propitiates, it must be God who is to be propitiated. Battrick (1981, 920), agrees with Mozley, when he submits that propitiation does not speak of an angry God but instead speaks of the removal of sin by way of sacrifice. He therefore argues that the propitiation should be understood as expiation; thus bring in the idea of God reconciling the world through Jesus Christ's life and sacrificial death.

This study also, submits that, one cannot think of God as needing to be pacified or made propitious by the blood of Christ. If the atonement springs from the love of the father and is the provision of His love, as has been shown above; it is not a contradiction to maintain that Jesus Christ conciliated by that which is the expression of His love? The expression of God's love finds life and being in Christ Jesus who was the lamb of expiation. This is what expiates for the universal sin of humanity. If invincible love is antecedent, then no place remains for the pacifying of wrath!

This study supports Unger and White's (1993: 107 – 108) admission that, there is deplorable confusion in this line of reasoning; to love and to be propitious is not convertible terms. Even in the human sphere, the unique object of love may at the same time be the unique object of wrath and displeasure. It is the denial of God's holiness in relation to sin, as the contradiction of what God is and what God demands, not to recognize that sin must evoke God's wrath. Just as sins belong to persons, so the wrath rests upon the persons who are the agents of sin. Grudem (2005,562) adding to what the above two scholars have said, observes that, those who God loved with invincible love were the children of wrath, as Saint Paul expressly says in Eph 2:3. In this particular scriptural passage, Paul says that by nature humankind were, children of wrath. It is to this fact that the propitiation made by Christ is directed to those who, by nature, deserved God's punishment. Those who God loved were the children of wrath! It is this truth that enhances the marvel of his love.

The implication for this study is that, the doctrine of the propitiation is, that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that he gave His own son to the end that He, by His blood, should make provision for the removal of God's wrath. It was Christ's to deal with the wrath so that those loved would no longer be the objects of wrath. Love would achieve its aim of making the children of wrath the children of God's pleasure. It is in this perspective that atonement is dispensed with the necessity and glory of propitiation.

According to Murrey (1969: 35), the disposition to deny or even underrate the doctrine of propitiation betrays a bias that is prejudicial to the atonement as such. He submits that, atonement means that Christ bore people's sins and in bearing sins, He bore its judgment as well. According to Romans 5:12; 6:23, death in itself is the

judgment of God upon sin. In this scripture, St. Paul observes that the wages of sin is death. He goes ahead and asserts that, Christ died for no other reasons, other than death which is the remuneration of sin and that is the epitome of the judgment of God which drew God's wrath upon humankind. If what Murrey asserts is anything to go by, then, Jesus Christ in place of humanity met the whole judgment of God. He must have endured that which constitutes the essence of this judgment.

Commenting on Murrey's thought of propitiation, Barnes (1969: 222) wonders, about the superficial notion that the vicarious endurance of wrath is incompatible with the immutable love of God to Christ! Barnes answers himself, by confirming that, the father loved the son with the unchangeable and infinite love. He says that, the discharge of the father's will in the extremities of Gethsemane's agony and the abandonment of Calvary elicited the supreme delight of the father (Jn 10:17). In concluding his argument he reckons that, love and wrath are not contradictory; love and hatred are. It is only that because Jesus was the son, loved immutably as such and loved increasingly in his messianic capacity as he progressively fulfilled the demands of the father's commission, that he could bear the full stroke of judicial wrath. This is inscribed on the most mysterious utterance that ever ascended from earth to heaven, "my God my God, why hast thou forsaken me; Matt. 27:46?"

The above argument creates another puzzle; God in the nature of humanity forsaken by God! Here is the wonder of the father's love and of the sons love too. How pitiable is the short-sightedness that blinds humanity to its grandeur and that fails to see the necessity and glory of propitiation. St. John wrote, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His son a propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10).

Christ is truly the propitiation for the sins of humanity, because He propitiated the wrath which was humanity's damnation. The idea of the propitiation of sin, in this study, brings in the government theory of atonement advanced by Grotius (1583 - 1645). According to Ryrie (1998: 309), God's government demanded the death of Christ to show God's displeasure with sin. Based on the judicial system, God accepted Christ's suffering as a substitute for the penalty of sin. Thus the justice of God was satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ.

In the quest for solving the above puzzle, this research submits that God, sent Jesus not only to die but to live as an example and to die as a sacrifice in place of humanity and as such the act of propitiation is not only in death as both Grotius and Ryrie would want to put it, but, in life and death Jesus Christ's work of propitiation is manifested. If this was not the case, then God is to be seen as a personality who takes pleasure in His son's suffering so that He is gratified; and the people propitiated.

### **3.6 Reconciliation**

According to Grudem (2005: 712), sacrifice has in view the exigency arising from the wrath of God, so reconciliation is concerned with humanity's alienation from God and the need of having that alienation redressed. Ronald (1981: 18) reveals that, in the scripture the actual terms used with reference to the reconciliation, which Christ achieved on the cross, are to the effect that, humanity is reconciled to God and that God reconciles humankind to Himself. Never is it expressly stated that God is reconciled to humanity. It has often been stated, therefore, that the cross of Christ, in so far as it contemplated reconciliation, did not terminate upon God to the removal of

God's alienation from humanity; but simply and solely upon people themselves, to the removal of their alienation from God. In other words it is not that which God has against humanity that is dealt with in the reconciliation but only with humanity's hostility against God. Wallace (1981, 19-26), sees it strange, that scholars should be so persistent with what is, to say the least, so superficial an interpretation of the usage of the scripture, in reference to the term in question. He concludes by saying that, it is not to be denied that the reconciliation is concerned with humanity's hostility against God. Reconciliation deals with sin and the evil preceding it; which is hostility towards God.

Pushing further on the concept of reconciliation, Thiessen (1979, 238) takes the example of Matthew 5:24, "Be reconciled to thy brother" and he argues that in this passage, the use of the word 'reconcile' should caution scholars against a common inference. In this instance the person bringing his gift to the altar is reminded that his brother has something against him. It is this grievance on the part of the other person that is seen as interrupting his act of worship. It is the grievance and, in that sense, 'the against' of the other, that the worshiper must take into account. More so, it is the removal of that grievance that, of 'that against', that the reconciliation which Christ is required to effect contemplates. He is to do all that is necessary to remove the alienation in the mind and attitude of the other.

Based on the above arguments, the researcher submits that, the situation requiring reconciliation is the frame of mind or the attitude of the other and what the reconciliation must affect is the change of mind on the part of, the person called the

brother. Thus, people are pointed in a very different direction from that which might have been expected from the mere formula, 'be reconciled.'

Although it is the 'against' of the brother that is in this view requires a change, the extortion, as in terms of being reconciled to God, can well mean that what the reconciliation has in view is God's alienation from humankind. Ladd (1974: 428 – 432) gives another example that points in the same direction as Thiessen (1979: 236) in Romans 11:15 'For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' The casting away is that of Israel; and the reconciling is that of the gentile nations. The casting away is contrasted with the reconciliation and the meaning of the latter is to be discovered from this contrasted with the receiving, that is, the receiving of Israel back again. The casting away can be nothing other than the rejection of Israel, from the divine favour; and blessing from which for a time they had been excluded. It is apparent that in both words the thought is focused upon the relation of Israel to God's favour and the blessings found in salvation.

This study submits that, reconciliation, being in contrast with casting away, must mean the reception of the gentiles into the favour of God and the blessing from the gospel; it is the relation to God's favour that is expressed. Hence it is upon the change in the disposition of God and the change in the resulting relationship of God to the gentiles that this thought is focused in the word reconciliation. According to this study, the above demonstrates that the term can be used with reference to a change that takes place in God's mind and relation with reference to humanity. Humankind should thus be prepared for the appreciation of the teaching of the scripture on the

reconciliation accomplished by Christ in his death. Any proper assessment of the nature and liabilities of sin shows that sin separated humanity from the favour and fellowship of God. It elicits, not only the wrath of God, but also in its complement, sin alienates people from God. The alienation is the result of humanity's estrangement from God. The latter is sinful and constitutes humanity's sin but the former is holy as is God's wrath (Spencer 1950, 465-470). It is that holy alienation that reconciliation contemplates and is directed to its removal. This is the gospel of the reconciliation, and what a gap there would be in the atonement if it did not provide for this requirement of humankind's sinful state. If reconciliation consists in the change that takes place in the heart of humanity; from hate to penitence and love, then reconciliation must be something inward; it is a change in the subjective disposition attitude of humankind.

According to Douglas et-al (1993: 1012), thinking of the concept of reconciliation, at times becomes challenging; especially adjusting the teaching of the two most relevant passages to this conception Rom 5:8-11 and 1Cor 5:18-21. According to these scriptural passages, it is the greatness of God's own love towards humanity that is being accented. This love is demonstrated by two considerations. One, that Christ died for humanity; and two, that Jesus Christ died for the sins of humankind while they were yet sinners. In Douglas et-al's thought, the attention is directed to what God did when people were still in their sinful state. This verse further communicates the essence of what follows in the next three verses. For the clause 'Christ died for us (vs-8)' is expanded in verse 10 in the words 'we were reconciled to God through the death of His son.'

### 3.7 Redemption

No category is inscribed more deeply upon the consciousness of the church of Christ than that of redemption. No song of the saints is more characteristic than the praise of redemption by Jesus' blood: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

In Garrett's (2000: 317 – 321) thought, redemption sees the atonement from its own distinctive aspect. Sacrifice views the atonement from the perspective of guilt, propitiation from that of wrath and reconciliation from that of alienation. Redemption has in view the *bondage* to which sin has consigned humanity; and it views the work of Jesus Christ, not simply as deliverance from bondage, but in terms of ransom. Garrett goes ahead and claims that, the word of God settles this necessity; "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as ransom for many" Matt. 20:28.

Building on Garrett's argument, Berkhof (1984, 385-394), speaks of three propositions that lie on the face of this declaration. One, the work Jesus came to do was one of ransom. Two, the giving of Christ's life was the ransom price. Three, the ransom price was substitutionary in character and design. In his argument, Berkhof refers to the following scriptural passages, Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14, 1 Tim. 2:6, Tit. 2:14. In these passages Jesus Christ's death is seen as a ransom; St. Paul says that, in Jesus Christ, humankind have been redeemed and have been forgiven of their sins. In Berkhof's thought, the death of Christ was a ransom paid to satisfy any claim Satan had against humanity; a theory that was first advanced by Origen (AD 185 – 2540). Grenz (1994:

450 – 451) however, comments that Satan was deceived; and claims that the bible does not say anything about, to whom a ransom was paid.

A clear analysis of the arguments and the language in the texts above shows and describes redemption as the act of securing release by the payment of a price; and it is this concept that is applied expressly to the laying down of Jesus Christ's life. The new song of the redeemed is, "Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood Rev. 5:9." One cannot doubt that, when Paul says, "Ye were bought with a price, in 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23." This study observes that, the price being talked of here is none other than the priceless blood of Christ.

### **3.7.1 Redemption from Sin**

Deliverance, or salvation from sin, is basic in the saving action of Jesus Christ. It is sufficient to be reminded that this is the meaning of the name 'Jesus' (Matt. 1:21). The title 'Savior' is that by which Christ is frequently identified: He is the Lord and savior Jesus Christ. The saving action comprehends much more than is expressly specified in the term redemption. In the researcher's view, all of the five categories, obedience, sacrifice, reconciliation, propitiation and redemption; in which the atonement is defined sustain a direct relation to sin and its liabilities. Apart from express statements to this effect, people should have to understand that, if redemption contemplates humanity's bondage and secures release by ransom, the bondage must have in view, that which is not only, arising from sin, but the express intimations that must also be appreciated. Christ Jesus, Paul states, "gave Himself for humankind, that He might redeem people from all iniquity, and purify for Himself a people for His

own possession, zealous of good works" ( Titus 2:14). Rahner (1978: 282 – 283), thinks that, though the relation to humanity's sins is not as expressly stated, it is equally implied when redemption through Jesus' blood is defined as "the forgiveness of our trespasses" in Eph. 1:7. Similarly, Bowie et-al (1985: 693 – 699) claim that, it is the reference to 'transgression' in Hebrews 9:15; that is, Jesus Christ's death was for the redemption under the first covenant.

What all these say to this study, is that sin is overt and as such, this research submits that, even where sin is not mentioned, it is nevertheless present. The assumed liability therefore, makes redemption necessary and gives character to it, as seen in Rom. 3:24. This reference to sin finds its Old Testament counterpart in Psalm 130: 7-8, that with the Lord is "plenteous redemption" and that "He shall redeem Israel from all the iniquities."

According to Spencer (1950: 469 – 470), the bondage which sin entails for humanity is threefold; guilt, defilement, and power. All three aspects come within the scope of the redemption work by Jesus Christ. It would not be feasible to dissociate any of these aspects from the passages which reflect on Jesus Christ's redemptive accomplishment; but it may be as well that, the redemptive thought is more particularly focused on one aspect in some passages and on another in other passages. He gives Rom 3:24, as an example; he says that, by reason of the context, it is no doubt that this passage talks of the provision of sin as guilt. Spencer goes ahead and claims that the same is true of Eph. 1:7. However, in Titus 2:14 sin is probably seen as guilt and defilement that is contemplated.

Now that the aspect of sin as power is so frequently neglected, it is necessary to devote more attention to this feature of the biblical teaching. This aspect, according to Keener (1993: 428), was uppermost in the mind of Zacharias when he said: "he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people" (Luke 1:68). In the succeeding verses Keener says that, the references to the "horn of salvation and to salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us" vss. 69, 71, indicate that the earliest New Testament expression of the redemptive hope is construed in terms of deliverance was understood in terms of redemption Luke 2:38. Keener goes on by arguing that, though redemption applied to Abraham and though Jacob likewise could use the language of redemption, as seen in Gen. 48:16; yet it is the exodus from Egypt that constitutes *par excellence* the Old Testament redemption.

Looking at the names of God, this study submits that God Himself has no name more abounding with significance for the consolation of His people than that of redeemer, (Jer. 50:34). It is the eloquence of the richness of the messianic promise that the redeemer will come to Zion as Isa. 59:20 says. Keener (1993: 430) sheds more light on what this study has submitted by saying that, it is the Old Testament witness that provides the background for the New Testament faith, expressed in Luke 1:68; 2:38. In this passage St. Luke presents Jesus Christ as the redeemer that was being waited for by the nation of Israel. It should not be a surprise, therefore, that in the New Testament the death of Jesus Christ should be represented as having direct bearing upon the archenemy of the people of God; and upon the power of sin itself. Keener concludes by describing sin, as power, brings people into captivity, Satan as the prince of darkness and god of this world who wields his suzerainty and brings people into bondage; thus needing a redeemer, God.

Although redemptive terms are not expressly used in connection with the destruction executed upon Satan, this research submits that, people are required to apply to the language of release seen in Heb. 2:15, as redemptive significance. Compared to the redemptive work by Moses from Egypt, the redemptive work in the New Testament is Jesus Christ's work. The former was an act of judgment against all the gods of Egypt as portrayed in Ex. 12:12, while the latter is an act of judgment upon Satan as St. John says in Jn 12:31. If the former is construed as redemption, so must the latter be. Furthermore, people cannot dissociate the deception of Satan, as the god of this world who blinds the minds of them that do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4), from the vain manner of life from which the precious blood of Christ's redemptive accomplishment.

This study states also that, people cannot dissociate the power of sin from the embrace of the redemption spoken of expressly in several of the passages already cited. But when the power of sin is particularly reflected on the consideration most relevant to deliverance, the truth is that those for whom Christ died are also represented as having died in Him and with Him, 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Eph. 2:1-7. Of basic importance in this connection is the fact that Christ in His vicarious undertakings may never be conceived apart from those on whose behalf He fulfilled these commitments. When Jesus Christ died to sin once for all, (Rom. 6:10), humankind was united to Him in the virtue and efficacy of His death. Those in Him also died to sin as St. Paul claims in Col. 2:20; and as such they also died to the power of sin. It would be artificial to construe this precise aspect of humanity's relation to the death of Jesus Christ; and of their deliverance from the power of sin in the terms of redemption.

### 3.7.2 Redemption from the Curse of the Law

According to Goppelt (1983: 1950 – 1951), the curse of the law does not mean that the law is a curse. It is probably from this understanding that Goppelt supports St. Paul's argument that the Jewish law is holy, just and good (Rom. 7:13); but, it must be understood that Jewish law exacts penalty for every infraction of its demands. According to Galatians 3:10, the curse of the Jewish law is, the curse, it pronounces upon those who transgress. In the words of Douglas et-al (1993: 103), the law's penal sanction is as inviolable as its demands; to this sanction as it bears upon people, redemption is directed. "Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. 3:13." It reminds people that the cost was not merely the death of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood but these in the circumstance of Golgotha's shame-Jesus Christ was "made a curse for us."

To this research, to be unmoved before the spectacle is to be insensitive to the sanctions of holiness, the marvels of love, and the wonder of angels. It is because humanity is ransomed from the curse of the law that humankind are represented as having died to the law, (Rom. 7:6, Gal. 2:19), as put to death to the law (Rom. 7:4) and as discharged from the law (Rom. 7:6). People are released from the bondage of condemnation and are free to be justified apart from the law. Again Douglas et-al (1993: 103) say that, the relationship between redemption from sin in its guilt, defilement, and power and redemption from the curse of the law is intimate. For the strength of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:65). In Galatians 4:5 it is redemption from the bondage of the ceremonial law that is specifically in view. It was by being made under this law that Christ redeemed those who were under the law. Christ secured this

release because He himself fulfilled all the truth that was symbolically and typically set forth in the provisions of the Levitical economy. These provisions were but shadows of the good things to come, and when that which they foreshadowed appeared, there was no need or place for the shadows themselves. Reflecting on the redemptive work, Goppelt (1983, 194) concludes that, this redemption has the fullest significance for all. By the faith of Jesus all without distinction enter into the full privilege of sons (John 1:12-13), without the necessity of the disciplinary tutelage ministered by the Mosaic rites and ceremonies. This is the apex of privilege and blessing secured by Christ's redemption, through which humanity has received the adoption.

### **3.8 The Biblical Nature of Atonement in View of Various Theories**

One of the theories that the Roman Catholic Church subscribes to, is the satisfaction theory, which was advanced by St. Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Tylor (1955: 301 – 304), and Erickson (2005: 815), this theory states that Jesus appeased God by becoming a human sacrifice, thus satisfying God's demand for the removal of sin. Commenting on Anselm's theory, Mylne (1998: 205) says that, the work of Christ, viewed in terms of sacrifice, thrusts into the foreground, the high priestly office of Christ as the savior. It is the prerogative of the priest to offer sacrifice and only in the exercise of Christ's prerogative, a great high priest of the Priestly profession did Jesus offer himself. "He was called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:10). Here the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice is further demonstrated; because He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. He acted as both priest and offering (Heb 7:27; 8:3 9) and thus purged the sins of humanity. Barlow (1974: 213 – 218), in support of Mylne, says that the transcendent perfection,

efficacy, and finality of Christ's sacrifice reside in the transcendent character of the offering and the dignity of his priesthood. Commenting on the Roman Catholic's understanding of the holy communion, Erickson (2005: 798 – 818), says that, at the celebration of the Holy mass it is believed that immediately the priest consecrates bread and wine, they become indeed the body and blood of Jesus Christ. According to Grudem (2005: 568 – 582), this puts Christ in the priestly office, able to sacrifice for the sin of humanity; thus satisfying God's demand for the removal of sin. According to Erickson (2005: 798 – 818), the Roman Catholics also subscribe to the ransom theory, advanced by Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. In this theory, it is alleged that God deceitfully pays off Satan with a bribe.

From the above discussion, this study establishes that, deliverance or salvation from sin is basic in the saving action of Jesus Christ; in essence, it is the meaning of the name 'Jesus' according to Matt. 1:21. The title 'Saviour,' as explained by Grudem (2005: 568-582), is the title, by which Christ is frequently identified in the scriptures; He is the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Grudem goes ahead to claim that all of the five categories in which the atonement is defined sustain a direct relation to sin and its liabilities. Going by what Grudem says, this study submits that, redemption contemplates humanity's bondage and secures release by way of ransom; the bondage must have in view that being a sinner; that is, humanity must be bailed out of the realm of sin, yet humanity are not able to remove themselves from this realm. Barlow (1974: 217 – 218), this research agrees with Barlow by saying that, this is where redemption must be contemplated. However, he adds that, express intimations must also be appreciated. For example he says that, Christ Jesus gave Himself for humankind, that He might redeem humanity from all iniquity, and purify for Himself

a people for God's own possession, zealous of good works, Titus 2:14. In looking at what Barlow is saying this study observes that, though the relation to humanity's sins is not as expressly stated, it is equally implied when redemption through Jesus Christ's blood is defined as "the forgiveness of our trespasses" in Eph. 1:7 and Col. 1:14. Similarly, it is the reference, 'to transgression' in Hebrews 9:15; Jesus Christ's death was for the redemption under the first covenant.

Since the reference to sin is overt in the passages above, this research establishes that, in others where sin is not mentioned, it is, nevertheless, the assumed liability; making redemption necessary and giving character to it, just as it is mentioned in Rom. 3:24, and 1 Tim. 2:6. Based on the above stated facts, one point that this research leaves unanswered is, "to whom was this redemption proceeds paid?" The question may look simple from the face value, but it is of a serious consequences. Put the way Grudem (2005: 580 – 582) and Erickson (2005: 801 – 818) would like people to believe, that, indeed a ransom was paid; thus mildly suggesting that this ransom was paid to Satan, one would ask, "Is Satan so powerful and influential that he would require a ransom to release the people of God?" Redemption being a market language, then the value of Christ's blood and human life must then be put to question. That is, 'of what value, in terms of monetary expectations is Jesus Christ's blood?' Here then, the blood of Jesus Christ would be expected to foot a bill of specific amount so that sins of humanity can be forgiven. This will in essence justify the indulgencies of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Renwick 1996: 109).

Having looked at the Roman Catholic stand on the concept of atonement, it is important that, the stand of other Christian sects be known, particularly the

conservatives. According to Grenz (1994: 452 – 458), the conservatives and some of the mainstream protestant churches, such as the Presbyterian Church subscribe to the penal substitution theory. It was advanced and preferred by the reformation theologians, like Martin Luther and John Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Wolfhart (2000: 403 – 434) and Garrett (1995: 33 – 44), state that, in this theory; God's mercy replaces His wrath after the infinite sacrifice of Jesus. In the biblical understanding, this could simply mean propitiation. The language of propitiation, as discussed before, applies to the work of Christ in the New Testament, Heb 2:17. According to Schleiermacher (1976, 462-464), to propitiate means, to pacify, conciliate or make propitious; it presupposes that the person propitiated is angry and needs to be pacified. If Christ propitiated for the sin of humanity, then, it must be God who was to be pacified. Pacification then, comes out strongly in this case, because, propitiation speaks of a sinful people in the hands of a wrathful God. In between these two parties, stands the pacifier who is Jesus Christ, who stands in as a substitution.

According to Thiessen (1979: 235 – 240) and Schleiermacher (1976: 451 – 466), the above churches too subscribe to the ransom theory; which they perceive to be propitiatory as well. Whether substitution or ransom, what it says to this research is that these churches subscribe to what can be said as either propitiatory substitution or propitiatory ransom that pacify God's wrath. Christ therefore becomes an object of substitution that stands between God and humanity as a ransom.

Grenz (1994: 443 – 458) observes that there are liberal Christians and '*post-Christians*' also who subscribe to the moral theory; sometimes referred to as the non-violent theory. In this theory, Jesus' death is an example for the rest of humanity to

emulate. Grenz goes ahead and observes that, being a moral act, atonement comes from the arbitrary choice of God. This theory was advanced by Abelard, a feminist theologian in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. There is also acceptance theory advanced by Don Scotus, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century; in which, Jesus voluntarily allows Himself to be executed. According to these two, Abelard and Scotus, the atonement act of Jesus Christ, defeated the power of evil and released humanity from its sin. In the light of these two post-Christian theories, what comes close to them in terms of the nature of atonement is obedience. It must be understood that obedience is a voluntary action with a non-violent function. It is buoyed by the attitude of servanthood, which is an act of morality. As discussed above, Paul's witness is to the same effect as that of the Old Testament and of Jesus Christ Himself (Phil 2:7-8).

### **3.9 Niebuhr's Theory and the Elements of Atonement**

Having looked at the five categories of atonement (obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption), Niebuhr's theory of Christ against sinful elements in culture is observed. This study that establishes that Jewish culture in the bible shows some elements that are sinful. As such, someone has to redeem it by way of removing these sinful elements (Niebuhr 1975: 47). Christ, in this case, becomes the redeemer per-excellence.

The original sin affects people on who they are, as well as what they are, because of their racial identity. Culture, is an important aspect of humankind and as such it becomes sinful, not by intent or design, but by human nature. It is from this original sin that Christ, in His expiatory sacrifice on the cross, redeems people. 'This being the

case then, the Old Testament atonement rituals, which were part of the Jewish culture in the bible, had some sinful elements that needed redemption by Christ.

The Christ above culture theory suggests that all cultures look up to Jesus Christ as an example (Niebuhr 1975: 118). In this case then, the Jewish culture had to look up to Christ for the work of atonement; because it had been affected by original sin (Romans 3:23-24) in its totality; and, as such, needed a purification. Apparently, all had sinned, and none would be able to lift people from where they had fallen. Hence the Jewish practice of atonement needed to be elevated to Christ's atonement for it to be seen as having been purified from the dirt brought about by the entry of sin. This also explains why the Christ and culture in paradox theory paints a picture of a culture, which is in conflict with Christ. Here, some elements in culture and all their ingredients have nothing to do with Christ (Niebuhr 1975: 149-150). Christ, therefore, came in to offer Himself as a sacrifice so that this Jewish culture is purified once for all.

### **3.10 Summary of the Nature of Atonement**

The five categories of atonement in the bible include obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption. According to this study, all these categories lead to one truth; through Jesus Christ reconciliation is effected between God and humankind. This is to say that, though the object of atonement is humanity, the subject is Jesus Christ. However the entire effort put in by Jesus Christ in the reconciliation act is to achieve only one thing, 'a better relationship between God and humanity.'

In accomplishing the said reconciliation, through the atonement, Christ suffered and died as a substitute in the place of a sinful humanity. The said suffering however, has to be understood vicariously. Not only was Christ a substitute, but Christ's suffering was, according to what this research discusses above, as substituted suffering and not the literal penalty of the law. That this substitution consisted essentially in Christ's blood; that is, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's own life. Finally, through Christ's sacrifice, humanity has received rationale for salvation. That is, humanity is only saved on the account of what Christ did on the cross, which translated to the atonement of sin; and this is the reason for the salvation of humankind.

### **3.11 The Process of Atonement in the Old Testament**

The process of atonement is embedded in both its nature and extent, because atonement is a legal concept. The atonement process specifics must, therefore, satisfy the legal purposes for it to be considered as legal in thought and practice. Time, space, the object, the officiator and the subjects are the major elements that come out prominently in the biblical understanding of atonement. To perfectly follow the Jewish concept of atonement, Mayrick (1950: 139) submits that the Day of Atonement (יום כפור - Yom Kippur) was observed on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) of the Jewish calendar. On this day, all work was forbidden and strict fast was enjoined on all people. Mayrick goes on and says that, to prepare for the sacrifice of the day, the high priest had to put off his official robes. He dressed in a simple white garment for the day's function. Three animals were brought, an ox and two goats. The high priest offered a bullock as sin offering for himself and the institution of priesthood. After filling the sensor with live coal from the altar, the high

priest then, entered the holy of holies. Here, he placed incense on the coals, which produced and sent forth a cloud of smoke over the mercy seat; which served as a covering of the ark of covenant. The high priest took some of the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it on the mercy seat and on the ground in front of the Ark of the Covenant. In this way, atonement was made for the priesthood.

In the next phase of atonement, Davidson et-al (1965: 148 – 149) say that, the high priest sacrificed a he-goat as a sin offering for the people. Some of the blood was taken into the holy of holies, where some of it was sprinkled in the holy of holies, in a manner in which the sin offering for the priest had been sprinkled, (Lev 16: 11-15). This, it was believed, was for the purification of the altar and the holy place. After purifying the holy place and the altar of burnt offering with mingled blood of the bullock and the he-goat (Lev 16: 18-19), the high priest took a second goat, he laid his hand upon its head and confessed over it the sins of Israel. This goat, commonly called scape-goat (escape-goat) was then driven into the desert, where it symbolically carried away the sins of the people. The carcasses of the two burnt offerings, the bullock and the he-goat were taken outside the city and burnt. The day was concluded with additional sacrifices such as thanksgiving sacrifice.

### **3.12 The Process of Atonement in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, the process of atonement is merely an interpretation of the Old Testament process of the same. According to Keener (1993: 665 – 668), the interpretation centres around one personality; Jesus Christ. The atonement process is, therefore, a reflection of the Old Testament, modelled on Jesus Christ; who is the

fulfilment of the Old Testament. The letter to the Hebrews in is seen as the equivalent of Leviticus. Thus, it is the main focus of the comparison in matters of the atonement process.

Myne (1998: 202 – 206) submits that, as the high priest entered the holy of holies with blood of his sacrificial victim (Lev 9:1-12); so did Jesus Christ enter heaven to appear before God, His father, on behalf of the people. Apart from the above, the high priest had to offer sin offering for himself and the people every year. This annual repetition of sacrifice served as a reminder; because the perfect atonement had not yet been provided. Consequently, Jesus Christ, through His own blood, affected eternal redemption for the people (Hebrews 9- 12).

Writing from the Old Testament perspective, Lane (1973: 259 – 270) says that the sacrifices could only affect the purification of the flesh; and that is why the Jews ceremonially cleansed the sinner. However, this cleansing could not bring about inward cleansing; but Christ's atonement cleanses both the flesh and the heart.

In view of the above then, this study submits that, the believer need not stand far off from the holy of holies, as the Jews did; but can, through Jesus Christ, approach the very throne of grace for help in times of need. This is because, this study underscores the importance of Hebrews 13: 11-12, which reminds the Christians that, just as the flesh (meat) of the sin offering of the Day of Atonement burnt outside the camp of Israel, in like manner, Jesus Christ was crucified outside of the city gate of Jerusalem, that He might redeem people from sin.

### **3.13 Summary of the Process of Atonement in the Bible**

According to Adeyemo et-al (2006: 1499 – 1501), the high priest only made atonement for the iniquities of the people of Israel; and all their transgressions. Christ made the atonement for all people of the world and of all ages and history. In the Old Testament, atonement was first made for the priest because the mediator between people and God had to be ceremonially clean. Adeyemo et – al claim that, Christ did not need this cleansing because He is already clean, for He is part of the God head. The sanctuary was also cleansed for it too, was ceremonially defiled by the presence and ministry of humankind, who, by nature, are sinful. Christ entered the sanctuary of heaven itself, which does not need to be cleansed; for it is the dwelling of God and it is holy already. What this says to the people of God is that, what was dirty within people, and around people, was made clean by the atonement done by Christ.

### **3.14 The Extent of Atonement in the Bible**

Berkhof (1984: 390 – 394) thinks that, if atonement accomplished all that is implied in the categories by which it is defined, and if it secures and insures the consummating redemption, then its design must be co-extensive with its ultimate result. He in fact, wonders aloud, in matters of the failure of some people and the predicament of such people's future. If some fail of eternal salvation, as the scripture plainly teaches in the gospel of St. John 1:12, if they will not enjoy the final redemption; they cannot be embraced in Jesus Christ who procured and secured it. Commenting on Berkhof's wonderings, Taylor (1955: 61 – 70) says that the atonement is so defined, in terms of efficacious accomplishment, that it must have the

same extent as salvation, bestowed and consummated. Unless there is a belief in the final restoration of all humankind, one cannot have an unlimited atonement. On the premise that some perish eternally, he says that one is shut up to one of two alternatives; either a limited efficacy or a limited extent. Having looked at atonement in both the New and the Old Testaments, this study establishes that though there is unlimited atonement for all people, there is also a limited atonement for individuals. This is because the life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is both universal and individual; and as such will depend on how the universe, groups of people and individuals respond to the said atonement.

### 3.15 Exegetical Analysis of Atonement

According to Meyrick (1950: 87), the restriction which applies to the extent of the atonement is borne out not only by the evidence pertaining to the nature of the atonement; but also by the passages, which define its design. Meyrick goes on to say that, nothing should be more obvious than the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save. Meyrick goes ahead and states that Jesus Christ did not come to make salvation merely possible nor make human beings salvable; if that be it, then, such a notion would contradict the express declarations of Jesus and of other inspired witnesses such as found in Luke 2:11; 19:10 and John 3:17; 39. Davidson (1965: 42 – 43), on the other hand, says that, the word of the angel to Joseph, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21), implies the assurance of salvation and not a mere possibility. According to Davidson, this certainty must, therefore, be understood by the act of salvation performed, namely, by way of the atonement. Davidson agrees with the gospel of St. John 3:16, which is so

often appealed to in support of universal atonement. Here, St. John points to this same assurance and security, by claiming that the purpose of giving the only-begotten Son is that, “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

According to this study, the issue of importance that these two scholars are discussing here is that, Jesus Christ makes infallible and secure the salvation of all who believe. When St. Paul says that “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25), this research sees this action as alluding to Jesus Christ’s sacrificial offering. In vv 26-27 St. Paul also states the design; that is, “That He might sanctify and cleanse it... that He might present it to himself a glorious church.”

Schleiermacher (1976: 642 – 464), is convinced that, Jesus Christ’s design of atonement, will certainly be fulfilled, and so the love and the giving of Himself will achieve their object, in the glorifying of that to which they were directed. However Schleiermacher believes that it is impossible to universalize the reference of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ alluded to above by Davidson and Meyrick. According to him, atonement is severely limited to those who finally will be holy and without blemish. He bases his argument on Romans 8:24-34, where references to the death of Christ and its implications are discussed. However, looking at this argument, this study observes that, atonement is in this view delivering Jesus Christ up for all humanity; particularly, vs. 32 of Romans 8:24-34 which is mentioned by Schleiermacher and in the clause, “Christ Jesus is the one who died” (vs. 34). Commenting on Schleiermacher’s argument, Keener (1993: 668) says that, it is impossible to place these references to the intent and effect of the death of Jesus Christ outside what seems clearly established by the context and defined in terms of

those predestined to be conformed to the image of God's son (vs. 29), the elect (vs. 33), and those embraced in the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (vs. 39). Besides, the delivering up (vs. 32) is that which insures the free bestowal of all things, the "all things" specified in the context as the blessings of salvation culminating in glorification.

### **3.16 Summary of the Nature, Extent, and Process of Atonement**

Having looked at the biblical understanding of the nature, process and extent of atonement, this research agrees with Barnes (1962: 219) that, atonement did not change the nature of God. It does not make God any different from what He has been before atonement was made. It has not been held and cannot be held, that God was, by way of atonement; severe, stern and unforgiving before atonement was made; and that now God has become mild and forgiving because of the death of Jesus Christ. If this was true, then, what it would have meant is that, earlier on God was not disposed to show mercy. It is only by way of atonement that, He has now been bought over; so that He now shows mercy to humanity. Pushed further, this research submits that, it would, in essence, mean that at least Jesus Christ's atonement has influenced God; or has exerted pressure, as to make God willing to do what He would not have done before atonement was made.

This research observes that, there has been misunderstanding especially in the five categories of obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption as the following poem, which the researcher found on the streets of Nairobi shows:

“Thy hands, dear Jesus, were not armed  
     With a revenging rod;  
 No hard commission to perform,  
     The vengeance of a God.  
 But all was mercy, all was mild,  
     And wrath forsook the throne,  
 When Christ on the kind errand came  
     And brought salvation down (Anonymous).”

What the above poem shows is that, God was such an angry creature, positioned somewhere wielding a big stick and ready to strike at human beings; until Christ came and appeased Him by way of atonement. However, this study notes that God is unchangeable. In Him there are no variables, ‘He is the same yesterday today and forever more’ (Heb 13: 8). His nature is the same, His attributes are the same, the principles of His administration are the same, His justice is the same and His love is the same; all things are the same under all circumstances. This research therefore notes that, it is, important to understand that, it pleased God to have the atonement as the way of restoring His relationship with humanity. In this way then, the five categories discussed in the nature of atonement, then, comfortably apply.

The research also submits that, in regard to the extent of atonement, or the question of whom it was made; whether it is available for all or is, by its own nature or by intention and purpose, limited to a part of humankind; whether it was designed to refer to humankind or to the elect, this research notes that, atonement is not intended for any other fallen being except for the salvation of the fallen humankind. In fact, the extent spoken of in this discussion is both a priori and a posteriori. It is a priori because, even the unborn have been catered for by the atonement. It is also a

posteriori because those who lived before were also catered for; humanity is therefore equal before God in all matters including atonement.

This study also establishes that, the nature and the extent, determines the process of atonement. From the discussion generated from this subject, both the Old Testament symbolism and the New Testament symbolism find their representation in Jesus Christ. The process has, therefore, to follow the way of obedience to the instructions given by God. This is because atonement is a method preferred by God in bringing about forgiveness and thus, it has to be carried out by way of obedience.

### **3.17 Conclusion**

The five categories of atonement; that is, obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, redemption and reconciliation are in essence five different facets of the same truth. All of these facets address the restoration of broken relationships, either between individuals, individuals and God, and individuals and the larger community. This therefore, speaks of atonement as affecting humankind in three aspects of life. The concept of atonement also reveals that, apart from destroying relationships, sin separates, it must therefore, be dealt with; but this involves a very high price, that is, the shedding of blood. This, also, raises the question of the importance of life! Anyway, by the life and death of Jesus Christ, the offenders have been judged and the offended vindicated, thus, restoring the relationship that had been initially destroyed.

Atonement was and is an important concept in the practice of the Christian faith. This concept reveals the extent of love the Lord has for His people. This is not a costless

love; it cost the life and death of His beloved son Jesus Christ so that people may restore the right relationship that initially was lost. This then, brings up a new thinking concerning the life and death of Jesus Christ in the Christian theology. The question that one is left wondering with is, 'the theology of the cross!' Was it a must that Christ had to die so that people may receive forgiveness? If so, then why death, by way of the cross?

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE WANGA CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF ATONEMENT

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the meaning of atonement, as understood by the Wanga Christians. This study also undertakes to know the place of atonement, in the Christian understanding and the interpretation of atonement among the different Christian denominations. All these require the understanding of the atoner in the mind of the Abawanga, so as to relate the atonement act later in chapter five. This is in line with objective three namely, to assess the impact of the Euro-American Christian teaching of the concept of atonement in the Wanga community.

### 4.2 Christian Understanding of Atonement

Okutoyi, an Anglican layman from the Diocese of Mumias understands atonement as an important agreement, or covenant, involving the shedding of blood. He further says that the blood that is shed is from a third party and that it is from a specified sacrificial victim, who is Christ Jesus. What these two people, or parties (the offender and the offended), are required to do, is to consent to what is done by this third party. This then brings about as mediated agreement; which is reached by the said, third party. Okutoyi comments that,

*Omusango kurulananga nende khukhusanga okhufuchilisańia mbu toto, obwononi buliho nebulano kenyekha bwosibwe-*  
Atonement has its foundation in agreement; the agreement is a confession of evil, which requires cleansing (Eshitabu Shiokhulaama 1982, 245)

On his part, Okwemba a Roman Catholic faithful, understands atonement as an appeasing relation to a high divinity; that is appeasing God. According to him, Christ appeased God on behalf of humanity. Inganga, a Kenya Assemblies of God (K.A.G) Pastor, seems to agree with Okwemba's description. He says that Christ's act of atonement appeased God's wrath; which would have been directed to mankind. Looking at various theories that inform Christian thinking on atonement, these two, Okwemba and Inganga, justify the satisfaction theory; which was advanced by St. Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. This theory states that Jesus appeased God by being a ritual human sacrifice; thus satisfying God's demand for the removal of human sin. Here then, what the two are saying is that Christ the sacrificial element satisfied God's demand on behalf of humankind (Erickson 2005: 798 – 818; Grudem 2005: 568 – 582). Although Okwemba and Inganga seem to suggest that Christian churches subscribe to the satisfactory theory, Okutoyi seems to suggest that Christ played a mediatory role; thus suggesting that God's mercy replaces His wrath, after the infinite sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This brings in the penal substitution theory, as a theory of choice for Christians (Wolfhart 2000: 403 – 434; Garrett 1995: 33 – 44).

In view of what the respondents have said, and the theories seen above, this research concludes that atonement is a mediated activity. What these theories are dealing with is the question of how and why atonement was done, but not whether it was done at all. According to this research, atonement is a tool that is used to remove sin and evil within the society, thus bringing people together; the offender and the offended, in what this study would then refer to as reconciliation. He further avers that, this tool was used by God through Christ Jesus. At the same time atonement is a process that is

put in place to deal with the question of sin and evil. Atonement as a process leads to purification, while atonement as an act, purges sin and evil.

Mutumishi, a Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA) preacher, brings in the idea of grace in the definition of atonement; which he understands as an act of grace, by which God reconciles and draws to himself a people who were otherwise separated from him. Although Weimi, an Anglican priest from the Diocese of Mumias, agrees with Mutumishi's understanding of atonement, he brings in the Wanga perspective of Omusango. He submits that atonement is taken from the concept of appeasing and as such it is faith based. He, therefore, proposes that atonement must be understood as actual grace, a confessed belief in Christ Jesus; who lived, died and rose again from the dead. This brings in the idea that atonement is found in the life death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Here then, God's wrath replaced His mercy in Christ's vicarious death (Erickson 2005: 798-818). Having looked at the atonement act, this study submits that, it is an act of wrath, yet its fruit is mercy. That is, by the vicarious life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sinners are viewed as though they are sinless. This then, brings in the purpose of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; which is to bring mercy to humankind.

Swati, a Roman Catholic (RC) priest, brings in a historical perspective in his understanding of atonement. He says that Jesus Christ was the lamb that was slain from the very foundations of the world. He complements Weimi's understanding by claiming that the life of Christ is a living atonement. His work is an act of atonement while his death is a cleansing atonement. His resurrection and his going to heaven, perfects the atonement of a believer. He concludes by saying that atonement finds its true meaning in Christ who is a live; thus atonement is meant for the continuous

cleansing of humankind. Here then, atonement is not only for one generation but it cuts across all generations, from the time of the Old Testament to the New Testament times. Christian atonement is also holistic, focusing not only on the death but on the whole life of Jesus Christ, the atoner per excellence.

Looking at what both the clergy and the laity are saying, atonement can be understood as a link between the divine world and the natural world. It is an act that makes what is non-Christian to be Christian, an act that is geared towards appeasing the supreme God; who, otherwise, would rain His wrath on the sinful people. It is the duty of the sinful humanity to confess, agree and conform to the ways of the atoner. This can be found in what Weimi is calling "active grace ... accepted by faith." This being the case then, Christian atonement has to be looked at through the glasses of the ransom theory that was advanced by Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. In this theory, God deceitfully pays off Satan with a bribe (Erickson 2005: 798 – 818; Grudem 2005: 568 – 582). This ransom is what today links humanity to God because the former owner (Satan) of humanity received the pay and let humanity off: Thus making it possible for people to freely relate to God.

As much as this study looks at the Christian atonement described by the respondents as being redemptive, there is also a thought of much grace and mercy coming in particularly from Weimi who informs this study that, Christian atonement subscribes to the penal substitution theory. This theory was advanced by the reformation theologians such as Luther and John Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; whereby, God's mercy replaces His wrath after the infinite sacrifice of Jesus (Wolfhart 2000: 403 – 434; Garrett 1995: 33 – 44). What this says to this research is that the basis of

Christian atonement is mercy and grace. Atonement, thus, is extended to people who in the initial place do not merit it; and as such it is by God's favor that it is extended to them. To this research then, Swati's description brings a rich understanding of atonement; which must be seen as a planned event. It is a plan by God that saves the world; which is effected by Jesus Christ. What this means then, is that atonement is God's favor towards humankind.

A careful scrutiny of all these understandings, however, shows the differences that are there among different Christian faiths. For example, Mutumishi and Inganga represent a Pentecostal understanding of atonement; which only points to the cross as the manifestation of the work of atonement. Weimi and Swati, on the other hand, represent the mainstream churches' point of view; which does not only look at the cross but to the whole life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the work of atonement. To this study, these views have a significant impact on the congregation; because each one of these groups teaches the concept of atonement based on their persuasion. In this regard then, the biblical interpretation of atonement may to a large extent depend on which persuasion one is coming from.

#### **4.3 Christian Symbolism of Atonement**

Atonement like any other concept is expressed in symbols among the Wanga Christians. Thus this research sought to understand the symbols that are used in churches, and Christian families to explain atonement. These symbols, too, were wide and varied, depending on the specific Christian denominations one belonged to.

Mutumishi (PEFA) says that, the most profound symbolism of atonement is the Holy Communion; a position shared by all the clergy and laity interviewed in this research. However, the representation of the Holy Communion symbolism differs from one denomination to another. According to Mutumishi and Inganga (K.A.G), ordinary bread and ribena (an ordinary healthy drink) would do; whereas to the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans, it must be wafers and wine.

Although the above may be a question of interpretations (which is not the concern of this research), it shows the impact of inculturation, of the concept of atonement on the Wanga Christian community. The Roman Catholics and the Anglicans take on the conservative aspect of the holy mass; while the Pentecostal prefer using what is available. To illustrate the above from the RC/AC perspective, this study refers to the RC liturgy;

*Mushiro shia yakhobwamo yabukula omukate nakhuupira orio, nakhuha oluyali... nibamalire okhulia yabukula eshikombe eshialimwo ivini mana nakhuupira orio naboola ari, bukule kuno mulie nikwo omubili kwanje, bukule ivini munywe niko amtsayi kanje-* On the night that he was betrayed, he took the bread and gave you thanks and glorified you and gave them saying... this is my body ...after they had eaten he took the cup that had wine and gave you thanks and gave them saying, take this and drink, this is my blood...

To illustrate the concept of conservatism, Swati, a RC priest insists that once the Priest blesses the Holy Communion elements during mass they become real body and blood of Jesus Christ. Barton and Muddiman (2008: 973 – 974), Spence and Exell (1950: 195 – 197) and Foster's (1974: 249) exposition of the gospel of John 6: 28-40 agrees with Swati's position. They claim that, it is Jesus Christ who is the real bread and wine; thus the bread and wine serve at the Holy Communion mass is real the body and blood of Jesus Christ. They go ahead to claims that, if Jesus Christ would have

wanted the holy communion elements to be regarded as symbols, then he wouldn't have claimed that the said bread was indeed His body and wine His blood; rather he would have come out clearly and said, 'these are symbols of my blood and body.' Based on these claims, this research submits that, for the R.C., and the A.C., it is not just anything that goes for Holy Communion; it has to be real wine and real bread. These are the elements that Jesus Christ used in the administration of the Holy Communion. It is also these elements that after blessing from the priest changes into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ. This research also notes that, the priest takes the place of Jesus Christ as he pronounces the blessing of the Holy Communion elements; he is the representation of Jesus Christ, the atoner per excellence.

The other symbolism that the respondents talked about is baptism. According to Isolo, a pastor with Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA), baptism is an act of obedience that shows that a Christian has found peace with his/her maker. Andoni, an R.C Priest confesses that, baptism is one of the sacraments that bring Christians closer to God. It symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ for any Christian who passes through it. Kwelinda, an A.C. priest, says that, baptism is an outside sign for the inward faith which is founded on Christ Jesus the chief atoner.

What these mean to this study is that, Wanga Christians must be baptized, for them to qualify as atonement candidates. Thus the act of baptism, to this research's understanding is a pre-requisite to atonement; and as such one cannot be a true Christian without the symbol of baptism. The impact of this symbol to the Wanga Christians is the obedience it brings with it. That is, every Wanga who decides to follow Christ must be obedient to Christ's instructions.

Another symbol which Christians talk of is the laying on of hands, by the ordained personnel. Both Andoni and Swati say that the laying on of hands is done by a consecrated person. In this case, it must be the Bishop; for the purpose of blessing and welcoming the person, who has studied church catechism into full membership of the R.C. and A.C. churches. In case of any inconveniences, the Bishop may delegate these powers to a specific priest in his See/Diocese, but this is just for that day only. Andoni and Swati say that this act unites Christians, just as atonement unites people together in Christendom. Weimi, Okutoyi and Kwelinda agree with these sentiments. According to both the Roman Catholic and Anglican tradition, it must be the Bishop; he may come from another See/Diocese, in case of the sickness or any other inconvenience of the Bishop of the affected diocese. If none is found, then, the event is postponed to a convenient date. To Mutumishi, Isolo and Khapele (Pentecostals), the laying on of hands is a Christian symbolism that signifies peace and solidarity of believers. It is also used as a means of healing the sick. The impartation of the Holy Spirit is also done by the laying on of hands. They claim that this exercise can be done by the elders of the church; who may not necessarily be ordained. All respondents, however, agreed that during the ordination or commissioning of new ordinates, laying on of hands is used as a means of blessing and sending off, of the newly commissioned clergy.

To this study, what this means is that, Christians have agreed that the laying on of hands is a symbolism of appeasing, thus seeking divine involvement in the affairs of humanity. The act also brings the Christian fraternity together as one people, just as atonement is meant to bring them to unity with God. Hence, the laying on of hands, distinguishes individual Christians from any other persons.

Concerning the particular people who are mandated to perform this duty; the researcher gathers that, they too are set apart. Whether they are ordained or not, at least they bear a title in both sides of the divide. In general, laying on of hands is a process that is used to distinguish specific groups of people to receive specific favors so that they may perform specific duties, or receive what is lacking, such as good health. Atonement therefore, distinguishes a Wanga Christian from any other Wanga; for the receiving of the said favors.

Symbolism speaks of separation: The Wanga Christians are, thus, separated from their kin who may be traditional Wanga. It sets them apart as a “specific” people, and not the ordinary Wanga. It is thus, a creation of a new people, ‘Abawanga’ that are Christians. Based on the meaning of Christian atonement, that was provided before there are definitely, by now two communities. There is a community of the Wanga who, by virtue of being Christians, have been atoned for; and another Wanga community who being, non – Christians have not been atoned for. The implication of this is the division of the Wanga community into the Christian and non – Christian communities. Sarah, one of the ‘tukutendereza’ sisters confirms this by saying that,

*Esie, mumabanga keshialo shino, ndibulwa mubakolwe. Nebutswa sheshilinji owa eshialo shino tawe shichila ndebulwe mumatsayi ka Kristo ndakulwa nende amatsayi kashila obukusu bwosi. I am born from the Abakolwe people by the blood of this world. However, I am no longer of this world because I have been born by the blood of Christ. I am bought by the blood beyond any price.*

#### 4.4 Jesus Christ the Atoner

The notion of the original sin (cf 2.3; 2.4; 2.5) defiled humanity; thus bringing in the notion of salvation which necessitates atonement. This study therefore underscores

the importance of the atoner in the Christian atonement ritual. This is because the efficacy and authenticity of atonement depends on the atoner. This research therefore sought to know the Christian qualifications of the atoner.

According to Kizito, a RC priest, who has served in Musanda for over ten years, Jesus Christ shares both the divine and the natural characteristics because He is both human and divine. In Phil 2:6-11, St. Paul talks of Jesus Christ as having the nature of God, yet in Heb 7:11-17, the writer speaks of Him as having been born in the tribe of Judah. As humankind, Jesus Christ understands, shares and identifies with people. As God, he measures up to the divine requirements; and as such, He is the ideal atoner.

Mutunishi; affirms this position by quoting Mark 10: 45. He asserts that, it is only Jesus Christ who was able to deal with the issue of the payment of the ransom. He is, therefore, qualified to purchase human beings from the world of the devil. Isolo says that, as God, Christ participated in the creation of humankind; He knows where sin has destroyed, and is able to repair. The repairing part is what Isolo calls the atonement act.

Now that Jesus Christ is divine, he knows how to deal with both Satan and humankind. The researcher submits that, Jesus Christ is able to keep those who have been atoned; because He knows both sin and righteous, and can control them. In this way Jesus Christ is able to keep the atoned from sinning again.

Swati brings in the idea of heavenly management and argues that, it is only Jesus who was sent by God. That means that from heaven no one has the atoning mandate apart from Jesus Christ. This research agrees with Swati because, no one else has been mentioned in the Bible as an atoner sent by God except Jesus Christ. He is therefore, the only way to God, a gateway to heaven John (14: 6-14).

Okutoyi talks of the motivation of atonement. He says that Jesus Christ is the only one who has the rewards that come with the atonement act. He promises heaven for the atoned; thus bringing a big motivation for humankind who is to be atoned. Masinde on the other hand, brings in the spiritual aspect by claiming that Jesus Christ had the blood that human beings were given for their atonement. He proves his argument by quoting John 1; 29. In this scripture John the Baptist claims that Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of humanity. He therefore should increase as John decreases.

This study agrees with both Okutoyi and Masinde in their claims of motivation and blood as the element of atonement. This is because in the previous chapter there were many kinds of atoners but in the Christian atonement Jesus Christ is the only atoner. Apart from being the atoner, he also supplies the blood, the element of atonement. He is therefore better than all the atoners mentioned in the previous chapter. Concerning the motivation, Christ as the principal atoner promises some benefits for those who will accept his atonement. One of these benefits is life in heaven.

#### 4.4.1 Jesus Christ the Intercessor

In view of what has been observed above, the researcher is of the opinion that Jesus Christ takes on a specific role of intercession. He mediates between the sinner and God, the natural and the divine; an idea that is well captured in both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic liturgy.

*Omundu naba niyonon alikhuwa khulinende omusambishi, omwenoyo neshisalisilio khulwa obwononi bwefwe.* If a person sins in anything, we have an intercessor who is between the person and God the father. (Eshitabo shiokhulaama. 1982, 240; Shitabu Shietsisaala 1989. 73-76).

What these two liturgies are claiming is that Christ is the only one worthy of cleansing people from evil and sin. Thus, they show the position of Christ as the atoner per excellence. Inganga strongly believes that Jesus Christ stands in between people (particularly sinners) and God. Weimi thinks of this act pictorially: He says that,

*Amabanga ka Kristo Yesu kebeena khumusalaba Kashinganga omwononi okhurula khuburuma bwa nyasaye*-The blood of Jesus Christ stops the wrath of God from human beings.

On his part, Okwemba says that Christ intercedes for the people. What this means to the researcher is that humanity is always in sin, and needs someone to stand in between a sinful people and a God who is wrathful and always ready to punish. Consequently, God is ready to punish the sinner and yet Christ comes in between so that sinners are not punished. Hence Jesus Christ can be understood as the stopper of God's wrath, by way of standing in between God and the sinful people. The act of atonement, in this case, becomes the mediation act, while the atonement elements become the bridge that unites people and God.

A clear assessment of what these respondents are saying brings in Niebuhr's theory of a culture that has been infiltrated by sin; so that Jesus Christ comes in to take away the sinful elements that have infiltrated this culture. This study submits that these sinful elements have been brought into this culture by sinful people; Jesus Christ therefore, takes the position of standing in between the angry God and sinful people, so that God does not pour His wrath on these sinful people. He does this by pleading with people not to sin; while at the same time, pleading with God not to punish.

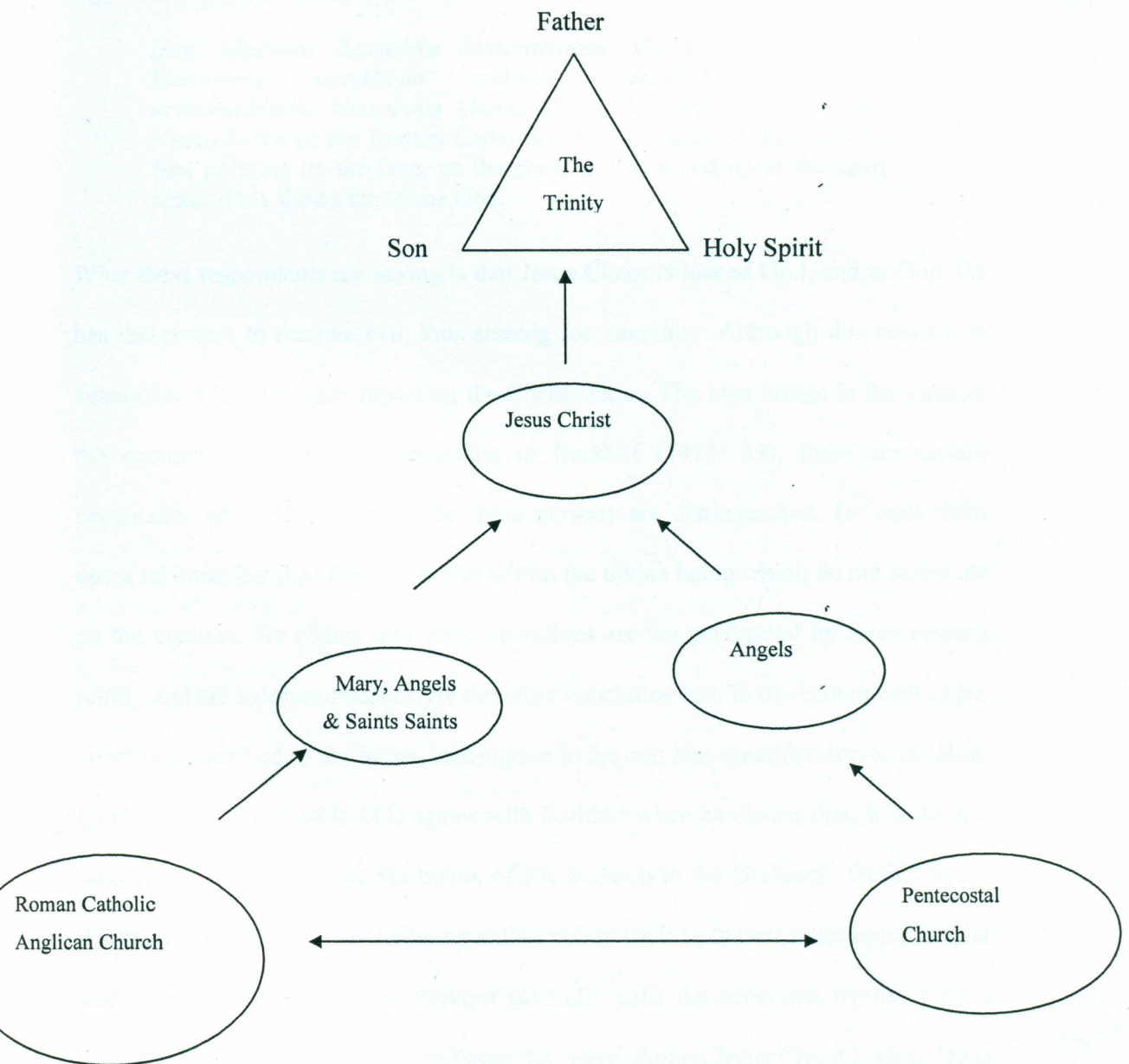
Concerning the above, there is another school of thought, among the Roman Catholic faithfuls. Swati comments that the role of holy Mary cannot be ignored in matters of intercession: because without Mary, Jesus Christ would not have been born. She therefore deserves mention for her intervention role, on behalf of humanity as it happened at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (Jhn 2:1-11). This could be the reason why the Roman Catholic Church put such prayers as part of their liturgy;

*Maria omutakatifu akhusayiranga Khu Kristo Yesu omwanawe,  
shichila yetsula inema- holy Mary intercedes on our behalf to Jesus  
Christ her son because she is full of mercy.*

Whereas in the R.C. fraternity, Mary seems to co-intercede with Christ, in the Pentecostal circles the angels are thought of as interceding for people through Jesus Christ; Mutumishi's claims that the angels are there to guard us and also to take our prayers to God strengthen the Pentecostal position. Despite Mutumish's claim, this study established that all Christian denominations believe in angels as mediators at one point. According to Williams (1992: 120), angels are mediators in all aspects of Christian life. What this research submits therefore, is that, Christ is not the only one who intercedes for the believer; there are other channels, which include Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ and the angels. The concept of intercession, as part of

atonement, brings in a bigger impact on the Christian understanding and the perception of atonement. Based on both these claims, this study came up with Figure 4.1, which makes the understanding of these claims clearer.

**Figure 4.1 The Process of Atonement**



Apart from interceding to God, Jesus Christ is in essence, seen as God by Christians.

Okwemba is convinced that Christ is part of the triune God. He comments:

*IfweKhusubibilanga obutaru bwa Nyasaye.Nyasaye sefwe, Nyasaye omwana nende Nyasaye roho omlafu. Nyayase omwana niye Yesus Kristo-We believe in the triune God. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Inyangala confirms what Okwemba is saying; when she told the researcher that the sign of the cross by the R.C represented the triune God. She says that,

*Ifwe Abaroma Katholika khwanziranga khubweni kho khutile khumwoyo, omukhono mukhasi oumukhono musatatsa, nekhumalilikha khumwoyo khandi. Kano kamanyia obutaru bwa Nyasaye-We of the Roman Catholics show the sign of the cross by first pointing on the face, on the chest and then end up at the heart again. This shows the triune God.*

What these respondents are saying is that Jesus Christ is indeed God; and as God, He has the powers to remove evil, thus atoning for humanity. Although this position is debatable, it has a bigger impact on the Christendom. The idea brings in the issue of the economy of salvation. According to Berkhof (1974: 89), there are certain personality attributes by which the three persons are distinguished. He calls them *opera ad intra*; because they are works within the divine being which do not terminate on the creature. He claims that these operations are not performed by three persons jointly and are incommunicable. He therefore concludes that, in the economical order, creation is ascribed to the father, redemption to the son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. Barackman (1984: 243) agrees with Berkhof when he claims that, it is the son who effected atonement by the nature of His position in the Godhead. To this study, therefore, this order in the divine operation points back to the essential order in God and forms the basis for what Berkhof generally calls the economic trinity. This is what this study illustrates with the figure 4.1. Here, though Jesus Christ is God, He is

also the mediator between humanbeings and the Godhead. He is therefore qualified as an atoner to the Wanga, for He is both God and the mediator.

From what the respondents are saying and the claim of both Berkhof and Barakman, it is clear that Jesus Christ is the middle person in matters of atonement. Here then, Christ must take the position of a sacrificial victim so that God's mercy overshadows wrath.

Based on the above argument, this study holds the view that, atonement can not be effective without the sacrificial victim. The efficacy, authenticity, the claim and impact of atonement cannot be felt without the sacrificial victim; who, in this case, must be someone with full knowledge and wisdom of the two realms- that is, the realm of numankind and the realm of God. According to Swati, Jesus Christ is the Lamb without blemish (sacrificial victim) who had lived in heaven for a long time; and who was willing to live on earth as well. Hence God saw it fit to be sacrificed for the removal of the sin of humanity. In both the RC and AC liturgy, the above is attributed to, especially during the celebration of the Easter Vigil Mass. In the AC, the prayer below is sung antiphonally;

*Leshe khulitsenekho lisaabo, okhuba Kristo yesu, niye likondi liefwe lia khaale, yekhoolile...omusanga Khulwa efwe*" Let us partake of the Holy Communion because Christ Jesus the Lamb of old has made Himself a ritualistic sacrifice, (Eshitabu shiokhulaama 1982, 280).

Swati's claim, of a blameless sacrificial victim brings in the argument of the sinless Jesus Christ taking on the sin of humanity. This takes this researcher to the qualifications of Jesus Christ, discussed before; accordingly then, for, Christ to pacify God's wrath he needed to be sinless. However, the argument that raise out of this

research concerning this issue is “how can a sinless God, accept the sinner’s sin, yet his eyes are so pure to behold sin?” Inganga claims that the sacrificial victim knew no sin, so that His sinlessness would be imputed to the sinner. He says:

*Kristo, kata niyatemwa nende tsimbi shiyayoonakhwo tawe. Eshifune shiene mbu, efwe khwali abooni, khunyoole oburayonoana bwibwe-*Though tempted Christ did not sin so that we who are sinners may receive his sinlessness.

What this study is hearing from the above claim is that God needed a sinless sacrificial victim to cleanse the sinner; God could only hear a plea from the sinless on behalf of the sinful. Khapere, a church elder with Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship Africa Church, says that Christ stands in between human beings and God. Masinde, an A.C. priest agrees with him by claiming that it is only Christ who mediates between the sinner and God. Though Andoni, an RC priest agrees with the two, he adds that, there are other prayers that Christians need to ask through the holy Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ; so that she can intercede for humanity to Jesus Christ her son (see figure 1.0 above). Though there may be these differences between R.C. and the Protestant Christians, the research sees this as a question of semantics. Whether it is through Mary, the angels as mentioned in figure 1.1 above or straight to Jesus, it is still Jesus who is above both the angels and Mary. This research places Christ above humanity and angels. Jesus Christ therefore, becomes the actual mediator.

#### 4.5 The Scope of Christian Atonement

In Okutoyi’s thought, Jesus Christ’s atonement is all inclusive. He claims that Christ died on behalf of the “son of Adam,” meaning Christ’s atonement is universal. Kizito, who has served for many years as an R.C. priest in Mumias, has this explanation,

*Okhwibulwa khwa yesu, khawali okhwa okhureera obusaasami mubaandu shichila yeblwa abaandu nibali halala. Obulamu bubwe bwali eshilolero Shia omulembe Kwa abaandu, ne okhufwa khukhwe khumusalaba kharera obuhambani mubaandu nende nyasaye. Mubulamushibwe Kristo nomusambishi wefwe-*  
 The birth of Christ brought together people of different levels to one level. The life of Christ was an example of the peoples' peace. His death on the cross brought unity between people and their God. The resurrected Jesus Christ, therefore, intercedes for all people.

If the word 'Adamic', as used by Okutoyi, should take on a group dynamic, then Jesus Christ atonement affects the Wanga, as a people, but not as individuals. Christian atonement, therefore, impacts on the Wanga as a nation and not persons. Here then, the Wanga culture must be looked at as having been invaded by sinful elements and that gives the cause for its atonement. Jesus Christ, therefore, comes in to correct the situation by way of atonement (Neibuhr 1975:118). Looking at what Jesus Christ does, this study submits that, the Wanga, by themselves, are unable to remove the sinful elements that have invaded their culture, hence needing the help of Jesus Christ. If the concept of the original sin (cf 2.3; 2.4; 2.5) is what is seen as the invading sinful element, then, in this case, biblical atonement becomes a standard for all cultures to follow; and the Wanga culture is no exception. Hence the Wanga practice of atonement needs to be elevated to Jesus Christ's atonement, for it to be truly Wanga and truly Christian.

Now that Okutoyi, in the above argument, is looking at the Wanga people as having sinned as a nation, then the Wanga Christian culture is in conflict with Jesus Christ's teaching (Neibuhr 1975: 149-150). For the Wanga Christian atonement to attain Christ's approval, then, atonement practices and rituals need to be looked at closely; and be reconsidered in the light of the gospel teachings. This particular atonement

needs reform. The gospel teaching, therefore, seeks to correct the corruption that might have crept into culture and restore the original state of the Wanga national culture. The Wanga Christian atonement should, therefore, seek to bring back what was initially corrupted by the 'Adamic' sin that Weimi mentions. In this way, Wanga atonement will be corrective in nature, just as the biblical atonement is.

In relation to what the informants have said, and the interaction with the theories of atonement, a clear interpretation of what is being said is that Christ's atonement covers the whole world. Going by the above explanation then, atonement impacts on the Wanga, just like any other people on planet earth; every Wanga then, has equal access to Jesus Christ's atonement, as described in the biblical teaching.

Although the RC and the AC informants agree on the universal atonement of Christ, the Pentecostal Christians disagree with the RC's and the AC's on matters of the application of the said atonement. Mutumishi says,

*Naihabwene, Kristo yakhufila, nebutswa amundu omwene, aboole nende Omwanakwe, ebulafu mbu Kristo ni nomuhonia. Nenda okhusubira mumwoyo kwe mbu Nyasaye yamulamusia okhurula mukhufwa. Habweneyaho, omundu oyo alahonibwa.* It is true that Christ died for humanity, but anyone who wants to be a believer must confess that Christ is the Lord and believe in his/her heart that God raised Him from death. Such person shall be called saved.

Thus, for one to believe, individual initiative is required. The implication here is at the individual and not group level; because authenticity and effectiveness are felt at an individual level. What the Pentecostals are saying is that Christianity is more of an individual enterprise than it is a co – operate one. Hence it is only after one has fulfilled the condition that he or she can join other like – minded people to form the

family of Christians. After a careful scrutiny of both stands, this research states that both of them are right. They should know that Christianity is both corporate and individual, and as such the atonement must affect Christians at both levels. At the individual level, the gospelled self must rightly relate to God, yet at the corporate level the gospelled selves must relate rightly with each other and God. Atonement, in this case, comes in to bring these two aspects into one; so that God receives the atonement as if coming from one house occupied by many individuals.

To understand the impact of atonement further, the researcher sought to know if non-Christians were impacted by Christ's atonement. Kisito, Swati and Masinde who represented the RC and AC agreed that non-Christians also bear the image and likeness of God and as such Christ's atonement included them. However, they gave a condition that they must accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Apart from the claim of these two, this research proves the universality of Christian atonement based on the notion of the universality of sin (cf 2.3; 3.2). The universality of atonement is also based on the fact that, it is only one person Jesus Christ, who effects the Christian atonement, (Phil 2: 1-11).

#### **4.6 Summary**

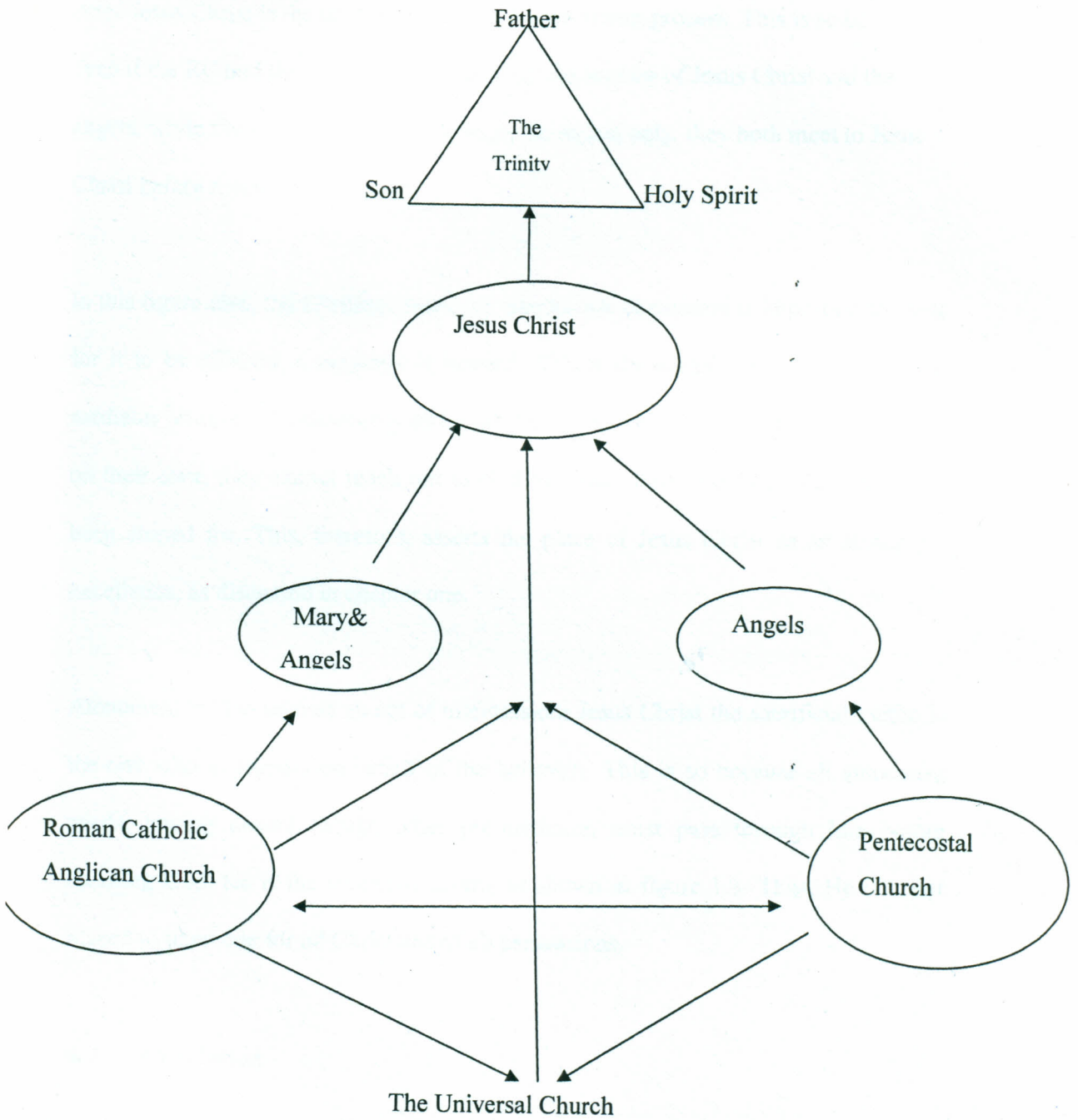
To the Christians, atonement means the cleansing of sin and counting the sinners as though they were sinless. Christ is the only one qualified to atone for the sin committed because He is sinless. Christians also understand atonement as an act of mediation between God and His people. This mediation has been necessitated by the corrupt humankind; the corruption that has severed relationships between them and

God. Jesus Christ, therefore, comes in by the act of atonement so that human beings may be in talking terms with God once more.

The concept of atonement is understood differently by each Christian denominations based on their different interpretations of the Bible. However, as much as they differ in their interpretation of the atonement act, they all agree on one mediator who is Christ Jesus. Different Christian denominations pass through some 'pre-mediatorship', as represented in figure 1.1; but eventually, Jesus Christ is the ultimate mediator, before they finally reach out to God. Jesus Christ therefore, unites all the Christian denominations as the final mediator; thereby making His mediatorship universal. He is the meeting point of all Christianity, as explained in figure 1.2.



**Figure 4.2: Gospelled Atonement**



From the preceding figure, the universal Church represents the gosselled atonement; since Jesus Christ is the unifying factor in the atonement process. This is so because even if the RC and the AC went through Mary the mother of Jesus Christ and the angels, while the Pentecostals went through the angels only, they both meet to Jesus Christ before reaching out to God.

In this figure also, the Christian fraternity admits that atonement is important and that for it to be effected, a mediator is needed. This study submits that, the need for a mediator hints at the inadequacy of human beings to mediate for themselves. That is, on their own, they cannot reach out to God because of sin and evil, which have not been atoned for. This, therefore, asserts the place of Jesus Christ as an atoner per excellence, as discussed in chapter one.

Atonement is also seen as an act of intercession: Jesus Christ the sacrificial victim is the one who intercedes on behalf of the believer. This is so because all atonement needs, having passed through other pre-mediator, must pass through him before reaching God. He is the reception centre, as shown in figure 1.2. Thus, He is better placed to intercede for all Christians of all persuasions.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

Having looked at the Christian view of atonement, it is emerging that atonement is the only concept that unite humanity and God. The act of atonement therefore presents Jesus Christ as the unifier of God and humanity. Atonement brings in the equality of humankind, whereby all people of all races and all times are equal before Jesus Christ,

the atoner. Atonement is a universal phenomenon as much as it is individual; it does not segregate based on religion or race. It is, therefore, an all inclusive act; that is, Jesus Christ died on behalf of the "children of Adam," meaning, Christ's atonement is universal.

Atonement brings all humankind to only one objective; that is, to please God. In this case then, Christ's atonement enables people to be able to reach God; and also God reaches out to humanity. Here then, the atoner becomes the reconciler, bringing these two together. The result of this reconciliation act becomes the peace that is now enjoyed between God and humankind.

Christians also see atonement as a tool that unites humanity, by way of identification and subsequent removal of sin committed against each other. In the atonement ritual, the offended is vindicated, while the offender is pardoned. Thus, the atonement act signifies a new beginning of relationships for both parties. The vindication, the pardoning, and the new relationship bring in new identity by which the offender and the offended are identified. That is, they share new life and have to have a new name—the children of Jesus Christ; hence Christians.

## CHAPTER FIVE: INCULTURATING BIBLICAL ATONEMENT AMONG THE ABAWANGA

### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, this study explored the meaning of atonement, as understood by the Wanga Christians. This chapter therefore, deals with the importance of inculturating the concept of biblical atonement into the Wanga culture.

For genuine inculturation to take place, it is important that relationships between the Jewish and the Wanga cultures are established. The former will be sourced from the Old Testament; while the latter will be sourced from the Wanga people. This study suggests that the common denominator of both cultures be used as a ladder in the realization of authentic inculturation. In doing this, then, the middle ground is the gospel part that seems to be ignored by a number of churches that minister among the Abawanga. Bellagamba (1994, 51) underscores this important phenomenon, by claiming that though in missions, the receiving community appreciates the sending community, they reserve the right and freedom to respond to that faith in ways that are culturally meaningful to it. What this seems to suggest is that, what is common in both cultures is shared; leaving out what is not common thus making the word 'appreciation' meaningful to the receiving culture. Inculturation constitutes finding the common ground between the scripture and the Wanga culture. This means that there are certain cultural aspects that are not compatible with the teaching of scripture (cf 2.12.1, 2.12.2, 2.17.2). Such aspects should not be considered in the inculturation process.

## 5.2 Relating the Jewish and the Wanga Atonement

The biblical process of atonement was instructional; just like when in Leviticus 16:1-34 specific instructions were given to Aaron, the high priest, of what was expected of him on the Day of Atonement. He was not to put on the sacred tunic on this day; he has to find the right animals for sacrifice; and he was to assume certain positions when performing these sacrifices. There were also specific ceremonial washings that were prescribed, for the man who released the scapegoat (Leviticus 16: 32-34).

Where the above instructions were not followed to the letter, the consequences were dire, which even included death, as listed in Leviticus 16: 1-2. The fulfillment of this atonement action, as found in the New Testament (Hebrews 9: 11), is also full of specificities. “Christ in acting as the high priest went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. Christ did not enter by means of the blood of goats and bulls but by His own blood” (Hebrews 9:11-12). According to Christian (1978, 184-186), Christ did not need to cleanse himself by means of sacrificing for the sins he may have committed, as an ordinary high priest would do, because he was perfect.

### 5.2.1 Atonement Regulations

Karakacha observed that atonement, among the Abawanga has specific regulations to be strictly followed. But in case the given instructions are not adhered to, then, the effectiveness of atonement is compromised. In this regard, Nabakolwe’s focus group

claimed that instructions formed part of the atonement process; and as such, they must be strictly adhered to.

*Nolalonda amalchirisio aka Omuchesi, omusaala nohomba olunyaasi shilutiilanga tawe* - if one does not strictly follow the instruction from the atoner then the prescribed medication cannot work.

Wekesa gives circumcision as an example of one of the atonement rituals, whose instructions have to be keenly observed. The officiator, who, in most cases, is chosen by the family, slaughters a white sheep in the *namwima* and pours some blood from the sacrifice to the four sides of the grave. He then mixes a special concoction, called *manyasi*, for the candidate and the people present to drink. After that, he utters the following words;

*Kuuka Mungoni, eshiayo shino neshihanwa shishio. Ewe kuuka, olalola obubi nohomba okhusinyishila eshishebo eshia omwana uno tawe. Mulekhuule yenjile murumbi obulayi* – Grand father Mungoni, this animal belongs to you as a gift from us for the circumcision of this, your child. Do not be angry but release this child so that he may undergo circumcision safely.

From what has been observed in the Jewish and Wanga cultures, instructions occupied a very important place in the atonement process. Now that the instructions and processes are highly regarded this research, concludes that, the instructions and processes formed part of the atonement ritual in both cultures. As such, the instructions and processes are to be taken at the same level with the actual atonement ritual. Breaking any of these instructions is equal to breaking the whole atonement exercise. This means that the efficacy, authenticity and acceptability of the atonement ritual are jeopardised.

### 5.2.2 Ritual Leadership

Leadership is another element that relates positively in both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures. The process involved the ritual leaders; who, in the Jewish culture, was a specific person - the high priest. Moses gave specific orders that sacrifices were to be offered, by sons of Aaron, the priests. However, for the atonement sacrifice, it had to be the high priest himself (Lev 1: 3-17; 16: 1- 34). In the Wanga culture also, atonement rituals had specified leadership, depending on the type of atonement and the community needs. A good example is the *okhufuwa*, a sacrifice talked of by the Nashikawa focus group. Here, the emphasis is on family leadership; it is the family that has the responsibility of finding a suitable ritual leader. If still alive, the father, who is the head of the family, is endowed with the responsibility of looking for the officiator. This must be an individual with the desired qualifications (cf 2.12; 2.12.1; 2.12.2) that will enable him or her to appropriately perform the desired duties.

### 5.2.3 Sacrificial Elements

In both cultures sacrificial elements are involved; in the Jewish culture, these elements were animals; specifically, the he-goat and the bullock. Of much importance were the characteristics desired of these two animals. Earlier on, Karakacha, an informant from the Wanga community, had claimed that the elements are to be young, preferably male, not lame and spotless.

In the Wanga culture, sacrificial elements involve much blood: they mostly include animals like cows, sheep, and goats. Some birds, such as chicken and quails (*isindu*) are also used as sacrificial elements. There is a general understanding among all the

Wanga people, that the animal to be sacrificed has to meet certain qualities. The sacrificial victim should be of one color, preferably black or white. Omukoko informs this study that, according to the Abawanga,

*Ingombe ya opili shiimalaanga omusango tawe – spotted ox  
can not finish the sacrifice.*

To this study, Omukoko's speech above reflects the fullness of life, as the ultimate purpose of the atonement act. Hence atonement is an anticipation of the ideal, in terms of personal and societal life. That is to say that atonement forms the deformed, and brings about the newness of life, to both the offender and the offended.

Atonement, in both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures, was performed in specified places, duly prepared for the exercise. For example, Andanje's explanation, in chapter two, (cf 2.11) shows that atonement takes place either at the exact place where sin or evil might have happened, or where the community believes that a solution is found. In the Jewish culture particularly, atonement was performed in the tabernacle and specifically the sanctuary area (Lev. 1:3). After the construction of the temple, atonement was done in the sanctuary; this is because the temple was constructed to reflect the tent of the meeting in the wilderness (Exodus 25: 10-37). Swati says that, in the same way, confession is done in a specific place, called confessionary within the Catholic Church.

#### **5.2.4 The Atonement Process**

Atonement process, in both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures, involved members of the said communities. If anyone may have been found within these communities, who did not belong to the community by birth, the naturalization of the said member took

place with immediate effect, so that dismembering was avoided. This means that all persons captured, during warfare and children born out of wedlock, had to be naturalized. Among the Israelites, the Lord commanded that atonement was to be the lasting ordinance for them and all those who lived within them (Lev. 16: 29-30). Among the Abawanga, Webele and Anangwe agree that if one has to take part in the Wanga atonement, one has to be a community member. They are required to step into the *obuse* (chyme) of the goat slaughtered before the actual atonement took place. Here then, everybody is regarded to be a member of the Wanga community, with rights and privileges bestowed.

What this means to suggest is that, atonement must only involve the offender and the offended. Anyone outside this circle is not to be involved. This happens either at community or individual level. To the researcher then, none is to share in the sin or evil of someone else. Everyone or every society must be responsible for their own sin; and this represents atonement as particular, linear and selectively focused to either the individual or the society. It is only the sinner or the evil that is to be cleansed in the atonement act and not the offended or one sinned against.

### **5.2.5 Natural and Supernatural Intervention**

The process of atonement had both the supernatural and the natural interventions in both cultures. In the Jewish culture, the Lord Yahweh is supernatural. Leviticus 16:1ff, describes the person who commands Moses as inhabiting from the clouds. The person identifies himself as God, thus bringing in the aspect of supernaturalism.

In the Wanga culture, the supernatural played a very important role in the atonement process, to an extent that ancestors were given preferential treatment, like appeasing. Waseka's focus group gives *okhufuwa* as an example of an appeasement sacrifice. *Okhufuwa* is giving a gift to the living dead (*abakuuka*); aimed at seeking special favors. Such favors include deterring specific calamities, such as injuries during circumcision; or restraining the floods, or even strange sicknesses, from attacking the people.

Anangwe, who confides in this researcher that he was once a *mufumu*, says that the supernatural plays a very profound role in the atonement process. The living dead, he says, "prescribe the type of atonement they require." In this case, then, the process is purely supernatural. He gives the example of slaughtering a black cow (*ingombe imali*) for the atonement of the sins of the Wanga nation. The individual atonement, which in this sense may be prescriptive based on the *abakuuka*'s (the living dead) wishes will for sure adhere to the supernatural processes.

From the above description, atonement in both cultures is the act of both the supernatural and the natural world; it concerns both the living and the living dead. The atoner, therefore, must be a person who is conversant with both worlds. This is because, in the researcher's view, this person is bringing together these two worlds by creating harmony between them. Here then, reconciliation, as a meaning of atonement, finds its place. This is because atonement, as an act, brings together not only people but the two worlds that had been drawn apart, by the sin or evil of the people. Atonement is a place where the purity of the supernatural meets the impurity

of the natural; thereby cleansing what would otherwise have been unclean. Here, people are regarded as righteous; even though they were initially not righteous.

### **5.3 Contrasting the Jewish and Wanga Atonement Practices**

In the Wanga culture, atonement is done both during daytime and also at night. The appropriate example is the drought/rain atonement, which is done at night. The reason given is that, Wanga secrets have to be kept, for the sake of Wanga state security. This is a matter that involves the head of state (Nabongo); and as such, the issues involved must be kept as the Wanga top secrets. In the Wanga culture, therefore, state security becomes state secret. What this study concludes from this position is that, national atonements were secretive by nature, since they involved the head of state. Atonement, in the Wanga community, carried not only the cleansing act, but in it was classified national information. In the Jewish culture, however, the atonement act was done in day time; hence there were no classified information. Here everything was laid bare for all and sundry to see and partake.

#### **5.3.1 The Timing of Atonement Rituals**

In the Wanga culture, atonement could be performed in different places, like in the forest or cemetery (*eshiembekho*), and the stone altar (*khumachina ka okhuraaka*); which were not far from home, or even within the homestead. This is because atonement depended on the kind of sin committed, the place the sin was committed, and the gravity presumed. Wasiche, too, confirmed this when he talked of atonement that takes place from the suicide spot.

In the bible, atonement was performed only in the tent of meeting: where the sanctuary and the holy of holies were. Given the sacredness of the atonement exercise, what seems to be implied is that to the Wanga people, all places are holy; depending on what one is doing and the purpose of the atonement. To the Jewish people though, only one place was holy; and that was the temple. This was where the sacred exercise had to take place; thus atonement of every kind was done from here. Looked at keenly, one can deduce that in the bible, sin is collected together and dealt with in one specific place; while among the Abawanga sin must be dealt with on the as - is, where- it- is, basis.

### 5.3.2 Leadership and Sacrificial Elements

In both cultures, leadership played a very important role in matters of atonement. Unlike in the bible, where only one leader was recognized, among the Abawanga, leadership depended on certain factors. Omusuula (cf 2.24; 2.2.4.; 2.24.2) gave a very elaborate description of the people who are qualified to preside over atonement rituals in the Wanga land. They include *omufumu*, *omulakusi*, *omuchesi* and *omuliuli* (prophet, seer, wiseman and exorcist). However, within the family set up, the head of the family, who was not necessarily the husband, but the oldest living male in the family, was (and still is) allowed to conduct an atonement ceremony.

Sacrificial elements were blood and plant related, in the Wanga culture; whereas in the bible it was purely blood. As described in the Book of Leviticus (chapter 16), there was no atonement without the shedding of blood; for this particular case, blood from the bullock, the he-goat or the lamb. Within the Wanga culture, plant life

complements blood, in issues of atonement. The *manyasi* that Andanje, Wakhungu, and Omusula talked about (cf 2.2.4), in such atonement rituals as bringing children born out of wedlock home; the *eshiembekho* ritual and the eating of new food, are in essence complementing the blood letting sacrifices.

### 5.3.3 Atonement and Sanctioning Process

The biblical, atonement was sanctioned and initiated by the God of Israel. From chapters 1 to 16 of the Book of Leviticus, the only person giving orders on how everything else should be done is God. In the Wanga culture, though, both the living and the living dead give orders and instructions on how they want atonement done. A good example is the atonement for the dying, which Wasike described to the researcher. He said that the living dead (*abakuuka*) called for the dying man to sacrifice so that he may be received well in the world of the living dead (*emakombe*). In Israel, neither the angels nor heaven dwellers could sanction for atonement of any kind. It is God who gave the instructions.

The atonement processes also varied based on the Wanga clans that were involved. During the process of atonement, some instructions were given, based on gender, age and status. The best example is the cleansing of the circumcision knife. According to Luseno, only the males who were forty years old and above, were allowed to attend. Wekesa further says that no one was allowed into the *namwima*, except the circumcision candidates and their family members. In this particular case, dismembering is based on familial relationships. The traditional beer prepared after the welcoming of the *emisambwa* (spirits) is drunk only by the clan elders, who must

be male. Here also the selection is 'skewed'; based on the clan criteria, which leaves out the 'unwanted.' Though there is some element of selection in the Jewish culture, it is only based on gender, but not age; and that men and women were allocated specific places in the temple or the tent of meeting. In the Wanga culture, one was expected to be totally absent; if not needed in any of the mentioned atonements.

#### **5.4 Atonement Theories Versus Wanga and Jewish Atonement**

Having looked at the relationship between the natural and the supernatural, the researcher concluded that in both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures, there is a sense in which the prescribed ritual sacrifices appease the supernatural. Thus, Anselm's theory, though not known by the Wanga people, was practised in their cultural atonement. The theory states that Jesus appeased God, by being a ritual human sacrifice; thus satisfying God's demand for the removal of human sin. In comparing both cultures, what seems to come out is that, the main purpose of sacrificial elements was appeasing the supernatural; thus satisfying the supernatural demand for the removal of sin (Erickson 2005: 798-818).

In both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures, there is a kind of punishment that should be expected, after sin has been committed. However, at the sacrificing of the elements mentioned above, this wrath is averted. Thus, one can deduce that, God's mercy replaces His wrath after the sacrifice is offered (Wolfhart 2000: 403 – 434; Garrett 1995: 33 – 44). Thus, the sacrificial elements must be regarded as wrath carriers with regard to the matters of atonement. The elements, too, become the bridge on which the supernatural meets the natural in the peace making effort.

A clear understanding of the Wanga atonement demonstrates that the exercise covered specific people; and none of them was exempted from the atonement practice, as long as one was in the said category. The atonement, therefore, affected all people involved; whether one was present or far away, it did not matter. Based on the purpose of atonement, which was the removal of sin for all; the position of the Wanga community is that, all have sinned and need atonement. This resonates with Neibuhr (1975: 45), on his claim that all culture (including Wanga culture) is sinful and needs an overhaul. Among the Abawanga, one needs to look at the history of sin and its effect on the community. Thus, sin is not by design or intent, but by nature. Subsequently, the Wanga culture is, by nature, sinful. The bible, which has been adapted by the Wanga Christians, would thus demand that Christ saves the Wanga culture from sin.

Based on the above observations, Christ is seen as the reformer of cultures, by way of atonement in the bible; while the sacrificial elements wash away sinful elements in the Wanga culture (Neibuhr 1975: 194). It should not be forgotten also that, atonement was to clear individual sins, in the both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures. Thus, what Neibuhr seems to suggest is that, not all elements in any given culture are sinful.

## 5.5 Summary

This study has found out that in both the Jewish and Wanga cultures, instructions occupied a very important place in the atonement process. Through instructions, which were given under specific leadership, both the offender and the offended were

able to reconcile. Thus the atonement process involved the ritual leaders; in the Jewish and the Wanga cultures. The said leadership was carefully selected, so that the person in leadership place was specific, and had desired qualifications. In the Wanga culture such person could be the head of the family, *omufumu*, *omulakusi* or *Nabongo*. This study noted that Nabongo, apart from being the head of state, was the head of his family. In the bible it was the high priest who performed atonement duties.

In both cultures, the sacrificial elements required were mainly animals, particularly an ox and either a sheep or a goat; which signified the necessity of blood letting in the atonement rituals. Atonement, in both the Jewish and the Wanga culture, was performed in specified places, duly prepared for the exercise. In the bible, it was done in the temple; while in the Wanga culture, it was done in designated places.

Although in varying degree, supernatural and natural participation was involved in both cultures. The instructions were received from the divine world to be acted upon in the natural world. In this regard, it was Yahweh who gave the atonement instructions to the Jews, while the ancestors instructed the Abawanga.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Relating the atonement rituals, in both communities, reveals that atonement is a human need that must be fulfilled for the wellbeing of every community. The need arises as a result of a conflict that happens between individuals; and, to some extent, between groups of people. Based on the findings of this research, it can be assumed that atonement constitutes part of the justice system in any given society.

The practice of atonement, in both cultures, points to the fact of the universality of sin and evil. There would be no need of atonement if sin and evil are not evident within any given society. Thus, by the act of atonement, these two cultures are not only dealing with the product of sin but also acknowledging the need of peaceful co-existence. Apart from acknowledging and dealing with the results of sin and evil, atonement recognizes the personal and corporate responsibility for the sin committed. Thus, by atonement, people confess their inability to deal with sin, and that they require another power to help them wipe out the effects of sin.

By looking at the instructions, the elements and processes of atonement, in both the Jewish and Wanga cultures; one concludes that God has supernaturally put mechanism within the universe, to deal with conflict and conflict related issues. One of these mechanisms is the atonement rituals; which operate in both the supernatural and the natural realms. Hence both realms are brought to the same level of understanding by the one act of atonement. This then, restores the communication that may have been broken by the sinful acts of mankind.

## CHAPTER SIX: IMPORTANCE OF INCULTURATING ATONEMENT

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the last objective, which is to show the importance of inculturating the biblical concept of atonement into the Wanga culture. The significance of inculturation is that the thought and practice of atonement can be seen as part of the life of the Abawanga, who practice the Christian faith. During the process of inculturation the scripture interacts with the Wanga culture ; producing a faithful who is truly Christian, and at the same time authentically Wanga. Here, the common denominators of both cultures are used as a ladder in realizing authentic inculturation. This study concurs with Bellagamba (1994: 53 – 55) when he says that missionaries must let the evangelized cultures provide the raw material that meets with scripture to provide the gospel truth for the said cultures. It requires, therefore, that similarities and dissimilarities, in matters of atonement be used as starting points in the inculturation process particularly on the concept of atonement among the Abawanga. This ensures that the principal meaning of the concept of atonement is kept; leading to its effectiveness within the Wanga community.

As seen from the previous chapters, the concept of atonement is fairly extensive. In this chapter, therefore, this study has selected specific themes that strongly came out in the previous chapters for discussion. These include, sin and evil, in relation to atonement and the ritual of atonement; and translation of the bible, as part of inculturation. Other themes that this chapter deals with are inculturation of the atoner, symbolism in inculturation, relating *mulembe* (greetings) to atonement, and the ritual meal of sacrifice.

## 6.2 Sin and Evil in Relation to Atonement

As mentioned earlier (cf 2.3), there cannot be atonement without sin and evil; both of which call for the atonement ritual. Even though this research does not deal with sin and evil, it is important that any attempt at inculturating the concept of atonement does not completely overlook the place of sin and evil. After interacting with the respondents, in chapter two, this study concluded that sin among the Abawanga is classified into two realms. These are sins of commission (doing what one is not supposed to do) and sins of omission (cf 2.14); that is, failing to do what one is expected (cf 2.9). To wipe out the evil that results from the two types of sins, described here, Oronda says that *omulukha* or *omusango* (atonement ritual) has to take place. In both scenarios, Wekesa described sin, among the Abawanga, as falling short of the Wanga cultural and religious expectations. That is understood as, not measuring up to the expected standards of Wanga religio-cultural righteousness.

This shows that a certain standard of expectations exists among the Abawanga. It is expected that every *Muwanga* (singular) should aim at meeting this expected standard. This is a mark of moral excellence that every Wanga person should aim at: failure to which, results in sin. According to Anger (1988: 258), if sin is to be understood in the New Testament perspective, it can be equated to the Greek terminology, 'ἁμαρτία' (*hamartia*) which means, missing a mark. ἁμαρτία is found from the archer's world, whereby, the archer aims at a specific mark. If he misses it, then it is regarded as sinful; that is, the archer has not measured up to the required standard. From its Hellenistic background, the New Testament adopted the word ἁμαρτία to mean sin. If a Christian commits sin, it is equated to missing the mark of

righteousness. Sin to a Christian, therefore, is the act of breaking the standard of righteousness, set by God.

It follows that, the Christian and Wanga understanding of sin are similar, and can be understood as the act of missing the set goal; which is the standard of life. Those interested in inculturation must find a concept that, in the Wanga culture, corresponds with missing the Wanga cultural standard; which in this case is the equivalent of missing a goal that is set for Wanga cultural righteousness. The goal is harmony and peaceful co – existence between the living and the living dead (cf 2.8, 2.10, 2.12.1). It could also be expressed as the balance between the natural and the super – natural. According to Oronda's discussion group the person who fulfills the said righteousness is referred to as, *omundu omulunjifu* or *omundu omukolofu* the straight person. This group further informs this research that,

*Omundu omulunjifu nomundu ouchendanga nushiloongole shia Abawanga* – The straight person is one who walks within the Wanga traditions.

This study therefore establishes that, *omulunjifu* – is a person who follows the Wanga traditions and practices; thus, fulfilling the set goal of righteousness that is demanded by the Abawanga. It is only after this goal is missed that atonement ritual is prescribed for the persons or groups who have not consciously or unconsciously attained this standard mark.

This research establishes that the word *okhwosia* – to cleanse is the descriptive adjective that will mean atonement; so that the above understanding is seen as restorative. This is because this word must also mean, returning the offender to the standard goal. This must be, by making the offender aware of the standard goal that

was missed, by the offense committed. In making the offender go through the atonement process, the society is, in essence, returning the offender back to the required standard of the Wanga religio – culture; leading to intergration; into the community.

To understand this standard measure, Anangwe informed this study that the two words used among the Abawanga are *tsimbi* (at times rendered as *obubi*) and *obulayi* (plural). According to Swati, *tsimbi/obubi* is a descriptive word that means below standard; *tsimbi* also is a noun referring to doing something bad; whereas *obulayi* means above the standard. It is also a noun referring to doing something good. Used either way, *tsimbi* connotes undesired expectations; while *obulayi* connotes desired expectations among the Abawanga. For example,

*Omwana oyo yakhoola obubi niyara inyungu ya mama, omwana oyo yakhoola obulayi nalonjiera mama wuwe inyungu. That child acted badly when he/she broke her mother's pot, that child did a good thing when she molded a pot for her mother.*

Whereas sin, is looked at as missing the standard measure evil, according the respondents (2.2.), is the result of sin. Wekesa says that, after one person or a specific group has sinned, by failing to meet the standard, famine and drought are the resultant evil. This result of sin affects everyone, regardless of whether one was party to the sin committed or not. The concept – evil, unlike sin, becomes universal and inclusive: and as such, it requires a national atonement ritual.

### 6.3 The Ritual of Atonement

In an effort to show the importance of inculturating the concept of atonement, both the scriptural and the Wanga cultural meanings of this concept are important. As mentioned earlier, the Wanga people understand atonement as an act that restores harmony and tranquility in their Wanga nation. They see atonement ritual as an act of reconciliation, meant to heal broken relationship between God and the people. It is an act of appeasement, intended to bring down the wrath of God; and bring the *omulembe* (harmony) between the natural and the super – natural. Thus, atonement returns the order of things as they initially were, before the standard goal was missed; and gives them an opportunity of becoming a better people.

Based on the perception of sin, discussed above, the Christian understanding of atonement is not different from the Abawanga understanding of the same. For example, in chapter four; of this study, it was noted that Christians see atonement as an act of appeasement. According to Swati, this is an act of *obukosia* – grace; and as such atonement has its roots in God. In chapter two, this study discovered that the Abawanga also view atonement as a moment of reconciliation; and as such the concept of atonement is perceived as a progression.

Having looked at the Abawanga and the Christian understanding of atonement, it is important that words translated to mean atonement reflect these two understandings. This is because, what is clear in both the Christian and the Abawanga understanding of atonement is that, it gives people their identity. This identity is based on the meaning of atonement; which determines its function among the Abawanga and in the

bible. It is also important to note that, atonement defines the relationship of both the natural and the super – natural. It is only after the atonement has been performed that this severed relationship is restored (cf 2.27). Inculturating the concept of atonement is, therefore, important because it determines the day to day life of the Abawanga; hence shaping their destiny, in terms of identity.

#### 6.4 Pre- liminaries to Inculturation

This research submits that it is easier and fair to have people hear Christ Jesus speaking in their own language; because it is only through the peoples' language that concepts such as atonement are properly articulated. Exegetical analysis of the word of God produces vital elements that are critical to the process of translation. Inculturation, therefore, entails a number of things; which include language, interpretation, and exegesis of the word. For example, Ndegwa (2007, 41-46) explains that inculturation is a place where culture meets scripture. This study, therefore, establishes that as a result of this meeting, ethnotheology of a given people is arrived at; thus resulting in the gospel message.

##### 6.4.1 Bible Translation

Swati supports the above view by claiming the following;

*Nowenya abaandu okhurumbula akali mumioyo  
chiabwe oboola alusungo lwabwe. Halali amapaaro  
akarumbulwa mumunwa kabolungwa mulusikoyo – If  
you want to know what is in peoples' heart, speak their  
language. But for verbalized thinking speak in English.*

He goes ahead and points out that, if a song, or a hymn, is sung in English, the participation is usually dull and lukewarm; thus not to the maximum. However, when the same song, or hymn, is sung in local language, the mood changes, and there is maximum participation; thus creating understanding of the song. This points out to the fact that, the meaning of any given concept is carried, in the language of the people. In view of this, the research submits that atonement, as a concept, is well understood if expressed in Lu-Wanga, than any other language; the meaning is much more internalized. Based on what Swati has said, this study, also submits, that, such meaning is an owned meaning. It is the peoples' meaning, and as such, it is an applied meaning; because it resonates to their day to day life style.

By translating the scripture into the Lu- Wanga, the Abawanga have had access to it. The scripture, therefore, interacts with the Wanga culture much more easily; producing an authentic gospel message. In essence, the act of translation may be deemed as inculturation of Jesus Christ Himself, so that he actually speaks to the Abawanga in their language. In this way, the association of the Abawanga to Christ Jesus is more pronounced.

#### **6.4.2 Inculturation of the Atoner**

As observed in chapter two (cf 2.24), not everyone is allowed to take lead in the atonement ritual exercise. There are specific qualifications that allow one to act as an atoner. These include a person being either from the side of the offender or the offended; or one who relates positively to both sides. The atoner could also be seconded or recommended by a person of high integrity. Either way, the atoner must

have some kind of association to both the offender and the offended. In this way the atoner is aware of the offense and its magnitude. By way of association also, the researcher infers that the atoner should be aware of the kind of, punishment and/or retribution involved in the offense committed.

One important qualification of Jesus Christ is that, he came from heaven and as such he understands both the people (the natural) and God (the divine). By virtue of his life on earth, he understands what it is to be human and by his life in heaven he understands God. Consequently the inculturation of the person of the atoner in the Christian realm should include a personality, who has the understanding of both the divine and the natural realms. Just like Jesus Christ, the presiding priest should not only be conversant with the scripture but he should also be familiar with the Wanga cultural understanding of atonement. In this way, the priest will be able to get the gospel message within the Wanga culture and articulate it to the people. This is so, because the scripture he knows will interact with the culture he knows, producing the gospel truth: something new that no ear has heard or eye has seen. Thus, this research submits that, the priest, who acts in the name of Jesus Christ, can officiate at atonement. In this way, then, it is Jesus Christ who is doing it, for the Christian Wanga.

#### 6.4.3 Representations and Symbolisms

According to Wasiche, symbolism is one of the ways of communication, among the Abawanga. He says that, the Abawanga's respect for *Nabongo's* symbol is almost equal to the respect given to *Nabongo* himself. Douglas-et-al (1982: 1142) on the other hand claim that a symbol is a representation of the actual. Based on the above,

Wekesa's focus group discussion (cf 2.11) is authenticated in their argument that, atonement plays a major role, as a way of communication, among the Abawanga. Okutoyi and Okwemba, who are pentecostals (cf 4.3; 6.8), agree with Namwiru's focus group; by claiming that in the Christian understanding of atonement, symbolism is also used. They point to the elements of the Holy Communion, which they claim, are only symbols and representation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. According to them, these symbols send a message of Jesus Christ's atonement to the Wanga Christians.

Although Okwemba and Okutoyi claim that Holy Communion elements are symbolic, Andoni, a Catholic Priest, disagrees with them; and asserts that immediately the bread and wine are blessed, they become actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. This, according to Andoni, brings in realism and not symbolism. Though this study acknowledges the theological differences that may emerge between these two groups the Catholics and the Evangelical – in terms of the Holy Communion administration; what is clear is that there is representation of atonement elements in the form – actual or symbolic body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Symbolism is acceptable in both the Jewish and the Wanga cultures and can be comfortably applied in both cases. This is because the Old Testament was written in Jewish culture; and as such it is expressed in Jewish symbolism. Andoni supports this by claiming that, in the cleansing ritual, water is used as a cleansing agent. According to him, this happens after the people of God or consecrated utensils have been defiled, or during the dedication of the church building by the Bishops. In the Old Testament, this is observed in Leviticus chapters 10, 11, and 12.

According to Hartley (1992: 126 – 140), water cleansing is a symbolism that emphasizes the purity of life expected of the people of God

Based on the information above, this study submits that symbols are representations of reality. If these symbols can be used, so that people are able to experience reality, then inculturation should take such forms. For example, the use of water (cf 4.3), by way of sprinkling on the offender and the offended will act as a means of cleansing the offense. This means that symbolism as a means of uniting the Abawanga, binds them more than the Euro-American way; which is taught rationally without any concrete manifestation. To this research, symbolism, in the teaching of atonement, among the Abawanga, shows that the Abawanga are, to a great extent, concrete thinkers; and as such, they should be approached in a concrete rather than abstract way.

#### **6.4.4 The Ritual Meal of Sacrifice**

As observed in chapter two (cf 2.19.1), food is an important ingredient in the atonement rituals; because it serves as a link between the offender and the offended. It is also a source of fellowship, between the living and the living dead. According to Andoni, the ritual meal of sacrifice is a sign of communion and as such, food brings people together, in trust and fellowship. Andoni goes ahead and claims that in all Wanga atonement rituals, elders would not leave until both the offender and the offended provide a meal; which is eaten, either at the place where the offense took place, or at any other designated place.

Thus, the ritual meal of sacrifice signifies a new beginning and new life because it is only people with a new life that can eat together. In the eating of the meal, is the exchanging of the new life. That is to say, that the offender and the offended share a new life, as they share the meal. In the Christian context, by participating in the Holy Communion, Jesus Christ, shares His own life with human beings, who are the offenders; thus bringing in the newness of life. Hence Jesus Christ, who is the offended, by the sins of the people, begins new life with the offenders. Jesus Christ imparts in people his life that has entirely met the set standards; so that people live their lives in Jesus Christ. Here then the word atonement must include the element of Jesus Christ, the atoner per excellence, living His life in the people. The importance of inculturation, in this sense, is the life of Christ; expressed in and by the people.

#### 6.4.5 Relating Mulembe to Atonement

The starting point of inculturating atonement, among the Abawanga, should always be the greetings (*mulembe*). *Mulembe* is a general greeting for all people at all times; and also indicates peace and order in the community. According to Swati, *mulembe* binds the Wanga people together; because it diffuses tension that may have existed before the two quarrelling people or groups. The *mulembe* concept also inquires of the order of the community, in terms of serenity and tranquility. Swati says that the Wanga people exchange greetings, even in times of enmity and mistrust: making, *mulembe* a mild form of atonement.

Based on the above explanations, this study concludes that, the *mulembe* concept signifies the willingness of engagement, even between enemies. Here, the offender

and the offended are willing to open up and discuss their differences. *Mulembe* is, therefore, a directional concept, pointing towards peace and order, of what has been previously disordered, by the offense committed. At the community level, the researcher submits that *mulembe* is an administrative concept; looking into the order of the community, and the day to day functions. *Mulembe*, therefore, is the ideal of the desired atonement and should be used in all spheres of Christian life.

### 6.5 The Ritual of Nababa

Having looked at other ways in which inculturation can be beneficial, this study attempted to inculturate the ritual of *nababa*. This is because *nababa* sets the precedence to all other things that are happening to the Wanga society. Once evil spirits have been sent away by performing the ritual of *nababa*, good things set in. Once again women start getting children, cows start multiplying, the rains that may have been delayed by the spirit of *nababa* begin and unexplained deaths within the Wanga community stops. Many other good things are experienced by the society. The serenity and tranquility spoken of earlier (cf 6.4.3, 6.4.5) sets in. In view of these, this study sees *nababa* as a starting point of inculturation in matters of atonement.

In this way also, Christianity will be a faith that does not only speak to the Abawanga, but it will also be a faith that is lived by them. Note also that, the Abawanga, like any other African community, need to identify themselves with the faith that speaks to them, using their own symbols and understanding (Marc-Ela 1989: 144). This faith, therefore, must be embodied in the Wanga identity, giving it a Christian understanding.

By inculturating Christianity, the Abawanga seek to use symbols that are familiar to them and talk to their reality, in expressing their faith. In all the atonement rituals observed in this study, there are symbols attached to specific truth that the Abawanga seek to communicate (cf 2.12.1, 2.12.2, 2.17.1, 2.17.2 and 2.19). This might be the

reason why Mbiti (1987: 136) argues that Africans never worshiped nature but the force behind nature; which in Mbiti's argument was God. It is in this spirit that this study revisits the issue of *nababa* among the Abawanga. *Nababa* is the spirit behind environmental degradation and drought. The resultant evil is what this study theologizes, in the hope that the church can be able to see the significance of water which is the outside sign for the inward faith in the 'ritualistic' cleansing.

According to Waluke, *nababa* is the spirit that brings about evil in Wangaland. This spirit is neither female nor male; no one knows its gender! It is claimed that *nababa* brings with it *omuyeka omubi* – bad wind. It is this wind that causes drought, resulting in crop failure; and drying up of vegetation leaving people and animals without food. This means that wild animals, especially leopards, come out of the forest and attack domestic animals. There is also prevalence of drought related diseases, coupled with malnutrition; thus leading to a high number of deaths being recorded at this time. During this time also, seasonal rivers dry up. Apart from affecting nature *nababa* takes on a social dimension manifesting itself in quarrels, conflicts and wars. All these bring about untold misery upon the people.

### 6.5.1 Chasing Nababa Away

After experiencing such a wide imbalance, in the natural and social sectors of the Wanga community, cleansing of this evil, and sending away the *nababa* spirit becomes necessary.

According to Omusula,

*Omusaala okwa okhuyiniaho obutoobela buno, ne okhuupa nababa. Amatepe nende ebifulia bikhupwa, ne abaandu nibayila nababa munyanza ya Yalulwe* – The medicine for removing this evil is beating *nababa*. Empty jericans and pans are beaten producing loudest noise as *nababa* is sent to Lake Yalulwe – Lake Victoria.

The local chief/leader calls all the people because of the evil that is stated above; and makes an announcement of when the ritual of *nababa* will take place. This calling takes place only when the *nababa* phenomenon has been noticed. In this meeting, the chief together with elders (cf 2.17.2) inform the people on how this function will be organized. This is because the chasing away of *nababa*, and its associated evil, is purely a community affair, in which every person must participate. In this ritual, everybody will have to be prepared with objects that will make the loudest sound which frighten *nababa* making it run away. According to Waluke, the louder the sound, the faster *nababa* runs and disappears into the water mass. Omusula says that, people believe that once it dives into the water, the land is cleansed. It is like, when *nababa* is on land, people and everything within the environment are besieged; and as such they have to break the bonds of *nababa*, so that it can go away.

*Nababa* and its associated evil are chased away towards the west and when one reaches the nearest stream, one must denounce this evil and return without looking back. According Waluke, the evil which is now in the stream, shall be drowned by water and sent to *Nzoia* (the big river); which will eventually send it to Lake *Yalulwe*. According to Washiali, when the evil of *nababa* is sent to lake *Yalulwe* it never comes back to haunt the people.

### 6.5.2 The Evil of Nababa and the Evil of Satan

Listening to the respondents, this study concludes that water nullifies the evil, brought about by *nababa*; and cleanses the whole community, bringing about the freshness of life. The lake in this case signifies a point of no return for the evil of *nababa*, ushering in the clean spirit responsible for the newness of life. Water among the Abawanga, is a symbol of cleansing. From the above descriptions, water has the power to cleanse and nullify the evil power, brought about by *nababa*. In this way, the Abawanga have found ways of combating this evil and working to re – establish the harmonious wellbeing; and to evoke God to forgive them and give rain that will bring about food for life.

In an effort to inculturate the concept of atonement, this study looks at the ritual of *nababa* as a community affair in which every member must participate. This community participation is purposeful because *nababa* spirit and its associated evil, brings the community together. This is to say that evil attacks the community as a whole and as such a collective community response is appropriate. The church also consists of humanbeings who are equally associated and affected by evil. A good example of the manifestation of evil in the church is the recently experienced election violence in Kenya. Most of the people who beat, maimed and killed each other were Christians. In church they would see each other as brothers and sister ready to share heaven. However, one wonders what happens with the brotherhood and sisterhood after church service/mass, so that violence sets in destroying all good things that had been said in church. The Abawanga take their religio – cultural teachings more seriously than Christian teachings. For example, on the wedding day, the couple after

taking church vows ends up taking other traditional vows at night. The reason given is that, if those traditional vows are not taken, the marriage will end in separation in future. The taking of the later vows reveals that the Abawanga are not fully committed to church. In order to bring about this commitment, inculturation is needed.

Having looked at the manifestation of evil in church, there is need for chasing such evil away, just as *nababa* is chased away from among the Abawanga. This research submits that in inculturating this ritual into Christianity, church leaders such as priests and bishops could call for fasting and praying so that evil, just like *nababa*, is chased away.

Just as noise is used to chase *nababa* away in this ritual, the priests and bishops would allow the sounding of church bells, drums and any noise making equipment of the church to run for about half an hour; making the loudest noise to scare away Satan. People can then come back to the church having driven away evil. However, they also need to be protected by the Holy Spirit; thus they should be sprinkled with holy water to cover them with shroud of God's protection. For the case of the Catholic Church, people then, go for confession, while in evangelical churches they can repent their sins. In this way, the Wanga symbolism can be inculturated within Christianity, giving the Abawanga Christians a symbolic identity.

### 6.5.3 Care for Environment

Concerning the environment, this study submits that the environmental evil originated with human persons. Although in some cases, it may not be true that the Abawanga are directly responsible for the evil befalling them. For example, the clearing of the Kobolet (source of river Nzoia) and Mt. Elgon forests reduce the rainfall, lowering the water volume of river Nzoia. The Abawanga will suffer drought, and low water supply, not because they have had anything to do with it; but all the same, it is a humanity problem. Human beings according to Abawanga (cf 2.19), are stewards to the environment and the animal world. They are, therefore, supposed to intercede on behalf of the environment and the animal world. After the above inculturated ritual, the Abawanga Christians should be ready to go out and do well to everybody and everything within the environment and the animal world.

### 6.6 Summary

In an effort to inculturate atonement in Africa, the researcher submits that the process has a history. The evangelizers should take note of what has been happening so that they can be able to build on what already exists. It is also noted that atonement does not exist in isolation; there are other concepts that must be looked at alongside atonement. Therefore, for any good and meaningful inculturation of the concept of atonement, it is important that the two concepts of sin and evil be looked at; which will mark the boundaries of the concept of atonement, because it is dependent on these two.

The atoner is a very important figure in the atonement process. It is important that he/she be someone who understands both the scriptures and the Wanga culture. That is, the qualification of the atoner, as found in the bible, be compared to the same among the Abawanga; making the person acceptable among the Abawanga. In this way the person of Jesus Christ will be seen as one of their own. It is this person who, to a large extent determines, what is to be offered as the atonement elements. The person is also aware of when and where the ritual takes place. This is because Jesus Christ understands life in both the divine and the natural worlds.

In the process of inculturating the concept of atonement, symbols should be taken with the weight they deserve. For the concrete thinker, it will be greatly advantageous for evangelizers to utilize this in the course of persuading the Abawanga to accept Christianity. Symbolism will not only speak to the Abawanga's mind but to their hearts as well. However, evangelizers should also take note that symbolism should not take the place of the actual message; it should only point to the intended message. In this case, therefore, the gospel message is as a result of interaction between the Wanga culture and the scripture and should be articulated by the use of symbolism.

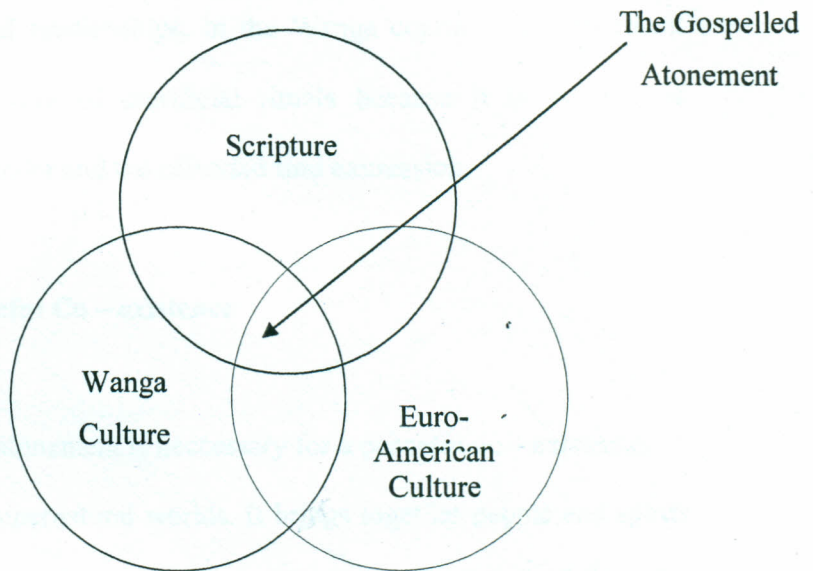
Finally, the translation of the scripture into the luhya language is of great importance. In this way then Christ speaks to the peoples' hearts rather than their minds. It is the translation of the scripture that makes it possible to interact with the Wanga culture, producing the gospel message (Ndegwa, 2007, 41-42).

## 6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher sought to show the importance of inculturating the biblical concept of atonement, among the Abawanga. In doing so, this research suggested the the inculturation of the meaning of atonement, should come from the people themselves. The process should be directed by a trained theologian, who should provide the expert advice; while the people provide the historical and contextual knowledge. In this way, the whole process of inculturation will be owned by the people; leading to the acceptance of the gospel message.

This research takes cognizance of the fact that the gospel message is the interaction between the scripture and the culture (Ndegwa, 2007: 41). Accordingly, it is the end result of the interaction between these two entities; the scripture and the Wanga culture that results in the gospel message. This gospel message is what authenticates the Wanga Christian faith; thus producing the Abawanga who are authentically Wanga at the same time truly Christians. The true gospel message then, is in itself an inculturation! The figure (6.1) bellow illustrates this study's persuasion.

**Figure 6.1** Scripture interaction with Wanga culture



The figure 6.1 above shows that one can be truly Christian; and at the same time authentically *Wanga*. In essence, one does not need to get out of their culture to become a Christian; but rather to let the scripture interact with one's culture. In this view, this research makes general conclusions; and suggests recommendations for further research on matters of inculturation and other biblical concepts, for any successful evangelistic enterprise.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 General Conclusions

A closer look at the concept of atonement reveals that, sin, evil and guilt are the three elements that bring about bad relationships, in the Wanga community. Atonement addresses this problem, by way of sacrificial rituals because it is a place of engagement, whereby the offender and the offended find expression.

#### 7.1.1 Atonement and Peaceful Co – existence

In the Wanga understanding, atonement is necessary for a peaceful co – existence, of both the natural and the supernatural worlds. It brings together people and spirits who would otherwise be potential enemies. Atonement, therefore, is the bridge for both the living and the living dead to reach out to each other; as it mediates between the warring factions. Atonement can, thus, be said to be the place where justice meets mercy. Here, the offender repents and restitutes, to the offended. In return, the offender is re-accepted into the community; while the offended receives justice. Consequently, atonement restores the balance of nature; bringing back the situation that prevailed before, so that life continues harmoniously. The tranquility and serenity that is now enjoyed by the community after the atonement rituals have been performed is what is referred to in chapter six (cf 6.5), as *omulembe kwa eshialo* – the peace of the nation.

### **7.1.2 Atonement and Culture**

Atonement takes place in specific cultures; and as such, its practice is also culturally imbedded. In the light of this, there is a way in which the concept of atonement is handled; in terms of where to perform the ceremony, who to perform, how to perform it, as well as how the sacrificial victim is handled. The place of sacrifice is in most cases, an indicator of the presence of God because the said place is pre – determined and set aside for this purpose. The atoner is specifically picked based on the qualifications set by the people in consultation with the divine. Consequently the handling of the sacrifice increases or reduces the efficacy of the atonement. All these show that atonement is, to some extent, dictatorial and prescriptive in nature.

### **7.1.3 Categorizing Atonement in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, atonement can be put in five categories as follows: obedience, sacrifice, propitiation, redemption and reconciliation. These, in essence, are five different facets of the same truth that address the restoration of broken relationships; between individuals, individuals and the community, and between the community and God.

### **7.1.4 The Elements of Atonement**

The concept of atonement also reveals that, apart from destroying relationships, sin separates people; a situation that can only be remedied by shedding blood. To the Abawanga, the ox, sheep or goat is slaughtered; which indicates that sin costs life. In

the Christian circles, the life and death of Jesus Christ brings the offender and the offended back to the negotiation table; where an agreement is reached. The agreement involves the offenders' judgment and the vindication of the offended; then, the relationship that had been initially destroyed is restored.

Atonement is an important concept in the practice of the Christian faith; as it reveals the extent of love the Lord has for his people. Although they have sinned and injured their relationship with each other and with him, he is willing to work on it again. This is not a costless love, as it cost the life and death of his beloved son, Jesus Christ; so that people may restore the right relationship that initially, was lost. What this shows is that God is the initiator of atonement. In the Christian context, the offender is 'humanity', while God is the offended. It is the offended (God) who makes the initiative. Jesus Christ is the sacrificial victim that is offered, but also, the atoner. In the Wanga religio – culture, the community makes the initiative; because there is already the offender and the offended. The sacrificial victim is the ox or the quail.

### **7.1.5 The Universality of Atonement**

Having looked at the Christian view of atonement, it is emerging that atonement is the only concept that unites humanity with God. Atonement brings in, the equality of humankind, whereby all people of all races and all times are equal before Jesus Christ the atoner. Here, then, atonement must be viewed as a universal phenomenon; because it does not segregate, based on religion or race. It is an all inclusive act; because, Jesus Christ died on behalf of the "children of Adam," making His atonement universal (Grenz, 1994: 450 – 451).

### 7.1.6 Atonement: Reconciliation between God and Humanity

Atonement is a tool of purpose, as it brings all humankind to only one objective – to please God. Jesus Christ's atonement, therefore, enables people to reach God. In the atonement act, God reaches out to the humanity; whereby Jesus Christ the atoner, becomes the reconciler, bringing these two foes together. The result of this reconciliation act becomes the peace that is now being enjoyed between God and humankind.

Christians also, see atonement as a tool that unites humanity, by way of identification; and subsequent removal of sin, committed against God. In the atonement transaction the offended is vindicated; whereas the offender is pardoned. Hence the atonement act signifies a new beginning of relationships for both parties. The vindication, the pardoning, and the new relationship, bring in a new identity, by which the offender and the offended are identified. That is, they share a new life and have a new name; the children of Jesus Christ, or Christians.

Relating the atonement rituals, in Christianity and the Wanga traditions reveals that atonement is a human need that must be fulfilled for the wellbeing of every community. Thus, it constitutes part of the justice system, in any given community.

### **7.1.7 Atonement versus Sin and Evil**

The practice of atonement, points to the fact of the universality of sin and evil, because through atonement, both the Abawanga and the Christians deal with the product of sin; and also, acknowledge the need of peaceful co-existence. Atonement, further, recognizes the personal and corporate responsibility of, and for, the sin committed. Thus, by atonement, people confess their inability to deal with sin, and acknowledge the fact that, they require another power to help them neutralize the effects of sin.

By looking at the instructions, the elements and processes of atonement, both in the Wanga culture and in Christianity, this research concludes that God has supernaturally put mechanism within the universe to deal with conflict and conflict related issues. One of these mechanisms is the atonement rituals; which operate in both the supernatural and the natural realms; so that both realms are reconciled. This restores the communication that may have been broken by the sinful acts of the humankind.

### **7.1.8 Incultrating the Concept of Atonement**

Having looked at the concept of atonement, it is important that the process of inculturation starts with the people themselves. However, the process should be directed by a trained theologian, who should be charged with the responsibility of providing the expert advice; as the people provide the historical and contextual knowledge. In doing so, the whole process of inculturation will be owned by the people; which is likely to lead to the acceptance of the gospel teaching.

Inculturation of the concept of atonement binds the Abawanga together; because it speaks the language of the people. The symbolism used is not foreign, the examples are taken from among the people; and the priests or theologians, charged with the responsibility of inculturation, are part of them. Inculturation then, creates an identity for the Abawanga; making them identify with missionaries, and the Christian faith, that is offered to them.

In the final analysis, inculturation is seen as the interaction of the scriptures and the Wanga culture. Ndegwah (2007: 41) says that, interaction between scripture and culture produces the gospel message. This research thus, takes cognizance of the fact that the gospel message results from the interaction between the scripture and culture. It is therefore the gospel message that moulds a *Muwanga* who is truly Christian and at the same time authentically African.

## **7.2 Recommendations for Inculturation**

Having looked at the dynamics and complexity of inculturating the concept of atonement, among the Abawanga, this research submits that, the challenge of inculturation is the main issue that faces evangelizers. This study, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

1. For any meaningful evangelistic enterprise in Africa, inculturation of biblical concepts should be given the first priority. In this way, Jesus Christ will speak to the people, in their own language and expressions.

2. Targeted communities should be fully involved in the inculturation process. This way, the cultures will own the concepts inculturated; thus making the gospel message meaningful to the community and easily understood. This process, is what this research calls, 'down up inculturation process. Arbuckle (1988: 510 – 512) and Burke (2001: 63) comment that, the adopting of symbols and words from a given culture should be the starting point of inculturation. Deeper understanding of these symbols and words must form the actual inculturation is needed for any meaningful evangelism to take place.
  
3. As much as the community participation is important, the input of the expert is needed in the inculturation process, in order to efficiently guide the people. According to Ndegwa (2007: 38), experts bring in the theological contribution, while the people bring in the cultural contribution. This research calls this, 'the integrated inculturation process. Chibuko (1996: 33 – 34) and Waliggo (1986: 13), do not only speak of the expert as a theologian, but an expert in the said culture as of equal importance to the theological expert. According to these scholars, these two will bring inculturation at a professional level and bring out the intended meaning, of the scriptural text, to the people.
  
4. Inculturation should be an on going process in any given culture; because languages and culture are not static. This will also ensure that, appropriate words that convey the intended meaning are chosen. Apart from this, Christian faith will be a lived faith; since the process will be current and able to answer to the needs of the people. Ndegwah (2007: 37) agrees with this

recommendation, when he says that any meaningful inculturation should be an on going endeavour; because culture is continuously evolving.

### 7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Inculturation is a wide subject that needs to be looked at from a wider perspective. This research, therefore, recommends that research be carried out in the following areas:

1. The impact of inculturating the concept of atonement on evangelisation.
2. Inculturation of related concepts, such as sin and evil; and its implications on mission work in Africa.
3. Inculturation and the question of the African Christian identity.
4. How inculturation of biblical concepts affect biblical hermeneutics in Africa.
5. The impact of inculturation on the preparation and delivery of sermons.

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## APPENDICES

### A1 Chapterization of the Study

Chapter 1: General Introduction.

Chapter 2: Atonement in Traditional Wanga Thought and Practice.

Chapter 3: Approaches Used by Missionaries in Teaching Atonement Among the Abawanga.

Chapter 4: The Impact of the Euro-American Inculturation on the Wanga Christianity.

Chapter 5: The Biblical Understanding of the Nature and Process of Atonement.

Chapter 6: Inculturating the Concept of Atonement in Wanga Religio-culture.

## A2 Tentative Time Schedule

	January 2009 - June 2009	July 2009 – April 2010	May 2010 - July 2010	August 2010- December 2010	January 2011- March 2011	April 2011- June 2011
Proposal Writing	➔					
Presentation & corrections of Proposal	➔					
Field Research		➔				
Analysis of Field Research Findings			➔			
Thesis Writing				➔		
Draft Thesis Presentation, Revisions				➔		
Presentation of Thesis for Examination & Defense					➔	
Thesis Defense					➔	

### A3 Tentative Budget

The projections bellow is by no means exact; and are subject to fluctuation, according to circumstances. They are, however, based on some of the real costs already experienced; as well as fees structure, acquired from Kenyatta University.

Item	Estimated Unit or annual cost in Kshs.	Required/ estimated Numbers	Total Cost in Kshs.
Tuition fees in the University	250,000	3	750,000
University Administrative fees:			
➤ Registration	1,500	3	4,500
➤ Examination	10,000	1	10,000
➤ Identity card	500	1	500
➤ Caution	2,000	1	2,000
➤ Subscription/Medical	2,000	3	6,000
➤ Library	3,000	3	9,000
➤ Material Development	3,300	3	9,900
➤ Computer fees	4,000	3	12,000
➤ Submission of thesis for examination	10,000	1	10,000
Purchase of computer and Computer Software	80,000	1	80,000
Stationery	15,400		15,400
Subsistence	30,000		30,000
Research assistants	50,000		50,000
Books	5,000	30	150,000
Travel to libraries and documentation centres	200	150	30,000
Travel to Western Kenya for field research	6,000	10 trips	60,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,108,900</b>

## A4 Research Instruments

### Preamble

My name is Manya Wandefu Stephen; A Ph.D. student at Kenyatta University. I am carrying out a research on the topic "INCULTURATION OF THE CONCEPT OF ATONEMENT IN AFRICA: A CASE OF THE WANGA PEOPLE OF KENYA." You are requested to be part of this research by participating in the interview. You are kindly requested to be objective in your answers. The information you provide shall be used strictly for this research; and your views will be confidential.

Research instrument will be administered to the following categories of informants:

1. Community elders (Male and Female).
2. Clergy (Male and Female).
3. Lay Preachers (Male and Female).
4. Members of the Wanga community who adhere to the traditional Wanga religion.
5. Christian members of the Wanga community.

**A5 Interview Questions for Male and Female Community Elders**

1. What is your name? Age? and occupation?
  - i). Tell us about your family's (Parents, children, siblings), education, economic and religious situation currently.
3. For how long have you lived in Wangaland?
4. What are some of the words that mean atonement in the Wanga language?
6. When are these words used in the common Wanga living?
7. Why, do you think, atonement is important among the Abawanga?
8. What happens if atonement ritual is not performed?
  - i). To an individual?
  - ii). To the society?
  - iii). To the environment?
9. What are some of the qualifications of an atoner among the Abawanga?
10. How do young people come to know about atonement?
11. What qualified one to teach the Abawanga atonement?
12. What are some of the elements used for atonement?
13. Where is atonement administered/performed?

**A 6 Interview Questions for the Clergy and Lay Preachers**

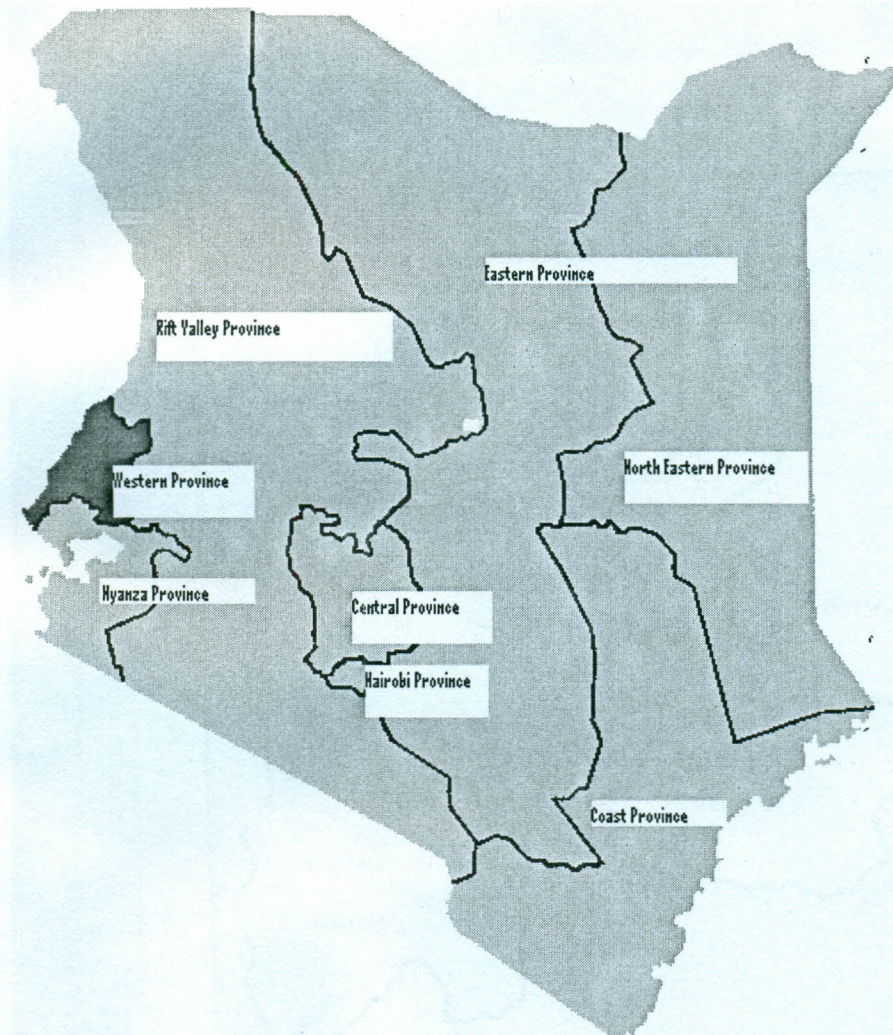
1. What is your name? Age? and occupation?
  - i). Tell us about your family's (Parents, children, siblings), education, economic and religious situation currently.
2. Which Church organization are you serving?
3. For how long have you been serving as a Clergy/Lay Preacher?
4. a). Do you have any theological training? Yes/No.
  - b). Explain your answer.
5. What are some of the words that mean atonement, in the Bible?
6. Do you think atonement is important in the Christian community? Yes/No
  - b). Explain your answer above.
7. What happens if atonement ritual is not performed,
  - i). To an individual?
  - ii). To the society?
  - iii). To the environment?
8. What are some of the qualifications of an atoner in the bible?
9. How do young people come to know about atonement?
10. When is atonement administered?
11. Where is atonement administered/performed?

**A7 Interview Questions for Traditionalists**

1. What is your name? Age? and occupation?
  - i). Tell us about your family's (Parents, children, siblings), education and economic status.
4. What are some of the words that mean atonement in Luhya language?
5. a). Is atonement important among the Abawanga people? Yes/No
  - b). Explain your answer above.
9. What happens if atonement ritual is not performed?
  - i). To an individual?
  - ii). To the society?
  - iii). To the environment?
10. What are the qualifications of an atoner among the Abawanga?
11. Who participates in the atonement process?
12. How do young people come to know about atonement?
13. What are the elements used for atonement?
14. When is atonement administered?
15. Where is atonement administered/performed?

## A8 The Map of Kenya, Provincial Boundaries

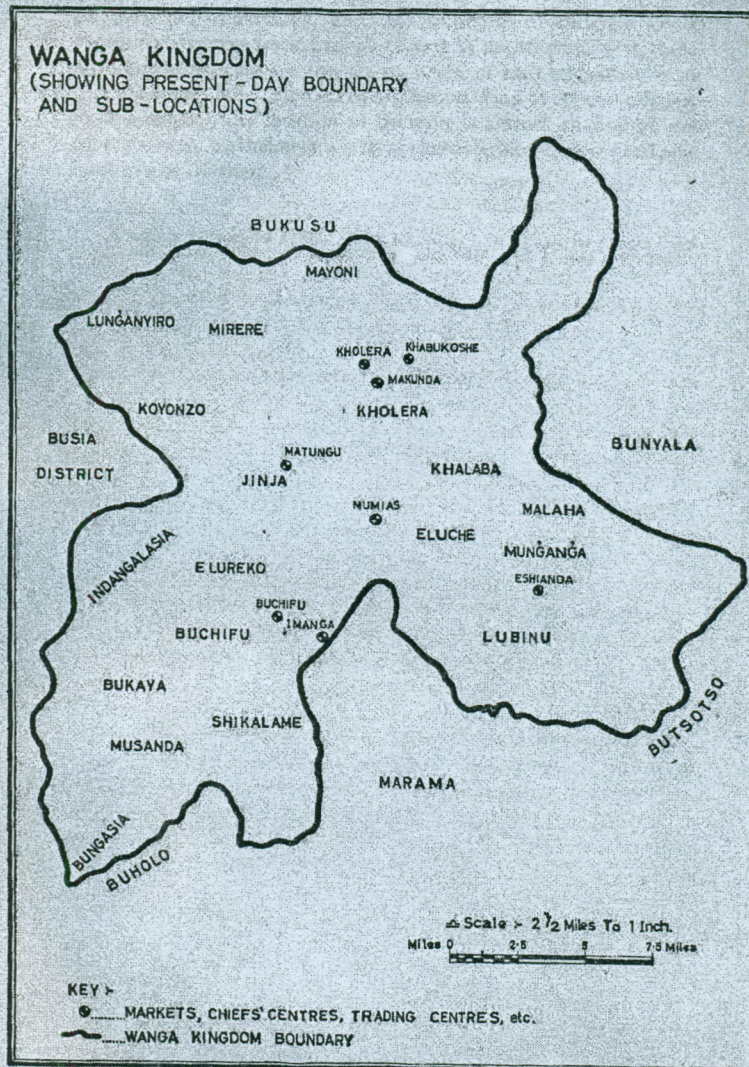
Hinkelman (2008 :1).



Note: The shaded province is the home of the Abaluhya.

## A 9 Mumias District

Adopted from the Wanga of Mumias, Were (1967: 99).



Note: Administrative boundaries may have been changed, but the village names and geographical locations remain the same, as at the writing of this thesis.

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