

**The Church as Alternative Community:  
Contextual bottom-up Reconciliation  
for a Catholic Diocese in Zimbabwe**

**by**

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I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis first to all the Christians in Masvingo Diocese who are part of the alternative Community striving to work for peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Second, I dedicate this work to the academic discipline of Missiology.

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I am greatly indebted to God Almighty who not only created me but also gave me this opportunity to research in this contextual situation of our country that affects his people in a very profound way.

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## ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to help the Catholic diocese of Masvingo to foster bottom-up reconciliation in its communities, by seeking ways and means of responding to the painful legacy of political violence. The background to this research is the repeated political violence orchestrated by the Zimbabwean state against its own citizens, especially at election times when the ruling party, through its alliance with the military, uses force to gain political support to remain in power.

This thesis uses a five-dimensional praxis cycle to integrate identification, spirituality, context analysis, theological reflection and practical planning. Chapter 2 develops a theological framework around the missiological concepts of *missio Dei*, alternative community, reconciliation and non-violence, focusing on scholars like Bosch, Brueggemann, Katongole and Schreier. Chapter 3 does context analysis by surveying five “waves” of political violence in Zimbabwe, from pre-colonial times to the present before making an in-depth study of the most recent (fifth) wave, since 1999.

For the sake of its focus on bottom-up reconciliation, the research sought the views of victims/survivors on political violence, limiting its scope to two incidents in the Zaka district during June 2008. Using an ethnographic approach, as part of a qualitative-interpretive design, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were used to listen to people’s experiences of fear, anger, mistrust and desperation, but also their views on the possible role of churches to overcome trauma and achieve reconciliation. Chapter 4 reports and analyses the data generated in that way.

In terms of the praxis cycle, Chapter 5 focuses on strategies for mission. It integrates theological resources (Chapter 2), context analysis (Chapter 3) and the input of the victims/survivors (Chapter 4) to suggest concrete actions that could motivate and encourage communities to recover from trauma and seek forgiveness, reconciliation, justice and peace. The vision is for churches to become an alternative community that lives and works, from the bottom up, for the restoration of human dignity, forgiveness and restorative justice as dimensions of reconciliation. The thesis embodies an epicletic spirituality, which acknowledges that reconciliation is the work of God, into which believers are called and empowered to participate.

### Keywords

Zimbabwe; political violence; executive-military alliance; trauma; *missio Dei*; alternative community; reconciliation; forgiveness; restorative justice; story-telling.

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AIPPA: Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

CCJP: Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

CFU: Commercial Farmers' Union

CIO: Central Intelligence Organisation

COPAC: Constitutional Parliamentary Committee

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

EFZ: Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe

ESAP: Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

GMB: Grain Marketing Board

GNU: Government of National Unity.

GPA: Global Political Agreement

HOCD: Heads of Christians Denominations

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IMF: International Monetary Fund

JOC: Joint Operations Command

LRF: Legal Resources Foundation

MDC: Movement for Democratic Change

MDC-T: Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai

MISA: Media Institute of Southern Africa

NCA: National Constitutional Assembly

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NIR: National Initiative for Reconciliation-

NOCZIM: National Oil Company of Zimbabwe

NRZ: National Railways of Zimbabwe

NSSA: National Social Security Authority

PF-ZAPU: Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union

PTUZ: Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe

PVO: Private Voluntary Organisations  
RAU: Research and Advocacy Unit  
SADC: Southern African Development Community  
SCC: Small Christian Community  
UDI: Unilateral Declaration of Independence  
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme  
UNISA: University of South Africa  
VOA: Voice Of America (Broadcasting Station)  
WCC: World Council of Churches  
ZANLA: Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army  
ZANU: Zimbabwe African National Union  
ZANU-PF: Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front  
ZAPU: Zimbabwe African People's Union  
ZCBC: Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference  
ZCHWU: Zimbabwe Catering & Hotel Workers' Union  
ZCTU: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions  
ZDAWU: Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers' Union  
ZDF: Zimbabwe Defence Forces  
ZEC: Zimbabwe Electoral Commission  
ZFTU: Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions  
ZIPRA: Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army  
ZRP: Zimbabwe Republic Police  
ZUCWU: Zimbabwe Urban Councils Workers' Union  
ZUJ: Zimbabwe Union of Journalists

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 MOTIVATION**

In my pastoral work as a Roman Catholic priest for more than thirty-five years I have come to realise the many challenges that the people of Zimbabwe have experienced. The socio-political violations perpetrated on the citizens of Zimbabwe have caused much pain, suffering, divisions and ongoing conflicts for individuals, families, communities and the peoples of the country. Desiring to participate in the academic debates on strategies and implementable methods to achieve reconciliation within the sadly divided peoples of Zimbabwe, I was motivated to join these academic debates.

The title of the thesis, *The Church as alternative Community: Contextual bottom-up reconciliation for a Catholic Diocese in Zimbabwe*, implies that reconciliation is needed and that the church can play a role in bringing it about. Even though the title doesn't state it explicitly, the reconciliation needed is from the socio-political violations against the citizens mentioned above that have caused pain, suffering, divisions, and ongoing conflict in Zimbabwe. Chapter 3 surveys the successive waves of violence experienced by Zimbabweans since colonial times, but this study focuses on only one period of disruptive violence that took place in 2008 (see 1.4). The study responds to the top-down initiatives by the Zimbabwean government to achieve some form of reconciliation in the aftermath of that violence (see 5.4). Since there is widespread consensus that those initiatives did not produce positive results, the focus of this study is on bottom-up initiatives as part of the mission of a Catholic Diocese, but there are long-standing debates in churches on the nature of their mission in relation to political violence and trauma.

##### **1.1.1 Alternative community**

As I searched for an entry point into this missiological debate, I became aware of David Bosch's praxis that he called the Alternative Community. This idea fascinated me. It grew out of the situation of apartheid in South Africa where religion had become an instrument of oppression to non-whites. Yet the religion of Jesus Christ was to be transformative and liberate people's lives. Bosch recognised the tension of what the Church should become and what it was denied to be.

This creative tension was an opportunity for the church to create and offer an alternative community to the already existing structures of the church that confirmed oppression (Bosch, 1991:381). The *alternative community* embodies this tension between the already and the not yet:

She [the church] is no longer what she used to be and not yet what she is destined to be. She is too early for heaven and too late for this world. She lives on the borderline between the already and the not yet. She is a fragment of the world to come. She is God's colony in man's world, God's experimental garden on earth. She is a *sign* of the world to come and at the same time guarantee of its coming. (Bosch, n.d.:18).

At the same time Bosch made it clear that his thoughts on the alternative community were influenced by Anabaptist theologians, especially John Howard Yoder (Nicol, 1990:89; Ahonen, 2003:64). He was also influenced by other theologians like Karl Barth (Nicol, 1990:89). While Bosch drew a distinction between the Anabaptist theologians who ignored the line between the church and the world while the Reformed ecclesiology drew a direct line between the church and the world, he criticised both views. Bosch believed that the more identifiable separate and unique the church community was, the greater was its significance for the world (Bosch, 1982:8). Therefore, the alternative community emerges within the traditional church of Jesus Christ but with a new thrust of living the true tenets of his Gospel. The Lord's Priestly Prayer (John 17), referred to by Cassidy<sup>1</sup> (in Nash, 1979:53), clearly relates the significant characteristics of such an alternative community. In this prayer the five marks of the Church are: truth (vv. 8, 17, 19), holiness (vv. 14-15), mission (v. 18), unity (vv. 21-23) and love (vv. 23-26) (Nash, 1979:53).

Other scholars like Cobus van Wyngaard (2008:24ff) also understand Bosch's "alternative community" in terms of how Jesus related to the various groups and classes in Jewish society. He describes how Bosch maps out what the alternative community should be like, as a transformative community that would dismantle the apartheid structures, without adopting direct confrontation with the state or withdrawing from public life (van Wyngaard, 2008:53). The praxis of "church as alternative community" suggested by Bosch motivated me to investigate it as a model for reconciliation in the context of Zimbabwe.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Cassidy, who played a leading role in initiating and organising the July 1979 Southern African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) in Pretoria, wrote an article entitled: "The Church as an Alternative Society" in *The Church and the Alternative Society* (South African Council of Churches, 1979).

### 1.1.2 Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

The issue of reconciliation in Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980 has been deliberated upon by many scholars and researchers, both local and international. To date some argue that very limited progress has been made, while others claim that the process towards reconciliation has been a complete failure (see Huyse, 2003). This thesis is motivated by the desire to explore these claims and to contribute to the debate.

The term “reconciliation” is derived from the Latin language. In Latin –“re” means “back” and “*conciliare*” means “bring together”. So, the term has the meaning of bringing people back together and harmonizing them after a conflict or misunderstanding. Other interpretations of the term are: cause to coexist in harmony, make compatible, or settle a disagreement. There are other synonyms, such as bury the hatchet, declare a truce, reunite, or restore friendly relations.<sup>2</sup> After much violence and violation of people’s rights in Zimbabwe, in which many citizens have been hurt and are now at loggerheads and aggrieved with pain and loss of limbs, property and loss of their relatives, and a few million are living in the diaspora, it would be appropriate to address this situation and seek a way forward by proposing reconciliation amongst the various contending parties.

On the eve of independence in 1980 the leader of ZANU, Robert Mugabe, adopted a conciliatory posture by offering reconciliation to the former enemies: the white Rhodesian Front party and to all who had opposed majority rule. That was a positive stance that would enable the nation to heal its past wounds. Such a pronouncement was accepted and praised the world over, but it proved to be a short-lived stint. Before long Mugabe’s Fifth Brigade began to wipe out any opposition from Matabeleland. At the same time, the whites continued to flee the country. The situation worsened after 2000, when the violent seizure of white-owned land without compensation was the order of the day (Holland, 2008). That act of taking white-owned land made the government a champion of ending white occupation of land that had lasted almost a century. At last, the historic injustice was corrected of six thousand white farmers owning some 15.5 million hectares of prime land while 4.5 million black farmers owned 16.4 million arid and semi-arid land in communal and purchased areas. Britain never resolved the land question at independence, hence the paradoxes of

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.google.com/search?q=etymology+of+reconciliation&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b> 23 March, 2017.

this maldistribution remained. Therefore, it can be argued that while the government considered itself the liberator, the one which embraced democracy, brought justice to the oppressed and even offered a hand of reconciliation, what actually transpired was the contrary. The government became a brutal dictatorial organ that enforced its own will, in opposition to the Christian ethics and principles that it claimed to uphold. Whoever did not support the ruling party became an enemy, whether white or black.

The list of enemies later included the neighbours of Zimbabwe, such as Botswana, Nigeria and even Libya, which had bailed out Zimbabwe during its fuel crisis, but at the top of the list remained Britain (Rukuni, 2012). Other enemies of the State are opposition political parties, the archenemy being the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), once led by Morgan Tsvangirai. Another serious enemy according to the government is the *Voice of America Studio 7* (VOA), created in 2003, run by Zimbabweans and funded by the American government. Its main purpose is to give different views on issues taking place in Zimbabwe, including views opposed to government ideology. However, the government sees the purpose of VOA as to achieve its demise through pursuing “regime change”.

Another enemy category is that of independent newspapers. They are viewed by government as enemies and as supporting opposition parties. There is always a real threat to journalists who work for these independent papers. For instance, one journalist believed to have leaked explosive footage to foreign media was killed in mysterious circumstances. Edward Chikomba, a former ZBC cameraman, was abducted on March 29 2007 near his home in Harare by a group of armed men and found dead two days later near the industrial farming area of Darwendale, according to local journalists and news reports. Those reports and CPJ sources said Chikomba's death was likely linked to his alleged leaking of footage showing opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai after he was beaten in police custody in February. The footage was aired on several global media networks and sparked international condemnation of Mugabe, but it was never shown on state television in Zimbabwe. The Chikomba murder instilled fear in the local press, especially with regard to collaborating with foreign media (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2008). No investigation of his death was ever carried out. He paid the ultimate price for being an independent journalist and there was a good number of other journalists who similarly suffered under police brutality. Another category of “enemy of the state” includes many individual Zimbabweans, black and white, who

openly opposed and criticised the tyrannical activities of government. Their fate is discussed in Chapter 3.

Martin Luther King Jr. (2010:32) expressed the dichotomy between words and actions very clearly when he said:

One of the greatest tragedies of life is that men seldom bridge the gulf between practice and profession, between doing and saying. A persistent schizophrenia leaves so many of us tragically divided against ourselves. On the one hand, we proudly profess certain sublime and noble principles, but on the other hand, we sadly practice the very antithesis of those principles.

The same dichotomy is clearly evident in the performance of the Zimbabwe government. On the one hand they claim to be on the side of the people and to guarantee their freedoms, while on the other hand they perpetrate violence and even atrocities against those same citizens. Although the government may not appreciate a direct challenge from churches as an alternative community, the necessity for such a prophetic alternative community has been demonstrated by the contradictions between government's claims and practices. Just like Bosch dared to challenge the status quo in apartheid South Africa, the Church in Zimbabwe needs to go beyond its traditional preaching ministry and become more of a prophetic alternative to help counter the serious challenges faced by its members and the community at large.

An alternative community is needed in the context of Zimbabwe because such a community is committed to closing the gap between what is said and what is done. It wishes to translate Christian principles into action. The government should be held accountable for its actions and this can only be implemented through the challenge posed by a credible and consistent alternative community, not by churches that support government violence or remain silent in the face of people's suffering. Churches can become instrumental in this mission if they grow together into an alternative community by posing such challenges to government so that the gap between words and deeds closes, instead of widens.

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference has written many Pastoral Letters to initiate this kind of challenge. A case in point is their 2001 Pastoral Letter entitled *Tolerance and Hope*. They said:



In our country the holders of political power, including those claiming to be Christians, do tend to abuse their fellow human beings. They just use them to achieve their own political ends and then dump them afterwards... Violence, intimidation and threats are the tools of failed politicians (ZCBC, 2001:149).

The Bishops did not hide what some politicians, even those who are Christians, have done to abuse people and use them as tools to achieve their selfish ends. The Bishops go further by stating the Christian principle that should be followed: “We must point out ... that they are engaging in an unjust activity. As your pastors... we call upon you to uphold the dignity and sacredness of each person” (ZCBC, 2001:149). This is a clear challenge given to politicians and members of the government to respect every human person. The Bishops intend to hold politicians accountable to their words and actions, thereby acting on behalf of the bigger Christian church as an alternative community:

We, the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, call upon our Government to use the organs and institutions of the state to bring about true peace and harmony as we move towards the presidential and mayoral elections in March 2002 (ZCBC, 2001:156).

That call was made in the face of the contrary actions implemented by government agents. Instead of being organs of security and peace for the people they were feared by the people because they, in some instances, inflicted intimidation, pain and even death. The Bishops should continue to be prophetic and inspire Christians to be an alternative community that boldly stands for justice and initiates change for the better. The Bishops should continue to speak truth to power in this way and also call their church members to become part of a living alternative community to challenge the status quo that oppresses the generality of people in Zimbabwe. To this category of “alternative community” belong all Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) and their members, as well as non-governmental organisations for human rights, in so far as they are in tandem with Christian principles and values.

In the context of these conflicts and contradictions suffered by the people of Zimbabwe since independence, as well as the courageous prophetic voices that have been spoken, I add my voice through this thesis to the search for peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe so that people may co-exist in a humane way. My research focuses on the mission of God in the shape of the church as

an “alternative community” to help bring about bottom-up reconciliation in the Zaka district of Masvingo Diocese.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective of this study is to explore and describe how a Catholic diocese can utilise the activities of what Bosch calls an “alternative community”. The activities of such an alternative community of believers may become a starting point for a larger process of national reconciliation in Zimbabwe, which has experienced a series of violent atrocities perpetrated against the citizens of Zimbabwe. This overall objective can be broken down into academic and strategic objectives.

### **1.2.1 Academic objectives**

The theological insight of the paradigm shifts in mission theology was discussed at length by David Bosch (1991) and has influenced many scholars in doing missiology. In line with the paradigm shift required at the time, Bosch suggested that the Church should see itself as an alternative community in the context of apartheid South Africa. The academic objectives of this research fit into the framework of a shift towards an ecumenical paradigm of mission, as proposed by Bosch, thereby reviewing the traditional approaches of churches to the social challenges of violence perpetrated in Zimbabwe.

The main academic objective of this research is to contribute to missiological reflection in Southern Africa, focusing on the question how churches could contribute to reconciliation in the context of atrocities and violence perpetrated by the Zimbabwe government agents in post independent Zimbabwe. The following academic objectives flow from this central objective:

- To use the praxis cycle as an interpretive framework for doing transformative missiological reflection;
- To explore the themes forgiveness and reconciliation missiologically in the Zimbabwean context;
- To develop a bottom-up theology of reconciliation in the context of post-conflict co-existence of various groups, leading to processes of forgiveness and reconciliation;
- To evaluate the relevance of Bosch’s alternative community concept and its practicality in the context of conflicting communities in Zimbabwe as a result of the violence and atrocities perpetrated in these communities.

### 1.2.2 Strategic Objectives

As explained in Chapter 3.1, there have been successive waves of conflict in Zimbabwe, both before and after independence. The violence perpetrated, the atrocities committed and the destabilisation of communities, particularly after independence, continue to cause anger, hatred, fear, lawlessness and ultimately lack of peace and proper development in Zimbabwe. Christians are not only called to uphold Christian principles such as the dignity of the human person, working for the common good, solidarity, justice, peace and the integrity of creation (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004), but also to be part of the Mission of God to reconcile humanity with God and human beings to each other (Bosch, 1991:389). Thus, the Church is present because God has a mission. This is missiologically sound as the work of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation is not just an individual's act but a community exercise (2 Cor. 5:20). According to Bosch (1991:117), Paul believed that "change in the life of the believer, which carries with it moral responsibilities that distinguish Christians from "outsiders" while at the same time stressing their obligation to those "outsiders," is key to the process of a believing community. In fact, the Church becomes an instrument of God's mission to his people, the mission of reconciliation. To engage in this reconciliation process, I explored the usefulness of the concept of "alternative community" that Bosch suggested in the struggle against apartheid to transform South African society. As Cobus van Wyngaard (2008:34) pointed out, the concept of alternative community remained central to the work of Bosch, even when his later work used the term "distinct community" more frequently. This concept has captured the minds of many scholars,<sup>3</sup> especially in trying to respond to the South African situation of apartheid.

Since an academic thesis in itself has very limited social impact, the following strategic objectives will require ongoing initiatives and engagement after the completion of the study. It is important for me to spell them out, however, since a firm commitment on my part to implement the suggestions generated by this research is part and parcel of my motivation to do this study. So, even though the following strategic objectives will not be achieved on the pages of this thesis, they represent the horizon within which and the goals towards which the whole study moves. My

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of alternative community has been discussed by several scholars such as: Kritzinger and Saayman (2011), Bekele (2011), Reppenhagen & Guder (2011), Saayman (2011); (<http://www.academia.edu/5550399/the-church-as-alternative-church>) 20 August, 2014.

strategic objectives, which represent key features of my identification or agency (see 1.5.1.2) in the praxis of this research project, are to suggest a way forward:

- To achieve peace and justice in communities through initiating a “bottom-up” process of forgiveness and reconciliation in a politically violated community;
- To provide a platform for victims/survivors to “empty out” their bitterness and anger, thus empowering them to participate in recovery from trauma;
- To provide moral and spiritual support to victims/survivors through the Church as an alternative community;
- To promote the vision of an alternative community by facilitating networking between people, organisations and Church bodies that work for reconciliation, peace and development;
- To provide space for interaction such as sports and developmental activities in order to achieve reconciliation amongst formerly conflicting individuals.

These strategies have far-reaching implications and will require persistent effort, but over the course of years they can be attained with the collaboration of churches and communities, as argued in Chapter 5. These are not completely new initiatives, since bodies such as the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Caritas have already interacted with some of these communities at the height of the violence and trauma suffered by them.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **1.3.1 Primary research question**

The description above has remarked that top-down approaches to establish reconciliation in Zimbabwe are problematic and have so far failed. Therefore, this proposed study will be guided by the following primary research question: How can a Roman Catholic diocese deepen its commitment to being an alternative community to initiate a bottom-up reconciliation process in Zimbabwe?

### **1.3.2 Sub-questions**

For the primary question to be properly explored and analysed in its local context several sub-questions had to be answered to build up the praxis of bottom-up reconciliation by an alternative community.

#### *1.3.2.1* What is the context of alienation, estrangement, violence in Zimbabwe?

This sub-question prompted context analysis and a historical description of the “fault lines” running through Zimbabwean society. This information was obtained firstly from written records and reports (Chapter 3) and secondly from semi-structured interviews with selected participants (Chapter 4).

#### *1.3.2.2* What are the experiences of victims of violence as well as perpetrators of violence?

This sub-question required views to be obtained directly from victims and perpetrators who were involved during the time of violence and atrocities in Zimbabwe to find out their personal experiences, attitudes, relationships and feelings.

#### *1.3.2.3 a.* What were the formal (institutional) responses for reconciliation by Government, NGOs like Amani Trust and others?

*b.* What were the responses of churches/Christians in Zimbabwe to alienation, estrangement and violence?

*c.* What is the response of committed Christians in the face of their suffering due to the political violence?

These sub-questions required an exploration of initiatives and attitudes to reconciliation from a variety of angles to find out what has been done in this area by different actors. The sources used were publications and interviews.

#### *1.3.2.4* What is the nature and purpose of the notion of the church as “alternative community” as discussed by David Bosch and Walter Brueggemann and how does it relate to the search for reconciliation?

This sub-question required reflection on the key theological concepts of the thesis: reconciliation, forgiveness, *missio Dei* and alternative community. The information for this was drawn from theological books and journals.

- 1.3.2.5 a. How can an “alternative community” approach be implemented concretely in the Zimbabwean context?
- b. What suggestions are given by committed Christians as the way forward for their communities?
- c. What do they understand as their Christian role in this conflict-ridden scenario in their communities?

These sub-questions represent planning for practical actions, and required listening to the views of committed Christians living in the context.

#### **1.4 THE SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

As already indicated, Zimbabwe experienced several waves of violence, extending from the pre-colonial era to the post-independence period. Five such waves can be distinguished, which due to the different weapons and strategies employed, varied in intensity. These waves are discussed in Chapter 3 to show how they contributed to entrenching a “culture” of violence in Zimbabwe over the decades. The more sophisticated the weapons and strategies utilised the more devastating the impact of each specific wave of violence was experienced.

The title of the thesis indicates that the focus of the research concerns a Catholic Diocese. To make the study manageable, its scope was firstly narrowed down to one particular diocese, namely the Diocese of Masvingo. The scope was narrowed down even further by focusing on Zaka district in the Masvingo diocese since it was the scene of two specific incidents of state-supported violence in 2008 that left a deep mark on the community: firstly, the petrol-bombing of the MDC offices at Jerera, which left two MDC officials dead and many other injured and maimed; and secondly the petrol-bombing of the priests’ house at St Anthony’s Mission, which destroyed the house and the belongings of its occupants. There is consensus in the community that both incidents of violence were perpetrated by the ruling party against their political opponents in a desperate attempt to cling to power. The specific incidents of violence took place during the run-off presidential elections in June 2008, after no clear winner emerged in the first round. The intensity of the violence against members of the opposition party (MDC-T) forced their presidential candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, to withdraw from the run-off elections, since many of its members were being harassed, assaulted and killed by ruling party supporters.

By focusing on those two violent incidents in Zaka district within the Masvingo diocese, the thesis thereby narrowed its temporal scope to 2008. This narrowing of geographic and temporal focus (on Masvingo, Zaka and 2008) was done in order to enable an in-depth understanding of the trauma caused by the violence and to canvas the views of local church leaders on how churches could respond to overcome the legacy of that violence. On the basis of those inputs from the community I explored how the concept of an alternative community could shape a process of forgiveness leading to reconciliation in the context of Masvingo diocese.

### **1.5 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A theoretical framework focuses on the manner in which one views the issues at hand. This is why a theory creates distance for the sake of clarity. It is an attempt to have an overview of the whole situation as well as a guideline for research. There are three types (or levels) of knowledge that play a role in research, which Mouton (2001:137-142) constructs as a “three worlds” framework. The three Worlds framework is a tool to enable the researcher to organise his/her thinking about science and the practice of scientific research. One is able to reflect on different levels when writing results of various data obtained from the research as well as choose a relevant research design.

In World 3 science develops itself through reflection on its principles in order to check how truth is attained. Constant reflection is key to obtaining truth and enables researchers to self-correct anomalies and disparities to the principles obtained, as Karl Popper has argued (Mouton, 2011:139). These three worlds display the basic frameworks of how knowledge is obtained from the world. In world 1 knowledge is obtained from the senses and referred to as pragmatic, while World 2 is normally referred to as the world of science. Thus, critical inquiry is to be made in World 2, utilising reflection in order to obtain the truth. World 2 is also called “epistemic” a derivative from a Greek word “episteme” meaning “truthful knowledge”.

World 3, where critical reflection is done on scientific theories and theory formation, is termed meta-science. In this world are included paradigms in the philosophy of science as well as paradigms in research methodology (Mouton, 2011:140). Thus, in world 3 we continuously reflect on our scientific research which enables us to improve the nature of our scientific inquiry. However, this model of three worlds is not to be taken literally. They are interwoven and used only to indicate distinctions in approaching knowledge in our world. Other terms could also be utilized

such as “frames of reference” or “modes of reflection” (Mouton, 2011:142). These are merely instruments to help us clarify the nature of our research.

It is to be highlighted that these three levels or worlds do not operate independently but are interwoven in making any research. These levels are identified for the sake of clarity, yet are complementary in pursuing a research project.

### **1.5.1 World 3 – Ontology**

The conceptual or meta-theoretical framework of this study – representing World 3 in the design of Mouton (2001:138) – is theological. This framework expresses both the worldview assumptions that drive the envisaged actions and the theoretical starting points underlying the scholarly reflection.

#### *1.5.1.1 Missio Dei*

The theological framework of this study is based on the fundamental drive for reconciliation that it is the work of God, the *missio Dei*. Thus, when the Church as alternative community works for reconciliation it participates in the work of God to bring about his Kingdom of peace, joy and justice.

The fundamental starting point of the *missio Dei* is that God created the universe and responded to the sinfulness of humanity. The disobedience of Adam and Eve led to their expulsion from the garden (Gen.3:23), but despite this weakness and brokenness of our first parents, God initiated the process of restoring humanity to himself. God not only values his creation of humanity; he also has seen it as necessary to reconcile humanity to himself through his beloved Son Jesus Christ in order to retain the dignity of human beings. Jesus Christ submitted to the will of his Father and assumed humanity and subsequently suffered, died and rose from the dead. This three-fold process culminated in the realisation of reconciliation between God and humanity as well as between human beings. As Paul states: “It is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18).

Central to the *missio Dei* is God’s preferential option for the poor and suffering, as revealed in the incarnation of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth. The very nature of God’s incarnate presence is *Immanuel*, God *with* us. The incarnation should not be seen as a condescending top-down movement from the side of God. The birth, life and death of Jesus show clearly how God entered the world from below, on the underside of history, among those excluded and marginalised by the



Roman Empire and the Judean religious authorities in order to transform and save the world. In Jesus of Nazareth God identified with broken humanity and showed his deep solidarity with every human being, to bring about reconciliation, justice and peace. In this sense, God's transforming mission is inherently bottom-up reconciliation, starting with the Victim among the victims, as spelled out in 2.3.3 and throughout Chapter 5.

As a Catholic priest who has worked for the past thirty-five years with people who have experienced much violence, trauma, injustice and excruciating pain and death at the hands of their fellow men and women, I opt for a theological framework that gives hope as well as meaning to the senseless suffering of people. God allowed his Son to suffer so that the whole of humanity can suffer with hope and ultimately be reconciled to live a better life. God starts with the victim, his Son, who is restored to life in a transfigured humanity. He goes on to forgive his disciples and heal them. Having healed them he commissions them to continue his message and mission to the whole world (Schreiter, 1998:22).

#### *1.5.1.2 Praxis cycle*

This theological framework also uses a praxis cycle, which follows the "pastoral circle" initially used by Holland and Henriot (1983) for social analysis. The pastoral circle originally had four elements (or "moments") but other authors have added other aspects. In a later book (Wijsen, Henriot & Mejia, 2006:42), the four phases are explained in analysing "Small Christian Communities" (SCC). The first stage is the contact made with the SCC, which is also referred to as the insertion phase. These are stories that relate what is happening in the SCC on various levels. It also relates the reactions and feelings of that same community. The second stage is analysis, where questions are asked: Why is the SCC succeeding or failing? In this stage the researcher tries to discover reasons for the particular performance of the SCC, whether positive or negative. The third stage is theological reflection. In this part, the researcher as a missiologist searches for Scripture texts that could guide the course of action to be taken. The fourth stage is the Response, in which strategies are suggested in order to accomplish the goal of the transformative praxis (reflection-action).

This thesis uses the pastoral circle of Holland & Henriot, as it has been adapted by Karecki, (2002:139) into a "cycle of mission praxis" with five dimensions: Identification, Context analysis, Theological reflection, Strategies for mission and Spirituality, but I prefer the term "praxis cycle".

In the first place this model, with its interplay between five elements of praxis, plays a role a) at the level of World 1 (see 1.4.3) to guide the gathering of data from victims/survivors and church leaders (Chapter 4); b) as a practical, mobilising instrument for involvement in the *Missio Dei* (Chapter 4.8 and the whole of Chapter 5); c) as an analytical, theoretical instrument at the level of World 2 (see 1.4.2); d) fundamentally as a meta-theoretical instrument at the level of World 3 to affirm the nature of God's mission praxis and to hold the whole thesis together. For that reason, the macro-structure of the thesis is shaped as follows by the praxis cycle:

Chapter 1	Identification
Chapter 2	Theological reflection
Chapter 3	Context analysis
Chapter 4	Context analysis
Chapter 5	Strategies for mission (integrated with context analysis and theological reflection)
Chapter 6	Identification

The role of spirituality cannot be located at one point or in one chapter. The spirituality inspiring and guiding my research praxis in this thesis is evident on every page. It imbues the whole study in the sense that every chapter and section, from my motivation to embark on this project (1.1) to my final self-evaluation (6.8) flows from my commitment as a Catholic priest to serve God by serving people. My analysis of the gruesome realities of violence (Chapter 3) was not inspired by anti-government political sentiment or ideological rhetoric, but by my concern for the life and dignity of all human beings, created in God's image. Likewise, every other aspect of the study, from the selection of interview participants to the drafting of interview questions and my style of interviewing (Chapter 4), as well as my suggestions for actions and projects (Chapter 5) were all based on sound academic criteria and conventions, but fundamentally on my sense of calling to participate in God's mission of justice, reconciliation and peace. In that sense the praxis cycle, with spirituality at its core, is at the heart of this thesis and holds it together.

The macro-structure of the thesis as sketched above is more clearly explained in 1.9, which gives an overview of the six chapters. The five elements of the praxis cycle in the macro-structure of the thesis do not follow the usual activist sequence of See-Judge-Act or Insertion-Analysis-Reflection-Planning. The study moves back and forth between the five elements of the cycle to show that this is not a manual for activists, but a scholarly reflection at the level of World 2, based on a firm commitment to transformation at the level of World 1 and on close listening to the voices of

victims/survivors at World 1. The praxis cycle functions in this thesis not primarily as a mobilising instrument (World 1), but as a theoretical instrument (World 2) and as a meta-theoretical perspective that holds the whole research together.

### **1.5.2 World 2 – Epistemology**

World 2, which is the “world of science” or the level of theory, is where the analysis is done of the data generated from consulting literature and listening to people’s experiences. It is moving a step outward from the overall perspective of World 3 and “upward” from the practices of World 1 in order to understand and interpret the information that was gathered. This is likened to what is sometimes referred to as the “balcony” view of events. It gives the researcher an opportunity not only to reflect and ask questions on the data collected but also to search for truth in the context of this research.

The epistemology adopted in this research flows from and resonates with the theological conceptual framework explained in 1.5.1. The integrity of the study depends on the question whether the research design is in line with that theological approach. The design of an empirical process to gather data at the level of World 1 that is attuned to the *missio Dei* – with its preferential option for the poor and violated – can only be a sensitive listening process. As a priest who has pastoral responsibilities for both the faithful and other fellow human beings, I endeavour that people live in harmony and eradicate all sources of disharmony, hatred and annihilation of one another in the name of politics or any other social structure. This method allows me to carefully listen, pay attention to the literature used on what people have gone through in their pain. I therefore explored and analysed the violence experienced by victims/survivors in terms of solidarity with the brokenness, weakness and sinfulness of humanity. The most appropriate research design to generate data for such a process is qualitative inquiry.

#### *1.5.2.1 Qualitative inquiry*

Qualitative inquiry encompasses a variety of approaches to interpretive research (Leedy, 1997:155). The approach is multi-faceted and includes many disciplines, which makes it difficult to define, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000:xv) point out:

The open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project (see also Swinton and Mowat, 2011:29).

The qualitative approach utilizes a variety of methods and approaches as its logic is based on the fact that human beings are “interpretive creatures” (2011:29). It is assumed that the world is not simply “out there” but that it is a complexity of processes interpreted by human beings as they try to make sense of their experiences, feelings and relationship to God. Qualitative research methodology links well with an interpretivist approach, which will be the main stay of the data collected in this study. Mason (2002) explains how social sciences make increasing use of qualitative research in their methodology as it lends itself better to an interpretivist approach: “I think it is exciting that so many researchers from so many different traditions and disciplines are interested in doing research which is, in some way or another, qualitative in nature” (Mason, 2002:3).

However, there is debate in regard to the definition of qualitative research. Scholars vary but it is acknowledged that it “indeed has grown out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions” (Mason, 2002:2). Thus, this method allows of differing versions of interpreting the world, depending on the context and material obtained. Although there are many qualitative designs, Merriam & Tisdell (2016:22-42) give a summary of six qualitative research designs.

First and most common is the *basic qualitative research design*. This research is done with the assumption and belief that knowledge is not discovered but constructed by people in an on-going fashion as they engage in making meaning of an activity experienced or a phenomenon observed. This is why this qualitative approach is also described as *generic, basic* and *interpretive* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:23).

Another qualitative design is *phenomenology*, which is interested in lived experiences, since it is through lived experiences that people become conscious of the world around them. Thus, when these experiences are shared their meaning can be shared amongst those who have experienced them. The focus of phenomenological study is to seek understanding about the essence and the underlying structure of a phenomenon. In the process of study, the researcher must refrain from personal prejudices and assumptions: “This process is called *epoche*, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgement” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:27).

There is also a qualitative design called *ethnography*, which seeks to understand the interaction between people and also between people and the culture of their society. This method originated from anthropologists who sought to “do” ethnography as a process but also as the product of that

research. Therefore “ethnography is both a process and a product...The factor that unites all forms of ethnography is its focus on human society and culture” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:29). There are various ways of defining culture, yet generally it includes the beliefs, values and attitudes that structure the behaviour patterns of a specific group of people or society.

Another research design is called *grounded theory*, which was initiated in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss. The investigator is the primary instrument of data collection as well as of the analysis that follows. The investigator then takes an inductive stance in producing meaning from the data collected. The result that emerges is a theory “grounded” in the data collected, which is why it is called “grounded” theory. Thus, grounded theory distinguishes itself from other qualitative theories in its focus on building a theory from the data collected, either by interviews, observations or documentary material.

*Narrative inquiry* is another method utilised in qualitative research. This method uses stories or narratives and it is claimed that this is “the oldest and most natural form of sense making” (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002:66). The usefulness of narrative is not so much that it talks about life but that it interacts with life. Narratives or stories are ways to share our daily lives, either through cave drawings in ancient times, story-telling, biographies, life history or through Facebook in our contemporary context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:34). Because the “text” of the story forms the data to be analysed, the discipline of hermeneutics is important in the study of story. Thus, hermeneutics focuses on interpretation in this methodology in order to get to the meaning of the text or any data gathered in the context of narrative inquiry.

The *case study* methodology also falls within qualitative research. A case study can utilise both qualitative and quantitative approaches. But here in the realm of qualitative research this design shares with all the other designs mentioned above. It searches for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis pursues an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product is richly descriptive. Although there are variations in defining what a “case study” is the following may be adopted: “A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:37). A case study focuses on a specific area, phenomenon, subject-matter, and empirically investigates that specific area. Thus the “what” that is studied is a bounded system, a single entity, a unit around which there are clear boundaries. This design differs from other qualitative research designs in that it is *the unit of*

*analysis* that determines its being a case study: “The other types of qualitative research – such as ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and so on – are defined by the focus of the study, not the unit of analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:39).

This research followed a qualitative-interpretivist approach. Although the types of qualitative research mentioned above may overlap, the specific qualitative design chosen for this research is ethnographic, since the research question and sub-questions require careful listening to victims/survivors and church leaders, as well as attention to the broader issues like cultural trauma (see 5.3.1). The concern is not with statistics, as in quantitative research, but with what was genuinely experienced and felt by the participants. An ethnographic research design gives careful attention to people’s experiences and how they interpret or process them. The research methods utilised to discern those experiences are explained next.

### **1.5.3 World 1 – Research methods**

In order to be in line with the research questions (1.3) and the theoretical framework developed in 1.5.1 and 1.5.2, the research methods used in this study were qualitative in nature. To investigate the current situation in the Masvingo diocese, data was gathered from a) relevant literature about the violent acts perpetrated in the area, b) from interviews with people who had suffered injury, cruelty and trauma from the violence, and c) from a focus group of church leaders. That furnished the research with data about how people experienced the violence and were busy dealing with it.

#### *1.5.3.1 Agency*

In designing the qualitative research methods, the question of agency was a critical factor. Who are to be the agents of reconciling mission? From the theological reflection in Chapter 2 and an interpretation of the written sources on the violence, it became clear that there two significant and complementary categories of agents in the mission of reconciliation. The first category consisted of the victims/survivors who had suffered politically motivated violence. To this first category also belong people whose stories have been documented and recorded from which the researcher has obtained data. The contribution of this first category was to express the feelings and experiences of the victims/survivors as well as their ideas on the way forward and the possibility of a process of reconciliation. In proposing suggestions for the way forward the first category participates as agents of reconciling mission. Since these victims are not necessarily all Christians, their feelings of anger and suggestions of retaliation may not fully annunciate the intended mission of

reconciliation, so they may not be able to be full agents of reconciliation. In other words, the contribution of this first category, obtained through personal interviews, was extremely valuable but not sufficient as a basis for the mission of reconciliation.

Since God has chosen the church as a community of believers to participate in his mission of reconciling the world to himself, the Church is the second category of agents of reconciling mission. The Church is well situated both to listen and accommodate the violated and move together with them in responding to God's mission of reconciliation. For this reason, it was essential to interview church leaders as well, to gather their views and suggestions on the mission of reconciliation. That was achieved by means of a focus group, as explained in Chapter 4.3.

In conclusion, there is a twofold agency in reconciling mission: the victims/survivors of violence and the church as "alternative community." The agency of these two groups are closely interwoven in the analysis of their inputs in Chapter 4 and in the use made of their contributions in Chapter 5.

#### *1.5.3.2 Interviews*

A number of different qualitative research methods could have been utilised in this regard. One option is structured interviews, in which the questions are formally tabulated and strictly adhered to. Another option is to use semi-structured interviews. While a structured interview has a fixed set of questions which does not allow one to divert, a semi-structured interview is more open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview in response to what a participant says (Adams, 2015).

In my research I used semi-structured interviews with an interview schedule so that I (as interviewer) could allow space for a participant to digress from the questions asked or to elaborate on a question, when I felt that the views or feelings being expressed added something significant that I had not heard from any other participants. In this way I heard some excruciating stories of suffering as well as some constructive ideas about a possible way forward as Christians.

All the details regarding the semi-structured interviews, the interview schedule and the sampling procedure are given in Chapter 4.2 and 4.3. The questions in the interview schedule (see 4.3) were drawn up on the basis of the research question and sub-questions (1.3).

### *1.5.3.3 Focus group*

As indicated in 1.5.3.1 and explained in detail in Chapter 4.3, a focus group consisting of church leaders was used as a second phase of data generation. While interpreting the views of the interview participants, key themes emerged, out of which a set of questions was drawn up for the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to gather the views of a few church leaders on the ways in which churches could respond to the legacy of the 2008 election violence. The focus group questions and the views expressed in the focus group are analysed in Chapter 4.

To conclude this section on data generation, the participants in this study included victims/survivors of the political violence and trauma of 2008 as well as a group of church leaders who were selected to help reflect on the practicability of an “alternative community” in the context of Zimbabwe’s attempt to realise forgiveness and reconciliation in post-conflict Zimbabwe.

### *1.5.3.4 Data analysis*

The process of analysing the data generated by the semi-structured interviews is described in detail in Chapter 4. Through a close reading of the transcribed interviews the key themes emerging from them were identified. Those themes were in turn used as the basis for drawing up a set of questions for the focus group. The focus group questions and the responses to them finally shaped the structure of Chapter 5, which contains my constructive reflection on the mission of an alternative community in the service of bottom-up reconciliation.

## **1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When carrying out research among individuals and groups, a number of ethical considerations stand out. The first and foremost is to do no harm. In this research I applied for ethical clearance to the Ethics Review Committee of the College of Human Sciences at Unisa. In my application I categorised it as “medium risk” research, but the committee overruled that and insisted that it is a “high risk” project, which I subsequently accepted. Due to ongoing political tensions in Zimbabwe between ZANU-PF and MDC-T, some participants could be exposed to harm by taking part in the research. I made sure to obtain written informed consent from every participant in the interviews and the focus group. A pro forma copy of the informed consent form is attached to this thesis as Appendix 1. When a participant referred by name to any perpetrator of the 2008 violence or any government official, I deleted those names from the transcriptions. I also ensured that the participants remained anonymous in reporting and analysing the views they expressed in the



interviews. I ensured that the transcribed interviews are safely and inaccessibly stored, both in digital and in hard copy format. I also made sure that I complied with all the research ethics rules and regulations required by Unisa, as the academic institution, overseeing my research (see Ketafian, 2015). The Ethics Review Committee of the College of Human Sciences at Unisa approved my ethical clearance application and issued the clearance certificate (Appendix 2).

## **1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

### **1.7.1 Violence and suffering**

Trice (2011) refers to the cruelty suffered on September 11 2001, when two planes crashed into the twin towers of the Trade Centre in New York and relates how people jumped to their death from various floors of the burning buildings. He explains why it is necessary and important to understand cruelty represented by the violent deaths that were suffered by people in the twin towers: “Cruelty at the institutional sphere is a fracture that can simultaneously harm and even annihilate well-being in every sphere” (Trice, 2011:16). For the connection between cruelty and violence with reconciliation, Trice refers to Jesus’ life, public teaching and public execution that “reveals inroads toward understanding reconciliation in light of cruelty” (Trice, 2011:18). It is therefore imperative to discuss the violence perpetrated and the subsequent suffering and trauma experienced by the people of Zimbabwe in order to give context to the reconciliation that is desired in this research. The same author points out that “cruelty shapes and affects our intra-personal, interpersonal and institutional lives” (:21), which means there is a need to listen and analyse the painful experiences of people before we can perceive the shape of reconciliation offered by God through his church.

### **1.7.2 A bottom-up approach to reconciliation**

Aware that many failed attempts at peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe with a top-down approach have been made, I am motivated to adopt a bottom-up approach to reconciliation. The top-down approaches, initiated by the government and its structures, have not succeeded in getting the whole community to participate. As argued by Huyse (2003), the latter approach is necessary, since it enables all the structures of governance and the community to take ownership of the process of reconciliation. Huyse (2003:39) also argues that a top-down approach to the process of reconciliation in Zimbabwe has failed thus far. Further, it is essential to listen to the experiences and desires of the people most affected by the violence, which implies an approach to the process of reconciliation from the bottom up instead of from the top down. A process of genuine

reconciliation is initiated by those who suffered the violence instead of being dictated from structures above.

What is a “bottom-up” approach? According to Hemmer et al (2006), psychology defines a “bottom-up” process as an approach in which there is a progression from the individual elements to the whole (Hemmer et al, 2006). In other words, the approach originates from the “common” people – also called the lower ranks, the non-professionals or the grassroots – and goes up to the higher structures. In the case of this research the bottom-up approach suggests that we begin to give ear to the victims or hear their stories then solicit them for a way forward to achieve reconciliation. There is no standard path already laid down, as in the case of a top-down approach, where the parameters and structures are fixed beforehand. A bottom up approach gives the researcher an opportunity to envision a process of reconciliation together with those directly affected by the violence.

The Church therefore plays an important role to move out of itself and provide a platform to listen to people who were violated or victimised and to walk together with them towards a healing, forgiving and reconciling process. In this way the church becomes an alternative community that can enable people in a community to work together for healing, reconciliation and co-existence between those who suffered violence and those who inflicted it.

### **1.7.3 Peacebuilding**

Although as a Catholic priest it is my duty and part of my ministry to work for peace and be involved in peace building, the Second Vatican Council says that “it is the vocation of the laity to take the lead in transforming the social order in light of the gospel. In other words, the front lines of peacebuilding will mostly be occupied by lay people” (Schreiter et al, 2010:vii). Thus, the role of the Religious and the laity together constitute the task given to the Church as alternative community by God to participate in working for reconciliation. And as Archbishop John O. Onaiyekan says in the Foreword of the same book: “The peacebuilding work of the church is most effective when the church is united” (Schreiter et al., 2010:viii). The praxis of peacebuilding is an attempt to respond to the violence, cruelty, abuse, murder and the rest of human misery perpetrated by fellow human beings on other fellow human beings considered to be enemies. It is an attempt to transform the situation and bring about solutions of peace, harmony, forgiveness instead of

fuelling the deadly violence. The Catholic Church uses myriad ways to engage in peacebuilding activities and operations around the world. (Schreiter et al., 2010:3f).

The Catholic Church has been involved in peacebuilding in many countries over the years such as Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and other countries as well as on other continents. The Church's experience of peacebuilding becomes relevant in the context of Zimbabwe's post-violence situation that currently prevails through engaging the church in Zimbabwe. The activities will include people working together, thus dialogue is to be developed between the affected themselves and those that caused the harm. There is a need for common projects of development and uplifting of those indisposed during the violence, such as activities offered by Caritas to violence-affected people.

On the spiritual level Archbishop John O. Onaiyekan refers to the Eucharist that God gives us as a means to achieve reconciliation and peace. Thus, the sacramental life enables the church as alternative community to be empowered to participate in God's mission of reconciliation in the context of Zimbabwe. Schreiter also gives us the insight that reconciliation has a context that involves history, culture, outside forces and passage of time which need to be taken into account in trying to provide a way forward (Kim et al., 2008:8).

## **1.8 AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

The discussion so far has covered this introductory chapter, which gives an overview of the whole research study. This included the motivation for the research, the objectives, research questions, delimitation, the conceptual framework, research design and methods, ethical considerations, a clarification of some key concepts and a survey of the waves of violence that have swept over Zimbabwe. By clarifying my motivation, social location and research approach in the midst of a culture of violence, this chapter addresses the element of insertion in the praxis cycle.

Chapter 2 focuses on the conceptual and theological framework of the study, utilising available literature that deals with the subject matter. The theological framework and resources draw from the many theologians who have developed views on the issues of justice, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Four missiological concepts that are central to the thesis are discussed in depth, namely *missio Dei*, alternative community, reconciliation and non-violence. These four concepts form an integrated missiological vision: The alternative community of Jesus is a way in which committed believers can take part in God's mission by working for bottom-up reconciliation in

non-violent ways. In terms of the praxis cycle, this chapter is about theological reflection, providing the basis for the strategic planning carried out in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 gives a detailed analysis and interpretation of the five waves of violence that the people of Zimbabwe have experienced and how that led to a culture of violence becoming entrenched in society. Drawing on various literary sources, the numerous incidents of violence perpetrated against the people are surveyed. The role of executive-military alliance and its negative effect on every aspect of society is described as well as the attempts of the Zimbabwean government to achieve some kind of reconciliation in the conflicts that have arisen. In terms of the praxis cycle, the chapter does context analysis, revealing the width and depth of the challenges facing an alternative community in its attempt to foster bottom-up reconciliation.

Chapter 4 describes how the voices of victims/survivors and church leaders were heard and made part of the research through the use of semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The sample selection, interview questions and responses of the participants are described and then analysed thematically. Then the chapter shows how the focus group questions were formulated out of the thematic analysis of the interview findings, how the focus group (consisting of church leaders) was selected and what the responses of the focus group were. In conclusion, the focus groups responses are analysed by means of the praxis cycle. In terms of the macro-structure of the thesis, based on the praxis cycle, Chapter 4 includes the elements of context analysis and theological reflection.

Having heard the voices of some victims/survivors and church leaders in Chapter 4, the thesis addresses the way forward in Chapter 5 by integrating theological insights from Chapter 2, aspects of context analysis from Chapter 3 and the empirical findings from Chapter 4 into an exercise of planning/strategising for mission. It reflects on ways and means to achieve bottom-up reconciliation and transformation in the context of Zaka district by taking part in the mission of God to heal and reconcile people to himself and to one another. The chapter is structured on the basis of the themes that emerged from the interviews and looks at the possible role of an alternative community in the healing of personal memories, addressing cultural trauma, facilitating forgiveness and restorative justice, and overcoming the culture of violence and lawlessness. This chapter encompasses the element of pastoral planning or strategising in the praxis cycle.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 6, which focuses on a critical self-evaluation of the research process that was followed. It contains an evaluation of whether the academic objectives and

research questions formulated in Chapter 1 were met by the thesis. The researcher also reflects on the nature of the scholarly contribution that the study makes to missiological debates in Southern Africa and whether the actions and projects proposed to resolve the challenges raised in the thesis are implementable. Some lessons learnt and issues for further research in this area are also identified.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESOURCES

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will deal with the theological framework and resources upon which the whole research will proceed. The framework will guide me to discover and narrate how reconciliation, forgiveness and healing could be achieved in the context of Zimbabwe, which has experienced many waves of violence, cruelty and destruction of both life and property. My theological framework is based first on a discussion of the *missio Dei*, its development, proponents as well as perspectives of some Catholic Popes. The second theological pillar is the understanding of “alternative community”, its various aspects including the perspectives of David Bosch, Walter Brueggemann and others. Thirdly, I unpack the crucial pillar of reconciliation, its definition and misconceptions, highlighting that reconciliation is ultimately the work of God, which is more of a spirituality than a strategy. Finally, I deal with pacifism and non-violence, analysing the views of Dom Helder Camara and others. That also includes Third Way Theology, its strengths and weaknesses. This theological framework represents the resources and parameters that will guide me in the search for reconciliation, forgiveness and healing in the context of the painful experiences in Zimbabwe.

#### 2.1 MISSIO DEI

It is noteworthy to acknowledge the historical background of this Latin phrase *missio Dei* in order to understand the debate regarding its meaning and interpretation. The phrase has a long history, dating back to the time of St. Augustine. It is claimed that the term was first used by St. Thomas Aquinas to describe the activity of God the Father in sending the Son and the Son sending the Holy Spirit. In its development many scholars, such as Karl Barth, Hartenstein and the Willingen conference presented varying views. Goheen identified two main trends of understanding the phrase *missio Dei* in the post-Willingen debates, namely Christocentric-Trinitarian and Cosmocentric-Trinitarian approaches (Arthur, 2015).

This missiological study is based on the notion of the *missio Dei* which serves as the basis and theological framework for this research on reconciliation in the context of the political violence suffered by many people in Zimbabwe. It is from the understanding of the fact that God has seen

the brokenness of humanity and has sent his Son to redeem the world: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). This incarnational act of God to reconcile sinful humanity to himself through the life, death and resurrection of his Son enables humanity to turn back to God and receive God’s grace, not only to enjoy forgiveness from God but also for humanity to engage in this process of reconciliation to fellow human beings.

This incarnational framework also provides the parameters which enable the researcher to investigate and describe the context of a diocese in Zimbabwe. The available literature as well as the semi-structured interviews conducted with people affected by political violence and atrocities are utilised to build up the argumentation for reconciliation and peace needed in these communities. In pursuing this framework, the researcher will explore the vision of an alternative community and its relevance to providing a possibility for reconciliation, forgiveness, confession and healing in the context of *missio Dei*. This will be done by utilising Katongole’s concept of “relocation and incarnation” (Katongole, 2011:136).

There are other dimensions of the *missio Dei* – such as ecology, conversion, ecumenism and development – which will not be dealt with in this study. Here the focus is on providing theological parameters to engage or initiate processes of reconciliation, since other reconciliation initiatives have not borne meaningful fruit over the years in Zimbabwe, as the country continued to experience intermittent acts of violence.

This thesis will unpack the process of reconciliation by utilising David Bosch’s approach of “alternative community” but other theologians will also be employed to demonstrate that the church is called by God, as an integral part of the *missio Dei* to participate in realising both social and spiritual reconciliation in relieving the plight of suffering people – particularly the oppressed, poor and marginalised. The situation of the oppressed often involves their political, economic, legal and other spheres that affect them negatively. While reference will be made to these spheres, the focus will remain on the theological dimension of Bosch’s “alternative community” which the researcher intends to affirm as relevant for the process of reconciliation in the context of Zimbabwe.

### **2.1.1 The development of the concept *missio Dei***

The understanding of the concept of *mission* over the years has been varied and scholars reflected particular views of their own interest. Bosch describes how, in preceding centuries, mission was sometimes understood in narrowly soteriological terms, “as saving individuals from eternal damnation” (Bosch, 1991:389). At other times it was thought of as a process of introducing people of the East and South to blessings and privileges of the Christian West or simply as the expansion of the church. In the last half century, however, there has been a decisive shift towards understanding mission more inclusively as *God’s mission*. Eventually successive scholars came to use the current theological term *missio Dei* to describe the whole salvation history that emanated from God, was implemented by God and will be brought to its eschatological fruition in the future by God himself. Thus, the general understanding is that the mission for the salvation and restoration of creation is God’s work, that is, *missio Dei*:

*Missio Dei*, the Mission of God, Mission begins with God. It is rooted in the nature of the trinity and character of a God who loves the world he made (John 3:16) and longs for all things to be reconciled to him (Col.1:19). The Father sent the Son to save the world (John 3:17) and the Spirit to continue the mission of Jesus (John 16:7-11). The Scriptures record the mission of God redeeming the world (Wright, 2016).

In fact, one could say that the whole Bible is the story about God’s mission through the people he calls and through whom he engages the world for the sake of all creation. Thus, God initiates his mission for the purpose of engaging the whole of creation and to reconcile humankind to himself.

### **2.1.2 Karl Barth on *Missio Dei***

The Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth states that: “The divine intervention which creates fellowship reveals itself and takes place, not as something which is alien to God, but as a mediation which is most proper to Him, which takes place first in Himself, in His divine life from eternity to eternity” (in Flett, 2014:71).

Barth acknowledges some challenges in this dimension of *missio Dei*. He identifies the problem of how human beings or the church might become God’s witnesses in his work. His response is that the problem of God’s own being belongs to him and not to human beings. God is the initiator and implementer of his project of salvation of mankind. Barth is of the opinion that scholars should leave this problem to God. God decided to be the Reconciler of the world created by himself. We



cannot resolve this problem except to understand it within the given action of God which he freely decided to do. Barth argues that what occurs in God's creating of fellowship between himself and humanity is something which first occurs in God's own being as Father, Son and Spirit. As Trinity, encounter and partnership already belong to who God is, without any abstraction or contradiction.

Thus, the reality of God – Father, Son and Spirit – is intertwined with his mission. What Jesus is, that God enters humanity, demonstrates both the mission of God and the witness rendered by God to Himself through Jesus. This means Jesus Christ's own humanity, connected to our own humanity with him, needs to be narrated in terms of his mission. The mandate of the church is part and parcel of how God continues his mission and gives witness in and for the world. Although this is abstract it is very decisive and significant for understanding the *missio Dei*. The very existence of God is self-evident and therefore God gives witness to himself in his proper life and what he has planned to do has benefited humanity and the whole of creation.

Although Barth's approach to the *missio Dei* is considered Christocentric, he still expressed that the works of the Trinity were indivisible from one another. Barth highlights that the particular stress on one of God's modes of being never implies its separation from the others. We acknowledge that the Son of God is directly involved in the redemption of humankind yet the whole process is initiated by the Trinity:

Mission starts with the realization that God in his mission of compassion, is the initiator of total reconciliation with humanity...The climax of God's enactment in guiding salvation history is his self-disclosure in the person of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Bekele, 2011:101).

As Trinity, God is the initiator, sender and actor in the reconciliation and redemption of humanity. Barth sees the role of Christ as being crucial and central in the process of this redemption. It is through the cross and his self-emptying that "Jesus Christ removed sin and the power of death" (Bekele, 2011:102). Through this act of Jesus Christ, he has enabled the church to participate in his work and this the Father has done through the Holy Spirit.

In pneumatological terms, the Holy Spirit is involved in the history of Jesus Christ and our own histories, and is himself the guarantee of the transition. As the Spirit is the transition of the Father to the Son in the person of Jesus Christ, the same Spirit is also the transition of the Son to ourselves

as human beings. Thus, the partnership of the Father and the Son in history is revealed by the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit intrudes upon our own closed and circular histories, disturbing and transcending our self-preoccupation to enter into Jesus Christ's own history. With such an intricate relationship God continues his mission both in the church and in the world through his Holy Spirit. The church cannot work outside God's mission nor does the church have its own mission outside God. The Spirit is the "summoning power" of the divine promise that points the community beyond itself, to transcend itself and in truth to be the community of God. Similarly, our relationship with Christ as human beings cannot be outside the witness of Jesus to his Father, thus our participation is part of God's mission for his people and the world (Flett, 2014).

In regard to reconciliation, God himself has already established that reconciliation through his Son. Thus, reconciliation in a way has already been completed by God. The realisation in our times is the process of giving witness with Jesus Christ to that fact already pronounced and accomplished by God. This is why community as community is very important. Community participates in what Jesus has already accomplished by crossing barriers of hate, division and rejection in order to live up to that reconciliation already offered by God to humanity. When the church inculcates in itself this witness it is not something extra or outside the mission of God; it fulfils that process of reconciliation as part of the mission of God in the context of today's situations. Reconciliation is crossing boundaries in response to the exclusion that exists among people. *Missio Dei* then is first a call to Christians to worship God and secondly to bear witness to the reconciling task of his Son Jesus Christ. The Christian community does not act alone but is led by the Spirit to witness to God who came to humanity through creation, reconciliation and redemption. This remains the work of God. *Missio Dei* thus includes witness, fellowship and joy. It is in these that God wants Christian communities to cross their own boundaries and find one another and become children of the same Father. In these communities true witness is given to the reconciliation already offered by God to humanity (1 John 1:1-5).

### **2.1.3 John Flett on *Missio Dei***

Although John Flett affirms the importance of the phrase *missio Dei*, he thinks that the term is used too narrowly to reflect what the church does. Instead, he maintains that the term describes the being of God: "The Triune God is in and for Godself missionary" (Flett, 2014:69). Another positive aspect is that many Christian scholars across the divide that include Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostals have accepted the term *missio Dei*. This understanding of the concept by Flett is

important because he takes it from the being and action of the Trinitarian God. *Missio Dei* equates “sending” with the being of God. To say that God is missionary is to say that he sends, first, his Son and the Holy Spirit and also sends his church and finally the whole of creation itself.

Among others there are three aspects that Flett perceives in the concept of *missio Dei*. First there is a correspondence between who God is and the calling of the church in and for the world. As God is missionary so also the community that worships him is also missionary. The second is that mission is set within an eschatological framework and becomes, either as God’s acting in history, or in terms of the church’s essential function, the determining factor between the times. One can say that there is an intrinsic relationship between who God is and his missionary aspect as well as his intention for the church’s function in his mission for the world. The third aspect reflected by Flett is that of freedom in the context of mission. He argues that the force given by the Gospel should be able to be contextualised in every culture. When the structures created by the church curtail that freedom which the Gospel should have then these structures need reformation so as not to thwart the processes of *missio Dei*. Basically, he accepts human witness in *missio Dei* but states that God’s witness is greater because it is the witness of God which he has given concerning his Son (1John 5:9; Flett, 2014:69).

From the understanding given by Flett two main perspectives contained in *missio Dei* can be deduced. First, that the whole of salvation history is the work of God who sent his Son through the Holy Spirit to reconcile the sinful and fallen world to himself. The second perspective is that God invites the church not only to participate in God’s work in the world but also to be an eschatological sign of the redemption of the whole world which God has already accomplished through His Son, but which will attain fruition only at the end of time.

Besides these positive contributions of Flett, he poses some challenges to the *missio Dei* concept. One challenge emanates from the structures utilised by the church in evangelising the East and the Southern hemispheres. In China and other areas, the application of mission of the church was seen as part of the process of colonisation by the Western Christian world. To some extent that was due to the structures utilised by the church (Flett, 2014:70). To this challenge he suggests that the church needs to restructure itself and be contextualised so as to reflect the meaning of the Gospel rather than be seen as part of colonisers. This is where the aspect of freedom that he identifies becomes relevant in proclaiming the Good News.

The second challenge that he refers to is the problematic act of why God sent his Son into the world. He does not really solve the challenge, but argues that this is in the realm of God himself that he planned to redeem humankind through this act of reconciliation, by sending his Son to be crucified, die, resurrect and ascend to Heaven. “This very act is problematic, yet the understanding of *Missio Dei* has significance in that by this very act God was reconciling humanity to himself thereby healing humanity from its sinful way of life” (Flett, 2014).

Although Flett raises these challenges the concept of *missio Dei* is critical in understanding the whole of salvation history. Humanity’s salvation and the subsequent reconciliation between God and humanity is wholly dependent on God’s initiative after the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 3). Therefore, even the call of the church to participate in this process of reconciliation is dependent on God. Flett is clear that reconciliation is at the heart of *missio Dei*. The reason why the church participates in the process of reconciliation is that God himself is the mission of reconciliation through his redemption of the whole of humanity. Therefore, the existence of the church emanates from its God-given mission. As Bekele (2011:60) affirms, Bosch’s belief in the church as alternative community is “rooted primarily and essentially in Bosch’s core conviction that the church has no existence apart from mission.”

#### **2.1.4 Vatican II *Ad Gentes***

The term *missio Dei* was also used by the Catholic Church. It has had a long history but its origin is debatable<sup>4</sup>. In the Catholic Church it is maintained that the idea dates as far back as to the period of St. Augustine of Hippo, but it was Aquinas who first used the term to describe the activity of the triune God, that is the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the Spirit (Arthur, 2013). This concept is taken up again in the Second Vatican Council but with stress on ecclesiology, the mission of the church. The Second Vatican Council therefore stressed the importance of the mission of the church as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in this work of God. The Council Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes*) says that missionary activity is nothing other than the manifestation or epiphany of God’s plan and its fulfilment in the world and in history. This history accomplishes the salvation of mankind (Alexander, Vatican II: 595). As a follow up to the deliberations of Vatican II (Flannery, 2002), Pope Paul VI wrote his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: on the Evangelisation of the modern world, focusing precisely on the

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<sup>4</sup> Jacob Kavunkal SVD says the phrase was probably initially coined by the German missiologist George F. Vicedom.

importance and necessity of the mission of the church in the world. In his opening paragraphs he says that the duty of giving encouragement to the brethren has been entrusted to us by Christ Our Lord as well as that the faithful should “put on the new nature” and “be reconciled to God” (para. 1-2) (Paul VI, 8 December 1975).

This means that, in order to work for reconciliation, the faithful should be guided by the Spirit (new nature). One could see parallels with the Church renewing herself into “an alternative community” in order to transform the oppressive situation of others and give them hope to let go of the past. Hence the mission of the church is participating in the work of God, *missio Dei*. This work of God is not only limited to evangelisation but includes all the aspects of redeeming humanity and renewing all of creation.

### **2.1.5 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Missio***

In his travels to many regions in the world Pope John Paul II experienced the urgency of the church to hasten its participation in the mission of Christ. Without specifically using the term *missio Dei*, John Paul II talks about redemption as mission. Capturing the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, in which he took part, his perspective is more on the mission of the Church than on the mission of God. On 7 December 1990 he wrote his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, explaining the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate to participate in God’s work. In his introduction he clearly states that the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion (Miller, 1996). It follows that the Church’s universal mission is born of faith in Jesus Christ as stated in the Church’s Trinitarian profession of faith: “I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God... for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit...” (John Paul II, 1996:497.).

John Paul II argues that the Church is a sign and instrument of salvation that has been bestowed on all humankind by Jesus Christ because the Church is the first beneficiary of Christ’s salvation:

The first beneficiary of salvation is the Church. Christ won the Church for himself at the price of his own blood and made the Church his co-worker in the salvation of the world... He carries out his mission through her (John Paul II, 1996: par. 9).

John Paul II explains that the whole work of God has various aspects, which ultimately achieve the salvation of humankind. The various paths of mission include witness to the Gospel,

evangelisation, conversion and baptism, directed by the Spirit, forming ecclesial basic communities and other paths, all meant for the Church to participate in, as the Church fulfils its God-given mandate for the salvation of all. Thus, the Church's role in working for peace and reconciliation is part of the *missio Dei* to bring about the love of God to all. John Paul II sees communities of the Church at the forefront to implement the work of God. They are "an instrument... for a new society based on a "civilization of love" (John Paul II, 1996:537). I therefore argue that this discourse on redemption not only stresses the urgency of the church to continue in the work of God but it is also relevant to the mission of reconciliation between God and humankind as well as between people themselves.

#### **2.1.6 Pope Francis' perspective**

Pope Francis on 4 June 2017 on the Solemnity of Pentecost and the Birthday of Christ's Church asks "What is the *heart* of our mission?" What is the responsibility of the believing community in the world marked by confusion, disappointment, frustration, numerous fratricidal wars targeted against innocent people? He answers that the heart of the mission is realised in the transformative power of the Gospel of Christ, the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6). The Church's mission is not a religious ideology but a lived faith in Jesus the Lord. What this means is that the faithful commit themselves to the teaching of Jesus Christ and in their worship and faithfulness to God become active instruments taking part in the mission of God in the world. They go out of themselves to reach out to others and become one community with those others. Pope Francis (2017) maintains that:

Through the mission of the Church, Jesus Christ himself continues to evangelize and act; her mission thus makes present in history the *Kairos*, the favourable time of salvation. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, the risen Jesus becomes our contemporary, so that those who welcome him with faith and love can experience the transforming power of his Spirit, who makes humanity and creation fruitful.

This transformative power is the gift of the act of Jesus' redemption that came through the Spirit and brings about forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. All this is done through *missio Dei* where God has engaged the community of humanity to be part of his own redemptive mission.

All the various perspectives on *missio Dei* discussed above give relevant support and theological framework as well as provide resources for the work of God in the mission of reconciliation. For

the mission of reconciliation and peace to succeed in the various contexts of conflicts and violence, needs the intervention of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the hearts of human beings to be able to genuinely participate in the work of God. The Second Vatican Council stated that “there can be no evangelization without the cooperation of the Holy Spirit” (Flannery, 1982:749). John Paul II also stresses the same point “the mission of the Church, like that of Jesus, is God’s work...the work of the Spirit... The work of the Spirit makes them [Apostles] *witnesses* and *prophets* (Acts 1:8, 2:17-18)” (John Paul II, 1996:513). This is why many human attempts of forced-reconciliation by governments or other humanitarian structures imposed from above do not seem to succeed. When the Church imbues itself with the vision of Christ the redeemer and participates in his work of reconciliation in the context of the suffering people then God can use her to achieve the goal of peace and reconciliation.

### **2.1.7 Beyond *Missio Dei***

I am aware that some missiologists already suggest a paradigm shift as the term *missio Dei* has weaknesses emanating from the western missionary interpretation and use of the term. Some missionaries stressed their act of crossing the seas to save souls. Those souls, they said, were controlled by demons and in addition those pagans had no idea of a deity or Supreme Being. Therefore, “today *Missio Dei*, with its emphasis on the sending, cannot be used indiscriminately in the changed world reality in which we find ourselves” (Kavunkal, 2018). It is argued that missiology should now go beyond the term *Missio Dei* as this is limited to “sending”. The appropriate term for our times would be *Extensio Dei*, reaching out. “*Missio Dei* refers chiefly to an activity of God, that of sending, whereas the very nature of God is mission, reaching out” (Kavunkal, 2018). Kavunkal argues that the Biblical narrative is not primarily that of “sending”. In fact, he maintains that the entire biblical discourse can be encapsuled in one phrase: *extensio Dei* (Latin *extendere* means “to reach out”). It is God’s going out of God’s self, in love, to reach out to his fallen creatures. Kavunkal says the concept of “*extensio Dei*” is more relevant today in expressing both the nature of God as well as God’s own action in the process of salvation. The idea of *missio Dei* highlights only the process of “sending”. Kavunkal connects the importance of this notion of “sending” to the period of colonialism. The very concept of mission as sending finds its origin with colonial expansion. Further, he links it to the fourth vow that the Jesuits make to the Pope. The fourth vow for the Jesuits is to directly obey the Pope. The Pope can send or give any

assignment to the Jesuits and they will obey. Thus, Kavunkal argues that the concept is limited to sending and does not capture the very nature of God, namely that he is “missionary” in Himself.

While Kavunkal’s understanding maybe considered valid by some, it is worth noting that *missio Dei* in itself does not constitute a paradigm of mission; instead it is part of the ecumenical postmodern paradigm. Thus, *missio Dei* remains valid as it has many dimensions which reflect the work of God in his creation.

Another important contribution is made by David Bosch in his reflection on “Mission”. He discusses “mission” as having a multi-dimensional scope and reflects various perspectives that build up the whole category of mission. Mission then is not to be viewed just from one narrow perspective but has many dimensions. Bosch presented an imagery of a prism which refracts the shades of white light. At the same time each colour has its own distinct texture yet all shades together produce the white light. In his article Kritzingler highlights the multi-dimensional perspectives offered by Bosch in regard to mission. The mission of God is better expressed in terms of “Mission as...” which names the various dimensional perspectives of the Mission of God “that need to be kept in creative tension with each other” (Kritzingler, 2009:2) This multi-dimensional approach which produced thirteen contextualised perspectives of God’s mission from David Bosch are considered very significant to missiology:

To my mind this was David Bosch’s most important contribution to missiology in South Africa... when we were still deep in apartheid, it helped us to counter that pernicious racist distinction between evangelism and mission that was common in the Dutch Reformed tradition in South Africa – and is still enshrined... (Kritzingler, 2009:3).

Following the multi-dimensional paradigm of Bosch (1991) in his book *Transforming Mission* in Chapter 12, Kritzingler explains that the 13 elements of mission exist in “creative tension” and together help to understand the mission of God through his Church in the world. Kritzingler (2010) summarises Bosch’s traces of the contours of Christian mission by listing the 13 elements described in terms of “Mission as” as follows:

Mission as the church-with-others  
Mission as *missio Dei*  
Mission as mediating salvation  
Mission as the quest for justice  
Mission as evangelism



Mission as contextualisation  
Mission as liberation  
Mission as inculturation  
Mission as common witness  
Mission as ministry by the whole people of God  
Mission as witness to people of other living faiths  
Mission as theology  
Mission as action in hope

Bosch is aware that the World Council of Churches (WCC, 1990:33) stated that the tension that exists within these elements is appreciated and that there will be no cheap attempt to resolve them. He therefore adds:

Such language boils down to an admission that we do not have all the answers and are prepared to live within the framework of penultimate knowledge, that we regard our involvement in dialogue and mission as an adventure, are prepared to take risks, and are anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us into fuller understanding (Bosch, 1991:489).

Thus, in line with Bosch's contribution of mission as multi-dimensional, Kritzinger's addition to these perspectives, that of "mission as reconciliation" is theologically relevant to this research. The concepts of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing are embodied in mission as reconciliation, which covers the area of this research. God has always taken the initiative to restore the broken relationship between his creatures and Himself. We have already witnessed his concern with Adam and Cain. This follows the mystery of the Trinity, bound together in love. From this love, the Father is able to send his Son to become human and redeem the fallen humanity through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. God moves to the people. God sent his angel Gabriel to humanity represented by an ordinary girl, Mary, who becomes the mother of Jesus.

In fulfilment of this purpose, Jesus moves from place to place, thus God coming down to his creatures in order to reveal God's love for humanity and offer reconciliation. We recognise that God reaches out to Adam, as he asks "Where are you"? (Gen. 3:9), a question showing God's concern towards Adam. He also reaches out to Cain and asks him "Where is your brother Abel"? (Gen. 4:9), reflecting his concern for the relationship of the two brothers. Later God reaches out to the whole of humanity through his Son. He reaches out in order to draw people to himself as he sends his angel Gabriel to Mary, who becomes the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:29-38).

However, *missio Dei* itself does not constitute a paradigm of mission. It is part of the ecumenical postmodern paradigm proposed by Bosch. As noted by Bosch, there are new challenges that need new responses, as traditional interpretations are no longer adequate. He says “Perhaps a rereading of the biblical notions of salvation, done from the perspective of the realisation that both the traditional and modern interpretations of salvation have proved inadequate, will help us here” (Bosch, 1991:399). Thus, in this ecumenical postmodern paradigm interpreting “mission as reconciliation” enables us to understand the whole process of reconciliation as the work of God himself, as an integral part of the *missio Dei*. Mission as reconciliation is one of the indispensable perspectives of *missio Dei* because a crucial task God set for himself was to reconcile fallen humanity to himself. Therefore, God’s actions towards Adam, Cain and later the whole of humanity are clear manifestations of the love of God to reconcile his people to himself. Although mission as reconciliation is fundamental to the purpose of God’s relationship with humanity, it is not exclusive, but part of the all-encompassing work of God. In the mission of reconciliation God sends his Son through the Spirit to become human so as to redeem fallen humanity. Further, God the Father and the Spirit send the Son to his church to enable the church to take part in the work of God: reconciliation. The church has been given the task by God to be involved in the mission of reconciliation in the world.

Like Bosch, Katongole has a similar understanding of *missio Dei* that it is the work of God. He sees the mission of God himself as enabling us through his Spirit to interpret the various painful and violent situations of humanity to move towards reconciliation as God has already reconciled the world to himself. Katongole (2011) uses stories of experienced community workers as examples of how to work for reconciliation and peace amongst violated people. The Father, Son and Spirit are involved in this process; therefore, this study explores the work of the Trinity and contextualises it in Zimbabwe in order to achieve reconciliation, peace, forgiveness and healing in communities.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that *missio Dei* is a relevant theological framework for this research, as demonstrated by the various theologians that I have discussed.

## **2.2. PARADIGM SHIFTS**

It has already been mentioned that the understanding of mission was varied throughout history, as interpreted by various scholars. Bosch (1991) identified a number of key paradigm shifts that

developed in the theology of mission. But in postmodern ecumenical theological discourse *missio Dei* was recognised as an integral part of an emerging ecumenical paradigm. There are other dimensions of mission that emerged, such as ecology and development, but those will not be dealt with in this study. The dimension of *missio Dei* provides the appropriate theological context for this study. The paradigm shift that took place is a result of theologians pursuing to understand salvation in the context of post-modern times. This has given a basis for continual reflection upon mission in search of appropriate meaning for our times. Therefore, the activities of God in history remain relevant to all ages and situations in the experiences of humanity.

As Brueggemann (2006:41) writes about Jeremiah: “The book of Jeremiah offers a clear test case and model for the shift in scholarly paradigms in Old Testament study”. Brueggemann makes reference to history of traditions, a perspective dominated by Gerhard von Rad where Jeremiah is situated in the Exodus and Sinai-covenant traditions and later added Davidic-messianic traditions which had a one-sided historical background. The three-source theory of Bernhard Duhm, and Sigmund Mowinckel came later. They utilised the reduction method as well as added Baruch to include the wisdom influence in the literature. This reveals one type of paradigm shift in reviewing Jeremiah’s literature. “The important shift in interpretive models permits us to pay much more sustained attention to creation themes in the tradition of Jeremiah” (Nicholson, 1970). One can argue that one of the important reason is to keep the Word of God relevant at all times. Just as Patrick D Miller, the editor of Brueggemann’s book, explains:

The only thing that matters about the prophetic word is its relevance. Those who keep on reading will, therefore, be disturbed, moved, encouraged, and challenged. I am not sure Brueggemann has any other purpose in writing about this disturbing and challenging man of God (in Brueggemann, 2006: ix)

Miller also observes that Brueggemann is fascinated by Jeremiah because “No prophet has conveyed more sharply the pathos of the prophetic calling to speak strong words to unwilling listeners and endure the consequences” (in Brueggemann, 2006: viii). Just as the paradigm shift in understanding Jeremiah assists scholars to contextualise him in today’s events and history, so the paradigm shift in mission theology that has produced *missio Dei* enables scholars to contextualise

God's salvation of humanity into our present-day events of injustice, oppression, suffering and marginalisation of the poor.

For the later discussion on attempts to achieve reconciliation it is important to note the view of Brueggemann on language as he discusses the Prophet Jeremiah. He reveals the difference of approach between synchronic and diachronic approaches<sup>5</sup>. These are two different but complementary methods of analysis of language utilised in written documents. These approaches reveal different understanding of texts. While Robert Carroll is the most influential proponent of a synchronic<sup>6</sup> interpretation of Jeremiah, since he concludes that access to the historical situation of the prophet is almost impossible (Brueggemann, 2006:58), James Muilenburg advocates a diachronic or historical analysis of Jeremiah (Brueggemann, 2006:60). There seems to be a move from a diachronic to a synchronic approach, reflected by a paradigm shift from historical analysis to rhetorical study. In contrast to historical analysis, which seeks to give a definitive and stable interpretation of what happened, rhetorical criticism not only focusses on smaller texts but also explores the intentional operation of the text. It is interested more in explaining the operation of the written texts than in making the text relevant to our times. In reference to the texts about Jeremiah, "This rhetoric is endlessly pluri-vocal, subversive and deconstructive. It does not admit of a single meaning and evokes ongoing interpretation that is never finally settled" (Brueggemann, 2006:60).

Both the synchronic and the diachronic approaches are relevant for this study in dealing with attempts at reconciliation as well as the praxis of "alternative community" in the context of the various waves of violence experienced in Zimbabwe. Although these paradigm shifts pose challenges, there is progress in theological development which enables researchers to dig deeper into the contexts of the mission of God amongst his people. Thus, there is not one standard way of interpreting or understanding a situation; there is always an element of social construction in any interpretation of events. These interpretations become credible because the theological

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<sup>5</sup> Ramat et al. (2013): "Synchronic: from Greek (*syn* = together and *chronos* = time), considers language at a moment in time without taking its history into account, while diachronic from Greek (*dia* = through and *chronos* = time) considers the development and evolution of a language through history. Historical linguistics is typically diachronic study". (Online). Accessed on 19 February, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann (2006:58) pointed out that earlier studies by Kathleen O'Connor, Pete Diamond, and Mark Smith are enormously suggestive about the synchronic shape of Jeremiah 11-20 and the intentional placement of the so-called "Confessions" in a grid of the larger text.

explanations give meaning to the events that people experience even when at the time the people continue to suffer. The prophetic eschatological vision is eventually vindicated, as in the example of Jeremiah referred to above.

Despite criticisms from various scholars that Bosch missed out on the Two-Thirds World Evangelicals in his reflection of paradigm shifts and ignored their contributions, Bosch's stance for inclusivity is clear. Verstraelen<sup>7</sup> says that he found nothing in Bosch's writing which reflects that Bosch was influenced by Third World theologies. It is said that he even missed the chance to correct his mistakes when he developed *Transforming Mission* (Bekele, 2011:82-83). Perhaps Bekele is right that Verstraelen exaggerated Bosch's shortcomings: "Bosch remains one of the first professional theologians to recognise the importance of new voices from the global South" (Bekele, 2011:83).

It is also important to mention here that Bosch's last comprehensive work championed *missio Dei* and provided a multifaceted approach to implementing the various dimensions of mission. As explained by Kritzinger and Saayman (2011:113), the title of Bosch's *magnum opus* is very significant:

That is what lies at the heart of the title he consciously chose for his book: *Transforming Mission*: a mission that transforms, as well as a mission that is being transformed. This radical transformation called for a new definition of mission.

### **2.3 ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY**

In tracing the origin and meaning of the notion "alternative community" it is important to situate it in the development of Bosch's own missiology. Bosch proposed the missiological praxis of "alternative community" as a creative way of responding to the context in South Africa. He resisted and condemned apartheid and sought a way to implement the message of Christ to all people: "Bosch rejected the missionary policy of his own church, with its embedded tone of racial segregation under the guise of the so-called equal but separate development. For him, such a missionary policy was nothing but a "wolf in sheep's clothing" (Bekele, 2011:282).

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<sup>7</sup> Other critics are Christopher Sugden and Willem Saayman (Bekele, 2011:82).

### **2.3.1 Bosch's theological background**

In order to understand Bosch's notion of "alternative community" it is necessary to view him against the background of his Afrikaner culture and in the context of Afrikaner church mission. Bosch's theological background was heavily influenced by the context of his experience as he grew up, studied and participated in the Afrikaner environment.

Bosch's theological trajectory moved from his Western trained perspective imbued with his Afrikaner background to a contextualised understanding of the forces and challenges that beset South Africa during the Apartheid era. The Dutch Reformed churches played an important role in shaping and giving meaning to Afrikaner identity. This identity merged into Afrikaner political nationalism. Bosch was influenced in a big way by that religious heritage: "To be a true Afrikaner means to speak Afrikaans, to belong to one of the Dutch Reformed churches, and to support the National Party. When one of these elements is missing in any specific individual, he or she can hardly claim to be a true Afrikaner" (Bosch, 1979:13-20). Bosch further identifies three characteristics that shaped Afrikaner Christianity, namely Reformed Evangelicalism (also referred to as Pietism), Kuyperian neo-Calvinism and Afrikaner nationalism.

Although the Afrikaners had been oppressed by the British when they signed the Vereeniging peace treaty in early 1900 to end the South African War, the Boers took advantage of the British laws that upheld inequality between whites and the majority blacks. The British Lord Alfred Milner advised that "You have only to sacrifice the "nigger" absolutely and the game is easy" (Bekele, 2011:26). This was reinforced in 1910 by the new *South African Act* that created the Union of South Africa which legitimated social hierarchy on the basis of ethnic origin, systematically excluding the black majority from taking part in decisions that affected the South African nation.

It therefore follows that this Afrikaner worldview gave value and meaning to ecclesiastical, socio-political, economic and cultural structures of the Afrikaner people: "The boundaries were clear: whites are superior, their interests always come first, and this status is their "God-given right". This was the "Afrikanerization of public life" (Bekele, 2011:27-8). An important development that emerged in 1918 was the establishment of the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, which was a secret pressure group. This animated and nurtured the creation of apartheid as a legitimate ideological political principle within the National Party. In other words, the *Afrikaner Broederbond* strengthened the

vision of the National Party which was already created in 1914. The three characteristics mentioned above, Pietism, Kuyperian neo-Calvinism and Afrikaner nationalism could eventually not co-exist. As the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries continued to work in South Africa the issue of evangelising blacks became more and more problematic. In fact, tension grew between white-run churches and black churches both belonging to the Dutch Reformed Churches. The heart of the problem was whether the blacks were to be wholly included and have full rights and participation in the churches like their white fellow Christians or blacks were to be treated differently. What was the stake of the dignity of blacks in the socio-political and economic destiny of South Africa?

At the beginning Pietism extended its missionary work to blacks and did not consider segregation as a theologically justifiable part of mission praxis. Only later when apartheid became the policy was segregation also enforced. Afrikaner nationalism became the norm and hence the churches were further divided even on ecclesiastical practices. This tension grew and divided the churches in South Africa over many years.

This is an important part of the theological background of Bosch who was an Afrikaner, studied both in an Afrikaner educational system in South Africa, did doctoral studies in Switzerland and then came back to South Africa. It is of consequence that these presuppositions and contextual upbringing of Bosch indeed provided the historical background for his theological vision and discourse. In reaction to his context Bosch both tapped from his Afrikaner experiences as well as rejected what he considered militating against the Gospel values.

In spite of the fact that Bosch had such a theological background of the Afrikaner tradition, as well as being Western trained, he was transformed by his experiences of working with Xhosa people, a South African ethnic group.

Bosch's vision of ecclesiology and mission was transformed from a narrow to a broader understanding by his ten years of mission experience (1957-1967) in African communities in Madwaleni, Transkei in South Africa. Bosch's wife gave details of those experiences, which led to his gradual transformation and growing theological perspectives (Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:11-37). In addition, we learn a similar perspective from Bekele (2011:49-50):

Bosch completely freed himself of what he had rejected in his inherited vision by envisioning an alternative community in which racial and socio-political superiority were neutralised. He rejected any establishment, whether ecclesiastical or political, that existed to serve the few at the expense of others who were seen as inferior. He saw all such structures as intrinsically unjust and in need of being challenged toward a norm of communal justice that involved accepting all people equally regardless of skin pigmentation and social standing.

This is a clear and powerful demonstration of how Bosch himself was transformed from his Western-oriented culture and background through his self-introspection of working among the Xhosa to challenge both the structures of apartheid as well as providing a new way of doing theology that had great impact the world over. Bosch is described as “one of the strongest theological voices speaking against apartheid in solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalised” (Bekele, 2011:8). It is not surprising that Bosch was not only disowned by his denomination but also suffered political hate from his fellow Afrikaners in regard to his position on the problems of injustice in South Africa. At the same time, there were black theologians in South Africa who regarded his opposition to apartheid as not strong enough, hence he was rejected by leaders on both sides of the political divide.

As we learn from Bosch’s wife, they both agreed that a black family friend, Vethe, could give eight of their children Xhosa names in addition to the first names their parents had already given them (in Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:17-18). The other three children were not yet born when they moved from the Xhosa community. The very fact that a white person, an Afrikaner for that matter, mingled so well with the Xhosa people meant that Bosch and his family came to consider blacks as fellow human beings whom he treated with the same dignity as his fellow whites. To accept Xhosa names for their children meant to identify with those Xhosa people. His missionary work did not segregate the Xhosa because they were black people, but he accepted them as fellow Christians. I would consider that one of the factors for the paradigm shift in his theological outlook emanated from the fact that he saw black people as fellow human beings and not as second-class beings who had to be segregated.

Thus, it is no surprise that when Bosch wrote his missiological discourses and articles, he moved toward a stance that is all inclusive, rather than opt for exclusion of some people. Bosch accepted



the concept of *missio Dei* from the period of Willingen Conference that the understanding of “mission” was based on Trinitarian theology. He also went further to post-Willingen missiological thinking that distinguished between *missio Dei* and *missiones ecclesiae*. He acknowledged that the Church’s mission had no life outside God’s mission: “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love” (Bosch, 1991:390). Further Bosch realised that black churches were increasingly articulating their concern for justice and freedom in the midst of apartheid. Black church leaders like Tutu, Boesak, Chikane and others took a definite stance against apartheid. For instance, at the eleventh annual Conference of the South African Council of Churches in 1979 Allan Boesak in his presentation contextualised Black experience in his theological paper as he sets off in his opening remarks: “The situation of blackness in South Africa is the unavoidable context within which theological reflection of Black Christians takes place” (Boesak, 1979:39). He says that all people are influenced by their social and economic environment and hence interpret the gospel differently. But in dealing with a Black understanding of the Gospel he clearly refuted the interpretation given by the white racists who had inflicted a history of suffering, degradation and humiliation on the Blacks while claiming that the gospel justified their actions. Boesak argues that...

black theologians, have taken seriously the cry of so many black people who through the years have refused to believe that the Gospel could be the narrow, racist ideology white Christians were declaiming from black pulpits and white theologians were giving respectability in their learned books (Boesak, 1979:39).

Therefore, there was a definite stance taken by many black theologians to reject the interpretation that blacks should be subservient to whites, who considered themselves superior. Boesak made reference to African Independent Church leaders such as Isaiah Shembe, who had found a God who “walks with feet among you, has hands to heal – a God who sees you, a God who loves and has compassion” (Boesak, 1979:40). This encouraged many Africans that the Gospel of Jesus Christ did not deny them to struggle for black humanity, for dignity and independence both inside and outside the church. They understood that the Gospel of Christ is for the total liberation of all people and “the God and Father of Jesus is the God of the oppressed” (Boesak, 1979:40).

At the same Conference Desmond Tutu called for *Unity* and *Fellowship* besides talking about administrative issues and summing up political situations that were current in neighbouring

countries. But Tutu bemoaned the stressful situation in apartheid South Africa which not only denied full citizenship to blacks but also transferred them to Bantustans in rural areas. He categorically declared “we refuse to be made foreigners in our motherland” (Tutu, 1979:22). He further saw the existence of Bantustans as an opportunity for government to relocate unresolved problems of blacks far away from cities mostly occupied by whites. These problems include unemployment, poverty, lack of proper housing and no means of earning a living. People were just dumped in rural areas. He called upon the Church to respond to that devastating situation of the plight of blacks: “Christians need to ask themselves seriously just how long they think fellow Christians can go on bearing this kind of anguish without exploding” (Tutu, 1979:24).

With the growing tensions between white Afrikaner churches and missionaries, Bosch was forced to make a choice. His experiences with the Xhosa people helped him to take a stance for the oppressed as required by the Gospel message. Kritzinger and Saayman made an analysis of important moments, both immediate and gradual, where Bosch changed his mind through his personal experiences. They provide a helpful, yet not exhaustive, list of transformations or conversions in Bosch’s life on his journey of faith. The conversions that they discerned in Bosch’s life were that he moved:

- From a nationalist and racist Afrikaner ideology to a non-ideological life of a Christian discipleship;
- From seeing black people “as pagans and at best semi-savages” to seeing them as full and equal human beings (see Livingston, 1999:26);
- From a view of mission as something done among blacks or not-yet Christians – and evangelism as something done among whites or no-more Christians – to a view of mission as a wide spectrum of activities of which evangelism is an “essential dimension”;
- From a mildly pre-millennialist position to what could probably be called a-millennialism;
- From Heilsgeschichte as a golden thread within (but not separate from) “secular history” to an integrated view of all history as the arena of God’s action;
- From a Reformed Pietism (with an emphasis on individual salvation and ecclesial separateness from the world) to a view of the reign of God as “new creation” with

cosmic dimensions, which is in process of being realised in history (Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:180).

Analysing the historical perspectives of mission as mediating salvation, Bosch acknowledged the rich and changing developments in the understanding of “mission”. For instance, among several Scriptural perspectives utilised by Bosch, we can cite the perspective of Luke which he identifies. He says Luke covers a wide range of human circumstances to encompass the mission of Jesus Christ. It includes “the termination of poverty, discrimination, illness, demon possession, sin...or as Scheffler (1988) puts it, in respect of economic, social, political, physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering” (Bosch, 1991:393). On the other hand, he also compares Luke with Paul, who stresses that salvation is a process and begins in this life, “initiated by one’s encounter with the living Christ, but complete salvation is still outstanding” (Bosch, 1991:393).

Bosch’s experiences helped him to formulate his own ideas, which became pillars for his later discourses. Theologically, three major themes began to emerge in Bosch’s vision. First, he maintains that the motivation of mission is *missio Dei*, “Mission is understood as being derived from the very nature of God” (Bosch, 1991:390); secondly that the gospel is the good news of God’s love: “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love” (Bosch, 1991:390); thirdly, Bosch states that the alternative community is one and at the same time a sociological and theological entity, and has also social and eschatological dimensions (Bekele, 2011:50). We also learn that Bosch “systematically developed a comprehensive missionary practice that integrated *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia* as indissolubly complementary elements of the gospel message” (Bekele, 2011:49; Ter Haar, 1990:51). This shows how Bosch progressively developed his theological perspectives and was searching for ways to contextualise what he had experienced in apartheid South Africa in order to find an impactful theological response.

Bosch (1991:390) affirms that mission is the total task which God has set for the church for the salvation of the world in the light of the Gospel, in line with other theologians such as Karl Barth, Johannes Aagaard and Jürgen Moltmann:

Mission was understood primarily as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The

classical doctrine of the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world... In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God....

Thus, Bosch stresses that the mission of the church has no life of its own but is effective only in the hands of the one who has sent it, namely God. Therefore, to participate in mission is to participate in the mission of God himself. Yet the focal point for Bosch’s ecclesiology is the cross of Jesus Christ. This is “an irreducible badge of distinction of the Christian faith” (Bosch, 1991:513), a phrase he borrows from Moltmann (1975:4).

As a missionary God, God enters the world in order to reconcile the world to himself. The church finds its mission in being called and sent by God, yet the extension of God’s mission goes beyond that of the church. While the role of the church is vital, God’s mission is not limited to the church. His entering his creation encompasses the whole of creation; it is not just limited to one aspect. For Bosch “mission concerns the world also beyond the boundaries of the church. It is the world God loves and for the sake of which the Christian community is called to be the salt and the light (Jn. 3:16; Mt. 5:13)” (Bosch 1991:494). Thus, God encompasses all the dimensions of human existence as well as the whole of his creation. He argues that a compartmentalised view of *missio Dei* minimises its true meaning. Bosch was referring to the polarising missiological debates of the 1970s between the priority of evangelism or social concern.

The above theological discussion on the theology of mission, although not exhaustive, has marked out the parameters and identified a few key sources for understanding the importance and centrality of *missio Dei* in theological circles. Bosch acknowledged the crisis of understanding “mission” and explained that a crisis spells both danger and opportunity (Bosch, 1991:7). He acknowledged several perspectives to approaching “mission” and agreed with the concept of “a pluriverse of missiology in a universe of mission” which he borrowed from Soares-Prabhu (1986:87). That is why Bosch argued that “different theologies of mission do not necessarily exclude each other; they form a multi-coloured mosaic of complementary and mutually enriching as well as mutually challenging frames of reference” (Bosch, 1991:8). This suffices as a preview of Bosch’s concept of “alternative community” which also affirms the theological framework of this research.

From this theological background as well as from his missionary experiences with black communities and the tensions around apartheid that developed in South Africa, Bosch envisioned and wrote on the alternative community as a prophetic Christian response to the dilemma of churches in South Africa, especially his own Dutch Reformed Church. Bosch's understanding of "alternative community" is what I will now discuss in the context of the *missio Dei*. Bosch employed the concept of "alternative community" as an intellectual tool which provides a new way of seeing each other and grasping the challenges that face Christian mission (Bekele, 2011:14).

### **2.3.2 Bosch on Alternative Community**

In opposition to dominant Afrikaner theology and missiology, Bosch developed the concept of "alternative community" which he believed would be an appropriate Christian response to the painful situation brought about by apartheid in South Africa. While he acknowledged that in the history of Christianity the early Christians put their stress on community togetherness, later the stress was on individual faith. In Bosch's view he maintained that "the faith of the individual should be embedded in the communion of all believers" (Bosch, n.d.:1), since it is a community of committed believers that has an impact in society.

The most significant discussion of Bosch on the alternative community is his analysis of the four groups that were prevalent during the time of Jesus. According to Bosch these represent the possible attitudes and social context of the prevailing political situations of the time. So even Jesus had to make a choice in responding to the socio-political situation of his time. Bosch describes the four alternatives in order to situate the response of Jesus. In fact, as shall be explained later Jesus rejects all the four positions and provides an alternative of his own which eventually got him to be rejected by Jewish leaders.

#### **2.3.2.1 Church as alternative community**

The Church as alternative community is meant to be an instrument of God in the struggle to bring about reconciliation, both within itself and within the wider society.

In striving for this reconciliation, there are two dimensions that need to be fulfilled. The first dimension is social. This requires the community to provide structures and processes for a fractured society to be reconstructed in truth and justice (Schreiter, 1998:4). The social dimension

provides the context within which every human being is born, develops, thrives and finds his or her actualisation in relating to others. When people are hurt, violated or broken they need human support to overcome their sad plight. The Church as alternative community is called to provide such a dimension of social support needed by the injured just as the community of Martin Luther King Jr (2010) provided to his fellow segregated black Americans. Katongole (2011), in the case studies that he employs to demonstrate his principle of 'relocation and incarnation,' also shows that the social dimension of reconciliation is crucially important.

The second dimension of reconciliation is spiritual (Schreiter, 1998:4). The social dimension is incomplete without the spiritual dimension. To realise reconciliation amongst the wronged and the wrongdoers God intervenes and touches the heart of the wronged. It is God who moves the heart to forgive. Schreiter explains that God begins with the victim. He restores to the victim the humanity which the wrongdoer has tried to wrest away or destroy: "This restoration of humanity might be considered the very heart of reconciliation...It is in the ultimate victim, God's Son Jesus Christ, that God begins the process that leads to the reconciliation of the whole world in Christ" (Schreiter, 1998:15).

Thus, there is the spiritual dimension where God has already initiated the process of reconciliation of humankind to himself. Yet even now God continues to work through the Holy Spirit to inspire the human community to implement this reconciliation within our injured society today. The Church therefore is called upon to offer this service as an alternative community. This spiritual element has its source from the redemption event when God the Father sent his Son to redeem the world. Christ became the victim of violence at the hands of his perpetrators. He therefore, underwent excruciating suffering and death. His suffering and death depict the political, social, emotional, psychological, dimensions suffered by many in Zimbabwe and other countries. The spiritual face of reconciliation culminates in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead where his suffering and death are conquered. The resurrection of Jesus Christ thus fulfils the process of God reconciling the world to himself, overcoming sin and bring the Kingdom of God into reality.

On the other hand, active and full participation of the Church in God's work is through the Holy Spirit given to the Church by Jesus Christ when he ascended to heaven. While God continues to be active in this Pneumatological era of the church, through His Spirit, the Church actively provides the structures, methodologies and processes of peace-building in order to achieve

reconciliation and forgiveness between the perpetrators of violence and their victims. There is a binding relationship between God's mission and the Church's full participation in her God-given mission to accomplish reconciliation within our world. Thus, God continues to transform the world through his Spirit working in the Church which acts as leaven to society. Jesus not only gave the Holy Spirit to his disciples, the first Church, for the forgiveness of sins, but also gave them "peace" and sent them into the world: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you" (John 20:21). Therefore, the Church has a mission from Jesus Christ and is working through the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit.

The Church as alternative community plays this instrumental yet important role in being used by God to fulfil his work of reconciliation. This is why the Church is an important instrument and has to be challenged to live up to its calling in the context of the brokenness of people who have experienced terrible violence and torture.

The term reconciliation here would operate in relation to other relevant concepts of peaceful coexistence, forgiveness, repentance, truth-telling and restorative justice. For this initiative to take place in communities, the Church is an indispensable instrument because God has a mission for the Church. As God continues to work through his Spirit, the Church as a community of believers and an alternative community is the visible sign that has direct impact on the structures of society as well as direct impact on the victims in the society that suffer violence and violation of their human dignity. God's mission and the Church's work are not at variance with each other, they are both God's work intended to reconcile humanity to God and within society.

In *A Missiology of the Road* Livingston (2014:339) summarises twelve theses of reconciliation discussed by Bosch in his early perspective on the matter. In the last thesis it is highlighted that "Reconciliation is not a human possibility but a divine gift. Reconciliation like conversion is ultimately the work of God himself." In his conclusion Livingston (2014:339) makes two observations in regard to Bosch's perspectives. First, he claims that Bosch saw the processes of reconciliation and demands of obedience as an urgent call to the Church. Second, Bosch realised that true reconciliation is really a challenge to the Church, (*my emphasis*) not to the world. Although I will discuss the participation of "church as alternative community" in the context of *missio Dei*, it is significant to note that it is God's work of reconciliation in which the church takes its rightful response to the call of God through his Spirit to function in this world.

Katongole also emphasises the importance of the local Church in Africa to live up to its calling. In the socio-political challenges that many African countries have faced after their independence, Katongole sees the response to the African woes of sickness, injury, marginalisation and abandonment in Pope John Paul II who sees the Church playing a vital role to transform the situation of the suffering peoples of Africa: “For my part, I express the hope that the Church will continue patiently and tirelessly its work as a Good Samaritan” (Katongole, 2011:36; c. *Ecclesia in Africa*, sec. 41). Further, interpreting Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, Katongole says that when the Church is placed at the centre of power it radiates and perpetuates the same formations of fear and violence as witnessed in Rwanda in 1994, yet when relocated on the outskirts of the village near the “evil” forest, then it welcomes twins, slaves, outcasts and it practises gentleness, mercy and care: “The result of this particular interpretation is to confirm “relocation” as an essential theological and ecclesiological requirement in the task of inventing the future of Africa” (Katongole, 2011:23) Thus relocating to the margins enables the Church incarnate itself in the real challenges of the ordinary people and be relevant to their needs. Katongole makes reference to the Synod Fathers who referred to the African continent as similar to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers. Now Africa needs to learn how to be a Good Samaritan.

Reflecting on Luke 4:18-19, Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 68 sees Jesus being relevant to the needs of those marginalised: “The entire ministry of Jesus is marked by the concern he showed to all those around him who were affected by suffering: persons in mourning, paralytics, lepers, the blind, the deaf, the mute” (Katongole, 2011:36). This means Jesus did not only relocate himself away from the centre of power, he incarnated himself into the arena of the marginalised and needy people. Thus, Katongole argues that the Church should also relocate herself and incarnate her mission amongst the marginalised. Therefore, those who have suffered violence and dehumanisation and have been relegated as enemies of the state in Zimbabwe need the attention of the Church for them to heal, be reconciled and forgive the atrocities that they have suffered. Lamin Sanneh<sup>8</sup> of the University of Yale, writes in his review of Katongole’s book: *The Sacrifice of Africa*:

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<sup>8</sup> Sanneh, L., (2010), Review on *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* by Katongole, E., (2010). (Online). Accessed 4 January 2015.



Yet the nation-state as the successor of the colonial state has stood in the way of the development aspirations of Africans. Katongole confronts this issue in a direct way. His reflections call on the churches to commit to action to change the situation and give people hope in a future that has looked increasingly bleak. The demands of the moment require the sacrifice of the churches on behalf of Africa's long-suffering peoples. This book is a valuable instalment in that cause.

Yet the whole process of reconciliation falls within the active action of God himself, who has designed to save humankind from its act of disobedience, sin and death. This process has been described as the Mission of God, *missio Dei*.

#### 2.3.2.2 *Four Jewish Movements in New Testament times*

The four religious groups that were active at the time of Jesus were the Zealots, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. Bosch describes each of these groups and relates how there are significant components of our society today that correspond with each of those groups in their own way. Following from this, the alternative community is that which captures the oppressive situation, remains true to its values and in the process exposes the evil and transforms the situation for the better.

Bosch discussed these four options in his booklet *The church as alternative community* (Bosch, n.d.:5-8). First were the Sadducees, to which most priests belonged. They were conservative and accepted the status quo of the Roman rule in order not to upset their own religious freedom. Thus, politically they were realistic and accepted the situation as it was. They saw it as foolish to oppose the political system and worked out their own system of justice within the Roman political structures. In terms of religious beliefs, they accepted only the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. "The word "expediency" sums up their fundamental attitude very well" (Bosch, n.d.:6). This is why they later opposed Jesus, because he was disturbing the order of the Romans and their own compromised comfort zone.

Bosch went on to explore the philosophy of the Pharisees as an option for Jesus. Most Scribes belonged to this group. They despised the Sadducees because the latter cooperated with the foreign regime. Their world was divided between what was "clean" and "unclean," and they created a guilty conscience among the people by their legalistic approach to life. Yet politics for them was a dirty game, not to be participated in. God was like a bookkeeper taking stock and account of the

actions of each person. Pharisees lived within the community but kept themselves clean and pure from all uncleanness and any form of contamination. They had great authority among the simple people of the community. Religiously they lived piously among the people but kept aloof as they avoided politics and just remained faithful to the religious law of God. Like the position of the Sadducees Jesus rejected the position of the Pharisees as well. In any case Jesus would not be acceptable to this group as he associated “with sinners, publicans, Samaritans and other outcasts, and because of His attitude to the Sabbath laws” (Bosch, n.d.:7).

The Zealots espoused a theology of revolution. They opposed the status quo and waged a holy war against the Romans. The Romans were to be removed by force and driven into the sea for the old glory of Israel to be restored. That is why they refused to pay taxes to the Romans or keep coins bearing the emperor’s image: “The Zealots identified the reign of God with institutional reform” (Bosch, n.d.:7). Although the Zealots fought for the reign of God Jesus also rejected their philosophy and method of force to bring the reign of God but stood nearer to them than he did towards the Sadducees and Pharisees. Possibly Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot were former Zealots, but the latter differed fundamentally from Jesus’ position as he did not approve of the use of violence in attaining the Kingdom of God.

Last, but not least, Bosch analyses the philosophy of the Essenes as an option which Jesus could take. The Essenes had some similarities with both the Pharisees and the Zealots. Like the Pharisees they maintained the strict purity rules of clean or unclean but unlike the Pharisees, who lived in cities and towns, the Essenes lived in secluded places in the desert. To remain clean and uncontaminated they lived in monasteries and followed a ghetto life, pursuing asceticism. On the other hand, like the Zealots, they believed that a violent change was necessary in order to remove the Roman rule. However, that was not to be done by human agency but by God himself, assisted by angels, to liberate the righteous and the elect and to destroy the unrighteous.

These were the possibilities which Jesus could have taken, yet he did not. In fact, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots had a common attitude towards Jesus and conspired to get rid of him. It was Judas Iscariot, the former Zealot, who betrayed Jesus while the Pharisees and Sadducees combined their efforts to have him crucified. The Essenes had no hand in the rejection of Jesus, not because they supported him, but because they had already left Jerusalem by the time Jesus pursued his active ministry in Jerusalem.

In fact, the four movements banded together because they had found a common enemy in Jesus, who upset and disturbed what they traditionally believed in. Ordinarily they did not agree amongst themselves and were in constant conflict. As Bosch sums up “the Pharisees blamed the Sadducees, the Essenes blamed the Pharisees, and the Zealots blamed the Romans, and so on” (Bosch, n.d.:25). When Jesus formed his group of disciples, he offered a completely new thrust, different from the traditional four Jewish movements that have just been discussed.

### 2.3.2.3 *Jesus’ Disciples as Alternative Community*

Bosch then goes on to discuss the new definition of community offered by Jesus, which is vastly different from the perspectives of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots. The Sadducees saw Jesus threatening the status quo from which they benefited, while the Pharisees were afraid that the threat he posed would devastate the esteem they enjoyed among the ordinary people. Bosch argues that Jesus may have formulated His demand to love and forgive one’s enemies in conscious contrast to what the Zealots demanded: “The Zealots considered His demand for love of enemies and renunciation of violence to be in extreme opposition to their ideal of revolutionary zeal” (Bosch, n.d.:9). They believed that Jesus was cutting the ground under their feet by demanding love and forgiveness of enemies. Jesus’s new definition of community went far beyond their traditional practices and left them without control over the people. He did not structure his community according to the existing models of the Jewish religious groups but offered an alternative model, which accommodated all people.

Jesus’ definition of community was all-inclusive: “Not hatred, but love brings victory. Not exclusivism but inclusivism is the answer. Not the limiting to the own group but the transcending of that group is the way we should go” (Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:11).

Thus, the new definition of community offered by Jesus cut completely across the traditional definitions of the four models. Basically, the four Jewish models were in agreement. They all wanted to restore the old order of Israel and its greatness. They believed in the monarchy, the temple, the priesthood and the law as valid and permanent institutions of Israel. Therefore, they were based on ordinary human systems and functioned like any other human race as those that surrounded the Jews. Indeed, human solidarity is based on loyalties, prejudices of family, race, people, language, culture, class, political conviction, religious affinity and others (Bosch, n.d.:10). Jesus did not follow that path; instead he embodied a new model to bring all people together, not

divide them. In contrast to the tradition that said “Love your neighbour and hate your enemy!” Jesus brought in a new teaching: “Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who treat you spitefully” (Mt. 5:43; Lk. 6:28).

Bosch argues that Jesus makes it clear that God is in control and that he chooses who my neighbour or brother is, as in the case when a messenger came to Jesus to tell him “Your mother and brothers are outside asking for you... and he replied “Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother” Mark 3:31-35 (Bosch, n.d.:12). To do the will of God is one of the fundamental principles that creates the new community of Jesus. That is why, when Jesus read the passage from Isaiah 61, he stopped before reading about the day of God’s vengeance. The new order is not based on hatred or vengeance and insiders were not privileged over outsiders:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He has chosen Me to bring  
Good news to the poor.  
He sent Me to proclaim liberty to captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind;  
To set free the oppressed  
And announce that the time has come  
When the Lord will save His people (Luke 4:18-19 GNB) (Bosch, n.d.:13)

This brought a new dispensation to all, a new way of being community and loyalty to God, rather than to institutions and systems. Therefore, the people belonging to the traditional models could no longer bear with Jesus who turned upside down what they considered holy.

In his arguments Bosch shows that Jesus destroyed all human definitions of community and solidarity, particularly as represented by the four models. In his new definition Jesus included three categories of people who traditionally were not welcome in the above-named groups. The first category included the useless ones: the blind, the lame, and especially the lepers. The second category comprised the traitors of the nation, exploiters such as the universally hated tax collectors. And the third category included the enemies, especially Samaritans and Romans (Bosch, n.d.:15).

This all-inclusive stance cost Jesus' rejection by all four the Jewish groups, whose aspirations and hopes were thereby put at peril.

To the realm of the new definition of community Bosch adds Jesus' interpretation of the "present moment". In his analysis Bosch reflects three positions that the Jewish communities adopted in their understanding of history. First, the Jews regarded their past, especially the Davidic period, as having been very glorious and prosperous. This view Bosch thinks was exaggerated. Secondly, he says the Jews viewed their present (during the time of Jesus) as being "empty and dismal" because their kingdom was no longer in existence and they were dominated, persecuted and ruled by Gentiles, the Romans. The Jews considered this period of domination as a period of "evil and suffering". That is why the Jews had a particular interest for the third period, that of the future. They expected the restoration of their former kingdom and glory, a reversal of fortunes and a period to dominate Gentiles and enemies. (Bosch, n.d.:15)

Contrary to the Jewish understanding of the present, Jesus proclaimed that the present was already fulfilled, the year of favour was already among the people, (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20) the text of Isaiah 61 had come to fruition. The present, as a time of grace and repentance, had arrived to all as in the case of the paralytic healed by Jesus: "My son, your sins are forgiven: (Mk. 2:5). Because of Jesus' interpretation of the present, identifying himself with God and having brought the reign of God amongst the people, it was no wonder that all the synoptic gospels report the clash between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, who saw Jesus' interpretation as blasphemy, (Mk. 2:7) since forgiveness was the prerogative of God alone! As Jesus claimed that a new dawn had arrived, it was a moment of decision for all. Either one accepted Jesus and entered into a new creation and realm or rejected him and fought him unto death. Neutrality could not be maintained in the face of the "present moment", the inauguration of the new era and new community. "This is what the exceptionally pregnant Greek concept *kairos* means: the decisive moment, the turning-point in history. Jesus rebukes Jewish leaders for their inability to recognise this basic fact. 'What hypocrites you are!'" (Bosch, n.d.:17). Indeed, those who recognise the *kairos* moment and welcome it become members of the Jesus community and citizens of the Kingdom of God, although the Kingdom is not yet fully realised. One becomes a member of this new community by repentance and conversion.

#### 2.3.2.4 *Life in the Alternative Community*

One qualifies to be part of the alternative community – the new creation, the Kingdom of God, which is still in process – through repentance and conversion. Bosch is at pains to explain that this involves a turning *from* to a turning *to*, a transfer of loyalty or allegiance from one lord to become a citizen of the Kingdom, to give up what one considers to be the most worthwhile and this happens at a *kairos* moment (Bosch, n.d.:18-27). For this repentance and conversion to be true, it has to start with us, not with outsiders: “We will not change anything unless we begin with ourselves” (Bosch, n.d.:25). The whole process embraces both the material as well as the spirituality of any human person who encounters Jesus and believes in Him.

Bosch identifies three basic elements that define one who is in the “alternative community”. These include firstly the “new definition of community and solidarity” by Jesus; secondly, “the new interpretation of the present time”, the *kairos*; and thirdly, “the true understanding of what conversion is” (Bosch, n.d.:27). He utilises several Scripture texts to demonstrate this new “alternative community” to which all are invited. These elements are interdependent and work in unison to reflect this alternative community. For instance, 1 John 3:14 says: “We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love is still under the power of death”. In this text all three elements are reflected at once. First: “We have left death and come into life”: this is conversion, a transfer of allegiance, a leaving self behind, a “turning *from*” as well as a “turning *to*”. Second: “We know it because we love our brothers”, that is, we have accepted the new definition of community and solidarity which has replaced the old. The love of Jesus binds us to one another. We belong to each other in community and solidarity because of our love to the Master and to each other. Thirdly, behind these two quotations is implied that we have been able to discern the *kairos* and assent to God’s moment (Bosch, n.d.:27).

In addition to repentance and change of allegiance Bosch adds that the inauguration of the new order, the time of grace, has already arrived by Jesus’ coming into the world. As Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17: “When anyone is united to Christ, there is *a new world*; the *old order* has gone, and a *new order* has already begun” (Bosch, n.d.:17). Thus, the coming of Jesus ushers in a new era, a new creation, indeed an alternative community that is imbued with the capacity to transform the wounded world.

Cognisant of these basic elements that reflect the new community of Jesus, Bosch also informs us that this community needs to be compassionate as Jesus is compassionate in his whole missionary work. The story of the Good Samaritan demonstrates what Jesus' call is all about: "The one overriding characteristic of this transformed man, member of the new community in this new day and age is compassion" (Bosch, n.d.:28). Although risky and dangerous, the one who decides to embrace the "alternative community" must be ready not only to suffer but also be included in the class of marginalised and outsiders. This compassion also includes the three categories of excluded people already mentioned above: the useless ones, traitors and enemies. Jesus' compassion extends to them as well and thus this new community following his footsteps is expected to do likewise. Compassion means to suffer with, not just to sympathise from a distance<sup>9</sup>. Bosch stresses the importance of compassion rather than sympathy, even though both terms have the same etymology. Therefore, instead of using violence to overcome violence, as the Zealots maintained, Jesus offers to suffer violence in order to overcome that violence. The power of love and compassion is much more transformative than the power of violence, "As a matter of fact, love of neighbour may be regarded as the litmus test for love of God. The same is true of *deeds*" (Bosch, 1991:67).

Bosch (n.d.:29) borrows some characteristics of this new community as described by Juan Mattheos: "The characteristics of the group of disciples were first, love of the brethren, then joy, peace, tolerance, kindness, generosity, loyalty, simplicity and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12-13). He also says that it is a group without privileges (1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), a group where Christ has brought peace (Eph. 2:13-16). No one is on top or bottom, but all are last and first at the same time (Mt. 19:30). The list is endless but these few demonstrate how Bosch

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<sup>9</sup> Fair, J., (2018). United States Conference of Bishops: "U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Administrative Committee Statement on the Life and Work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." The Conference Committee wrote on the occasion Catholics celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr a man who gave his life for others: "'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). April 4th marks 50 years since the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. On this day, as we reflect on his life and work, we need to ask ourselves if we are doing all we can to build the culture of love, respect, and peace to which the Gospel calls us.

(<https://zenit.org/articles/catholics-mark-50th-anniversary-of-death-of-martin-luther-king-jr/>) accessed 5 April 2018. Another vivid example is Nelson Mandela, who refused to be released from jail for the sake of his oppressed people of South Africa: "Not only have I suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years... But I cannot sell my birth right, nor am I prepared to sell the birth right of the people to be free..." (Mandela, 1994:623).

laboured to describe and define this new community of Jesus, which was a clear alternative to the four traditional Jewish communities.

The understanding of Bosch's concept of "alternative community" was not conceived from political motives, as some of his fellow DRC members thought; instead he understood it as a theological term. As explained by Kritzinger and Saayman, he was influenced by the Mennonite tradition of his friend John Yoder. This tradition "supplied the dimension of radical separation and alternativeness"; while the Reformed tradition of Bosch "supplied the dimension of engagement with the world, the desire to "turn the world upside down" (Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:77).

This alternative community therefore is based on members of the Christian community being committed in their fellowship as disciples and remaining faithful to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Their mutual solidarity does not depend on social divisions such as family, language, race, culture, class, political affiliation, religious affinities, profession, common interests, occupation, or any such social dimensions. Their mutual solidarity transcends all these and is a product of mission as well as a medium for mission. (Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:10).

Thus, the concept of *kairos* and all aspects of conversion are accommodated in the all-inclusive definition of Jesus' community. To belong to this community demands a conversion that begins with each person individually, before they can call on others to change. Through commitment to Jesus, this vision seeks to transform a Christian community from the inside and to mobilise it to engage in the transformation of the society around it.

### **2.3.3 Bosch's perspectives on missionary task**

In his major publication on the theology of mission, *Transforming Mission* (Bosch, 1991), Bosch discusses the missionary task of the Church from various perspectives. He selects Matthew, Luke-Acts and Paul as the documents that reflect the general thrust of the New Testament missionary paradigm, with huge implications for the identity and task of the church as alternative community (Bosch, 1991:56-178). Even though Bosch does not use the term "alternative community" in *Transforming Mission*, the notion that the church is a distinct community shaped by grace and radical inclusion is still crystal clear. The thrust of the alternative community as God's new creation is manifested by a community that has genuinely encountered Jesus Christ and whose life has been transformed radically by that encounter. Further, such a community is not only itself transformed, but is also a sign and instrument for the transformation of others. It represents the



values and teachings of Christ in the society and world within which it finds itself, yet goes beyond itself and becomes a pointer to the not-yet-fully-realised community intended by God. Contextually, the alternative community lives in history but theologically it is eschatological and points to a community yet to be fully realised. The Church's function is therefore to renounce the old worldly values and not only announce but also live as witness to the new values of Christ centred on love, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and other values that Christ has taught in his gospel. Hence Bosch argues for the involvement of the church in matters of politics, as those affect people on a daily basis: "The love commandment, which is *the* basis for the Church's involvement in politics, is an integral part of the mission commandment" (Bosch, 1991:82).

This means that if the Church in general does not adhere all the time to Christ's message then it too needs transformation in order to be a real sign of the new creation and the Kingdom of God: "Matthew desires his community no longer to regard itself as a sectarian group but boldly and consciously as the church of Christ (he is the only evangelist who uses the word *ekklesia*, (church)...)" (Bosch, 1991:59). Thus, Jesus has already ushered in the Kingdom of God and the church is the visible symbol that continues to participate, give witness and point to the promise of that true Kingdom realised in its fullness. As Bosch presents Matthew's perspective: "to encounter the kingdom is to encounter Jesus" (Bosch, 1991:71).

Although Matthew is pre-occupied with the Jewish community in his Gospel narrative, Bosch utilises that same Gospel to challenge that perspective and show that the Good News is for all. In this regard Bosch criticises the evangelical interpretation of Matthew's "Great Commission," which made the call for social justice "at best auxiliary and at worst irrelevant" (Bekele, 2011:271). Instead, Bosch sees it as part of the core purpose of the Church's mission: "I have argued that the 'Great Commission' at the end of the Gospel is to be understood as the key to Matthew's understanding of the mission and ministry of Jesus" (Bosch, 1991:60). The universal context of the mission is made clear by Matthew, both in the Beatitudes and in the last commission of Jesus to his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18-20). Thus, the alternative community is a sign for all to embrace the gospel of Christ and be transformed: "Matthew's tendency to opt for creative tension, of combining the pastoral and the prophetic, is also evidenced by the way in which he portrays the call to a mission to both Jews and Gentiles" (Bosch, 1991:82). All Christians, like Jesus' disciples, continue to stand in this dialectical tension in both their

following and implementing of the gospel. The elements of doubt and worship, as well as elements of faith and fear, co-exist within the followers of Jesus, the new alternative community. Bosch concludes that Matthew's view is that Christians identify themselves through involvement in mission, in communicating to others in a new way of life, in a new way of interpreting reality and God and committing themselves to the liberation and salvation of others. Thus, a missionary community is an alternative community that understands itself as being both committed to its environment and different from it and therefore not "of the world" (Bosch, 1991:83).

On the other hand, when Bosch utilises the perspective of Luke-Acts he demonstrates the inclusive thrust of the mission of Christ transcending socio-economics in the context of forgiveness. Against his own background, where apartheid was the accepted order of the day, Bosch adopted the theological values of Christ which are inclusive of all people. From the narratives of Luke, Christ's teachings embody inclusiveness and emphasise "the centrality of repentance and forgiveness, of prayer, of love and acceptance of enemies, of justice and fairness in inter-human relationships...the poor" (Bosch, 1991:86). Among Luke's unique contents (*Sondergut*) in the Synoptic tradition, which underline his priorities, one finds the passages on the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37), the Pharisee and the publican (Lk. 18:9-14), the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), Zacchaeus (Lk.19:1-10) and two unique sayings on the cross (Lk. 23:34; 43). Luke is also the writer who says most about Jesus' ministry of forgiveness and acceptance of women (for example Lk. 7:36-50, 8:1-3). Hence the entire ministry of Jesus and his relationship with various outcasts and marginalised people gives witness to "Jesus' practice of boundary-breaking compassion, which the church is called to emulate" (Bosch, 1991:86). With such a theological stance Bosch was not only responding to the system of apartheid but also articulating his theological vision of the alternative community in his missiological praxis.

Throughout Luke's narrative Jesus displays that he always has a special place for the poor. They readily receive and trustingly respond to Jesus' message:

Jesus championed God's preferential option for the poor. He announced the jubilee which would reverse the fate of the oppressed, the sick and called upon the wealthy and healthy to share with those who are victims of exploitation and tragic circumstances (Bosch, 1991:118).

The Jesuit Society founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola developed a spirituality for themselves that also stresses “the option for the poor”. The phrase “option for the poor” was used by the Jesuit Superior Fr. Pedro Arrupe in 1968 in a letter to the Jesuits in Latin America. In 1971 it became a focus of the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, who declared in their Synodal letter:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel...or of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971; Padberg, 1989).

This “option for the poor” has become a landmark in Luke’s Gospel presentation of Christ and demonstrates the love of Christ for all, but particularly the marginalised. This is not just material poverty alone but encompasses all aspects, including cultural and spiritual dimensions. This perspective from Luke’s Gospel was also discussed by the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which referred to the poor nine times. Many Popes have also spoken about the priority of the poor, the Catholic Bishops of Latin America (CELAM) at Medellín and Puebla articulated the same principle. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* in 1991 declared that poverty included all aspects of human life. More recently Pope Francis on November 13, 2015 said that the “option for the poor” meant “living and thinking with the people” (Luciani & Palazzi, 2015).

This “option for the poor” was also employed by liberation theologians in their quest to eliminate poverty amongst the oppressed, particularly in Latin America. As a developed theological principle, the option for the poor was articulated by Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P. in his landmark work *A Theology of Liberation* (1971). Gutiérrez insists that the principle is rooted in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and claims that a preferential concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of the poor is an essential element of the Gospel.

Thus, Bosch builds his persuasive case on the premise that, for Luke, conversion is radical: If one claims to have had an encounter with Jesus, one cannot remain indifferent to the needs of one’s neighbour. The issue of conversion in Luke is critical and also specific. He relates stories of those who encounter Jesus and take a stance. For instance, in the case of Zacchaeus he undertakes to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold those from whom he had extorted money. The conversion of Levi the tax-collector (Lk. 5:27-32), the woman who was a sinner (Lk.

7:36-50) all took bold decisions to repent and convert. The result was they all received salvation: “Liberation *from* is also liberation *to*, else it is not an expression of salvation. And liberation to always involves love to God *and* neighbour” (Bosch, 1991:107). It follows that the test of belonging to the community of Jesus is measured by one’s commitment to love of God and love of neighbour. Thus, Bosch argues for an alternative community reaffirming what Jesus had already inaugurated when he formed the community of his apostles.

Therefore, Bosch holds that the church as alternative community needs to have encountered Jesus in such a manner that the love of Jesus for his people, especially demonstrated in his love for the poor, shapes its life in a decisive way. The love of such an alternative community will extend to all the people of God, without segregation, especially prioritising the marginalised, oppressed, second class citizens, poor and downtrodden. Such an alternative community should both challenge itself and challenge the world in its commitment to the principles of Jesus Christ.

Bosch sums up Luke-Acts’ missionary theology with the central thrust of the gospel message of repentance and forgiveness which is meant for all nations. This message is to be executed by witnesses with the power of the Holy Spirit (Bosch, 1991:91). With such a vision Bosch sees a committed community empowered by the Holy Spirit as that alternative community capable of giving witness to the rest of the Church and to the whole world. This is not a sectarian group but an instrument utilised by God in the process of his *missio Dei* to fulfil his mission in the world. Like Jesus’ disciples after his resurrection, who were transformed to become the church of the risen Lord, the alternative community can fulfil the role of being an instrument of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing when it truly bears witness to the values and teachings of its master and founder, Jesus Christ.

However, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, before he became Pope Benedict XVI, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, did not agree with some elements of liberation theology. He says that in liberation theology there are elements of Marxism which would approve the use of violence in order to liberate the poor. Pope Benedict XVI, who was rather famously antagonistic to liberation theology, embraced the option for the poor as a true Catholic obligation. In August 1984 Ratzinger strongly criticised several aspects of liberation theology, thus the subsequent stance of the Catholic Church does not approve of sections of liberation theology (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 1984)

However, when he became the Pope, he discussed the issue of the “option for the poor” in his first Encyclical, *Caritas Deus Est* (God is Love),(2005) and extended its meaning in Catholic understanding. He spoke about charity as a responsibility of the Church and from a scriptural point of view:

Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety... ‘All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need’ (Acts 2:44-45).

Bosch’s position too does not include violence in his theological discourses and so the alternative community would only challenge the whole church as well as the world by giving witness to the pacifist values propounded by Christ himself and his demonstration of love through the cross, that is through vicarious suffering.

Before Vatican II, Catholic Social teaching mostly depended on Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, which advocated fair economic distribution of wealth that included everyone, with particular stress on “workers and the poor”. Such a move envisioned the Church as an alternative community in relation to the status quo of the time of Pope Leo XIII’s world.

#### **2.3.4 Brueggemann on Alternative Community in Jeremiah**

In addition to the ethical and missiological perspectives mentioned above, based mainly on the New Testament and the Gospel of Luke in particular, Walter Brueggemann uses the concept of “alternative community” in the context of prophetic ministry. He utilises the prophet Jeremiah to explain this alternative community of which Jeremiah is a revealing instrument of God. Brueggemann stresses three important aspects in order to achieve a sustainable alternative community in the ministry of the prophets. First, there should be a proper formation of a religious *community*, secondly its practice should have a disciplined *spirituality* and thirdly it should embrace that niche of *prophetic faith*. These are dimensions of Christian obedience that converge and cannot be separated from each other: “Prophetic faith is a voice for life in a world that is bent on death” (Brueggemann, 2006:142). He thinks the call to this prophetic faith is not only radical, risky, urgent and subversive but also dangerous in a society in pursuit of its own destruction. The

example that best suits this description is the book of Jeremiah, as it reflects the various levels of God interacting with his people Israel. The manner in which Jeremiah himself acts, talks and expresses his message in poetic language brings out both Jeremiah's prophetic faith in Yahweh as well as the self-destructive behaviour of Israel, Yahweh's chosen people. The situation into which Jeremiah entered is reflected even today in our own situation with that tendency to self-destruction. While Israel resisted, ignored or denied Jeremiah's witness and continued on its way to death, "Jeremiah stands isolated in historical, cultural context, a voice of sanity in a world of madness" (Brueggemann, 2006:142). Thus, he suggests that a faithful, witnessing community of faith is also situated, like Jeremiah, in a similar destiny that will discern the right action to take and witness to it.

Israel alienates itself from Yahweh and forgets what he has done for the people, especially in two particular areas. The first is that Yahweh brought the people out of oppression in Egypt, yet the people forgot that past and Jeremiah depicts Israel's alienation from God as follows (Brueggemann, 2006:143-4):

They did not say, "Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt,  
Who led us in the wilderness,  
In a land of deserts and pits,  
In a land of drought and deep darkness  
In a land that none passes through  
Where no one lives? (Jer. 2:6)

The second is that he gave them the gift of the promised land of Canaan and again Israel estranged itself from this special gift of land given by Yahweh. The people live as if they had acquired this land on their own. They have forgotten that it is an utter gift, reflecting God's love and generosity to Israel. The People have forgotten the Torah and the priests no longer live in close and intimate loyalty to Yahweh. In response, the intervention of Jeremiah offers an alternative to the people of Israel: "Thus Jeremiah has to practice his ministry and his faith in a community alienated from and cut off from its founding, authorising memory. It is a main insistence of Jeremiah that Israel's whole life must be resignified and redescribed through that primal memory" (Brueggemann, 2006:144). Jeremiah's faith must be practised in a theological situation of enormous danger. Brueggemann's use of Jeremiah implies that the prophetic community can only be an alternative

community when it is a sign and witness to the teachings of Yahweh in the context of challenges and real danger.

Because of the committed faith of Jeremiah in Yahweh despite the unfaithfulness of Israel, Jeremiah can rely on the governance of Yahweh and not on earthly human governments. Thus, he can assert that real and important decisions which shape the earth are beyond human reach, since they are heavenly. When the prophet says “Thus says the Lord,” this metaphor depicts that his message transcends earthly authority and no one can nullify it: “This is an alternative authorization that subverts conventional authority” (Brueggemann, 2006:146). It can be argued that, even though Jeremiah faces tough and dangerous opposition, his prophetic faith in Yahweh offers the right alternative to the situation that Israel brings upon herself. Following this line of thought, an alternative community today is there to offer the correct response to the difficult challenges that our world faces today. The strength of such a community emanates from its formation through disciplined spirituality, committed practice of witness and prophetic faith. Such a community continues to be committed to its belief in Yahweh despite the dangers surrounding it. Even in the face of false prophets that also claim to be speaking on behalf of God, Jeremiah stands his ground because of his appeal to the Mosaic rootage as well as to the heavenly Council which gives him Divine authorisation. There is a third rootage for Jeremiah:

Jeremiah’s faith is sanctioned by his participation in the concrete pain, anguish, and pathos of his actual situation. Jeremiah takes the hurt of injustice in his society to be a pathology that reaches clear to the heart of God. It is this notice and embrace of pain among his contemporaries that legitimates the terrible words of the prophet (Brueggemann, 2006:147-8).

Just like Jeremiah, who was rejected and went through pain in the society that was bent on self-destructive acts against God’s instructions, the alternative community too becomes more prophetic and a sign of God’s *missio Dei* in reconciliation, forgiveness and healing when the community gives its witness through embracing rejection, pain and suffering in the context in which it is to be a true instrument of God. Therefore, being an alternative community is neither easy nor readily accepted by the society or world, which is often governed by worldly standards of oppression and exploitation of fellow human beings.

Yet this pain and grief of the prophet is not limitless. In the midst of this grief and pain the prophet becomes lyrical about a common social possibility that is rooted in the heart and resolve of God: “The prophet is rooted in a *powerful vision of an alternative future*” (Brueggemann, 2006:151). Although that future is multifaceted, Brueggemann discusses four alternative visions. First, there will be the restoration of the land (Jer. 29:14). The people who went into exile will once again come back to the land that had been temporarily taken away. Therefore, land is guaranteed in the face of present circumstance. The land is an inalienable right and gift rooted in God’s promise to his people. When the people of Israel went into captivity, they did not see any hope, but the faith of Jeremiah and his prophetic stance, although rejected, is a hopeful alternative position to believe in.

Second, the city will be rebuilt (Jer. 30:18-21). This is surprising, because Jeremiah utters the fact of rebuilding the city while it was still in ashes. In addition, there was no social order or political power of Israel to usher in such a construction at the time of the prophecy. Yet God’s promise lies in his fidelity to fulfil what he says through his true prophet Jeremiah.

Third is the promise of the new covenant. A new relationship will be ushered in, no longer rooted in violations of commandments but based on a fresh change of heart, a renovated will and a glad embrace of what is required. At last Israel will do what God requires her to do.

In the fourth aspect the possibility is articulated as social, concrete, visible and public yet it is a theological vision based on God’s resolve and commitment: “It is for that reason that the newness is rooted in *an affirmation of forgiveness*” (Brueggemann, 2006:152).

These four dimensions of the vision of Jeremiah clearly demonstrate that his faithful stance to the promises of God to Israel are vindicated. Jeremiah shows us through his prophetic faith, witness and spirituality that he is the alternative to Israel’s stance to Yahweh. Therefore, this provides the basis for an alternative community to do the same in its difficult context of present-day experiences in this world. The alternative community is expected to talk about the world subversively, by resignifying, redescribing and reimagining what faith means in a particular context. Like Jeremiah, its central theological perspective is to shift from pain to possibility and from judgement to the promise of God. Hence the alternative community must be prepared to face the challenges of this world and be a sign of what a community should be like. It points to the ideal community of the future, the eschatological “heavenly” community.



This process is backed up by a prophetic faith that aims at “*reconstruction of social reality*” (Brueggemann, 2006:153). It is therefore possible for Jeremiah that social transactions are redeemable and subject to change. He is certain that human agents can make a difference in the shape of that world through the influence of the prophet who is basically a reformist: “The reformist tendency of prophetic faith is boldly and affirmatively “this worldly”. This tendency is embedded in a thoroughly Israelite tradition that stretches from Moses to Ezra, the two great administrators of public possibility in Israel” (Brueggemann, 2006:153).

Another important call made by the reformist tendency is the call to repentance. This call is made to Israel, urging her to return to Yahweh. This call is both theological as well as covenantal. All areas of life are implicated in this call. This includes the socioeconomic and political perspectives. Israel is summoned to enact the radical public claims of Yahweh and effect transformation as desired by the Lord. Although Israel tries to repent by freeing captives and restoring property to the poor, eventually Israel withdraws this behaviour and inflicts revenge on those to be released. Finally, Israel is to be punished, as there was no hope for her. While Israel now has no hope of avoiding Yahweh’s punishment Jeremiah once again uses his imaginative rereading, resignifying and redescribing the social reality that faced his people.

Jeremiah utilises two metaphors to describe the helpless situation of Israel. The first metaphor is that of marriage, honeymoon, adultery and possible remarriage which offered a rereading of Israel’s life and faith. The second metaphor is that of sickness and healing (Brueggemann, 2006:158-9). In using radical language Jeremiah displays the reality of pain that Israel has gone into. Because of disobedience Israel now has an incurable disease, in fact, a terminal illness. These metaphors reflect on the one hand the serious helplessness and pain that Israel has delved into and on the other hand point to the possibility of reunion with God as well as healing of the incurable disease. Thus, both these metaphors of “divorce and reconciliation” as well as “sickness and healing” are crucial theologically. Why the negative metaphors do not lead to the nullification of Israel’s hope is rooted in God’s will for relation: “Thus it is God’s yearning that leads to reconciliation: it is God’s passion that leads to healing” (Brueggemann, 2006:160). So, Jeremiah penetrates into God’s resilient intention through his imaginative poetry and powerful metaphors, enabling a hopeless situation to be redeemable in the face of all the odds that prevailed at his time. The important role of prophetic imagination is also evident in contemporary theologies reflecting

on the transformative potential of the gospel. Here it can be seen that Jeremiah's prophetic faith, despite the suffering involved, enabled Israel eventually to realise that the prophet was right in continuing to point to the desire of Yahweh to sustain his relationship with her and bring her back to follow the precepts of the Lord and remain faithful to him: "Now, for Jeremiah, for YHWH, and for Israel, suffering produces hope" (Brueggemann, 2006:165).

Although Jeremiah spoke most of these prophecies about Israel, scholars believe that he worked with a small community of disciples who kept his prophecies and probably edited them. The most notable member of this community was his secretary Baruch. Generally, prophets had a small group of followers who were committed to what the prophet proclaimed to the nation of Israel. In the case of Jeremiah, he gave instructions to Baruch to write what he was prophesying: "Jeremiah therefore summoned Baruch son of Neriah, who at his dictation wrote down on the scroll all the words Yahweh had spoken to him" (Jer. 36:4). Further it can be demonstrated that some of the biographical accounts of the prophet were written in the third person, which the prophet could not have written about himself, for example: "Jeremiah then gave Baruch this order: 'As I am prevented from entering the Temple of Yahweh, you yourself must go and, from the scroll you wrote at my dictation, read all the words of Yahweh to the people in the Temple on the day of the fast'" (Jer. 36:5-6). This is corroborated by some scholars that "...we find biographical prose written in the third person about the prophets. In the case of Jeremiah, it is often thought this may have been written by Baruch; in general, it may have come from the disciples of the prophets" (Rowley, 1963:45). This community of Jeremiah was responsible not only for preserving the prophecies of their master but also for being committed to them to be a sign to the people of Israel that Yahweh would fulfil his promises to his people of forgiveness and restoration.

As Jeremiah articulated and embodied this prophetic faith for Israel – surrounded by a committed faith community – so an alternative community today could believe in such a transformation for society. An alternative, prophetic community has the task to call society to repentance, reconciliation and transformation through its witnessing to the teachings of Christ. Although complex, Brueggemann has assisted us to have a deeper comprehension of Jeremiah's commitment to his prophetic faith and the role he played to bring out God's commitment to Israel, despite Israel's moving towards self-destruction. This role of Jeremiah then provides another basis for arguing for the possibility of the church of Christ living as an alternative community in our times.

## **2.4. RECONCILIATION**

Some of the theologians that affirm the importance of the role of the church in the process of reconciliation – which includes justice, forgiveness and healing – are the Church Fathers who produced the Second Vatican Council documents as well as Popes such as Leo XIII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. Others are in the category of liberation theologians or ecumenical or protestant theologians who include Walter Brueggemann, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Leonardo Boff, Justo L. Gonzalez, Catherine G. Gonzalez and many missiologists.

In this section I will deal with reconciliation as part of the theological framework for this research work. First, I will briefly state what reconciliation is not, then an attempt to define reconciliation, conditions of violence that necessitate reconciliation, a Christian understanding of reconciliation, distinction between individual and social reconciliation and reconciliation as mission of the Church.

### **2.4.1 Misconceptions of Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is a term that can be misunderstood or applied to processes that do not quite reflect its proper praxis. Schreiter identifies three areas where the term could be used yet does not represent its proper meaning. He points out that reconciliation is not a hasty peace. Those who interpret it as a hasty peace often intend to suppress the history of violence that they have perpetrated against others and quickly want to glide over real facts and in the process suppress the memory of victims of that violence. "...this approach is supposed to put the violent history behind us and allow us to begin afresh" (Schreiter, 1992:19). With reference to James H. Cone (1969:143-52), Schreiter says that such an approach not only trivialises and ignores the suffering of people but also ignores the source of the sufferings, namely those who oppress and do violence to others. Hence, "To trivialize and ignore memory is to trivialize and ignore human identity, and to trivialize and ignore human identity is to trivialize and ignore human dignity. This is why reconciliation as a hasty peace is actually the opposite of reconciliation" (Schreiter, 1992:19).

A second misunderstanding is shown by those who say they prefer reconciliation instead of liberation. The fallacy is that there is failure to perceive that it is not a question of preference as the Kairos document or the South American Bishops' Conference stated, but liberation is needed in order to achieve reconciliation, thus liberation comes prior to reconciliation. Thus, liberation is called for in order to achieve reconciliation (Schreiter, 1992: 22). Therefore, if sources of violence

and conflict are not examined and removed then reconciliation cannot take place. Liberation implies the removal of those sources of violence and conflict so that conditions for reconciliation can be created.

The third misunderstanding is to take reconciliation as a managed process. Often there is confusion between reconciliation and conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is a process whose aim is to lessen conflict in order to get the parties to agree to live together. Thus, a skilled mediator is employed whose goal is to negotiate an agreement between the conflicting parties. Each side has claims but will have to give up some of its claims in order to accommodate the other side and co-exist with less conflict. This needs a rigorous, disciplined and guided process by a skilled mediator or mediators in order to carefully attain the goal of co-existence of conflicting parties: “Reconciliation then becomes a process of bargaining in which both sides are expected to accede (sic) some of their interests in order to reach an end to conflict” (Schreiter, 1992:25). Such reconciliation requires both sides to give up something but not so much that this causes yet another conflict. The skilled mediator is engaged in such processes as negotiating contracts between employers and employees, in coalition building in communities, between disputing parties and even between warring nations.

In comparison with Christian reconciliation such a managed process falls short because Christian reconciliation goes beyond such a managed process. It falls short in three ways, as Schreiter says: in the Christian context, “it is God who reconciles” (Schreiter, 1992:26). This acknowledges the enormity of the task required to restore social order and peace in either oppressive situations or warring nations that have caused extreme pain, suffering and dehumanisation.

Secondly, a managed process falls short since it reduces reconciliation to a technical skill that can be learnt to deal with a problem that can be managed. In fact, reconciliation is not a skill to be acquired or learnt, it is the power of grace discovered in God who gives it in his love. Thus, it is a power one discovers in God and utilises in one’s life in order to overcome the pain and suffering caused by conflict: “Reconciliation becomes more of an attitude than an acquired skill; it becomes a stance assumed before a broken world rather than a tool to repair that world...reconciliation is more spirituality than strategy” (Schreiter, 1992:26).

Thirdly, it falls short in that it reduces reconciliation to the highest form of technical rationality. This categorises it into one form of culture where rationality is the only form and means to deal

with the complexity of the world. Reducing reconciliation, a complex process, to mere technical rationality would be simply to uphold the technology-rich culture of the western world. Such a reduction does not recognise that reconciliation is God-given (Schreiter, 1992:26). Thus, we have seen that reconciliation cannot be reduced to a rational, technical skill to be learnt; it is much more and goes beyond the limits of a managed process. Having said this, we now look at what reconciliation is in the theological sphere.

#### **2.4.2 Definition of Reconciliation**

Until recently the term “reconciliation” was mostly used in the religious context, but after the dramatic political change in South Africa in 1994 when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up the concept has also been subjected to systematic analysis by political scientists and social psychologists (Kelman, 2008).

Frequent use of the term reconciliation was noted in 2003 after the episodes of genocide, mass killing and other serious conflicts between nations or within a nation where various ethnic groups were at war. Essential elements that are needed to create space for reconciliation are “mutual trust and mutual acceptance”. These elements are precisely lacking in the relationship between warring groups and societies enmeshed in deep-rooted protracted conflict that reconciliation is designed to restore. I concur with Staub & Bar-Tal (2003:334) who define reconciliation as “mutual acceptance by members of hostile or previously hostile groups of each other and the societal structures and psychological processes directly involved in the development and maintenance of such acceptance”.

On the other hand, we must realise that reconciliation is both a process as well as the goal or end result of the process undertaken by conflicting groups, societies or persons. The religious sense of reconciliation often limited it to interpersonal processes of resolving conflict either between two persons or between an individual and God. Thus, individual confession or mitigating tension between two persons who suffered a conflict was generally accepted as the arena of reconciliation. In more recent times the term was extended to efforts undertaken to help groups who experienced deep-rooted hatred, anger, non-acceptance because of war, ideological differences or ethnic differences, to come to terms with one another and work towards co-existence within the same region, area or country. The processes taken by such groups are part of reconciliation and when

the goal of acceptance and co-existence is achieved, the end result is also termed reconciliation. Therefore, reconciliation refers to both the process and the goal.

Whereas reconciliation is dependent on conflict resolution it is not identical with it. Reconciliation is qualitatively distinct: “Whereas conflict resolution refers to the process of achieving a mutually satisfactory and ...durable agreement between the two societies, reconciliation refers to the process whereby the societies learn to live together in the post conflict environment” (Kelman, 2008:18). Analysing the differences between conflict resolution and reconciliation is based on a conceptual framework emanating from the qualitative processes of peace-making that of: conflict settlement, conflict resolution and reconciliation. These three, although qualitatively distinct, are not exclusive, in fact they support each other and often overlap in achieving their goals, that of broadly changing the relationships from hostility to peaceful co-existence.

Behaviour change in individuals is possible because of quality changes induced by social influence. Social structures such as belief systems, value systems, and cultural norms play a vital role in influencing individual behaviour change. Thus, when the Church reviews its quotidian *status quo* praxis and allows itself to be led by the Spirit to take up its prophetic role and become “an alternative community,” the church will not only have significant social influence but also a therapeutic pastoral influence for behaviour change within the aggrieved persons and communities that suffered violence and atrocities.

The term “reconciliation” comes from Latin verb *conciliare*, which means “to come together” and implies a process of restoring a shattered relationship between two actors. In the situation of the Rwandan genocide, the immediate efforts of Catholic Relief Services to start discussions on reconciliation fell flat. Many Rwandans considered such efforts as being “insensitive at best, deeply offensive at worst” (Kumar, 1999).

Thus, the timing of this exercise was insensitive to the emotions of the people and ignored the proximity of events that had just left people shattered and devastated. The attempt made immediately after the genocide had negative effects. One can safely assume that in initiating the processes of reconciliation, other factors are to be taken into consideration such as timing, memories of violence, emotions and destruction of people and property and other excruciating experiences. Learning from the Rwandan situation it maybe expedient to begin with dialogue to assess the situation as well as engage in conflict resolution before beginning the process of

reconciliation. Social reconciliation is a process that begins with adversaries' acceptance of each other's right to coexist. Social reconciliation does not assume tolerance but promotes it in order to create space for dialogue and communication which will lead to the processes of building acceptance and trust, which are pillars for reconciliation.

Kumar (1999) argues that a social reconciliation intervention is intended to achieve at least three objectives. These include to prevent further violence through communication and developing peace structures; to reduce deep-seated anger, prejudices and misunderstandings as well as acknowledge the painful past through dialogue and cooperative action; and to establish or re-establish positive relationships through cooperative activities that build acceptance and trust between the divided parties. These objectives can then be translated into strategies to implement the processes for reconciliation.

Although I have already discussed some strategies above, some traditional societies have their own mechanisms to remember the past and deal with their sad experiences. For instance, they may use public confession of guilt, story-telling as in many African cultures, public feasts or ceremonies in order not to forget the past and also to heal the wounds of the past. Whatever strategies are employed, the important goal is to bring the divided peoples or communities to accept to live together in harmony, that is, to reconcile them.

Krishna Kumar (1999) offers a detailed five-stage plan of strategies to initiate processes for reconciliation. In summary this includes uncovering and acknowledging the past through truth commissions; promoting dialogue; promoting understanding through media; developing grass-root structures for peace; and having collaborative activities between former conflicting groups. Another factor is that interventions in economic development can also contribute to social reconciliation. Therefore, all those developmental activities in which the former warring groups participate in assist them to come together and work together, thereby building acceptance and trust between them (Kumar, 1999).

As already stated above, reconciliation "per se" is the work of God: "When we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). Although God is the primary agent of reconciliation in his fallen world, humankind has a role to play. Schreier discussed three levels of reconciliation where God's mission is availed to human participation. There is the level of

strategies where communities create conditions where reconciliation might happen. These conditions include truth-telling, pursuit of justice, peace-making so as to create communities of hope. Then forgiveness and healing can take place, when the necessary conditions prevail. Secondly, there is need for social structures and processes in order to rebuild and sustain the social fabric. Thirdly, as reconciliation is the restoration of our humanity, “*the experience of reconciliation makes of both victim and wrongdoer a new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17)” (Schreiter, 1998). In the context of the Christian community, to forgive is divine and thus God is present in the process.

The term reconciliation encompasses a number of dimensions, depending on the circumstances to which the exercise of reconciliation is applied. Those circumstances have a direct bearing on the meaning of reconciliation. Some of the dimensions to be considered are: Who are the parties involved? What challenges are to be resolved? Is there an agreed frame of reference to measure the truth in order to achieve justice for the new situation to be achieved? and What is the goal of the process? All these and others issues need to be considered for they affect what reconciliation means. As Schreiter (2010:13) states, “There is no agreed upon definition of reconciliation in human societies”. However different cultures have their own distinct concept of reconciliation that is expressed ritually in a myriad of ways. For instance, in some cultures when the wrongdoer apologises, a ritual punishment may be carried out and eventually another ritual is performed to re-integrate the wrongdoer into the community.

### **2.4.3 Theological perspectives on Reconciliation**

There have been different emphases in the Christian understanding of reconciliation. The Protestant position has stressed Christ’s atoning death and justification by faith. That position recognises the “advantage of seeing reconciliation in continuity with the saving acts of God through history, especially in the theology of covenant” (Schreiter, 2010:14). The passage from the letter to the Romans 5:6-11 is relevant here. On the other hand, the Catholic position stresses the love of God which he has shown through the reconciliation God has carried out in his Son Jesus Christ. “Here the emphasis is on the new creation” (Schreiter, 2010:14) and the relevant passage is 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

Reconciliation comes after perpetration of violence, social disorder, or cruelty of some kind. In the Scriptures, Paul is the principal source for the concept of reconciliation although there are a few



other Scriptural sources that deal with this concept, for instance Matthew 5:24. Combining all sources, Schreiter (borrowing from theologian José Comblin) suggests that a theology of reconciliation can be discerned on three levels:

...a Christological level, in which Christ is the mediator through whom God reconciles the world to God's self; an ecclesiological level, in which Christ reconciles Jew and Gentile; and a cosmic level in which Christ reconciles all powers in heaven and on earth (Schreiter, 1992:42).

We clearly learn from Paul (Rom. 5:10-11 and 2 Cor. 5:18-19) that reconciliation is the work of God, who reconciles humanity to himself and this is not human work. Further it is God who takes the initiative and continues this work through the death of Christ. Paradoxically<sup>10</sup> death, cross and blood are the means through which reconciliation is brought about by God. This reaffirms that reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy. It is in this context that God always takes the side of the disadvantaged. He sides with the poor, the widowed, the orphaned, the oppressed, the imprisoned, the marginalised and all those considered outsiders or outcasts. Why does he side with them? "It is in the ultimate victim, God's son Jesus Christ, that God begins the process that leads to the reconciliation of the whole world in Christ (Col. 1:20; Schreiter, 2010:15).

Another theological perspective discussed by Israel Selvanayagam (Kim, 2005: 1-22) is that "...seeing the face of God in another brother's face" (Kim, 2005: 02) enables reconciliation to take place. This refers to the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33 which demonstrates another perspective of reconciliation. The former unfairly takes the birth right and blessing of his elder brother. Although the term "reconciliation" is not used, the relationship of the two brothers was restored by God as Jacob struggled all night with God and the following morning his brother embraces him instead of inflicting revenge: "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (Gen. 33:4). There was no mention of the unfair past events. What is theologically liberating in this story is that, at a time when what happened was very explosive and disruptive, God intervenes and reconciles the two brothers (Kim, 2005:4). This

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<sup>10</sup> "The paradoxical character of the symbols helps mediate the move from death to life in the reconciliation process. The symbols make possible the foursquare acknowledgment of violence, suffering, and death, but also provide the means for overcoming them" (Schreiter, 1992:47-8).

is very significant because Esau, though unjustly wronged by his brother Jacob, was transformed to see God in his brother's face.

In Kim's book other authors also discuss reconciliation as healing, both physically and spiritually. Reconciliation becomes a process of wholeness and being at peace with God and neighbour. It is both a goal and ministry of mission.

To deepen the understanding of reconciliation, we turn to the five theological levels or phases of reconciliation suggested by Schreiter.

#### *2.4.3.1 Reconciliation is the work of God*

As already stated, reconciliation is above all the work of God which he has effected through his beloved Son Jesus Christ. The love God has for his Son has been extended to humanity, thus although humanity sinned against God, God had pre-ordained to reconcile humanity to himself: "...reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ" (Schreiter, 2010:14). If reconciliation is the work of God then it follows that reconciliation is not a human achievement but God's work within us and through us. It also means that in contexts of nations with warring situations or complex oppressions reconciliation exceeds human capacity; when reconciliation is finally attained it is God's work. Examples are countries like the former Soviet Bloc, African countries that were oppressed by colonisers, South Africa with its apartheid, local conflicts and violence in countries like Rwanda, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar and others all over the world. Some of these countries have attained reconciliation while others continue to struggle and suffer violence. Where reconciliation has been achieved, God initiates reconciliation in the lives of victims: "God begins with the victim, restoring to the victim the humanity which the wrong doer has tried to wrest away or to destroy. The restoration of humanity might be considered the very heart of reconciliation" (Schreiter, 2010:15). Although God initiates reconciliation, that does not mean that the human person is inactive. God's action comes through human action and thus when the person is touched by God, they participate in that work of God and are ready to move to a new situation, overcoming the old painful situation. Thus, Schreiter terms this communication between the divine and the human interaction, "the surprise" for the victim. This surprise is the moment of grace that moves the victim and the community to be ready to move to a new situation and a new level in their lives.

#### 2.4.3.2 *Reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy*

The second point in Christian understanding is that “*reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy*” (Schreiter, 2010:16). Reconciliation is found in working out our relationship with God. Our cultivation of this relationship that has already been extended to us then finds its medium through which reconciliation can take place. As God initiates and works with us, on our part we participate as ambassadors of God’s work, (2 Cor. 5:20). This relationship with God expresses itself in spiritual practices that enable space for truth, justice, healing and new possibilities to be actualised. Such spiritual practices include the creation of communities of memory, safe spaces to relate and untangle the painful stories told by victims, and space to enable victims to engage in truth-telling and nullify the lies of injustice told by the wrong-doers. Wrong-doers told lies to dehumanise victims and to have some credible basis (in their own eyes) for inflicting violence, pain and even death. Thus, victims are healed by continual truth-telling that leads to justice and by their own conversion to be ready to forgive.

While reconciliation as a spirituality is absolutely necessary, conditions for enabling reconciliation to take place are also vital. Thus, besides being a spirituality, reconciliation also needs some strategies embodied in enabling conditions such as creating communities of memory in order to create a basis for hope. Such communities are places where victims can repeat their story-telling and their affirmation of the truth of what really happened to them in order to build confidence and hope for themselves. Without hope reconciliation cannot succeed. With hope the experience of reconciliation leads to action. The victim, having been transformed through the grace of God, becomes an actor to become an agent of transforming others. In the case of social reconciliation, different from the individual reconciliation, some structures are to be set up in order to assist such a process. Structures such as a neutral judiciary, and provision for amnesty and pardon are to be put in place in order to create a new society. In following up such a process a balance between spirituality and strategy is to be maintained so that reconciliation is realised. Stressing strategy alone makes the process just a technique to be acquired and stressing spirituality alone makes human participation irrelevant as God then works alone: “In that inaction it is the spirituality that should guide the strategy, even as the strategy gives the spirituality form in action and practice” (Schreiter, 2010:17).

#### 2.4.3.3 *Reconciliation makes both victim and wrong-doer a new creation*

Reconciliation can be described as a restoration of the person who has been dehumanised by violence, oppression or any form of injustice that takes away the dignity of an individual. God restores that humanity which has been removed or wrested away from the individual. On the other hand, it is not a removal of the experience of injustice or violence perpetrated or a removal of the memory of that painful experience. Instead, it is a transformation through the grace of God for the individual to be able to accept and overcome the painful experience and move on to a new situation which empowers the victim to be able to embrace and let go the past. In this very act of letting-go of the painful past, the victim becomes a new creation. The victim is able to address the past with a new perspective, different from the status quo which the victim maintained since the injustice was perpetrated. It is not forgetting the past but addressing the past with a restored humanity and dignity. The victim begins to feel human again. Having been made into a new creation the victim is now in a position to act positively and not seek revenge. In letting-go of the past the victim acts positively and forgives the wrong-doer. The victim sees the wrong-doer as a fellow human being and is able to embrace them. Thus, the wrong-doer having been forgiven is also moved to accept their wrong-doing and is moved to be remorseful. Such an acceptance leads to repentance of the wrong-doer who is now empowered to ask for pardon for his wrong-doing, hence the wrong-doer too becomes a new creation. We have already seen that the outcome of reconciliation for the victim and even communities come as a “surprise” and this is the expression that there is a “new creation”. Victims find themselves in a new place of experience: “This new creation of both victim and wrongdoer is a sign of God’s presence. The victim’s restored humanity must include the painful experience of violence, because that is now part of the victim’s memory and identity” (Schreiter, 2010:18).

#### 2.4.3.4 *Reconciliation emanates from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*

The process of reconciliation creates the new humanity by making both the victim and wrongdoer a new creation that can co-exist. This new creation is only possible because it is within the design of God whose task was to reconcile fallen humanity to himself. He has fulfilled this task by sending his beloved Son to redeem humanity. His Son Jesus Christ has obediently suffered excruciating pain unto death, but on the third day rose from the dead. The passion of Jesus Christ is told in the gospels not because of the gruesome unjust treatment it was, “but as a “dangerous memory” of how God subverted power that was used for perpetrating injustice” (Schreiter, 2010:18). Yet his

resurrection demonstrates God's power over evil. This enables us to read the resurrection stories as accounts of God's healing and forgiving power in the world. Thus, all resurrection stories can be interpreted as stories of reconciliation, demonstrating God's power of reconciliation and forgiveness to each of those characters that encounter Jesus after his resurrection. For instance, the women who went to the tomb (Mk. 16:1-8; Jn. 20:1-18), the two disciples travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35), Peter's encounter with Jesus at the shore of Tiberias after Jesus' resurrection (Jn. 21:15-18). In each of these encounters Jesus extended his power of healing and forgiveness for the misunderstanding or wrong done prior to his death. Therefore, his passion, death and resurrection has brought a new dispensation, not only for his disciples but for the whole of humanity.

#### 2.4.3.5 *The process of Reconciliation extends to the whole world*

Today we realise in our world that there are many complexities emanating from wars, violence and injustices among human beings. The whole world suffers from human actions. As Pope Francis stated that there is environmental degradation, pollution through the waste that we throw away, climate change, deforestation, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, global inequality and other complexities emanating from humanity's actions<sup>11</sup>. As we become aware of the complexity of this enormous task, we are humbled as we realise that we are unable on our own to bring about reconciliation in the world: "It becomes ever more evident that reconciliation is God's work, with our cooperation... Reconciliation can only be grasped as involving 'all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross'" (Col. 1:20; Schreiter, 2010:19). Thus, complete consummation of the world is made by God through his Son Jesus. To have complete reconciliation within humanity, and complete equilibrium within the created universe, God carries out this task and, in the process, he utilises the cooperation of humanity to bring it to fruition. This means that reconciliation does not stop when God reconciles humanity to himself, God goes further to reconcile the whole world and the whole of his creation to himself. In fact, the full impact and fruition of God's reconciliation process is ultimately eschatological. It will be realised in the future at the end of time.

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis discusses these issues in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si: On the Care for Our Common Home*, 24 May 2015.

#### **2.4.4 Reconciliation as Healing**

One of the central tasks in Jesus' mission was his holistic approach to healing. The various perspectives reflected in his mission have already been referred to and together act like a prism that refract white light. Some philosophers like Descartes have stressed the dualistic nature of humanity and divided the person as body and soul. This has led scientists to stress medicine and healing in a narrow sense that highlighted the healing of the body only. On the other hand, the Church was relegated to deal with the salvation of souls. Gandiya (2005:28) informs us that Descartes' separation of the body and soul resulted in the church being secluded from the medical profession in the area of healing. Yet in Jesus' time healing included body and soul. He in fact commissioned his disciples to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons" (Mt. 10:8; Mk. 6:13; Lk. 9:1) (Gandiya, 2005:24). Cognisant of this wide perspective of healing, Jesus' acts of healing were reconciling the individual both to God and their community. Therefore, this reconciling process is part and parcel of healing which the church is tasked to do. Thus, healing is not a prerogative of professional medicine alone. The church has the mandate to reconcile through healing various wounds of humanity, both at the individual and communal level:

Reconciliation is a task of healing, for instance, healing the wounds which hatred and prejudice have inflicted on people in mind and heart. As such, the church has power to heal not only relationships but also broken hearts, minds and bodies (Gandiya, 2005:25).

In most African religions this communal aspect is central to the dignity and value of individuals. Thus, even in greetings the importance of relationships is reflected and therefore the wholeness of an individual is related to the wholeness of the whole community. Should one not be well, then the family, relatives and even community are also affected and not well. In Shona greetings in Zimbabwe, one will respond that one is well if the one who has greeted him/her is also well. This practice is similar in many African cultures (Gandiya, 2005:30).

In looking at the various healings performed by Jesus in the Gospels one witnesses that healing was holistic and not just physical. We learn that healing narratives take up about 37% of the Gospel, hence this was an important aspect of Jesus' mission (Gandiya, 2005:36). Healing was a process of restoring people to their dignity as well as their social relationships. For instance, the healing of lepers restored them physically but also restored them to their families so that they were no longer outcasts and excluded from the society. Healing enabled them to be reconciled to

themselves, to God and to their neighbours. In the Roman Catholic Church there are two sacraments of healing that bring about reconciliation to the sick, the Sacrament of Penance and that of Extreme Unction. The latter is anointed to the seriously sick. We can now see how reconciliation, healing and mission are all linked in the mission of the church and that it is the mandate of the church to participate in the *missio Dei*.

## **2.5 PACIFISM AND NON-VIOLENCE**

Another important dimension of the theological framework of this study is pacifism and non-violence. This section deals with the theological basis of pacifism and non-violence as an integral aspect of the *missio Dei* in the processes of reconciliation, forgiveness, confession and healing. Before giving some theological reflection I first refer to the example of Dom Helder Camara from Brazil who pursued a pacifist, non-violent but revolutionary method of responding to the oppression and injustice of his time.

### **2.5.1 Helder Camara's progressive vision as a theological resource**

Helder Camara was a Catholic priest who was ordained in 1931 and appointed as Education Secretary in his home state of Ceara in 1934. For the next twenty years, he worked in Rio de Janeiro, holding various responsible Church posts. Later he served as Secretary General of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference and had a great influence on it. He was later elected as Secretary General of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), which held a meeting at Medellín meeting in 1968 which was a turning point in the struggle of the oppressed peoples of their region. He was appointed Auxiliary Bishop and later Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in North Eastern Brazil. He was a good organiser and fought for the poor and marginalised of Brazil, a country full of inequalities on many levels. However, he was accused by his country and a large section of society of being a Communist, a subversive person determined to go around the world leading a smear campaign against his government. He was under constant threat of assassination by "other Christians" but refused any bodyguard. Although Brazil was the most industrialised country in Latin America, most of the wealth was owned by a few rich people. About 80% of the land was owned by 2% of the population (Camara, 1971:7-8). During the 35 years that he served as a priest, these realities gradually changed his view on social justice and concern for the poor.

Political instability developed because of these great inequalities. Successive presidents of Brazil, Janio Quadros and his successor Joao Goulart, failed to transform the situation. Eventually the

army moved in and imprisoned all those who were fighting for equality and democracy. In the meantime, the Bishops' Conference had equipped their instructors, pupils with both training and transistor radios to introduce the concepts of "justice and exploitation, dignity and action" (Camara, 1971:11). At the same time the Bishops' Conference under the leadership of Camara set up a dynamic Basic Education Movement in 1963 which utilised the principle of Paolo Freire *Viver e lutar* ("To live is to struggle") (Camara, 1971:11). Thus, some kind of a social movement was underway and was meant to transform the situation in the country. One could refer to this movement as "an alternative community" intending to be an instrument for social change, inspired by Gospel principles.

It is in this new setting that Helder Camara became the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in 1964. He became very open in his disapproval and opposition to the status quo and stated that the persistent oppressive structures "cannot be preserved" (Camara, 1971:14). The new military President, General Garrastazu Medici, enacted new legislation which gave him sweeping powers and abolished the few remaining legal guarantees for individuals. The result was that it was eventually only the church in Brazil that was not directly controlled by this dictatorship.

It was in 1968 that Camara became a symbol of opposition to oppression, particularly in Europe. When he visited England in April 1969 and addressed the youth, the English press reported him as a "star" because of his stance against the repression of his own people. The church in Brazil, particularly the clergy, faced problems and dilemmas in the face of these repressions by government:

Do they betray their people by keeping quiet or do they stand up and denounce injustice only to take the supreme punishment? The supreme punishment, what can this be for a priest, death ... or suicide? (Camara, 1971:16).

Camara lost some priests because of this dilemma and indeed there were at the time 12,000 prisoners reported by Amnesty International, mostly youth. The average age was calculated to be twenty-two years (Camara, 1971:18). Yet Camara had the advantage that he could stand up and articulate what others could never say and remain alive. People like students, or workmen or any intellectual or professor could not risk to speak openly against the government's oppression of its own people, but Camara dared to speak out. In his stance he became prophetic, like Jeremiah, as discussed above (2.3.8). Camara's faith was inspired by his Catholic upbringing as well as the



Popes' encyclicals which deliberated on Catholic social teaching. In his writings he referred to Popes such as Leo XIII, Pius X, Pius XI, Pius XII and Paul VI, all of whom dealt with social teaching and social justice. Amongst the mostly quoted are *Populorum Progressio*, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*.

As a theological source Camara's writings on "social teaching" are instructive and encouraging because they offer an alternative solution to the human tragedy created by social injustices. In an argument in defence of a priest accused of being a subversive Communist, the logic of Helder Camara was clear. He argued:

Paul VI was right to say, "The earth was given to us all, not just to the rich".

No-one thinks that is communism: it is the voice of the Pope.

Private property, yes, if it is for all.

But not private property which deprives...(Camara, 1971:20)

Although the government accused anyone who opposed it of being a Communist, this did not hold water as all the Popes had condemned Communism and therefore the government had no argument at all to continue to oppress its people. It is clear that Dom Helder Camara was firmly within the mainstream of Catholicism. As he stood for the oppressed, he continued to echo what Vatican II called for in the renewal of the Church to influence events in the world so that its social teaching may be realised. We return to Camara's input in Chapter 5 when the focus is on how the church as alternative community can contribute to the process of reconciliation, forgiveness, confession and healing (see 5.1.6).

Before the period of Dom Helder Camara, the fear of Communism had been trumpeted by one U.S. Senator, Joseph McCarthy, while Harry S. Truman was President of the United States (US Department of Defence, 2006). It was known as the Second Red Scare and lasted from 1947 to 1956. This period was characterised by heightened political repression emanating from a strong campaign of spreading fear of Communist influence on American institutions. This fear led to a witch hunt of suspected Communists and collaborators or anyone who supported the "Reds", as they were called. Many suffered in that witch hunt, but an outstanding person was Anne Hale. Her life in Wayland fell to pieces in the 1950s when informants reported her to the FBI for being a Communist at one time in her life. On September 28, 1953, Special Agent Jeremiah J. Healy Jr.

drove to Maguire's home to brief him more fully on Anne's case. Her first lawyer abandoned her just before the matter went to court. After several sessions she was dismissed from her teaching profession and struggled to find other employment. She was accused of "siding with the enemy". This is an example representing many people who suffered injustice because of falsehood.

In all the deliberations so far in the chapter on the theological framework and resources for this study, we realise that the basis of *missio Dei* is love. The church that is called to participate in God's work is to follow the same path and therefore any reconciliation, action for justice, forgiveness and healing are to be implemented in a non-violent manner. In most oppressive countries the talk about non-violence is viewed negatively, as a tool used by the powerful to further oppress the downtrodden. That scepticism is understandable, but it is the firm view of this study that the most authentic interpretation of reconciliation, as part of the *missio Dei*, is that unjust situations can best be transformed without using violence.

However, in the Christian tradition it was believed that a just war could be waged to correct the evils perpetrated by wrongdoers. Saint Augustine provided the first classic theory of a just war in Christian theology. He referred to the Bible to argue his position that a just war could be upheld as a means to fight evil. Saint Thomas Aquinas revised St. Augustine's version and laid down three criteria for a just war: a) the war has to be waged by a legitimate authority; b) there has to be a just cause; and c) there have to be moral intentions for the war to take place. Just war theories therefore argue for the right to go to war in order to bring about justice. Prior to these Christian theologians the philosophers Plato and Cicero were also proponents of related just war theories (Neste, 2006).

The just war theory also developed a set of principles to be followed in order to engage in a just war for the purposes of righting wrongs or evils perpetrated by evil-doers. Seven principles to guide right conduct in a just war were laid down. Firstly, a just war has to be a last resort. All other peaceful options have to be considered and exhausted before engaging in war. Secondly, a just war has to be waged by a legitimate authority, in other words a legal government, not by individuals or groups. The third principle upholds that the war has to have a just cause, which is constituted by the need to right a wrong that has been unduly perpetrated by a wrongdoer. An example is a state entering a war in self-defence to correct the inflicted wounds or suffering of its citizens. The fourth principle determines that there needs to be a reasonable probability of success. If a nation is aware that it would probably be defeated and that more of its citizens would die, such a situation

would not qualify as a just war. The fifth principle is to right intention. The purpose of a just war must be to re-establish peace and the peace produced should be better than the situation that would have prevailed without the use of force. The aim of the use of force must therefore be to achieve justice. The sixth principle requires that the violence used in a just war must be proportional to the casualties suffered. The people killed in a just war must not exceed the justification needed to re-establish the desired peace. In other words, the legitimate authority should continue to value the lives of people – even the lives of enemies – so that they do not kill more than necessary to defeat the enemy. The final principle is that civilian casualties must be avoided at all costs. A distinction must be made between soldiers and civilians; and civilians should never be a target for military operations, unless it is absolutely unavoidable, for instance when civilians are near a strategic target of the militia. These principles or set of rules must guide any state that wishes to engage in a just war<sup>12</sup>

Can wars be justified by invoking the proposed theory? There have been debates on whether wars can be justified, with some supporting the theory and others rejecting it. The first group believe that fighting for human rights and for one's liberation can be justified, while the latter group believes that war is in principle unethical and by no means fair. Every war reflects the failure of humanity to settle their differences through negotiations. In wars there is always unnecessary loss of important lives and usually peace still requires negotiations, after the war has ended (Lemennicier, 2003).

I have already discussed the attitude of Jesus towards the Zealots, who wanted to use violence to change the oppressive situation of their time (2.3.4). Jesus was not in favour of violence and therefore we can conclude that he was not for war. His preferred option was a revolutionary – but not violent – method of achieving change and establishing justice and peace. Further, Jesus promulgated the new commandment of love, therefore it was love that was to transform all forms of transgression and malice, not war. His own self-giving on the cross was a clear demonstration of his love for the people. Therefore, it can be argued that non-violence is the preferred method.

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<sup>12</sup> “Principles of the Just War” (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/justwar.htm>). Accessed 26 May 2018.

### **2.5.2 Theological understandings of non-violence**

As stated above, the two terms of “non-violence” and “reconciliation” are often misconstrued by both oppressors and the oppressed. For oppressors the terms pacify the oppressed and let the oppressors go without any punishment or recrimination for their injustice. Moreover, oppressors utilise the Scripture text Romans 13:1-7 where they insist that the ruled should always submit to the authorities, without any question: “Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God” (Rom. 13:1). Further texts are also employed by those who inflict injustices upon others to vindicate their actions and to pacify the sufferers (Mt. 5:38-41).

When it comes to violence in South Africa, before 1994, both the Afrikaners and British used to glorify violence in their monuments and histories. Afrikaners continued to celebrate the battle of Blood River and the Great Trek, while the British continued to display their regimental colours on stained glass windows. Whites condemn black violence, while they allow their sons to be conscripted into armed forces where the soldiers use violence and kill blacks for resisting their rule (Wink, 1987:8).

On the other hand, the oppressed detest with uttermost abhorrence such a view propagated by those who oppress them. In his research, Walter Wink (1987:7) describes how one person he interviewed described the attitude of black South Africans to these terms, which are used to “pacify” Africans: “The two dirtiest words in black South Africa are “non-violence” and “reconciliation.” This was a result not only of the traditional misuse of these terms by oppressors (Whites) but also the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures to maintain the subjugation of the blacks in South Africa.

Reconciliation is necessary but those who strive to achieve it must demonstrate their resolve. Such leaders need to demonstrate that they are committed to the struggle for justice for all people, especially the oppressed but utilising non-violent means. When these leaders are equivocal in their announcements and tend to take sides with the oppressors, their messages are not only naïve but also rejected by those they claim to want to liberate. For the oppressed to appreciate the necessity of non-violence in reconciliation, they need to discover how Jesus preached the way of non-violence in the Scriptures. Wink insists that the traditional interpretation of the texts on non-violence preached by Jesus was based on a mistranslation of the original Greek texts:

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles (Mt. 5:38-41, Revised Standard Version; Wink, 1987:7)

When King James had the Bible translated in 1611, the Greek phrase *mē antistēnai to ponērō* was translated as “*Resist not evil*”. That was done in order to have his subjects submit to him, yet this is not what Jesus meant. The Greek verb is made up of two parts: *anti* which means “against” and *histēmi* (noun form is *stasis*) which means to “stand”. The compound verb *ant-istēmi* can mean to “rise up against” and thus “*violent rebellion*”, “*armed revolt*” or “*sharp dissention*”. So, the proper translation of what Jesus said would be “Do not strike back at evil (or, one who has done you evil... Do not retaliate against violence with violence” (Wink, 1987:13). Jesus did not condone evil but he was concerned with the manner evil should be fought. There are three ways evil can be responded to, the first is that one can be passive and submissive to evil. This would be a defeatist position, which reflects the oppressed resigning themselves to the oppressive or violent situation caused by the oppressor. This first response is how traditional interpreters of the above Scripture have generally understood the non-violence suggested by Jesus. This is a complete misunderstanding of what Jesus intended.

The second is to respond to evil through violent opposition, which causes harm to the perpetrator of evil. Jesus also rejected this second option, as demonstrated by his rejection of the Zealot option to wage war against the Romans. These were the traditionally accepted alternatives of responding to evil, either to fight or to flee. Because of these two positions most Scripture scholars then read Jesus as saying that when evil is done to you, meek submission to that evil is the appropriate response. But Wink (1987:14) flatly rejects that: “Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil”.

Jesus showed a third way of responding to evil, which is the *militant* but *non-violent* manner of responding to evil. Considering that Jesus’ audience was mainly the marginalised, poor and downtrodden, his response would be understood and appreciated by them. Jesus gives three examples to illustrate what he expects as the response to an act of evil. He says when struck on the cheek one should turn the other cheek; and when one sues you and takes your coat give him your

cloak as well; and when someone forces you to walk one mile then go two miles. To “turn one’s cheek” would actually not only embarrass the perpetrator of evil but also disarm them, as the oppressed would have refused to be humiliated in such a manner. Thus, the response is revolutionary, but non-violent. It forces the perpetrator to stop and think and (hopefully) to desist from their evil act. The oppressed takes away the power from the perpetrator to continue to dehumanise them. In this way the oppressed is saying that they have the same human dignity as the perpetrator. Therefore, this is not meek submission or passive collaboration with evil, but a militant non-violent opposition to it.

The second example is set in a court of law, where the one who has lent his money drags the poor person who owes them money to court. When the person fails to pay back the lender takes the coat of the poor person. In response the poor person also gives their cloak to the lender. In Jewish tradition the cloak is the outer garment that is often needed at night and used by the poor to cover themselves. Because the coat has already been taken, by giving their cloak, the outer garment, the poor remains with nothing, in fact they become naked. With such a scenario that the poor walks in the street naked and people begin to ask what has happened, he would explain that his clothes had been taken by his lender and this is why they are naked. This would attract attention to the community which would empathise with the dispossessed. Subsequently, this act by the poor man would embarrass the lender and make the lender think hard and perhaps return both the coat and the cloak. “Nakedness was taboo in Judaism, and shame fell not on the naked party, but on the person viewing or causing one’s nakedness (Gen. 9:20-27; Wink, 1987:19). Such a response is indeed revolutionary and daring, but not violent in the sense of harming the lender physically. Once again, the poor would have demanded his personal dignity but in a rather daring and nonviolent manner. In fact, the many parables of Jesus are full of debtors struggling to salvage their lives. So, such an example was well taken by the poor.

The third example comes from the practice of Roman soldiers. They used to force people to do their chores or to carry their bags. When people were asked to carry these bags and walk for a distance, it would embarrass the soldier to see the forced person walk double the distance the soldier had requested. Thus, the response of Jesus was a revolutionary, non-violent manner of resisting subjugation and humiliation to those who would force or oppress others. The Jews understood this example very well. Therefore, the intention of Jesus goes beyond the mere fact of

walking two miles. It is a powerful reaction to resist subjugation by an oppressor through defying the instruction and instead going beyond the instruction. Jesus' two miles was a big challenge to those who force others. It was better to defy the instruction non-violently by walking two miles instead of pursuing the futile method of revolting against the Roman Empire, which would be disastrous for the Jews.

Jesus is encouraging the oppressed to take the initiative to restore their dignity, even in circumstances that could not be changed at the time. The soldier would not only be surprised to see the forced person extending the assistance, but he would have to beg the person to stop carrying his burden because the soldier knew the limits of the law, which is unjust. As he begs the forced person to return his things, the latter has been restored his dignity as a person because he has taken the initiative to take back the power of choice for himself: "The soldier is thrown off-balance by being deprived of the predictability of your choice. Now you have forced him into taking a decision... If he has enjoyed feeling superior to the vanquished, he will not enjoy it today" (Wink, 1987:21).

In Walter Wink's poem of Jesus' Third Way, he displays what Jesus intended the non-violent response to be:

Seize the moral initiative  
Find a creative alternative to violence  
Assert your own humanity and dignity as a person  
Meet force with ridicule or humour  
Break the cycle of humiliation  
Refuse to submit or to accept the inferior position  
Expose the injustice of the system  
Shame the oppressor into repentance  
Stand your ground ... (Wink, 1987:23).

Therefore, the Third Way of Jesus is a creative struggle to restore the humanity of all parties in a dispute. The oppressed regain power in their direct and daring manner of responding to violence in a non-violent way and those who cause evil are put in a predicament and forced to see the injustice of their actions, thus transforming themselves in the process. Following this line of thought, this theological argument can be utilised in other contexts where violence is perpetrated

against citizens by its own government. Therefore, the oppressed people of Zimbabwe need to regain power in order to respond to their own situation of violence that they experienced particularly in 2008.

The most fundamental virtue that drives *missio Dei* is the love of God for his people and the whole of creation. Love is the greatest of all virtues: “It is the bestowing of unconditional love and having a positive impact on the lives of others” (Walton, 2011). This love becomes the basis of the church’s participation in the work of God. This leads the church to be “an alternative community” for the sake of others. Wink acknowledges that the practice of love in the context of South Africa is problematic as it may be misunderstood as being spineless. This is a challenge as Wink wrote during the time of apartheid and therefore was daring a solution to a situation that had not yet been resolved. Yet Wink recognised from Christ’s teaching that love of enemies had “become the litmus test of authentic Christian faith” (Wink, 1987:49). Thus, the non-violent response based on love has enabled many in history to challenge and transform their own painful conditions, such persons as Martin Luther Jr., Nelson Mandela and others.

An added dimension of non-violence was contributed by Mahatma Gandhi who utilised it to defeat colonialism in India. It is claimed that with Gandhi the notion of non-violence attained a special status. He made us understand that the philosophy of non-violence is not the weapon of the weak but a very powerful tool that can be utilised by all. He did not invent the idea but is called the “father of non-violence,” as Mark Shepard says: “He raised nonviolent action to a level never before achieved... Somaiya (2016) again asserts “Gandhi was the first in human history to extend the principle of nonviolence from the individual to social and political plane”. Gandhi is credited for seeing non-violent revolution not merely as a method of acquiring power, but as a programme for transforming relationships and achieving peaceful transfers of power within human society (Wink, 1987:57).

### **2.5.3 Third Way Theology**

Third way theology is another way of responding to a conflict situation and pursuing a middle way to achieve reconciliation. This method was utilised particularly in South Africa by churches in trying to respond to the apartheid system. Although the churches realised the injustice of apartheid, they did not agree on the specific way to oppose it or try to dismantle that oppressive system. In fact, the churches reflected amongst themselves that same conflict and divisions that prevailed in



society. The church in South Africa found itself in an invidious position as it had been party to the injustice of apartheid right from the beginning (Balcomb, 1993:14). In analysing the third way theology one discovers many levels of interpretation unfolding that belong to this general perspective. However, one could say that it grew out of an attempt to avoid two extremes that emerged from the church in trying to respond to the crisis created by apartheid. On the one hand were those on the right wing, who included perpetrators of apartheid, racists and those who wanted to maintain the status quo. On the other hand were those on the left, supporting social equality, egalitarianism, radical social reform and liberation of the oppressed. Both positions were considered to be violent as the left was called “black nationalism” that wanted to overthrow apartheid through a revolution by means of force and the right was called “white nationalism” that wanted to maintain the oppressive status quo of apartheid.

Those advocating the third way theology in the main maintained that the two extremes were to be avoided and a middle way was to be found in order to achieve reconciliation and peace. This third way was given various terms like “new way”, “better way” “new road”, “new nation”, “another voice” (Balcomb, 1993:59) in order to give it a positive outlook. In this third way theology there was the left position, the right position and what was called the neutral or middle position. This middle way took varying perspectives depending on the protagonists of that particular group propounding their interpretation of that third way. The third way claimed that it was not influenced by political options in society and it held an “ideological freedom which does not project any particular economic or political solution for South Africa” and had “no purpose... either to preserve the status quo or enhance revolutionary objectives” (Balcomb, 1993:63). Thus, many in the church preferred this third way theology in order to resist the polarisation already found in the whole society in response to apartheid. Yet, it was a fallacy as that very choice served the political interests of the powerful, even though its proponents claimed that it was the “middle ground” where both sides could meet. The church was supposed to be free in order to retain its own identity.

The Church was concerned with three areas in third way theology: the identity of the church, the conflict and violence in society and the political power struggle. It did not want to get involved in the political conflict and power struggle that was prevalent in the 1980s. The Church had three options to implement this third way. First was the “understanding of the church as an alternative community” which sees itself as transcending the power arrangements of the secular world. The

second sees the gospel as offering an arena where the power interests could encounter each other and benefit both sides. The third understands the church as an arena of power encounter yet itself being power-free, neutral and a non-interested mediator or negotiator of the two conflicting sides (Balcomb, 1993:68).

Proponents of the alternative community were at pains to extricate themselves from the influence of politics. They however maintained that the church must remain critical of all solutions without siding with either the left or right; she is to move on and has no real home anywhere. She has to transcend the basic interests of power, both the status quo and the revolution for liberation of the oppressed (Balcomb, 1993:68).

On 18 July 1985 Michael Cassidy called for a National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) in South Africa, which was believed to include Christians from both ends of the spectrum and steer a conference that would achieve mainly two goals. First it was a reconciliatory meeting to conscientise other Christians and second to exert pressure for change in South Africa. Although the four aims of NIR were noble (Balcomb, 1993:83), the proposed six days stay-away, made by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for all workers, was changed to a one day “pray-away” session. The change was necessitated by those who interpreted that this stay-away politically supported the revolution of the oppressed, while they wanted to remain neutral and apolitical:

It soon became very clear, in fact, that the conference itself was a microcosm of the struggles that were taking place in the wider political society...The black constituency believed that a situation of neutrality was impossible and the white constituency (on the whole) believed that a position of neutrality was essential to maintain the kind of objectivity appropriate to the church. It soon became apparent, however, that the power struggle taking place at the conference directly reflected the power struggle taking place in the wider society (Balcomb, 1993:89).

President FW de Klerk realised this opening that the church was offering through a third way of theology and seized it. He went for the middle way, that of neutrality. He condemned both the left and the right positions and opted for involving those who were moderate on either side of the conflict. He thus tried to co-opt the church in his programme of national reconciliation which had originally emanated from the church, thereby enticing the church to support his “total strategy for the state”. However, the claim on neutrality was untenable for the oppressed blacks, as it

demonstrated political pretence, since such political “neutrality” meant siding with those with most political power (Balcomb, 1993:22). When Balcomb (1993:20) insisted that Christians should be more objective in matters political, a black Christian responded to him: “You cannot be objective about a person who is standing on your toe!” Balcomb then realised that he was in fact enjoying a lot of safety and benefits which his black counterparts were denied by apartheid. It dawned on him that the system protected those with power and had nothing to do with the real values of the gospel. This means that while a third way theology claims that it maintained neutrality and does not make any option for a particular political stance, that very neutrality betrayed the church as it represented a stance to maintain the status quo. It is unlikely that beneficiaries of a particular social system would promote opposition to that system through social conflict since that would disadvantage themselves (Balcomb, 1993:24-5). The challenge that the church encountered in South Africa is that it was co-opted by the state and used to legitimise its power. It therefore needed to find means to extricate itself from that entanglement.

It is in this context of the third way theology that Bosch developed his view on the alternative community. While many of the proponents of third way theology, particularly those who wanted to continue to enjoy the benefits and advantages brought about by apartheid, argued for churches to withdraw from taking political sides and pursue the road of neutrality they were “de facto” idealising and not taking specific steps to get rid of the oppressive political system. In other words, their stance more or less joined the programme of reconciliation proposed by the very same government that oppressed the blacks and non-whites in South Africa. It is in this context that Bosch developed his argument for “the alternative community” as a way forward for the church to adopt. As already stated above, Bosch utilised the approach of Jesus, which is called by Wink, “Jesus’ Third Way”. Bosch maintains that the church should offer something “totally unlike any other community on earth” (Balcomb, 1993:71). He argues that the church needs to utilise the gospel values and Jesus’ way of suffering to transform the oppressive situation. Although Bosch does not give practical details how to implement that alternative, he goes beyond the other third way theologians who tended to legitimise the system of apartheid. He pushed for gospel values and the love of Jesus, who gave his own life to redeem the sinful world. Bosch then sees the way of the cross and suffering as the way to go. The followers of Jesus cannot escape the cross; they have to stand with Jesus. The way of the cross is in keeping with the Church’s identity and its goal.

Like Jesus its mission is to participate in the liberation of the oppressed on all levels – physically, spiritually, morally – and to empathise with the poor and the marginalised.

The weakness of third way theology is that it avoids direct and violent confrontation with the oppressive systems. But in the arguments of Bosch and Wink the breakthrough is in the non-violent yet militant approach to sin and oppression. The strengths of the gospel message is found in the non-violent approach to challenging injustice, sin, oppression and any system that violates the value and dignity of any person. The submission of Jesus to suffering on the cross has revealed that it is only through the power of God that reconciliation and forgiveness can take place. Hence human beings can attain that reconciliation and forgiveness through the power of God, given through the Holy Spirit.

Marsh (2005) stresses the power of love as being the centre in the Trinity. This starting point of the Trinity has brought together the various churches to work together in this theological endeavour for reconciliation. Hence the starting point for any reconciliation emanates from the triune *missio Dei*. Marsh argues that churches have moved away from church-mission-centred approaches to mission approaches centred in God, thereby stressing that it is the work of God: “Turning to the selfless love of God in the Trinity as the starting point of mission (*missio Dei*) has become a unifying factor in ecumenical relationships” (Marsh, 2005:45). The work of God contains both the element of love and the element of non-violence. For when God loves he gives his whole self and pours out his love as he demonstrated through the suffering, crucifixion and death of his Son in order to reconcile humankind to himself. Thus, Marsh highlights what Bosch had already explained about *missio Dei*:

[The]*Missio Dei* notion has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission (Bosch, 1991:392).

Following this aspect of the love of God to his people, Kim sees the element of reconciliation as being central to mission. It is both its goal and its ministry, thus mission encompasses both. This is why mission is also to be seen as reconciliation (Kim, 2005:xvii).

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has laid out the theological framework and resources for this thesis, which amount to four key concepts: *missio Dei*, alternative community, reconciliation and non-violence. The chapter did not set out to “prove” that these concepts were true, but instead to elaborate on how they are understood in the context of this study. In Chapter 1.5.1 I indicate that the *missio Dei* constitutes a key dimension of my ontology. The title also reveals that reconciliation and alternative community are central concepts in this thesis. The only new element that this chapter added to the central theological thrust of the study is that of non-violence, but that is an integral dimension of Bosch’s view on alternative community, so it is not really new.

To draw together the different elements of the chapter one could say that the purpose of the chapter was to provide a clear theological basis for the search of the Diocese of Masvingo to become an alternative community based on the *missio Dei* in order to achieve bottom-up reconciliation in the context of the various violent waves that took place in Zimbabwe, especially after its independence.

To provide a bridge to the following chapters, which engage in context analysis, it is necessary to reflect briefly on the adjective “bottom-up” that qualifies the term reconciliation in the title – and throughout the thesis. If any initiative is to be a genuine “bottom-up” process, it needs acceptance and support from people in local communities, at the so-called “grassroots.” The theological reflections in this chapter are not meant to be a top-down imposition on a community or to “hang in the air,” since in the discussion of *missio Dei* it became clear that it includes the “preferential option for the poor.” The exposition on alternative community included the emphasis on inclusion of the excluded, along with empathy and compassion with the marginalised. Likewise the unpacking of reconciliation showed that it is inherently a bottom-up process or journey, since it starts with the (V)victim. Finally, the explanation of non-violent approaches showed that their starting point is in the plight of the vulnerable ones who suffer from war and power abuse. And yet, as important as this conceptual inclusion of victims/survivors in the research design may be, the transition to the “empirical” section of the thesis does raise the question how a Christian alternative community can be relevant to victims/survivors of violence. In this brief reflection, which serves as a bridge to Chapters 3 and 4 and an anticipation of Chapter 5, I wish to mention three ways in which an alternative community is relevant to the needs of victims/survivors of violence. These aspects can be called integrity, attentiveness and embrace.

### **2.6.1 Integrity**

One of the factors that frustrate and demoralise victims/survivors is the contradiction between the words and deeds, pronouncements and implementation, of political (and other) leaders. The government of Zimbabwe claims to work and stand for all the people of the country, but in practice government leaders stand only for those who support them and affirm their praxis. While the government claims to be all-inclusive in treating citizens, what actually transpires creates a tension full of contradictions. Katongole (2011:9-20) cites examples of bad governance in Africa, originating in the colonial era and persisting to the present. While King Leopold of Belgium claimed to be furthering the noble ideals of “democracy”, “development”, “civilisation” and “progress” in the Congo, in reality there was horror on its rubber plantations, where millions of Africans were killed when they refused to slave for him and enrich him. The personal ambition, greed, and violence of King Leopold, which should have shocked the European world, was concealed both by him and his fellow colonisers and instead he was presented as a “philanthropic monarch” assisting the “poor Africans” (Katongole, 2011:11-14). The story of greed and plunder on the one hand and the sacrifice of African lives on the other were accepted as normal by King Leopold. This contradiction has been woven into the socio-political structures of new nation-states, even after their independence: “The actors change, but the script seems to be unchanged” (Katongole, 2011:15). This ongoing scourge of violence, need to be addressed and challenged so that society can achieve justice, peace and reconciliation, as intended by its Creator. Humanity has struggled ever since its existence to match its words with its actions. This contradiction reveals the brokenness of humanity that needs redemption and healing. Martin Luther King Jr. (2010:32) said: “The greatest tragedies of life are that men seldom bridge the gulf between practice and profession, between doing and saying. A persistent schizophrenia leaves so many of us tragically divided against ourselves”.

In response to this duplicity and double-speak that victims/survivors hear all the time from political leaders, the vision of an alternative community presents a way forward. Firstly, it calls victims/survivors of violence into a space of healing for their personal trauma and into a community of genuine care and compassion. Secondly, it invites them into a journey of reconciliation with the perpetrators who caused them pain and suffering. Thirdly, it calls them to a life of personal integrity and to participation in God’s mission of bringing justice and healing to society. Fourthly, in relation to dishonest and unjust government, it empowers them to be

courageous in the face of power abuse and oppression, to persevere in non-violently seeking the common good and the well-being of the marginalised and excluded, without being intimidated by any authorities. Such a vision of an alternative community, embodying this call to comprehensive integrity, is good news to victims/survivors of violence who are seeking a way “up” from the “bottom” of their trauma.

### **2.6.2           Attentiveness**

Another desire from the side of victims/survivors of violence, humiliation and pain is to be seen and heard. People who have suffered deeply desire to be heard and to tell their stories. As will be seen in Chapter Four from the results of the interviews, the general feeling expressed is a deep yearning to be heard as the first stage of appreciation of what victims went through. A space in which to be heard would also provide an opportunity to perpetrators to acknowledge that what was done was indeed wrong. Such an atmosphere of attentiveness to their pain and suffering could assist sufferers to recover from their trauma and embark on a journey of reconciliation. The injured desire such a platform, to be heard not only by their perpetrators but by the whole community. Thus, the community plays a vital role in the process of healing the injured. As the memories of the injured often evoke anger, hate and resentment towards those who inflicted violence and pain upon them, their families and the surrounding community need to support and counsel them. This is where the Christian community needs to assume the responsibility of becoming an alternative community. With caring attentiveness from a local Christian community the wronged can eventually move forward in life and come to terms with what they have gone through.

Katongole expresses this attentiveness to victims/survivors with his call on churches in Africa to “relocate and incarnate” among the marginalised survivors of violence: “If relocation is the hallmark of the church everywhere, it is particularly significant for Africa. Relocation repositions the church within a different imagination of Africa” (Katongole, 2011:143). In the midst of so much violence and pain unleashed on ordinary citizens, who are perceived as enemies of the state in Zimbabwe, the vision of an alternative community calls the church to be deeply attentive to their stories of pain, in order to “listen them into existence”.

### **2.6.3           Embrace**

An alternative community is an embodiment of the “beloved community” of Martin Luther King, Jr. It calls the injured to change their attitude to their perpetrators. King Jr. highlighted this change

from hate, resentment and anger to embracing the other, because it reflects Christ's teaching on love for enemies (Lk. 6:27f). King explains that

hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. So, when Jesus says: 'Love your enemies', he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition (King Jr., 2010:47).

The wronged need to move their mind-set to the level of the challenging "alternative community" of Jesus in order to subdue the perpetrator with love and not with hate. King Jr. preached as well as mobilised the members of his believing community and later others joined in to demonstrate peacefully against segregation and all that the Black Americans suffered at the hands of Whites. Although the perpetrators of violence in this research are Blacks against perceived enemies, who are fellow Blacks, the vision of an alternative community is highly relevant in Zimbabwe; its usefulness is not limited to the struggle against racism. It challenges the perpetrators of violence and transforms the mind-set of both the sufferer and the perpetrator to move towards embracing the other. This is a serious challenge, yet it is the way to go for an alternative community following the way of Jesus.

If this vision of an alternative community can be embodied and realised, even to a limited extent in the Zimbabwean context, it could help to foster integrity, attentiveness and embrace, thereby creating hope that a bottom-up reconciliation journey could succeed.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

Having established a theological basis for addressing the situation of violence in Zimbabwe in Chapter 2, this chapter takes an in-depth look at that violent context. It responds to the second research sub-question (1.3.2.1) of the thesis: What is the context of alienation, estrangement and violence in Zimbabwe? In other words, it is an exercise in context analysis to examine the violent situation in which an alternative community seeks to engage in bottom-up reconciliation.

The chapter has three major sections. The first (3.1) gives an overview of the five phases of violence in Zimbabwe; the second (3.2) is devoted to a description of the post-independence “executive-military alliance” (EMA) and its impact on violence in Zimbabwe; and the third section (3.3) looks in detail at the fifth phase of violence (1999-2018), which is the main focus of this study. In sections 3.1 and 3.2 each phase of violence is explored by asking the following five questions:

- a) What were the “fault lines” running through society at the time?
- b) Who were the parties involved?
- c) What was the nature of the conflict?
- d) What were the effects of the violence?
- e) Were any attempts made at reconciliation?

#### 3.1 PHASES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE

Much has been written on the different phases of violent conflict in Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial times to the independence period<sup>13</sup>. It falls outside the scope of this study to give a detailed description of that long history. The purpose of a brief overview of that history (3.1), which has been distinguished into five “waves” of violence, is to provide the background for the most recent

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<sup>13</sup>Several writers have discussed the violence in Zimbabwe at various periods, for example: Ranger (1967); Needham (1974); Schmidt (1992) and others.

(fifth) wave of political violence (1999-2008), which is explored in detail in 3.3. The five waves that have been distinguished for the purpose of this study are:

- 3.1.1 The pre-colonial wave emanating from the Mfecane (1830-1870);
- 3.1.2 The colonial period of British invasion and control (1888-1965);
- 3.1.3 The late colonial period of UDI under Ian Smith (1965 to 1979);
- 3.1.4 The early post-independence period (1980 to 1999);
- 3.1.5 The later post-independence period, from 1999 to 2018.

These five waves are presented by means of diagrams (figures 1-6) to show the constant pattern of violence, although the details and nature of the violence varied from the one wave to the next. The very fact of this repetitive experience of violence engraved a psychological disposition among the people of Zimbabwe that violence could (or should) be expected from time to time (Kaulem 2012). The notion of a “culture of violence” is explained by some scholars as depicting a repetitive tendency in the occurrence of violence that has become ingrained and entrenched from one generation to the next. Some scholars have described the waves of violence in Zimbabwe as having created such a culture. Sachikonye (2011) argues that the roots of recent violent actions in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the violence of the Rhodesian armed forces as well as the inter-party conflicts that occurred during the war of liberation. Kaulem (2012:14) agrees:

The origin of Zimbabwe’s culture of violence emanates from both its pre-colonial and colonial history. One group of people have always exercised violence on another justifying their acts either as God-sanctioned or that they were naturally entitled to harass and enslave others as the superior and privileged group. There are those who now believe that the power which establishes a state is violence; the power which maintains it is violence; the power which eventually overthrows it is violence.

When surveying these phases diachronically, some characteristics emerge out of these violent waves that repeat themselves. Although the context of each wave is unique, the repetitive nature of violence can be categorised to produce similar characteristics or pattern. Thus, analysing these waves diachronically, the first characteristic is that violence is employed to achieve the goal of an aggressor or perpetrator. The perpetrator wants to overcome the opponent and establish a new order of governance or control which is to benefit the perpetrator. Once the attacked are defeated,

they become subservient and are ruled by the victor, who utilised violence to achieve that victory. Secondly, there are multiple consequences flowing from the violence that was perpetrated. There is loss of life and also physical destruction of whatever infrastructure was present. The cultural systems and even religious beliefs are often destroyed or partially removed by the conqueror, to be replaced by their own practices. These characteristics reinforce a mental disposition of psychological defeat among the people conquered or oppressed. Thirdly, a characteristic of all these phases is that the violence evokes continual anger, resentment and even revolt in those who were defeated. This third characteristic sometimes becomes the ground for further violence by the victors to retain their power position and violence from the side of the oppressed to liberate themselves. This last characteristic has given rise to the saying that that violence begets violence or that violence sets in motion a spiral of violence.

### **3.1.1 Precolonial violence**

The first wave, which extended from the 1830s to 1870 in the pre-colonial period, occurred when the Mfecane in South Africa caused the Ndebele people to migrate into Zimbabwe. There was a series of conflicts among the Nguni and Sotho-speaking peoples of South Africa that were called the *Mfecane* (literally “crushing” in isiZulu) or *Difaqane* (in Sesotho), a period of violence that took place between 1795 and 1870. It set in motion a chain reaction of bloodshed, devastation and migration that had catastrophic consequences, resulting in large-scale destruction of property and human life.

There were intensified wars especially between 1815 and 1840. In 1821 the Zulu general Mzilikazi of the Khumalo clan defied king Shaka and set up his own kingdom. He made many enemies including the Boers, Griqua, Tswana and others. Mzilikazi moved to the north and established his kingdom beyond Pretoria in the Limpopo area. The arrival of the Boers in 1837 forced Mzilikazi to cross the Limpopo and re-establish his kingdom in present-day Zimbabwe with his Amandebele, whom the English later called the Matabele. He created his Ndebele state and continued his raids amongst the Shona peoples who were already established in most of present-day Zimbabwe at the time (Tlou, 1985). This wave of violence can be presented as follows:

WAVE 1		
Dates	Context	Activities/results
1830 To 1870	<i>Mfecane</i>	Fleeing of the Ndebele people from South Africa to Zimbabwe
	Fault line	Flight of the Ndebele and their invasion of Zimbabwe.
	Parties involved	Ndebele and Shona
	Nature of the conflict	Warfare: invasion of land, raiding of cattle and taking Shona women
	Effects	Forced co-existence/hatred/suspicion between the two parties,
	Attempts at reconciliation	Uneasy truce but lasting legacy of division and distrust between the two parties.

**Figure 1: The first wave of violent conflict**

In summary, the first wave of conflict in Zimbabwe started when the Ndebele tribes from the south invaded the Rozvi Kingdom of the Shona tribes in the 1840s. Mzilikazi gradually assimilated most of the Shona tribes and took their cattle, beautiful girls and women and other valuables as he had stronger warriors (Needham 1974). Those intermittent raids became the roots of deep divisions and resentment between the Shona tribes and Ndebele tribes. Those tensions were later used by the colonialists to reinforce their strategy of divide and rule to control the peoples of Zimbabwe, then called Rhodesia.

### **3.1.2 Colonial violence and occupation**

The second wave of violence began in the 1880s, when Cecil John Rhodes and his British South African Company arrived. In 1888 Rhodes hoodwinked King Lobengula to sign a concession for mining rights to be granted to Rhodes and his company. Rhodes used this concession to persuade the British government to grant his British South African Company a royal charter over Matabeleland and Mashonaland, which he collectively called Rhodesia in 1895. That brought numerous settlers from Great Britain and other European countries to the region, travelling mainly from or through South Africa, in search of gold, diamonds and other minerals and to farm on the fertile soil. To counter that encroachment on their land and livelihood, the Shona staged unsuccessful revolts in 1896-7, which became known as the first *Chimurenga* – the first war of

liberation (Needham, 1974). The colonisers eventually managed to dominate and subjugate the Ndebeles, the Shonas and all the other smaller ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. In 1923 Rhodesia became a self-governing British colony and even assisted the United Kingdom in its involvement in First and Second World Wars (Ranger, 1967). The second wave can be presented as follows:

<b>WAVE 2</b>		
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Activities/results</b>
1889 to 1965	<i>Pioneer column</i>	British South African Company formed by Cecil John Rhodes in 1889 and arrived in Zimbabwe in 1890.
	Fault line	Invasion by British settlers in search of gold, diamonds, other minerals and good weather
	Parties involved	The British colonial settlers versus Shonas and Ndebeles
	Nature of the conflict	Invasion of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) by the British South African settlers; Betrayal of the Rudd concession
	Effects	Country named Rhodesia in 1895 in honour of Rhodes; Ndebele rebellion: crushed by white settlers; Shona rebellion: crushed by white settlers; Lasting legacy of subjugation by white colonialists
	Attempts at reconciliation	The British installed self-government in Rhodesia; Indaba held with chiefs resulting in uneasy truce

**Figure 2: The second wave of violent conflict**

Because colonialism was forced on Black Zimbabweans, the British colonialists had to keep on using force to stay in control. They imposed laws that were oppressive to the Africans and skewed in favour of the Whites, which inflicted physical pain on their Black workers and servants. The situation was therefore that a small minority of Whites were in total political and economic control in the self-governing crown colony of Britain known as Rhodesia.

### **3.1.3 Unilateral Declaration of Independence and war of liberation**

As the movement of decolonisation swept over Africa after the Second World War and one British colony after the other was granted independence by Britain, the hopes of freedom from colonial were raised also in Southern Rhodesia. That hope became particularly strong after their neighbours, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, were granted independence in 1964 to become Zambia and Malawi respectively. Those hopes were dashed, however, as Ian Douglas Smith, the leader of the Rhodesian Front (RF) party, proceeded with a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in November 1965 (Smith, 1997). That called forth intense opposition in Black

communities and a group of nationalists began to organise industrial strikes to register the Black people’s dissatisfaction with colonial rule and to demand self-rule by the Black majority.

The third wave of violence was therefore Black resistance against the violent discrimination of White minority rule. A protracted war of liberation ensued, in which many atrocities were committed by both warring parties, the Rhodesian army and security intelligent agents on the one hand and the liberation fighters, often referred to as “freedom fighters” on the other. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) released a detailed report, *The Man in the Middle*, in 1976 to expose the Rhodesian government’s curfews, torture, forced resettlements and evictions of blacks to create farmland for whites in the fertile regions of Rhodesia. As the war escalated, wanton killings and atrocities against unarmed black people were committed by both the Rhodesian forces and the guerrillas, who were engaged in a conflict for the control of Rhodesia. The war intensified between 1972 and 1979, causing the death of many Black and White armed men and women, but worse still, the death of many innocent civilians on both sides of the conflict.

<b>WAVE 3</b>		
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Activities/results</b>
1965 to 1979	<i>UDI</i>	Formation of Rhodesian From Party by Ian Douglas Smith
	Fault line	Subjugation and oppression of black majority by white minority
	Parties involved	White Rhodesians versus the AmaNdebele and Shona
	Nature of the conflict	War of liberation by Africans versus war of preservation by whites
	Effects	Repression of blacks by whites; Alienation of whites from international world; Liberation struggle by blacks continues.
	Attempts at reconciliation	Agreements and cooperation between Ian Smith and weak, unrepresentative African leaders, for example Bishop Muzorewa, Reverend Sithole and Chief Chirau; Ian Smith in vain requested British support; Uneasy truce;

**Figure 3: The third wave of violent conflict**

Finally, Britain brokered a settlement at Lancaster House in 1979, which led to Zimbabwe attaining independence in 1980, with Robert Mugabe as its first Prime Minister. However, due to

the duration and intensity of the conflict, the wounds of war created permanent scars in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans, which to date have not been properly healed.

### **3.1.4 Post-independence ethnic-political violence (1980-1999)**

Unfortunately, independence did not end all violence in Zimbabwe. The attainment of independence in 1980 was welcomed by all, especially as the new Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, extended a hand of reconciliation to all, even to the former white Rhodesians in his address to the nation on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1980, the eve of Zimbabwe's independence: "The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten" (Bell, 2012). Yet two years later the government unleashed terror and atrocities in Matabeleland with the pretext of eradicating "dissidents". During the liberation war for Zimbabwe two main parties fought the Rhodesian soldiers of Ian Smith. These were the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces led by Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) party and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) forces under Joshua Nkomo, leader of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). These two political parties, although both fighting the Rhodesian forces, were themselves at loggerheads and strained by power struggles to control the country after the war of liberation. They entered into a marriage of convenience while opposing their common enemy, but when Mugabe came to power in April 1980, he felt threatened by Joshua Nkomo's forces. To silence that threat once and for all Mugabe had a special army trained, the Fifth Brigade, to deal with the threat of Nkomo's forces, some of whom had defected from the national army.

This Fifth Brigade was set up to eradicate the menace of "dissidents". The Shona term used for this eradication was *Gukurahundi*, a term that refers to "the early rains which washes away the chaff before the spring rains". In Zimbabwe this term came to refer to the particular operation carried out by the national army's Fifth Brigade between 1983 to 1987. Whenever the Brigade suspected and identified any anti-government elements among the Ndebele community it eliminated them. *Gukurahundi* then became an ideological strategy aimed at cleansing all Ndebele elements that posed a threat to Mugabe's government. These citizens were considered as chaff, to be swept away by *Gukurahundi*. At times there was random killing of innocent Ndebele people, including women and children, by the Fifth Brigade. The largest such incident occurred in March 1983, when 55 civilians were shot on the banks of the Cewale River near Lupane in Matabeleland (Stiff, 2000).

Underlying that conflict was the unspoken ethnic tension between ZANU and ZAPU, as generally representing the Shona and the Ndebele respectively, going back to the first wave of conflict (3.1.1). According to Mukonori (2015), the government then unleashed terror and havoc upon the whole of Matabeleland and part of Midlands, where the majority of Ndebele live. It is claimed that about 20 000 Ndebele people were murdered in this operation termed *Gukurahundi* which means to clean the chaff, implying the clampdown on opposition. This wave can be presented as follows:

WAVE 4		
Dates	Context	Activities/results
1980 to 1999	<i>Post-independence ethnic-political conflict</i>	Euphoria, suspicion and repression
	Fault line	Unfulfilled expectations from liberation Ethnic tension since the first wave
	Parties involved	Shona versus Ndebele ZANU versus ZIPRA
	Nature of the conflict	<i>Gukurahundi</i> campaign against the Ndebele by Mugabe's government; 20,000 civilians killed
	Effects	Lasting distrust and suspicion between Ndebele and Shona citizens; Extensive damage to property
	Attempts at reconciliation	Zimbabwe National Unity Accord, 1987 Joshua Nkomo appointed second vice President

**Figure 4: The fourth wave of violent conflict**

David Moore noted that “the long history of ZANU-PF indicates failed efforts to establish its rule as hegemonic before and after independence. To him the liberation movement was a terrain of tensions and crises rather than unity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:31). That terrain of tensions persisted after independence and the use of the term *Gukurahundi*, which reduced opponents to “dirt” or “chaff” to be washed away, indicates the depth of the antagonism and lends credence to the notion that a “culture” of violence has been established in Zimbabwe.

According to Doran (*The Guardian*, 19 May 2015), “The so-called *Gukurahundi* massacres remain the darkest period in the country's post-independence history, when more than 20,000 civilians were killed by Robert Mugabe's feared Fifth Brigade”. In 1997, the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) released a report on the Matabeleland and Midlands atrocities, titled *Breaking the Silence*, revealing the extent of the violence. In summary, after independence there continued to be a recurrence of politically



motivated conflicts that caused violence, suffering and death to many Zimbabweans, who should have been enjoying peace, justice, development and fulfilment of their dreams after the disappearance of colonial rule.

### **3.1.5 Post-independence political violence (1999-2018)**

From the 1990s onwards a fifth wave of violent conflict arose in Zimbabwe. It grew out of tensions between workers, represented by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and the government. Those continuing tensions led to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) under the leadership of the former Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions Secretary General Morgan Tsvangirai. He left the post of Secretary General of Trade Unions in 1999 to become the president of the MDC, with the support of those trade unions and some non-governmental organisations. That presented a turning point in Zimbabwe's history because it produced the first political party that could seriously challenge the popular support of ZANU-PF in an election.

The first evidence that ZANU-PF, and President Mugabe in particular, no longer had majority support for his ideas was the fact that he lost the referendum on a new constitution in February 2000. That proposed constitution would have given the government the power to confiscate white-owned farms without compensation, if the United Kingdom (as former colonial power) failed to pay such compensation. President Mugabe took the loss of the referendum as a personal insult and orchestrated the forced occupation of white-owned farms in 2000-2002 to achieve the land reform he pursued by means of the proposed new constitution through illegal means. The occupiers were mostly war veterans who are ZANU-PF supporters and former freedom fighters.

For the purpose of this research the main focus during the fifth wave falls on the election violence of June 2008. It was triggered when President Mugabe did not win the presidential elections of March 2008 outright, so a date was set for the re-run of the elections on 27 June 2008. During the campaign period for the run-off elections, ZANU-PF unleashed horrific violence against opposition members and parties. Many opposition members lost property, were maimed, lost their employment and a considerable number of people were killed because they were considered "enemies of the state" (Human Rights Watch 2008). This thesis focuses particularly on two

incidents of violence in Zaka district in 2008, during this fifth wave, and the responses of people to it at the grass-roots. Some key aspects of the fifth wave can be pictured as follows:

<b>WAVE 5</b>		
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Activities/results</b>
1999 to 2018	<i>Post-independence political conflict</i>	Ongoing militarisation of the state
	Fault lines	Unfulfilled expectations of citizens; Appointments of military personnel to strategic institutions and parastatals; Widening gap between rich and poor.
	Parties involved	ZANU-PF versus ZCTU ZANU-PF versus MDC Government versus all its critics, the press, NGOs
	Nature of the conflict	Power struggle for control of the state; Election campaigns disrupted by political violence; Oppressive legislation passed by government; Widespread physical violence against MDC supporters; Some revenge attacks by MDC.
	Effects	Economic meltdown Destabilisation of families, massive emigration to diaspora
	Attempts at reconciliation	Power sharing brokered by Pres Thabo Mbeki (RSA); Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009; Improved economy under GNU; Attempts by churches to broker reconciliation between ZANU-PF and MDC; Drafting of new constitution (2013)

**Figure 5: The fifth wave of violent conflict**

It should be clear that this wave, as portrayed above, is actually made up of a series of small waves, since there were intermittent eruptions of violence during this whole period of 1999 to 2018, which cannot be exhaustively pictured in such a diagram. However, most of the aspects that are necessary to understand the 2008 election violence are contained in it. The only exception is the growth of the “executive-military alliance”, which played a crucial role in the fifth wave and which is left out since the whole of the next section of the chapter (3.2) is dedicated to it.

### **3.2 THE EXECUTIVE-MILITARY ALLIANCE AND ITS IMPACT**

The overarching framework of post-independence political violence in Zimbabwe has been described as an “executive-military alliance” that emanated from the liberation war and continued

into post-independent Zimbabwe. This overarching framework has entrenched the process of “competitive authoritarianism” in which the alliance has steered all democratic processes to its own advantage. The subsequent suffering of the masses is in part a result of this crafted framework that continued the principles created during the armed struggle for liberation.

### **3.2.1 The origin and nature of the executive-military alliance**

Several have argued that this central role played by the executive-military alliance in Zimbabwe’s electoral processes is not a sudden post-2000 phenomenon but has its genesis in the elections of 1980, which consolidated the war-liberation parties into power. Moyo and Ncube (2015:39) refer to several scholars who have reflected on this phenomenon of executive-military alliance, namely Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003; 2012); Rupiya (2002); Bratton and Masunungure (2011); and Mangongera (2014). This members of this executive-military diarchy have been described as “*militicians*” (military-cum-politicians). It is further argued that this military elite operates under the Joint Operations Command (JOC) in order to achieve legitimacy by collusion or force:

The military elite operate under the Joint Operations Command (JOC) comprising of the commanders of the army, air force, police, central intelligence organization (CIO) and prisons. A majority of them are senior commanders of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA – liberation military wing of ZANU-PF) and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA – a liberation military wing of the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People’s Union (PF-ZAPU) (Moyo and Ncube, 2015:42-43).

This overarching framework of the executive-military alliance (see *figure 6* below) that is explained in this chapter is a summary that includes the military and state security, the executive arm, the legislative arm, the judicial arm, the economy and civil society. All these have been influenced and controlled by the coordinated alliance that has existed between the leadership of the forces of the war of liberation and the liberation forces themselves. When Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980 the leaders became the executive arm of government while the war cadres became the conventional army of the state, so the alliance that existed during the struggle continued even after independence. This alliance reflects the brokenness of humanity in exposing the greed for power, wealth and desire to dominate others by whatever means, even political violence against citizens.

As already stated above, this “executive-military alliance” has become so strong that it permeates all sectors of life in Zimbabwe. A brief discussion on each of the six areas of power that are summarised in Figure 6 shown below, is appropriate for understanding the operations of government and how the whole socio-political and economic cross-section became influenced and affected by this alliance.

**Figure 6: Illustration of the Executive-Military Alliance (EMA)**

<b>Military and State Security</b>	<b>Executive Arm</b>	<b>Legislative Arm</b>	<b>Judicial Arm</b>	<b>The Economy</b>	<b>Civil Society</b>
<p><b>Genesis</b> Made up of former liberation war combatants recruited on the basis of liberation war credentials.</p>	<p><b>Mugabe as Prime Minister</b> Pressed for peace, reconciliation and development, working with traditional leaders and village councils to consolidate governmental power.</p>	<p><b>Reconciliation</b> The first parliament of the independent government was seized with building bridges between former liberation war belligerents.</p>	<p><b>First 10 years of Lancaster House Constitution</b> Judiciary was independent of the state.</p>	<p><b>First Decade</b> The independent state inherited a strong economy in 1980</p>	<p>The Civil Society is multifaceted that includes the categories below.</p>
<p><b>Civil unrest</b> The North Korean trained 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade involved in an ethnic- cleansing Operation <i>Gukurahundi</i>. Most notorious torture camp: Bhalagwe in Kezi (Mukonori,2015: 83)</p>	<p><b>Executive Presidency</b> As executive president, Mugabe pressed for one party state, which did not succeed.</p>	<p><b>Equality of races</b> In the first decade the laws were generally informed by what government termed 'Growth with Equity' agenda</p>	<p><b>Partisan Appointments</b> The President appointed top judicial officers who apparently supported the ruling party.</p>	<p><b>Second Decade</b> Characterized by a severe drought (1992); ESAP (1991-1995); Workers' plight; War veterans gratuities as sources of corruption</p>	<p><b>The Press</b> The state repressed the press through oppressive legislations. threats to local journalists and expulsion of foreign journalists.</p>

<p><b>Vanguard</b> The military was involved in political campaigns for ZANU- PF and determining electoral outcomes</p>	<p><b>Use of force</b> The executive then used state agents in trying to silence the opposition</p>	<p><b>Black economic empowerment</b> An outstanding component of this agenda was the amendment of laws to favour Blacks, including the land Act of 1992.</p>	<p><b>Subjective Dismissals</b> President sacked top officers who censured the ZANU-PF cause. An example is Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay who was sacked in 2001.</p>	<p><b>Third Decade</b> Violation of property rights through land invasions and White-owned farms. Blacks failed to produce and land devalued (Zunga 2003:83).</p>	<p><b>NGOs</b> These were also subjected to state security surveillance , being suspected to be opposition sympathizers.</p>
<p><b>Alternative civil servants</b> They were appointed in parastatals to replace the disgruntled civil servants who were now emigrating to the Diaspora.</p>	<p><b>Economic meltdown</b> Government policies brought about destruction of industries and the souring of international relations which plunged the economy into crisis.</p>	<p><b>Indigenisation</b> The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act compelled foreign-owned businesses to cede at least 51% of their shares to Blacks.</p>	<p><b>Constitutional Change</b> In 2000, the state lost its bid to replace the Lancaster House Constitution. A New Constitution came in 2013 and created the Constitutional Court to uphold the supreme law.</p>		<p><b>Churches</b> They were also gradually viewed as being critical of the state regarding human rights issues.</p>
<p><b>Political rewards</b> Most were allocated farms and mines in recognition of their partisan support of the executive.</p>	<p><b>Desperate moves</b> Government assigned military personnel to lead government</p>	<p><b>Repressive laws</b> Laws such as AIPPA, Criminal Law and codification Act, and Broadcasting</p>	<p><b>Vote of No Confidence</b> Citizens demanded judicial reforms citing political abuse of the</p>	<p><b>Fourth Decade</b> State failure characterized by military-appointments</p>	<p><b>Artists</b> These played a crucial role as social commentators through music and plays; and</p>

	<p>parastatals in a desperate move to contain the crisis.</p>	<p>Service Act were enacted to support the Executive.</p>	<p>courts especially in the hearing of contested election results. Also top ZANU-PF members seemed to be above the law and immune from the courts.</p>	<p>into civilian roles; hyperinflation; shortage of commodities and, mass brain drain. The situation was temporarily improved by a Government of National Unity (2009).</p>	<p>they also often criticized state violence.</p>
	<p><b>Corruption</b> The use of appointees and cronies in governmental affairs led to lawlessness and untold corruption</p>	<p><b>NB: Zimbabwe has a bicameral legislature with Senate being the upper chamber and the House of Assembly being the lower chamber. In both houses, there are elected and President-appointed members.</b></p>	<p><b>NB: The judicial arm comprises of the Supreme court and Constitutional court at the apex. then high courts and magistrate courts, civil courts and traditional courts.</b></p>	<p><b>Post-GNU</b> Multicurrency regime failed to sustain the economic positives as the government introduced bond coins and bond notes as desperate moves to deal with worsening cash crisis.</p>	<p><b>Sports</b> This fraternity seriously-lacked state willpower for its development; and those into it resultantly saw the state as being oppressive as it considered sports to be a luxury rather than an industry in its own right.</p>

### **3.2.2 The impact of the EMA on the military and state security**

The roles of the military and state security are explained in most international legislation and are legitimate for maintaining the security of any state. Mijalković and Blagojevic (2014) state that:

One of the major principles of national security in every modern democratic state is the rule of law. This implies the definition of standards relating to vital state and national values, but also the existence of mechanisms and organisations which take care of security (the establishment, jurisdiction, tasks, powers, responsibility, and control thereof).

They argue that the above includes both the national law reflected in the constitution, laws and by-laws of the country as well as the international law contained in conventions, resolutions, charters, covenants, recommendations, court rulings, decisions of international courts, commissions and arbitration bodies and other guidelines. In most democracies it is believed that the national law is based on international law. Therefore, it can be said that national security can be based on the international legal foundations which set the framework for the proclamation, regulation and protection of state and national values and interests. However, in the case of Zimbabwe the military continues to be used by a single party, the ruling ZANU-PF, so that it remains in power. The army was no longer independent from the party as the party and government merged into one. The genesis of this relationship has its roots in the war of liberation, as stated above.

#### *3.2.2.1 The origins of the EMA*

Based on the analysis of Zunga (2003), it can be further argued that this close relationship between the military and politics element goes back to the nocturnal gatherings, called *pungwes*, where the guerrillas forced villagers in the rural areas to come together to be indoctrinated in Marxist-Leninist ideologies by ZANU cadres. Further the guerrillas instilled fear among the people so that they should support them as well as support only one leader: Robert Mugabe. Zunga (2003:30) says,

ZANU-PF were experts in intimidation, beatings and abductions. Every rural person had to comply with their demands otherwise you were dead. Chanting ‘Pamberi neZANU’ (‘Forward with ZANU’) they terrorised the villagers.

When those guerrillas became members of the army in independent Zimbabwe their influence in political affairs did not stop. The leaders of the guerrillas during the war of liberation who had become leaders of government continued to operate in close relationship with the army as they did during the struggle. Zunga (2003) further explains that for the liberation fighters to send the chill of fear into the community, they not only killed those men that were considered traitors but went further to punish their families: “Women were forced to spit or urinate over their sprawled husbands or forced to eat the ears, eyes and flesh of victims. Women were raped and others impregnated” (Zunga, 2003:29).

This clearly demonstrates the fundamental parameters of this executive-military alliance in the governance of Zimbabwe, which has continued to thwart proper democratic processes and instead enabled the state to stage-manage all the elections, which produced predictable results. As argued by another scholar, this phenomenon in Zimbabwe can also be described as a “competitive authoritarian regime” that sets up structures such as constitutions, elections, parliaments, courts, local governments and other structures that resemble democratic institutions yet all these “are subject to state manipulation so severe, widespread and so systematic that they do not qualify as democratic” (Schedler, 2010:12). It follows that the rest of the operations in the state are all controlled, guided, and decided by this “duumvirate” executive-military alliance which stage-manages democracy without real democracy. Makumbe and Compagnon make specific reference to the 1995 general elections and the subsequent boycott by the opposition parties. This boycott and the court challenge exposed the electoral processes as a sham. It “was the unmasking of Zimbabwean elections as no more than a façade of electoral democracy” (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000:224). To reinforce the hollowness of these elections, Masunungure (2009) also analyses the 27 June 2008 run-off elections that followed the 29 March harmonised elections of 2008. He says the people had expressed a very high percentage in support of the opposition party, which later led to the power-sharing agreement of the parties. Masunungure argues how the military/security wings were deeply involved in the run-off process and applied systematic violence and intimidation to cow the people to vote for ZANU-PF for the presidential re-run. In fact, the violence was so intense against the opposition party that Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew from the elections to save his supporters (Masunungure, 2009:79).



There are a number of reasons that would support the consolidation of such a phenomenon of the executive-military alliance. The ZANU-PF liberation movement did not stop its military attributes when it became a civilian government; instead, the indoctrination given during the liberation struggle continued to have effect on politicians (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006:53). This gave politicians the opportunity to co-opt the military and other security structures for their own support. Thus, the reasons for this executive-military alliance include indoctrination and liberation war credentials, fear of exposure of past wrongs (the reprisals for which the ruling party wanted to avoid at all cost), fear of exposure of corruptly accumulated wealth, as well as avoidance of justice before a court of law for any political crimes committed while in office (Muringi, 2008:88).

### 3.2.2.2 *Civil unrest in post-independent Zimbabwe*

With independence all citizens hoped that the violence had come to an end, but hardly two years after independence the army was used by the state to clean up some sporadic violence in Matabeleland. There was a massive drive on a part of the army that was trained by the North Koreans to butcher and murder people in the name of state-security. In that episode of *Gukurahundi* (“cleaning the chaff”), already mentioned in Chapter 1.8.4, it is estimated that twenty thousand civilians lost their lives. Mukonori (2015:83) records “The most notorious detention base was Bhalangwe in Kezi. The locals called this a ‘concentration camp’”.

Thus, the army was at the disposal of the executive to further its own interests to remain in power. Mugabe’s use of the army was intended to be legitimate, even when the state was not in danger of being attacked by any foreign nation. That created a platform for all the political violence that happened later. It was a platform from which the army could be called upon at any time to act for the benefit of the alliance. The state was thereby militarised so that violence for the sake of the ruling party became normalised.

This explains later developments in the country, for example when the army was used for land invasions. Mugabe made a correlation between the invasion of Rhodesia by white colonialists and later targeted whites, using the army and militia to invade white commercial farms, as mentioned in Chapter 1.8.5. Feeling threatened by the opposition, Mugabe extended the use of the army in his post-independent violence even against fellow black citizens. This is demonstrated in the following paragraphs, which show how the executive used army personnel for political campaigns

and appointed them to head parastatals, as explained within the context of “the executive arm of government”. The army also got directly involved in the economy of the country as some of its leaders acquired farms and mines.

### *3.2.2.3 The military as the vanguard to influence Zimbabwean elections*

Although the Defence Forces Act and the Zimbabwean Constitution are very clear in prohibiting the military from participating in politics or even interfering in the electoral affairs of the state, the military had already been given a green light to involve themselves in civilian elections. The Constitution of Zimbabwe states in Section 211(3): “The Defence Forces must respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons and be non-partisan, national in character, patriotic, professional and subordinate to the civilian authority as established by this Constitution.”

First in contradiction to the dictates of the Constitution, some of the top brass soldiers uttered statements and addressed people to inform them of the soldiers’ support for the ruling ZANU-PF party. For instance, the Chief Executive Officer of the Electoral Supervisory Commission, Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba proclaimed publicly to the rural chiefs, the police and soldiers at 3-3 Infantry battalion in Manicaland on 23 October 2010 that no one without revolutionary credentials would win the elections. This was a clear reference to ZANU-PF’s leader Robert Mugabe. Earlier to this pronouncement, the former and late Defence Forces Commander, Vitalis Zvinvashe, stated categorically that the military would not salute anyone without war credentials: “To this end, let it be known that the highest office of the land is a ‘straightjacket’ whose occupant is expected to observe the objectives of the liberation struggle”, thereby implying that Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC, would not be allowed to rule in Zimbabwe even if he would win the elections (Rupiya 2011:10-11). Further, Rupiya, in Raftopoulos and Savage (2004:90-91) makes two clear observations that the European Union (EU), in its report on the elections of June 2002, condemned the involvement of the army and cited that the army was part of the crisis in the election process. Secondly, they also observed that Zimbabwean Forces (ZDF) cultivated a “very healthy relationship...with the rest of the African continent over the last twenty years...” therefore the African Union (AU) was hesitant to be critical of the role of the military in the Zimbabwean elections over the years.

Masunungure (2009) comments that elections in our contemporary world will always remain the best and most effective measurement instrument to connect citizens to policy-makers, but that while elections are necessary, they are an insufficient ingredient for democracy: “The history of elections in Zimbabwe is a history of gross irregularities in the form of electoral fraud, violence and intimidation” (Masunungure 2012:15). Such a stance is affirmed by many of the people he interviewed, whose opinion on elections was dimly negative because of the violence people suffered. One anonymous source from Matabeleland South is quoted as having said: “People no longer look forward to elections here in Zimbabwe because they bring a lot of pain, suffering and death as people are burnt alive in their own homes” (Masunungure 2012:19).

When the army, militia, Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) officers, ZANU-PF youths and supporters perpetrated violence, their deliberate intention was to influence elections. The violence included intimidation, harassments and killings intended to strengthen the ruling party’s grip on power. This affirms that elections in Zimbabwe were not a barometer of the will of the people but more the will of the executive-military alliance that wanted to perpetuate their political power. Thus, the violence that will be discussed later, both in this chapter and later chapters, emanates from the executive propagating the “liberator syndrome” or “freedom fighter cause” of the former ZANLA and ZIPRA forces that fought the war of liberation for Zimbabwe. This ideology was perpetuated so that the professional soldiers never cut their umbilical cord with the ethos of the liberation war times.

Zaka was a hotspot of politicised violence in Masvingo Province in 2008 (Madzokere and Machingura 2016:294). Two significant examples, which I chose as focus for the interviews and the focus group (see Chapter 4). In Zaka district on 4 June 2008, at the height of campaign for the re-run of the Presidential elections, Guma reported that three MDC members were killed at Jerera growth point by persons wearing army uniforms who arrived around 3 am. They attacked the MDC office where at least five MDC officials were sleeping. The armed men fired their guns into the small building. The perpetrators then poured petrol inside and outside the office and set it alight. Three people died and the other two managed to get out but sustained very severe burns. They were hospitalised at Musiso Mission Hospital in Zaka and recovered but are now disfigured. (Guma, 2008).

The second incident also took place in Zaka at St. Anthony’s Catholic Mission. As related by Madzokere & Machingura (2016:294), “the house of a Roman Catholic priest of St Anthony Mission was burnt down by ZANU-PF supporters immediately after he delivered a sermon denouncing violence.” Earlier the priest went to bury an MDC youth who had been killed by ZANU-PF youths, an act that angered local ZANU-PF leaders. The priest was tipped off that the ZANU-PF militia were coming after him, so he left the Mission to stay with relatives in Bulawayo. On 18 June 2008, a group of ZANU-PF youths came at night, singing songs of hate, but did not find the priest, so they decided to throw a petrol bomb into his room through a window that they had broken. The bomb exploded and burnt out not only the priest’s room and all the property in it but the whole priests’ house, including the other six rooms. The house was gutted by the fire and completely destroyed.

The military was involved in political campaigns for ZANU-PF and influenced the outcome of elections in favour of the ruling party. Thus, it acted as the vanguard for maintaining the power of the ruling party. In the following table, Rupiya (2011) gives the number of perpetrators of violence by institution, based on statistics gathered from news agencies (Short Wave Radio Africa).

*Table 2: Perpetrators of violence and the institutions they belonged to*

<b>Violator Institution</b>	<b>Number of perpetrators</b>
Zimbabwe Defence Force	424
Central Intelligence Organisation	37
Zimbabwe Republic Police	72
ZANU-PF members	12,896
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13,429</b>

Source: Rupiya (2011)

According to these sources, 533 members of the official security arms of the state collectively were guilty of perpetrating atrocities as part of election violence in the interests of ZANU-PF. But perhaps the most significant (and disturbing) feature of these statistics is the huge number of rank and file ZANU-PF members, probably mainly youth militias, who were involved with impunity in political violence. This gives credence to the notion that a “culture of violence” has been established in Zimbabwe. Even though these statistics cannot be independently verified, due to the collusion of the military, police and judiciary, they paint a picture of serious abuse of political power for a state claiming to be democratic.

#### 3.2.2.4 *Appointment of military personnel as alternative civil servants*

Following his use of the military as the vanguard of the ruling party, Mugabe appointed military personnel as alternative civil servants. He did this in order to consolidate his power in all parastatals as well as to replace the disgruntled civil servants who had left the country and emigrated to diaspora. A former army officer, who opted to study and lecture in War Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, confirms that there were distinct phases of military intervention to assist the executive of Robert Mugabe in his governance of the country (Rupiya 2011). He surveys the *Gukurahundi* episode and the violent responses to the emergence of MDC as opposition party and then gives details on Robert Mugabe’s appointment of several military officers in government institutions and parastatals to reinforce the executive’s grip on political power (Radio Africa 1 October 2018):

Mugabe systematically deployed military personnel to strategic positions in various state institutions responsible for governance such as the judiciary, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Delimitation Commission... state-controlled companies such as the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM) (Rupiya 2011:6).

Besides the executive benefiting from this alliance with the military, the military itself also utilised the apparent advantages to plunder the wealth of the parastatals entrusted to them without recourse to any accountability or fear of the rule of law. Such a state of affairs allowed the military to do whatever they wanted in order to retain their power and influence on the whole society of Zimbabwe (*Zimbabwe Independent* 28 February 2014).

### 3.2.2.5 *Political rewards*

According to a correspondent of *The Guardian* 30 November 2010, Mugabe used the land reform programme to reward his supporters rather than ordinary black Zimbabweans when he and his allies seized up to 40% of white owned farms: “In order to buy loyalty of his cabinet ministers, senior army and government officials and judges he took nearly 5m hectares (12.5m acres) of agricultural land, including wildlife conservancies and plantations, according to the national news agency ZimaOnline”. Mugabe further allowed the military to be engaged in mining so that they could enrich themselves, instead of enhancing the dilapidated economy of the country. Those actions of seeking to please and reward his supporters has had serious consequences down the line for the economy of Zimbabwe.

## 3.2.3 **The impact of the EMA on the executive arm of government**

### 3.2.3.1 *Robert Mugabe – from Prime Minister to Executive President*

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister announced a policy of national reconciliation and pressed for peace in order to build bridges between the former war belligerents. He brought in traditional leaders, chiefs, headsmen and village councils in order to consolidate the power of government. For a start this seemed to be a journey in the right direction. However, this policy of building bridges did not materialise as there were no structures put in place to implement that reconciliation policy. Mugabe was Prime Minister from 1980 to 1987, when he when he became executive president<sup>14</sup>. As executive president Mugabe pressed for a one-party-state, but that plan did not succeed. Gregory (Africa Portal 1 January 1986) explains:

To bring about the goal of the one-party state, Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, is seeking to bring opposition groups into an acceptable arrangement with his government, and he intends to build on his existing support base for this purpose. By a ‘one-party state system’,

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<sup>14</sup> There were constitutional changes of 1987 to 1989: At the end of the moratorium on changes to the composition of the Parliament the constitution was changed fundamentally: Amendment No 6 of 1987 abolished the separate white voters’ roll for the election of both houses of Parliament. Amendment No 7 of 1987 changed the system of government from a parliamentary to a presidential system. The post of prime minister was abolished. Amendment No 9 of 1989 replaced the bicameral system with a unicameral Parliament ([https://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/nordem/publications/docs/zimbabwe\\_constitution\\_2013.pdf](https://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/nordem/publications/docs/zimbabwe_constitution_2013.pdf)).

it is understood that a political system relies on a single party to aggregate and articulate national interests in a society.

### 3.2.3.2 *Use of force*

As Mugabe had failed to achieve a one-party state, as executive president he used state agents to achieve the goal of controlling all the sectors of the nation. Eventually there was growing opposition from civil society and Churches. The more the opposition voices grew the more force Mugabe used to impose his wishes on the nation. Nyarota (2018:35-56), a Zimbabwean journalist who suffered under Mugabe, chronicles how the president systematically silenced divergent voices against him through security agents. Amongst many opponents targeted by Mugabe were his long-time rival, Joshua Nkomo, who had to flee the country on 7 March 1983 (Nyarota, 2018:38). At the same time to demolish the power of Nkomo he ordered the Fifth Brigade to butcher the Ndebele people through operation *Gukurahundi*.

Another former collaborator of Mugabe, Edgar Tekere, the former Secretary General of ZANU-PF, turned into an opponent and became a thorn in the flesh because of his criticism of Mugabe's style of ruling. Tekere was consequently expelled from the ZANU-PF party. Journalists and other opponents were harassed or beaten by state agents in order to be silenced. The MDC became the archenemy, together with its workers, white farmers and whites in general, and anybody who criticised or opposed Mugabe. Some opponents disappeared, some were beaten and others were killed by state agents so as to silence them, as Nyarota (2018) explains. In all these ways Mugabe continued the use of force against opponents that became an established pattern during the liberation struggle.

### 3.2.3.3 *Economic meltdown*

Because of bad government policies many industries were destroyed, with the consequences of economic meltdown and various crises that followed, like food shortages, unemployment, and the deterioration of the country's infrastructure. As the government took desperate moves such as the appointment of the military to parastatals, corruption increased resulting in lawlessness and further economic decline. Despite this pathetic state of affairs in the country Mugabe did not stop appointing his cronies in governmental affairs or reward them to the detriment of the state.

While the functions of government are clearly laid out in the constitution, the executive did not hesitate to sidestep and ignore its dictates. The functions of the executive arm of government broadly include the carrying out and administering of laws that are enacted by the legislature. Ministers of government also make decisions on policy issues guided by the decisions of the ruling party and are responsible for the administration of government. Although the constitution of Zimbabwe upholds separation of powers between the executive, legislature and the judiciary, the implantation of this principle has been a bone of contention since Zimbabwe attained independence. In analysing the idea of separation of powers the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum (1 October 2018) has said:

The Zimbabwean experience does not always live up to this standard... There in fact have been gross violations of this doctrine. The executive, during the ZANU-PF government, was all powerful to the extent of stifling other arms. This has compromised the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and the vibrancy of the legislature.

#### *3.2.3.4 Corruption*

Corruption was so pervasive that it infiltrated all sectors of the political economy, as discussed in various parts of this thesis. There was a symbiotic relationship between corruption and lawlessness, as those two aided and abetted each other. One of the most badly affected areas is the public sector, as mentioned, where military officers were systematically appointed to governmental and parastatal positions.

#### **3.2.4 The impact of the EMA on the legislative arm of government**

The structure and functions of the legislative arm of government are laid down in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which was amended in 2013. The legislative arm of government is bicameral, the Senate being the upper chamber and the House of Assembly the lower chamber. For both chambers the majority of members are elected by the citizens of the country while about one third are appointed by the president to cater for minority groups such as the disabled and other groups of disadvantaged people. Constitutionally their functions include making and enacting laws for the country as well as exercise their power of oversight over Bills through parliamentary committees that deal with specific legislative tasks. Both chambers support the executive-military alliance in its commitment to retain power at all costs and to silence divergent or alternative voices. Through



the President-appointed members in both houses the President exercises a great deal of influence and control in both houses. The cabinet, which is also appointed by the President, has influence on the making of laws, since it considers the draft bills passed by parliament and Senate before they are presented to the president for signing them into law.

#### *3.2.4.1 Reconciliation*

The first parliament of independent Zimbabwe was committed to building bridges between former liberation war belligerents. Wars and animosity had prevailed between the white Rhodesian forces and the black guerrilla fighters as well as between the Mugabe led ZANLA cadres and Nkomo led ZIPRA cadres. Relationships between some ethnic groups were not always harmonious because of historical events. The new parliament needed to bring peace to the new nation. Thus, in the first decade laws were generally informed by what government termed a “Growth with Equity” agenda. Sibanda and Makwata (2017:4) state that “the black government adopted the Growth with Equity policy in 1981 as the first post-independence economic policy statement.” The thrust of this policy was aimed at redressing colonial era imbalances by assimilating previously marginalised people into the mainstream economy so that all citizens would benefit instead of only the minority whites who enjoyed the benefits of the economy when the regulations were skewed in their favour (Sibanda and Makwata 2017).

#### *3.2.4.2 Racial equality*

Stemming from the reconciliation agenda, the new Zimbabwe government was also poised to promote racial equality. In particular, there were programmes which were geared to bridge the age-old racial divide. Such programmes were parcelled together under the general policy named “Growth With Equity”. This philosophy permeated all sections of society, but only for a limited time since those democratic laws were later replaced by a new agenda of black economic empowerment.

#### *3.2.4.3 Black Economic Empowerment and Indigenisation*

An outstanding component of this agenda was the amendment of laws to favour Blacks, including the Land Act of 1992. Prior to 1992 colonial laws were skewed in favour of the whites and the new Parliament of Zimbabwe was preoccupied with enacting laws that would be all-inclusive and deliver justice for all the citizens of the country. This meant that some laws were repealed while

others were amended. The negotiations before independence agreed that the Lancaster House Constitution was to be maintained for ten years without amendment. The Lancaster House Constitution protected white-owned farms as well as guaranteed white representation in Parliament for ten years. The processes of uplifting the blacks who were previously disadvantaged resulted in the Black Empowerment Act which was later augmented by the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (2008) that compelled foreign-owned businesses to cede at least 51% of their shares to Blacks. This Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act was not well received by foreign investors, who preferred to relocate their investments to other, less restrictive, countries (Marazanye 2016:29). This policy thrust is perhaps the most aggressive and transformative Act in Zimbabwe's postcolonial law-making history. The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act was enacted in 2008 and it polarised the interests of the Black citizen against those of any other races, particularly against the White race. In principle, the indigenisation law was designed as a clever way to normalise the land and property grabs since year 2000. Among other things, this law compelled foreign-owned businesses with at least half-a-million US Dollar capitalisation to surrender 51% of their shares to indigenous Zimbabweans (Government of Zimbabwe 2008:1).

#### 3.2.4.4 *Repressive laws: Lack of independence of the legislature*

Laws such as the AIPPA, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the Broadcasting Service Act are examples of repressive laws that were enacted to support the Executive. In a way these laws were a response of government to growing discontent among citizens and criticism by various media houses and opposition parties. The Executive arm of government, with its majority in the two legislative houses, exerted so much influence and pressure that laws curtailing the freedom of citizens were passed.

The impact of media laws on journalists and media organisations is a case in point. Mpfu and Chimhenga (2013) explain the negative impact of the Access to Information and Protection Act (AIPPA)<sup>15</sup> and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), saying that these laws militated against the freedom of expression, especially of independent non-state owned media organisations. When private media had gathered momentum, becoming critical of government and exposing the various ills and malpractices in both government and the private sector, the Executive through the

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<sup>15</sup> Another law that militated against the freedom of the people in Zimbabwe was: Public Order and Security Act (POSA) of 2002. (<https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/zimbabwe-aippa-report.pdf>)

Legislature made laws to clamp down on private media houses and personnel. Thus, AIPPA made it difficult for journalists to investigate corruption and the abuse of power while on the other hand the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation (ZBC) controlled the air waves and did not allow independent players. The situation was so oppressive that most Zimbabweans resorted to watching Digital Satellite Television (DSTV), South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and other international channels that are broadcast through satellite (Mpofu and Chimhenga 2013). Paradoxically, those two laws contravene the Zimbabwean Constitution, which explicitly protects the rights of citizens to freedom of association and freedom of speech. Sadly, there are still other oppressive and restrictive laws that have been retained from the colonial period and have only been slightly modified and given new names. For example, the Official Secrets Act and the Law and Order Maintenance Act date from the period of Ian Smith, after declaring the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 (Mpofu and Chimhenga 2013).

While the two houses complement each other and together constitute an independent legislative function, their operations have not always been free and independent. According to the *Newsday* newspaper of 26 October 2012, the legislature increasingly lacks independence from Government in its core-business of enacting laws. Makamure, a *Newsday* journalist, quote Mugabe as having described parliamentarians as “stooges” who “exist to rubber-stamp Executive decisions”. The reporter was disturbed because this was said by a learned person who should have known the importance of separation of powers between the Executive, Judiciary and the Legislature. Separation of powers is a principle that requires Parliament to make laws, the Judiciary to professionally interpret them and the Executive to accurately enforce them without favour, while all three these arms respect the law of the State. The reality, however, is quite different, as Makamure points out:

It is the Executive that has fuelled this polarisation in Parliament because of their attitude that Parliament should merely rubber-stamp Cabinet decisions. While it is true that our Parliament has not been able to fulfil its law-making responsibilities by enacting legislation that advances the promotion and protection of human rights, this does not justify the Executive usurping the powers of Parliament. One of the main reasons why Parliament has been weak in the area of law making is the common practice whereby draft legislation emanates from the Executive (*Newsday*, 26 October 2012).

### **3.2.5 The impact of the EMA on the judicial arm of government**

It is clear from the above discussion that the Judicial Arm of Government is biased in favour of the ruling party. Its independence and impartiality, especially in dealing with political cases, is very much compromised in favour of ZANU-PF. Chamburuka (2019) in her PhD research comes to a similar conclusion. She argues that those of the opposition are always the ones alleged to be the offenders while the real perpetrators who belong to the ruling party get away scot-free:

Prosecution is not fairly practised, because even the judiciary system seems to be biased towards the ruling party, giving the impression that it is not an independent body...No wonder there is an outcry for the independence of the judiciary by opposition parties and the international community (Chamburuka, 2019).

She argues that the reason for the bias towards the ruling party stems from the fact that some of the people perceived to be perpetrators continue to hold positions of power in the ruling party and are “sacred cows”, Thus the judiciary, which is appointed by the ruling party, is not capable of being impartial when it considers political crimes. Chamburuka (2019) speaks of Zimbabwe’s “dark history” of impunity: “[P]erpetrators of violence have not been prosecuted because most of the political violence has been state-sponsored and is highly institutionalized”.

#### *3.2.5.1 The first decade of independence*

For the first ten years of independence the judiciary was independent of the state, as determined by the Lancaster House Constitution. The new executive government inherited the judiciary that had been in place during the colonial period and hence it continued to operate without much interference from the executive arm. In 1987 Mugabe became the executive president of the country and abolished the position of prime minister. Thus, he became responsible for appointing judges to the Supreme as well as the Constitutional Courts. The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice and four other judges while the Constitutional court has a Chief Justice, a deputy and nine other judges. They are all appointed by the President, after receiving recommendations from the Judicial Service Commission, the Public Service Commission Chairperson, the Attorney General and two or three independent members, also appointed by the President. This judicial arm is represented in all the provinces of the country by one or two judges appointed by the President. But there are certain major cases that continue to be referred to the Supreme Court of the country.

### 3.2.5.2 *Partisan appointments and subjective dismissals*

After the Lancaster House agreement which was effective for ten years since independence, Mugabe began to make partisan appointments to the judiciary. He appointed top judicial officers who openly supported the aims of the ruling party. Although the Constitution of Zimbabwe clearly demarcates the parameters as well as separation of powers amongst the three arms of governance (Nyemba 2013), in practice the Executive arm has always been dominant because of its alliance with the military. Hence it could always achieve its intentions, even when they were not procedural. Mugabe made substantive dismissals and sacked top officers who censured the ZANU-PF cause, especially on the land issue. According to the UK *Telegraph* 2 March 2001, the government of Robert Mugabe forcefully sacked Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay and replaced him with the Judge President Godfrey Chidyausiku. Chief Justice Gubbay was 68 years of age and not yet due for retirement. Blair states that Chief Justice Gubbay came to work the following morning, after receiving instructions that he had been sacked, but he had to return home as security guards would not allow him to enter the premises. He had fallen out of favour when he presided over a Supreme Court case concerning the land issue and sided with the White farmers' claim to remain on the land. He infuriated the government by "striking down Mr. Mugabe's "fast track land seizures". Lawyers believe that the judge has fallen victim to a political vendetta being pursued regardless of the law" (*The Telegraph*, 2 March 2001).

Thus, the Executive removed the White Chief Justice in order to make way for Judge President Chidyausiku who sided with the plan of appropriating farms from the White farmers and redistributing them to the Black landless peasants.

### 3.2.5.3 *Constitutional Change*

In 2000 the state lost its bid to replace the Lancaster House Constitution. A new Constitution was formulated and passed in 2013 which created the Constitutional Court to uphold the Supreme Law. By that period the opposition party (MDC-T) was very active and instrumental to mobilise the creation of that new Constitution of the country. Thus, there was demand for a vote of no confidence when the citizens demanded judicial reforms citing political abuse of the courts especially in the hearing of contested election results. Unfortunately, Tsvangirai of the opposition never got a proper response from the courts in regard to his contestation.

#### 3.2.5.4 *Selective justice: No confidence in the system*

Over a long period of time, as the Executive-Military Alliance consolidated itself into the governance of the country, there was more and more interference with the justice system and citizens were at a loss as to where to turn. On 8 November 2008 Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that ZANU-PF continually and systematically compromised the independence and impartiality of Zimbabwe's judiciary and public prosecutors as well as instil a one-sided partisanship into the Police. For instance, the HRW reported a police officer in Chegutu, Mashonaland West Province in June 2008 declining to investigate a political violence complaint against ZANU-PF: "Our hands are tied. We cannot do anything where ZANU-PF is involved. However, if your case was not political we could have helped you – all political violence matters are off limits for the police". There were many similar accounts where victims went to report to the police and perpetrators were never prosecuted and if they were prosecuted the courts declined to try them or simply acquitted the accused if they were ZANU-PF supporters. Thus, top ZANU-PF members and their militia seemed to be above the law and immune from the courts whenever they committed acts of violence against members of the opposition or ordinary citizens.

Section 3.3.4 of this chapter discusses in detail several cases of political violence and cruelty done to opposition members by the ZANU-PF party. Such cases also illustrate incidents of selective justice in order to affirm the injustice of the executive-military alliance visited upon the citizens of Zimbabwe. This alliance had impact on the whole spectrum of people's lives in Zimbabwe, ranging from the social, political, cultural, economic, gender and other areas of people's experience. At this juncture a few examples will suffice to illustrate part of the impact that this alliance had on Zimbabwean society.

The traditional social structures of villages, with headmen, and a chief looking after his tribal population were kept, but new elements were introduced. The introduction of local government in both rural and urban areas was aimed at replacing the colonial structures that were skewed in favour of the colonial regime. This was meant to allow the participation of all citizens in the issues that touched their social lives. Local government provided the needed services utilised by individuals such as waste disposal, public transport, water, schools, health facilities and other social services. At independence in 1980 the Zimbabwean government implemented wide-ranging

reforms, removing restrictions based on race, including participation of all races in elections and redistributing resources (Alexander and McGregor, 2013).

The introduction of modern local government structures at independence, such as councillors, enabled government to monitor both rural and urban councils for loyalty. These new councillors were meant to run concurrently with the traditional village heads. The councillor was a political representative while a village head was considered a traditional leader. By installing councillors the “executive-military alliance” ensured its grip and influence on the grassroots and the ordinary citizens in the rural areas who make up the majority of citizens in Zimbabwe.

### **3.2.6 The impact on the EMA on the economic sphere**

#### *3.2.6.1 First decade*

At independence in 1980 the state inherited a strong economy from Ian Smith, who managed to keep the economy going, despite the challenges of sanctions from Britain and other European countries. For the first decade the country therefore enjoyed the fruits of the stable economy supported by white farmers and industrialists.

#### *3.2.6.2 Second decade*

The second decade was characterised by a severe drought (1992); Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) from 1991 to 1995; the plight of workers; and war veteran gratuities as sources of corruption. The ruling party used drought to give its supporters food packages which it received from donor countries instead of distributing it to all the people. War veteran gratuities further drained the ailing economy and opened avenues of corruption from the ruling party cadres who distributed gratuities.

The impact of this economic downturn on the people was devastating as it plunged them into real suffering and abject poverty. This excruciating impact eventually led to the meltdown of the Zimbabwe Dollar. The ZANU-PF government once again used drought relief to reward its supporters and did not distribute any to its opponents, especially the MDC supporters. In a *Bulawayo 24 News* of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013, ZANU-PF MPs used drought relief in Matobo district to punish MDC supporters by politicising the distribution of food.

According to the Zimbabwe Peace Project (2015), many villagers in all the provinces were facing serious hunger because of shortage of food, but the government was politicising food aid. There were poor rains and people were desperate for food, but unfortunately the food given was distributed along political lines because provincial governors and the district administrators were ZANU-PF political appointees. Being the ruling party, ZANU-PF manipulated the food for political advantage. Thus, while food is a human right and the donors that provided the food wanted it distributed to all needy people, the government chose to politicise the food and give it to its supporters only. There are many documented accounts of this nature in regard to food distribution throughout the country. Particularly Human Rights groups and non-governmental organisations documented such inhuman practices by the ruling party.

Another area of negative impact was in the developmental projects proposed by donors or by government itself. ZANU-PF often misused the allocation of projects meant for all people by allocating them to their supporters, either for vote-buying or as awards for supporting those elected into positions of power. Normally the projects would never be implemented, as the resources would not have been allocated to the intended beneficiaries. A glaring example was the allocation of state tractors meant for specific areas that instead were re-allocated by Grace Mugabe, the first lady, who was not in the structures of government, to her political supporters. Veneranda Langa reported to *News Day* on 22 October 2015 that “opposition MPs wanted to know who had given Grace the authority to donate the equipment, which was sourced by the government from Brazil under a \$98 million loan deal”.

### 3.2.6.3 *Third decade: Violation of property rights*

The third decade of independence was characterised by violation of property rights, particularly against the whites who owned much property, including land. When ZANU-PF realised that it was becoming unpopular amongst workers and trade unions, Mugabe encouraged war veterans to occupy and seize white-owned farms so as to redistribute the land to the landless black people. Thus, most white-owned farms were invaded and taken by force, thereby violating property rights of those who had bought their land and other properties like factories and mines. Many of those black farmers given the land failed to produce, causing the land to be devalued (Zunga 2003:83), which caused the economy to deteriorate further.



#### 3.2.6.4 *Fourth decade: State failure*

In the fourth decade of independence, the failure of the state to manage its economy continued unabated, going from bad to worse. The situation was characterised by haphazard appointments of military personnel into civilian roles, as already indicated, a move that did not assist the ailing economy. In fact, hyperinflation attained its highest levels so that the Zimbabwe dollar became worthless. There was a serious shortage of commodities and many citizens reacted by leaving the country into the diaspora for better opportunities to support their families. In the process there was a massive brain drain of specialised people who went to render their services to other countries because Zimbabwe's economy had collapsed.

There was a temporary improvement of the economy after the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009. The two parties, ZANU-PF and MDC, worked together for the next five years. It was during this period that Tsvangirai went to visit President Obama of the United States of America and requested permission for the hard currency of US dollars to be used in Zimbabwe in order to resuscitate its economy. During that period the economy of Zimbabwe was stable, but it came to an end when ZANU-PF claimed to have won general election of 31 July 2013, which caused a new round of economic instability.

#### 3.2.6.5 *The economy in the post-GNU period*

When the GNU period ended in 2013, people once more saw a progressive decline in the country's economy. The introduction of the multicurrency regime was viable only for a short period and this situation resulted in varying prices of the same commodity, depending on which currency one used to purchase the item. This situation was worsened by the introduction of Zimbabwe bond coins and bond notes. Thus, the multicurrency regime failed to sustain the economic positives of the GNU period as the government desperately struggled to initiate changes to correct the ever-declining situation, which resulted in a cash crisis throughout the country.

A third area with adverse economic impact on the people came from multiple malpractices such as corruption, amassing of multiple farms by ZANU-PF leaders (which they did not utilise), non-transparent dealings of acquiring diamond mines and other minerals to the detriment of the

country, nepotism in appointments of key government positions and other clandestine dealings. Already in 2003, the cabinet knew that some ZANU-PF cadres owned multiple farms, but did not rectify the situation. An article in *The Zimbabwean* of 16 October 2009 reported that

the extent of multiple ownership of commercial farms by senior ZANU- PF officials in cabinet and armed forces are revealed in minutes of government meetings about the land reform and resettlement programme national audit, conducted in 2002/3 and chaired by the late vice-president Joseph Msika.

More recently, the *Daily News* reported that the current President Mnangagwa is doing cheap politics when he tells the nation that he is still waiting for information to determine whether President Mugabe owned more than fifteen farms, since Mnangagwa knows very well that many ZANU- PF leaders own multiple farms (*Daily News* 31 August 2018).

According to Didymus Mutasa, an expelled former ZANU-PF guru, the vice president in 2015, Emmerson Mnangagwa, colluded with the army and a Chinese mining company, Anjin Investments, to steal diamonds from Marange (*The Zimbabwean*, 31.3.2015). In addition, President Mugabe himself and some army personnel were involved in the racket of looting the proceeds of the various diamond mines of the country (*Daily News*, 27 June 2018). Such looting clearly did not assist the economy of the country; instead it only enriched a few, while the country was drained of much needed capital for its development. Therefore, the ordinary people continued to suffer while the ruling party leaders clandestinely acquired the wealth of the country.

Regarding nepotism, Blessing Mashaya argued that Mugabe set a bad precedent by appointing his relatives and in-laws to government posts, parastatals and other key posts, as that provided fertile ground for subsequent corruption in government circles and eventually the whole country (*Daily News*, 30 December 2016).

The improvement of the economy during the inclusive government was short lived and the situation in country deteriorated steadily as the impact of the executive-military alliance became more and more stringent. Chamburuka (2019) confirms the unprecedented tumult that engulfed the country both before and after the GNU. She described the situation as desperate for many:

[I]t include the worst hyper-inflation, severe poverty and unprecedented political woes that include abduction, torture, intimidation, victimisation, selective application of the rule of law and murder of alleged members of the opposition MDC (Chamburuka, 2019).

All these had very negative effects on the whole economy with the result that the economy collapsed and people suffered. Most of those dealings were perpetrated by the executive arm, in league with high-ranking military personnel, hence reinforcing their alliance in perpetuating their stay in power.

### 3.2.7 Civil Society

The executive military alliance did not only have a negative impact on the economy of the country; it was also oppressive to the civil society and the population of the country at large. Civil society is multifaceted in Zimbabwe, including the Press, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Churches, Artists and Sport. The bad governance of the executive-military alliance was felt in all these areas of people's lives. A brief survey of each area will make clear how political violence impacted civil society.

#### 3.2.7.1 *The Press*

As already mentioned (3.1.4.4), the state restricted the press through oppressive legislation such as AIPPA and other oppressive laws to curtail the freedom of the press. Further there were threats against journalists, both local and foreign, to the extent that some local journalists were arrested while some foreign ones were expelled from the country. Several local journalists, including Jestina Mukoko, Eric Knight and Raymond Choto went into exile (*Bulawayo 24 newspaper*, 18 November 2013). Some are presently working for the Voice of America's Studio 7, funded by the American government.

#### 3.2.7.2 *NGOs*

NGOs too were harassed by the Mugabe government. They were subjected to state security surveillance and suspected of sympathising with the opposition parties. Some NGOs openly condemned government human rights violations and for that they were accused of supporting the opposition. Ian Black and Chris McGreal, in an article entitled "Mugabe suspends foreign aid agencies' work in Zimbabwe" reported that the Zimbabwe government banned all work by foreign

aid agencies. The government accused the agencies for campaigning for the opposition party during the country's disputed presidential election (*The Guardian*, 6 June 2008). Thus, government increased its threats and intimidation against NGOs for their humanitarian operations, accusing them of supporting opposition parties and seeking regime change.

### 3.2.7.3 *Churches*

The Zimbabwe Catholic Church as well as the Heads of Christian Denominations have regularly written pastoral letters in which they made constructive criticisms of worsening government policies. It was the Pastoral letter "God hears the cry of the oppressed" on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2007 which was read in all Catholic Churches and parishes that really angered Mugabe. The letter, which was supported by other Christian groups and churches, "accused Mugabe of bringing about the country's socio-economic and human rights crises through bad governance and a lack of moral leadership" (ZCBC, 2007). Mugabe retorted vehemently, describing the letter as "political nonsense" and threatening the bishops: "This is an area we warn them not to tread" (Chaya 2007). On the other hand, Mugabe's fiercest critic, Archbishop Pius Ncube stated: "He [Mugabe] does not apply his faith to his political governance of the country. He totally ignores it". There were other incidents when the executive-military alliance threatened the Bishops, or arrested priests and church-goers to intimidate them from criticising the bad governance which brought so much suffering to the people. Thus, some churches were also gradually viewed as being critical of the state regarding human rights issues.

### 3.2.7.4 *Artists*

The executive-military alliance did not spare its repression even on artists in Zimbabwe. A number of artists fled the tyranny of the government. One example is Thomas Mapfumo, whose music was continually viewed as anti-government, and who went into exile in 2004 (*Public Radio International*, 21 November 2017). Mapfumo has consistently sung against oppression since colonial times and he has continued to conscientise the people against state oppression, even after independence. That led the state to ban his music.

### 3.2.7.5 *Sport*

Many developed societies can measure their wellbeing and use of leisure time through their participation in sport. While Zimbabwe performed well just after independence as their sports

teams inherited sound leadership in coaching and directing sports, that euphoria soon came to an end. When independent Zimbabwe appeared for the first time at the Olympic Games in Russia, the women hockey team obtained the gold medal and there was great jubilation in the country. Then Zimbabwe was chosen to host the All Africa Games in 1995. Swimming pools were constructed, soccer stadiums improved and new ones constructed. But after the All Africa Games, many facilities were neglected to a dilapidated state and government never supported the various sports activities despite putting sports under the Minister of Education Sport and Culture. Ndamu Sandu, in a newspaper article “Neglected sports facilities fall apart” lamented that sports facilities were neglected by government: “Multi-million dollar sports facilities built for the 6<sup>th</sup> All Africa Games hosted by Zimbabwe in 1995 are lying derelict and neglected...” (*The Standard*, 9 May 2003).

Although the Minister of Education, Sports and Culture during the GNU government, David Coltart, supported the demonstration of cricket players Andy Flowers and Henry Olonga, who wore black armbands to protest “the death of sports in Zimbabwe”, the minister still expressed the view that sports should be utilised to achieve reconciliation amongst people. The demonstration by players was intended to reveal that government was not committed to sport, despite its nice words about it (Coltart 2011).

### **3.3 Postcolonial Political Violence**

Having explored the impact of the executive-military alliance on Zimbabwean society as the underlying background to post-independence political violence in Zimbabwe, the rest of this chapter analyses the violence of the fifth wave by asking the five questions stated in the Introduction to this chapter: a) What were the “fault lines” running through society at the time? b) Who were the parties involved? c) What was the nature of the conflict? d) What were the effects of the violence? e) Were any attempts made at reconciliation?

The fifth wave of violence spans from 1999 to 2018. Within this phase are segments of stressful and painful violent episodes perpetrated by the government on its own citizens, particularly during election periods. The state turned on its citizens and perpetrated violence for the sake of holding on to power (Sachikonye 2011) and that state-sponsored violence erupted in election campaigns and in the programme of fast-track land reform that began in 2000.

The context of violence was aggravated by the fear of the ZANU-PF government that saw its support base gradually diminishing, especially in urban areas where the workers were increasingly dissatisfied by government's performance. The government had been in office since independence in 1980 and by 2002 general fatigue among the populace was increasingly setting in. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) of the 1990s, introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as major international financial institutions in economic globalisation, were clearly an inappropriate economic policy for Zimbabwe. Thousands of workers were laid off from many companies and therefore many breadwinners became unemployed over a short period of time. While the intended results of the structural adjustment programme were to improve the economy, the per capita income for most working families diminished. In addition, government was expected to retrench 25 percent of its civil servants during the implementation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme of 1992, which had serious negative effects on a large number of families (Marabuka 2013).

### **3.3.1 Fault lines underlying tensions in the fifth wave**

Before actual violence erupted in the fifth wave there were a number of factors that contributed to the "fault lines" that eventually led to violence between the contending parties. After independence the government promised many developments and raised the hope of uplifting the lives of citizens from the level of colonial times – when the majority of people were systemically excluded – to the levels of a developing nation where the majority would enjoy better lives than their forebears. But sadly, these expectations were far from being realised. As the working class assessed the changes in their level of income and status around 2000, surveying the twenty years since independence, the euphoria of liberation had waned and the hard realities of unemployment or decreasing income hit home, challenging the promises of a better life in post-colonial times.

#### *3.3.1.1 Unfulfilled expectations*

The principal glaring fault line was that of pronounced "unfulfilled expectations" of various categories of workers like civil servants, miners, farm labourers, domestic workers and others as well as non-working class such as peasants. One could argue that the fundamental fault line in the fifth phase of violence is due to unfulfilled expectations that had been created and raised by the coming of independence. Although the laws had given workers opportunity to form the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) so as to protect themselves and for the first time have power

to bargain for their salaries with their employers, that opportunity also gave workers a vision for a better life for themselves and their families. They no longer depended on the whimsical decisions of the employers of hiring and firing at will, like in the colonial period. Thus, the expectations and demands made by workers gave them hope and confidence of better lives in the country. While the government at first stood with workers' demands and protected them against companies mostly run by Whites, the companies' profits were affected as they had to pay higher salaries and this was part of the beginning of the decline of many industries. The practice of "cheap labour" was no longer tenable in Zimbabwe as it was in the colonial period. Some of those industries scaled down and eventually stopped operations. Hence the high hopes the workers had for themselves in working for those companies were not coming to fruition; instead, their demands became the reasons for companies to close down and therefore resulted in workers' expectations being unfulfilled. As articulated by Bourne (2011), "The decline and fall of Zimbabwe is a modern morality tale. The hopes of 1980 turned into despair in scarcely two decades."

When the Trade Unions led by Morgan Tsvangirai also pressed for higher wages for civil servants the government felt under pressure and threatened. Fearing legal implications as well as the condemnation of the outside world, the government did not want to clamp down on the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), instead the government was instrumental in dividing the ZCTU. The government claimed that ZCTU was misleading workers and making their demands into a political campaign for their president, yet it was clear that Morgan Tsvangirai was fighting for the rights of all workers across the board. As reported by *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 3 April 1998, the government succeeded in dividing the ZCTU by supporting a splinter group:

Wary of the legal and political implications of banning the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, the government has resorted instead to sponsoring and strengthening a splinter trade union federation... The splinter union, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), has recently been attacking the ZCTU accusing it of fraternising with the White community in remarks identical to the position the government has adopted.

Contrary to the accusation of government the demands of workers clearly expressed their anxiety and dissatisfaction with their unfulfilled expectations. The promises made at independence were

not being realised and therefore created a lot of frustration with many workers across the board, hence the stand-off by workers.

### 3.3.1.2 *Mugabe's political authoritarianism*

As stated above, the over-arching political framework that came into operation reflected the executive-military alliance that controlled and governed the country. Thus, Mugabe became an authoritarian leader who managed to control and determine all aspects of people's lives. Because of that power he could force his decisions on the systems that operated in the country. Although there was a massive drive for education in Zimbabwe, bad authoritative economic decisions did not help the country to develop. Thus, with improved education in Zimbabwe people hoped to embrace the much envied life-style of the developed world of western countries, but unfortunately this vision was never realised. It has been argued by Sutcliffe that there are mainly two factors from which the fault line of unfulfilled expectations emanates. First is the political authoritarianism of Mugabe's government, which interfered directly with economic policies that would have helped develop the country:

Equally, the regime's incoherent and frequently capricious economic policies over the three decades since independence have been roundly condemned as precipitating Zimbabwe's economic decline (Sutcliffe 2013).

In response to this authoritarianism and bad economic policies, which hurt workers as well as citizens in general, ZCTU called for industrial actions several times to make government aware of their displeasure. According to Joseph Winter, reporting to BBC on 20 March 2000, a number of strikes were called by ZCTU including a two-day anti-tax strike in March 1998, a one-day strike against price hikes in November 1999, a two-day strike against fuel prices in July 2001 and a one-day anti-lawlessness protest in August 2001. Unions for teachers and nurses called their followers to go on strike to demand sustainable wages (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 28 February 2008). According to Majongwe, reporting to *Deutsche Press*, 7 September 2008, "The country's estimated 70,000 qualified teachers earned about 937 Zimbabwe dollars a month, the equivalent of about 4 UD dollars", and that pushed the teachers to launch another strike. Not only were public government hospitals paralysed by the strikes of doctors and nurses but the strike of 2008 lasted several months and many patients lost their lives while waiting for medical care in public hospitals.



*The Voice of America News* (VOA) reported on 25 February 2009 that doctors and nurses went back to work after several months, with the hope that the new Government of national Unity was going to address their salaries concerns. These few examples illustrate the basic fault line that caused the frustration of workers across the board and the *raison d'être* for their strikes.

### *3.3.1.3 The neoliberal policy of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)*

The second factor, which reinforced the unfulfilled expectations and which was responsible for the privation of the Zimbabwean people was the neoliberal economic policies imposed on the African continent by the developed countries:

Privatisation, de-regulation, the shrinking of the state and punitive actions against state 'roguery' have created much hardship across Africa, and these neoliberal reforms have arguably entrenched the continent's economic inferiority whilst ensuring continued enrichment for northern and southern elites (Sutcliffe 2013).

Neoliberalism refers mainly to the 20<sup>th</sup> century resurgence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas associated with laissez-faire economic liberalism. Such Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) or policies have appeared to be democratic yet are socially constructed to favour the rich to the detriment of ordinary people. In this context the government of Zimbabwe, like other African countries, embraced ESAP in order to obtain loans from the western countries, to the detriment of its citizens. Thus, the combination of "unfulfilled expectations" of citizens and neoliberalism was a recipe for economic disaster for Zimbabwe and added to the tensions between the government and its citizens.

The tension between government and urban workers, civil servants, mine workers, farm workers as well as the general rural population became pronounced during the fifth phase. The reaction of the workers in demanding higher salaries became the order of the day. More and more people were agitated as they realised that the promises made by government were far from being fulfilled.

### *3.3.1.4 Military personnel appointed to strategic institutions by government*

With the situation described above, the government reacted but its reaction only aggravated and intensified the atmosphere for violence. The ZANU-PF government decided to implement the appointment of military personnel to strategic institutions and parastatals of the country,

supposedly to improve the economic situation. Mugabe defended the appointment of retired Air Commodore Mike Karakadzai as General Manager of National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) in 2005 and ZANU-PF declared him a national hero at his death. That retired military officer did not produce the intended results, but Mugabe “blamed sanctions for stifling progress” when Karakadzai was at the helm of NRZ (*The Zimbabwean*, 25 August 2013). Many more appointments from military leadership continued to be made into civilian structures in order to consolidate the power of the executive in its governance.

According to Tendi (2013), since 2002 many Zimbabwean politicians have said that the Joint Operations Command (JOC), comprising the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) and heads of the army, prisons, police, air force and intelligence, pose a threat to civilian authority since they are assigned to those civilian duties by government. Further, Moyo (2016) wrote an article on the expanded involvement of the military in the political economy of Zimbabwe in the context of “military commercialism”. He argues that those military personnel have little or no background to macroeconomic policies in the state enterprises they are appointed to lead and thus cannot deliver the required results. Hence their involvement further impoverishes the people.

As the economy worsened into hyperinflationary mode because of poor economic policies and an unplanned land reform programme which disbanded agricultural produce – especially tobacco, which earned a third of the country’s foreign currency – government further abetted inflation by printing money. Thus, the appointment of military personnel did not yield the intended results of improving the economy; instead, the economy worsened so much that government introduced bearer cheques with such high denominations as a Z\$100 trillion dollars note, which was practically worthless. According to the *News Day*, 23 November 2010, the Bearer’s Cheque was a major tourist attraction and some visitors could not believe that they would become trillionaires once they spent a little foreign exchange.

### 3.3.1.5 *Widening gap between the rich and the poor*

Adding to the tension of the fault line between government and the people discussed above, there was the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Clemens and Moss (2005) perceive that the whole population’s economic status was taken back to the level of 1953, when the average yearly income was \$760.00 per annum. The effect of that gap was that only a few continued to have

unlimited access to amenities of life such as clean water, food, health facilities, education and proper shelter, while the majority were left to suffer. Clemens and Moss (2005) estimated that if the crisis persisted, its shock would cost the lives of at least 3,900 Zimbabwean children per year.

In fact, while top government personnel could afford to secure medical treatment outside the country, the rest of the citizens were crowded into hospitals and clinics which had very little medical supplies. On the other hand, since 2008 there were constant “stay away” demonstrations by teachers, who either did not turn up for work or came to schools but did not work as a move to have government increase their poor salaries. Further, Stephen Bevan reported in *The Telegraph*, 18 November 2007 that 25,000 teachers, a quarter of the total needed, then left the country for greener pastures. This means that the children of many schools suffered for lack of proper education and the impact added to the gap between the rich and the poor. The rich could afford to hire teachers for their children or even send them outside the country to study, while the majority suffered the effects of a lack of teachers.

A survey carried out by the Progressive Teachers’ Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), who interviewed a random sample of 1200 teachers from across the country, with a particular focus on rural areas where the majority of teachers suffered the most political violence since 2000, highlighted the government’s negative attitude towards its own civil servants such as teachers. According to Peter Marimudza, reporting to Relief Web International in 2012, “More than half of Zimbabwe’s teachers have at one point during the past decade experienced some form of political violence including being threatened, beaten up, tortured or raped, according to a new report released at the weekend.”

### **3.3.2 Parties involved in the conflict**

Several contenders can be itemised as parties to the conflict in question, such as trade unions and student bodies. During the liberation war students were known to be allies of liberation parties and thus, at independence students were generally aligned to the ruling party. Yet in the 1990s, due to increasing government corruption, students became its staunchest critics and engaged in several anti-government demonstrations. As government failed to address economic challenges, public corruption and mismanagement, students continued to play an important role in opposition politics in the 1990s and beyond (Mlambo 2014).

### 3.3.2.1 *Tension between ZANU-PF and MDC*

The formation of the MDC in 1999 changed the conflictual landscape to such an extent that the two main parties to the conflict since then have been the MDC and the ZANU-PF government. Thus, the fifth phase of violence was ushered in around 2000 by the tension between the MDC and the ZANU-PF government, which led to the government perpetrating violence against its people. The government felt threatened by the MDC, since it managed to mobilised large numbers of urban Black Zimbabweans as well as most of the Whites who opposed the oppressive rule of the government. Thus, the conflict was mainly between the ZANU-PF government and the newly created MDC party, which had a large following of workers as well as most Whites in the country. This fifth phase started when groups of war veterans invaded White commercial farms at the instigation of government, on the pretext of wanting to redistribute land to the Blacks who were landless. In the period 2002-2018 the government used the war veterans and other arms of government to unleash violence on MDC supporters and anyone else who was perceived as opposing the ZANU-PF government. The highest points of violence occurred in 2002, 2008, and 2013, before and during general elections.

In this section on the parties involved in the fifth wave of violent conflict, the research reveals the precursors that led to the formation of the MDC, which was seen by government as the main threat to its continued rule and hence the violent reaction by government, not only towards MDC as a legitimate opposition party but also to anyone who was perceived as not supporting government, including its own civil servants.

### 3.3.2.2 *Tension between Government and Workers*

Besides the MDC party, which was considered by government not only as an opposition party but as enemy, it also perceived other groupings of society as its enemies, and therefore in conflict with government. Those other parties were workers, the Press and NGOs whose mother bodies in the western countries were also accused of being enemies of the government. To all intents and purposes, whoever was opposed to the misrule of the ZANU-PF government was automatically considered an enemy and had to suffer the consequences.

Generally, workers became discontented as government seemed unable to come to their rescue. Although legislation was put in place at independence to protect workers from arbitrary dismissal

by employers, who were mostly Whites, some companies because of growing tensions with government simply relocated to other countries like Botswana or South Africa while others closed their operations, thereby forcing many workers to become unemployed. Many companies closed shop in Zimbabwe, including major ones such as Zimplats and Unki, Bindura Nickel, Spar Supermarkets, Dairibord, Cairns, Olivine Industries and Plate Glass Industries. According to *The Zimbabwe Independent* of 18 October 2013, the National Social Security Authority (NSSA) had reported 711 company closures in Harare, rendering 8,336 individuals jobless. While Tinotenda Samukange on February 21 2014 revealed in the *News Day* that 75 companies closed, rendering 9,000 people jobless, another reporter Lloyd Mbiba informed the nation on 14 April 2014 in *The Daily News* that “Hundreds of companies shut down.” In fact, the Registrar of Companies had already struck down 176 companies and was in the process of de-registering 634 companies, leaving thousands of bread winners jobless, according to the same source. These few examples demonstrate how government no longer cared for its working class, simply because it felt that the workers no longer supported the government.

Thus, tension kept on increasing between government, especially the executive, and workers. Citizens in urban and mining areas were most affected as they constituted a large percentage of formerly employed personnel, who sustained millions of families. Studies made to assess the impact of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) reveal that in the case of Zimbabwe, the adverse effects were experienced most acutely by women, children and the poor. Kanji (1995) noted that ESAP was hardly successful, even when using the narrow economic criteria of the international finance institutions and the government. Kawese and Dibia (2000) add that:

These economic reforms inflate poverty, decrease the country's capability to develop a strong diversified domestic economy, increase the exploitation of workers through deregulation accompanied by environmental degradation. ESAPs' devastation of the poor translates into recurrences of socioeconomic crises that threaten peace and social justice.

It was not the towns, cities and mines alone that experienced growing tensions with the government; even the rural folk which constituted the majority of supporters of government began to feel the pinch of the unemployment of their sons and daughters in the cities. Hence the financial

support which used to come from their children was dwindling at an alarming rate. The support of parents and extended families in the rural areas for government began to erode as the effects of the deteriorating economy hit not only their children in towns but also the families in the rural areas. An added adverse context to this tension in the rural areas were the continued droughts that hit the country year after year and therefore people suffered in more ways than just lack of money. Food and other provisions were in short supply because of droughts and the closing of companies that used to produce needed products. Severe droughts were experienced in 1991, 1992 and 1995 while ESAP was introduced in 1991 and fully implemented in 1992. Shah (2008) says that between 1991 and the year 2001, Zimbabwe's GDP declined culminating in a negative growth of -11.5%. Further Shah informs that in 1995, some 62% of the population were living in poverty.

Although the government moved in to give free food to people in the rural areas, the distribution of the food right from the start was selective. Chiefs, village heads, councillors and all rural leaders seemed to have been instructed to give food only to those who supported the government. Thus, some families went without food hand-outs because they were seen as not supportive enough to the government. Jealousy and misuse of leadership posts became rampant as sometimes certain families were not given food simply because of other social reasons rather than political ones. With all these tensions the context of violence started brewing both in cities and rural areas.

When government popularity was increasingly waning towards the elections of 2002 the government resumed the bone of contention in regard to the land redistribution exercise, which had been left dormant since independence in 1980. There had been the policy of "willing buyer, willing seller" in respect of redistributing land to the landless Black majority who were squeezed into arid and semi-arid areas called "African Reserved land", a policy inherited from the British colonial period which was reinforced by the white minority government of Ian Smith after UDI from Britain in 1965.

After independence in 1980, a new law was swiftly passed by parliament which gave power to government to acquire land from White commercial farmers and redistribute it to the landless majority. The government took the position that the funds that had earlier been promised by Britain in the Lancaster House Agreement should be used to compensate White farmers whose land the government was going to redistribute. However, when Tony Blair was the prime minister of Great

Britain from 1997 to 2007 he stopped those funds from being used in Zimbabwe, since it had a bad human rights record, due to the *Gukurahundi* atrocities in Matabeleland after independence.

The government then utilised war veterans and its various agencies to occupy and take possession of White commercial farms and force White farmers off the land. A number of farmers who resisted were killed by war veterans and settlers, but government took no action against the killers. *The Guardian* of 18 March 2002 reported that “Terry Ford became the 10<sup>th</sup> White farmer killed during a two-year campaign of intimidation and occupation of White-owned land when he was shot dead near his homestead while trying to escape an attack by settlers and war veterans.” The reason why the government took no action was that President. Mugabe had already accused the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), which consisted of mainly White farmers, of using the opposition Movement for Democratic Change as a front for its effort to maintain White economic dominance in Zimbabwe.

Thus, the idea of redistributing land provided another context of violence in Zimbabwe, through which many White farmers lost most of their properties and assets. Many farm workers, most of them from neighbouring countries like Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, lost their jobs and were stranded, unable to return to their original homes. Some of the workers belonged to second or third generations of foreign workers and had never been to the countries of origin of their parents as they were born and bred in Zimbabwe. As government did not come to their aid, claiming they were supporting the White farmers, farm workers too suffered violence and injustice from government. All these factors created a multi-dimensional context of violence, which eventually erupted in Zimbabwe and further perpetuated the endemic “culture” of violence that had become entrenched through the previous waves of conflict.

### 3.3.2.3 *Tension between Government and the Press*

This issue has already been included in the diagram explaining the overarching framework of the executive-military alliance. Andrew Meldrum, a British freelance journalist worked in Zimbabwe for 23 years (1980-2003), writing for *The Guardian* and *The Economist*, was literally thrown out of the country after state agents abducted him, put a hood over his head and forced him into a plane to Britain. After leaving Zimbabwe he has continued to write about Zimbabwe. In an article that appeared in the *Harvard International Review* on 22 December 2010, Meldrum reveals how the

Mugabe government was unwilling to free the press and only wanted the state press and media, who support his political programmes. The journalist relates how Mugabe sent state agents to bomb printing presses of non-state media houses and how he outlawed and closed five independent newspapers. One random example is the closing of the *Daily News* by the state in September 2003<sup>16</sup>.

President Mugabe also jailed scores of journalists on spurious charges. He went further to send state agents to beat, torture and murder editors, reporters, photographers and videographers and signed laws that gave the state a monopoly on all radio and television broadcasting. Meldrum says that personal emails of non-state media personnel were monitored from time to time. Mugabe did not mind when the foreign press reported on the seizure of White farms, since he wanted the world to view him as a radical African leader who got rid of the last vestiges of colonial power, represented by White farmers.

Meldrum continues: “But Mugabe did not want the press to report that he was using systematic torture and violence against Blacks opposed to his rule” (*Harvard International Review*, 22 December 2010). When Meldrum was visited by state agents, beaten and imprisoned for two days, a human rights lawyer named Beatrice Mutetwa defended him and he was acquitted. After his acquittal, he was deported from the country, as stated already. He was not the only journalist to suffer at the hands of state agents. Many courageous Black and White journalists spent nights in prison cells for their articles that exposed human rights abuses and rampant government corruption. Many of them were represented in court by Beatrice Mutetwa, including the *New York Times* correspondent, Barry Bearak, who spent several days in jail in 2007. In fact, Beatrice herself was beaten twice by the police but this did not deter her from courageously defending the agents of a free press.

#### 3.3.2.4 *Tension between Government and NGOs*

Many authors have noted that political tensions between the government and NGOs escalated already before 2000, but intensified after the general election of the same year. The government particularly accused NGOs of launching opposition political activities and used the Private

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<sup>16</sup> *The Humanitarian* 17 September 2003, of Johannesburg stated: “Amnesty International (AI) on Wednesday added its voice to a chorus of disapproval over the closure of the Daily News, Zimbabwe’s only independent daily newspaper”. (<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/214134>).



Voluntary Organisations Act, a colonial relic which gave the government power to control NGOs, to threaten or to clamp down on NGOs. Eventually the government gazetted a new NGO Bill on August 20 2004. Although its objective was ostensibly “to provide for an enabling environment for the operations, monitoring and regulation of all non-governmental organisations, and to repeal the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Act,” it is in fact “more repressive than the act which it replaces” (Human Rights Watch, 2004). This new Bill prohibited local NGOs from receiving any foreign funding for their activities, while foreign NGOs were prohibited from registering if their main purpose was to deal with issues of governance that involved human rights issues. Thus, the new Bill was worse than the one it replaced.

President Mugabe not only accused NGOs for clandestinely plotting with opposition parties to achieve “regime change” but also stubbornly used all the evil colonial tactics of oppressing anyone who advocated true democracy and respect for human rights. The tension grew because Mugabe realised he was no longer as popular as he was at independence, yet he did not want to relinquish power. He did not want to acknowledge that

groups such as the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (Zimrights), Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights are organised to promote causes, principled ideas, norms, traditions and values (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 8 March 2012).

### **3.3.3 The Nature of the Conflict**

Before analysing the nature of the conflict in Zimbabwe between 1999 and 2018, it is necessary to explain some analytical perspectives on the term “conflict”.

#### *3.3.3.1 Conflict*

Rummel (1976) states that conflict is basic to the understanding and appreciation of the reality of human action. This concept is multi-dimensional and includes a family of perspectives depending on situations. Conflict can be treated in a broad manner as a philosophical category denoting the clash of power against power in the striving of all things to become manifest. It can also be apprehended as a potentiality or a situation, a structure that manifests itself in action or event or even a process.

Rummel (1976) further explains that conflict is a balancing of vectors of power, of capabilities to produce effects. Conflict happens when there is no equilibrium between powers instead a clash of powers – a pushing and pulling, giving and taking, process of trying to find a balance between powers. Rummel (1976; Chapter 26.2) states that, “Conflict is a balancing of vectors of powers, of capabilities to produce effects, a clash of powers...Thus, power simply is the capability to produce effects and conflict is the process of powers meeting and balancing.” One can therefore argue that at the core of a conflict there is a struggle between at least two contending sides or powers or views, both of which want to succeed in manifesting itself or its goal. Thus, conflict is a result of struggles for power. Another characteristic of conflict is that it inherently involves some sense of struggle or incompatibility or perceived differences among values, goals and desires. Action in a conflict can either be overt or covert, and either side uses power to influence the outcome or effect of what the struggle is about (Wilmot and Hocker, 1998).

It is important to note that conflict can be constructive or destructive. In the case of constructive conflict, it is generally broad based and aims to be inclusive and democratic in order to find a balance that will benefit the majority of people involved. It strives for the “common good”. On the other hand, destructive conflict tends to be selfish, self-centred and intends to impose the desired goal of one party, whether it is beneficial to the majority or not. In the context of Zimbabwe, the conflict is basically a power struggle between ZANU-PF and its new challenger, the MDC party. Thus, the state struggles for control of the governing apparatus of the state, such as legislative powers and military forces (Britannica, online). Such a struggle can be driven by an ideologically defined revolutionary movement for decolonisation or by a selfish desire to retain power and control of the state, whether people like it or not. The examples that follow illustrate the desperate attempts by ZANU-PF to destroy the MDC party and other perceived enemies in order to retain control of power and continue to rule the country. The nature of conflict will be multifaceted, as already stated, but I have highlighted a few facets to indicate that the conflict in Zimbabwe can only be described as destructive.

The growing tension between the ruling party ZANU-PF, government and government agents on the one hand and MDC party, supported mostly by workers, on the other hand eventually resulted in real conflict between the two parties. The nature of the conflict took various forms, implemented mostly by government with a sadly corresponding reaction from the opposition party or those

against whom the violence was perpetrated. To illustrate the nature of the conflict experienced by the people it is relevant to discuss the actual methods that were utilised to inflict violence and pain upon those perceived to oppose the government and also the methods employed by the opposition when they decided to retaliate against such acts of violence.

### 3.3.3.2 *The struggle for power and control*

The nature of the conflict between the government and its opponents displayed itself in varied ways, but basically it was a struggle for power and for control of the state. As the government of Robert Mugabe felt threatened and feared to be removed from power, it tried to consolidate itself by force and eventually used violence in all its forms. While those who opposed government advocated true justice, peace, reforms of draconian laws and adherence to the rule of law in order to uphold human dignity of every citizen, the government and its agents continued to force its rule upon the people. This culminated in antagonism and direct violence upon all those deemed to be opponents of government.

There was conflict between the ruling ZANU-PF party and new emerging political parties who offered alternative agendas for running the country. In the run-up to the elections of 30 July 2018 there were 133 political parties that wished to contest the election, but eventually only 23 were able to register. According to *My Zimbabwe News*, 30 May 2018, the political parties included the African People's Congress, Zimbabwe First Party, Zimbabwe African People's Union, National Alliance for Good Governance, Patriotic Union of MaNdebeleland, the African Democrats, the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai (MDC-T), National Democratic Congress among others. The strongest contender to oust the ruling ZANU-PF party was the MDC Alliance led by Nelson Chamisa. In this category the conflict centred on the struggle for power and control of the state, which is mainly a political conflict.

### 3.3.3.3 *The struggle for workers' rights*

The second category of parties involved in conflict with the government was the workers of Zimbabwe. These workers were mostly represented by various trade unions and the conflict centred on remuneration and benefits of workers which the government was unable to fulfil, hence the conflict. A sub-category within workers unions is between workers and other independent employers who are not part of government structures. The unions included the Zimbabwe

Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) which is the largest and became the biggest threat to government in the ensuing conflict between government and workers. There are over twenty Trade Unions in Zimbabwe listed by Garikai Dzoma (*Revision Online*, 24 May 2017).<sup>17</sup> Although the government had approved legislation for the protection of workers in these various Unions the government itself failed to uphold the rights of its own civil servants with regard to their salaries and benefits. Thus, the main contention of the workers who were in conflict with government had to do with restrictive labour legislation that forced companies to close and with inadequate salaries and benefits of civil servants.

#### 3.3.3.4 *The struggle for media freedom*

The third category of parties in conflict with government is the various media houses and journalists. Government perceived many independent journalists as being too critical and supporting opposition parties, whereas media houses saw it as their responsibility to report the abuses, corruption and crimes perpetrated by government agents against the citizens. The media sector is determined to foster the principles of good governance through investigative journalism but the government would not allow them to play that watchdog role and to blow the whistle on corruption. This conflict played itself out by government using its legislative power to pass laws that curtail media freedom and by arresting and harassing journalists, while journalists use the power of communication as effectively as possible to protest restrictive legislation and to use the spaces that do exist to expose corruption and power abuse.

#### 3.3.3.5 *The struggle for a vibrant civil society*

The fourth category of parties in conflict with government comprises NGOs and their western allies and funders. The government accused them of having a “regime change” agenda of toppling the ruling ZANU-PF party and replacing it with the MDC. According to the Information Cradle Website, there are over 350 international and local NGOs in Zimbabwe, most of which fund health projects. There are also some NGOs that fund programmes to help ordinary citizens in times of

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<sup>17</sup> Some influential trade unions are Zimbabwe Pulp & Paper Workers’ Union, Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers’ Union (ZDAWU), Zimbabwe Chemicals & Plastics Allied Workers’ Union, Zimbabwe Textile Workers Union, Zimbabwe Tobacco Industrial Workers Union, Zimbabwe Educational Scientific, Social & Cultural Workers’ Union (ZESSCWU), Zimbabwe Catering & Hotel Workers’ Union (ZCHWU), Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), Zimbabwe Construction and Allied Trades Workers’ Union, Zimbabwe Urban Councils Workers’ Union (ZUCWU) and a litany of others.

drought or floods and initiate projects to absorb some of the many unemployed workers. Both NGOs and some of the western countries fund projects that intend to uplift human rights, human dignity and freedoms of all citizens of Zimbabwe. Because of the abuses perpetrated by government agents there was bound to be conflict between government and these NGOs supported by western countries.

### 3.3.3.6 *Antagonism*

Two features stand out when one surveys the nature of the conflict taking place across the five fault lines identified above: Antagonism and violence. The nature of the conflict

*The Telegraph*, 18 April 2010 reported that Costa Pafitis, former Press Secretary of Prime Minister Ian Smith, was requested by President Mugabe to continue working in that job in independent Zimbabwe. Pafitis had hoped that Mugabe, after giving his first speech reflecting a spirit of reconciliation, would lead Zimbabwe to develop as a democratic country. However, before long Pafitis realised that there was underlying antagonism between Mugabe and his opponents in ZAPU. When Mugabe ordered the murder of 20,000 Ndebele people Pafitis regrets that “Yet even this did not set the alarm bells ringing elsewhere. Prospering White farmers turned a blind eye and it was not until Zimbabwe’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary approached that its descent into real chaos began.”

Pafitis realised that the antagonism of Mugabe was yet to turn against the very same White farmers to whom the hand of reconciliation had been extended at independence. He says that a lot of White farmers came to regret their public support of the MDC because the antagonism was turned against them as Mugabe ordered the chaotic land invasions and dispossessed the Whites of their land. Besides antagonism towards the Whites, Mugabe did not hide his antagonism towards the MDC party and especially its leader Morgan Tsvangirai. The state tried all tricks to frame Tsvangirai and accuse him of treason. Even when Mugabe met with the business community who tried to persuade him to have reforms in his economic policies so that the country could attract foreign investment, the aging president did not hide his stubborn antagonism towards foreign investors. *The Source* newspaper of 7 September 2017 says, “But, at what was his first meeting with business leaders in a decade, Mugabe... gave no signals that he was willing to change course, lecturing the leaders on their pleas for foreign direct investment and once again railing against foreign

ownership of business.” In fact, anyone or any group of people who showed some opposition to Mugabe was at the risk of suffering antagonism in one way or other.

#### *3.3.3.7 Direct and indirect violence*

The nature of conflict between government and what it considered its opponents was not limited to antagonism but was expressed as both direct and indirect violence towards those same opponents. The multifaceted methods of violence used by the conflicting parties, but mostly by government, included abductions, physical violence like torture, beatings, forced hunger, electric shocks, submersion under water and murders. Another category was that of sexual abuse, rape, emotional trauma, psychological torture and emotional torture. Victims also suffered financial and material losses, neglect or denial of medical services, abuse of spouses or relatives, burning of homes or granaries and above all loss of personal dignity and human respect. According to Kudenga, reporting to the *Zimbabwean* of 21 July 2017, Mugabe is responsible for “nearly 50,000 deaths in Zimbabwe – both during the Gukurahundi and 2000s era.” This is obviously not including those who were maimed for life, abducted, tortured, sexually abused, or had their homes razed.

#### **3.3.4 Effects of the Conflict between Government and Its Opponents**

As stated above, the nature of conflict between government and its perceived opponents took a variety of forms, so did the effects of that conflict. Although this section analyses the effects of the conflict, the discussion cannot be exhaustive because these effects are as many as the multifaceted violent acts that were perpetrated. The research has already acknowledged that the nature of conflict took a number of approaches. Correspondingly, the effects of each of those forms of violence had its own impact, not always the same in every case. It means the effects presented here are a summary of the varied approaches taken to carry out the violence against individuals, families, groups and communities. Chamburuka (2019) affirms that political violence in Zimbabwe caused the disintegration of families. Not only was development impeded but many citizens left the country to seek asylum in neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia and others went overseas to other continents.

#### 3.3.4.1 *Effects on media freedom*

A strongly negative effect was suffered by the citizens of Zimbabwe when government legislated the oppressive laws already referred to above. The enactments of Access to Information of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Service Act that gives monopoly of broadcasting to the government continue to limit freedoms of non-governmental media houses to investigate and publish, particularly issues that criticise government in any way. The effect of these laws was described by the International Press Institute on 29 May 2018 as being unfair as well as crippling to the development of the media field in Zimbabwe. The same source states that media freedom in Zimbabwe has another hurdle in that military personnel have been entrenched in government and over the years the army has been hostile towards freedom of expression. This observation further demonstrates the reality of the “executive-military alliance” described above. Similarly, the effects of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) gave sweeping powers to the president and the police to repress the people’s voice, having been crafted in 2002 by John Nkomo and Emmerson Mnangagwa, passed by the ZANU-PF majority parliamentarians and revised in 2007. Through this law the president consolidated his power while the police could always deny opposition parties their right to demonstrate or express their opinions in the name of “security of the state”. Thus, in general, citizens suffered the consequences of the enactment of all repressive laws in Zimbabwe.

#### 3.3.4.2 *Effects of Economic meltdown*

Another violence perpetrated against the people of Zimbabwe came from bad economic policies, corruption, ESAP and chaotic land reform, to mention a few factors. The overall effect of all these factors together was Zimbabwe’s economic meltdown. Tejvan Pettinger commented: “In 2008, Zimbabwe had the second highest incidence of hyperinflation on record. The estimated inflation rate for Nov 2008 was 79,600,000,000%” (*Economics*, 13 November 2017). Some of the causes of this hyper-inflation that are given by Pettinger include bad economic policies, high national debt, decline in economic output, price controls that exacerbate shortages, lack of confidence in government and its socio-political policies. Some of the devastating results of this economic meltdown were that people could no longer afford to purchase basic commodities including food items. There was no credit available and generally people lost their savings in banks. Business turned into barter trade, which added further damage to business confidence. By January 2009 the

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe issued its highest Bank note of 100 trillion dollars, which in fact became worthless (*The Guardian*, 14 May 2016).

This meltdown had several ripple effects. Families were unable to make ends meet and families were torn apart and sometimes destroyed in desperation to search for greener pastures in order to survive. Couples were forced to separate and go into the diaspora. For example, if the mother is a nurse she might get employment in UK and her husband, a mechanic, would go to South Africa, leaving the children alone in Zimbabwe. Because of this economic meltdown which attained a rate of inflation reaching 231 million percent in July 2008, there was massive emigration by Zimbabweans. Although it is difficult to be accurate with figures, Filippa and Cronjé (2013) say that because of inflation, compounded by acute shortages of all commodities, approximately one quarter of the population migrated from Zimbabwe. Zanamwe and Devillard (2010) concur with this statistic and Kabelo Khumalo (2017) adds that unemployment rate had risen to 94 percent by the year 2008.

In her earlier research study, Filippa (2011) acknowledges that parental absence due to diaspora is a double-edged sword. On the one hand the emigration of parents is positive as they are able to send money home to pay for their children's education and maintenance, and even support the extended family at times. This was demonstrated particularly from 2008 onwards, when there was an exodus of breadwinners to the diaspora. On the other hand, parental absence is negative, since it creates "diaspora orphans" who suddenly took upon themselves heavy responsibilities of running homes, and therefore "had feelings of anxiety, loneliness, helplessness in addition to other psychological problems..." (Filippa, 2011). Thus, one can argue that the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe had very negative effects on many families, representing a large percentage of Zimbabwean society, all emanating from the violence imposed by government due to its misrule.

Another face of the conflict in Zimbabwe was corrupt activities, which took many forms. The corrupt practices went unchecked and unpunished, starting with the leadership and flowing down to the grassroots level. It ranged from nepotism in appointments to high offices and vacancies in training institutions, to embezzlement of public funds and the erosion of the "rule of law" through a selective application of the law of the land. The closure of White-owned industries and chaotic land redistribution eventually eroded the economy of the country. In order to survive many people



were left with little choice but to engage in corrupt activities themselves. According to *The Guardian*, 12 November 2012, revenue from the Marange diamond fields was channelled into a parallel government loyal to Mugabe... Even the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority was rocked by corruption scandals in which the state lost US\$2Million, which was only revealed after the former commissioner-general Gershem Pasi was forensically audited (*The Standard*, 6 May 2018).

The resulting implosion of the Zimbabwe economy reflected this conflict, which manifested itself in general corruption that prevailed in the country already since 2002. The resulting corruption had devastating consequences for families, communities and the whole nation as nepotism and party favouritism became rife. Only those with connections with prominent members of the ruling party had access to scarce commodities. We now turn to another aspect of the nature of this conflict between ZANU-PF and MDC, which is fear and intimidation.

#### *3.3.4.3 Effects of intolerance by government leading to violence*

With the dawn of independence, the new government promised development, availability of jobs, removal of the colonial “bottle neck” educational system for Blacks and free education for all, health for all, better housing facilities, availability of water, restoration of people’s dignity and access to a whole host of human rights that had been denied to the Blacks over decades of colonial rule. Thus, people were justified to look forward to a new Zimbabwe where each citizen would have the opportunity to realise their potential and live a meaningful and fulfilled life. In fact, at independence government initiated legislation that enabled the creation of The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and supported the interests of formerly underpaid Black workers in all sectors of economy (ZCTU 1995). But, as pointed out above, with passage of time workers directed more and more of their demands to the government itself.

Government became more and more agitated by the claims for higher wages and better conditions of service made by the ZCTU, represented by its Secretary General (Morgan Tsvangirai) and President (Gibson Sibanda). Government was no longer as supportive of the workers as it had been at the initial stage. When workers asked for permission from the police to hold peaceful demonstrations, permission was not granted as easily as in the years following independence. Government reactions and responses to the demands made by employees became more and more oppressive. Government’s intolerance was apparent as other factors added to the dissatisfaction of

people with the government's performance in all socio-political sectors of their lives. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1993), parents found it difficult to continue paying school fees for their children, the health sector deteriorated as medicines were no longer as available as they had been before, the infrastructure of health facilities needed improvement, yet no improvement was done. Some mines were already struggling to remain functional and droughts put more pressure on the availability of food in the country. The roads deteriorated and no repairs were done.

Although a few opposition parties already existed, they were small and ineffective. These parties included the United African National Congress (UANC) led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) led by the former ZANU member Edgar Tekere, and Super ZAPU based in Matabeleland (Mukonori 2015:89). Yet the leaders of Trade Unions felt there needed to be a real opposition party to the ruling ZANU-PF in order to have a proper multi-party system and maintain democracy. The Trade Unions continued to exert public pressure to check the powers of the president.

This pressure culminated in the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a group of NGOs, in 1997 which then worked with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP), the Legal Resources Foundation, Zimbabwe Human Rights (ZimRights), and the ZCTU to lobby for constitutional reform which would entrench a multi-party system of democracy and also limit presidential powers. Government did not want to join this new vision of reforming the constitution, but could not ignore the momentum that those bodies exerted amongst the electorate. Therefore, government decided to pay war veterans as compensation for having fought the war of liberation, seventeen years after independence. On the other hand, the relationship of the president with the trade unions became more and more antagonistic. At the formation of the NCA its first elected chairperson was Morgan Tsvangirai, who was at that time the Secretary General of ZCTU. As the pressure mounted, Mugabe formed his own commission to draft a new constitution which would be put before the country in a referendum. In order to challenge the proposed new constitution, the ZCTU leaders mooted the idea of forming an opposition party (Maroleng, 2004).

The realisation of the need for the formation of a new party was hatched at the workers' convention that was held from 26-28 February 1999 in Harare. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions met with representatives of 30 other civic organisations to draw up a document which, among other things, called for the formation of a "vigorous alternative political movement for change". The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was officially launched in September 1999 in Rufaro Stadium in Harare by Morgan Tsvangirai, who had already been elected its first president at the workers' convention in February 1999 with Gibson Sibanda as its first secretary general. David Coltart, a White lawyer, and also a founder member of MDC, was elected secretary for legal affairs of the party. He later played an important role in defending many members of the MDC who were arrested and falsely accused of various charges by the government. He also organised the defence of Tsvangirai, when the government presented him with trumped up charges of treason on 26 February 2002 (Thornycroft, *The Telegraph*, 26 February 2002). Tsvangirai was defended by Advocate George Bizos from South Africa and two Zimbabwean advocates. The verdict came after two years, on the 26 February 2004, and was reported as follows by *The Telegraph*, 27 February 2004:

A court in Zimbabwe today found the country's opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, not guilty of treason charges that his party maintained were a government attempt to frame him. Members of the opposition cheered and clapped after Judge Paddington Garwe acquitted Mr Tsvangirai in a long-awaited judgement at Harare's high court.

The referendum on the government's new proposed constitution was held in February 2000. The MDC (through Morgan Tsvangirai) and the NCA (through Lovemore Madhuku) explained to the people that more fundamental changes were needed to the constitution in order to check the powers of the then president Robert Mugabe. To the surprise of many, the government lost the referendum, with only 44% of the voters supporting the new constitution. For the first time ever the government lost at the polling booths, which shook the government to its foundations (Slaughter and Nolan, 2000). The MDC achieved much in its short history by year 2000 (Laakso 2002) and ZANU-PF realised that the new party posed a real threat in the forthcoming parliamentary elections of 2002. What irritated the government further was that many White business persons, miners and farmers – who had remained neutral in party politics, with the exceptions of a few Whites who had supported the ruling party – massively supported the MDC and even funded it. Suddenly there was

real opposition to the ruling party and the possibility that the MDC may get an even bigger following among the electorate. This seriously threatened the government, which increased its intolerance to the opposition party.

The government realised that MDC had given its credibility a devastating blow and experienced it as its first humiliation since independence twenty years earlier, when the euphoria of independence gave a milieu of great support to the ZANU-PF government, as the liberators of the nation. In response to this embarrassment the government through the party started to train youths into a militia that would go around villages and rural areas to “re-educate” people to continue supporting the ruling party. This militia grew in numbers to twenty thousand between 2000 and 2003. However, instead of educating people the militia became notorious for perpetrating atrocities against MDC members and anyone perceived to be against the government. For example, in January 2002 a group of youths in Tsholotsho, Matabeleland force a family to watch as they beat the family father with an iron bar and later strangled him (*Integrated Regional Information Networks* (IRIN) News, 8 September 2003). This same human rights report by IRIN includes accounts narrated to a committee chaired by Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, assisted by Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa. They listened to many atrocities, covering a period from October 2000 to August 2003, perpetrated by this militia which was supposed to be a National Youth Service to empower the youth by training them in various vocational skills to help themselves or to be employed. After listening to the testimonies of violence, Archbishop Ncube concluded: “African leaders support one another, but are blind to the abuse of citizens. The militia is killing the soul of young people in Zimbabwe” (IRIN, 2003).

A third example demonstrates the ruthlessness and increased militancy of the militia and eventually other agents of government. A 29 year-old woman escaped with her life to become a refugee in South Africa after the March 2008 elections. Human Rights Watch reported on 8 March 2011 that ZANU-PF militia had killed her brother and burned down her house because of her support for the MDC. She was pregnant at the time but the militia brutally beat her and left her for dead. When she recovered she went to South Africa. There are hundreds of similar stories that demonstrate beyond doubt the increased militancy of the government and its youth militia.

To further demonstrate the role of the government in entrenching the prevailing “culture” of violence, reference can be made to the Minister of Security, Sydney Sekeramai, who finally acknowledged that the government was responsible for training the militia: In July 2008 he defended the government’s policy of training the militia:

By announcing an ‘intention’ to train youth in weaponry, the minister had finally owned up to a ‘de facto’ government policy. It is now beyond doubt that the youth militia training is in fact paramilitary training under the guise of a national service. According to defected militia, it is often brutal and brutalising (*Relief Web*, 8 September 2003).

The Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) was another agent of government that added to the increased militancy and helped to entrench the “culture” of violence against ordinary people in general and the MDC in particular, which caused much havoc and pain:

The intelligence service – the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) – does not feature in the present Constitution at all. It is not set up by statute. Indeed, the only reference in the statute law of Zimbabwe to this organization is in the Provincial Councils and Administration Act, which provides that the local senior CIO officer must be a member of the provincial development committee (*Veritas Zimbabwe* online).

Msupatsila, reporting to *Bulawayo 24 News* on 4 June 2011 also affirms the fact that the CIO does not have proper legal standing in the current constitution of Zimbabwe. It is a remnant from the Security Intelligence system used during the colonial period to protect the colonial regime. The havoc of violence caused by the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is reported by many news agents. AMANI<sup>18</sup> Trust raised the alarm as early as 5 September 2001 before the haphazard occupation of White-owned farms (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2001). The same source reports that of the 23,853 human rights violations, 1% was committed by the CIOs between the 1st of July to 31<sup>st</sup> of August. The list of violations include threats, assault threats, false accusations, forced displacements, detentions, kidnapping, threats of rape and acts of rape, disappearances, murders and destruction of property of perceived opponents.

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<sup>18</sup> AMANI is a word of Arabic origin which means “Wish” but in Swahili it means “Peace” and the latter is applicable to the AMANI Trust in Zimbabwe. (<https://www.babynames.com/name/AMANI>), accessed 22 January 2019.

Further the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) were also implicated in the violence that took place during the election period of 2008. The violence was perpetrated against MDC members, especially in the rural areas. In a report by the Human Rights Watch of 30 April 2008 Taurai Shava (2008) said: “Members of the army have participated in attacks on suspected opposition supporters in rural communities in particular”. The report added that Morgan Tsvangirai’s spokesperson confirmed that such attacks had claimed the lives of 20 MDC supporters.

#### 3.3.4.4 *Effects of the changing ideology of ZANU-PF government*

At independence, the ZANU-PF government embraced the Marxist ideals of a pro-poor political economy and they coined the term Growth with Equity for that broad policy. According to Sibanda and Makwata (2017), this policy framework championed the plight of workers who had been hired and fired at will by the colonial government and White Zimbabweans in general. The government introduced labour laws intended to protect workers, who were mostly the Blacks, in the various sectors that sustained the economy of the country. During the colonial period up to the time of Ian Smith labour laws were skewed in favour of Whites so that Blacks toiled for very little remuneration and at times there was forced labour without remuneration. Nomazulu Thata in an article in *Bulawayo 24 News*, 17 June 2016 commented:

If the former Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith was alive today he would concur that the White regime lost the war because of the failure of the government to implement labour laws and workers’ wages that were liveable and decent to the Black majority population in the then Rhodesia. Black people worked in all aspects of the capitalist economy that was booming... It was paradise on earth to be a White person ... in those heydays...

The colonial labour law was skewed in favour of the employers who were mostly Whites. Some of these labour laws had already been introduced by the Cecil John Rhodes through the British South African Company that had colonised Zimbabwe. Sachikonye (1985) mentions some of those laws: Masters and Servants Act of 1901; the Pass Law of 1902; the “Native” Juvenile Employment Act of 1926, the Compulsory Native Labour Act of 1943 and many others, which were all intended to give power and control to the employer and make the employee subservient.

To counter that oppression and abuse of workers the new government of Zimbabwe sought to reformulate the labour laws to bring about equity that would benefit both employers and

employees. It struggled to enshrine the rights of workers so that the life style of employees also benefited from the produce of their labour. Thus, in response to the unfair colonial labour laws the government at independence repealed the inequalities that were based on race:

Probably the most significant piece of legislation which the Zimbabwe Parliament debated and approved during the first five years of independence was the Labour Relations Bill of 1985. This was a comprehensive code of regulations relating to employment, remuneration, collective bargaining, the settlement of disputes, the registration and certification of trade unions and employers' organisations (Sachikonye 1985:7)

With this new labour law in place most workers were able to go on strikes for higher wages, to which government gave its support. Farm workers, miners, and even civil servants demanded better wages and government set a good example by increasing salaries of civil servants and therefore insisted that other sectors also increase the salaries of all workers. In 1980 President Mugabe declared socialism as the official ideology of Zimbabwe. He tried to implement Marxist-Leninist principles in order to transfer the means of production to the ordinary people. Mugabe's vision was to establish a socialist one-party state, but he did not manage to achieve that:

Indeed, within ZanuPF were some staunch believers in socialism, including Robert Mugabe himself.... Fortunately, the majority of the people of this country rejected the notion of a 'de jure' socialist one-party state, and so to all intents and purposes, Zimbabwe remained essentially a capitalist state, but with a sprinkling of half-baked socialist, if not social welfarist policies. The manner in which the nation was governed, however, was clearly indicative of the existence of a de facto one-party state, though not entirely socialist... ("Political context: Zimbabwe", 2010).

A similar interpretation is given by Musarurwa (2017):

The nation state that resulted from the revolution was a Socialist Republic working for the good of the generality of Zimbabweans, or so it should have been. But Zimbabwe arguably did not outrightly repudiate some of the tenets of capitalism, which had been inherited from the Rhodesian era.

Don Muvuti, a ZANU-PF central committee member, as reported in *The Zimbabwean* (23 June 2010), explained that new government tried to implement socialism in the 1980s. By using the party militias, known as youth brigades, the new government put pressure on employers and business people, who were branded “capitalist traitors”. *The Zimbabwean* (23 June 2010), commented as follows on Muvuti’s views: “Businesses were forced to close or were taken over by Zanu (PF) to be run as co-operatives. However, most of the enterprises collapsed due to theft by senior party officials, mismanagement, bureaucracy and disagreements on how to share profits and losses”. Muvuti claimed that socialism failed in the 1980s “because Zanu (PF) was ‘prevented’ from redistributing land.” To this, *The Zimbabwean* (23 June 2010) responded: “He neglected to mention that most of the farms that were acquired for resettlement using Western funds were snatched by Mugabe cronies at the expense of genuine land-hungry blacks”.

With the passage of time the government became unable to match the demands of workers and fulfil their expectations, even though the officially declared ideology of the state was Marxist-Leninist, and therefore worker-oriented. The ZANU-PF government did not change its socialist rhetoric or the names of its structures (like Politburo), but gradually adopted more capitalist practices. Coupled with President Mugabe’s dictatorial governance and with increasing corruption by government officials, it led to the gradual deterioration and ultimate disintegration of Zimbabwe’s economy. The dictatorship of Mugabe led to bad governance. Cain (2015) stresses bad governance and adds multiple other factors that led to this bad governance. The oppressive reign of Mugabe demonstrates how a government can lose touch with its people and become concerned with retaining power at all costs, changing its ideology from people-centred to government-centred. Cain (2015) further explains the oppressive nature of the government and the suffering it has caused:

Zimbabweans have been subject to gross violations of property rights, including state-sponsored expropriation and vandalism, corrupt politicians, restrictive business regulations and an abysmal monetary policy... Therefore, one of the main sociological problems in Zimbabwe is poor governance, and each of the aforementioned factors that restricts it from developing is a direct consequence of bad public policies.



Since independence, the Trade Unions, which had been encouraged by government, continued to advocate the rights of workers for better working conditions and better salaries. But in later years the position of government changed as workers continued to demand their constitutional rights. Government on the other hand felt attacked as it failed to respond to workers' demands. Trade Unions continued to demand that the rights of workers be honoured and the new labour laws be adhered to. Because of the pressure brought to bear by Trade Unions the government started accusing them and their leadership of being political, inciting workers to oppose the government. As the government was increasingly unable to meet workers' demands, it pursued measures of suppressing trade unions and its leadership, particularly Morgan Tsvangirai, who continued to articulate the interests of the workers. The inability of government to uphold the rights of workers emanated from mismanagement of funds, corruption, lack of transparency, ESAP and the sheer greed of government ministers, as already stated above.

At the same time, the interest of government was to remain in power, even if that meant sacrificing the interests of workers. Thus, the nature of conflict at this level was represented by a difference of interests between the two parties, government and workers, the majority of whom were members of the MDC. Some civil servants, especially teachers, were accused by government of being MDC supporters and hence suffered harassment from government agents (Marimudza, 2012). This trend became the bone of contention between the ZANU-PF government and the MDC party. This fault line ran through all the subsequent acts of violence that followed which were carried out prior to each of the elections conducted on 29 March 2002, 29 March 2008 and the subsequent runoff on 27 June 2008 as well as 31 July 2013 and after the elections of 30 July 2018, when Mnangagwa was declared the presidential winner by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

Prior to the formation of the MDC when government viewed workers as an element opposed to government Morgan Tsvangirai mobilised workers for massive strikes to put pressure on government to attend to workers' concerns and interests. Therefore, the nature of conflict was that of both parties exerting pressure on each other. The pressure was reciprocal as the government reduced its support for workers to put pressure on them to desist from making demands that government could not fulfil. On the other hand, workers showed their dissatisfaction with their conditions of service through strikes and put pressure on government to heed to their expectations. Sibanda (2002) describes the three phases that workers went through. Although there were some

variations what is common to them is the repressive nature that prevailed in all of them. It is known that the colonial period was repressive and the colonial rule did not hide such repression. However, the first phase came after independence in 1980 to 1985.

According to Sibanda (2002), this first phase was the “honeymoon” period which was the transition when from the colonial labour regime to a post-colonial period with partial reforms of labour laws. The second phase came with the legislation in 1985 that gave power to workers to “engage in collective bargaining” with the employer. On the face of the law it appeared that employees were given power to bargain, yet in reality when the employees’ demands could not be met the government had to get involved. In fact, eventually reforms made by government gave wide discretionary powers to the Minister of Labour. In that way the government was able to exercise its repressive decisions in cases where it felt that the workers militated against the government. The third phase came when the “right to strike” was approved, as collective bargaining would be meaningless without the right to strike. However, the right to strike is burdened by so many obstacles that Madhuku (1995) finds Zimbabwe’s labour legislation in this regard ridiculous:

Owing to a number of restrictions, it is impossible to have a legal strike in Zimbabwe. The net effect of all this is to effectively deny this right to workers. Public Service workers have no such right... Although the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1985 provides for what it calls ‘collective job action’, there is no clear constitutional protection of the right to strike.

There are further aspects that erode this law in Zimbabwe, as explained by Sibanda and by Madhuku. Employees are not permitted to engage in political strikes, in other words, no worker is allowed to strike against the government. In addition, after all other alternative means have been exhausted, the final arbitrator is once again the Minister of Labour, who always decides in favour of the government, thereby continuing the repressive measures of government towards workers.

Even in the face of such repressive laws several groupings of workers engaged in continuous strikes for pay increases, including Tongaat Sugar company workers who downed tools and would not allow management to enter the factory premises for three weeks (*The Herald*, 18 December 2015). McDonald Dzirutwe (2016) reports that teachers, doctors and nurses went on strike over unpaid salaries. In addition, the police were engaged in battles with taxi drivers who were

protesting against the government as the economy deteriorated. Such strikes were common during the whole period of economic meltdown, although no strike was ever sanctioned by the police.

#### 3.3.4.5 *Instilling fear and disappearances of opposition party members*

Jeffrey Moyo reported in an article entitled “Mugabe Opponents Intimidated” in *Inter Press Service* (IPS) that extensive intimidation and fear was exerted on the opposition party and its members after the run-off presidential elections of 2008. The fear instilled in opposition members was intended to scare them from supporting the MDC and to strengthen the position of ZANU-PF government to continue ruling the country, even though many were dissatisfied with its poor performance. Quoting Chimhini, Moyo (2015) said:

We have received reports of intimidation... historically there have always been constant cases of intimidation that often follow every election. [It is] a ZANU-PF strategy to deflate members of the opposition parties and vanquish whatever semblance of support the opposition may have.

Moyo added that the heavily armed police presence in Harare did not make people feel safe at all. Instead it increased the fear, particularly of the opposition MDC members, especially as the police were based close to the MDC Headquarters at Harvest House. A man named Alex Rutsito of Highfield, Harare’s low-income suburb, informed an IPS reporter that not only had he been intimidated and accused of being a ZANU-PF enemy, but that his house was ransacked, and he with his family were mercilessly beaten for being MDC activists. Yet another man, Matevura by name, told IPS: “These police disturb our peace; we are really afraid and our clients are now avoiding this route because of these cops as they harass anyone who gets near them” (Moyo, 2015).

Rona Peligal (2010), Africa Director of Human Rights Watch, also reported: “ZANU-PF supporters and their allies continue to commit abuses with impunity, and the police remain partisan. The government of Zimbabwe needs to put a halt to the attacks and allow the constitutional outreach to proceed without violence.” Cleto Manjova, a human rights programmes officer of Heal Zimbabwe Trust, confirmed that ZANU-PF perpetrated violence against the opposition after the election of March 2008 (Human Rights Watch, 2010)

Georgette Gagnon (2008) of Human Rights Watch in Johannesburg reported from eyewitnesses she had interviewed, that Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF party had set up a network of informal detention centres to beat, torture and intimidate opposition activists and ordinary Zimbabweans. Such centres were set up mainly in opposition strongholds such as constituencies of Mutoko North, Mutoko South, Mudzi, Mashonaland East, and Bikita West. The intention was to round up people and instil fear in political opponents and all those suspected of being against ZANU-PF. Gagnon reported in *Human Rights Watch* on April 19, 2008: "ZANU-PF members are setting up torture camps to systematically target, beat, and torture people suspected of having voted for the MDC in last month's elections."

There are hundreds of recorded reports from various human rights organisations complaining about the violence of ZANU-PF and government arms. The few examples quoted here represent just the tip of an iceberg in regard to the violence perpetrated against opposition members. Surprisingly, Rugare Gumbo, the national spokesperson of ZANU-PF, always refuted the reports given by these various NGOs as lies or biased reporting: "ZANU-PF national spokesperson Rugare Gumbo denied that intimidation was perpetrated by members of his party" (Jeffrey Moyo on *Relief Web*). This means that the conflict continued and acts of violence were inflicted upon the people with impunity by the ruling party and its arms of governance.

One of the practices adopted state agents such as the Central Intelligence Officers (CIO), the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the ZANU-PF youths brigade and at times the members of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) was to instil fear by abducting high ranking officials of the MDC and make them disappear, some of whom were never found again. Several newspapers, both national independent and international networks, reported abductions carried out by government agents, especially by ZANU-PF youth militias and the police.

The British newspaper *The Guardian* (8 February 2002) reported on abductions carried out by government agents. In a small town of Nkayi in Matabeleland, some MDC members of parliament who had gone there to campaign for Morgan Tsvangirai before the presidential election of 2002, were abducted, beaten and detained in Police cells at Nkayi. The Police paraded them before the people while they were bleeding in order to scare MDC supporters. Another 37 MDC leaders were later also abducted by the police and detained at Nkayi. Before those abductions, *The Guardian*

reported that the ZANU-PF militias reserved their attacks for less prominent MDC supporters, but as the presidential election drew nearer the militias targeted more prominent MDC leaders such as district leaders, provincial leaders and MPs. The newspaper reported that three MDC politicians, Abednico Bhebhe (MP for Nkayi), Peter Nyoni (MP for Victoria Falls) and Joel Gabuza (MP for Binga) were leading a convoy to distribute leaflets for Morgan Tsvangirai before the presidential polls on March 9 and 10 2002 when soldiers shot at their vehicle and seriously injured Bhebhe.

Interviewing people after the incident, the *Guardian* reporter, Andrew Meldrum, reflected the great fear instilled in the people by such violent actions by government agents. One person told Meldrum: "It is frightening; we don't know what is going to happen to them. The army is here, the militia is here and they are beating so many people". David Coltart, one of the MDC leaders, responded to this cruel behaviour by those who were supposed to protect the ordinary citizens by saying: "He felt that this car rally, as he called it, would give him safety in numbers to be able to campaign for Morgan Tsvangirai. We are very concerned about him and all those with him" (*The Guardian*, 8 February 2002).

Another reporter, Norm Dixon of the *Green Left*, an Australian newspaper, entitled his article in February 2002 on the run up to the presidential elections on 9 to 10 March as: "Mugabe relies on repression to survive". He stated that the ZANU-PF party intensified its violent campaign against the MDC opposition in order to save Robert Mugabe in the forthcoming election: "not a day goes by without the independent Zimbabwe press reporting assaults, abductions and murders of MDC supporters by gangs of ZANU-PF militia, especially in rural areas. Several MDC MPs have been abducted and tortured in separate incidents." (*Green Left*, 6 March 2002).

In dozens of incidents properties such as vehicles, shops, homes or anything worthwhile of known or alleged supporters of MDC supporters were torched, stolen or destroyed by the militia. Dixon (*Green Left*, 6 March 2002) also quotes the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, a non-governmental organisation, which claimed that a large number of MDC supporters were killed and about seventy thousand people were displaced from their homes before the 2002 elections, fleeing from government-perpetrated violence. Intimidation was rampant and eventually rural areas became "no-go areas" for the MDC, as the ruling party militia terrorised the communities. Dixon further reported that as from February 2002 at least fifty MDC rallies were banned by the police, fearing

mobilisation of people against the ruling party. On the other hand, around 8000 ZANU-PF supporters were allowed to march unmolested through Harare on February 18 2002. The police allowed government supporters to protest outside the British High Commission and then afterwards attack MDC headquarters with stones, without any arrests being made.

Bridget Sibanda of the *Zimbabwe Independent* reported on 8 April 2005 that “Police have banned the Movement for Democratic Change from holding rallies in the country fearing they might mobilise people into anti-government protests”. A reporter from *The Telegraph* in the United Kingdom, Peta Thornycroft, who was based in Harare during the election of 2008, reported on 17 June 2008 that Mugabe’s onslaught against his opponents included attacking families. She reported the abduction of the newly elected mayor’s wife by armed men. Forty-seven year-old Emmanuel Chiroto was not at home on the day the perpetrators intended to take him, but only Abigail, his wife, (27 years old) and their four-year-old son Ashley were at home. The armed men took her and her son and petrol-bombed their house into flames. Mr. Chiroto reported the disappearance of his wife and son, but no action was taken by the police. The only people who could carry guns at the time of elections were soldiers, police, intelligence agents and the militia. After a few days the deceased body of blindfolded Abigail and her son were found on the side of the road near their house in north Harare.

Even after the GNU government was established in 2008 and Morgan Tsvangirai was appointed as Prime Minister, he complained that ZANU-PF was continuing to abduct members of his MDC party. Speaking to Jonga Kandemiri of Voice of America (VOA), Tsvangirai said on 4 May 2011 that four MDC members from Mashonaland East Province had been kidnapped by members of ZANU-PF at a Harare bus terminus on their way home from a Bulawayo party congress. They were Remita Motiwa (chairwoman of Chikomba West District Women’s Assembly), Timothy Mugari (a ward chairman), Anna Peresu (a party member) and Taruvinga (a youth chairman), (VOA, 2011)

The conflict took many forms, depending on the method of violence utilised, but ultimately it was a power struggle and vicious attempts by the ruling party to succeed in the elections, even by unjustified means. These few examples illustrate how vicious the conflict had become and how desperate the government was to retain power. The pressure exerted by government upon members

of the opposition was dehumanising and cruel. This was not only devastating to the families concerned but also to the opposition party as a whole. This type of conflict was intended to discourage people from both supporting the MDC party as well as becoming members of it. This is some kind of psychological warfare by government against everyone perceived as opponents.

The sectors of government, instead of protecting all citizens, were biased towards supporting the ruling party to remain in power and continuing to traumatise opponents by abducting bread winners of families and leaving those families in the desperate situation of not knowing what happened to their loved ones. Wives were left without husbands and children were orphaned, often unable to continue their education because their fathers were no longer around to support them. The results that ensued from such a conflict between government interests and opposition vision of good governance adversely affected not only the active members of the opposition party but their families as well. These disappearances were never investigated and families never found any closure regarding their missing ones. Those wounds remained festering in their hearts and memories, and no genuine attempts have yet been made by the government to heal those wounds.

Besides the psychological level of conflict discussed above, government actions also included exerting violence and inflicting excruciating pain, particularly on opposition members in the rural areas that ZANU-PF party considered as their main support base. In the context of Zimbabwe, the small parties did not pose a threat to the ruling party, it was only the MDC which had a large following and thereby presented a real threat to the ZANU-PF party and government. Thus, the violence and pain was mostly inflicted on MDC members, whose leadership was targeted.

There are hundreds of persons who suffered deprivation of their human rights or suffered physical pain at the hands of government or state security apparatus. The Voice of America Studio 7 (VOA) radio transmission on Zimbabwe based in Washington DC reported many incidents of violence by the government against MDC supporters and leaders. On 11 April 2007 the VOA reported that Godfrey Coaster, Darlington Madzonga (former chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly) and Morgan Tsvangirai were abducted by security agents in broad daylight in Harare. They were freed without charge after a few days. The VOA also reported that Sibukile Nkala and Themba Nyati, two MDC activists from Bulawayo, were arrested and taken to Harare prison cells and released the following day without charge. In Penhalonga (rural Manicaland) armed soldiers

severely beat Paul Shereni who worked in the MDC treasury department. Another eight members who were with Shereni were also seriously beaten by the armed soldiers.

As already discussed above, Andrew Meldrum reported about the torture of MDC members of Parliament in 2002 in Nkayi, prior to the above beatings and arrests. In the same report Meldrum added that David Mpala, an MDC member of parliament, had been abducted and stabbed and was recovering in hospital. Welshman Ncube, the MDC secretary general, was quoted as saying, “The MDC urges all international monitors who have arrived in Zimbabwe to go to Nkayi and witness ZANU-PF’s brutality at its best”. The response of government and its agents was always denial, alleging instead that the persons involved had been attacked by other MDC members. Even in the many cases where there were witnesses of these tortures and atrocities, the government did not accept responsibility. To illustrate the government’s position when MDC politicians were attacked, Meldrum quoted the official spokesperson of the police in the country: “A police spokesman, Wayne Bvudzijena, denied that the politicians were beaten” (*The Guardian*, 8 February 2002).

Meldrum further reported that even Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the MDC, did not escape the brutality of the state. He was attacked on at least three occasions before presidential elections. His convoy was attacked by police and ZANU-PF thugs and in two separate incidents on 22 February 2002, when bullets and tear gas canisters were fired at his motorcade. This was before he was charged with treason on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2002, a case in which he was found not guilty by the high court, as mentioned already. This trend of harassing MDC members continued even after the signing of the “Memorandum of Understanding” on 21 July 2008 between ZANU-PF and MDC, which put in place a Unity Government. ZANU-PF continued to look for ways and means of victimising members of the opposition party. In the *Human Rights Watch Report* of 12 August 2008 it is reported that hundreds of MDC supporters continued to flee from their homes in fear of reprisals after ZANU-PF had lost the presidential elections that culminated in the run-off elections of 27 June 2008, which led to the Unity government: “...war veterans and youth militia continue to terrorise villagers in the rural areas... and there has been beatings and torture of more than 5,000 people over the past three months.”

In the face of all this torture and pain the government made little effort to dismantle the torture camps and bases that it had established in the immediate aftermath of the March 29 2008



presidential elections, which Mugabe lost. The Human Rights Watch organisation complained in its report that abuses continued with total impunity. Not only were serious crimes committed without investigation, prosecution or legal redress or compensation for victims, but the Police took no action to investigate the *Human Rights Watch Report*; nor did the police question or arrest the perpetrators, despite the fact that the victims and witnesses named their abusers and perpetrators. The report stressed that many MDC activists were abducted and brutally beaten and tortured by ZANU-PF supporters, youth militia and war veterans. Their families too were victimised and subjected to similar torture and beatings.

In the context of this political conflict another method of inflicting pain and desperation on the opposition members by government was to deny food allocations to members of the MDC during the drought periods that prevailed in Zimbabwe. Amnesty International had evidence that ZANU-PF officials in charge of food distribution in most rural areas in the country were discriminating against those believed to be MDC supporters. The militia ensured that such people would not benefit from the government food supplies in the drought-stricken areas. Amnesty International also recorded information from Innocent Gonese, a human rights lawyer, who confirmed that militia lead by war-veterans took over control of the Grain Marketing Board food distribution facilities in the Matabeleland North Province. He reported that the militia demanded a ZANU-PF party card before allowing people to buy maize meal. He also confirmed that this happened in Masvingo as well as in Gutu towns. Further, Amnesty International received individual reports that denial of food to MDC members or those perceived not to support the government was a common practice throughout the country.

#### 3.3.4.6 *Rape as a political weapon*

According to *Pambazuka News*, 7 August 2013, Alice Kasirori (pseudonym) was raped in 2008 by four men during the violent run-off in the presidential elections. She paid a very high price for her husband's political activism, which resulted in the birth of her third child. Kasirori is now a mother of three but lives in fear that her husband will discover that her third child, a son, is not his. "My son is a result of rape. I don't know his father, because I was raped by four men in one night" she said tearfully.

Kudakwashe Chitsike, a Zimbabwean women's rights activist and film maker, championed the rights of women and has spoken openly about the politically motivated violence on women. Women were beaten as well as violently sexually assaulted. As she worked for the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) organisation, she had an opportunity to go to Copenhagen to talk about politically motivated violence against women in Zimbabwe in order to make this abhorrent human rights violation known to the world. *Kenworthy News*, 19 August 2011 reported that Chitsike spoke of "thousands of women who were systematically and deliberately raped and tortured in the run-up to the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe by men loyal to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF."

The rapes were committed against wives and daughters of political opponents, particularly MDC members, in order to inflict pain on their husbands as well as discourage them to support MDC. Thus, rape and torture were used by government as political weapons against the opposition party. *Kenworthy News* (2011) reported that ultimately the state president was responsible for these atrocities as he was quite open about how any opposition to his rule had to be dealt with. He spoke in March 2000 at a ceremony when he opened the Pungwe-Mutare pipeline: "Those who try to cause disunity among our people must watch out because death will befall them... I warn the MDC and its leadership that those who play with fire will not only be burnt, but consumed by that fire".

In a report from *Amnesty International* published on 5 April 2002, the organisation quoted the AMANI Trust, which had interviewed and documented victims of sexual violence by the militia in Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe. Similar acts of rape committed in Midlands were also reported by Amnesty International, quoting research by the AMANI Trust:

The AMANI Trust reported a new pattern of sexual violence ... where victims were forced to rape other victims at the instigation of the militia. AMANI Trust documented further sexual assaults by militia, including incidents in which men were forced by militia to commit sexual assault on one another. In the town of Gokwe in Midlands province, the AMANI Trust reported that militia members and army soldiers continued to rape women and teenage girls or forced them to perform humiliating sexual acts in public (Amnesty International, 5 April 2002).

Amnesty International also quoted another human rights organisation, the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association, which estimated that some 1,000 women were being held in militia camps. It is also reported that in Masvingo farm workers were forced to watch their wives being raped by militia as punishment for the election results which had favoured the opposition.

Several international human rights watchdogs like Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group and Physicians for Human Rights have documented systematic rape and sexual torture of women during Zimbabwe's political violence since 2000. Dr Sheila Meintjes, a member of South Africa's Commission on Gender Equality and a lecturer in political studies at Witwatersrand University, went further to report about the gender-based violence that took place in Zimbabwe (*IRIN Africa*, 8 April 2003). She wanted to bring to the awareness of the academic community the horrors that women in Zimbabwe went through: "We need to break the silence of academia and human rights institutions in South Africa about what is happening in our neighbourhood." To demonstrate gender based violence in Zimbabwe, the Witwatersrand University produced a documentary film entitled "In a Dark Time" acted by Sarudzai, a sixteen-year old girl who had herself suffered sexual and gender based violence from government militia. Another human rights defender, Tony Reeler, who worked for the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, described what he called a new pattern of sexual violence in Zimbabwe. After June 2001, rape and brutal torture in front of their families of women whose husbands were suspected of being supporters of MDC became the order of the day. "One individual's physical torture becomes a mass psychological torture", explained Reeler (*The New Humanitarian*, 8 April 2003).

Thus, political rape was intended not only to instil fear and to break the political will of opponents but also to punish individuals, families and communities who either held different political views or supported opposition parties. As mentioned already, the government of Zimbabwe targeted mainly the MDC party and its supporters and employed its militia, youth, intelligence personnel, police and even soldiers. The conflict between government and MDC manifested itself also in sexual violence and pain inflicted by government on MDC members or anyone perceived to be against the ruling party and government. Rape thus became a political weapon to fight the momentum with which MDC party was growing and acquiring support from many who were disappointed by the failure of government to deliver on the promises it had made to its citizens.

#### 3.3.4.7 *MDC response to violence also included violence*

The effects of violence and brutality on MDC members by ZANU-PF led government led MDC to complain to the independent media to go into hiding or leave the country. Hundreds of Zimbabweans left the country to save their lives as well as look for greener pastures. Yet another form of reaction made by MDC youths was to engage in violence as well. This was limited, as their engaging in violent activities was mostly in self-defence. They had some skirmishes against members of ZANU-PF as a way of protecting themselves from the onslaught of ZANU-PF militia and other agents who perpetrated violence against many of their MDC members. For instance, some MDC supporters attacked police officers in Ximex in Harare (Sachikonye 2011:60).

According to Paidamoyo Muzulu, reporting in *New Day* of 7 March 2016, there was a bloody clash between MDC youths in Ardbennie Road in Harare. ZANU-PF youths prevented MDC youths from holding a rally that had been approved by the police. In the clash 30 MDC youth were injured and some hospitalised. Terrence Mawawa reported in *The News* of 19 June 2018 an incident where two ZANU-PF supporters were attacked by MDC members. “According to information obtained from ZANU-PF Provincial offices in Masvingo, James Musukutwa and Daniel Museve from Chirorwe Village sustained multiple injuries after being assaulted by the MDC youths.”

The incidents of MDC members perpetrating violence against ZANU-PF members are very limited because the main culprit of violence was the ZANU-PF led government and its various agents. When Mugabe was removed from power in 2017, Rick Noack summed up the period of Mugabe’s rule as that of brutality and violence: “The military announcement last week triggered the end of an era of one of Africa’s most notorious rulers, who brutally crushed many of his opponents.”(*The Washington Post*, 21 November 2017).

Thus, the conclusion of Helder Camara is vindicated that violence begets violence (Camara 1971:30). Using violence to impose an unjustified course of action will attract a response of violence therefore implementation of justice is the only alternative to be opted for as Camara appeals.

#### 3.3.4.8 *Tsvangirai pulling out of re-run presidential election*

Another serious effect of the Mugabe violence was that it forced the leader of the MDC party, Morgan Tsvangirai, to pull out of the Presidential re-run elections in June 2008. Tsvangirai openly stated that there was a rising tide of violence and repression against his supporters, which made his further participation impossible. Thus, the leader of MDC took a stance to protect his supporters, as he stated on Sunday 22 June 2008 that the vote would cost his supporters' lives:

Conditions as of today do not permit the holding of a credible poll. We can't ask the people to cast their vote on June 27 when that vote will cost their lives. We will no longer participate in this violent sham of an election. [Tsvangirai added that Mugabe had] "declared war by saying the bullet has replaced the ballot." (Perry, *Time*, 22 June 2008)

The continued acts of violence against the opposition had the direct effect that Tsvangirai had no choice except to protect his supporters. After all, the executive-military alliance exerted great repression on his supporters by not only threatening them but also beating, abducting, killing and using all kinds of atrocities to intimidate the MDC supporters. Tsvangirai withdrew from the election on 23 June 2008. According to *Pindula Online*, he said 86 people had been killed and 10 000 injured in the violence.

In this chapter violence has been dealt with from across the country, but it would not be complete if we do not indicate the violence that took place in Masvingo. Such incidents also took place in Masvingo area and people know about these sad stories from reports of VOA or other independent Media such as the News from South Africa stations, both radio and television channels. The forms of violence that I indicated above are similar to what happened in Masvingo diocese. In chapter four I will capture some of these incidents in Masvingo diocese as I relate and analyse the interviews of those involved or affected by violence in Masvingo diocese.

#### **3.3.5 Attempts at reconciliation**

The final question in our analysis of political violence has to do with attempts at reconciliation after a violent incident. After a protracted political and economic crisis, which had led to massive emigration of Zimbabweans and the failure of a democratic outcome to the 2008 elections, there was a stalemate. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) requested President

Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to mediate in the Zimbabwean leadership crisis. Mbeki had a very challenging task, since as the contending parties made their own demands at the beginning of the discussion. Dumisani Nkomo reported in *The Independent* (18 February 2011) that ZANU-PF sought three things from the impending unity government. Mugabe wanted legitimacy, removal of international sanctions and access to the state coffers without accountability, as he was used to. On the other hand, the two MDC parties wanted to return to democracy and have the government function democratically, they also wanted to rebuild the dilapidated economy, make ZANU-PF accountable to all the parties and share power instead of ZANU-PF dictating what should be done.

Tapfuma (2016) concluded that the 2008 political dispute in Zimbabwe was rooted in the authoritarian nature and governance of ZANU-PF, contrary to claims by both ZANU-PF and Thabo Mbeki that located the crisis in the land issue...and the neo-liberal agenda of the Western countries (Tapfuma, M. 2016:125). In her conclusion, she both pinpoints the nature of the crisis as well as reflects the repressive perspective of the “executive-military alliance” of ZANU-PF governance which was already discussed above (Tapfuma, 2016).

Although Mbeki struggled to bring the three parties to agree, the attempt to reconcile finally succeeded when ZANU-PF led by Mugabe, MDC-T led by Tsvangirai and MDC led by Mutambara, entered into a marriage that was based on parameters proposed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which were termed the Global Political Agreement (GPA). After several discussions the GPA culminated in a Government of National Unity (GNU). Thus, Mbeki was successful to declare Mugabe as President of the country, Tsvangirai as Prime Minister and Mutambara as Deputy Prime Minister. This was meant to ease the tension in the country as well as prepare a new constitution, before another election could be held. Bringing the contending parties to participate and negotiate together was a key factor in attempting to resolve the conflicts and achieve reconciliation (Mhandara, and Pooe, 2013).

On the part of Tsvangirai, as soon as he was sworn in as prime minister of Zimbabwe, he made his ambitious programme for the country known. He wanted to restore the rule of law and the freedoms that had been stripped away by Mugabe’s regime. In addition, he announced that he was determined to revive the country’s non-existent economy. His determination revealed his sincere

attempt to reconcile the broken country by putting it back into development mode (McGreal, 2009).

While the Government of National Unity was a positive step it faced huge challenges, since as President Mugabe often acted without consulting the leaders of the other two parties. For instance, he unilaterally appointed provincial governors, judges and ambassadors without consultations of the other parties. In his complaint Tsvangirai expressed that he was extremely concerned about Mugabe's lack of commitment to either the GPA, SADC resolutions or even the constitution of Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai threatened both to sue Mugabe for his illegal appointments as well as not to recognise those appointments (*The Standard*, 28 October 2010). While this indicates the frustration that Tsvangirai experienced with Mugabe in the government of national unity, the fact that the term of office scheduled for this government was attained is a good indicator that to some extent the attempt at reconciliation was indeed positive. The affirmation of this reconciliation can also be measured through some of the achievements attained by the government of national unity.

#### *3.3.5.1 Improved economy affirms attempt at reconciliation*

Soon after being sworn in, Tsvangirai visited President Obama of the United States to seek assistance to resuscitate the dilapidated economy of Zimbabwe. Obama praised the efforts of Tsvangirai for making an effort to improve the daily lives of people who faced chronic food shortages. He also commended him for tackling the hyperinflation that had devastated the economy of Zimbabwe and created unemployment at the rate of 90 percent. For a start, Obama promised to give Zimbabwe \$73 million but not directly to the government as Obama was worried about the bad governance of the country. Instead, he would channel the funds through American aid organisations in Zimbabwe (*Reuters*, 13 June 2009). Thus, in a bid to offer a solution to the crisis in Zimbabwe, Tsvangirai made a bold decision to pay civil servants in foreign currency, using the American dollars which he had further acquired in his discussions with several Western countries, since the Zimbabwean currency had become worthless. In another article by McGreal in *The Guardian* of 19 February 2009 he reported the move taken by Tsvangirai to pay government workers in foreign currency as “most shops only accept payment in foreign currency after inflation rises above 10 sextillion (10 billion trillion) percent” (*The Guardian*, 19 February 2009).

This international support was a great affirmation for Tsvangirai's attempt to achieve reconciliation and consensus between the three parties sharing the governance of Zimbabwe and to help the economy improve. Maverick concurs in his analysis in *Zimbabwe Independent* of 20 September 2013 when he concludes that the introduction of the multicurrency system in the economy of Zimbabwe was "the single most important policy introduced by the Government of National Unity (GNU)... which forced President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF to work together with the two MDC parties..." (*The Independent*, 20 September 2013).

Besides improving the economy of the country, in four years the GNU also made strides in the areas of health and housing. There was an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 10,6% and inflation decreased from 231 million% (recorded in 2008) to less than 5% in 2013 (Pindula Online). This improved economy had cascading results in other sectors of life. In 1998 the Zimbabwe health sector was considered one of the finest health systems in Africa and life expectancy had risen from 54 to 63 years, which was basically the same as many other countries with a good health (Asante 2012). However, with the collapse of the economy in Zimbabwe the health system, housing provision, and other sectors of life became pathetic. Yet with the American dollarisation of the currency of Zimbabwe, these systems began to revive. For instance, donor funds in foreign exchange for the health sector assisted in the purchasing of drugs for all Provincial Medical Directors in the country. The USAID assessed that:

On average, donors contributed US\$167,537 directly to Zimbabwe's PMDs in 2009, for health service delivery. In practice, donor funds were used chiefly to purchase medicines that were stocked-out and to refurbish and improve health facility infrastructure (USAID, 2010).

### 3.3.5.2 *Attempts of Zimbabwean Christian Churches*

The Christian churches in Zimbabwe constitute the largest group of religious organisations. It is estimated that Christians constitute about 80% of religious bodies. Munemo and Nciizah (2014:1) reckon that this fact "makes the church perhaps the largest and arguably the most socially influential institution in Zimbabwe". With such a large percentage of members, Christian churches are in a position to work for peace and reconciliation.



Although the ZANU-PF government normally marginalised Churches, the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in February 2009 provided an opportunity for Churches to embark on a process of national healing and work publicly for peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Yet the churches themselves did not always speak with one voice; they had divisions amongst themselves with some supporting the government while others were critical of it. (Munemo and Nciizah 2014:68) summed it up well: “[S]ome leaders of independent African initiated churches have largely thrown their weight behind ZANU-PF while traditional church structures have been ambivalent about getting involved in the political issues while the Catholic Church has been critical of government’s repressive policies and actions”.

However, another disadvantage for the churches emanated from the position taken by government to accuse the churches that criticised it of having the same goal as civil society organisations, namely to achieve “regime change”, by removing the government with the help of Western countries. Although the Church faced challenges and sometimes those challenges came from its own member organisations, in the main churches continued to work for peace and reconciliation. Two examples suffice at this juncture of the attempts made by the churches.

A clear demonstration of working for peace, justice and reconciliation is reflected by the multiple Pastoral Letters written by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference. The Bishops did not stop at condemning and criticising government for its oppressive policies and violence; their letters always provided some vision of hope and the way forward. Generally, the ordinary citizens looked forward to such pastoral statements which described the sad context in which citizens found themselves but also added a vision of hope to the people. Some of the pastoral letters with such content are: “God hears the cry of the poor” produced on 30 March 2007 and published on Holy Thursday 5 April 2007 to all Catholic parishes and missions. Other pastoral letters were:

- “Only when power stands under God’s blessing can it be trusted”(16 December 2007), focusing on the impending elections of 2008;
- “National healing and reconciliation: God can heal the wounds of the afflicted” (1 October 2009);
- “Let us work for the common good, Let us save our nation” (14 January 2011)

There are many other pastoral letters that can be mentioned, which all describe the people's plight but at the same time give them hope and expectation of reconciliation within the nation.

A second example that demonstrated the desire for churches to work for peace and reconciliation is summarised by collaborative documents produced by Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) (2013). In one such joint document, a section subtitled "The cry for reconciliation in Zimbabwe today", the Churches say:

Several historical developments in our nation demand that a process towards national reconciliation be initiated so that we can begin to move in the same direction, share the same vision of the Zimbabwe we want, and begin to reconstruct our broken economy and national pride, and heal the wounds (*The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 2013*).

There were many other efforts made by individual churches to work for peace, justice and reconciliation, with limited success. Chapter 5 will suggest efforts that churches can make to increase their impact in the community to become an alternative community in the current context in order to achieve the desired processes towards peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

### 3.3.5.3 *The new constitution of Zimbabwe (2013)*

The new constitution of Zimbabwe came as another attempt at reconciling the various divisions in the Zimbabwean society, since previous legal systems had always been to the advantage of some members and to the disadvantage of others. The previous constitutions were skewed in favour of those who had political power, from the colonial era until after independence in 1980. The colonial constitution of Ian Smith was replaced by the Lancaster House Constitution which was signed on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1979 in London, with Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa on the one hand and the Patriotic Front of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo on the other hand. It was brokered by the British, the former colonisers of Zimbabwe. However, while the Lancaster House Constitution removed most of the inequalities between whites and blacks, it still retained some protection for the whites for a period of ten years. After ten years the government of Zimbabwe made many amendments to the Lancaster House constitution, but during the 1990s the demand grew for a new constitution that would, among other provisions, limit the tenure of an executive president to two

terms. Although a new, better constitution was drafted by the ruling party, ZANU-PF, it was rejected in a national referendum held in February 2000, as mentioned earlier (see “Zimbabwe: 2000 Constitutional referendum results,” *Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 2007 in eisa.org.za*).

As agreed in the negotiations for the GNU in 2009, a new constitution had to be adopted before elections could be held. After consultations throughout the country under the leadership of the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (COPAC), a select team of 25 parliamentarians with several support teams, produced a final draft of the new constitution of Zimbabwe on 31 January 2013, signed by three representatives of the three main parties. They were Hon. Paul Mangwana of ZANU-PF, Hon. Douglas Mwonozora of MDC-T and Edward Mkhosi of MDC, who were also the co-chairpersons of COPAC (<https://www.pindula.co.zw/COPAC>, accessed on 22 January 2019).

The new constitution proffered hope and positive expectations, being a direct attempt at reconciling the disparities of the various communities that constitute the nation of Zimbabwe. This attempt was a noble one, to lay a foundation for true peace and prosperity for future generations. At the end of the deliberations, Douglas Mwonozora, one of the MDC co-chairpersons of the select team, described how the process had enable the participants to overcome differences and focus on the core business of producing a document that would not only unite Zimbabweans but also bring hope to them:

Douglas Mwonozora, another of the six Committee co-chairpersons, expressed thanks to the leaders for resolving their differences to come up with a draft they could all accept. All the parties have said they will support the draft through the referendum process. Mwonozora said, “[t]he unity of purpose for all Zimbabweans has been clearly demonstrated in the process where it has been shown that where there is a will, there is indeed a way. Zimbabweans have risen above their political differences to remove the hurdles that had threatened to stall the process.” (<http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/zimbabwe-new-constitution-approved-by-parliamentary-committee/>, Accessed 22 January 2019).

In finally producing this constitution in 2013 the Parliament of Zimbabwe created space and opportunities for hope, unity, justice, and reconciliation. Although the constitution was approved

by a 94.5% vote in a referendum on 16-17 March 2013. Even though it was overwhelmingly welcomed by the citizens, in time the ruling party failed to adhere to it consistently, thereby giving rise to new divisions and dissatisfaction so that Zimbabweans once more experienced oppression and suffering under their own black government.

This chapter explored the context of political violence in Zimbabwe by citing examples of violent activities based on publications and news reports. Since a central theme of the thesis is to develop a bottom-up process of reconciliation, the focus now shifts to the “voices from the bottom” by analysing the data generated through semi-structured interviews and a focus group conducted “on the ground” in the Zaka district of the Masvingo Diocese. The next chapter therefore attempts to achieve an in-depth understanding of how those who experienced direct violence during the 2008 election period now feel and think about that suffering and pain.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESPONDING TO EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In terms of the macro-structure of the thesis, as explained in Chapter 1.9, this chapter combines two elements of the praxis cycle, namely context analysis (listening to voices of victims/survivors and church leaders) and theological reflection (reflecting with victims/survivors and local church leaders). It does that by reporting and analysing the data generated in semi-structured interviews with victims/survivors and a focus group with church leaders.

The semi-structured interviews relate the actual experiences of a total of fifteen selected persons who in some way witnessed the violence that took place in Zaka district. The first group consists of ten participants while the second consists of five participants. When reporting their responses, all of them are identified by means of numbers in order to protect their identities. Among the several acts of violence which took place at all newly formed army bases in Zaka district in Masvingo Diocese, two incidents stand out as being prominent and public as they were reported by the media in and outside the country. The first is the burning and destruction of the MDC-T office at Jerera Growth Point by armed military personnel, (3.1.3). Guma, (2008) reported in an article entitled “Three MDC-T officials killed in Army Petrol bomb attack”:

[A] truckload of militants arrived at the party offices at midnight and fired shots into the building. The attackers later petrol bombed the building that was also housing victims of political violence in the area. At least 4 activists are missing and presumed dead while another 2 suffered critical injuries and are detained at St Anthony's Musiso Hospital. The charred remains of 3 bodies lay on the floor in the burnt-out MDC-T offices and all had bullet wounds.

The group of fifteen people that were interviewed included two who survived the above-mentioned attack at Jerera and they revealed that the attackers were ZANU-PF militants wearing army uniforms. They also narrated that the critically injured were initially taken to the local hospital and later transferred to Harare where they underwent specialist medical treatment. They were in Harare for eight months. The MDC-T claimed that over 50 of its supporters had been killed since the March 2008 elections (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 6 June 2008).

The other prominent violent incident was the destruction of St. Anthony's Priests' house near Jerera in the same Zaka district. Like the former incident, the latter also took place at night. The attack was carried out by the youth militia, led by war veterans (3.1.3). In this incident the priest who was targeted, but escaped, is also one of the participants in the semi-structured interviews. In the context of Zimbabwe, the term "youth militia"<sup>19</sup> refers to the youths that the ruling party ZANU-PF conscripted and trained as para-military personnel to follow the *Manifesto* of ZANU-PF.

Besides youth militia another group of participants in the violence was that of war veterans. The war veterans are those who fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe against the Rhodesian army. Known as the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), their organisation was established by former combatants of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) who served during the Rhodesian Bush War (*The New Humanitarian*, 18 December 2002). They were demobilised at independence in 1980 but have continued to support the ruling ZANU-PF party. The war veterans wanted to punish a Catholic priest who had conducted a burial for an MDC youth who had earlier been killed by the militia. The priest also denounced violence in his sermon at the burial:

In Zaka the house of a Roman Catholic priest of the St Anthony Mission was burnt down by ZANU-PF supporters immediately after he delivered a sermon denouncing violence. The ZANU-PF supporters came to his homestead during the night demanding him to come out of the house so that they can deal with him as they regarded him as a sympathiser of the opposition party. The priest was not present at the time of the gang's arrival, and after there was no response, the ZANU-PF supporters went on to burn the house, destroying everything in it (Madzokere and Machingura, 2016:294).

The first part of this chapter (4.0 – 4.6) deals with the data generated by my semi-structured interviews that explored people's present perceptions and experiences of these two incidents in order to establish possible ways of engaging in processes of peace and reconciliation in these communities in Zaka district within the diocese of Masvingo. The second part of the chapter (4.6.1

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<sup>19</sup> Formed in 2002, the youth training programme was the brainchild of the late Border Gezi, who was then the ZANU-PF national commissar and Minister of Gender, Youth Development and Employment Creation, the ministry under which the programme falls...the militias have gained notoriety due to their propensity for violence (<http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/208548>) Accessed 3 April, 2020.

– 4.6.5) deals with the data generated by the focus group that I conducted with church leaders to map out the way forward. The focus was on finding ways in which the church(es) as alternative community could offer means of peace and reconciliation to heal local communities of the wounds they suffered through the political violence they went through.

#### **4.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE VIOLENCE**

This information has already been provided in Chapter 3.2.2.3, but it is briefly recapped here as a setting for this chapter. After the parliamentary and presidential elections on 29 March 2008 there was no outright winner. The incumbent President Robert Mugabe garnered 43.2% of the vote, while Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC-T leader, got 47.9%. Thus, Mugabe lost an election for the first time in his life, which caused a serious crisis for the ZANU-PF party. However, since there was no outright winner, a re-run was scheduled for 27 June 2008. During the campaign for this re-run presidential election an upsurge of violence was mounted against all those perceived to be opponents of the ruling party. The violence was so intense, especially against MDC-T members, that Morgan Tsvangirai pulled out of the elections on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2008. He did this to protect his supporters from the perpetrators of violence, whom many identified as ZANU-PF supporters, some of whom were youth militia and others segments of the army. Chris McGreal of *The Guardian* reported as follows from Harare on Sunday 22 June 2008 in an article “*This is no election. This is a brutal war:*” “More than 100 have died and thousands have endured savage beatings in the lead up to Zimbabwe’s presidential run-off as Robert Mugabe’s thugs terrorise opposition supporters” (McGreal 2008). The context of that violence was therefore clearly party political in nature, flowing from the refusal of ZANU-PF to accept the possibility of electoral defeat. This chapter focuses on the violence that occurred in the two incidents that took place in Zaka district at Jerera Growth point and St. Anthony’s Mission respectively in Masvingo diocese, which are about two kilometres apart from each other.

#### **4.2 INTERVIEWING PHASES**

The purpose of this study is to find ways for a church to contribute to healing and reconciliation in a community at large, by being an “alternative community” that contributes to overcoming every form of discrimination and alienation between groups in society. In order to hear from people “on the ground” how the church could become such a community, particularly in the aftermath of serious violence, I realised that it is necessary to listen to two distinct groups of people: a) those

who were directly affected by the violence, and b) influential opinion formers in the church(es) of the community. The purpose of this is to listen to the experiences of pain and suffering as well as to visionary and hopeful perspectives from leader figures in churches.

This required a two-phase approach to my data generation: a first phase of personal interviews with (15) people directly affected by the violence and a second phase of interviews with (10) local church leaders and elders from various denominations.

The first phase (personal interviews) is intended to answer research sub-question 1.3.2.2: What are the experiences of victims of violence as well as perpetrators of violence? In contrast, the second phase (focus group) attempts to answer three related sub-questions: 1.3.2.3 c: What is the response of committed Christians in the face of their suffering due to the political violence? 1.3.2.5 b: What suggestions are given by committed Christians as the way forward for their communities? 1.3.2.5 c: What do they understand as their Christian role in this conflict-ridden scenario in their communities?

Due to the sensitive nature of the first phase, it seemed appropriate to conduct it by means of personal interviews and the second phase by means of a focus group, to enable some local church leaders to “brainstorm” together about the future role of churches in the community. I give details on the composition of these two groups in point 4.3.2.4 and 4.3.2.5 below.

#### **4.3 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE**

As a researcher, my home area is in Zaka district and I am familiar with many of the violent incidents that took place in this district. However, in order not to be biased, the selection of the sample group was done in consultation with the parish priest of St. Anthony’s Mission as well as the local Primary School Headmaster, both of whom have lived in the communities before and after the violence erupted at the two places under study. Moreover, the two are considered credible and good leaders in their communities. They have extensive knowledge of how people in the area experienced and dealt with the violence, which enables me to trust that they are qualified to select an informed and credible sample of research participants to share experiences of how that violence still affects the community 11 years later. I requested them to select a sample group consisting of people who have in some way witnessed the violent activities perpetrated against those considered “enemies of the state” during the 2008 run-off elections. The group was carefully selected to include both men and women, and different age groups, including youth (20-35 years), middle



aged (36-55 years) and elderly (over 56 years). The group is also mixed in terms of religious affiliation, to ensure that it doesn't include only Catholics. The priest who was in charge of St Anthony's Mission and the Head of the school at the time of the violent incidents have also been included in the sample. Two middle-aged women leaders and an elder from Jerera were also selected to be part of the focus group.

#### **4.3.1 The nature and purpose of the sample**

The purpose of sampling is of great importance in qualitative research as it assists the researcher to get to grips with the issues under consideration. Scholars may have varying starting positions but at the end their purpose is to generate credible and reliable knowledge, which can be applicable to a wider range than just the sample itself. Johann Mouton (2001:287-8) presents two possible types of sampling in a qualitative paradigm: the first limits the study to a specific area and the second (called "theoretical sampling") collects data with the purpose of generating or developing a theory. In this research the sample is a group of people taken from the larger population of the community who experienced political violence during the run-off presidential elections of 2008 to hear and interpret their experiences, feelings, aspirations, frustrations and to draw some conclusions and guidelines from this sample. Thus, this research utilises the first type of sampling to generate data. Due to its size, the sample cannot claim to be representative of the experiences of the whole population in Zaka district. The findings from the sample can therefore not be generalised to reflect what the whole population went through. In order to do that one would have to conduct a quantitative research project with a random sample drawn from the whole community. This project does not claim such representativity; what it does is to identify a few aspects of the pain and disruption that people experienced as a result of that violence, as expressed by them. So this project does not claim to "speak for" the whole community of the Zaka district; instead it allows a small group of people from that district to speak for themselves and to reflect deeply on their experiences, so that I can use their reflections as a basis for my theological reflection on the mission of the church as an "alternative community" that can contribute to healing, wholeness, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace in a community. I will discuss the results of sampling later in this chapter when I have analysed the responses of the semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.3.2 The personal interviews**

As the researcher I have personally conducted the personal interviews of the selected group of fifteen people. I interviewed each one of them separately so that each one would be free to express

their experiences without any fear or anxiety. I realised that each of the participants felt comfortable to relate their story alone, without the presence of others.

#### *4.3.2.1 Interviews as safe spaces*

The purpose of using interviews is to understand what participants went through during the violent period. It gives the researcher an opportunity to appreciate the devastating effects of the violent acts that they talk about. I was able to create a safe environment for the participants, so that they had the space and freedom to express their direct experiences of violence, without fear or inhibition. This aspect of safety is important, because what they went through is very sensitive, even though several years have elapsed since the painful experiences took place.

#### *4.3.2.2 The nature of the personal interviews*

I selected the format of semi-structured interviews to avoid the rigidity inherent in a structured interview and the unpredictability of unstructured interviewing. A semi-structured interview allows a researcher to provide a clear framework for the interaction with the participant, without imposing a rigid agenda. For example, when speaking about their ordeal the two survivors of the Jerera bombing clearly expressed their anger and desperation at what the armed people did to them. This is reflected in what one of them said: (Participant 2: question 2, p. 4):

On 4 June 2008 came armed men wearing military uniform around 3am. They fired with guns at our small office, then threw a petrol bomb through the window, three people died and I and another managed to break the door and escaped. Five of us were sleeping in the office to look after the material of our party, MDC. My friend run to the Mission hospital through the bush, I was carried by a Good Samaritan by car to the hospital as I could not walk because my feet were shot at. I was angry and bitter against those perpetrators. I am still bitter as we are now disfigured.

The survivors reflect anger and, as we shall analyse their interview further, they also express the desire to be compensated before a process of reconciliation and forgiveness can take place. Another example of the nature of the interviews comes from the seminarian who was on pastoral attachment at St. Anthony's Mission at the time and escaped to seek shelter at the nearby convent. He said: "I was afraid, confused and completely devastated by this bombing of the priests' house. Up to now I have not completely recovered and feel strongly that politics is a game of violence". Later he expressed an urgent need for the church to train youngsters in schools and church services

to be tolerant and accept every person as a brother or sister despite difference of opinion. Thus, this process of interviewing has enabled the researcher to listen to the various experiences, emotions, reactions and assessments of individual participants.

#### *4.3.2.3 The questions for the personal interviews*

Each semi-structured interview was guided by the following set of 17 questions:

Introduction: Explaining to participants the issue of reconciliation after the events of Jerera Township and St Anthony Mission

1. Is it possible to have reconciliation in these communities?
2. In what ways were you involved in or affected by the violence that took place before and after the country's elections of 2008?
3. Which groups of people were involved in the violence? (Do not mention names of individuals)
4. Why did this conflict happen?
5. What were the effects of that conflict?
6. How many people in your family and your area were affected by that violence, to your knowledge?
7. Did anyone assist to alleviate this violence that took place? And what did they do?
8. Was any action taken by government or NGOs to bring about reconciliation?
9. Were you aware of the bombing of the priests' house at St Anthony's Mission? Why do you think that it happened?
10. Did you attend the blessing of the renovated priests' house? What effect did it have?
11. Did you attend the funeral of the two people who died in Jerera? What effect did it have?
12. Did you attend the cleansing ceremony? What effect did it have?
13. Do you think that there is still a need for reconciliation in the community regarding these events?
14. What do you suggest should be done? And by whom?

15. Does the government and NGOs have a role to play in this?

16. What role can the Church play in this process?

17. What legacy would you want to establish for your children and your community?

#### *4.3.2.4 The composition of the interview sample*

The participants include people of different age-groups youth (20-35 years), the middle aged (36-55 years) and the elderly (over 56 years). Care was taken to select participants from different churches and religious persuasions. Two groups of participants were interviewed, the first group consisting of ten persons while the second group consisted of five persons to make a total of fifteen participants for both places Jerera and St Anthony's Mission.

#### **4.3.3 The focus group**

Although there are two places which were petrol-bombed, Jerera MDC-T offices and the priests' house at St Anthony Mission, I convened one focus group to deal with the issues generated from the data of personal interviews carried out in the first stage. The main reason for having one focus group is that it represents the elders of the Church(es) in the Zaka area and intended to provide coherent and focused responses for how the Church(es) should participate and assist in bringing about healing in the Zaka communities. The issues that surfaced in the responses of participants in the two areas did not differ sufficiently to justify two different focus groups. I drafted the questions for the focus group from the themes that I identified when analysing the interviews. The purpose of this approach was to ensure continuity in the study by getting the church leaders to respond to the concrete experiences, feelings and thoughts of the community members, rather than to talk vaguely and generally about "the past" or "the future".

##### *4.3.3.1 The composition of the focus group*

The focus group of eleven persons was constituted by different church leaders and elderly persons of good standing in the community, drawn from both venues affected by the violence. The leaders have knowledge of the violence that took place at Jerera as well as St. Anthony's Mission. The purpose of this focus group was to hear the reflections of the local church leaders on possible actions and programmes of the Church to overcome the consequences of the violent incidents, in response to the views of the participants in the individual interviews. By church leaders I do not include only ordained priests, pastors or prophets, but also religious sisters, professional lay

women and other categories or levels of church leadership, to ensure gender and age representativity.

#### *4.3.3.2 The focus group questions*

The questions for the focus group proceed from the responses of the individual interviews so that the focus group provides suggestions of the way forward for the Church to operate and achieve the intended reconciliation and find ways to prevent such violence and cruelty in communities. Since the focus group focused on planning future actions, rather than dealing with violent actions in the past, the focus group members, unlike the individual interviewees, shared their views and deliberated together to produce a way forward in response to the questions.

### **4.4. VIEWS EMERGING FROM THE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

In the following section I structure the responses received from the participants according to the sequence of the question in my interview schedule (see 4.3.2.3 above).

#### **4.4.1 Is reconciliation possible in these communities?**

After introducing the theme of semi-structured interviews to each participant the research inquired if reconciliation was possible after the two events of violence that took place at Jerera and St Anthony's mission. There were varied responses ranging from those who saw the possibility of reconciliation to those who expressed sentiments of conditional reconciliation and even some who found it difficult to perceive how reconciliation could take place after such terrible violence. For instance, the first category is represented by Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, and 15. Basing their arguments on their Christian beliefs they expressed that reconciliation is still possible. Participant 14 said: "...I think it is still possible to have reconciliation in communities" (p.47) while Participant 15 said: "...as a Catholic priest I do not have any option as regards working for reconciliation; this is part of my mission..." (p.50). The second group, expressed conditional reconciliation which is represented by Participant 9 and 13. Participant 9 (p.29) said, "The government must acknowledge that it did wrong; then we can consider the issue of reconciliation." The third group is represented by Participant 1, 2, 11, and 12. Participant 1 (p.1) said: "after the suffering of so many people it is very hard to see how reconciliation can be achieved." While Participant 2 (p.4) emptied his feelings by saying "these people have no human heart. I was pained and am still pained even now." Participant 12 (p.40) echoed the same sentiments: "Reconciliation

is very difficult to achieve because at the moment ZANU-PF is refusing to take responsibility of what they did to the people.”

#### **4.4.2 Involvement in or affected by the violence**

Three categories of groups can be identified in regard to the second question. There are some whose relatives were involved or affected (P1 and 10), then the group of those who were personally involved (2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15) and a group of those who were indirectly affected (5, 6, 11 and 12). In the context of the extended family setup in Zimbabwe some of the participants had a relative or friend who was affected by or involved in the 2008 violent episodes that took place either in Jerera or elsewhere in Zaka district. Thus, although some of the participants may not have been beaten or injured themselves, the very atmosphere that prevailed was intimidating and instilled fear in everyone in the villages. Thus, there was psychological violence perpetrated against the people of the area in 2008. All the participants knew at least someone (or several persons) who had been beaten, maimed or killed in the violence. Further, they also went for the nocturnal meetings called by the leaders of the ruling party to politicise everyone on whom to support when they cast their ballot for the re-run of the presidential election. In that process of politicising, a lot of fear was instilled and examples of those who had been beaten were given so as to deter people from voting for the opposition party. Participant 5, who held a leadership post in the ruling party at Jerera business community, as he himself is a business person, said that some villagers came to him in trust to report of the beatings and disappearances of their relatives so that he could help them (P5, p.16). Whenever it was possible, he talked to the military leaders to release some of the people whom he believed were not members of the opposition. It was a terrible time from 2 May when the presidential elections were announced to the run-off elections in June when ZANU-PF unleashed violence against villagers in Zaka. This clearly shows how intense and serious it was for most villagers, especially those in the opposition party. In his position as a leader, Participant 5 had lots of information of what transpired during the violent period. He also revealed that at Jerera there was a place called “slaughter house” where people were beaten thoroughly and some subsequently lost their lives (P5, p 16). This had the approval of the army colonels in order to frighten people. He quoted one of the army colonels who addressed people at the nocturnal meetings as saying: “This time when you vote know where to write your X, you just have to put it against Mugabe’s name; otherwise, you will pay with your blood if he loses again on the 27 June

2008” (P5, question 2, p.15). Such politicisation instilled great fear among the members of the community.

Participant 10 was most helpful, for he enabled me to get some insight into the operations of the ruling ZANU-PF party. He said that the turning point for ZANU-PF came in 2000, after the referendum on the new Zimbabwe Constitution, which was rejected by the people when MDC campaigned for a “No” vote to the proposed new Constitution. The constitutional referendum took place on 12-13 February 2000 (P10, question 3, p.32). This was also reported in *The Independent*, 11 February 2000 under the title: “Zimbabwe’s Constitution vote”. ZANU-PF did not expect the people to reject the new constitution, which would reinforce the powers of the president. From 2000 onwards the ruling party employed the army and war veterans to strengthen its position. This cemented the relationship between the Executive and the Military which had already developed an alliance from the time of the liberation struggle (see 3.1.1). Participant 10 said that in 2000 government encouraged lawlessness by using war veterans to occupy and seize white farms, a practice that the government had forbidden since independence in 1980. That was done to regain control and instil fear among the people. According to the same participant, the second incident was when Mugabe lost the elections in April 2008, which shocked ZANU-PF as it did not expect that result: “Therefore, a strategy of engaging the military and war veterans was to rectify this

situation, but unfortunately violence had to be used by the ruling party” (10, question 4, p.33). This is also substantiated in Britannica (McKenna 2008) in an article “2008 Elections and Aftermath,” saying: “The weeks leading up to the runoff election were plagued with political violence, which the MDC asserted was sponsored by Mugabe’s ZANU-PF led government”. The military was instructed to supervise the campaign for the run-off elections, which allowed local party leaders to use whatever means at their disposal to make sure that Mugabe would win. There was no real directive from the highest organs of the party, but by employing the army and war veterans it was clear that they would use any means necessary to intimidate people into supporting Mugabe. Since then, violence was tacitly allowed to be used for political gains by the ruling party, which had lost the April 2008 elections. This intervention by the military and war veterans explains the lawlessness and cruelty that followed during the campaign for the run-off elections. While the leadership of ZANU-PF knew about the violence, they did nothing to stop the atrocities, as the executive wanted to win: “Because of this lawlessness, our country has not yet recovered from use

of violence and has not yet regained the rule of law” (P10, question 3, p.33). The same was reported in *ZimOnline* by Khumalo, N., (2008): “Lawlessness and violence perpetrated by those entrusted with ensuring law and order are destroying Zimbabwe, a prominent bishop told church, civic and opposition leaders who gathered in Harare on Monday to pray for peaceful elections next month.”

Up to nine of the fifteen participants in the semi-structured interviews (P2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15) were directly affected by the violence. Among them are two male MDC-T survivors whose offices were gutted by a petrol bomb at Jerera on 4 June 2008. The two participants passionately related their ordeal and were very emotional and bitter about their perpetrators during the interview, even though it was already 11 years since the incident. (P2, questions 4, 5, 6, and 13; P9, questions 3,4,5,6 and 15). The same sentiments of violence are echoed by Guma (2008). The two participants said that their scars keep on reminding them of the terrible ordeal. They also related how they are still unable to be gainfully employed because of the injuries they sustained. As a consequence, their families are struggling to make ends meet. They are also unable to work on their fields, which leaves their children and wives to till the land.

Three others were survivors of the incident that took place at St. Anthony’s Mission. They were two seminarians on pastoral attachment at the Mission, who were already in bed that night when the priests’ house was petrol bombed. The third was a priest who had already been forewarned that the youth militia were going to attack the Mission that night. So, the priest had already left the Mission when his room was petrol bombed and the whole house was destroyed by fire. The priest related that he was personally targeted by the ZANU-PF local leadership as he had conducted the funeral of an MDC youth who had earlier been beaten to death by the ruling party youths. He also stated that subsequently he had condemned the current violence that was utilised by the ruling party in a Sunday homily: “I mentioned in my sermon that the current episodes of violence against other people were not Christian and were wrong. People should learn to live together in peace” (P15, question 2, p.50). As a result of those actions, he was “personally targeted” by the ruling party local leadership and they “wanted to retaliate and get rid of” him since they regarded him as having “campaigned against ZANU-PF” (P15, question 2, p.50). As the militia threw the bomb through the back window of the house into the targeted priest’s room, the seminarians had the chance to get out through the front door and run to the convent nearby for protection. The property of the priest as well as the seminarians was utterly destroyed to ashes. They remained with nothing.



All their belongings were gutted by fire on Tuesday 18 June 2008. Participant 8 said: “All my particulars, identity card, certificates and other important documents were destroyed so that I had to go to government offices to get new ones” (P8, question 2, p.26). Participant 14, who also escaped this violent incident of the bomb at the Mission, said: “It was terrible. I was crying and shouting to the Sisters for help” (P14, question 2, p.47).

#### **4.4.3 Groups of people involved in the violence**

It was made clear by each of the participants that the struggle that resulted in acts of violence emanated from the two political parties: the ruling ZANU-PF and the MDC-T. What is striking is that each of the participants stated with conviction that the ruling party organised all these acts of violence against those considered enemies of government. In reference to the burning of the priests’ house, participant 7 added that the army leader (name withheld) and the youths went to the mission at night, singing revolutionary songs. She knows that because she lives in Jerera where the planning took place (P7, question 3, p.22). Participant 10 concurred that it was part of the ZANU-PF strategy developed during the war of liberation to coerce people into supporting the party, even though beatings and other violent means as the whole concept of liberation was based on forcefully taking power and the land from the colonial oppressors (see 3.1.2). Therefore, force was part of the strategy to achieve the intended results (see 3.1.1).

A member of the local business community at Jerera (P5), who is a full member of the ruling party, admitted that his party organised meetings, rallies and sometimes used force to politicise people and intimidate them into voting for Mugabe. He referred to these harsh and violent means as tactics to persuade people to vote for the ruling party (P5, question 4, p.17). It is interesting that he also identified another category that was not mentioned by other participants. He said there were those who took advantage of this dire situation to settle scores with their opponents and enemies, which had nothing to do with politics. They would give false reports at the military base and the political leadership would summon the accused to question them. If they failed to explain themselves well, they would be beaten and then released. Participant 5 (question 3, p.16) blamed such opportunists for being “indirectly involved” in the violence that transpired in Zaka:

There were others, like some teachers at St. Anthony Mission (names of teachers supplied but withheld), who were ambitious and talked negatively about the School leadership as well as about

some of the priests. This led the ZANU-PF leadership to think that the mission authorities were supporters of MDC.

The two seminarians too reiterated the same that the groups involved did not have equal strength. It was the ruling party that perpetrated violence against all those perceived to be enemies of the government (P8, question 3, p.26; P14, question 3, p.47; and P11, question 1, p.35).

#### **4.4.4 The fundamental cause of conflict**

According to the participants, the fundamental conflict arose from the denial by the ruling party that President Mugabe, who had led the liberation struggle for the country's independence, had failed to win the 2008 presidential election. Although the MDC-T leader did not get the required percentage to be declared the outright winner, he was ahead of Mugabe in the overall votes that he acquired. The ruling party, the military and supporters of the ruling party were in shock and sought ways to regain support from the people so that Mugabe would win in the run-off election. Thus, in seeking ways to garner support from the citizens, the ruling party chose to intimidate and engage in violent acts to force the people to vote for Mugabe. In perpetrating violence against perceived enemies conflict arose between ZANU-PF and MDC-T supporters. In interpreting the responses of participants, they were unanimous that the conflict was a result of the denial by the ruling party that Mugabe had lost the election. Participant 2 stated that the colonel (name withheld) who addressed political rallies was very clear that the country had been won through armed struggle and shedding of the blood and therefore the people had to vote for Mugabe (P2, question 4, p.5 and Participant 4, question 6, p.13). Participant 5 (question 6, p.17) estimated that about 10 people died immediately or later as a result of beatings at Jerera. He indicated that there was a building at Jerera called "slaughter house" where people were beaten and where some subsequently lost their lives (P5, question 2, p.16). Indeed, most participants affirmed that the politicisation of villagers was full of intimidation and hate speech against MDC-T supporters. Therefore, the conflict happened because of a political power struggle between ZANU-PF and MDC-T.

The issue of organised violence is also collaborated by an article from the Human Rights Watch in an article of 9 June 2008 "Bullets for each of you: State sponsored violence since Zimbabwe's March 29 elections". HRW states:

The campaign of violence and repression in Zimbabwe, aimed at destroying opposition and ensuring that Robert Mugabe is returned as president in runoff elections on June 27, 2008

is claiming thousands of victims as the government at national and local levels actively, systematically and methodically targets Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) activists and perceived MDC supporters... Within government-supporting circles, the operation has been dubbed "*Operation Makavhoterapapi?*" (Operation Where Did You Put Your Vote?). (*Human Rights Watch, 2008*)

Participant 10 (question 4, p.34) added that the cause of conflict was to eliminate all those perceived as enemies or opponents to the ruling party. They were treated with brutality in order to scare everyone from supporting the opposition party:

I have come to realise that the path of violence that we have been travelling from the time of liberation should have ended at independence of this country in 1980. At independence when Mugabe announced the idea of forgiveness and reconciliation, the country should have taken steps to implement that dream. Unfortunately, three years later, violence broke again against Matabeleland in the form of "*Gukurahundi*" in 1983, (see 1.2.4). It is a shame on us who claim that people have freedom of choice. (P10, question 5, p.33-34).

#### **4.4.5 The effects of the conflict**

The views of the participants on the effects of the conflict concur in many ways with those already discussed in Chapters Two and Three, even though the participants focussed on their own situation in Zaka district. Participant 8 (question 5, p.26-7) represented the sentiments of most participants when he expressed that the effects of this conflict included instilling fear, trauma, beatings, burns, gunshot wounds, anger and even killings of people. He added: "I was terribly traumatised by this violent incident" (P8, question 5, p.26). He indicated that even now (in 2020) people in Zaka live in fear when campaigns take place for new political elections. Many do not appreciate the period when the country goes for elections, since they associate it with violence and thus are afraid that they may be beaten. The community at Jerera as well as the nurses at the Mission hospital were instilled with fear by ZANU-PF supporters.

Another painful effect of this conflict was loss of life. Some MDC-T employees, an MDC supporter (name withheld) of ward 19 and another (name withheld) of ward 18 perished at Jerera. Participant 1 (question 2, p.1) said that the third person killed in the MDC-T office at Jerera was kept at the mission hospital mortuary for several weeks as the Village head refused him to be buried in his village for fear of reprisals from ZANU-PF local leaders . He was later buried at the

Jerera Council graveyard. The other two were buried with the help of the MDC-T leadership. Participant 5 (question 2, p.16) reported that several people were beaten and some later died due to the injuries received from the beatings and were buried in shallow graves at Jerera (also Participant 7, question 5, p.22-3). This evoked a lot of anger and fear within the community. Relatives later requested to exhume them from the shallow graves and re-bury them at home. Participant 11 also stated that some armed men (names withheld) led youths to go and burn the priests' house at St. Anthony's Mission near Jerera Growth point (P11, question 9, p.38; P13, question 9, p.44). This incident has already been referred to above (4.4.1).

Participant 7 also revealed that an MDC-T truck was burnt out by youth militia while soldiers harassed people in the villages. At night they took girls to their base at Jerera and abused them, just as they did during the war of liberation (P7, question 5, pp.22-3; P11, question 5, p.37). These were harrowing effects of this conflict, since the parents were helpless to protect their daughters. The communities around Jerera were not only filled with fear and anger but relatives no longer trusted one another, as they sometimes belonged to different political parties (P1, question 5, p.1; P5, question 3, p.16).

Participant 10 echoed the responses of others and added that another devastating effect was that:

People felt totally unprotected despite the presence of the police. There was devastating reign of terror and those in power could do anything they wanted against the people. Women and girls were raped and abused and no one was arrested (P10, question 5, p.34).

This devastating effect of the conflict on girls and women, who often suffer most due to abuse and rape during times of war, was mentioned by a number of participants (p.22, 34, 37, 41), indicating that no arrests were made.

According to Participant 10 (question 5, p.34), the local ZANU-PF party leaders were a law unto themselves. They took opponents' cattle, goats, sheep and chickens and killed them for meat during the campaigns; and the victims were powerless. Even the police were powerless (P8, question 7, p.27; P10, question 5, p.34).

Participant 4 added that one clear effect of this conflict was the achievement of the intended result of the elections by the perpetrators of violence. People had no choice but to vote for Mugabe in

the re-run of the presidential election, with the result that he was re-elected, after the withdrawal of Morgan Tsvangirai (P4, question 4, p.12-13; see also 3.11.8).

#### **4.4.6 Relatives and people affected**

More than half the participants indicated that relatives of theirs or someone they knew had been affected in the conflict of 2008. They were harassed if they had relatives who supported opposition parties. In other cases, they were beaten or even killed if they were members of the opposition party, as in some of the cases already cited above (See also Chapter 3.1.2-3.1.3). Others had their homes burnt and granaries destroyed. These incidents brought sadness to most of the participants as they related their experiences and pain, for example participants 4, 11 and 15. Participant 3 had a brother who survived the bombing of the MDC-T office at Jerera, causing their whole extended family to be affected. So many years after this brutality, the elder brother was still bitter about what the ruling party had done to his younger brother: “I will never forget this violence; it brought a lot of stress, anguish and pain to the whole extended family” (P3, question 2, p.9). On the other hand, Participant 5 is one of the persons who lives at Jerera Growth point and has a role in the ruling party. He knew what the military and militia did to most of the people who were summoned to their base at Jerera. A lot of people were beaten at night for either supporting the opposition party or for being suspected of being supporters. Participant 5 (question 2, p.16) estimated that about 10 people could have died due to the beatings or directly killed and buried in shallow graves and that over a 100 people were affected in Zaka in one way or other by the violence that took place (P5, question 6, p.17). Participant 4, an employee at a government training centre, lamented that his brother-in-law, who was a teacher (name withheld) was burnt and killed because he was an MDC supporter (P4, question 6, p.13). This was very painful to the teacher’s family as well as the whole extended family. He related with pain the terrible event of how his brother-in-law was burnt to death by ZANU-PF agents. Although Participant 10 was a full member of the ruling party, his niece was a local leader in the women’s league for MDC-T. When her home was burnt down by ZANU-PF militia, she brought all her children to live with her uncle, who looked after them at his own home until she could rebuild her home after the run-off elections (P10, question 6, p.34).

#### **4.4.7 Measures to alleviate the situation**

None of the participants, to the best of their knowledge, could recollect any plan of action taken by the perpetrators to alleviate the stressful situation of violence. The perpetrators seemed happy to see the population in such great fear and helplessness. Some participants mentioned that the risk

taken by the mission hospital to treat in private those who were brutally beaten by the militia and military personnel was a very courageous and welcome act of alleviating the plight of the suffering people (P1, question 7, p.2; P7, question 7, p.23). In addition, the risk taken by the hospital administrators to transfer at night the bomb survivors to Masvingo General Hospital, was seen as a heroic act that contributed to the alleviation of the stressful and highly dangerous situation “to escape the armed men who had injured us” (P2, question 7, p.5). In fact, it was life-threatening for anyone who wanted to assist any of the people who suffered violence at the hands of the military and militia, for violence was deliberately perpetrated against all who were considered enemies. So, to help the “enemy” would be provoking the wrath of the perpetrators.

In the case of the bombing at the Mission, the participants said that when people heard about it, it increased the fear of the people in the area. Participant 4 related that a Brigadier (name withheld) together with a number of soldiers came to the Mission and gathered the employees of the hospital and the mission just a few days before the run-off elections (P5, question 12, p.18). He addressed the gathering and informed them that ZANU-PF was not responsible for burning the priests’ house. He himself had obtained his education from a Catholic Mission therefore the military could not do such an act. The Brigadier blamed the opposition party’s youth for having burnt the house. However, Participant 11 said that people knew that youth were led by armed men to the mission and petrol-bombed the house to ashes. (P11, question 9, p.38; P7, question 9, p.23). The participants stated that, because of fear, none of them could do anything at that time to alleviate the situation (P7, question 7, p.23; P9, question 7, p.30). The priest in charge of the Mission informed the local police about the bombed house and they came to the scene of the burning house. Although investigations were made, no official results were released and no arrests have been made to date. Participant 8 explained that the priest in charge also immediately informed Bishop Bhasera, who is in charge of the diocese. In turn the Bishop phoned the deputy president of the country, Simon Muzenda (now late), and informed him of what had transpired at St. Anthony’s Mission. Muzenda was a member of the Catholic Church and his home was in Masvingo diocese, so he made arrangements the following day that soldiers be sent to the Mission to guard it until after the run-off elections. Thus, through the intervention of the Bishop, the deputy president made arrangements to alleviate the situation at the Mission. This was the only alleviation made by government after the destruction of the house in 2008. (P8, question 7, p.27; P10, question 9, p.35).

Although the situation was also tense in the 2013 elections, there were not many incidents of violence in Zaka district, except verbal intimidation by ruling party representatives, who reminded people of what happened in 2008. Participant 10 reported that the government and the ruling party did not do anything to alleviate the effects of the violence, since it was government agencies that had perpetrated most of those violent acts. However, he knew that NGOs and the Church assisted some who were injured by paying for their hospital bills. He added that some women from Zaka were placed by MDC-T in safe houses in Masvingo city, to take them away from the situation in Zaka. (Participant 10, question 7, pp.34-35).

#### **4.4.8 Reconciliation efforts by government**

In the context of the violent incidents in Zaka district the participants were not aware of any efforts made by government to provide reconciliation strategies. Several participants expressed that government did not compensate those who lost homes, property or were maimed, beaten or even killed (Participant 8, question 14, p.26; Participant 9, question 1, p.27; Participant 13, question 14, p.43). They wished government would have done something to take responsibility, as expressed by Participant 9 (question 13, p.31): “I feel very strongly that the government must compensate the victims first and the people who perpetrated violence... must be prosecuted and justice done”. Instead, what some government officials did was only to blame MDC-T for creating such a scenario that necessitated violence to follow. The government was only interested in retaining power and not in the welfare of all the citizens. Therefore, no real reconciliation efforts were made by government to heal the hurting communities in Zaka. On the national level, Pamela Machakanja (2010:1) observes that since the period of land seizures of 2000, followed by violent elections of June 2000, March 2002, March 2005 and March 2008, the ruling party has attracted international censure for their poor human rights record, which resulted in targeted sanctions for the ruling elite. The government has failed to acknowledge the trauma it caused amongst its citizens; it has failed to put in place processes that would bring about forgiveness, healing and reconciliation in the whole society.

#### **4.4.9 Burial of the Jerera bomb victims**

Besides the third person, already discussed above (4.4.1.4), who was buried by his family members at the Jerera Council graveyard, the burial of the other two Jerera bomb victims was assisted by MDC-T leadership. Participant 1 confirmed that “The top leadership of MDC-T provided the families with coffins and provisions that assisted at the burial” (P1, question 7, p.2). As people

were afraid, not many people except relatives attended the funeral”. (P3, question 11, p.11). The rest were too afraid. The situation was very tense and not much time was spent at the graveyard. No elaborate speeches were given except at the cleansing ceremony which was organised several years later, well after the run-off elections. As there was great fear among the people, as expressed by all the participants, most did not attend the burial of MDC victims, for fear of victimisation by the ruling party.

#### **4.4.10 Cleansing ceremony**

Several years after the elections, when the tense atmosphere had subsided, Morgan Tsvangirai requested the local leadership of MDC-T in Zaka to organise supporters and others to come together to remember those who had perished during the campaigns for the presidential run-off of 2008. The local leadership organised the event and indeed many supporters of MDC-T had the courage to congregate at Jerera on the morning on Friday 26 October 2012 near the place of the shallow graves, where a number of victims had been buried. Most of them were later exhumed by their relatives and re-buried at their homes, while the top leadership of MDC-T provided the families with coffins and provisions to assist with the burial. Participant 3, whose brother was a surviving victim of the Jerera bombing, said that although he failed to attend, he was informed that the president of MDC-T, Morgan Tsvangirai, had organised the gathering to pay formal condolences, give speeches and conducted a cleansing ceremony at Jerera (P3, question 12, p.11). Tsvangirai chose for his rally the place used by perpetrators of violence to bury their victims in shallow graves at Jerera Growth Point. When Tsvangirai came to Jerera with some of the national leaders of MDC-T his speech was aimed at consoling the families of victims of the brutal violence perpetrated against his supporters. Other speakers too consoled the families and gave people courage to soldier on against the injustice engineered by government. Thus, the MDC-T requested the local MDC-T elders to perform a traditional cleansing ceremony as well as pour snuff on the ground to appease the deceased. After that the party leader addressed the large gathering and acknowledged the injustice done and gave words of consolation to families and those affected by the violence. Mrs Elizabeth Tsvangirai, the wife of Morgan Tsvangirai, who accompanied her husband to Jerera for the memorial service for MDC members, expressed shock, “...due to gruesome attacks by ZANU-PF and State security agents... and was very saddened when the MDC youths narrated to her how they were attacked by soldiers at the MDC offices at Jerera growth point” (Guma 2008).



Since Participant 12 briefly attended the cleansing ceremony, he revealed that before Tsvangirai came to Jerera the ruling party local leadership of ZANU-PF already heard that the president of MDC-T had initially planned to visit Jerera soon after the killing but later cancelled and actually came only several years later. Therefore, ZANU-PF, believing that Tsvangirai would come, was pro-active and called the community together for their own cleansing ceremony, inviting local chiefs, villagers, headmen, party leaders, business people and civil servants. They also requested African traditional religious ceremony makers to scatter snuff and African beer at the place where the shallow graves had been dug and to make prayers to the spirits to ensure that the people who had lost their lives would not become avenging spirits (P12, question 12, p.41). Snuff and beer are considered as important vehicles of communication to appease the ancestors. They also made prayers to ask for forgiveness from the ancestors of those who had perished. In this way they were cleansing both the deceased and those who had caused their deaths. Participant 4 added that “This ceremony is the single act in Zaka that somehow demonstrates the admittance of perpetrators to the violence inflicted upon the people” (P4, question 12, p.13). Yet at that gathering, the military continued to blame the opposition party for the killings. So, despite that ceremony, the attitude of the perpetrators, both the military and the ruling party, did not reflect remorse at all, continuing to demonise the opposition party and blame it for the violence that had ensued during the 2008 elections.

#### **4.4.11 Need for reconciliation and what should be done**

The cleansing ritual at the site of the shallow graves arranged by the MDC-T leadership in 2012, like the earlier cleansing ceremony arranged by ZANU-PF, was a one-day event, which could not really heal the wounds of the survivors and all the members of the community who had been physically hurt or psychologically traumatised by the violence. In responding to question 13, most of the participants affirmed that there was still need for reconciliation within the local communities (P1, p.3; P3, p.11; P4, p.14; P6, p.20; P8, p.28 and others). Relatives had been responsible for selling out their own kith and kin to the perpetrators, and those who had been betrayed in that way suffered severely from the beatings, harassment and other human rights abuses. Participants agreed that there was a need for a process to bring about healing and harmonious co-existence among the villagers. There was a need for building trust again within the communities. Some participants (P2, question 3, p.4 and P8, question 7, p.25) lay the blame of the violence squarely on the perpetrators while others lay the blame on relatives who had betrayed their fellow family members and thereby

created deep mistrust(P1, question 5, p.1; P2, question 5, p.5 and P15, question 5, p.51). But both these groups of participants agreed that there was an urgent need to engage in a process of reconciliation. Participant 8 (question 13, p.28) stated that

since some of the perpetrators of violence still continue to live in the same communities, I really feel that there is urgent need to continue promoting activities that would bring about reconciliation, forgiveness and healing among the victims of violence.

Echoing these sentiments for reconciliation, Participant 6, added that a number of things should be done. The Church should not only pray for the change of heart but also utilise her Church commissions such as CCJP and Caritas to provide a platform for peace building and reconciliation for villagers (P6, question 16, p.21). In addition, the Church should organise activities, for instance small projects of repairing community roads and small bridges, reclaiming eroded land and organising community sports events that would bring former enemies together (P6, question 16, p.21). Participant 5 affirmed that the Church should take the leading role since the Church is taken to be neutral and would be accepted by both sides of the conflict (P5, question 16, p.18). Participant 7 commented positively on the service that the Bishop of Masvingo conducted on 29 September 2011 when he blessed the renovated priests' house at Jerera. In his sermon the priest who preached on this occasion emphasised the spirit of forgiveness which would bring peace to the community. He read the Gospel passage from Luke 17:11-19 where Jesus healed the ten lepers. He likened the experiences of violence as the disease of leprosy which the community suffered. Now that the house has been renovated and blessed it was time to thank God for the healing, just like one leper went back to thank Jesus after being healed. He encouraged the community to extend pardon to the perpetrators of violence and move on in the spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. He also added that those who suffered the violence in the villages should embrace this opportunity as the Bishop is blessing the house, that he is also blessing and healing our family wounds.

Participant 8 added that the Catholic Church through its Commission of Justice and Peace would be of great assistance if it continued to hold workshops on "Human rights" as well as preach human dignity (P8, question 16, p.28). Participant 11 added an interesting perspective, proposing that the various churches should combine and provide trained persons or their ministers to provide counselling sessions to those affected by violence that have still not yet recovered (P11, question 16.p.39). The idea of combining effort is indeed helpful as it demonstrates the process of

reconciliation amongst the various churches and brings reconciliation to the communities. Participant 10 appealed to the churches, but particularly to the Catholic Church, which played an important role for the liberation of the country. He felt strongly that, just as the missionary bishops stood firm with the suffering African people during the colonial times, echoing the conviction of Bishop Donal Lamont of Mutare diocese<sup>20</sup>. Participant 10 insisted that the bishops with such a respected history should continue to fight for justice and reconciliation after the atrocities that have been committed by the independent government to the people of Zimbabwe: “Unless the Church takes the lead, reconciliation will remain just a dream for many” (P10, question 16, p.36).

#### **4.4.12 Role of government and NGOs in reconciliation**

Most participants were of the opinion that government had a duty and responsibility to enable reconciliation to take place. Since government allowed those atrocities to take place in Jerera, St. Anthony’s mission and other places in Zaka, it had the primary responsibility to show some remorse and alleviate the plight of victims by giving compensation or assisting in some developmental projects for the area. Unfortunately, government is not showing any signs of either taking responsibility of those atrocities nor has it given any compensation to anyone. Participants 2 and 9, both survivors of the Jerera bombing, emotionally expressed with bitterness that government should first accept responsibility for the violence that happened in Zaka instead of falsely blaming opposition parties for initiating the conflict. Secondly, they said that the least they expected from government was some form of compensation for the atrocities they suffered that disabled them from working to support their families (P2, question 5, p.5). Participant 2 added emotionally that “before the run-off elections in June 2008 I owned a bicycle-repair shop, but had to abandon it because my hands were deformed by fire and can no longer work on the bicycles with my hands” (P2, question, p.5). Participants 2 and 9 hoped to be put on a government social welfare programme or be assisted to pay school fees for their children:

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<sup>20</sup> It was Catholic church leaders, usually called ‘missionaries’ by church members because they came from other countries, who most effectively championed the cause of the oppressed during colonial times. For example, Bishop Donal Lamont of Umtali [as Mutare was called then] called the Smith regime with its oppressive laws ‘the real terrorists.’ He said: ‘The Rhodesian system which keeps a whole people in subjection differs not in essence, but only in degree, from the Nazi doctrine of racial superiority’ (Maenzanise, 2008).

With such compensation at least, I would feel that the process of forgiveness and reconciliation would be possible. But with such a vindictive attitude by government it is difficult to consider reconciliation possible” (P2, question 14, p.7).

Some participants (P2, question 15, p.7; P3 question 15, p.11) thought that NGOs like AMANI Trust<sup>21</sup> and others could be instrumental to initiate reconciliation by providing counselling services for survivors, developmental projects in the area that would bring people together: perpetrators, victims and the whole community.

Contrary to the above views, Participant 10 took a different stance. He maintained that the government had lost all credibility and could not initiate and sustain the process of forgiveness and reconciliation in Zaka or in the country as a whole. What the government should do is to remove all military personnel from rural areas and from road blocks and return them to their barracks. Soldiers should not be involved in politics and therefore should not address people at political rallies. Soldiers are meant to protect the country from outside enemies and not to terrorise and inflict harm on its citizens. He explained further that government currently deployed what are called “agricultural supervisors” in rural areas under the scheme of “Command Agriculture”, a top-down strategy that is intended to produce greater yields in agriculture. While this scheme is yet to succeed, the hidden role of these supervisors is intertwined with political control because they are retired soldiers and war veterans who were given some elementary agricultural training, but their main task is to monitor all people and act as intelligence agents of government, according to Participant 10. He said that if government was genuine it would let university trained agriculturalists supervise rural farmers like the “agricultural extension officers” do (P10, question 15, p.35).

However, since government wishes to continue to control the rural folk it has deployed soldiers in the name of improving agriculture. Participant 10 stressed that the work of reconciliation and bringing about forgiveness and healing should be done by Churches as these are not only qualified but also generally regarded as “a credible and acceptable player in the process of bringing about reconciliation and peace” by most citizens (P10, question 16, p.35-36). He added that it would

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<sup>21</sup> AMANI Trust in particular was providing counselling services free of charge to victims in Matabeleland. “While the telling of stories is an important step, there is also need for some kind of economic compensation... there is need to repair communities through development. This may mean more schools, better roads, dams, jobs and other types of economic progress for affected regions...” (CCJP 1999).

make better sense if the government utilised the soldiers trained as builders to build bridges which are destroyed by floods, and construct proper houses for those whose homes were burnt during the violence period (P10, question 15.p.35). This would create a good relationship between the soldiers and the ordinary people who experienced suffering at the hands of the same military personnel. Participant 10 spoke from the vantage point of being a former insider of the ‘high command’ of the ZANU-PF administration. According to him, the basic concern of the ruling party was to retain power and not reconciliation with anyone (P10, question 15, p.35).

Following this claim, Participant 10 maintained that although government set up an “Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integrations” (ONHRI) in 2009, headed by one of the vice Presidents, John Nkomo, it had not succeeded in its purpose. It was mere propaganda when it proclaimed: “Peace begins with me; peace begins with you and peace begins with us” as was stated in many newspapers (*The Chronicle*, 17 January 2017). This slogan was coined by John Nkomo when he was appointed to head the Organ for National Healing in preparation for the elections in 2013. Participant 10 was echoing the words of the ZANU-PF 2013 Election Manifesto: “Team ZANU-PF 2013: Peace begins with me, Peace begins with you, Peace begins with all of us” (ZANU-PF Election Manifesto 2013).

Participant 10 continued to explain that the Organ was meant to implement national healing, peace and reconciliation, but that a process of reconciliation was possible only when truth is told and those responsible for violence acknowledge it and take responsibility. On the one hand the ONHRI never created a platform for victims to air their stories of suffering and on the other hand government was still reluctant to take responsibility for the atrocities committed by its military and other state agencies. For Participant 10, government had thereby disqualified itself as a genuine partner for reconciliation (P10, question 15, p.35). This view of Participant 10 is corroborated in the PhD research of Sheila Chamburuka (2019) who said: “Indeed, this organ did not yield the desired results”.

With regard to NGO’s, Participant 10 is in agreement with other participants who have a positive view of what those various organisations have done to assist Zimbabwe in its various needs. NGOs have assisted in programmes of education, health, social welfare, drought relief, self-help projects, counselling and many others. Therefore, with such projects NGOs would complement the efforts of Churches in bringing about a real process leading to reconciliation, forgiveness and healing

among the suffering people of Zaka district and potentially the whole country (P10, question 15, pp. 35-6).

#### **4.4.13 The role of the Church in reconciliation**

In regard to the role of the church in reconciliation, most participants accepted that the church had an important role to play to bring about reconciliation in the local communities as well as in the country after those devastating violent experiences. According to the participants, the role of the church has many perspectives, ranging from its historical contributions during the colonial times to the post independent times. The Church was cited as being supportive to the oppressed, marginalised and voiceless people: "...it [the Church] has a history of supporting the oppressed from the colonial times. Even up to now people look up to churches to play this role" (P2, question 16, p.7). Participant 1 also affirmed the role of the church as being supportive to the oppressed and voiceless (P1, question 16, p.3). With such capacity the church can be involved in bringing perpetrators and victims together to dialogue, or at least be involved in common activities such as sports, projects or workshops. By so doing the church could create platforms for people to engage with one another and bring about a process of dialogue which would lead to reconciliation: "The Church can facilitate dialogue between the two parties on the village level, so that the people are engaged in issues that will build up their villages" (P4, question 16, p.14; P7, question 16, p.24; P14, question 16, p.49). Besides dialogue, other participants highlighted joint community projects as a good means to engage the contending people to resolve their challenges (P3, question 16, p.11; P12, question 16, p.42; P14, question 16, p.49). Participant 5 said: "It is only the Church that remains with credible legitimacy to engage all sides into a process of reconciliation" (P5, question 16, p.18).

In addition to the role of the Church engaging perpetrators and victims on the village level and communities, some participants expressed that the Church is so positioned that it can also engage the highest levels of governance into dialogue, with the intention of resolving challenges of violence against the ordinary citizens. Some participants for example Participant 2, p.7; Participant 9, p.32; Participant 14, p.49 and Participant 15, p.53 saw the need that the Church should engage with government to address the issues of violence: "Church leaders have capacity to talk to government and discuss the way forward to rectify these terrible violent events that took place at Jerera, St Anthony mission and the whole country" (Participant 9, question 16, p.32). The Church exercised this important role of engaging government to deal with challenging issues that affect

many people during the colonial period and therefore people expect the Church to continue to intervene in order to assist the suffering.

Another role that was mentioned was that the Church already has a teaching role as one of its goals. The church runs schools where it has the opportunity to engage many youths and teach them Christian values, which enable them to appreciate others and respect others. Schools enhance good cultural practices and form children in a holistic manner. As demonstrated by Participant 1: “The Zimbabwe Council of Churches also sent their drama groups to organise our youths in schools and churches to perform drama that teaches us to live in peace” (P1, Question 16, p.3). Participant 10, p.36 also affirmed the important role of teaching by the church. In addition to the aforementioned, Participant 11 highlighted the critical contribution of the church in imparting “the social teachings of the church” both to pupils and Christian congregations: “The Church has various topics ranging from the Gospel itself, gospel values, human rights, social teachings of the Church as well as developmental activities for all ages” (P11, questions 16, p.39). The Church’s teaching includes imparting skills so as to equip youths to be empowered as stated by Participant 8, question 16, p.28: “Caritas would also impart skills of sustainable development in agriculture and livelihoods to the communities”. Participant 6, question 16, p.21 pointed out that, besides teaching, the Church has an added advantage of preaching which is a form of teaching Scriptures to the faithful: “...the Church should continue to preach and teach about human dignity.”

Closely connected to teaching, other participants mentioned the Church’s responsibility to counsel people, especially the survivors of violence. Like some NGOs who have counselling skills (P8, question 15, p.27), the Church too needs these skills. Counselling therefore was considered as contributing to the healing process of those violated in any way by the violence suffered. Thus, the church’s role covered this important method of assisting the vulnerable, as reflected by Participant 9 p.31 and Participant 10, who stated: “When people relate their stories it helps them to empty and begin the process of healing” (P10, question 16, p.36).

A fundamental role of the Church in working for reconciliation that was mentioned by participants is its duty to pray (P6, question 16, p.21; P 7, question 16, p.24; P13, question 16, p.46 and P14, question 16, p.49). Participant 7, question 16, p.24) suggested: “Common days of prayers for peace and reconciliation can be organised by the fraternity of churches and attended by all”. Prayer brings about not only healing but it also transforms people. When the Church prays, both the survivors

and perpetrators are enabled to transform. In addition to prayer, religious music or church hymns were seen as instrumental in assisting to transform the situation of people. Hence Church songs should be encouraged among the faithful. One participant said:

Music provides space for people, it offers parameters that can be used to frame experiences, perceptions, feelings and transform people in a very positive way. Music also increases desire to pray so people have opportunity to turn more to God when they listen to music (P13, question 16, pp45-6).

In addition to prayer and music, the formation of Small Christian Communities (SCC) and Bible studies were recommended as contributory means to empower the faithful to deal with the challenges of violence that were suffered in Zaka. Participant 3 stated that the Church could involve people on the local level by building small Christian communities (P3, question 16: p.11). Thus, the Church was encouraged to continue this role in the area. Another participant said: “The Church can form small Christian communities in villages for prayers and Bible studies to empower Christians in their faith” (P14, question 16, p.49).

From the views mentioned above it can be deduced that the Church is considered by most participants to have an important role in reconciliation, both in the local communities as well as at the national level. At the level of communities, the Church could bring together the perpetrators and survivors to engage in dialogue, participate in joint projects and other fora so as to begin the process of reconciliation. At the national level the Church was expected to engage the government so that the latter would deal with the challenges of violence that the people in Zaka, as well as the whole country, experienced during the run-off presidential elections. In both cases the Church was seen as a potential mediator that would assist to bring about real change in effecting reconciliation and peace in the country.

#### **4.4.14 What legacy do you want to establish for your children and community?**

When they were asked this question, practically every participant responded in the positive. All of them wanted their children to have a better community and a better life than the one their parents experienced during the violent episodes. Participants expressed various aspects that reflected better lives for their children. Several participants expressed the idea of establishing a legacy of peaceful co-existence (P1 p.3; P3 p.11; P7 p.24; P8 p.28; P10 p.36; P11 p.39; P12 p.42; and P15 p.53). For instance, Participant 1 said: “I wish to leave a legacy of peaceful co-existence in our community.



I really am concerned that my children concentrate on their education so they prepare their future” (P1, question 17, p.3). When responding to this question on legacy, participant repeated that the issue of education was very important for him.

Another aspect mentioned in relation to legacy was that of justice (P2 and 9). Since it requires a sustained process to establish justice after such a long duration of violence and oppression, one participant expressed the desire that his children would know that they were to carry on with the process of establishing justice for the community and the country:

Since I was injured in the process of campaigning for true justice and change in our country, I wish that my children would know that the struggle has not stopped for us to live well in Zimbabwe. They should struggle for equity, sharing of resources and real peace in the country (P2, question 17, p.7). Participant 3 said that he would like his children to “inherit good Christian values where they respect the rights of others” (P3, question 17, p.11 and P14, question 17, p.49). Others expressed the same idea but used the term “moral values (P4).

Some participants (P4, P5, P7 and P9) highlighted the aspect of “respect for others and right to life” because they had experienced such high degree of disrespect for the lives of others during the campaign for the run-off elections. He stated: “I wish to leave a legacy to my children that they have respect for other people’s lives and that every human life is sacred” (P 4, question 17, p.14).

Two participants (P8 an P10) stated that they wanted to establish a legacy of peace and reconciliation for their children and community: “I would want to establish the legacy of true peace and reconciliation among the people of God” (P8, question 17, p.28).

An interesting response that came up in connection with establishment of legacy was that of providing children with employment and a means of livelihood. This was expressed as an appeal to government to create employment for their children (Participants 1, 2, 13, and 15): “I also wish our children can have proper employment in this country and not always go to other countries and run away from their country because of bad governance” (P13, question 17, p.46).

One participant also mentioned, among other aspects, the establishment of “the rule of law” as an important aspect for the country. In this respect P15 said:

I strongly advocate for a truly transformed Zimbabwe where we have respect for human dignity, tolerance, respect of the rule of law and peaceful co-existence so that our people have a chance to truly develop and earn a living for themselves (P15, question 17, p.53).

#### **4.4.15 Conclusion**

Several dimensions of feelings, experiences, emotions, reactions frustrations and hopes were mentioned by participants in responding to the various individual questions during the semi-structured interviews. From the above responses I now identify and analyse the key themes that emerge from the semi-structured interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of those experiences and to prepare the questions for the focus group. This set of themes is intended to enable the focus group to grapple with finding a way forward and providing suggestions of how to heal the wounds and establish a process of reconciliation between the perpetrators and survivors of the violence of the 2008 elections.

### **4.5 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES TO THE VIOLENCE**

Section 4.4 contains a description of the interview responses by moving from one interview question to the next. That has given a good overview of the sentiments expressed, but I now analyse the responses in terms of the key themes that emerge from the interviews. This is necessary for drawing up an agenda for the actions of churches in response to the issues raised in the interviews, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. First of all, however, these themes constitute an agenda for the focus group with local church leaders, whom I have invited to reflect with me on possible church responses to the issues raised. As will be seen below, these themes have shaped the structure and content of the focus group conversation, ensuring that it addressed the pain and brokenness expressed by the participants in a concrete way.

The themes that emerged from the interview data can be distinguished as: a) negative experiences of suffering and disorientation, and b) positive interventions of a constructive nature. The negative experiences in turn can be distinguished as more personal and more structural in nature.

#### **4.5.1 Negative personal experiences (suffering and disorientation)**

##### *4.5.1.1. Loss and mourning*

A deep sense of loss was experienced by various participants. Loss of life was the most serious and impactful. Section 4.4.1.4 referred to the well-publicised death of three MDC party members at Jerera, but participants also spoke of other deaths due to beatings and torture. As indicated,

participant 5 estimated that about 10 people could have died in the area, either during the attacks, or sometime later due to their injuries (see 4.4.1.4). Participant 4 spoke of the pain of their whole extended family at the death of a cousin, an MDC-T supporter, who was beaten to death at the ZANU-PF base at Jerera (see 4.4.1.5). A painful sense of loss caused by the unjustified murder of an innocent relative is deeply ingrained in the memory of numerous families. The senselessness of this loss was heightened by the fact that their relative was not engaging in criminal activity but exercising the democratic right to support the political party of their choice, a right which is enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution.

#### *4.5.1.2 Anger and bitterness*

The participants who had been so directly affected by the violence that they carried physical scars or disabilities in their bodies, expressed bitterness due to the bodily trauma they experienced. The lasting dehumanising effect of such personal scars was evident in what they said. For example, “I was angry and bitter against those perpetrators. I am still bitter as we are now disfigured” (P2, question 2, p.4). Their scars keep on reminding them of the ordeal they had endured (p.5). However, it was not only the physical scars that stayed with them; the intimidation and hate speech levelled against them (as MDC-T supporters) caused a lasting resentment (p.5). The eleven intervening years did little to erase the bitterness, not only for those with physical scars, but also for their close relatives (p.5).

#### *4.5.1.3 Fear, helplessness and confusion*

It was significant how many participants spoke about the fear instilled in them at the time by the violent intimidation of the militia and ZANU-PF leaders. Threats such as “[K]now where to write your X ... otherwise you will pay with your blood if he loses again” (P5, p.16f) had a deeply disturbing effect. The threats, beatings, sexual abuse and killings were deliberately aimed at crushing political opposition and forcing compliance with the wishes of the ruling party. It was particularly the abuse of young women (p.23) by the militia that demoralised the families who were affected, since it traumatised the young women and dishonoured the family name. It was also something they dared not speak about in public, to protect the honour of their daughters. It was that sense of helplessness that had such a harrowing effect (p.23); people felt totally unprotected from the “reign of terror” (p.21).

A disturbing aspect of the “fear, trauma and anger” caused by the violence of 2008 is that the confusion and disorientation that it brought about still affects people today (p.23). As one participant said: “I was afraid, confused and completely devastated ... Up to now I have not completely recovered” (p.25).

#### **4.5.2 Negative structural impact**

It may be a bit artificial to distinguish between the personal and structural effects of the 2008 violence, but it highlights the dimensions of its impact that stretch wider than merely individual suffering. It is important to take note of these dimensions, since they have become endemic in the society and are therefore even more difficult to overcome than personal suffering.

##### *4.5.2.1 Victimisation and humiliation*

The burial of the victims of the violence was another source of suffering. In the first place the perpetrators buried their victims in shallow graves at Jerera Growth Point (p.16). That practice is extremely humiliating in an African community, since that is the way one buries an animal. The deceased were not accorded the dignity of a human funeral in a properly dug grave, with an appropriate family ritual. The dehumanising effect which that had on the families and on the whole community is hard to fathom. It was more than a personal insult to the deceased and their families; it had a structural impact since it defiled the whole community.

A second structural aspect of burials was that fact that a village head refused permission for some of the deceased to be buried in his village, for fear of reprisals from local ZANU-PF leaders (p.1). In other words, the personal fear and intimidation also had structural (or policy) implications in a village that usually honoured all its deceased members with great respect.

##### *4.5.2.2 Abuse of women*

The abuse of young women by soldiers and militia has already been mentioned (4.4.1.5), but it is important to emphasise that those actions not only had an impact on the affected women and their families; it also affirmed and reinforced the patriarchal system that treated women as inferior and as less human than men. In every situation of war or violence the people who are worst affected are always women and children. In this analysis of the violence – and in the reflections in Chapter 5 on what churches could do to overcome its enduring effects – the dimension of patriarchal abuse needs to receive proper attention (see 5.3.5 and 5.5.3.4 (a).)

#### 4.5.2.3 *Economic impact*

During the 2008 election conflict, the economic impact of the violence was already evident. In the first place, the soldiers and youth militia “took opponents’ cattle, goats, sheep and chickens and killed them for meat” (p.5). The powerlessness of families against this economic abuse has already been discussed but it is necessary to point out that this amounted to theft and the illegal exploitation of people’s livelihood. Secondly, the granaries of some families were destroyed (p.33), which destroyed the food they had harvested and saved up for the future, thus doing them direct economic harm. Thirdly, some families had their homes burnt down by the militia (p.1, 18, 22, 29 and 33), which created a serious existential crisis to whole households. They had to seek temporary shelter with family members or friends, who would be willing to accommodate them until the violence subsided. However, the economic harm was not limited to the period of actual violence. The structural impact on people’s lives was more destructive than that. The loss of livestock and granaries through theft and arson imposed a financial burden on them when they began reconstructing their lives. The destruction of a home, in particular, caused a huge economic setback to a family as it struggled to rebuild its habitation.

Even more permanent was the impact on the livelihood of someone who had been disabled by the violence. Some participants explained how they became unemployed (and in some cases unemployable) due to the injuries they had sustained (p.5), leaving their families economically challenged until the present.

#### 4.5.2.4 *Division and distrust*

A number of participants indicated that in their extended families relatives no longer trusted one another, since they belonged to different political parties (p.48, 51). When people were beaten or harassed because their own relatives or neighbours had reported them to the perpetrators, it caused serious (and sometimes permanent) distrust and resentment. Such a breach of trust was not just a personal or interpersonal matter; it brought about structural alienation in extended families and neighbourhoods (p.15, 51). As one participant pointed out, some of the perpetrators (whose names are widely known) continue to live in the same communities (p.11, 27) but since nobody is able or willing to address the matter, the awkward silence around it affects the health and happiness of the whole community (p.19, 23). According to participant 8 (p.28), the structural and social consequences of the violence require healing and restoration. In similar vein, Bishop Bhasera

compared the experiences of violence as a leprosy which the community suffered, causing deep distrust and alienation (p.23).

#### 4.5.2.5 *Lawlessness*

One of the most disturbing structural dimensions of the violence was the general lawlessness and lack of accountability that it expressed – and perpetuated. Participant X pointed out that it was a harking back to (or continuation of) the intimidation tactics used by the guerrilla fighters during the liberation war in the 1970s. Participant 10 said: “the path of violence that we have been travelling from the time of liberation should have ended at independence of this country in 1980.” (p. 33).

The first aspect of lawlessness was the disinformation and propaganda spread by ZANU-PF officials, for example by blaming the MDC opposition for burning down the priests’ house (p.26). As reported above, both the military and the ruling party continued to demonise the opposition party and blame it for the violence (p.5, 13, 22, 27). The saying “The first casualty of war is the truth” was confirmed in this situation, as the ZANU-PF falsely accused the MDC opposition of the violence. Participant 10 said that, due to this lawlessness, “our country has not yet recovered from use of violence and has not yet regained the rule of law” (p.33).

A second aspect of the general lawlessness identified by participants was the abuse of a traditional African religious ceremony – scattering snuff and African beer where the shallow graves had been dug – to ensure that the people who had lost their lives would not become avenging spirits, while not admitting that they were responsible for the deaths of those victims (p.39). Such an abuse of religion, to cover up the transgressions of the powerful and to keep them in power, was an integral part of the lawlessness and breakdown of community values.

Thirdly, the lasting structural impact of the violence is that community members are still reluctant and fearful to vote in elections: “I have so much fear that even now it still affects me” (P11 p. 37). They are afraid to vote “since they associate it with violence and thus are afraid, they may be beaten” (P5 p. 16). This lawlessness thereby undermines democracy in a fundamental way, which leads to the final subsection.

#### 4.5.2.6 *Oppression*

The lawlessness discussed above could be further characterised as political oppression. Participant 10 pointed out that

This was part of ZANU-PF strategy developed during the war of liberation to coerce people into supporting the party even through beatings and other violent means as the whole concept of liberation was based on forcefully taking power and the land from the colonial oppressors. Therefore, force was part of strategy to achieve the intended result (p. 33).

While such lawless tactics were widely accepted (though not universally supported) in Zimbabwe in the liberation war against an illegitimate colonial regime, their use by a democratic government against its own citizens can only be called oppressive. It seems that when ZANU-PF changed from a liberation movement to a ruling party it did not undergo a fundamental change of mind and approach; instead, it continued to use its state power as the ruling party to “perpetrate violence against all those perceived to be enemies of the government” (p.44). This made Participant 4 remark that “politics is a game of violence” (p.13) and Participant 15 that “the government was only interested in retaining power and not in the welfare of all the citizens” (p.51).

### **4.5.3 Positive actions during the violence**

#### *4.5.3.1 Acts of compassion*

As became clear above, the participants not only expressed negative experiences and sentiments; they also highlighted positive interventions and compassionate acts of some people and institutions in the midst of the violence. One example was Participant 5, who held a leadership post in the ruling party, but risked interceding for people: “Whenever it was possible, I talked to the military leaders to release some of the people whom I believed were not members of the opposition. It was a terrible time” (p.15). Other participants acknowledge the risk taken by the Catholic mission hospital “to treat in private those who were brutally beaten by the militia and military personnel.” They called it “a very courageous and welcome act of alleviating the plight of the suffering people.” (p.2). The hospital administrators took the further risk to transfer at night the bomb survivors to Masvingo General Hospital, which was described as “a heroic act” that alleviated the “stressful and highly dangerous situation” (p.6). Participant 10 referred to the fact that NGOs and the Church “assisted some who were injured by paying for their hospital bills” (P10 p.34).

Many participants also referred to the fact that at least some families were allowed to give their deceased relatives a decent burial at their family home (p.15). In some cases, this happened much later, so that they needed to be exhumed by their relatives and re-buried at their homes (p.18). Participant 1 mentioned that the top leadership of MDC-T provided the families with coffins and

provisions that assisted at the burial (p.2). In other words, in spite of (and in the midst of) the violence, there was some human decency as families could lay their loved ones to rest.

#### *4.5.3.2 Acts of protection*

Participants also referred to acts of protection. Participant 10 mentioned that the MDC-T placed some women from Zaka “in safe houses in Masvingo city” to withdraw them from the danger zone (p.35). This was particularly necessary since some women MDC-T supporters were victims of arson, forcing them to flee with their families. Participant 10, who was an active member of the ruling party, took in his niece (a local leader in the MDC-T women’s league) and her family in to his home and protected them after their home was burnt down by ZANU-PF militia (P10: p35.).

Another act of protection was carried out by Bishop Bhasera, who phoned the deputy president, Simon Muzenda, to inform him of what had transpired at St. Anthony’s Mission (p.39), which led to a protective police guard to be stationed at the Mission.

### **4.5.4 Proposals for the future**

#### *4.5.4.1 Demand for compensation*

All the participants agreed that concrete steps need to be taken to bring about reconciliation in the Zaka district. One concern was for compensation to the families of victims, an emphasis that could be seen as a call for restorative justice, but there were two views on agency in this regard. The first view was that perpetrators should be the actors, assisted by the church. The Church should encourage perpetrators to give some compensation to victims: “...the Church should have the bottom-up approach to initiate programmes and projects on the local level that involve both perpetrators and victims... When the Church initiates then government has opportunity to pay compensation to communities to show remorseful gesture to grieved families and local people (P8, question 14, p. 28). The second was that government should take the responsibility to pay compensation, since it was directly implicated in the violence, but that [it] “had done nothing to compensate those who lost homes, property or were maimed, beaten or even killed” (P9, question 1, p.29).

Both of these courses of action would be extremely difficult to get off the ground, due to the sensitivity of the issues and the possible financial and legal implications for a perpetrator or for the government to formally accept responsibility for the violence – and all the damage it has caused.



#### 4.5.4.2 *Initiatives for reconciliation*

Each of the participants affirmed that there was a need for reconciliation within the local communities (p.10, 19, 22, 26, 33, 36, 44, 47, 50 and others), but there wasn't complete agreement on what it would entail. One participant emphasised the importance of apology: "...the Church should encourage perpetrators to find a platform to apologise for their acts of violence and not just remain silent" (P1, question 1, p.1). Two direct survivors of the violence agreed, but linked apology to compensation: "With such compensation at least I would feel that the process of forgiveness and reconciliation would be possible. But with such a vindictive attitude by government it is difficult to consider reconciliation possible" (P2, question 1, p.5 and P9, question 1, p.29). For them, reconciliation cannot only be a matter of words or attitudes; it has to be accompanied by tangible expressions of remorse in the form of compensation. To link this with the previous section (4.5.4.1), one could characterise this view as saying that reconciliation is impossible without visible and tangible (restorative) justice. The question is whether this expression of "conditional" forgiveness falls short of a Christian understanding of grace or whether it makes a theologically valid connection between reconciliation and justice. I return to this issue in 5.4.2.4.

Another emphasis regarding reconciliation had to do with the inadequacy of the cleansing rituals organised by ZANU-PF and MDC-T shortly after the violence. Many participants felt that the ZANU-PF event was discredited because that party did not take responsibility for the atrocities committed. Other participants, who appreciated the ritual arranged by MDC-T, felt that a one-day event could not "really heal the wounds of victims and all those affected by the violence..." (P1, question 12, p.3) and that more needed to be done.

Most participants were in agreement that churches had an important role to play in this regard and should take the initiative. One example: "Unless the Church takes the lead reconciliation will remain just a dream for many" (P10, question 14, p.36).

Participants proposed church-initiated activities such as

- small projects of repairing community roads, small bridges, reclaiming eroded land and organising community sports that would bring former enemies together (p. 21, 36, 51, 54).
- various churches should combine and provide trained persons or their ministers to provide counselling sessions to those affected by violence that have still not yet recovered. (P2: question 14, p.8; P5: question 14, p.18; P14: question 1, p. 51).

- an urgent need for the church to train youngsters in schools and church services to be tolerant and accept every person as a brother or sister despite difference of opinion (P2, question 16, p.9; P5, question 17, p.18; P8, question 17, p.28; P11, question 16, p.41;).

The study will return to these constructive proposals in various sections of Chapter 5.

#### *4.5.4.3 The role of NGOs and development*

Some participants thought that, in addition to churches, NGOs like AMANI Trust and others could also play a key role in reconciliation by providing counselling services for victims and development projects in the area that could bring perpetrators, victims and the whole community together in hope-giving, future-directed projects (P6 question 15, 21; P8: question 15, p.28; P10: question 14, p.36; P14: question 14, p.50).

#### **4.5.5 Conclusion on the thematic analysis of the interviews**

From the thematic analysis above, we have perceived the sentiments, expressions, gestures and thoughts that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The interviews have informed the researcher of a whole spectrum of what the survivors have gone through during the 2008 political violence in Zaka district. The researcher has deduced expressions of negative experiences of loss and mourning, anger and bitterness; several structural imprints of victimisation, humiliation, division, distrust, lawlessness and others. From the semi-structured interviews were found some positive acts of compassion and protection of victims/survivors. Finally, survivors also expressed their future expectations. This analysis has equipped the researcher to be attentive to the focus group as it suggests possible solutions and way forward to resolve these challenges and discover implementable actions and projects in communities.

#### **4.6 FOCUS GROUP**

As explained in 4.2, the second phase of data generation in this thesis happened by means of a focus group. By using this qualitative research method, this section of the chapter attempts to answer three related sub-questions: 1.3.2.3 c: What is the response of committed Christians in the face of their suffering due to the political violence? 1.3.2.5 b: What suggestions are given by committed Christians as the way forward for their communities? 1.3.2.5 c: What do they understand as their Christian role in this conflict-ridden scenario in their communities?

#### **4.6.1 Focus group process**

From the advice of the parish priest and the school head we arranged to meet the focus group at the mission in the side wing of a big church at the mission. This venue was selected for several reasons. From the geography of the church, it is built close to the presbytery away from the schools and the hospital under the mission. Therefore, there was assured privacy and people would not visit the place except for services on Sundays. The day of the meeting for the Focus group was 25 July 2020, a Saturday. Prior to the meeting I had already met each of the participants to request whether he/she would be willing to participate in the focus group. To those who accepted, I sent invitations to come to the venue of the meeting at the church. When we finally met, I asked one of the church leaders to lead us in an opening prayer for our meeting. I acknowledged the presence of each one of them and thanked them for coming. I then introduce the theme and purpose of my research.

After introducing the theme and purpose of my research to the group and explaining the ethical clearance I obtained from UNISA to carry it out, I invited each member of the focus group to introduce themselves so that the participants could get to know each other better. I gave everyone a chance to clarify whatever was not clear to them about the nature and purpose of the research. Having finished the preliminaries, I introduced the discussion of the prepared questions (see below). These questions were designed in such a way that they would not stifle discussion but allow participants to freely contribute their views and raise whatever aspects they regarded as relevant. Thus, the questions had a purpose similar to those used in the semi-structured interviews: to guide the discussion but not to impose a rigid agenda. The purpose of the focus group was not necessarily to produce a complete consensus or unified response to each question, but to stimulate as much creative thinking and interaction as possible. I engaged the services of rapporteur to assist me to record the responses of the focus group. Therefore, in compiling the responses to the questions of the focus group I was able to utilise both reports, that of the rapporteur as well as mine, so as to be as comprehensive as possible.

#### **4.6.2 Focus group questions**

The following questions for discussion in the focus group, were distilled from the thematic analysis of the interview data, as set out in section 4.5 above. These questions capture six key issues raised in the interviews and have been formulated in a way to enable the focus group conversation to contribute optimally to this research. Focus group participants were invited to discuss the role

churches could play to foster reconciliation and healing in the Zaka district in the light of the violence that occurred there in 2008. Each question is prefaced with a short preamble or explanation that sets the context of the question by referring back to the interview data. The six questions are:

4.6.2.1 Explanation: Some interview participants indicated that they are still experiencing personal anger and bitterness as a result of the violence they (or their close relatives) suffered during the elections of 2008.

Question: Can churches facilitate the healing of memories of those victims? If so, how?

4.6.2.2 Explanation: Many participants said that they experienced trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion during the violence of 2008 and that those feelings are still evident in the community.

Question: Do you think churches can empower people to overcome such feelings? If so, how?

4.6.2.3 Explanation: Some participants said that the violence of 2008 caused distrust and division among families and neighbours, since some people betrayed others as “sell-outs” (*vatengesi*) to political leaders or the militia.

Question: Can churches create platforms for reconciliation and healing of such distrust and division in families and neighbourhoods? If so, how?

4.6.2.4 Explanation: Some victims of violence expressed in the interviews that they are waiting and hoping for compensation for the injuries and economic losses they suffered in the 2008 violence.

Question: Is this a justified expectation? If so, can churches do anything to make this a reality?

4.6.2.5 Explanation: From the interviews it emerged that some participants are willing to forgive the perpetrators of the violence, on condition that the restitution (or compensation, see previous question) has been implemented.

Question: How should churches respond to such an attitude of “conditional forgiveness”?

4.6.2.6 Explanation: According to some participants, the violence of 2008 created a situation of lawlessness which demonised political opponents and which has become endemic in Zimbabwean society.

Question: Can churches help society to overcome this “culture” of violence and lawlessness? If so, how?

## **4.7 FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

As already stated above (4.6.1) the aim of the focus group discussion was to assist the church leaders to come up with suggestions of how the Church should move forward to respond to the issues raised in the semi-structured interviews of the various individuals above. It was not expected that the responses emanating from the focus group would give unified answers to the various facts raised by those who experienced the violence and pain, but the general responses were summarised and where responses to the same question were varied such observations were also carefully recorded.

After reporting the responses from the focus group (4.7.1 - 4.7.6) I look at those same responses in 4.8 through the “lens” of the four “moments” of the praxis cycle (Contact, Analysis, Reflection and Response) propounded by Wijzen, Henriot and Mejia (2005). That opens up another perspective on the responses to the six questions that have already been presented in 4.7. While Chapter 5 will give a detailed theological reflection on the possible responses of churches to the violence experienced by the community of Zaka, Chapter 4.8 only recasts the focus group responses in terms of the four “moments” of the praxis cycle as a transition to the reflection on them in Chapter 5.

### **4.7.1 Responses to Question 1**

Some interview participants indicated that they are still experiencing personal anger and bitterness as a result of the violence they (or their close relatives) suffered during the elections of 2008. Can churches facilitate the healing of memories of those victims? If so, how?

There was general agreement in the focus group about the capacity of the Church to assist in facilitating the healing of the painful memories of 2008. Personal anger and bitterness that were revealed by victims were affirmed by church leaders in Zaka district as they deliberated upon how to respond to those acute challenges. The advantage of churches is that they are well placed in

being able to deal with both perpetrators and survivors. People have faith and trust in churches that they stand for truth and want to assist the well-being of people. Thus, all members of the focus group agreed that churches could facilitate the healing of those painful memories inflicted by the violence of 2008 (Focus group, question 1).

There were several suggestions from the focus group of *how* this alleviation would be carried out by churches. One clear method highlighted is that churches must continue to teach the faithful on human dignity, respect for every person and principles of the Social Teachings of the Church (Reference was made to *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004). Through their teaching churches can reach out to both survivors and perpetrators of violence and educate them that violence is not a solution to conflicts that people encounter. The method of teaching is also non-threatening to listeners as it endeavours to give people worthwhile information. The method of teaching people assists them to gain insight into the challenges they face that of anger and bitterness and learn how to handle them and their pain and grow out of it and seek healing. In this way churches can alleviate the plight of those affected.

Another method put forward by the focus group was that of prayer. Prayer not only expresses people's petitions to God but community prayer brings people together and breaks down barriers between them. When survivors and perpetrators meet in prayer at churches, the very process of praying together brings about some change of attitudes that may lead to "letting-go" of the anger and bitterness. As this process takes place, the healing of injuries suffered during the violence may follow. Thus, the possibility of forgiveness is made available between survivors and perpetrators. Prayer therefore brings about a change of heart and some spirit of accepting one another, at least during prayer.

Some participants added that prayer should not be confined to church buildings or formal services, but extended to villages by creating Small Christian Communities (SCC) which meet regularly in the villages within the parish. A theological thrust stressed by the church leaders is that of the power of prayer. Through prayer the community strengthens its faith and assists the sufferers to bear the pain of the violence they experienced. Indeed, the focus group agreed that "the power of prayer is what the Church has at its disposal to transform this sad situation" (Focus group, question 1). This is not only therapeutic but also alleviates the condition of suffering, especially by the survivors. Thus, the role of churches in creating spaces for prayer remains significant and part and

parcel of the alleviation provided to sufferers of violence who are still angry and bitter. Further it was acknowledged that churches themselves must create moments of inter-denominational prayer sessions: “Various churches must also come together from time to time and pray together” (Focus group, question 1).

The focus group also discussed the vital role of counselling for both survivors and perpetrators. It was observed that both survivors and perpetrators want to be listened to as they relate their stories. By relating their stories, they unwind and empty themselves so that the healing process can take place. “We as churches have also a duty to talk to perpetrators and understand what their motivation was and try to assist them. They need to be listened to and counselled” (Focus group, question 1). The group agreed to a further explanation expressed by an experienced social worker and leader that “Churches can combine victim and perpetrator because both come to church, and ... can bring them together through psycho-social support through discussions in various groups and counselling” (Focus group, question 1). While there was general agreement that both survivors and perpetrators need help, many of the leaders feel that “our assistance should be victim-centred...so as to assist victims in their grieving process” (Focus group, question 1). Leaders noted that continued anger and bitterness was also detrimental to health: “We should also make people aware that anger and bitterness can affect our health... therefore Churches can help with inner healing of those affected through counselling” (Focus group, question 1). It was seen that institutions of churches can be used to provide counselling centres. Schools, hospitals, clinics and other church institutions can set up counselling centres (Focus group, question 1) with trained personnel to assist not only our faithful but all affected people to move on in their lives and not be haunted by the violence that took place such a long time ago. Churches can both respond and alleviate to anger and bitterness of survivors through counselling those affected at their various centres.

A member of the focus group added another dimension from her nursing profession, namely of involving qualified persons to give talks to various guilds of churches to enlighten them on issues of violence. Besides counselling it was accepted that professional talks on the ravages of violence would assist those affected by violence to heal. In the face of anger and bitterness expressed by the first participants (4.5.1.2) “...as a health worker I think that churches should invite health carers to gatherings of various guilds to talk about the serious consequences of inflicting violence on

others and how these injuries can damage someone on a permanent basis” (Focus group, question 1). Yet another member expressed that “churches must move slowly with victims for them to heal” (Focus group, question 1). To sum up, the focus group members affirmed that churches can facilitate the healing of memories of survivors through the various methods mentioned by the group. These issues will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5.2.

#### **4.7.2 Responses to Question 2**

Many participants said that they experienced trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion during the violence of 2008 and that those feelings are still evident in the community. Do you think churches can empower people to overcome such feelings? If so, how?

While the focus group acknowledged the great dangers of confronting the sources of the trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion of the people it agreed that it was the responsibility of churches to stand with the people in their plight. The focus group said:

It was important that churches be courageous to face the many challenges that communities in Zaka are facing because of the political violence that transpired. As churches we should adopt a multi-faceted approach in responding to the challenges of empowering people. Our goal should be to assist the people to heal, forgive, reconcile and ultimately live with one another in peace and reconciliation (Focus group, question 2).

##### *4.7.2.1 Churches to empower survivors*

First, the focus group accepted that churches should strive to address these challenges and therefore move on to empower people to overcome these feelings as the churches had good standing to do so. As the focus group discussed to identify the sources of the feelings mentioned above, the members agreed that the perpetrators who were still living in the communities were the main source of people’s trauma, fears, helplessness and confusion. The perpetrators were connected with the ruling party and structures of government. This made the challenges more difficult. Yet the leaders agreed that a multi-pronged approach was useful to resolve the challenges and empower the people in communities. It is useful to approach the various structures of society and engage in dialogue to resolve challenges faced by survivors of violence. The focus group observed that the churches need to have courage: “The Church needs to have courage, and the knowledge of how to help the people in fear” (Focus group, Question 2).



After considering various methods of dealing with the past in order to achieve reconciliation, the focus group adopted a loose but useful method that would enable churches to both empower the people to overcome their trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion as well as help to bring about healing to the survivors of violence. Four stages were proposed: *Truth telling, Justice, Mercy (or Forgiveness) and Healing*. There was quite some discussion on each of the stages mentioned above (Focus group, question 2, p.5)

#### 4.7.2.2 *Churches to engage stakeholders*

On the local level churches should engage with the various stake holders and utilise them in discussing the various relevant issues that affect people. Dialogue is the way to go. “We can also use existing structures, like the police, village heads, counsellors, chiefs, Government District Coordinator and others to talk to them and assist our structures to handle these challenges” (Focus group, question 2, pp.2-3). In engaging these structures people are reassured that churches are assisting them to resolve the issues that threaten their lives. In so doing this begins to empower the ordinary villagers who feel helpless and are afraid. While churches involve these structures such dialogue and discussions would also include the villagers themselves so that they are able to express their concerns openly to the structures of government. With dialogue some understanding and acceptance of each other is achieved and the possibility of empowerment is realised. However, the focus group also acknowledged that it was not easy to approach the local perpetrators who continue to live in our villages. People are afraid of them because they still have support of structures of government. As agreed by the church leaders: “We may see the perpetrators but at times we are not able to approach them out of fear” (Focus group, question 2). This is precisely why the focus group recommended that churches should work together as a fraternity and utilise the structures already referred to above. In working together churches themselves are empowered and as they involved the stake holders at the grassroots, they are in a position to further empower the participants the ordinary people who are experiencing the trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion.

#### 4.7.2.3 *Contribution of ZCBC Pastoral Letters*

The focus group appreciated the influence and significance of Pastoral Letters that are usually written by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference over the years (Focus group, question 2, p.2). These should continue as they are empowering not only to Catholics but to all the citizens of Zimbabwe, especially when faced with challenges emanating from the government which is

supposed to protect its citizens. A case in point is the violence of 2008 that was perpetrated by the structures of government. A few Pastoral letters were cited such as: *Call to Conscience: April 2005*; *God hears the Cry of the oppressed: April 2007*; *A Call to immediate stop to violence: June 2008*; and *Let us work for the Common Good: January 2011* to affirm their influence of empowering people as well as expressing the church's call to government to respond to urgent issues that affect the nation.

#### 4.7.2.4 *Churches to engage government in dialogue*

In addition to Pastoral Letters the focus group agreed that it was the duty of churches to directly approach and engage government in dialogue on pertinent issues that threaten the lives of ordinary citizens such as issues of violence and non-adherence to the rule of law. When church leaders engage the government in discussions of this nature it helps the people to be empowered and be assured that their challenges are addressed, hence people no longer feel helpless. This is expressed in the discussion of the focus group that "... our Church leaders should also approach those in authorities like government..." (Focus group, question 2 page 1-2).

The same point was again stressed in connection with the great losses suffered by survivors. The focus group reiterated that "government should be approached..." (Focus group page 7) in order to address those issues that continue to perpetuate the feelings of fear, trauma, helplessness and confusion among the many ordinary villagers in the area. This means churches have a crucial role to play in assisting to resolve challenges that people face particularly that these challenges emanate from government which is supposed to be the protector of its citizens. At the same time the group acknowledged that Church leaders sometimes experience fear to approach government as the latter has the capacity to victimise anyone it so wishes: "Is the church not also afraid to approach those responsible for causing fear among the people?" (Focus group Question 2). Despite this acknowledgement of fear, the church leaders agreed that the churches must have courage to approach government on behalf of the ordinary suffering people. After all, in the history of the missionary churches, their leaders have engaged in dialogue the various governments from colonial times to the present.

#### 4.7.2.5 *Churches to encourage traditional courts for restorative justice*

The second stage is to move towards establishing justice or some redress on what transpired. Indeed, churches could not establish legal courts to try wrong-doers as they do not have such

jurisdiction but the focus group suggested to encourage traditional leaders to continue with the traditional cultural method of employing a system of 'restorative justice'. On the other hand, churches may engage in sessions of truth-telling which would encourage both survivors and perpetrators to tell their stories. As they tell their stories perpetrators maybe encouraged to make some form of restitution to the injured. Normally the payments would be a token or gesture of admitting guilt and expressing the desire to restore good relations again with the wronged party. Thus, the main aim of restorative justice is to rebuild relationships in the community so there is peaceful co-existence. The churches can play such a role to restoring good relations and empower the victims to overcome their plight. There was no consensus on the issue of taking perpetrators to legal courts, although some members of the focus group felt that churches should allow as well as support victims who wish to seek personal justice in courts of law should they so wish. In the end the focus group accepted that some form of justice is to be done whether it is restorative or legal. Culturally, restorative is preferred in cases of family and community disputes in order to restore peace co-existence. (Focus group, p.5). Added advantages are that the community is familiar with the praxis of restorative justice and this process is done on grassroots level by the actual persons involved in the conflict. Thus, churches advocate for restorative justice already mentioned or use counselling to heal the wounds of survivors. The churches are only there to facilitate such processes which communities would accept.

#### *4.7.2.6 Churches' responsibility to encourage repentance and forgiveness*

The third stage is that of mercy or forgiveness. While these two terms do not mean the same, the focus group put them into the same category because they both appeal to the inner relationship of the person with the Creator God. This is on the spiritual level and demands the faith response of the persons involved. On the part of the perpetrator, he/she may be moved to repentance and ask for forgiveness from the victim of violence, the person/s they wronged. This is not easy. It is a bold move made by a heart that has faith in God. Such an act needs Divine intervention or the power of God to be humble to ask for forgiveness, pardon or mercy. Similarly, on the part of the victim or the wronged, spiritual strength is required to forgive or extend mercy to the perpetrator of violence. To be able to break through and reach the other who has caused harm on you and forgive them is certainly a Spiritual act that can only be done with assistance from the teachings of Christ propounded by churches. The focus group was clear that the role of churches in this third stage is part of the mission of the Church to fulfil the redeeming act of Christ to the sinful world.

The churches highlighted their role in communities that this spiritual act in fact empowers both the victims and perpetrators and brings healing to both of them. The focus group expressed that “Mercy or Forgiveness should emanate from the dialogue, or discussion conducted after the two above stages have been done... so that those involved are moved to the spiritual level” (Focus group, page 5). However, it was noted that some people may not wish to take this third stage and they are not to be forced. Yet it remains the responsibility of churches to teach repentance and forgiveness in such circumstances.

#### 4.7.2.7 *God’s power to heal*

The fourth stage is healing. The focus group kept on bringing up the issue of healing, thereby highlighting its importance and usefulness especially among the individuals who suffered as well as the whole community that needs healing. (Focus group, question 2) The focus group also acknowledged that even perpetrators need healing from their oppressive conditions. While churches should utilise their role to participate in God’s work in teaching about repentance and forgiveness, it is through God’s power that both survivors and perpetrators can be healed. But churches should take the lead (4.4.2.5) in the process of healing the aggrieved and affected at their centres, churches should also invite experts and other community leaders to share the platform with churches in order to have a holistic approach to the process of healing. As stated above (4.7.2.2), churches should involve community structures of leadership, councillors, headmen, village heads, chiefs, local police and others to give their input on how to heal the wounds of people and empower them to move on. The special factors that churches used for their believers were also mentioned. Some churches use the Sacrament of penance or reconciliation to heal the wounds of sin. This enables the faithful who have done wrong to empty themselves or “to let-go” and be healed by Christ. The idea of letting-go is discussed in the context of healing by Vanheusen (2015). The idea was already discussed in Chapter 2, (2.4.4). Vanheusen (2015) proposes four staged of healing. The first is to *observe* the situation. The second is to *process* the memories with Jesus. The third stage is to *listen* to Jesus and then the fourth stage is “*to let-go*”. This means that the affected need to ascend to the decision that these painful memories are disruptive and detractors of continued positive and harmonious life. They not only prevent development in the life of the affected but also are destructive factors to a meaningful positive life. The implementable goal, through the assistance of the church, is for the affected to let go and embrace a new start offered by the power of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II (2.2.5) highlights this role of the Holy Spirit in

*Redemptoris Missio* (1996:44) when he explains that the Church is born of Jesus Christ as stated in the Trinitarian profession of faith: I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God... for us men and our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This same power of the Holy Spirit enables those who suffered violence to allow themselves to come to the stage of being healed of their painful personal memories and engage themselves in a constructive life free of oppression by negative memories. Indeed, the memories will not be erased but the affected are able to accommodate them and live with them without those memories controlling their lives. Following these four stages those individuals affected by the violence in Zaka, through the platforms created by the alternative church, are able to move across the spectrum from the desperate experience of pain to the liberation from that same pain so that their lives resume to have a positive meaningful reality again. In the Catholic church healing also takes place through the Sacrament of penance, which is also referred to as the Sacrament of 'healing' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, (2006). The various services practised by churches also assist people to be healed in their psycho-somatic conditions. In this way churches empower people to be released from the oppressive conditions of trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion.

Thus, the focus group concluded that churches, through the various rituals and other forms of ministry they perform, could assist to enhance the processes of healing and empowering people who have been victimised by the violence that took place in Zaka district in 2008.

#### **4.7.3 Responses to Question 3**

The focus group then turned to question 3:

Some participant stated that the violence of 2008 caused distrust and division among families and neighbours, since some people betrayed others as “sell-outs” (*vatengesesi*) to political leaders or the militia. Can churches create platforms for reconciliation and healing of such distrust and division in families and neighbourhoods? If so how?

##### *4.7.3.1 Churches to create platforms for survivors and perpetrators*

The focus group brainstormed a number of platforms that could be utilised to create dialogue and discussions that would lead people into healing the distrust and divisions amongst families and neighbours. Church leaders realised that in Zimbabwe today “the political divide separates people more than any other factor but all local leaders need to meet and talk to each other more in order to bring our people together” (Focus group, question 3)

First the focus group agreed that it was necessary that the truth of what transpired during the violent period be told, especially by survivor. This would give an opportunity to victims not only to tell their stories but this act of story-telling would also be therapeutic to them as they emptied themselves to someone who was listening to them. This could be done in counselling sessions but also in small groups at the churches with some professional person guiding the process of this story-telling to avoid resurgence of conflict. But an atmosphere of safety should be created so that such an exercise of truth-telling becomes possible. It was also suggested that a mixture of perpetrators and victims could be brought together into these small groups to tell their stories. As summed up by a member of the focus group: “Truth telling is the first way that can be used. Churches can bring perpetrators and victims together or separately to tell their stories and try to find truth” (Focus group, question 2, p.5).

#### *4.7.3.2 Creating platforms through sports*

The proposal of organising village sports events amongst the youths was accepted as an attractive platform that could bring all ages together to watch the various sporting activities, but especially soccer and netball which were common in the rural areas. While people come to enjoy sport and recreate with others, the common discussions would help them to open to one another while commenting on the sports being played. That very exercise may offer people opportunities to talk about the violent incidents that took place in 2008. When teams are drawn up the organiser could mix up the youths to include the relatives and friends of both survivors and perpetrators to play together in the same team. In this way sport could help perpetrators and survivors (and their family or friends) to build up a team spirit to try to win games together. In this way a gradual healing of wounds could take place and trust could be slowly restored between those who are still divided or alienated because of the violence of 2008. While discussions during sports sessions would be informal, the fact of creating space for former enemies to meet and talk could enable the building of foundations for reunion and trust. If churches encourage and support such village sporting activities, they could help create platforms for trust-building and eradicate divisions, suspicions and the attitudes of “them and us” which developed during 2008 and have not yet been overcome (4.4.2.7).

#### *4.7.3.3 Creating platforms through workshops*

The focus group proposed that churches could also create another platform for reconciliation and healing, by organising workshops for village heads to deal with conflict resolution issues. The

workshops conducted by the CCJP were particularly mentioned in this regard as a good example. Church leaders proposed that CCJP could come to Zaka district to run workshops for local leaders and village heads since the organisation has capacity to run such events. Such workshops would include conflict resolutions, peace-building skills and others. In this way the village heads are equipped to discuss issues of mistrust and divisions with their people when they hold their normal village meetings. By utilising these skills of conflict resolution, village heads can bring about the reunion of divided families and communities and strengthen trust relationships between them. Such church initiatives could restore trust, unity and harmony between families, neighbours and the whole community (4.4.2.5).

#### *4.7.3.4 Create platforms of church associations*

The focus group agreed that other platforms that could bring families and neighbours together are groups such as choirs, associations, guilds, and other church groups that meet at churches. The people who meet in these groups often include those families and neighbours that are in conflict, that distrust one another because of the violence of 2008. By bringing them together to do church activities this creates space for dialogue that may build trust and healing amongst the members of the same group: “Trust is a process that goes far and should be allowed to grow through discussions on topics such as what are the causes of fear and distrust” (Focus group, question 3).

#### *4.7.3.5 Create platforms through development projects*

Another platform brought forward was that of the various development projects done by churches in Zaka district. The nutrition gardens, reclaiming of gullies, repairing rural roads, small scale dams’ construction and women’s sewing clubs can be revitalised with the initial capital from organisations such as Caritas and other developmental organisations. These projects will include the same villagers who are in conflict and experience mistrust between themselves. By being engaged in these projects and dialoguing over a long period of time, the mistrust will diminish and stronger bonds of relationship can build up again. This means that churches in Zaka must be creative to generate their own income from amongst their members so as to restore the broken relationships of villagers.

### **4.7.4 Responses to Question 4**

Some victims of violence expressed in the interviews that they are waiting and hoping for compensation for the injuries and economic losses they suffered in the 2008 violence. Is this a justified expectation? If so, can churches do anything to make this a reality?

After some varying views were considered and argued upon the focus group agreed that claims of compensation by some victims were justified as they understood that some of the victims were no longer able to help themselves. Some had been maimed in such a way they could no longer work for themselves. Although requesting some compensation was a justifiable cause it was not practical and applicable in every situation. As discussed below, some cases are difficult to compensate such as the loss of a body part, a leg or an arm.

#### *4.7.4.1 Churches to create a fund for assistance*

The focus groups agreed that one way forward was for local churches in Zaka to lobby (Focus group, pp.2 and 6) for creating a fund to assist in some token of compensation to those victims who are particularly disadvantaged physically since they are now unable to be bread winners for their families. Special fundraising activities would be held to cater for school fees for the children of survivors who are incapacitated by the injuries received during the 2008 violence. In addition to local fundraising, churches would further appeal for such funds from sister churches in other countries so that the project of paying school fees would be sustainable until the children at least finish their secondary education.

#### *4.7.4.2 Churches to engage government and NGOs for assistance*

In regard to economic losses suffered, the focus group stated that government should be approached by churches (Focus group, p.6) in order to open a discussion so that those who lost their properties would for the time being be put on the government social welfare programme to help them to get food and basic necessities. For the long term, churches should invite non-governmental organisations who have varying projects that include sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry, chicken rearing and others who could assist villages to build up their lost properties again. The focus group acknowledged that “developmental projects in areas that suffered the violence would bring tangible progress in these communities and often take the place of the desired compensation” (Focus group p.7). For those whose homes were destroyed the leadership of churches should approach government to assist with reconstruction of homes through its ministry of reconstruction or through soldiers’ building brigades. Although it is not an easy task to approach government, as government has already repeatedly denied responsibility for the 2008 violence, Churches should try all the same. Church leaders realised that there were situations where compensation could not tally the loss. For instance, were victims lost parts of their bodies like a leg or arm, no compensation would equal such a loss. The focus group then opted for the traditional



restorative justice in such complex situations, which would enable both parties to live together again: “Churches would strive for restorative justice where victims and perpetrators are eventually brought to some acceptance of one another in order to live peacefully. Restorative justice is a better option” (Focus group pp,6 and 7).

#### *4.7.4.3 Possibility of criminal justice*

The focus group accepted the possibility of criminal justice to be taken, although the members acknowledged that it was difficult because of the expenses required to pay the lawyers who take up such cases to the criminal justice courts (Focus group, pp.5 and 6). It was recognised that it would be quite a challenge for any of the survivors to have the means to approach the courts for criminal justice to be done in order for them to get any compensation for their suffering caused by perpetrators of violence. Thus, survivors could in principle choose to prosecute their perpetrators, but the state did nothing to assist them up to date (Focus group, p.7). If the state were to assist by prosecuting perpetrators, and pay compensation to the survivors, this would certainly assist the healing process of survivors.

To sum up the above discussion we see that the focus group agreed that compensation is good and justifiable, but not in every situation. There are circumstances when compensation cannot be implemented such as in the case of a perpetrator who does not have any property of his/her own or in a loss of a body-part by a victim. The focus group advocates for dialogue between the victim and perpetrator, or counselling in order to achieve peaceful co-existence as well as healing for the victim. In cases where compensation can be implemented, churches should assist with fundraising, approaching government to assist and strengthen human values through the Social Teachings of the Church. Thus, the Church can make compensation a reality but also is pragmatic to discern what is implementable and what is not.

#### **4.7.5 Responses to Question 5**

From the interviews it emerged that some participants are willing to forgive the perpetrators of the violence, on condition that the restitution (or compensation, see previous) question) has been implemented. How should churches respond to such an attitude of “conditional forgiveness”?

The focus group acknowledged the sources of such a position held by some of the participants who experienced violence in 2008. It was realised that this conditional forgiveness emanated from the anger and bitterness which still prevails in some of the participants that suffered the violence. This

position of ‘conditional forgiveness’ is problematic theologically. The focus group was unanimous that “Forgiveness is not to be given conditions” (Focus group, p.7). The focus group agreed that “Forgiveness has no conditions. Conditional forgiveness would be difficult theologically because the church cannot teach ‘conditional’ forgiveness” (Focus group p.8). It was deliberated that what needed to be dealt with is the anger and bitterness that some of the participants still continue to have so many years after the 2008 violence. The church leaders referred to the practical solutions that they had already mentioned earlier such as encouraging such persons to go for counselling sessions (Focus group, p.4) or village conflict resolution workshops (4.7.3.3.).

#### *4.7.5.1 Churches to teach the understanding of forgiveness*

While some victims felt strongly that they could only forgive after being paid or receive compensation for their loss, the focus group emphasised the church’s role on catechesis of forgiveness. It was noted that many people, including Christians, have not yet understood what Christian forgiveness is all about. Therefore, “Churches should assist people to understand the concept of forgiveness. As Jesus Christ is the role model of true forgiveness people should learn to follow that model of complete sacrifice for the sake of the other. This means one can forgive someone who has not even asked for forgiveness or pardon for his/her wrongdoing” (Focus group page 8). This means victims need to learn that they are expected to forgive their wrong-doers even when the latter have not asked for forgiveness. The missiology of churches continues to be relevant even today as churches participate in the Mission of Christ who has come to redeem humanity which is broken and sinful. The focus group insisted this teaching on forgiveness is not only meant for victims but for perpetrators as well as all communities in the affected area.

In addition to the catechesis on true forgiveness, which excludes ‘conditional forgiveness’ the focus group highlighted the importance of using Scripture texts to build the understanding on forgiveness. Based on the story of Jesus Christ’s mission, churches should identify relevant Scripture texts (particularly from the New Testament) to explain and demonstrate what forgiveness really entails. It was accepted that ‘forgiveness’ among other concepts included self-sacrifice, letting-go of hurt or wounds inflicted by the perpetrator, and an act of the will to accommodate the wrong-doer as a human being. In the end forgiveness is an act of love that is possible with the power of the Holy Spirit. As stated in the Gospels Jesus forgave out of love and human beings also have to learn to forgive out of love that has been bestowed by God in every person’s heart. The focus group mentioned a few Scripture texts such as Luke 23:34 “Father forgive them, they do not

know what they are doing”; Mt. 6:12 “And forgive our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us”; Mt. 6:14 “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” These texts were to demonstrate that Jesus is clear about forgiveness. There is no conditional forgiveness and he prays for his perpetrators to be forgiven by his Father. We learn that it is the responsibility of God to forgive, yet we as believers in Christ participate in this divine act of God.

This is not easy but the focus group believed that using the Scriptures would assist those affected to grasp the true concept of forgiveness. “People need to know that forgiveness only applies when someone has done wrong. This is why Christ came to forgive sinful humanity and Jesus did not forgive us conditionally” (Focus group page 8). Thus, the issue of compensation and restitution may be implemented where possible, but they cannot be considered as pre-conditions for granting forgiveness. As already stated, the focus group agreed that there are no conditions for forgiveness.

#### 4.7.5.2 *Prayer is vital for forgiveness and reconciliation*

Another factor that assists the implementation of forgiveness by the victim or request for forgiveness by the perpetrator is prayer. Prayer is a powerful instrument that enables people to utilise the power of the Spirit in their daily encounters of difficult situations such as the act of forgiving or asking for forgiveness. Reference was made to the Lord’s prayer (Mt 6:12) as being relevant in praying. It reflects the main point of the entire ministry of Jesus and teaches us to do the same. Jesus taught us that ‘forgive us our debts as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us’. The focus group encourages us all to pray as the act of forgiveness needs Divine intervention. Then, we achieve true perspective of forgiveness that has no pre-conditions in its implementation. Although the act of forgiving can sometime be difficult, it is possible through prayer. The Scripture text utilised to emphasise that we should forgive always was a text from Matthew (18:21-22): “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” (Focus group, p.2). The focus group was cognisant of the fact that besides survivors forgiving perpetrators, the perpetrators too need to be assisted to forgive themselves. This also needs the Church to assist them through prayer.

#### **4.7.6 Responses to Question 6**

According to some participants, the violence of 2008 created a situation of lawlessness which demonised political opponents and which has become endemic in Zimbabwean society. Can churches help society to overcome this “culture” of violence and lawlessness? If so, how?

The focus group accepted that our country has become very much polarised on political lines than any other sphere. Because of wanting to monopolise power the ruling party has become ruthless in order to retain the power of governance. Indeed, as stated by some participants in the individual interviews the ruling party has utilised any means, including violence and lawlessness, to retain power. Unfortunately, this lawlessness has grown into a culture of violence every time the country goes for elections. Many people, especially the opposition parties, are always afraid of election times because of what they suffer before, during and immediately after elections.

##### *4.7.6.1 Strategies for churches to overcome the culture of violence*

After some deliberations the focus group agreed that the churches can help people to overcome the culture of violence and lawlessness, which have become endemic in the country. The focus group suggested a number of activities and strategies that churches could utilise to implement their effort to assist people to overcome these challenges. First church leaders must take responsibility not to align themselves with any corrupt system of governance as this compromises their strength to influence the government. It was mentioned that in some instances some church leaders aligned themselves with the ruling power: “Sometimes our church leaders benefit from certain powers that govern so they will not have strength to point out the wrong that the government does to its citizens” (Focus group, p.9). Therefore, churches should have courage not only to be early whistle-blowers of any impending violation of human rights but also be the voice of the voiceless to overcome that culture of violence: “Churches should act as whistle-blowers through early warning signs to prevent any violation of people’s rights” (Focus group page 9). In this way churches will no longer be reactive but become pro-active and continue to teach Gospel values and not wait until elections are taking place. Churches should assist to establish a culture of maintaining human rights by teaching not only their Christians but also go to the grassroots and involve ordinary villagers through workshops.

##### *4.7.6.2 Churches to encourage politicians to avoid divisive language in campaigns*

Another factor that the focus group identified was that of the use of “political language” during the campaign period. Negative language used for political opponents is poisonous and creates hate

speech which later translates into violence against opponents. Instead, the focus group agreed that hate speech had to be avoided and campaigners should simply state positively what they want to accomplish for the people. This is why “churches should encourage language that promotes peace, unity and co-existence especially during campaign periods. Language is very powerful and the use of good language is a must” (Focus group page 9). In addition to denouncing hate speeches by politicians against opponents, churches must stand firm and discourage the political polarisation of citizens that has destroyed our nation. Speeches given by politicians which highlight people’s political affiliations between “us and them” must be refocussed to respect all people with the dignity they deserve. Churches have such opportunities availed to them in all their pastoral ministries as they serve all regardless of their political affiliations. The focus group stated that the churches themselves must demonstrate in their writings and preaching the use of “an all-inclusive language” so as to take the lead in showing what politicians should also follow. Positive and respectful language will always bring people together. Thus, churches strive to bring all peoples into the Kingdom of God, their efforts should also be channelled to assist opponents allow themselves to differ in opinions but remain united as people of the same village, area or nation. In fact, people in villages are related on many levels. Some are related by marriage, by being neighbours, by working at the same place, by attending the same village meetings. Thus, there are more factors that unite people than divide them. So political opponents only refer to differences of political opinion or affiliation: “Difference of opinions should not put us at loggerheads but utilise the various ideas to build our nation” (Focus group page 10). Therefore, the focus group affirmed that churches must utilise the positive factors in order to eradicate demonisation of political opponents.

#### *4.7.6.3 Churches to encourage unity*

The focus group also stressed that within the area of Zaka many villagers know one another and meet at various fora. Church leaders encouraged that this factor of knowing one another should in fact bind people together rather than divide them. Christians who are at the same work place or attend the same services at their churches have a stronger bond to unite because of their Christian faith. Christians should strive to live in harmony and pray for forgiveness and peace when there are misunderstanding in order to fulfil their Christian principles: “At work places or in villages Christians should encourage one another to have peaceful co-existence, forgiveness and reconciliation in order to further the work of the church” (Focus group, p.9).

#### 4.7.6.4 *Churches to engage government on lawlessness and culture of violence*

In regard to lawlessness, the focus group realised that it was the duty of law enforcement agents of government to maintain the rule of law in the country. There was need for churches to deal with the source of lawlessness. Churches must approach Government and discuss the issue of lawlessness in the country particularly during election times. Laws have to be maintained and enforced without fear or favour. Similarly, true justice, not selective justice, must be maintained by government at all times. While Pastoral letters are effective in communicating these issues, a face to face dialogue between churches and government bears much more fruit for the benefit of the nation.

The focus group accepted that a ‘culture of violence’ was developing in Zimbabwe, especially during election times (Focus group, p.9). Churches need to deal with this endemic development. The focus group acknowledged that politicians use the youths to implement violence against their opponents. Churches should target youths in their churches. The youths were more prone to be used or abused by politicians to commit violent activities against opponents or those perceived as “enemies” (Focus group, p.3). Besides teaching them Gospel values and encouraging them to join various guilds for the youths, churches need to occupy the youths with useful projects such as developmental activities, fund raising activities, sports for recreation and philanthropic activities where they help the elderly and the disadvantaged of their communities: “The youth should be guided and taught what it means to be peace-loving, peace-building and taught to be better people” (Focus group, p.3). This builds a foundation that youths uphold the dignity of others and so continue to respect every human life. This gives them courage not to be abused by politicians.

#### 4.7.6.5 *The power of media and new technology*

The focus group realised that media is another powerful platform or tool that churches can use to enhance positive thinking in order to cultivate peaceful co-existence and eradicate the culture of violence. The use of simple local church magazines or newsletters would benefit communities. Even the use of modern technologies could be employed, where possible, to expand the sense of inclusiveness and reject the culture of violence within communities, as concluded by the focus group:

Churches should use modern platforms to communicate Christian values in order to continue the processes of peace-building and acceptable co-existence. Churches can use Social media,

Websites, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Newspapers, Magazines and other channels to the faithful and local communities so as to build a culture of inclusiveness and values that uphold that every person is my neighbour (Focus group page 9-10).

#### **4.8 THE FOCUS GROUP VIEWED THROUGH THE PRAXIS CYCLE**

It has already been noted above (4.4.1 – 4.4.14) that each structured interview has expressed their detailed response to the violence that they experienced and the focus group has provided responses for the way forward following the outcome of the structured interviews. While Chapter 5 deals with in depth theological reflection of this experienced violence it also captures and develops the constructive proposals that have been proffered in Chapter 4. Therefore, the four moments are dealt with here in summary form in order to augment the responses already given by the focus group (4.7.1 – 4.7.6). I now present the focus group responses, viewed through the four elements of the praxis cycle: Identification, Context analysis, Theological reflection, Strategies for mission, and Spirituality.

##### **4.8.1 The element of spirituality**

In its reflections the focus group singled out prayer as a shared common value in responding to the situation at hand. Be it prayer in small groups (SCC) or in large congregations the focus group saw it as an indispensable vehicle for human beings to relate to God. In so doing prayer enables people (victims, perpetrators and all those in between) to relate to God. In relating to God through prayer, its power transforms human hearts and empowers people to transcend their present painful situation and aspire through the power of God to see one's neighbour in a positive light. Prayer then enables victims to be healed, to forgive the perpetrator and on the other hand the perpetrator is able to accept responsibility of his cruel actions and seek for pardon in humility. Thus, the focus group in its discernment saw prayer at the centre of people's relationship with God. Without prayer there is no relationship and there is no transformation of heart.

##### **4.8.2 The element of identification**

The focus group recognised that the violence perpetrated in 2008 is the centre of pain, suffering, disharmony, hurt, lawlessness, death and other feelings articulated by victims. Taking all these feelings that were outpoured during the semi-structured interviews the focus group agreed that its moment of insertion is the privileged position that churches have in society. Using that privileged position, the point of insertion for churches is their involvement with various stakeholders in order to resolve the pressing challenges caused by violence. Four categories of levels of involvement

can be identified. First, churches are able to approach both victims and perpetrators and involve them in processes of dialogue, healing and eventual reconciliation. Secondly, churches are also capable of approaching the government to address the sources of pain and make an urgent appeal that government desists from perpetrating harm on its citizens. Thirdly, churches can involve local leaders of communities and other stakeholders such as the police, councillors, village heads, chiefs, and other people who can influence communities. Fourthly, churches need to involve the youths who are often abused by political parties and influenced to commit acts of violence. Therefore, churches are able to bring about the process of healing emanating from their mission of teaching and preaching Gospel values in communities where they live. It can be argued from the focus group that in Zaka churches during their services include both victims and perpetrators and whatever restorative action is taken would be all inclusive and this would be their moment of identification with the source of the problem.

#### **4.8.3 The element of context analysis**

In the praxis cycle the element of context analysis refers to asking questions and analysing the problem at hand. This involves identifying the time and place of the problem, the structures involved in it and the values interconnected to it (Wijsen et al, eds. 2005:151). Analysing the responses of the focus group it acknowledged that 2008 was a significant period when devastating violence was perpetrated against opposition members and all those perceived to oppose the ruling party. The focus group recognised some structures were used to perpetrate atrocities and these structures needed to be engaged in order to address the complex challenges that prevail. Some of these structures are members of the army. These forces are powerful, feared and support the government. The focus group is aware that engagement of this structure can only be achieved through approaching the government, which is responsible for the actions of the army. Another structure is the police, who were powerless in the face of acts of violence unleashed against some of the citizens in and around the villages. This structure too, like the army, needs engagement of government to enforce the just rule of law and not selective justice to only some members of the community. The third structure identified is that of the ruling party, particularly on the local level. Churches can directly approach the local party structures to seek the way forward to address the effects of the violence that took place in 2008.



#### **4.8.4 The element of theological reflection**

In the praxis cycle the element of theological discernment of the meaning of the situation entails reflection of the situation in view of our shared values, our faith commitments, teaching of scriptures and other norms of communities and its traditional wisdom (Mejia et al, (2005:252).

In its deliberations the focus group delved into the six summary questions in order to discern the meaning of the situation that transpired during the violent period of 2008. Having accepted the excruciating pain that victims went through, the reflection of the focus group postulated some commonly shared values and resolutions in responding to the challenges before it. The responses of the focus group have already been dealt with in 4.7.6. However, to narrow down the discussion on the element of theological reflection there are two outstanding shared common values emanating from their Christian beliefs and church teachings that the focus group agreed upon. First, it agreed upon the shared value of human dignity and respect of the life of every person. Human dignity is a shared value amongst not only Christians but the whole of humanity in general. The focus group therefore strongly feels that in human relationships human dignity is to be upheld always, which results in respect for every human life in any situation or community. Biblical teaching also asserts that “every person was created in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27). Second, the reflection of the focus group emerged with the view that for healing to take place truth must be told which will liberate the oppressive situation which continues to fuel the fear amongst the victims. One of the appropriate tools to create space for truth-telling which the focus group discerned is that of counselling. It was agreed that the value of counselling was of paramount importance in responding to the myriad challenges that were encountered during the 2008 acts of violence. As many people still suffer from the effects of those painful experiences there was urgent need of setting up counselling clinics as well as encouraging both victims and perpetrators to use these facilities for their benefit. Unfortunately, the traditional praxis of the role of the aunt and uncle who used to do counselling to members of their extended families is no longer in use because of modernisation and transformation of cultural practices. Another factor at this third step in the praxis cycle of the moment of discerning the meaning of the situation is the shared value of ‘forgiveness’ or ‘mercy’ that churches should propound upon. To resolve the situation at hand the focus group sees the need of forgiveness, reconciliation and praxis of mercy.

#### **4.8.5 The element of strategies for mission**

While the full response to the constructive proposals of the focus group is discussed in Chapter 5, which also discusses the theological response, here it suffices to make a pre-view of those concrete actions and steps that will be dealt with later. In responding to the challenges already raised by the semi-structured interviews and the responses of the focus group, the research now moves into the planning stage. This must reflect the road map of stages of planning, acting and evaluating in order to achieve the desired effect to change the situation. What short-term and long-term strategies are needed to bring about healing, forgiveness/mercy and reconciliation after this episode of violence experienced in 2008? Those strategies will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. Here it can be pointed out that the focus group presented four strategies in its deliberations: Practical assistance, Structural assistance, Long-term assistance, and Evaluation that brings out the challenges met by the churches.

##### *4.8.5.1 Practical assistance*

In its way forward the focus group gave some suggestions of what churches and people could do in order to bring the situation to normalcy again and initiate processes of healing. As churches have direct access to people during services, church leaders should continue to preach and teach Gospel values and highlight human dignity and respect for every person. Churches too have direct access to youths and therefore should engage them in practical programmes and projects in order to both gainfully occupy them as well as bring them together to break barriers between victims and perpetrators. As church leaders meet with villagers, councillors, chiefs, business persons, and other sectors of the community at various fora they can influence them in their meetings as well workshops in order to bring about the desired change. Church organisations such as CCJP, Caritas and organs of Zimbabwe Council of Churches should not only work together to unite people but also demonstrate unity through organised common prayer sessions of various Christian denominations. Churches should take the initiative to bring villagers together through sports. This will both entertain people but also bring former enemies and opponents together. In the process this creates space for dialogue and reconciliation. Indeed, the focus group intends to utilise these practical activities as means of responding to the challenges encountered during the 2008 violence.

##### *4.8.5.2 Structural assistance*

The focus group also put forward means of responding to the dire situation through setting up structural assistance both to the communities and to government. In regard to communities,

churches could use the setting up of Small Christian Communities (SCC) in villages. These SCCs would not only be for prayers but also for meetings to resolve community challenges. Such a structure would be of great assistance to build the faith as well as knowledge of participants in Christian principles and knowledge of Scriptures. Another important structure is that of setting up counselling centres and clinics at Church hospitals as well as at parishes. Such structures would enable churches to continue to give assistance in the healing process of the affected, both victims and perpetrators. Establishment of Church guilds in the rural areas of Zaka are structures that would continue to provide on-going formation of the various groups of Christians in Zaka. Community committees for development in the area are part of structural assistance given to the people. Caritas can set up more committees for building small scale dams for sustainable agriculture, committees for goats rearing, chicken farming and vegetable farming. These committees form part of structural assistance given to the people that can empower them and bring them together rather than divide them. Similarly, CCJP committees formed in the rural areas of Zaka empower people to deal with challenges that threaten communities. Such structural assistance can enable people to know their rights and duties, to be whistle-blowers when organised violence is about to take place in the area. In regard to government, churches need to form a structure that can be utilised to dialogue with government regularly in addition to writing Pastoral Letters and Statements.

#### *4.8.5.3 Long-term assistance*

The focus group realised that the culture of violence had become endemic in our society. Violence was always used by the ruling party to force people to vote for the ruling party in order to remain in power. This is a continuous challenge that requires long term assistance to eradicate. Continued workshops and teaching by churches will enhance this long-term assistance within communities to desist from the use of violence. Similarly, lawlessness and lack of ‘the rule of law’ always follows acts of political violence perpetrated against innocent people. To instil the sense of the rule of law, churches must be fearless and speak out on behalf of the voiceless and also speak out to government to adhere to the constitution and use law enforcement agents to implement justice. Such a process needs long-term assistance to eventually transform the situation of lawlessness that recurs every time elections are held in the country. Another issue responded to by the focus group is that of compensation to victims. As government is reluctant to take responsibility for the violence that took place in 2008 the focus group resolved that churches must fund-raise within its

communities as well as seek for funding from sister churches overseas to create a fund that would assist the victims of this violence in a small way. To establish such a fund is not easy and this would be in the category of long-term assistance. Such a fund would not be comprehensive but only a token to cover areas like school fees for children of those victims who were incapacitated to work for their families, as well as small developmental self-help projects. Another area cited by the focus group was that of broken human relationships that were a result of some people betraying their relatives to local political leaders of the ruling party. The focus group acknowledged that this hurt still festered in the hearts of many victims. To heal these wounds takes long-term assistance to those affected. Lastly, the issues of forgiveness and mercy were deliberated upon at length. While the focus group agreed that this was the way to go to bring about peace, reconciliation and harmonious co-existence of villagers, the process was certainly a long-term assistance to both victims and perpetrators. Such a process always takes a long time because attitudes and hurts take long to change. This is why prayer, already mentioned above, is necessary (4.8.4.1).

#### *4.8.5.4 Evaluation and challenges*

In this evaluation and reflection of challenges encountered by churches I continue to utilise mainly three sources of the responses of the focus group to the six questions already given above (4.7.6.1 to 4.7.6.6). I compiled into one report the three original sources of the focus group discussion which included 1) my own notes, 2) the notes of a Rapporteur who assisted me, 3) my tape recording I made during the discussion of the focus group on 25 July 2020, which I now call “Focus group report” by Walter Nyatsanza.

From the discussion of the focus group, it can be observed that the group had constructive insights into the way forward to respond to the views expressed by participants in the semi-structured interviews. The responses were focused and relevant to the issues raised. The group dealt with the challenges from various angles, which enabled it to propose practical and definitive answers which can be implemented in relation to victims, perpetrators, government, government agents, villagers and all involved in the sad acts of 2008. The group also proposed areas of structural assistance and long-term assistance in order to resolve the challenges at hand. These church leaders noted that some of these proposals were already being carried out, for instance by CCJP, Caritas, Zimbabwe Council of Churches and therefore these proposals were implementable and effective. The unity of churches is important as it gives them strength to carry out difficult challenges in their mission work.

On the other hand, some challenges were acknowledged by the focus group. In a few cases some church leaders were afraid to challenge political leaders when they perpetrated violence opponents in Zaka district (like in the cases of the Jerera bombing, the Mission bombing, the beatings of opponents at the base during nocturnal political meetings led by the ruling party leaders and other atrocities). Such fears from a few church leaders incapacitate them to be the voice of the voiceless, so that in some way they become a hindrance to the desired change. Nevertheless, this fear of the few was overshadowed by the majority of mainline churches who have been able to articulate the atrocities committed against innocent citizens. Another challenge was that church leaders did not always stand with one voice; some supported the ruling party while others were critical of those leaders because of the injustice that they allowed to take place. Churches that criticised the ruling party were not only condemned by government but also accused by them of supporting opposition parties, especially the main opposition party of the MDC-T.

Despite these challenges the work of churches will continue to offer an alternative voice until the desired changes are realised in our communities. The suggestions from the focus group in response to the challenges encountered by survivors will be considered again in Chapter 5 in the context of churches deepening their commitment to their prophetic call and living up to the goal of becoming an alternative community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BECOMING AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher carries out the intention of the research by integrating the insights of previous chapters. The research draws from the preceding chapters especially chapters 2 that provides the theological framework, chapter 3 which relates the context of violence and various violent experiences in Zimbabwe as well as from chapter 4 that provides the direct experiences of people who experienced violence in Zaka district. The challenges encountered in chapter 4 are interpreted and interwoven into the theological framework in order to suggest some solutions that can be implemented within communities.

##### 5.1.1 Mission as reconciliation

This work of implementing some solutions is done by the Church. Yet it must be recognised that this is not merely human work but it is achieved in the context of *missio Dei* (2.2), which has already been discussed extensively. While Bosch provides thirteen perspectives of ‘mission as’ (Bosch, 1991:389-510), there is general agreement among many scholars on the concept of “mission as reconciliation” (Schreiter and Jørgensen, 2013). In their editorial introduction, they say:

‘Reconciliation’ and ‘Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation’ have in recent years been overriding themes and perspectives for some of our major Christian traditions. For that reason, three key documents have been major references for the book and its writers:

- Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation, preparatory paper for WCC Conference in Athens 2005.
- The Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI *Africae Munus* (The Challenge of Africa) from 2011.
- The Cape Town Commitment, from the Lausanne III World Congress on World Evangelization, October 2010.

These three documents affirm that reconciliation is the work of the triune God bringing fulfilment to God’s purposes of creation and salvation through Jesus Christ (Schreiter and Jørgensen, 2013:4).

It is to this new paradigm of mission that Kritzinger adds his voice in stressing the importance of “mission as reconciliation”: He says: “...I propose that we should also speak of mission as reconciliation, since reconciliation is an integral dimension of church’s mission on earth.” The understanding of “mission as reconciliation” adds to the rich theology of *missio Dei* and is relevant in this research as the researcher focuses on reconciliation in the face of the violence that was carried out in Zaka district. Yet, as already stated, “mission as reconciliation” (2.2.9) is not to be treated in isolation but in relation to other perspectives of “mission as”, in creative tension. In acknowledging that the whole process of reconciliation is God’s work, it follows that the role of the Church is moved by God himself. The spirituality of the Church is realised in its members participating in God’s mission. The members are able to participate because they are drawn into this work by the Holy Spirit (2.3.1) and enabled to discern God’s will with open eyes: “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love” (Bosch 1991: 390). When the Church participates in God’s work then it is able to strategise and plan, not through its own power but by living epiclestically, thus by calling on God and seeking his will. Kritzinger (2011:55) states:

Mission flows not merely from an external command (like the Great Commission), but from the outpouring of the Spirit, which sets in motion an ongoing movement of people living in the power of the Spirit and by the guidance of the Spirit. The church in mission – and the church as mission – lives epiclestically.

In other words, the church needs the Spirit to implement the work of God here on earth.

### **5.1.2 “Bottom-up” reconciliation**

In 1.7.2 and 2.6, I explained that a “bottom-up” approach to reconciliation begins to give ear to the victims and hear their stories, to solicit from them a way forward to achieve reconciliation. There is no standard path already laid down. The bottom-up approach gives the researcher an opportunity to build up the process of reconciliation together with those directly affected by the violence. The Church can play an important role to move out of itself and provide a platform to listen to hurt people and walk together with them towards a healing, forgiving and reconciling process. In this way the church becomes an alternative community – and not a traditional instrument that maintains the status quo – to enable people in a community to work together in common processes of healing, reconciliation and co-existence, that is, both those who suffered

violence and those who inflicted the violence on others. In other words, the “bottom-up” approach relates to or originates from processes that begin with victims/survivors, the non-professionals or the grassroots and moves up to the higher structures (Autesserre, 2012). Then there is no standard path already laid down as in the case of top-down approach where parameters and structures are decided beforehand. At this juncture both the suggestions of semi-structured interviews (4.0 – 4.6) and focus group (the rest of chapter 4) are used as sources of possible solutions, integral aspects of a “bottom-up reconciliation”

### **5.1.3 Reconciliation as spirituality**

The process of reconciliation is perceived as a hope-giving journey to both individuals and communities, which gradually converge together from their estrangement and opposing positions. Without hope reconciliation cannot succeed. With hope the experience of reconciliation leads to action. Schreiter (1998:16) clearly states that “reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy”. Schreiter (2.4.3.2) further explains that reconciliation is found in working out our relationship with God. Our cultivation of this relationship that has already been extended to us then finds its medium through which reconciliation can take place. As God initiates and works with us, on our part we participate as ambassadors of God’s work, (2 Cor. 5:20). This relationship with God expresses itself in spiritual practices that enable space for truth, justice, healing and new possibilities to be actualised. Reconciliation can be described as restoration of the person who has been dehumanised by violence, oppression or any form of injustice that takes away the dignity of the individual (2.4.3.3). Both the victim and perpetrator benefit as they are gradually restored through a spiritual journey of giving hope to the injured and devastated. Reconciliation is reaffirmed by Kim (2005:25) as a process of healing the wounds which hatred and prejudice have inflicted on people’s minds and hearts. The Church, through the power of the Spirit, journeys with victims/survivors as well as perpetrators and has the power to heal relationships, broken hearts, minds and bodies (2.4.3.5).

### **5.1.4 Reconciliation, church and alternative community**

In regard to the relationship of “alternative community” to the institutional church several views can be advanced yet its proper role is to be like yeast within the institutional church. There is the view that the alternative church replaces the traditional institutional church. Such a view would not only undermine the role of the church but would also work to replace the traditional church, which would be counterproductive and antagonistic. Another view would be that alternative



community is in fact to form another separate community like a new church. Such a view would only increase the multiplication of denominations and not enhance the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps seeing 'alternative community' as forming a new guild within the church that intends to renew and call the church to fulfil its mandate in a more challenging manner like the prophets of old would be closer to understanding the role of what the alternative community intends to achieve. Brueggemann's use of Jeremiah implies that the prophetic community can only be an alternative community when it is a sign and witness to the teachings of Yahweh in the context of challenges and real danger. It is therefore possible for Jeremiah that social transaction is redeemable and subject to change (2.3.4). Therefore, the purpose of an alternative community is to work as a renewing leaven within the churches. The community invites and calls as many members as possible into an alternative lifestyle in relation to the violence and atrocities that happened in 2008. Such members of alternative communities in various churches aim to be exemplary and prophetic within their traditional churches. These prophetic communities would not separate themselves from other traditional members but in humility and faithfulness to Jesus, the Master of the new alternative community, work for reconciliation with justice *in* their churches and *between* their churches. The alternative communities are not above the traditional churches or separated from them but are imbued with Gospel values and inspire the traditional churches in a prophetic manner. This is why Jesus was all-inclusive in his approach to the society and left no one out who needed liberation or healing.

The following diagram expresses the way in which this study envisages the relationship between churches in the Zaka district and the emergence of an alternative community within and among them. An alternative community in the spirit of Jesus represents a way of life in which the Spirit of God draws together members of different churches towards each other and into a shared journey of reconciliation in their community with a view to the coming reign of God. This journey or movement of reconciliation does not alienate them from their churches; on the contrary, it activates and mobilises them to be more active members of their churches, who are also learning how to take part in various ministries of reconciliation and healing – first of all within their own parishes and congregations – and then also in the community in which they live. An alternative community is not a new gospel or a new church, but a revitalisation of what all churches believe and who they have been called to be as community of the promised Reign of God, with a specific focus on reconciliation and healing in a community at large.

One could say that all churches need to grow into being God's alternative "kingdom community" in society. And the "kingdom" (Reign) of God is "more than the church" in a number of crucial ways. First of all, the reign of God, not the church, represents the ultimate future of God's plan (see for example 1 Cor. 15:24-28). So the Reign of God is "more lasting" than the church and therefore the point of orientation and final goal of the church's life. Secondly, God's Reign is "wider" than the church. God's will should be done in the whole of society, not only in the lives of the baptised or within the four walls of a church building. As Lord of the universe God needs to be obeyed in the full scope of society: culture, ecology, economics, politics, education, sport, etc. As a church grows into being a "kingdom community" which reaches out into society does God's will in every sphere of life, it becomes more and more the alternative community to which God has called it and which the Lord Jesus exemplified in his life and through his death. Thirdly, the Reign of God is also "wider" than the church in another sense. Flowing from the previous point, one should admit that not every human being is a Christian, and countless people of integrity and morality in other churches and religions (and in no religion) are also agents of God's gracious rule and care in society, doing God's will. A church grows into becoming God's alternative community to the extent that it respects God's wider work in society, using people who "do not belong to us" (see for example Mark 9:38) and as it becomes willing to work with all of those people for the common good and the glory of God. Finally, the Reign of God is "deeper" than the church, since God's ways "are not our ways" (Isaiah 55:9) and will always remain a mystery, even to believers who have received the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:10). When a church, in humble boldness and bold humility (Bosch, 1991:489), participates in God's mission (*missio Dei*), the Spirit of God progressively transforms it into a *Regnum Dei* community, which is the alternative community envisaged and lived by Jesus. As this inclusive and liberating vision of the Reign of God more and more informs and shapes the life of a church, it becomes "regnified" into a genuine alternative in and for a sick and broken society.

An alternative community is thereof not an organisation with a "signed up" membership or with leadership structures apart from the existing church leaders. It is a grass roots, bottom-up movement of church members, guided and encouraged by their church leaders, for achieving reconciliation and healing in churches and in the community. This vision of a "regnified" community is embodied by a group of fellow Christians, journeying together as ecumenical partners in the service of God's coming Reign and the establishment of justice and reconciliation.

Practically speaking, the vision of an alternative community gives rise to small think tanks and action groups of colleagues and friends that act as a “leaven in the lump” to collaborate in imagining, planning and suggesting actions or projects that are to be carried out by the churches, sometimes separately and sometimes jointly. An alternative community therefore exists both inside churches and between (or among) them, a diffuse group of believers moving forward together towards a more just and reconciled society, trying to draw other church members into that shared journey and to mobilise their churches to embark on concrete reconciliatory actions. To speak of different alternative communities within different churches would therefore be confusing. The Holy Spirit mobilises a Kingdom-directed alternative community in and between churches to renew those churches themselves and to work together for overcoming alienation and estrangement among those churches and in the community.

A second diagram is therefore necessary to portray the convergent purpose of an alternative community in relation to different churches. Its purpose is to be instrumental in God’s mission of drawing all Christians closer together in service of society and mobilising them for that purpose. If the vision of an alternative community catches on and grows in a specific context, it will not threaten the existence of the churches or undermine their leadership, but instead foster greater appreciation and closer collaboration between them in the service of reconciliation-with-justice.

### **5.1.5 “Taking sides”**

Alternative community means taking sides, but not among the existing camps. Jesus, having assessed the four traditional Jewish movements of Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots and Essenes, did not join any of them. Each had a particular posture that excluded others. He therefore opted for his own alternative community of disciples that he schooled and initiated into the values of the Kingdom of God. In place of the four alternatives provided by the Jewish tradition, Jesus chose those “outside” this realm, what one may call the “underside” of history.<sup>22</sup> Jesus’ alternative community was all-inclusive with stress on the poor, the marginalised and women. As Paul says in 2 Cor 5:17 “When anyone is united to Christ, there is *a new world*; the *old order* has gone, and a *new order* has already begun” (Bosch, n.d.: 17). Thus, the coming of Jesus ushers in a new era, a new creation, evoking and calling into being an alternative community that is imbued with the

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<sup>22</sup> This expression was made popular in theological circles by EATWOT in a publication titled *The emergent gospel: Theology from the underside of history* (Torres S. & Fabella, V. (eds). Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978).

capacity to transform the wounded world (2.3.2.3). Jesus then takes a side, but the side of those traditionally excluded by the four movements. Yet at the same time the members of those four movements are also invited into the alternative community as long as they uphold the new teachings of Christ which are all inclusive and liberating for everyone. One outstanding characteristic stressed by Jesus is that of ‘compassion,’ especially towards the helpless ones. Bosch picks this characteristic when he says: “The one overriding characteristic of this transformed man, member of the new community in this new day and age is compassion” (Bosch, n.d.: 28). While it is risky to do so, the alternative community includes the categories of the useless ones, traitors and even enemies. The first category included the useless ones: the blind, the lame, and especially the lepers. The second category comprised the traitors of the nation, exploiters such as the universally hated tax collectors. And the third category included the “enemies,” especially Samaritans and Romans (Bosch, n.d.: 15). In the four traditional movements these categories were excluded (2.3.2.3), but Jesus chose to include them. The new alternative community cuts across the traditional definitions of the four models. This gives an opportunity for all to be saved. Jesus’ definition was all inclusive: “Not hatred, but love brings victory. Not exclusivism but inclusivism is the answer. Not the limiting to the own group but the transcending of that group is the way we should go” (Kritzinger and Saayman 2011:11). Thus the side that Jesus chooses enables Katongole (2.3.2.1) to describe it as a move that “relocates and incarnates” among the poor and excluded. Jesus’ alternative community moves from the traditional movements, who often seek power, influence and popularity, to identify itself with the poor, the oppressed, the violated, the sick, the marginalised, the women and all those who are excluded in one way or other in society. As already stated by Brueggemann in describing Jeremiah’s alternative community: “This is an alternative authorization that subverts conventional authority” (Brueggemann 2006a: 146) (2.3.4). In the matter of taking sides, Bekele (2011) employs Bosch’s stance that there is no neutrality in taking sides. Bosch completely frees himself of his traditional vision influenced by his Afrikaner background of apartheid. He rejected his inherited vision by envisioning an alternative community in which racial and socio-political superiority were neutralised. He rejected any establishment, whether ecclesiastical or political, that existed to serve the few at the expense of others who were seen as inferior. He saw all such structures as intrinsically unjust and in need of being challenged toward a norm of communal justice that involved accepting all people equally regardless of skin pigmentation and social standing (Bekele 2011:49-50) (2.2).

### **5.1.6 Non-violence and pacifism**

It is also important in this chapter to reflect on pacifism and non-violence (2.5.0) as a theological methodology of *Missio Dei* in the processes of reconciliation, forgiveness, confession and healing. The two terms of ‘non-violence/pacifism’ and ‘reconciliation’ are often misconstrued by both oppressors and the oppressed. For oppressors the terms pacify the oppressed and let the oppressors go without any punishment or recrimination for their injustice. The oppressors therefore are comfortable that pacifism should be understood in the terms just described so that they can oppress without being held to account for their misdeeds. They further interpret Scripture (for example Rom. 13:1-7) to refer to such oppressor-friendly pacifism, but that is not what the pacifism of Bosch’s alternative community is about.

On the other hand, as already stated in (2.5.1) Bishop Camara upheld the stance of Jesus who did not condone violence nor did he condone pacifism which means not taking any action as the oppressors would want to interpret it. Instead, Jesus opted for the side of the oppressed and his justice was all-inclusive which liberated all those who committed themselves to doing what is right. The new standard of Jesus moved away from both extremes and upheld true liberation for the oppressed. “Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil” (Wink 1987:14). Even the oppressors were oppressed by their own blindness and therefore need liberation as well. They could only get this liberation by rejecting their oppressive stance and embrace the dignity and value of every human being including those they oppressed. Jesus has a third way of responding to evil. He rejects both revenge and docile passivity as means of dealing with evil and violence. The third way of Jesus is the militant but nonviolent manner of responding to evil. Considering that Jesus’ audience was mainly the marginalised, poor and downtrodden, his response would be understood and appreciated by them. Jesus was encouraging the oppressed to take the initiative to restore their dignity even in circumstances that could not be changed at the time. Jesus encourages the oppressed to humiliate and shame the oppressors into repentance thereby liberating themselves from the oppression (Wink, 1978:23).

### **5.1.7 Reconciliation and identity**

In the following sub-sections where I discuss healing, reconciliation and forgiveness in the context of becoming an alternative community the concept of identity according to Schreiter, who says that both victim and perpetrator become new creatures, is also reflected: “The victim’s restored humanity must include the painful experience of violence, because that is now part of the victim’s

memory and identity” (Schreiter 1998:18). Thus, the identity of the individual is important within the alternative community of believers. He adds that “To trivialise and ignore memory is to trivialise and ignore human identity, and to trivialise and ignore human identity is to trivialise and ignore human dignity. This is why reconciliation as a hasty peace is actually the opposite of reconciliation” (Schreiter 1992:19) (2.4.2). This concept of identity is not static but its boundaries increase with the experiences of the individual affected by what surrounds them, including the memory of what the individual has gone through.

### **5.1.8 The purpose and macro structure of the chapter**

Described in terms of a praxis cycle (see Chapter 1.5.1.2), the purpose of this chapter is to weave together context analysis (from chapter 4) and theological reflection (from Chapter 2) with pastoral planning and spirituality. It develops approaches and strategies for bottom-up reconciliation resulting from this integrative process that are theologically well founded and strategically impactful “on the ground.” It does this to develop a genuine alternative to the existing options being exercised, and a convergent movement out of the fixed and polarised positions that have become entrenched in the community.

In order to ensure that this chapter develops a genuinely “bottom-up” approach, its macro structure is not provided by the theological aspects of “alternative community” as described in Chapter 2, but by five themes that have emerged “from the bottom up” in the interviews and focus group analysed in Chapter 4. It weaves together those five themes with the missiological dimensions of church as alternative community. The six key themes that emerged from the interviews (and put as questions to the focus group) move from deeply personal pain to cultural communal disruption and ultimately to the public political terrain. To avoid unnecessary repetition, those six themes have been contracted into four for this chapter, by combining themes 2 and 3 as well as themes 4 and 5. That gives the following structure:

### **5.1.9 The micro structure of each sub-section**

The micro structure of each section is shaped by the logic of the pastoral/praxis cycle, moving from context analysis to theological reflection and then to pastoral planning. A concluding reflection draws the lines together and provides a bridge to the following section. As an example, the structure of 5.2 looks like this:

- 5.2 The healing of personal memories
  - 5.2.1 Context analysis
  - 5.2.2 Theological reflection
  - 5.2.3 Concrete actions or projects
    - 5.2.3.1 Healing of memory workshops
    - 5.2.3.2 Personal and family counselling
    - 5.2.3.3 Personal and family rituals
    - 5.2.3.4 Church liturgies
  - 5.2.4 Concluding theological reflection

In the context analysis of each section (5.n.1), the differing (and often opposing) positions are described as the existing options to which an alternative community provides a genuine alternative, in the sense of a different way. The theological dimensions of an alternative community, as summarised above from Chapter 2, suggest a journey between (and away from) two extremes: on the one extreme a denial or ignoring of the problem, which amounts to repression or resignation (“Nothing will ever change”) and on the other extreme a blunt refusal to reconcile (“What I did was justified, so I will never apologise” and “What I suffered was so horrific, I will never forgive”). This approach also suggests a way of avoiding other positions, which either “cheapen” reconciliation (“Let’s just forget about it and move on”) or make it “conditional” on certain demands (“I will only consider reconciling once ..... is done”). What makes all these options theologically unacceptable from the viewpoint of an alternative community is that they all (in some way) either minimise the seriousness of evil and suffering or deny the efficacy of God’s grace (or both).

Each section of this chapter therefore explores the journey of a reconciling and convergent alternative to the existing options. The shape of such an alternative community is not conceived as a fixed or normative position but as a complex field of overlapping options and approaches.

## **5.2 THE HEALING OF PERSONAL MEMORIES**

The first sub-section in this chapter is about healing of personal memories. This theme emanates from the discussion in Chapter 4 where both individual interviews as well as the focus group clearly expressed unresolved memories of loss, mourning, anger, bitterness, helplessness and other emotions. What is needed is a gradual healing of personal memories to enable a victim/survivor to take charge of their life and once again manage it, instead of being controlled by the suffering they went through during the periods of violence (4.4.2.7). The healing of personal memories is not a

single act, but a process that an individual undergoes. That process can be smooth sailing but it is usually much more complex. In the words of Father Michael Lapsley (2012:18), who was seriously injured by an apartheid letter bomb and later established the Institute for Healing of Memories: “The healing journey is a zigzag road, two steps forward, one step backward.”

### **5.2.1 Context analysis**

The responses of participants to the personal trauma they suffered due to the 2008 violence varied from person to person, but their memories were predominantly negative, with the exception of a few positive memories of courageous people who saved the lives of victims by transporting them to hospital or cared for relatives who had been made homeless by the violence. The different aspects of their responses to the trauma are dealt with systematically in the rest of the chapter: Distrust and alienation (5.3.2), Passivity and resignation (5.3.3), Powerlessness, anger and denial (5.3.4) and Gender-based violence (5.3.5). This section focuses on the healing of *personal* memories, whereas the following four sections look at personal issues in the broader context of family and community. The personal and communal cannot be separated but are distinguished mainly to highlight the different types of initiatives or interventions that an alternative community could engage in to address the trauma. As a result, the five sections (5.3.1 to 5.3.5) overlap, but together they present a differentiated picture of the challenges and opportunities facing an alternative community committed to reconciliation.

#### *5.2.1.1 Beatings, torture, rape*

The most widespread personal trauma was inflicted by the 2008 election violence was the way in which the security forces and militias detained MDC supporters, took them to interrogation centres, verbally insulted and physically assaulted them. This intimidation campaign directly affected a large number of families in Zaka district, but indirectly traumatised the whole society. It is impossible that everyone in an African community, even the most ardent ZANU-PF supporters, could be completely untouched by the intimidation, torture and loss of life all around them. And if there were those who actually celebrated the death of the MDC members, their humanity was also harmed, perhaps even more deeply than that of the direct victims, since it poisoned their minds and hearts. And what did all the violence and death do to the children of the community? A separate section (5.3.5) is devoted to the issue of rape and sexual abuse.



This aspect of trauma is about violence as a physical violation of a person's body, an invasion of their privacy and a denial of their human dignity. The traumatic effect of physical assault is difficult to describe and impossible to measure. It affects a person for many years, usually for their whole life. This is the first challenge facing an alternative community when trying to address this trauma.

#### 5.2.1.2 *Death*

Another aspect of trauma was the actual murder of MDC supporters. The death, and especially the murder, of a relative has a huge emotional impact. The lengthy process of grieving that is customary in African cultures is a great help for families to come to terms with what happened, but that process was totally disrupted because some families did not know where the bodies of their deceased relatives were, and because the pervasive atmosphere of violence and intimidation prevented them from claiming the bodies for fear of being assaulted themselves. From the viewpoint of the victims' families, the murder of their relatives created deep personal trauma.

However, the murders also created some trauma for their killers. There are usually serious legal problems that one encounters when committing a murder, which in this case was completely absent due to the anarchy created by ZANU-PF. But there are serious religious and cultural trouble that you run into when committing a murder, and those troubles cannot be ignored or evaded, even when you try to cover up the evidence by hastily burying your victims.

The Shona both fear and respect the deceased, thus they have an obligation to perform rituals for them (Bourdillon, 1976:232). The ancestral/family spirits (*vadzimu*) are considered as protectors by the living, but they are so powerful that when they are displeased or annoyed with the living they can bring sickness, misfortune or even death upon them (Gelfand (1965). Thus, the living must perform rituals for them to pacify them: "In many ways the *vadzimu* are spirits who are more feared and respected than loved. The awe of the Shona towards their *vadzimu* is very similar to that of the Jew to God" (Gelfand, 1965:114). The rituals include songs and dancing: "The songs express the merits of the deceased and the grief of the community" (Bourdillon, 1976:233).

Yet, there is another category of spirits who are aggrieved and act in a vengeful manner, which are called *shave* (plural *mashave*) (Gelfand, 1964:41). There are several categories of *mashave*, "depending on their land of origin and the particular attribute they confer" (Gelfand, 1964:41). The most feared is the *ngozi* or revenging spirit. It comes to take revenge on the person (or on any

of their family members) who has aggrieved the deceased person, especially when the deceased was murdered or bewitched. If not appeased, many members of the family and extended family could fall sick, encounter misfortune or even die. All these are signs that there is some reparation to be done by the suffering family either because they did something wrong to the deceased or their ancestors committed a crime against the aggrieved person. “The Mashona say that once the demands of the *ngozi* have been met, the matter is closed and it will not return again to trouble the family” (Gelfand, 1964:42). This affirms the Shona tradition of searching for ways to be reconciled, even with the deceased. This concept is also emphasised by Bourdillon (1976:270):

An angry spirit is terrifying. Such a spirit attacks suddenly and very harshly. It usually attacks an individual through his family causing a succession of deaths or death followed by serious illness in other members of the family. And an angry spirit is not easily appeased.

Bourdillon (1976:271) explains that one may interpret the fear of an avenging spirit as a sanction for ethical behaviour. This means that during one’s lifetime one must avoid performing provocative actions to anyone lest their spirit returns to take revenge. Another deterrent to encourage good behaviour is the payment expected to be given to the family of the avenging spirit. Thus, both scholars reveal the importance of good behaviour as well as acts of reconciliation.

### 5.2.1.3 *Burial*

One of the issues that played a role in increasing the trauma of the 2008 violence was how the deceased were treated by the people who had killed them – and how their relatives responded to it. Interview and focus group participants stated that some of the deceased in the 2008 violence were initially not given due respect as they were buried in shallow graves (4.5.2.1). They were not accorded the dignity of a funeral in a properly dug grave, with an appropriate family ritual. The dehumanising effect which that had on the families and on the whole community is hard to fathom. It was more than a personal insult to the deceased and their families; it had a structural impact since it defiled the whole community (4.5.2.1).

Although churches should not take the lead in these traditional rituals, at the same time churches must understand why those involved want to carry out such rituals. Thus, individuals and families continue to perform these (*kuripa ngozi*) rituals in order to put to rest the aggrieved spirits of their relatives who were killed during the political violence. This is why later the MDC leadership including Morgan Tsvangirai later came to Jerera (4.4.2.4) to conduct traditional rituals to accord

proper dignity to the deceased as well as restore respect to the families that had been dehumanised. Most of them were later exhumed by their relatives and re-buried at their homes, but some participants, who appreciated the ritual arranged by MDC-T, felt that a one-day event could not “really heal the wounds of victims and all those affected by the violence...” and expressed the feeling that more needed to be done (4.5.4.2). Cognisant of the strong belief in the role of rituals for the deceased, ZANU-PF leadership too summoned villagers to perform rituals at the site of the shallow graves to appease the spirits of the dead (4.4.2.4).

The second burial issue that played a role was the funeral service conducted by a Catholic priest for a murdered MDC youth, which resulted in the priest’s house of St Anthony’s Mission being burnt down. The burning of a church property, along with the knowledge that the petrol bomb was intended to kill the priest who conducted the funeral and almost killed two seminary students staying in the house, caused serious personal trauma for Catholic members and for the whole community.

#### *5.2.1.4 Disability*

The final aspect of personal trauma to highlight here is the fact that some MDC members became permanently disabled as a result of the Jerera bombing. The lasting impact of such a violation of a person’s bodily dignity is hard to imagine. It leaves permanent scars, physically, emotionally and economically.

### **5.2.2 Theological reflection**

What theological resources are available to churches who wish to take up this task of assisting victims/survivors to receive healing for their memories of violence? This section explores the resources developed in Chapter 2 and expands on it where necessary.

Healing can be achieved through participation in an alternative community. Brueggemann uses this concept in the context of prophetic ministry (2.3.4). As he explains the life of Jeremiah, Brueggemann stressed three important aspects in order to achieve a sustainable alternative community in prophetic ministry. The first is that there should be a proper formation of a religious community, the practice of this community should be a disciplined spirituality and thirdly it should embrace that niche of prophetic faith. These three aspects combine to uplift the life of a believer: “Prophetic faith is a voice for life in a world that is bent on death” (Brueggemann, 2006:142). Thus, for true healing to take place the one to be healed not only needs some religious formation

in the Christian community in which he participates, but that formation should be accompanied by a disciplined spirituality imbued by a prophetic faith that gives hope to the process of healing. As Brueggemann explains, to opt for an alternative prophetic community is not easy. It is radical, risky, urgent and even subversive in a society that pursues self-destruction. He explains by using the example of Jeremiah: “Jeremiah stands isolated in historical, cultural context, a voice of sanity in a world of madness” (Brueggemann, 2006:142). Therefore, true healing does not come without struggle, just like Jeremiah wanted to bring sanity and healing to Israel, but had to suffer in pursuance of that goal. Through his suffering Jeremiah exposed the sinfulness of Israel and tried to persuade Israel to come back to Yahweh. It is only through faithful commitment to Yahweh that Israel can do what is pleasing to God. For this to happen (as Brueggemann has already stated), spiritual formation and concrete actions are needed to achieve an alternative community. Just as the formation of an alternative community in the time of Jeremiah led to practical acts of the transformation of Israel, this theological reflection also needs to lead to concrete actions or projects in the communities that underwent violence in Zaka.

These reflections from Jeremiah and Jesus emphasise the importance of a supporting fellowship around a prophetic figure, which draws people into a hope-giving and non-vengeful journey in the midst of ongoing pain and uncertainty. In 5.2.3 the strategy of organising “healing of memories” workshops will be explored, and it is therefore helpful here to take note of some key theological resources for such a journey of personal healing, as supplied by Father Michael Lapsley (2012:168):

While a Healing of Memories workshop does not depend on Christian imagery, there are echoes of the gospel that are implicit in its design. The heart of the gospel story is that Jesus triumphs over crucifixion and death, and Thomas, overcoming disbelief, thrusts his hand into the still-visible wound of the resurrected Jesus. So, like Jesus, our wounds may remain visible but they can be healed, and then we are no longer their prisoner. The signs of the crucifixion had not disappeared, but Jesus’ wounds were no longer bleeding. I think that tells us something about God’s will for the human family – that we are called to recognize and acknowledge the terrible things that we have done to one another, but then we are called to stop being crucifiers. We are called not to be a Good Friday people but to be an Easter people. The idea of the wounded healer is thus deep within Christian theology. The

victim triumphs not by becoming a victimizer of others but rather by becoming fully himself or herself. It was St. Irenaeus of Lyons who asserted that the glory of God is a human being fully alive.

This takes us from theological reflection to pastoral planning, to reflect on ways of putting these ideas into practice.

### **5.2.3 Concrete actions or projects**

Through the following actions and projects people could slowly gain healing of their memories within (or with the assistance of) an alternative community, which manages to avoid a desperate position of giving up as well as a position of overlooking the real suffering by politicizing (4.4.2.6) the process of peace and healing. We now draw from the suggestions of chapter 4 as well as other practical actions that could assist in the healing of memories of violence.

#### *5.2.3.1 Personal counselling*

Both the interviews and the focus group highlighted the strategic role that counselling could play in healing the personal trauma caused by the violence of 2008. Churches were urged to provide trained personnel to offer counselling to individuals as well as families (4.4.2.5). It is important to stress that people who are counselled are not passive recipients of something that is “done to them;” If someone is not willing to commit to an interactive journey with a counsellor, there is little hope of progress or healing. And if they are not open and honest with themselves, admitting their feelings and being willing to share them with a counsellor, nothing positive will emerge. On the other hand, if they participate constructively in counselling sessions there is a possibility of gradual growth towards healing and wholeness. Through offering personal counselling services, churches can become an alternative community inspired by gospel values.

In practice this would mean that parishes and congregations would announce that counselling services are available to anyone with personal pastoral problems and that people are welcome to contact appointed (and suitably trained) counsellors for an appointment. Such invitations will have to be general in focus and not limited to people affected by the 2008 violence, since that would probably make it more difficult for people to come forward. The advantage of a wide invitation is that it doesn't prioritise trauma from political violence 12 years ago over trauma caused by crime, domestic violence or rape from a few months ago. It may also make it easier for people to risk

coming forward to seek help with those older memories, since they are not the only ones seeking help. The disadvantage is that the older memories may be crowded out by more recent and more urgent pain, which could drive the memories of the political violence further underground and make them more difficult to overcome in the long run. It may therefore be advisable to arrange more dedicated and focused counselling services in the Zaka district to address the 2008 violence.

Before moving to such proposals, it is necessary to underline what is at stake here. As already stated above, counselling (4.4.2.7) is one way of implementing healing of personal memories so that an individual would fully take charge of his/her life again. The focus group also agreed that counselling is an important exercise in order to heal victims and assist them to accept what happened to them in 2008 (4.7.4.3). The personal experience shared by Lapsley (2012:20-21) of his own journey to deal with the violence that permanently maimed him is instructive:

Some people who have had horrible things happen to them are, to be sure, survivors, but they remain prisoners of a moment in their past. I think there is another step that requires moving away from being an object of history – someone to whom something terrible has been done – to becoming a subject of history once more. This means becoming someone who once again participates in shaping and creating the world. Therefore, I began to realize that if I were consumed by hatred, bitterness, and a desire for revenge, I would be a victim forever. The oppressors would have failed to kill my body, but they certainly would have killed my soul. The outpouring of love and support I received enabled me to walk a journey from victim, to being a survivor, to finally becoming a victor. This did not happen quickly or easily; it was a long road, and it continues to this very day.

The crucial words at this point are: “The outpouring of love and support I received enabled me ...” but the question is: How best can such an “outpouring” of love and support be mobilised, structured and made operational in a community? That takes us to the next section.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Healing of memory workshops*

Some participants (4.4.2.6) referred to the work that the AMANI Trust did in the 1980s to provide counselling to individuals and families in Matabeleland during and after the *Gukurahundi* violence. The suggestion was made that the same organisation, with its wealth of experience in this field, could be invited to Zaka district to provide a similar service. That is a good proposal,

since it is clear that special expertise is required to help people come to terms with painful memories that are not only deep but also long-lasting.

Some participants (4.4.2.7) suggested that other NGOs could also be approached to assist families and individuals in this regard. The Institute for Healing of Memories founded by Father Michael Lapsley, which has already been mentioned, is another viable option. Lapsley has visited Zimbabwe regularly since 2002 to conduct Healing of Memories (HOM) workshops and to train Zimbabwean facilitators. In other words, there is already a group of trained HOM facilitators in Zimbabwe.

Instead of exploring and comparing the approaches of these NGOs, it is more important for this study to stress how essential such initiatives are and to reflect on the kind of issues that emerge in HOM workshops and to relate those to the concerns raised by the interview and focus group participants. The vast scale of the pain and alienation suffered by citizens across Zimbabwe during the different waves of violence in its history, has caused trauma to become endemic in communities. It should therefore be a priority for churches and NGOs to develop the expertise to organise and run these kinds of workshops on a regular basis across the country. In the process of planning such programmes, the following issues stand out: a) Recent and distant trauma; b) The centrality of story-telling; c) The intersectionality of pain and suffering; d) Keeping hope alive.

#### 5.2.3.2 (a) *Recent and distant trauma*

Lapsley (2012:207; 211) comments on his constant concern while on visits to Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2011:

I asked myself whether it would be possible to deal with issues of the past while the difficulties of coping with the present were so overwhelming.... I was doubtful that people who were struggling with survival would have the emotional and spiritual resilience to focus on how the past of the country had affected them when the present was so crushing.

However, he was surprised to find that there was an eagerness “to leave the worries of the present for a little time and focus on some of the poisonous residue from the nation’s past” (:211). He refers to the “many layers of pain” that were revealed in the story-telling, resonating with the five waves of violence identified in Chapter 3 of this study. A key question facing a bottom-up reconciliation and healing ministry in Zimbabwe is to what extent the present political and

economic turmoil – and the recurring waves of violence over the past two centuries – are testimony to a cumulative embedding of trauma in a whole society, which not only explains the “ease” with which violence recurs but also the extreme difficulty of overcoming its bitter legacy. This intersection between distant and recent trauma is therefore closely related to the intersection between collective (or national) and personal trauma. A bottom-up reconciliation and healing process will inevitably start by dealing with personal trauma, one person at a time, but it will only make a significant contribution in society at large if it manages to allow the deeper and collective “layers of pain” (Lapsley) to emerge, so that all those stories are told, acknowledged and dealt with by a growing number of people across society. On the other hand, the inability to deal with the deeper layers of pain may in fact be a key contributing factor to many people’s inability to come to terms with their more recent pain: “I have long felt that one of the negative influences that fuels the present situation is the memory of past conflicts that Zimbabweans tended to bury rather than acknowledge and work through” (Lapsley 2012:211).

An essential dimension of the life of an alternative community in a context like Zaka is not for a group of “healed and happy” Christians to “go out and help” people in the community who have been traumatised, but to admit their own traumatising, to start telling their stories to one another and gradually to grow together into wounded healers in relation to one another – and then to invite other traumatised community members into an ongoing process of healing. It is such vulnerable solidarity that Bosch had in mind when he spoke of the alternative community. In other words, an alternative community is not an organisation that gets established but a movement that is born and that grows organically.

#### 5.2.3.2 (b) *Story-telling*

What a healing of memories workshop does is allow and encourage traumatised victims/survivors of violence to tell their stories and share their pain. This “deceptively simple” workshop approach is “a deeply interpersonal experience wherein we listen to one another’s pain as well as our own and acknowledge our suffering” (Lapsley 2012:159). It consists of a programme that has been “painstakingly designed and ... attentively watched over by a team of facilitators trained in the flexibility and perceptiveness needed to encourage participants gently along the way” (:160). It is the common sharing of pain in a safe and affirming atmosphere that helps participants feel less isolated and alone:



The trust that is generated among participants in a workshop as they tell their individual stories is healing and binds people together, and this in turn helps to restore a sense of belonging and mends the social fabric (:160).

Another interesting perspective on storytelling is presented by the African (Shona) traditional practice of folktales. These are stories handed down from generation to generation, which are pregnant with meaning and contain aspects of advice, , prohibition, counselling and even therapy. The western culture understand storytelling primarily as coming from the person who was traumatised and relates their story in the context of counselling. Since African folktales, which are normally used for entertainment and education, are imbued with wisdom and advice, the proposal here is that they could be used to help traumatised people to recover from their trauma. Charema (2002) argues:

The vast majority of the Shona people use both traditional (informal) and modern counselling services. The indigenous approach to counselling tactfully captures the importance of the family and the community as a mode of communication for therapy and moral values. However, the influence of Eurocentric counselling theory, research and practice among the Shona people has demonised and oppressed individuals and groups whose culture lies outside the Eurocentric counselling culture. It might be worthwhile for all community leaders, traditional healers, pastors and counsellors to employ the multicultural approach in order to cater for cultural diversity that has come with ‘modernisation’. This method presents a hopeful strategy of recovering stories, cultural traditions and values.

Traditional stories, as told by traditional leaders, are an important cultural resource that could become part of healing journeys towards healing and recovery from trauma.

#### 5.2.3.2 (c) *Intersectionality*

The term intersectionality was introduced by the African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who defined it as follows:

It’s basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often

missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts (in Steinmetz 2020:1).

Without using this term, many interview participants looked at the Zaka violence through this lens and highlighted the intersections between the kinds of trauma experienced by people on the grounds of being MDC members, women, priests, young people or village dwellers. Those who belonged to more than one of these categories were exposed to more encompassing – and therefore more traumatising – violence. And the suffering they experienced was “not just the sum of its parts.” What a healing of memories journey aims to achieve is to help traumatised victims/survivors of violence to come to terms with all the dimensions of their violated humanity – and how those dimensions intersect and reinforce each other – by telling their stories and taking back their dignity.

#### **5.2.4 Concluding theological reflection**

For Christians, the conviction that God has decisively wrought salvation for all in and through Jesus Christ stands at the very centre of their lives. Luke is the writer who says most about Jesus’ ministry of forgiveness and acceptance of women and various outcasts and marginalised people of his society. The alternative community that emerged around him practised “boundary-breaking compassion,” which the church is called to emulate (Bosch 1991:86) (2.3.3). The focus group insisted that this teaching on forgiveness is not only meant for victims but also for perpetrators and for all the communities in the affected area (4.7.5.1). The alternative community embodied by Jesus in his mission did not merely proclaim certain values that remained announcements; he actualised what he taught and initiated his disciples to do the same. This section on the healing of personal memories integrated some of the theological insights generated in Chapter 2 with some of the views expressed by participants in interviews or in the focus group to develop broad strategies for concrete actions that can be implemented in the Zaka community. These strategies lead beyond the traditional boundaries of the separate churches towards the emergence of a “regnified” alternative community of people from all sides of the conflict, which intends to accommodate and transform everyone affected by the violence of 2008 in Zaka district.

What all counselling and workshop approaches have in common is a non-triumphalist humility and modesty. No counsellor or workshop facilitator ever promises instant healing or quick reconciliation. An awareness of the deep brokenness of people’s lives and the complexity of their

pain – and how they have been dealing with it – leads to the realistic admission that such interventions can at best set in motion processes of healing and journeys of reconciliation. What lies at the heart of such Christian interventions and what sustains those who pursue it, is the commitment to live as an alternative community in the midst of division, estrangement and pain, working to “keep hope alive” (Lapsley 2012:207).

### **5.3 OVERCOMING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA**

Whereas section 5.2 dealt with the healing of personal memories, which gave it a psychological or counselling focus, this subsection uses the term “cultural trauma” and has a communal and public focus. The personal and communal dimensions of social life cannot be separated but the dynamics of healing personal pain are different from the overcoming of communal distrust and antagonism, which means that an alternative community needs to adopt different strategies or practical activities to address them. Like the previous subsection, it weaves together elements of theological reflection from Chapter 2, elements of context analysis from Chapter 3 and viewpoints expressed by participants in the interviews and the focus group (Chapter 4) to develop concrete actions to overcome the collective trauma still haunting the community up to the present time.

#### **5.3.1 Cultural trauma**

##### *5.3.1.1 Context analysis*

Chapter 3 described the state-sponsored violence in Zimbabwe that led to continued fear, helplessness and confusion, which are features of a traumatised society. Some of the atrocities committed were torture, beatings, forced hunger, electric shocks, submersion under water, murders, sexual abuse, rape, emotional trauma, psychological and emotional torture (3.3.3.2). In Chapter 4 the viewpoints of some people in the Zaka district, who were participants in this research, were reported and analysed. In order to explore the damage done to the community at large this section uses the concept of “cultural trauma,” which is used by sociologists such as Erikson (1976); Eyermann (2001); Hughson & Spaaij (2011); Alexander (2012, 2019). The distinction between individual and collective trauma was explained as follows by Kai Erikson in an influential publication in 1976:

By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively . . . By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the

bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma.' But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared . . . 'We' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (quoted in Alexander 2019:4).

This notion of collective trauma was later developed into the concept of "cultural" trauma, to highlight the cultural processes taking place in a community to transform shocking and violent experiences into collective trauma:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways (Alexander 2019:1).

Sociologists who have developed the notion of cultural trauma suggest that it should be understood as a process, not as a single shattering event. As much as cultural trauma is usually triggered by a disruptive "originating event" in the past, it is constructed in and by a community over a period of time: "As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory" (Eyerman 2001:1). Alexander (2019:10) expands on this:

For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors 'decide' to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go.

The important implication of this approach is that the 2008 violence did not cause cultural trauma in and of itself. The cultural trauma arising out of the 2008 Zaka violence should be seen as part of the steady traumatisation of Zimbabwean society as a whole, which grew cumulatively through

the five phases of violence surveyed in Chapter 3, but most especially since the year 2000 when ZANU-PF failed to obtain a majority in the referendum on a new constitution. In other words, the cultural trauma revealed (and reinforced) in the 2008 Zaka violence is not in the first place a trauma affecting the MDC-T supporters and their families who were beaten, tortured or killed. It was (and is) in the first place a cultural trauma for the ruling ZANU-PF, who were unwilling and unable to accept that they could lose power in Zimbabwe. As noted in 3.3.4.3, the ZANU-PF government experienced the 2000 referendum result as a huge shock. In that event the MDC gave the credibility of ZANU-PF a devastating blow, their first political humiliation since the euphoria of independence in 1980, when they had overwhelming public support as “liberators of the nation.” That cultural trauma was reinforced by the results of the 2002 presidential election and subsequent tensions, so that by 2008 it had already become deeply entrenched in society as a whole. As the ruling party, with full access to state power and working as an “executive-military alliance” (see Chapter 3), ZANU-PF transformed its own cultural trauma into the national trauma of Zimbabwe as a whole.

To understand that transformation process, one needs to use two other concepts used in cultural trauma theory. The first term is “carrier group,” which refers to the collective agents of the trauma process who articulate and propagate the claim(s) in public, thus producing a collective or cultural trauma (Alexander 2012:16). The second term is “spiral of signification,” which describes the way in which violent or tragic events are made into collective trauma through their symbolic representation as “claims” about the shape of social reality (what it should be like; what has gone wrong; what threatens it) that are broadcast publicly to mobilise people into action (Alexander 2012:16). Every cultural construction of trauma begins with a claim:

It is a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution (:16).

The claim that “spiralled” into cultural trauma in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008 was that a “terrifying profanation” of Zimbabwe’s most sacred value, namely its liberation from colonial and white minority rule, was about to take place. The propagated narrative was that if the MDC was allowed to take over the government, it would constitute a “fundamental injury” to the country that would be a “horribly destructive social process,” against which everyone needed to be mobilised

and against which any means or methods were justified. The “carrier group” of that cultural trauma was ZANU-PF and all the organs of state at its command that it could mobilise. The creation of a trauma narrative of “a nation in crisis,” becoming the “victim” of a conspiracy by an opposition party – supported by white farmers and numerous powerful forces outside Zimbabwe – while they themselves were creating thousands of political victims by exercising state power in a brutal way, is paradoxical, as Nyambi (2019:114) has pointed out:

[T]his (political) system and its dominant grand narrative of *the nation in crisis* have oftentimes paradoxically assumed a similar identity, that of *the political victim*, in order better to position themselves to summon political affects that can compel people to align with their narrative (italics added).

As became clear in Chapter 3 and in the interviews, there is also a powerful counter-claim being made in Zimbabwe by other carrier groups, contesting the “dominant grand narrative” of ZANU-PF. The trade union movement and the MDC that developed out of it (see Chapter 3), have been raising the claim of ongoing violence experienced by Zimbabwean citizens at the hands of an oppressive and corrupt government, presiding over the utter failure of the Zimbabwean economy. It claimed a “terrifying profanation” of the country’s most sacred value, namely the dignity and freedom of its citizens, which was a “horribly destructive social process” that constituted a “fundamental injury” to the country. The “spiral of significance” giving credence to this counter-claim of collective trauma was spread by carrier groups like the MDC, some NGO’s, some newspapers and occasional Pastoral Letters by the Catholic Bishops, as set out in Chapter 3.

Both the claim and counter-claim speak of “a nation in crisis” and the following description of collective trauma applies to both:

Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into *the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity*. Collective actors “decide” to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go (Alexander 2012:15, italics added).

These two opposing claims of cultural trauma are not equal. To understand the differences between them, one needs to trace the way in which they originated:

Representation of trauma depends on constructing a compelling framework of cultural classification. In one sense, this is simply telling a new story. Yet this story-telling is, at the same time, a complex and multivalent symbolic process that is contingent, contested, and sometimes highly polarizing. For the wider audience to become persuaded that they, too, have become traumatized by an experience or an event, the carrier group needs to engage in successful *meaning making* work (Alexander 2012:17, italics added).

The creation of a master narrative to persuade people to “make meaning” out of a tragedy is an essential part of the development of cultural trauma. According to Alexander (2012:13-15), the representation of trauma through such meaning-making narratives is shaped by four factors:

- a) *The nature of the pain*: What actually happened – to the particular group and to the wider collectivity of which it is a part?
- b) *The nature of the victim(s)*: What group of persons was affected by this traumatizing pain? Were they particular individuals or groups, or “the people” in general? Did a singular and delimited group receive the brunt of the pain, or were several groups involved?
- c) *The relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience*;
- d) *Attribution of responsibility*: Who actually injured the victim? Who caused the trauma?

These four issues can be researched as questions of historical veracity or social “facts,” but in the exploration of cultural trauma they are asked as matters of symbolic and social construction (Alexander 2012:15). In other words, the question is: How does a master narrative try to *persuade* the public and how does it *present* the nature of the pain, the identity of the victims, their relation to the larger community and the persons to be blamed for the trauma? It is clear that the master narrative propagated by ZANU-PF was radically different from that of the MDC. What seemingly made the MDC narrative persuasive to growing numbers of Zimbabweans between 2000 and 2008 was the fact that they did not experience the projected cultural trauma of “losing our independence” (as projected by the ZANU-PF narrative) as violence against themselves. What they did experience as violent was their daily struggle to make a living and to afford life’s necessities, while government ministers lived in luxury, were involved in large-scale corruption, and clamped down violently on any form of protest. The traumatising of large sectors of the population by those forms of violence produced a persuasive narrative “claim” that grew into cultural trauma and

caused a direct confrontation with the dominant ZANU-PF narrative. Hughson & Spaaij (2011:285) have pointed out that

a trauma inducing cultural disorientation occurs when people feel that an event shakes the ‘foundations of their collective pride’ and is often perceived as a challenge to collective identity warranting some type or another of confrontation.

The confrontation between these two competing cultural traumas (and related collective identities) are at the heart of the challenge facing an alternative community. What theological resources are available to address this?

#### 5.3.1.2 *Addressing cultural trauma narratives theologically*

The notion of cultural trauma raises national and structural questions, in other words, issues of social and political ethics. The vision of an alternative community, as set out in Chapter 2, has a great deal to say in this regard. The prophetic imagination of Jeremiah, directed against the opportunistic and short-sighted political manipulations of the last kings of Judah (as interpreted by Brueggemann) and the alternative praxis of Jesus of Nazareth (as interpreted by Bosch) show a way to respond to the two competing forms of cultural-national trauma identified in 5.3.1.1.

A prophetic alternative community exists in creative tension between identifying itself with its surrounding context and offering a solution that differs from the available options prevalent in that society. This tension is what Bevans & Schroeder (2011) have expressed so clearly with the term “prophetic dialogue.” All Christians, like Jesus’ disciples, continue to stand in that dialectical tension in both their following and implementing the gospel. The elements of doubt and worship, as well as elements of fear and faith, co-exist within and among the followers of Jesus, the alternative community. In other words, they do not adopt a superior or judgmental posture that they try to impose on others; instead, they speak out prophetically and live out (exhibit) the values of the Reign of God in their common life.

When it comes to the clash between two versions of cultural trauma that are being presented to the Zimbabwean public (5.3.1.1), the way of an alternative community is not to choose one political “camp” over another but to choose justice. Jesus of Nazareth did not side with one of the four religious “camps” of his time (2.3.2.2). Nor did he side with either the Roman Empire or the Jewish



liberation movement, represented by the Zealots. He sided with those on the “underside” of history, who were being marginalised by all those groups and oppressed (treated unjustly) by the powerful.

An alternative community in Zaka, while being aware of the two extremes – continued fear by victims and excessive desire for power by the ruling party – is challenged to courageously offer a solution that enables the victims to be liberated. This involves an alternative that overcomes the sterile and visionless impasse that entrenches oppression and neglect from above and despair from below. This means finding clear theological language to counter the cultural trauma narrative of ZANU-PF, namely that the main victims in the nation’s crisis are war veterans and political leaders, who are the courageous protagonists fighting to preserve the integrity and dignity of Zimbabwe against “the enemy” – which consists of disloyal black Zimbabweans who side with white Zimbabweans and the neo-colonial world to undo Zimbabwe’s freedom and independence. An alternative community theology will prophetically expose such a trauma narrative as hypocritical and oppressive, since it is aimed primarily at preserving the power and privileges of the governing elite and the military establishment, not the well-being of the majority of Zimbabweans.

Such a prophetic exposing of the dominant cultural trauma narrative in the country is risky. It corresponds to the “resistance” response to trauma identified by Harms (2015:12). We have seen how Brueggemann explains Jeremiah’s courage in the face of danger and division amongst the people of his time (2.3.4). His actions aimed at persuading the rulers and citizens of Judah to repent of their trust in foreign political powers and other divinities, and to turn back to Yahweh. Similarly, Bosch explains the courage needed for Jesus to call and lead an alternative community that embodied the way of all-inclusive compassion, even when exposing the injustice and hypocrisy of the Judean authorities and risking extreme danger in that process. Although this way of resistance to trauma is risky and dangerous, those who embrace an alternative community are called not only to suffer but also to be included among the marginalised and outsiders (2.3.2.3). This risky unmasking of the ZANU-PF cultural trauma narrative is the first step that an alternative community is called to make, not as observers on a grand stand, from a safe critical distance, but in prophetic solidarity with the community.

However, a prophetic denouncement or unmasking of the dominant cultural trauma narrative of ZANU-PF does not imply a party political position in support of the MDC. It calls for identification

with the plight of poor and unemployed Zimbabweans – on the “underside” of society – who bear the brunt of the government’s economic and political policies. It means identifying with the trauma narrative that highlights the collective suffering of the “least of these” – who suffer injustice – as the primary violence affecting Zimbabwe. The fact that the trade union movement and the MDC also speak and act on behalf of those excluded and marginalised citizens means that there is an overlap between the interests of an alternative community and of those movements, not that there is identity or collusion between them.

What makes an alternative community into an “alternative” is precisely its freedom *from* uncritical or unconditional commitment to every political programme and organisation, in order to be free *for* those who suffer and are excluded. Such an evangelical freedom (*from* and *for*) is clearly articulated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:1-23. Even though that was written in a different context and with a different purpose, his fundamental conviction is relevant here: “For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them” (1 Cor. 9:19). That “winning” should not be interpreted narrowly as “winning more converts for the church” but as *identifying* with people in their concrete situation (“becoming weak to the weak,” etc. – v.22) in order to *draw* them into the freedom of the gospel, into that *movement* towards the Reign of God which involves living “in Christ,” with others in love, justice and compassion.

This evangelical freedom of an alternative community makes a clear distinction, but no separation, between the Reign of God and every political system or ideology; between the Reign of God and every human (and Christian) attempt to embody it at a specific place and time. This “eschatological reserve” is fundamental to the life and witness of an alternative community, since it acknowledges reconciliation as *God’s work and gift* (5.1.4). The freedom of an alternative community is therefore a freedom *from* people to identify *with* people. It is a freedom from domination by powerful political and cultural forces in order to identify with weak and marginalised communities. It is a freedom *from* the past, *for* God’s promised future, for God’s preferential option for the poor revealed in the mission of Jesus (2.3.3).

That option of Jesus, and the threat which his non-violent message presented to the Roman and Judean authorities, led to his unjust condemnation to death and his humiliating death on the cross. An alternative community that is shaped by the praxis of Jesus will therefore be in solidarity with the “crucified people” of their context, those who are unjustly oppressed, marginalised and often

killed. A number of theologians have developed this notion of the “crucified people” and of Christ’s solidarity with the “cross-bearers” of today. The South African Black theologian, Takatso Mofokeng, titled his doctoral thesis *The Crucified among the cross-bearers* (Mofokeng, 1983). Another South African black theologian, Olehile Buffel (2015), chose the title “Bringing the crucified down from the cross” for an article dealing with the preferential option for the poor in a context of poverty. However, he insists that this

should be done in such a way that the crucified people themselves are the bearers of salvation. The agency of the crucified peoples is very critical. The church, theologians and pastors, including Christian and development workers are to accompany and journey with the crucified peoples (the poor) as they struggle for their own liberation, as they struggle to transform the socio-economic and political structures that are a cause of their poverty, oppression, suffering and dehumanisation (Buffel 2015:361).

The solidarity of an alternative community with crucified people in the midst of their trauma and poverty can bring about the “resurrection of the true church” (Sobrino 1984:84ff). And the catholicity of that alternative community means that it

adopts a partisan point of view in conformity with a God who is greater but who is also lesser; a God who is for all but whose Spirit is in the poor; a God who wants to reach all, directly but through his privileged ones, the poor; a God who wants to raise up all through his hidden presence in the cross and death of the oppressed (Sobrino 1984:115).

The intimate connection between mission and justice, redemption and liberation, crucifixion and resurrection, as attested by the World Synod of Catholic Bishops (1971) (see 2.3.3), should guide and shape the cruciform life of an alternative community. This is the compelling theological vision that it brings to the competing narratives of cultural trauma circulating in Zimbabwe.

### 5.3.1.3 *Overcoming national cultural trauma*

What kind of bottom-up actions and projects could an alternative community carry out to embody the theological notions developed in 5.3.1.2 in the context described in 5.3.1.1? To answer this question, I integrate the reflections in 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2 and also draw on the proposals made by interview participants (4.5) and by church leaders in the focus group (4.7). It is important to reiterate that an alternative community is not a new gospel or a new church intended to replace

existing churches. Nor is it a select group of people drawn from different churches to form an elite “super church.” It is a vision for a Christian community that embodies the values of the Reign of God, a community into which members of all churches are drawn in order to revitalise their churches to work together for the common good, with a specific focus on reconciliation and healing in the community at large. It is the vision of a community deeply involved with stakeholders at the grassroots, which is well positioned to empower all who experience trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion (4.7.2.2). The proposals in this section should not be seen as prescriptions for churches but as suggestions emerging from the research to help churches, growing together into an alternative community, to imagine what it could mean to be involved in God’s mission of reconciliation.

The first issue that needs to be cleared up when considering practical steps to address the clashing narratives of cultural trauma in Zimbabwe is the relationship between this structural, political dimension of trauma and the personal dimension of trauma discussed in 5.2. There is often polarisation among theologians, ministers and church members between involvement in personal pastoral care to traumatised individuals and involvement in addressing the social and political policies or structures of society that cause trauma. The vision of an alternative community aligns itself with an integrative or multidimensional approach to trauma and resilience, in line with the PCS (personal-cultural-structural) model explained by Harms (2015:145f; see 5.3.2.1). This is essential, since the Reign of God, for which and towards which it lives and strives, is “more than” the church (5.1.4) and encompasses personal, social, cultural and structural dimensions of society. When this section explores possible actions to overcome cultural trauma on a national scale, it is therefore not a replacement for, or an alternative to, the person-directed ministry of the healing of memories as elaborated in 5.2. On the contrary, the two fields of endeavour (or mission) are both essential and are closely linked. And therefore, no battle of priority should be allowed between them.

What kind of politics is involved in concretely choosing justice and identifying with those on the “underside” of society, without choosing one political “camp” over another” (5.3.1.1)? In line with the suggestion of the focus group, a multi-faceted approach to empowering people (4.7.2) is required to tackle these issues.

### 5.3.1.3 (a) *Sunday worship*

The politics of an alternative community that is concerned with national trauma will start with worship. There is no act that is more political than to worship the living God as Creator of the universe and Lord of history. Weekly Sunday services represent the main identity formation event of Christian churches and are the communal response to the gracious presence of God. If churches are to become more consistently oriented towards God's promised future and towards addressing national trauma, their worship will have to clearly reflect that orientation. Many churches have prescribed liturgies or at least established worship habits, which means that an "alternative liturgy" shared by all participating churches isn't thinkable. But there are ways to develop their worship in the service of building an alternative community.

A group of churches could agree to include certain common elements in their regular Sunday worship services, or occasionally to use common liturgies or shared programmes for their guilds and associations or Bible study groups. This strategy would not draw a group of committed members of different churches out into a public show of solidarity with the affected families (see 5.3.1.3 (c) below), but would focus on the members of one's own church and aim to get more of them to grow in their awareness of the cultural trauma affecting the nation and to draw them into a Jesus-shaped alternative community.

### 5.3.1.3 (b) *Liturgical lament as expression of spiritual solidarity*

What kind of liturgical renewal is needed for churches to become an alternative community that addresses national trauma and shows spiritual solidarity with the people most deeply affected by the 2008 violence? The vision of an alternative community is to grow *with* victims and survivors of the violence into a deepening spiritual awareness of their suffering as *cultural* (not only personal) *trauma*. This means fostering the awareness that the trauma experienced in the district of Zaka – before, during and after 2008 – is part of the trauma suffered by the whole of Zimbabwe as a wounded society, as a traumatised nation.

Church liturgies normally include praise, thanksgiving, remembrance, supplication and repentance to awaken mind, body and soul and to uplift them to God. Liturgies that best express solidarity-in-trauma are liturgies that include lament as an integral element. The spirituality of an alternative community that wishes to alleviate cultural trauma and nurture hope needs to embrace the biblical practice of lament, as argued so persuasively by Katongole (2017).

Prayers and songs of lament could be written jointly by colleagues from different churches, who are all committed to the vision of leading their churches to become an alternative community. Churches with prescribed liturgies all have spaces in the worship service where intercession for specific local issues are allowed and encouraged, whereas churches without a fixed liturgy would also find it easy to include in their worship. If intercession-with-lament becomes a fixed part of weekly worship it would help to gradually shape a spirituality of hope-from-lament in people's lives. Ideally, different forms of lament should be used from month to month or in specific liturgical seasons, like Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ascension and others, to ensure that it does not become an empty routine but leads worshippers into a dynamic and challenging journey. That would also ensure that the leaders or representatives of the participating churches keep regular contact with each other to reflect on their worship.

The season of Lent suggests itself for journeys or pilgrimages of lament, so that the suffering and death of Jesus Christ the Crucified becomes integrally linked to the suffering and death of today's cross-bearers, who have been unjustly and often brutally killed. As suggested in 5.3.1.2, a theology of the crucified Christ's solidarity with "the crucified people" could serve as a basis for this. This could be expressed by contextualising the fourteen Stations of the Cross, which are used during Lent, in such a way that each "station" passed by the Lord Jesus on his way to the cross is linked to a "station" passed by the people of Zimbabwe in their descent into cultural trauma. It would mean that the congregation "following" Jesus to the cross would "stand still" not only at fourteen steps of his *via dolorosa* but simultaneously at fourteen different aspects of cultural trauma in Zimbabwe, so as to identify "in one breath" with the suffering of their Lord and the trauma of their people. As in the traditional 14-step ritual, where at each station involves appropriate Bible passages, songs and prayers, some elements of lament could be added at appropriate points. The diagram below suggests one possible way to make meaningful connections between the *via dolorosa* of the Crucified and of the cross-bearers of Zimbabwe.

<b>FOURTEEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS: The Crucified among the cross-bearers</b>	
<b>The suffering of Jesus</b>	<b>The suffering of Zimbabweans</b>
Jesus is condemned to death	Lament for all the people who were killed by a mob, without a process of justice

Jesus carries his cross	Praise God for the dignity with which the crucified people face poverty and injustice
Jesus falls the first time	Lament for those who have fallen into addiction
Jesus meets his mother	Praise God for loving and caring families Intercede for all disturbed and broken families
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross	Praise God for the hope inspired by strangers, relatives and friends who support people in their suffering and pain
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus	*Praise God for the hope inspired by the women (mothers, grandmothers, aunts, daughters and nurses) who care for the traumatised and the dying *Intercede for all women and their children
Jesus falls the second time	Lament for those who have fallen into despair and depression
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem	Lament for the men who abuse and rape women Cry with the women of Zimbabwe for themselves and their children
Jesus falls a third time	Lament for those who have fallen into youth gangsterism of political parties in order to commit violence
Jesus' clothes are taken away	Lament for the humiliation meted out to people by those who attack and intimidate them and take their property
Jesus is nailed to the cross	Pray for those who commit acts of brutality and murder
Jesus dies on the cross	Silence at the horror of unjust violence
The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross	Intercede for the projects of poverty alleviation that empower poor people to come down from the cross
Jesus is laid in the tomb	Lament for the victims of violence who are left in the open or buried in shallow graves

### 5.3.1.3 (c) *Day(s) of Prayer*

A second area for implementing the politics and spirituality of an alternative community would be public days of prayer or rituals of commemoration for those who have died across the country. It may be sensible to select one day in the year as a Day of Prayer for Zimbabwe, which does not clash with important events in the liturgical year or existing feasts of any individual church, so that there are as few obstacles as possible to participation in the event, across the ecclesial spectrum.

As suggested by an interview participant (4.4.2.7), such a Day of Prayer could be planned and hosted by a ministers' fraternal representing a group of churches. It would be significant if a group of churches could begin to see their prophetic role as going beyond their individual programmes and coming together as an alternative community of local (Zaka) churches. They could negotiate

with one another, and with the affected families, to fix appropriate venues and dates associated with the 2008 violence for holding commemorative joint rituals or worship events. This could include annual commemorative events at the homes of the deceased, at their graves or at the priests' house of St Anthony's Mission that was burned down, but if that is too potentially divisive or dangerous, commemorative worship events could be held in church buildings or neutral spaces, in consultation with local authorities.

The choice of date should be widely consulted among churches and community leaders, ideally on the basis of a document that sets out the background and purpose of the event. It is important that the date does not raise suspicion or open the possibility for the event to become a platform for divisive ethnic or party political sentiments. If it is to involve as many people as possible and have the desired effect, the date could be associated with an appropriate element in the biblical tradition, or a unifying figure from Christian history, or a date with unifying significance in Zimbabwe's history. The focus should be on hope in the midst of suffering. Possibilities would be the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) in the Old Testament, reimagined as a Day of Lament. The Feast of St Francis (4th October) is another possibility, focused on his prayer "Make me an instrument of your peace" and his ecological concern, to lament the lack of peace along with the destruction of the environment.

Regarding the programme of such an event, it would be appropriate if it involved some form of fasting as an act of identification with those who are suffering the after-effects of violence. The performance of choirs from different churches, singing songs of lament and supplication, together with poetry readings and other music could broaden participation. Drama performances by youth and other groups (or guilds) could enhance the impact. Some homilies based on appropriate Bible passages, agreed on beforehand by a planning committee of leaders from different churches, would be a necessary component. In Appendix 4 I attach the full liturgy that was used by the World Council of Churches in a service of solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe on 19 June 2008, before the run-off presidential elections of 27 June 2008, in response to the election violence. The selection of Bible passages in that liturgy and the closing affirmation (by St Yared of Ethiopia) express a spirituality of hope-in-lament, which can help shape the kind of event I am suggesting here:

The cross is the way of the lost.



The cross is the staff of the lame.  
The cross is the guide of the blind.  
The cross is the strength of the weak.  
The cross is the hope of the hopeless.  
The cross is the freedom of the slaves.  
The cross is the water of the seeds.  
The cross is the consolation of the bonded labourers.  
The cross is the source of those who seek water.  
The cross is the cloth of the naked.  
The cross is the healing of the broken.  
The cross is the peace of the church.

In addition to the singing, preaching and praying suggested above, a practice similar to wreath-laying (which is not a local custom) or the lighting of candles could be employed to remember and honour the departed ritually in such a ceremony. It would also be helpful if the theme and the Bible passages are spread around on social media long before the event, not only to invite participation but also to widen the impact of the event among people who cannot attend personally. This initiative is not intended as a nationwide project but to highlight the national dimension of cultural trauma in a local project (or projects) in the Zaka district. It may happen that such an event appeals to churches in other areas and that the idea spreads, but that is not the primary purpose of this proposal, which envisages a local and “bottom-up” process in Zaka.

#### *5.3.1.3 (d) A broader movement?*

As much as the alternative community envisioned here is a committed group of Christian disciples in the context of Zimbabwe it is also a committed group of fellow Africans who wish to practise solidarity across barriers of language, ethnic group, denomination and religious affiliation. An alternative community therefore adopts a “roots-and-wings” ethos of evangelical freedom, as explained above (5.3.1.2). It will therefore plan practical ways in which an alternative (Christian) community can invite and inspire the whole community, regardless of religious affiliation, to collectively affirm (and lament) the cultural trauma affecting everyone in Zimbabwe. Such planning should be done together with youth groups, women’s groups, schools, church boards, NGOs and representatives of other religious groups.

Such activities will be primarily symbolic in nature and could consist of public commemorations on significant dates, as discussed above, but planned for wider participation. They could also take the form of silent marches or “pilgrimages of lament and hope” to raise public awareness. Such

events should be led by religious and community leaders committed to the common good and party-political propaganda should be avoided. Their clear aim should be to help the country recover from the trauma that has plagued it – and is still plaguing it – even if that trauma is often repressed or denied. The events should focus on rituals that assist personal and family restoration and should not be confined to church members or church buildings; anyone willing to participate should be welcome, but the leadership should be in the hands of a group of Christian leaders who are intentionally pursuing the vision of an alternative community.

A prophetic and priestly imagination inspired by the Holy Spirit is needed to guide an alternative community into collaborating with other religious communities to plan such public processes that could address national cultural trauma in wider, more inclusive ways. If that succeeds, the vision of an alternative community could give birth to a social movement that gains a momentum of its own and makes an ongoing contribution to creating a stronger civil society in Zimbabwe. This theme will feature again in 5.5.

### **5.3.2 Local trauma: distrust and alienation**

#### *5.3.2.1 Context analysis*

In section 5.3.1.1 the notion of cultural trauma was used as a lens through which to look at Zimbabwe as a whole. It has opened up important insights into the nature of the violence that occurred in Zaka district in 2008 and how that was part of a national crisis. An integrated approach to trauma, such as the PCS (personal-cultural-structural) model, explores the interaction between factors at the personal, cultural and structural levels, since they are jointly “determinative of the experience of risk or resilience” (Harms 2015:145). It is therefore important to take the collective trauma in Zaka district seriously as trauma, with its own distinct shape and challenges, distinct from the healing of personal memories (5.2) and the cultural trauma manifested at a structural (national) level (5.3.1.1).

A key feature of that local collective trauma, as stated by the interview participants, was fear, helplessness and confusion (4.5.1.3) in the relationships between family members and (former) friends, due to the manner in which some victims/survivors were reported to the authorities by their own relatives and friends (4.5.2.4). A number of participants indicated that in their extended families, relatives no longer trusted each other since they belonged to different political parties and since some of those who supported the ruling party were accused of betraying their relatives so

that they suffered violence. Relatives betrayed relatives as “sell-outs” (*vatengesi*) to political leaders or the militia (4.7.3). Such reporting led to people being picked up, interrogated and beaten by members of the security forces.

This breach of trust was not just a personal or interpersonal matter; it brought about structural alienation in extended families and neighbourhoods (4.5.2.4). The destruction of families is already reflected in Chapter 3, where I discussed how government inflicted violence and pain on opposition members (3.3.3), as well as the effects of that violence (3.3.4). Several approaches were used to carry out the violence against individuals, families, groups and communities (3.3) and members of the army have participated in attacks on suspected opposition supporters in rural communities in particular (3.2.2; 3.3.2). The resentment at such a betrayal of trust has caused deep estrangement, since it represents a disruption of intimate relationships and structural alienation in extended families and neighbourhoods (4.5.2.4).

Saul’s (2014:1) definition of collective trauma as “the shared injuries to a population’s social, cultural and physical ecologies,” is helpful in this regard. He unpacks the definition as follows:

The mental health consequences of disaster are many and include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), physical health problems, chronic problems in living, interpersonal relationships, and financial stress, as well as the loss of resources such as actual and perceived social support.

What is needed in such a context is resilience, not only as an individual’s capacity to “bounce back” after adversity (5.2), but as community resilience, which he explains as:

the collective capacities in families, communities, organizations, and society at large that are more than the sum of individual capacities.... [C]ommunity resilience is a crucial factor in recovering from adversity, and in preventing long-term mental health and social difficulties (Saul 2014:xv).

Concrete ways of fostering community resilience, including the focus group’s suggestions of platforms that could be utilised to create dialogue and discussions, are explored in 5.3.2.3,

#### 5.3.2.2 *Addressing collective local trauma theologically*

Whereas justice and freedom were key theological concepts in 5.3.1.2, the central concepts here are love, compassion and reconciliation. In the interviews, one participant stated that “Unless the

churches take the lead reconciliation will remain just a dream for many” (4.4.2.5). This view on the need for the church to exercise leadership is a sign of the distrust and disillusionment with all the branches of government among many citizens. As set out in 5.3.2.1, the trauma here is the pain of distrust, betrayal and division in families and communities. Many people look to the church as perhaps the only institution with the credibility and capability to provide leadership in this area. But what does a theology of love, compassion and reconciliation look like that can address these challenges?

As explained in Chapter 2, Jesus’ compassion extends to all those who feel the pain of betrayal in their families and neighbourhoods. The alternative community, following in his footsteps, is expected to do likewise. Compassion means to suffer with, not just to sympathise from a safe distance. Bosch stresses the importance of compassion, rather than sympathy, even though both terms have the same etymology. Therefore, instead of using violence to overcome violence, as the Zealots maintained, Jesus offers to suffer violence in order to overcome that violence. The power of love and compassion is much more transformative than the power of violence. Love of neighbour is “the litmus test for love of God” (Bosch, 1991:67) (2.3.2.4).

If churches wish to become an alternative community to heal families and communities that distrust each other, they need to be ready to suffer violence to overcome violence, as Jesus demonstrated on the cross (2.3.2.4). The way towards reconciliation is not an exercise of force to “bring” people together, but to show openness and vulnerability while making space for people who have become estranged from each other – or are opponents and enemies – to start moving towards each other. Reconciliation is the gracious work of God, which can only be received as gift and surprise (2.4.3.1). By living into God’s story, both victim and wrongdoer become a “new creation” in God’s presence (2.4.3.3). This makes a reality of what Jesus accomplished by crossing barriers of hate, division and rejection in his life, death and resurrection to embody the reconciliation offered by God to humanity (2.4.3.4). Reconciliation, forgiveness and justice go hand in hand, so a vision of reconciliation must press beyond “the love of justice” to “the justice of love”. Reconciliation is a process of healing, an integral part of the *Missio Dei* revealed in Jesus’ life, which should shape the church’s mission (2.4.4.6). An alternative community arises as the wounded rise up to become wounded healers.

Henri Nouwen based his classic exposition of this term on a story from the Talmud. It says that the Messiah has already come, is sitting at the gates of the city and can be recognised as follows:

He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds. The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, 'Perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment' (Nouwen 1972:81f).

Nouwen points out that this insight inspires a lifestyle of hospitality and healing in community:

Hospitality becomes community as it creates a unity based on the shared confession of our basic brokenness and on a shared hope... A Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision... Community arises where the sharing of pain takes place, not as a stifling form of self-complaint, but as a recognition of God's saving promises (Nouwen 1984:93f).

This urgent hope-giving impact of a "wounded healer" approach is underlined by Nouwen at the end of his reflection:

To announce ... that the Liberator is sitting among the poor and that the wounds are signs of hope and that today is the day of liberation, is a step very few can take. But this is exactly the announcement of the wounded healer: 'The master is coming – not tomorrow, but today, not next year, but this year, not after all our misery is passed, but in the middle of it, not in another place but right here where we are standing' (Nouwen 1984:95).

To hold together all the dimensions of reconciliation, woundedness and hospitality set out above, an alternative community needs the wisdom and courage of the Holy Spirit. But it also needs adequate resources, clear goals and effective strategies, to which we turn now.

### 5.3.2.3 *Overcoming collective local trauma*

First of all, an alternative community needs to clarify its basic approach to this dimension of trauma. In the light of the theological reflection above, it could be characterised as "recovery" and "resilience" – in terms of Harms's (2015:8-12) typology of responses to trauma, but specifically as *community* resilience as explained by Saul (see 5.3.2.1). This calls for trust-building initiatives to repair the torn fabric of the local community.

An alternative community does not set itself up as benefactors who “go and help” victims and survivors. A preferential option for the poor and wounded leads an alternative community to do things *with* people rather than *for* them. As pointed out already in 5.3.1.2, that can only proceed credibly from the insight that *everyone* in the community has been “wounded” (traumatised) by the 2008 election violence – and the waves of violence that preceded and followed it. Whereas 5.3.1.2 reflected on this in the light of Zimbabwean society as a whole, this section focuses on collective trauma in the Zaka district. Such an “owning” of cultural trauma is not intended to create a passive victim mentality, but on the contrary to grow together into mature “wounded healers,” as explained in 5.3.2.2.

#### 5.3.2.3 (a) *Story-telling*

Story-telling has already been mentioned in 5.2 as an integral part of the “healing of personal memories” approach. It is emphasised here to emphasise that it is not only useful for therapy in workshops of personal healing. The focus group suggested that it could also be used in family counselling with groups since it allows people to share their stories of suffering (4.7.2.7).

The focus group also suggested that churches should try to facilitate dialogue between victims and perpetrators, in order to achieve peaceful co-existence as well as healing for the victims (4.7.4.4). The churches themselves – or specialised groups like NGOs – could create safe spaces and conditions for such dialogue to take place. Ministers of religion who are trained in counselling could also assist. These groups would provide the much needed personal and family counselling sessions which would build the capacity of empowerment for victims/survivors.

The focus group also recommended the use of other platforms that could bring families and neighbours together: groups such as choirs, associations, guilds and other groups that meet at churches (4.7.3.3). Within such church groups, where one feels accepted and protected, one is more likely to share the sensitive story of one’s experiences of violence. In telling their story the survivor gathers courage, engages in the process of healing and gets empowered to overcome the threats that oppressed them. The act of story-telling is therapeutic for victims, since it enables them to “empty themselves” to someone who is listening. This could be done in counselling sessions but also in small groups at the churches (4.7.2.7).

### 5.3.2.3 (b) *Spiritual support for individual families*

Prayer is a powerful instrument that enables people to experience the power of the Spirit in their daily encounters with difficult situations such as living with the scars of violence and risking to forgive or to ask for forgiveness (4.7.5.3). An alternative community would reach out to the families directly affected by the violence to hear from them whether they would appreciate spiritual support and solidarity. If such families are not Christians, or if they belong to a church that has not (yet) been drawn into the vision of an alternative community, these could be delicate or difficult relationships to manage.

As a point of departure, Christians who are working and living for a Jesus-shaped alternative, will avoid a top-down approach and not impose themselves on a family to “use” them in their “programme.” With a careful and patient priestly approach, they would visit a family and “listen them into existence” by identifying with their trauma and by affirming that the family’s trauma is part of the trauma of the whole community: “If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). The family may request material help, for example with the erection of a tombstone or another symbolic act of remembrance of their deceased relative. They may be helped to tell the story of their relative’s life (and death) and to write it down, or to create a “memory box” with memorabilia as part of the healing process. The difference of emphasis between such initiatives and the healing of memories in 5.2 is that here the focus is on the family rather than the individual and the emphasis is on reaching out to families rather than inviting individuals to a healing of memories workshop. But the two approaches are closely related and should mutually strengthen each other.

An alternative community could also show solidarity with a family by asking whether they feel the need for organising a memorial service or another family ritual as a concrete way to remember and honour their departed relatives. Such a proposal will have to be negotiated and planned with the priest, pastor, prophet (or other leader) who serves in the church or religious community to which the family belongs. This approach is essential to avoid the impression of “proselytising” and to ensure that the emphasis on community resilience remains central. With the consent and cooperation of the family’s religious leader(s), an annual commemorative service for a departed relative, into which their relatives are invited, could provide meaningful spiritual support for a family. There is a risk that such a service may become a party political platform, but it is a risk

worth taking, as long as the inputs from the organisers – in the songs, homilies and rituals – express a clear overall focus on community resilience, lament-with-hope and reconciliation.

Such a ritual should also stress the key gospel value that strong faith in God through the power of the Holy Spirit enables believers to overcome the fear that the spirits of angry deceased relatives could do them harm. Since it is only rituals that are able to reinforce this belief in the minds and lives of family members, churches should seek to develop relevant rituals to make this possible.

#### 5.3.2.3 (c) *Communal commemorations*

An alternative community could also consider asking a family, or a group of families, whether they would find it meaningful to be part of a more public commemoration of their deceased relative(s). Due to the repression of dissent by the military and ZANU-PF militias in 2008 and subsequently, no bottom-up public movement has emerged in Zaka district to address the trauma experienced locally by the victims/survivors and their families. Would it be possible and advisable to organise public liturgical ceremonies to overcome trauma and bring healing to the wounds of division and mistrust to the community of Zaka? Could such celebrations be therapeutic, both to individuals and the community?

If the families of the deceased (and other involved persons) agree, and if the leaders who are striving together for an alternative community discern together that such public commemorations are wise and appropriate, annual ceremonies for the deceased could be organised. It will be critical to communally identify the dates and venues for such ceremonies, to be hosted by an association of churches. A date in the month of June, when the victims lost their lives, would be most suitable, but another date that suits the local community could be chosen. Two venues for such public commemorations suggest themselves: Jerera and St. Anthony's Mission.

Such a practice could contribute to the healing of both individuals and communities in remembering their dead who passed away in such excruciating circumstances. To do this as an association of churches is wise, to prevent one church being targeted by arms of government who may interpret such ceremonies as an attack on them or an incitement to villagers to reopen the wounds of the violence of 2008. In any event, such public commemorations are only possible with the agreement and approval of local government, to avoid further tension.



Alternatively, such commemorations could be held on the premises of different participating churches, on a rotational basis from year to year, or (more appropriately) at the common graveyards of the involved villagers or of their faith communities. Activities at such ceremonies would include prayers for the dead, sharing appropriate passages from the Bible, church songs accompanied by beating of drums, and dancing of people to celebrate the offering of souls to God. Dancing at such ceremonies in the Shona culture is a sign of joy for the living as they offer their deceased relatives to God.

#### *5.3.2.3 (d) Ecumenical conferences*

The focus group proposed that the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) should not only work together to unite people but also demonstrate unity through organised common prayer sessions of various Christian denominations (4.8.4.1). While that would take place at a national level, as suggested in see 5.3.1.3 (c), the focus group also saw the need for local churches to meet, not only to pray together but also to organise ecumenical conferences on justice issues, especially after the incidents of 2008 which are still haunting communities. The focus group members were pleased that the researcher had involved them in this exercise to reflect on what local leaders of churches could contribute on issues of justice. Although such conferences have not yet been organised, this research project has made some local church leaders aware to be much more involved and creative by arranging ecumenical conferences on issues of human rights, justice and the prevention of violence.

### **5.3.3 Passivity and resignation**

#### *5.3.3.1 Context analysis*

One of the responses to the trauma mentioned in the interviews was that nobody has been able or willing since 2008 to initiate contact with perpetrators of the violence who are still living in the community. There was (and still is) an “awkward silence” regarding them, with no attempt at any kind of reconciliation (4.5.2.4). The participants called that an unhealthy situation, which called for healing and restoration, but the distrust and ongoing alienation in the community has become so entrenched, that it was even compared to leprosy (4.5.2.4). The dominant view among the participants regarding the traumatic effect of the 2008 violence – during the events and since – seems to be one of passivity and resignation. As a result, few if any constructive initiatives have emerged to resolve the impasse. Some interview participants indicated that it was fear that prevented them in 2008 from doing anything to alleviate the violent situation (4.4.2) and

subsequent developments seem to have transformed that fear into silence. Harms (2105:157f), when discussing an anti-oppressive approach to trauma, points out how trauma survivors who are rendered silent “lose their voice, control, dignity, autonomy and rights,” with negative implications:

Silence is profoundly destructive, for it attests to the person’s, the family’s, the society’s, the community’s, and the nation’s inability to integrate (and constructively respond to) the trauma.

The awkward and helpless silence from the side of the victims/survivors in relation to the perpetrators is matched by a comfortable silence from the side of the perpetrators. They seemed to enjoy intimidating the population at the time and seeing them in fear and helplessness, so they have not come forward with any initiatives to apologise or make restitution. At the one extreme there are those who hold back from empowering themselves to act, due to the “culture of silence” (Paolo Freire) that they have interiorised. At the other extreme the government and the local perpetrators of the violence have shown no interest in reversing the situation (4.5.2.6), but only in retaining power. Any agenda of empowering people to overcome collective fear, helplessness and confusion is not currently part of government’s goals. It also does not seem to be on the agenda of the local community at large. And yet, change is possible, as is evidenced by interview participant 10, who was a ZANU-PF insider at the time of the violence but changed his mind since then.

#### 5.3.3.2 *Addressing passivity and resignation theologically*

The key words describing this dimension of trauma in 5.3.3.1, as it emerged from the interviews in Chapter 4, are fear, betrayal, distrust and silence. The theological resources at the disposal of an alternative community to address this range of painful issues can be summed up in one word: conversion. Section 5.3.3.1 ended on the hopeful note that conversion is possible, that someone on the inside of ZANU-PF could change their mind and attitude.

However, the trauma alleviation addressed in this section focuses in the first place on the conversion of silenced and betrayed people into speaking up, telling their stories and reaching out to those who betrayed them. It is the conversion of those on the underside to stand up and overcome the passive resignation brought about by powerlessness. In 2.3.2.1 it was pointed out that God’s reconciling work begins with the victim, restoring them to humanity and dignity, empowering them to rise up and even to face those who betrayed or attacked them. This requires spiritual

practices like truth telling within communities of memory, which can untangle the lies and half-truths that created the estrangement between family members in the first place.

Personal spiritual awakening and empowerment will always play a key role in this process of restoration, but here the focus is on community resilience and the role of a shared spirituality to facilitate the encouragement for silenced people to lift their heads and find their voices. Katongole (2017:52) has pointed out, in a discussion of the Old Testament book Lamentations, that by learning to speak about grief, by naming it, “grief itself become owned, valorized, and thus ultimately consolable and healable.” This nurtures the courage to face and speak to others about the grief, and even (eventually, hopefully) to those who harmed them. As pointed out in 2.3.3, Bosch sees the members of a Christian community as identifying themselves through involvement in mission, in communicating to others a new way of life, a new way of interpreting reality and God and committing themselves to the liberation and salvation of others. Thus, an alternative community is a mission community, a space of transformation, in which people experience the new creation, in which the Holy Spirit creates *koinonia* (mutuality in community) and *parrhesia* (the courage to speak confidently). It is a community in which the prophetic vision of Isaiah 40:4 becomes a reality that every valley is being lifted up and every mountain and hill is made low, in other words, where the poor and oppressed regain their human dignity, while the powerful and privileged are brought down to earth, humbled into sharing a common humanity with their former victims.

#### 5.3.3.3 *Overcoming passivity and resignation*

Conversion cannot be organised or orchestrated. The new birth from above, as described in John 3:1-10, is the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, who “blows where it chooses,” beyond human control or manipulation. However, the Spirit calls, equips and uses human instruments to create spaces where conversion can happen. Through careful and imaginative discernment an alternative community can become an instrument of conversion in the lives of traumatised families. The conversion brought about by the Spirit of God is directed to the future – towards the coming of the Reign of God – even in the midst of serious trauma and fear, enabling traumatised believers to overcome passivity and resignation, as expressed in the apocalyptic language of Luke 21:28: “When these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” If the everyday life of an alternative community is attuned to this liberating and empowering message, it can become an instrument of conversion. It is not possible, or necessary,

to draw up a programme or blueprint for this. Only Spirit-given imagination and courage can guide an alternative community into constructive ministry to help bring this about.

### **5.3.4 Powerlessness, anger and denial**

#### *5.3.4.1 Context analysis*

Another set of features of collective trauma that emerged from the interviews are repressed anger and repressed guilt. On the one extreme there are villagers whose relatives were brutalised or killed during the violence who continue to express anger and desperation, feeling trapped in their situation, without a solution (4.4.1.5). They are still angry that soldiers and youth militia forcefully “took opponents’ cattle, goats, sheep and chickens and killed them for meat” (4.5.2.3), which deepened resentment and division in the communities. In the face of such actions the victims were powerless, and they experienced that even the police were powerless (4.4.1.5). Since the victims/survivors have continued to repress their anger it has deepened their experience of powerless and desperation, with no solution in sight. Such trauma is a prison from which they need to be released. Possible actions to do that are discussed in 5.3.4.3.

At the other extreme, the military and militias responded with public denials at national level, simply dismissing all accusations against them and claiming that the violence was the fault of the MDC (4.4.2). Among themselves they justified their actions as loyalty to President Mugabe and ZANU-PF and in terms of the “nation in crisis” cultural trauma narrative explained in 5.2.1.1. The local perpetrators of the violence, who remain in the community and keep on denying responsibility for the collective trauma they have caused, continuing with impunity as if nothing has happened, live with repressed guilt. That is also a form of trauma, which destroys their dignity and humanity, even if they are not prepared to admit it, at least not in public. Such a denial of responsibility for the death, despair, anger and division that they have caused among relatives and communities, is also a prison from which they need to be set free.

#### *5.3.4.2 Hope in the midst of powerlessness, anger and denial*

The collective trauma to be addressed in this subsection was identified in 5.3.4.1 as repressed anger and guilt. The powerlessness and despair caused by repressed anger calls out for hope. People who sit in deep darkness desire some light to show them the way and to give them the courage to take a few steps forward. If anything, an alternative community needs to be a breeding ground for hope. However, as Katongole (2017: 52-57) has shown, hope in the midst of ruins is not a triumphant or

optimistic exercise. Instead, it is fragile, surrounded by uncertainty, doubt and hopelessness; it cannot be plotted as a linear upward curve or as a neat progression of steps; it is a gift that appears as a surprise in the midst of pain – and then sometimes slips away again. Hope in Scripture is inseparable from lament: “the spine of lament is hope” and “the spine of hope is lament” (Katongole, 2017: 55). He quotes Kathleen O’Connor:

Biblical hope does not emerge from proper reasoning or new information. It is not optimism or wishful thinking. It is not a simple act of the will, a decision under human control, or a wilful determination. It emerges without clear cause like grace, without explanation, in the midst of despair and at the point of least hope. It comes from elsewhere, unbidden, illusive, uncontrollable, and surprising, given the pit, the place of no hope (in Katongole, 2017: 55).

The communal practice of such hoping lament and lamenting hope can therefore not be manufactured by the church. On the one hand it is a gift of God to an alternative community living by grace and on the other it is a “set of practices connected with the longing for restoration” (Katongole 2017:56). What could such a set of practices look like?

#### 5.3.4.3 *Overcoming powerlessness, anger and denial*

Between the trauma of the helpless victims/survivors and non-commitment of government, the focus group advocated engagement between the concerned parties. By engaging the affected, churches reassure people that they intend to deal with the issues that threaten their lives. In so doing this begins to empower the ordinary villagers who feel helpless and afraid. Churches invite people to dialogue and have discussions with them so that the villagers can express their concerns openly to them (4.7.2.2). In this way a process of empowerment is initiated and progressively grows within the people who have continued to be afraid, helpless and confused.

##### 5.3.4.3 (a) *Overcoming powerlessness*

The feeling of powerlessness during the re-run of the presidential elections in June 2008 was a multi-faceted experience. Firstly, police, as law-enforcement agents were powerless in the face of perpetrators committing acts of violence against “the supposed enemies” of the state, as reported by the focus group (4.8.2). Secondly, victims/survivors of violence also felt powerless (4.4.1.5), since they could not do anything against the perpetrators, nor could they report them to the police.

Thirdly, families were powerless (4.5.2.3) in the face of economic abuse by perpetrators who took their cattle, goats, chickens for food at their night rallies.

In the first instance, the powerlessness of the police in relation to the military or youth militias is a problem that cannot really be overcome in a bottom-up initiative, since the police were following commands given by their superiors. The sidelining of the police by the military on the instruction of the government is a serious violation of the rule of law, since the very authority and mandate of the police is to protect everyone who is unjustly attacked. This matter of the “culture” of violence and lawlessness is addressed in 5.5, but what can be said here, as suggested by the focus group, is that churches need to continue to engage government (4.7.2.4) in matters that threaten the lives of people, appealing to them to follow the rule of law at all times, whether there are elections or not. It may also be possible for a group of local church leaders, inspired by the vision of an alternative community, to approach the local police chiefs and station commanders on a regular basis to build positive relations with them while there is no crisis, to discuss collaboration for the common good. In that way bridges of trust can be built that may perhaps bear positive fruit when a communal crisis occurs again.

With regard to the powerlessness that people felt – and still feel – since they could not do anything against the perpetrators, nor report them to the police, other sections of this chapter address different aspects of this challenge. Ways to address the personal and collective trauma that brought people to the point that they don't see a way out of their situation are the subject of 5.2.3, 5.3.1.3, 5.3.2.3, 5.3.3.3 and 5.4.3. These are meant to help restore confidence in people and enable them to take control of their lives again. The nurturing of the fragile and uncertain hope suggested above (5.3.4.2) has been addressed already in 5.3.1.3 when the spiritual practice of lament was discussed. Practices connected with “the longing for restoration” (Katongole 2017:56) could also include tree planting and the establishment of vegetable gardens, since hope is not an isolated “spiritual” feeling or attitude; it is embodied in constructive acts of affirming life in the midst of poverty, pain and death. The affirmation of life involved in planting and cultivating or rearing cattle, goats and chickens is a fruitful way of instilling and nurturing hope. The establishment of such community self-help projects, like those organised by Caritas and other NGOs, could be an important element in this regard, apart from the actual benefits it could bring to families in terms of food to eat.

For families who are powerless because their property was taken by force by perpetrators it may be difficult now, after more than twelve years, to establish the value of the property lost and to lodge a legal claim. In addition, there are no affidavits and police reports from 2008 that could be used as evidence. Different people come to terms differently with such a sense of material loss and powerlessness, but it always takes time. And on that journey a close connection should be established between forgiveness and restitution, as explored in 5.4.

Bosch stresses that, for such hope-giving empowerment to materialise, an alternative community needs the power of the Holy Spirit (2.3.2.4). In a similar vein, Schreiter says that the power to overcome pain and suffering caused by conflict can be found in God (2.4.3). Therefore, some of the most important “practices longing for restoration” that can lead to overcoming powerlessness are indeed spiritual practices.

#### 5.3.4.3 (b) *Overcoming anger*

Anger was already referred to in various phases of violence in chapter 3, especially as it pertained to continual anger caused by violence (3.1) and it also came up constantly in the interviews analysed in chapter 4, especially in 4.5.1.2. The focus group emphasised that anger has to be dealt with, and not repressed, in order to overcome it (4.7.5). Because the *missio Dei* is rooted in the love of God for humanity (2.1) the proper solution for anger is not denial or repression but its transformation into love of neighbour. The repression of anger only deepens the sense of powerless and desperation, bringing no prospect of a solution. The release of captives from their various prisons (Lk 4:16-21) is a key dimension of the Spirit-anointed mission of Jesus – and of an alternative community. It is a mission in which anger gives way to love and in which the desire for revenge is overcome, as Bosch has pointed out (2.xx). Pope John Paul II agrees, by stating that the church participates in the *missio Dei* in order to establish a new society based on “the civilization of love” (2.1.5).

#### 5.3.4.3 (c) *Overcoming denial*

As reported in Chapter 4, the interview participants unanimously confirmed that the government was responsible for the 2008 election violence perpetrated against the people of Zaka district. As pointed out in 5.3.4.1, the local perpetrators who still live in the community and keep on denying responsibility for the violence and the collective trauma it caused, are trapped in a prison of denial and repressed guilt. An alternative community should reach out to them in a spirit of forgiveness,

to try to draw them into admitting their guilt, confessing it and committing themselves to acts of restitution (see 5.4).

Despite overwhelming evidence, the government has persistently denied responsibility for the violence and blamed it on the opposition party (4.4.1.4). An alternative community should hold the government responsible for the violence by making concerted efforts to confront them with this through pastoral letters, workshops with government departments and direct engagement with local, provincial and national leadership. Although such initiatives are difficult to plan and carry out, and may even be dangerous, government must be called to account for its actions against its citizens. Mere dialogue will not be sufficient; an alternative community will have to confront government with its responsibility, while continuing to pray for the intervention of the power of God to transform and remove the oppressive system of governance in the country. Only through the power of God can government face up to its responsibilities and begin to execute justice and uphold the rule of law. If that begins to happen, the systemic government denial can eventually be overcome and be replaced by a new society governed by a civilisation of love.

### **5.3.5 Gender violence**

#### *5.3.5.1 Context analysis*

A final aspect of collective trauma that emerges from the interviews is gender-based violence. This matter was already discussed in chapter 3.3.4.7 in connection with rape as a political weapon. It also surfaced in the interviews (4.4.1.5) as a matter of serious concern.

It is important to stress at the outset that this is not merely an issue of personal trauma and the healing of memories, since women collectively were violated and treated with contempt. The obviousness with which soldiers assumed that was their right to sexually abuse and rape women in the 2008 election violence has caused widespread collective trauma, not only among women but among all the families of the community. The blatant violation of the dignity of a family when a group of soldiers take away a daughter from their home at gunpoint to use her as an object of sexual pleasure sends shockwaves through a whole community. It traumatises all the women and men in the community and is therefore an expression of structural violence, caused by a combination of blatant patriarchal power and military authoritarianism, reinforcing a pattern of gender-based violence that was established during the liberation struggle (4.4.1.5).



The ongoing violence against Zimbabwean women who are leading figures in opposition politics, long after 2008, means that the issue here should not be reduced to incidental sexual abuse of some young women by a few “rotten apple” soldiers in a crisis situation. It should be seen as part of an established pattern of gender violence as a political weapon. The disturbing reports in *The Standard* newspaper (7-13 March 2020, p.3) bring this clearly to the fore, with examples of four women opposition leaders suffering incidents of armed robbery, arrest and detention. There is also a revealing article by Gonye entitled “Violence keeps Zim women out of politics,” in which the stories of Esteri Mukaro, Susan Konjiwa and Abigail Sauti are told as examples of the danger and violence faced by women politicians in Zimbabwe today.

#### 5.3.5.2 *Addressing gender-based violence theologically*

The shocking level of abuse experienced by women during the 2008 election violence across Zimbabwe, and also in Zaka district, cries out for a strong theological response. The theological notions that are central in this subsection are dignity and justice. An alternative community affirms the equal dignity of women and men as image bearers of God, their common creator, and therefore the need to practise justice in all relationship between women and men.

These values were clearly practised by Jesus and his disciple group, as the founding model for an alternative Christian community. However, it is not sufficient merely to affirm the values of equal dignity and justice for women. What mattered most to Jesus, as he embodied and modelled the life of an alternative community, was to exercise a preferential option for those who were being humiliated and marginalised. Bosch (n.d.:15) pointed out how Jesus included three categories of excluded people: “useless ones”, traitors and enemies. Sadly, Bosch did not mention women as a marginalised and abused group in Judean society, but it is clear that the community emerging around Jesus constituted a rather radical alternative to the dominant gender relations of his society. The key features of Jesus’ full acceptance of women – his identification with their plight and recognition of their strengths within an alternative community – can be summarised in five points: a) He was accompanied not only by “the twelve” but also by a group of women who “provided for them out of their resources” (Lk 8:1-3). In other words a partnership in mission between women and men emerged in his alternative community; b) He was willing to be interrupted by women in need – without being embarrassed when they approached him – even when the men around him were upset and offended (Mk 5:21-43; Lk 7:36-50; Mk 10:17-22); c) He spoke openly in public with a Samaritan woman, sensing that she was lonely and marginalised by her community (Jn 4:1-

42). In that encounter he transgressed both a cultural-racial and a gender barrier; d) He was willing to be convinced by a Syro-Phoenician woman who appealed to him for the healing of her child (Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30); He appointed a woman, Mary Magdalene, as the “apostle to the apostles” after his resurrection (Jn 20:11-18).

The second dimension of a theological response to gender-based violence is a fundamental revulsion at every form of physical violence against women, children, people with disabilities and those without cultural or legal protection in a community. An alternative community exists to overcome not only verbal and emotional abuse – as forms of violence – but particularly the physical and institutional violence they experience at the hands of dominant groups. Jesus’ rejection of the violent Zealot option in opposing injustice did not imply a condoning of the Roman Empire’s institutional and military violence or the religious abuse heaped on “tax collectors and sinners” who did not abide by the strict rules of the “purity system” of the Judean religious authorities. The opposition of Jesus’ alternative community to such violence was to undermine and subvert the dominant culture rather than to carry out violent confrontations with it. Even the “temple incident” reported in Mk 11:15-19 (and parallel passages) cannot be construed as a military takeover of the temple but was a prophetic protest against the abuse of the religiousness of believers by the temple aristocracy and a call to action for justice:

Taken together ... those action-word combinations [in Mark 11] proclaim the *already present* kingdom of God against both the *already present* Roman imperial power and the *already present* Jewish high-priestly collaboration. Jerusalem had to be retaken by a nonviolent messiah rather than by a violent revolution, and the temple ritual had to empower justice rather than excuse one from it. What is involved for Jesus is an absolute criticism not only of violent domination, but of any religious collaboration with it (Borg and Crossan 2008:53, italics in original).

When related to violence against women, this means that in a Jesus-shaped alternative community the full humanity of women and girls must be respected by all, and their leadership skills must be affirmed and treasured. In a society where women are abused and exploited, a preferential option of solidarity with women will be a prominent part of the life and ministry of an alternative community. And such a preferential option will include an intentional and systematic undermining of patriarchal oppression.

### 5.3.5.3 *Overcoming gender-based violence*

To make the abovementioned theological statements credible, an alternative community in the context of Zaka needs to develop practices in three areas: empathy and solidarity with women who have experienced sexual abuse; community education for boys and men to avoid abusing women; and communal as well as legal protection for women against abuse.

The NGO “Plan International” offers helpful suggestions for how to overcome gender-based violence. A number of their suggestions have been adapted for this section.<sup>23</sup>

#### 5.3.5.3 (a) Empathy and solidarity

An alternative community seeking bottom-up reconciliation will firstly create safe spaces for women who have experienced sexual abuse to support one another. Empathy and solidarity does not mean doing things for people, but being with them: “True compassion ... is suffering with the other, sharing in His suffering, suffering on His behalf. And this is the amazing thing about sharing: if I share in His grief, the grief is halved” (Bosch n.d:29). Prophetic presence begins with silent solidarity, as modelled by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:12-15) and the friends of Job (Job 2:11-13).

Yet solidarity is not only about silent presence. The power of story-telling has been mentioned a number of times in this study and it remains a primary healing medium available to communities. However, an alternative community will have to do more than create safe spaces for women to share their stories of suffering and to empower one another with hope. It needs to amplify those voices and make them heard in society at large. The whole society needs to stop and listen to the experiences of the girls and women who suffered physical and sexual violence in 2008 and heed the solutions they suggest. However, the reality of ongoing gender violence requires that the abuse of 12 years ago not be treated as isolated and exceptional incidents from the distant past, but as exceptional examples of recurring patterns of injustice to women.

An alternative community should therefore empower girls and women to speak out against every form of violence that they experience in a community. Opportunities for them to do that could be created during congregational worship (see 5.3.1.3) or in special conferences dedicated to gender

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<sup>23</sup> The suggestions of Plan International to overcome gender-based violence were found at: <https://plan-international.org/ending-violence/16-ways-end-violence-girls> (Accessed 23 February 2021).

justice. Within the vision of an alternative community, guilds and associations or other youth and women's groups could occasionally plan public protests or street theatre to highlight the plight of women and children, following in the footsteps of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as Prince of Peace (Mk 11:1-11), his affirmation of the shouting children in the temple (Mt 21:14-17), and the dramatic temple incident the next day (Mk 11:15-19). In this way an alternative community will not be "the voice of the voiceless" but instead allow the formerly voiceless to find their own voices and make those heard in public, for the sake of greater public awareness of gender-based violence.

#### 5.3.5.3 (b) *Community education for boys and men*

An important emphasis of the suggestions of Plan International to overcome gender-based violence is the involvement of boys and men. They emphasise the need to mobilise boys and young men to become agents of change through well designed education and awareness building programmes. Too often the language used in this regard focuses on the plight of victims, as in statements like: "The woman was assaulted" or "The girl was raped," instead of focussing on the acts of perpetrators, as in: "The intruder assaulted the woman" or "The group of soldiers raped the girl." The language used in reporting such crimes is sometimes caused by the fact that the names and identities of the perpetrators are unknown, with the result that the focus falls on the violated woman, but in education programmes the focus must fall squarely on male agency and responsibility. An alternative community has a huge task on its hands to transform the language regarding gender violence as a starting point for transforming the patterns of male behaviour in churches and in the community at large. Volf (1996:76) has pointed out that the *practice* of exclusion and the *language* of exclusion go hand in hand and that the "symbolic exclusion" involved in the ways we speak is usually not based on ignorance but on "a distortion of the other" and "a wilful misconstruction." It cannot be denied that the invisibility of male agency in the passive voice language used for gender-based violence ("A woman was raped") obscures reality and tacitly excuses men from the moral responsibility for the evil committed.

The task of developing healthy masculinities in a society that has been traumatised and poisoned by successive waves of political and gender-based violence is a huge challenge, but it is a high priority for an alternative community. As Plan International suggests, it is crucial to "engage respected elders in the fight against violence" and to take this re-education process into homes and families so that gradually communities may be transformed "from the inside."

### 5.3.5.3 (c) *Communal and legal protection*

In conclusion, Plan International also places emphasis on the physical and legal protection of women in a community. The parable of the Good Samaritan captures a crucial aspect of the life of an alternative community, but it is not enough to bind up the wounds of women victims and pay the inn-keeper (as in 5.3.5.3 (a) above) or to try change the minds of the “priests and Levites” who merely walk by (as in 5.3.5.3 (b) above); it is also essential to make the road between Jericho and Jerusalem safe for women and children so that they need not live in fear.

A project to achieve safer communities will require widespread re-education of boys and men (as above) but also the involvement of local and regional authorities, particularly the police. The way from Jericho to Jerusalem will never be safe when “robbers” lie in wait at every turn in the road or when the custodians of safety, such as members of the “defence” force, are in fact the “robbers.” The military and the militia are always a difficult group to deal with because they are controlled by government, yet most of the gender-based violence was committed by these groups during the campaign period in June 2008. The leadership of the army can best be engaged in dialogue at a national level, which falls outside the scope of this study, and may also prove difficult to initiate.

However, to overcome gender-based violence in a bottom-up process, local government and local police structures need to be engaged in open dialogue. The vision of an alternative community impels church leaders to initiate discussions with local authorities, calling on them to fulfil their obligations to the people of the country in terms of the Zimbabwean constitution. If it is clear that the motivation of an alternative community is a search for the common good, advances can be made in the communal and legal protection of women. Women and girls should be strongly encouraged to report perpetrators of violence to the police and law enforcement agents or to organisations that assist in Gender-based violence cases. At the same time, the embarrassing (and often humiliating) treatment of women by police when they report incidents of gender violence needs to be stopped. An alternative community could try to initiate processes of renewal within the police force to train and re-educate police officers in human rights. Since many police officers are members of local churches, such discussions should begin in congregations and parishes among police officers who are committed Christians – and spiral out from there. The idea of an annual “day of prayer for the police” could create an event in which local police chiefs to be invited to church services (or an ecumenical conference on community safety) for prayer and for ongoing dialogue about concerns of women’s safety in the community.

### **5.3.6 Concluding theological reflection**

An alternative community is about positive praxis that brings both healing and transformation to families who are traumatised by loss and pain: “Liberation *from* is also liberation *to*, else it is not an expression of salvation. And ‘liberation to’ always involves love to God *and* neighbour” (Bosch, 1991:107). The test of belonging to the community of Jesus is measured by one’s commitment to love of God and love of neighbour (2.3.2.4). Therefore, what churches offer liberates families from trauma that emanates *from* fear, helplessness and confusion *to* the love of God and neighbour. Pope John Paul II clearly identified the nature of an alternative community, even though he did not use the term, when he called the church “an instrument... for a new society based on a ‘civilization of love’” (John Paul II, 1996:537) (see 2.2.5). The greatest virtue generated by the gospel is “the bestowing of unconditional love and having a positive impact on the lives of others” (Walton, 2011). This love becomes the basis of the church’s participation in the work of God and leads it to be an alternative community for the sake of others (2.5.2). An alternative community is an invitation to all churches to be empowered to overcome trauma and heal the mistrust and divisions of families and communities in Zaka district.

## **5.4 FACILITATING FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

The two main themes under discussion here are the challenges of facilitating forgiveness and restorative justice. As indicated in Chapter 4, these two issues surfaced strongly in the participant interviews and the focus group as ways of addressing the trauma of the 2008 election violence. The themes of forgiveness and justice are not discussed in two separate sub-sections, since they are too closely linked. The section is structured according to the threefold themes of context analysis (5.4.1), theological reflection (5.4.2) and practical actions or projects (5.4.3).

### **5.4.1 Context analysis**

As in the previous sections of the chapter, this section on context analysis does not repeat the analysis of the 2008 violence. It surveys responses of victims/survivors to the question of forgiving perpetrators and responses of perpetrators to the question of confessing one’s guilt, asking for forgiveness and making reparations. It then traces where the key actors in the Zaka violence are positioned regarding these responses. It is helpful to portray the major types of responses by means of a diagram.

<b>Victims/survivors</b>		<b>Bystanders</b>		<b>Perpetrators</b>	
<b>Refusal to forgive</b>		<b>Reluctance to get involved</b>		<b>Refusal to be responsible (4.8.4.2)</b> <b>Refusal to apologise (4.7.4.2)</b>	
Despair: 'My life has been ruined'	Cynicism: 'They will never change'	Apathy: 'Let's just forget about this and move on'		Accusation: 'They got what they deserved'	Justification: 'I was carrying out orders'
		<b>Conditional forgiveness</b>		<b>Conditional apology</b>	
		'I will forgive if they apologise and make reparations' (4.4.2.6)		Half-hearted, top-down process, ONHRI (4.4.2.6) Refusal to compensate victims (4.5.4.1)	
		<b>Unconditional forgiveness</b>		<b>Unconditional apology</b>	
		'I no longer hold it against them' (4.7.5.1)		Apology, reparations (restorative)	

The purpose of the table is not to classify or “label” people, and thereby to judge them. It is to visualise the challenges facing an alternative community in working for reconciliation. For that reason, the rest of this subsection is devoted to understanding the positions in the table, thereby setting the agenda for theological reflection (5.4.2) and practical projects (5.4.3).

In addition, this diagram does not portray all the viewpoints that are held in the Zaka community regarding these dimensions of reconciliation, but it helps to clear the ground for the discussion that follows. The challenge facing an alternative community is to draw as many people as possible into a convergent process moving towards the bottom of the diagram. This is an idealised portrayal, since the hard realities of politics, gender and economics realities are always more complex than can be presented in a diagram, but the vision of an alternative community is to foster this kind of convergence among everyone in society, against all forces and obstacles that may impede it.

5.4.1.1 “Bystanders”

Due to the nature of the sample selection (see 4.3.3.1), no “bystander” views found their way into the interviews or the focus group, but it doesn’t mean that those views are absent from the community. In fact, they are probably the proverbial “silent majority” who do not take strong positions in public. The basic approach of “bystanders” is apathy or indifference, which is a serious obstacle to reconciliation, since a movement for change needs to have broad support in a community to make a difference. The challenge facing an alternative community is to draw as many indifferent people as possible into a movement towards reconciliation. This would mean helping them understand that they too have been affected by the cultural trauma narratives, even

though they are not aware of it or willing to admit it (see 5.2.1.4). However, the primary focus of this section, like the rest of the chapter, is not on them, but on the views of the interview and focus group participants.

#### 5.4.1.2 *Perpetrators*

The “hard” position in the top of the right-hand column (“Perpetrators”) represents the view of the government. There were no actual perpetrators of the 2008 violence or government officials in the sample, so the interpretation of government attitudes, are based on the views expressed by the participants and focus group members. Those views were formed by what they had experienced during the 2008 violence (and since then) and on what they heard from government spokespersons in the news media like newspapers, television and radio.

Participants felt that, even though the government and its agents were directly implicated in the violence, it “had done nothing to compensate those who lost homes, property or were maimed, beaten or even killed” (4.5.4.1). Further, government had denied any responsibility for the 2008 violence (4.7.4.2). Thus, government exonerated itself from the responsibility to apologise and make reparations to the victims/survivors of that violence: “Government is reluctant to take responsibility of the violence that took place in 2008” (4.8.4.3).

The phrases “They got what they deserved” and “I was carrying out orders” were not spoken by any participants in this research, but were taken from the rationalisations given by government agents in other contexts to justify violent actions against fellow citizens branded as “the enemy” or “traitors”. The ZANU-PF cultural trauma narrative of “the nation in crisis” (see 5.3.1) enabled the military and the militias to justify their violent actions as “eliminating enemies of the state” (4.3) and “defending the fatherland.” For widespread reconciliation to become conceivable in Zimbabwe, the “liberation movement” narrative of national trauma needs to be transformed into that of a political party in a democratic state, but that issue is discussed in 5.5.

The position in the diagram under the heading “Conditional apology” refers to the initiative of the Zimbabwean government in 2009 to set up the “Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration” (ONHRI). The clear view of participants was that it was a “window-dressing”: exercise, in which the government did some “swift sloganeering about peace” from above and then moved on (4.4.2.6). They regarded the ONHRI slogan “Peace begins with me; peace begins with you and peace begins with us” as empty propaganda, without substance. In the view of the



participants, it therefore yielded no positive results, because victims/survivors were not invited or allowed to tell their stories and because the government persisted in denying responsibility for the violence.

The heading “Unconditional apology” in the diagram embodies a hope that was expressed by a number of participants, but it may never materialise. The possibility that a few individual government officials, soldiers or militia members may step forward and publicly confess their remorse at what they did in 2008 is more likely than a formal turnaround in the government position, and yet that is what an alternative community will pray and work for.

It may be that these representations of the government position are not correct in every respect, but the input from participant 10, who was a ZANU-PF insider at the time of the violence, does lend credibility to it. However, since the emphasis of this study is on *bottom-up* reconciliation in the Zaka community, its focus is not on “how to change the government.” This macro-political question is addressed in 5.5, but the main approach of this study is what Katongole (2011:123) calls “a practical theology of relocation and marginality:”

The search for ‘a different world right here’ is the search for a new, dynamic presence and experience of church, particularly in the marginalized places in Africa. But marginality does not simply refer to physical geography; it also includes leaving behind the dominant story of power and violence that has shaped African social history. As we have seen, this story easily sacrifices the lives of the ‘small people of God’ in the name of the big stories of modernity, progress, civilization, and African identity.

#### 5.4.1.3 *Victims/survivors*

The viewpoints of the victims/survivors in the left-hand column of the diagram also represent a range of positions. The most negative views in relation to reconciliation are from those participants who suffered the most in the 2008 violence. There were two types of refusal (or reluctance) to consider forgiving the perpetrators. The first was a view that is characterised by personal despair: “*My life* has been ruined.” The one survivor of the Jerera bombing, who was permanently disabled and lost his shop and consequently his livelihood, is understandably deeply bitter. The second type of refusal to forgive is not directed inwards but outwards, at the government: “*They* will never change.” It is understandable that people have become desperate and cynical 12 years after the

incident, not believing that the government can change, especially after the euphoria surrounding the replacement of President Mugabe on 24 November 2017 has turned into disillusionment.

A second position on forgiveness from the side of victims/survivors is placed under the heading “Conditional forgiveness” and expressed as: “I will forgive *if* they make reparations.” In the direct words of one survivor of the Jerera bombing:

With such compensation at least, I would feel that the process of forgiveness and reconciliation would be possible. But with such a vindictive attitude by government it is difficult to consider reconciliation possible (4.4.2.6).

The final position on forgiveness, under the heading “Unconditional forgiveness” is characterised as: “I no longer hold it against you.” One of the aims of an alternative community is to invite and inspire victims/survivors to adopt such a position, and then to proceed – from that vantage point – to work for reconciliation, justice and peace in society. The next section explores the theological resources available (and required) for that journey.

#### **5.4.2 Theological reflection**

This theological reflection follows the framework designed in diagram of 5.4.1 above. There are strong views expressed by various groups that have emerged in the context analysis that now form the basis of responding to those views, utilising the theological input of (especially) chapter 2, which discusses the theological framework and resources. In the diagram, the one extreme is the position of “refusal to forgive” adopted by victims/survivors while the other extreme is the position of “refusal to take responsibility” and “refusal to apologise” adopted by perpetrators. Then there is a progressive continuum of positions between those extremes. An alternative community adopts none of the above views; instead, it offers a completely different but challenging position emanating from Jesus’ mission on earth. Forgiveness emanates from his Father and is instrumental to bring back humanity from sin and heal the whole of humanity, giving each person a chance to be reunited again with their creator. It is not easy to forgive but it is a powerful instrument to overcome evil. Forgiveness may be viewed as having many aspects. In chapter 2 we saw that Bosch utilises the perspective of Luke-Acts as he demonstrates the inclusive thrust of the mission of Christ that transcends socio-economics in the context of forgiveness (2.3.2.4). Bosch sums up Luke-Acts’ missionary theology with the central thrust of the gospel message of repentance and forgiveness which is meant for all nations. (2.3.2.4.).

This section reflects theologically on the challenge of facilitating forgiveness and restorative justice and responds directly to the different positions and views contained in the diagram above:

#### 5.4.2.1 *Bystanders who “cheapen” forgiveness*

The theological response of ‘cheap’ forgiveness, as propagated by ‘bystanders’ (“Let's just forget about this and move on”), is fundamentally unacceptable to an alternative community, because it does not take the hurts, violence and excruciating emotions suffered by victims/survivors with the seriousness they deserve. It is a quick gliding over and brushing away of the experiences suffered. The bystanders’ fast track option to just forget the violence and move on ignores the real feelings of victims/survivors who are still angry and bitter twelve years after the violence (4.3.2.2). In so doing the bystanders reflect two possible positions: On the one hand they could be so tired of the memories of violence and desperate to close that chapter in their minds and “move on” because they find it too depressing to face. As a result, they choose to block out the emotions and forget about those violent incidents. On the other hand, they could be adopting a safe position by thinking that, since they were not directly involved or affected, it really does not concern them. In a sense that is not a *by-stander* position but more of a *passer-by* movement, an attitude of looking the other way. It has become a commonplace to say that the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference, as classically expressed by Eli Wiesel, the Jewish holocaust survivor. In his acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, he recounted his astonishment as a young prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp at the apathy and silence of the “civilised” world in the face of Nazi atrocities:

And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the center of the universe (Wiesel 1986:1).

Wiesel’s position clearly reflects the approach of an alternative community as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. That is why neither of the positions is acceptable to an alternative community because their silence and indifference prevent processes of real healing and

forgiveness from taking place. An alternative community brings in a different perspective from that held by bystanders or passers-by. It accepts the violence and pain that victims/survivors went through by putting those into the context of what happened to Jesus the Son of God. It was through his suffering, crucifixion and death that he brought true forgiveness to the whole of humanity. Jesus “enables humanity to turn back to God and receive God’s grace not only to enjoy forgiveness from God but also for humanity to engage in this process of reconciliation to fellow human beings” (2.2). This process of receiving forgiveness is no longer a ‘cheap’ human process of gliding over what happened but, as Katongole (2010:136) says, it is part of the *missio Dei* which he characterised as a process of “relocation and incarnation” (2.2). It is contextualised in the work of God, in which humankind is invited to participate. The suffering is indeed serious yet the means to overcome it is provided by God himself through his grace (2.4.2) offered to humanity. It is impossible to remain silent or indifferent to the suffering victims/survivors of Jerera, since God’s gracious presence is relocated and incarnated into their devastated lives. The incarnating movement of God towards and among the marginalised draws believers into an alternative community that participates in the “incarnation” that Jesus went through for true forgiveness of humanity by the Father to take place. Thus, when suffering is taken with utmost seriousness in the light of Jesus’ redeeming act (2.5.3), it is clear that the positions of the passers-by and bystanders do not represent forgiveness at all. They are blatant denials of the pain of the victims/survivors as well as the responsibility of the perpetrators. An alternative community shaped by the compassion of Jesus cannot entertain such self-centred choices.

The forgiveness by which they live and towards which they strive cannot be taken lightly and ‘cheapened’ in this way. Forgiveness is part of ongoing divine intervention that truly releases the bondage of suffering. As Pope Francis says, “this transformative power is the gift of the act of Jesus ... that brings about forgiveness, reconciliation and healing” (2.2.6). Therefore, considering the intervention of God in the process of forgiveness, an alternative community cannot accept positions that ‘cheapen’ forgiveness or regard it as irrelevant. On the contrary, it invites both passers-by and bystanders to overcome their self-preoccupation and become involved in God’s mission of transformation and reconciliation in their community.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Victims who refuse to forgive, from despair*

The next position regarding forgiveness that emerged from the interviews requires a different theological response. It is the attitude of a victim/survivor whose experience of violence has made

them refuse to extend forgiveness to a perpetrator because they feel useless (“My life has been destroyed”). It could be called a position of permanent victimhood.

While some victims/survivors expressed their refusal to forgive their perpetrators because of the hurts they still nurse to the present day such a response is untenable to an alternative community. This response of refusing to forgive has been discussed in the context analysis above (5.4.1.3), and although such a position is understandable from the view point of a victim, it goes against the grain of an alternative community. The approach to forgiveness by an alternative community is not primarily about the self-preservation of victims/survivors (inward-looking) nor about the condemnation of perpetrators (outward-looking), but about the transformation of the victim from feeling useless or destroyed into being an actor through the power of the Spirit: “The victim having been transformed through the grace of God becomes an actor to become an agent of transforming others” (2.4.3.2). As Schreier (2010:15) says, God restores the humanity of the victim which the perpetrator tried to destroy. Because the victim takes possession of their dignity again, they are no longer emotionally paralysed or dehumanised but able to overcome the old painful situation and move to a new situation (2.4.3.1). And a key dimension of that transformation is the ability to forgive.

The transformation of the victim/survivor into a new creation enables them to act positively by not withdrawing into despair but reaching out to forgive the wrong-doer (2.4.3.3). This new positive perception assists the victim/survivor to be healed and therefore the complaint “My life has been destroyed” cannot be maintained. An alternative community offers hope by enabling victims to overcome perpetual desperation. In Brueggemann’s discourse Jeremiah with his alternative community offers hope to Israel while it was in exile (2.3.3). Similarly, an alternative community following the pattern of Jesus also offers hope (2.4.3.2). In the face of this hope offered by an alternative community, the position of refusal to forgive taken by victims because ‘their lives have been destroyed’ is not congruent with the ethics of the alternative community. In offering forgiveness, the alternative community excludes no one, as Bosch says (2.3.1). People who have fallen into that despairing position need to be pastorally invited into the journey of an alternative community that embodies the inclusivity inaugurated by the mission of Jesus himself.

#### 5.4.2.3 *Victims who refuse to forgive, from disillusionment*

The diagram has identified another approach to refusing forgiveness, which is based not on despair about one's own life but disillusionment and cynicism about the possibility of change in the perpetrator ("They will never change"). This amounts to saying that it is not worthwhile to forgive them, in other words a denial of their human worth. Respect for the dignity of one's enemy, in spite of what they did to you, is one of the most difficult, and yet most fundamental, features of Christian faith. It is based on various instructions in the Old Testament (for example, Prov. 24:14 and 25:21), which are quoted and intensified in the New (Mt 5:43-48; Rom 12:17-21). To write off another human being, even your worst enemy, is to take judgment into your own hands and to deny the power of God's grace.

This position denies the very design of the *missio Dei*, since God plays no role in it; forgiveness becomes a mere human decision that depends on human volition. An alternative community, however, is shaped by God's mission that humanity can be forgiven and reconciled to God and one another (2.4.3.6). Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God (2.5.3). This is precisely why God sent his Son not to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17) and sent his Spirit to continue the mission of Jesus (John 16:7-11), (2.2.1). This means that as the Spirit moves the victim/survivor into a new creation, enabling them to forgive, the same Spirit moves the perpetrator to desist from their evil acts (2.5.2). If the perpetrator is offered forgiveness by the very person the perpetrator tried to destroy, it challenges the perpetrator to reflect seriously. The victim/survivor who was the oppressed, takes away the power of the perpetrator by "turning the other cheek" (Mt. 5:39), embarrassing the perpetrator into taking responsibility for their evil deeds – and turning away from them. It challenges the perpetrator to think (2.5.2), to open themselves to the grace of God, and be transformed.

Thus, in offering forgiveness, the alternative community excludes no one but is all-inclusive, as Bosch says (2.3.1). Therefore, the refusal by victims to forgive their enemies, as humanly understandable as it is, does not resonate with the ethics of an alternative community. If the community of Christ's followers would live in that way, they would present no alternative to society; they would have simply "conformed to this age" (Rom 12:2). An alternative community lives by the metamorphosis of grace, being renewed in their minds to discern the will of God (Rom 12:2). In that way it is enabled to embody the embracing inclusivity inaugurated by the mission of Jesus himself. No one is simply "regarded from a human point of view" any longer (2 Cor. 5:16);

the perpetrator can change just as the victim can. Both should be open to the Spirit of God who empowers every human being to cooperate with the mission of God. John Paul II (1996:497) highlights that salvation came through the power of the Holy Spirit (2.2.5). The refusal to forgive perpetrators since “they will never change” strikes at the heart of an alternative community whose motives and goals emanate from the *missio Dei*. People who have fallen into such a judgmental position need to be pastorally invited into a journey of faith that trusts in the gracious power of God to transform enemies into fellow human beings.

#### 5.4.2.4 *Victims forgiving conditionally*

The diagram in 5.4.1 contains another option regarding forgiveness that surfaced in the interviews: “I will forgive if they apologise and make restitution.” In other words, forgiveness is made conditional on – and thereby dependent on – an apology rendered by the perpetrator. The view of the focus group was that the notion of conditional forgiveness was unacceptable theologically because the church does not uphold such a teaching (4.7.5). As elaborated in 2.2.8, the concept of forgiveness is inherently embodied in mission as reconciliation. Bosch (1991:82) argues that since forgiveness is inherent to mission, the church has a duty to be involved in politics so as to further the commandment of love to all people, including enemies (2.3.2.4). In so doing an alternative community is fulfilling the values and teachings of its master and founder, Jesus Christ. Just as Jeremiah witnessed in his own life, forgiveness means embracing rejection, pain and suffering and accepting to be a true instrument of God in his work of reconciliation (2.3.3). Thus, the Christian concept of forgiveness expresses God’s willingness to absolve totally the guilt of all the evil acts done by a perpetrator and that believers become the conduits or instruments for God’s forgiveness to reach those perpetrators. There is no conditionality in the act of forgiving. This is why the victim who forgives accepts the pain, rejection and suffering done to them and through the grace of God rises above those in order to “let-go” (2.2.4) of bitterness and revenge, both for the sake of their own peace of mind and freedom and to “let-go” of all harm done by the perpetrator. This is further explained in 5.4.2.5.

Although the position of the victim who is willing to forgive conditionally is understandable from their point of view, it cannot be sustained or go along with the Christian understanding of what forgiveness truly means. It is unacceptable to an alternative community which bears witness to the reconciling task of Jesus Christ (2.2.2).

Bekele (2011:60) confirms the stance of Bosch that an alternative community is essentially and primarily rooted in this mission of Christ (2.2.3) to bring about forgiveness that redeems humanity from its sinful state. Therefore, no apology or restitution is required as a pre-condition of forgiveness by God. Even without restorative justice, forgiveness is offered to the wrong-doer. This is precisely what God intended in redeeming humankind: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The heart of the *missio Dei* is this unilateral indicative of grace realised and actualised in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all of humanity. It becomes an experiential reality in someone’s life when they accept this free gift in faith and get drawn into the ongoing movement of grace flowing into them – and through them – to other people. The indicative of grace includes an imperative: “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news” (Mk 1:15), but repentance is not a condition for receiving the kingdom and its blessings. To repent is to receive the unilateral and unmerited gift of forgiveness; and to start sharing it with others.

#### 5.4.2.5 *Victims forgiving unconditionally*

The final positive position of forgiveness in the diagram of 5.4.1 is the ideal. Much of it has already been affirmed in the foregoing sections, while showing the inadequacies of the other positions, but some details and implications still need to be developed. The Holy Spirit transforms the hearts of people (2.2.6) so that they can participate in the mission of God to bring healing to all. The forgiveness of God to humanity through his Son is timeless and without conditions. This position is expressed in the phrase: “I no longer hold it against them.” When victims are able to say this and to forgive unconditionally, it is a clear demonstration that the transformative power of the Spirit (2.2.6) has enabled them to rise above the oppressive conditions of their pain, stress, rejection, suffering and dehumanisation. Whoever is unable to rise above this is still under the power of death.

That is not to say that such a “rising above” is easy or smooth. In fact, it is extremely hard, as has been seen in examining the previous options (5.4.2.1 to 5.4.2.4). The other options come naturally; they are the standard and predictable ways in which people respond to the evil done to them. The testimony of Lapsley quoted in 5.1 also made that very clear. And yet the mission of an alternative community is precisely to interrupt that predictable pattern and to be a redemptive *alternative* to the normal flow of life, by becoming an instrument of grace to invite those under the power of death ‘to turn *from* death’ ‘to new life’ (2.3.2.3). The words of 1 John 3:14 (“We have left death



and come into life”) constitute the road map for an alternative community. The process of accepting the suffering that victims have endured and being able to rise above it shows that such victims have turned to new life and embarked on the long journey of embodying forgiveness.

To be able to respect and absolve a perpetrator is the true character of a follower of Jesus, who forgives unconditionally. Bosch (1991:67) stresses that “As a matter of fact, love of neighbour may be regarded as the litmus test for love of God (2.3.2.3). An alternative community invites victims to love their perpetrators even when the latter do not (yet) show any remorse or acknowledge only half-heartedly that what happened “may have been wrong.” Schreier states that the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates the power of God over death (2.4.3.4) hence the power of sin and death are overcome by forgiving the sinful world and bringing healing to it. After his resurrection Jesus extended his forgiveness to the wrong done to him prior to his death, for instance Peter’s denial (Mt. 26:69-75).

It is crucial, however, that an alternative community’s call to unconditional forgiveness should not become a burden on those who become part of it. The granting of unconditional forgiveness to a perpetrator cannot be forced or legislated. It is a fruit of God’s Spirit at work in the hearts and minds of victims/survivors who have found safe spaces within which they can come to terms with their pain and loss (see 5.4.3 below). All victims/survivors start at positions higher up in the diagram (5.4.2.1 to 5.4.2.4) and move slowly towards unconditional forgiveness within the transformative space of an alternative community, as is clear in 5.4.3 below. It would be wrong to “blame the victim” for (not yet) being unable to forgive a perpetrator, since that could amount to re-traumatising them. It is particularly women in abusive marriages that have raised the alarm against this kind of spiritual pressure from the side of the church to “keep on forgiving” – while nothing changes in an abusive relationship. God’s forgiveness is without conditions, but it cannot remain without consequences. That once again raises the question of the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation: whereas forgiveness can (and should) be granted unconditionally, reconciliation is the restoration of a broken relationship and can therefore not happen without some kind of positive response from the side of the (former) perpetrator (see 5.4.2.6).

That space between forgiveness and reconciliation can also be seen in the prayer of Jesus on the cross: “Father forgive them for they do not know what they do” (Lk 23:34). He did not pronounce forgiveness over them, as he did to his penitent fellow victim (Lk 23:43). He *prayed* to the Father

for their forgiveness, showing that a victim of horrific injustice and torture can live (and die) without a grudge, with a forgiving heart, while leaving forgiveness in God's hands and pleading to God for them. The process of actual reconciliation has to wait for an answer to that prayer and a positive response from the perpetrators.

The unconditional act of forgiveness from the side of a victim/survivor sends out a call and offer of holistic healing to the perpetrator. It cuts across the spectrum of social life. As Gandiya (in Kim 2005:25) says, the church has the power not only to heal relationships but also broken hearts, minds and bodies (2.4.3.6), which leads to the next section.

#### 5.4.2.6 *Responses of perpetrators*

The right hand side of the diagram in 5.4.1 contains a few positions held by perpetrators of violence. This section develops theological responses to those positions, which, like on the left hand side of the diagram, are arranged with the "harder" viewpoints at the top.

The dynamics of a journey of bottom-up reconciliation embodied by an alternative community can be pictured as a process of convergence from the harder (more closed) positions in the diagram towards the softer (more open) ones and, ideally, to significant reconciliation, where "unconditional forgiveness" meets "unconditional apology." In the real world, an alternative community will consist of people on different stages of that journey, but the important question is not where they are on the map but whether they are moving closer together. The two movements (of victims/survivors and perpetrators) cannot be separated; any progress on the one side will have a positive effect on the other side. The dynamics of this encounter provides the agenda for an alternative community that is committed to a bottom-up reconciliation journey.

#### 5.4.2.6 (a) *Blunt refusals to confess*

The positions on reconciliation from the side of perpetrators start with blunt refusals to apologise for the violence. The two phrases "I was carrying out orders" and "They got what they deserved" represent an "I" statement (inward: self-justification) and a "they" statement (outward: accusation) respectively. Such statements, as negative as they are, already represent progress, since at least they acknowledge that evil happened and that they were involved in it, even though they are not guilty of anything. The official position of the Zimbabwean government that the violence was carried out by the MDC-T opposition constitutes a total denial of responsibility. To take such a position is to place yourself completely outside of a reconciliation journey, and theologically that

can only be interpreted as a “blinding” of the eyes and “hardening” of the heart as a result of wilful dishonesty and power abuse.

Much the same can be said of a soldier or youth who refuses to admit moral guilt or show remorse for being involved in the 2008 election violence in Zaka by saying: “They got what they deserved.” Ideologically, this amounts to a justification of violence and murder in the name of unbridled political power, outside the ambit of the constitution and the rule of law. Theologically, it amounts to a form of idolatry, in which human sacrifices are callously offered to an idea of the State which is beyond unaccountability to God or humanity.

#### *5.4.2.6 (b) Reluctance to confess*

A soldier who refuses to show remorse for involvement in the 2008 violence by saying: “I was carrying out orders” needs to be taken seriously, if they are willing to engage in dialogue, since there is at least a sense of accountability and an opening for dialogue. Practical ways of possibly drawing perpetrators into significant dialogue are discussed in 5.4.3, but theological and ethically it needs to be said that a soldier does not abdicate their moral responsibility when putting on a uniform. After all, their oath of allegiance as a member of the defence force or police is to the Zimbabwean constitution, not to any individual office bearer set over them. If the person is also a member of a church, and has made a public Christian commitment, there is an even stronger platform on the basis of which to enter into a dialogue about moral responsibility and possibly drawing them into engaging personally with victims/survivors of the 2008 violence. However, these are highly complex issues; the recollections of war veterans in morally compromised situations can only be described as “tortured memory work,” as the African American theologian Willie James Jennings (2016:23) has pointed out:

All remembering after participating in war is troubled, but this memory work holds an unbearable heaviness, because it is enfolded inside a theological vision of transgression and even apostasy. Those who remember from within a moral universe or a theological framework must confront the ideas that they have disobeyed a divine law of how life ought to be handled and humanity maintained or even acted in ways that imply that they have turned from the true way of God and toward evil.

Quoting Warren Kinghorn, Jennings (2016:24) continues: “Soldiers who kill in ambiguous circumstances are often to themselves neither guilty nor innocent, neither victims nor perpetrators,

neither heroes nor villains, but some complex amalgam of them all.” It will therefore not be easy to draw soldiers or members of youth militias into reconciliation processes, even if they are active church members. As with victims/survivors who find themselves trapped in emotionally difficult situations regarding what they suffered in 2008, a patient pastoral invitation and accompaniment is the only way that an alternative community could possibly draw trapped perpetrators into a journey towards reconciliation.

#### 5.4.2.6 (c) *Half-hearted apologies from above*

The position in the diagram under the heading “Conditional apology” refers to the initiative of the Zimbabwean government in 2009 to set up the “Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration” (ONHRI). The clear view of participants was that it was a “window-dressing”: exercise, in which the government did some “swift sloganeering about peace” from above and then moved on (4.4.2.6). They regarded the ONHRI slogan “Peace begins with me; peace begins with you and peace begins with us” as empty propaganda, without substance. In the view of the participants, it therefore yielded no positive results, because victims/survivors were not invited or allowed to tell their stories and because the government persisted in denying responsibility for the violence.

It is significant that the government launched such a reconciliation initiative from above, but it suffers from the weakness of all official diplomacy in conflict situations, namely that they are “rational responses to irrational phenomena” and “fail to consider social-psychological and spiritual approaches in peace building” (Botcharova 2001:280). What is far more productive is “track two diplomacy” which is about “unofficial interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict” (Botcharova 2001:284). That is another way to describe the “bottom-up” initiatives that this study is reflecting on.

The difficulty with top-down attempts of the Zimbabwean government to set in motion processes of reconciliation is that there is a fundamental conflict of interest. The government cannot mediate in a conflict when it is deeply implicated on the one side – and where everyone knows that. Reconciliation is only possible between people or groups that are more or less equal in power: “You can’t be reconciled to your dog” (Desmond Tutu). Theologically speaking, the Zimbabwean government would have to practise *kenosis* (incarnational self-emptying) on the pattern of Phil

2:5-11 if it wishes to play a credible role in a local process of reconciliation in Zaka district. That would mean making itself vulnerable, listening to the stories of the victims/survivors and taking full responsibility for the violence. That is the theme of the next section.

#### 5.4.2.6 (d) *Unconditional apology*

The heading “Unconditional apology” in the diagram embodies the hope expressed by a number of participants that the government, soldiers and militia will change their minds and be courageous enough to admit their involvement in the 2008 violence and initiate a process of reparations. The possibility that a few individual government officials, soldiers or militia members may step forward and publicly confess their remorse at what they did in 2008 is conceivable, but unlikely. A formal turnaround in the position of the government is highly unlikely, given the history of Zimbabwe and the evolving political dynamics (see also 5.5). And yet, that is the vision for which an alternative community is praying and working: a messianic reign of justice and peace of which Isaiah prophesied in Isa 11:1-9 and 65:17-25.

A theological response to individual perpetrators who refuse to apologise or make restitution (or do it half-heartedly) is to follow the challenging but bold way of an alternative community, which offers Jesus’ way of being all-inclusive in his approach to sinful humanity. As stated in chapter 2, the most fundamental virtue that drives the *missio Dei* is the love of God for his people and the whole of creation. Love is the greatest of all virtues. It is “the bestowing of unconditional love and having a positive impact on the lives of others” (Walton, 2011). This love is the basis of the church’s participation in the work of God, leading it to be an alternative community for the sake of others (2.5.2).

The all-inclusive alternative community created by Jesus (2.3.2.2) cut across the four dominant religious groups, Zealots, Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. It was also open to people traditionally marginalised by those four religious groups, such as sinners, women, the poor, the lame, the blind, the sick (especially with leprosy), gamblers, tax-collectors, non-Jews and many others. The mission of Jesus, which emanated from the Trinity, determined the nature of his new community. The selfless love of the Trinity is the starting point of *Missio Dei* (2.5.3). Thus, the whole mission of Jesus is to bring the “broken world” (2.4.2) to healing (2.3.2.4) and reconciliation (2.4.3) through forgiveness (2.2). All these concepts are embodied in the mission of Jesus (2.2.8).

It is because the Trinity is love that the core of Jesus' mission is driven by love for all humanity and all creation.

Therefore, the way an alternative community should relate to perpetrators who refuse to apologise or make restitution is to adopt an open arms attitude towards them. Theologically that would mean in the first place not to demonise them or to plan revenge against them. The approach of Jesus to powerful authority figures, who were involved or complicit in violence, represents a range of options. There wasn't only one style that he adopted; he addressed each individual in terms of their unique authority and complicity, as can be seen in his kindness to a Roman centurion (Mt 8:5-13) and a hated tax-collector (Lk 19:1-10), his honest and probing conversation with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-10), his dismissive remark directed at Herod Antipas (Lk 13:31-35), his scathing criticism of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 23:1-36), his overturning of the tables in the temple (Mk 11:15-19) and his stubborn silence before Pontius Pilate (Jn 19:1-16). What all these approaches had in common was a deeply committed love – sometimes soft, sometimes tough – that sought the coming of God's reign of justice and peace, discerning in each encounter what the coming of that Reign required at that particular moment. Another common feature of those encounters was that Jesus confronted each powerful person, explicitly or implicitly, with a question about the source and nature of their authority and the way they were exercising it, particularly in relation to weak and marginal members of society. His opposition to the authorities amounted to calling them to account before God and the poor.

As a victim in solidarity with victims Jesus unmasked the pretences and power games of the powerful in terms of his vision of leadership as service and sacrifice (Mk 10:45). In Lk 22:24-27 he pointed out the irony that the dominating and oppressive rulers of the earth are called benefactors (*euergetai*) and called on his community to adopt an alternative leadership style. In line with that was his advice to his community to adopt the radical (and offensive) alternative of “turning the other cheek” when confronted by a Roman soldier instructing them to do some forced labour (*angareuo* in Mt 5:41 and Mt 27:32, see Wink, 1987:7). An alternative community encourages victims to take the bold and risky path of “turning the other cheek” and “walking the second mile” (Mt 5:41) and to “heap burning coals on their head” (Rom 12:20-21) in an attempt to shame enemies/perpetrators into treating them humanely. Such a revolutionary non-violent

approach aims at disarming the perpetrator and putting them in a position to desist from their evil acts (2.5.2), by drawing them into a process of reconciliation and transformation.

#### 5.4.2.7 *Forgiveness and restorative justice*

In the previous sections the focus has been primarily on a theology of forgiveness. This section shifts the focus to a theology of restorative justice and how that relates to forgiveness and reconciliation. Taking the issues discussed above the churches in Zaka become relevant to walk along with the violated people in the community in order to offer platforms for restorative justice as well as cultivate the arena for making forgiveness possible.

A good starting point is the view of the focus group in 4.7.2.5.2 that, while accepting legal justice to be the responsibility of the organs of state, churches should consider encouraging the employment of the traditional Shona cultural system of ‘restorative justice.’ There is a common perception that punitive justice – that is when a perpetrator has been arrested, sentenced and punished – helps victims/survivors to “find closure” for their trauma. When people say “I am looking for justice” they usually mean “I am waiting for the perpetrator to be found guilty and punished.” Research has shown, however, that while the recovery process of trauma survivors “*may* be helped by the perpetrator’s being held accountable by the criminal justice system, acknowledging the wrong or making restitution,” the widespread view that people can only find “closure” when the perpetrator has been punished, is not borne out by the evidence:

For ancient Israelites as well as modern victims of violent crime, it may seem as if one could find peace only when one’s assailant is punished. However, one’s recovery from trauma does not depend on the perpetrator’s acknowledging the wrong, making restitution, or being punished (Frechette 2014:75).

This finding may be surprising at first, but it reveals that one’s inner processing and “coming to terms” with trauma cannot finally depend on what happens to someone else, in other words, on something external to yourself. It does depend on an accepting and caring support network of family and friends who accompany you through your recovery journey, in other words on positive feedback, but not essentially on the news that the perpetrators themselves are now feeling pain similar to the pain they caused others.

In addition, it is questionable whether a punishment like imprisonment really improves the life of a perpetrator or a community. Some people who are imprisoned for minor offences become hardened criminals in prison. Others, who are sentenced for more serious crimes, keep on reverting to their criminal behaviour on their release. It can also not be denied that communities are fearful and suspicious of people released on parole or discharged from prison. The stigma attached to having been in prison presents a serious obstacle to an ex-prisoner's reintegration into a community. Even though prisons are now mostly called Correctional Services, with the stated aim of correction rather than mere isolation or punishment, a strong case has been made for an approach that is inherently restorative. Desmond Tutu (1999: 51) explained it as follows:

I contend that there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here the central concern is not retribution or punishment, but in the spirit of *ubuntu* the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and perpetrator.

Several researchers in Zimbabwe, such as Ranger (1985:287-321), Bangura (2005:11) and Benyera (2014) (see 1.2.12e), corroborate the understanding of Tutu of the value and concept of *hunhu/ubuntu* given by Shona traditional culture. Samkange and Samkange (1980:39) also stress the centrality of the African philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu* in Shona culture (1.2.12 e), especially in the area of reconciliation:

The attention one human being gives to another: the kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behavior, an attitude to other people and to life, is embodied in *hunhu* or *Ubuntu*.

African wisdom dictates that peace and justice in a community are not achieved in the first place by the exercise of power but by the preservation of a culture of care and respect. In other words, the exercise of authority in a situation of division or conflict is aimed at the restoration of damaged or broken relationships, not in the first place at punishment. It is aimed at rehabilitating both the victim and perpetrator, as Tutu has said.

Strong theological arguments can be added to these cultural ones. The encompassing purpose of an alternative community is to work for the realisation of God's Reign as revealed in the life, death



and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that purpose can be formulated as *shalom*, which is comprehensive well-being and wholeness. The emphasis of the previous sections on unconditional forgiveness as shaping the attitude of an alternative community to perpetrators needs to be complemented with an emphasis on processes of restorative justice that heal broken relationships in communities. On the one hand this approach avoids an exclusive emphasis on the guilt and punishment of perpetrators. On the other hand, it avoids an ignoring or underestimation of the pain and suffering of victims/survivors. It aims to hold these together in a broad and inclusive framework of “restoring” justice, which is “justice understood as redemptive and reconciling, justice as the exercise of love and power in a way that heals relationships and builds community” (de Gruchy 2002:201).

Different forms of justice have been distinguished – for example, between punitive, corrective, compensatory or redemptive justice (de Gruchy 2002:200) – and these are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. But in order to hold these dimensions together under the heading of “restoring” justice, they should all be understood in the context of the *missio Dei*. There are the material and social aspects that represent the participation of human beings in attempting to rectify the wrongs done to people through violence, which are to be integrated with the spiritual aspects that acknowledge God as the creator and initiator of the whole redemptive mission. This is the embracing context in which justice, compensation, repentance and forgiveness all find their place and their true meaning (see also Katongole 2011:75).

Brueggemann assists us to understand how God’s justice is reflected by Jeremiah. The manner in which Jeremiah himself acts, talks, expresses in poetic language brings out both Jeremiah’s prophetic faith in Yahweh as well as the self-destructive behaviour of Israel (2.3.3). Jeremiah does not waver in his faith in God yet by revealing the wrongs of Israel Yahweh’s justice is highlighted because Yahweh does not destroy Israel but brings her back to himself through her repentance. Thus, his punishment of Israel through her deportation to a foreign land is superseded by her restoration to Jerusalem, thereby showing God’s justice to Israel. Just like Jeremiah, who was rejected and suffered pain in a society that was bent on self-destructive acts against God’s instructions, an alternative community too can become a prophetic sign of God’s mission of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing when it presents its witness through embracing rejection, pain and suffering in the context in which it is to be a true instrument of God (2.3.3).

Jesus' resurrection likewise demonstrates God's power over evil. This enables us to read the resurrection stories as accounts of God's healing and forgiving power in the world. Indeed, all resurrection stories can be interpreted as stories of reconciliation, demonstrating God's power of reconciliation and forgiveness to each of those characters that encounter Jesus after his resurrection. For instance, the women who went to the tomb (Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-18), the two disciples travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), and Peter's on the shore of Tiberias (John 21:15-18). In each of these encounters Jesus extended his power of healing and forgiveness for the misunderstanding or wrong done prior to his death (2.4.3.4), thus restoring those broken relationships. An alternative community that participates in the mission of Christ is to follow his path of restoring justice by embracing suffering and pain without bitterness, by extending forgiveness to perpetrators, by reaching out to them, attempting to draw them into remorse, confession and restitution to restore the broken relationship. When a victim/survivor forgives and embraces a wrong-doer as a fellow human being, the wrong-doer – having been forgiven – is invited into repentance by acknowledging the suffering they caused, by being remorseful and starting on a journey of transformation (2.4.4.3 and Schreiter 2010:18). This reconciliation creates the new humanity by making both the victim and wrongdoer part of the new creation, in which they can co-exist (2.4.4.4).

Perhaps the clearest and most-quoted biblical example of restorative justice, and of the integration between forgiveness and restitution, is the story of Zaccheus (Lk 19:1-10). As victim among victims, Jesus invites Zaccheus, the corrupt wrong-doer, down from his "bystander" or spectator position into a transformative encounter. He is drawn by Jesus from that safe position, where he experienced "the power of clear sight, the power of seeing without being seen – a panopticon – which is the real meaning of power, of touching without being touched" to join the messy, disorderly crowds and be seen and touched by them" (Katongole 2011:136). As he senses Jesus' acceptance, he acknowledges his evil, confesses it and commits himself to pay reparations to those he defrauded. The words of Jesus: "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19:9) is a declaration of forgiveness, showing that forgiveness and reparation, prayer and politics, conversion and restitution always need to go together.

### **5.4.3 Concrete actions or projects**

This sub-section considers how the foregoing theological reflections on forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice can be implemented. A good place to start is the proposal of the focus group

that, when dealing with the past experiences of violence, four stages can be identified in the journey of victims/survivors and their perpetrators to achieve peaceful co-existence. These are: Truth telling or story-telling, Justice, Mercy or Forgiveness and Healing (4.7.2.5). These four issues are dealt with in this section, but not in this exact sequence. The last two (mercy-forgiveness and healing) feature in 5.4.3.1 and the first two (truth-telling and justice) in 5.4.3.2.

It became clear in 5.4.1 that there are various approaches to and (mis)understandings of forgiveness and its relationship to reconciliation and justice. In response to that range of views the theological approach of an alternative community was developed in 5.4.2 and this section tackles the challenge of realising that theological vision in concrete ways.

#### *5.4.3.1 Teaching on forgiveness, reconciliation and justice*

Due to the lack of clarity in the community at large regarding a theology of forgiveness, reconciliation and justice (5.4.1), the top priority for an alternative community would be to spread its theology of reconciliation (explained in 5.4.2) as widely and effectively as possible.

##### *5.4.3.1 (a) Teaching programmes*

The widespread view in churches that to confess or to forgive are signs of weakness need to be combated by churches as strongly as possible. Likewise, they need to counteract the false separation between working for justice and working for reconciliation. If churches wish to become an alternative community, their alternative vision should be heard and seen and felt in the day-to-day existence of their congregations and parishes. The topics that need to be addressed in this regard were spelled out in 5.4.2, but participants also suggested workshops on topics such as the Social Teachings of the Church, Human Rights and the dignity of every person (4.4.2.5). This section focuses on how to communicate those ideas in such a way that they become embedded in the life of the churches and thereby becoming the firm theological framework for an active alternative community.

Churches should use every platform at their disposal to inform, invite and inspire their own church members to adopt the vision of an alternative community and to become part in a concrete way of the movement of the Reign of God, as set out in Chapter 2 and in 5.4.2. That would include sermons, catechism teaching, school curricula and the programmes of guilds, associations and all other entities of a parish or congregation. Church radio stations and digital platforms like Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp could also be used to make talks and sermons on these topics

available to a wider audience, presented by capable communicators: young people, women, church leaders. One of the advantages of the covid-19 lockdown is that it has forced churches to become more adept at using social media platforms to communicate the gospel.

It would be helpful for churches to develop shared study material for use in the various church groups and activities. A group of colleagues from different churches could collaborate on producing such material, but it will also be wise for each church to develop their own material, in which they can make it clear that the vision of an alternative community is not “an import from outside” but an integral part of that church’s own theological and spiritual tradition. In the Catholic tradition, the following encyclicals provide ample material to be used in such booklets or internet resources: Leo XIII, (1891) *Rerum Novarum: On Capital and Labour*, John XXIII, (1963) *Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth*, Paul VI, (1967) *Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples*, Paul VI, (1968) *Humane Vitae: Of Human Life: On the regulation of Birth*, John Paul II, (1993) *Veritatis Splendor: The Splendor of Truth*, Francis, (2013), *Lumen Fidei: The Light of Faith* and many other relevant encyclicals.

#### 5.4.3.1 (b) *Facilitating forgiveness*

An important implication of the teaching on forgiveness flowing from 5.4.2, is that victims/survivors should be willing to forgive the perpetrators that harmed them or their relatives, even when they have not (yet) confessed or apologised for it (4.7.5.1). The different theological viewpoints on this were discussed in 5.4.2, but the consensus view is that (at the very least) an aggrieved believer should learn to adopt *a forgiving attitude* towards a perpetrator, for the sake of their own peace of mind and mental health. This means that an alternative community cannot merely teach *about* forgiveness, as set out in 5.4.3.1 (a); it should also facilitate processes by which victims/survivors are accompanied to *practise* forgiveness by “letting go” of their anger, bitterness and desire for revenge. This issue has already been partly addressed in 5.2, but the emphasis here is more on communal processes that could hopefully impact communities at large, rather than merely individuals who attend Healing of Memories workshops.

This requires therapeutic group sessions in which people with deep-seated pain can be guided by experienced counsellors, in the safe environment of a caring community of faith, to receive grace from God’s Holy Spirit to forgive the perpetrator(s) and “let go” of their bitterness. Such a therapeutic group would function as a support group of people who have all been exposed and

harmful by negative or violent experiences. The theological basis for such a group would be in the notion of “wounded healers” as developed by Nouwen (see 5.3.2.2). At this point it is also important to mention the view of Shelly Rambo (2010) that it is not helpful to tell traumatised people to “move on” or “get beyond” their trauma, as if recovery from trauma is a linear progression from crucifixion to resurrection. Both the narratives of sacrifice and victory, which call people either to *suffer* (“bear your cross bravely”) or to *overcome* (“celebrate your victory”) fail to do justice to the ongoing struggle people face to overcome trauma. Rambo proposes a “middle between crucifixion and resurrection” that

does not yield a narrative that calls us to suffer but instead calls us to witness to suffering in its persistence, its ongoingness. If viewed from the middle, redemption is about the capacity to witness to what exceeds death but cannot be clearly identified as life. Redemption finds new expression in the always here, in the persistent witness to what remains” (Rambo 2010:144).

On this complex and precarious journey to overcome trauma, redemption is understood by Rambo in terms of remaining and survival rather than victory or conquest. Resurrection is “not a simple victory of life over death, but rather the persistence of love through and alongside death” (Stone 2016:48). What makes this journey even more precarious is the challenge to forgive a perpetrator. This underlines the need for the journey to be carried by a spirituality of reconciliation and an atmosphere of prayer, to instil the awareness that this is God’s will and part of God’s mission of healing and restoration. The nurturing of forgiveness, based on the atonement of sin, is an essential part of reconciliation. And the atonement of sin emanates from God himself. As indicated in Chapter 2, this incarnational act of God to reconcile sinful humanity to himself through the life, death and resurrection of his Son enables humanity to turn back to God and receive God’s grace – not only to enjoy forgiveness from God but also for humanity to engage in a process of reconciliation to fellow human beings (2.2).

Prayer enables people to relate to God. The focus group confirmed that prayer is a powerful instrument that enables people to utilise the power of the Spirit (4.7.5.3). In relating to God through prayer, human hearts are transformed and empowered to transcend their present painful situation and aspire through the power of God to see one’s neighbour in a positive light. Reconciliation takes place when people are moved to “see the face of God in another brother’s face” (see 2.4.3).

Prayer in the midst of a supportive community thus assists victims to be healed and to forgive the perpetrators that harmed them. However, as pointed out in 5.4.1.3, forgiveness is not a once-off occurrence or a simple linear progression, but a long struggle in which some days are better than others. This once more underlines the importance of a spirituality to sustain people on their journey of forgiveness.

The focus group mentioned prayer as an important discipline that churches should exercise in their ministry of healing for communities, since it is a shared common value among most community members in responding to difficult situations (4.8.3). To remove this spiritual dimension of seeking God's blessing would weaken their spiritual impact and their potential to transform people's understanding and practice of forgiveness. It is important, however, for an alternative community not to speak of prayer only in general terms, but to develop different aspects of prayer as integral to the practice of forgiveness. Four dimensions of prayer stand out as essential to the journey of forgiveness: Supplication, praise, intercession and lament.

*Supplication* to God for the forgiveness of one's own sins is fundamental to this journey: "Forgive us our trespasses/debts" (Mt 6:12). It is fruitless to argue whether receiving forgiveness from God has priority over forgiving others. The parable of the "unforgiving servant" in Mt 18:23-35 suggests that in one sense God's forgiveness of us precedes and necessitates our forgiveness of others, but in another sense our forgiveness of others "precedes" God's forgiveness of us (Mt 18:32-35). In the Lord's Prayer, the petition "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12 NRSV) makes it clear that the forgiveness of others precedes the petition for forgiveness of one's own debts/sins. The only conclusion that one can reach is that the two acts are inseparable. Whoever struggles to forgive someone else for an evil done to them are both sinners and sinned-against and therefore need to pray for the forgiveness of their own sins *while* struggling to extend forgiveness to others.

*Praise* to God for unmerited forgiveness is likewise a key component of a spiritual journey of forgiveness. The assurance of having been forgiven by God on the basis of God's mercy revealed in Jesus Christ is an integral part of the gospel. An alternative community lives with the joyful assurance of hearing again and again: "Your sins are forgiven!" (Mt 9:2; Mk 2:5; Lk 7:48). However, to make sure that God's grace is never taken for granted, thus turning it into "cheap

grace” (Bonhoeffer 1959:35), one needs to receive forgiveness in faith and praise God for it consciously and continually, like breathing in and breathing out.

*Intercession* is another key feature of the forgiveness journey. In the first place, intercession needs to be made for others who have suffered (or are suffering) violence, to avoid a self-centred spirituality which suggests that you are the only (or the most important) person who has been harmed or violated. The experience of forgiveness takes place within the Body of Christ, where the rule applies: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). The spiritual discipline of intercession for others who suffer shapes an alternative community in a fundamental way. Secondly, prayer for the perpetrators of the violence that one has suffered is another key dimension of a spirituality of forgiveness. One of the most distinctive (and most difficult) marks of an alternative community is love for enemies: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt 5:44). The prayer of Jesus on the cross for his executioners: “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34) is the model for this form of intercession.

Finally, prayer as *lament* enables believers to honestly “pour out their hearts” to God in complaint, in the midst of agony and suffering: The burning questions like “why?” and “how long” are frequent in the Psalms of lament. However, lament is not a cry of despair; it is a form of hope that involves “turning to God” and “turning around God” (Katongole 2017:104, 107), which reflects a deep intimacy with God. Quoting Scott Ellington, Katongole (2017:107) explains:

A relationship of trust, intimacy, and love is a necessary precondition for genuine lament. When the biblical writers lament, they do so from within the context of a foundational relationship that binds together the individual with members of the community of faith and that community with their God.

Lament therefore reflects a deep immersion in the covenant relationship with God and with the community of faith. It is not unrestrained whining, like a toddler’s tantrum or a “spoilt” teenager’s ranting against their parents. It is not a wallowing in self-pity by people suffering from a sense of perpetual victimhood. Instead, “Biblical lament is a structured and complex language of complaint, protest and appeal *directed* to God” (Katongole 2017:107, italics in original). It is an appeal to the covenant God, who made promises of peace, justice and freedom, but does not seem to be keeping them. At the same time, it is a “hurting *with* God” since in Jesus of Nazareth God identified the

divine self with the “crucified peoples” of the world (see 5.3.1.2): “It is precisely God’s willingness to love and to suffer that gives his presence meaning in the face of profound human suffering.... The prayer of lament drives the church to the margins, to the crucified ones in history” (Katongole 2017:116, 120).

This form of prayer is rare in much of African Christianity, or totally absent from it, since the dominant responses of church members to disaster are: “God knows best” or “It is the will of God.” Passivity and resignation expressed in this way, which was touched on already in 5.3.3, is one of the reasons why many political activists (under the influence of Marxist rhetoric) regard religion as “the opium of the people” and therefore not only irrelevant but harmful. A recovery of lament in Christian worship and spirituality is therefore essential, since “the eclipse of lament from the contemporary church and social life ... signifies a loss of passion for social justice” (Katongole 217:120).

If this neglected feature of Christian prayer is to be recovered as a spiritual practice, it will have to happen through singing. An alternative community will have to present its alternative spirituality through this medium, which travels best in African communities. The fact that 40% of the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible are known as psalms of lament (Katongole 2017:104) has two implications. Firstly, it shows that laments were sung as communal exercises, even though some of them were originally composed as personal prayers; and secondly it suggests that the spirituality of lament is best learnt (and entered into) through communal singing. Fortunately, the translations of the lament Psalms in Shona and other local Zimbabwean languages are poetic and rhythmic enough to be sung or chanted in an engaging and impactful manner. These translations draw an alternative community into the practice of lament. The guilds and associations in churches are ideal creative spaces in which the biblical psalms of lament can be practised for impactful public performances and out of which new songs of lament can emerge, in which women, men and young people learn to direct their painful complaints to the covenant God who suffers with them and inspires hope within them.

By teaching and mobilising these four forms of prayer through study courses and retreats, an alternative community can draw a growing number of people into the practice of forgiveness. It can thereby also gain credibility by showing that it does not only teach others to forgive but lives daily by the power of God’s forgiving grace.



In addition, the Catholic Church uses the Sacrament of penance or reconciliation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2006:277-286) to heal the wounds of sin. This enables the faithful who have done wrong to “empty themselves” and be healed by Christ through the Sacrament of penance, which is also referred to as the Sacrament of ‘healing’. The various services practised by churches also assist people to be healed in their psycho-somatic conditions. In this way churches empower people to be released from the oppressive conditions of guilt, bitterness, trauma, fear, helplessness and confusion (4.7.2.5.4). In regard to nurturing and facilitating forgiveness, Katongole (2011:73) already reflected its importance when he connected this process to sowing the seeds of hope. He says that reconciliation (as gift and task) is about sowing and nurturing seeds of hope (2.4.4.6). The task of nurturing these seed of hope is to be done by Christians. In their struggles to work for healing in a broken world, they continue to nurture the seeds of hope already sown by God through reconciliation (Katongole, 2011:73). Thus, becoming an alternative community is the task of offering continual nurturing of the seed of hope in reconciliation. Though reconciliation is always about practical and concrete actions, “the pursuit of reconciliation, justice and peace is shaped and sustained by a vision beyond, and presses towards a future promised, but not yet seen” (Katongole 2011:74).

#### 5.4.3.2 *Truth and reconciliation processes?*

We have seen in 5.4.1 that, in societies which are more individualist in nature, a trauma survivor’s recovery from trauma does not depend on the perpetrator’s “acknowledging the wrong, making restitution or being punished,” but on an inner journey of forgiveness and acceptance. The same “inner work” needed to forgive a perpetrator is also required in a society that is more collectivist or communal in orientation, since no one else (not even a caring support group or the extended family) can do the forgiving for someone else. And yet, in a communal culture, recovery from trauma is greatly helped when a perpetrator does show remorse and/or makes some kind of restitution.

It is for this reason that the focus group insisted that the teaching on forgiveness, justice and reconciliation is not only meant for victims but also for perpetrators and for those who position themselves as observers or bystanders (4.7.5.1). They proposed that churches should try to arrange workshops where interpersonal encounters between perpetrators and victims/survivors are made possible and where perpetrators are able to accept responsibility for their cruel actions and seek for pardon in humility. That brings us to the possibility of “TRC-type” encounters.

The powerful effect of story-telling in the process of recovery from trauma has been mentioned already (5.2, 5.3.2.3). There are numerous examples of countries where formal “truth and reconciliation” processes were designed and carried out with positive effect. The TRC process in South Africa is the most well known in Zimbabwe in this regard. For this reason, some participants and focus group members suggested that a “TRC-type” process could possibly be arranged by churches in Zaka district to facilitate encounters between survivors and perpetrators and to contribute to reconciliation (4.4.2.6, 4.4.2.7).

As emphasised in 5.4.2, reconciliation is not identical with forgiveness. Trauma survivors may have forgiven perpetrators as a personal act of “letting go,” but that in itself does not mean that reconciliation has taken place or that peace has been established. Since reconciliation and peace are impossible without justice, the wider community has to get involved and perpetrators have to admit (or confess) their guilt, ask for forgiveness and commit to some form of restitution, so that broken relationships can begin to be restored. However, such a process is very difficult to arrange without the backing of political authorities, as it was in South Africa, Chile and elsewhere.

The promotion of national unity and reconciliation was the focus of the TRC Charter Act (No. 34 of 1995) in South Africa, which was approved by the newly elected democratic government. The main task of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to investigate gross human rights violations that were perpetrated during the period of the Apartheid regime (1960 to 1994). Among other issues the mandate included abductions, killings and torture, committed by both the state and the liberation movements. The commission held special hearings focused on specific sectors, institutions, and individuals. Controversially, the TRC was empowered to grant amnesty to perpetrators who admitted their crimes truthfully and completely to the Commission, but it failed to convince the government to pay reparations to many of the victims and their families.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, many South Africans do not regard the TRC as a resounding “success” in what it set out to achieve, but it did help to create a political climate after the 1994 elections in which perpetrators could admit their wrongdoing and survivors could tell their stories of pain and loss. The main purpose of the TRC was to avoid the two extremes: conducting “Nuremberg trials” (long

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.usip.org/publications/1995/12/truth-commission-south-africa> (Accessed 18 January 2021).

drawn-out criminal prosecution of all perpetrators) on the one hand and a general amnesty (ignoring the evils of the past) on the other.

Since the interview and focus group participants longed for such a “climate” in Zaka district, they proposed that churches could learn from what transpired in South Africa by advocating and organising a “TRC style” healing process in communities and villages on the 2008 election violence in Zaka district. In spite of the good intentions, a number of serious challenges face such a proposal. Firstly, who could appoint a committee that would have enough authority and credibility to summon perpetrators and victims to publicly tell their stories of guilt or pain? Secondly, could such a committee claim the power to pardon those who publicly admitted their guilt? Thirdly, who would be qualified and experienced to conduct the hearings, competent to guide the delicate process of letting both survivors and perpetrators speak about the violence of more than 12 years ago? Fourthly, would any perpetrators come forward to admit their crimes in public, thereby possibly incriminating themselves and exposing them to criminal or civil prosecution? Finally, would any survivors risk sharing their stories of suffering in public unless there is some expectation that they could receive reparations?

Only a government would have the jurisdiction to set up a formal TRC-type commission. If a group of churches tried to do it, they might risk creating (or increasing) the tension between the government and themselves. What they could certainly do is to request the government to institute such a commission, even if they thought that the chances were slim for it to happen. By making such a request they would send a clear prophetic message to government – from the bottom up – that communities are traumatised and desiring to find peace and reconciliation, to overcome political, ethnic and historical divisions.

The most that churches could do “on the ground” in this regard is to organise much more modest local “truth commissions” or “reconciliation forums” led by church leaders themselves, which would give the opportunity to local people to tell their stories. This need not be limited to church members or to issues related to the 2008 violence, but would be open to everyone wishing to contribute to the healing of the community’s collective trauma – and perhaps to receive some relief or therapy for themselves by telling their stories.

In response to the five challenges facing such a commission, which were mentioned above, the churches would have to prepare such a commission very well, by: a) ensuring that the

“commissioners” they appoint are highly respected and credible community leaders (see 5.4.3.4 below); b) making it clear that the commission cannot dispense amnesty in the legal sense; c) approaching perpetrators on a personal and confidential basis, together with their own church leaders (if they are members of a church) in order to counsel them and invite them to attend a hearing of the commission; d) approaching victims/survivors on the same personal and confidential basis to counsel them and invite them to attend the commission. It will be a precarious and time-consuming process to set up such a reconciliation forum, but if it succeeds it could make a significant contribution to overcoming the collective trauma of the community.

If any perpetrators are indeed willing to participate in such a truth-telling exercise, the church leaders conducting the sessions would encourage them to make some form of restitution to the injured, as the focus group pointed out (4.7.4.2). In the case of the traditional *dare* (5.4.3.4.) normally the payment would be a token or gesture of admitting guilt and expressing the desire to restore good relations again with the wronged party. The token given by the perpetrator is a symbol of compensation (4.2.2.6) because in certain circumstances, for instance, if victims lost parts of their bodies like a leg or arm, or even life, no compensation could ever equal such a loss (4.7.4.2). Thus, the main aim of restorative justice is to rebuild relationships in the community so that there can be peaceful co-existence (4.7.2.5.2).

The churches then would cooperate and allow “TRC-type” restorative justice to be done by both Church and community leaders. At the same time churches themselves, as an alternative community would continue to offer opportunities for community prayers and projects which would assist in overcoming collective trauma. Such an initiative would not be able to provide any reparation or restitution for aggrieved participants, unless some perpetrators or their families stepped forward and offered some tangible compensation.

A remarkable incident that took place in 2011, although singularly peculiar, demonstrates the dynamics of reparation in Shona culture. A Gokwe man, Moses Chokuda, was murdered by alleged ZANU-PF activists who had been sent by Farai Machaya, the governor of Midlands. After his death he stayed in Gokwe mortuary for two years because his relatives demanded payment before his burial. It is believed that when the police tried to bury his body they failed because they could not carry the body out of the mortuary. Shona traditional religion affirms that the deceased man was “fighting his own war for justice” to obtain compensation for his family. Although the body

stayed almost two years in the mortuary it remained fresh till the time of payment of reparation of fifteen head of cattle.<sup>25</sup> It isn't possible to replicate such an event in a different context, but the story can and must be told as an indication that the principle of reparation is deeply entrenched in Shona culture and that it is can be mobilised for the healing of families and communities.

However, even such a modest local TRC-type initiative by church leaders may be regarded as provocative by the government or political parties and prove rather risky, but such danger would not deter an alternative community committed to the coming of the reign of God. In fact, in pursuing such a prophetic mission, it would expect to encounter resistance from authorities, as did Jeremiah (2.3.3.) and Jesus (2.3.2.1). However, an alternative community committed to finding healing for those oppressed by trauma would be careful to avoid unnecessary confrontation with government and instead heed the advice of their Master to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” as they live the message of God’s Reign “like sheep among wolves” (Mt 10:16).

#### 5.4.3.3 *Conflict resolution workshops*

Some interview and focus group participants proposed actions that do more than teach theological concepts or deal with trauma from the past. They suggested workshops on inclusivity and conflict resolution skills that could impact the communities in Zaka more widely (4.7.3.2). Participants specifically mentioned the kind of workshops conducted by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), which could be offered for the local churches.

At national level Christian churches have a tradition of working together on national issues and often produce joint pastoral statements to the nation. Such collaboration is facilitated by the Zimbabwe Heads of the Christian Denominations (ZHOCD), which is an umbrella body bringing together the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Union for the Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa.<sup>26</sup> The focus group encouraged churches in Zaka district to adopt that ecumenical spirit of collaboration evident at national level in their local efforts. The aim would be to have a positive impact on Christians of other denominations and on other villagers, to bring about restorative justice and to nurture forgiveness in communities. This is why the focus group

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<sup>25</sup> A police spokesperson, Wayne Bvudzijena, confirmed this story. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2011/02/2011-02-04-dead-man-refuses-burial/> (Accessed 2 March 2021).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?q=History+of+Zimbabwe+Heads+of+Christian+Denominations&o> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021).

argued that CCJP, which has wide experience of conducting workshops at national level, should be invited to Zaka district to carry out workshops for the churches working in the area (4.8.4.1).

The purpose of the workshops would be to equip church leaders or representatives to share the same skills more widely among their congregants. It would also enable them to demonstrate their capacity to initiate restorative justice and to move along with the people in nurturing and facilitating the process of forgiveness. Such workshops could facilitate the emergence of an alternative community that responds creatively to the challenges at issue by including everyone and providing actions congruent with Jesus' all-encompassing mission of forgiveness (2.3.2.2).

In addition to workshops directed at church members, an alternative community could also create a broader platform of workshops for village heads to equip them to deal with conflict resolution issues in communities. In that way the Church can play a role of working for peace and reconciliation in the community, as part of the *missio Dei* to bring the love of God to everyone (2.2.5). In particular, the focus group mentioned the CCJP, which regularly conducts such workshops on conflict resolution (4.7.5). Church leaders proposed that CCJP should be invited to Zaka district to run workshops for local leaders and village heads, since the organisation has the capacity and experience to offer such workshops (4.7.3.2). The main purpose would be for the CCJP to impart conflict resolution skills to community leaders, but it is important that such peace workshops should not focus narrowly on people affected by the violence of 2008. There are many conflicts plaguing communities, some of which were directly caused by the 2008 violence, but many that were only indirectly caused by it, or not at all. It would be artificial and unproductive to isolate the 2008 election trauma from other forms of trauma plaguing communities. The trauma that an alternative community needs to address is not only bigger than the violence of 2008 (see 5.3.1.3 on national cultural trauma), but there is also more recent trauma at work (see 5.2.1 on distant and near trauma).

To address all these forms of trauma in a holistic way -- and to focus on the future (prevention) as much as on the past (healing) -- an alternative community would also try to arrange workshops on human rights and conflict resolution with other local leadership structures such as the police, ward chairpersons, councillors, headmen, village heads, chiefs, business owners, school heads (4.7.2.5.4) so that the impact of such workshops could spread to all local communities. In this way the CCJP, as an arm of the Church involved in Justice and Peace issues, could help draw more

local people into an alternative community that heals distrust and division to create hope for the future.

#### 5.4.3.4 *Involvement of dare structures*

The concept of *dare* is part and parcel of the Shona traditional court system. Gwaravanda (2011:148) says:

The traditional Shona court system (*dare*), which is still applicable in contemporary rural Zimbabwe, shows a unique African approach to jurisprudence and legality... For the Shona, a crime (*mhosva*) is seen as affecting the whole community, hence the social, ontological and moral dimension of crime.

Although there are some challenges with the system, people appreciate that *dare* provides principles that facilitate conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation among the parties involved so as to promote social harmony, a cherished aspect in the Shona society. It is the elders of the community who handle the whole process of the *dare* in order to establish the facts of cases, verify them and give their judgements. Elders in the community or sages direct the logical steps of the argument in a manner which is both calm and reasonable (Ramose, quoted in Gwaravanda, 2011:152). In appreciating the role of local village heads and other leadership structures, the focus group stated that by utilising these skills of conflict resolution village heads bring reunion of divided families and communities and strengthen their trust and relationships. Such church initiatives restore trust, unity and harmony between families, neighbours and the whole community (4.7.3.2). Thus, the main purpose of *dare* is to achieve restorative justice by establishing what happened, giving a judgment and ensuring that the opposing parties have forgiven each other. After forgiveness, the final act is to award a token of compensation to the aggrieved party. Such a token is decided upon by the elders, after consulting the aggrieved.

In his research, Gwaravanda (2011:148) found that there are three types of court in the *dare* system, each of them with a distinctive description. The first is *dare repamusha* (family) which deals with domestic issues or family affairs and is led by elders of the family. The second type is a local village court *dare remumana*, which presides over cases involving two or more different families and handles smaller crimes such as theft, fights and consumption of crops by livestock, among others. The third type of court is the highest, *dare repamusoro* (area). The chief and his sub-chiefs preside over it and settle serious cases, such as divorce, taking someone's wife, working in the

fields on sacred days and others, but not crimes reserved for the criminal justice courts of the country. In this type of court, the chief presides over the case with the help of advisors who are chosen on the basis of intelligence, knowledge and eloquence of speech. In all categories the aim is to have restorative justice and achieve forgiveness and compensation amongst those involved. An added advantage is that the communities are familiar with this practice of restorative justice since it is done at grassroots level with the actual persons involved in the conflict (4.7.2.5.2) guided by the elders.

An alternative community has two options in this respect. Firstly, some church leaders could approach those responsible for a *dare remumana* and request them to hear a particular case of family estrangement that happened during the 2008 violence and still has an effect on the relationship between the two families. The church leaders could request to be allowed to attend the hearing and to contribute to the proceedings as “friends of the court” (if that is allowed) and thereby try to contribute to the reconciliation process. They could also do the background negotiations before the sitting to convince the two parties to engage in a *dare* hearing.

Secondly, a group of church leaders committed to an alternative community could borrow or adapt some practices of a *dare* in setting up a TRC-type hearing, as suggested in 5.4.3.3. They could utilise the art of involving both perpetrators and victims/survivors in handling the grass roots grievances emanating from the 2008 violence. They could also consider inviting some village chiefs or elders to co-chair the proceedings, thereby trying to give the process more local credibility and authority, but also giving it some protection against possible negativity from the side of the government. Such church-community collaboration could broaden the inclusivity of the consultation process, since the wrong done affected (and still affects) all the members of the community.

#### 5.4.3.5 *Village building projects*

Another proposal made by the focus group was that the churches could organise workshops to foster self-reliance and practical skills development, particularly for the individuals who had suffered violence. The Caritas organisation, the social development arm of the Catholic Church, conducts regular workshops on several projects to impart skills in agriculture, gardening, chicken rearing, animal husbandry and other agro-ecological skills (4.8.4.2). Such workshops could serve as a form of restitution for those traumatised or disabled by the 2008 violence through enabling



and equipping them to recover from the trauma by beginning to do some constructive work. It could assist in healing their traumatic memories as they acquire skills to help themselves out of the painful situation, they experienced in 2008. The training and formation provided in such workshops would not focus only on people affected by the 2008 violence but attract as many people as possible. In that way an alternative community could help to integrate victims/survivors into the broader community, without drawing unnecessary attention to them.

The focus group also proposed broader developmental projects in communities in Zaka district that are initiated jointly by different churches but organised by Caritas, due to its experience in this field. The kind of projects that they suggested included communal road repairs and community gardens (4.7.3.4). There was also the idea of some building projects in the area, such as building small scale dams to provide water for gardens of vegetables and fruit trees to serve as nutrition for the community. It was also suggested that Caritas could fund the building of toilets for schools and villages in the various wards, in the same way that it assisted in such projects in other districts of Masvingo province. These projects could include the same villagers who are in conflict and have mistrust between themselves. By being engaged in these projects and dialoguing over a long period of time, the mistrust could diminish and stronger bonds of relationships be built up again (4.7.3.4).

Another area for possible communal projects raised by the focus group addressed ecological concerns. A number of areas around the villages are developing gullies from soil erosion and uncontrolled drainage systems. Church leaders suggested that villagers could embark on projects to reclaim those gullies, which would restore the eco-system and benefit the whole community (4.7.3.4). Grass and indigenous trees could be planted during the rainy season to preserve the soil and prevent more gullies from occurring. Churches could mobilise the communities and work with government soil conservation officers to embark on such a life-giving project.

This may seem a very indirect way of dealing with the trauma inflicted on the communities in Zaka district more than 12 years ago, but there is wisdom in these proposals since it acknowledges that trauma is collective and that it gets reinforced and entrenched by squalid living conditions and poverty. An alternative community will take a holistic view of the collective trauma suffered by the community and also adopt these strategies in an attempt to heal the wounds of whole communities.

#### 5.4.3.6 *Sports programmes*

A related set of suggestions made by the focus group dealt with arranging sporting activities such as soccer and netball, which are common sporting activities in the rural area of Zaka district, as an attractive platform for healing distrust and division in communities (4.7.3.1). Sporting activities have the advantage of bringing people of all ages together. While people come to enjoy watching the sporting activities, they also spend time with other spectators and to engage in friendly discussions. This could create an atmosphere of openness to one another while commenting on the sports and supporting their respective teams. It is not likely that people would start talking directly about the violent incidents of 2008, but it may prepare the ground for that in the long run.

If the churches are able to organise such sporting events, they would be in a position to select teams in such a way that youth from different churches, villages and political persuasions play together in the same team. By including relatives of both victims and perpetrators to play together and to build up a team spirit so that they can win their games, sport could contribute to healing the wounds of families and creating a climate conducive to reconciliation. In this way trust could be slowly restored between those who are now divided because of the violence of 2008. While discussions during sports sessions would be informal, the fact of creating space for former enemies to meet and talk would enable the building of foundations for reunion and trust. If such village sporting activities are encouraged by different churches, they may provide platforms for trust-building and eradicate divisions, suspicions and attitudes of “them and us” which were demonstrated so clearly and destructively in the 2008 violence (4.7.3.1).

The purpose of the village building projects and sporting activities proposed by the focus group is to provide public platforms for interaction that could weed out distrust and division among the people and heal their communities so that they can live in harmony. By spearheading such initiatives churches are inviting villagers into an alternative community to transform their lives into a new creation of God (2.4.3.3).

### **5.5 OVERCOMING THE “CULTURE” OF VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS**

In this final section of the chapter the focus is on the widest and most fundamental challenges facing an alternative community that desires to realise the vision of God’s reign of peace and justice. In pursuing a bottom-up approach to reconciliation, this chapter started with issues of personal trauma (5.2), collective trauma (5.3), forgiveness and restitution (5.4) and now arrives at

the structural and political dimensions of the mission of an alternative community. Section 5.5.1 briefly surveys the key features of the “culture” of violence and lawlessness, as identified by the focus group. That leads to theological reflection on those issues (5.5.2) and proposals for action (5.5.3).

### **5.5.1 Context analysis**

Two key aspects of the context were highlighted by the interview participants and the focus group: the “cultural” nature of endemic violence; and the collapse of the rule of law into lawlessness, resulting in a complete lack of accountability.

The fact that violence has become so deeply entrenched in Zimbabwean society that it has indeed become cultural (3.7, Kaulem, 2012:14), emphasises the enormity of the challenge facing an alternative community in its mission of bottom-up reconciliation. It means that new generations of children and youth get socialised into that culture and that it has become part of their worldview. It thereby perpetuates enemy images of political opposition members firmly in the public consensus. Since it is political violence (violence to achieve political ends) that has become entrenched, the community as a whole has become deeply politicised and divided. So this section addresses the sensitive and potentially dangerous terrain of violence in terms of party political struggles and national governance, However, the focus here is not on “regime change” or political revolution but on a bottom-up process of culture change through “relocating and incarnating” among victims/survivors of the 2008 violence in Zaka district. This reflection approaches the political arena with caution and wisdom in order not to endanger anyone who needs to be liberated from this legacy of violence.

#### *5.5.1.1 A culture of violence*

The dimension highlighted in this section, when compared to the previous ones, is the fact that when violence becomes cultural it becomes normal in a community. A number of interview participants expressed the view that a culture of violence was evident not only during the 2008 run-off election but also in subsequent election periods, leading them to say that they are still afraid to vote during elections (4.4.1.5). In other words, there is an atmosphere of intimidation “in the air” when elections happen, inhibiting the free exercise of democracy. It is clear, however, that this culture manifests itself not only during elections. The harassment and intimidation experienced regularly by opposition politicians and supporters as reported, for example, in *The Standard* of 7<sup>th</sup>

March 2021 (see 5.3.5.1), is evidence that the government is committed to put maximum pressure on the political opposition, critical NGOs and the independent media at all times. It is for this reason that some participants characterised the government as “oppressive” (4.5.2.6). They referred to the government’s exercise of “selective justice” (3.4.4), violence against demonstrating workers (3.9.1), violence against the press (3.9.2) and issues of rape (3.11.7). Violence, used as a comprehensive weapon against political opponents, induced so much terror in a community like Zaka that many people were debilitated to the extent of cowering away in silence.

#### *5.5.1.2 Lawlessness*

Since the Zimbabwean government never admitted responsibility for the violence unleashed against the Zaka community in 2008 and since no one was ever arrested or questioned for the crimes committed, the interview participants described the situation as lawlessness and political oppression, a continuation of ZANU-PF’s intimidation tactics during the war of liberation “to coerce people into supporting the party even through beatings and other violent means as the whole concept of liberation was based on forcefully taking power and the land from the colonial oppressors” (4.4.1.3). When ZANU-PF changed from a liberation movement to a ruling party it did not undergo a fundamental change of mind; instead, it started using state power as the ruling party against all those perceived to be “enemies of the government.” This made politics into “a game of violence” exercised by a government that was “only interested in retaining power and not in the welfare of all the citizens” (4.4.1.3).

The implication of this lawlessness is that the principle of “might is right” became the dominant political principle and that the government placed itself above the constitution and other laws of the land, accountable to nobody. Since the military and other state organs were not charged when they committed atrocities against the opposition parties in the name of defending government, a symbiotic relationship developed between lawlessness and corruption (3.2.4). The prevailing lawlessness contributed to an economic meltdown, with devastating consequences for the country, forcing thousands of citizens into the diaspora in search of greener pastures (3.4.5).

#### **5.5.2 Theological reflection**

The first theological resource that an alternative community needs in order to address a culture of violence and lawlessness is: a social, structural approach to ethics; a robust theology of human dignity; and a Trinitarian theology of mission.

### 5.5.2.1 *The need for a structural ethic*

One of the key priorities for an alternative community is to develop a theology that overcomes false dichotomies. The paralysing separations like sacred/secular, soul/body and personal/social are obstacles to the development of a strong theology for public and political life. As quoted before, Bosch (1991:82) argues that since forgiveness is inherent to mission, the church has a duty to be involved in politics so as to further the commandment of love to all people, including enemies (2.3.2.4). According to him, it is particularly the universal Lordship of the ascended Christ that provides this impetus:

The ascension is, pre-eminently, the symbol of the enthronement of the crucified and risen Christ – he now reigns as King. And it is from the perspective of the present reign of Christ that we look back to the cross and the empty tomb and forward to the consummation of everything. Christian faith is marked by an inaugurated eschatology. This is true not only of the church – as if the church is the present embodiment of God’s reign – but also of society, of history, which is the arena of God’s activity.... Therefore, to opt out of civil society and set up little Christian islands is to subscribe to a truncated and disjunctive understanding of God’s workings....Mission from this perspective means that it should be natural for Christians to be committed to justice and peace in the social realm.... The glory of the ascension remains intimately linked to the agony of the cross, however.... The Lord we proclaim in mission remains the suffering Servant. The principle of self-sacrificing love is enthroned at the very centre of the reality of the universe (Bosch, 1991:515f).

The reduction of the gospel to an individual concern with personal salvation after death, which is common in many churches, is a serious distortion. In order to see the problem of political violence and lawlessness in society with clear eyes, an alternative community needs an ethic that encompasses the whole of social, economic and political reality. In other words, it needs an ethic of social justice that develops criteria for good governance and sound public policies. It cannot insist on one particular political model of democracy or one specific economic ideology, but it should develop ways of discerning healthy and peace-building approaches to governance and authority. A theology of the state developed by an alternative community will develop criteria by which to hold every government accountable in terms of their commitment to the common good, in which the preferential option for the poor and excluded will play a central role.

### 5.5.2.2 *A theology of human dignity, democracy and nationalism*

The problem with an entrenched culture of violence in a society is that it makes violence normal. Instead of political violence towards its citizens being viewed as a shocking transgression of the limits of respect for human dignity, that flagrant violation of human life is normalised and regularised. Not only the brutal killing of the Jerera bomb victims, but also their hasty burial in shallow graves (see 4.4.1.5; 4.4.2.4; 4.5.2.5), are vivid testimony to the violation of human dignity that has become endemic, which means that it can (and probably will) happen again. The extent to which a political system normalises such disrespect reveals the depth of its descent into inhumanity. Over against that, an alternative community needs to develop a robust affirmation of the dignity and worth of every human being, regardless of gender, age, race, class or religious persuasion. On the basis of a sound theology of the creation of humankind in the image of God (Gen 1:26; 9:6; Jam 3:9), an alternative community will preach, teach, propagate and protect the dignity of every human being, as far as it is in their power.

Due to the fact that Zimbabwe claims to be a democratic state, with a constitution and regular elections, an alternative community will also have to develop a clear theology of democracy if it wishes to contribute to public life and to hold government accountable to its stated democratic values. De Gruchy (1995) discussed the role of the church in contributing to processes of democracy in the world. Looking at democracy through the lens of Christian theology, he argues that the Christian tradition played a key role in the development of democracy, to assist humanity to live better. Due to the role of religion in its origins, democracy “cannot survive without the spiritual basis which gives meaning to life” (De Gruchy 1995:247). This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for an alternative community to work publicly for the “spiritual basis” of democracy to be recognised and valued. There have been long-standing debates about democracy in Africa, which have circled around issues of decolonisation, the one-party state, the relationship between politics and economics, and many others. Those debates fall outside the scope of this study, but it is crucial for an alternative community to enter those debates from a theological vantage point, in developing its public role and profile into the future.

In broader ecumenical circles there have also been theological debates about the relationship of God to democracy Hickman (2008:177) has reflected on the view that democracy functions as a “god-term” in American culture, in other words that it is assumed as “the ‘normal’ form of government to which any nation is entitled – whether in Europe, America, Asia, or Africa.”

Consequently, “democracy” has increasingly come to be presumed to be “both a ‘universal value’ and a portable practice devoid of specific content.” Hickman (2008:179) understands democracy teleologically, as referring to “any potential movement toward radical egalitarianism” so that it becomes “a blanket term for the various forms of republicanism, liberalism, and communitarianism.” These American understandings of democracy cannot be imposed on Africa and the rest of the world, so an alternative community in Zimbabwe needs to define its own terms, in dialogue with those global conversations.

The question of democracy is a very important one, not only with regard to government, but also the church: In what sense are churches democratic institutions? What is the implication for the life of a Christian community when churches call God the “sovereign creator of the universe” and Christ the “King of kings and Lord of lords”? Is any church democratic in the sense of a “movement toward radical egalitarianism,” as defined by Hickman above? Can churches call on a government to be democratic if they are not democratic themselves? These questions cannot be answered here, but they need to be firmly on the agenda of an alternative community as it seeks to be a credible witness to the justice of God’s liberating reign in society.

A related theological question concerns the issue of nationalism. This matter has been raised already (5.3.1), I need to add that a key element of a theological critique of the culture of violence and lawlessness in Zimbabwe will have to be an examination of the “grotesque” nationalism that has emerged since 2000 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Muzondidya 2011).

#### 5.5.2.3 *A non-violent Trinitarian theology of mission*

In the midst of a violence-soaked world, the divine Trinity has pre-ordained salvation history for humankind and intends to fulfil that mission. A clear understanding of the nature of God’s love is the greatest resource for an alternative community in facing the challenges of a violent society. Because the Trinity is bound together in love (2.2.8), humanity (created in the divine image) is also bound in love to the Trinity and to one another. As Bosch (1991:300) pointed out, this unity of divine love is missionary in nature; God is a missionary God (2.3.1) and the power of love is the heart of the Trinity (2.5.3).

In this theological reflection we are informed that the symbol of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit and the pre-ordained salvation history designed by the Trinity give direction to humanity’s participation in God’s mission in his creation. The culture of violence in human society, even as it

is contextualised in Zimbabwe, can be embraced by the acts of our redeeming God and be extricated from this oppressive and violent culture, to be born into a new society with a life that is all-inclusive, just, compassionate, merciful and acknowledging oneself in the face of the other – being drawn by the very love of God whose nature it is. These are the values of the Gospel that Jesus enacted for us to follow. The life of an alternative community is to implement a process of transforming every culture of violence into the new life of the desired Reign of God, whose dawn has come but is not yet fully realised (2.3.2.2).

At the heart of the triune mission of love stands the way of the cross of Jesus, which was identified by several theologians in chapter 2 as the way in which an alternative community should deal with the culture of violence. The followers of Jesus too have to go the way of the cross and stand by their master (2.5.3). It is through suffering the cross that Jesus conquered the violence perpetrated against him by the Jews, who brought false accusations against him, and by Pilate, who gave in to the demands of the leaders of the Jewish community. Schreiter (2.4.3) affirms that three symbols – death, cross and blood – are the means through which reconciliation is brought about by God. Put another way, these symbols, although painful, bring about reconciliation and new life. They help to mediate the move from death to life in the reconciliation process. Schreiter (1992:47-8) acknowledges that the violence, suffering, and death of Jesus are the very means used by going through them in order to overcome them and obtain new life in Christ (2.4.3). By his very cross Jesus Christ demonstrates his love (2.3.2.4) for humanity. Indeed, it is paradoxical that the same symbol of suffering, the cross, is also the symbol for liberation, reconciliation and new life.

Through the self-emptying sacrifice of Jesus on the cross it became clear that only through the power of the Holy Spirit humanity can attain reconciliation and forgiveness (2.5.3). As Bekele stated (2.2.2), the climax of God's guiding of salvation history is in his self-disclosure in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is involved in the history of Jesus as well as in our human histories, linking them together. The Holy Spirit draws people to participate in the mission of God (2.2.2), thereby making them into an alternative community that works to achieve the aims of the *missio Dei*. This mission is not limited to the Church but extends to the whole world and all creation. Vatican II reiterated that the missionary work of the Church is done through the Holy Spirit (2.2.4) to establish the Kingdom/Reign of God. The role of the Holy Spirit



is indispensable in overcoming sin and death but also in enacting reconciliation and establishing the Reign of God.

When these Trinitarian theological reflections are taken together, the shape of an alternative community's mission against endemic violence, lawlessness and oppressive state power becomes clear. It is not a mission that seeks head-on confrontation with the forces of evil. It does not fight evil with evil or violence with violence. That simply fans the flames, creating an ongoing spiral of violence. An alternative community undermines the injustice and violence of an oppressive state by refusing to give it the attention it seeks, by denying the state its pathos, by "starving" it of attention. Jennings (2016:27f) explains how Karl Barth faced the clash between the Bolshevik Revolution and the attempts to legitimise the status quo after World War I: "Barth understood that the goal of those who offered these narratives was to have us chain our lives inside these master stories." Barth's response was: "Deprive them of their *Pathos*, and they will be starved out; but stir up revolution against them, and the *Pathos* is provide with fresh fodder" (in Jennings 2016:28). Katongole (2011) has argued similarly that Christian leaders in postcolonial Africa should stop trying to "change the government" and "relocate and incarnate" among the poor and marginal victims of state power, creating a new "political theology" for Africa from "out there" through bottom-up initiatives.

At this point the most poignant image used by Bosch in his booklet on an alternative community comes into play, namely the role of an alternative community as antibody:

There is no success recipe. Perhaps our society, even our churches, will continue very much the same they are today. We may not be able to change much. We may perhaps have no more to show than a few crocuses in the snow. But we may never resign and succumb. We have to persevere in the hope that we are indeed going to change things, we have to operate silently as an antibody, fighting evil consistently and relentlessly.

An alternative community is not after success. Like an antibody it silently and unobtrusively works away inside the body, combating viruses and eliminating threats to life. This kenotic-subversive way of doing mission combines the sacrificial humility of the Crucified, the risen Lord's relentless fight against evil, and the community-creating power of the Holy Spirit. By pursuing mission in this subversive way, an alternative community can help draw the poison out of a violent culture and slowly infuse a lawless society with human dignity and compassion.

### 5.5.3 Concrete actions or projects

Listen! I am sending you out just like sheep to a pack of wolves. You must be as cautious (or wise, *phronimoi*) as snakes and as gentle (or innocent, *akeraioi*) as doves (Mt. 10:16).

This neglected “mission text” of Jesus is the only fitting motto over the projects suggested in this section, as we consider how an alternative community could offer workable and hope-giving strategies to embody the compassionate justice of their Master in a lawless culture of violence, by rising above those debilitating obstacles. At the outset it must be said that there are no “quick fixes” in culture change. Cultures change slowly. But the sobering vision of Bosch – of an alternative community as little more than a silent antibody that combats the infections plaguing society should not be understood as an excuse for doing nothing. Antibodies can have a uniquely powerful impact, as the world is discovering in the covid-19 pandemic. But in the daunting ask of redeeming a culture from the violence and lawlessness that has become endemic in it, the emphasis should be on building healthy “civil society” institutions that would create a basis for a just and peaceful society in the country.

An alternative community needs to offer practicable initiatives that: a) deal with the *past* by enabling victims/survivors of violence to recover from their personal and family trauma; b) prepare a new *future* by wisely, systematically and persistently countering the culture of violence and lawlessness; c) establish a new *present* now, against all obstacles, by building institutions that create violent-free “pockets” of justice and freedom in communities and – gradually, hopefully – a violent-free society in Zimbabwe. In this way, the notion of “liberated zones” that is often used in wars of liberation needs to be turned against a liberation-movement-gone-wrong in Zimbabwe. Society now needs to be liberated from its liberators. But that will not happen through violent actions; the poison needs to be “sucked” out of the culture by consistent and compassionate service with and among those who suffered most. There are no standard forms or strategies for this daunting task; an alternative community, humbly submitting itself to the power of the Holy Spirit and utilising every available opportunity, needs to come up with creative actions that seek to bring justice and peace to society in Zimbabwe.

In the face of these challenges, the focus group advocated that churches should collaborate and use modern platforms to communicate Christian values in order to continue processes of peace-building and acceptable co-existence to overcome the culture of violence (4.7.6.6). As local

churches in Zaka district come together in jointly-planned ecumenical actions to respond to the culture of violence (4.7.2.5), their activities should target the local communities in Zaka where they operate. As they initiate and implement these activities, either as individual churches or more appropriately as combined churches, this may spread to other regions with passage of time, thereby influencing other regions to create opportunities of overcoming the culture of violence. The ecumenical efforts proposed below will challenge people in villages and also prophetically offer the beginnings of an alternative community in the district. These activities overlap with those mentioned in sections 5.2 to 5.4, but create a particular niche that targets agents in the public political arena. As indicated in 5.5.2, this is necessary since violence and lawlessness has become so deeply entrenched that it can only be addressed holistically – at all levels – from the deepest recesses of the worldview to the highest levels of political authority.

#### *5.5.3.1 Pastoral letters in the diocese (on a theology of democracy)*

The focus group was cognisant of the Pastoral Letters released by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference over the years to defend the marginalised, the oppressed and the violated and to call upon government to rectify the various situations in order to alleviate the plight of its citizens (4.7.2.3). If it is wise to use the same strategy in a local context of Zaka, the diocese would have to draft diocesan pastoral letters to call upon the local political leadership to respect the rights of individuals and communities where violence has been perpetrated. Even more impactful would be pastoral letters from a combined ecumenical body of leaders of various churches in Zaka district. If they come together to write pastoral letters to local authorities at significant moments of the church cycle, like Easter, Pentecost or Christmas, such pastoral letters would go a long way to influence the political parties and the communities in Zaka.

To write such joint pastoral letters would require that local church leaders agree to form a body with some elementary executive so that their leaders could call meetings and draft letters to be circulated for approval by the churches who participate in the body. Currently such a body does not exist, but CCJP could motivate for such a body to be formed for an easier working relationship among church leaders. By collaborating in writing such pastoral letters the churches would grow into an alternative community in a number of respects: a) the journey of convergence among Christians would be enhanced; b) they would play a constructive public role in the community by offering guidance on a better way for members of society to behave and relate to one another; c) they would fulfil their prophetic mandate by working constructively to uphold democracy and the

rule of law in society. When a group of church leaders write a joint pastoral letter, it is intended to foster an alternative way of governance rather than the violent methods that were used in 2008 – and are in some cases still being used – to gain political support amongst the citizens of the country.

#### 5.5.3.2 *CCJP workshops (with political parties)*

The focus group affirmed that political parties were responsible for the 2008 election violence (4.4.1.3) and that they abused youth by mobilising them to commit acts of violence to (4.8.1). The military was also involved in the petrol bombing of MDC offices at Jerera and other incidents (4.3.2.2). Because government agents and the political arms of government were involved in these violent acts, the focus group agreed that an appropriate response to the situation could not focus only on changing the minds of individual perpetrators but would have to involve these institutions. The focus group recommended that one set of workshops be targeted towards political parties (4.8.4.4). As CCJP is represented in all the Catholic dioceses in Zimbabwe, the CCJP of the local Masvingo diocese could liaise with the national CCJP office and arrange for such workshops to run first at the national level so that when the local CCJP conducts their workshops at a local level the themes would be coordinated. Such a national effort is very important as it lays the foundation for engaging political parties at the national level.

Such CCJP workshops would enable political parties to acknowledge the excruciating pain that the election violence inflicted on the people, by the very people who were supposed to be protecting them. It would create the awareness that such violence was not only undeserved but also unjust and illegal. The CCJP, which has skills to present such risky and sensitive issues, would utilise its expertise to challenge and advise political parties to find ways of overcoming such violent practices during election campaigns. It is clear that one workshop would not be sufficient; several workshops over a long period of time are needed, since there is deep alienation between the parties and the process of overcoming it can only be gradual. A series of workshops would also allow the process to reach different layers of leadership in the different parties and allow a measure of trust to develop between the parties. By addressing representatives of all political parties, the CCJP would not be finger-pointing any party as being responsible for the political violence, thereby being accommodative of all parties, in the hope that they will actually attend.

It may be difficult to get representative of different political parties together in one workshop so that the role of church leaders and other community figures will be crucial in helping build trust

between the groups by engaging in “shuttle diplomacy.” It may prove to be true that only churches are generally regarded as credible and acceptable players in the process of bringing about reconciliation and peace (4.4.2.6).

#### 5.5.3.3 *Engagement with local and regional leadership of political parties*

After engaging political parties on the national level (5.5.3.2), local churches have a task to engage local and regional leadership, as suggested by the focus group (4.8.1). Within this leadership are included the police, councillors, village heads, chiefs, business community, headmasters, headmistresses and other people who can influence communities. As mentioned above for the national level workshops, the focus group recommended workshops targeting political parties and other leaders on the district level in Zaka (4.8.4.4). A diversity of organisations should be involved to organise such workshops, not only the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and CCJP but also other NGOs that have experience in running workshops against violence for local and regional leaders.<sup>27</sup> Some NGOs operating in Zimbabwe that could be approached are AMANI (for counselling victims of violence, see footnote 19); the Musasa Project (for women who suffer violence, both domestic and political);<sup>28</sup> “Padare/Enkundleni” (Men’s Forum on Gender);<sup>29</sup> World Vision (for the rights of children), and many others.

The burden of suffering that has been placed on the innocent members of the Zaka communities in the 2008 election violence can only be overcome when those involved submit themselves to the power of God, who loves every human being. Such a community, empowered by the Holy Spirit, becomes an alternative community, as Bosch argues (2.3.2.4). Every human being is included in the love of God because he created every person in his own image (Gen.1:27). The hope expressed in this proposal is that, by engaging local leadership, the process of offering a new vision of respect and dignity for every person can slowly begin to dawn on local political leaders, so that in time they renounce violence as a means of political gain and campaign without using violence. As local

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<sup>27</sup> For information on NGOs that have experience in this field, see (for example): <https://www.google.com/search?q=NGOs+in+zimbabwe+against+violence&oq=NGOs+in+zimbabwe+against+violence&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i22i29i30.20475j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> (Accessed 20 February 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Musasa is a non-governmental organisation that was set up in 1988 to deal with issues of violence against women and girls. It provides relief to survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), operating from four (4) regional offices located in Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo as well as various service centres located in all the provinces of Zimbabwe (<https://musasa.co.zw/>).

<sup>29</sup> See <https://www.comminit.com/africa/content/padareenkundleni-mens-forum-gender>.

political leaders are key to the process of overcoming the culture of violence, their participation in these workshops is indispensable.

*5.5.3.4 Praying for the authorities*

The actions proposed in this subsection to overcome the culture of violence continue to be on the political level, because the political arena is wholly responsible for allowing occasional political violence to harden into a “culture of violence” (3.11). The structures and arms of government that have become militarised (3.1.2) need to be addressed to counter the entrenchment of this culture of violence. One way in which churches can mobilise their unique religious resources to engage such authorities is to pray for them. This sub-section suggests three concrete ways in which the churches in Zaka could engage in ecumenical mode to pray for the various arms of government.

*5.5.3.4 (a) Penitential Service*

In the Catholic Church, the Penitential Act (usually found in the Roman Missal) is a general prayer of admitting one’s sinfulness and a rite that seeks to ask for pardon and forgiveness of sins. However, such a prayer is not limited to one particular church. If properly organised by church leaders, various churches could come together in a spirit of ecumenism. The important aspect in the prayer is to admit that humanity is frail, sinful and in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness. Such a penitential service would not lay the blame on government structures but would be all-inclusive, inviting and including everyone present to take part, since everyone is in need of forgiveness and transformation. In such a service, church leaders could include praying for government structures, mentioning them in prayers that are formulated to include all the people of Zimbabwe and the communities of Zaka in particular. A sample or possible format for such a penitential service is indicated in the table below:

**Communal Penance and Reconciliation Service**

1. Opening Song	2. Opening Prayer by Presider
3. Theme: Admit our sinfulness (for example Isa 38:17)	4. Prayer of praise to God
5. A Song for Pardon	6. Psalm for Hope in God: for example, Ps 62
7. Gospel Reading (for example Lk. 6:19) and brief explanation	8. Examination of conscience by all
9. Presider mentions general sins of the community	10. Prayer asking for pardon, mercy and forgiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-centredness,</li> <li>• greed for money, for power,</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• abuse,</li> <li>• violence against women, girls and other citizens, etc.</li> </ul> <p>11. Song of Joy</p> <p>13. Prepared prayers for all the Faithful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government leaders</li> <li>• Families</li> <li>• Political parties</li> <li>• The poor, marginalised, oppressed</li> <li>• Orphans</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Disadvantaged women and girls</li> <li>• Pastors</li> <li>• The Army</li> <li>• The youth</li> </ul> <p>15. Concluding Song</p>	<p>12. Presider mentions responsibilities of every person towards their neighbour</p> <p>14. Presider says the concluding prayer after all the prayers for the faithful have been said/read</p> <p>16. The Benediction is given if necessary.</p>
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Such an ecumenical penitential service would not only assist the faithful but also indicate how all Christian communities are concerned with the effort of overcoming our sinfulness and in particular overcoming the culture of violence in our nation. The choice of date, venue and other practical aspects are of critical importance and should be carefully negotiated by the participating churches (see also 5.3.1.3). It would be ideal if there isn't a single presider but a team of presiders from different churches to embody the ecumenical spirit of the service. It may also be a good idea to write a Peace Pledge that all participants could be asked to affirm at the end of the service, committing themselves to be instruments of peace in the community. The participation of church choirs and other gospel musicians could be considered, especially to enhance wider participation, but that should not detract from the penitential mood and purpose of the service. The songs they render should be laments, which capture the emotions of remorse for the violence and solidarity with the victims. If such a service becomes an annual event, it could grow into a significant factor in building a culture of peace, justice and respect that can help to gradually overshadow and replace the culture of violence and lawlessness.

#### 5.5.3.4 (b) *Public Processions*

Church processions have been part of the Roman Catholic Eucharistic liturgy (mass) over the years. However, they seem to have vanished from Protestant churches in response to the demands

of Martin Luther, John Calvin and many others for simplicity in worship. Yet, if agreed upon by an ecumenical group of churches in Zaka, public processions could be utilised, both to demonstrate the unity of churches as well as to pray specifically for God to intervene in our society to empower people to overcome the culture of violence. Processions generally indicate vulnerability (like during Lent), triumph (like at Easter, Pentecost or Jesus' Kingship) and the theme of such a procession could be that of the vulnerability of our society. The local church leaders could set the date for such a procession, which would be open to anyone who wishes to join, not just the faithful alone. The procession would have a beginning and a destination agreed upon by church leaders and individuals would be selected beforehand to lead in the songs, readings, prayers and final blessing. The format may be set like the one in 5.5.3.4 (a) above, to ensure good order and give guidance to those walking in the procession. This proposal could be linked to the suggestions regarding the Stations of the Cross in 5.3.1.3 (b). It may also be possible to use a procession to hand out printed posters to the community, with images similar to No Parking signs, which symbolise No Violence and which people can put up in homes ("This is a violence-free home"), church buildings ("This is a violence-free church"), schools, and other public buildings. If an ecumenical group of church leaders could visit government offices and public buildings to request permission for such posters to be put up, it would broaden the impact as well as the challenge to the community.

#### 5.5.3.4 (c) *Teaching manuals for small Christian communities*

In the process of developing teaching material for the various guilds and youth groups, the local churches could come together to create a teaching manual on Christian responses to violence and lawlessness for small Christian communities in Zaka to inculcate a new sense of being Church, alternative community. There are many samples that church leaders could refer to for obtaining ideas. Some of the manuals are *Luther's Small Catechism: A manual for Discipleship*, by John T. Pless; *Resource Manual for Small Christian Community Ministry in the Diocese of Trenton* (2001); *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa: A Training Handbook for Facilitators* (2017) and others. The main theme for the communities in Zaka is to aim at becoming an alternative community. The lessons drawn up therefore should remain targeted to this theme and also include practical actions that can be done to initiate such a process of becoming an alternative community. Eventually this could be a catalyst that drives communities to strive for a violent-free community and overcome the culture of violence. A series of manuals dedicated to addressing specific forms of violence could be considered, such as bullying, gender-based violence, domestic violence, human rights, democracy, etc. A sample manual for use by Small Christian Communities on a topic like Human Rights, which is based on the praxis cycle, could look something like this:

##### 1. Introduction



2. The mission of a Small Christian Community in a Parish
3. Identification: Who are we? Telling our own stories of dignity and suffering
4. Theological reflection: What does the Bible say about human dignity and rights?
5. Context analysis: Are there people around us whose dignity is being violated? What is causing that to happen?
6. Strategies for action: How can we meet them? Is there anything we can do with them?
7. Spirituality: How can we intercede for them? Lament with them?
8. Conclusion

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Having reached the end of this wide-ranging chapter, which contains the heart of the thesis, it is good to reiterate that its purpose was not give a detailed prescription of “what must be done” but a range of options. All those proposals attempted to understand the context sensitively, to develop a sound theological basis for a response, and to creatively discern opportunities for constructive action. The next chapter wraps up the whole study with some critical reflection on its methodology and outcomes as well as some suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this concluding chapter I focus on a critical self-evaluation of this thesis. I assess whether the thesis answered the primary research question and sub-questions set out in Chapter 1. Was the thesis able to utilise adequate research methods and carry out the promises made in chapter 1? In my reflection I also assess whether I would carry out the research differently if I were to do it again. It is also important in my critical assessment to mention if I encountered any surprises during the course of my research which I had not expected. In this chapter it is also crucial that I mention my contribution to the discipline of missiology in the context of Southern Africa. I also wish to point out a few areas that I discovered during my research which could be done but could not be pursued in this thesis because of limitation of time and space. Finally, I intend to mention what the research process did to me personally and how I have gained in this scholarly exercise.

#### **6.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF RESEARCH GOALS**

Looking back at the goals of the study, as envisaged in Chapter 1, the research has indeed achieved the goals that were envisaged in this work. The five waves of violence that Zimbabwe experienced in its history were examined in Chapter 3. The bitter legacy of those five waves resulted in a “culture of violence” becoming endemic in Zimbabwean society. The discussion of those five waves set the scene for the whole study, underlining the seriousness of the situation and the importance of addressing it theologically as well as practically.

##### **6.1.1 Research objectives**

The *strategic* objectives of the research were explained in (1.2.2) by formulating five general reasons that motivated it: a) To achieve peace and justice in communities through initiating a “bottom-up” process of forgiveness and reconciliation in a politically violated community; b) To provide a platform for victims/survivors to “empty out” their bitterness and anger, thus empowering them to participate in recovery from trauma; c) To provide moral and spiritual support to victims/survivors through the Church as an alternative community; d) To promote the vision of an alternative community by facilitating networking between people, organisations and Church bodies that work for reconciliation, peace and development; e) To provide space for interaction such as sports and developmental activities in order to achieve reconciliation amongst formerly conflicting individuals. The research has responded to each of these intentions, particularly in

Chapter 5, by providing numerous suggestions for actions and projects to be carried out by an alternative community.

The *academic* objectives of the research were formulated as follows in 1.2.1: a) To use the praxis cycle as an interpretive framework for doing transformative missiological reflection; b) To explore the themes forgiveness and reconciliation missiologically in the Zimbabwean context; c) To develop a bottom-up theology of reconciliation in the context of post-conflict co-existence of various groups, leading to processes of forgiveness and reconciliation; d) To evaluate the relevance of Bosch's alternative community concept and its practicality in the context of conflicting communities in Zimbabwe as a result of the violence and atrocities perpetrated in these communities. The thesis used the praxis cycle to shape its macro-structure and as an interpretive framework to do transformative reflection, responding to each of these objectives, particularly in Chapter 5.

### **6.1.2 Research questions**

The research questions in Chapter 1.3 were designed to guide and shape the whole research process. The central research question (1.3.1) is: How can a Roman Catholic diocese deepen its commitment to being an alternative community to initiate a bottom-up reconciliation process in Zimbabwe?

There are four elements that constitute the primary question. The first element mentions a specific church, a Roman Catholic diocese, the second element is how this diocese can deepen its prophetic commitment, thirdly to be (or become) an alternative community. The fourth element is to implement a bottom-up process of reconciliation. In a more simplified manner, the four elements are:

1. a Roman Catholic diocese,
2. deepen its commitment,
3. as an alternative community,
4. to implement a bottom-up process of reconciliation.

The Roman Catholic diocese was identified as Masvingo diocese in the Southern part of Zimbabwe and the church activities that were considered for use in the development towards being an alternative community were identified by participants in semi-structured interviews and by a focus group, as reported in Chapter 4. Additional church activities and projects were added and

elaborated on in Chapter 5, in all its sub-sections. Those church activities and projects are not limited to the Roman Catholic diocese alone or to an ecumenical body of local churches in Zaka; they also extend to the communities in Zaka. What is of importance is that this research proposes that they are to be initiated and led by churches on the initiative of the Roman Catholic diocese of Masvingo, for a start. After the initiation of these activities, the responsibility of managing and continuing could be shared by all local churches in Zaka district. That would be like a pilot project for initiating a bottom-up process of reconciliation in Zaka district, but which may eventually cascade to the whole diocese or even the country at large. As a group of local churches take the initiative for such a process of bottom-up reconciliation, they become an alternative community within their communities and thus participate in the *Missio Dei* as an instrument of God.

Five research sub-questions were formulated (1.3.2.1 to 1.3.2.5). While each sub-question addressed a specific dimension of the praxis cycle, put together the sub-questions shaped the research as a praxis cycle. The questions include analysis of the context of violence, experiences of victims/survivors and perpetrators, formal responses to reconciliation from various groups, the purpose of an alternative community and recommendations made for actions and projects to be done. Each of these sub-questions generated a separate chapter of the thesis, as pointed out below, but these questions all came together in Chapter 5, where practical actions and projects for local churches were proposed, based on a deep analysis of the experiences of the 2008 violence (taken from Chapters 3 and 4), interwoven with theological reflection (taken from Chapter 2). The element of spirituality was embedded in the prayers and liturgies suggested.

The first research sub-question (1.3.2.1: What is the context of alienation, estrangement and violence in Zimbabwe?) required a historical analysis of the Zimbabwean context to trace the “fault lines” running through the society and the waves of violence that caused them. That was done in Chapter 3, where the five waves of violence were analysed and illustrated by diagrams to indicate the parties involved in the conflicts, as well as the nature and effects of each conflict (3.7.1 – 3.7.5).

The second research sub-question (1.3.2.2: What are the experiences of victims of violence as well as perpetrators of violence?) required empirical investigation. The semi-structured interviews that were conducted with a selected sample of victims/survivors generated very rich data for analysis and reflection. Out of those well-articulated views a number of themes emerged that expressed the

experiences of victims/survivors with great clarity (Chapter 4). Those themes were framed into a set of questions for a focus group consisting of selected church leaders, to gather their insights into what churches could do to respond to the experiences of the victims/survivors. The many constructive suggestions that emerged from the focus group were reported in Chapter 4 and fruitfully employed in Chapter 5.

In one sense the second sub-question was not adequately answered, since it was not possible to include the experiences of perpetrators in a direct and representative way. The situation was still highly sensitive and the official position of the government (and its agents) was to refuse taking responsibility for perpetrating that violence (4.4.2). The views of perpetrators in this study were therefore gained indirectly, from the victims/survivors and the focus group members, in other words from how those participants interpreted the actions of perpetrators during and after the violence. The only direct source from the side of perpetrators was one participant who was a former ZANU-PF member, which was therefore very valuable. Thus, the experiences of perpetrators were mainly gained from the views expressed by victims/survivors and focus group members. The question whether this invalidates the present research can be answered in two ways: a) Whenever views were attributed to perpetrators or to government, a cross-reference was given to the relevant section in Chapter 4 to show how those views emerged from the interview participants. Qualitative research does not claim to express “absolute truth” about “reality” but always interprets perceptions and perspectives; b) The “alternative community: approach adopted in this study implies a preferential option for the oppressed and excluded, which means it does not apologise for viewing society through the eyes of victims/survivors. The very expression “bottom-up reconciliation” in the title, which informed all the actions and projects proposed in Chapter 5, expresses this prior commitment and bias; c) This approach does not imply an antagonism towards or a rejection of perpetrators or government. The detailed exposition of the unconditional nature of Christian forgiveness (5.4.2), the emphasis on love as the heart God’s trinitarian life and mission (5.5.2.3), and the proposed projects focused on praying for perpetrators and government (5.5.3.4) testify collectively that this research did not set up perpetrators or government as “the enemy,” fostering hatred or revenge against them. Instead, from a position of empathy and solidarity with the victims/survivors, it proposed a comprehensive vision of reconciliation-with-justice that could heal communities and restore broken relationships.

The third sub-question read as follows: (1.3.2.3: What were the formal responses for reconciliation by the following: a) Government, NGOs like Amani Trust and others? b) Churches/Christian communities in Zimbabwe? c) Committed Christians who suffered the political violence? It was necessary to ask this compound sub-question to avoid creating the impression that nobody had done anything about this challenging situation before and that this research was therefore completely original. It forced me to situate this research historically within the long struggle of Christians and other citizens of Zimbabwe to overcome the violence and unaccountability that has become endemic in society. This sub-question did not generate a whole chapter; the responses to it are spread out over Chapters 4 and 5.

This information on activities of local churches and NGOs in relation to reconciliation were gathered from interview participants and focus group members, as reported in Chapter 4. Additional information on NGOs activities was obtained from journal articles and newspapers. The latter sources were also used to get information on government initiatives, since no government officials could be approached due to the sensitivity of the issue. This information on earlier reconciliation attempts allowed me to build on those initiatives but also to see some gaps that needed to be filled. The results of those reflections are found in Chapter 5.

The fourth sub-question (1.3.2.4: What is the nature and purpose of the notion of the Church as “alternative community”?) posed the central theological question of the thesis. The response to this question, in general terms, is found in Chapter 2, but those insights were further developed and focused in Chapter 5, interwoven with context analysis and planning, with a concrete focus on the Zaka district context. Since the notion of “alternative community” does not stand on its own or constitute a complete missiological perspective, I integrated it with the notions of reconciliation, *Missio Dei*, Reign of God and Trinity in Chapter 2, as well as in relevant sections of Chapter 5. I believe that this treatment of the concept “alternative community” provided sufficient interaction with earlier uses of the term by scholars like Bosch and Brueggemann, but also a reinterpretation of it in the specific Zimbabwean context of the study.

The fifth sub-question was also a compound question (1.3.2.5): a) How can the “alternative community” approach be implemented concretely in the Zimbabwean context? b) What suggestions are given by committed Christians as the way forward for their communities? c) What

do they understand as their Christian role in this conflict-ridden scenario in their communities? The response to the first of these questions shaped and informed the whole of Chapter 5 and could even be called the main academic purpose of the whole thesis. The information to answer the other two was obtained from the interviews and the focus group, as reported in Chapter 4 and subsequently used in developing actions and projects in Chapter 5. In the initial design of the research the term “committed Christians” was used in the last two questions, since the composition of the sample for the interviews was aimed at getting the views of victims/survivors, regardless of their religious affiliation or commitment. There was therefore a specific need to hear the views of active Christians in Zaka district on the possible role of churches in overcoming the legacy of violence in their community. Due to the limitations placed on the empirical part of the research by the government lockdown for the covid-19 pandemic, that component of the data generation became limited to one focus group consisting of church leaders. If the circumstances were more favourable, the research would have benefited from an additional focus group consisting of committed lay Christians, thus allowing a greater participation of youth and women.

### **6.1.3 The scope and delimitation of the study**

To set manageable limits for exploring the central research question of this thesis and to achieve an in-depth exploration of a bottom-up approach to reconciliation, a number of limitations were placed on the theme (1.4). Firstly, a geographic limitation: one specific district (Zaka) within the Masvingo diocese was chosen instead of the whole diocese. Closely linked to that choice was a chronological limitation: Instead of exploring how people responded to all five waves of violence, two events that happened during 2008 were selected to serve as focal points for exploring responses to violence and trauma. Two locations in Zaka district, namely Jerera and St Anthony’s Mission, were chosen because the violent events that occurred there left a deep impression on the whole community. For that reason, they could serve as clear focal points to explore people’s responses to violence and their views on reconciliation.

Looking back on the research journey that was travelled in this thesis it does seem as if these limitations aided the research, by giving participants two clear incidents to respond to rather than to ask them about violence or trauma in general. As a result, it also gave rise to a number of specific suggestions for actions in response to the violence, which may not have emerged if the questions

had been more general. It seems that this narrow focus did not reduce or distort the missiological agenda but instead gave it focus and depth.

## **6.2 THE USEFULNESS OF THE CONCEPT “ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY”**

The title of the thesis contains the concept “alternative community” and it is consequently a key feature of the whole study. It was explored throughout the thesis as a central vision for Christian involvement in attempting to resolve the challenges presented by the successive waves of violence that Zimbabwe has experienced. This concept was extensively explored, as it is used by various scholars, but in particular by David Bosch. The general theological reflection in Chapter 2 established that the concept is useful in the context of Zimbabwe and it played a key role in designing possible concrete actions and projects throughout Chapter 5. As indicated already, the concept of alternative community was interpreted within a wider missiological framework, integrated with the concepts of reconciliation, Trinity, Reign of God, and *Missio Dei*. This demonstrates that the set goal for establishing the usefulness of the concept “alternative community” has been achieved.

## **6.3 A “BOTTOM-UP” APPROACH TO RECONCILIATION**

In this research a bottom-up approach to reconciliation was proposed in Chapter 1 to address the challenges of violence (1.2.1), since the traditional top-down approach to reconciliation in Zimbabwe had not yielded positive results. The results of the interviews and the focus group, as reported and analysed in Chapter 4, showed that the participants did not trust top-down approaches to reconciliation and strongly supported bottom-up initiatives by churches to address the issues (4.7.2.7). They emphasised a bottom-up approach to help specific communities to deal with the actual victims on the ground and assist them to initiate processes for their own healing and to move forward. The vision of an alternative community (Bosch, Brueggemann) dovetailed well with the notion of “relocate and incarnate” (Katongole) and the insight that reconciliation starts with victims/survivors (Schreiter) to provide a credible missiological design. The bottom-up approach of conducting interviews and a focus group resonated with this theological framework and therefore led seamlessly to the development of practical actions and projects in Chapter 5.



#### **6.4 WERE THE RESEARCH METHODS ADEQUATE?**

In regard to the research methodology (1.5.3) various methods were utilised in this thesis. First of all, the logic of the praxis cycle, which underlay the whole research project, provided the overarching unity and integrity of the study. It informed the macro-structure of the chapters, in the sense that the insertion or agency of the researcher was clarified in Chapter 1, theological reflection was the focus of Chapter 2, context analysis happened in Chapters 3 and 4, and planning/strategising in Chapter 5. As indicated already, the micro-structure of each section of Chapter 5 was also shaped by the praxis cycle, since each section contained aspects of context analysis, theological reflection and planning, weaving them together in an integrated way. Did the praxis cycle provide an adequate theoretical framework to address the issues of trauma, endemic violence and lawlessness from the point of view of a Christian missiology? The prior question of the criteria by which to judge the adequacy of an academic design comes up here. Due to the perspectival nature of all human – and theological – knowledge, it can only be said here that this thesis departed from the view that God is at work in society to bring about transformation, renewal and reconciliation, and that Christians are called to participate in God’s mission of transformation. The praxis cycle resonates with that theological vision and provides a framework within which the interplay between the different dimensions of transformative believing-and-acting can be studied and mobilised. A consistent use of the praxis cycle gave this thesis both its coherence and its relevance.

A second dimension of the research was the employment of a qualitative-interpretivist methodology. In order to generate reliable data on how people “on the ground” in a conflict situation experience trauma and how they process the challenges flowing from it, one needs to employ ethnographic research methods. For that reason, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected sample of participants who were affected or influenced by the 2008 election violence. Since the purpose was not to find the “dominant” or “majority” view on the 2008 violence prevalent in the community, which would be the aim of quantitative research, but to make an in-depth exploration of some perceptions and then to explore their implications, the semi-structured interviews performed that limited purpose very well in this research process. The fact that it was also possible to access literature (newspapers and articles) on experiences of the

2008 violence by people in other parts of Zimbabwe, enhanced this data generation and served both as confirmation of the interview findings and as a reality check on their reliability.

The nature of the semi-structured interviews resonated well with the declared intention of the thesis to develop a *bottom-up* process of reconciliation and transformation. To employ a qualitative methodology in listening to the experiences of people “at the bottom” – who were either direct victims/survivors of the 2008 violence or close to such victims/survivors – was in line with the *theological commitment* of the study (a preferential option for the poor and excluded) as well as its *pastoral purpose* (developing bottom-up initiatives for reconciliation). In that sense the qualitative methodology was fully appropriate and helped to make the research design into an integrated whole. The same can be said for the interpretivist methodology used to survey the history (waves) of violence in Zimbabwe (Chapter 3), which enabled the researcher to interpret both the interviews and the literature about the violence.

## **6.5 COULD THE RESEARCH HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT DIFFERENTLY?**

My own assessment is that I would not carry out the research differently if it were to be done again. However, there would be a few adjustments and perhaps additions in doing it again. In the first place I would apply for ethical clearance as soon as the proposal is accepted. The long time that I waited to get ethical clearance from the university greatly delayed the empirical part of my research. I could have used that time to conduct more semi-structured interviews so as to collect as much information as possible from the people affected by violence. I could have also used that time to arrange two focus groups, one of church leaders and the other of committed lay Christians to broaden the input from the community on possible actions and projects.

Having done this research, I am also more confident and less afraid of the sensitive circumstances involved in ethnographic research. If I were to do it again, I would make a real effort to involve a few of the perpetrators of violence, selecting them from members of local churches. I would go further and try to include a few government officials/agents in Zaka district who are also church members, so that they could shed more light on those violent activities and on why law enforcement agents did not react in the face of violence against the people. However, I would not change the framework of the research.

## **6.6 CONTRIBUTION TO MISSIOLOGY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The whole region of Southern Africa was colonised by a few European nations. With the exception of Botswana (1966), Lesotho (1966) and Swaziland (1968), who were granted independence by Britain, the rest of the countries gained their independence partly through armed struggle. The desire to hold on to power by the liberation governments is still very strong, which holds back the process of the maturing of democracy. Repressive media legislation (for instance, the AIPPA and POSA laws in Zimbabwe), the lack of the rule of law and the imprisonment of journalists who expose government corruption (3.3.5) all indicate the context of most Southern African countries. It is into this background that my thesis attempts to find alternative means or space to heal the wounds of oppression and to enable communities to reconcile after the experiences of violence unleashed by government. The research's achievement is to be measured against the background of the strategic objectives (Chapter 1.2.2). These strategic objectives do not correspond to a particular chapter but they interact to eventually produce the intended results. My contribution to missiology in the context of Southern Africa includes the following:

- Exposing the various incidents of political violence that took place in Zimbabwe helps many to continue to uphold human dignity and desire justice, peace and reconciliation. By exposing the violence that took place in Zimbabwe, I have drawn the attention of citizens in Southern Africa that the use of violence by governments is not unique to Zimbabwe; it is in fact common in the region. Many citizens will be able to identify with the incidents of violence in their own countries. The individuals who lost their lives or were maimed in the violence have become merely a statistic. This research is a reminder that they are not just a statistic but someone's father, mother, son, daughter or other relative. Relating their stories restores their humanity and immortalises them in our memories. This awakens our desire for restoring human dignity to every citizen and to do something about the sad situation in our region of Southern Africa. As stated in the first general reason (1.8) that the research intends to achieve peace and reconciliation in communities, this is precisely what the research intends to contribute to missiology in this region. The research has dwelt at length on the issue of justice, forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. These principles will remain perpetual goals for all our communities in this world and will only be fulfilled in the eschatological world when the Reign of God is fully established.

- Discussing *Missio Dei* in this thesis gives many people hope of success as the work of liberation belongs to God and not just to humanity. Human beings participate in the work of God. This goes beyond political liberation. Although discussed by many missiologists before, the concept of *Missio Dei* is even more relevant in our times as the secular world concentrates on humanity's scientific achievements and perhaps focus less on the role of the Creator, the Trinity and his fundamental responsibility of creating all that exists. Drawing attention to the indispensable reality of the Creator and his design for the world helps humanity to remain focused on the ultimate values of life. Despite the injustice, evil, violence and helplessness of humanity in its weakness it is sobering to acknowledge that "God is still in charge". By bringing this awareness to multitudes of people, they can be inspired and filled with hope that God is responsible for our salvation and that humanity has been charged with the responsibility to participate in his work. I present this as a hopeful contribution in the context of Southern Africa beset by so many challenges emanating from the inequalities within the socio-political, economic, cultural, religious structures. Pope John Paul II (1988) called them the "structures of sin" that are at the foundation of the division of the world.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, highlighting *Missio Dei* enables people of this region to continue to have hope of not only overcoming their challenges in this world but that humanity's salvation is attainable through God's design.
- Offering the vision of an alternative community can give Christians and others courage to bear witness to the efforts of being all-inclusive as Jesus teaches us. In Southern Africa there are many divisions of exclusion (tribal, racial, xenophobia, wealthy versus poor, abuse/oppression of women and girls, political affiliation, etc.). The invitation to churches to live as an alternative community, as difficult as that is, can act like leaven in the populations of Southern Africa like the exemplary alternative community of Jesus Christ and his disciples. While it takes courage to opt to live as an alternative community of Jesus, one of the biggest advantages is that such a community offers everyone a chance to belong to Jesus and the kingdom of his Father. An alternative community is all-inclusive and therefore cuts across all barriers created by human beings. No one is excluded from belonging to Jesus' community. This is why Christian principles and values of justice, dignity of every person, forgiveness for everyone, leads all to be reconciled to one another

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<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, 1988, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

and live in peace together. This is achievable when an alternative community gives witness to society, but it is a gradual and painful process. Besides being all-inclusive, an alternative community provides moral and spiritual support not only to its members but also to others who need it. Because of the devastating situations they encounter, many families and communities in Southern Africa need moral and spiritual support to cope with their challenges. The vision of an alternative community could attract and inspire many to live in a similar way. One contribution of this thesis is that it offers concrete suggestions on what the theology and practices of an alternative community could look like in a society traumatised by violence.

- Offering in-depth analysis of personal and community trauma so as to recover from them. Chapter 5 has dwelt at length on analysing both personal and community trauma emanating from the violence suffered. The thesis also explored the feelings of anger, bitterness, helplessness, mistrust, fear, confusion and humiliation that victims/survivors experience (Chapters 4 and 5). After analysing these feelings and their effects, including trauma, different ways were explored that could help to gradually heal those painful experiences. One way of responding was to provide platforms for the sufferers (and, where possible, the perpetrators) to share their debilitating and painful feelings. The platforms offered had several dimensions, like story-telling, counselling, workshops and others (Chapters 4 and 5). One of the general reasons for this thesis was “to provide a platform for ‘emptying out’ bitterness and anger” (1.2.2) and the research has provided such a platform in a small way to the victims/survivors who could tell their stories during the interviews. In addition, the thesis provides concrete suggestions for how such healing processes could be extended in communities to give people safe spaces or platforms to recover from crushing experiences. The research enabled the researcher to penetrate deeper into what people went through during the 2008 violence. It offers the whole Southern African region an eye-opening view of what political violence can do to communities.
- Offering concrete actions and projects that are implementable and that can gradually transform communities to co-exist together in peace and harmony. There are several actions and projects that have been suggested in Chapters 4 and 5 that provide possible means of implementing processes of reconciliation in communities in Zaka and beyond the

district. Those activities could bring together former enemies and create opportunities for victims/survivors and perpetrators to interact and have dialogue. The last general reason for the research states: “To provide space for interaction such as sports and developmental activities in order to achieve reconciliation amongst formerly conflicting individuals”. Through this research, an array of areas that could bring people together has been suggested. These include sporting activities, church activities like Bible study, church workshops for various guilds and youth, developmental activities like building small scale dams, gardening projects and others. Such activities could bring about togetherness and open up space for dialogue; it could introduce the possibility of forgiveness that leads to repentance and reconciliation; it could also give communities a chance to heal and begin to trust one another again. The aim of these developmental projects would be to rebuild community spirit to enable communities to live in harmony again after the destructive violence of 2008. Following this possible contribution in Zimbabwe, the missiological contribution for Southern Africa could be to stimulate the re-building of communities through developmental projects, which churches could initiate and possibly influence their governments to support, that could create employment for thousands of families suffering from the “structures of sin” in the region.

The impact of an academic thesis on the transformation of society may be limited, but the firm intention of this research is to contribute to a process that could lead, in the long run, to a gradual transformation of many communities in Southern Africa as churches recommit themselves to their prophetic role and take the lead to teach, catechise and inspire people to become an alternative community in this part of the world.

## **6.7 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

During the research journey that produced this thesis some areas opened up for in-depth research but which fell outside the scope of this study. They present opportunities for broadening and deepening the body of missiological knowledge in Southern Africa. I briefly explain these areas, in no particular order of importance.

### **6.7.1 The impact of the 2008 violence on children**

An important area of research is the impact of the 2008 political violence on the children who lost their parents in that process or were disabled through injuries they sustained themselves. The effects of violence on children are often minimized and their voices often taken for granted or ignored. It is through children that societies continue to exist, thus the impact of any violence on families also disrupts the lives of children. Children who lose their parents due to violence are forced to fend for themselves, thereby producing “child-headed households”. It is not surprising that many of these children soon drop out of school due to lack of means to continue their schooling. They also lack food and other necessities of life. Such families are often abused and taken advantage of by elder relatives, who may use them as a cheap labour force, or in worse scenarios may even enrich themselves through child-trafficking. The effects of violence on children need to be researched to learn more about their situation and plight in the face of violence.

### **6.7.2 Women and violence**

There is a general belief that men are the primary perpetrators of violent activities. However, I discovered from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group that during the political violence of 2008 there were active women members of the ruling party who played significant roles in the bombing of the MDC offices at Jerera, the bombing of the priests’ house at St. Anthony’s Mission and the beatings of “enemies of the state” in nocturnal meetings at Jerera. However, there was also the quiet involvement of women behind the scenes who warned the people being targeted for attack beforehand so that they could escape before the violence was unleashed on them. These unknown or unnoticed actions of women were very powerful, since they either aggravated the violence or helped prevent its worst effects. It occurred to me that the different roles played by women as active agents during the violent period of 2008 in Zaka district could be a topic for further research.

There is also another side to the effects of the 2008 violence on women. It emerged from the interviews that sadly some women and girls were abused and even raped by soldiers or militia (Chapter 4), without any arrests being made up to the present time. This could be a research topic on its own, which could give better insight into the trauma caused by the 2008 violence but also into the kind of actions an alternative community could pursue to give psychological and/or legal support to such women and to develop human rights training programmes for soldiers.

### **6.7.3 The abuse of youths for violence by government agents**

During the research process the role of youths (in the rural communities) and youth militia (trained by government agents to mobilise ruling party supporters) stood out as an important factor in the 2008 violence. Because most youths are unemployed, they are ready to take up any assignment that could earn them a few dollars for their daily upkeep. Youths were not employed in such roles only during the 2008 run-off election; they are always mobilised in every election. The government finds them an easy target to utilise for campaigning at every election. Unfortunately, these youths are often misused to commit crimes, violence and murder against opposition members. Their role therefore, is to instil fear and to terrorise “enemies of the state” to cow them into voting for the ruling party. Some of the youths have said that they did not have a choice. They had to join out of fear, to avoid being labelled “enemies of the state” themselves, like the members of opposition parties. In all fairness, this is not the task of unemployed youth; proper employment opportunities should be created for them. A research project among unemployed youth, not only those who took part in the 2008 violence, to find out what they think and feel, and what their aspirations are could help an alternative community develop constructive projects that would give them direction in life and help them to resist the pressure of being drawn into doing the dirty and cruel work of political parties.

### **6.7.4 The understanding of forgiveness – “the scandal of Christianity”**

In this thesis the concept of forgiveness was discussed at some length, together with other concepts such as justice, peace, reconciliation and healing. By reflecting on the views expressed in the interviews and the focus group and by attempting to develop actions to facilitate forgiveness and restitution in Chapter 5, I became aware of just how complex and contested the concept of forgiveness is – and how difficult it is to help people pastorally along the journey of forgiving. A sermon on forgiveness preached by Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani<sup>31</sup>, an Anglican Bishop of Iranian descent, stimulated and challenged me to explore this theme in greater depth. Three insights in her sermon stood out for me. Firstly, although we have difficulty to relate to the concept of forgiveness, it is a central theme of our Christianity. Secondly, forgiveness is “the scandal of Christianity” but it is imbued with *hope* as we trust God in the midst of hopelessness. Thirdly, it is not our duty (or burden) to forgive, but God’s. I am fully convinced that the concept of “forgiveness” deserves in-

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<sup>31</sup> <https://youtu.be/uxHkI8hBOaI>



depth analysis in the context of so much violence, oppression, and non-observance of the “rule of law” and the whole array of “structures of sin” in our region of Southern Africa.

## **6.8 WHAT THE RESEARCH PROCESS HAS MEANT FOR ME**

This research process was a learning curve and has given me several insights about higher academic research work. Personal direct involvement was indeed enriching as I grew along with the research. It is very different from merely reading a text book about research. I will use a few sub-headings to explain what the research process meant for me and what I have gained from it.

### **6.8.1 Gain from the research process**

I have become deeply aware that research demands commitment and perseverance, since it can become a long journey. There was the period of preparatory reading of several books around the idea of what I wanted to research on. Because of my experiences of violence in Zimbabwe I had already come up with the idea of “reconciliation” as a possible response to the plight of the people. I read several books, which took quite some time. This reading sharpened my focus and increased my interest in what I had embarked upon. A key person in this process was my experienced supervisor who assisted me to come up with a proper formulation of my topic and gave me advice on how to follow the regulations in presenting it. This process culminated in the writing of the Research Proposal.

Another insight I gained from this process was the exercise of applying for a Certificate of Ethical Clearance. This took a long period and I had to make corrections twice before my application was approved. Although the demands made on me seemed frustrating, I learnt that academic standards had to be maintained and protection of all those to be interviewed had to be assured. Following the approval of the Ethical Clearance Certificate I had to make several trips around Zaka district in order to establish contact with individuals of good reputation who could assist me to select appropriate persons for my semi-structured interviews as well as establish the focus group. Having decided to consult the priest in charge of the mission and the headmaster of a primary school, we had a number of meetings to identify individuals who would be both knowledgeable as well as have experience of the violence in some way. Of the list suggested, I had to visit all of them again to meet with each one separately and tell them of my intention and show them the letter from my supervisor and the department of UNISA. I was happy that most of the persons suggested agreed,

with the exception of a few who declined because of fear and hesitation as the subject matter is still sensitive to the present day. The research process meant that I was involved in an area which directly touched people's lives. I developed a personal relationship with each individual during the semi-structured interviews. In fact, I had to reassure them of safety and confidentiality and this meant to me that people continued to live in fear. From this exercise I became aware of the thoughts of those affected by violence and what mattered to them most. The process of interacting with people who suffered developed an empathetic disposition in me as I continued to hear similar stories being related through the semi-structured interviews. The next most significant process was the actual writing of chapters of the thesis. Through the wise guidance of my supervisor these chapters, paragraphs, sections were changed and corrected many times. I greatly appreciate the many discussions that I had at UNISA with my supervisor, before the Covid-19 pandemic, which opened my mind to several possibilities of expressing my findings. After the pandemic we resorted to skyping. All these processes worked in unison to help me to produce this thesis.

### **6.8.2 Gain from the content**

There are mainly three types of sources where the content of this research emanated from. The first source of the thesis' content is literature, which includes books, articles, newspapers and church statements. The many books and articles that I read, especially borrowing from UNISA library, gave me a vast amount of knowledge about my subject area. I have now developed a sharpened reading culture, which has become part of me. One learns from the many various authors their styles, views, and how they present their material. Thus, I concur that the written word remains a fundamental source of information in any field. From one book, one is referred to other authors who deal with the same subject, thereby widening one's horizon in regard to the multitude of possible sources to consult from. I therefore have gained from the content written by many authors on my subject area as well as other related areas.

The second source of my content comes from online research. The online source is so handy because one can always find some relevant material even if one fails to obtain a book from the library. It is also more convenient to procure the content online from one's home without going to the library. Further, procuring material online enhances my skills of using modern technology on the internet. I also improved on the skill of individual learning as well as communication skills

while gaining the content of what I was searching for online. Indeed, the online research is the modern way that has added value to my work.

The third source of content is the engagement I made use of conducting semi-structured interviews as well as managing the focus group discussions. Both sessions of direct interaction with persons who were affected by the 2008 violence yielded a wealth of information which consolidated the goals of my research. I would not have achieved such an in-depth understanding of what actually transpired during the 2008 politically motivated violence without the interviews and discussions that I had in this process. Direct human contact remains an invaluable means of obtaining data for research and gives a particular yet holistic contribution of the researcher. It is holistic because the researcher is able to observe the reactions, to determine the feelings expressed, the unsaid content through the gestures made in the interviews. This direct engagement enriched the content of the research and provided possible solutions (following the bottom-up process) to the challenges encountered. Therefore, I gained immensely in content of the data from the three sources that I utilized.

### **6.8.3 Empowered to participate in the work of reconciliation**

As already stated in Chapter 1 (1.1), my motivation emanated from the long experience I have gone through as a Catholic priest working with different communities. Over the years I have witnessed the sufferings of people particularly during the election times as has been related in Chapters 3 and 4. Having gone through this process of academic research and established the sad experiences of many ordinary people in Zimbabwe, I now am empowered to participate with people in the process of bringing about reconciliation amongst the communities that are affected by such painful encounters in their lives.

### **6.8.4 Gain in personal growth (in issues that affect others)**

What has the research process done to me? Indeed, by gaining the content (6.9.2) of data which I obtained from the three sources I also expanded my knowledge, especially in the area of my research. While I increased my knowledge of missiological concepts I also gained a wider cognitive perspective on issues that I delved in, such as the individual stories of violence, the pain, anger, bitterness and helplessness that people narrated. This knowledge made me grow and become aware that the struggles within human nature continue to affect us. This academic process enabled

me to develop and foster critical thinking. Through contextual analysis of issues, (Chapter 5) I also acquired analytical skills through hands-on research processes. These skills assisted me to tap into the suggestions of the focus group and other literature to produce concrete actions and projects which are implementable by an alternative community as response to the challenges of violence that had been related. The process therefore gave me relevant tools to work with. And these tools have become a personal treasure for me as I encounter similar situations in the future. The process also helped me remain committed in order to sustain the research. Another poignant effect on me of listening to the sensitive and personal stories of violence (Chapter 4) is that it was very humbling and taught me to be patient whenever people relate their accounts that touch them in a deep way.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm that I have achieved the goals of this research. The process of this thesis gave me a unique experience that I never had before. I will treasure it for the rest of my life and certainly draw lessons from it. After this experience, I would like to commit myself to continue to read and write articles in missiology for the benefit of other scholars as well.

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## APPENDIX 1



### COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

13 November 2020

Dear W S Nyatsanza

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference : 4797-  
0146\_CREC\_CHS\_2020

Decision:  
Ethics Approval from 11 November  
2020 to 31 October 2024

Principal Researcher(s): W S Nyatsanza (4797-0146@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

Supervisor: Professor J.N.J. Kritzinger

Title: The Church as alternative Community: Contextual bottom-up reconciliation for a Catholic Diocese in Zimbabwe.

Type of Research: PhD Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The **Medium Risk application** was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on **November 2020** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



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4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**31 October 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number 4797-0146\_CREC\_CHS\_2020 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours Sincerely,

Signature :   
Dr. K.J. Malesa  
CHS Ethics Chairperson  
Email: [maleskj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maleskj@unisa.ac.za)  
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## APPENDIX 2

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

#### **The Church as alternative Community: Contextual bottom-up reconciliation for a Catholic Diocese in Zimbabwe**

##### **Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews**

Introduction: reconciliation; violent events at St Anthony' Mission, Jerera township

- 1) In what ways were you involved in or affected by the violence that took place before and after the country's elections of 2008 and 2013?
- 2) Which groups of people were involved in the violence?
- 3) Why did this conflict happen?
- 4) What were the effects of that conflict?
- 5) How many people in your family and your area to your knowledge were affected by that violence?
- 6) Did anyone assist to alleviate this violence that took place and what did they do?
- 7) Was any action taken by government to bring about reconciliation?
- 8) Did you attend the funeral of the two people who died? Who organised it? What effect did it have?
- 9) Did you attend the cleansing ceremony? Who organised it? What effect did it have?
- 10) Do you think that there is still a need for reconciliation in the community regarding these events?
- 11) What do you suggest should be done and by whom?
- 12) Does the government and NGOs have a role to play in this?
- 13) What role can the Church play in this process?
- 14) What legacy would you want to leave in the Church for your children and your community?
- 16) What role can the Church play in this process?
- 17) What legacy would you want to establish for your children and your community?

## APPENDIX 3

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

After laying the ground rules and creating an environment of trust among the participants the group is guided by the following questions. The questions are intended to reflect two sides, A) How Church can be present or heal the physical wounds of people who are still suffering and B) How church can be an alternative community in its spiritual presence to the people.

A)

- 1) Considering the current pain and suffering of the people reflected by their anger, hatred, division and loss of loved ones some of whom they could not attend their burial, how can our church heal this brokenness today?
- 2) Considering what people are still going through: fear, trauma and helplessness, how can church be an alternative community to respond to these experiences that haunt people now?
- 3) Considering the plight of women and girls who were raped and abuse how is the church of any help to them?

B)

- 4) Considering that some participants expressed that reconciliation is no longer possible, how can church be an alternative community to realize this reconciliation in these communities?
- 5) How can church initiate hope and moving-on of people in a bottom-up process?
- 6) Why has the church to engage in this process of reconciliation?

## APPENDIX 4

### PRAYERS OF LAMENTATION FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

The following order of service was prepared by the worship committee of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva for a prayer of lamentation held at the chapel of the Ecumenical Centre, 19 June 2008. It may be reproduced and adapted for parish use freely.

Silence

How lonely sits the city  
that once was full of people!  
How like a widow she has become,  
she that was great among the nations!  
She that was a princess among the provinces  
has become a vassal. (Lamentations 1.1)

Song: Mayenziwe...

Blessed is our God now and for ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen  
A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted for her children,  
because they are no more. (Jer 31:15)  
Even when I cry out, "Violence!" I am not answered;  
I call aloud, but there is no justice. (Job 19:7)

Silence

For these things I weep;  
my eyes flow with tears;  
for a comforter is far from me,  
one to revive my courage;  
my children are desolate,  
for the enemy has prevailed. (Lamentations 1.16)

Song: Mayenziwe...

Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs, and an impious people reviles your name. Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild animals; do not forget the life of your poor forever. Have regard for your covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of violence. Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and needy praise your name. Rise up, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all day long. (Ps 74:18-22)

Remember this, O Lord,  
Remember this, O Lord

Silence

My eyes are spent with weeping;  
my stomach churns;  
my bile is poured out on the ground  
because of the destruction of my people,  
because infants and babes faint  
in the streets of the city. (Lamentations 2.11)

Song: Mayenziwe...

Remember this, O Lord,  
Remember this, O Lord,  
Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame.  
Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame.  
Rise up, O God.  
Rise up, O God.

Silence

They cry to their mothers,  
'Where is bread and wine?'  
as they faint like the wounded  
in the streets of the city,  
as their life is poured out  
on their mothers' bosom. (Lamentations 2.12)  
Song: Mayenziwe...

Prayers

Eternal God:

In your sight nations rise and fall, and pass through times of trial.  
We pray with and for Zimbabwe in this hour of national decision,  
and we ask your divine blessing on all the people of the land.  
May Zimbabwe's leaders seek justice by means that are just;  
May the voters take action to promote the common good;  
may international observers and mediators be guided by your wisdom.  
Lead us not into temptation, Lord, and deliver your people from evil:  
Empower us all to overcome anger, jealousy, division and violence;  
help us to respect one another despite our differences;  
and teach us the things that truly make for peace.  
This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.  
Amen.

Silence or time for free prayer

We are longing for the day, when the prophecy of Micah will come true, when "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Affirmation (St. Yared, Ethiopia)

The cross is the way of the lost.  
The cross is the staff of the lame.  
The cross is the guide of the blind.  
The cross is the strength of the weak.  
The cross is the hope of the hopeless.  
The cross is the freedom of the slaves.  
The cross is the water of the seeds.  
The cross is the consolation of the bonded labourers.  
The cross is the source of those who seek water.  
The cross is the cloth of the naked.  
The cross is the healing of the broken.  
The cross is the peace of the church.

Song: Mayenziwe...

You are invited to leave the chapel in silence

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-of-lamentation-for-peace-justice-and-reconciliation>, Accessed 12 February 2021.