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# **RECONCILIATION, GENDER AND FAITH**

Perspectives on reconciliation in the  
Zimbabwe Council of Churches

Faculty of Social Sciences

Master's thesis

11.2023

# ABSTRACT

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Master's Thesis  
Tampere University  
Peace Mediation and Conflict Research  
11 2023

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This thesis explores reconciliation, and how it is considered in the literature of peace- and conflict studies, and analyzes how reconciliation works in action, in the Zimbabwean context. I examine reconciliation through the lenses of critical intersectional reading and concentrate on the issues of gender and religion. This study shows that literature on reconciliation doesn't address gender and religion often, even though both are commonly seen as important to notice in peace processes.

This thesis represents the main theories of reconciliation and outlines the main concepts. These are justice as a precondition of reconciliation, truth-telling and storytelling, healing, rituals, and rites. These concepts are found in the Zimbabwe reconciliation process, led by ZCC (Zimbabwe Council of Churches), and are examined by how they address gender and faith. In addition to these concepts, in Zimbabwe reconciliation by ZCC, an important concept is also visioning the future. This study shows that even when not mentioned, gender stereotypes affect reconciliation, and when reconciliation is conducted by faith-based organizations, the relationship between faith and gender must be acknowledged.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Zimbabwe, ZCC, Christianity, Gender

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.



# AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest and sincerest gratitude to Dr. Eeva Puumala, for her continuous support, invaluable feedback, and endless patience on this long, long road to completing my thesis. Thanks should also go to all members of the Tapri - team, that has supported my studies over the years.

I also could not have done my thesis without my dear colleagues in Felm, especially Tanja Viikki and Kristiina Rintakoski. Thank you so much for your support and sharing of knowledge of reconciliation.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the colleagues in ZCC who generously provided knowledge and insights on this subject. Your work is world-changing, and I am happy to be able to get to know it.

Words cannot express my gratitude to my dear friend Henni Alava, who has constantly encouraged me to finish my thesis and supported me in every possible way. I am also grateful for having so much support from my dear friends, Sini, Hanna, Reetta, and Pia, for your continuous support, late-night whatsapp, calls, and discussions.

And my dearest of all, my lovely, amazing, and wise children, Onni and Toivo, the inspiration, joy, and motivation for everything I do, and from whom I couldn't be prouder.

Lastly, I would also thank my mother and sister and Janne, the father of my children, for your continuous support in my studies, and endless belief in my academic possibilities. Thank you!

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Focus on reconciliation

In recent years, the concept of reconciliation has gained growing interest. According to Simon Keynes at least 100 countries in the world had some reconciliation program pursued at the end of the year 2018 (Keynes 2018). Reconciliation is a way of dealing with past wrongs in a way that might promote a way to sustainable peace (Schaap 2009: 3), and it is forward-looking, even though the process of reconciliation itself takes time. However, the problem seems to be that reconciliation is viewed from widely diverse positions and backgrounds. Thus, reconciliation processes often start without defining what reconciliation means to various stakeholders. If these meanings are not articulated, the reconciliation process might lead to unwanted results. According to Megan Shore, even one of the most famous reconciliation process in the world, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), didn't have a definition or consensus of the meaning of reconciliation. At the TRC, the concept of reconciliation was highly contentious, and this can be one reason why the reconciliation process was not as successful as it could have been (Shore, 2009).

The question is not only or mainly about etymology, but the lack of definition means that the word reconciliation tends to be used indiscriminately, as Tristan Anne Borer describes: “with authors seemingly presuming that their readers naturally know what they mean by it”. This often leads to multiple, or sometimes even contested understandings of the term (Borer 2006:31). Therefore, I find it important to explore the meanings and ideas that might stay unarticulated with the notion of reconciliation, and to deconstruct the concept further, to clarify the meaning of the concept.

Though reconciliation might be a relatively recent concept in the field of peace and conflict research, it has a long history in the Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Consequently, it is important to also explore how religion affects the ways reconciliation is defined. According to Feldman Gardner, reconciliation is particularly popular among Christian religious literature and research

(Gardner 2012:21). I aim to explore, how the Christian ideas of reconciliation are intertwined into the secular ideas of reconciliation. I am also looking at the ways gender is recognized and represented in reconciliation process. Hence, Christianity has always had a complex relationship with the questions of gender, and even though many of the religious actors, as progressive they are in the field of peacebuilding, might have quite conservative teaching on issues concerning gender.

The importance of gender issues in peace processes is widely recognized, as well as the importance of religion in peace processes and conflict resolution has been noted (Lederach, Johnston&Cox, Gehlin, Portaankorva). However, the effects that religion has on gender have not often been acknowledged in peacebuilding. (Vuola 2019). Therefore, it is important to see, whether the complexity of gender in Christianity affects the reconciliation process, when religious actors participate in it.

According to Castelli (2001), when religion interconnects with other categories by which identities are framed (gender, race, class), it often complicates these other categories. Therefore, my approach is intersectional, which means that religion and gender are factors in a combination of identities that effects on how reconciliation is perceived.

Implementing an intersectional approach means that one must pay extra attention to specific contexts and their politics. Without paying attention to the narratives of identity politics articulated, struggles of those in the margin may end up unnoticed (Wibben 2016: 6). Even though intersectional analysis makes it harder to draw simple conclusions, it hopefully leads to more accurate understanding. Mirroring Cynthia Enloe (2014), it has taken power to keep the questions of inequity in religions in the margins in local churches and communities, and it has taken power to have religious actors participating in reconciliation processes but keeping women of faith away from them. This power I am hoping to look into.

Lately, many scholars have emphasized the need for a closer examination of the many aspects of reconciliation (for instance, David Philpott and Marc Gopin). Although reconciliation has a religious context and background, it also has diverse meanings in multiple disciplines, such as politics, economics, and psychology alongside peace and conflict studies.

I look through the lens of peace and conflict studies, how the Christian ideas and definitions of reconciliation affect the ways the subject is addressed in peace and conflict research. Statistics have shown that including civil society actors, such as women's organisations and religious actors, in peace agreements has a positive impact on the durability of the agreements (Nilsson 2012). Therefore, I am examining how these actors affect reconciliation processes.



As an example of the intertwining of reconciliation, religion, and questions of gender I am exploring a Zimbabwean NGO working on reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The local history, environment, and culture affect the relationships of religion and politics and development (Alava 2015 p. 144, Carney), and therefore the local solutions of reconciliation. Hence, by examining reconciliation in Zimbabwe, I will see how the reconciliation process affects the culture and local solutions.

According to Elisabeth Porter, even though feminist peace research increases its popularity, very few have studied reconciliation from a feminist angle. The fact that women often refer to personal needs in domestic life, when they are asked what makes them feel safe, signals that the everyday local environment constitutes a community of life and care, that is crucial to notice in peacebuilding, noting the differences that men and women themselves highlight. Especially in truth commissions, women tend to talk about what happened to their male relatives, and therefore their own trauma might not be heard (Porter 2016).

Thus, for women and girls, as well as gender minorities, there is often a disconnect between security and well-being in everyday life and routines. Nevertheless, if not noted in research, simplistic gender-dichotomies might affect peace and reconciliation. Assumptions such as all men are perpetrators, or all women are victims of abuse, fail to see that also women can reproduce violence, for instance as female combatants or through traditional socialisation of boys, and men can have vulnerabilities to violence (incl sexual assault as part of torture). (Porter 2016). Moreover, this kind of assumptions often rule out non-binary genders, and make them invisible for the reconciliation.

## 1.2 Feminist peace research

The basic premise of feminist peace research is that total and wholesome solutions to global problems without critical interdisciplinary feminist analysis do not exist. This applies especially to problems concerning violence, justice, and peace (Väyrynen et al. 2021:3). According to Väyrynen et al, conventional peace research often sidesteps the questions of multiple kinds of justices, peace(s), and violences, not to mention the marginalisation and diverse entanglements concerning the issues.

Feminist peace research has shown that peace can exist in contexts of violence and vice versa, and strict dichotomy between violence and peace is not genuine (Cockburn 2014). Therefore, through feminist peace research, there can be found new, more accurate ways to address peace studies.

Furthermore, the feminist perspective sheds light on the experiences of all genders, and therefore it has a potential to make reconciliation processes more democratic and more inclusive. Hence, more lasting (Kashyap 2009:447).

Traditionally peace research has been gender unaware. This has led to a situation, where notions of peace have been defined homogenously. Therefore, culture of gendered violence and gendered insecurity have remained unnoticeable, as well as diversity of genders invisible. Nevertheless, during the latest decades, there has been a shift in policymaking rhetoric that has brought gender issues more relevant in peacebuilding and peace research. This can be seen for instance in 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the following Beijing Platform for Action. Thus, one of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action was women and Armed conflict. Following Beijing, the security Council of the United Nations passed a resolution 1325 in 2000. The resolution addressed the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention and resolution. It called for actors (including UN itself) to apply gender mainstreaming to a range of issues relating to peace and security, for instance in implementation of peace agreements and peace negotiations as well as supporting local women's peace initiatives (Steffansson 2018:15). Despite these developments, the issue of gender equality is not often prioritized in the design and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction (O'Reilly 2013:57).

On many occasions, the international peacebuilders and local people have diverse understandings on how gender is noted in the peace process. Often in peace negotiations there is a tendency to re-introduce the pre-war situation, which often doesn't take gendered issues into consideration, and women or gender minorities might be excluded from the post-war process, not noting the significant expertise they have gained in grass roots peacebuilding (Porter; 2016).

In building lasting peace, one must work in removing root causes of conflict, such as gender-based violence and gender inequality. Nevertheless, positive peace, or lasting peace, is not often achieved fully. Often this is a result of pushing ideals aside from the urgent need of stopping violent outbreaks. Thus, broader needs of social, economical and gender justice are not met (Du Toit 2007).

According to Elisabeth Porter, even peace negotiations that do include women or marginalized groups, often fail to find participants that are approximate equals (Porter 2016:225). Likewise, international peacebuilders' understanding of the post-conflict situation differs greatly from the local marginalized person. Thus, even gendered agency is understood differently (Väyrynen 2010:151).

### 1.3 Research questions

In this study I explore various meanings of reconciliation from the perspective of religion and gender. Reconciliation has deep religious meanings, and since reconciliation should be innately inclusive for producing lasting results, I am examining how it intersects with religion, not often as inclusive especially concerning the questions of gender. My hypothesis is that religion-based reconciliation leans on (hidden) expectations of the role of gender in religious ideals, such as the ideal of nuclear family, women's role as mothers and nurturers in society, and condemnation of LGBTQ+-people and their lifestyles. Since reconciliation is mostly used in Christianity, I concentrate on it, even though Islam and Judaism are as well familiar with the concept of reconciliation.

Subsequently, many times the politics and Christianity are embedded in the culture, I am planning to explore how religion and gender are intertwined in the Zimbabwean discussion on reconciliation. I examine especially the ZCC, currently working on starting the national dialogues in the country and supported by Finnish NGO, Felm (Finland's evangelical Lutheran mission). Felm has a background in missionary work, but in the last decades its focus points have been in development cooperation, peacebuilding and supporting churches and Christian organisations in leadership and inclusion. Felm has supported ZCC since 2016.

In other words, my research question is, how Christianity and gender interconnect in reconciliation, and how this can be seen in the reconciliation process in Zimbabwe. I am also studying what role and with what effects on inclusivity does Christianity have in reconciliation.

## 2 MAPPING RECONCILIATION

In this chapter, I first introduce central theoretical approaches to reconciliation, focusing on feminist research traditions and literature related to religion in reconciliation. Thereafter, I identify key themes in these literatures, which emerged as central in the case of the ZCC, as I will proceed to analyse in Chapter 5.

According to the research of reconciliation, reconciliation is always contextual. The complexity and unpredictability of conflicts demand diverse actions (Keynes 2018). Therefore, there is not only one way to define reconciliation, but rather there are many diverse paths to achieve reconciliation in a community.

The path to reconciliation as a way of building peace dates to Johan Galtung's concepts of structural and cultural violence in the 1970s, and John Paul Lederach's arguments on focusing on the relationship-building (Darweish 2012:3). Few pacifistic Christian groups, such as Mennonites and Quakers led the development of conflict resolution and conflict mediation methods in the 1960s and 1970s, which contributed to ideas of reconciling structural injustices and redistribution of power (Cortright 2011: 336). Also, sustainable development theories that point out how war-torn societies need to have met the reconstruction, relief, and development needs, have affected the idea of reconciliation. Since the liberal peace -model has faced criticism for its western and paternal approach, and the civil-society led approaches have struggled, the new ways of building peace that provides both bottom-up and top-down approaches and are more inclusive and integrative have found their place in peacebuilding (Darweish 2012:3-5). Since its commitment to nonviolence and peace education, this kind of approach provides a good base for reconciliation efforts. The chapter proceeds as follow: I will start by presenting theories of reconciliation, and after that, I will head to the religious background of reconciliation. Lastly, I present the key components for successful reconciliation that I found from the studies, and which I mirror to the case of Zimbabwean reconciliation later on in this thesis.

## 2.1 Theories of reconciliation in conflict and peace studies

According to Daniel Philpott, reconciliation is a fairly new concept in international politics (Philpott 2006:12), and the term reconciliation has no tight consensual usage. Nevertheless, it has strong ancient roots in Hebrew, Latin, Arabic and Greek languages, that provide the meaning of 'restoration of right relationship' (Philpott 2006 p14). Reconciliation is similarly interpreted in peace and conflict studies, even though the peace and conflict interpretation is more detailed and wider.

In the field of peace and conflict studies, reconciliation is often formulated as relationship building, a long-term process of overcoming hostility and creating trust among divided people (for instance Lederach 2014; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 2017:35). Reconciliation's definition is at minimum peaceful coexistence, rapprochement or political accommodation (Gardner 2012:29). Hence, the reconciliation process aims at learning to live without violence in situations of radical differences as well as restoring relationships that have been broken (Ramsbotham et al. 2017: 286, Philpott 2006:3). Reconciliation is innately a long-term process. Since enmity can be inherited through generations, the deconstruction of the enemy images and building trust may also take generations (Darweish, 2012:6). According to Feldman L. Gardner, successful reconciliation is a blend of institutional and cultural strategies, that encompasses interaction across the spectrum of diverse policies (Gardner 2012:30). Nevertheless, according to Susan McKay (2000:566), there is no considerable discussion of reconciliation and gender in reconciliation literature.

The studies of reconciliation share a consensus that reconciliation cannot be attempted in the early stages of post-war reconstruction since the deeply traumatized are not ready for such a task (Ramsbotham et al.2017:288, Darweish 2012, Porter 2012). In addition to psychological barriers and accepting the past, reconciliation requires structural changes that enable coexisting with enemies and trust in institutions. Therefore, politics and reconciliation are interwoven to each other, and the foundation of reconciliation must happen in political power-sharing as well as in economical justice (Darweish 2012:6). However, some scholars have analyzed reconciliation by dividing reconciliation into thick (individual) and thin (political) reconciliation, and this way separated the politics from reconciliation. I will look into this model more closely, but there are other ways to classify reconciliation as well. For instance, Elisabeth Porter (2016) understands diverse views on reconciliation as a four-fold approach. They find that reconciliation can be seen as spectrum of possibilities, or through practice of re/building relationships, or as processes, as well

as a culture of reconciliation. In my study, I don't concentrate on reconciliation as a process, but look more into the possibilities it brings and how the culture of reconciliation works.

### 2.1.1 Individual and political reconciliation

Many scholars analyze reconciliation by dividing the experiences of reconciliation into two systems. The one way to look at reconciliation is to see it as an individual process, between two people, victim and the perpetrator, or sometimes within oneself. Seeing reconciliation as an individual process corresponds often as religious or psychological (or therapeutical in other ways) way of viewing reconciliation, that aims to heal the victim. This model can be called as "thick reconciliation" (Borer 2006:32) or social reconciliation (Charbonneau, Parent 2012:3). This also is the traditional way of interpreting reconciliation in religions. For instance, in Christianity, reconciliation includes healing, forgiving and repentance in personal level.

Another way of looking at reconciliation is more political. Tristan Anne Borer describes the second model of reconciliation as "national unity and reconciliation" or "thin reconciliation". "Thin reconciliation" means that this approach acknowledges the possibility that former enemies will not get along very well, and it aims at peaceful coexistence (Borer 2006:33). For Borer, this second model of reconciliation is closely associated to tolerance, rule of law, democracy, human rights and conflict resolution. This "thin reconciliation" could also be interpreted as political reconciliation. Charbonneau and Parent divide reconciliation similarly, but with different terms, into social and political. Social reconciliation means to them a reconciliation that happens at the community and individual level when political reconciliation is more of a top-down approach to reconciliation (Charbonneau, Parent 2012:3). According to the scholars, both types of reconciliation are needed to achieve sustainable peace.

Reconciliation needs to include both bottom-up and top-down approaches, along with local ownership of the process (Darweish, Rank 2012:2). Further, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall criticize the ways of using reconciliation as a synonym to conflict resolution or peacebuilding, because this might lead to a situation where reconciliation is only seen as institutional state-building or in terms of power-sharing agreements (Ramsbotham et al..2017: 286-288). As pointed in the previous chapter, Elisabeth Porter (2016) has accomplished this issue by dividing reconciliation by its

objectives, as possibilities of reconciliation, practices or as a cultural phenomenon. Joram Tarusaira and Gladys Ganiel (2014:56) have similar approach. According to them, reconciliation can occur at different levels, such as individual, between groups, both national or international levels. These all are needed, for reconciliation involves rebuilding trust and relationships, and is easier if the socio-political conditions that contributed to violence, are renewed.

To implement reconciliation at the societal level, non-governmental initiatives are often vital at the early stages of the process. Reconciliation can be understood and achieved in various ways depending on the culture pursuing reconciliation. However, based on the research, reconciliation cannot be looked only from an individual nor national approach, but both must be included to achieve sustainable and positive peace.

While for many individuals reconciliation has a deeply personal overtone, personal healing and reconciliation are not sufficient for creating sustainable peace. To achieve justice, reconciliation needs to include the population as a whole (Villa-Vicencio 2006:67). Therefore, just reconciliation should include different religious and non-religious actors, as well as the whole diversion of genders, ethnicities and social classes. For being just, reconciliation needs to be inclusive and comprehensive. This type of reconciliation (thin/political) aims at creating a climate within which parties can coexist, and a climate of hope. Political reconciliation enables dialogue and reciprocity but does not deny the past conflicts. It can aim at mutual respect, but does not ask for apologies or forgiveness. According to Charles Villa-Vicencio, political reconciliation has material and subjective dimensions as well (Villa-Vicencio 2006:62-63). It covers aims from a society that is democratic, human-rights-based and economically balanced to tribunals and truth commissions. Political reconciliation is modest by nature. Therefore, it must take into account the wounds of the victims, and unlike individual reconciliation, it does not aim at healing but coexisting (Villa-Vicencio 2006:67). Hence, in a way, political reconciliation is a starting point for achieving individual or "thick" reconciliation.

Thus, many scholars divide "thick" and "thin" reconciliation, they are organically linked to each other, and in practice they cannot be divided so straight forward. If reconciliation includes, as its definition suggests, relationship-building or building trust, both aspects of reconciliation are needed: thin reconciliation, to create just society, and thick reconciliation, personal change in relation to the experiences that happened in conflict. In Christian reconciliation, scholars often discuss of holistic change. This holistic change includes both, thick and thin reconciliation. Later on,

when addressing the Christian reconciliation in Zimbabwe, these both sides are clearly visible in my data.

## 2.1.2 The dimensions of reconciliation

Either thick or thin reconciliation, or combination of both, reconciliation has diverse ways in how it is addressed and viewed. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall define these ways by representing four dimensions to reconciliation, that portray the ways reconciliation can be seen in diverse situations (Ramsbotham et al. 2017: 286-288). The first dimension is accepting the status quo, which is the voluntary acceptance of the situation, even though the outcome is not ideal. Thus, this often leads to the ending of violence. Secondly, Ramsbotham et al. mention reconciling 'financial and other accounts' or correlating accounts. The third dimension of reconciliation is bridging diversity or reconciling opposites, which aims at managing contradiction. This dimension encounters the possibility of mutual change. These three meanings of reconciliation are necessary for moving from violent conflict to peaceful management of contradiction and normalization of relations, yet not sufficient to achieve full reconciliation. The fourth meaning or dimension of reconciliation is reconciliation between former enemies. This means creating a possibility to reform relations by creating emotional space without the past enmity. This usually happens between individuals or small groups but it is possible also between nations. Starting from opening diplomatic relations, to symbolic gestures or formal expressions of repentance to cultural exchange.

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2017:292-296) also describe the range of reconciliation processes and define various paths to reconciliation. The first process they name as "official amnesia", amnesia as a deliberate policy choice, and then three justice-based approaches, and also a culturally conditioned option. However, one could argue that official amnesia is not a form of reconciliation, but a way to move forward without reconciling the past. The second process is truth-telling and truth commissions as well as trials. Trials or war crime tribunals often are regarded as an alternative to truth commissions, but they can also be seen as complementary actions for truth commissions. The trials answer for the need for retribution for the victims that truth commissions cannot always achieve. Also, apologies and rituals are important according to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (Ramsbotham et al. 2017:292-296).



Darweish and Rank describe reconciliation not as a linear process, but a process that can include relapses as well as progress. For them, there are multiple factors that contribute to reconciliation. These include such as security as a precondition for reconciliation. People need to see that the violence has ended and have some assurance that it will not recommence. Also, acknowledgment of the past atrocities and "making things right", in other words, truth, and justice. Darweish and Rank also see healing, both in community and individual level, essential for reconciliation (Darweish, Rank 2012:6).

J P Lederach, states poetically, that reconciliation exists where truth and mercy meet justice and peace (Lederach:1997: 29). He describes four decisive components in reconciliation. These are public truth-telling, restorative justice, re-storying and collective healing (Lederach 2014:143-147). For Gardner, the actual reconciliation process starts with the acknowledgment of past crimes, misdeeds or injustices. Given this, an apology is often an initiation to the process (Gardner 2012:30).

Many aspects of reconciliation are commonly regarded as bearing relevance by scholars in the field of peace and conflict research, as shown above. The significance of truth-telling and truth commissions for reconciliation is notable for they can build national unity as well as heal individuals, as well as "reconciling financial and other accounts" (Ramsbotham et al.2017). These "other accounts" can include such issues as public health systems, interreligious dialogue, dealing with secessionist movements, refugee questions, or reintegration of former combatants (Darweish, Rank 2012:). According to the scholars, rituals and traditional processes can be helpful in reconciliation processes in many ways, as well as re-storying or storytelling (Lederach 2014; Darweish, Rank 2012) and some form of psychologically healing (Lederach 2014). I will explore these more closely in the upcoming chapters. The Christian reconciliation often emphasizes the ideas of confession, repentance and forgiveness. Justice is the precondition and starting point in Christian reconciliation as well.

### 2.1.3 Christianity and reconciliation

In conflicts, religions are often portrayed either as a source of discrimination, violent actions and motivation for destruction, or as ethical convictions, such as maintaining human rights and commitment to social justice and building peace and bringing hope (Gehlin 2017:3). Both representations are true and similarly untrue. Religion's role in conflict depends on multiple issues, and as other factors, it should be critically and

contextually examined. In this chapter and the following, I will present some basic theological ways of interpreting reconciliation through Christianity's lens. Since I am exploring the basis of Christianity in reconciliation, and especially trying to interpret the way it effects in Zimbabwe reconciliation, I am not discussing the ways religions have been used as an excuse for wars and atrocities.

Christian's holy book, the Bible, discusses a lot of reconciliation and peace. However, the correlation between the Bible scriptures and peace is ambivalent. For instance, in the Old Testament, there are passages of God's blessing wars, and in the New Testament, there is commandment to love your enemies. These scriptures seem to advocate different goals. The first advocates just war, and the second values forgiveness, even in unjust settings. Considering this, it is no wonder that the definition of the meaning of reconciliation for religious actors is not simple.

Christian churches and organizations have a long experience in truth and reconciliation processes, and they have large networks. In a society where centralized authority has collapsed, or government isn't reliable, organized religion might be the only institution that has remained its trust amongst the population (Simson 2007). Hence, an increasing number of religious actors have been included in the peace processes.

Many scholars have stressed that the division between religion and politics is artificial if not even misleading, especially in the context of many African cultures. African theologies are holistic by nature, and therefore separating societal and religious life doesn't do either of them justice. Faith is embedded in all actions of a person, and cannot be looked at separately from other areas of life.

Alava notices especially three blind points in the western view of dividing faith and politics. First, seeing faith as a private matter, but not noticing that the line between public and private is not at the same spot in all societies. Secondly, the role of the state might be less significant, and thirdly, politics and religious thinking have intertwined in the African philosophical thinking and societies almost inseparably (Alava 2015:145).

When looking at reconciliation from the Christian perspective, it raises a question of inclusivity. When reconciliation must be inclusive to work, what does the inclusivity mean for the Christian actors? The relationship with gender and Christianity have been ambivalent since the early days of the written history of Christianity. Holy scriptures and traditions have always been interpreted through cultural and social frames. The revolutionary way of including women as active actors in early church, being the first witnesses of the resurrection and being apostles,

has changed into reactionary way of limiting women's role in church and society. Furthermore, unlike society in general, Christianity is not yet reflecting on diversities of genders.

For religious actors, especially Christian ones, the concept of reconciliation has deep religious meanings. The central idea of Christianity lies in the reconciling work of Christ towards humankind. Even though Christianity often looks at reconciliation vertically, between human and God, it also interprets reconciliation horizontally, between people. The importance of reconciliation as horizontal action and its interpretations differ between denominations and various Christian actors.

However, in the history of old religions, such as Christianity, the strictly defined scriptures are not the ones that define the values of the religion, but the great thinkers and various interpreters over time have shaped the way values are interpreted (Gopin 2000 p.135). Therefore, the problem seems to be that reconciliation is looked from widely diverse positions and backgrounds. The scholars Sara Gehlin and Mark Gopin point out, that in achieving just peace, it is important to support the theologies that see the inclusive and tolerant dimensions within sacred texts (Gehlin 2017:2, Gopin 2000 :28).

The origins of the term reconciliation are in Hellenistic diplomacy, it has become an essential concept in the theology of salvation (Kärkkäinen 2013:368). Even though the definition of reconciliation varies, certain Biblical passages often occurs when scholars examine reconciliation in the Christian context. Most often quoted seems to be the 2. Cor 5:17-19 (for instance Katongole&Rice 2008, Ericson 2001, Danaher 2004, Kärkkäinen 2013)<sup>1</sup>.

One explanation for the difficulty in defining reconciliation in Christianity might lie in the ways it has been portrayed. Theologian William Danaher states that reconciliation is not science, but more of a form of art (Danaher 2004). Finnish theologian from the Pentecostal church, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen translates reconciliation as "healing and bringing together broken relationships". He concludes in a poetic way, that it contains such ideas as "cosmic reconciliation", the Hebrew concept of "shalom", the work of the Holy Spirit the overcoming of barriers between Christians, the work of the church in the world, peacemaking, movements towards ethnic reconciliation among others. Under all these forms of reconciliation, there is

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“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here!  
18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:  
19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2.Cor 5:17-19, New World Version)

the motif of restoration of relationships (Kärkkäinen 2013:364). These definitions come close to the definitions I presented in chapter 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. The only difference being the interpretation of the Holy Spirit as the moving power of reconciliation. Nevertheless, as noted before, there also are issues and themes in theological reconciliation that are not relevant for peace and conflict reconciliation. Megan Shore quotes Alex Borrane and John de Gruchy when defining religious reconciliation as a gift from God that includes several stages, such as confession, repentance, restitution, and forgiveness (Shore, 2009:133-134).

Being at the core of Christianity and being such an important part of Christian way of living, reconciliation also bears strong burden when interpreted in religious way. The demand of forgiving and healing poses a strong pressure on individuals who are mistreated and violated. Since women and gender minorities are often the ones that face traumatizing sexual violence in conflicts, the hurt the demand of forgiveness causes, is gendered. Stressing of personal forgiveness can also shift the perspective of reconciliation from structural and political to purely individual effort, and leave the responsibility of reconciling only for individuals, and therefore prevent the change in society.

This controversion of individual and societal reconciliation in Christianity is stressed in many liberation theologies. Thus, the various contextual interpretations of reconciliation in Christianity raise often from the heritage of liberation theology. In the following chapter, I am looking closer a few different interpretations of reconciliation in Christianity, and the movements in Christianity that have affected most on the reconciliation processes.

#### 2.1.4 The theology of liberation as a basis for reconciliation

The roots of Christian work towards political reconciliation are often rooted in the theology of liberation. Liberation theology is a theology that sees Gospel and scriptures from the perspective of oppressed and suffering people. The origins of the theology of liberation are in the 1960's and 1970's Latin America, but it has spread to various communities and cultures. Each theologies of liberation share the commitment to social justice. Whether we discuss Latin American, black or feminist theology, the liberation theology has been born from political conflict of some kind as well (Vuola 1997).

Key themes in liberation theology have been the dialogue with social sciences, and the critique for the structures that creates poverty, including the structures of

the institutional church (Kuruvilla 2009: 52). Theology of liberation also emphasises a new understanding of sin: sin is not primarily moralistic, but structural issues that forces individuals to sinful deeds due to circumstances. Sin is not only personal but social, political and economic change (Kuruvilla 2009:52). Given this, the reconciliation necessarily doesn't need personal apologies and personal forgiveness, but a structural change. This reconciliation comes close to the ideas of political reconciliation or thin reconciliation discussed in chapter 2.1.1.

Many of the Christian actors who have participated in reconciliation processes have found inspiration from Liberal theology in the formatting of reconciliation. Especially in processes such as the South African truth and reconciliation process, liberation theology was an important source of inspiration.

J. Carney has summarized the development of modern sub-Saharan Africa's theology in dividing it into four stages. The first stage according to him was inculturation. This was a view from mostly catholic theologians, and it tried to combine the Gospel and a certain culture. It encouraged sensitivity towards cultural features and simultaneously tried to protect the integrity of the Gospel. However, inculturation face a strong counterculture from the rise of Pentecostal movement, that appealed more on the realities of ordinary people's lives.

As an alternative to inculturation in Catholic and protestants churches, around 1970s and 1980s arose the liberation or black theology. Albeit, liberation theology faced criticism since it seemed not to be very applicable for post-conflict reconstruction. Hence, the following paradigm amongst the theologians was reconstructionism. It had an optimistic vision that rose from the second wave of African democratisation. However, it faded quickly to make room for the latest development in theology, the reconciliation theology.

The theology of reconciliation in Africa grew from the pain of political and ethnic conflicts. Most known African theologians of reconciliation are Desmond Tutu, Emmanuel Katongole and John Rucyahana (Carney 2010:553). For Tutu, reconciliation is interdependence bound to the concept of "ubuntu". Ubuntu means "a person depends on other persons to be a person". For Tutu, the goal of reconciliation is harmonious co-existence in which also enemies are seen as God's children. In Tutu's theology of reconciliation, it is important to retain a prophetic or liberative dimension so that the church and keep a critical distance from the state (Carney 2010:554). John Rucyahana is a Rwandan bishop that combines holistic reformation to reconciliation. He stresses that reconciliation starts from the transformation of individual and at the final stage of the reconciliation is communal.

The goal is not just tolerance towards old enemies, but conviviality (Carney 2010:555).

Emmanuel Katongole is Ugandan catholic priest and scholar, whose finding in reconciliation is that "the way things are, is not the way they have to be". He emphasises the pilgrim-nature of reconciliator, and reconciliation as a journey, not an ending point. Katongole states that to a Christian vision of reconciliation, it is vital to emphasize the right relationship with God. To Katongole, the reconciliation journey is rooted in God's commitment to restoration after the fall of humanity. This restoration is an invitation to humankind to make the same commitment (Katongole&Rice 2008).

Even though in many conflicts, the theology of liberation is not appropriate since both parties have been oppressed as well as oppressors (Ericson 2001:23), and that sometimes theology of liberation have made reconciliation harder (Volf 1996: 200-205), when looking at my example of Zimbabwean reconciliation, their contextual interpretation of theology is rooted in the Liberation theology, and the sub-Saharan theologies of reconciliation. The interpretation of theology as a reconciliation gives the Christian organisations and churches a mandate to work actively as part of society's reconciliation, instead of just excluding faith as non-worldly matter. This opens up possibilities of extending reconciliation to the parts of society it otherwise wouldn't necessarily reach.

## 2.2 Reconciliation in action

Above, I have discussed theoretical approaches to reconciliation, in the following, I discuss different aspects of reconciliation as action: justice, truth-telling, collective healing, and rituals and rites. These elements will later be unpacked/illustrated in the data presented in the following chapter. The chapter ends with critical discussions concerning these practices.

### 2.2.1 Justice as a precondition for reconciliation

The first precondition for reconciliation is the absence of violence and a situation where the divisive political issues are somewhat cleared. In addition to this, justice is crucial for reconciliation. Justice can be described as making things right through

punishment or reparations, depending on the situation and circumstances (Rigby 2011:237). In the core of reconciliation is the concept of justice, and the restoring or reconciling relationships in all levels: in communities, individuals, national and international level. Justice can be seen in reconciliation in ways that relationships are restored, as well as ensuring that the former conditions of wrongdoing are not possible again. According to Llewellyn (2014:16), the objective of justice is to protect and create reconciled relationships ahead.

Concurring to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, reconciliation and psycho-social healing presuppose justice, to achieve positive peace (Ramsbotham et al., 2017: 291). John Paul Lederach names justice as one component for successful reconciliation (Lederach 2005:144). The path from negative peace to positive peace goes through justice, and justice itself has multidimensional ways of promoting reconciliation, such as truth commissions, trials or reparation and rehabilitation measures (Ramsbotham et al. 2017: 292). When exploring the failed truth and reconciliation commission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Verity Mould states that one of the main reasons for the failure of the process was that the government gave up for the demand of justice to protect fragile peace (Mould 2012:62-65).

Restorative justice as a contrast to retributive justice can be used in reconciliation as well. Unlike retributive justice, restorative justice does not focus on punishments, but its goal is addressing past wrongs by recognizing the needs of victims and obligations of wrongdoers (Borer 2006:36).

Reparation is also a key element of justice, and therefore invaluable to reconciliation. Reparation is a future compensation for the past, but it is not always financial, but can also be monuments, parks, buildings or anything that acknowledges the victim's sufferings.

Justice is a strong and meaningful term in Christianity as well. World Council of Churches (WCC) states in its document: "Freedom of religion and beliefs", the importance of justice this way:

"In the Old Testament, the word mishpat – Hebrew for "justice" – occurs over 400 times. It offers a profound and transformative approach to justice that is associated with ideas of mercy as in Micah 6:8. Biblical justice demands "acquitting or punishing every person on the merit of the case, regardless of race or social status... But mishpat means more than just punishment of wrongdoing. It also means to give people their rights." (WCC 2019)

The Old Testament determines righteousness and justice quite parallel to each other. WCC affirm that righteousness could be understood as the communal expression of holiness, as justice may be seen as God's order to correct the institutional injustices. In the Old Testament, according to the Prophet Isaiah, there is no peace without righteousness and justice (Isa 9:7). The Lutheran theology recognizes that all created rational beings understand the necessity of justice as the basis of a good life. The Biblical idea of justice includes equality between all people (regardless of faith, gender or other) (evl.fi 2019 vocabulary).

In the western Lutheran world, the doctrine of atonement has been dominated by a courtroom language, which doesn't do justice to the understanding of the New Testament. In the New Testament, the justification includes the forgiveness of the sins, healing, reconciliation as well as restoration, and is not only individual but also communal (Peterson 2014.p 72-).

The Lutheran World Federation document "For the healing of the world" even states that to be justified becomes almost synonym to "to be healed", and this healing unveils in caring and responsible relationships to others and the whole creation (LWF 2003 Healing).

## 2.2.2 Truth-telling, storytelling and truth commissions as part of reconciliation

The UNHCR states that there cannot be a reconciliation without truth telling, and without reconciliation there cannot be sustainable peace (Borer 2006:29). Both, the peace scholars as well as scholars from transitional justice interconnect the concept of truth telling into the concept of reconciliation (Borer 2006:28). Through truth-telling or storytelling, the survivor's story is being listened to with sensitivity and using tools such as active listening. Telling the story of past atrocity, survivor can reclaim their identity, find a voice to speak about a matter that has been unspeakable, and be heard in public context (Porter 2016).

However, the deep linkage between truth and reconciliation can be questioned as well. Hence, expecting reconciliation after truth-telling is not always realistic, and measuring the importance of truth-telling by looking at the success of reconciliation might hinder the importance of truth-telling as such. The way the term reconciliation is understood affects the importance of truth-telling as well. If reconciliation is seen



as “thin reconciliation”, or merely political reconciliation, truth-telling doesn’t have a significant meaning (Borer 2006:29-34). However, individual reconciliation needs truth-telling.

According to Elisabeth Porter (2016), especially for women, storytelling is an important way of surviving trauma and proceed on reconciliation. However, the telling doesn’t happen in negotiation rooms or in high level cabinets, but more secure settings is needed. These can be more home-like environments, or methods that use art as a tool to expressing individual stories and learn about others stories.

Porter gives an example of this from Rwanda, after the genocide:

“*Dubozanye* (‘To Console Each Other’) is a group of Hutu and Tutsi women who came together in mourning, having lost family members, most had been raped and many had borne children through this violation. The relational bonds that developed in the group led to building houses and starting an agricultural cooperative, a school for orphaned children and a craft centre. Through collective mourning, these women developed a common narrative that provides a safe place for practical manifestations of reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi women as an indigenous, bottom-up ‘narrative transformation.’” (Porter 2016:210-225.) Truth Commissions are official bodies that have a temporary mandate to investigate violations that have occurred in a particular prior period. Usually, their goal is to publish a comprehensive report that makes the injustices that have occurred public (Philpott: 2006:4). Truth commissions intend to honor the past and to build bridges between competing versions of the past. Truth commissions also aim to bring public disclosure of human rights violations (Ramsbotham 2017: 293-294). Some degree of amnesty is also included in truth commissions' characteristic features (Darweish 2012:7). According to the chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Desmond Tutu, truth commissions are the way between tribunals of international law and national amnesia (Tutu 1999: 10-36). The first to use this term was Chile, and South Africa most famous of the truth and reconciliation commissions (Philpott 2006: 12). Yet, there have been many more, and each reflects the contextual issues of the country's situation.

The truth commissions represent great diversity. Depending on resources and constraints they get from international, governmental, and local actors, they function in wide variety of sociopolitical settings, and their success is varying as well depending on these attributes (Avruch &Vejarano 2002: 37-38).

In South African TRC there were special hearings for women’s experiences. Such testimonies acknowledged suffering and gave voice to the loss and grief that women,

girls, mothers and wives had experienced. However, as South African TRC has acknowledged, 'telling of pain is an act of intimacy'. (Ayruch, Vejarano 2002:85)

Some of the women expressed their suffering in TRC through intentional silence. This too is a meaningful act of agency. Silence enabled women to protect themselves. Sometimes because of self-dignity, and sometimes protecting their reputation. According to Porter, self-choosing silence is a reminder, that gender experts are essential in truth commissions, for understanding the gendered requirements to responding to deep grief. Expressing one's suffering of deliberately choosing silence does not automatically lead to healing or forgiveness (Porter 2016: 240).

The definition of justice is quite broad in truth commissions, it involves not only procedural justice but also therapeutic and healing qualities of restorative justice. Truth commissions try to tackle the challenges where punitive approach interprets as "victor's justice", and the commission tries to uncover also the truths not visible to courts of law in an environment where the concept of 'truth' is highly contested (Ramsbotham 2017: 295). Verity Mould stresses the importance of balance in commissions. Hence, the pursuit of commission is to consider, what amount of truth the victim needs to gain a sense of justice, but simultaneously how much truth the commission can tolerate to maintain peace (Mould 2012:66).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was possible for many reasons. South African apartheid overpowered being so decisive and having sufficient resources to mount TRC. The Christian tradition of reconciliation, as well as the indigenous African Ubuntu<sup>2</sup> traditions, could be drawn upon. Further, outstanding leadership was providentially displayed (Ramsbotham et al 2017: 295-296). South African truth and reconciliation commission included in the truth process also, for instance, healing, repentance, and forgiveness. Even though these were not explicitly mandated by the constitutional provision that established the commission (Philpott 2006: 4). Since especially the chair of the commission, Desmond Tutu, Bishop of the Anglican church, introduced and celebrated these ideas, it is easy to see that the idea of reconciliation in South Africa was rooted in religion.

Nevertheless, truth-telling is an inseparable part of reconciliation, even in situations where truth commissions are not seen meaningful or appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> Ubuntu is an African word that means humanity to others. It is often translated as: 'I am what I am because of who we are'.

## 2.3 Collective healing and psychological transformation, forgiveness

Oliver Ramsbotham states that reconciliation after violent conflict is the most challenging (Ramsbotham 2017: 289). Therefore, to reach reconciliation and to recover from trauma, the past must be dealt with and addressed (Lederach 1997:27) as well as justice restored. Bruno Charbonneau and Genvieve Parent's research shows that peacebuilding initiatives that have not paid attention to healing traumas have not been successful (Charbonneau et al. 2012:10). Hence, psychological transformation must be a part of reconciliation as well. Cynthia Enloe states that the questions of psychological wounds also bring gender issues into reconciliation since the traumas from violence are often gendered (Enloe 2014). Also, western psychological approaches might not always be appropriate in non-western cultures, and this underlines the importance of cultural sensitivity (Ramsbotham et al. 2017:290).

Healing is often mentioned when discussing reconciliation (for instance Charbonneau et al. 2012:8, Lederach 2005). Nevertheless, the methods and processes of healing vary among scholars. One way of interpreting healing is Judith Herman's division to three stages. The first stage is the feeling of security for the victim, secondly, the remembrance and mourning, which includes the storytelling, and thirdly "reconnection" with ordinary life (Charbonneau, Parent 2012: 8).

One form of individual reconciliation is healing through trauma counselling. A person suffering from trauma won't be able to rebuild families or communities, essential for the reconciliation of society as well as individually. According to Anne Borer, traumatic experiences can also lead to retributive circle of violence, if not addressed (Borer 2006:34). Traumatic memory is static and wordless. Therefore, "storytelling" is an important part of the healing and consequently, a reconciling process. Through the remembrance and mourning, the polarisation in society can be reduced (Montville 2001:119 quoted in Charbonneau et al. 2012: 9). Storytelling can be done in various trauma-informed ways, using for instance different forms of arts and healing rituals.

Healing is also a Biblical word that has many meanings in different Christian traditions. It often occurs in prayers or in the liturgical language in the meaning of making a person whole or well. The language of healing is used both in the north and global south to address the need for reconciliation and wholeness in those who experience alienation from God, themselves, one another and creation itself. In this regard, healing happens both personally as well as between persons. This leads to the notion, that where sin is understood as alienation between God and humanity,

healing becomes more important than in a community where Christian message of forgiveness of sins isn't as relevant (Conradie 2006:18). Hence, Christian tradition can support the reconciliation for offering the familiar concepts and mindset for it.

Forgiveness is linked profoundly in the Christian idea of reconciliation and healing. For the last century, the theological debate on forgiveness has been divided in two directions. First, those who associate forgiveness with justification and the vision of salvation, and secondly, those who associate forgiveness with justice and the search for reconciliation. The first interpretation has faced a great deal of criticism, especially from contextual and feminist theology since it has been seen excessively abstract (Kärkkäinen 2013:79). The critiques also ponder that since forgiveness has theologically been tied in the process of penitence and human sinfulness, it has often led to a situation in which forgiveness has been privatized as personal religious practice, spiritualized and faded away from everyday life. According to Helmick and Petersen, the collective significance of forgiveness has often been replaced by more retributive conceptions of justice, power politics, and social theories (Helmick, Petersen 2001 p.4). Nevertheless, the second interpretation is often criticized of using a language that moves from transcendence to prevailing political rhetoric (Petersen 2001 p. 5-6).

Yet, in Christianity, forgiveness is not only about "cancelling the debt" or forgetting the sin but restoring a broken relationship and creating a new relationship of mutual love and commitment. Forgiveness underlies in Biblical religion, and when it is grounded in deep beliefs or deep ontological understanding of life, reconciliation becomes the more important piece in building self-understanding and existence (Helmick and Petersen 2001:11). Therefore, the Christian reconciliation looks for forgiveness. Consequently, it is important to see when the profound need for achieving forgiveness hinders the possibility of justice.

### 2.3.1 Rituals, rites, and traditional practices

Many cultures, societies, and religions have rites and rituals to support reconciliation. Therefore, it is crucial to bring grassroots knowledge of the traditional practices into reconciliation processes. Organizations working in post-conflict environments could aid reconciliation by encouraging the use of traditional practices and rituals. This can be effective as well as culturally appropriate. Nevertheless, sometimes national initiatives can create a space for local initiatives, and the top-down and bottom-up approaches can strengthen each other. (Mould 2012:67).

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall have collected some examples of rituals in diverse post-conflict situations in the book *Contemporary Conflict resolution* (2017: 298-299). Also, Steve Kaindeneh stresses the importance of traditional rituals in achieving the reconciled peace, for instance through remembrance practices of Mendi in Sierra Leone (Kaindeneh 2012).

Verity Mould stresses the importance of local, traditional rituals for reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These rituals, such as traditional community courts and ceremonies that involve truth-telling, confession, forgiveness and purification rituals, do not work solemnly, but can be an important asset supporting the national reconciliation process (Mould 2012: 69).

Long and Brecke (2000), in their analysis on Latin America, state that the possibility of lasting peace increases, when “reconciliatory events” are included in the reconciliation process. They mention public ceremonies and symbolic behaviors as reconciliatory events (Long, Brecke 2000:2). Many times, the religious rituals offer a possibility for these.

### 2.3.2 Criticism of reconciliation

The rising interest in reconciliation has caused a great deal of criticism as well. The critiques remind that reconciliation is unrealistic in some conflicts, but instead, societies must live enduring differences. Again, reconciliation might suppress conflicts that need to be pursued (Ramsbotham et al. 2017:286-287). Darweish also reminds that for victims of atrocities reconciliation may seem ambiguous or even insulting (Darweish 2012:6). According to statistics, separation of groups is the key to ending ethnic civil wars: "Good fences make good neighbours" (Kaufmann 1996:161 quoted in Ramsbotham 2017:288).

However, in a modern global world separation is not a feasible general strategy for preventing conflicts (Ramsbotham 2017: 289). According to David Philpott, the concept of reconciliation is absent from the liberal tradition, that poses such values as individual liberty, civil and political rights, democracy and distributive justice (2006:13). He articulates that contemporary liberalism is critical for reconciliation for many reasons. One argument is that reconciliation is short-changing the retributive justice when it minimizes the punishments. Also, some liberals see reconciliation as personal, not political, and therefore not functional on conflicts. Liberal democracy often sees reconciliation as a religious concept as well. In a fragile phase of democracy, uprooting old injustices may hinder social unity, and as a result,

reconciliation becomes divisive (Philpott 2006:12). According to Borer and Allen, anecdotal evidence gives mixed results on looking at the results of reconciliation efforts, especially the truth-commissions. Sometimes individuals report feelings of catharsis, but as often also feelings of frustration and anger (Borer 2006:31). Borer also reminds that neither reconciliation nor forgiveness cannot be forced, even for the nation's unity (Borer 2006:34).

The critique would also be in place with the reconciliation that does not include intersectionalities. When not explicitly addressed, the voices of minorities or unprivileged groups are not heard in the reconciliation. For instance, the first reconciliation attempt in Zimbabwe, after the country gained independence, failed because the genders, ethnicities and other groups were not included.

Lately, the amount of state apologies has increased all over the world. Apologies are important for reconciliation but have also been criticized. For instance, David A. Crocker criticized the South African truth and reconciliation commission and Desmond Tutu for appealing people for forgiveness. He found that "ubuntu" or social harmony was unrealistic, and therefore it would be better to, instead of reconciliation, settle for the possibility for restoring minimally acceptable relationships (Crocker 2002:509). The apology can harm reconciliation, if it is not followed by corrective actions, such as restitution and reparations or joint commemorations and people-to-people contacts. Nevertheless, it is important to notice, that forgiveness is not necessary for reconciliation when looking at the scholars in conflict and peace research (Ramsbotham et al.2017:297-299). However, reconciliation is often inseparably linked to forgiveness in everyday discussions (Borer 2006:32). In religious reconciliation, forgiveness has a more substantial role.

## 3 LOCATING ZIMBABWE AND THE ZCC

This study focuses on reconciliation in the context of the Zimbabwean Council of Churches (ZCC). This chapter provides a brief overview of the context in Zimbabwe, and why reconciliation is needed, and introduces ZCC as an ecumenical peace advocate. The chapter proceeds as follows. First I explore the history of the country, and then discuss the Christianity in Zimbabwe and the development and activities of ZCC. This context provides a backdrop against which the documents and interviews at ZCC can be analysed in the upcoming chapters.

### 3.1 From colony to failed state

The roots for the current crisis in Zimbabwe dates to the times when the country was part of the British colony and known as Rhodesia. Rhodesia was an independent monarchy led by Ian Smith in 1965-1980, but its independence was not acknowledged by other countries. The country was transferred into a democracy in 1980 after a civil war that had lasted the last decade. The name of the country was changed to Zimbabwe. The constitution and government for independence were formed in Lancaster House, London in 1979.

Robert Mugabe was the 1980s independence struggle hero that turned out to be a dictatorial president whose leadership turned the country to an unseen crisis (Blessing-Miles 2011: 307). In 1979, the Mugabe-led party ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) won the elections against Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People Union (ZAPU), and ZANU and Britain conducted the Lancaster house independence agreement. This agreement was supposed to be a starting point for reconciliation in Zimbabwe. However, some researchers (e.g., Blessing-Miles 2011, Tarusaira et al.2014) argue that the reconciliation that this agreement aimed at, was a reconciliation between black and white Zimbabweans, not among all the population. According to Blessing-Miles, to protect the white Zimbabweans, the British rulers overlooked the atrocities against black minorities. Blessing-Miles writes:

”The human rights of British descendants living in Zimbabwe mattered more than the human rights of Zimbabweans at large because there was a domestic electoral price to pay if they were not protected. There was no electoral price to pay for failing to protect the human rights of black Zimbabweans.” (Blessing-Miles 2011: 309)

The Lancaster house agreement had left the equitable redistribution of land impossible to proceed, and the agreement was short-sighted, and more intended to protect and appease the white minority than the long-term building of the nation (Blessing-Miles 2011:309). The agreement was conducted rapidly, the process only lasted three months, and it was not at all sufficient for the newly formed independence (Ndulo 2010:180).

The newly elected president celebrated the new constitution and agreement of the Lancaster House and delivered a speech that emphasized reconciliation that the new government engaged in (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:56, Fisher 2010:28). In his speech, he outlined national reconciliation for Zimbabwe, that would make the nation strong and unite:

“My party recognizes the fundamental principle that in constituting a government it is necessary to be guided by the national interest, rather than by strictly party considerations. Accordingly I am holding consultations with the leader of ZAPU-Patriotic Front, Comrade Joshua Nkomo, so we can enter into a coalition. What I envisage, however, is a coalition which, in the interests of reconciliation, can include by co-option members of other communities, whom the Constitution has denied the right of featuring as our candidates, by virtue of their being given block parliamentary representation..... I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget. Join hands in a new amity and together as Zimbabweans trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery.” (Mugabe’s speech on election victory, March 4.1980. )

However, instead of reconciliation, the agreement brought envy and resentment between ethnic groups.

The reconciliation narrative of the government in the 1980s was criticized by some members of the Zimbabwean academic community. They considered it as not genuine but based on the power of the former rulers and the economic privilege of the white Zimbabweans. Thus, the words remained hollow in terms of reconciliation. However, some, (such as professor Jeffrey Herbst) thought that since the white resided from power peacefully, reconciliation was a great success. Another narrative was also that reconciliation was possible due to the "human maturity" of President Robert Mugabe and the black Zimbabweans since they acquitted the white settlers for their colonial atrocities. The language of reconciliation brought western



acceptance for the governing party. Therefore, it is easy to see why the ZANU government spoke about reconciliation (Blessing-Miles 2011:307-318).

The country's independence started with a famous speech of reconciliation and respect for human rights by President Mugabe. A few years later, the same president released a unit of soldiers to attack against an ethnic group (and ZAPU -supporters), Ndebeles, in their homeland, Matabeleland and the Midlands. This led to a genocide called Gukurahundi (Gukurahundi translates in Shona: "the first rains of the wet season that washes away the chaff"), that lasted from 1983 to 1987. Approximately 20 000 people were murdered, and many more were raped and tortured (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:56-57). Blessing-Miles quotes a British High Commissioner to Zimbabwe in 1983-85, who affirms that Britain and Europe knew about the genocide in Matabeleland even as it was committed, but decided not to meddle, and rather support the government (Blessing-Miles 2011: 309). This period of violence ended in December 1987, when President Mugabe and ZAPU –leader Joshua Nkomo, signed the Unity Accord. As part of this, the two parties merged as a new party ZANU-PF. Amnesty was announced for the people that committed violations during the Gukurahundi, and thus, the atrocities remained unresolved and unaddressed. President Mugabe addressed a commission to investigate the violence, but the reports of the commission were never made public. Many Ndebele communities were left alone to cope with the traumas and losses. (Ntali 4.6.2019).

Gukurahundi was unfortunately only a start of the ways the president betrayed his promises of reconciliation. The government's failed land reforms in 1992 and 2002 led to economic difficulties in the country. Also, centralizing power to the president increased the security of the regime but decreased human security in the country. The "Jambanja" violence (farm invasions), that had government's support, worsened the situation. According to Ganiel and Tarusaira, the Gukurahundi and Jambanja were only parts of a larger pattern of violence by the government. The rise of the new opposition party MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) raised a wave of state-led violence, for instance, the "operation Murambatsvina" ("Drive out the trash"), that destroyed the homes and businesses of people living in urban areas that supported MDC, and the multiple assassination attempts and violence towards the founder and leader of MDC, Morgan Tsvangirai. In the elections 2002, Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew to protect his supporters and himself from the violence of the government.

The hopes were high in 2017 when Mugabe was forced to leave the presidency. However, little has changed during the few years his successor, Emmerson Mnangagwa, also a leader of ZANU PF, has been the president. Mnangagwa himself

is alleged to have been the mastermind in the Gukurahundi massacres in the 1980s (Ntali 4.6.2019).

This continuing violence has led the country into a situation where educated citizens have left the country, the independent media is struggling, unemployment rates especially among youth are high, and the average life expectancy has dropped 30 years, from the 1990s 61 years to 2012 only 33 (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:58). The unresolved Gukurahundi genocide has victims that are without formal certification of birth and nationality, because their parents were killed during the genocide, and therefore have limited possibilities for livelihood. Many of the young people have inherited the bitterness and hatred from the past hurts, and there is a potential of bursting tribal violence.

According to a UNICEF report, Zimbabwe has more than 1.3 million children orphaned by Aids and 50,000 households headed by children under the age of 18 (Unicef 2021). The yearly inflation rate in 2020 was 557% (World Bank statistics 2020). Therefore, Zimbabweans live under structural violence since their life changes and human security is on such a low-level (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014: 58-59). As structural injustice is so noticeable in Zimbabwe, researchers seem to agree that reconciliation in Zimbabwe must include reconstruction (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:61 Brewer, Higgins, Teeney 2011), or legislative reform (Machakanja 2010).

## 3.2 Christianity, faith and politics in Zimbabwe

Christianity in Zimbabwe dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Portuguese missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church entered the country. However, since the Portuguese power faded, also Christianity disappeared from Zimbabwe, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when protestant missionaries came to the country. Hence, the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe is strongly linked with the history of colonization as well. Christianity was the religion of the colonial powers, and therefore from the beginning, linking closely to the political/societal power as well.

Today, more than 80 percent of the population of Zimbabwe are Christians. This makes the church by far the most socially influential institution in Zimbabwe (Munemo, Nciizah 2014:63). Also, the political leaders tend to be associated to diverse Christian denominations. Nevertheless, according to the report of freedom of religion (2007) the government has respected the constitutional freedom of

religion. Yet, Government's laws restricting freedom of assembly and expression, challenge the faith-based communities as well as other movements in the society.

The churches have been active to varying degrees during the historical stages of the country, mostly by having contributed to national development through hospitals and schools as well as humanitarian programs and care for the disadvantaged. The churches of Zimbabwe have also been involved with the liberalization process of the country after the colonial times.

Yet, despite of being Christian, the majority of the population continues to believe in indigenous religions and traditional healers as well (Freedom of religion 2007). The number of Muslims is rising and Islam accounts for one percent of the population. The rest of the population are practicing Greek Orthodoxy, Judaism, and traditional indigenous religions. There are also small numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and atheists in Zimbabwe.

In the current political situation, the biggest Christian organizations are working together to stabilize society and provide tools in building peace. They find that they have a mandate for this because of the historical role they have had during the previous stages of the country (Zimbabwe we want 2006:16). Churches participated the Lancaster House negotiations for independence in 1979, The Unity Accords in 1987, the negotiations for the coalition government in 2009 as well as 2013s new constitution (Felm 2019). However, the churches have also faced a critique of their silence during the genocide.

### 3.3 The Zimbabwe Council of Churches

Especially Lederach points the importance of local peace mediators. For succeeding in peace mediation, the local mediators need to be trusted and valued in all the levels of society (Lederach 1995, 89). The methods are found from the experiences inside the conflict, so the solution will fit for the community (Lederach 2005:94-97, Portaankorva 2018: 51). Based on this, the role of ZCC is well justified.

“ZCC is working to bring community members together to heal wounds and address historical and structural causes of conflict in Zimbabwe. The ZCC builds social community and brings cohesion where there has previously been none due to intolerance of divergent views and opinions by different people and community leaders.”

The ZCC was founded in 1964. Its members are from various denominations, from Methodists to Anglicans and Lutherans. It has 26 Church-members and 10 Christian organization members. Its members share the same theological understanding that the continuing work of God gives the church a possibility to work towards just, peaceful and abundantly providing country through the power of the Holy Spirit (ZCC 26.9.2019). Dr. Rev. Kenneth Mtata (evangelical Lutheran) has been the leader of ZCC since 2016, and during his leadership, the organization has activated in the peace and reconciliation efforts in Zimbabwe. Finnish organization Felm (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran mission) has been supporting the reconciliation efforts in Zimbabwe through supporting ZCC since 2017. Since 2022 ZCC's General Secretary has been Reverend Wilfried Dimingu from the Methodist Church.

According to the statements of ZCC, the council has a strong self- understanding of its role as "championing the spirit of reconciliation". In a statement 15.11. 2017 the council stresses that the church is a community of people who have been reconciled to God, and therefore the church has a calling to be a sign of reconciliation that calls the nation to reconciliation also. It also states that without reconciliation the nation will not survive (ZCC 15.11.2017). According to their strategy, justice is important for the ZCC. Thus, two out of three its strategical priorities have something to do with the issues of justice. (ZCC 26.9.2019, strategy)

ZCC has been active in Zimbabwe's reconciliation efforts, especially after 2017, when President Mugabe was displaced. ZCC reacted fast for the changing situation in the country, and they were organizing National People's Convention in November 2017. The Convention gathered approximately 4000 leaders from churches, the private sector, civil society (including women, students, and youth organizations). The convention demanded, among other things, free and fair elections, reinforcement of women's rights and participation, economical change, improvement of education, security and youth employment and eroding corruption.

The organization has good relationships with both the main opposition party's leader, Nelson Chamisa, as well as the current president Emmerson Mnangagwa. ZCC's leader in 2016-2022, Kenneth Mtata, is also the leader of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD), a coalition led by ZCC, that combines major Christian organizations in the country. This coalition has together released many statements (such as the "Sabbath Call") and has been proceeding the national dialogues. For instance, in 2019 the coalition organized the National prayer breakfast conference that the leaders of the country participated, including the opposition leader Nelson Chamisa. In August 2019, ZHOCD published a statement about the growing distress and violence in the country, to which the president

responded thanking the work of the churches and inviting the opposition to dialogue. Nevertheless, a few weeks later the government violently suppressed the protests to the government's politics.

The other members of ZHOCD are ZCBC, UDACIZA and EFZ. ZHOCD is Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Council that represents the Catholic church in Zimbabwe. It has eight dioceses, and the bishops of the dioceses form the bishops' council along with two bishop emeriti. Its main values are reconciliation, justice, peace, solidarity, subsidiarity, charity, faith and hope. It states as its vision, that Zimbabwe would be a reconciled society, living in harmony and peace in a democratic developmental state (ZCBC 26.9.2019). EFZ is Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe.

EFZ is founded in 1962 by Evangelical Church leaders, and it represents over 4,5 million members. Its vision is to impact the nation of Zimbabwe in all aspects of life. It is administered by annual general meeting, that brings the Heads of denominations together. It also has national executive committee as well as provincial committees that is advancing EFZ's mission and strategies (EFZ 8.11.2019).

UDACIZA, Union for Development of the Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe, was founded in 1993, as an umbrella organisation for the apostolic religious communities and Zionist churches, to create a route of communication between the Apostolic and Zionist churches and the mainline churches. It also aimed at improving the health and education of its members, since some of these churches were known for neglecting these issues. Later on, after participating on the formation of "The Zimbabwe we want" the organisation has divided, and formed also other organisations, such as ACCZ in 2010 (Chitando, Gunda, Kugler 2014 p. 96). My study concentrates on ZCC, for it is supported by Finnish peace-building organisation, and therefore relevant for Finland as well.

### 3.4 Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

There have been some vague attempts by the government to conduct some reconciliation efforts in the past decade. The Government of Zimbabwe has established the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) in 2013. However, it took five years from the establishment and the signing of the law and starting the work in 2018. Thus, it seems clear that the NPRC doesn't have sufficient

political or legal power to address the complex injustices rooted deeply into Zimbabwe's past.

The Zimbabwean government has tended to smooth out the injustices that have taken place in the country. For instance, the 1987 Unity Accord, which was meant to end the Gukurahundi, genocide in Matabeleland, completely ignored the victim's sufferings and offered no compensation for them, but instead created a one-party state when the ruling party, ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front) subsumed ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union).

Also, the Global Political Agreement's (GPA) article 7 (Mandate to Government of National Unity, GNU) in 2008 that was signed between ZANU-PF and two factions of the opposition party (Movement for Democratic Change's (MDC) Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara) and led to setting up the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) that was supposed to address past injustices. Nevertheless, ONHRI failed in settling the past injustices, primarily due to a lack of political will of the ruling party, ZANU-PF. In 2013 GNU was replaced by NPCR.

The Gukurahundi issue is still unresolved, and its trauma have passed over-generations. According to the former minister of Education, sports, arts, and culture, David Coltart, there are no memorials, no compensation for the victims, but mass graves and unresolved issues. He concludes that closest to an apology is Mugabe's reference to the massacres in 2000 when he pointed to the situation as "a moment of madness". The election of the current president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, did raise the wounds of Gukurahundi even harder to bear since his central role in the conduction of the massacres (Ntali 4.6.2019). Also, the communities affected by the Gukurahundi have concrete difficulties still unresolved, such as having identification documents for instance, birth certificates nearly 35 years after the killings (Independent 21.2.2020). Also, since the time has passed, more and more of the victims have passed without getting any retribution. These unresolved traumas have been passed to next generations, for whom it is more difficult to solve.

Researchers and activists have argued that reconciliation in Zimbabwe should mean approaching political violence and economic distress. Yet as well the troubled ethnic relationships especially between whites, the two largest ethnic groups: genocide-suffered Ndebeles and Shonas, represented by the ruling party Zanu-PF. In public discussions, both secular and religious actors seem willing to conduct reconciliation (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:60).

According to Gladys Ganiel and Joram Tarusaira, those of Christian organizations that work outside the mainstream organizations, have a better chance

to affect reconciliation. As an example of these organizations, they mention ZCA (Zimbabwe Christian alliance), Churches in Manicaland (CiM) and Grace to Heal (GTH). They call these organizations as non-conformists. (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:55,68-69). They believe that small organizations can work more freely since they are more independent towards the government as well as organized denominations. Tarusaira and Ganiel also see that ZCC and its partner organizations (ZCBC, EFZ) have been non-conformists during the time before and right after independence but have later been more latent or inactive politically. Therefore, Tarusaira believes based on his fieldwork in 2012, that ZCA, CiM, and GTH would be more prominent in implementing reconciliation than ZCC and its partners (Ganiel, Tarusaira 2014:69). However, the role of ZCC has dramatically changed after Tarusaira's fieldwork, and is now considered as a prominent actor for implementing reconciliation.

President Mnangagwa has made some efforts to address the Ndebele community's grievances. In 2019 he met the representatives of the Matabeleland Collective, and after that, he appealed to Zimbabweans to talk freely of the massacres. He also suggested plans to exhume and rebury victims and provide services for displaced survivors. However, the president's actions have raised criticism. Both, academics (for instance, Political analyst Gift Ostallos Siziba, and researcher Tjenesani Ntungakwa) and the NGO's (including ZCC) demand discussion about justice, truth-telling and reparations, and independent investigation, as well as clearance of Mnangagwa's role in the Gukurahundi genocide. The arrest of journalist Zenzele Ndebele after he called the president to address the incidents in the eighties, seems to support these accusations (Ntali 4.6.2019).

The Revolutionary Research Institute of Zimbabwe's researcher Tjenesani Ntungakwa calls for an independent commission that would be operated by the Church, since the first people to bring facts of the human rights abuses in Gukurahundi was the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) (Ntali 4.6.2019).

## 4 METHODS AND MATERIALS

In this chapter, I introduce my data and the methods with which I have analysed it. The thesis is two-folded. First, I examine the literature in peace and conflict studies about reconciliation, and the history of reconciliation as a religious concept as well. In analyzing the literature, I am using critical intersectional reading to discover how the concept of reconciliation is influenced by its religious background. I also examine, does this background affect the ways gender and culture are portrayed in the reconciliation process. Then, as an example of the reconciliation that interconnects with Christianity and gender, I compare the findings from the literature to the ongoing reconciliation efforts in Zimbabwe by ZCC. I do this by looking at the documents the organization has produced, and by interviewing some key people working in or close to ZCC.

I use four documents published by Zimbabwe's Council of Churches (ZCC): *Zimbabwe we want* (2006), *Zimbabwe Between a Crisis*, and a *Kairos* (2017), ZCC pastoral statement to the press (2018), and *The sabbath call* (2019). All these documents can be found on the internet. I have also interviewed three people who currently work or have worked closely with the ZCC. I conducted the interviews during fall 2019. Two interviews were done via video connection, so the interview situation reminded face-to-face discussion. One of the interviews was conducted through a phone call. All the interviews were recorded, and the recordings transcribed. The interview questions were formed as open-ended, I tried to guide the discussion as little as possible. However, if the interviewee didn't mention any intersectional aspects, I did ask about them at the end of the interview. In addition to this, I discussed with the General Secretary of ZCC in 2022, to clarify and update the questions that arouse in the time between my interviews and current situation.

Nevertheless, a research interview is not neutral dialogue between equal partners, but an instrumental form of conversation, where the researcher sets the script according to their own research interests (Kvale 2006: 482). In my interviews, the subjects I found important to research, maybe were not so important for my interviewees. For instance, my main interests were gender and religion, but for some of my interviewees, the question of youth was more important than question of gender. Therefore, the interviews discussed quite a lot about this subject. Indeed, the



question of the youth in the context of Zimbabwe is quite crucial. The life expectancy rate has dropped dramatically during the last three decades, the youth unemployment rate is high, and the risk of violence is high as well. Therefore, when researching reconciliation in Zimbabwe, the question of youth is highly relevant. This example shows how important it is to look at reconciliation as a contextual and intersectional matter.

I analyzed the interviews and documents by dividing them into discourses. I am presenting these discourses later in this chapter. I am using discourse analysis as a tool to interpret the variable meanings of reconciliation, and in construing my analysis, I use the intersectional reading. In this thesis, the notions of intersectionality, gender, and Christianity are utilized to analyse the complexity of reconciliation in peacebuilding. Therefore, critical intersectional reading suits well for my analysis.

My data consists of four documents by ZCC. The oldest and most extensive of the documents is called "The Zimbabwe we want" from 2006. This document is about what should be done in Zimbabwe, to create a just and reconciled society. The second document is called "Zimbabwe between a crisis and a Kairos (opportunity)", and it has been published after Robert Mugabe's resignation, in the dawn of the new government. This situation is addressed as "crisis and Kairos," referring to the situation being both, a challenge and a new possibility for the nation (later on, I refer to this document as Kairos). The third document, "Pastoral Statement to the press: empowering churches for national transformation", is published after the election in 2018, before which the ZCC had launched a "Pray and vote" campaign, empowering people to vote, and which led to the disappointment of alleged dishonesty of the elections. The last document I am researching is "a Sabbath Call" a policy proposal for the government as well as opposition actors that proposes withdrawing from elections for a sabbatical time (seven years), to achieve peaceful development in the country.

## 4.1 Critical intersectional reading

In this study, I observe my data through intersectional lens, and use discourse analysis as a tool in dismantling certain themes and identifying them. Discourse analysis aims to recognize structures and power, and intersectionality sharpen the perspective into certain concepts and ensure their presence in data.

Intersectionality is an approach that intentionally researches the relationships of various identities and their position in society. Intersectionality emphasizes the diversity within-group. This diversity essentially shows that there is not one unitary voice for a specific social location, such as gender. The term intersectionality refers to the critical view that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age do not function as cohesive entities, but as a reciprocally constructive phenomenon, which in turn forms complex social inequalities (Collins 2015: 3). The intersecting conditions are determined by power relations.

The intersectional approach has gained popularity in gender studies and has elevated a considerable amount of discussion about how to understand and analyze gender with other categories. As Ann-Dorte Christensen and Jensen Sune Qvortrup state, the growing attention on intersectionality gives a possibility to capture the complex relationship between gender and other social differentiation in contemporary societies (Christensen, Jensen 2012:109).

Intersectionality as a concept has taken new meanings in various contexts. Its origins are in the black feminist movement in the US. In the US, the focus was on structural power relations. Later, the researchers have emphasized that intersectional analyses must embody the interplay between structures and institutions at the societal level, as well as identities and lived lives on a personal level. (Christensen, Jensen 2012:109).

Intersectional analysis fits well in peace research, for it, as a methodological tool, recognises the structural violence that is often entangled with epistemic and slow violence, that Väyrynen et al (2021) refers to as “a tender, intimately-scaled, lived violence that is constantly being reproduced and reborn through individual bodies and relationships” (2021:5).

A methodological challenge that critical intersectional reading holds is the number of categories. Usually, the main categories in the intersectional study are race, gender, and class (Christensen, Jensen 2012:110). However, in the case of researching reconciliation, these categories didn't seem most relevant. Therefore, I have chosen to look into gender, religion, and class, but keep an eye for other categories as well. As Christensen and Jensen point out, there can be multiple categories, but more categories make the method more challenging. Nevertheless, Christensen and Jensen are sceptical of basing intersectional analyses on an endless series of social categories. Subsequently, the relationship between categories is the point, and for a specific analysis, it is necessary to select a few categories strategically. This makes it possible to concentrate on the categories most important for the specific research question (Christensen and Jensen 2012:12). In my case, I chose the

categories based on their importance to the subject I am researching. It is also important to notice that the categories do not function with similar logic to each other (Christensen and Jensen 2012:111, Yuval-Davis 2011:79). Gender cannot be treated similarly to religion because they are different types of issues and hold various meanings.

I am concentrating on the relationship between Christianity and gender. Since the relationship is complex and ambivalent in many ways, I want to shed light on the reconciliation process from the perspective of those who are marginalized within religion.

Since Christianity in Zimbabwe is not a religion of a minority, but main religion, Christianity is not a marginalized group. Therefore, one might question the decision of choosing it for intersectional analysis. Nevertheless, as pointed by Yuval-Davis (2011:81), if the intersectional analysis is to be seen as a theoretical framework for analyzing social lamination, it is important to include all members of society, not only marginalized, for including the majority as well. Especially, when looking at reconciliation, which should include the whole population, it would not be rational to exclude the majority. Nevertheless, with the majority status the questions of power structures rise in a way that is significant as well.

I scrutinize the ways in which reconciliation is portrayed, and what gendered and religious ideas are revealed in the literature overview and the documents and interviews concerning ZCC. I also examine how speech about reconciliation acknowledges the various religious and gendered identities. Thus, as the thesis regards a case from a country deeply affected by the colonialization and its aftermath, I consider the cultural interpretation of reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

My work builds on the findings of feminist peace research. Feminist peace research tradition doesn't address peace in terms of the absence of violence, but rather rethinks it with regard to security and violence. Feminist peace research pays attention to the ways peace as a concept is associated with femininity, and violence associated with masculinity, and due to gendered hierarchy peace is devaluated (Väyrynen, Parashar, Féron, Confortini 2021: 4) I join this tradition, and look critically at the ways gender is joined into notions and ideals of reconciliation.

Feminist peace research has produced essential and much-needed research on the absence of gender sensitivity in post-conflict peacebuilding, and gender-based violence, reconciliation has not been studied much from gendered perspective, even though reconciliation processes affect greatly on all genders.

In analyzing my data, I rely on critical intersectional reading to discover how the concept of reconciliation is influenced by its religious background, and how this

background affects the ways gender is portrayed in the reconciliation process. By using Zimbabwe's situation as an example, I examine the contextuality of reconciliation. Since the relationship of Christianity and gender is complex, as well as the relationship between religion and peacebuilding, as also the relationships between western peacebuilding theories and African context, I shed light to this complexity by the critical intersectional reading of the data. The intersectional reading is an experiment in thought based on the ambiguity of the material, in which it is possible to stretch the boundaries of the material and test whether a certain kind of reading would take place. In reading my data, I emphasize the notions of intersectional connections. Such as how religious ideas blend in the ideas of reconciliation as a tool for peacebuilding, and how religious language infiltrates into the secular language of reconciliation. I pay attention to the Christian perceptions of gender and gender-roles and their impact on the talk of reconciliation. Traditional reading of the Bible places emphasis on binary gender roles, and often regards women and men equal but different in terms of their roles in society. Therefore, women's role has been as homemaker, a mother, and a wife, when men have been seen in roles that are not home-related, but active in society. Also, traditional interpretations of Christianity and Bible do not recognize other genders than men and women, and this brings a special challenge into researching gender in Christian context.

These themes do not always explicitly arise from the material, but by using critical intersectional reading I am specifically researching the presence or absence of these themes. This critical intersectional reading reveals power positions in society in respect to systems of power. However, this kind of reading depends heavily on the interpretations of the researcher. Therefore, I open up the choices I have made as much as possible. Aside the three interviews I use to support my findings from the documents and literature, my research material is openly available to the reader.

The positionality of the researcher can also be examined from an ethical standpoint. Offering a critical reading of a material denotes always regenerating the data. The researcher does not only read discourses but produces them (Jokinen 1999:41). Therefore, the research that uses critical reading, should not be considered as "reporting facts", but it should be considered reflectively (Jokinen 1999:41). Consequently, the power relation between the researcher and the research topic and materials should be considered. My relationship with this study could be described through the concept of reflexivity, one way to understand the interaction between the researcher and the material (Juhila 1999: 212-214): I am careful concerning the

interpretations, because I am aware of how, for instance, my social position may lead me easily reading certain things from the material – and into it.

## 4.2 Discourse analysis

As a tool to analyze and categorize the data, I use discourse analysis. Discourse analysis examines how social reality is produced through language and social practice. It allows the study of meanings, structures, and agency, as well as of the interaction between these. Social relations, identity, knowledge, and power are not understood as immutable facts, but as socially constructed entities. Discourses are built and constructed in the daily life of written and spoken text and practice, in institutions and organizations. By giving meaning to these practices, they classify the world around them. (Häikiö, Juhila, Suoninen 1999).

A particular area of interest in discourse analysis is the examination of the structure of the world, as well as power structures. It is well suited to examine what types of situation-specific attitudes people adopt and how. It seeks to specify exactly what categories are created in language and how things are made meaningful (Jokinen and Juhila 2016). All discourse analytical research methods and trends have in common a strong perspective based on social constructionism, where the language is understood as much more than a mere mirror of the outside world and discourses are central to building the ideas, social processes, and phenomena that make up our social world (Nikander 2006: 413). In my study, I explore the language of reconciliation, both, in the Christian concept as well as in peacebuilding, and try to find a common ground.

According to Arja Jokinen and Kirsi Juhila, discourse analytical research relies on the meanings, communicativeness, and culture all intertwined. Thus, in discourse analysis, the focus is on cultural meanings that is, the construction of a common social reality. It is essential to link cultural meanings to human interaction. When researching especially the intertwining notions of reconciliation, religion, and gender, I believe that discourse analysis is a useful instrument to analyze reconciliation. Rhetoric is persuasion that takes place using language and is aimed at a specific audience (Jokinen and Juhila 1999: 77). The basic assumptions of rhetorical discourse analysis are that language use is not assumed to tell about the speaker's attitudes or the facts of the outside world, but the interest is to study how things are argued as

"true" (Jokinen 1999b: 127). Therefore, my research focuses not only on the study of meanings of reconciliation but also on the study of that what is behind these meanings, I also draw on analytical tools from other concepts used in discourse analytical research when needed, particularly the study of rhetoric. Nevertheless, my study is not rhetoric analysis as such. Unlike rhetoric analysis, discourse analysis doesn't concentrate on the formation of phrases and sentences, but it stresses the cultural meanings and interactions between humans (Jokinen and Juhila 2016). In my study, the cultural meanings are the interwoven meanings and ideas that Christianity brings to the discussion of reconciliation.

According to Juhila's (1999: 163) categorisation, my approach can also be described as relativistic discourse analysis. When realistic discourse analysis reads material through presupposed power, institutions, or subjugating truths, relativistic discourse analysis focuses on how people use various categories, such as race or gender, when talking about themselves and others (Juhila 1999: 166).

In my research, my interviewees represent a specific institution, and they don't present personal positions directly. I will, therefore, look at how the interviewees use their position as an expert, namely when they present their positions from it, and whether other types of positions can be interpreted. In this case, I look specifically at the user of the discourse as functional; how people function in alternative systems of meaning and take advantage of diverse discourses. Therefore, I see various identities as resources for their users that they can also modify (Jokinen 1999:39–40.).

As I will discuss in further detail when analysing the data in section 5, one aim of discourse analysis is to identify common discourses, and find the meanings and interactions from the data.

### 4.3 My positionalities

Discourse analysis also looks at interaction in interviews and this raises questions of the positionality of the researcher (Juhila 1999:203). In my Interviews, my identity and positionality definitely affected the interview and my way of reading the documents and literature. I have a background in theology, and I have worked as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. My interviewees knew that they were talking to a pastor, and many of them were also members of the clergy. Therefore, the language that was used was often religious and contained concepts

assumed to be interpreted similarly. I tried to open these assumptions also in my analysis.

Zimbabwe Council of Churches is partnering with a Finnish peacebuilding organization Felm (Finland's Evangelical Lutheran Mission). Felm works for promoting peace and is funded by the Finnish Foreign Ministry. Felm has recently started the collaboration with the ZCC, and the work is still taking shape. I conducted the interviews during my internship in Felm, as a part of Felm's project of defining reconciliation and theology. Hence, my position as Felm's representative affected the interaction in interview situations as well. Nevertheless, without my internship, I wouldn't have been able to reach the key persons that have expertise in the ZCC's work. During my internship, I interviewed numerous people that work with the ZCC, but most of the interviews were short encounters. Therefore, I decided to use only these three interviews because they provide broad insight into the subjects relevant to my research question.

I also pondered if it would be ok to have a case study that represents a culture that I am not very familiar with, nevertheless represent it myself. However, according to Anna Rastas (2005, 78–79), who has discussed cultural differences between the interviewer and the interviewees; a researcher studying, for instance, urban and educated locals in Asia, Africa, or South America, may have more contact with respondents than many other groups living in their own home country. Hence, I believe that culturally I as a theologian and a peace student, share partially the same language and global reality with the theologians and peacebuilders in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, Rastas (2005:85-86) reminds, that familiarization to another culture so that all possible cultural differences would be noted at the stage of analysis is impossible. However, the researcher must take special care regarding the interpretations of the meanings given by the interviewees, i.e., understand her own unfamiliarity with the interviewees' cultural backgrounds. Hence, I have defined my research subject through what it is possible for me to interpret from the material. For instance, I am not analyzing the institutional or political discourses of Zimbabwe, nor reconciliation's role in the life of Zimbabweans, but concentrate on comparing the starting reconciliation process on the global discussion of reconciliation.

In the following, I present the data on which my thesis builds. As material for my research, there are four ZCC produced documents. In addition to this, I have interviewed three people, who have been, or are, in substantial positions in ZCC.

## 4.4 Data 1: ZCC documents on reconciliation

This work looks closely at the most recent documents of ZCC. These documents are 2017's 'Zimbabwe Between a Crisis and a Kairos (opportunity): the pastoral message of the churches on the current situation', 2018's 'ZCC pastoral statement to the press', and 2019's 'The sabbath call'. All these documents somehow mention the earlier document: 'Zimbabwe we want'. Therefore, I find it relevant to use the ideas and definitions of reconciliation described in the document Zimbabwe we want, as well.

In 2017, ZCC published a document and a press statement about the worsening situation of the country. The document "Zimbabwe between a Crisis and a Kairos", emphasizes the role of religion as a force of transition in reconciliation. It points out that everyone who has experienced reconciliation with God should be willing to reconcile in nation-level as well. The document also states that without the unification of the nation and reconciliation there will be no positive future for the country. The document also reminds of the past crisis, and how the nation has united during those events (ZCC 2017a).

After the elections of 2018, ZCC published a press release, called 'ZCC's pastoral statement to the press. In the statement, ZCC addressed both parties the election as well as the people of Zimbabwe. During the elections, ZCC had launched a large campaign for mobilizing people to "vote and pray". The statement criticized the independence of the elections and the election system that favours the incumbents. The issues that involve reconciliation in the statement are the unresolved past hurts and pains, the polarization of the nation and the declining living standards and economic hardships. ZCC expresses its support to Zimbabwe's electoral support network's (ZEC) efforts to transparency and accountability of the elections. ZCC prays for the peaceful expression of the objections of the results. ZCC states that the polarization that the election shows, calls for nation-building and envisioning (ZCC:2018).

In 2019, ZCC published another statement with other Christian organizations. 'The Sabbath call' is bolder by its nature than the other statements that have been more affirmative and acknowledging the current situation. The Sabbath call wishes to seize the root causes of the current crisis by declaring a seven-year Sabbath, during which the elections would be postponed. According to the Sabbath Call, during this time the opposition and government could work together for finding solutions for the country's situation by building confidence and trust without the competition of the power (ZCC:2019). The Sabbath Call appeals to the document Zimbabwe we



want as "founding vision" for the call, and therefore it is justifiable to assume that the definitions of reconciliation stated in "Zimbabwe we want" apply also for the Sabbath Call.

The Sabbath Call consists of ten statements that address various aspects of how the proposed sabbath could establish society. The first statement gives Biblical reasons for the sabbath and binds it to the 2029 celebrations if the independence. According to the Call, to truly jubilate the independence, the land needs to heal the past wounds, recover the economy and build co-operative political culture. This could be done by removing all the political contestation. The second and third statement addresses the economic, social and political paralysis of the country. The fourth addresses the past atrocities that have been neglected and need to be addressed as well. Fifth and sixth statements discuss the polarization in the country and the atmosphere that doesn't allow political reforms, as well as the violence that has labelled the elections since 2000. The sixth statement also affirms why churches are making this call. According to it, there have been proposals for the national dialogues, but not proposals on how to create an atmosphere that would make the dialogues possible.

“Different observers and independent commissions have raised the need for a broad-based and comprehensive national dialogue to find a lasting solution to these challenges and mutual accusation. What has not been proposed is the environment conducive enough to allow for such transformative national conversation to bring hope. It is such a solution the Church is humbly proposing to the nation”(Sabbath Call 2019)

The seventh statement states worry about the citizens' weariness of the democratic system since the voting hasn't brought changes, but violence. The last three statements explain the hoped results of the Sabbath. These results would be the establishment of a recovery mechanism that acknowledges the most vulnerable communities, rebuilding trust and confidence through healing the past hurts, developing national reform agenda that would deepen the democracy and establishing shared, inclusive economic vision for the nation. The churches propose that there could be a referendum for finding out would the people agree for the suspension of the elections, and if so, the opposition together with the government would decide how to proceed in the matter. The proposition of Sabbath as solution for reconciling the nation has evoked both praise and criticism. It is yet to be seen whether this proposition will change the ways of understanding and doing reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

## 4.5 Data 2: The interviews

### INTERVIEW 1

Interviewee one is a former leader in ZCC. I1 found local work the most important. They have organized education for ordinary people, about peace and conflict resolution, and they have resolved personal conflicts through storytelling and healing through forgiving. They found that non-violent conflict resolution needs to be taught to people.

### INTERVIEW 2

Interviewee 2 has a close relationship with the organization as an advisor for the leaders, but I2 does not work as an employee in the organization. Nevertheless, they have an important role in the organization, and they know the organization very closely. As an "outsider", they can also spot some issues that the organization itself cannot see or does not want to reveal.

### INTERVIEW 3

Interviewee worked in ZCC during the time of the interviews and had an important role in the organisation's work. The interview with I3 was conducted through three WhatsApp and Skype calls. Three, because the Internet connection constantly collapsed, and the line was disrupted. The interviewee also once called from a neighbouring country, to have a better chance to discuss. Other interviewees also mentioned the concern of possible government's intelligence, and although this was not said in this interview, this might also be the reason for the difficulties.

Through this interview, one can see the consequences of the highly contested situation in Zimbabwe, and how it brings many obstacles to ZCC not easily seen. For instance, modern-day influencing with the web that cannot be trusted to work is a huge issue for an organization trying to reach people in different parts of the country, as well as to provide information outside Zimbabwe. Even though what was said did not strongly shed new light on the reconciliation of ZCC, this interview shows something about the vulnerability of intersectional study and therefore is an important part of my study.

A similar phenomenon is described in Tiffany Page's article *Vulnerable writing as a feminist methodological practice* (2017). According to Page, vulnerable methodology means questioning what is known, and what might come from an opening in not-knowing, and what ethical questions this rises (Page: 2017:14). For me, this interview revealed a lot in the broken sentences that could not be completed, despite many

attempts to do so. Page suggests that the solution is not always to collect more material, but instead work within the material that is available (Page 2017:18). They write about how diverse temporalities might attach to "hidden rhythms", where the more visible parts of narratives are sometimes displaced by stressing the "lesser beats", the narrations misheard, ignored, or erased by usual modes of telling. They propose that both questions, what is known, as well as what might come from an opening in not knowing, are equally important (Page 2017: 18). Following their theory, I interpret the difficulties in the interview as a sign of the difficult work environment, with which the leaders of the organisation must tackle in addition to the actual work providing reconciliation.

## 5 ANALYSIS

Based on the documents and interviews of the key persons in ZCC, the main ways to promote reconciliation in Zimbabwe are healing through truth-telling and storytelling, rituals, and vision of the new Zimbabwe. These issues I address in the following chapters. The ZCC, being a Christian organisation, finds achieving reconciliation as deeply religious process, that rises from Christian motifs, and justice has to be the starting point.

Part of discourse analysis is the classification of common discourses that occur in the data. I found from the literature review as well as from the research of ZCC's notions of reconciliation through documents and interviews, some discourses that recurred in all of them. These discourses are justice as a precondition to reconciliation, truth in reconciliation, rituals, and healing. Discourses that were not so much seen in the literature, but were strongly present in my data, were religion as a reason for justice, intersectionality, gender and visions of the future, that I named as utopianism. In the figure below can be seen the ways these discourses were shown.

Figure 1: Common discourses across the datasets

Data (on the right) / Discourse (below)	Zimbabwe we want	Kairos	Pastoral statement	Sabbath Call	Interview1	Interview2	Interview3
Justice and God	Practical, reconciliation without justice is unchristian secularity eroding morality humans as image of God, diversity	Human life is God-created, therefore sacred	allowing freedom, God sees injustice	God's will, Biblical model	balancing restoration with fragmentation	restitution, restoring dignity	human security, God's will
intersections	disabilities, women, children, minority groups		deep national polarization across political, tribal, gender, class and other distinction.	equality	youth, women	question of youth, women into decisive roles	women, disabled people
rituals and healing					storytelling, liturgy	new, inclusive language	storytelling, funerals, liturgy
utopianism	new Zimbabwe	vision of new Zimbabwe	vision of the future	new political order	clearing the past to create future	vision	hope of the future
truth-telling, storytelling	acknowledge own participation	healing through truth		common good	investigating past atrocities	Knowing what happened	knowing truth

The literature doesn't mention notion of utopianism as part of reconciliation, but the documents and interviews discuss about it, and therefore I find it important to add it into my analysis.

The analysis in this Chapter is informed by and structured according to the discourses that were identified.

## 5.1 Justice and God

All of the documents as well as the interviewees emphasized justice and healing from the past as crucial part of restoring relationships to reach reconciliation. As in the research overview on reconciliation that I looked at in chapter 3, justice was crucial for ZCC reconciliation as well. Hence, in Zimbabwe, the notion of justice was even deeper, to social justice in society and equality. Justice was also seen as something that needed to be concrete, actual change in society, not only an idea.

“Reconciliation goes hand in hand with renewal of the socio-economic and political structures. What we are saying here is that the movement towards reconciliation presupposes an equally important movement toward the creation of a just society. There can be no reconciliation without an effort to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. A new social order has to be created. This even brings in the issue of reparations which is a biblical ethic in which those who have acquired wealth through cheating or exploitation of fellow human beings were required to return that wealth plus the interest. “(Zimbabwe 2006:51)

As quoted above, the document, as well as my interviewees, thought that justice is a precondition for reconciliation. Justice is a very practical matter for the churches. The economical imbalance must be balanced, the ones that have gotten their good position through fraud must redistribute or return it to the rightful owners. Apologies are expected and everyone is encouraged to forgiveness. The churches realize that reconciliation is not possible if the present injustices are not fixed. They argue that reconciliation without correcting injustices would only play into the hands of oppressors when oppressed would be forced to accept reconciliation without apology or reparation.

“Building reconciliation in Zimbabwe is another journey all together, because the divide between (people) in the west, where the massacres took place, and there are huge division between the people, and they are still looking at the bodies of the people

who were killed. So that.. rebuilding that relationship and acknowledging what happened. The president never being acknowledged yet. And for the churches, to go on a journey to acknowledge what has happened. 'cause for the churches, except the catholic church, were silent. And now they must come out and ask for forgiveness... The mistake is sometimes made, that we go from repentance to reconciliation, but without no restitution. There has to be a restitution before walk in the reconciliation. Not necessary money, but apology, knowing where the bodies of the loved ones were. For me the reconciliation is about restitution, to recognizing the peoples dignity to know. And it is about my dignity, in knowing where I did play a part." (Interview 2)"

Thus, the Christian churches in Zimbabwe hold significant power. Subsequently majority of the population are Christians, and therefore the church should not be unaware of its position and the ways it uses power in society. ZCC has recognized and apologized the past they were not actively defending justice, but current-day power the churches hold is not critically explored in these documents and interviews. This poses a threat for the demands of justice, as they might not seem realistic without addressing current power structures.

Maria Ericson (2001) emphasizes reconciliation that is only possible through restorative justice, when all the parties of the conflict participate. They state that building reconciliation means finding a common moral landscape for all the participants of the conflict.

'The Zimbabwe we want' states that reconciling Zimbabwean society should happen through dialogue. The document positions the theological reasons for churches to be active in socio-political issues, and it tries to give practical solutions for the issues. Regarding the meaning of reconciliation, the 50-page document argues the following:

"Reconciliation is about restoring broken relationships through forgiveness; it is about healing the spiritual and the physical wounds. The result can only be a peaceful environment in which people love and care for one another, live in true fellowship with God and one another, and seek nothing but the common good and the wellbeing of one another. Zimbabwe is yearning for peace and justice. At the root of that yearning is a cry for reconciliation and forgiveness." (Zimbabwe 2006:48)

As can be seen in the quote above, emblematic for reconciliation in ZCC is Christian concept of forgiveness. One can question, will the demand of forgiveness make conducting reconciliation more difficult for the organisation.

Hence, the forgiveness can also be gendered issue. Loise Du Toit argues that in South Africa TRC, especially when discussing rape and rape victims, the failure of doing justice for the victims of rape was constitute, rather than unintentionally exclusive practice. Du Toit sees this as sign of the patriarchal practices that go hand in hand with reconciliation (Du Toit 2007). In addition to this, forgiveness in

reconciliation is strongly intertwined with the question of power. The one holding the power can demand forgiveness, as well as the one forgiving or not-forgiving can use power over the other. In the light of Du Toit's theory, the question of who holds the power in forgiveness is also deeply connected with the roles of gender.

Nevertheless, forgiveness is an important part of reconciliation for Christian actors. For instance, in South Africa's reconciliation process the secular reconciliation included Christian concepts such as forgiveness, repentance, and healing (Appleby 2000: 196-202), and in Sierra Leone, both Muslim and Christian leaders found forgiveness as important for the peace process, even though the atrocities were not forgotten (Portaankorva 2018).

As in theological literature, Interviewee 1 stressed that theological reconciliation is a two-folded issue: both the individual reconciliation, as well as society's reconciliation is important. They also discussed the special role of the church in Zimbabwean society, and what is churches' mandate in being actively involved in the reconciliation. They found that the biblical reasons for churches participation is strong, but they were clear at separating churches actions from political actions:

“Churches have a role to play. (They have the) power, and to do that, you are not involving yourself with politics, but you are really taking sides on the side of the poor, the people that are suffering, the people that are victims of a violence. You know, you are on the side of human rights, (the side of the) suffering. The church need to speak up. I think that the churches (in Zimbabwe), the bishops, the catholic bishops conference, I think they have been very active. (it is a) position of the church, without really going into becoming politicians themselves. To tell the truth, and address the possible solutions .....This is in the core of the churches mission. This is what we believe, that is our core business, to build peace.. Christ is called a prince of peace, and we are the instruments, so we must build peace.... that it is our responsibility we should be more active on that area, in peace and reconciliation. (But there is) the issue of justice, if you want for peace, then you need justice. “

For I1, there cannot be reconciliation without justice, and they saw that peace, justice, and development are all intertwined with each other, and one cannot be achieved without another.

I2 stated that there is no real reconciliation without restitution. They expressed that sometimes there is reconciliation after repentance, but without restitution. Restitution doesn't have to be money, but recognizing peoples' dignity, right to know what has happened to the loved ones. To them, it is also about the dignity of the perpetrator, knowledge where they have played a part.

Interviewee 3 saw that there are two sides in discussing reconciliation: peace, and justice. The difficulty for ZCC and others that try to promote reconciliation is that



there cannot be reconciliation without justice. However, achieving justice would need the ruling party to take responsibility for what has happened. This seems at the moment impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, the citizens that have been mistreated, are not, rightly so, able to trust the peace actions, if the old atrocities are not recognized, and if the violence during elections is not addressed and discontinued. The ZCC must therefore balance in between not "scaring" the persons with power, by stressing too much about the need for justice, but simultaneously, be loyal to the theological idea of reconciliation, which includes justice and restoration, also crucial for the people still suffering from the past. They say:

“But basically there are two things there is this justice aspects to say that we ... and at the other side, there is the peace aspect. But again, when you look at those aspects... (line interrupted) those that drove the past conflicts the power metrics... once you start talk about the justice, you scare those in the power. But again, but you can't talk about the theology (of reconciliation), without talking about justice and restoration, because of those who have suffered from the past. So, so what we are trying to do there is to have a balance. So, at the same time we talk about justice, we need to be mindful of the prevailing fragmentation, but also the... (line interrupted) everything is intertwined, you know. The socio-economics, religious needs, the political... (line interrupted) So it is quite complicated setup.”

the Sabbath call was published a few weeks after our interview with interviewee 3, so in a way, the Sabbath call offers a solution to achieving justice.

I3 is also concerned about the growing inequalities in Zimbabwe, especially about the elites profiting from the current economical chaos.

None of the documents or interviewees discussed of power issues that Christianity as mainstream religious system in the country holds. However, the position of majority religion creates questions on how justice is executed with religious minorities.

## 5.2 Truthtelling, storytelling

Elisabeth Porter states, that many of the reconciliatory spaces are dominated by men, such as in tribunals, commissions, and negotiation tables. More often the narratives of women and gender minorities arise in more informal settings, where people can have a feeling of security and ease. These settings can be more domestic, or the meaning-making happens using diverse artistic methods, such as drama, dance or painting (Porter 2016). Storytelling gives a chance for mutual legitimation of

experiences, and the feeling of being heard opens a way to healing. Also, in the interviews, the storytelling or truth was seen unalienable part of the reconciliation.

In the interviews, healing was seen as multi-levelled process, that was needed both in grass-root level as well as in leader's own life. The healing could happen through acknowledging the truth and the past atrocities, as well as through forgiveness. The interviewees stressed the truth-telling or storytelling as a way to heal and become reconciled. One of the interviewees mentioned specific method, Michael Lapsley's healing of memories<sup>3</sup> as a way to this.

Storytelling was mentioned as a way of acknowledging the past by being heard of what has happened to an individual, and being empathetically heard and recognised. In Elizabeth Portman's article, 'Feminist building Peace and Reconciliation', they connect empathy especially as a part of feminist peace research. Barriers to showing empathy in a post-conflict situation, are usually strong, but they remind that empathy don't need agreement, but an attempt to comprehend the situation from other's perspective, and it is fundamental to feminist praxis. (Portman 2016:227)

Nevertheless, storytelling was also seen as a way of using religion as a tool to recovery. This was about the churches teaching Biblical stories that addressed similar issues people have gone through, so the healing can happen through shared experience. For instance, using stories such as Job, that is about individual suffering and God's interference, or a story of a poor widow and Jesus. All of the documents of ZCC had some biblical references, that connected the document to biblical storytelling.

The truth-telling/storytelling seems to be also entangled to the notion of justice. The justice will occur when truth is acknowledged. And when the truth is acknowledged, then the socio-economical imbalances of the society can be altered as well.

“We were as a nation never taken through a process where the truth was told about the pain experienced during the years of the struggle for liberation and our oppression by the colonial regime. The nation needed to end the years of conflict in a formal way by the ritual of truth telling and forgiveness. Even in our African cultures conflict was never resolved by simply believing people will forget and everything will be back to normal. It involved some ritual ceremonies that would reconcile the warring families or factions through forgiveness...” (Zimbabwe 2006:51)

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Lapsley is the leader of Institute of healing of memories, that works in many African reconciliation processes. The institute has originally founded in South Africa, but has gained popularity in Zimbabwe and other countries as well. The programme is three-folded: prevention, healing, and empowerment. Storytelling is pivotal method for the programme.

Interviewee 1 stressed that even though the local reconciliation has been successful, there cannot be true reconciliation if the government doesn't acknowledge its involvement and responsibility for the past atrocities. However, according to them, a governmental apology would create room for peace.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the other interviewees, according to I2 the special feature in the churches role in Zimbabwe reconciliation is the trust issues. Since the church has not been active in the past, when injustices and atrocities have happened in the country, it must gain the trust of the people. In order to do this, it is important to acknowledge what has happened, and rebuild the relationship. I2 sees the role of ZCC as very important: they state that churches are moving to the front line and providing leadership in the vacuum that is in Zimbabwe now. They find that activating people is a challenge for the church because the past incidents in the country have caused passivity. They also stress that reconciliation must be a creative process, and therefore it needs, for instance, women to bring diverse perspectives.

For them, educating people about reconciliation not being a fast process is important. They stress that it takes time before society is on its feet again. This mediation role of the churches brings hope. Also, the complexity of the past conflicts and reconciliation are issues that must be considered when looking at the situation.

### 5.3 Rituals and healing

The storytelling and being heard was one way to healing through reconciliation, but the interviewees saw rituals as an important part of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Especially the rituals of burying the victims whose bodies were lost in the violent encounters years ago, was seen important. When having burials, the loss of a loved one was made visible creating room for the grieving process and getting closure for the things happened. All the interviewees mentioned funerals, but other religious activities, such as devotions were mentioned as well.

Interviewee 1 felt that church has done some rituals but could also be more inventive and develop new rituals to support grief processes, especially for those, who are not able to find out where their loved ones are buried. As the years go by, many of the past atrocities become impossible to investigate, since the witnesses are getting older or died, and one must accept that the truth might not be never known. This kind of situation also needs a closure, and church might be the one providing rituals for this.

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<sup>4</sup> At spring 2023 this process has started, since the government has supported ZCC's national dialogue process on the Gukurahundi genocide. However, this process might be only temporary, since the elections are taking place in 2023.

Other than the rituals of healing that we do ourselves, people are able to tell stories, that is a one way. And the other one ... until people are able to... they need a closure, to the pain to the loss of the killed. There are mass-graves, there are people they don't know where their relatives and loved ones are. so, as a church, we need to develop rituals to address (these people). We go beyond that step that there is only a closure, until people got to know what has happened to their loved ones, and where they are buried, and to give them decent burial. So there is need for those kind of rituals and I think that it is already happening, although in a small scale. Where churches go to bury together....those rituals designed in churches are not shared very widely. We need to develop a proper liturgy and ritual to cope with the pain, the loss and get the closure. (interview 1)

This also linked to the truth-telling and justice, because people need to know the truth about what has happened to the victims, as well as the leaders of the country to be responsible of the past. Knowing the truth would work as a restitution important for healing.

Jari Portaankorva has studied the peace process in Sierra Leone and found that religious rituals had a special role in the peace process. He states that religious rituals, even though they don't erase sufferings, give people a space to handle the trauma (Portaankorva 2018). This kind of space for the trauma healing seems to be needed in Zimbabwe as well.

Interviewee 2 sees the liturgy and liturgical practices as well as liturgical language as a source for reconciliation. They especially think that women can be imaginative in a new way that changes the old liturgical language as well as the practices that violate women. The liturgical language is important in creating peaceful interpretations of religion (Gopin, Gehlin 2016: 96). Since the society in Zimbabwe is patriarchal, the religion is not usually spoken through female voices. However, interviewee 2 seems to think that this brings new possibilities to the church, since the whole potential of women is unused in this sense.

According to interviewee 3, the churches watch the current situation in Zimbabwe through the unresolved past conflicts that cause, for instance, social fragmentation in Zimbabwe. The past conflicts, such as the genocide in Matabeleland, must be addressed in many ways. One way to reconcile the past they mention is the storytelling, and one is rituals. They also see that some restitution is necessary for the reconciliation to actualize.

Since many of the Zimbabweans still find comfort from the traditional beliefs, it raises a question are the church's rituals sufficient, or could churches also support the traditional rituals, to achieve holistic healing?

## 5.4 Utopianism, vision of the future

In the documents provided by ZCC, as well as the interviews I conducted with the key persons of the organization, a common and significant element for reconciliation to work was the vision of the future. My interviewees described this vision as "re-imagining the future Zimbabwe", or "vision of the unite Zimbabwe". They all felt that the country needed a new way to look to the future, in order to reconcile the society. Interviewee 3 tells about this:

We feel that we need to have vision for future together. Focusing on the dialogical process, and value based process, where though dialoguing people can be reconciled. So we feel that the whole concept of reconciliation is not something that.. have only to deal with the legacy issues of the past conflicts. We are looking at the reconciliation to be individual, the internal peace, but also because we are faith based organisation, but also looking at families, looking at the recognition. We are looking at building communities, and hopeful (future).Interview 3

They also linked this to the worries of fragmentation of the society, that was said to be the result of the lack of national vision (interview 3, Zimbabwe we want 2006: 16-17).

To understand this better, I searched an explanation from the field of the Utopian studies. Traditionally, utopia is defined as a social imaginary that looks into both, toward an idealised past, as well as the ideal future (Moylan and Baccolini 2007). Utopian elements are embedded into all political ideals and are important for construction of the future (Alava 2017:156). However, they are usually addressed apart from the reconciliation process.

Dr Henni Alava has studied in her doctoral dissertation the ‘utopia of Peace’ in the post-war Uganda. In her study, the “utopia of Peace” emerges as opposite of the violence and war, and is inclusive regardless of colour, gender, ethnicity, creed or political attachment. Similarly, according to the Zimbabwe we want -document, the vision of ZCC for future Zimbabwe is a country with good governance and respect for universal Human Rights.

“a nation united in its diversity, free, tolerant, peaceful and prosperous; a nation that respects the rights of all its citizens regardless of creed, gender, age, race and ethnicity”.

And above all, as the document states, the vision is based on a hope, that Zimbabwe would be a God-fearing nation. The Ugandan utopia of peace seems to be linked into Christianity quite similarly that Vision of the future of Zimbabwe is. According

to Alava, the utopia of Peace in northern Uganda resonates profoundly with the utopian visions that lie beneath the violence it has set out to counter (Alava 2017:155). As reported by Alava, the utopia of peace is entangled with hope. However, they propose that especially the narratives of religious leaders, of social imaginaries that are embedded within the utopia of peace, might end up creating boundaries of exclusion, and therefore producing new forms of violence (Alava 2017:156).

One part of the vision for future, are the values. The document 'Zimbabwe we want' emphasizes the importance to the nation to share the same values since the document states that the current crisis is the result of the unshared values. The new, shared values of the Zimbabwean society should include the fight against secularity that erodes the spirituality and morality, and unity-in-diversity; coexistence between people of diverse ethnicities, tribes, communities, and families. This coexistence includes the recognition of individual differences, of which representation is allowed, but also regulated, harmonized and balanced for the greater good of the nation. Thus, the exercising of mutual tolerance and cherishing peace and harmony is important as well. In this hope of harmony and coexistence, one can see the risks Alava mentions, since harmony can often be forced by the expense of minorities.

The vision also states other values: respect for human life and dignity (Human beings are created in God's image, therefore the human life is sacred), respect for democratic freedom, respect for other persons (need for humility), democracy and good governance, participation and subsidiarity, sovereignty, patriotism and loyalty, gender equity, social solidarity and the promotion of the family, stewardship of creation, justice and the rule of law, service and accountability, promotion of the common good, option for the impoverished and marginalized and lastly, excellence. Nevertheless, the possibility of dichotomy in these values is not addressed at the documents, nor at the interviews. For instance, what is the future for woman, who doesn't want to have a family? How are non-binary genders are included? Does the value of gender equity overcome the value of promoting family?

I3 also stress that there needs to be a shared vision for the future, for both the government as well as the citizens. They hope for a future that is "holistic", that recognizes all the aspects of human security issues (restitution of the past, free democracy, education, health care, equality, etc). They feel that it is the only way to reconcile society and correct the current fragmentations.

"I think one most important thing for us is the holistic approach to the whole process. Work is holistic long-term thing: the whole every aspect of individual need to be addressed. And when we look at the individuals of this world, we may talk about our..... (interruption)... talk about us building peace in the communities, it has to be

sustainable.. the work we do we hope that genders to come..(interruption)..Women empowerment, child rights, economic.. peace is a process, and must be developed sustainably..(interruption) Individual level, family level, community level.. Church need to look at itself also in order to make the reconciliation forward.” (13)

This utopianism could be seen as 'moral imagination', that John Paul Lederach speaks about in their book *'The moral imagination: the art and soul of building peace'* (2004). They state that in the middle of a transformative process, it is important to have the ability to hope and dream of peace. This ability they call the moral imagination. They speak about paradoxical curiosity the contradiction that arises in the search for currently invisible, but which gets to be known through the moral imagination. Imaginations reinforce the belief ahead with opportunities for peace and reconciliation that cannot yet be expressed rationally (Lederach 2004:35-39). According to Gopin (1997) Combining religious hope with conflict resolution is a strong element in peacebuilding. Prophetic daydreaming and the scriptures open up new visions for change.

## 5.5 Intersectionality in Zimbabwe reconciliation

Intersectional aspects that rose from my data, were contextuality, gender and youth, and people with disabilities. From the total of seven documents and interviews, the context; national polarisation and tribal questions were mentioned in two. However, the discussion of justice contained many of the elements that could be seen telling about the context. Since I already have presented those in the previous chapter, I don't concentrate on them in this chapter.

Zimbabwe is home to more than 70 different ethnic groups. The two largest groups are Shona and Ndebele, but there are also significant numbers of other tribes. The tribe leaders, chiefs, have considerable power in their own communities, and one of the interviewees mentioned, that it is crucial that ZCC leader is trusted and able to address the chiefs.

Also, two of my materials mentioned disabled people, or disabled youth important in reconciliation. It is estimated that about 900 000–1.4 million people have some sort of disability in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, the situation of disabled people varies, depending on the location. Disability occurrence for women is slightly higher than that of men (12.9% versus 9%), and the households and individuals with

disabilities have lower levels of economic wellbeing than others. Hence, intersectional discrimination affects especially disabled women on the rural areas. According to the Sida report on disability rights in Zimbabwe (2014), Individuals with disabilities also have lower rates of education. The Sida report states that as much as 67 percent of disabled children in Zimbabwe never access education, and the percentage is larger with girls than boys. Sida also reported that gender-based violence is more common among disabled women. Even as much as 87 percent of disabled women were victims of sexual violence (Sida 2014). As Interviewee 3 stressed, people with disabilities must be included into the reconciliation as well.

Due to the conflict filled history, Zimbabwe's population is quite young. Approximately 61 percent of Zimbabwe population is under 25 years old. Because of the economical challenges of the country, it is estimated that youth unemployment rate is 35 percent, and young women face more barriers, both in education and workforce (Unicef 2021).

Since all the documents and interviews I conducted stressed the importance of gender, and also the other contextualities have gendered challenges, I discuss the gender in the next chapter.

## 5.6 Gender in Zimbabwe reconciliation

Many aspects of gender issues were covered during my interviews. Since the data I am using follows traditional binary gender definitions, I mostly concentrate on those as well. However, in my interviews, I proposed a discussion on non-binary genders, but the concept was not either familiar (or the words I used were not the ones used in Zimbabwean culture), or it was a topic not open for discussion. Furthermore, as in most of the countries, non-binary self-identification is not legally recognized in Zimbabwe.

The interviewees saw questions of gender important for reconciliation, but they emphasized slightly diverse aspects of gender issues. The cultural reasons were found important with gender issues. The Zimbabwean culture was seen as patriarchal and traditional, and therefore it causes structural obstacles especially for women (I2). Similarly, cultural issues were seen to prevent men from seeking aid and admitting their weaknesses (I1). Also, the threat of violence was seen especially an issue



concerning young men (I2). Even though it was not specified in interviews, it is likely that ethnicities effect on the amount of violence toward young men as well.

The interviews show that the hopelessness among young men is the main reason for the violence to occur. While violence against women has been widely recognized, violence towards men is rarely discussed. According to studies, men often fear to reveal violence because of the traditional ideals of masculinity, such as being strong and in-control. In Sub-Saharan Africa, violence towards men occurs even to 64,5 % of men (Kacooza 2022: 478). My data affirms this difficulty to address the violence towards men, since the documents did not discuss the violence concerning men, but it came up in interviews. Violence affects not only to the victim or the perpetrator, but it has broader social effects in the communities. According to John A Rich, who has studied the violence in the lives of young men in USA, the communities that have violence outbursts, have also high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health issues (such as depression and anxiety) and substance abuse (Rich 2009:4). Therefore, the violence amongst young men is an important concern when discussing gendered reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

The interviewees hoped to see more women in negotiations, as well as in churches. Women were seen to have a possibility to use the liturgy more imaginative ways, also in ways that promotes peace. One of my interviewees also mentioned that when discussing reconciliation in Africa, one should also discuss about the ongoing genocide in Africa, that is the domestic violence towards women (I2). This (along with the studies on masculinities and violence) is in line with the researchers that emphasize the importance of having more feminist research on reconciliation (such as Porter, Du Toit, McKay 2016).

The harmful practices of churches were also mentioned in the interviews, such as making a teenaged, unmarried pregnant girls sit in a separated places during masses, and through this showing that they are not seen as equal members of the society because of gendered discrimination. These old, unjust practices were seen as hindrance for equality in the reconciliation processes as well. Overall, the role of the church as advocate of gender justice, was considered important, and it should also include teachings of new masculinities for men.

Interviewee 3 says:

“The gender issue, we (the ecumenical church leaders) have missed to address that, we need targeting both men and women, to say we are affected by conflicts differently. to women, we can say they suffer more at the moment when the conflict happens. And therefore, those gender disparities need to be addressed. We are having workshops with men alone, in particular, to change the way (they are) looking at things. Because the traditional way is always quite discriminative against women. (We)

try to get people to rethink about the gender role and how they effect on all of us. Then we are also including people living with disabilities. they are another group that is being forgotten. And most important are the young people. they are aside in mainstream decision making. Both in church and in society. The unemployment of the young people is horrid, 90 percent being unemployed. They are growing to the world where there is no positions. Men think just the survival so we...really need to really to focus on young people, and as well gender, disability...”

When looking at the intersectional issues found in I2’s interview, the issues that they raise, are extreme poverty, ethnicities<sup>5</sup>, structural gender issues, and the issues with youth. They find poverty as starting point of the violence, as well as the unresolved issues between the groups involved in the massacre in Matabeleland. Society's patriarchal policies hinder the reconciliation since the chiefs in the rural areas have to be convinced of the importance of the inclusion of women. According to I2, churches have an important role in this since they have gained trust among chiefs. However, the change is slow, but they also stress that it has to be slow, to achieve permanent solutions. They state:

Zimbabwe is a very traditional society, and in the rural places there are chiefs that have enormous (power). (ZCC leaders) has to obey the rules of the chiefs, cause it is chief's power... it is very difficult issue to tackle, and it takes a long time to change. I think there are some chiefs that are younger, and have some idea on what is happening global, but the elder chiefs are not often well educated, and they are not stupid. I mean they have an authority. But he (the leader of ZCC) is remarkable, he has raised issues that ten years ago nobody would have raised. They know that the change is coming. You have to be alertive to where the creative leadership lies... change is coming, how you manage them (Chiefs) to change without them losing dignity. Across Africa gender issue is huge. We talk about genocide, domestic violence, other violence towards women. I am worried about the quick solutions to the gender issues.

I decode that the worry about “quick solutions to gender -issues” that is mentioned, includes the broad understanding of gender. The interviewee sees that inclusive gender approach might backflash in a way that would hinder the rights of women, since the power belongs to the patriarchal chiefs. Therefore, there is a temptation only to concentrate on women’s rights, and leave the gender minorities not noted, to avoid conflicts not only with the conservative chiefs, but also the religious communities that are not accepting the minority gender groups.

Like the other interviewees, I2 stresses the importance of including youth in reconciliation. They say:

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5 by ethnicities I refer to politicised ethnicities (the concept of Mahmud Mandani)

“The thing I am concerned about, that the young are impatient, they don’t want wait. There is a danger. If the anger and disappointment are not (addressed), there will be violence. The army and police are ready.

Managing and working with the youth, is important. In schools in curriculum you should have management of conflicts. Also to priests.”

Except for the Zimbabwe we want, the other documents do not discuss gender extensively. In ‘Zimbabwe we want’ Gender Equity is one of the "shared values" Zimbabweans should follow to achieve the vision of future Zimbabwe. The document defines gender as: "the expectations and norms within a society with regard to appropriate male and female behaviour and roles, which attribute to men and women diverse access to status and power, including resources and decision-making power" (Zimbabwe 2006:22).

It mentions that women experience systematic oppression, and harmful stereotypes of women legitimize their subordination to men. It leans on UN statistics on women labour as well as malnutrition of women and children. The document addresses also women’s sexual vulnerability and their higher risk of getting HIV. The document states that domestication or subservience of women is not biological or natural necessity, and inequality between men and women is against God's will. The minority gender-groups are not mentioned in any of the documents.

Another shared value in the document that relates to gender issues is the promotion of family. The document argues that to develop as a healthy human, a person must be part of a community. The first and most basic community is a family, and therefore family stability must always be protected. This can be done by protecting and supporting marriages, a promotion of pensions, inheritance laws and policies that enhance family togetherness, and supporting child-headed families (Zimbabwe we want 2006:23).

These traditional roles that assign women a role only as a mother or wife, and even more, as tender and peace aspiring creatures, not only narrow the roles of women, and the participation of the women who don’t fit into these categories, but also affect the ability to recognise the risks women (as well as men) can pose to reconciliation and peace. In feminist peace research, this kind of categorisation have been proved not to be accurate. For instance, in the research of sexual violence against men (Féron 2018), women’s militarism (Kronsell and Svedberg 2011) and overall women’s violence (e.g., Gentry and Sjoberg 2015; Parashar 2014; Yadav 2016), show that representations of gender are various. As Tarja Väyrynen and colleagues points out, the contradictions and tensions of feminist thinking need to be taken seriously, not to settle on simplistic generalisations (Väyrynen et al 2021:4).

As Jean Scott (2011; 72-73) reminds, “woman” does not only represent biological gender, but carry many assumptions as well. Ideas of weakness, passivity, domestic are linked with the image of woman, when “men” can carry such assumptions as active, strong and powerful. These assumptions are not at all addressed in the documents nor the interviews. Therefore, it seems that the role of a woman is quite narrow and passive outside the home in ZCC’s thinking. This does not necessarily mean that ZCC sees women’s role so thin as the documents refer, but it might also be a way to emphasise the community’s importance in a patriarchal society. Nevertheless, not noticing women’s full potential in other than family-related contexts, or not noticing varieties of manhood or non-binary genders, can affect harmfully for the process. According to Autumn Reinhart-Simpson, the religious way of praising motherhood has often proven to be an effective strategy, when wanting to controlling female power (Reinhart-Simpson 2020:251).

According to Wibben, women have traditionally been seen nurturing, as “biologically peacemakers” (Wibben 2016:6). Scott writes about this issue when addressing and questioning the traditional feminist approach that finds that women have natural antipathy to war and conflict (Scott 2011: 65-66). These kinds of representations shape perceptions of the role of women in peace-building and reconciliation, and it is therefore important to examine which representations affect the processes of reconciliation, especially if the reconciliation is carried out by religious actors. In order to achieve equal reconciliation, there should be an analysis of the representations of gender from cultural, historical and religion’s perspective.

Nevertheless, women's empowerment was seen important for reconciliation, and all the interviewees thought that women should have bigger role in the reconciliation process. Also, they stressed the importance of youth and disabled people being included in the processes as well. Since all these groups were mentioned, it raises a question of those groups that were not mentioned to be important to hear and see in reconciliation process. It seems that gender- and sexual minorities were excluded either on purpose, or any of the interviewees didn’t come to think of them as a group of equal importance.

Also, since the documents quote Bible quite often (they often start with a direct quotation, and often also end with such), the selections that are made when choosing the biblical passages shows a glimpse of values. One interesting choice is in the document of pastoral Statement to the press in 2018. It quotes a Biblical story about a mother that has been forced to leave her home with her child because of another woman (the story of Hagar, Gen 21:15-19). This story proposes a certain image of

womanhood that is seen as advantageous. The story of Hagar is not only a story of a mother who is displaced, but it also has a layer that portrays the feelings of despair that leads the mother to temporarily abandon the child. Story begins with another woman, who is not ready to sacrifice her rights over Hagar's. With linking this passage to the document, it leads to a broader interpretation of a woman's role, than the document itself, that emphasizes more traditional roles.<sup>6</sup>

Apart the interviews, the documents did not discuss on gender minorities or sexual minorities. Only one mention in the *Zimbabwe we Want* addressed LGBTQ+ issues, stating that:

“All limitations to the fullness of life envisaged in Christ must be completely uprooted, including homosexuality and lesbianism as stated in Leviticus 18, 22-25. We advocate gender equity, by which we mean that women must fully participate in decisions and operations that affect the Church, politics, economics and society as a whole.”(Zimbabwe 2006:23)

Leviticus 18,22-25 is traditionally interpreted as a prohibition of sexual interactions between men, and this passage is often used as an argument to contest the rights of LGBTQ+ people. Therefore, the gender-rights presented above do not apply to the LGBTQ+ community in Zimbabwe. The document clearly states that gender equity only applies to normative expressions of gender. Even though the definition of gender could include the non-binary as well, but the chosen Biblical quotes do not support this interpretation.

Therefore, the gender idea follows closely the traditional Biblical interpretations of Christianity and leave unaddressed the role of unmarried (or women that are not mothers) women, as well as the non-binary gender-roles. When not-noticing the other genders, it also diminish men's role into a traditional masculinities, and leaves the variety of men out from the reconciliation along with untraditional women and non-binary people.

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<sup>6</sup> Autumn Reinhard-Simson has discussed in their study the many sides of the story of Hagar and Sara from exegetical and feminist theology perspective.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

As this thesis has shown, reconciliation is a deeply contextual process, and questions of religion and gender are embedded in it in many ways. Due to this multiplicity and contextuality, there cannot be a one-way-model for reconciliation, but reconciliation must be sensitive to these different meanings, implicit assumptions, as well as context-alert. In Zimbabwe, the model for achieving reconciliation according to ZCC, seems to include storytelling, using and developing rituals, and having a vision of the future. This study showed, that there is a need for research of reconciliation that is context-bound, since the theories of reconciliation are not specific enough.

Since reconciliation is contextual, also gendered reconciliation is highly contextual as well. The pre-conflict gender roles affect how reconciliation is planned and executed. If gender issues are not especially addressed, reconciliation is not complete and effective. Therefore, research of reconciliation should always include gender analysis as well.

All the interviewees in ZCC found the consideration of intersectional aspects important in gaining reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Mostly stressed themes were the young people, and women, but also disabled people were mentioned, as well as the diverse ethnicities and new masculinities. Nevertheless, the gender issues were discussed only in binary terms, so one can assume that non-binary people are not yet included in the discussion of inclusivity in ZCC. In this interpretation, ZCC follows the traditional and conservative churches, even though the process of reconciliation could open doors to shake the interpretation, and move towards more progressive Christianity.

According to many studies, women's grass-root activities in peacebuilding, link gender justice to reconciliation processes (McKay 2000:564; Porter 2016:225). However, Porter's study shows that there is not profound discussion of gender and reconciliation in reconciliation literature (Porter 2016:225). Often gender injustice is reduced to rape and sexual torture, but the examples of domestic slavery, poverty, disappearance of family members, and forced prostitution (because of, for instance, food shortage) are not noted, even though women themselves include these into gender justice in reconciliation (McKay 2000,564). This is well shown in my interviews as well, and the interviews process women's role in reconciliation more

widely than the literature. Also, the men's experiences of violence was not addressed largely. Therefore, a question of gender should be actively addressed when planning on reconciliation process.

All the interviewees found justice and processing the past necessary for the reconciliation. However, they all mentioned that the road to achieving that is long and difficult, and the past attempts have not been successful.

Some of the documents mentioned also the responsibility of the churches in the past. Christian churches hold significant power in Zimbabwe, by representing 80% of the population. Therefore, the church should not be unaware of its position and the ways it uses (and has used) power in society. Also, the Christian churches hold a power position over other religions and non-religious Zimbabweans as well, but in my study the role of other beliefs and ZCC's relation to them did not come up.

Unlike the mostly western literature of reconciliation, all interviewees found the "vision of the future" important for reconciliation to succeed. The Sabbath call is an imaginary way of addressing reconciliation, and a good example of visionally thinking of future. It shows a model quite unique to resolve a conflict between government and opposition, since its basic assumption is that all the participants have a good will, and all wish to work for better country. However, having no trust for the opponent side, the model is not possible. As the discussion around the document demonstrates, giving up the power is not negotiable for the ruling party at the moment.

This study has illustrated that post-conflict reconciliation develops openings for transformative thinking, whether it is visions of justice, or re-thinking gender from binaries and stereotypes into holistic equality of all people. In case these openings are not utilized, the possibility of transformation is lost.

At the moment, ZCC is living interesting times. The head of the organisation has changed in 2022, and many other Christian organisations have given up on working for peace in Zimbabwe, due to the violence targeted towards civil society actors. Since my interviews took place, ZCC has also worked with the gender issues by establishing a gender desk for the organisation, that will address gender issues more widely. Therefore, a study on how the organisation's views on gender develop, would be interesting to research in the future.

Also, for the first time, the ZCC have started a reconciliation process that has government's support. This reconciliation process got support from the government, even though it addresses the Gukurahundi, in which the current government have been largely involved. However, the elections in Zimbabwe in August 2023 might as well mean the end of this well-started process, that would have

helped Zimbabwe in its way to a reconciled and peaceful society. In the future, it will be important to research, how intersectional aspects are noted in this process, and will this process bring transformation to the fractured society.

Since I started this study, there has also been a growing discussion on decolonialisation, both in research but also inside ZCC and its partner organisations. Even though this theme has not been addressed in this study, it would most certainly be an important angle when researching reconciliation. Especially in the context of Christianity, that has a long colonizing (and yet quite unaddressed) history.



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