

# Forward (N) ever! Backward march! Towards an Afro-centric Biblical philosophy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe

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## **Abstract**

*This article is an attempt to formulate an African Biblical theological model of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The history of Zimbabwe testifies that political violence has become endemic. It is this background that informed recent calls for national healing, reconciliation and integration. However, the biggest challenge to this endeavour is the model of reconciliation that should be adopted to bring about national healing and integration. This article contends that, without considering the African past; that is, the traditional Shona and Ndebele conceptions of justice, any attempt at reconciliation is doomed to fail. The article is premised upon the hypothesis that in order to move forward we need to look back. In other words, Zimbabweans will never move forward unless they reflect on and engage with their past. "Going back in order to move forward is consistent with African teachings of life" (Muhwati, 2010: 151-163). This observation lays the background for an Afro-centric scheme of reconciliation, hence the proposal that the Zacchaeus Episode Model (Luke 19: 8), which resonates with the Traditional Shona and Ndebele philosophy of reconciliation, be adopted in the quest for national healing in Zimbabwe.*

**Key words:** National healing, reconciliation, justice, Shona, Ndebele, Zimbabwe

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## **Introduction**

This article discusses the problems besetting national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe today. While acknowledging the importance of religion, as represented by Christian leaders and traditional chiefs in the programme of national reconciliation and healing, the article bemoans the absence of a serious dialogue between Christianity and African Religions, which could produce an Afro-centric model of reconciliation. The first part of the article asserts that contrary to the popular scholarly opinions, recent politically motivated violence is not unprecedented; it is a continuation of a culture of violence (Kaulemu: 2011), and evidence that the nation has never truly healed and reconciled since 1980 when Zimbabwe attained political independence. The failure to appropriate the African philosophy of reconciliation by religious leaders and government authorities from 1980 is the notable weakness in the two previous attempts, in 1980 and 1987 respectively, at national healing, reconciliation and integration.

Since Zimbabwean churches have been co-opted by the government to help in the process of national healing and reconciliation, the second part of the article proposes a Biblical theological dimension to reconciliation by appealing for the adoption of the Zacchaeus Episode Model (Luke 19: 8), read from a literary-historical perspective and situated in the Jewish conception of justice and reconciliation. Such a model is in concordance with the Traditional Shona and Ndebele philosophy of reconciliation. The article concludes that without understanding the root cause of the conflicts, and without appealing to a model of reconciliation which is understood by the majority of Zimbabweans, national reconciliation, healing and integration will remain a pie in the sky.

## **Reconciliation efforts in Zimbabwe**

In February 2009, following a lengthy period of negotiations between three political parties: the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the Movement for Democratic Change Mutambara (MDC-M)<sup>1</sup>, Zimbabwe witnessed the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU). Immediately after, an organ responsible for national healing, reconciliation, and integration was established. To show the seriousness of the government in wanting to address these issues, the organ was made up of senior members of all the political parties: the late John Nkomo, the Vice President of Zimbabwe, (ZANU-PF); the late Gibson Sibanda, Vice President of MDC-M, and Mrs Sekai Holland (MDC-T). Officially launching the programme of national

healing, reconciliation and integration, President Robert G. Mugabe set out three days, from 24 to 26 July 2009, to rally the nation behind this cause as well as to place the programme in the hands of God. Churches and Traditional leaders were asked by both the organ and the President to be proactive in seeking strategies to establish peace and reconciliation. President Mugabe (2009) said:

...I further enjoin all the country's traditional and faith-based leaders at all levels to assume their age-old responsibility to make devotions to the creator with solemn ceremonies; to seek the cleansing of our land, Zimbabwe, from the curse of conflict and bloodshed; to make supplication for forgiveness and prosperity and to seek everlasting guidance for the nation of Zimbabwe from generation to generation.

There are three issues raised here in this speech that are worth noting. First, there is an implicit acceptance that the nation is bleeding from internal conflicts. Second, these conflicts (and violence) have become an endemic culture that needs urgent attention. Third, there is implicit acknowledgement that previous attempts at reconciliation have not worked, and that there should be a shift towards seeking reconciliation through the appropriation of religious/divine solutions. Such a shift is in concordance with Heike Schmidt's observation that 'collective experiences of violence require social healing which is located in the religious sphere' (Schmidt, 1997: 301-310). The inclusion of the churches and traditional chiefs as key players in the reconciliation process is an affirmation of the centrality of religion in the Zimbabwean society. Statistically, 70-80% of the Zimbabweans go to church, and about 98% of the total national population believes in God and the influence and power of spirits (ancestral, avenging, alien and ghost among others) in the affairs of human beings (Shoko, 2007). Therefore, failure to incorporate religious solutions to problems in such a society is counterproductive.

### **Background to recent calls for reconciliation in Zimbabwe**

From the year 2000, as ZANU-PF and MDC contested for political power, several crimes and atrocities were committed by both parties. It is alleged that thousands of homes were burnt to ashes. Hundreds of people lost their lives through beatings and torture. Cattle, goats, sheep, chickens and other livestock were either killed for meat, sold or just taken from their owners. While most of the perpetrators wilfully committed these crimes, some were forced to engage in these atrocities.

Several stories are told of men who were forced to sleep with their own daughters, daughters-in-law, and mothers-in-law. During this period, Zimbabwe witnessed a situation where relative turned against relative, neighbour against neighbour, parent against child, sister against sister, and brother against brother. In short, the experiences reminded one of the Matabeleland disturbances of the 1980s, when racism and ethnic violence led to the commission of hideous crimes against the Ndebele.

### **Racism and tribalism in the MDC**

A close analysis of the violence shows that Zimbabweans had not truly reconciled at Independence in 1980, and in 1987 when ZANU PF and PF ZAPU signed a unity agreement following years of fighting. Racism and tribalism continued to play a big role in the violence of 2000 to 2008. This is clear evidence of the failure of the previous ventures to fully and truly reconcile different races and ethnicities. Notably missing in the previous attempts at reconciliation was an acceptance of responsibility, dialogue, justice and reparation. Each section of the society kept the suspicion about the other, secretly awaiting an opportunity to manifest its anger.

The formation of the MDC in 1999 availed such an opportunity. This coincided with the beginning of the land reforms, where black Zimbabweans (both Shonas and Ndebeles) fought with white farmers to repossess their land which was taken away during colonisation. In the eyes of ZANU-PF, supporting MDC became synonymous with being a puppet of the whites (former Rhodesians, Britain and their western allies) who, for a long time, had been using the politics of divide and rule by promoting regionalism, tribalism and partyism. There is a lot of substance in arguing that the MDC was formed or hijacked by white economic interests; foreign and local. Paradoxically, these are the same powers against which the MDC was ‘formed’ by workers, students, unemployed and poor peasants.

That the MDC is a front of white Rhodesians and a puppet of the western powers is premised upon three related factors. First, it gets support (ideological, financial, technical and moral) from white former Rhodesian farmers, and European and American governments. While the MDC has always denied this, the Wikileaks of November 2010 revealed that this relationship exists.

Second, the MDC is dominated by former Rhodesians: commercial farmers, legal experts and industrialists. Roy Bennett, David Coltart, Eddy Cross, Brian James, Ian Kay and Stevenson Trudy are just a few

examples of former Rhodesians who occupy positions of authority in the MDC. Most of them own farms and companies that they inherited from their ancestors who dispossessed black people of their land during the colonial era. There are thousands of these former Rhodesians (commercial farmers) who openly funded the MDC, and most of them were directly involved in the Ian Smith regime that denied black people any rights. They zealously participated as police officers, soldiers, and intelligence operatives who killed thousands of black people. It is estimated that around 80 000 black Zimbabweans perished, 450 000 were wounded, 250 000 displaced and the majority of them were women and children (Sachikonye, 2005: 11).

Third, former MDC officials have also revealed that there is a questionable relationship between the MDC leadership on the one hand and industrialists, commercial farmers and western powers on the other. Munyaradzi Gwisai, former MDC Member of Parliament, acknowledges that the MDC leadership was hijacked by white farmers, employers and foreign interests only six months after its formation. He says:

The MDC party in terms of its leadership was now being led by employers, the party had become very close to the western governments like Britain, America, the IMF, and the World Bank. These were the very same people who had worked with Mugabe to introduce ESAP Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes which in turn introduced unprecedented poverty. The rich, the white farmers, the business community, only came in after February 2000 e.g. the economic Eddie Cross and a whole lot of other people who moved in...because they saw that the MDC was offering real change and bringing in a working people's government. And they came in to ensure that they would try and hijack this programme (SW Radio Africa, 24 May 2005).

In line with Gwisai's argument, Gabriel Chaibva, also former MDC Member of Parliament and Secretary of Information and Publicity, made stunning revelations about the 'handlers' of the MDC. He revealed that the party is controlled by the whites and the western powers who use tribal fronts (NewZimbabwe.com, 3 February 2010). These revelations constitute enough background to postulate that Britain and America, among other western powers, have always been behind the MDC, with the objective of unseating ZANU-PF. Also, these revelations confirm ZANU-PF's views regarding the MDC outfits. According to Jonathan

Moyo (2009), in 1999 the British political establishment, through its political parties made up of Labourites, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats decided to seek regime change in Zimbabwe. The objective was to stop land reform and frustrate the empowerment of the people by creating a tribal frontline led by Tsvangirai, which was supposed to make up the so-called “South-South Ethnic Co-operation” (mainly from Matabeleland but also from Manicaland) as the most potent opposition to ZANU-PF.

Following the MDC split in 2005, Moyo’s ‘South-South Ethnic Co-operation’ theory was vindicated as the reactions of the factions clearly indicated entrenched tribal tensions, especially regarding the filling of vacancies. Welshman Ncube led the predominantly Ndebele faction while Morgan Tsvangirai remained with the predominantly Shona group. To disguise ethnic alignment, both camps picked members of the other tribe to fill in posts. Tsvangirai chose Ndebele speaking people (from Matabeleland) to fill in positions that were left vacant by Ndebeles. Similarly, Professor Welshman Ncube also picked Shona speaking people to occupy offices that were vacated by Shona occupants. Some of these people had not been politically active. For instance, Professor A.G.O Mutambara (who is Shona from Manicaland) was invited by Ncube to be president to fill in Tsvangirai’s post. In the end we have MDC-T for Tsvangirai and MDC-M for Mutambara. Clearly, the choices were done on tribal lines rather than political activism or managerial capabilities.

### **Racism and tribalism in the ZANU-PF**

ZANU-PF is also accused (by the MDC and its allies) of racism and regionalism. The MDC claims that ZANU-PF does not consider whites in Zimbabwe as full Zimbabwean citizens. From 2000 these ideas were recycled by the media, journalists, academics, white farmers and political scientists sympathetic to MDC. The recently published book by David Kaulemu reinforces this point (Kaulemu, 2012). There are also MDC academics and political scientists in Zimbabwe who accuse ZANU-PF of being a Zezuru ethnic party, hence ‘Zezurocracy’ (Mbanga, 2005; Makumbe, 2009). The emergence of Mavambo Kusile Dawn (MKD) from ZANU -PF ‘split’ in 2007, with a Shona-speaking Simba Makoni (from Manicaland) and Ndebele-speaking Dumiso Dabengwa (from Matabeleland), gives some credence to the above views. While the relationship was short lived as in 2008 Dabengwa distanced himself from Makoni, citing financial misappropriation, it is clear that the party

was established along ethnic considerations.

Dabengwa claimed, as he distanced himself from the Unity Accord (of 1987 between PF ZAPU and ZANU PF), that Mugabe had diverted from the liberation goals by fostering tribalism. Dabengwa re-established ZAPU. For him the revived ZAPU was ‘to foster the same old ZAPU spirit where people would meet and identify each other as *‘umntwana wemhlabathi/ mwana wevhu’* (son/daughter of the soil) rather than discriminate against each other based on tribal lines as had been propagated by the current ZANU-PF leadership (Ncube, 2009).

The accusations of racism and tribalism in recent political party splits speak volumes about the past reconciliation processes. It is indicative of the fact that the attempts at reconciling the Zimbabwean nation has so far failed. The African philosophy that considers reparation as a necessary condition for healing and reconciliation was never used. It is because of previous failures that I argue a case for an Afro-centred philosophy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. I address two key questions in this paper: Is it possible to talk about reconciliation without justice in Zimbabwe? What form of justice system should be applied in order to achieve peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe?

### **The Traditional Shona and Ndebele philosophy of justice and reconciliation**

It is important to remember that although there is diversity among African cultures, generally the majority of African cultures are not fragmented into separate spheres such as religion, politics and economy. Also, the observation by Mbiti (1977: xi) that despite rapid changes that have been witnessed across Africa, traditional values still form the backbone of many African cultures holds true in Zimbabwe. Among the rural dwellers especially, traditional religious and philosophical practices and ideas are still in full force. This provides the rationale for appealing to the traditional African philosophy of reconciliation and justice as understood by the Ndebele and the Shona people of Zimbabwe. My use of the term ‘philosophy’ of reconciliation in this article is guided by an Afro-centric paradigm which understands philosophy as “[...] a historically circumscribed quest for wisdom that puts forward new interpretations of the world based on past traditions in order to promote existential sustenance,” (West, 1989: 230). As such, philosophy itself is a culture which views proverbs, dress, music, dance, storytelling, and rituals as avenues for expressing that culture.

The Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe believe that

restorative justice is a prerequisite for reconciliation. Restorative justice is defined as a philosophy of justice that emphasises the need to repair damage, loss or harm engendered by criminal behaviour (Muhwati, Gambahaya and Magena, 2006). Thus, justice for the Shona and Ndebele entails redress for every crime committed, as expressed in the proverb; *mhosva hairovi/ haivori mushonga wacho kuiripa*. Literally translated, it means that crime does not decay or cannot be concealed forever. Failure to correct one's misdeeds would not bring peace to the victim and his/her family. This stems from the belief among the Shona and the Ndebele that God is the final guardian of law and order and of moral and ethical codes. Therefore, the breaking of such an order, whether by an individual or a group, is ultimately an offence by the collective body of society (Mbiti, 1971: 206).

This is the reason why colonial administrators in Rhodesia had problems settling cases among the Shona. A case of murder for example, could be handled by the law courts and a death sentence passed. But for the Shona, such a verdict would not resolve the case. The victim's family would raise the case anew in their chief's court and the offender, through his family, would also be ordered to pay compensation to the victims' family (Bourdillon, 1998: 144-145). Today, this traditional legal principle still holds among the Shona.<sup>2</sup> Failure to compensate the victim is considered as failure to appease the spirit of the victim, and this means that there has been no reconciliation between the dead and the living.

The proverb, *mushonga wengozi kuripa* (the medicine for an avenging spirit (ngozi) is payment) says it all. *Ngozi* (the spirit of the victim of murder who 'comes back' to demand justice) is only settled through compensation, either by offering a girl child who is symbolically married to the spirit of the dead, or by payment of cattle. If one does not pay, *ngozi* strikes the family of the perpetrator, by causing mysterious deaths, deadly illnesses, or other misfortunes (Shoko, 2007: 42). While such a philosophy is valid as a traditional system of restitution, there is an underlying danger if it is literally applied as it may lead to child abuse. I argue that any application of traditional law should be conscious of the need to modernise traditional systems to avoid using children as payment for avenging spirits.

Because reconciliation is not just a matter of emotions or feelings (evidenced by tears, handshakes and hugs), for the Shona and Ndebele, tokens were frequently demanded. A token of admission of guilt must be physically given to the other party (*muripo*). Also, a material form of



reconciliation (*chipeto*) between the feuding parties is required (Gombe, 1986: 21). In the case of more serious offences such as murder, payment is in the form of cattle. Since there were no prisons in traditional Shona and Ndebele societies, the severity of a person's crime was measured by the number of cattle he had to lose (Tsodzo, 1970: 18). A verbal statement alone was of little value. Statements were supported by visible action involving the transference of some material token, which could later be exhibited as proof of what has been said (Bourdillon, *ibid*: 129). In the case of livestock theft or the theft of other movable property, the thief returned the stolen property to the rightful owner, and something else was paid as a penalty (Kabweza, 2002: 99). A verbal apology alone was never enough.

The proverbs *Vagwi ndovawirirani* (fighting parties will eventually reconcile) and *Mvura bvongodzeki ndiyo gadzani/gadzikani* (troubled waters shall eventually be still) show that the reconciliation of the feuding parties was at the centre of the Shona and Ndebele traditional justice system (Bourdillon, *ibid*: 127), and that whatever the crime, ultimately there must be reconciliation. When disputes arose there were various levels at which people attempted to resolve them and reconcile the parties involved. Mediation started at the family level, and when the matter could not be resolved, it proceeded to a hearing presided over by village or ward headman and, finally, the chief (Gelfand, 1973: 89; Gombe, *ibid*: 20; Magena, 2007: 173; Mangena, 2012; Muhwati, et al, 2006: 4). As such, for the Shona and the Ndebele, the chief's court acted as a court of appeal.

Traditionally, truth was central to reconciliation and restoration of social harmony in the Shona and Ndebele courts. Emphasis was placed on establishing the root cause of disputes. But since a resolution was an imperative prerequisite of reconciliation, the process did not have to rationally and impartially apply abstract rules; truth needed to be contextualised because it did not entail facts as they are understood in the context of a western court of law. Truth, for the Shona and Ndebele, meant that one had to be polite and pleasing. As a result, a Shona person often said what he/she thought his/her audience wished to hear rather than the strict truth, especially when speaking to someone regarded with deference (Bourdillon, *ibid*: 129).

Unlike the western conception of justice that leaves out family members who are, according to the Shona and Ndebele people, very important players in the process of reconciliation, the African philosophy of justice directly involves the family of the victim(s) and

that of perpetrator(s). According to the Shona and Ndebele, the guilt of one person is the guilt of the entire household. Implied in this philosophy is that crime is committed against the whole family/community, not against an individual. It also connotes that crime is inherited (the perpetrator passes it on to his/her immediate descendants and even to the extended family). The family of the victim is therefore entitled to receive compensation, even if the victim is dead.

The land issue in Zimbabwe is one instance where this philosophy may be applied. Today, black Zimbabweans always refer to white farmers as people who dispossessed them of their land. But most people in Zimbabwe today, both black and white were not yet born when white people took land from black people during colonialism. For the Shona and Ndebele, in as much as one inherits material wealth from deceased parents, one also inherits their crimes (and other liabilities). Indigenous Zimbabweans therefore believe that the act of dispossession that happened to their ancestors was done to them and they deserve to be compensated. This is the African philosophy that needs to be considered by church leaders and academics as they call for reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

### **The church and reconciliation: Lessons from Zacchaeus**

The importance of the Church in healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe cannot be overemphasised. However, the problem is that the Church has not been fully Africanised to effectively deal with Zimbabwean problems such as post-colonial conflicts. Inculturation in Africa has thus remained more of a wish than a realised fact (Schreiter, 1991: viii). In the case of Zimbabwe, the Church has not embraced the African traditional philosophy of reconciliation. Contrary to the Shona and Ndebele concept of reconciliation, which is premised on restitution, church conferences and prayer rallies were held across the denominations and texts such as Matthew 18: 21-22 were read to encourage Zimbabweans to forgive unconditionally, as many times as possible (Machingura, 2010: 347).

What these church rallies did not take into consideration is the fact that in the cultures of the black Zimbabweans, there is no forgiveness or healing without restitution. If victims of land dispossessions are not compensated for their loss, it is impossible for healing and reconciliation to be realised in Zimbabwe. In other words, Zimbabweans are asked, by the churches, to move on without first looking back, to act as if nothing ever happened at all, and to forget about the loss of land and

not to demand compensation. History has shown that unconditional reconciliation is alien to the people of Africa, Zimbabwe in particular, and cannot bring healing. Therefore, reading such texts as Matthew 18: 21-22 which reads: Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” promotes a culture of violence and conflict.

### **The Zacchaeus episode as a model of reconciliation for Zimbabwe**

Any Biblical interpretation that hopes to bring about reconciliation in Zimbabwe must take on board the Shona and Ndebele philosophy of justice. The Zacchaeus story in Luke 19:1-9, especially verse 8, read from a literary-historical perspective, can help bring healing and reconciliation to the Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. Luke 19:8 reads, “And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much”. Such a reading yields results that correspond closely to the Shona and Ndebele traditional conception of justice and reconciliation.

In Luke 19: 8, Zacchaeus, after having met Jesus and having been forgiven, realised that it was not enough just to say, ‘sorry’ to the people he had previously wronged. His words had to be matched with action that served as acknowledgement and admission of guilt. Zacchaeus, in verse 8b said, “[...] and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” Zacchaeus realised that words alone did not mean anything without redress, and volunteered to amend his past wrongs when Jesus forgave him ‘undeservedly’. He vowed to repay (all) those he had defrauded in the past and, by implication, to take care not to defraud anyone in the future (Cullpepper, 1995). What Zacchaeus promised was not new. It was the norm and expectation in the Jewish society of the time. The pledge by Zacchaeus tallies with the Old Testament laws of restitution that governed the ancient Israelite society. Although Old Testament laws varied a lot, and that with time they became less strict, Zacchaeus offered to follow the most stringent standards to demonstrate his sincerity and contrition. Leviticus 6:5 states that, “you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay to its owner when you realise your guilt” (New Revised Standard Version, cf Numbers 5:7). It was also common practice among the Jews that if a stolen animal was found alive in the thief’s possession, the thief was required to pay double (Exodus 22:4). If the stolen animal

was slaughtered or sold, the thief was required to pay fivefold for an ox and fourfold for a sheep (Exodus 22:1; 2 Samuel 12:6 (Cullpepper, *ibid*). Therefore, Zacchaeus, by volunteering to repay fourfold what he had taken, did exactly what was expected by the Jewish tradition. Thus, although he appears to have volunteered, traditional law compelled him to do so.

This interpretation of the Zacchaeus episode resonates with the Shona and Ndebele traditional legal systems. Thus, Nyamiti (1991) argues for the Church in Africa to embrace an African worldview as a vehicle for evangelisation. Therefore the Church in Zimbabwe needs to consider the Shona/Ndebele philosophy of restitution as an important prerequisite for lasting peace and reconciliation. The interpretation and communication of the Gospel message must be guided by this traditional Shona worldview.

The proposed approach is consistent with the realities in Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans, as is common among Africans (and any other group of people across the globe), have always been reading the Bible selectively, citing and applying into their lives those passages of scripture which resonate with their culture. As Mbiti (1986:26) observed, “Africans hear and see a confirmation of their own cultural, social and religious life in the life and history of the Jewish people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible”. This is very true of the Shona in Zimbabwe. They, as most ‘Africans see and hear, in the Bible, descriptions parallel to those of their own traditional life’ (Schreiter, 1991: viii).

Recent studies on African proverbs, including those of the Shona and Ndebele, have revealed very close similarities between African worldview and proverbs in the Old Testament (and of the ancient Israelite society) (Holter, 1999; Ndogo, 2007; Nyika, 2008). This provides a rationale for dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religions in Zimbabwe. It enables traditional chiefs and Christian leaders to come up with one model of reconciliation. In fact, it is encouraging to note that in Zimbabwe, as far back as 1993, some Church leaders realised the need for the Zacchaeus example regarding the issue of land (see Bakare, 1993). As such, the same approach could be appropriated to promote reconciliation in other spheres of life.

### **The quest for the Zacchaeus model in Zimbabwe: Looking back**

The first calls for the Zacchaeus approach to reconciliation in Zimbabwe were over the land issue. Retired Anglican Bishop Sebastian Bakare, commenting on the land issue and reconciliation in 1980 argued that

repentance is a necessary aspect of reconciliation. In his view, genuine repentance itself involves a change of heart that is evident in deeds, not just words. He quoted the Zacchaeus story, saying that Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector's willingness to pay back as much as four times what he had stolen from his fellow human beings was not meant to assuage his conscience against theft; it was to right the wrongs he had committed (see Bakare, 1993).

The aspect of redress as we have argued above has been missing in the Zimbabwean context. Thirty-three years after independence, there is no sign that white people have accepted responsibility for the wrongs committed by their ancestors in dispossessing the Africans of their land. They have not even accepted the hand of reconciliation that was extended by the government at independence. They instead resorted to every trick in the book to retain the land (Kilgore, 2009). But, if justice is to be done, considering that the Zimbabwean crises (racial, tribal and political) begin and end with the land issue, land grabbers, like Zacchaeus, have to give the land back to its owners. I agree with Bakare's observation that the question of compensation on developments on the farms, which has been accepted by the government of Zimbabwe as a legitimate procedure to acquire land from large-scale farmers for the purposes of settling peasants is, unfortunately, a legitimisation of the settler's method of land acquisition (Bakare, 61). According to the Shona concept of justice, the government of Zimbabwe should neither pay for the land nor the developments on the farms.

My contention is that white settlers and their descendants made a lot of wealth from utilising the land (for more than hundred years, from 1890 to present) such that there should not be any compensation at all. I argue that it is the white people who must compensate black people who were dispossessed of their land for more than a century. If we accept that black people are victims of land dispossession, it follows that they (or their government) should not be compelled to pay compensation to the perpetrator. If they are, justice would not have been served. Expecting the victims to buy back the land (with their taxes) is like making them pay for the wrongs of others.

Thus genuine reconciliation involves repentance and restitution. In the same way, the relationship between Africans and settlers was broken by dispossession, and true reconciliation will be possible only through restitution and a genuine attempt to rectify the age old injustice (Bakare 1993: 63). For Zimbabweans, no criminal case is considered closed until there is a settlement which involves transference of tokens

of compensation, which in turn symbolise an acceptance of guilt. This is the clearest message the churches and traditional leaders have to consider.

## Conclusion

The article has established that recent events in Zimbabwe, especially politically motivated violence (which ignited the call for national healing, reconciliation and integration), should not be divorced from the racial and economic struggles in the country. In criticising the two previous attempts at reconciliation, I have proposed the adoption of the traditional Shona and Ndebele philosophy of reconciliation and justice encoded in the proverb; *mhosva hairovi, mushonga wacho kuripa*. The basis for this argument is that since the majority of the victims are the Shona and Ndebele people, it is reasonable to expect that a model of reconciliation that they understand and practice must be used to achieve reconciliation and healing in Zimbabwe. As such, I have argued that reconciliation without restorative justice is unattainable in Zimbabwe. I have, instead, proposed that the Zacchaeus Episode Model, which resonates with Jewish conception of justice and reconciliation, and the Shona and Ndebele traditional religion and Christian scriptures, be adopted if reconciliation is to be realised.

## Notes

1. It is important to explain the naming of the two MDCs here. In 1999, a new political party called Movement for Democratic Change was formed in Zimbabwe. But in 2005, following an internal misunderstanding and power struggles, the party split into two; and subsequently named after the leaders; MDC-T and MDC-M. In 2010, MDC-M split into two; Mutambara remained leader of another faction while another faction is headed by Prof Weshman Ncube and the party has subsequently been named MDC-N: that is MDC Ncube.
2. The story involving Bikita West (MDC) Member of Parliament, Heya Shoko who in May 2010 was charged with murder by the magistrate after an accident that killed a nine year old child, confirms that this principle applies in contemporary Zimbabwe. Owen Chikari reported that the family (of the deceased) demanded six heads of cattle and US\$3 000.00. This was independent from the police and magistrate's court processes. Cf. *The Daily News*. 07 April 2010.

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