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# Miroslav Volf's Theology of Memory in Relation to Zimbabwean Social Narratives

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**Abstract:** The issue of the theology of memory has been acknowledged in a number of Miroslav Volf's publications, including "The End of Memory". In light of Volf's public theology of memory, this article addressed the issue of what should be done for Zimbabweans who witnessed the public tragedies of Gukurahundi, Fast Tracked Land Reform Programme, Murambatsvina, and election-related conflicts and death. Every one of these people has a slightly unique story to tell. Stories on social injustice in Zimbabwe can be told from different kinds of angles. Aspects of Volf's theology of memory that encourage the development of both new narratives and memories of social injustice narratives are discussed in the article's conclusion. This article examines social justice in Zimbabwe through an interpretation of Miroslav Volf's public theology of memory. Miroslav Volf's theology will be used as a point of departure and critique in this article, along with a mixed approach to qualitative research and the gathering and analysis of the relevant research literature.

**Keywords:** theology of memory; narratives; remembering; Miroslav Volf; wrongdoing; healing; public memory; social injustice



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## 1. Introduction

The theology of memory put forth by Miroslav Volf can provide a useful framework for addressing Zimbabwe's complex historical and social problems. As one of the most well-known public theologians, Volf's theology is contextualised in this study because it highlights how important it is to remember and confront the past, especially when it comes to pain, violence, and injustice. In spite of the unique combination of theological understanding, multidisciplinary methods, and personal narratives, Volf's writings are still highly recommended. Zimbabwe's history is characterised by colonialism, liberation wars, and post-independence conflicts; Volf's discusses the historical trauma. Zimbabweans may encounter and recover from similar painful experiences with the support of Volf's theology. A national dialogue over historical atrocities like Gukurahundi and Land Reform can be facilitated by the theology of memory and promote accountability and forgiveness. Zimbabweans can also endeavour to create a society that is more inclusive and cohesive by reflecting on and learning from the past.

## 2. The Present Memory-Related Issues and the Violent Situations in Zimbabwe

According to [Gobodo-Madikizela \(2016, p. 114\)](#), subtle, systematic acts of violence that compromise people's sense of worth and dignity as well as sneaky acts of violence that compromise their psychological and spiritual integrity are among the most damaging

acts of violence to the human soul. There are more times in Zimbabwean life when the people require the state, or Zimbabwean government, to provide them with answers. The government and ruling party of Zimbabwe will be referred to as the state in this article. The community of Christ followers in Zimbabwe, representing all churches and ecumenical boards, will be referred to as the church or religious institutions.

As stated by [Gobodo-Madikizela \(2016\)](#), recalling the past involves addressing unpleasant and difficult realities. The following situations that took place in Zimbabwe ought to be remembered accurately and handled appropriately. The implementation of the Gukurahundi approach against the Ndebele-speaking population in the 1980s, who were suspected of harbouring dissidents, was merely an early example of the violent mentality that currently permeates the entire nation, claims [Ndlovu-Gatsheni \(2012, p. 4\)](#). Gukurahundi's political objective was to overthrow the capitalist system, the white settler rule, the "internal settlement puppets", and any other hindrances to ZANU-PF's rise to power. The incidents are still remembered by people. According to [Ndlovu-Gatsheni \(2012, p. 5\)](#), Zimbabwe's political use of memorialisation and commemoration goes back to the liberation war, when ZANU-PF skilfully and strategically exploited specific events to both popularise itself and assert that it was the only one who started the liberation struggle. However, the government knows that what they did was completely wrong; thus, events like Gukurahundi are mentioned but not told. However, [Mpofo and Makombe \(2023, p. xviii\)](#) noted that efforts by the Zimbabwean government to wipe out Gukurahundi from public memory had not been successful. This is because information about the genocide and the experiences of individuals, families, and communities have been passed down through the years. As a result, third generations who were not personally affected by it are now more expressive in their unhappiness and fury. This causes a significant fracture in the nation's concept by widening and hardening the gap between the generalised victims of Ndebele and the general perpetrators, the Shona.

The Land Reform Programme of the 2000s is examined by [Matondi \(2012, p. 4\)](#), who expresses being concerned about the fact that the policies were formulated centrally without much direct local involvement or perspective. Violence penetrated the political action of land reform in relation to the land seizure. The current administration wanted broad backing for its land takeover initiative. Workers and landowners suffered harassment and violence, and they lost their land and possessions. This left an impact on the public's memories of people being abused and losing their livelihoods. As noted by [Matondi \(2012, p. 16\)](#), one of the programmes that divided Zimbabwean society and generated conflict between those whose land was seized and those who legitimately claimed the same land as having been historically expropriated was the land reform process. The majority of formal business entities shut down after the land reform programme, and many people lost their work in small towns and on farms. Then, people flocked to large towns and cities. Many illegal homes and illegal business sectors grew as a result of the major cities' inability to meet the demand for housing. Products from the informal marketplace predominated in the marketplaces. Operation Murambatsvina took place when Zimbabwe was struggling to give its citizens access to formal jobs, housing, basic needs, and other social amenities, according to [Musoni \(2010, p. 316\)](#). A report by [Nicolai \(2005, p. 818\)](#), in May 2005, stated army officials and police officers detained thousands of people, destroyed and set fire to homes and businesses, and made people destroy their own property. Due to the fact that the majority of the people were left vulnerable, stranded on the streets, and forced to migrate illegally to other neighbouring countries, this contributed to the public memory of the majority of Zimbabweans. The nation's economy and urban poor were impacted by this clean-up effort. Significant election-related conflict has occurred in Zimbabwe, leading to fatalities and violations of human rights. The narration of all those stories was

poor. The 2008 presidential election, which saw a great deal of violence, is one of the most notable examples. According to [Mwangovya \(2023\)](#), human suffering, displacement, and fatalities have been linked to Zimbabwe's political election history. According to [Bourne \(2011, p. 266\)](#), by the second half of 2008, Zimbabwe had devolved into a failed state, with life expectancy plummeting, the economy contracting, emigration, and basic services deteriorating. Everything was politicised, and opposition leaders and their supporters were abused. All of these memories still exist because they happened in Zimbabwe.

### 3. The Challenge of Remembrance

In the view of [Denis \(2016, p. 7\)](#), all memories are positioned on a continuous interaction between individuals and shared memories, but recollection is still an individual act that is influenced by the context. The difficulty of "remembering rightly" is a topic Volf writes on. People in Zimbabwe frequently forget things and mistakenly believe they are recalling facts when they are not. The majority of Zimbabweans have covertly helped their deteriorating memory so they may unintentionally pass off fiction as truth. Christian and political leaders need to be aware of how memory helps us connect our current selves to our past selves. Falsehood can penetrate the space between now and then, and imagination can fill in whatever gaps in "memory" that exist. Most stories do contain some truth, but it is usually truth that has little to do with what actually happened. Sometimes, people will tell themselves a made-up truth. [Volf \(2006, p. 47\)](#) asserts, "The truth about the past is merely the story we find most compelling, either because it is attractive and useful to us or because it has been imposed upon us by some social constraint or subtle persuasion". This article's approach will be to consider the nation's historical narratives as fictionalised memories of some important event that both state and religious leaders must comprehend. Because they have been moulded over many generations of narration and interpretation, the majority of the Zimbabwean stories told in Gukurahundi, 2000 Land Reform, and Murambatsvina are exceptionally complex. The interpretation of facts that the original storytellers placed on the victims, the government, civic society, church, and political opponents shapes the myth of land distribution in Zimbabwe.

The fictionalised narratives of social injustice and land reform from various groups in Zimbabwe have been influenced by how they have been used by the intervening generations and ultimately by how we choose to tell the story today. Political leaders and Christian institutions in Zimbabwe must work together to help the nation re-examine its history and reframe its central narratives. The interpretation must respect the veracity of what occurred (as accurately as we can piece together that veracity) and mould the memory's presentation in a way that elevates national ideals while incorporating crucial new values as necessary.

In order for Zimbabweans to get back together and move on from the changes in their lives, this study suggests that they must first communicate their previous feelings and have the ability to forgive those who have wronged them. In accordance with [Volf \(2006, p. 9\)](#), the memory must be directed by the pledge to be kind and helpful, even to the wrongdoer. Many victims consider they are under no responsibility to love the perpetrator and are likely to assume that if they did, it would betray rather than fulfil their humanity. As defined by [Denis \(2016, p. 6\)](#), memory is the capacity to encode, store, and retrieve information. The process of remembering involves numerous interrelated parts of the brain.

As we are all aware, when you repeatedly portray a group of people as one thing, they end up being that thing. This is what happened in Zimbabwe during the land reform. "Rambai Makashinga, (Continue to endure)" is a song (jingle) that the Zimbabwean government introduced. The topic of land and its redistribution was raised in the song.

According to [Sibanda \(2004\)](#), these songs conveyed an ideologically articulated support for land reform, which served as the focal point of ZANU PF's election campaign and selling point, in both an overt and covert manner. [Sibanda \(2004\)](#) provides an eye-opening number, noting that one jingle, "Rambai Makashinga", was broadcast on all four radio stations 288 times per day and 72 times per day on television. Land was a recurring motif in the music created during that time. As noted by [Chitando \(2005, p. 224\)](#), the President and Cabinet, which were led by a pro-government critic, were in charge of postcolonial propaganda campaigns. A department of 20 religious themes were created in the last quarter of political activities and were frequently broadcast on radio and television. The setting was set by a deep narrator whose voice was similar to most biblical documentaries: "In the beginning was the land". On the land were the people. The land belonged to the people. It will always be the same as it was in the beginning. Greetings from Zimbabwe. We are reasonable people". The approach used in this research holds that allowing people in positions of power to shape our memories is not always essential. It is necessary for both the general public and those in positions of authority to comprehend the past. The present moment is unclear, and the future of Zimbabwe is unknown. This situation could promote an unhealthy attachment to the past. It is crucial to give such memories careful thought.

#### 4. The Quest for Theology of Memory in Zimbabwe

[Adichie \(2016, p. 87\)](#) narratives are important. Stories can be used to empower and humanise people, but they have also been used to oppress and dehumanise. A people's dignity can be damaged by stories, but it can also be restored. The church must understand that it develops into a community that is both reconciled and reconciling. It is evident that if the people do wrong, some actions have been performed and that they have committed an offence when judgement is rendered as a moral discriminatory act. In this way, judgement helps both the person who was hurt and the perpetrator remember the offence correctly. Three main principles of damage remembered right are identified by [Volf \(2006, p. 96\)](#): remembering the truth, remembering to heal, and remembering to draw lessons from the past. Even though Volf is explicit about how memory might be distorted to preserve the innocence of the rememberer and lost over time, it is still necessary to recall as accurately as possible.

Denying the perpetrator's identity or the severity of the damage they caused is a significant obstacle to victims' ability to heal. Restoring broken relationships, resolving imbalances, and attempting to rehabilitate both the victim and the offender who ought to be given the chance to reintegrate into the community he has harmed by his offense are the main concerns, according to [Tutu \(1999, p. 55\)](#). The approach taken by this research challenges Zimbabwe's government and church to see that, by avoiding denial, victims can heal from their suffering by honestly admitting wrongdoing. Denial isolates offenders from the full consequences of their actions and prevents them from growing from their transgression. Sincere recollection gives offenders the chance to reflect on the effects of their actions and learn from them in order to make changes. The Zimbabwean government must come to terms with the fact that the mistakes made by Murambatsvina, the Land Reform Programme, and the Gukurahundi were real. This is one of the lessons we learnt from Volf. [Bates \(2020, p. 31\)](#) asserts that it has taken a lot of practical rethinking to adapt narrative approaches to working with people in a distant community. Keeping in mind that every discussion should focus on the local context facilitated communication and generated resonances that ran across the stories, including themes like language, culture, connection, the immensity of distance, and time. Stories are constructed with local context by their narrators. This needs to be undertaken authentically, taking into account the actual circumstances of the traumatised individuals in Zimbabwe. In accordance with

Volf and McAnnally-Linz (2016, p. 203), without unwavering respect for individuals, particularly when we are unable to respect their positions and actions, no constructive public engagement for the common good is possible. Furthermore, without cultivating the virtue of respect, no such regard will be attainable. In order for people across Zimbabwe to have peace of mind and go on with their lives, they must respect one another's feelings and face their past memories. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Banyera (2015, p. 9) also reiterate this, saying that any mythology and process used to achieve justice and reconciliation must be able to deal with the violent and conflictual legacy of history without obstructing future attempts to forge a strong nation.

## 5. Volf's Theology of Collective Public Memory and Its Challenge to Zimbabwe

In the words of Volf (2015, p. 144), in order to prevent the past from colonising the future, it is necessary to address the violent past. The interpenetration of our past, present, and future in our consciousness at any given moment is a feature of the human condition. Volf (2006, p. 10) discusses the topic of how Christians ought to remember wrongs done to them. In the words of Volf, memories must be forgotten in order to make way for new ones. He also contends that this process offers a public theology of memory, which holds because these memories have a significant influence on the future personality. Volf's theological reflection on memory is set against the backdrop of his traumatising experience. How Zimbabweans can recall correctly after going through so much adversity is the key question. Should they recall mistreatment, detention, and injustice as people devoted to forgiving the guilty and defeating evil with goodness? People are aware that it is difficult to remember all of the wrongs committed against them, including the loss of their justice and the abuse they endured. Volf is aware of the suffering and challenges that religious people face when attempting to live in accordance with God's will for the world.

We do not live with the events that make up our lives; rather, we exist with the stories that we tell ourselves about these events, according to Volf's truth about memory (Volf 2006, p. 41). In a dynamic relationship between self and memory, we shape the memories that mould us. Volf (2006, p. 26) asserts that "what we do with our memories will depend on how we see ourselves in the present and how we project ourselves into the future". Zimbabwe's future is defined by its past experiences. This suggests that Zimbabwean citizens require healing. According to Volf (2006, p. 28), 'healing will not simply result from viewing a remembered incident in a new way. More broadly, remembering your suffering is a requirement for personal healing but it's not a cure in and of itself. The meaning of healing is the interpretive work a person does with memory's religious institutions in Zimbabwe need to practise 'remembering well' as one of their key life skills. Thus, according to Volf (2006, p. 55), "the duty to remember truthfully is fundamentally a duty to act justly, even in such a seemingly straightforward act as 'identifying' what one person has done to another". How may people theologically being reflective on social justice and social injustice in Zimbabwe benefit from weaving these theological strands together? The natural tendency is to try to make sense of events when Zimbabwean citizens go through crisis or trauma.

According to Bourne (2011, p. 268), Zimbabwe is going through these challenging times because of decades in which its people did not view their fellow countrymen as equal members of society. Working hard, rewriting their past, avoiding power monopolisation, and gaining genuine respect are all necessary to restore Zimbabwe to its former glory. Making sense of many kinds of unpleasant experiences may be simple, but in instances of abominable evil and unjust suffering, Volf contends the public theology provides the most profound meaning. Regardless of how the one who suffers fares, we may count on God's

steadfast justice to triumph perhaps not in our lifetime, but at a moment of God's choosing, or the victims of the social injustice may turn to their faith in the things that will matter to help them make sense of the tragedies they must endure now. In the opinion of Volf (2015, p. 145), victims' memories tend to be long, and with the help of these memories, their pain and humiliation of the past can deprive them of a future, usurp a large portion of their identity, and drive them to commit offences themselves. If victims are able to forgive and so rid themselves of hatred and the guilty parties, the light of honest and public remembering can release them from the dead hand of the past.

## 6. The Meaning of the Theology of Memory

The topic that Volf (2006, p. 9) draws attention to is the memory of wrongdoing endured by a person who chooses to love the wrongdoer rather than to detest or disregard him or her. This may seem like an unusual method to approach the issue of remembering wrongs that have been done to you, but if you embrace the core of Christianity, you will be drawn out of your comfort zone and into the dangerous region designated by the vow to love your enemies. Being right-minded is important. The residents of Zimbabwe must be aware that how we create our memories and pass them down from one generation to the next has significant implications for identity, value clarification, and soul care. People need to be aware that our memories affect how we understand the world around us, how we act out our values, how we make decisions, and how we define our purpose. Denis (2016, p. 4) argues that through emphasising the past, people may give the present context. The churches, ecumenical organisations, religious groups, and theological institutions all use different methods to express their memories. When the context changes, memories can be lost, found, challenged, or marginalised. Religious entities, as in society as a whole, might have memories that were once opposed but are currently widely used.

In the words of Buttica and Norelli (2018, p. 79), memory is a broad term used to understand how the past and present are related to one another. It is defined as an exceptional career. Memory also has a significant influence on public discourse on critics' involvement with their own history and the significance of the past for comprehending the present in politics and the media. Memory teaches people how a country, a society, or a religious community view itself; hence, the past takes on significance when it is remembered in the sense that it is understood, honoured, and ritualised. Even while memory refers to individual recollections, it should be distinguished from public memorial celebrations. In order to access the past in the present, memory depends on the preservation and transfer of the remnants from the past.

In the opinion of Volf (2006, p. 28), the interpretive implies a person conducting with memory is what healing means. Therefore, remembering is a necessary component of salvation as well as personal healing, but remembering alone does not guarantee restoration. Truth telling is the only way to bring about healing. The truth is ready to be openly admitted by Chitando et al. (2020, p. 17), both individually and collectively. Every survivor has a right to the truth and information about how abuses affected them. For instance, many Zimbabweans experience shakes at Land Reform time. It is made worse by the continued mystery and denial surrounding the Land Reform time, which is bad news for national healing and reconciliation, not to mention the pursuit of justice. To remember is to participate in the past, to experience the past, to experience the past as a part of the story of a community's present, and to inspire the community's imaginations regarding its future, according to Cockayne and Salter (2021, p. 275). The idea of actualisation, which refers to the process through which a ritual or story enables the community to relive historical events, is essential to this corporate religion's sense of memory. Then, people might consider how

to apply these biblical notions of memory to modern practice by considering contemporary study on the psychology and philosophy of memory.

Given that memory is such a fundamental ethical and religious idea, Vosloo (2017, p. 5) contends that we should legitimately consider whether speaking of an art or even a responsibility of forgetting is consistent with our theological notions. Most of Zimbabwe's recent events have been purposefully untruthful because politicians have taken charge to advance their own agendas. In the culture of "just memory", as described by Vosloo (2017, p. 14), the emphasis ought to focus on the need to remember. This duty to remember should be utilised to criticise the unfair promotion and glorifying of forgive and forget and emphasise the obligation to recall circumstances of historical injustice. Volf and Vosloo can be viewed as public theologians who were interested in a thorough defence of forgetting in all its complexities and ambiguity.

## 7. What Can Religious Institutions in Zimbabwe Do to Address Volf's Contentions?

Awareness of oneself and other awareness are fundamentally based on memory. As stated by Volf (2006, p. 24), "when we serve ourselves from memory, we lose our identity—particularly the part of our identity that is rooted in God". Volf provides a Christian perspective by stating that to remember the Exodus is to be a Jew, and to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus is to be a Christian. Memories bring individuals together and aid in self-understanding. According to Volf (2006, p. 96), "when they think of Christ, they think of themselves as members of a group of people who have died and risen with Christ and whose fundamental identity is this spiritual connection with Christ. They recall the life of Christ not just as his life but also as their life and the life of every human being". Denis (2016, p. 5) echoes the same that "memory is a theological theme". In Zimbabwe, communal and national memories are primarily what constitute the sacred memories of social injustice.

Machakanja (2010, p. 1) contends that Zimbabwe's history is marked by several difficulties that later materialised as violent challenges at various significant points. A lack of comprehensive solutions to the problem of human rights violations has made it difficult to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity since independence. Zimbabwe's political developments during the past decade have presented issues that have caught the interest of both local and foreign players. People still remember events like Gukurahundi, Land Reform, and Murambatsvina, and to a greater or lesser extent, the victims of such events can pass on their memories and tales from one generation to the next. As Volf (2006, p. 100) points out, "Take away a community and sacred memory disappears, take away the sacred memory and the community disintegrates". Its capacity to influence how the nation and its people will develop in the future is the source of what we have encountered in life. Zimbabwe in particular has to understand that our "memories" of the past serve as the foundation for our hope for the future. If Zimbabweans' memories are rooted in instances of dependability, trustworthiness, and love, the nation should anticipate these same virtues in the future to come. Pirner et al. (2018, p. 14) state "reconciliation is the belief that unity is insufficient. We have histories of conflict and division, which has resulted in sorrow and bitterness. We also have memories of wrath and fear, as well as sentiments of resentment, suspicion, and alienation". Zimbabwe is experiencing all of these feelings as a result of the brokenness that occurs both within and amongst individuals. Even unity in Zimbabwe will remain on the surface if people there do not find methods to deal with these histories and memories of brokenness and resentment. The religious societies have been entrusted with preaching and practising forgiveness and reconciliation for all future generations; hence, they must continue to uphold their beliefs and practices.

### 7.1. *Recalling the History of Collective Memory in Zimbabwe*

Volf (2006, p. 15) states, “In memory a wrongdoing frequently spreads over and colours the character of the one who committed it, rather than remaining an isolated stain in his character”. People’s thought processes frequently change as they gain experience. Before determining who is right or wrong in terms of land reform, the study urges the people of Zimbabwe to work on the issue of having a true goodness in trying to discover ways out from under the wreckage of their mistakes. It is possible that they were engulfed in political influences and structures to prevent others from speaking the truth. The Zimbabwean administration has to understand that the fight of the populace is connected to public memory, and that people need to hear more about the fairness of some of the issues that have been discussed in public and disseminated around the country.

Volf (2006, p. 18) states in the case of public remembrance, “so it happens, the protective shield of memory frequently transforms into a vicious sword, and the just sword of memory frequently sever the very good it seeks to defend”. The study suggests that in order to avoid further social unrest and other issues of social injustice, Zimbabwe’s government should take into account the past wrongs done. Even now, ordinary residents continue to call for justice for those who lost their land. If we can recall things clearly, then we can help people, as Volf challenges us to do. In the words of Volf (2006, p. 42), “learning to remember well is one key to redeeming the past is nestled in the larger story of God’s restoring of our broken world to wholeness”. Volf (2006, pp. 74–75) is deeply concerned about the ways in which the interpretive process can lead to memory distortion, particularly in light of what he thinks occurs when therapists advise clients to process traumatic memories through narrative. According to what he writes, would retelling the interrogation’s tale in a different way actually aid in healing, as opposed to people truly being healed when they are able to live their lives without restriction and with a sense of peace regarding what transpired? As stated in a study by Sachikonye (2011, p. 13), political conflict has its roots in pre-colonial times when conflicts over land and chieftainship were the main causes of violence. During the colonial era, conflicts over land and ethnic supremacy were the main causes of conflict. In the post-colonial era, conflicts over political dominance and hegemony were the main causes of conflict. Rewritten memories shield from the incident and increase the likelihood of ongoing inner anguish. They are not a real approach, but rather a persistent disease’s symptom and a way to deal with the two sides of a corroded coin.

### 7.2. *Examining Memory from a Biblical Hermeneutical Perspective by Volf*

Volf talked about how victims of heinous evil should remember what happened to them, how remembering helps people heal, and how it is necessary to recall wrongs that are a part of bigger stories. Volf proposed a biblical hermeneutics that is Christian based on the idea that “the call to truthfulness in remembering was underwritten by God’s final judgement of grace, which is itself an extension of the way in which God treated human sin as God delivered Israel from oppression as Jesus Christ hung on the cross”. Volf argues that victims would not have to consider the wrongs that have befallen them when God recreates everything in the new heaven and new Earth. He calls this “non-remembrance of wrongs suffered”. Not that we will have forgotten the difficulties we have faced.

According to Volf (2006, p. 9), we will be so absorbed in God and his perfect love that we would not even need to think about the wrongs we have done in the past. God’s love will just flood into us. We shall go through a “not-coming-to-mind of sufferings”. As we become more like Jesus Christ, even our memories will have undergone a makeover. In the case that our wrongdoers are, they will also undergo transformation via the work of the Holy Spirit and the crucifixion of Christ, joining God’s family. According to Volf,

being in God frees our lives from the tyranny the irrevocable past wields with an iron fist of time. God does not erase our past; rather, God brings it back to us in pieces, with the tales reimagined, our true selves fully redeemed, and people who were once divided now living in peace (Volf 1996, p. 201). Applying the events from the Bible's Exodus and gospels, Volf, who maintained a Christian perspective, found the components of memory healing, a new identity, new possibilities, and integrated existence.

#### 7.2.1. Exodus Memory of Volf as Motif of Liberating and Redeeming

As noted by Volf (2006, p. 105), the Israelites treated their own slaves and aliens differently than how they were treated in Egypt because they accurately remembered their servitude and liberation. As Volf (2006, p. 107) noted, the Exodus event can be linked to the Zimbabwean setting in driving two lessons. The first is "deliverance", which is an act on behalf of the oppressed and weak, much to how God acted on your behalf when you were weak and afflicted. The Exodus motif can be utilised to reassure Zimbabweans who are seen as weak and who have experienced oppression that God is for everyone and that the right time for deliverance will arrive. The second lesson teaches us to confront oppressors and punish those who have oppressed others in the sake of unbending retributive justice. As noted by Volf (2006, p. 108), "the memory of the Exodus suggests that in a just and violent world, the deliverance of the oppressed requires unrelenting struggle against their oppressors". Volf (2006, p. 112) aptly puts it as follows:

For the Israelites, properly remembering their slavery and liberation involved treating their own slaves and aliens differently from the way they themselves were treated in Egypt. Their model was the redeeming God, not the oppressing Egyptians. Emulating the Egyptians was to return to Egypt even while dwelling in the Land of Promise. Emulating God was to enact the deliverance God had accomplished for them.

Liberation and redemption are therefore things that should start from within the individual and then be reflected outwardly.

#### 7.2.2. The Memory of Jesus' Death and Resurrection in Volf's Theology

As stated by Volf (2006, p. 111), "the memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to Christian identity". Jesus Christ's passion frees and seems to liberate all of mankind from the slavery of sin by means of forgiveness and may even bring us back together with God and one another. Zimbabwe still has the capacity to forgive one another since they are all its citizens. Instead of arguing over points of agreement while having regions of difference, Zimbabweans must cooperate where they have a shared interest and where they can agree. In a study by Volf (2006, p. 119), victims can be entirely emancipated and healed from the pain of wrongdoing only if the perpetrators truly repent and the two parties are reconciled. Bond in preserving bonds with wrongdoers having suffered at their hands. The community must maintain the unity and reconciliation connections while upholding and respecting the value of both the wrongdoers and the injured. They must also view each other as God's creation.

#### 7.3. Applying Volf's Five Christian Faith Proposals in Zimbabwe

In the view of Volf et al. (2023, p. 183), in order to fight injustice, one must recognise its reality and comprehend its causes. Not all forms of injustice are created equal. Context is important. The agonising fusion of tragedy and beauty should bring us together so that we can support one another through it. Both religious and political leaders in Zimbabwe might apply the questions laid out by Volf (2006, p. 43). Zimbabweans need to ask themselves: Who are we as a nation, as people, as communities, and as humans as a whole? Why are we in this place? What is our destination? Volf offers five arguments for the Christian faith that are applicable to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe, which prides itself on being a Christian

nation, can use God's wider redemptive story to remember its suffering rather than relying just on personal experience. As Zimbabweans, we must comprehend what God has done in the past, how God engages with us today, and what God means to accomplish in our future as part of the redeeming story of God. Volf (2006, pp. 43–44) lays out the five propositions, the first of which is that "God of Love created each of us along with our world". As Zimbabweans, we must base our love on God's creation of the world and humanity. The value of each person's life cannot be underestimated. Everyone must be treated with respect as a human being. The second is that "God created us to live with God and one another in communion of justice and love". Zimbabweans can learn from Volf that they must acknowledge that they were created for a world of justice and love, not selfish ambitions, where they could live in harmony with God and each other. All things must be distributed equitably among everyone, including land, resources, and judicial fairness. Thirdly, "God entered human history and through Christ's unchangeable atoning work on the cross, made us right with God and with one another". We can say that people harmed God's exquisite creation. However, God entered human history through the death of Christ on the cross, and as a result, we are now at peace with both Him and one another. In keeping with the Christian teachings, Christian leaders ought to assist the Zimbabwean citizens in living in harmony with one another.

Fourthly, according to Volf (2006, p. 44), "God will make our frail flesh imperishable at the end of history and restore true life to the redeemed, so that we may forever enjoy God and each other in God". God, who took on our finitude in Jesus Christ, will do this. As Christians in Zimbabwe, we must be aware that, at the end of the age, we shall undergo a change that will allow us to live with God and one another in Christ for all eternity. Fifthly, "God will make wrongs clear, denounce every evil deed, and redeem both the repentant perpetrator and their victims, bringing them to peace with God and each other". Because social injustice and land reform are the focus of our study, it is crucial that we understand this idea. When God exposes injustices, condemns immoral behaviour, and reconciles repentant perpetrators with their victims. These recommendations, according to Volf (1996, p. 20), will result in social arrangements, the type of society that ought to be established to permit individuals to freely create and deface their own identities. Theologians should concentrate more on "fostering the kind of social agents capable of envisioning and creating just truthful, peaceful societies and on shaping cultural climate in which those agents can thrive" rather than social institutions, according to Volf (1996, p. 21). There is currently a great demand for social agents in Zimbabwe to help the people build strong social institutions that promote harmony, justice, and peace in the country. A competent justice system can only be achieved when the process values and considers the thoughts and goals of all parties involved. A competent justice system and equitable resource distribution in Zimbabwe can only be achieved when the process recognises and considers the ideas and desires of all stakeholders.

To recover, the nation must remember the hurtful incidents and ensure that they are properly remembered. To assist the public in appropriately recalling their traumatic past experiences, the church can employ the theology of memory model, which must include these components of Volf (2006, pp. 27–33). In order to rebuild an objective of truth in terms of true stories in Zimbabwe, the religious institutions must take the lead in the community and among the general public. Memories that are not true are memories that are unpleasant. The principle of "remembering as truthfully as possible" must be upheld by the religious groups.

People recount how the story has resulted in healing and redemption as they reflect on the past events. Religious institutions are expected to assist those who have been harmed by the narrative, teach them how to deal with shame and grow from it, and demonstrate

God's kindness and grace to everyone who has been affected by the event. Zimbabwean citizens need assistance from the religious groups in telling new stories and "viewing the remembered experience in a new light".

The religious institutions must remember that the memory's shaping cannot result in additional suffering for potential victims. In Zimbabwe, victim identity shall remain confidential unless the victim has requested to be identified. Religious people, who are in charge of retelling the traumatic incident, must ensure that the victims are taken care of, so they are not mistreated again; this is all about "protecting victims from further suffering and violence". Speaking truthfully about people's unstirred memories is something that religious people need to learn. Listening to the narrative that the public is narrating about their current experiences and how they are influencing their future recollections is another aspect of remembering correctly.

## 8. Conclusions

Although many years have passed by, and stories of injustice are almost forgotten, the religious institutions still have a role to play in telling captivating narratives that help in rebuilding the country of Zimbabwe. The results of this study indicate that the religious groups should not ignore the injustices that people face. For people to enjoy justice, peace, and prosperity in the future, the theological discourse of theology of memory must be developed. Religious leaders should be courageous as well as truthful when interacting with the public and advocating for social justice and the welfare of all.

These are the conclusions and suggestions drawn from every method, both empirical and practical, that the church can take from Volf in order to persuade the government to give the truth about Zimbabwe's past. The religious institutions ought to be an activist and an advocate. Oral histories must be documented by the religious scholars; survivors of Gukurahundi, Land Reform, Murambatsvina, and other traumatic events can have their stories gathered and recorded by religious authorities. This can help preserve the truth and give a counter-narrative to the state's version. This study recommends that religious leaders can speak truth to power by denouncing violations of human rights and encouraging accountability by using their public platforms and influence. The religious representatives can participate in national forums and dialogue, promoting justice, reconciliation, and the revealing of the truth. The religious institutions should not believe that only politicians should handle these tragic occurrences.

Based on this inquiry, religious groups should set up outreach initiatives to interact with trauma survivors, offering them support and encouraging healing even if they are dispersed throughout the world. Additionally, they should collaborate with human rights organisations, civil society organisations, and other interested parties to promote justice, truth, and reconciliation. Together with scholars and researchers, the religious leaders can create scholarly works that challenge the government's story and advance a more truthful knowledge of Zimbabwe's past. The religious institutions can denounce violations of human rights, push for accountability for their members, and support in the general public's recovery by interacting with international organisations like the UN. The religious people need to continue speaking truth to power and fighting for accountability and justice in order to maintain its prophetic voice. Religious groups may draw on their historical teachings and practices that emphasise memory and remembering the past and learning from it in order to promote reconciliation and improve the lives of all. Religious institutions can promote healing and reconciliation by using the forgiveness, mercy, and restoration principle of the theology of memory. Faith-based organisations can challenge the nation's narrative and promote a more realistic understanding of nation-building by employing these practical and empirical methods.

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