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ABSTRACT

THE RWANDAN ETHNIC CRISIS OF THE 1990s: AN HISTORICAL
ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES AND A STRATEGY FOR
FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION FROM A
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

by

Hesron R. Byilingiro

Adviser: Russell L. Staples

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE RWANDAN ETHNIC CRISIS OF THE 1990s:
AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES AND A
STRATEGY FOR FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION
FROM A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

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Date completed: August 2002

Statement of the Task

In 1994, the central Africa nation of Rwanda experienced a large-scale genocide in which thousands of people were killed. Many Christians including Adventists participated in these mass killings. It is the task of this study to investigate (1) the historical causes of the genocide, (2) why Seventh-day Adventist Christians participated in the genocide, and (3) propose strategies for forgiveness and reconciliation from an Adventist perspective.

Methodology

The study is an historical and analytical investigation of the country and people of Rwanda from pre-colonial to post-independence time. It draws on the personal experience and direct interviews of 94 church leaders and members of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Rwanda. The research has drawn on books and journals from libraries in the United States and overseas.

Results

The study reveals that prominent among the complex factors that led to the 1944 genocide in Rwanda were first, the promotion of Tutsi superiority over Hutus by some missionaries, colonialists, anthropologists, and historians; and second, that in spite of the phenomenal growth of the church in Rwanda or perhaps partly because of it, there was a failure to effectively teach and practice the oneness of human beings in Christ.

Conclusion

First, in spite of all the good accomplished by church leaders in Rwanda, they failed to effectively teach the doctrine of unconditional love among the people. Second, there is a need for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of Rwanda, who remain divided in the

aftermath of the genocide of 1994. Third, the biblical and theological foundations of forgiveness and reconciliation are explored and developed in practical strategies, appropriate to the circumstances in Rwanda, for breaking down divisions and building a spirit of mutuality and community within the churches and subsequently also in the wider community.

The Adventist Church is an instrument of hope for the people of Rwanda. It needs to lead in showing the way to unity through confession, forgiveness, reconciliation and renewal in Christ. The Church should promote this process through literature, public media, and the educational system.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated:

To God, who "brings wars to end all over the world. He breaks the arrows, shatters the spears, and burns the shields. Our God says, "Calm down, and learn that I am God! All nations on earth will honor me." Psalms 46:9, 10
(Contemporary English Version)

and

To all the people of Rwanda, Hutus and Tutsis, who have been affected by the ethnic crisis that culminated in the genocide of 1994. This dedication is not meant to memorialize the genocide, but rather to call all those who passed through the experience of the genocide to a different future for Rwanda where through God's love and forgiveness, people of all ethnic groups can live together in peace and unity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rwanda, a landlocked central African nation located at 2° South of the equator and 30° East, with 24,948 sq. km. of land and 1,390 sq. km. of water, is about the size of the State of Maryland. It is bordered by Uganda in the North, Burundi in the South, Tanzania in the East, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the West. This mountainous country with its tropical temperature and rainy climate has been called the Switzerland of Africa for the beauty of its grassy uplands and hills.¹

The country's indigenous population is 7,312,756. It is made up of Hutus (84 percent), Tutsis (15 percent), and Twas/Pygmoid (1 percent) who share the common language of Kinyarwanda.² Each of these groups had occupied the

¹Randall Fegley, *Rwanda: World Bibliographical Series*, vol. 154 (Oxford: Clio Press, 1993), xv.

²Paul Nzacahayo, *Africa: Rwanda, in Religion as a Source of Violence*, ed. Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel (London: SCM Press, 1997), 10.

region for centuries before the Germans came in 1916.

The earliest missionaries to evangelize Rwanda were Roman Catholics who account for 52.7 percent of the population today. They were followed by Protestant groups that presently compose 24 percent of the population. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the second largest Protestant denomination with 10.4 percent. Moslems account for 1.9 percent. The remaining 6.5 percent follow indigenous beliefs and some 4.5 percent do not make any religious profession.¹

Rwanda's economy consists of subsistent agriculture, tea and coffee as cash crops for export, and animal husbandry. Relatively small amounts of gold and other minerals are mined.

Rwanda became a sovereign independent nation in 1962 after a tumultuous resurgence of the age-old ethnic tension between the Hutus and Tutsis. The Tutsi king had been deposed three years before independence.

Although the churches had played a major role in the educational, medical, and spiritual development of the

¹"Rwanda," *The World Factbook 2001*, available from <http://www/cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rw.html>; Internet.

people of Rwanda, the ethnic conflict between the tribes persisted. In 1994 the world was shocked when this tension culminated in a massive genocide in this professedly Christian nation.

Statement of the Problem

The Rwanda Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists had the largest membership (285,440) of the unions in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division.¹ It was the fourth² largest

¹The terms 'Union' or 'Union Mission' and Division are used within the Seventh-day Adventist Church organizational structure to refer to, respectively, an association of churches organized into a regional entity usually consisting of one country or state. Second, the term 'Division' refers to the centralized Administrative organization of a regional group of Union Missions and/or Conferences in a geographical area. Divisions are sub offices of the General Conference, the highest organizational entity of the Church. A division often covers a continent or a sub-continent.

²According to General Conference statistics for 1994, the Inca Union Mission in the South American Division was the largest with 407,019 members followed by the East African Union Mission with 337,467 members. The south Mexican Union Conference of the Inter American Division held the third place with 311,067 members and the Rwanda Union Mission came in fourth with 285,440 members. Rwanda was the largest Union in membership in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. *123rd Annual Statistical Report--1994* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1994), 8, 9.

union in the worldwide work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Despite this numerical growth, there appears not to have been corresponding growth in spiritual maturity. Many Seventh-day Adventist members are believed to have actively participated, even in some cases to the point of taking of life, in the ethnic conflict of 1994. And some Adventists are among those who sought to hide their complicity in the genocide by flight into surrounding countries. Hugh McCullum who went to Rwanda as a journalist after the genocide wrote about the participation of the churches in the genocide. He reported that "even the Seventh-day Adventists, who were largely apolitical, reported that the killings were as bad in their area as anywhere else."¹ Hence the question: What factors nurtured the spirit of ethnic tension in Rwanda that culminated in the genocide of 1994 in which even Seventh-day Adventist Christians participated, directly contrary to the clear teachings of Scripture about the oneness of humanity?²

Statement of the Task

The task of this study is to investigate the factors

¹Hugh McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 67.

²Acts 10:34-35; 17:26.

that led thousands of Seventh-day Adventist members to actively participate in the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda, and to develop a strategy that will bring about a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of that country.

Justification

The country of Rwanda has a high percentage of Christian believers from both the Hutu and Tutsi tribes who expected to live together in Christian love and unity. However, the ethnic crisis revealed that tribal tensions still exist among Christians, and even among Adventists. Hence, there is a need for a study to examine the causes and to show how reconciliation can be achieved.

According to David Barrett, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the second largest Christian denomination in Rwanda."¹ This raises concern that the

¹David B. Barrett, ed., "A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in Modern World" *World Christian Encyclopedia*: (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 589. He claims that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the second largest Christian denomination in Rwanda. He differs with Hugh McCullum, who claims that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the third-largest religious grouping (McCullum, 67). The difference between the two authors is that Barrett considers the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a separate entity from the other four Protestant denominations. By so doing, the

Seventh-day Adventist Church with such a large membership in the country has not exerted a sufficiently positive influence on the attitude and behavior of society to encourage peaceful co-existence of people of different ethnic groups.

It has been alleged by some that since "the 1930s, when the colonial masters occupied the territory, they perpetuated the idea that Tutsis are superior to Hutus, because of their physical appearance and complexion of the skin,"¹ that Tutsis were therefore accorded advantages in socioeconomic and educational opportunities. Some analysts regard this as a major root of the crisis. These allegations need to be substantiated by further research.

Some argue that close ties between political and church leaders were a facilitating factor in the crisis. It

Seventh-day Adventist church, which is the largest Protestant denomination, becomes the second-largest denomination in the country after the Roman Catholic Church. Hugh McCullum differs by taking the Roman Catholic Church as the first and largest denomination in Rwanda, a grouping of four other Protestant denominations (excluding Seventh-day Adventists which is the largest Protestant denomination) as the second, while the Seventh-day Adventist Church grouped alone is the third.

¹Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1998), 50.

is possible that some Adventist pastors, wishing to overcome an earlier alienation of the Adventist Church from the political powers, cultivated an overly close affiliation with the political leaders. If this was the case, such an alliance could have led to a blunting of Christian values and the sense of oneness in Christ. These are all important factors to be investigated in the search for causes of the genocide.

Finally, the study will address causative factors of this multifaceted phenomenon in order to discover and suggest possible solutions the church can do to break down feelings of alienation and hostility, and bring the two groups together in a true non-partisan union and a genuine spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness. The study will seek to discover how efforts to promote reconciliation can be most effective.

Methodology

The study follows an historical and holistic investigation of the country and the people of Rwanda using available written accounts in libraries in the United States, Rwanda, and Europe.

Use is also made of information gained through my

personal interviews with Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and members in Rwanda.

I also leaned heavily on personal experience and background as a Rwandan citizen and Seventh-day Adventist pastor to analyze information obtained from the various sources.

Sources

The study utilizes books, journals, and other literary sources obtained in the James White Library of Andrews University. Other materials were obtained from other universities in North America through inter-library loan services.

Personal interviews were conducted with Seventh-day Adventist Hutu and Tutsi church leaders and lay members in 2002 during the quinquennial session of the Rwanda Union Mission.

Description of the Study

In chapter 2 the historical background of the ethnic conflict in Rwanda is presented that spans the pre-colonial, the colonial, and post-colonial eras up to the independence of Rwanda as a nation. A description of the social structures of the Hutu and Tutsi peoples is also presented

in this chapter.

A brief history of the introduction of Christianity to Rwanda is presented in chapter 3. The coming of Roman Catholic missionaries and their teachings, the arrival of different Protestant churches, including Seventh-day Adventists, and their approach to missions is broadly covered in this section.

In chapter 4 the historical relationship of the churches to the state is examined. Initially, emphasis is placed on the relationship developed by the Catholic Church to the state. Subsequently, consideration is given to relationships sustained by the Protestant Churches and more specifically to the polity and relationships of the SDA Church in this regard and the possible influence of these attitudes and relationships in the development of the crisis.

In chapter 5 a detailed description of the events that led to the genocide of 1994 is provided. The escalation of the problems of refugees from Rwanda in neighboring countries of Africa and abroad, and preparations in Rwanda to suppress Tutsis are all considered as a prelude to the genocide.

A biblical and theological basis for reconciliation

and forgiveness is presented in chapter 6. Here the broad biblical basis of God's role in the reconciliation process is presented, with special emphasis on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. The chapter closes with suggestions as to how the people of Rwanda can experience reconciliation and forgiveness.

Suggestions are made in chapter 7 regarding strategies that can be implemented by the church to help shape a different future for the church and consequently also for the wider society in Rwanda.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ETHNIC CRISIS IN RWANDA

In 1994, the whole world was shocked by the news headline "Rwanda Massacre." The magnitude of the slaughter was almost beyond imagination. Authorities estimate that within three months, between 500,000 and 1 million people were massacred and more than 1 million refugees fled to surrounding countries.¹ The underlying cause of conflict in Rwanda that led to the massacre was the ethnic identity reflected in the religious, political, and social life of the Hutus and Tutsis.²

¹Robert M. Press, *The New Africa: Dispatches from a Changing Continent* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 225.

²Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford, Brussels: Kimarian Press, 1998). Destexhe gives more information of the general background on issues underlying the problem of ethnicity between Hutu and Tutsi. Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); see also Essack Karrim, *Civil War in Rwanda* (Dar es Salaam: Forem Litho Printer, 1993).

In this chapter, the historical, cultural, and social background of Rwanda is examined in order to identify those historical factors that may have contributed to the Rwandan societal conflict. Indeed, the only logical starting point to identify factors that contribute to the crisis of any nation is an investigation of the social, political, cultural, and ethnic history. This is true also of Rwanda.

Pre-Colonial Period

Two Tribal Groups: the Hutus and Tutsis

The earliest European observers of Rwanda identified two predominant groups--the cattle-owning Tutsis and the farming Hutus. Although these "two groups shared the same language and culture, they had distinctive physical characteristics, occupations, and behaviors, and it was often assumed that they represented two different stages in the colonization of the country."¹ Physically, the Tutsis are generally taller, thinner, and have long faces and noses, whereas the Hutus are shorter, heavier, and have short faces and round noses. Philip Gourevitch puts it this

¹Ian Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda* (New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1977), 10.

way:

Within the jumble of Rwandan characteristics, the question of appearances is particularly touchy, as it has often come to mean life or death. But nobody can dispute the physical archetypes: for Hutus, stocky and round faced, dark-skinned, flat nosed, thick-lipped, and square-jawed; for Tutsis, lanky and long faced, not so dark-skinned, narrow-nosed, thin-lipped, and narrow-chinned.¹

This manner of describing the Tutsis was also used by such early European settlers as Von Gotzen.²

The traditional leadership structure in Rwanda usually included the Hutu. The leadership of the country could be divided into three categories of chiefs. First, the chief of men was in charge of recruiting soldiers for the king's army. Second, the chief of the pastures was in charge of the grazing lands. Third, the chief of the land-holdings took care of taxation and agriculture. This latter chief was often taken from the Hutu group, which was an indication that the Hutus were included in the administration during the pre-colonial period.³ In other words, this limited

¹Gourevitch, 50.

²The first European from Germany visited Rwanda in 1894 and was interested in Rwandan society.

³Alain Destexhe describes the administrative system of Rwanda before and during the arrival of colonialists (40).

leadership role was somewhat shared, and the Hutus accepted their national Tutsi king.

Initially, before the European colonialists occupied Rwanda, the Hutu and the Tutsi lived more or less happily together. Tharcisse Gatwa describes it thus:

The Hutu and Tutsi communities lived in harmony. Colonial ideology damaged this traditional harmony. They created formal division with the introduction of ethnic groupings into official documents. They gave political, administrative and economic privileges to some and not to others thus exacerbating the ethnic differences they had already made.¹

Professor Luc de Heusch, an authority on Rwandan history, alludes to the fact that "before the nineteenth century, Rwandan social structure had ceased to depend on the personal relationship between land owner (Hutu) and cattle owner (Tutsi)."² Inter-ethnic relationships were relatively harmonious.

A system evolved out of both ethnic groups interacting economically for the benefit of each. No obligation force or oppression was evident. For example, labor-for-livestock arrangements were voluntarily entered

¹Luc de Heusch, quoted in Tharcisse Gatwa, "Revivalism and Ethnicity: The Church in Rwanda," *Transformation* 12, no. 2 (April 1995): 4.

²Ibid., 7.

into between wealthier members of the community, be it wealthy Tutsis or occasionally wealthy Hutus, and poor Hutus, or occasionally a poor Tutsi.

A sense of unity between ethnic groups was fostered by the king, a figure who transcended tribal divide and was the focus of national unity. Gerard Prunier states that "Hutus and Tutsis shared the same Bantu language, lived side by side with each other without any 'Hutuland' or 'Tutsiland' demarcations."¹ Mutual relationships between the two groups often resulted in intermarriages. Destexhe observes that "it was extremely difficult to find any kind of cultural or folkloric custom that was specifically Hutu or Tutsi."²

Despite the apparent harmony between the two groups, however, distinguishable social categories did exist before the colonizers arrived. But both groups seemed to accept the social elevation of the Tutsi. This was a socio-economic status as well as an ethnic one. Prosperous Hutus could become Tutsis. This emphasis on economic status was not apparent until the arrival of the colonialists. At that

¹Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 5.

²Destexhe, 36.

time, other new classifications or stereotypes arose in a way that pitted the groups against each other. Destexhe notes: "It was by exaggerating such stereotypes and supporting one group against the other that the colonizers reinforced, consolidated and ultimately exacerbated such categorizing."¹

Social Structure

Social division and tension between people can be fostered by various factors, among them ethnicity, birth, wealth, culture, place of origin, physical features, and social or marital ties.²

Status in Rwanda before 1860³ was based on the ownership of cattle. During that time, a Hutu could

¹Ibid., 36.

²L.B. Back and P. Skalnik, *The Study of the State* (New York: Monto, 1981), 15-33. The authors made a brief analytical view of complexities of Rwandan traditional society, patron-client relationships, social stratification, and ethnic differences. See also Alex Kagame, *Summary of the Ethno-History of Rwanda* (Butare, Rwanda: Editions Universitaires du Rwanda, 1972). Kagame includes details on pre-colonial history of Rwanda, events before the arrival of Europeans, and roots of Rwandan traditional society.

³Mwami Rwabugiri, one of the greatest kings of Rwanda, came to power in 1860 and reigned until 1898. See section "The Colonial Era" below.

acquire cattle if he worked several years for a rich Tutsi family. In turn, the Tutsis required the Hutus to provide services for them and give them farm produce. According to Catharine Newbury, the relationship between the Tutsis and Hutus after 1860 took the form of a patron-client contract¹ called *Ubuhake*.²

The institution of *Ubuhake* dictated that a person of lower status (usually a Hutu or possibly a poor Tutsi) worked for a person of higher status (usually a Tutsi or possibly a rich Hutu) in return for protection and rewards, including cattle. Newbury notes: "Conventionally, clientship was said to involve the exchange of protection from the superior partner (the patron) for services of the inferior (the client)."³ This relationship was also described using the feudal terms "lord" and "Vassal."

¹Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 73.

²*Ubuhake* is a word in Kinyarwanda which indicates a system of an agreement by which the Hutus obtained the use of the Tutsis cattle and, in turn, rendered personal and military service to the owners of the cattle. This agreement began as a simple, small-scale exchange of a cow for land and labor, but eventually it involved whosoever had land and cattle inland into a feudal-type class system in which land, cattle, and power were in the hands of the Tutsi and/or the rich Hutu.

³Newbury, 74.

In this feudal structure military power and land belonged to the Tutsi and were extended to those Hutu who managed to acquire wealth and cattle. Some Hutu who became rich were accorded the status of a Tutsi. Likewise, a Tutsi who lost land and cattle might be treated as a Hutu.

Thus, by 1860 some fluidity had developed in the achievement of status in the kingdom of Rwanda. A person who was born Hutu could work to gain acceptance as a Tutsi.¹

Position of the King in Pre-Colonial Rwanda

Kingship as an institution was very important in Rwandan society. The king was known as Mwami² and was treated like a divine being. Twagilimana states that "the Mwami was the source of the land's fertility and

¹Bodnarchuk gives detailed information on the classification of Hutu and Tutsi. She mentions that during the period of feudalism, status mattered more than ethnicity. A Tutsi was determined by his social ranking and privileges. Anyone who was poor was regarded as Hutu. As a result, a person who was born Hutu could work to become a Tutsi and could hold positions of power within the Rwandan hierarchy. See Kari Bodnarchuk, *Rwanda: Country torn Apart* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1996), 34.

²Mwami means king. Mwami is referring to the Rwanda king. U is a prefix used in Kinyarwanda language to identify an individual.

prosperity."¹ According to Tutsi oral history, the Mwami was God incarnate, i.e., he was viewed as some form of a spirit or God. His subjects called him *Nyagasani*, meaning God or Lord. This same name is used today by Rwandan Christians when they to refer to God.

All cows and women in the kingdom belonged to the mwami. He gave power and wealth generously but could withdraw these privileges whenever he wished. He was the highest judge in the land. The Mwami was regarded as perfect and beautiful even if he was physically unattractive. He was considered to be immortal in the sense that his people would always remember him for his divine morals and physical perfection. Because he was regarded as a divine being, he was greatly revered. Rebelling against him or his kingdom was a religious offense. In fact, he was regarded as the heart of the kingdom; without him the kingdom could not exist. Accordingly, if anyone tried to revolt against the mwami, one risked severe punishment and the loss of everything he or she possessed.

The Mwami's power was seen as that of righteousness in contrast to profanity, and his presence and influence

¹Aimable Twagilimana, *Hutu and Tutsi* (New York: Rosen, 1998), 15.

encompassed the entire territory of the country. A special vocabulary was used to describe the manner in which the king walked, sat down, and spoke. His utensils and other belongings had a special terminology. Interestingly, before 1959, the Mwami was accepted by all Rwandan people regardless of tribal affiliation. But by 1959 certain elements among the Hutus, secretly supported by the Catholic missionaries, had already commenced uniting the Hutus in rejection against the Mwami kingship and the Tutsi-dominated administrative structure. This social revolution which came to be supported by both Colonial administrators and Catholic missionaries¹ eventually forced the Tutsi king to leave the country and go into exile.

The Hereditary Power of Kingship

In Rwanda, as in many other parts of the world, the royal power was hereditary, normally being passed from father to son. While the king was the supreme ruler, he shared his power with his mother, known as the *Umugabekazi* or Queen mother. The king was advised by a council of chiefs called the *Abatware b'intebe*.

When a king died, the hereditary power vested in him

¹Newbury, 197.

was transferred to his successor, usually a son. A council, called the *Abiru*, guarded the secrets of the kingdom and oversaw this process of transfer of power from the king to the son and ensured that the rules of the kingdom were followed.

The king secretly could have entrusted to the *Abiru* the name of the son he wanted to succeed him. The name of this son, the future king, was not revealed under any circumstances until after the death of the king. Usually the king had many wives. He could choose any wife's son to inherit the throne. If he did not have a son, his brother or half-brother could inherit the throne.

After the king had died, the councillor (one of the *Abiru*) could announce which son would take the throne. If the king died unexpectedly without naming his heir, the *Abiru* could choose the new king. This system was not limited to the monarchy. The chiefs could be appointed and replaced through hereditary succession in a similar manner.

The Cow as a Symbol of Economic Power

The ownership of cattle became the main sign of wealth, and cattle owners were considered the economic elite in Rwandan society. Thus the cow played a pivotal role in

society. Men owning the largest herds of cattle had the greatest power.¹ The vassal lived with the hope that he would receive a cow from his feudal lord. Because of the importance of cattle in Rwandan society, people associated milk with happiness, wealth, and power.

As wealth became the dominant indicator of social status, the ethnic and physical characteristics distinguishing the Tutsi from the Hutu became more fluid than the rigid system of stratification, and status could change depending on one's possessions.

The number of cattle one owned and one's marital status were both highly significant in determining social status. For this reason, Newbury prefers the term "class" rather than "ethnicity" to refer to the pre-colonial distinction between Tutsi and Hutu.² It was possible for one to move from one class to another, depending on one's economic fortune or misfortune.

¹William Dudley, *Africa: Opposing Viewpoint* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 101; see also Roger Bowen, "Rwanda: Missionary Reflections on a Catastrophe," *Anvil* 13, no. 1 (1996): 34.

²Newbury, 12.

Social Structure After 1860

The political and social implications of being Hutu or Tutsi varied over time and from region to region. For instance Newbury reports that

[After 1860, with] the arrival of [Mwami] Rwabugiri¹ and his chiefs, classification into the category of Hutu or Tutsi tended to become rigidified. Lineages that were wealthy in cattle and had links to powerful chiefs were regarded as Tutsi; lineages lacking these characteristics were relegated to non-Tutsi status. During the period of Tutsi rule, later overlaid by European rule, the advantages of being Tutsi and the disadvantages of being Hutu increased enormously. In this context there occurred a gradual enlargement to a scale of "ethnic" awareness among Hutu through realization of common oppression.²

Catharine Newbury supports Linden's analysis.

According to her, the terms "Tutsi and Hutu became political labels. 'Ethnicity' as such came to assume political importance, determining a person's life chances and relations with the authorities."³ Rwabugiri reified the Ubuguhake social structure, and in doing so, intensified ethnic and economic differentiation.

¹Mwami Rwabugiri was one of the greatest kings of Rwanda who greatly increased the power of the Rwanda central court over both internal and external affairs. His reign, which extended over the last third of the nineteenth century, was followed closely by the imposition of German colonial rule in 1898.

²Newbury, 11.

³Ibid., 52.

This had become a core aspect of the identity of the Rwanda people by the time European colonialists arrived in Rwanda in the late 1890s. The labels "Tutsi" and "Hutu" retained implications of ethnicity, but had also come to indicate a person's social status or class.¹ The colonialists and missionaries built upon this social stratification, bolstering it with anthropological ideology.

The Colonial Era

Stereotypes by Colonialists

By the end of the 1800s, the kingdom of Rwanda was a powerful monarchy in Central Africa. At this time, European powers were competing with each other to establish colonies in Africa--a period known as "the scramble for Africa."

The first European explorers reached Rwanda while searching for the source of the Nile River. They described the Tutsis and Hutu of Rwanda using ethnic terms to categorize the two groups.

The words of one of the Belgian administrators of the 1920s, Pierre Ryckmans, shed some light on this matter, even though he emphasizes physical features. He suggests that

¹Ibid., 12.

the Batutsi were meant to reign. Their fine presence is in itself enough to give them a great prestige vis a vis the inferior races which surround. . . . It is not surprising that those good Hutu, less intelligent, more simple, more spontaneous, more trusting, have let themselves be enslaved without ever daring to revolt.¹

In contrast, the colonialists described the Hutus as being shorter and darker, servile, rowdy, and undignified, compared to the Tutsis.

J. P. Harroy describes the Hutus as follows: "The [Hutu] display very typical Bantu features. . . . They are generally short and thick-set with a big head, a jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips. They are extroverts who like to laugh and lead a simple life."²

The colonialists' descriptions of the physical differences between the Hutus and Tutsis tended to hide the social harmony that existed between the two tribal groups that shared a common language and many social values.

The colonialists formed stereotypes and oversimplified mental pictures of the Hutus and the Tutsis. According to their descriptions, the Tutsis were tall, light-skinned, and often said to be quiet, reserved, and relaxed. However, some of the expatriates interpreted these

¹Prunier, 11.

²Jean Paul Harroy, *Rwanda du Feodalism a`la Democratie 1955-1962*, (Brussels: Hayez, 1984), 26.

same qualities negatively, saying that the Tutsis were secretive, arrogant, and lazy. They also sometimes interpreted the Tutsis' wealth and power as the result of shrewd, opportunistic, or unscrupulous behavior. One administrator who was in charge of Rwanda and Burundi during the colonial period described the distinction between the two groups in heavy pseudo-scientific terms which indicated the impression that Tutsis were definitely superior beings:

The [Tutsi] of good race has nothing of negro, apart from his color. He is usually very tall, 1.80m. at least, often 1.90m. or more. He is very thin, a characteristic which tends to be even more noticeable as he gets older. His features are very fine: a high brow, thin nose and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth. Tutsi women are usually lighter-skinned than their husbands, very slender and pretty in their youth, although they tend to thicken with age. . . . Gifted with a vivacious intelligence, the Tutsi displays a refinement of feelings which is rare among primitive people. He is a natural-born leader, capable of extreme self-control and calculated goodwill.¹

This categorization not only hurt Hutu pride, but went deeper by implying that the goodness or beauty of the Tutsis were considered in their similarity or resemblance to White people.

Theory of Tutsi Superiority Advocated by Colonialists

The colonialists regarded the Tutsi as being

¹Ibid., 26

superior to the Hutu, and therefore believed the Tutsis were destined to rule.¹

These prejudicial stereotypes gained anthropological and historical legitimacy from the descriptions made by John Hanning Speke who coined the "Hamitic theory." When this explorer came to the area of Rwanda from the North of Africa, he found a group of people whom he referred to as a superior race of men who had a different physical appearance from those of ordinary Bantu origin.

According to Speke, these people had "fine oval faces, large eyes, and high noses" which to him were an indication of the superior blood of the Abyssinian family.² Speke further presented what he called his "theory of conquest of inferior by superior race." Prunier reports,

After observing the "foreign" origin of some ruling groups in several of the interlacustrine kingdoms, Speke "deduced" from this "fact" a "theory" linking the monarchic institutions he had found in the area with the arrival of a "conquering superior race," carriers of a "superior civilization." He decided, without a shred of evidence, that the "carriers of a superior civilization" who were the ancestors of the Tutsi were the Galla of southern Ethiopia.³

¹Linden, 161.

²John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London: J. M. Dent, 1969), 21.

³Prunier, 7.

It has been a long-held view that the Tutsi probably migrated from Ethiopia along with their herds of cattle, which eventually became a symbol of wealth. They had more cattle than any other people in the region, and their socio-economic class eventually became determined more by the ownership of cattle than by a strictly ethnic hierarchy. As it was before colonialism, so it remained during the colonial period in Rwanda: The Tutsis controlled the social and economic system and were supported in these functions by the colonizers. Mgr. Classe, the first Roman Catholic bishop of Rwanda, advocated disenfranchising the Hutus and reinforcing "the traditional hegemony of the well-born Tutsis in 1925." According to Philip Gourevitch, Mgr. Classe "warned" in 1930: "We have no chiefs who are better qualified, more intelligent, more active, more capable of appreciating progress and more fully accepted by the people than the Tutsis."¹

The Tutsis were considered superior Africans and were designated "Hamites" or "White Coloureds," because they were supposed to represent the "missing link" between the Whites and Blacks.²

¹Gourevitch, 56.

²Destexhe, 38.

Thus the colonialists highly elevated the Tutsis and supported their claim to be the leaders of the country. However, when the colonial masters realized that Tutsi-led political independence could mean that the colonialists would have to leave the country, they tried to make things difficult for the Tutsis. Reversing their policy, the colonialists began to support the Hutus, so they could remain in the country and retain their own political power. They persuaded the Hutus to resent leadership by the Tutsi. This tension led to political antagonism between the two groups which continued to escalate until independence, at which time the Hutus gained leadership in the government of the country.

Various Proponents of Tutsi Superiority

The controversial Speke theory was never forgotten by the Rwandan people. "One Hutu power ideologue delivered a famous speech on national radio by applying the Speke theory just at the beginning the Rwanda crisis, calling on Hutus to send the Tutsis back to Ethiopia by way of the one large river in Rwanda (Nyabarongo), a tributary of the Nile that winds through Rwanda."¹ In the month of April 1994, that

¹Ibid., 57.

same river was choked with bodies of dead Tutsis floating and washed to the shores of Lake Victoria. This became the fulfillment of those words.

The political weight of Speke's theory has been exacerbated by anthropological hypotheses concerning the possible origins of the Tutsi as a "superior race." This theorizing can be traced to other nineteenth-century explorers and, to some extent, to some twentieth-century missionaries as well.¹

Piollet cites two Catholic priests² who suggested that the Tutsis originated either from ancient Egypt or from Melanesia or Asia Minor. Multiple anthropological schools of thought exist, each with a different theory about the origin and superiority of the Tutsi.³ Some of the theories

¹Twentieth-century missionaries who are cited as having held such views include Sir Samuel Baker, Gaetano Casati, Father van den Burgt, Father Gorju, and John Roscoe. E. Mworoha, *People and Kings of the Great African Lakes Region* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1902).

²Paul Piollet, *Old Techniques of the Treatment of Traumatic Dislocations of the Hip; Indications of the Blood Method, Results* (Lyon: University de Lyon, 1902), 19.

³The opposing schools of anthropological thought include the following: (1) John Speke believed that Tutsis are carriers of superior traits from the Galla of southern Ethiopia (now called Omoro). (2) Fathers Pages and Lacger speculated that the Tutsis originated from ancient Egypt and from either Melanesia or Asia Minor, respectively. (3)

of Hamitic or Semitic origins of the Tutsi have been questioned or even completely rejected by anthropologists in recent years. The following quotation shows the degree of speculation involved in much of this.

The Bahima [Tutsi clan] differ absolutely by the beauty of their features and their light color from the Bantu agriculturists [Hutu] of an inferior type. Tall and well-proportioned, they have long thin noses, a wide brow and fine lips. They say they came from the North. Their intelligent and delicate appearance, *their love of money* [italics mine], their capacity to adapt to any situation seems to indicate a Semitic origin.¹

Mworoha concurs with Paul Piollet; he says, "We can see Caucasian skulls and beautiful Greek profiles side by side with Semitic and even Jewish features, elegant golden-red beauties in the heart of [Rwanda and Burundi]."²

Piollet suggested that the Tutsis came from north of Africa and postulated a Semitic origin. (4) Father van den Burgt, a missionary, imagined that the Tutsis had Caucasian skulls and beautiful Greek profiles with Semitic and even Jewish features. (5) Father Etienne Brosse proposed that the Tutsi came from India or even from the Garden of Eden. Some Belgian administrators submitted the idea that the Tutsi might even be the last survivors of the lost continent of Atlantis. (6) As late as 1970, a former French ambassador to the newly independent Rwanda narrated a story of a Tutsi Magi who had come from Tibet (with a minor branch making it to Iceland). Jean Paul Chretien, *Le Burundi Notes et Etudes Documentaires* [Paris: La documentation Francaise, 1967], 72-73).

¹Piollet, 376-377.

²Mworoha, 27.

Although, contemporary anthropologists are more cautious regarding theories of origin, these earlier affirmations impacted the development of the current ethnic crisis in a number of ways. In the first place, these theories deeply conditioned and perpetuated the views and attitudes of the early colonialists regarding the Rwandan ethnic groups with whom they interacted. They legitimized their desire to elevate the Tutsis, as a superior race, over the Hutu.

Second, these theories provided the "scientific rationale and canon" used by the Germans and later by the Belgian colonial authorities in the actual governance of the Rwandan society. Administrators elevated the Tutsi chiefs to positions of administrative authority in systems of indirect rule. Third, these theories had a lasting and massive impact on the Tutsis and Hutus themselves. A pattern of "brainwashing" and stereotyping for some sixty years inflated the Tutsis' sense of cultural superiority. On the contrary, Hutu feelings were crushed, further engendering an aggressive and resentful inferiority complex. Danielle Case concludes that

If these subjective feelings are combined with the political and administrative objectives of the colonial authorities, which favored one group over the other, we can begin to see how a very dangerous social bomb was

manufactured throughout the years of domination and culminated in the events following independence of the country.¹

Missionaries and anthropologists based their concepts on the existing theories, some of which were inaccurate. Those artificially created concepts turned out to exert a divisive influence upon the population of the country.

Administrative System During the Colonial Era

Rwanda was first governed by Germany (1896-1916) and later by Belgium (1916-1962). These colonial governments followed a system called indirect rule. In other words, they depended on local African authorities to carry out the Europeans' colonial policies.

During both the German and the Belgian occupations of Rwanda, the Tutsis were accorded dominance in local colonial administration in spite of the fact that local administrations were not in conflict with colonial policies.

Roman Catholic Mgr. Leon Classe wrote the following in 1927:

The greatest mistake this government could make would

¹Danielle Case, *The Former Yugoslavia and Burundi/Rwanda: Two Case Studies on the Role of Ethnocentrism in Warfare* (New York: New York University, 1997), 97.

be to suppress the Tutsi caste. Such a revolution would lead the country directly to anarchy and to hateful anti-European communism. We will have no better more active and more intelligent chiefs than the Tutsis. They are the ones best suited to understand progress and the ones the population likes best. The Government must work mainly with them.¹

The Belgian colonizers established distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi and introduced identification cards which designated people as Hutu or Tutsi. Peter Uvin avers:

The colonizer rigidified this ideology both through the use of racist images describing Hutu and Tutsi as two distinct races, with greatly differing intellectual and moral capacities, and through the institution of indirect rule, which forcefully implemented these images for the same practice in what is now Cameroon.²

Colonialism from its inception stratified Rwandan people and bolstered Tutsis' superiority over the Hutus.

This historical background helps one to understand the beginning and development of the major tensions that led to the ethnic conflict in Rwanda.

Post-Colonial Era to Independence and Beyond

The Pre-Independence Situation

Throughout the continent of Africa in the 1950s, the great interest was self-rule. Educated Africans were

¹Ibid., 27.

²Uvin, 32.

pushing for independence. Like other African nations or colonies, educated Rwandans played a leading role in fighting for independence. The desire for self-rule and democracy led Tutsi intellectuals to demand Rwandan independence from Belgium.

In 1957, a small group of nine Hutu intellectuals including Kayibanda, who later became the first president of the independent nation of Rwanda in 1962, wrote a *Bahutu Manifesto*. This became one of the most important documents of "Hutu consciousness" and the founding of the Independent State of Rwanda.

The central message of the *Bahutu Manifesto* claimed that "the problem is basically that of the monopoly of the Tutsi group, that has condemned the desperate [Hutu] to be forever subaltern workers." The *Manifesto* further accused their Tutsi opponents of "Tutsi Colonization," a term accusing the Tutsis of wanting to become the new colonialists in place of the Belgians.

In reality, the *Bahutu Manifesto* referred to the humiliation and socioeconomic inferiority of the Hutu community. Catharine Newbury asserts that

the problem was basically that of the political monopoly of one race [the Tutsi]. In the present circumstances, this political monopoly is turned into an economic and social monopoly. And given the de

facto selection in school, the political, economic and social monopolies turn into a cultural monopoly which condemns the desperate [Hutu] to be forever subaltern workers, even after an independence that they will have contributed to gain without even realizing what is in store for them. The *Ubugake* has been legislated away, but these monopolies have replaced it with an even stronger oppression.¹

The goal of the *Bahutu Manifesto* was to call attention of all Hutus in order to put an end to what they regarded as *Tutsi Colonization*. This *Manifesto* severely questioned the feudal system which was to be replaced by a government of majority Hutu.

In February 1957, a group of Tutsi intellectuals published their response from Nyanza, the Tutsi royal capital of Rwanda. According to this document, the ideal relationship and proper ties between the Hutus and the Tutsis should be established according to the principle of lord and servant or vassal. Thus the royal establishment condemned the *Bahutu Manifesto*.

The colonial masters took advantage of this situation by supporting the Hutus, who did not intend to end colonial rule. Twagilimana, a Rwandan professor at Buffalo State University, argues that

these opposing documents hardened the views of the more radical Tutsis and Hutus. At the same time, the

¹Newbury, 146.

Belgian colonial government began to shift its support from the Tutsis elite to the Hutus, who demanded democracy but not the end of Belgian control.¹

Because the Tutsis were demanding independence, threatening colonial rule, the Colonial Administration divided the two groups, insisting that the 15 percent of Tutsi in Rwanda could not rule over the majority Hutu. This represented a fairly radical shift on the part of the Belgian authorities who had previously always supported the Tutsis. Only when their colonial rule was threatened did they advocate Hutu self-rule.²

Due to this radical shift in Belgian Colonial policy, tensions between Hutus and Tutsis increased sharply, culminating in the 1959 civil war. This war cost hundreds of thousands of Tutsi lives, and thousands of the remaining Tutsis fled into neighboring countries.

The Hutu victory owed much to Belgian support. Even

¹Twagilimana, *Hutu and Tutsi*, 42.

²J. P Harroy (Governor General of Rwanda and Burundi in 1955 during the colonial era) claims that he encouraged Colonel A. Logiest to install structures of administration staffed by Hutu in the aftermath of the 1959 uprising; such measures were necessary, he and Logiest believed, to ensure that Tutsi supporters of the UNR, political party would not again control the state of the Hutu. Whatever the role of Harroy, Logiest clearly became an active partisan aiding the Hutu. Newbury, 197.

though the Hutu were in the majority, that factor alone is insufficient to account for this sweeping change because they were not in a commanding position. Twagilimana confirms that "the Hutu victory was due both to their far larger numbers and the support they received from the Belgian colonial government."¹

Thus, the Independence of Rwanda was given a particular character by the sudden reversal of Belgian sympathy from the Tutsis to the Hutus. Just before granting independence in 1962, the Belgians permitted several riots intended to undo and undermine the authority of the Tutsi chiefs. According to Alain Destexhe, "more than twenty thousand Tutsi, highly educated individuals, were killed."² The 1959 civil war became a turning point in the political history of Rwanda. Hutu authority was centralized and large numbers of Tutsis were excluded from the political life of Rwanda. The Hutus created a unique political party, "Parmehutu," which meant a "party for the Hutus" which excluded the Tutsis. With the creation of "Parmehutu," the Hutu government began "playing the ethnic card." Uvin wrote

¹Emmanuel Koline, "Towards Reconciliation in Rwanda," *Transformation* 12, no. 2 (April/June): 13.

²Destexhe, 43.

that "independent [Hutu-led] Rwanda defined its identity by denying the right to existence of the others [Tutsis], by defining [them] as strangers."¹ Destexhe also reveals that "from this point on, the Tutsi minority became the scapegoat in every political crisis."²

Since independence, the whole ideology of the Hutu government has contained genocidal elements. This point is clearly illustrated in the 1964 speech of Kayibanda, the first president of Rwanda, when he warned the Tutsi refugees that if they attempted to obtain political power again, the entire Tutsi community would be wiped out."³

This ideology was downplayed during the 1970s but had not disappeared. Its salience in public life decreased. In the 1990s, this ideology was rejuvenated, radicalized, and raised to a genocidal level during the massacre of 1994.

The Massacre and Dispersion of the 1960s

After Rwanda became independent in 1962, the Hutus dominated the government and adopted a spirit of revenge. They tried at all costs to victimize the Tutsis. For their part, between 1963 and 1967, the Tutsis continued to

¹Uvin, 33.

²Ibid., 44.

³Ibid., 37.

antagonize the Hutu government, making several attempts to overthrow it. Each time a coup was attempted, some Tutsi civilians were killed by the Hutus. Randall Fegley comments:

Ethnic tension continued after independence, when serious tribal warfare broke out in 1963. Tutsi malcontents launched an invasion of Rwanda but were repelled. In retaliation, over 12,000 Tutsi were massacred by the Hutu, while many others fled the country. Rwandan relations with neighboring Tutsi-dominated Burundi soured and the economic union of Rwanda and Burundi, fashioned by the Belgians, was terminated.¹

Now Tutsis were being blamed for political problems in Rwanda. This was a carefully designed strategy to justify the killing of Tutsis within the country. Previously, in 1961, a group of Tutsi refugees known as militants of the Union National Rwandaise (UNR) organized themselves to conduct guerrilla warfare. These guerrillas had their bases in various neighboring countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They targeted Hutu officials and managed to kill several of them in the prefecture (province) of Byumba in the northern part of the country. The Hutu government then took revenge by killing nearly two thousand Tutsi civilians. Finally, the Tutsis realized that the more they

¹Fegley, xxiv.

attacked the Hutu government, the more they lost numbers of Tutsis still living in Rwanda. Because of this, they retreated into their host countries.

When the refugee problem heightened, it was no longer just a Rwandan problem, but an international one. Many more Tutsis were forced into exile. This movement, which began slowly, gained momentum until a continuous flow of refugees exited the country between 1959 and 1964. By 1962, about 120,000 were already in refugee status.¹ That figure increased to 336,000 by 1964 according to the official report. Prunier records the following numbers of Tutsi refugees in surrounding countries: "Burundi 200,000, Uganda 78,000, Tanzania 36,000, Democratic Republic of Congo 22,000."²

The Tutsis' self-determination was not stopped by their adversaries. Instead, they were inspired to move

¹Some writers on the Rwandan refugee issue claim that no standard figure is unanimously agreed upon. The issue is complex and the numbers enormous. And though for propaganda reasons the government preferred a smaller figure, reports from surrounding countries would indicate otherwise.

²The actual figures could be either larger or smaller than Prunier estimates. The point is the large numbers of Tutsi refugees who left Rwanda between 1959 and 1973 because of political persecution and who were still identified as refugees in 1990. See Prunier, 61-62.

ahead. Wherever they went, the Tutsis worked hard and became successful in business and other ventures.

The Tutsi Search for Homeland and Identity

When Tutsis left Rwanda during the 1960s and entered neighboring countries, they had no idea they would be in *diaspora* for nearly thirty years. Though many refugees died, many children were also born in exile. Their situation became increasingly diversified. As Prunier states:

Personal biographies became increasingly diversified to the point where being a Rwandan refugee could mean anything from eking out a precarious living in a refugee settlement in western Uganda to another working as a journalist in Switzerland, by way of peasants in Zaire, businessmen in Bujumbura and social workers in New York City. As the daughter of a refugee said to a researcher in Uganda, "We had no land, so we had to use our heads."¹

The majority of the Tutsi refugees, however, remained in the nations surrounding Rwanda. Even though many of them were wealthy and seemingly well established, they were often overwhelmed by a sense of rootlessness and loss. They desired to return home. Many of them related how they had to change their names and disguise themselves in order to be accepted in meaningful jobs to earn a living.

¹Prunier, 64.

Successful as they were, the Tutsi refugees always feared that everything they had achieved or built could one day be taken away from them. The difficulties the Tutsi refugees faced in diaspora often caused them to fantasize about Rwanda. Those who visited Rwanda brought reports of hope. The search and longing for a homeland and a national identity often blinded many Tutsis to the actual truth about Rwanda. Some admitted that they did not know the Hutus, but they had heard what the Hutu had done to their grandparents, killing them with knives and burning their houses. In spite of this, many intellectuals understood that even after the invasion of or return to Rwanda, some of them would want to keep Ugandan citizenship or that of their adoptive country.

Life in neighboring countries was competitive and difficult, especially in Uganda. This situation was similar to that of Palestinians and Eritreans. Andre Guichaoua writes:

A limited number of individuals acquired a reputation for professional and financial success which was often quite exaggeratedly extended to the whole community in the Great Lakes area. Many people remained in precarious social and economic situations: widows and families with a single female parent, lone young adults, people left behind in the camps, and groups in conflict situations with the local population.¹

¹Andre Guichaoua, *Le problem des refugiés rwandais et des populations Banyarwanda dans la région des Grands*

Even though the exiled Tutsis experienced drastic dispersion and social differentiation, they kept in touch with each other. This maintained network gave them courage and strength. It provided them with solidarity in seeking ways of returning to their homeland. Idealization of the desire for their homeland kept the exiled Tutsis focused. They held on to this dream and were successful in almost every temporary venture that would prepare the way for its realization. With determination, they sought to reclaim their homeland and resettle in Rwanda.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that the people of Rwanda (both Hutus and Tutsis) lived in relative harmony in pre-colonial times. A limited pattern of leadership was shared in their social, economic, and political life. During the colonial era, social stratification became more pronounced. Various theories of ethnic superiority advocated by colonialists became the seedbed for the future crisis. In the pre-Independence and post-Independence periods, this ethnic identity was further crystalized, giving rise to ethnic tension which resulted in massacres during the late 1950s,

Lacs Africains (Geneva: UNHCR, 1992), 20.

early 1960s, and beyond.

The role of the Christian church before and after independence had a direct impact on this ethnic identity crisis.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY IN RWANDA

Rwanda is considered a Christian country with over 85 percent of the population professing a Christian faith.¹ Therefore it is important to examine the history of Christianity in Rwanda in relation to ethnic conflicts that climaxed in bloody genocide in 1994. In spite of Christianity's deep roots in the country, its impact on the indigenous peoples seems to have been comparatively shallow and lacking solid foundation. Aaron Mugemera, a Rwandan Protestant pastor, wrote,

The church didn't change people [in Rwanda]; instead, the church was changed and became weak. People joined extremist political parties and went to political meetings on Sunday [or Saturday] instead of going to church. Then when the massacres began, people became worse than animals because our message had become so superficial.²

This chapter explores the history of Christianity in Rwanda with special attention to Catholicism, Protestantism,

¹Bowen, 33.

²McCullum, 74.

and Adventism. The analysis of the work and influence of these denominations may give some insight into the responsibility of the Christian church in relation to the genocide. The historical background of religion and social structure in Rwanda before the arrival of missionaries is presented first, followed by the history of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Adventist missions in Rwanda. Important conclusions follow the background study.

Religion and Social Structure in Rwanda Before the Arrival of Missionaries

Long before Westerners entered Rwanda, before the arrival of missionaries, the people of Rwanda had a sense of worship of a creator-being they called Imana. Their form of worship followed two levels.

First, Imana, who was conceived as all-powerful and as sustaining the whole universe, was the ultimate being deserving full allegiance. He was the creator of everything that exists. All other forms of life were sustained by him. He was good and took care of humans but required no offering or sacrifice from them. He could be offended, but in return he punished by sending misfortune.

Second, a daily form of worship involved veneration of the spirits of dead ancestors. It was believed that when a person died, his or her spirit lived on in continued fellowship with the living relative. Although the dead were believed to inhabit the spirit world, they still maintained an interest in the affairs of their living families and had to be placated by offerings and gifts.¹ Certain calamities and misfortunes, such as childlessness and drought, were attributed to the displeasure of the ancestors. Sacrifices of flour and animals to the ancestors were believed to gain their favor and turn away misfortune and evil.

The people of Rwanda lived in a tightly structured society. The king (*mwami*) in his position commanded ritual worship and consolidated the social structure. He was the promoter of justice, unity, and authority. The king was accepted by both Hutus and Tutsis. Within this background of civic structure, authority, and religious belief and practice, Christianity was later engaged, challenged, and came to be accepted.

¹Albert Long, "Christianity in Rwanda" (Master's thesis, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, 1976), 13.

The Coming of the Roman Catholic Church

The First Roman Catholic Missionaries

The "White Fathers," led by Monsignor Hirth,¹ were the first European missionaries to arrive in Nyanza, the royal capital of Rwanda. Their arrival around 1900 was treated with suspicion because the ruling king, Musinga, was not sure of their motives. He gave missionaries a lukewarm reception. Paul Nzacahayo reveals that "one of the reasons the king [Musinga] of Rwanda was suspicious of the Christian missionaries was that he was afraid that they would contaminate his traditional religion which he was bound to protect."²

The Tutsi chiefs restricted interaction between the missionaries and the local people. In fact, doors of the ruling class were tightly closed to the Roman Catholic missionaries until the mid-1920s. Only one member of the ruling class had been converted to Christianity by that time.³ The early converts consisted largely of the Hutu peasants residing around the mission stations, and other impoverished and patronless individuals who sought

¹A. Arnoux, *Les peres Blancs aux sources du Nil* (Paris: Librairie Missionnaires, 1953), 105-197.

²Nzacahayo, 14.

³Linden, 173.

protection by the Fathers from powerful feudal lords.¹

It is easy to understand why the Tutsis at first rejected the missionaries. The White Fathers were perceived by Tutsi chiefs as a threat to their order of governance. The patron-client relationship was at stake as the missionaries intervened in disputes between Tutsi patrons and Hutu church members. Thus much resentment developed on the part of the ruling class against the missionaries.

Roman Catholic Missionary Methods

The Roman Catholic work focused on religious programs: preaching, teaching, and medical programs. But the earliest representatives of Christianity in the country became mired in and identified with partisan politics. This contributed to ethnic animosity and division by favoring one group over the other.² The extensive involvement of the first Roman Catholic missionaries in the politics of the country and in the colonial governance worked to the detriment of the Christian faith.

¹Ibid., 34.

²Laurent Mbanda, *Committed to Conflict: The Destruction of the Church in Rwanda* (London: Cromwell, 1997), 42. See also E. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Function in Time Perspective" *Journal of African History* (1960): 521-532.

Concentration on the Ruling Class

The missionaries wanted the ruling class to join the church. They believed that the success of the Rwanda mission depended upon conversion of the Tutsis, regardless of their animosity towards the missions at that time. The missionaries believed that by targeting the ruling class and converting it to Christianity they could win the population of the whole country. Linden describes the strategy of Monsignor Pages, one of the White Fathers, as to how he hoped to evangelize the country by winning the Tutsis.¹

Between 1825 and 1892, Cardinal Lavigerie was the moving force on behalf of the Roman Catholic mission. He propagated the hierarchical theory that grace flows from the top downwards. This theory suggested that once the upper class was converted, the entire populace would follow. Monsignor Classe, who arrived in 1906, was a disciple of Lavigerie. He set about implementing Lavigerie's theory of hierarchical strategy of evangelism and concentrated on evangelizing the Tutsi ruling class which, by now, had begun

¹Pages thought the Tutsis had come from Christian stock on the border of Ethiopia, and he wanted to begin again where Coptic Christianity had left off. He drew heavily on Tutsi informants and court traditions to provide an account of the expansion of the Rwandan State in the form of a dynastic history. Linden, 5.

to identify with the church.¹ Gatwa confirms that "the dream of the White Fathers' Christian Kingdom in central Africa was summed up in the famous slogan and evangelical principle of Cardinal Lavigerie, 'Once you have the heads you have no problem in obtaining the body.'"²

As noted above, the White Fathers perceived that Musinga, the king, was both "anti-European and anti-Catholic." Nonetheless, Father Classe strongly believed that if Christianity was to be generally accepted in Rwanda, many Tutsi chiefs would have to be converted despite their suspicions of the missionary activities.

In a letter dated September 1927, Classe addressed the following remarks to Morteau, an administrator of the Rwanda colonial government:

At the present time, if we want to take a practical point of view, and look to the country's real interests, we have in the Tutsi youth an incomparable element for progress that nobody knowing Rwanda can underestimate. [Tutsi youth are] avid to learn, desirous of becoming acquainted with all that comes from Europe, wanting to imitate Europeans, enterprising, realizing well enough that traditional customs have lost their *raison d'être*, but nonetheless preserving the political sense of the old-timers and their race's adroitness in the management of men, this youth is a force for the good and for the economic

¹Ibid., 2.

²Gatwa, 5.

future of the country.¹

Monsignor Classe summarized the relationship between the Catholic Church and traditional Rwandan authority in the following words: "Until now, nothing from the political standpoint or in the administrative domains in Rwanda, has really favored Catholicism. Now, Catholics are considered enemies of the king, enemies of the customs of Rwanda."²

In another letter addressed to the headquarters of the White Fathers in Belgium, Monsignor Classe wrote: "It seems that the king, after his mad opposition against the church and to all that is European, tends towards a cause that will destroy him."³ The Monsignor's "solution" was to plan King Musinga's removal and replace him with his son who would probably be more amenable to Roman Catholic objectives.

Postiaux, the Governor, in a report to the Ministry for the Colonies, dated May 28, 1929, wrote:

The Governor had no preconceived idea about the king, but as from now, he considers that on the contrary the administration has nothing to gain, even in the eyes of the [Tutsi] noble persons who are worthy of our consideration. . . . I conclude that the government will not expose itself in Rwanda to any

¹Paul Rutayisire, *La Christianisation du Rwanda (1900 -1945)* (Fribourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul, 1987), 175.

²Ibid., 167.

³Ibid., 181.

misunderstanding by removing Musinga and providing a pension for him.¹

The fateful day for King Musinga arrived on November 12, 1931. The Governor, escorted by a company of soldiers, entered Nyanza in the presence of all the chiefs of the country. He had a meeting with Musinga in the morning. The king learned to his dismay that he was being immediately removed and ordered to leave the next day for Kamembe² where a house had been prepared for his imprisonment.

On the night of King Musinga's departure, a small reception was jointly prepared by Monsignor Classe and the the Governor of the region at which Rudahigwa was proclaimed King of Rwanda. Monsignor Classe gave him a legal name, Mutara III Rudahigwa.

The new king understood what his role would be in the new regime. Hence, he practiced a different kind of politics from his father. The new King Rudahigwa accepted Christianity while supporting traditional patterns of worship. By so doing, he won the favor both of his subjects and the Catholic fathers. He and his mother both accepted

¹Ibid., 174.

²Kamembe is the post office address. It is located in southwest Rwanda near the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

baptism.¹

The removal of King Musinga led to the enrollment of more than ten thousand new catechumens at the Roman Catholic headquarters mission of Kabgayi, and within a year nearly four thousand new Christians were baptized.²

Linden describes the effects of this change: "The departed Musinga had been like the rock that stops the torrent; once removed, the water surges on."³

The new Christian king commenced his noble task of committing his country to Christianity, showing that he was willing for God's kingdom to be established on Rwandan soil.

The conversion of the king made it easy for the chiefs and sub-chiefs to follow his example. Mgr. Classe put Cardinal Lavigerie's methods into practice, evangelizing the subjects through the chiefs. What followed was called the "Conversion Tornado."⁴ Linden notes:

In the 1930s, [the] Tornado swept large numbers of the aristocracy into the Church and fulfilled Cardinal

¹Christian Terras, "L'honneur perdu des Missionnaire : La Sainte Collusion," *Goliath Magazine*: no. 48/49 (Summer 1996): 32.

²Linden, 172.

³Ibid., 172

⁴"Conversion Tornado" refers to the rush of Tutsi conversions in Rwanda to Christianity during the years of 1929-1934.

In the 1930s, [the] Tornado swept large numbers of the aristocracy into the Church and fulfilled Cardinal Lavigerie's dream of converting Africa through its chiefs. Rwanda became 'the Christian Kingdom' with *mwami* Rudahigwa and the court shored up with an ideology of Christian kingship that made the dynastic history of the Tutsi lineage a second Old Testament leading up to the arrival of the New Testament.¹

Commonly among Africans, when the chief is converted, his subjects follow suit. Therefore, when large numbers of Tutsi chiefs were baptized, it was easy for the Belgians to continue ruling, indirectly through the Tutsis, thus making Catholicism a state religion.

Consequently, the Catholic Church assumed the political role it customarily held in any official Catholic country. During Rudahigwa's enthronement, Mgr. Classe kept a very low profile. Rumiya states:

The new king [Mutara III Rudahigwa] was solemnly enthroned in November 1931. The Belgian officers, the chiefs, and the neighboring population were present, nobody missed the appointment. [On the contrary], Monsignor Classe was careful not to display his public presence, in order to prevent any doubt [suspicion] about his role in Musinga's removal.²

This account helps explain the background of the alliance between the ruling government and the church which was a foundational factor in the rising tension between the

¹Ian Linden, "The Churches and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Tragedy," *The Month* (July 1995): 261.

²J. Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le Regime du Mandat Belge de 1916 a 1931* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), 172.

Rwandan peoples.

When Mgr. Classe had accomplished his plan, the Tutsis were perceived not only as political leaders, but also as religious leaders.¹ Now missionaries became divided over whether to invest their efforts on the Hutu or Tutsi.

In the midst of tensions within the mission itself, Mgr. Classe specified the direction the church would take.² Christian Terras defines clearly Mgr. Classe's strategy:

According to our religious point of view, he said, we believed that the Mututsi [Tutsi] element is the best, the most active, the most convincing, the most capable to act in the mass of people to influence his role of ferment.³

This choice on the part of the Roman Catholic Church of one tribe over the other undermined the unity of the people of Rwanda from the beginning. The close liaison between Church and State and the elevation of Tutsis to positions of high responsibility by both intensified the prevailing ethnic divisions and conflict between the Rwandan

¹Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, 174.

²Christian Terras reports the following as an expression of Father Classe's philosophy of mission: "You must choose the [Tutsis], because the government will probably refuse [Hutu] teachers. In the government the positions in every branch of the administration, even the important ones, will be reserved henceforth for young Tutsis." Terras, 32.

³Ibid., 33.

peoples.

By the enthronement of King Rudahigwa and the "Conversion Tornado," the earlier Hutu Catholic Church of the poor became a Tutsi church of the ruling class.

In 1906, prior to the arrival of Msgr. Classe, the most feasible Catholic mission approach, because of the resistance of the Tutsi ruling class, was to establish a Hutu Church. The aim thus was to convert the Hutu and induct their youth into seminaries where they could be educated, prepared for ministry, and ultimately ordained.¹ But Monsignor Classe had a different vision and worked hard to upset that plan. His desire to convert the ruling class appears to have been the first move of the Roman Catholic Church that eventually led to a division of the people of Rwanda.

The Mass Conversions of the 1930s

Some commentators believe that the mass movement of the Tutsis into the Catholic Church in the 1930s was premature. They were joining the church not because they were converted, but for ulterior motives: the desire to rule, to identify with the superior class, and to obey the

¹Paul Flamm, "The Catholic Church and Ethnic Divisions in Rwanda: A Critical Analysis," Unpublished manuscript, 1995, 6.

missionaries. The Hutus had joined the church to gain an education, a desire for the White man's way of life,¹ and self-interest. In addition, the mission could protect them against the forced labor under the traditional *ubuhake* conventions. Prunier comments on such conversion:

The danger of such an onslaught of converts is that their preparation, commitment, and faith were not sufficiently tested. Consequently, many of the converts were ill-prepared and were converting for questionable motives, such as the social, economic, and educational benefits which may have come with one's allegiance to the [Roman] Catholic Church.²

This evaluation has led to the claim that Rwanda was evangelized, but not deeply Christianized. Some analysts argue that the mass conversions of Hutus and Tutsis were not the right motives. Probably the participation of so many Christians in the ethnic conflict of 1994 was due to a lack of a true conversion when they joined the church.

The Catholic Church Changes Sides

In 1956, Monsignor Classe's successor, Monsignor Andre Perraudin, archbishop of Kabgayi, became the first prominent Catholic leader to advocate majority rule and

¹Michel Twagirayesu and Jan van Butselaar, *Ce Don Que Nous Avons Recu: Histoire de l'Eglise Presbyterien au Rwanda (1907-1982)* (Bruxelles: N. de Jonge, 1982), 96.

²Prunier, 34.

social justice.¹ Monsignor Perraudin's motive in choosing Hutus to lead the country, in place of Tutsis, was not understood by some Rwandans. Thus Perraudin's ideology, like that of his predecessor, also became a factor in the ethnic conflict later in the 1950s. In a letter in 1959, he acknowledged that,

in our Rwanda, the difference between the ethnic groups is determined according to wealth, political power, and judicial authority, and these powers are in a great proportion in the hands of one ethnic group, the Tutsis.²

Under orders from Rome, Perraudin took it upon himself to change the policy the Church had earlier focussed upon, that is, giving the majority approach to the Tutsis. This change reversed the pro-Tutsi church system established fifty years earlier by Msgr. Classe. Naturally, it led to dissension and confusion. It soon became clear that Msgr. Perraudin was aligning the church with the majority Parmehutu movement, which he regarded as the rising party of the government of the future. Common to the policies of both Perraudin and Classe was a church program which gave consecutive support to one ethnic group above the other.

This radical and rapid shift followed the politics of the country from a pro-Tutsi to a pro-Hutu Catholic

¹Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, 259.

²Terras, 33.

Church/mission approach. This prepared the way for Catholic identification with the Hutu political movement.

Monsignor Perraudin's relation with the first Hutu president, Gregoire Kayibanda, and his political party, Parmehutu, did not make things any easier for the future of the country.¹

Thus the mission policy of the Roman Catholic Church gave support to the rising tension between the two main groups of the people of Rwanda. The two bishops (Msgr. Classe for the Tutsis and Msgr. Perraudin for the Hutus) are judged negatively for emphasizing ethnicity, even though they did so in responding to two very different political situations. The problem, viewed from a current and much wider perspective, fostered and tended to widen the tension between the two major ethnic groups of Rwandans.

The Arrival of Protestant Churches

Lutherans--1907

Protestantism was brought to Rwanda in 1907 by Lutheran missionaries of the Bethel mission who had previously established an extensive work in Tanzania. Their route into Rwanda from the east lay via the court of the grand chief Gahigi who received them with hospitality. He

¹Parmehutu, meaning "Emancipation of the Hutu," was a party based on ethnic ideology.

offered them a place to spend the night and a cow to celebrate their arrival.¹

Pastor Johanssen, the leader, took advantage of his visit to the Chief's house to teach him the gospel, but, according to the missionaries' report, the chief had blocked his ears. It seemed too difficult for him to give up his harem, beer, absolute power over his subjects, and the large assets which came from all kinds of taxes.

Despite the chief's resistance to the gospel, the generous hospitality accorded the Lutheran missionaries in their first contact with the eastern population of Rwanda was encouraging. From the beginning, the Protestant missionaries were impressed by the ordered social structure of the people of Rwanda.

On July 22, 1907, they visited Nyanza, the political center of Rwanda. Their first visit with Musinga was positive and he gave them a gift of a cow and ten goats. Musinga spoke *Swahili*, a language which the missionaries knew well. Musinga was interested to know if the Roman Catholic missionaries would leave Rwanda once the Protestants were established in his country. The missionaries responded negatively, noting that the country seemed to be large enough and heavily populated enough to

¹Twagirayesu and van Butselaar, 27.

host two missions.

In the days that followed, the initial contacts with the king became very friendly. Johanssen gave the king a magnet; the other missionary, Ruccius, gave him his belt. Musinga himself taught them a few words in Kinyarwanda, the local language of the country.

Later when von Grawert, the German administrator of Rwanda, heard of the arrival of the Lutherans, he gave his support to the missionaries' request for the establishment of a mission. Musinga allowed them to set up a mission and suggested that they locate their mission on the shores of Lake Kivu. When they explained to him that this would be too far from Bukoba, Tanzania, their port for fresh provisions, he gave his consent to their installation in the east of the country.

Seventh-day Adventists--1919

Between 1921 and 1922, Seventh-day Adventists established mission bases at Gitwe in central Rwanda and Rwankeri in the far north.¹ This group of Protestants was unique in that they worshiped on the seventh day of the week, Saturday, rather than the first day of the week,

¹Lydie Delhove, *A Daughter Remembers: D. E. Delhove, Pioneer Missionary in Central Africa* (Denver: Master Printers, 1984), 24.

Sunday. The work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be treated in more detail later in the chapter.

Baptists--1920

In 1920, The Union des Eglises Protestantes Baptist au Rwanda (UEBR) from Belgium entered Rwanda and established a strong mission in the southern area of the country. Much later, American missionaries from the Congo formed the Association des Eglises Baptist au Rwanda (AEBR) in 1964.¹

Anglicans--1922

The Anglican Church began its activities at Gahini in the northeast in 1922. Through education and evangelism, the Anglican Church enhanced the development of Protestant consciousness. Further, the massive spiritual revival of the Christian Church known as the East African Revival started at Gahini in the Anglican Church in the 1930s. This is discussed in more detail below. Anglicans appointed their first Rwandan bishop in 1966.

Pentecostals--1940

The Pentecostal Church was planted in 1940 by the Free Swedish Mission from Congo, but local congregations were not united in a national organization until 1979. The

¹Gatwa, 5.

Pentecostal community spread almost everywhere, offering healing and emotional power. The younger generation seems to be attracted by this new way of worship.¹

Methodists--1940s

The American Methodist Church entered Rwanda from Burundi in the early 1940s. They were active mostly in the southwestern part of the country. In 1964 they were granted autonomy by the mother mission. They ordained their first African bishop in 1984.

East African Revival

Before the massive movement of renewal, known as the East African Revival movement, many people had accepted Christianity while still holding on to some aspects of their traditional religion.

In 1928, two Ugandans, Kigozi and Yosiya, of the Gahini Anglican mission were convicted of a deeper experience of Jesus Christ by the preaching of an Anglican, Dr. Joe Church. Kigozi and Yosiya began to preach publicly about confession, forgiveness of sin, and personal salvation in Jesus Christ.

The first mass movement of the revival took place at Rukiga in 1928. With the prayers of Christians from many

¹Ibid., 5.

places, the real Revival Movement erupted at Gahini in the east of Rwanda in December 1933. Many people, overwhelmed by a sense of their sinfulness, gave themselves to the Lord during public meetings and confessed their sins in public. Strangely enough, while these activities were happening in Gahini, similar activities were simultaneously taking place in another mission station called Kigeme. Thereafter, the movement spread throughout Rwanda and spilled over into the neighboring countries of Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, and Kenya. Though the revival started in the Anglican churches, it quickly spread into other denominations.

Russell Staples, in his article on the work of Henri Monnier, the first Adventist missionary at Rwankeri, Rwanda, mentions that one of the factors that contributed to the increase in conversions at the Adventist Rwankeri Station in 1928 was that many people who fled the country to the north and east due to a famine had already come in contact with the East African Revival Movement. When they returned to Rwanda after the famine, they engaged in their own revival movement. As a result more people became receptive to the gospel at the Rwankeri Station than at any other Seventh-day Adventist field in Rwanda.¹

¹Russell Staples "Henri Monnier, 1896-1944, 'Rukandirabagabo' --- 'The Mighty Man,'" unpublished manuscript, October, 1980.

The Roman Catholic Church, however, rejected the Revival Movement because they saw it as a Protestant movement and because it emphasized the experience of personal salvation.

Revival Unites Tribal Groups

The Revival Movement in the Protestant churches penetrated the wall of tribalism that had separated Hutus and Tutsis. The Hutus shared the experience of their sinful life with Tutsis. During the years of ethnic conflict in the 1960s and 1970s, many Hutu converts defended the Tutsis who were members of their church family. Some sacrificed their lives by refusing to be separated during prayer sessions and were killed together. The increase of unity and brotherhood in the churches could be traced in many instances to origins in the Revival Movement.

Chiefs Converted to Protestantism

The Revival Movement led many people of Rwanda to join Protestant churches. Even many Tutsi chiefs were converted to Protestant Christianity. Catholics watched helplessly as Protestantism spread in Rwanda, even among the ruling class. Tharcisse Gatwa explains that ,

in Rwanda, some chiefs and sub chiefs were converted to Protestantism, such as Chief Ruhorahoza of Bugesera and Mbaraga of Kanage. That did not please the Roman Catholic Church since its plan was to hold on to the

ruling class and limit the influence of the Protestants to the minimum possible.¹

Now they had to share the ruling class with the Protestant churches.

The Revival Movement led to conflict between Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic Church as an "established" church sought to monopolize the religious leadership of Rwanda. They literally attempted to eradicate any efforts to further the kingdom of God through Protestantism. In general, the Protestant churches were referred to as sects. But the Protestant teachings were strong, emphasizing biblical principles that brought deliverance from such habits as drinking beer, smoking tobacco, and similar practices. These teachings were unique to the Protestants and contributed to strained relations with the Roman Catholic church.

Rivalry Between Catholics and Protestants

The Roman Catholic Church fostered its close relationship with the Belgian colonial administration in Rwanda. In reality, the Catholic Church wanted to spread its message to all people in the country and expand its roots without interference from other religious groups. When they realized that people were converted to

¹Gatwa, 6.

responding to the Protestant message, the Roman Catholics were so upset that some Catholic sub-chiefs went so far as to whip Protestant members for not attending the Roman Catholic Church. Ian Linden states that

Catholic Chiefs used the whip freely on the peasantry and recalcitrant sub-Chiefs, and as the Belgian demand for labor mounted Protestant Hutu were discriminated against, loaded with *kazi* and beaten if they protested.¹

The success of the Protestant Church in penetrating Rwanda was not without daunting difficulties, yet they persevered. With the passing of time, however, the situation began to change. The enthusiasm with which Protestantism was accepted in Rwanda was overwhelming. As a result, many souls were converted, including chiefs. The Catholics came to realize that this was a power to reckon with. They had to compete in every way. In turn this gave a great challenge to Protestantism because Catholicism was well rooted in Rwanda.

Protestants and the Ethnic Conflict Before the Genocide

The Protestant churches in Rwanda have not featured prominently in the histories of the socio-political conflict in Rwanda. By contrast, much has been written about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Rwanda ethnic

¹Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, 205.

role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Rwanda ethnic conflict because of its long involvement on both sides of the political spectrum.

During the crises of 1959 and 1963, the Protestant churches in Rwanda consistently encouraged unity and peace among their church members. They were much involved in ministry to the suffering during the ethnic conflicts. They helped refugees flee during the crises and hid individuals whose lives were in danger. They were active in ministry on a direct and personal level not only to their own church members but to all persons in need. However, while they preached unity and peace, they failed to speak out in prophetic judgment against the injustice of the day.

When the Protestant missionaries departed on permanent return, their responsibilities were reassigned to local leaders, many of whom were not yet spiritually mature enough to stand and speak against the evils of government politics or the acts of Hutu extremists. Some local church leaders began identifying with the government leaders to gain favor whereas it had seemed, earlier, that only the Catholic Church had political recognition. Some Protestant leaders now began to feel important in the community as the representatives of church institutions. John Martin writes,

Some Protestant church leaders felt emancipated because for the first time, they were representatives of

institutions which counted in a society where one church was dominant. Thus, crucial issues like the refugee problem, the violation of human rights, the numerous assassinations . . . could not be addressed.¹

The dynamics in the relationship between the Protestant churches and the Rwanda government slowly changed. The new church leaders were too close to the situation and were without the adequate pastoral formation to recognize their distinctive role as church leaders. As these new leaders began to undertake spiritual and moral responsibilities in relation to state policy. They tended to become partisans of the ruling party.

Seventh-day Adventist Mission

The first Adventist missionaries arrived on August 4, 1919, occupying two mission stations abandoned by the German Lutherans during the first World War. Linden states, "Late in 1919 a Seventh-day Adventist pastor occupied the abandoned stations of Kirinda and Remera before making Gitwe² the Adventist headquarters."³

The first Adventist missionaries to arrive in Rwanda

¹John Martin, "Revivalism and Conflict: Rwanda Why?" *Transformation* 12, no. 2 (April/June 1995): 18.

²Gitwe is the first Adventist mission station established in Rwanda.

³Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, 153.

were the families of David E. Delhove,¹ a Belgian, and Henri Monnier,² a Swiss. Delhove previously had been a missionary in Kenya but was drafted into the Belgian Army during World War I while serving as a District Commissioner in the Belgian Congo. He learned of the abandoned German missions in Rwanda and determined to return and open Adventist work there.

Henri Monnier, a watch maker, was recruited by Delhove to accompany him to Rwanda as soon as the war ended. They were allowed to occupy the abandoned Bethel Mission at Kirinda.³ Unfortunately, Mrs. Monnier died in January 1920. The work of the missionaries continued to flourish even though it required hard work and sacrifice. Lydie Delhove, daughter of the first Adventist missionary in Rwanda, described the hard work of these first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries:

We were at Kirinda for the whole of 1920. During that year the men folk were busy doing all kinds of missionary work. In July Brother Monnier started working at Remera, the third station, reopening schools and buildings, learning the Kinyarwanda language,

¹*SDA Encyclopedia*, "Delhove, David E."; "Obituary, David E. Delhove," *Review and Herald*, 28 April 1949, 20.

²*SDA Encyclopedia*, "Monnier, Henri"; "Obituary, Henri Monnier," *Review and Herald*, 28 January 1945, 24.

³Kirinda, a mission station which lay seventy miles East of Rubengera in Kibuye Prefecture (Province), in the southeast section of the Country.

teaching and preaching Adventist doctrine which had not been heard there before.¹

Adventist missionaries encountered few obstacles in their efforts to establish a permanent presence in Rwanda. The major difficulties they experienced could be attributed to the unstable political climate in Rwanda. In due course, the new Belgian administration requested the Adventist missionaries to leave Remera and Kirinda,² the former Lutheran stations. King Charles Mutara III Rudahigwa gave them a 125-acre plot of land at Gitwe about fifteen miles east of Kirinda and eleven miles north of Nyanza, near the king's royal palace.

This move enabled a continuation of the work that had begun in the area of Kirinda. It also had the advantage of accessibility to the Tutsi central government. This Gitwe station became the center of the Adventist mission in Rwanda. It also carried a negative history as it was believed to have been cursed by the kings in the past.

Lydie Delhove puts it this way:

Immediately all inhabitants deserted the cursed hill and as time passed, not even a tree was growing on it. The name of the hill was Gitwe (the place of the skull) because of many human skulls which had accumulated over the years. When the father [Delhove] heard this story and saw the strange hill, he was convinced that this was the leading of the Lord--the site for the mission

¹Delhove, 20.

²Ibid., 21.

station--and that in time the curse would be turned into a blessing.¹

The Adventist missionaries became a blessing to those who needed medical assistance and in due course disarmed the superstition surrounding the place.

Early Developments in Adventist Mission

Delhove set about establishing the work of the mission at Gitwe. Monnier set out to establish a new station at Buganza near Lake Muhazi. The mission station in Buganza was short-lived as a road was constructed through the mission property.

In April 1921, Monnier moved to Rwankeri in the northwest of the country. A. A. Matter and family joined the missionary team. Their work together resulted in rapid progress. They quickly acclimatized and learned the local language.

Monnier gained a good grasp of the Kinyarwanda language. Not only did he translate hymns and Adventist doctrines, but he also produced a very important tool for English-speaking missionaries, a Kinyarwanda grammar. This book was used widely to help the missionaries learn the language and culture. Later he was one of the translators of the Kinyarwanda Bible.

¹Ibid., 21.

However, the attitude of the Tutsi chiefs to the gospel had not changed much from the time of the White Fathers. It was not easy to convert them to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the Adventist missionaries did not lose heart. They continued to labor while focusing on Jesus Christ, the giver of all good things. Their efforts gradually paid off through the power of the Holy Spirit. The message began to change the hearts of the people.

By 1924 two people had been baptized at Rwankeri. These were the first recorded baptisms. The missionaries worked systematically and continued to provide Christian education and evangelism in many areas. They were attempting to change a whole society and were determined to reach the whole nation.

The first permanent Adventist school in Rwanda was opened at Gitwe in 1921. By 1924, eight other schools were affiliated with Gitwe. The first school at Rwankeri was established in 1925. During this period Adventist medical work was also being established.

The strategy of establishing educational and medical institutions was motivated by a concern to teach Adventist doctrines of the soon coming of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the body, the seventh-day Sabbath, the immutable law of God, and the judgment of deeds done in the

body on the great day of the Lord. They also taught the principles of healthful living and established clinics to treat those who needed healing. Lydie Delhove describes the mission work of her father:

Father installed a small dispensary where for a while in the mornings the sick were attended to. Also when emergencies arose he would be called at any time, day or night. I remember on more than one occasion his going out in the middle of the night to help some [woman] having a difficult delivery.¹

Delhove's practice is an example of the Adventist methods of evangelism, including the healing arts and emphasizing the importance of education. These principles were deeply rooted in the Adventist philosophy of mission that permeated Adventist work on every mission outpost.

Adventists and the Ethnic Conflict Before the Genocide

In 1962, when Rwanda became independent, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had only marginally nationalized its leadership; expatriate missionaries were still in charge. Consequently, during that time Adventist church members were not much involved in politics. Adventist convictions about separation of church and state led the missionaries to discourage church members, and especially church employees, from actively participating in

¹Delhove, 24.

politics and joining political parties. They even discouraged members from taking government jobs.

However, some church members and workers were encouraged by their families to accept government jobs and to participate actively in national politics so as to represent and protect the interests of their clans. At that time, church workers, both teachers and pastors, were hesitant to be identified with or affiliated to a political party lest they lose their denominational employment. Another barrier to office in government administration at that time was probably that many Adventists were not well prepared to hold responsibility in the government because they lacked high education.¹ These could be some of the reasons why Adventist Church workers and members were not as active in national politics at that time as were members of other denominations.

During the ethnic conflict of the 1960s and 1970s, Adventist missionaries helped and protected members and employees of the church who were experiencing difficulty

¹Before the independence of Rwanda, and even ten years after, not a single Seventh-day Adventist in the country had a college degree, but many had completed high school. By 1970, the first three Adventist young men were accepted in national universities. Two of them went to the University of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the third entered the Official University of Bujumbura in Burundi.

because of their ethnic identity. They assisted many workers who were mistreated by politicians on account of their ethnic background. In some cases, missionaries transferred church workers to neighboring countries to save them from abuse and death. The countries to which they were commonly transferred were the Congo, Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda. Some were accorded scholarships to institutions of higher education outside of the country. The missionaries leading the church thus saved many workers from being victimized.¹

When Rwandans were promoted to positions of administrative responsibility for the church, this practice largely came to an end. Generally speaking, the young national church leaders were no longer willing to take the risks associated with protecting their vulnerable members from victimization.²

¹In the ethnic crisis of 1960s and early 1970s, many Seventh-day Adventist missionaries protected their national employees against abuse and from death in their mission fields. Missionaries such as Miss. V. Larson, Pastor A. L. Davy, Pastor J. Evert, and Pastor D. H. Thomas in the North Rwanda Mission Field; Pastors F. L. Bell and J. E. Schultz in the South Rwanda Mission Field, and Pastor G. L. Goodwin in the East Rwanda Mission Field all aided national workers.

²In 1972, at Gitwe Secondary School of Seventh-day Adventists, Hutu students threatened to kill their Tutsi classmates if they reported for school on a given day. As a result, all Tutsi students left the school. No effort was

Church leaders had the tendency to take sides, to protect the interests of people of their own group, and to support the discriminatory policies of the government. As time passed, some church leaders sought to identify themselves with the ruling party in government, not only to promote the interests of the church, but also to gain personal advantage. When a crisis arose, church leaders were often afraid to speak out in protest and to protect their workers from political victimization and other difficulties because they did not want to risk being regarded as unsupportive of the ruling political party. They were not prepared to protect the Tutsis. It appears that some valued their own ethnic identity above their Christian identity.¹

It has been learned that many church members and workers participated either directly or indirectly in the 1994 genocide. Some of these have been arrested and are now

made to protect the threatened Tutsi students by the local school administrators who favored the plot to have them killed. See Jean Damascene Bizimana, *L'Eglise et le Genocide au Rwanda: les Pere Blancs et le Negationnisme* (The Church and the Genocide: The White Fathers and Negativism) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 132.

¹In 1963, one of the SDA Pastors in North Rwanda Mission Field was arrested to be executed in Ruhengeri under false allegations. None of the local church leaders investigated or came to his rescue because he belonged to a tribal group other than their own.

awaiting trial. Many others are suspected of having participated.

Conclusion

This chapter presents a broad picture of the work of the early Roman Catholic missionaries. They found a people with a structured tribal rule. The missionaries' involvement in the political life of Rwanda, their theory of Tutsi superiority, and their subsequent elevation of them to a privileged position in the church were some of the factors exacerbating a previously submerged tension between the Rwandan people.

When Protestant mission groups including Adventists entered Rwanda, they followed both a colonial policy and an established pattern of missionary work that tended to favor the Tutsis in the churches. This ultimately worked to exacerbate the general ethnic tension between the Hutu and Tutsi groups. The Adventist church, like the others, was caught in the vortex of the rising tension as the country moved toward political independence and became a sovereign nation. Events moved rapidly, and the church and its leaders were ill prepared to deal with the growing tension.

It is crucial to note that missionaries achieved what in hindsight can only be viewed as a wonderful work. They evangelized, gathered thousands together in church

communities, built a rudimentary medical infrastructure, and established a large educational network that resulted in a widespread functional literacy, which, at times, provided a transcendent vision that seemed to create an identity that sublimated ethnic differences. In spite of all this, one must seriously enquire how their work could have been more faithful to the gospel and how the church could have succeeded more effectively in reducing inter-group tension and promoting the growth of a transcendent Christian identity.

The post-independence era saw a growing tension between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda and even among the Rwandans who were in exile. The church--Roman Catholic, Protestant, and even Adventist--was unprepared for the unfolding crisis that would culminate in the genocide of 1994.

CHAPTER 4

CHURCH AND STATE IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

During the 1994 crisis in Rwanda, Christian churches--Roman Catholic and Protestant, including Seventh-day Adventists--passed through a period of testing of their integrity and mission. The church did not protest the genocide which was going on in 1990s.

The participation of many Christians in the genocide has raised many questions. Why did so many Christians become involved in these evil deeds? Was it the weakness of the church members that led to such widespread participation in the genocide? Why did ethnic identity rise above Christian identity?

There are conflicting theories regarding these questions. Some people have suggested that the nature of conversion among Christians in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide was superficial because "those who filled our Churches were the first to go with machetes in their

hands."¹

Others suggest that the unfortunate situation was caused by long progressive accumulation of resentment and hatred. It is further proposed that because the Hutus were the majority, they wanted to be liberated from the Tutsi rule and that the Catholic Church manipulated this change, which later climaxed into genocide.

While there is some validity to all these claims, this study has shown that the teaching and practice of the Catholic missionaries and the policies of the successive colonial governments heightened the distinction of the two groups and provided a foundation for the escalating factors that climaxed in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

This chapter focuses on the relationship of the churches with the government of the independent nation of Rwanda and proposes that this relationship nourished the spirit of conflict among the ethnic groups in Rwanda. It shows that no church, Catholic, Protestant or Seventh-day Adventist, was neutral in the 1994 crisis of Rwanda.

¹Gilbert Okoronkwo, "Is the Church at War with Itself in Rwanda: A Newsletter of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa" *Afroscope* 67, (July 1994): 2-5.

Churches in Partnership with the Government

Someone said, "A Church too closely identified with a regime shares its fate."¹ It appears this statement sums up the relationship between Church and State in Rwanda. Not only does it describe the nature of the relationship, it also shows the nature of the consequences that may result from such a union.

From a historical perspective as has already been outlined in the previous chapters, the Church in Rwanda enjoyed a close relationship with the State.²

Both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches co-operated with the government in its policies, which were

¹Bowen, 36.

²Adelman and Suhrke allude to the fact that Church leaders were very close to political power in the Habyarimana regime. Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, *The Rwanda Crisis From Uganda to Zaire: The Path of a Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999), 86. Hugh McCullum, a Canadian journalist, calls the relationship between the church and the regime [of Habyarimana] "an umbilical relationship" (*New Vision*, May 24, 1995). It gives the example of the Catholic Archbishop, Vincent Nsengiyunva, who was a prominent member of the MRND, the political party of the country. Such a bishop not only participated in and identified with partisan politics, thus dividing his own laity, but knowingly identified with the political party (MRND) with all its sectarian and extremist policies.

based on its theories of the class divisions among the people.

Lilly Fautre expresses agreement:

The Catholic Church is part of the political establishment, not only historically but at present. It publicly supported the regime till it was too late to condemn, when murderous acts began taking place against the political opposition.¹

The US Ambassador in Rwanda, David Rawson, reports:

Leaders in the church used the close relationship with the state to enhance their own power within the church hierarchy. In the time of trial, many turned away from their faith, consciously violating the norms, symbols and ethos of the church.²

Laurent Mbanda also describes the situation and attitude of church leaders before the genocide:

Some church leaders and their followers were fed up with the nonsensical secular political games and lost confidence in their top leaders. Others became opportunists and sought to rally congregations of people behind them, but not necessarily with commitment to the radical transformation of lives or an honest desire for peace and unity. For the opportunists, "business-as-usual" church politics of position-seeking, the accumulation of material wealth, recognition and regionalism motivated their move toward gathering and holding Christian group meetings.³

¹Lilly Fautre, "Rwanda Church: Fearful and Silent," *World*, July 2, 1994, 23.

²David Rawson, "Rwanda: Analysis by the U.S. Ambassador," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (July 1995): 322.

³Mbanda, 76.

The dangers embedded in such a relationship cannot be overemphasized. When the state makes a good move, the church is equally praised, but if the state makes a mistake, the church shares the blame, therefore it is not possible for the church to maintain a credible and balanced position when the state is in control of its principles, its programs, and ultimately its direction. While the state is governed by human philosophies, the church is founded on biblical and divine principles and precepts; it must be guided by principles if it is to maintain its prophetic role, as Ian Linden states: "The Church must have the courage in situations like Rwanda to challenge the givenness of ethnic boundaries and to imagine new identities with new contents and so redefine acculturation in terms of social justice."¹

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda sat on the central committee of President Habyarimana's ruling party and government for ten years. Some of the outstanding leaders in the Anglican hierarchy were known supporters of the former president. They enjoyed his favor and courted

¹Ian Linden, "Churches and Genocide," 263.

his patronage.¹ In other words, the church in Rwanda was so close to the ruling government that it lost credibility as an independent voice of morality, reason, and protest. The General Secretary of the Mid-Africa Ministry, Roger Bowen, commented, "Senior church leadership supported the Habyarimana regime and courted his favor."²

The Catholic Church: Its Historical Relationship with the State

The Church's Influence on Government Policy

In order that the existing political system might be propagated, the Roman Catholic Church influenced the communications media used to mobilize and control the public.

The first president of independent Rwanda, Kayibanda, was an adherent of the Catholic Church, and his political orientation was supported by the Catholic Church. Gerard Prunier describes how the Church was involved in supporting the political system through the media.

One of the main organs used in the process of change by the European-led main segment of the church was the periodical *Kinyamateka*. In the hands of a leading Hutu evolute, Gregoire Kayibanda, [who became later the first President of the new nation] it became the most read

¹McCullum, 73.

²Mbanda, 69.

organ in Rwanda with a circulation of about 25,000.¹

It appears that various developments in relationships between Church and the government which took place in Rwanda prior to independence set the stage for an upsurge of suffering and marginalization of the less powerful people in the country.

The Catholic Church enjoyed a privileged position in that during the rule of the second president Habyarimana, a Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda was a member of the central committee of the Republic and a chair person of the sub-committee for social affairs of the country. At this time the Catholic church had built up a strong unity with the government of Rwanda.

The Church's Involvement in the Genocide

The article entitled "Catholics in Turmoil Over Bishop's Arrest," published in *New Africa* after the genocide, made startling allegations concerning the inappropriate involvement of some Catholic bishops in politics during the crisis of 1994.² There had apparently

¹Prunier, 45.

²Note the following quotation: "In a letter sent to Pope John Paul, the director of the UK-based NGO African Rights, Rakiya Omaar, writes that several priests and nuns

emerged a critical need for a transparent leadership without a hidden agenda. It has been public knowledge that Roman Catholic Church leaders have supported and maintained very close ties with government authorities in Rwanda. The church complied with the developments that escalated and culminated in that genocide. The participation of many church leaders in the genocide contributed significantly to the silencing of the prophetic voice for change in the country.

Could the situation in Rwanda have been different if the Catholic Church had not been so involved in the political life of the country from the time it arrived through the 1950s up to 1994? Historically, Roman Catholic theology has favored participation in social issues and activities of local governments. This same trend had been carried through the Habyarimana regime in the Second

of the diocese witnessed that Mgr. Misago refused hospitality to Tutsis who asked for asylum and sent them to a place called Murambi, where they were all slaughtered. Bishop also expelled two Tutsi workers of Gikongoro parish knowing that he was putting them at risk since the dreaded Interahamwe Hutu militias were patrolling in the area. Bishop also failed to protest against the detention at Gikongoro prison of three Tutsi priests who were eventually murdered" William Pike, "An Umbilical Relationship: Church and State," *New Vision*, May 24, 1995): 8.

Republic. The fact that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda was sitting on the central committee of the ruling party indicated that the church tacitly approved the policies of the government regarding the treatment of the Tutsis.¹ This approval would later lead the Church into a serious crisis. This is one of the reasons why the issues of tribalism had not been adequately dealt with in Rwanda.

The Protestant Churches: Their Historical Relationship with the State

Initial Non-Partisan Relationships with the State

In the early 1960s the Protestant churches constituted a strong Christian presence in Rwanda and were relatively apolitical. As a result, very little was mentioned of the Protestant social-political experience in Rwanda, or of the conflicts leading up to independence.

Laurent Mbanda says,

The Protestant Christian missions were largely apolitical in their approach to the Rwanda socio-political structure. The first Protestant missionaries to enter the country supported the indirect German colonial approach and in so doing raised no socio-political issues. A small minority in the country, they were not highly visible and had limited personal influence; their interest was in evangelism, leaving

¹Bizimana, 88.

the social issues alone.¹

The Protestant Church was initially very careful to avoid direct interference with government policies. Its influence was exercised in the up-building of persons rather than in the sphere of public policy. In the crisis of 1959 and early 1960s, the clergy organized programs and other types of ministry that helped alleviate the sufferings of many people, including refugee safety programs. Protestant denominations assisted refugees fleeing into Uganda. Some people were hidden by Protestant leaders and were saved from merciless killers and victimizers. Somebody commented that "the less the church gets involved in the politics of the land, the stronger her influence becomes in correcting the ills of the government and the people." This was the case with the Protestant denominations. Because they were not so much involved, they were able to help in the reconciliation of the people during the crisis of the early 1960s.

Anglican Missionaries were associated with the Tutsi Chiefs in Rwanda. They even went into Burundi, working and taking care of refugees during the ethnic conflict of the early sixties and seventies. Although a handful of

¹Mbanda, 49.

Protestant denominations were beginning to surface, it was not until the formation of the Protestant Council of Rwanda (PCR) in 1962, *Conseil Protestant du Rwanda (CPR)*, that the voice of the Protestant churches began to be heard in Rwanda.

The Protestant church's involvement with the government developed when through the CPR the church began to solicit funds from the World Council of Churches for community programs of welfare outreach and refugee support.

It was during this period that Protestant church leaders sought to work in partnership with government leaders, thereby developing a mutual relationship that strengthened political ties with the government.

Following the Catholic Church Model

The leaders of the Protestant churches, after realizing the influence and patronage the Roman Catholic leadership were enjoying from the government, decided to follow their example of establishing close ties with the government.¹

¹A good example of the influence and patronage the Roman Catholic had is best illustrated by an anonymous Catholic Archbishop who shares some useful tips on how leaders can get favors and influence from the government. Protestant fraternity leaders sought to establish close ties

The bishops and representatives of the Episcopal Church and leaders of the Presbyterian and other churches stepped up to mingle with the president of the country. During this era, political leaders, many of whom later aspired to win election to the State house, in return welcomed the opportunity to cultivate the support of church leaders and the votes of their members. This practice was generally not condemned by the churches.

Working in Partnership with the Government

Protestant church leaders soon began to brag about meeting and befriending the president. Note the following:

Among the Protestant bishops, Episcopal Archbishop Nshamihigo and Bishop Sebununguri (even though some say that he had fallen out of grace with Habyarimana) were very close confidants of the president. Other bishops, such as Aaron Ruhumuliza of the Free Methodists, were also in that circle of the president's "living room friends." Many sources have indicated that most church leaders had been bought off by the government officials through favours.¹

In this way they sought to gain support for the

with the government with the sole purpose of seeking some favors and political influence. A good example of these favors were: unlimited access to the president's statehouse, unsecured personal loans from the government banks, securing government employments for their relatives and friends, and recommending applicants to government schools and institutions. Mbanda, 68.

¹Ibid., 69.

denomination they represented. These leaders did not necessarily fare well with their congregations. The general public regarded them as sellouts blinded by favors from the government.

In some churches, like the Episcopal Church of Rwanda, selection of the top leaders became more of a political than a spiritual matter. Hence it is suggested:

Nominations for any key church leadership position had to be informally approved by the president of the country. In most cases church leadership was not based on calling or spiritual and administrative qualifications, but on ethnicity and sometimes also the geographical area of one's origin.¹

Many scandals have been reported. In some cases the church selected a leader on the basis of ethnicity in order to satisfy the whims of the political government rather than God.² Sometimes even if ethnic distinction was not pronounced, geographical origin was used to determine who should become the top leader. As a result, many church leaders compromised their prophetic and pastoral integrity and replaced virtue with love of fame, and pursuit of presidential favor and benefits.

¹Ibid., 71.

²Ibid., 70.

**The Adventist Church: Its Relationship
with the State**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church tends to be careful in the way its leaders interact and deal with government. The words of Gary Ross, the former General Conference Religious Liberty Director, summarize well the position of the church in its relationship with government:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church respects government, believes in its legitimacy, and conducts a cordial but somewhat distant relationship with the authorities. However, the Church does not politicize itself by engaging in partisan matters, and does not condone governmental abridgements of religious liberty.¹

One can well understand why the Seventh-day Adventist Church is so careful. Experience has shown that close familiarity can backfire and cripple the church's prophetic voice so that it cannot speak out on moral issues with confidence. Zdravko Plantak suggests that

the responsibility of Adventist administrators is to express clearly disagreement with various injustices in the world; and the responsibility of each member of the church is to stand on the side of Christ and on the

¹Gary Ross, interview by author, March 28, 2000, Berrien Springs, MI. Ross is Assistant to the President of Andrews University and former Director of Religious Liberty of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

side of his neighbor, regardless of the consequences.¹

In areas of the world where church leaders have consistently followed this philosophy, relationships with government have generally been mutually respectful, allowing the church to function without intimidation and to continue to be a voice of conscience.

Adventist Church-State Relationships

As with several other Protestant denominations, the above policy has not been consistently followed in Rwanda since the 1950s. It appears that the influence of the so-called "living room personnel" attracted individual leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Adventist missionaries cultivated the friendship of the Mwami Rudahigwa and adopted a mildly pro-Tutsi stance, not officially, but in practice. When Rwanda became independent in 1962, the Seventh-day Adventists were on the wrong side of the street, and the church suffered practical if not legal marginalization.

The concern to overcome this "discrimination" of the Hutu government against the church motivated local Adventist

¹Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Rights* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 48.

leaders to cultivate a positive relationship with the new regime and its leaders. The prophetic voice was silenced. The dynamics of the relationships between Adventists and the new regime were somewhat different from that of the other denominations. Having a history of good relations with the previous royal regime, pursuing a denominational policy of political non-involvement, and perceiving the need to establish cordial ties with the new Hutu government, the Adventist church found itself in some strategic difficulties not experienced by the other denominations.

Since the country had become independent, everyone fantasized about the day they could meet with the president of the country or high government ministers for prayer and Bible studies. Those Adventists who found themselves assigned to positions that allowed them to mingle with government authorities were also infatuated by the pomp and the desire for recognition.

Some pastors who were appointed as representatives of the church desired to look like the Catholic and Protestant bishops who had flags on their cars during special presidential occasions or at functions held to

welcome other dignitaries who visited the country.¹

This kind of ambition misdirected pastors' attention from their real work and negatively affected their level of spiritual productivity. Perhaps we can judge the kind of ministry that was developed in this era by the events of the massacre. They had allowed themselves to be intoxicated by government privileges and loyalty to the neglect of weighty moral and spiritual responsibilities.

Adventist Work Across Ethnic Lines

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's mission in Rwanda encompassed the Hutus and Tutsis. But as the work grew and the government evolved from colonial to independent state, the church began to work along with the government in its relations with ethnic groups as was the case in public government service. The church followed the policies of the government by electing leaders not by their ability but by their ethnicity.

During President Habyarimana's regime, educational policies designed to subjugate the minority Tutsi group were introduced and accepted also by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The discriminatory government policy adopted by the

¹McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us*, 80.

church simply allowed that, of the total school enrollment, only 10 percent could consist of Tutsi students even if more Tutsis qualified to enter high school or college. The Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders also openly accepted and supported this policy.¹

The local leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda appeared to be content with the recurring or ongoing discriminatory ethnic practices of the government. Prospective Tutsi university and high-school students were rejected on the basis of ethnicity.²

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda accepted these policies to the extent that candidates for church office were rejected using the practice of ethnicity. It is in this context that McCullum points out that

¹The acts of discrimination in the system of leadership were accepted by some Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders. They would not allow some students to go to high school because they belonged to a Tutsi tribe and those admitted were only 10 percent of the student population. The recruitment of workers was also discriminatory in that appointment to certain positions was according to their ethnic affiliation. The church had adopted and supported the discriminatory policies of the Rwanda government.

²Jean Damascene Bizimana reveals what was going on within the Seventh-day Adventist institutions during the crisis of 1972. He demonstrates clearly the way the church leaders were supporting discriminatory ethnic practices (132).

within all the churches of Rwanda [including the Seventh-day Adventist Church] ethnic tensions often surfaced at the time of elections or nominations to senior ecclesiastical positions. Splits were glossed over but never healed; People were elected, not for their spiritual, administrative or leadership qualities, but along ethnic lines.¹

Even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church the election was strongly based on tribalism and regionalism, not on spirituality and the potential and capacity of the individual to lead. The church adopted the tradition of the ruling government, although perhaps to a lesser degree than some of the other churches. It does not matter how little or how much, discrimination was practiced.

The fact is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda supported, rather than protested against, the discriminatory policies of the government. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that when the ethnic crisis had reached its climax, individual members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church joined others in the genocidal killing of 1994.

Conclusion

There has been an historically symbiotic relationship between the church and the state in Rwanda

²McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us*, 78.

which has fostered ethnic tension. This tension was dramatically exacerbated by the shift from Tutsi to Hutu supremacy and the rise of independence. After independence, the church's close relationship with the government left many Christians confused as to their role when the ethnic conflict climaxed in the genocide of 1994.

The participation of many Christians in the genocide has not lessened the ethnic division that has existed in Rwanda for a long time. The Church and the State went through the experience of the genocide without either of them condemning the evil.

The future stability of Rwanda and the unity of its people greatly depend on both institutions re-examining their relationship with each other and their experience in the genocide of 1994.

CHAPTER 5

THE RWANDAN CRISIS

As the Christian churches continued their missionary work in Rwanda, the people of Rwanda continued to be divided into Hutu and Tutsi groups, something that the colonial government supported.¹ The Protestant churches, including Seventh-day Adventists, viewed Rwandans as two major tribal groups as the Catholic Church had done, and did little or nothing to curb the growing ethnic conflict among the people.

The Result of the Ethnic Conflict in 1960s

During the pre-independence crisis of 1959, and soon after independence, many Tutsis fled the country due to growing tribal conflict. They lived in exile in neighboring

¹Adelman and Suhrke wrote on the church's involvement in the politics of Rwanda in these words "The church's involvement in politics of Rwanda goes back to colonial times, when church leaders became vanguards of divisive politics in the country. Just like the colonial masters did, the church--especially the Catholic church--first threw its support behind the Tutsi. At the time of independence, they switched sides to support the Hutu and accused the Tutsi of being oppressors" (85).

countries of Burundi, Congo Democratic Republic, Tanzania, Uganda, and abroad. Many of them, especially those who fled into the neighboring countries, would live in refugee camps for more than thirty years.

Some Tutsis who had remained in Rwanda under the Hutu-led government were subjected to discrimination in political and administrative services of the government. They were denied vertical mobility in their jobs and excluded from participating in military services. Most diplomatic and parliamentary jobs were reserved for the Hutu group only. The government re-enforced the ethnic identity card system introduced by the Belgians in 1933, which was also used as a means of discrimination in schools. A quota system was installed whereby access to higher education and state jobs for people with Tutsi IDs was limited to a number supposedly equal to the proportion of Tutsis in the population. This was done even though in other sectors of society, such as commerce, enterprise, and development projects, the Tutsis were present in higher proportions. The quota system and ethnic cards served to preserve ethnic distinctions and to facilitate social control by the state rather than by direct discrimination. The Hutu-led government maintained these discriminatory practices until the time of the genocide in 1994.

It was not only the Tutsis who had remained in

Rwanda who suffered discrimination. Those who had settled in the neighboring countries were equally discriminated against. It was the group that had settled in Uganda that would later be the nucleus of future political turmoil for Rwandans in exile.

Rwandan Exiles in Uganda

The exiled Tutsi in Uganda rose to positions of high responsibility in the Ugandan government of president Museveni. Although they had grown up in Uganda, they were not accepted as Ugandans. They were reminded that they were Rwandans. And as nationalistic feelings heightened, they longed to return to Rwanda, their home country.

These Tutsi refugees in Uganda, both ordinary citizens and some in high positions, realized that Uganda was not their home because they were constantly reminded that they were foreigners.

By 1982 and following sporadic persecutions and demotions in the Ugandan government some young Tutsi generals in the Ugandan National Resistance Army¹ (NRA),

¹National Resistance Army was a rebel movement founded in February 1981 and led by Museveni until he took over the country in 1986. Approximately one third of his army force was made up of the Tutsi refugees.

such as Fred Rwigema¹ and Paul Kagame,² decided to organize for their return to Rwanda. Efforts were put in place to mobilize many and raise nationalistic consciousness, because many had no personal memories of Rwanda. They had only heard about Rwanda from their parents. Prunier describes their situation:

The 1982 crisis and the sporadic persecutions which were to follow during the next two years marked a returning-point for the Rwandese refugees in Uganda. Many of the young men had felt that Rwanda was an old story, their parents' story. And that they were now Ugandans. Then they suddenly discovered that the people among whom they had lived for thirty years were treating them as hated and despised foreigners.³

During this time, a newsletter was circulated by the Tutsi refugees that had organized under the name "Rwandese

¹Major General Fred Rwigema had been one of the Rwandan Child refugees of 1959. He grew up in Uganda, fought in Museveni's rebel movement, was appointed deputy army commander and deputy minister of defense when Museveni took power. He later became head of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, led the October 1, 1990, Rwanda invasion, and was killed in action on October 2, 1990.

²Paul Kagame, Major General and currently President of Rwanda. He was among young Rwandan child refugees of 1959 raised in Uganda and fought for seven years with Museveni's guerillas. He became head of military intelligence for the Uganda National Revolutionary Army (NRA) when Museveni became President of Uganda; he was enrolled in the U.S. General State College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, at the time of the October 1990 invasion and became head of the RPF when Rwigema was killed in October 1990.

³Prunier, 70.

Alliance for National Unity" but later changed its name to Rwandan Patriotic Front.¹ This organization had developed a seven-point program: (1) National unity, (2) end of corruption and misuse of public office, (3) improvement of economy, (4) democratization of armed forces, (5) progressive foreign policy, (6) establishment of social services, and (7) termination of the Habyarimana refugee-producing government.

Attempt to Overthrow the Government

Although the Rwandan Patriotic Front had laudable plans of creating a system that would include both Hutus and Tutsis in the new government, it had chosen to use conventional military force to seize power from the Hutu-led government. In 1990 the RPF captured Nyagatare, a tourist resort town, and the Gabiro barracks, in the northwest of Rwanda. But their success was short-lived because the Congo Democratic Republic supported the Hutu-led government troops, and military intervention by France and Belgium in support of the Rwanda Republic served to frustrate their efforts.² The Rwanda Patriot Front suffered major losses,

¹Rwanda Patriotic Front, the political arm of the Rwanda Patriotic Army dominant coalition partner after the overthrow of the Hutu-led Government in 1994.

²McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us*, 9.

as its high officers were killed, including Major General Rwigema. After this defeat conventional methods of fighting were abandoned and guerilla warfare strategy was adopted.

By the end of 1990 there were developments in both the RPF, with a new breed of young men assuming leadership of the organization, and in the Rwandan government, with a new president and Paul Kagame, a Tutsi and close associate of Rwigema as his military head. From 1990 to 1994 a long guerilla warfare was waged even though the hopes of seizing power were not realistic. Negotiations between RPF leaders and the government of Rwanda failed to establish peace.

Meanwhile the government in Rwanda intensified its efforts to mobilize the local Hutu population to prepare for ethnic cleansing. The government put a tight control on its media. Newspapers, radio, and television were used to spread anti-Tutsi sentiments. As the mobilization continued, the situation reached a point where many local Hutu residents or citizens felt that participation in killing Tutsis was a civic duty. Things reached a point where people were prepared to participate in killing their fellow nationals without guilt.

Preparation to Kill Tutsis in Rwanda

It required a highly orchestrated plan of mobilization for the government of Rwanda to influence the

population to go beyond the usual political friction to ethnic cleansing. Omaar and de Waal reported,

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the mass media in whipping up popular sentiment. Most rural people in Rwanda could only obtain their news from Radio broadcasts. The incessant propaganda, to exterminate the Tutsi, and that the government was winning the war, made many ordinary people believe that the future belonged solely to Hutu extremism.¹

Some prominent newspapers controlled by extremists led in setting the flames of inter-ethnic hatred. The monthly newspaper *Kangura* also contributed to spreading anti-Tutsi racism.² Two months after war broke out in 1990, it published a 'Call to the conscience of the Hutu people' accompanied by the Ten Bahutu Commandments which pronounced, "The Hutus should stop feeling any pity for the Tutsis," and the tenth commandment ordered, "Regard as a traitor every Hutu who has persecuted his brother Hutu for reading, spreading and teaching this [Hutu] ideology."³

When the extremist Hutus became convinced that they had a justifiable obligation to defend themselves from the Tutsis who were believed to be working toward the establishment of "feudalism" (*Ubugake*), people were

¹Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance* (London: Africa Right, 1994), 79.

²Linden, *The Church and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Tragedy*, 256.

³Destexhe, 30.

passionately disturbed.

As the mobilization continued, the situation reached a point where many local Hutu residents or citizens felt that participation in killing the Tutsi was their public duty. Their heart and sympathies were so hardened that they had no pity whatsoever.

There was intense propaganda in 1992, and there can be no question that the government was planning the strategy of genocide. Warnings were issued to the Hutu population to alert them to the "manipulation of the Tutsi betrayers" (referring to manipulative strategies attributed to the Tutsis). The following passage sheds some light on this,

The army and the militia were ready with lists of their enemies [Tutsis]; the extremist radio stations and newspapers had already created an atmosphere of anti-Tutsi hysteria. All that remained was for the signal to be given.¹

Other forums championing the campaign included speeches full of hate and malicious allegations against the Tutsis. Songs were composed and poems were written to incite and provoke hatred and violence. A good example of the poetic lines begins: "I hate the Hutu" and went on to explain that the author hates Hutus who protect and

¹Fergel Keane, *Season of Blood: A Rwanda Journey* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 28.

collaborate with the Tutsis.¹ In addition, the Hutu extremists used privately financed radio and television stations. This network of propaganda prepared people to participate without guilt in killing. McCullum puts it this way:

The notorious Radio Television Mille Collines (RTLM), established privately only in 1993, played a central role in encouraging genocide [of Tutsis] by whipping up fratricidal fears of a return to Tutsi massacres and domination among illiterate and impressionable peasants. . . . RTLM broadcast endless fanatical propaganda urging ordinary citizens to hunt down and kill all Tutsi. The radio station played perhaps the most critical role in fomenting and sustaining tension between the two [groups] by describing the best ways of killing.²

This propaganda paved the way for what would be analyzed by historians as the third holocaust of the world in the twentieth century.

The 1994 Genocide

Any attempt to understand the 1994 Rwanda genocide should be done in the context of a thirty-five-year deterioration in the civil order because the perpetrators of earlier massacres were never brought to justice. This created a culture of impunity in which mass killings eventually came to be tolerated. In the massacres of innocent people in 1959, 1963, 1973, 1991, and 1992, the

¹Ibid., 50.

²McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us*, 17.

perpetrators of these crimes against humanity were never brought before the court of law to face justice. This is the culture that existed before the genocide of 1994.

A close look at the 1994 genocide reveals that the killings were meticulously and systematically planned. The newspaper *Umuranga Mubangutsi* has confirmed the preparation of the mass killings as follows:

There is overwhelming evidence that the extermination of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus was planned well in advance of 7 April 1994. From shortly after the Rwandan Patriotic Front Invasion in 1990, there were frequent reports that "Machetes are being sharpened in preparation for D-Day."¹

The reason why so many people participated in the killing was revealed in an African Rights Investigation. A much quicker and more reliable way of checking identity is the traditional method, namely knowing an individual's ancestry. This requires killers who already know the victims. Hence the leaders of every community in the country, who could be called upon, were forced at gun point, if necessary, to immediately locate and kill every Tutsi and moderate Hutu in their neighborhood.²

This shows how well prepared the people were for this scheme to be successful. They had a common goal, to

¹"The Tutsi in Bugesera Were Attacked by Interahamwe," *Umuranga Mubangutsi*, March 11, 1993 (my translation), 6.

²Gourevitch, 45.

eliminate and cleanse Rwanda of the Tutsi.¹ This task of killing was a call to every Hutu. The Hutu-led Government planned to eliminate the entire Tutsi population.

Suppression of the Media and the Lack
of International Involvement

The killings were portrayed as a civil war rather than genocide and the government concealed information from the local Hutu population as well as the international community.² The picture created was that Rwanda was experiencing a "tribal conflict." Although from the very beginning of the killings there were calls for a cease-fire, the government of Rwanda sent confusing signals to the international community until it was too late to halt the genocide. In order to conceal vital information that would give advance warning of the impending genocide, the government of Rwanda used propaganda and lies to deceive not

¹John Corcoran, "Rwanda's Message Mission Outlook," *Quarterly Review*, (October 1994): 5.

²Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal described it in this way: "The international press had a difficult task in Rwanda. It was not made easier by the fact that, from April 8, the interim government waged a systematic campaign of disinformation. First, it sought to confuse the issues of the war and the mass killing, insisting that a cease-fire was a precondition for halting the massacres. Secondly, it sought to portray the killings as a spontaneous outbreak of tribal violence. It also tried to play the humanitarian card; pleading for emergency aid as a strategy to deflect attention from the central issue of genocide" (198).

only the Rwandans but also to confuse the international community. Rakiya Omaar describes this situation:

Central to the extremists' strategy was to sow confusion, so that neither Rwandans nor foreigners knew what was happening. The objective was to create fear and ignorance. The plan was draconian but simple: to isolate people by imposing a news blackout; to prevent information about the extent of the killings from becoming known; to discourage people from fleeing, to make it more difficult for them to plan their escape, to prevent, as much as possible, news of the carnage reaching the outside world.¹

A picture was painted that Rwanda was experiencing "a tribal conflict." As a result, the killings went on unchecked, causing devastating human destruction. It was the advancing of the RPF forces that in a way helped to end the killings. Even though from the beginning of the killings there were calls for a cease-fire, the international community totally misunderstood the nature of the conflict. Because of the confusion deliberately created by the government of Rwanda, nothing was done until it was too late. Genocide was the result.

Mass Killings

The death of president Habyarimana of Rwanda along with the president of Burundi in a plane crash served as a precipitating cause of tension in preparation for the genocide. People who were in opposition to the existing

¹Ibid., 184.

government and journalists were targeted to be killed. When the killings began, it was the Tutsis who were the prime targets even though moderate Hutus who sympathized with those who were being killed also fell as victims.

The loss of human life in the genocide cannot be accurately accounted for. The victims included school children who died at the hands of fellow classmates, babies who were thrown alive into pit latrines, adults, and older people. Some were slaughtered by "machetes," others preferred to pay money so they could be killed by guns. Some in various professions turned on their fellow workmates. Destexhe reported:

In this way every Tutsi family could be denounced by somebody who knew the members personally: Pupils were killed by their teachers, shop owners by their customers, neighbors killed neighbors and husbands killed wives [if she was a Tutsi woman] in order to save their life.¹

Rwandans died at the hands of fellow Rwandans. In this genocide, both Tutsis and moderate Hutus who lifted up their voices in protest died as one at the hands of the perpetrators. Women and girls became victims of sexual abuse by their captors. Families were disrupted and eradicated during this genocide.

The killers not only attacked people in their homes, they also went to social institutions: Hospitals, schools

¹Destexhe, 31.

and universities, orphanages, hotels, clubs, public facilities, and even churches. Probably most tragic was killing of people who sought refuge in places of worship.

The Church's Involvement in the Killings

The church in Rwanda remains discredited for the sins of both commission and omission. Both clergy and lay people were involved in the killing. A reliable source reveals that

one of the institutions that has been implicated in the extremist killings in Rwanda is the church. Rwanda is a highly religious country; about 90 percent of the population are Christians. However, some church leaders--bishops, priests, and nuns--were among those whose hands are soiled with the blood of those that were massacred by the Habyarimana regime and its even more extremist successor. The killers were overwhelmingly Christians, as are the vast majority of the 80,000 or so people awaiting trial for the genocide.¹

The involvement of Christians in the killings shocked the whole world beyond belief. Even though the number of pastors and priests who are known to have been either directly or indirectly involved in the genocide is small, it is shocking that those who are highly esteemed and respected as God's servants would betray their own flocks. Laurent Mbanda postulates that "church young people participated in the training of how to use machetes, axes and iron bars for killing." He states quite succinctly that

¹Adelman and Suhrke, 85.

"among the killers were church members of both Catholic and Protestant faith."¹ Church members and clergy of all denominations alike were involved in the killings either directly or indirectly.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Involvement
in the Genocide

According to a special Adventist World Report released in December 1994, at least 3,000 people were killed in the church at Mugonero Field Mission headquarters in the western part of the country. And close to 1,000 were killed at the Adventist University in the north of the country. These killings are reported to have been carried out with the participation of church workers.² Even though Adventists are not the only religious group accused of joining the killing, it is shocking that church pastors and members participated in genocide in this way. Hugh McCullum observes,

Mainline Protestant Churches, as well as Roman Catholic leadership, were perceived as being close to the hard-line Hutu extremist ideology. But even the third-largest religious grouping, the Seventh-day Adventist [sic], who were largely apolitical, reported that the killings were as bad in their areas as anywhere else.³

The following was reported in Newsweek magazine: "A

¹Mbanda, 82.

²Ibid.

³McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us*, 67.

minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church committed and abetted genocide in the country. This ordained minister is on the list of those presumed guilty of the mass killing that has been compiled by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda."¹ The allegation is that he was directly involved in the genocide. In *Spectrum*, Sharise Esh reported:

In the killing fields of Rwanda, Adventists were involved in killing other Adventists. That is the darkest report coming out of Rwanda. Not only did Adventists participate in the killing of tribal enemies in their communities; Adventists were involved in the deaths of fellow Seventh-day Adventists.²

African Rights, a human rights organization based in London, accused Adventist pastors of active involvement in the mass killings along with two other Adventists, a secretary-treasurer of a conference and a church deacon. According to African Rights, this secretary-treasurer is in detention and the deacon is responsible for many deaths, including those of Adventist pastors.³

J. J. Nortey, former President of the Africa-Indian

¹Joshua Hammer, "Rwanda: What Did You Do in the War, Father," *Newsweek*, September 4, 1995, 36.

²Sharise Esh, "Adventist Tragedy, Heroism in Rwanda: Rwanda's Genocide Through the Eyes of Missionaries and the Voice of the Victims' Relatives," *Spectrum* 24, no. 2 (October 1994): 3.

³Rakiya Omaar, African Rights, to Roy Branson, March 1, 1996.

Ocean Division which includes Rwanda, estimates that perhaps 10,000 Adventists died in the genocide of 1994.¹ For the record, Nortey says he himself does not have evidence of Adventists killing Adventists. Alan Nichols, executive associate at World Vision Australia, who visited Rwanda in August 1994, reported that "there are other bizarre incidents. A Seventh-day Adventist pastor, in response to a question, replied "'the sin is not killing it is only a sin to kill on Saturday.'" ²

At this time, when the country was at the peak of hatred and murder, it was especially needful that church leaders should have been morally proactive and ardent advocates of a higher way of love. Members of various denominations could have vindicated what Christianity really stands for, and demonstrated that religion makes a difference. But "the children of men" hardened their hearts as was the case with the children of Israel. Church leaders and pastors proved to be poor shepherds. They led their sheep to the slaughter instead of acting like the good shepherd of Ps 23. Among others, Seventh-day Adventist Church pastors failed to seize the moment to prove to the

¹Esh, 3.

²Alan Nichols, "Fighting Not Against Flesh and Blood Insights into Rwanda," *Transformation* 11, no. 4 (October/December 1994): 31.

world that they represent the "remnant of her seed" (Rev 12:17).

There is still much to be done by the church in Rwanda. The world church should not sleep. There is potential for yet another eruption. The starting point in attempting to solve the Rwanda problem is to encourage forgiveness and reconciliation, and that will be subject of the next chapter.

Conclusion

Indeed there can be no simple or appropriate conclusion to such vast destruction and annihilation of human life. Those who sympathize with the killers suggest that the issue be closed and be forgotten. It seems such a move is insensitive to those who lost loved ones and is also an insult to the international legal obligation to punish crimes against humanity.

However, crucially significant questions remain: How should we deal with Hutu extremists without antagonizing the Hutu community? How should we deal with the dilemma of the Tutsis without adding to their pain and sorrow, or causing more loss of lives? How can innocent people be protected in the country? How can the church be an agent of change in Rwanda? These are not easy questions. We must

critically evaluate every situation related to the Rwanda genocide and extract those clues that may help us design a compelling strategy for peaceful initiatives.

Having done this, let the people of Rwanda then join hands as one, regardless of their groups, and develop the nation that is currently torn apart. Those who have lost loved ones can forgive in a conducive environment that spells out fairness and justice and guarantees security for all.

Justice and fairness must be extended to all the people. The people should come to terms with the value of life and the consequences of lawlessness. What is justice to the Hutus? What is justice to the Tutsis? Both should understand that justice is not revenge but an organized way of dealing with lawlessness. Law, for that matter, is no respecter of persons. The ultimate result will be a manifestation of long-lasting reconciliatory closure which is a product of forgiveness.

In all dealings of law, lawlessness, order, and unity of humanity, no attempt is adequate that negates the biblical foundations of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Bible provides the model and guidelines for reconciliatory provisions in human relationships. The people of Rwanda can

turn to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and find hope for unity.

CHAPTER 6

A THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

The people of Rwanda continue to remain divided in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. Even so, in spite of continuing tensions and conflict, there is hope for a better Rwanda. That hope is ingrained in the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Scriptures provide a framework and even examples of ways through which forgiveness and reconciliation can be initiated and effectively sustained.

The church has a unifying message regarding the oneness of humanity and the equality of all people. The church has a lot to offer the people of Rwanda. Through proper teaching of the Scriptures, and active modeling of the biblical message of unconditional love, it can spur them on to achieve reconciliation and unity.

This chapter will explore three aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation as seen in Scripture: (1) God's dealings with His people through history; (2) the teachings of Jesus; and (3) the teachings of Paul. Based on

the scriptural models, the chapter will then consider how the people of Rwanda can appropriate and experience these Scriptural teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation for the sake of future generations.

A Biblical Perspective on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

From a biblical perspective, God is the origin of forgiveness and reconciliation. Genesis includes a classic example of a situation where human beings were alienated from God. According to Gen 3:8, the guilt and consciousness of sin caused Adam and Eve to shun God. They felt afraid and uncomfortable in God's presence, knowing that they were sinful and under His displeasure. In this condition, they found it impossible to draw near to Him with confidence. However, God provided a way to clear their guilty conscience from the shackles of sin, and to restore them into fellowship with Him.

When, as a result of their sin, Adam and Eve realized their nakedness, and hid from God in the garden of Eden, God not only sought to reconcile them to Himself, but covered their nakedness with animal skins instead of the fig leaves that they had made for themselves (Gen 3:21).

God's act of covering their nakedness was symbolic of His plan and provision for the forgiveness of sins,

through the merits of the sacrifice of His Son in later years. Thereby, God established the concept of atonement (reconciliation), which runs through the breadth of the Old Testament writings.

Alienation from God has resulted in strained relationships between man and fellow man. In Gen 4, the story is told of Cain killing his brother Abel. God asked, "Where is Abel, your brother?" His response was, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That was the beginning of genocide on earth. All conflicts, crimes, wars, and tensions between people are the result of man's failure to be a trustworthy brother's keeper. In the case of the Rwandan conflict, the Hutus and the Tutsis have failed to be each other's "brother's keeper."

Man's initial act of rebellion carried with it a sequence of consequences. God spelled out those inevitable consequences in pronouncing a curse on the soil which necessitated man's toil and sweat, and others such as pain in childbirth (Gen 3:16, 18). In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, some have questioned the need for punishment of those who participated in the genocide. But in Genesis, even God did not leave the injustices of sin and rebellion unpunished. God is just and fair. The exercise of justice in society is not against the principles of God's kingdom.

Inasmuch as God initiated reconciliation between Himself and humanity, and has put in place a plan for reconciliation, He certainly desires that man should experience reconciliation with his fellow man. God has established a moral law, an absolute standard, and put it into human hearts. That law, Jesus tells us, can best be summarized as follows: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . And . . . love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-38). This, undoubtedly, is God's plan for the people of Rwanda.

Hizkia Assefa defines reconciliation as "the restoration of broken relationships or the coming together of those who have been alienated and separated from each other by conflict."¹ To reconcile, therefore, is not a sign of weakness or cowardice. It is rediscovery of one's humanness and the value of the other person as an equal being, who deserves to be treated in the way one would love to be treated.

¹Hizkia Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm*, Nairobi Peace Initiative Monographs Series Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi peace Initiative, no. 1, 1993, 7. Peri Rasolandraibe adds that "reconciliation includes the effort of the community to re-integrate . . . those who were estranged because of misconducts deemed harmful to the community as a whole" (Peri Rasolandraibe, *Liberation and Reconciliation: An African Ethical Reflection* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1984], 26).

In the biblical examples of man's broken relationship with his Creator, the means by which God has initiated reconciliation was by making provision for the forgiveness of the sin which caused the alienation. In the case of Adam, God came seeking the sinner to restore a broken relationship and did it by means of forgiveness through death of an animal. In the case of Cain, Cain's refusal to accept God's forgiveness through the prescribed animal sacrifice precipitated the murder of his brother Abel. God did not ignore Cain's offense, but held him accountable for the murder of his brother. In all God's subsequent dealings with sinful humanity, God has always sought reconciliation through both forgiveness and justice toward the sins committed.

Jesus' Teaching on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness and reconciliation lie at the foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's most comprehensive statement about the principles of His kingdom, He places reconciliation as a higher duty than liturgical worship. "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and

offer your gift" (Matt 5:23, 24). He makes human forgiveness toward other humans a condition for receiving forgiveness from God (Matt 6:12, 14, 15). Thus Jesus teaches that forgiveness and reconciliation are not an option, but a demand and command that are foundational to the Christian faith and religion.

Forgiveness

In many of His sayings, teachings, and parables, Jesus presented forgiveness in three dimensions: (1) that which God exercises towards man (Mark 3:28; Luke 11:4; 23:34; Matt 18:35); (2) that which He, as Son of Man, exercised toward other humans (Mark 2:10; Luke 7:48), and (3) the forgiveness to be exercised between humans (Luke 17:3; 23:34; Matt 18:35). In each case forgiveness is presented as the removal of obstacles to reconciliation.¹

Jesus taught that forgiveness and reconciliation were more significant than ritual--they were a command. If it meant forgiving someone a number of times, one had to do that in order to facilitate reconciliation and foster peace. The call to a radical form of forgiveness in Jesus'

¹Vincent Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Study in New Testament Theology* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1948), 19.

teachings is profound.¹

Jesus taught forgiveness where there was offense. The meaning and definition of forgiveness is rooted in the divine expression of God through Jesus Christ, and made possible by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is perpetually involved in the process of forgiveness.

Ellen G. White defines forgiveness as follows:

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which he sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Ps 51:10.²

Jesus taught the value of forgiveness and its costliness in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 18). There was pain and reluctance on the part of the lost to return home, and forgiveness and acceptance produced tension

¹Jesus' preaching of God's forgiveness was an attack on the honor-and-shame culture of his day. Jesus urged his followers to practice forgiveness. Forgiving in an honor-and-shame culture may be considered a sign of weakness, but the forgiveness that Jesus preached was forgiveness growing out of love. For a discussion of Jesus' culture as one of honor and shame, see Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament, World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 25-50.

²Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 114. See also Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, "Guilt and Forgiveness" *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 285.

at home between the father and the elder brother. Forgiveness costs. It costs more on the part of the initiator.¹ The father was unaware of the attitude of his repentant, returning son, as the son did not know how the father would receive him. In essence, Jesus taught that the wounded and the repentant must meet on the way. For Hutus and Tutsis to experience unity and peace, forgiveness will mean giving up pride and the acceptance of each other. This suggests the selfless nature of forgiveness.

Love for Enemies

It is to those who have believed the love of God for them and accepted the forgiveness of God for their sins that Jesus said, "I say unto you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). Loving enemies and praying for their persecutors has been made possible for those whose hearts have been softened by the love and forgiveness of God. Love for enemies leads, in turn, to forgiveness of enemies.

Jesus illustrates love for enemies in His parable of the Good Samaritan, where an ethnic and religious "enemy" is the hero of the story (Luke 10:29-37). In other contexts,

¹See the discussion in Gregory L. Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 300.

Jesus praised several foreigners, among them a Roman centurion (Matt 8:5-10); and a Samaritan leper, who of ten lepers healed, alone returned to give thanks (Luke 17:17). In these examples, Jesus taught that love for fellow man transcends both religious and ethnic boundaries.¹

Jesus spelled out what love for enemies might entail when He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' but I say unto you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Matt 5:39).

In Matt 18:21-22, when Jesus was asked, "If my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy times seven."

Believers are called to a ministry of peacemaking. Members of the Christian faith are expected to live in harmony and peace, irrespective of the political ideology or ethnic differences that so commonly cause social conflict.

The Lord's Supper

At the close of His ministry, Jesus invited His disciples to participate with Him in the Lord's Supper

¹Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins on a number of occasions. Even on Calvary, He asked forgiveness for His executioners and then extended forgiveness to one of the criminals being executed with Him (Luke 23:34, 40-43).

preceded by the washing of feet as presented in John 13. Jesus sat at a meal with His disciples knowing that one of them would betray Him, and all the others would desert Him. Nevertheless, He humbly served them all, setting an example for them to do the same to one another (John 13:1-4). This sacrament has significance in the church until the return of Jesus and the establishment of His Kingdom. It signifies unity of purpose in advancing Christ's Kingdom on earth, and acceptance of one another as believers in His Church.

Although the Christian Church in Rwanda has used this sacrament throughout the years, its meaning and application in the daily life of believers was not clearly understood. In the aftermath of the genocide, this sacrament needs to be understood and clearly applied in the daily lives of the Hutus and Tutsis as a means of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Rwandan people can participate in this sacrament with the understanding that Jesus invites all--Hutus and Tutsis--to come to a common table of communion with Him and with one another as brothers and sisters who look forward to a future heavenly Kingdom in which they will enjoy an eternal unity.

Jesus's Prayer in John 17

In His priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples. His prayer embraced the needs

of His church in the whole world, including Rwanda. He looked beyond His disciples to those who would believe in Him through their ministry down to the end of time (John 17:20).

The believers in Rwanda, Hutus and Tutsis, were to be one. But the genocide revealed that Christ's prayer for unity has not been answered. It remains for the church and believers to help answer Christ's prayer for oneness.

The unity Christ prayed for among His believers will not be achieved by mere passive acceptance. Believers must actively participate in Christ's priestly intercession for the world by seizing every opportunity for loving interaction that leads to unity.

The answer to Jesus' prayer for unity does not come when people merely believe the word, but when they actively consistently practice unconditional love toward all for whom Christ died--that is, every living person on earth, regardless of their social status or ethnic identity. Christians in Rwanda, Hutus and Tutsis, who professed a common faith, but participated in killing one another, showed that their faith was "dead"--valueless, and not recognized by God as genuine faith (Jas 2:14-20).

Jesus' appeal for unity was grounded in His oneness with the Father before the creation of the world, and anticipated a shared future glory at the completion of His

redemption (John 17:20-24). Therefore, believers realize the answer to the prayer of Christ when they practice unconditional love toward all humans, thus transcending tribal, racial, and all other differences as they wait to share in the heavenly glory with Him in His new Kingdom.

The Cross

The cross demonstrates God's act of forgiveness for the sins of humanity. By the death of His Son on the cross, God has removed the barrier of sin that stood in the way of humanity's reconciliation with the Creator.

When Jesus hung on the cross, it was the climax of all capital crimes. He had been condemned to die by the people He had come to save. All humanity was represented in the people who condemned Him to die. The accumulated guilt of all humanity was borne by Jesus on the cross. He died for the guilty ones. But He died pronouncing forgiveness to his captors--that represented all humanity, including Hutus and Tutsis.

In this propitiatory death of Christ is revealed the antidote to all crimes. The perpetrators as well as the victims can all find forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation in the spirit of Christ, who forgave His captors. Rebecca Pippert puts it this way:

We crucified Jesus and he died. And the good news is that because of the price God was willing to pay we can

be forgiven and reconciled back to God. But to experience and benefit from the cure, we must turn to him and quit pretending there is nothing wrong with us. That is true sacrilege, pretending that there is nothing wrong with us when rectifying our problem cost God the life of his Son. God's mercy and justice are finally reconciled through the cross. Why did God take such dramatic effort to rescue us? Because he wanted so much to forgive us. And the amazing thing is, we did not even know we needed it.¹

It is in the cross that both Hutus and Tutsis will find forgiveness and healing. God has forgiven all humanity for the capital crime of putting His Son to death. The Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda can find freedom and release in God's forgiveness by forgiving one another for the crimes of genocide.

The Church

The Church was established to be a community undivided by race, social status, or gender (Gal 3:28). Jesus in speaking of the visible symbol of the church, His house, said, "My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:7). He was quoting from a passage that proclaims God's acceptance of both Jews and Gentiles, foreigners and social outcasts. Thus Jesus declared that there should be no discrimination in the church. All believers are to share a unity of faith and practice in

¹Rebecca M. Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons: The Search to Satisfy Our Deepest Longings* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 112.

God's church.

While the church in Rwanda is meant to be an house of prayer for both Hutus and Tutsis, the genocide, unfortunately, revealed the contrary. It showed that tribal blood "proved thicker than baptismal water."¹ It also laid bare the fact that church leaders had not successfully taught the daily life application of this principle of unity of believers in Christ's church. The depth of understanding of this principle by those who taught, and the degree to which it was experienced by those who were taught, remains in question in the light of the genocide. The Church can be an institution of inclusion only when, in the hearts of its members, self has been dethroned and there is in its place a spirit of embrace for all. Miroslav Volf states:

The Spirit enters the citadel of the self, de-centers the self by fashioning it in the image of the self-giving Christ, and frees its will so it can resist the power of exclusion in the power of the Spirit of embrace. It is in the citadel of the fragile self that the new world of embrace is first created (2 Cor. 5:17). It is by this seemingly powerless power of the Spirit--the Spirit who blows even outside the walls of the church--that selves are freed from powerlessness in order to fight the system of exclusion everywhere--in the structures, in the culture and in the self.²

¹Stephan R. Haynes, "Never Again? Perpetrators and Bystanders in Rwanda," *Christian Century*, February 27-March 6, 2002, 31.

²Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 92.

It is in the post-genocide era that the church has another chance to emphasize the unity of the believers that comprise it. Only when Hutus and Tutsis understand the church as "an house of prayer for all people" to mean that it advocates a unity deeper than blood, to oneness with God in creation and redemption, can there be true reconciliation and unity.

Paul's Teaching on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The apostle Paul's preaching was rooted in the message of forgiveness. Believers were promised forgiveness "through his name" (Acts 10:43). Paul saw as part of his commission the opening of men's eyes that they might receive forgiveness (Acts 26:18). It was clear to Paul that in Christ is "our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7), and in Him "we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col 1:14). Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22), but "where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:18).

Paul also understood the divine injunction of forgiveness between human beings. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph 4:32). "Bear with each

other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:13).

Paul views forgiveness as the removal of obstacles or barriers in the way of reconciliation. It is God who grants forgiveness; repentance is the condition for receiving forgiveness. Forgiveness is necessary in human relations for the removal of barriers in order to renew fellowship one with another.¹

Paul uses the term *katallassein*, "to reconcile," thirteen times to teach the importance of oneness with God and human beings. Reconciliation is necessary between two parties when something has occurred to disrupt fellowship, causing one or both parties to be hostile to the other. While sin has separated human beings from God, it has also caused broken fellowship between human beings.² The conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis had its foundation in this original brokenness of human nature.

Paul clearly teaches that the Jewish attitude of superiority over the Gentiles is wrong. In the same way, the teaching of Tutsis' superiority over the Hutus is wrong.

The Bible itself is a reconciliatory phenomenon,

¹Taylor, 8.

²George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 49-50.

through which God acts to bring his alienated children back to himself. In Ephesians, Paul states :

Remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace and reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Eph 2:12-14)

Paul teaches that the ethnic heritage of the Jews gave them clear advantages over the Gentiles, in terms of knowledge and revelation (Rom 3:1, 2, 9). But the gospel proclaimed God's purpose to receive all humanity on the same basis. Through the atonement of Christ, all people, irrespective of their ethnic origin, have equal standing before God. Christ came to reconcile all to God as well as to one another. Hutus and Tutsis stand as equals before God, in the light of what Jesus has done for humanity.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Rwandan Experience

As a result of the genocide, deep divisions still exist among the people of Rwanda. The noble efforts to rebuild the ruined country and foster unity will require both a clear theoretical understanding of the principles of

forgiveness and reconciliation as taught in the Bible, and practical implementation of ideas, plans, and strategies to enhance the process of healing. Until the subject of forgiveness and reconciliation is clearly addressed by both church and society, it will continue to be difficult for the Tutsis to live together with the Hutus.

Paul proclaims that, through the cross, Christ put to death the hostility between the Jews and Gentiles, between Hutus and Tutsis. Superiority and status fall away, shamed in the light of His willing humiliation and sacrifice of Himself for the forgiveness of His enemies. Christ's reconciliatory process provides a way to the Father, through the Holy Spirit. Thus, nothing stands between man and God. As a consequence, barriers between humans also crumble, so that Hutus can accept Tutsis and Tutsis can accept Hutus as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. This is the essence of reconciliation. Christ's sacrifice of Himself can bridge the tribal divide and bring people together in dialogue and reconciliation, despite lingering mistrust.

Conclusion

In this chapter, forgiveness has been presented as a divine provision. Forgiveness cures hatred, which is the root of genocide. Those people who participated in the genocide and those who were victims of it can find freedom

from the past only through forgiving. Not to forgive is to perpetuate the spirit of hatred which caused the genocide.

To the question, "How often should I forgive"? Christ answered, "Not seven times, but . . . seventy times seven." One practical inference of this pronouncement is that forgiveness involves both a *decision* and a *process*. Each act of forgiveness is the result of a decision, but the cumulative total of "seventy times seven" (and more) constitutes an ongoing process. The concept of forgiveness as both decision and process has three further implications.

First, both Hutus and Tutsis can make conscious decisions to forgive each other and break the cycle of conflict and revenge.

Second, decisions to forgive constitute a commitment to the ongoing process of achieving a different kind of future, a future of forgiveness in which all Rwandans live together in harmony. The process of forgiveness is a process of breaking free from the power of the past, in this instance from the cyclical ethnic conflicts of the past. This process of becoming free from the power of the wrongdoing of the past will require the telling and re-telling of the traumatic story of the genocide, a potentially long and difficult task of acknowledging the wounds and working through the memory that keeps the wounds present with us. The process will take time, but will

result in reaching wholeness of relationship and oneness.¹

Third, Rwandans who were victims of the genocide must not resign themselves to taking merely a passive role, for fear of future tension; they must purposely work through the past conflict to a peaceful resolution.

Choosing a different future does not mean ignoring or forgetting the past. Thousands of survivors are relatives of those who were victims of the genocide. The dead cannot forgive, but the surviving relatives and those who played a role in the killings need to mutually extend forgiveness, seek reconciliation, and intentionally choose a different future for Rwanda.

This forgiveness can be experienced mutually by both Hutus and Tutsis who call on God, who is the source of forgiveness and the center of the act of reconciliation. The next chapter will suggest some specific strategies to facilitate the continuing process of forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda.

¹Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 40.

CHAPTER 7

STRATEGIES FOR SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RWANDA

In the course of this research, I visited Rwanda and Uganda in November 2000 to talk to church leaders and members about the traumatic experience of the genocide. The visit gave me firsthand exposure to the debilitating effects of the genocide. It also afforded me an opportunity to assess the willingness of the people to seek unity as members of one nation.

My personal interviews with ninety-four leaders and members of the Adventist Church in Rwanda confirmed the findings of the bibliographic research regarding the root causes of the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. Of the ninety-four people who were interviewed, there was an 80 percent response rate to the questions. Eighty-five percent of those interviewed indicated their belief that the teachings and practice of many early expatriate missionaries and colonial administrators regarding tribal differences in Rwanda had promoted the growth of tribal hatred.

The interviews also revealed the division between

the Hutus and Tutsis in the aftermath of the genocide, and thus highlighted the need for forgiveness and reconciliation among them. This was confirmed when interviewees were questioned as to whether they had hope for reconciliation. Seventy-one percent offered a glimmer of hope for reconciliation and expressed hope for a better future in Rwanda.

Several responses were given to the question on how reconciliation between the Hutus and Tutsis could be achieved: 33 percent expressed the thought that unless the members of the church accept Christ and are born again, there will be no forgiveness and reconciliation. Eighteen percent specified that repentance on the part of those who sinned is the best way to achieve reconciliation among the church members in Rwanda. This indicated that there remains more work to be done. Sixteen percent indicated that the most important thing is to forgive and let justice take its course. The other 16 percent mentioned that the church should practice equal treatment, fairness, and love among all citizens to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. Thirteen percent said that forgiveness and reconciliation can only be achieved by exercising justice before forgiveness. Four percent responded that reconciliation can

be best achieved by forgiveness of all alleged criminals. This study proposes a new, alternative approach, which it is hoped will promote understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

I saw firsthand the people's disappointment in their leaders, who had not only betrayed the cause of truth, but had failed in their responsibility to stand up against evil. However, in spite of this disappointment, 94 percent expressed commitment to their church, faith in its mission, and a willingness to work for a better future for their church in Rwanda. Almost two-thirds of those interviewed (64 percent) looked forward to reconciliation with their brothers and sisters, whom they had regarded as enemies in the days of the genocide. The survey findings confirmed my belief that hope for Rwanda can rise from the ashes of the genocide.

In the light of this research, it is possible to make some proposals for reconciliation of the people of Rwanda. Before the Adventist Church can become an agent for change in Rwanda, the leaders and members of the Church need to experience forgiveness and reconciliation among themselves. It was encouraging to me during the interviews to observe a general willingness among church leaders and

members to work as agents of reconciliation in the country, but it must be recognized that the Church cannot offer the nation something the Church has not itself experienced. Therefore, the most urgent need for the Adventist Church (as for other Christian bodies) is for its members to experience forgiveness and reconciliation with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as people of one nation.

Because the ethnic conflict in Rwanda is a nationwide problem that has been recurrent through the years, there exists the potential for similar recurrences in the future. Therefore, measures to prevent future conflict must be broad based and designed to achieve an enduring impact. It may not be the multitude of programs so much as the consistency of action that will yield lasting results. The strategies for a solution must engage people of all groups and should start at the grassroots level; that is, from the children and adults of local villages, to political leaders and professionals.

The mission of the church in the world is to influence change in society through its members who exemplify Christian values. Now the Adventist Church, after its failure during the 1994 genocide, has a second chance for transformational ministry. It will need to use a comprehensive variety of approaches, first within its own

structure, so that teaching and educating are supported and reinforced by the principled lives of its church members. Then the church may expect to have a positive impact on the wider society of Rwanda.

As the largest Protestant denomination in Rwanda, the Adventist Church must accept responsibility for helping to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation. It is therefore proposed that there must be direct and aggressive strategies for change.

Theological Strategies

The Seventh-day Adventist Church will need to renew its teaching approach in one area that has a direct bearing on the unity of Rwanda. The first step will be to make a clear call to all Seventh-day Adventist churches to re-emphasize a solid biblical understanding of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This call will have to be made to all church leaders, pastors, and elders to engage in deep soul-searching conversion, and spiritual renewal with a new emphasis in Bible teaching.¹

¹Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 159-172. See also Johannes Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls: A Christian Cry for Racial Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), 23-25.

The Doctrine of the Unity of Man

All church groups in Rwanda accept and teach the doctrine of creation. There is a common understanding that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. There is also a common understanding that man was created in the image of God. It is clear, also, that man is separated from God by sin and needs to be reconciled to the Creator. While there has been this common understanding across denominational lines, there has not been a clear teaching and application of the unity of humanity and the need for reconciliation with God and fellow-man.

The doctrine of man unites humanity, strengthens the dignity of humanity, and undermines theories of one race or group being superior to the other. Seventh-day Adventists have taught and understood the creatorship of God but evidently failed to place sufficient emphasis on how that Creatorship and the *Imago Dei* concept (man in the image of God) unite different tribal groups and destroy theories of any group as inherently superior to another.

While teaching the importance and observance of the Sabbath day, Adventists evidently did not place enough emphasis on the doctrine of God as Creator, and man as being created in the image of God. Perhaps this partially

explains why the church was prominent in defending freedom of worship and yet when, during the ethnic conflict, the dignity of humanity was at stake, it was not an issue of high concern. This study, therefore, proposes a call to re-emphasize the teaching of the doctrine of man in the Adventist Church. With its unique understanding of the Sabbath doctrine, the Adventist Church should lead in appreciating the dignity of humanity as created in the image of God which unites all humanity as one and equal irrespective of tribal or racial origin. This will require preparation of sermons and Bible studies on the doctrine of the unity of humanity, for use in Seventh-day Adventist schools, Bible study groups, and church worship services across the country.¹

Educational Strategies

Seminar Workshops for Leaders

Seventh-day Adventist members were not the exception in participating in the genocidal conflict in Rwanda. Participants in the 1994 genocide originated from a cross-section of society. Government leaders, educators, corporate leaders, medical personnel, and even pastors were involved. This broad-based involvement in the genocide suggests the need for an equally comprehensive effort to

¹See a Sample Outline of a Bible Study in Appendix D.

teach principles of unity to the leadership strata of society in Rwanda.

The Adventist Church, drawing on its Judeo-Christian heritage, and as a servant of its suffering Savior, can bring a message of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation to the leaders of the Rwandan people, through seminar-workshops on issues that impact daily life. These seminars would first be conducted for pastors, headmasters, and teachers of primary and secondary schools, church elders, and others in church leadership positions.

In format, the seminar-workshops would begin with an educational approach like a seminar, but then make a transition to a direct person-to-person workshop designed to help individuals actually experience forgiveness and reconciliation in the group. Once they have spiritually and emotionally experienced forgiveness and reconciliation, they could then be taught methods of extending the experience and teaching the concepts to others in their spheres of influence.

Using the scriptural basis for reconciliation, and other sources of contemporary material, seminars could include such subjects as, Jews and Naziism, Lessons of Triumph in History, Ethnic Lessons from Bosnia (or Kosovo, Cambodia, Ukraine under Stalin, etc.), Human Heritage, Our Tribal Heritage and Our Common Destiny, How to Prevent Hate

Crimes and War, How to Live in Peace, Human Survival in Poverty, Hunger, and Disease, and the Obligation of Good Governments toward their People. These seminars could be conducted in medical institutions, schools, churches, and similar institutions. The seminars could have two components: (1) Instruction (seminar) on above topics, each topic closing with biblical principles of confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and acceptance, and (2) Interaction (workshop) in which participants seek to experience forgiveness and reconciliation. The interaction component would help participants to (a) get acquainted with one another, (b) share stories of personal experience in the genocide,¹ (c) and discover and acknowledge that we are all human, and that whatever evils we did, or whatever good we failed to do, sprang from motivations that are common to all humans--fear, selfishness, anger, hatred, and/or self-preservation. Participants would further be led to (d) face-to-face confession of wrongs done to each other and (e) hearing from those who were wronged, the full results of the

¹Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 71. See also Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 30.

harm done or the good people failed to do.¹ It would be necessary to (f) wrestle with and clarify the tension between forgiveness and justice showing that forgiveness does not remove the necessity for justice. Participants will need to decide together whether for a given wrong forgiveness can lead directly to reconciliation, or whether some act of justice needs to be done before full reconciliation can take place. It would also be important in the workshops to deal with (g) the relation between what these workshops can do and what the court system's responsibility is, concerning some of the revelations of crimes committed or individuals' emotional outpourings in response to such revelations. In the last act of experiencing forgiveness, the participants would (h) join in a signed covenant that declares their belief and acceptance of each other that they are first Christians, second Rwandans, and, only third, identified with individual tribes and that never again will they tolerate racial or tribal enmity or allow public expressions of hatred or violence toward those of any ethnicity. Finally the participants would be given an opportunity to consider their own personal abilities and to volunteer, if they wish, to contribute

¹Louw Alberts and Frank Chikane, *The Road to Rustenburg: The Church Looking Forward to a New South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: Struik House, 1991), 146.

their time and talents in some way to help put on the next seminar-workshop. These seminars could each be two to three days in duration, to allow interactive participation from attendees.

As the members of the Adventist Church in Rwanda learn to love one another unconditionally, they will in turn influence their associates in private, public, or government sectors, with positive Christian values that engender unity among all peoples. If these targeted approaches to forgiveness and reconciliation are of long-term duration, they could eventually influence the whole population of Rwanda.

Educational Curricula in Schools

The educational system in Rwanda was started by Christian churches. The Adventist Church places a strong emphasis on education as a primary part of its mission. The Church has operated thirty-four primary schools, three secondary schools, and more recently one university.

Within its own schools, the Adventist Church in Rwanda can revise the civics curriculum, in both elementary and secondary levels. This area of study should place primary emphasis on the unity and brotherhood of man in the image of God, and their implications for ethnic, racial, and tribal issues. On this spiritual foundation can be also

taught the meaning of citizenship, its rights and responsibilities, the manner in which public officials are elected, the role and work of government leaders, and their responsibilities to the citizens of the country. Thus students who complete elementary and secondary education would be better citizens and prepared to assume responsible leadership in the country.

Mass Media Strategies

Writing and Publishing

From its beginnings, the Adventist Church has relied on the power of the printed page. In spreading the message of reconciliation and the oneness of humanity, it should now spearhead a publishing program which builds the faith of its members and appeals to the positive values of unity among the masses.

The Adventist Church does not have a publishing house in Rwanda. Perhaps the time has come for the Church to establish a publishing house to publish books, magazines, newspapers in French, Kinyarwanda, and English for the people of this country. The Church could also start a Christian magazine or journal, which could provide a forum for publishing articles on the doctrine of the unity of humanity. Calling on the gifted writers within its ranks, the Church should encourage its members to engage in writing

and publishing books, magazines, and newspaper articles on such themes as love, unity, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

History books written without ethnic bias should be circulated through Adventist Book Centers, libraries, and schools. Young people in churches and schools should be motivated to write articles on positive themes of love and oneness, that could be published in newspapers and magazines for the people of Rwanda.

Adventist Christians who are gifted in writing should be enlisted to conduct Christian writers' workshops throughout Rwanda, emphasizing the Christian themes of love and unity. Individuals interested in independent publishing should be encouraged to produce and circulate positive literature with the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation for the nation.

Radio and Television

Radio and television have been used extensively in disseminating information to the public in Rwanda. The Adventist Church, like other Christian churches, has had limited opportunity to use these channels of communication to spread the gospel in Rwanda. In the light of the enormous mission of the Church in the post-genocide era, the Church should target the use of the media to lead the people of Rwanda to unity by teaching Christian values that promote

oneness. To the probability that the Church may not be allotted enough air time on public radio and television to adequately influence the nation at prime time, two solutions might be pursued. First, the church could lobby the boards that control the media, urge writers to prepare scripts for TV programs, and in this way, exert a direct influence on the content of the broadcast material. Second, the church could encourage some wealthy church members to establish private radio or television stations to air programs that teach positive themes of love and unity between the Hutu and Tutsi people of Rwanda.

The very first fruit of the spirit is love (Gal 5:22). Where love is absent, the work of the Gospel has not yet begun. Thus the church's mission is to lead people to the Lord Jesus who only can create unselfish love in selfish human hearts. When this mission is accomplished in Rwanda, its fruits will be peace, justice, and harmony among its people. In view of the Adventist Church's experience of complicity and silence during the genocide, it is time for it to recognize its mission and raise its voice when wrong ideas are disseminated to influence the mind of the population.

In conclusion, this research and my personal interviews with Adventist Church leaders and members in Rwanda confirm three things: First, in spite of all the good

accomplished by the church leaders in Rwanda, they failed to effectively teach all their converts the doctrine of unconditional love. Second, there is a need for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of Rwanda, who remain divided in the aftermath of the genocide of 1994. Third, the Adventist Church remains an instrument of hope, devoted to change the future for the people of Rwanda. It should engage all its resources in the task of this ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, in the light of the expanding role of the church in the rebuilding of Rwanda, the practical suggestions presented in this chapter cannot be exhaustive. As the Adventist Church renews its mission in Rwanda, new avenues of service will open, and it must adjust its methods of operation accordingly.

Afterword

It may be appropriate to conclude this study on a personal note. The process of this research project has been a personal pilgrimage. It has led to the resolution of a dilemma that I have lived with all my personal life, and yet one that is common to most Rwandans.

I was born in a Christian home. As a second-generation Seventh-day Adventist, I was privileged to attend church school all my life. My father worked as a teacher and then a minister for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Like many Rwandan youth growing up in a nation that had been widely Christianized, I, too, embraced the Christian faith that my parents professed. But, I was also aware of my native identity as a Rwandan, and a Tutsi by tribe.

Although I was a Christian, and had adopted a Christian name, I was still considered and treated as a Tutsi young man. I associated with fellow Rwandans of the Hutu tribe and often had to be protected from Hutus because of my tribal identity. I knew that there was tension between the Hutus and the Tutsis. I was born into this conflict.

My parents had grown up in the midst of this tension. I later grew up to become a worker of the church I loved, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But, in many respects, I was still a Tutsi worker of the Adventist Church.

The dilemma I have lived with is that my Christian identity as a child of God destined to live with God did not supersede my native identity; sadly, it did not define my identity in relation to my tribal counterparts. How I was supposed to relate to fellow Rwandans, who happened to be Hutus by tribal identity, was not clearly defined to me in my classroom, in my Christian upbringing, or in my work. I lived in and with a needlessly prolonged dilemma.

In 1994, my country experienced a tribal genocide in which I lost my parents, brothers, sisters, and many

relatives. This was the climax of a national identity crisis that had been brewing for generations. I do not know what my fate would have been, or how I would have reacted in 1994 had I been in Rwanda when the genocide broke out. But, my dilemma is the dilemma of many Adventist Rwandans, including lay Christians, pastors, and government leaders who participated in killing others, or were victims in the crisis. However, having gone through this research study, I now know why events unfolded as they did.

This study has shown that what happened in Rwanda was a long process of wrong orientation of the people as to their origin, identity, and common destiny. The teachings of the earliest missionaries about the superiority of one Rwandan tribe over the other, the opinions of anthropologists, the schematic structures of the colonial government rulers, and the lack of clear teaching by Christian churches, including Adventists, on the unity of humanity combined to nurture the explosive conflict in Rwanda that took place in my adult years.

The study places the weight of responsibility on the church as the agent of change in Rwanda. There has been an acknowledged failure of the church, my Adventist Church, to lift its voice in the midst of this crisis. But, lessons learned in adversity can serve to redirect the church to its mission of reconciliation and unity in the midst of division

and confusion.

The church's mission and responsibility to society derives from a divine mandate. The conditions of work may not be favorable. The Church's mission is not a popular one, but the eternal destiny of a nation rests upon the faithful execution of this mission. In a time when human dignity is degraded, like the ancient church of God in exile in Persia on the brink of national genocide, it must lift up its voice as Queen Esther did in the face of doom and say, "If I perish, I perish!" It is with this sense of total self-dedication to this mission and its ultimate triumph that I committed my life to Christ when I became a Christian and I purpose to live by it and die for it if necessary. It is the same commitment I expect and appeal for from the people in Rwanda and elsewhere who have suffered this kind of tragic experience, that they might let go of hatred and let good and God triumph through goodwill toward all people so the kingdom of God can be realized.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

Appendix A

Candidate's Statement

Rwanda is generally regarded as one of the most "Christian" countries in Africa and the world, one of the real "successes" of Christian mission in Africa. Statistically speaking, some eighty to ninety percent of the population regard themselves as Christian. A missiological discussion of the 1994 Rwanda crisis of necessity includes a critical analysis of the role of the church in the country's history, because the Rwanda tragedy indeed throws a dark shadow over the accomplishments of mission.

Both personal observations and discussions with colleagues in ministry reveal that the Christian Church, Adventists included, is experiencing problems regarding tribal differences among Christians. The darkest report that came out of Rwanda says that "Adventists also did not merely participate in the killing of tribal enemies in their communities, but they were involved in the deaths of their fellow Seventh-day Adventists."¹ It is so hard to recover from the hatred and hostility that has been passed down from generation to generation.

As a minister of the Gospel, I sense a heavy burden

¹Esh Sharise, "Adventist Tragedy, Heroism in Rwanda," Spectrum 24, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 3-11..

and a great responsibility to investigate the extent to which Seventh-day Adventist members participated in this crisis of Rwanda. I also want to develop a strategy that will sensitize tribal members to each other's common humanity and thus prepare the way for a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. I hope that this project will contribute to the understanding of the ethnic problems of Rwanda among Seventh-day Adventists, other Christians, and non-Christians as well.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire

This survey questionnaire is strictly confidential. Do not provide your name. The identity of the respondents will not be known. The data provided will only be used for research purposes. Please respond to each question by circling the appropriate answer or number.

(A) Information about the respondent

1. Sex:

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Age group:

- 15-12
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51+

3. Level of Education:

- a. Elementary School: 5; 6.
- b. High School: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6;
- c. College/Technical; 1; 2; 3; 4;
- d. Graduate/ Post-Graduate

4. Profession

- a. Teacher
- b. Pastor
- c. Civil Servant
- d. Academician
- e. Student
- f. Medicine
- g. Self Employed
- h. Other

5. How many years have you been a Seventh-day Adventist?

- a. 1-06 years
- b. 7-10 years
- c. 11-15 years
- d. 16-20 years
- e. 21 years and over

6. Were you victimized by the events of 1994

Yes

No

7. Did you witness first-hand any events of 1994

Yes

No

(B) General questions on the historical background of the country. The following statements are extracts from several scholarly works on the history of Rwanda in the pre-independence era.

1. Historians think that colonial administrators advocated an ideology that tended to polarize the Hutus and Tutsis.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

2. Anthropologists supported an ideology that placed Tutsis and Hutus at odds with each other.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

3. Colonial administrators initiated an ideology that fostered ethnic hostility between Tutsis and Hutus.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

4. The hatred between Tutsis and Hutus is based solely on the ideology of ethnic superiority.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

5. The hatred between Tutsis and Hutus has roots in internal political strife.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

6. The hatred between Tutsis and Hutus has roots in economical dynamics in the country.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

7. The expatriates favored the Tutsis as more teachable than any other ethnic group i.e Hutu and Twa.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

8. Among the methods listed below, which one best describes the way most Tutsis were converted to Christianity.

- a. Personal Conviction
- b. King Mutara Rudahigwa conversion
- c. Protection against the force labor from the ruling elite
- d. Self-interest
- e. Desire of the White man's way of life
- f. Other reasons

9. Among the methods listed below, which one best describes the way most Hutus were converted to Christianity.

- a. Personal Conviction
- b. King Mutara Rudahigwa conversion
- c. Protection against the force labor from the ruling elite
- d. Self-interest
- e. Desire of the White man's way of life
- f. Other reasons

10. The conversion of the ruling king Mutara Rudahigwa to Christianity gave Catholicism the needed credibility.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. no opinion
- f. Not sure

11 . The Christian teachings had an equal influence on both the Tutsis and the Hutus.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

12. Both ethnic groups benefitted equally from the introduction of Christianity in Rwanda.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

(C) Questions about the Seventh-day Adventist Church prior to or and after the events of 1994.

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church before 1994 promoted mutual acceptance among individuals of different ethnic background.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree

- d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion
2. Some leaders/ members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda were political activists prior to the genocide.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion
3. Some church leaders took part in acts of genocide by either killing, conspiring, or just being indifferent.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion
4. There are church members who participated in the genocide.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion
5. Some church members do not regret the 1994 genocide.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion
6. Most church members understand the relationship between Christian teachings and harmony (unity) between ethnic groups.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. No opinion

7. I am personally reaching out to members of a different ethnic group.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

8. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda condemned any members who helped, supported, or enabled any wrongdoing during the 1994 crisis.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

9. The Seventh-day Adventist Church provided a safe haven and protection for those who sought refuge in church facilities, i.e. churches, schools, and other institutions.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

10. Today the Seventh-day Adventist Church actively promotes harmony among its members and various ethnic groups.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

11. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is now actively providing support to widows, orphans, and other victims of the genocide.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

12. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda had taken seriously its responsibility by teaching love and unity among its members and between different ethnic groups, many lives could have been spared.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

13. Today The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches and promotes Biblical principles designed to help heal the wounds among the different community members so that they can all live together in peace.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No opinion

14. Reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis can be achieved by (Choose only one answer).

- 1. forgiveness to all alleged criminals.
- 2. justice first, and then forgiveness.
- 3. forgiveness and let justice take its course.
- 4. practicing equal treatment, fairness and love among all citizens.
- 5. if all church members accept Christ and are born again
- 6. repentance.
- 7. others.

15. The Seventh-day Adventist Church will help its members to be an instrument of peace and love in the future when: (Choose only one answer).

- 1. church leaders are role models for peace and unity to all.
- 2. church leaders practice what they preach.
- 3. church leadership draws a line of separation between church and state.
- 4. church members understand what should be their role in time of crisis.
- 5. church understand the importance of prayer for one

another and suffering with those who are
persecuted.

6. others

16. Will Rwanda achieve ethnic unity and harmony in our life
time.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I hope so
- d. I don't know
- e. I don't care any more

APPENDIX C
ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

Appendix C

Analysis of the Survey

STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

This survey was limited to interviews with Seventh-day Adventist Church ministers and lay members, some of whom were first hand witnesses to the events of the 1994 genocide.

The Instrument

Since the writer did not know the kind of response, he was going to get from the survey, he decided to use a two-pronged approach to get the answers to the questionnaire. The first method was to outline a text of questions and test them on Rwandans in the United States, to see if the same questions would work in Rwanda. To achieve this, the writer field-tested the sample questions on some selected Rwandans in Southwestern Michigan. The category of Rwandans surveyed were Seventh-day Adventist members and non-members.

From a sample tally, it was observed that some of the questions were not clear because they involved multiple concepts, thus the mock questionnaire indicated the need to be more specific and clear. Therefore, questions were framed from individual perspectives: a historical, anthropological and colonial administrators, instead of

combining these into one broad question. Another question which was revised was question eight, (section B) which solicited answers exclusively from the Tutsis. Question nine regarding the Hutus, was inserted to avoid bias. Some words and expressions also had to be reworked.

Historical Background to the Country of Rwanda

It has been shown that theories of ethnic superiority in Rwanda, were sustained by colonialists, anthropologists, historians, and the early Catholic Missionaries, in their doctrinal teachings.

This section deals purely with general questions about the historical background of the country and focuses on the history of Rwanda during the pre-independence era. The reason is to provide information regarding the history of the country, because it appeared distorted by expatriates.¹

The writer, purposely, wanted to find out whether members thought that historians, anthropologists and colonial administrators had rigidified the ideology that Tutsis as a race possessed greater intellectual and moral capacities than Hutus. This is a concept which had fostered

¹The term "expatriate" includes the colonial administrators, missionaries, and other Europeans who came to the Rwanda in 1907, and thereafter.

an ideology that reified the division between Rwandans. Both colonial administrators and Church expatriates began a process that favored one group above the other. This practice was begun when they came to Rwanda early in the previous century. Certain privileges and prerogatives were assigned to Tutsis. This practice extended even into the educational system. Tutsis were selected to work alongside expatriates. In the economic sphere, the Tutsi were given more favors and empowerment than the other group.

This kind of arrangement bred antagonism and ethnic rivalry between the Tutsi and Hutus. The colonial Masters failed to rectify the existing differences between the ethnic groups, and the problem escalated into a complex and difficult situation. The instrument sought to investigate understandings regarding, and attitudes toward their theory. (See a sample of questionnaire of the survey in Appendix B)

Category of Respondents to the Survey

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda has been dominated by young people. Ninety percent of the respondents to the survey were within the ages of 21 to 51 plus.

Although the survey was administered to both males and females, About 80 percent of the respondents were male

since they form the majority of the people who were involved in the victims of the genocide.

The survey revealed also that, eighty percent of the respondents had either high school or College/Technical Certificate and as such, they were able to understand the questions and also had knowledge of the events that led to the genocide. They were able to constructively analyze the genocide situation with the help of the questionnaire.

In order to gain a broad view of the issues at stake, people of different status participated in the survey, namely: teachers, pastors, civil servants, academicians, students, medical practitioners, self employed and others in unidentified categories, but the majority were pastors. These people represent different political and religious persuasions.

Seventh-day Adventist Church: Views Before and After the Genocide

This study has a special focus on the Seventh-day Adventist Church; its role and involvement in the genocide. The survey sought to find the perceptions of members of the church before and after the genocide. This is significant because it will be the starting point in the process of healing and reconciliation.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Responses From the Survey Substantiate the Following
as Factors in the Conflict that Led to the Genocide

The question asked: "Did the Seventh-day Adventist Church before 1994 promote mutual acceptance among individuals of different ethnic backgrounds?" The answer to this particular question: Sixty-five percent of the respondents agreed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church promoted mutual acceptance among individuals of the two ethnic groups, while eighty-two percent of the respondents confirmed that some leaders and members of the church had become political activists prior to the genocide.

The paradox of the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1994 crisis is that, in spite of the church promoting mutual acceptance among individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, the survey revealed that eighty-two percent of the respondents believed that some leaders and members of the Seventh-day Adventist church took part in acts of genocide by either killing, conspiring, or just being indifferent during the time of the ethnic conflict. It is a concern and a sad situation that the church had failed to create an environment of acceptance and tolerance, and that members acted against their conscience.

Doctrinal Teaching
of the Church Leaders

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the second largest Christian denomination in Rwanda. This has raised the concern that the Seventh-day Adventist Church with such a large membership in the country, has not exerted a sufficiently positive influence on the society's response to ethnic differences. Question 6 in section C of the questionnaire p-172, above asked respondents to assess the degree to which "most church members understood christian teachings regarding harmony between ethnic groups. Answers to this question offered a glimmer of hope for reconciliation. Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated their belief that "most church members" understand Christian teachings on harmony between ethnic groups. This leaves the other twenty-nine percent who we may presume have not yet forgotten the effects of the events. Consequently, this may necessitate a lot of work on reconciliation, so that there can be harmony between the two ethnic groups in the church, and of course in the entire country.

The writer also asked opinions on the concept that if the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda had taken seriously its responsibility, by teaching love and unity among its members and between different ethnic groups, many lives could have been spared. The research revealed

shortcomings prior to 1994. The church somehow seemed relaxed. The gap between the Hutus and the Tutsis before 1994 had not been properly bridged, and the church appeared indifferent to the extent that some considered their ethnic identity more than Christian identity.

The survey also asked opinion on whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches and promotes biblical principles designed to help heal the wounds among the different community members, so that they can all live together in peace. Ninety-four percent of the respondents agreed. They believed that the teachings of the Bible, if promoted, could heal the aftermath of wounds inflicted after the 1994 genocide. This study will later give a guideline to build on what is already being done.

There were several responses given to the question on how reconciliation between the Hutus and the Tutsis could be achieved: 33 percent expressed the thought that unless the members of the church accept Christ and are born again, there will be no forgiveness and reconciliation. Eighteen percent specified that repentance on the part of those who sinned is the best way to achieve reconciliation among the church members in Rwanda. This indicated that there remains more work to be done. Sixteen percent indicated that the most important thing is to forgive and let justice take its

course. The other sixteen percent mentioned that the church should practice equal treatment, fairness and love among all citizens to promote reconciliation and forgiveness. Thirteen percent said that reconciliation and forgiveness can only be achieved by exercising justice before forgiveness. Four percent responded that reconciliation can best be achieved by forgiveness of all alleged criminals. This study proposes or will propose a new, alternative approach, which may promote understanding towards reconciliation and forgiveness.

The survey also wanted to know which of five factors would contribute to the Seventh-day Adventist Church helping its members to be, "an instrument of peace and love," in the future. (see question # 15 on p. 174 above). Only one response was permitted to this question. Forty-nine percent of the respondents chose the option that church leaders should be role models for peace and unity. Forty-six percent chose as their option that the church leaders should practice what they preach. Five percent indicated that church leadership should draw a line of separation between Church and State in their relationship. No doubt there is merit in all of these. But it seems significant that not one of the respondents believed that "prayer for one another and suffering with those who are persecuted" was of prime

importance. [Here is a clear symptomatic indicator].

The last question of this survey was to investigate whether the church members had any hope of achieving ethnic unity and harmony among Rwandans in our lifetime. For this question, there were mixed reactions. Thirty-five percent indicated that they hope so. Twenty-nine percent responded affirmatively, that Rwanda will achieve unity and harmony in our life time. Eighteen percent said, "No way!," There will not be unity and harmony in the country. Sixteen percent did not have an opinion on this question. And one percent expressed resignation. They don't care any more about the issue of ethnic differences.

The Responses on Theories of Expatriates

It has been alleged by some that the expatriates who worked in the territory, perpetuated the idea that had tended to foster ethnic hostility between Hutus and Tutsis, and that Tutsis were accorded an advantage in socio-economic and educational opportunities. Some analysts regarded this as a major root of the crisis. The survey purposely wanted to find out how the influence of historians, anthropologists and colonial administrators had rigidified that ideology. In fact, the survey showed that a majority of respondents believe that allegation. Eighty-eight percent of the

respondents believe that historians advocated an ideology that tended to polarize the Hutus and Tutsis. Regarding the colonial administrators, 88 percent of the respondents believed these had followed an ideology that fostered ethnic hostility between the Hutus and the Tutsis. The remaining question concerns the perspective of anthropologists on the same issue. Sixty-three percent of respondents agreed that some anthropologists proposed an ideology that placed the Hutus and the Tutsis at odds with each other.

The results confirmed that the respondents perceive colonial administrators and historians as promoting the ideas that the Tutsis were naturally superior and born to rule, and that the Hutus were the opposite in all respects, that they also helped these ideas become realities which influenced the everyday life of the Rwandan people. Certainly, this situation fostered hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsis.

During this survey, the writer also investigated beliefs about the factors that contributed to the crisis of 1994. The findings showed that eighty-five percent of respondents believed that hatred was fostered by the favoring of one group over the other by colonial administrations.

Another question examined respondents perceptions of

whether the expatriates were really under the impression that the Tutsis were more teachable than any other group in Rwanda, as Monsignor Classe stated in his letter of September 1927. The findings revealed divided perceptions on that question: 47 percent agreed 25 percent disagreed, and the rest did not offer any opinion.

Responses on Politico-economic Structures

It is felt by some that close ties between church and political leaders was a facilitating factor in the crisis. This is an important factor to investigate, because such an alliance could lead to a blunting of Christian values and the sense of oneness in Christ engendered by the church. The survey revealed that 63 percent of the respondents felt that some leaders and members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church were political activists prior to the crisis and took part in acts of genocide by either killing, conspiring, or simply being indifferent during the time of the ethnic conflict.

Another question relating to the factors that contributed to hatred: Seventy percent said that the hatred had a root in the internal, political strife before and even after the independence of the country.

There was also a perception that economic dynamics played a role and were a factor that stirred hatred between

the Hutus and the Tutsis. This idea was not corroborated by the survey. Only 21 percent of the respondents agreed that the economical situation in the country prior to the 1994 crisis was a factor that triggered the ethnic conflict. A majority of the respondents felt that other factors were the cause; such as perceived ethnic superiority, internal political strife, and others.

APPENDIX D

A SAMPLE OF BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE
ON SUBJECT OF DOCTRINE OF MAN

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Appendix D

A Sample Bible Study Outline on the Doctrine of Man

DOCTRINE OF MAN

1. God is the Creator of all things.
Genesis 1:1
2. He created all things in six days.
Genesis 2:1-3
3. The crowning work of His creation was the creation of humans-first Adam and then Eve.
Genesis 1:26, 27
4. As a memorial of His creative work, God rested on the Seventh-day and separated as a holy day.
Genesis 2: 2,3
5. The crowning work of his creation,
 - (a) Man was put in charge of all creation
Genesis 2:15
 - (b) Man was commanded to multiply and fill the earth
Genesis 1:28,29
6. All humanity originated from the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, irrespective of current diversity in color, height, culture, language, and geographical location (Acts 17:26,27). Therefore, all human beings share a common origin from the Creator God and a common destiny--death--as a result of sin or of accepting God's plan of salvation.
7. An observance of God's memorial day--Sabbath--presupposes an adoration of God as Creator, in nature as well as man in all his diversity -color, culture, language, and geographical location.

Application:

1. All humanity is one by
 - (a) Creation
 - (b) Sin

(c) Redemption

2. The oneness or Unity of humanity transcends

- (a) Color
- (b) Culture
- (c) Tribe- Hutu and Tutsi
- (d) Geographical location

Conclusion:

The Bible clearly teaches us that we have a common origin. It calls us to unity as one people--Hutus and Tutsis. We have to see one another as one people whom He has made in His image. The physical differences in us have no bearing on His image that he made us in, which though marred by sin, He still sees in us. Let us unite and accept God's plan for one common destiny, one plan, of salvation, leading to one place with Him in His kingdom (Revelation 7:9-17).

APPENDIX E

**LETTER FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

LETTER TO FACILITATE THE SURVEY

November 16, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that Hesron Bylingiro is pursuing studies to complete requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Seventh-day-Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

Some of his work will require research as he prepares his dissertation and related projects. This research will consist of questions to be used only for the purpose of developing his dissertation. Please be assured that this research is only to facilitate Pastor Bylingiro's educational objectives.

Thank you

Dr. Skip Bell
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
Andrews University

APPENDIX F

**MAP OF RWANDA AND ITS LOCATION
ON AFRICAN CONTINENT**

Appendix F
Map of Rwanda and its location on African Continent

UGANDA

★ First Adventist Stations in Rwanda

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	1969-1974 Lukanga, Democratic Republic of Congo
College	1981-1985 B.A. Business Administration) Solusi College, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Graduate Studies	1991-1993 M.S.A (Masters in Science Administration) Andrews University, Michigan, USA.
	1994-1997 M.Div. (Masters in Divinity) Andrews University, Michigan, USA.
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1974-1976	Teacher Rwankeri Elementary School Rwanda
1976-1981	Headmaster and Church Pastor Rwankeri Mission Field Rwanda
1985-1986	Accountant North Rwanda Mission Field Rwankeri, Rwanda
1986-1991	Staff Auditor Sahel and West African Union Africa Indian Ocean Division Ivory Coast, Abidjan