



‘God spends the day elsewhere, but He sleeps in Rwanda’

About Catholicism, conflict and peace in Rwanda

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*Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.*

psalm 85:10

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Introduction

*'God spends the day elsewhere, but He sleeps in Rwanda'*¹

Rwandan saying

Rwanda is a small landlocked country in the Great Lakes Region in Central Africa. The Rwandans proudly used to say that their country was so beautiful that God spent the night there. Rwanda never attracted much attention until it experienced a genocide in 1994. By that time, many Rwandans thought of their ancient saying and whispered that God had been asleep during the genocide.² This thesis is about the role of Catholicism in the dynamics of conflict and peace in Rwanda. The role of religion in politics and society gained a lot of attention in recent years. At the end of the Cold War, many scholars and politicians thought they would live to see the worldwide triumph of liberal, democratic ideas. Before long, their hope faded. New intrastate wars flared up that involved guerilla groups, rebel armies and ordinary citizens. Democratic values seemed to perish where leaders mobilized their constituency on the dangerous mix of ethnic identity, religious ideas and economic interests. In the last decades of the twentieth century, religious motives played an important role in the Islamic revolution in Iran. Conflicts in Sri-Lanka, Sudan and the Balkans also proved that religion was an important factor to reckon with. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 drew attention to religiously motivated terrorism. The people that were eager to witness the triumph of capitalism and democracy saw their dream ending in violence. In many cases, religion could be at least partially blamed.

The genocide in Rwanda was one of the most horrific conflicts of the 1990s. During a relatively short but intensive genocide between 500.000 and 800.000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed.³ Many of them were killed by ordinary citizens who participated in the massacres with machetes. But the genocide was not a spontaneous outburst of ancient hatred. The genocide was part of a political strategy of a small elite of extremist Hutu who desperately tried to hold on to power. They felt threatened in their position. On the one hand, a war was going on with a Tutsi rebel army. On the other hand, their power was waning because of an ongoing democratization process.⁴ The international community stood by and did nothing while genocidal violence spread across the country. Three months of killings completely disrupted Rwanda's society. The Hutu extremists failed in their effort to hold on to power. A new government was installed that had to rebuild the country. After the violence was stopped and the bodies were buried the people of Rwanda had to find a way to deal with the legacy of the genocide. How could justice be done when so many people had been perpetrators? How could Hutu and Tutsi reconcile after so many Tutsi had been killed because of their ethnic

¹ Joseph Sebarenzi and Laura Mullane *God Sleeps in Rwanda: A Journey of Transformation* (Simon & Schuster: London, 2011) 79.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Alison Des Forges 'Numbers' *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (Human Right Watch, International Federation of Human Rights: New York/Paris, 1999) [available online <http://bit.ly/pi3QRj>, accessed August, 30 2011].

⁴ Des Forges 'Threats to the MRND Monolith' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/i4pxQA>, accessed June 14, 2011].

background? How could Tutsi and Hutu ever live again in peace with each other? All the difficulties that people have to deal with after a violent conflict had to be lived through *in extremis* after the Rwandan genocide.

Over the last decades, scholars from different backgrounds have extensively researched the ways people deal with the consequences of violent conflict. Only recently, the contributions of religion to processes of peace and reconciliation attracted academic attention. This thesis builds upon this emerging field of study. It revolves around a central question: *How did the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide affect its role in the peace process?* The choice for Catholicism is motivated by the prominent role of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. Before the genocide, the country was widely considered to be one of the most successful examples of mission work. In 1991, about 90 percent of the population was Christian and of this number a majority of 65 percent identified themselves as Roman Catholic.⁵ The country was widely considered to be an example of successful Christianization. But in the genocide, Christian values seemed to crumble rapidly in the face of ethnic hatred. Christians killed their brothers and sisters in Christ. Churches became places of mass execution. In the aftermath of the genocide, many people wondered how such massive violence could have occurred in a religious country like Rwanda. It did not take long before critical studies about religion's role in society appeared. Meanwhile, the people in Rwanda had to find ways to deal with the genocide. It is worthwhile to find out which role Catholicism played in the country's journey towards peace, justice and reconciliation that began after the genocide.

This thesis can be situated on the intersection of history and conflict studies. The study draws heavily upon concepts that are developed in the field of conflict studies. Within this broad field, the publications concerning religious peacebuilding are relevant. They will be combined with historical publications about the genocide. Wherever possible, the thesis will be enriched with primary sources from archives of Catholic NGO's like Pax Christi International and Mensen met een Missie (formerly Centraal Missie Commissariaat). These organizations have been active in Rwanda and had to deal with the consequences of the genocide. Unfortunately, it was impossible to build the thesis upon primary material since these archives provided only a fragmented view of the efforts of these organizations. That's why interviews were held with experts from NGO's and churches that work in Rwanda. A third primary source that will be used in this thesis is the Rwandan magazine *Dialogue*, an independent and critical Catholic periodical that contains articles written by Catholic intellectuals. *Dialogue* is a bimonthly printed journal in French which started in 1967. Issues of *Dialogue* are only available in the Netherlands from the mid-1980s. A fourth source of primary material that will be used from time to time in this thesis are interviews with the people that were involved in the genocide. Much scholarly research about the reconciliation process is based on interviews, but many authors never published their collection of interviews. Some of the interviews that are available will be used. These stories are relevant because they reflect the way the people in Rwanda experienced the role of religion in the genocide and the peace process that followed.

⁵ Stephen D. Lowe 'Genocide and Reconciliation in Rwanda: From Complicity to Credibility' *Forum on Public Policy Online* (Summer 2008) vol. 2008, no. 2, p.4.

The study aims to be academically relevant in its effort to combine an historical perspective on the role of religion in the politics of conflict and peace with analyzing frameworks developed in the school of conflict studies. The models from the field of conflict studies will not be evaluated; they will be used to illuminate historical tendencies. But if there any aberrations, they will be mentioned. An historical perspective on the role of religion in peace and conflict will hopefully enrich the emerging field of religious peacebuilding. The other way round, the insights from the field of conflict studies might uncover historical trends that would have gone unnoticed otherwise. The subject of this thesis also proved to be relevant for non-governmental organizations (NGO's). A considerable number of NGO's work in the field of peacebuilding. Concretely, this thesis has contributed to the theoretical framework of ZOA's peacebuilding policy. ZOA provides relief to people affected by conflict or natural disasters and assists them throughout the recovery phase. Personally, I work for ZOA as a Campaign Officer on public awareness campaigns in the Netherlands. But while writing this thesis, I regularly talked with Corita Corbijn of ZOA's Monitoring and Policy Development Department.

Finally, some words about the structure of this thesis. The introduction will be followed by a *status questionis* about the role of religion in conflict and peace and more specifically on the role of religion in Rwandan society. From the second chapter onwards, the thesis is chronologically structured. The first chapters describe the history of Catholicism in Rwanda until the early 1990s. In the sixth chapter, the focus will be on the behavior of the Church during the genocide. The seventh chapter deals with the role of Catholicism in the process towards justice and reconciliation. The history of Rwanda is often portrayed as a road to genocide. In this view, prior periods of violence are considered to be 'rehearsals' for the genocide. But this teleological perspective does not render justice to Rwanda's past, nor to the genocide. This thesis aims to unravel the way Catholicism interfered with the Rwandan society over time. It focuses on the choices people could make in the situation they were in. In each chapter, a fixed structure will be used. Every chapter starts with a theoretical paragraph about themes from the field of conflict studies that are relevant for the issues described in that chapter. This paragraph will be followed by a short overview of the relevant political, economic and social developments. This is necessary because it is impossible to understand the role of religion in a society if one is not familiar with the developments in the broader society. Then, the chapter elaborates upon the role of Catholicism. In this way, it will the history of Catholicism in Rwanda will be written. In the conclusion it will become clear how the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide, affected its possibilities to contribute to the peace process.

Chapter 1

Status Questionis

*'Religion itself is neither good nor bad, it is simply there. It is a reality, whether one likes it or not. Religion is a social fact, that rather than being lamented, dismissed or ignored may be turned in to the advantage of humankind by considering how it can be used for constructive purposes.'*⁶

Gerrie ter Haar

This thesis interacts with two fields of study. On the one hand, it deals with peace and conflict studies. Within this discipline, publications about religious peacebuilding are most relevant. The Belgian scholar Katrien Hertog provided an overview of the developments in the young field the study of religious peacebuilding. She illuminated several trends that will be discussed in this chapter.⁷ On the other hand, the thesis builds upon the body of literature concerning the genocide in Rwanda. In this *status questionis* both fields of study will be examined, as far as they are concerned with the central question: How did the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide affect its role in the peace process? The developments in the academic world will be analyzed and the most important publications within both fields of study will be discussed. Changing attitudes in the academic world will be related to broader social developments. Hence, connections between both fields of study will appear.

§ 1.1 Academic context

Three Western ideas had to prove wrong before one could even think of the subject of this thesis. The first assumption dates from the seventeenth century. Since the Enlightenment, intellectuals were convinced that the modernization process would eventually lead to the decline of religion. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars used the 'secularization theory' to refer to this process. But in the last decades of the previous century, this long held assumption about the nature of modernity proved to be wrong. The Iranian revolution confronted Western scholars with the fact that modernization and secularization not necessarily went hand in hand. Academics began to write about what they called the worldwide resurgence of religion.⁸ Books like *Religious resurgence: contemporary cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism* reflected upon the unexpected rise of orthodox movements all over the world.⁹ The general public was confronted with the revival of religion on September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks upon the United States left the world in disarray. Everybody tried to understand what had motivated the Islamic extremists. A stream of articles, movies, speeches and books found its way to the public.

⁶ Gerrie ter Haar 'Religion: source of conflict or resource for peace?' in: Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil eds., *Bridge or Barrier Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace* (Brill: Leiden, 2005) 31.

⁷ Katrien Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding: Resources and Obstacles in the Russian Orthodox Church for Sustainable Peacebuilding in Chechnya* (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: Leuven, 2008) 23.

⁸ Richard T. Antoun and Mary Elaine Hegland eds. *Religious resurgence: contemporary cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 1987).

⁹ Peter L. Berger 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview' in: Peter L. Berger ed. *The Desecularization of the World* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Washington, 1999) 11.

Religion and its connection to violence appeared on top of the academic agenda. In the broadest sense, this study has to be understood against the background of the increased attention for religion.

The supposed decline of religion was not the only Western idea that proved to be wrong. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, many people thought democracy and peace would prevail. This idea was quickly overtaken by events. Wars erupted and UN-missions were deployed all over the world. Mary Kaldor analyzed the changing nature of war in *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*.¹⁰ Kaldor explains that the days of uniformed armies fighting each other on a battlefield are over. New wars are far more complex. There is no clear battlefield and the actors involved range from the global to the local level. The line between soldiers and citizens is blurred. And the battle is no longer primarily about territory, but about identity-issues. The international community experienced that it was far from easy to establish peace and democracy in a society shattered by a new war. In 1992, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali stated in his *Agenda for Peace*: 'Peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people.'¹¹ This analysis can be situated in the growing body of literature that aims to 'identify and support structures which tend to consolidate peace'.

'Never again' was the third Western idea that sadly proved wrong. This thesis concerns a genocide that would not have happened if the international community stayed true to its promises. After millions of Jews were killed in the holocaust, the United Nations adopted the genocide convention in 1948. The countries that ratified the genocide convention committed themselves to act whenever a genocide was about to take place. In the convention, genocide is described as '[...] acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.'¹² Genocidal acts range from killing members of a group to imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group. The intention of the perpetrator determines whether an act is genocidal or not. The events in Rwanda unmasked the illusion that the international community was committed to prevent another genocide from happening. Alison des Forges, a highly respected expert on Rwanda, accused the international community: 'Policymakers in France, Belgium, and the United States and at the United Nations all knew of the preparations for massive slaughter and failed to take the steps needed to prevent it. Aware from the start that Tutsi were being targeted for elimination, the leading foreign actors refused to acknowledge the genocide.'¹³

§ 1.2 Religion and conflict

¹⁰ Mary Kaldor *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1999).

¹¹ United Nations, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992), UN Doc A/47/277-S/2411 (17 June 1992).

¹² *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly (9 December 1948).

¹³ Des Forges 'Introduction' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/p6Wyhv>, accessed May 25, 2011].

The developments described above came together as academics began to research the connection between religion and new wars. Religious organizations had always been involved in war and peace, but their efforts never attracted academic attention until recently. In 1997, the Belgian scholar Luc Reyhler published *Religion and Conflict* about the role of religion in conflict and peace. Reyhler categorizes religious actors in different groups ranging from conflict parties, to bystanders, peacemakers and peacebuilders.¹⁴ In the section 'religious actors as conflict parties', the author distinguishes between wars with a religious dimension, religious fundamentalists resorting to violence, religious bodies supporting structural violence and religious organizations legitimizing cultural violence. Reyhler borrows the concepts structural violence and cultural violence from Johan Galtung. In the late 1960s, Galtung, a founding father of conflict studies, introduced different types of violence: 'Direct violence (murder), structural violence (children die of poverty) and cultural violence (whatever blinds us to this).'¹⁵ This makes perfectly clear that the role of religion in violent conflict can be visible at the surface, but can also be hidden. Reyhler did not only elaborate upon the role of religion in conflict. He also showed that religion has a great potential for constructive conflict management. Religion in itself is neither good nor bad; it can promote both violence and peace. Reyhler regretted the fact that there was no structural assessment of the role of religion within conflict and asked fellow academics to pay attention to this 'urgent research challenge'. In the past years, many studies focused on religion and direct violence, but it is worthwhile to follow Reyhler and pay attention to the way religion relates to structural violence and cultural violence and peace processes.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States, many studies were published about what Reyhler called religious fundamentalism. One of the leading publications on the subject of religious terrorism is *Terror in the mind of God: the global rise of religious violence* by Mark Juergensmeyer. In his introduction, Juergensmeyer mentions several ways religion and terrorism can be intertwined: 'This is a book about religious terrorism. It is about public acts of violence at the turn of the century for which religion has provided the motivation, the justification, the organization, and the world view.'¹⁶ Juergensmeyer shows how religious ideas encouraged ordinary believers to resort to violence. In most cases, however, it is much more difficult to determine the exact nature of the connection between religion and violence. Many 'new wars' were not caused by religious convictions, but certainly had a religious dimension. In 1999, Jeffrey Seul elaborated upon religious dimensions of conflicts in *Ours is the Way of God: Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict*. Seul explains that groups involved in conflict often have a different religion. As a result, religion often functions as an identity-marker, even when a conflict is not caused by religion. This religious dimension has serious consequences: '[...] the combatants may be emboldened by a sense of religiously defined identity and purpose, and their traditions may provide a fund of symbolic, moral, institutional, and other resources that can be used to mobilize the group and legitimate its cause.'¹⁷ Numerous studies showed that

¹⁴ Luc Reyhler 'Religion and Conflict' *International Journal of Peace Studies* (January, 1997) vol. 2, no. 1, 2 [available online: <http://bit.ly/mH5Qsb>, accessed June 14, 2011].

¹⁵ Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (2nd edition, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2005) 9-11.

¹⁶ Mark Juergensmeyer *Terror in the mind of God: the global rise of religious violence* (3rd revised edition, University of California Press: Berkeley, 2000) 7.

¹⁷ Jeffrey R. Seul 'Ours Is the Way of God': Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict' *Journal of Peace Research* (September 1999) vol. 36, no. 5, 564.

these factors turn religion into an important player in the field of peace and conflict, even when a conflict is in the end not about religion at all.

Religion's potential for violence can be unleashed 'spontaneously' when people confronted with suffering stand up and use a theological narrative to legitimate their resistance. The liberation theology in Latin America, for example, was developed in response to social injustice. Many scholars in the 1990s, however, came to the conclusion that the involvement of religion in 'new wars' was often not as spontaneously as it looked like. Political leaders often used religion to further their own interests. Several studies about the Balkan wars showed that religious communities and their leaders were used by nationalistic political movements and their leaders. The Dutch study *Tales of War and Peace* demonstrates that Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mobilized by their political leaders.¹⁸ As Ter Haar puts it: 'Religion is a powerful instrument in the hands of those who use it. These are not necessarily believers alone. They may also include others, such as politicians, who manipulate religion effectively.'¹⁹

§ 1.3 Religion and the Rwandan genocide

After the genocide, many of the churches in Rwanda were left bloodied, desecrated and cluttered with bodies. It was clear that the clergy was not able to protect the people who hid themselves in the churches. But were they willing to protect the Tutsi who fled to the churches? Questions arose about the role of the Catholic Church in the genocide. Did nuns and priests die with their brothers and sisters in Christ? Or was the Rwandan clergy among the killers? The Catholic Church denied any responsibility for the genocide. In 1996, Pope John Paul II stated: 'The Church itself cannot be held responsible for the misdeeds of its members who have acted against evangelical law.'²⁰ The Pope's view was certainly not shared by all scholars. In this *status questionis*, the major publications concerning the Rwandan genocide will be investigated on the role of religion in the genocide. More detailed studies that focus on the role of the churches will also be discussed.

According to Ian Linden, the Catholic Church was too weak and divided to prevail against the genocide. Linden is a renowned author. He wrote several books about the role of religion in Africa. In *The Church and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Tragedy* he takes a stand against the accusation that the Catholic Church was complicit in the genocide. The author states 'Whatever the judgment on complicity, it does not apply to all the Church, which was also a Church of martyrs.'²¹ According to Linden, only the lower levels of leadership actually participated in the massacres. The fact that many Christians participated in the killings simply reflected the fact that over 90 percent of the Rwandan population was Christian. According to Linden, the Church was complicit in its failure to

¹⁸ *Tales of War and Peace. Religious Leaders During and After the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Calculated Hypocrisy or Paving the Way for Peace? A case study for the Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy* IKV Pax Christi and Bureau Beleidsvorming Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (IKV Pax Christi and BBO: Utrecht, 2008), 18.

¹⁹ Ter Haar 'Religion: source of conflict or resource for peace?' 31.

²⁰ 'Pope Says Church is not to Blame in Rwanda' *New York Times* (March 21, 1996) [available online: <http://nyti.ms/iidRnJ> accessed May 27, 2011].

²¹ Ian Linden 'The Church and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Tragedy' in: Gregory Baum, Harold Wells eds. *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches* Mary Knoll Institute (Orbis Books: New York, 1997) 51.

speak out against the dominant role of ethnicity within the Church and human rights violations of the regime. But in the face of the genocide, the Church was powerless: 'By the early 1990s the Church had little recourse against the propaganda machine, which preached an exclusive Hutu identity [...]. At a practical level, the Church had no radio station with which to combat *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* or Radio Rwanda. It was hopelessly divided at its leadership level as well as at the parish level. And in the hundred years of its presence in Rwanda it had barely begun to call into question in the light of the gospel the two identities that dominated Rwanda politics.'²²

Whereas Linden asserts that the Catholic Church lacked the capacity to withstand the genocide, other scholars argued that the Church did not have a profound impact on Rwandan society. According to these academics, the values promoted by the Church were not really incorporated by the Rwandan people. Gérard Prunier wrote a well-known book about the genocide *The Rwanda Crisis: History of Genocide*.²³ In his book, the author states that 'Christian values did not penetrate deeply, even if Christian prejudices and social attitudes were adopted as protective covering. Catholicism [...] was a legitimizing factor, a banner, a source of profit, a way of becoming educated, a club, a matrimonial agency and even at times a religion.'²⁴ This view is shared by some other scholars who wrote about Christianity in Rwanda. In *Committed to Conflict: the destruction of the Church in Rwanda* the Rwandan author Laurent Mbanda confirms the idea of Prunier that many Rwandans turned to Christianity in order to get jobs or material goods.²⁵ Mario I. Aguilar based his book *The Rwanda Genocide And The Call To Deepen Christianity In Africa* on the assumption that Christian values were not internalized by the Rwandan people. He states: 'If Rwanda, a country where 70% of the people claimed to be Christians, exhibited such an unchristian attitude in time of crisis, then Christ's message of love and fellowship has fallen to deaf ears completely.'²⁶ The Belgian scholar Saskia van Hoyweghen also suggests that the Rwandan Christians were 'Sunday goers' who did not really incorporate Christian values.²⁷ According to these scholars, academics should be careful not to overestimate the influence of the Church on people's minds. Timothy Longman, whose work will be discussed later on, concluded that the implication of this idea is that the Church cannot be blamed for the genocide, since its positive, peaceful messages were not incorporated in the Rwandan society.²⁸

Nevertheless, there are several authors who defend the idea that the Catholic Church could have exercised its influence in one way or the other to prevent or to stop the genocide. One of the first publications about the genocide *Rwanda: death, despair and defiance*, severely criticized the leadership of the Church.²⁹ African Rights, a British-based human rights NGO, focused on the experiences of the victims of the genocide. *Rwanda: death, despair and defiance* has been criticized for oversimplifying the role of ethnicity in post-independence Rwanda and for minimizing the role of the

²² Linden 'The Church and Genocide' 52.

²³ Gérard Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis History of a Genocide* (New edition, Hurst: London, 1997).

²⁴ Idem, 34.

²⁵ Laurent Mbanda *Committed to Conflict: the destruction of the Church in Rwanda* (SPCK: London, 1997) 19-22.

²⁶ Mario I. Aguilar *The Rwanda Genocide And The Call To Deepen Christianity In Africa* (AMECEA Gaba Publications: Eldoret, 1998) viii.

²⁷ Saskia Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda: A Study of the Fragmentation of Political and Religious Authority' *African Affairs* (July, 1996) vol. 95, no. 380, 387.

²⁸ Timothy Longman *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010), 9.

²⁹ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights (Revised edition, African Rights: London, 1995).

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in human rights abuses.³⁰ Despite these weaknesses, the publication is valuable. It provides a comprehensive picture of the genocide based on first-hand accounts that have been recorded shortly after the genocide. African Rights devotes a chapter to the responsibility of the churches in genocide. The organization lists the names of priest and nuns who died during the genocide. But African Rights also points out that the Catholic Church was certainly not only a victim of the genocide. The organization accused the leadership of the Church of '[...] giving spiritual support to the extremist before and after they launched their apocalypse.'³¹ According to the African Rights, the people of Rwanda and the clergy were betrayed by their own leaders. Many ordinary priests and nuns died while defending their people from the murders. Churches were deliberately desecrated.³² Hundreds of nuns, pastors and priests hid Tutsi and were willing to risk their own lives.³³ Meanwhile, their leaders systematically allied themselves with the authorities. The bishops were closely tied to the Hutu-dominated government. Sometimes, priests and nuns participated in the killings or actively encouraged the killers because they felt protected by their leaders. African Rights calls it a 'moral failure' that the Church leadership remained silent while the churches became places of mass murder.

African Rights is not the only publisher that made a distinction between the leadership of the Church and the ordinary clergy. One of the most highly valued accounts of the genocide, *Leave None to tell the Story: Genocide In Rwanda*, also indicates the difference between the higher and lower levels of authority within the Catholic Church. Des Forges' Human Rights Watch Report on the genocide is firmly rooted in the historical, economic, political and social context of Rwanda. She demonstrates that the genocide was prepared by the factions in the government and could have been stopped if the international community had acted in time.³⁴ Des Forges does not elaborate upon the role of the Church in the same way as African Rights. In her study, she mentions that the Habyarimana regime 'benefited enormously from the support of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which counted 62 percent of Rwandans among its adherents.'³⁵ Des Forges condemns the silence of the Church leadership during the genocide. 'By not issuing a prompt, firm condemnation of the killing campaign, Church authorities left the way clear for officials, politicians, and propagandists to assert that the slaughter actually met with God's favor.'³⁶ But the author also brings in a new perspective. She indicates that religious images were used in propaganda because the extremist knew their message of hate and fear would be made acceptable through the use of religion.³⁷

The publications described above focused on the role of the Catholic Church in the actual genocide. Other authors analyzed the way the Church contributed to the root causes of the genocide. In *The Rwanda Crisis* Gérard Prunier provides an historical account of the events leading up to the

³⁰ Villia Jefremovas 'Traacherous Waters: The Politics of History and the Politics of Genocide in Rwanda and Burundi' *Africa* (2000) vol. 70, no. 2, 299.

³¹ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights, 863.

³² *Idem*, 865-868.

³³ *Idem*, 992.

³⁴ Des Forges 'Introduction' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/p6Wyhv>, accessed May 25, 2011].

³⁵ Des Forges 'The Army, the Church and the Akazu' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/pLPiO1>, accessed May 27, 2011].

³⁶ Des Forges 'The clergy' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/l8zyQy> accessed May 27, 2011].

³⁷ Des Forges 'Validating the message' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/rbbWZK>, accessed May 27, 2011].

genocide. The Rwandan scholar Tharcisse Gatwa more specifically investigated the role of the churches in the genocide in *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crisis 1900-1994*. Both Prunier and Gatwa argue that the root causes of the genocide can be traced back to the early years of colonization. Before the colonization, the terms Hutu and Tutsi referred to economic and social status. The colonizers re-interpreted these concepts from a racial perspective. Moreover, the colonial rulers used the Hamite myth to favor the 'superior Tutsi' over the Hutu majority. Prunier and Gatwa demonstrate that the Catholic Church played a major role in these developments.³⁸ According to Gatwa the Hamite myth was used to shape an ethnic discourse that could be used as a powerful tool in the hands of the colonizers, the monarchy and the Church.³⁹ Gatwa also writes about the relation between the state and the churches. He comes to the conclusion that the leadership of the Church offered moral support to the Habyarimana regime. There were several initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation. But Gatwa describes these efforts as 'too little, too late.'⁴⁰ The ideas of Prunier and Gatwa did not go uncriticized. Prunier made one of his readers wonders whether it is fair to blame the rulers of the early 1900s for starting the developments that ended in the genocide.⁴¹ As for the rest, Prunier is not very critical about the role of the Church in during the genocide. He describes the churches as one of the bystanders of the genocide.⁴² Unfortunately, Gatwa did not investigate the role of the Catholic Church in the actual genocide.

Some authors downplayed the role of religion in the Rwandan society and the genocide. Others investigated the role of the Church in shaping the root causes of the conflict or accused its leadership for its silence during the genocide. In the first view, the Church is primarily a victim of the genocide, in the second view a (guilty) bystander. But some scholars are far more critical of the Rwandan churches. Mbanda argues in line with Prunier and Gatwa that the Church played a major role in shaping the root causes of the genocide. But the author goes further. In *Committed to Conflict* Mbanda shows that the relation between the Church and the governing authorities had always been very close. There was a large discrepancy between Christian teachings and practices. The Church proclaimed peace, love and justice, but practiced discrimination and hatred.⁴³ Mbanda's argumentation is enriched with personal anecdotes. The reader has to keep in mind that Mbanda is a victim of the hatred between Hutu and Tutsi. He was four years old when he fled with his parents to Burundi in 1959. But the author convincingly shows that the ties between the Catholic Church and state remained strong until the 1990s.⁴⁴ According to Mbanda, the leadership of the Church was silent during the genocide because they lacked the will to prevent the massacres from happening. The Church as an institution had always been on the side of the powerful and had always promoted impunity after violations of human rights or killing.⁴⁵ In Mbanda's view, the Church lost credibility long before the genocide. The accusations of Mbanda should not be taken lightly. On the other hand, the reader has

³⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 5-9.

³⁹ Tharcisse Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crisis 1900-1994* (Paternoster: Waynesboro, 2005) 106.

⁴⁰ Idem, 217

⁴¹ Michael Twaddle 'Untitled Book Review' *International Affairs* (April, 1996) vol. 72, no. 2, 417.

⁴² Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 250.

⁴³ Mbanda *Committed to Conflict* 37.

⁴⁴ Idem, 70-72.

⁴⁵ Idem, 90-92.

to keep in mind that *Committed to Conflict* is probably not the most objective study because it is partly based on the personal experiences of an author who was personally involved in the conflict.

One of the most virulent accusations of the Catholic Church has been made by Timothy Longman. His book *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* is an answer to the question: 'If the churches were, as I contend, powerful and influential institutions that were in fact being pressured from within and without to take a stand against authoritarianism and ethnic violence, why, then, were they so deeply inculcated in the genocide?'⁴⁶ The answer is based on Longman's field work in Rwanda before and after the genocide. The results of Longman's fieldwork are preceded with an analysis of the involvement of the Church in the politics of ethnicity, comparable with Prunier's *The Rwandan Crisis* and Gatwa's *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology*. The second half of the book comprises a detailed study of two Presbyterian parishes in north-west Rwanda. In Kirinda both the leaders and the members of the Church were involved in the killings while in Biguhu they actively resisted the genocide. Longman comes to the conclusion that the major difference between the parishes was the way the leaders of the Church related to the population. In Kirinda, the clergy enforced the authoritarian structures while in Biguhu the leadership of the Church empowered the poor.⁴⁷ In both parishes, the Tutsi were eventually murdered, but in Biguhu the clergy tried to protect them. Longman reveals a split within the Church. Authoritarian leaders tried to maintain their power while progressive forces were knocking on the doors of the Church. According to Longman, clerical leaders used the genocide to kill their opponents and re-establish their authority.⁴⁸

§ 1.4 Religion and peace

In the 1990s, the international community deployed peacebuilding missions in dozens of countries all over the world. These missions were rooted in the 'liberal peace thesis'. Political and economic liberalization had to prevent war-torn countries from a relapse into violent conflict.⁴⁹ Democratic elections and the establishment of a market economy had to be the pillars of peace. After a while, the international community realized that peace processes would be more sustainable if they were rooted in the culture and practices of the people involved. One of the publications that contributed to this awareness was *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. In the mid 1990s, this book urged American diplomats to recognize the long-neglected peace potential of religion.⁵⁰ There has been an increasing recognition of the contribution of religion in peace building processes ever since.⁵¹ In this paragraph, the scientific reflection on this process will be reviewed. The most important publications on the issue of religion and peace will be explored. In the light of the central question of this thesis, the focus will be on the possibilities of religious actors to contribute to peace building processes.

⁴⁶ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 10.

⁴⁷ *Idem*, 297.

⁴⁸ *Idem*, 318.

⁴⁹ Neclâ Tschirgi *Post-conflict peacebuilding revisited: achievements, limitations, challenges* (WSP International/IPA Peacebuilding Forum: New York, 2004) 10.

⁵⁰ Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson eds. *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1994).

⁵¹ Mathijs van Leeuwen *Partners in peace: discourses and practices of civil-society peacebuilding* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2009) 5-6.

It has already been said that religious peacebuilding already existed on the ground for a long time before it became a research subject. The Quakers and the Mennonites have been working on peace and conflict for centuries. Adam Curle, Elise Boulding and John Paul Lederach built upon their respective religious traditions and are widely respected for their contributions to the theory of peace. However, the core of their work is not about religious peacebuilding. The Jewish rabbi Marc Gopin was one of the first academics who studied the peacebuilding potential of religion. Gopin combines his knowledge of conflict resolution with the world of religion in *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*.⁵² The author acknowledges that all religions have violent tendencies. But at the same time, he states that every religion has 'commitment to peace and elimination of violence.'⁵³ In his book, Gopin analyzes the myths, sacred texts and traditions of the major religions. He searches for values, attitudes and rituals that promote peace and reconciliation. The rabbi encourages religious leaders to investigate the hermeneutical process within their tradition and promote pro-peace strands. According to Gopin even the most orthodox religious communities can become religious peacemakers. He provides religious leaders with a framework to help them investigate their own religious tradition.⁵⁴ The Jewish scholar also criticized Western scholars of conflict. They misunderstood or neglected the role of religion in conflict for too long. Gopin's book is an appeal to conflict resolvers and religious leaders to work together and find ways to incorporate religion in peace processes.⁵⁵

In 2000, Scott Appleby published a groundbreaking work in the field of religious peacebuilding *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*.⁵⁶ The American historian states that religion in itself is neither good nor bad, peaceful nor violent. Appleby agrees with Gopin that religious leaders are extremely important. They have intimate knowledge of their religious tradition and build upon it to create a message for their constituency. With this idea in mind, Gopin continued his book with an in-depth investigation of religious traditions. Appleby approaches the subject from a different perspective. He asks the question under which circumstances religious people choose violence over peace or the other way round. His analysis is not restricted to the internal hermeneutical process. External factors like religion's role in society, the available resources or the quality of leadership can also have a strong influence on the attitude of religious organizations towards conflict. According to Appleby, a religion has to meet certain requirements to be a (potential) influential actor in a peace process. First, the religion has to act independent from the state. Second, the adherents of the religion have to be educated and morally formed in their own religious tradition. Third, the religion should not be isolated from the rest of the society. A 'strong religion' which meets these requirements can play an important role in a peace building process. On the other hand, a 'weak religion' which

⁵² Marc Gopin *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2000).

⁵³ Marc Gopin quoted in Moshe Cohen 'Untitled book review' *Association for Jewish Studies Review* (April, 2003) vol. 27, no. 1, 155.

⁵⁴ Katrien Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding* 39.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth M. Bounds 'Review: From Eden to Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (June, 2003) vol. 71, no. 2, 449.

⁵⁶ R. Scott Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (Rowman & Littlefield: New York, 2000).

does not meet the standards can be easily manipulated and can even provide a threat to a peace process.

At the turn of the century, the stage was set for more extensive research. Appleby's *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* provided scholars with analytical tools to describe the role of religion in conflict. The body of literature grew considerably. Some scholars worked in line with Gopin whereas others preferred Appleby's approach. Although the field of religious peacebuilding was enriched with many case-studies, few authors contributed to a coherent analyzing framework. In 2004, a comprehensive book called *Religion and peacebuilding* was published.⁵⁷ The introduction of this book was written by David Little and Scott Appleby. They wrote about the promise that religious peacebuilding entails in an era of ethnic and religious conflict. But the exact nature of the promise of religious peacebuilding remained rather vague. Little and Appleby came up with a rough framework to arrange the positive contributions of religious organizations in peace building processes. In this framework, they took different stages in a peacebuilding process as a starting-point; conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Within each stage, the authors described possibilities for religion to contribute to peace, ranging from more passive roles like heralds to active roles like peace educators or observers. The authors underlined their ideas with examples they took from case-studies. Unfortunately, the other contributions that can be found in *Religion and Peacebuilding* were not linked to the structure presented in the introduction.

While reviewing the literature concerning religious peacebuilding, one wonders why there is no coherent analyzing framework until one reads *Religion and Peacebuilding*. In this article, Cynthia Sampson rightly points out that it is impossible to develop such a framework.⁵⁸ The term 'religious peacebuilding' encompasses a large variety of religious actors. They work on different levels, on different subjects and in different stages of conflict and peace. The only thing religious peacebuilders have in common is their religious character. Thus, it is almost impossible to build a coherent analyzing framework. Still, it is possible to distinguish between different roles of religious actors in peace processes. Sampson distinguishes between four roles of religious intervention and offers examples. Advocates stand up to change in situations of violence or oppression, intermediaries mediate between parties involved in conflict, observers discourage violence by their physical presence and educators provide trainings that promote peace and reconciliation.⁵⁹ Religious actors can be analyzed in the same way as any other social actor. But they do have certain characteristics that enable them to have a profound impact on the dynamics of peace and war. According to Sampson, religion has social and moral characteristics that make it perfectly suitable to play a major role in peacebuilding.⁶⁰ Some of the specific social traits of religion might seem rather down-to-earth. Religious organizations are often very well organized. Their communication channels range from the global to the local level. Moreover, religion is often deeply embedded in a culture, a society and people's lives. These sociological

⁵⁷ D. Little and R.S. Appleby 'A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict' in: Harold G. Coward, Gordon S. Smith eds. *Religion and Peacebuilding* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2004).

⁵⁸ Cynthia Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' in: I. William Zartman ed. *Peacemaking in international conflict: methods & techniques* (revised edition, United States Institute of Peace: Washington 2007).

⁵⁹ Idem, 280-294.

⁶⁰ Idem, 275-276.

characteristics provide religious actors with a perfect starting point to contribute to a peace process. As Gopin already stated, many religious traditions promote values of reconciliation, forgiveness and repentance. Religious leaders could use their legitimacy to enhance these values and contribute to the peace process.

The literature review about the role of the Catholic Church in Rwanda suggests that religion was part of the problem in the Rwandan society. Can a religion group become part of the solution when it was a part of the problem? In *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* Appleby deals with this problem when he describes the role of religion in the Balkan wars: 'decoupling religion and national identity or hoping that religion will "go away" is unrealistic as well as shortsighted. The better and more realistic approach would be to find within the rich cultural and religious traditions of the Balkans the moral norms and basic beliefs that are consistent with a vision of society in which religious, ethnic, and national differences are less a source of conflict than a reason for coexistence.'⁶¹ Appleby is encouraged in his vision by Gerard Powers. In his article *Religion, conflict and prospects for reconciliation in Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia* the author claims: "The best way to counter religious extremism or manipulation of religion is with strengthened, more authentic religion, not weakened religion. The challenge for religious leaders in the Balkans is to show that religion can be a counter to extreme nationalism and a source of peace because of, not in spite of, its close link with culture and national identity."⁶² In *Tales of War and Peace* the authors express a similar view. Although they are critical about the role of religion in the war, they conclude that the process of rebuilding society would 'greatly benefit from integrating religion.'⁶³ The society should be rebuilt at all levels and in all sectors. According to the authors, religious leaders have the chance to (re)define their position and contribute to a democratic, tolerant society and a strong civil society.

§ 1.5 Religion and the Rwandan peace-process

In July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) conquered Kigali. Rwanda had endured a genocide, a war and a political turnover. The country had to find a way to peace. A balance between justice and healing, vengeance and forgiveness. It did not take long before the prisons were crowded with over a hundred thousand people accused of genocide. The new Rwandan government initially focused on punishment en retributions. The United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) dealt with high-ranking officials. Rwanda's national court system could not handle the masses of perpetrators. It is estimated that only 10 lawyers were left in Rwanda after the genocide. It would take more than a century to bring all prisoners to trail.⁶⁴ Therefore, the Rwandan government decided to revive a grassroots court system called *gacaca*. From 2001, the *gacaca* courts started bring those responsible for the atrocities to trail. These sessions brought victims and perpetrators together at the local level to foster reconciliation and healing. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

⁶¹ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 76.

⁶² Gerard F. Powers 'Religion, conflict and prospects for reconciliation in Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia' *Journal of International Affairs* (Summer 1996), vol. 50, no. 1, 252.

⁶³ *Tales of War and Peace* IKV-Pax Christi and BBO 55.

⁶⁴ E. Zorbas 'Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda' *African Journal of Legal Studies* (2004) vol. 1, no 1. 34

(NURC) had the same objective at the national level. Meanwhile, the Rwandan government promoted economic development to ensure that the process of reconciliation would not collapse in the face of poverty and inequality.⁶⁵

Almost fifteen years after the genocide, the literature about the Rwandan peace and reconciliation process is only beginning to expand. First, the genocide and its causes attracted scholarly attention. Now, fifteen years later, scholars begin to evaluate the efforts towards justice and reconciliation. Since the gacaca courts played a central role in this process, the literature on this subject has mushroomed. According to Phil Clark, the publications can be arranged along three lines.⁶⁶ On the one hand, there are critical voices from NGO's like Human Right Watch (HRW). In *Justice Compromised The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-Based Gacaca Courts*, for example, HRW is critical of the quality and fairness of the trial system.⁶⁷ Other authors consider the process of justice and reconciliation facilitated through *gacaca* to be extremely state-driven. Bert Ingeleares states in *The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda* that in *gacaca* sessions the truth cannot always be told because 'the state controls what can be aired, creating self-censorship within the population.'⁶⁸ A third group focuses not only primarily on the legal aspect of the process, but also investigates its contributions to the Rwandan society. In *Punishment Postgenocide: From Guilt to Shame to 'Civis' in Rwanda*, for example, Mark Drumble investigated whether the *gacaca* really contributed to long-term stability in Rwanda. The second and third group are most valuable when it comes to this thesis because these authors are more likely to take the role of religion in the reconciliation process into account.

Only a few authors performed in-depth research about the role of religion in the process towards peace and reconciliation. The studies that are available tend to downplay the role of the Church in the reconciliation process. Within the publications, one finds three subjects that are regularly discussed. First, authors point to the disintegration of the Church. During the genocide, the Catholic Church lost its legitimacy in the eyes of many of its members. Saskia van Hoyweghen described this process in one of the first publications that appeared after the genocide *The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda: A Study of the Fragmentation of Political and Religious Authority*. Van Hoyweghen argues that 'The fall of the nation state was simultaneously the collapse of a "clerical state"'. The disintegration of the Catholic Church, once one of the most powerful institutions in civil society is imminent if action is not taken swiftly.⁶⁹ Several years later, it seems like the Catholic Church did not succeed in restoring its credibility. Articles discuss the rise of Islam in Rwanda. In 2002, for example, the Washington Post published an article 'Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide'.⁷⁰ Other articles like *Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape* describe the rise of Pentecostal movements.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Zorbas 'Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda', 37-39.

⁶⁶ Phil Clark *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice And Reconciliation In Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010) 4-6.

⁶⁷ *Justice Compromised The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-Based Gacaca Courts* Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch: New York, 2011) 4.

⁶⁸ Bert Ingelaere 'The Gacaca courts in Rwanda' in: Luc Huyse and Mark Salter eds. *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences* (International IDEA: Stockholm, 2008) 54.

⁶⁹ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church' 379.

⁷⁰ Emily Wax 'Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide Jihad Is Taught as Struggle to Heal' *Washington Post* (September 23, 2002) [available online: <http://wapo.st/9dSloE> accessed June 10, 2011].

⁷¹ A. Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape' *Exchange* (2007) vol. 36, no. 2.

Another important subject in the literature about religion after the genocide is the relation between the state and the Church. In *Is Reconciliation Possible in After Genocide* Mark Amstutz states that the Church had to change its attitude towards that state to regain credibility.⁷² But the relation between the Catholic Church and the state changed profoundly after the genocide. Jan van Butselaar states in *Religion, conflict and reconciliation: multifaith ideals and realities* that the government of Rwanda put pressure on the Catholic Church. According to Butselaar, the government wanted to be sure that the leaders of the Church were either favorable to the new regime or remained silent. Since the RPF was not in the position to the leaders of the Catholic Church, they began to scapegoat the entire Church. As a result, the Catholic Church lost its legitimacy and its capability to criticize the government.⁷³ This view is supported by Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*. According to these authors, the Tutsi leaders blamed the Church for the support it had given to the Hutu when they came to power in 1959. Moreover, the post-genocidal government did not allow an independent voice to challenge its hegemony. The churches were among the few organizations that had the capacity to challenge the state. In both publications it is stated that the Vatican tried to appease the RPF-government.⁷⁴

A third important subject in the literature about religion after the genocide is the difference between the official attitude of the Catholic Church and the laity. The Catholic Church did not repent for its role in the genocide. A team of South Africans invited to Rwanda to advise the newly appointed National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, reflected on this in *Die kerke in Rwanda: Skandes en uitdagings- en lesse vir Suid-Afrika*.⁷⁵ According to the authors, repentance was one of the pre-conditions in order for the Catholic Church to make a real contribution to the peace process. In *Religion, memory and violence in Rwanda*, Longman and Théoneste Rutagengwa even give an example where the Catholic Church surpassed efforts by ordinary Catholics to engage in grassroots reconciliations.⁷⁶ Inspired by faith, people did find ways to repent and work towards reconciliation. Gatwa writes about individual efforts in *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crisis 1900-1994*. The author takes the Detmold confession as an illustration. In Detmold, Germany, twenty-four Christians from different background came together to repent, both the Hutu, Tutsi and Western Christians. Although the leaders of their churches remained silent, these people stood up for reconciliation.

The *status questionis* indicates that the subject of this thesis is highly relevant. It builds upon an increasing body of literature concerning the role of religion in violence and peace. Many studies focus on either the role of religion in conflict or the role of religion in a peace process. This thesis

⁷² Mark A. Amstutz 'Is Reconciliation Possible After Genocide?: The Case of Rwanda' *Journal of Church and State* (Summer 2006) vol.48 no. 3, 560-564.

⁷³ Jan van Butselaar 'Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Rwanda' in: Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, H. M. Vroom eds. *Religion, conflict and reconciliation: multifaith ideals and realities* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2002) 335.

⁷⁴ Timothy Longman 'Limitations to Political Reform: the Undemocratic Nature of Transition in Rwanda' in: *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence* (University of Wisconsin Press: Wisconsin, 2011) 28.

⁷⁵ P.G.J. Meiering 'Die kerke in Rwanda: Skandes en uitdagings- en lesse vir Suid-Afrika' *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* (2000) vol. 56, no. 4

⁷⁶ Timothy Longman and Théoneste Rutagengwa 'Religion, memory and violence in Rwanda' in: Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres *Religion, violence, memory, and place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 140.

interacts with both fields. The role of Catholicism in the Rwandan peace process will form an important part of the thesis, this field is still largely unexplored. A historical perspective on the role of Catholicism in Rwanda could therefore provide valuable insights on the role of religion before, during and after a violent conflict.



Members of the royal family of Mwami Yuhi V Musinga, who ruled Rwanda from 1896-1931.

Chapter 2

The Origins of Hutu and Tutsi

*'Rwandans take history seriously. Hutu who killed Tutsi did so for many reasons, but beneath the individual motivations lay a common fear rooted in firmly held but mistaken ideas of the Rwandan past.'*⁷⁷

Alison Des Forges

§ 2.1 The origin of ethnic groups

Who are the Hutu, the Tutsi and the Twa? Where did they come from? Have they always considered themselves to be different from each other? Was being different a reason to resort to violence? Or did they focus on the things they had in common? What about the differences between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa? Are they biological or cultural? All these questions have to do with the issue of ethnic identity. It is important to gain understanding about the origins and dynamics of ethnicity when studying the history of Rwanda. In the context of this thesis, a related issue also deserves attention. Does religion have the power to influence ethnic identity? Could it be possible that Catholicism changed the ethnic identity of Hutu and Tutsi? Although these might seem straightforward questions, the answer is rather complicated. Since the late 1960s, the issue of ethnicity has been a subject of discussion between two opposing schools of thought: the primordialists and the social constructivists. These schools have a rather different perspective on ethnic identity, ethnic violence and the way religion could interfere with these issues. The history of Rwanda looks completely different depending on the approach one takes. Therefore, it is relevant to analyze the differences between the schools and explain the way the concept ethnicity will be used in this thesis.

One of the most important books concerning primordialism and social groups was published in 1973 by Clifford Geertz. In *The interpretation of cultures*, the anthropologist Geertz wrote about the social and political resources for stability in postcolonial societies.⁷⁸ He observed that in a multi-ethnic postcolonial society, people tended to attach themselves to other people who they considered to be of the same race. In this context, Geertz introduced a definition of primordialism that has often been quoted:

'By primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens" - or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens" - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood,

⁷⁷ Des Forges 'History' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/lXh2Od>, accessed July, 2 2011].

⁷⁸ Steve Fenton *Ethnicity* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2010) 78.

speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves.⁷⁹

Primordialism has often been characterized as a theory that considers ethnicity to be an unchangeable fact of nature, rooted in either biological or cultural characteristics. As a result, it has often been portrayed as a naïve and backward concept.⁸⁰ Nowadays, some scholars argue that Geertz' ideas have been misunderstood.⁸¹ Geertz did not suggest there is some sort of 'pre-social' bond between people. He only argued that people tend to *experience* ethnic or racial bonds as ancient, primordial. However, in the primordialist school there are more extreme tendencies. Some scholars developed a socio-biological interpretation of ethnicity.⁸² They described ethnic identity as a genetic feature of mankind.⁸³ In this view, neither religion nor any other social force could influence people's ethnic identity. Although there are differences within the primordialist school, it is possible to say that it developed a distinct view on ethnicity. In their view, ethnic bonds are durable and recurrent. They have a strong non-rational, emotional quality. People tend to experience ethnic ties as ancient and natural. But as we have seen, there is no agreement among primordialist scholars about the origin of ethnic bonds.

Currently, the social constructivist school dominates the study of ethnicity. In the late 1960s, anthropologists found out that people employ different ethnic labels in different situations.⁸⁴ Observations like these led to the conclusion that ethnic identity is fluid and even exchangeable. According to adherents of the social constructivist school, people have a certain freedom to choose from a variety of ethnic identities. Ethnic identity is considered to be a mixture of ascribed traits like appearance and place of birth and social inputs like economic, social and political factors. Although an individual cannot change its place of birth, it can choose to convert to a religion or to learn another language to be included in another ethnic group. Social constructivists also argue that people have multiple ethnic identities. A Hutu from Rwanda, for example, might identify himself with his clan, as a Hutu, a Rwandan or an African, depending on the context. But not only the individuals' perception of his or her ethnic identity is subject to change. Social constructivists argue that even the boundaries of ethnic groups are flexible to a certain extent.⁸⁵ Closely related to the constructivist school, is a tradition

⁷⁹ Clifford Geertz *The interpretation of cultures* (Basic Books: New York, 1973) 259-260.

⁸⁰ A widely known article that disfavored primordialism is written by Eller and Coughlan: 'The poverty of primordialism: The demystification of ethnic attachments' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (1993) vol. 16, no. 2. 183-202.

⁸¹ Steven Grosby defends this view in: 'The Verdict of History: The Inexpungeable Tie for Primordiality- a response to Eller and Coughlan' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (1994) vol. 17, no. 1, 164-171. Murat Bayar also defends Geertz' ideas in: 'Reconsidering primordialism: an alternative approach to the study of ethnicity' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2009) vol. 32 no. 9. 1639-1657.

⁸² Sandra F. Joireman *Nationalism and political identity* (Continuum: New York, 2003) 20-23.

⁸³ One can find a socio-biological explanation of ethnicity in Pierre van den Berghe *The ethnic phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981).

⁸⁴ In 1969, the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth published a groundbreaking work called *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Barth examined various examples of individuals and small groups that crossed ethnic boundaries because of specific economic or political circumstances. In his essay he stated: 'What is then left of the boundary maintenance and the categorical dichotomy, when the actual distinctions are blurred in this way? Rather than despair at the failure of typological schematism, one can legitimately note that people do *employ ethnic labels* and that there are in many parts of the world most spectacular differences whereby forms of behaviour cluster so that whole actors tend to fall into such categories in terms of their objective behaviour.'

⁸⁵ Joireman *Nationalism and political identity* 54-56.

that focuses even more on ethnicity as an instrument. The so-called instrumentalists argue that ethnicity is only an issue when it serves a certain purpose. In this view, ethnicity is considered to be an instrument in the hands of individuals and groups to further their (political) interests.⁸⁶

The debate between primordialism and social constructivism is still ongoing. It has already been said that the differences between the original ideas in primordialism and social constructivism are not as big as some scholars think. Still, it is important to indicate the perspective from which this thesis is written. In this thesis, the socio-biological approach of ethnicity will be disfavored. It has been shown convincingly that ethnic identity is subject to change. But the primordialist observation that many ordinary people do consider ethnic ties as primordial and feel a strong emotional attachment to their ethnic identity will be taken into consideration. Still, the social constructivist approach of ethnicity will be dominant. This has important consequences because it opens up the possibility that Catholicism influenced the ethnic identity of Hutu and Tutsi. A close look at Rwanda's history reveals how the concepts Hutu and Tutsi evolved over time. It will be investigated if and how Catholicism played a role in this process. In the course of this thesis, the instrumentalist idea that ethnicity can be used as a weapon in the hands of the powerful will also be taken into consideration.

§ 2.2 *The origins of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa*

Rwanda's early history is a highly sensitive issue because subsequent rulers used it to legitimize their political goals.⁸⁷ Pre-colonial Rwanda has been depicted as a harsh dictatorial state where Hutu peasants suffered under Tutsi rule. More recently, it changed into a paradise where the labels Hutu and Tutsi were nonexistent and where the people of Rwanda lived together in peace and harmony. Tutsi academics tend to downplay the differences between Hutu and Tutsi. In their opinion, there were only minor socioeconomic differences or no differences at all. Hutu intellectuals tend to argue that Rwanda always knew ethnic or even racial differences between Hutu and Tutsi. Depending on their view, Western academics also get a pro-Hutu or pro-Tutsi label.⁸⁸ When reading and writing about Rwandan history one has to keep in mind that every version of history has served or still serves a political goal.⁸⁹ In this paragraph, the academic consensus about the early history of Rwanda will be followed. Some of the most important debates about Rwanda's early history will be mentioned. These debates often have a political connotation.

It is widely believed that the Twa were the first to set foot in the forested hills of central and eastern Africa.⁹⁰ They were followed by Hutu farmers while later Tutsi pastoralists occurred in what is currently called Rwanda's territory. Here, at its very beginning, socio-biological primordialists tend to freeze the history of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. But in reality, the history of Hutu and Tutsi is far more complex. Archeologists agree that pastoral groups began immigrating into Rwanda somewhere

⁸⁶ Idem, 36-37.

⁸⁷ Gerard van 't Spijker, interview with the author (Utrecht, June 2011).

⁸⁸ Mahmood Mamdani *When Victims become Killers Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2001) 41.

⁸⁹ Gerard van 't Spijker, interview with the author (Utrecht, June 2011).

⁹⁰ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 2-3.

between the 12th to the 15th century.⁹¹ Here we touch upon one of the major debates about Rwanda's early history. Where did the pastoralist Tutsi come from? Did they migrate into the country in small groups? Or did they conquer the territory? The political relevance of this debate will become clear in the course of this thesis. Nowadays, many scholars think the Tutsi came from East Africa. It is not likely that they conquered Rwanda. Instead, a process of mutual cultural integration began after Tutsi groups appeared on the scene. Centuries passed while Hutu, Tutsi and Twa lived together in small chiefdoms and principalities based on lineage or clan systems.⁹² Within these small systems the different groups lived interspersed and spoke the same language, Kinyarwanda.⁹³ Rwandans identified themselves with their house, lineage and clan. Whereas a house and lineage were exclusively Hutu or Tutsi, most clans consisted of both Hutu and Tutsi lineages.⁹⁴ The terms Hutu, Tutsi and Twa had an economic connotation. Generally speaking Hutu were farmers, Tutsi were cattle herders and Twa were hunter-gatherers or potters.⁹⁵ The groups were interdependent in many ways and relations between the groups were characterized by exchanges.⁹⁶

During the 18th century things started to change when one of the small kingdoms began to expand. In the Nyiginya kingdom the *mwami* (king) was able to raise standing armies.⁹⁷ This provided him with the opportunity to protect the borders, conquer new territory and steal cattle from non-Rwandese tribes.⁹⁸ The king subjected his clients by giving them the usufruct of his cattle. Cattle became more and more important.⁹⁹ The military training and the wars glued Hutu, Tutsi and Twa together. It should be kept in mind that the three groups also shared the same religion. According to the religious ideas of the Rwandese people a god called *Imana* was the creator of the world and the source of life. *Imana* needed no worship. The spirits of ancestors, however, had to be pleased because they could bring illness or fortune. The people also turned to the spirits of heroic figures, the *imandwa*. One needed a ritual of spiritual possession *kubandwa* to get in touch with the spiritual world. The spiritual aspect of these rituals was important.¹⁰⁰ In the Nyiginya kingdom the ritual significance of the *mwami* was emphasized.¹⁰¹ The *mwami* was considered a divine being, a descent from *Imana*. Because of his heavenly origin, he was neither Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. The king played a crucial role in rituals concerning fertility and agricultural production.¹⁰² He functioned as the political, religious and social centre of the Nyiginya kingdom.

In the 19th century, the state became increasingly important. The stories about Tutsi supremacy and the suppression of Hutu can be traced back to this period in Rwanda's history. *Mwami*

⁹¹ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 50.

⁹² Des Forges 'The Meaning of "Hutu," "Tutsi," and "Twa" Leave None to Tell the Story [available online: <http://bit.ly/gy15Se> accessed July, 2 2011].

⁹³ Charles Mironko *Social and political mechanisms of mass murder: an analysis of perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide* (PhD dissertation, Yale University: Yale, 2004) 30.

⁹⁴ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 55.

⁹⁵ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 3.

⁹⁶ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 58-59.

⁹⁷ Jan Vansina *Antecedents to modern Rwanda: the Nyiginya Kingdom* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 2004) 67.

⁹⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 14-15.

⁹⁹ Vansina *Antecedents to modern Rwanda* 67.

¹⁰⁰ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 36-37.

¹⁰¹ René Lemarchand 'Rwanda' in: René Lemarchand ed., *African Kingships in Perspective: Political Change and Modernization in Monarchical Settings* (Frank Cass and Company Limited: London, 1977) 68.

¹⁰² Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 48.

Rwabugeri managed to centralize his power to ever higher levels. The conquered chiefdoms had to acknowledge the religious function of the *mwami* and were incorporated in systems of labor corvée.¹⁰³ The whole society was hierarchically organized. To achieve this, *mwami* Rwabugeri had divided his expanding kingdom into provinces and districts.¹⁰⁴ A military leader ruled the provinces, while a chief of land and a chief of pastures governed the districts. The chief of land was generally Hutu, while the chief of pastures was normally Tutsi. Both chiefs were in the position to raise taxes and regulate different forms of labor corvée.¹⁰⁵ One of the most important social institutions was *ubuhake*; a relationship between a person with a low social status who offered his services in return for protection to somebody whose social status was higher. As a symbol of the agreement, the patron would give a cow to his client. A client had almost full rights over this cow, only the female offspring had to be given to the patron.¹⁰⁶ This institution also has also been a subject of discussion among scholars. Was *ubuhake* an instrument to gain control and subordinate people? Or did it function as a survival strategy for poor families? It is not surprising that Hutu scholars tended to favor the first option while Tutsi academics defended the alternative interpretation. Nowadays, scholars think that the institution could be used to serve both ends.¹⁰⁷

In this changing context, the concepts Tutsi and Hutu developed a political meaning and became equivalent for people in power and ordinary people.¹⁰⁸ The gap between Hutu and Tutsi widened.¹⁰⁹ Since cattle herders largely constituted the ruling class, cattle became a symbol of power and status. When a Hutu had acquired many cows, he could have his status changed into Tutsi. Otherwise, a Tutsi who became poor saw his social status turning into Hutu.¹¹⁰ Still, the people of Rwanda identified themselves primarily with their family, lineage and clan.¹¹¹ This started to change after the first European explorers reached Rwanda.

¹⁰³ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 18-20.

¹⁰⁴ Eller J. D. *From culture to ethnicity to conflict: an anthropological perspective on international ethnic conflict* (University of Michigan: Michigan, 1999) 206-207.

¹⁰⁵ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 36-40.

¹⁰⁶ Idem 60-61.

¹⁰⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 29.

¹⁰⁸ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 74-75.

¹⁰⁹ Des Forges 'The Meaning of "Hutu," "Tutsi," and "Twa" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/gy15Se>, accessed July 2, 2011]

¹¹⁰ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 55-56.

¹¹¹ Idem 67.



The colonial ruler King Boudewijn of Belgium meets Mutara III Rudahigwa on Rwandan soil in 1955.

Chapter 3

Colonial Times

*'The Belgians set the stage for future conflict in Rwanda. Such was not their intent. They were not implementing a "divide and rule" strategy so much as they were just putting into effect the racist convictions common to most early twentieth century Europeans.'*¹¹²

Alison Des Forges

§ 3.1 Catholicism

The European explorers and colonizers reached Rwanda in 1892.¹¹³ It did not take long before the first missionaries followed the explorers to convert the people of Rwanda. They introduced a new religion, Catholicism, in the country. The story of this thesis starts here. In this paragraph, the perspective of this thesis and the term Catholicism will be discussed. At first sight, this might seem irrelevant since it has already been explained in the introduction that the role of religion will be analyzed from an historical perspective. But even within this scope, there are many ways to analyze the role of Catholicism in Rwanda's history. A historian working from a psychological perspective, for example, would focus on the way religious experiences of Catholics changed over time. On the other hand, a historian studying the connection between religious ideas and violence from a theological point of view would focus on the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In this thesis, the influence of Catholicism on societal developments in Rwanda will be discussed. One could say that the thesis is written from both an historical and a sociological perspective. It is therefore relevant to find out how sociologists have defined religion. A sociological definition of religion might give a clue about answer to the question how Catholicism should be defined. A quick overview of the literature reveals that sociologists have approached the subject of religion from different angles.

Rudolf Otto, a German scholar of comparative religion, tried to get to the essence of religion in his classic work *The idea of the Holy* (1917). He described a religious experience as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.¹¹⁴ The contemporary scholar of religion Scott Appleby draws upon Otto's ideas about religion when he states: 'Religion, as interpreter of the sacred, discloses and celebrates the transcendent source and significance of human existence.'¹¹⁵ Whereas Otto and his followers tried to understand what religion *is*, other scholars decided to focus on what religion *does*. This thesis can be situated in the last school. In 1970, the American sociologist Milton Yinger established a functional definition of religion: 'Religion, then, can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with these ultimate problems of human life.'¹¹⁶ This way of looking

¹¹² Des Forges 'The Transformation of "Hutu" and "Tutsi" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/IXh2Od>, accessed July, 2 2011].

¹¹³ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 69.

¹¹⁴ Rudolf Otto *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine* (Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish, 2004) [available online: <http://bit.ly/hnq9wc> accessed July, 2 2011] 12.

¹¹⁵ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 8.

¹¹⁶ Keith A. Roberts *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Dorsey Press: Homewood, 1984) 25.

at religion is closely related to the original meaning of the word. Religion can be traced to the Latin word *religare* 'to bind fast'. Religion binds people to their gods and connects people with each other.¹¹⁷ It has a strong communal connotation. This is reflected in Yinger's definition and in the way many scholars of religion, conflict and peace look at religion. The Belgian sociologist Hertog, for example, examined the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the conflict between Russia and Chechnya. She chooses to analyze the Church as an organization, a social actor and a living tradition with certain ideas, a set of values and worldview.¹¹⁸

In this thesis, the role Catholicism played in Rwanda will be examined from a functional perspective. The Dutch Professor of religion, human rights and social change Ter Haar offers a useful functional definition to analyze the different aspects of religion. According to Ter Haar, religion consists of four elements: 'religious ideas (content of belief), religious practices (ritual behavior), social organization (religious community) and religious – or spiritual- experiences (psychic attitudes).'¹¹⁹ This definition of religion can easily be applied to Catholicism and will serve as a guideline throughout this thesis. However, a number of things should be taken into consideration. A critical reader might argue that the definition of Ter Haar could also be applied to the players in a football team. They share certain ideas about football and practice the game following certain rules and rituals. If their team wins an important match, they might even experience feelings of joy and fellowship that they consider to be spiritual. The comparison with a football club becomes more unlikely when certain aspects of religious ideas are highlighted. It should be acknowledged that religious ideas derive from a religious meaning system, a worldview (this is usually not the case when it comes to football).¹²⁰ They are not mere opinions.¹²¹ A religious worldview has a strong normative, *moral* character. As a result, religious institutions are capable of forming the inner dynamics of their adherents 'in a way that now other institution can match.'¹²² The influence of religion goes far beyond clerical institutions. The focus of this thesis could therefore easily be expanded in such a way that all Catholic actors are included. Many faith-based Catholic NGO's worked in Rwanda in the 1990s. These NGO's could reasonably be included in this inquiry. In the course of this thesis, however, the focus will be on Catholicism in a more narrow form. Only Catholic actors that are directly related to the Catholic Church of Rwanda will be taken into consideration. A clear focal point hopefully contributes to an in-depth analysis of Catholicism in Rwanda.

§ 3.2 Colonial rule in Rwanda

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Ramsey and Shannon Ledbetter 'Studying Religion: Issues in definition and method' in Ian S. Markham and Tinu Ruparell eds., *Encountering religion: an introduction to the religions of the world* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 2001) 2.

¹¹⁸ Hertog *Religious peacebuilding* 116-121.

¹¹⁹ Ter Haar 'religion: source of conflict or resource for peace?' 22.

¹²⁰ Marc Gopin 'World religions, violence, and myths of peace in international relations' in: Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil eds., *Bridge or Barrier Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace* (Brill: Leiden, 2005) 35.

¹²¹ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Hanne Eggen Røislien 'Faithful Brokers? Potentials and Pitfalls of Religion in Peacemaking' *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* (Spring 2008) vol. 25, no. 3, 352.

¹²² Joseph Adero Ngala 'The Christian Church as a peacemaker in Africa' in: Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil eds., *Bridge or Barrier Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace* (Brill: Leiden, 2005) 154.

Central Africa was assigned to Germany at the Berlin Conference (1884-1885). No European explorer had ever travelled this far into the heart of Africa. Only a few years after the conference, the first European explorers reached Rwanda. They were impressed by its highly developed monarchy. The German colonizers that followed swiftly sought to use the existing political system to enhance their rule over Rwanda. The Nyinginya kings ruled over central and southern Rwanda.¹²³ Since it was easier to deal with a unified Rwanda, the remaining Hutu chiefdoms in the north and northwest were overthrown and incorporated in the Nyinginya kingdom.¹²⁴ But the German rule did not last long. In 1916, the Belgians conquered Rwanda and after Germany's defeat in World War I, the League of Nations officially affirmed Belgian rule in Rwanda.¹²⁵ In the 1920s, the Belgians further refined the German system of indirect rule. They limited the powers of the king and accommodated the Rwandese political system to generate as much revenue as possible. The network of provinces and districts was developed even further. Moreover, the Belgians abolished the existing governing system where a military leader, a chief of land and a chief of cattle had to share power. In most cases, the Hutu chiefs were fired. In this way, the governing authorities could exercise extraordinary power at all levels of society.¹²⁶ The colonial administration used this capacity to reform the existing system of labor corvée. The traditional social structures of the Rwandese society were disrupted. Whereas labor corvée had always been a responsibility of whole lineages on a hill, it was now transformed into an individual obligation. Other indigenous institutions were also individualized. Grazing field had always been communal property but were turned into private property of rich people owning ten or more cows.¹²⁷ The existing social structures were adapted for the benefit of Belgian and Tutsi rulers.

From the very beginning, the European explorers, colonizers and missionaries preferred Tutsi over Hutu and Twa. Their approach of the indigenous population was rooted in the European culture of the nineteenth century. Many scholars were pre-occupied with race. Although race is often associated with ethnicity, it is a different concept. A race consists of people who share certain biological features. Nowadays, scientific research has shown that the biological differences between people that were supposed to belong to the same race are sometimes bigger than the similarities. But in the nineteenth century, scientific projects concerning race were highly topical. Based on De Gobineau's theories in *Essaie sur L'inégalité des Races Humaines* (1855) the European invaders considered Tutsi, Hutu and Twa to be different races that could be ranked hierarchically.¹²⁸ The Twa were seen as an inferior race: 'quite similar to the apes whom he chases in the forest.'¹²⁹ The Hutu were typified as an unintelligent Negroid race: '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.'¹³⁰ The Tutsi race, however, was completely different. Tutsi were portrayed as descents of Ham, the son of the biblical figure Noah. They were a superior "Caucasoid" race from northeastern

¹²³ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 4.

¹²⁴ Scott Strauss *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Cornell University Press: New York, 2007) 208.

¹²⁵ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 25-26.

¹²⁶ Strauss *The Order of Genocide* 210-211.

¹²⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 27-29.

¹²⁸ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 116.

¹²⁹ *Rapport Annuel du Territoire de Nyanza* (1925) quoted in Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 6.

¹³⁰ Ministère des Colonies *Rapport sur l'administration Belge du Ruanda-Urundi* (1925) 34, quoted in Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 6.

Africa. 'His features are very fine: a high brow, thin nose and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth.'

¹³¹ Only they would have been able to develop the highly sophisticated bureaucracy that amazed the explorers of Rwanda: '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 of calculated goodwill.'¹³² While writing about the Rwandan 'races' in such a way, the colonizers seemed to forget that although Hutu and Tutsi had originally been different groups, they had been living together for ages. Of course, there were people who resembled the stereotypes. But many Tutsi had Hutu features and the other way round.¹³³ The colonizers also seemed to forget that there were many Hutu leaders who ruled neighboring kingdoms before they assisted the Nyiginya kingdom to conquer them. And along the track they also forgot the contribution of Hutu peasants and leaders in the rise of the Nyiginya kingdom. The Tutsi elite embraced and furthered this distorted version of history. It legitimized their role in society and their favored position with the Belgians. In the 1920s and 1930s they provided the clergy and the academics with information that fitted with the European ideas about Rwanda's history.¹³⁴ The Belgians acted according to their best knowledge of Rwanda when they registered everyone's racial identity in 1933. Everybody with more than ten cows was registered as Tutsi. All others were enlisted as Hutu or Twa.¹³⁵

The colonizers did not invent the concepts of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. These terms were already used in Rwanda before the colonizers arrived. Neither did the colonizers create the idea that Tutsi were born to rule. Indigenous myths also suggested that Tutsi were natural leaders.¹³⁶ And in the 19th century, the term Tutsi already became associated with political power. But the colonizers did influence the meaning of the concepts Hutu, Tutsi and Twa in a profound way. They interpreted the differences between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa according to the scientific conventions of their days. As a consequence, they gave it a racial, a 'biological' twist. This proves the idea of both the social-constructivist and the instrumentalist school that ethnic identity is subject to change. Moreover, the Belgians began to register ethnic identity. In this way, the once flexible categories were carved in stone. An instrumentalist would add that the Belgians and the Tutsi used the concept of race as an instrument to legitimize their position. It didn't take long before the distorted view on Rwanda's society and history was taught in every school in Rwanda. It had a major impact on the way Hutu and Tutsi thought of themselves and the other group.¹³⁷ The Hutu self-esteem slowly began to crumble while the Tutsi began to believe in their racial superiority.¹³⁸ One could say that thinking in racial categories slowly became a part of the cultural foundation of the Rwandan society. It did not take long before people experienced 'race' as a given, a primordial fact of nature.

¹³¹ Ibidem.

¹³² Ibidem.

¹³³ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 8-9.

¹³⁴ Des Forges 'The Transformation of "Hutu" and "Tutsi" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/lXh2Od>, accessed July, 2 2011].]

¹³⁵ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 77.

¹³⁶ Gérard van 't Spijker *Indicible Rwanda Expériences et réflexions d'un pasteur missionnaire* (Éditions CLÉ; Yanoundé, 2007) 88-90.

¹³⁷ Des Forges 'The Transformation of "Hutu" and "Tutsi" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/lXh2Od>, accessed July, 2 2011].]

¹³⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 8-9.

§ 3.3 Catholicism under colonial rule

The colonial administrators were not the only Europeans involved in the racialization process of the Rwandan people. The Catholic missionaries also played an important role in this process. The White Fathers were the first missionaries who reached Rwanda. In 1900, they received permission from the *mwami* to establish a mission post in what is today Butare. Under supervision of Mgr. Hirth they established four mission posts throughout the country.¹³⁹ The White Fathers had a clear strategy for the Christianization of Rwanda. Their late founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, had embraced the Latin principle: 'cuius regio, eius religio', whose realm, his religion.¹⁴⁰ After the leaders would be converted, the masses would follow.¹⁴¹ In Rwanda, this meant that the Catholic missionaries tried to ally themselves with the ruling Tutsi elite. This was not easy. The indigenous religion of Rwanda legitimated the existing socio-political structures. Thus, the Tutsi elite thought of the missionaries as a rival power.¹⁴² After Protestant missions also appeared in Rwanda, the struggle for the souls of the Rwandan people really began. Mgr. Hirth and his followers had to work under difficult circumstances. The strategy of Cardinal Lavigerie did not seem to work. In 1910, the 4,500 converts in Rwanda were largely Hutu.¹⁴³ As a matter of fact, the relations between the missionaries and their converts were often based on mutual misunderstanding. Poor Hutu peasants interpreted the emerging religion in terms of the existing client-patron relations. They thought of the White Fathers as new patrons who could protect them. A conversion to Christianity held out the possibility of material gain. Unintentionally, missionaries confirmed these ideas. Many converts benefited from the fact that mission stations quickly became commercial centers.¹⁴⁴ But the leaders of the Church did not acquiesce in the situation. In 1922, Mgr. Hirth was succeeded by Mgr. Classe. The newly appointed leader tried again to engage the Tutsi elite. But they still kept the missionaries literally at a distance.¹⁴⁵ To Mgr. Classe's regret, king Musinga did not want to get involved with the new religion.¹⁴⁶ It would take some time before the strategy of Lavigerie turned out to work.

The religious ideas of the missionaries corresponded to a certain extent with the traditional religious ideas of the people of Rwanda. The missionaries spoke about a God who created the earth and looked after his creation. They also talked about an invisible, spiritual world. This fit with the worldview of the Rwandan people. It was common religious knowledge. But the missionaries also spread new ideas about God. They taught about the Holy Trinity, about God who became human in

¹³⁹ Vénuste Linguyenzeza 'Jubilé de 100 ans d' évangelisation du Rwanda' *Dialogue* (March-April 2000), no. 215, 7-8.

¹⁴⁰ Linguyenzeza 'Jubilé de 100 ans d' évangelisation' 11.

¹⁴¹ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 39.

¹⁴² Justin Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise 1900-1962* (Présence Africaine: Paris, Dakar, 1991) 103, 116.

¹⁴³ Octave Ugirashebuja 'The Church and Genocide in Rwanda' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda Complicity of the churches?* Aegis Trust (Paragon House: St. Paul, 2004) 50.

¹⁴⁴ C.C. Taylor *Milk, honey, and money: changing concepts in Rwandan healing* (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, 1992) 55-56.

¹⁴⁵ Ian Linden *Church and Revolution in Rwanda* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1977) 3.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Rutayisire *La christianisation du Rwanda (1900-1945) Méthode missionnaire et politique selon Mgr Léon Classe* (Edition Universitaires: Fribourg Suisse, 1987)

Jesus Christ to save the world.¹⁴⁷ The nature of the message of the Catholic missionaries has raised discussions among scholars. Theories about racial inequality flourished in the 19th century. These ideas were fostered by a socio-religious idea called the Hamitic thesis. The biblical story of Noah played a central role in this concept. One day, after the flood, Noah became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. Ham, one of his sons, saw his father laying naked and told his brothers. Ham ridiculed his father, but his brothers Shem and Japheth took a garment and covered their fathers body. After Noah found out what his youngest son had done to him, he cursed him.¹⁴⁸ Centuries later, this story was used to legitimize the enslavement of black Africans, who were considered to be descents of the cursed Ham. But in the nineteenth century, the Hamitic theory needed an update. Europeans were confronted with highly developed monarchies like the Nyiginya kingdom in Rwanda. They could not believe that a cursed, black 'inferior race' was capable of such accomplishments. In the revised edition of the Hamitic thesis, the Hamitic race was portrayed as an African race of a non-black origin that had introduced civilization in Africa. In this way, one could distinguish between inferior black people and superior black-but-related-to-white people. All the accomplishments of Africans could be traced back to their white origins.¹⁴⁹ Ideas like these influenced the mindset of the missionaries. They did not set out to preach a message of racial division. But from the very beginning, their message about love and forgiveness was mixed with ideas about racial inequality that promoted division within the Rwandan society.¹⁵⁰ The missionaries were probably not aware of this situation themselves.

It is important to keep the intellectual background of the missionaries in mind when considering the Catholic Church as a social organization. Although the Catholic Church started with small mission posts, their influence increased rapidly. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Catholic Church played an increasingly significant role in education and exerted more and more influence on the Rwandese society.¹⁵¹ The bonds between the Catholic Church and the colonial powers became tight.¹⁵² The missionaries provided education for young Tutsi students and helped them to gain important positions in the colonial bureaucracy. A conversion to Christianity became also lucrative for Tutsi. Many young Tutsi turned to Catholicism to get a job within the Belgium administration. The mission schools became the key to the conversion of the Tutsi elite.¹⁵³ For the Tutsi elite, it became the portal to political power.¹⁵⁴ Due to the Belgian reforms of the political system the *mwami* was losing his power. A new generation of Tutsi found its way to political power trough the education system of the Church. Mgr. Classe convinced the colonial authorities to work with Tutsi.¹⁵⁵ From a social-constructivist, or an instrumentalist point of view one could argue that the mission schools were the key to the reconstruction of the concepts Hutu and Tutsi. The missionaries had a prominent role in (re)writing Rwandan history and were able to spread their ideas on a large scale. But the last big blow to the traditional religious and political structures was made in 1931. The reluctant *mwami* Yuhi V

¹⁴⁷ Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise* 117.

¹⁴⁸ *New International Version* Gen. 9:20-27.

¹⁴⁹ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 65-69.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵¹ Taylor *Milk Honey and Money* 59.

¹⁵² Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 44-46.

¹⁵³ Rutayisire *La christianisation du Rwanda* 68-69.

¹⁵⁴ Linden *Church and Revolution in Rwanda* 152.

¹⁵⁵ Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise* 201.

Musinga was replaced by his docile son Mutare II Rudahigwa. For Mgr. Classe it must have felt like a victory. He had urged the colonial authorities to replace the anti-Catholic Musinga. The new king, Mutare III Rudahigwa, was a catechumen, carefully selected by Mgr. Classe,¹⁵⁶

People could join the Catholic Church through the ritual of baptism. Everybody who wanted to be baptized had to take part in catechism classes. In theory, this period of catechism could take up to four years. A catechumen had to live up to a certain moral standard before he was allowed to be baptized. Polygamy and divorce, for example, were forbidden. Virtues like obedience to the colonial and clerical authorities were promoted.¹⁵⁷ But in practice, the period of catechism gradually reduced. The lack of in-depth catechism reached its height when, after thirty years, the strategy of Cardinal Lavigerie finally began to work.¹⁵⁸ The Tutsi elite and their followers began to turn to the Catholic Church in massive numbers. In 1930, the Catholic Church had less than 100.000 baptized members and by 1940 over 300.000 members were enrolled in the Church.¹⁵⁹ A tornado of conversions swept through the country. Christians saw the Holy Spirit working everywhere. But for many Rwandans, there were practical reasons to convert to Christianity. In the late 1920s, the colonial administration required that the chiefs had to be baptized in order to keep their position. Those who wanted to be baptized, had to bring a number of new postulants for catechism. Many chiefs pushed their subjects to conversion. Moreover, it was the common perception that the king ordered conversion. The people of Rwanda called the movement *Irivuze umwami* 'what the king has said you must follow'.¹⁶⁰ In 1946, Rwanda as a country was consecrated to Christ. The king of Rwanda devoted his country to the King of the universe.¹⁶¹

Catholicism as a religious community expanded rapidly. The new religious community was strictly hierarchically organized. The believers fell into two categories: leaders and followers. On the one hand were the leaders; the pope, the bishops, the priests and the missionaries. They taught the followers, the ordinary believers, about the content of their faith, about the rituals, about moral behavior. Everybody had to stay in the position they were given by the Divine Providence. This conservative principle was applied to both Church and society.¹⁶² The leaders had a lot of influence on life in the Catholic community. Catholicism encompassed all aspects of life. It was not possible to be a member of the Catholic community and practice traditional religion.¹⁶³ As a result, the Christianization of Rwanda had a large effect on the spiritual and cultural life in the country. The *kubandwa* possession cult virtually disappeared. On the surface, the Rwandese people seemed to adopt Christian values instead. Obedience to the authorities and hard work were encouraged by the clergy, while ancestor worship and adultery were prohibited. According to Prunier hypocrisy flourished in the Rwandese society, while the clergy was not able to get to people's hearts.¹⁶⁴ But Prunier's ideas are contested by

¹⁵⁶ Idem, 207-212.

¹⁵⁷ Rutayisire *La christianisation du Rwanda* 317-319.

¹⁵⁸ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 55-56.

¹⁵⁹ Idem, 45-58.

¹⁶⁰ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 90.

¹⁶¹ Linguyenzeza 'Jubilé de 100 ans d' évangélisation du Rwanda' 13.

¹⁶² Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise* 118-119, 299.

¹⁶³ Idem, 237.

¹⁶⁴ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 31-32.

other authors. In the course of this thesis, his statements about the internalization of Christianity will be examined more in-depth.

§ 3.4 *The U-turn*

The Belgian reforms of the 1920s created a centralized, efficient state. Many people had to deal with an increasing burden of taxation and forced labor. Between 1920 and 1940 this burden only increased. Men were forced to dig terraces, grow coffee for export, plant trees and build roads. These activities could take more than 50 percent of a man's time.¹⁶⁵ After World War II things started to change. The Tutsi elite learned about new world-wide developments. They heard about democracy, decolonization and self-government. They realized they had to act quickly if they wanted to maintain their position. If the Hutu masses would become aware of these new ideas, they would certainly not agree with an independent Tutsi government. Therefore, the Tutsi elite pushed the Belgian colonizers and irritated them with intrusive questions about independence. The bond between the Tutsi and European elite that had been nurtured for decennia began to crumble. Meanwhile, the Hutu population became increasingly aware of the exploitation and subordination by the Belgian administration and Tutsi elite. Since the Belgians had destroyed the communal social structures, they began to think for themselves, as individuals.¹⁶⁶

In this critical situation, the Catholic Church started to foster the growth of a Hutu counter-élite. The old ideas about Tutsi as a race that was born to rule wavered. New ideas from Europe about human rights, decolonization and equality flowed into Rwanda with the arrival of young missionaries. This generation was influenced by social democratic ideas and saw Hutu as an exploited class that needed support of the Church. They did not want to ally themselves with the powerful Tutsi, but choose side with the powerless Hutu. Hundreds of disillusioned Hutu already converted themselves to Protestantism. The young missionaries wanted to turn the tide. As a result, a contradiction occurred between the religious ideas of the young generation and the Church as an institution.¹⁶⁷ The leadership of the Catholic Church remained conservative, also after Mgr. Classe died in 1945. His successor Mgr. Deprimoz was not able to unite his clergy under a conservative banner. The Church became actively involved in the struggles for political power.¹⁶⁸ Tutsi clergy allied themselves with Tutsi politicians who developed anti-European ideas and independence. Meanwhile, the younger missionaries educated Hutu's and provided them with career opportunities within the Church.¹⁶⁹ This was not easy since the leadership of the Church was predominantly Tutsi.¹⁷⁰ Since the colonial administration often refused to put Hutu's in a high position, the Church was one of the few options for an educated Hutu.¹⁷¹ The Church became totally divided in itself.

¹⁶⁵ Idem 8-9.

¹⁶⁶ Idem 42-43.

¹⁶⁷ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 113.

¹⁶⁸ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 82.

¹⁶⁹ Idem, 66-69.

¹⁷⁰ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 113.

¹⁷¹ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 66-69.

Meanwhile, the self-consciousness of the Hutu counter-elite grew. The Belgian administration encouraged the emancipation of the Hutu to counter the power of the Tutsi elite. From 1956 they were supported by Vicar Perraudin, the successor of Mgr. Deprimoz, who chose to side with Hutu.¹⁷² He acted from the preposition that racial and social inequalities were more or less the same: 'In our land of Rwanda, differences and social inequalities are largely linked to differences of race.'¹⁷³ In the late 1950s Grégoire Kayibanda, a mission-educated Hutu, became editor of the Catholic newspaper *Kinyamateka*. He published several critical articles about Tutsi rule. With eight fellow intellectual Hutu and two White Fathers, Kayibanda published the Hutu Manifesto in 1957. In this manifest the authors complained about the economic, political en educational monopoly position of Tutsi. They demanded reforms from the Belgian government. It is striking that the Hutu intellectuals did not challenge the racial divisions in Rwanda. Instead, they were so accommodated to it that they used the existing racial stereotypes to further their cause. Certain aspects of the Hamitic theory were now turned against Tutsi. They were depicted as foreign invaders.¹⁷⁴ The authors of the manifest called for the maintenance of ethnic identity cards as a tool to monitor the racial balance in several sectors of society. The racial bonds that only existed for roughly sixty years, were already experienced as primordial. Later that year, Kayibanda formed a political party, the *Muhutu Social Movement* (MSM) to achieve the goals formulated in the Bahutu Manifesto. Two years later, he changed the name in *Parti du Mouvement pour l'Emancipation Hutu* (PARMEHUTU). The first political party in Rwanda was born.

Hutu and Tutsi prepared themselves for the struggle for power that was to come. Other political parties emerged. Joseph Gitera founded a more radical Hutu political party the *Association pour la Promotion Social de la Masse* (APROSOMA). The Tutsi elite responded with arrogance. Since Hutu were defeated long ago, they should not foster hope on equality. The Tutsi elite founded the *Union National Rwandaise* (UNAR) to defend Tutsi supremacy. This party was denounced by the Catholic Church because it received aid from Communist Russia. A more moderate Tutsi party was the progressive *Rassemblement Démocratique Rwandaise* (RADER).¹⁷⁵ The end game of colonialism was marked with violence. Tensions rose after *mwami* Rudahigwa died under suspicious circumstances in July 1959. The spark that ignited the powder keg came in early November 1959. UNAR militants beat a Hutu sub chief in Giterama. After the rumor spread that the sub chief had died, Hutu came to protest at his house. When they were insulted by Tutsi they responded with violence, killing four Tutsi leaders. In the weeks that followed the violence spread through the country. After two weeks, Belgian paratroopers arrived to restore order. In the aftermath of the violence the Belgian colonizers choose to replace the killed Tutsi chiefs and sub chiefs with Hutu.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the violence continued. Tutsi hid themselves in churches and a number of White Fathers even brought out their hunting rifles to protect them.¹⁷⁷ About 20,000 Tutsi were killed and between 120,000 and 300,000 fled to neighboring countries, creating a refugee problem for many years to come.¹⁷⁸ In 1960

¹⁷² Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise* 436-441.

¹⁷³ Ugirashebuja 'The Church and Genocide in Rwanda' 57.

¹⁷⁴ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 82-88.

¹⁷⁵ Strauss *The Order of Genocide* 178.

¹⁷⁶ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 70-73

¹⁷⁷ Linden *Church and Revolution* 268.

¹⁷⁸ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 90.

and 1961, PARMEHUTU won the communal and legislative elections.¹⁷⁹ The Hutu revolution was completed.

¹⁷⁹ *Idem* 88.



Rwandan refugees in Uganda waiting for food distribution in 1964.

Chapter 4

Patterns of violence

*'What would later be touted as a 'social revolution' resembled more an ethnic transfer of power.'*¹⁸⁰

Gerard Prunier

§ 4.1 Patterns of violence

The revolution of 1959 could have marked the beginning of a more just and peaceful society. But injustice and violence remained an inherent part of the Rwandan society. Many people associate violence with beatings, rape and murder. But violence can be defined in many ways. There is, not surprisingly, no generally accepted definition of violence. Still, it is important to distinguish between different ways of looking at violence in order to investigate the relation between violence and violent conflict in the Rwandan society and Catholicism. The Belgian scholar Reychler once claimed that: 'To prevent violence more effectively, one has to look at the whole fabric of violence.'¹⁸¹ There is one author who published a lot about different forms of violence since the late 1960s. The Norwegian peace researcher Galtung was one of the founding fathers of the field of conflict and peace studies. His models are still widely used to explain the dynamics of conflict and violence. Galtung had a strong opinion about the essence of violence: 'I see violence as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible.'¹⁸² It has been said in scholarly circles that it has certain disadvantages to work with such a broad definition of violence. Definitions are only useful when they provide scholars with clear demarcation lines.¹⁸³ On the other hand, it has been argued that violence is indeed an intrinsic part of our daily life. As Ghandi once put it: 'Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence.'¹⁸⁴

Galtung elaborated upon his definition of violence and distinguished between direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Direct violence is a violent event, visible for everybody. It ranges from killings or sanctions to rape or repression. In case of direct violence, it is not difficult to recognize the perpetrator and the victim. But Galtung's understanding of violence goes beyond direct violence. According to the author, direct violence is often rooted in structural violence. It takes some time to recognize structural violence because it is anonymous. It is impossible to identify an individual

¹⁸⁰ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 50.

¹⁸¹ Luc Reychler 'Challenges of Peace Research' *International Journal of Peace Studies* (Spring/Summer 2006) vol. 11, no. 1, 3 [available online http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol11_1/11n1Reychler.pdf, accessed September 17, 2011]

¹⁸² Johan Galtung 'Cultural Violence' *Journal of Peace Research* (Aug. 1990) vol. 27, no. 3, 292.

¹⁸³ J.M.G. van der Dennen 'De rechtvaardiging van geweld 2. Psychodynamische processen en mechanismen' (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen: Groningen, 2005) 4 [available online: <http://irs.uibn.rug.nl/ppn/280499205>, accessed August, 20 2011].

¹⁸⁴ Mahatma Ghandi, quoted in Ronald Terchek *Gandhi: struggling for autonomy* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Lanham, 1998) 190.

perpetrator and sometimes it is even difficult to identify the victims.¹⁸⁵ The term structural violence refers to an institutionalized process: systematic exploitation, unfair trade systems, racism or marginalization. In the 1990s, Galtung added the concept of cultural violence. The author argues that both direct violence and structural violence are embedded in cultural violence. It takes a more in-depth analysis to recognize cultural violence. Cultural violence makes direct violence and structural violence feel right. It is an internalized legitimization of the more overt forms of violence. Once violence is structurally and culturally embedded, it is difficult to resolve the conflict.¹⁸⁶ Galtung's view did not go unchallenged. One of the major criticisms is that the author defines violence as the cause of differences between an ideal situation and reality. The idea about what violence is varies with one's ideas about the ideal situation. As a consequence, violence becomes a highly subjective term.¹⁸⁷ But despite the occasional critique, Galtung's work is still highly valued. The author also applied his ideas to the dynamics of conflict. He represents conflict as a triangle with a contradiction (c), behavior (b) and attitude (a) at its vertices.¹⁸⁸ In this model, the contradiction (c) refers to the underlying conflict; the real or perceived incompatibility of goals. The behavior (b) of the parties involved determines whether a contradiction turns into a violent conflict. The behavior on its turn is rooted in the attitude (a) of the parties, the perceptions they have of each other and of themselves. In this model, direct violence is related to violent behavior, cultural violence has to do with negative attitudes and structural violence can be related to the contradiction.¹⁸⁹

The conceptual framework of Galtung shows that there are many levels of violence and conflict. Practitioners of conflict resolution thought about ways to prevent a latent conflict from turning into an open, violent conflict. Lederach argues that the transformation violent structures into peaceful ones has to do with a redistribution of power.¹⁹⁰ Adam Curle, one of the founding fathers in the field of conflict mediation developed a model to bring about such a transformation.¹⁹¹ Curle explains that a third party has to make the victims of structural or cultural violence aware of their situation. This is what Curle calls a process of education or conscientization. But it is not enough to raise awareness about injustice. The victims of structural or cultural violence have to be assisted in confronting those in power. They have to find ways to organize themselves and articulate their grievances. For both parties involved, this is a difficult period because it is characterized by instability. Curle argues that confrontation has to be followed by negotiation. The parties involved should come to terms with each other and find a way to restructure the power balance in a more just and equal way. If they succeed, violent cultural and structural patterns can be demolished before they turn into overt, direct violence. Religion can either consciously or unconsciously sustain the violent patterns in society or work towards real peace.

¹⁸⁵ Galtung 'Structural and Direct Violence a Note on Operationalization' *Journal of Peace Research* (1971) vol. 8, no. 1, 73-76.

¹⁸⁶ Galtung 'Cultural Violence' 295.

¹⁸⁷ Kjell Eide 'Note on Galtung's Concept of 'Violence' *Journal of Peace Research* (1971) vol. 8, no. 1, 71.

¹⁸⁸ Johan Galtung *Peace by peaceful means: peace and conflict, development and civilization* (International Peace Research Institute: Oslo, 1996) 72.

¹⁸⁹ Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* 10-11.

¹⁹⁰ John Paul Lederach *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 1997) 12-13.

¹⁹¹ Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* 21-22.

§ 4.2 The Kayibanda years

Rwanda became formally independent on 1 July 1962. Kayibanda was elected president of the republic and formed an exclusively Hutu government. *Mwami* Rudahigwa had died in 1959 and his young and inexperienced successor Kigali V had fled into exile.¹⁹² Thus, the president was able to establish an authoritarian regime. Kayibanda favored the Hutu from Giterama where he came from, while Hutu from other parts of the country were discarded.¹⁹³ He could arrange this because he was personally responsible for all appointments within the administration.¹⁹⁴ The president based his rule firmly in the racial myths of Rwandan history.¹⁹⁵ The distorted version of Rwandan history can be described as cultural violence. The ideas about the origins of Hutu and Tutsi were not questioned. But the myths about Rwanda's early history were turned against Tutsi. Hutu were cast as the authentic Rwandans whereas Tutsi were depicted as foreign invaders and oppressors. This idea about Rwanda's history legitimated structural violence: the official discrimination of Tutsi. The Hutu government developed a quota system based upon the representation of each group in society. The identity card that was once introduced by the Belgian administration to favor Tutsi was now used against them.¹⁹⁶ Hutu got 85-90 percent, Tutsi 9 percent and Twa 1 percent of the available places in schools and government jobs. In practice, it was almost impossible for a Tutsi to go to university. Moreover, the Tutsi were accused of virtually everything that went wrong in Rwanda. The reprisal of the Tutsi often ended up in direct violence: beatings, murder and the burning of houses.¹⁹⁷

Over the years, many Tutsi fled to neighboring countries. They lived in refugee camps in Uganda, Burundi and Zaire and started to organize themselves. From the early 1960s some of these refugees regularly attacked Rwanda to arrange a military comeback.¹⁹⁸ In 1963, the exiles launched a major attack from Burundi and invaded Rwanda with 1,000 to 7,000 men.¹⁹⁹ Although they almost reached Kigali, the attackers lacked military expertise and were quickly beaten back by the forces of Kayibanda. The insurgents were called *Inyenzi*, cockroaches. The president cunningly used the attacks of the *Inyenzi* to secure his own position. The Catholic Church remained silent while Tutsi who still lived in Rwanda suffered of massive reprisals.²⁰⁰ The leadership did not raise its voice to address the structural and direct violence that prevailed in the Rwandan society. It is estimated that 10,000 Tutsi were killed and that 200,000 to 300,000 Tutsi refugees left Rwanda as a result of this campaign.²⁰¹

¹⁹² Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 54.

¹⁹³ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 96.

¹⁹⁴ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 57-59.

¹⁹⁵ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 106.

¹⁹⁶ Des Forges 'The Hutu Revolution' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed July, 20 2011].

¹⁹⁷ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 95.

¹⁹⁸ Des Forges 'The Hutu Revolution' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed July, 20 2011].

¹⁹⁹ Strauss *The Order of Genocide* 185.

²⁰⁰ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 121.

²⁰¹ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 95.

§ 4.3 Catholicism under Kayibanda

After the independence, the Catholic community expanded rapidly. Since the Church was perceived to have played a major role in the Hutu revolution, Hutu joined in large numbers. In 1960, the Church had 698,000 baptized members. In 1971, 1,439,000 baptized members were registered.²⁰² The Church became the second largest employer after the state and remained a portal to social and economic upward mobility for many people.²⁰³ The Catholic Church became a truly Rwandan church and the organization reflected all the divisions of Rwanda's society. Whereas many progressive, young missionaries were glad with the results of the revolution, the older generation of missionaries still cherished the idea of the noble Tutsi. Thus, the racial tensions within the Church remained high. Some dioceses were known as conservative Tutsi strongholds whereas other dioceses had the reputation to promote Hutu activism.²⁰⁴ The leadership of the Church was still predominantly Tutsi. But in general, one could say that Tutsi were not as enthusiastic about the Church as they used to be. Haffmans, a Dutch employee of the Catholic development organization CEBEMO, visited Rwanda in 1973. He reflected upon the changing attitude of the Church and came to the conclusion that 'choosing side with Hutu alienated Tutsi and brought about a certain backlash for the Church.'²⁰⁵ The divisions in the Church might explain the fact that the Church never actively promoted reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi. Neither did the Church reflect upon its role during the colonial period.²⁰⁶ The Catholic Church seemed to take the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi for granted. It was blind to the cultural violence that lay at the foundations of the Rwandan society.

It is clear that Catholicism in Rwanda was no longer a unity. Different religious ideas generated divisions within the Church as a social organization. But in the aftermath of the revolution, the cracks within the Church caught the eye no longer. The Church returned to preaching the old message of obedience to the authorities and the revolutionary fire seemed to be extinguished.²⁰⁷ Still, close observing reveals that as a result of the divisions within the Church, the relationship with the government became ambiguous. On the one hand, the Church was considered to be one of the forces behind the revolution. Many political leaders had received support from Catholic missionaries. President Kayibanda himself was a devote Catholic. But on the other hand, the Church as an institution was dominated by Tutsi. This was not about to change rapidly. According to many Hutu who had otherwise pursued a career in the Church, now left the seminaries for a job with the government. Moreover, the Tutsi clergy was desperately trying to hold on to their influential position in the Church since they had lost their access to the state.²⁰⁸ In the mid-60s the Kayibanda administration attempted to enlarge its influence at the expense of the Church. After a bitter conflict, the state enlarged its

²⁰² Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 85.

²⁰³ Van Hoywegen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 382.

²⁰⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 74.

²⁰⁵ R. Haffmans "Verslag van een sociale observatie-poging in Rwanda" (Den Haag, June 1973) 6 Katholiek Documentatie Centrum (KDC), Nijmegen, Collection Centraal Missie Commissariaat, serial no. 2439.

²⁰⁶ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 86-87.

²⁰⁷ Idem, 76.

²⁰⁸ Linden *Church and Revolution* 284.

control of the education sector. In this way, state officials kept both their former mentors and distrusted Tutsi clergy at a distance. Haffmans would conclude in 1973 that 'There is no place in Africa where Catholics enjoy such a great responsibility for people's welfare and State structures. But, as a result, the relation between the Church as a center of power and the State is particularly delicate.'²⁰⁹

Despite the occasional conflicts, the Church exercised what Prunier called 'social hegemony' over Rwanda. Catholicism played a major cultural and social role in the country. The Catholic worldview and religious ideas became more and more accepted. Mass attendance was high, prostitution was punished and the number of converts kept growing.²¹⁰ Not only the Catholic Church experienced a period of growth after independence. The Protestant churches also began to flourish. Various Protestant churches had been working in Rwanda under colonial supervision. Protestant missions from all over the world had been struggling to convert the people of Rwanda from the beginning of the twentieth century. Until the decolonization they were never really successful because they lacked good ties with the colonial government and the *mwami*. Like their Catholic counterparts, the Protestant missions also became embroiled in the racial tensions in Rwanda. In general, they also supported the status quo and tried to get in the government's good books.²¹¹ But the Protestant churches never became as involved with the authorities as the Catholic Church. Consequently, the Protestant churches attracted many ordinary Tutsi who turned their backs on the Catholic Church in the aftermath of the independence.

The repression against the Tutsi worsened in the 1970s when Kayibanda felt his power waning. Hutu from the North of Rwanda were strong in the army and refused to take their second-class position for granted. Kayibanda tried to unite Hutu from all over the country in a struggle against Tutsi, the enemies of old. The circumstances seemed favorable. In neighboring Burundi, the Tutsi minority had just carried out a massacre to secure their hold on power. In 1972 and 1973, 'Public Safety Committees' were set up to investigate whether the quota were still applied in schools, civil service and even private enterprises. Catholic parishes in the pro-Tutsi diocese Nyundo were attacked. This time, the leaders of the Catholic Church did raise their voice. The bishops of Rwanda met in an extraordinary session and declared that the 'racial violence' was against 'The Law of God, as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Man'.²¹² Still, the hate campaign continued and many Tutsi fled. But the trick of the president eventually failed. On 5 July 1973, Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana took power in a bloodless coup.²¹³

§ 4.4 *The Second Republic*

The whole country breathed a sigh of relief. Hutu were glad that the regionalist politics of Kayibanda had come to an end while Tutsi were delighted to see the order restored. General Habyarimana even promoted ethnic and regional tolerance. Tutsi continued to be structurally marginalized because the

²⁰⁹ Haffmans 'Verslag van een sociale observatie-poging in Rwanda' 8.

²¹⁰ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 59.

²¹¹ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 77-81.

²¹² Linden *Church and Revolution* 285.

²¹³ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 56-57.

government held on to the quota policy, but at least the direct violence seemed to have come to an end.²¹⁴ The government set priorities and choose to focus on both development and the problem of overpopulation. The population of Rwanda grew rapidly. CEBEMO employee Haffmans visited Rwanda again in 1975 and got the impression that Rwanda was 'overflowed' with people. He thought the 'demographic explosion' was Rwanda's most urgent problem. In his opinion, the Rwandan government was well aware of the situation and came up with credible solutions.²¹⁵ Habyarimana received development aid from all over the world to feed and educate Rwanda's growing population. But the government's efforts to develop Rwanda had a reverse side. In 1975, Habyarimana turned Rwanda into a single-party state under *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND). In the years that followed, he transformed the MRND into a party that completely dominated the society. Rwanda was divided into ten prefectures, each of which included sub-prefectures. These sub-prefectures consisted of communes, which were in turn divided into sectors which had a population of around 5000 people. The sector was composed of cells which contained about 1000 people. Habyarimana had a secret service and spies were everywhere. The president used this elaborated system to control his people and to mobilize them for development projects.

In the 1980s, Rwanda slowly transformed into a dictatorial and authoritarian state. In his quest for power, Habyarimana was supported by Hutu from northern Rwanda.²¹⁶ The president favored Hutu from the north above Hutu from other parts of Rwanda. But Habyarimana's inner circle, the *akazu* 'little house', benefited most from the political developments. The *akazu* was formed by members of the president's wife's family and her trusted confidants.²¹⁷ They profited most from the large amounts of foreign development aid that kept flowing into Rwanda. The country was attractive to many donors because it was well organized. It formed a beacon of stability in a region that was sliding to chaos.²¹⁸ The president built upon the old systems of labor *corvée* and introduced *umuganda*, work for the public good. In this way, he could mobilize the people to build roads, maintain irrigation works and clear the bush.²¹⁹ The efforts of the regime and of foreign aid agencies immediately bore fruits. In 1962, there were only two countries in the world that had a lower income *per capita* than Rwanda. In 1987, there were eighteen countries that had a lower income per capita than Rwanda. The country successfully exported coffee, tea and tin. Moreover, the health sector was improved significantly and the proportion of children going to school also increased. The country was supported by content donors like Belgium, Germany, the United States, Canada and Switzerland.²²⁰ In 1971, the United States contributed USD 35 million. The level of aid rose to USD 343 million in 1990. But all was not gold that glittered. The people in control profited most from the increasing levels of foreign aid. The

²¹⁴ Idem, 76-75.

²¹⁵ R. Haffmans 'Certains aspects actuels du Rwanda constatés lors d'un voyage d'étude du 1er au 15 jui 1957' (July 1975) 1-2 Katholiek Documentatie Centrum (KDC), Nijmegen, Collection Centraal Missie Commissariaat, serial no. 183.

²¹⁶ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 97-99.

²¹⁷ Des Forges 'The Army, the Church and the Akazu' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed August, 20 2011].

²¹⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 81-82.

²¹⁹ Des Forges 'The Single-Party State' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed August, 20 2011].

²²⁰ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 77-81.

vast majority of farmers remained very poor.²²¹ And just outside Rwanda's borders, hundreds of thousands Tutsi refugees were not allowed to return to their homeland.

§ 4.5 Catholicism and the Habyarimana-regime

The Catholic Church was probably the only institution in that could stand up against the increasing power of the state.²²² But like his predecessors, President Habyarimana could count on the support of the churches. About 62 percent of the Rwandan people belonged to the Catholic Church. The Church remained a place where Tutsi could have the career they could not have in the government or the army. But even within the Church, Tutsi were the victim of structural violence. Vacant leadership positions were reserved for Hutu. And although the Church remained open for Tutsi, it supported the regime.²²³ The relations between the Church and the state became more and more intimate. President Habyarimana actively involved religious leaders in political institutions.²²⁴ Over time, it became difficult to separate Church and state.²²⁵ The Catholic Church moved the seat of its archbishop to Kigali to facilitate the cooperation between the Church and the state. The archbishop of Kigali, Mgr. Vincent Nseniyumya was personally involved in politics as a member of the central committee of the MRND. He served the party for many years until the Vatican forced him to resign. Still, Nseniyumya remained the personal confessor of Habyarimana's wife. The Church changed its focus from charity to sustainable economic development. Many Catholic and Protestant clerics served in councils that managed development projects at the prefectural or communal level.²²⁶ The Church as a social organization became intertwined with the state. Haffmans wrote about it in his report: 'The relations between the Church and the State seem particularly good. [...] The cooperation mainly takes place at the local level of the commune. The Church works from a service-oriented attitude and supports the initiatives of the commune.'²²⁷ The cooperation between the Church and the state was mutually beneficial. The Habyarimana regime felt it gained a degree of legitimacy from its association with the Church. And the Church received state support for its schools and hospitals.²²⁸ The only issue that the Church and the state did not agree upon was the promotion of condoms in the family planning program.²²⁹ But in the 1980s, things began to change. The once unchallenged cooperation between the Catholic Church and the state was no longer taken for granted. The Church once again began to change.

The challenges of the clerical establishment largely found their origins in what has been called an 'internal revolution' in the worldwide Catholic Church.²³⁰ In the 1950s, religious ideas about justice

²²¹ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 99.

²²² Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 106-108.

²²³ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 75.

²²⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 89.

²²⁵ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 98.

²²⁶ Des Forges 'The Army, the Church and the Akazu' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed August, 20 2011].

²²⁷ Haffmans 'Certains aspects actuels du Rwanda' 3.

²²⁸ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 383.

²²⁹ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 129.

²³⁰ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 42.

had encouraged the new generation of missionaries to support Hutu. The Catholic Church had continued to expand its theological focus to social issues. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) had radically changed the focus of the Church to issues like the promotion of peace and human rights. The changing religious ideas influenced the clergy in Rwanda. People reflected upon the upcoming liberation theologies.²³¹ And the close cooperation between the State and the leadership of the Church no longer completely went unchallenged. In the Catholic magazine *Dialogue* articles appeared with titles like 'Priests and Politics'.²³² During a pilgrimage of the Rwandan bishops to Rome, Pope John Paul II reminded the bishops that the Church had to assure its independence from the State.²³³ The Second Vatican Council had also addressed the role of the laity. This affected life in the local Catholic communities. Since the Church in Rwanda had expanded rapidly, the parishes were so large that the pastors and priests could not personally guide all the parishioners. Therefore, many parishes in Rwanda were divided into small communities led by lay people. These Small Christian Communities (SCC's) were usually grown out of evangelization and provided the believers with community prayers, Bible study and Sunday school. But in the 1980s, the Church changed the structure of these SCC's. The groups became smaller, the leaders of the groups were no longer appointed by a priest but chosen by the people themselves and the SCC's became more autonomous from the Church. Many lay groups appeared under auspices of the Church. The role of the laity started to become more and more important.²³⁴

The clerical establishment did not only have to deal with new religious ideas about social justice, new clerical structures and the raise of lay movements. These changes took place under supervision of the Church. The Church also had to deal with spiritual challenges. A movement called Charismatic Renewal came to Rwanda from the United States in the 1970s. People were called to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Adherents of diverse spiritual movements came together to sing hymns, pray and speak in tongues. Officially, the constitution of Rwanda guaranteed religious liberty.²³⁵ But in the mid-80's, these movements suffered from government repression. The clerical leadership remained silent while at least fifteen adherents of the so-called 'sects' were killed, three hundred were arrested and sentenced to up to fifteen years in prison.²³⁶ After the wave of repression was over, *Dialogue* published several articles about the issue of religious freedom. The editors of the journal posed critical questions about the restrictions of religious freedom and the silence of the Church.²³⁷ Rwandans were not only attracted to foreign spiritual movements. In the 1980s, a home-grown charismatic movement mustered many followers. This movement started after a sixteen-year Catholic girl claimed to have been visited by the Virgin Mary in Kibeho in 1981. Mary appeared to several young people in the years that followed. When an apparition was expected, thousands of people gathered in Kibeho to hear the message of Mary. The mother of Jesus spoke with a

²³¹ M. Donnet 'Théologie et libération (suite en fin)' *Dialogue* (July-Aug.1989) no. 135, 41-66.

²³² G. Fourez 'Prêtres et Politique' *Dialogue* (Sept.-Oct. 1987) no. 124, 47-53.

²³³ Pope John Paul II 'Discours aux Évêques de Rwanda en visite "Ad limina Aposolorum"' (Rome, May 27, 1987) printed in *Dialogue* (Sept.-Oct. 1987) no. 124, 47-53.

²³⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 102-104.

²³⁵ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 92.

²³⁶ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 139.

²³⁷ Editorial 'De La Liberte Religieuse' *Dialogue* (November – December 1987) no. 125, 1.

messenger who would be struck by a trance. The messenger would answer questions from the crowd or give a statement about the future of Rwanda.²³⁸ The government decided to promote the Marian cult. Articles were published in government-controlled newspapers and the national radio also covered the apparitions. Members of the presidential family often went to Kibeho. The bishop of Butare officially approved the Marian cult in 1988.²³⁹ In this way, both the state and the Church tried to incorporate the spiritual movement.

Rwanda had become a strongly Catholic and conservative country ruled by an authoritarian regime.²⁴⁰ But in the late 1980s the first cracks in the system appeared. From 1985, the prices of tea and coffee on the world market dropped. Rwanda heavily depended on the export of these products and slid deeper into poverty.²⁴¹ The already heavy burdened peasants suffered hard from the price collapse. The problem of overpopulation became ever more pressing. In 1988-1989, a period of drought followed and thousands of farmers crossed the Tanzanian border in search of food. The Hutu elite had other problems to deal with. Since they could no longer make money out of coffee, tea and tin only one source of income prevailed. Competing political clans tried to maneuver themselves in the position to cream off foreign aid.²⁴² The tensions within the Hutu elite increased. In these quarrels, Habyarimana strongly relied on his wife's lineage because he was not a member of a powerful family himself. The regionalism that cooked Kayibanda goose also became an important pillar of Habyarimana's rule. Agatha Kanzinga led the *Akazu* which did not hesitate to eliminate their opponents.²⁴³ But the *Akazu* was not able to silence the opposition. Journalists accused the government of corruption. Donor nations demanded political reforms. Now that the Cold War had ended, they were no longer willing to support an authoritarian regime. The pressure increased and Habyarimana announced the introduction of a democratic multi-party system.²⁴⁴ But just when these promises were about to be materialized, an army of Tutsi exiles launched a major attack from Uganda. Suddenly, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) stood on Habyarimana's doorstep.

²³⁸ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 97-101.

²³⁹ Léon D. Saur 'From Kibeho to Medjugorje' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Witworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda* 213-214.

²⁴⁰ *Idem*, 213.

²⁴¹ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 99.

²⁴² Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 84.

²⁴³ *Idem*, 86-88.

²⁴⁴ Des Forges 'Threats to the MRND Monolith' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/fGsWh2>, accessed August, 20 2011].



An eighteen-year-old boy waits until it is his turn to join his comrades of the RPF in the war.

Chapter 5

The crises of the 1990s

*'Social scientist have too often discussed church-state relations as if both institutions were simple, unified entities, accepting for example that the statements of Church leaders fully represent the position of a church on a given issue'*²⁴⁵

Timothy Longman

§ 5.1 Religion and conflict

The offensive of an army of Tutsi exiles radically changed the situation in Rwanda. The war urged the Catholic Church to reconsider its position in the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi. The leadership of the Church also had to determine their attitude towards the war. They could choose to actively support the regime in the war against the rebel army of the RPF. But they could also choose to promote values of peace and non-violence. The Jewish scholar Gopin shows in his book *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* that every world religion has a potential for both peace and violence.²⁴⁶ The Catholic tradition also provided resources for both positions. Against this background, scholars in the field of religion and conflict have concluded that the role of the religious leadership is extremely important.²⁴⁷ But even if the leadership of the Catholic Church would choose to promote peace, they would have to overcome certain weaknesses. In the previous chapters, it has already become clear that Catholicism contributed to the emerge of racial divisions between Hutu and Tutsi. The Church itself became a place where Tutsi were discriminated. The level of cultural and structural violence towards Tutsi had always been high since the Hutu revolution. The Catholic Church in Rwanda was not exactly well prepared to engage in peacemaking activities. Still, they might choose to promote a peaceful solution.

A war does not occur out of nothing. It has already been described in the previous chapter that the first stages of conflict are often invisible to the unguided eye. Rwanda knew violent cultural patterns that involved myths about Rwandan history. Over time, different forms of structural violence had emerged from these violent cultural patterns. It started with suppression by a Belgian and Tutsi elite and ended up in discrimination and occasional violence by a Hutu government. Tutsi refugees in Uganda grew up with stories about discrimination and hatred. That's why they wanted to settle themselves in Uganda.²⁴⁸ But in the late 1980s, the situation turned sour. The possibilities in Uganda minimized and the refugees were not allowed to return to Rwanda either. In this precarious situation,

²⁴⁵ Timothy Longman 'Christianity and democratization in Rwanda: Assessing Church Responses to Political Crisis in the 1990s' P. Gifford ed. *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (Brill: Leiden, 1995) 200.

²⁴⁶ Marc Gopin *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁴⁷ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 55, Gopin 'Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution' *Peace & Change* (1997), vol. 22, no. 1, 5.

²⁴⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 73.

the frustrated refugees tented to resort to direct violence and war.²⁴⁹ At this stage, conflict prevention would have been crucial. But as long as the refugees did not take up their weapons, it was difficult to recognize the earnest of the situation. As a consequence, nobody took the chance to prevent the latent conflict from turning into a open, violent conflict. Adam Curle, who has been introduced in the previous chapter, is only one of the many scholars who wrote about conflict prevention. Curle focuses on third party intervention, but conflict prevention can take many forms. It ranges from light to deep interventions, from the global level to the individual level.²⁵⁰ It is not surprising that a whole range of actors can be involved in these activities. Although the space for religious actors in conflict prevention has not been explored thoroughly, it is clear that religious actors can contribute to conflict prevention in many ways.²⁵¹ Cynthia Sampson focuses on the possibilities of religion as a social organization and religious ideas. She does not take the possibilities of religious practices and spiritual experiences into account. Sampson describes two ways in which religious actors at all levels can work toward peace at an early stage of conflict. Religious actors can stand up as *advocates*, demanding justice for the poor and oppressed. They can raise a prophetic voice about the widening rifts in the social fabric. A second option for religious actors is to serve as *educators* and develop peace programs.²⁵² Religious actors can use their religious ideas and organizational capacities to educate their fellow believers in, for example, non-violence, advocacy and conflict mediation.

The Catholic Church in Rwanda clearly missed the opportunity to engage in conflict prevention. Now that the latent conflict had turned into a violent conflict, it could no longer go unnoticed. At this stage, the Church could engage in efforts to limit the impact of the war (conflict containment) or to resolve the conflict (conflict resolution or transformation).²⁵³ In addition to the roles that have already been mentioned, Sampson describes two possibilities for religious actors in a conflict at this stage. These roles derive from religion as a social organization and the moral character of religion. Religious can function as *mediators* between the conflicting parties and they can act as *observers* to discourage violence by their presence.²⁵⁴ Academic research, however, has shown that if the Church in Rwanda wanted to engage in conflict containment or conflict resolution, it would be difficult. The American scholar Appleby investigated the possibilities of religious actors to engage in peace processes. He distinguishes between what he calls strong and weak religion. A strong religion is able to engage in peace building activities in a meaningful way. A religion is considered to be strong 'if its institutions are well developed and secure and its adherents 'literate' in its doctrinal and moral teachings and practiced in its devotional, ritual, and spiritual traditions.'²⁵⁵ The institutions of the Catholic Church of Rwanda were well developed. But within this institution, progressive and conservative clergy quarreled over the message and direction of the Church. This had important consequences for the second internal condition for a strong religious peace movement: 'the quality

²⁴⁹ Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* 11.

²⁵⁰ *Idem*, 114-121.

²⁵¹ Judy Carter and Howard Smith 'Religious Peacebuilding, From Potential to Action' in: Harold G. Coward, Gordon S. Smith eds. *Religion and Peacebuilding* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2004) 280.

²⁵² Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 280-294.

²⁵³ Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* 11-12.

²⁵⁴ Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 280-294.

²⁵⁵ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 77.

and kind of spiritual-moral formation' provided to the religious community.²⁵⁶ The explosive growth of the Church in the 1930s and 1960s brought about a large but relatively badly educated community. The adherents of the Catholic Church were not particularly experts on the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church.

The internal constellation in the Catholic Church was not favorable for a strong peace movement. But the external conditions were even less promising. Appleby mentions several external conditions that influence the range of choice available to religious leaders. They include factors like the presence of armed conflict, the policy of the state towards religion, the participation of religion in the political economy.²⁵⁷ The Catholic Church in Rwanda had maneuvered itself in a difficult position. According to Appleby the degree of autonomy enjoyed by religious leaders and institutions determines to a large extent how religious actors react on violent conflict.²⁵⁸ In Rwanda, the Catholic Church had always sought to ally itself with political leaders. The Catholic Church could hardly be called an independent organization. The Church took the cultural and structural violence that occurred in Rwanda for granted. It had discriminated Tutsi clergy and turned a blind eye to the structural violation of human rights of Tutsi by the state.²⁵⁹ If the religious leaders of the Catholic Church would decide to promote peace between the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and the government, they would have to become a reliable partner for both parties. Things would have to change radically. The Church would have to regain its independence from the political leaders.

§ 5.2 *The October War*

In 1988, the history of the difficulties of the Rwandan civilians in Uganda was described in an article in *Dialogue*. The author showed how emigrated Rwandans and refugees got caught up in Uganda's political quarrels. He focused on a terrible event in 1982. At that time, about 10,000 refugees suffered from death, famine and diseases at Rwanda's borders. They were expelled by Uganda and not allowed to go back to Rwanda. *Dialogue* tried to raise awareness about this tragic story because 'this important event remained a mystery to most of us.'²⁶⁰ The ignorance was the result of the fact that both the state and the churches had long neglected the refugee-problem. Since the Hutu revolution in 1959, the Tutsi community in exile had swelled to about 600,000 people.²⁶¹ Many of the exiles lived in refugee camps in Rwanda's neighboring countries. Life in the camps was hard and without perspective. The Rwandan government did not allow the refugees to return to their villages. Generally, they were not allowed to settle permanently in the countries they had fled to either. In Uganda, this situation led to the formation of an army that wanted to enforce the return of the refugees with military means. Initially, many of these soldiers aimed to improve their situation in Uganda. They had joined the resistance movement of Museveni to overthrow the regime of President Obote. But after Obote

²⁵⁶ *Idem*, 284.

²⁵⁷ *Idem*, 283.

²⁵⁸ *Idem*, 284.

²⁵⁹ Ugirashebuja 'The Church and Genocide in Rwanda' 55

²⁶⁰ Ananie Nkurunziza 'Expulsion des ressortissants rwandais de l'Uganda' *Dialogue* (March-April 1988), no. 127, 15.

²⁶¹ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 70.

had been defeated in 1986, they did not receive the recognition they had hoped for. They began to long for Rwanda again. In secret, high-ranking military leaders like Kagame and Rwigyema began to form a rebel army within the Ugandan army.²⁶² The RPF did not want to wait for a political solution to the problems of the refugees. The leadership was convinced that the regime was on the verge of collapse. They wanted to push it off the cliff.

The leadership of the RPF heard about the democratization process but only accelerated the preparations for the war and attacked on 1 October 1990.²⁶³ About 2,500 soldiers crossed the border with Rwanda on the first days of October. They were fully equipped and brought with them machine guns, mortars and other weapons from the Ugandan army. It is important to recognize that the RPF did not solely consist of Tutsi exiles. Hutu opponents of the Habyarimana regime and Twa were welcome. The RPF preached the unity of all Rwandans.²⁶⁴ The *Forces Armées Rwandais* (FAR) who had to protect the border were quickly overrun. During the night of 4/5 October, Habyarimana deceived the world with a fake attack on Kigali. President Mitterrand immediately responded and sent French troops to support the FAR. The French were eager to enlarge their influence in French-speaking Africa and helped Habyarimana out. In one month, the RPF was decimated and fled into the Virunga Mountains in northern Rwanda. There, Major Kagame tried to reorganize what was left of his army. Meanwhile, the government took advantage of the fear aroused by the 'Tutsi invasion'. The Habyarimana regime deliberately portrayed Tutsi inside Rwanda as 'ibiyitso' or 'accomplices of the enemy'.²⁶⁵ Many educated Tutsi and Hutu who were opposed to the MRND were arrested and detained.²⁶⁶ But the repression only hardened the opposition. People started to organize themselves within different political movements. In June 1991, a new constitution was put in place that allowed the existence of several political parties. The political struggle for power was about to begin.²⁶⁷

§ 5.3 Forced democratization

The end of the Cold War had major consequences for Habyarimana's regime. International allies that had always supplied large funds changed their attitude towards Rwanda. It was no longer good enough to be an anti-communist country. Donor nations pressed for democratic reforms.²⁶⁸ Habyarimana's main purpose in the early 1990s was to maintain power by frustrating the democratization process. The MRND itself changed its name into the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement et la Démocratie* (MRNDD). Democratic parties were established all over the country. The most important rival of the MRNDD was the *Mouvement Démocratique Rwandais* (MDR). This party united Hutu from Giterama and Ruhengeri that formed a strategic alliance to regain power from the Gisenyi based *Akazu*. Since the MDR has a strong anti-Tutsi message, more

²⁶² *Idem*, 67-74.

²⁶³ *Idem*, 90-92.

²⁶⁴ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 103.

²⁶⁵ Des Forges 'The Strategy of Ethnic Division' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/lXh2Od>, accessed August, 23 2011].

²⁶⁶ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 100-109.

²⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁶⁸ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 106.

moderate Hutu from Butare organized themselves in the *Parti Social Démocrate* (PSD). Urban well-to-do Tutsi established the *Parti Liberal* (PL). A fourth important party consisted of Christian democrats, the *Parti Démocrate Chrétien* (PDC).²⁶⁹ In December 1991, President Habyarimana named a new cabinet that excluded the opposition parties. Catholic and Protestant church leaders established *Comité des Contacts* to mediate between the government and the opposition.²⁷⁰ The pressure on Habyarimana increased. In 1992, the new democratic parties began to organize mass demonstrations.²⁷¹ A coalition government was finally formed during a meeting organized by the *Comité des Contacts* in April, 1992.²⁷² In this period, the *Coalition pour la Défense de la République* (CDR) was established to defend the rights of the Hutu. CDR was very critical towards Habyarimana and accused the MRNDD of softness towards the RPF.²⁷³

Democratization was giving people high hopes. But it soon became clear that a large part of the opposition was motivated by selfish greed. A political career gave these people an opportunity to grab their share of foreign aid now the economic situation worsened.²⁷⁴ Moreover, the democratization process got increasingly violent after the coalition government was installed in April 1992. The PL, the MDR and the PSD, the new political parties in the coalition government, tried to separate the MRNDD from the state. Meanwhile, the MRNDD tried to hold on to power. The parties organized youth wings which increasingly got involved in violent clashes and gradually turned into militia groups. The youth group of the MRNDD called *Interahamwe* 'those who work together' even received military training from regular soldiers beginning in 1992.²⁷⁵ Local politicians who had decided to join one of the new political movements were threatened. Public meetings held by a political party disturbed by militia from rival political parties. Influential politicians were assaulted. In several communes, political meetings resulted in massacres of Tutsi by local peasants.²⁷⁶ Inter-ethnic violence flared up. Some people protested. Manassé Mugabo, for example, published an article in *Dialogue* and tried to convince his audience that an awareness campaign should be started immediately. The people should know that ethnic violence was absurd 'we all belong to the same ethnic group of 'ubunyarwanda'. But the violence would not stop.²⁷⁷ Perpetrators were no longer brought to justice. The authorities increasingly lost their legitimacy because they could or would not protect ordinary citizens. Rwanda slid into a situation where violence became a 'normal' part of the political struggle for power.²⁷⁸

The coalition government of Rwanda had to deal with many difficulties. Rwanda had slid into an economic crisis. The economic situation had deteriorated severely after the price of coffee dropped in the 1980s. Over half of the population was very poor.²⁷⁹ The political situation remained insecure.

²⁶⁹ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 121-126.

²⁷⁰ Longman 'Christianity and democratisation in Rwanda' 198.

²⁷¹ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 106.

²⁷² Longman 'Christianity and democratisation in Rwanda' 198.

²⁷³ Des Forges 'Consolidating the Opposition' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/IXh2Od>, accessed August, 23 2011].

²⁷⁴ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 131.

²⁷⁵ Des Forges 'Kubohoza, 'To Help Liberate' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/IXh2Od>, accessed August, 23 2011].

²⁷⁶ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 136-138.

²⁷⁷ Manassé Mugabo 'L'absurdité de l'ethnisme à la Rwandaise' *Dialogue* (February 1992) no. 151, 7.

²⁷⁸ Des Forges 'Impunity and Insecurity' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/IXh2Od>, accessed August, 23 2011].

²⁷⁹ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 99.

After the October War, the RPF had regrouped. The rebel army had shown its renewed strength when it took Ruhengeri, an important town in northern Rwanda, in a surprise attack in January 1991. The RPF could hold the town for only one day. But in the year that followed, the RPF and government troops regularly clashed in the northern *préfecture* of Byumba. The RPF applied typical guerilla hit-and-run tactics. The government army expanded rapidly and grew to some 30,000 soldiers. Still, the RPF was able to launch a major offensive in April 1992 in north-east Rwanda. About 300,000 civilians fled in fear.²⁸⁰ Peace talks started as soon as the coalition government was installed. The opposition parties that had joined in the coalition government forced Habyarimana to start negotiations. The government and the RPF signed a cease-fire at Arusha, Tanzania in July 1992. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) monitored the cease-fire and facilitated the negotiations. But the tensions within Rwanda only increased. The gap between Hutu and Tutsi widened.²⁸¹ Hardliners in the MRNDD, the CDR and parts of the army were totally against the peace negotiations with what they called the Tutsi enemy.

§ 5.4 The Church' response to violence

Rwanda had entered a period of turmoil and violence. The Catholic Church had to deal with several crises. First, the Church had to cope with the deteriorated situation of the people of Rwanda, poverty struck hard. More than six million peasants lived below subsistence level, out of a total population of seven to eight million.²⁸² Second, the Church had to find a way to deal with the war between the RPF and the government troops. The situation was critical. Thousands of people had fled from their farms and lived as internal refugees. The RPF wanted to overthrow president Habyarimana. Third, the Church had to position itself in the political crisis in Rwanda that accompanied the democratization process. Due to these crises, the Catholic Church found itself in a difficult position. It was closely allied with the 'old order' of the MRNDD that could lose its power to a rebel army or to the internal democratic opposition. The crises of the 1990s would serve as a litmus test for the cooperation between the Church and the Habyarimana regime. Along the way, the Church' dedication for democracy and peace would be put to the test.

The decade started very positive for the Catholic Church in Rwanda. For several years, the bishops had invited the pope to come to Rwanda.²⁸³ Now, in 1990, Pope John Paul II planned to visit the country. The Catholic bishops anticipated on his visit with several pastoral letters. *Dialogue* published an extract of the first message in February 1990. The message, which was titled 'Christ our Unity', spoke about the unity among Rwandans. According to the bishops, the Church had never ceased to 'preach the unity and the good understanding between the children of God, even if they

²⁸⁰ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 136.

²⁸¹ Des Forges 'Preparations for Slaughter' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/ni0GIU>, accessed August, 23 2011].

²⁸² Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 99.

²⁸³ Pope John Paul II 'Discours aux Evêques de Rwanda en visite 'Ad limina Aposolorum' (Rome, May 27, 1897 [available online: <http://bit.ly/pnXQcq>, accessed August, 20 2011].

were ethnically, ideologically and religiously different.²⁸⁴ They condemned ethnic conflict, regionalism and the growing gap between rich and poor.²⁸⁵ Some believers highly value the fact that the Church raised issues like these in the pastoral letters and messages.²⁸⁶ Others claim that in practice, the bishops continued to support a State that promoted inequality. Even the Vatican was aware of this situation and reacted. Mgr. Vincent Nsengiyumva, archbishop of Kigali, had to withdraw from the Central Committee of the MRND.²⁸⁷ But the alliance between the Church and the State did not falter. In May 1990, the bishops did not hesitate to praise the MRND that it did 'not hesitate to sign the UN Declaration of Human Rights and work hard to implement it.'²⁸⁸ The bishops did refer to human rights, but they did not speak a word about the human rights violations of the regime. They remained silent about corruption, about the assassinations of political activists and the frustration of the democratization process.²⁸⁹ For many people in Rwanda, the visit of Pope John Paul II was just another sign that the relation between the Catholic Church and the Habyarimana regime was excellent.

The Pope had just returned to Rome when the RPF attacked Rwanda. During the war, the bishops published several pastoral messages which were widely read in the churches. In these messages, the bishops sought for the pacification of the country. They seemed to choose for peace. The messages talked about peace, reconciliation and solidarity. The message of March 1991, for example, was called 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another'.²⁹⁰ The bishops even stood up for democratization after the regime had announced the advance of multi-party politics. But all these messages remained words. The leaders of the Church did not address any specific issues. They did not even raise their voice to stand up for Catholic clergy and religious who were imprisoned at the start of the war.²⁹¹ Neither did they reflect upon the ethnic divisions that existed in the Catholic Church. The contradictions in the church remained a thorny issue.²⁹² On the one hand, the majority of the clergy was still Tutsi.²⁹³ On the other hand, many people at all levels of the Church profited from the ties with the MRND. They benefited from the status quo.²⁹⁴ Due to this situation, the Church lost touch with ordinary believers. In the late 1980's, for example, a critical article appeared in *Dialogue* about the fact that the laity forgot about the poor people in their efforts to become friends with the rich elite.²⁹⁵ The issue was raised again in 1989 and 1990.²⁹⁶ The divisions in the Church led to pastoral

²⁸⁴ Evêques du Rwanda 'Le Christ notre Unite' (Kigali, February 28, 1990) reprinted in *Dialogue* (May-June 1990) no. 140, 27.

²⁸⁵ Evêques du Rwanda 'Le Christ notre Unite' 26.

²⁸⁶ Marie Césarie Mukarwego 'The Church and the Rwandan Tragedy of 1994: a personal view' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda Complicity of the Churches?* Aegis Trust (Paragon House: St. Paul, 2004) 119-120.

²⁸⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 132.

²⁸⁸ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 196.

²⁸⁹ Idem, 197.

²⁹⁰ Idem, 199.

²⁹¹ Longman 'Christianity and democratisation in Rwanda' 197.

²⁹² Filip Reyntjens *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise Rwanda, Burundi: 1988-1994* (Éditions Karthala; Paris, 1994) 167.

²⁹³ Reyntjens *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise* 167.

²⁹⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 140.

²⁹⁵ L. Ntezimana 'Religieux et Religieuses au Rwanda: Où est votre témoignage?' *Dialogue* (May-June 1987) no. 122, 54-64.

²⁹⁶ Emmanuel Ntakarutimana 'Le péché structurel' (January-February 1989) no. 132, 72-87 and Callixte Kabayiza 'Coup d'oeil sur l'Eglise' *Dialogue* (May-June 1990) no. 140, 34-43.

messages that were nothing more but a vague compromise. It did not take long before people began to notice the gap between words and reality.²⁹⁷

Appleby states that the competence of a religious community to engage in peace building is determined by the quality of spiritual and moral formation.²⁹⁸ This was exactly one of the weaknesses of the Catholic community in Rwanda had to deal with. The bishops feared that many Rwandans did not really internalize the religious ideas they had been taught. In a message about the 75th anniversary of priesthood in Rwanda they stated: 'many Rwandans have not yet heard of the Gospel and even those baptized were not really converted: some go to Mass and afterwards get involved in killing their neighbors, looting and other acts of hatred and violence.'²⁹⁹ The Church had not exactly stimulated the believers to study in the Bible and learn about the Gospel themselves. The Bible was only completely available in Kinyarwanda in 1991.³⁰⁰ Not only the ordinary Catholics were badly equipped to challenge violence. In February 1991, an ecumenical body, the *Comité des Contacts* was set up to meditate in the political crisis of Rwanda. According to Gatwa, the prime motive was 'less a mediation between a dominant party, the MRND government in Rwanda, and the refugees knocking on the door, but rather an act intending to support the regime.'³⁰¹ The committee consisted of ten church leaders and was co-chaired by Bishop Nsengiyumva of the Catholic diocese of Kabgayi and Twagirayesu of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda. It has already been mentioned that the *Comité des Contacts* played a role in the formation of a coalition government. The *Comité des Contacts* did also succeed in bringing the RPF and the government to the negotiation table. But the church leaders had little influence on the negotiations.³⁰² They withdrew after the parties had been brought to the negotiation table because they were too inexperienced and ill prepared for the real negotiations. They did not have a clear vision on violence, justice and reconciliation. This meant that specific moral and ethical questions were never asked.³⁰³

The *Comité des Contacts* succeeded in bringing opponents together. But they lacked the expertise to engage in a meaningful conversation with the government and its opponents. However, individuals within the *Comité des Contacts* did speak out about the situation in Rwanda. The Catholic co-chair Bishop Nsengiyumva of Kabgayi was one of the courageous progressive bishops who went beyond vague pastoral letters. In December 1991, he published a revolutionary document 'Let us convert ourselves to co-exist peacefully'. In this publication, Nsengiyuma thoroughly analyzed the problems of Rwanda. He acknowledged the structural and cultural problems that lay at the roots of the conflict. He called the Catholic Church 'a giant with feet of clay.'³⁰⁴ The bishop came to the same conclusion as Appleby did a few years later. The Church would only be able to speak the liberating truth if it gave up its compromising alliance with the State.³⁰⁵ The publication of the bishop aroused a

²⁹⁷ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 197.

²⁹⁸ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 284.

²⁹⁹ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 200.

³⁰⁰ G.M. Dion 'La Bible en Kinyarwanda' (September- October 1991) *Dialogue* no. 148, 65.

³⁰¹ Tharcisse Gatwa 'Church involvement in Conflict resolution' 8 [available online: <http://bit.ly/optjIT>, accessed August, 23 2011].

³⁰² Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 209.

³⁰³ Gatwa 'Church involvement in Conflict resolution' 8.

³⁰⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 154.

³⁰⁵ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 214.

discussion among well-known Catholics.³⁰⁶ But Bishop Nsengiyumva was not alone in his critique. Many people in the Catholic Church were frustrated with the close alliance between the Church and the State. The Catholic magazine *Kinyamateka* criticized the regime. Moreover, human rights organizations were often created or supported by progressive laity and clergy.³⁰⁷

In January 1993, the negotiators at Arusha signed an agreement on power-sharing. The future Broadened Base Transitional Government (BBTG) would each have five cabinet posts for both the MRNDD and the RPF. The MDR would have four posts, the PSD and the PL three each, the PDC one. The extremist in the MRNDD and the CDR did not agree with this result. They organized violent demonstrations. The RPF broke the cease-fire with another major offensive, the February War. The rebel army advanced rapidly. About 860,000 Hutu peasants fled in fear. They had heard about the atrocities and human rights violations the RPF committed in Ruhengeri. The governmental troops were not able to stop the advance of the RPF. French troops were deployed in Kigali to safeguard Rwanda's capital. But they did not have to fight. The RPF proclaimed a unilateral cease-fire on 20 February. The RPF troops halted 30 kilometers north of Kigali.³⁰⁸ The February War had enormous consequences. The troops had gained territory, but they had lost the confidence of many moderate Hutu. Formally, the leaders of the RPF claimed that they were planning to stop massacres in north-eastern Rwanda. But since these massacres had stopped almost two weeks before the offensive, many people doubted about the true motives of the RPF. The *Comité des Contacts* tried to mediate again.³⁰⁹ But this time, it was even more difficult. The opposition parties became totally divided as a result of the attack. The CDR virulently rejected President's Habyarimana's choice to sign a ceasefire with the RPF. They claimed the President was delivering the Hutu majority into the hands of a Tutsi rebel army. Many Hutu politicians from different political parties came to a similar conclusion. The RPF could no longer be trusted because it had violated a ceasefire. It had even committed atrocities against Hutu civilians.³¹⁰ President Habyarimana was caught between the 'old opposition' that accused him of an anti-democratic attitude and a 'new opposition' that accused him of softness towards the RPF. Habyarimana decided that the 'old opposition' was less dangerous than the 'new opposition'. He re-opened negotiations with the RPF and finally came to an agreement in August 1993.

³⁰⁶ Reyntjens *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise* 168.

³⁰⁷ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 141-143.

³⁰⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 174-177.

³⁰⁹ Nsengiyumva, President du Comité and Kanyarengwe, Président du FPR 'Communiqué du comité de contacts et de FPR-Inkotanyi' (Bujumbura, March 3, 1993) personal collection of G. van 't Spijker, Utrecht.

³¹⁰ Idem, 181-186.

EGLISE NTARAMA
SITE DU GENOCIDE: ± 5000 PERSONNES

NTARAMA CHURCH
GENOCIDE SITE ± 5000 PERSONS

KIRIZIYA NTARAMA
AHABEREYE ITSEMBABWOKO
N'YEMBATSEMBA BY'ABANTU BARENGA 5000

Almost 5000 men, women and children were killed in the Ntarama church during the genocide. Nowadays, the church is a genocide memorial.

Chapter 6

Genocide

*'I raise my voice to tell all of you: stop these acts of violence! Stop these tragedies! Stop these fratricidal massacres!'*³¹¹

Pope John Paul II

§ 6.1 Religion and genocide

The reader might have noticed that this thesis did not deal with genocide thus far. Rwanda's history has often been described as some sort of strange prelude to genocide. The New York Times, for example, analyzed the genocide from this primordial perspective: 'Tribal problems exist in virtually every African country. But modern weapons, the centuries-old feud between the Hutu and the Tutsi and a competition for land unlike anywhere else in Africa have led to genocidal orgies in Rwanda and Burundi. [...] The first recorded tribal clashes date to the 15th century, when the Tutsi -- a tall and elegant Nilotic people also known as the Watusi -- migrated from Ethiopia and imposed feudal rule over the Hutu, a short, stocky Bantu people living in the forested hills.'³¹² This view entails that there was nothing the world could have done to prevent the genocide. It suggests that genocide was an inevitable consequence of history. This thesis is written from a completely different perspective. It did not deal with genocide thus far, because nobody in Rwanda thought of organizing a killing campaign to annihilate all Tutsi. Rwanda's history was not a prelude to genocide. This is an absurd and even a dangerous point of view. It releases people from their responsibility to choose and act against violence. Rwanda was only set on the road to genocide in the early 1990s.

The term genocide is relatively young. The Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin introduced the concept in a book about the administrative and legal aspects of the extermination of the Jews in the Holocaust. Lemkin derived the term from the Greek *génos* (race, birth, tribe) and the Latin *cidium* (cutting, killing). The lawyer used it to refer to 'a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.'³¹³ Due to the strong connection with the Holocaust, the term genocide acquired a strong moral connotation. It touched upon unspeakable human evil.³¹⁴ The 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide imbued the term with a legal and a political connotation. Countries which signed the convention obliged themselves to prevent genocide. In the convention, genocide was described as 'any of the following acts committed with

³¹¹ Pope John Paul II 'Homily at the Mass of the Inauguration of the African Synod' (St. Peter's Basilica: Rome April, 10 1994) [available online <http://www.afrikaworld.net/synod/jp10.htm>, accessed August, 31 2011].

³¹² Jerry Gray '2 Nations Joined by Common History of Genocide' *New York Times* (April 9, 1994) [available online <http://nyti.ms/r0U0he>, accessed August 26, 2011].

³¹³ Raphael Lemkin *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe Laws of Occupation - Analysis of Government - Proposals for Redress* (reprinted by The Lawbook Exchange: Clark, New Jersey, 2005) 79.

³¹⁴ Scott Strauss 'Contested meanings and conflicting imperatives: A conceptual analysis of genocide' *Journal of Genocide Research* (2001) vol. 3, no. 3, 359.

intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.³¹⁵ Virtually every part of this definition has been scrutinized. Why are some groups, like political groups, excluded from protection? How can the intention behind an act be determined? When is a group destroyed 'in part'? Questions like these have been subject of debate among scholars.³¹⁶ In the context of this thesis, it is not relevant to describe the dynamics of these discussions. The idea of genocide as the intentional destruction of a group remained foundational in each definition. Genocide is explicitly intended to destroy a people. The Rwandan genocide fits even the narrowest definitions.³¹⁷

Genocide does not occur out of nothing. Scholars have been trying to develop a coherent framework to describe the process towards genocide. Over time, different frameworks have been developed.³¹⁸ Gregory Stanton introduced an influential model in the 1990s. Stanton distinguishes between eight stages of genocide. According to the author, each stage is 'predictable but not inexorable.'³¹⁹ The first stage is *classification*. At this stage, people are distinguished into 'us and them'. They are categorized in cultural, racial, ethnic or religious groups. In the second chapter of this thesis, it has been shown that concepts Hutu and Tutsi had existed for a long time before the first explorers reached Rwanda. The meaning of the words Hutu and Tutsi varied over time. In the twentieth century, the differences between Hutu and Tutsi were interpreted in racial terms by the European colonizers. The colonizers used both scientific and religious ideas to underpin their preference for the superior Tutsi. Thus, the colonizers exacerbated the differences. Categorization is a natural, human phenomenon. But it could also be the first stage in a genocidal process. According to Stanton, this is more likely when a society turns into a bipolar society where no one is mixed.³²⁰ The author explains that this was the case in Rwanda, a child born out of a marriage between Hutu and Tutsi was never Hutu or Tutsi. The ethnic identity of the father determined the ethnic identity of the child.³²¹

The second stage that Stanton distinguishes is *symbolization*. At this stage, names and symbols are used to visualize the classification that already took place. According to Stanton, Rwanda entered this stage with the introduction of ethnic identity cards in the 1930s. The once flexible

³¹⁵ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* Adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly (9 December 1948).

³¹⁶ Strauss 'Contested meanings and conflicting imperatives 361-363 and Martin Shaw *What is genocide?* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2007) 28-29.

³¹⁷ Shaw *What is genocide?* 28-29.

³¹⁸ There are many ways to describe a genocidal process. Lecomte, for example, described a process that entails seven stages: (i) definition of the target group; (ii) registration of the victims; (iii) designation of the victims; (iv) restrictions and confiscations of goods; (v) exclusion; (vi) systematic isolation; (vii) mass extermination in: J.M. Lecomte, *Teaching About the Holocaust in the 21st Century* (Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, 2001).

³¹⁹ Gregory Stanton 'Eight stages of genocide' (US State Department: Washington, 1996) [Available online: <http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/8StagesBriefingpaper.pdf>, accessed August 30, 2011].

³²⁰ *Idem*, 2.

³²¹ Stanton 'Could the Rwandan genocide have been prevented?' *Journal of Genocide Research* (June 2004) vol. 6 no. 2, 213.

categories were carved into stone.³²² The introduction of ethnic identity cards, however, was probably not the most important step in this genocidal stage. In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that a process of symbolization started immediately after the colonizers entered Rwanda. In the third chapter, it has been shown that Tutsi were described as intelligent, natural born leaders from a superior 'Caucasoid' race from northeastern Africa. Hutu instead, were described as generally short and thick-set with a big head. They were considered to be 'simply people who like to laugh'.³²³ From the moment Rwanda was colonized, the concepts Hutu, Tutsi and Twa became increasingly symbolized. Stanton argues this process of symbolization enters a next level in the third stage of genocide: *dehumanization*. The victim group is denied humanity. They are given animal names or names of diseases. In this way, it becomes easier for people to kill since their victims are no longer considered to be human. In Rwanda, this process started at a large scale after the war with the RPF started. The Tutsi rebel army was called an army of *inyenzi* – cockroaches. In cartoons, Tutsi were depicted as cockroaches, snakes and devils.³²⁴

The next stage is arguably a crucial stage in a genocidal process: *organization*. The previous stages dealt with large societal processes. To a large extent, they are comparable with Galtung's cultural and structural violence. But structural processes like classification, symbolization, and even dehumanization do not spontaneously result in genocide. They 'only' prepare the soil for genocide. That's why Stanton shifts from structural patterns to the individual level. At the organizational stage, a person or a group determines organize a genocide. Looking at the definition of genocide, it should be acknowledged that the genocidal process actually starts here. Genocide is about the *intentional* destruction of a group. It is only at this stage of Stanton's model that the intention to annihilate a group arises. In this chapter, the organization of the genocide will be discussed more exhaustively. The next three stages that Stanton describes will also be analyzed. According to Stanton, the organizers of a genocide will promote *polarization*. At this stage, the groups will be driven apart through hate propaganda, intimidation and killings. Moderates will be silenced or eliminated. Next, the organizers of genocide will prepare the annihilation of the victim groups. The *preparation* phase entails identification of key-figures who have to be killed first. It also includes the expropriation of the victim's properties. The preparation phase may be concluded with the physical separation of the victims in concentration camps or ghettos. The seventh stage is the *extermination* of the victim group, followed by *denial*.³²⁵

At each stage, a religious actor has the opportunity to either counter negative, genocidal tendencies or foster it. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) argues that religion can be mobilized in genocide prevention. The research institute explains that religion can contribute to genocide prevention in various ways. Religious institutions can function as a bulwark against genocide, religious leaders can mobilize their communities to stand up against violence, and religious ideas about non-violence can be promoted in the communities.³²⁶ The USIP focuses on the

³²² *Idem*, 214.

³²³ Ministère des Colonies *Rapport sur l'administration Belge du Ruanda-Urundi* (1925) 34, quoted in Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 6.

³²⁴ Stanton 'Could the Rwandan genocide have been prevented?' 213-214.

³²⁵ Stanton 'Eight stages of genocide' 3-4.

³²⁶ Susan Hayward *Averting Hell on Earth Religion and the Prevention of Genocide* Special Report 248 (United States Institute of Peace: Washington, 2010) 7-9.

possibilities of religion as a social organization and religious ideas. But it has already been noticed several times that religion entails more than a social organization and religious ideas. The moral character of religion is essential. Said and Funk argue that that religion is one of the most powerful constituents of norms and values. It addresses the most profound existential issues of human life. Religion is about fear and faith, right and wrong, vengeance and forgiveness.³²⁷ If religious leaders would choose to radically denounce or support the genocidal process, that would probably have a major impact on the people of Rwanda. Especially because of the hierarchic character of the Catholic organization. Sadly, the religious ideas which prevailed in the Catholic Church in Rwanda contributed the cultural and structural violence in Rwandan society. This was reflected in the religious community and organization. Stanton would probably argue that that the Church promoted genocide at its early stages: classification and symbolization. In the 1990s, the Church countered this tendency and contributed to the peace process. Although its efforts were not always successful, one could argue that the leaders of the Church at least showed the intention to promote peace in Rwanda. Many ordinary Catholics participated in peace marches and engaged in human rights organizations. On the other hand, the bishops were not willing to acknowledge the mistakes that had been made by the Catholic Church in the past. An analysis of Catholicism in Rwanda through Appleby's lens has already shown that the Church was not exactly well prepared to deal with issues of war and peace. It was highly unlikely that the Church would be able to overcome its weaknesses in the face of genocide.

§ 6.2 Towards the genocide

Nobody knows when the first plans for the genocide were drafted. But in the spring of 1992, the Belgian ambassador in Kigali already warned his government that the *Akazu* was 'planning the extermination of the Tutsi of Rwanda to resolve once and for all, in their own way, the ethnic problem and to crush the internal Hutu opposition.'³²⁸ At that time, similar warnings reached Europe from different sides.³²⁹ It is also clear that by late 1993, concrete plans for a genocide were in place.³³⁰ A small group of Hutu extremists at the highest level of the army, the secret service and certain political parties were involved in the plot. They ruled Rwanda like 'a private company from which a maximum profit could be squeezed.'³³¹ Prunier explains that these people were ready to use absolute terror to gain absolute power.³³² Their only goal was to regain the power they had lost due to democratization and war. The plans were set in motion after the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords on August 4, 1993. The hardliners despised at least two provisions of the peace accords. It was agreed that the MRNDD would transfer power to a transitional government that would be installed on February 10,

³²⁷ Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C. Funk, 'The role of faith in cross cultural conflict resolution' presented at the European Parliament for the European Centre for Common Ground (Brussels, September 2001) [available online: <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pes/ASNC83PCS.htm>, accessed September 16, 2011].

³²⁸ Belgian Senate *Rapport de Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda*, (December 6, 1997) 493. Quoted in Linda Melvern *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (Zed Books: London, 2000) 43.

³²⁹ Melvern *A People Betrayed* 43-45.

³³⁰ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 186.

³³¹ Melvern *A People Betrayed* 43.

³³² Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 169.

1994. But in this transitional government, the MRNDD would receive only five cabinet seats and the CDR would receive no seats at all. Moderate opposition parties would receive nine cabinet seats. The transitional government would be completed with five seats for the RPF. In the eyes of Hutu hardliners, the power balance was completely lost in this scenario. To make things worse, the RPF army would be integrated in the Rwandan army. The RPF forces would almost equal the government forces in new structure agreed in the peace accords. Command posts were to be divided evenly amongst the former warring parties. In the eyes of Hutu extremists in the MRNDD, the CDR and the army this was simply intolerable.³³³

The preparations for the genocide accelerated after the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye of Burundi in October 1993. Rwanda and its neighboring country Burundi were both inhabited by a Hutu majority and a Tutsi minority. But in Burundi, the Tutsi minority was able to hold on to power after independence.³³⁴ Ndadaye was the first democratically elected Hutu president of Burundi. He was assassinated in a coup by Tutsi military officers on October 21, 1993. His assassination led to violence and massacres all over Burundi. It convinced many Hutu in Rwanda that Tutsi could not be trusted. Hutu hardliners doubled their strengths to impede the peace process. Meanwhile, a small group of Hutu extremists knew the time had come to put their genocidal plans into action.³³⁵ The opposition parties began to fall apart. A majority of the MDR and smaller factions of the PL and the PSD formed an informal coalition known as Hutu Power. They joined the MRND and the CDR in their struggle against the implementation of the Arusha Peace Accords. The polarization at the political level was almost complete. In this tense situation, some of the stipulations of the accords were implemented. A United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) came to Rwanda to oversee the peace process. An RPF battalion was deployed in Kigali to protect RPF politicians. Meanwhile, the political violence reached ever higher levels. The power transfer to the transitional government was postponed several times. The *interahamwe* expanded. Weapons kept flowing into Rwanda. Opponents from Hutu Power feared armed assaults, attacks and assassinations. The quest for democracy had changed into a brutal quest for power. The situation was becoming explosive.³³⁶

§ 6.3 Peace initiatives of the Church

The power of President Habyarimana was waning. The Catholic hierarchy stood by and watched while the political situation transformed in 1993. The religious institutions did not function as a bulwark against genocide. Neither did the religious leaders mobilize their communities to stand up against violence.³³⁷ The bishops published many pastoral letters from 1990 to 1992, but they remained almost silent in 1993.³³⁸ At lower clerical levels, priests tried to draw attention to the miserable situation of the people. In March 1993, fifteen priests from Byumba and Ruhengeri wrote a letter of distress to the pope. They accused the RPF of atrocities and genocide. The priests complained that nobody cared

³³³ Idem, 192-197.

³³⁴ Idem, 198.

³³⁵ Idem, 200.

³³⁶ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 182-184.

³³⁷ Hayward *Averting Hell on Earth* 7-9.

³³⁸ Idem, 184.

about the people in Byumba and Ruhengeri who suffered from war. They asked the RPF to stop the atrocities, the politicians to stop quarreling and work towards peace. The priests hoped the pope would intervene to turn the tide.³³⁹ The priests could no longer count upon their bishops to give them support. One of the few pastoral letters of the bishops was released just before Christmas 1993. The bishops called for a new Rwanda where peace would reign. They tackled some relevant issues, but they failed to mention the fundamental problems of Rwanda.³⁴⁰ It is not surprising that these issues were not mentioned. The divisions within the Church became increasingly visible. Archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva had always supported the MRNDD regime. He had even been a member of the Central Committee of the party until he was forced to resign in 1989. Moderate bishops were no longer willing to join progressives like bishop Kalibushi and bishop Nsengiyumva. It is likely that they were disappointed by the February attack or frightened by power transfer that was agreed in the Arusha Peace Accords. They might have felt threatened by the RPF.³⁴¹ It became increasingly difficult to find common ground. As a result, the bishops were silenced.

The *Comité des Contacts* tried once again to mediate in the political crisis. In November 1993, about a month after President Ndadye of Burundi was killed, the members of the Committee organized a symposium in Mombasa, Kenya. They attempted to bring the different factions within the MDR and PL together. About 100 representatives of the churches, political parties, the RPF, the government and NGO's attended the symposium. The atmosphere was very tense. The churches were requested to organize another meeting in Rwanda, but this never happened.³⁴² In January 1994, the *Comité des Contacts* tried again to reunite the different factions in the MDR and the PL. The transitional government was supposed to be installed next month. It became crucial which faction of the MDR and PL would participate in the transitional government. The *Comité des Contacts* advocated for a power sharing arrangement between the rivaling factions. The suggestions of the Committee were supported by civil society. But the *Comité des Contacts* was mistrusted by both factions in the MDR and the PL. The politicians strongly rejected the proposition and accused the churches of 'unacceptable interference in politics'.³⁴³ The *Comité des Contacts* was not able to halt the ongoing process of polarization. Gatwa concludes: 'Having not previously taken a stance to challenge the government, then proposing a mediation that arranged all parties in the conflict, they understandably were never listened to.'³⁴⁴

Only a few voices continued to speak out. The bishop of Nyundo, Wenceslas Kalibushi, and priests from Kibuye and Gisenyi stood up against the distribution of weapons to civilians by late December 1993. The Catholic magazine *Kinyamateka* continued to publish critical articles about the deteriorating situation.³⁴⁵ Some ordinary Christians took the courage to continue where their leaders

³³⁹ Abbés de Rugengeri 'Cri de détresse' *Dialogue* (April 1993), no. 165, 37-48.

³⁴⁰ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 201.

³⁴¹ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 184-186.

³⁴² Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 206-208.

³⁴³ Idem, 209.

³⁴⁴ Tharcisse Gatwa 'Church involvement in Conflict resolution' World Association for Christian Communications (Kigali Seminar on Media, Gender and Peace-Building: Kigali, March, 14-15 2011) 9 [available online: <http://africa.waccglobal.org/church%20involvement%20in%20conflict%20situations.pdf>, accessed August 30, 2011].

³⁴⁵ Longman *Christianity and genocide* 184.

stopped. They gathered in their parishes or Christian associations to promote peace and reconciliation. The *Centre Christus* in Kigali hosted seminars about active non-violence.³⁴⁶ Some Christians worked on human rights or peace. Others promoted democratization.³⁴⁷ These people were able to proclaim authentic prophetic messages that challenged the regime. They formed the religious bulwark against genocide that USIP would write about years later.³⁴⁸ But there were only few of them and they worked under difficult circumstances.³⁴⁹ They continued their work as the situation worsened. A network of Christian individuals and organizations decided to raise their voice together in 1994. They proclaimed the year 1994 a 'Year of Peace'. The Catholic NGO Pax Christi Rwanda initiated ecumenical demonstrations for peace and non-violence. Many organizations joined the initiative. The first days of 1994 were marked by large marches throughout the country.³⁵⁰ In Kigali, about 8,000 people marched for peace. In Butare, the second largest city, about 5,000 people showed their commitment for peace and marched through the city. All over the country tens of thousands of people were mobilized and stood up for peace.³⁵¹ Initiatives like these tried to turn the tide. But it seemed like they fought a losing battle. In March 1994, an author observed that 'Rwanda tends to become a jungle. The people of Rwanda tend to become some sort of animals who make each other cry, destroy and kill each other. The Rwandan tends to become a creature of fear and hatred.'³⁵² It was obvious that the campaign for peace and reconciliation was not the only campaign that was carried out in Rwanda.

Hutu extremist worked hard to prepare the ground for genocide. Habyarimana had played the ethnic card to arouse fear among the Hutu population after the October War in 1991. The stories about Tutsi domination were told again to reunite the Hutu behind Habyarimana.³⁵³ By 1994, a smooth propaganda machine reached every corner of Rwanda. Hutu hardliners established a radio station called *Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM) in April 1993.³⁵⁴ Radio RTLM became a popular station because it skillfully mixed up-to-date music, informal chats with ordinary people and anti-Tutsi propaganda.³⁵⁵ The genocidal ideology that legitimized and fueled the hatred consisted of old stories and new lies about the Tutsi enemy that were published in newspapers and told on the radio. Tutsi were constantly portrayed as outsiders, alien, and foreigners.³⁵⁶ This was in line with the Hamitic myth

³⁴⁶ Joseph Ntamahungiro 'La Non-Violence Active' *Dialogue* (May 1993), no. 166, 11. Jean-Pierre Godding 'La Non-Violence Active, un Chemin pour la réconciliation des Rwandais' *Dialogue* (March 1994), no. 174, 27.

³⁴⁷ Patrick D. Gaffney 'Pax Christi au Rwanda' (date and place of writing unknown), KDC, Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, Rwanda 1994-1995, serial no. 800.

³⁴⁸ Hayward *Averting Hell on Earth* 7-9.

³⁴⁹ Komissie Rechtvaardigheid en Vrede, Werkgroep Centraal Afrika 'Verslag van de bijeenkomst van 27 mei 1994' (Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles) KDC, Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, Commissie Justitia et Pax, Werkgroep Centraal Afrika: Rwanda, serial no. 486.

³⁵⁰ Jef Vleugels 'Rwanda: vergeving na volkenmoord? Pastorale benadering' (date and place of writing unknown) KDC, Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, Rwanda 1991-1994, serial no.500.

³⁵¹ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 216.

³⁵² Joseph Nsengimana 'Problématique de la réconciliation des Rwandais' *Dialogue* (March 1994), no. 174, 7.

³⁵³ Des Forges 'The Strategy of Ethnic Division' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online: <http://bit.ly/lXh2Od>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁵⁴ Des Forges 'Propaganda and Practice' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/p7r8lV>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁵⁵ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 150-153.

³⁵⁶ Mamdani *When Victims Become Killers* 190-191.

that was still generally supported by the churches of Rwanda and it's mainly Hutu clergy.³⁵⁷ The old drums of 'Rwanda's history' were beaten again. The RPF was depicted as a brutal army of foreign invaders; they were seen as the colonial oppressors of old, hungry to regain power in Rwanda. Many people listened to RTLM and took the warnings against 'Tutsi cockroaches' for granted. The ideas of the extremists were supported by politicians and renowned intellectuals. Extremists also used religious images in their propaganda. The biblical Ten Commandments, for example, were turned into the Hutu Ten Commandments that included lines like 'Hutus must cease having any pity for the Tutsi.' The genocidal ideology was skillfully built upon the ideas that already existed in Rwandan society. All means were used by Hutu extremist to create the context of polarization, hatred and fear that made the genocide on Tutsi possible.

§ 6.4 Genocide and renewed war

On the eve of April 6, the airplane of President Habyarimana was shot down. The President of Rwanda, the President of Burundi and the crewmembers died. Habyarimana had attended a meeting with regional leaders in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. The leaders were supposed to talk about the situation in Burundi, but the meeting had turned into a verbal attack on Habyarimana. The President was blamed by his colleagues for failing to implement the Arusha Peace Accords.³⁵⁸ After the unpleasant meeting, the President flew back to Kigali. But somebody decided that the President had to be killed before he would set foot on Rwandan soil. The attack has been attributed to the RPF, Habyarimana's presidential guard, French soldiers, Hutu hardliners and UNAMIR troops. Until today, nobody knows who shot the airplane down as it approached Kigali airport. The deadly attack on President Habyarimana served as a starting signal for the genocide. Within an hour after the attack, members of the Presidential Guard and other elite troops spread out into Kigali to kill.³⁵⁹ They carried lists of prominent Tutsi, opposition politicians and human rights activists.

Colonel Bagosora took command as soon as he learned that Habyarimana was killed. He was assisted by the commanders of strong elite units like Major Mpiranya of the Presidential Guards, Major Nzuwonemeye of the Reconnaissance battalion and Major Ntabakuze of the Paracommando battalion.³⁶⁰ Roadblocks appeared on the streets of Kigali. Militiamen and Presidential Guards started a house-to-house search for enemies. Sometimes they were hindered by the government troops who tried to stop the killing. Their commander-in-chief, Colonel Marcel Gatsinzi, was not involved in the plot and did everything he could to keep the army on his side.³⁶¹ Bagosora had to push hard to ensure his control over the military. Gatsinzi bowed under the pressure two days later, after the RPF had decided to take up arms again. Bagosora also made sure he could not be hindered by peace initiatives from the government that was ruling the country. Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was attacked while

³⁵⁷ Matthias Bjørlund, Eric Markusen, Peter Steenber, Rafiki Ubaldo 'The Christian Churches and the construction of a Genocidal Mentality in Rwanda' *Complicity of the Churches* 155.

³⁵⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 211.

³⁵⁹ *Idem*, 223.

³⁶⁰ Des Forges 'Launching the Campaign' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/oa17S4>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁶¹ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 229.

she was protected by UNAMIR soldiers. She tried to escape but was found and killed next day. The soldiers who had to protect her were taken to a military camp and were killed. UNAMIR troops remained passive because they were bound to restrictive rules of engagement. The genocidal powers were now in control of the situation. Selected victims were killed to ensure this position. Several ministers were killed. Human rights activists were killed. Hutu who were members or sympathizers of democratic opposition parties were killed. And many Tutsi were killed because they were Tutsi. As Prunier puts it: 'The lists were long, detailed and open to extension.'³⁶²

The leaders of the genocide wanted to keep up the appearance that Rwanda was a properly governed country. Therefore, a provisional government was installed on April 8. The ministers came from the MRNDD and 'Hutu Power' factions of the MDR, the PSD, the PDC and the PL. They were either easy to manipulate or extremists themselves.³⁶³ Behind the scenes, Colonel Bagosora and a small elite of Hutu extremists kept ruling the country. The genocide was coordinated by a tight group that consisted of both military leaders and civilians. Joseph Nzirorera, the secretary-general of the MRNDD, was one of the civilians involved. He coordinated the operations of the *Interahamwe*. Another important civilian was Félicien Kabuga, a businessman. He financed the RTLM and the *Interahamwe*. All people involved belonged to the regime's political, military and economic elite. As a matter of fact they all belonged to the inner circle of Mme Habyarimana.³⁶⁴ These people were eager to export the genocide from Kigali to other parts of Rwanda. The whole country had to be cleared from opposition and Tutsi. Radio RTLM paved the way and preached fear and hatred. It proclaimed that President Habyarimana had been killed by the RPF. Now, all Hutu risked to be attacked by all Tutsi.³⁶⁵ But during the first days of the genocide both Tutsi and Hutu feared for their lives. Many high level Hutu were already executed and assailants kept killing Hutu opposed to CDR and MRNDD. By Monday April 11, about 20,000 Rwandans had been killed. The vast majority of the victims were Tutsi.³⁶⁶

Colonel Bagosora and his supporters changed their strategy after a few days of violence. They no longer directed the violence against Hutu political opponents. From now on, Hutu had to unite in the fight against Tutsi. Many Tutsi were driven out of their homes. They fled in fear to places where they thought they would benefit from collective protection. Some gathered in stadiums. Others went to military bases of UNAMIR. Some fled to schools or hospitals. But most Tutsi went to churches because they had been a safe haven for Tutsi in previous massacres. Thousands of Tutsi thought they had found a safe place but were massacred. The stadiums, military bases, schools and churches became death-traps.³⁶⁷ Often, the killers would wait until the buildings were overcrowded. Once the people inside these buildings were tired and weak they were slashed to death with machetes, blown apart by grenades or shot down. When the killers could not finish the slaughter in one day, they would leave a guard and come back the other day. Many women were raped before they were killed. Others were mutilated and tortured. The victims often knew the perpetrators. Many ordinary citizens

³⁶² Idem, 231.

³⁶³ Idem, 232-233.

³⁶⁴ Idem, 239-242.

³⁶⁵ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 171.

³⁶⁶ Des Forges 'Sharpening the Focus on Tutsi' *Leave None to Tell the Story* Available online <http://bit.ly/oa17S4>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁶⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 253-255.

participated in the genocide for different reasons. Some were motivated by a deep hatred against Tutsi. Others feared the RPF and believed the propaganda of Hutu Power. Some killed Tutsi to steal their land or their cows. But many Hutu killed Tutsi because they were coerced to take part in the massacres. Peer pressure was huge. Reluctant Hutu were threatened, rebuked or forced to participate in the killings.³⁶⁸

The genocide required organization and persuasion skills. The violence did not automatically spread through the whole country. The organizers of the killing campaign used all means to reach and pursue the Hutu population to genocide. Rwanda's well developed administrative structures served as a channel to spread the genocide. Burgomasters scheduled meetings to incite the people of their administrative division. They encouraged the population to engage in genocide.³⁶⁹ Politicians of different political parties organized killing campaigns to secure their own position. Militia groups travelled the country to encourage reluctant Hutu. The military structures also became tools in the hands of the organizers of the genocide. Soldiers often led peasants in slaughter. Even retired soldiers were called upon to organize the killings. High-level officers in the army who did not collaborate were replaced. The prefects of Butare and Gitarama who dared to oppose genocide were subsequently removed and overruled. Unwilling burgomasters were put under pressure until they gave in. Meanwhile, Radio RTLM spread horrific stories about atrocities committed by the RPF and encouraged Hutu to act in self-defense.³⁷⁰

Throughout the genocide, the government of Rwanda also had a war to fight. The RPF advanced from the northeast of Rwanda. Government troops were able to hold Kigali for about three months. But meanwhile, RPF troops conquered eastern Rwanda by late April.³⁷¹ The troops headed westwards to conquer Kigali and Gitarama. The authorities doubled their strengths to extend the genocide. A "civilian self-defense" force was set up in May. Its leaders were put in charge of the existing militia groups and trained new civilian groups to make sure all Tutsi would be killed.³⁷² At this point, about half of the Tutsi population of Rwanda was already killed. But the international community began to grumble and the work that remained had to be done more secretly. The UN Security Council authorized the re-deployment of 5,500 UNAMIR II troops who had to assist humanitarian operations. But it would take some time before the troops needed were found.³⁷³ The genocide entered a new episode. The time of large-scale killings was over. The radio talked about 'pacification' to deceive the international community. Everybody in Rwanda knew 'pacification' meant that remaining Tutsi had to be lured from hiding.³⁷⁴ In some places, drums were beaten to ensure Tutsi they could go back to their houses. Many Tutsi thought the slaughter was over and came out. These people were often killed at

³⁶⁸ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 178, 192, 202.

³⁶⁹ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 244.

³⁷⁰ Des Forges 'The Organization' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/pn6Xr9>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁷¹ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 268-270.

³⁷² Des Forges "The Population Is Trying to Defend Itself" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/pzllke>, August, 30 2011].

³⁷³ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 110-111.

³⁷⁴ Des Forges "Pacification" as Deception' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/o6pAsI>, accessed August, 30 2011].

night or were brought to remote places before they were killed. Tutsi women and children, who were often spared in the first weeks of the genocide, were now slain.³⁷⁵

§ 6.5 Catholicism and the genocide

At least three Rwandan bishops happened to be gathered in Kigali when the genocidal wave of violence started to spread across the country. They were about to go to the Synod of African Bishops in Rome.³⁷⁶ But the trip was canceled because of the violence. The church was probably the only Rwandan institution that could take a stand against the overwhelming power of the state. The pulpits provided the Rwandan bishops with the opportunity to reach almost the whole Rwandan population with a strong moral message. The bishops certainly had to overcome practical obstacles to get a message out in the chaos of genocide. Telephones were cut off, roadblocks emerged everywhere and the radio was in the hands of the organizers of the genocide.³⁷⁷ Death squads roamed through Kigali and killed everybody on their lists. It soon became clear that the clergy would not be spared. On April 7, the *Centre Christus*, a Jesuit retreat center in Kigali, was attacked. The center had always been a place where ethnic reconciliation was promoted. Now, a group of six soldiers shot all Rwandans present. Seventeen Hutu and Tutsi were killed.³⁷⁸ At the same day, the moderate bishop Kalibushi of Nyundo was taken to a common grave to be killed. He was spared because Colonel Bagosora thought that killing him might arouse the international community.³⁷⁹ About three hundred Tutsi, including eight priests, were killed the next day in the cathedral and Kalibushi's residence. Militia also attacked other parishes in Nyundo diocese, killing several priests.³⁸⁰ Des Forges states that within twenty-four hours after Habyarimana's plane crashed, it was clear that Tutsi clergy were killed like any other Tutsi. Another twenty-four hours later, it was clear that churches were desecrated by slaughter.³⁸¹

While this horrific scenario unfolded, the Rwandan bishops remained silent. They wasted the chance to use their moral weight to counter the genocide. They failed to condemn the killing campaign that was executed right in front of their eyes. Doing so, they probably lost any claim to moral leadership. Pope John Paul II was the first Catholic leader who publicly acknowledged the fact that massacres were carried out in Rwanda. On April 10, he raised the issue during a homily at the opening ceremony of the African Synod. His words were an emotional appeal: 'I wish to recall now in particular the people and the Church of Rwanda, who these days are being tried by an upsetting tragedy linked in particular to the dramatic assassination of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. With you Bishops here present, I am sharing this suffering caused by this new catastrophic wave of violence and death which, investing this well loved country, is making blood flow even from priests,

³⁷⁵ Des Forges 'Mid-May Slaughter: Women and Children as Victims'[available online <http://bit.ly/pzllke>, accessed August, 30 2011].

³⁷⁶ Laure de Vulpian *Rwanda, un génocide oublié?: un procès pour mémoire* (Éditions Complexe: Brussels 2004) 206-207.

³⁷⁷ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 896.

³⁷⁸ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 189.

³⁷⁹ Melvern *Conspiracy to murder: the Rwandan genocide* 170.

³⁸⁰ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 189.

³⁸¹ Des Forges 'The Clergy' " *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qwXfwz> , accessed August, 31 2011].

religious sisters and catechists, innocent victims of an absurd hate. With you, reunited in this African Synod, and in communion of spirit with the Bishops of Rwanda who could not be with us today, I feel the need to launch an appeal to stop that homicide of violence. Together with you, I raise my voice to tell all of you: stop these acts of violence! Stop these tragedies! Stop these fratricidal massacres!³⁸² In Rwanda, the situation was deteriorating every hour. Church leaders and ordinary believers barely listened to the Pope's call.³⁸³

The first message of the Rwandan bishops was published on April, 11. The letter appears to be written by three bishops who were gathered in Kigali at the time.³⁸⁴ In this publication, the bishops decided to support the interim government that consisted of Hutu hardliners. It is hard to believe, but the bishops even called upon the Rwandan people to 'respond favorably to calls' from the new government to restore peace and security. In the same message, they also asked the armed forces to protect everyone, regardless of their ethnic identity.³⁸⁵ Apparently, they tried again to send a more firm message to the Rwandan people as the slaughter continued, but they were not allowed to.³⁸⁶ In the course of the genocide, four messages were released by the Rwandan bishops. As far as could be traced in this research, none of these messages firmly denounced the genocide. The second letter of the bishops was released on April, 17. This time, the letter was written by five bishops who were gathered in Kabgayi. The bishops and the interim government had left Kigali since the RPF besieged the Rwandan capital. The bishops called upon the RPF and the government to end the bloodshed. Some academics argued that the bishops masked the true nature of the events. They made it look like the killings were part of the war.³⁸⁷ Other scholars stated that this was only a part of the message. The bishops also 'urgently called upon the people of Rwanda to stop the killings, the massacres, the looting, and the banditry [...]'.³⁸⁸ In the course of this research, it was not possible to find out more about these messages. The documents are not widely available. It seems like many scholars lacked a copy of the messages. Even renowned authors only referred to parts of the messages that were already quoted in other publications.³⁸⁹

Whatever the bishops exactly said, they were not able to stop the killings. Both Des Forges and Longman argue that the ambiguous stance of the clerical hierarchy fostered the idea that they

³⁸² Pope John Paul II 'Homily at the Mass of the Inauguration of the African Synod' (St. Peter's Basilica: Rome April, 10 1994) [available online <http://www.afrikaworld.net/synod/jp10.htm>, accessed August, 31 2011].

³⁸³ Hugh McCullum *The angels have left us: the Rwanda tragedy and the churches* (WCC Publications: Geneva, 1995) 64.

³⁸⁴ de Vulpian *Rwanda, un génocide oublié?* 206.

³⁸⁵ Marie Julianne Farrington 'Rwanda - 100 days – 1994: One Perspective' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda Complicity of the Churches?* Aegis Trust (Paragon House: St. Paul, 2004) 94-95.

³⁸⁶ Des Forges 'The Clergy' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qwXfwz> , accessed August, 31 2011].

³⁸⁷ Elisée Rutagambwa 'The Rwandan Church: the Challenge of Reconciliation' Paul Christopher Manuel, Lawrence Christopher Reardon, Clyde Wilcox eds. *The Catholic Church and the nation-state: comparative perspectives* (Georgetown University Press: Washington, 2006)

³⁸⁸ de Vulpian *Rwanda, un génocide oublié?* 207.

³⁸⁹ Both Longman in *Christianity and Genocide* and Farrington in 'Rwanda – 100 days - 1994 refer to quotes from Des Forges in *Leave none to tell the Story*. This is remarkable, since Des Forges did not seem to use the original messages. She quotes from a press release, an interview and a fax message. The complete messages are available in *Bulletin de la Conférence des Evêques catholiques du Rwanda*, n° 3-4, 1994-1995. This publication is not available in the Netherlands.

approved the slaughter.³⁹⁰ Genocidal propagandists claimed that even God favored the genocide. Many Tutsi died in the church they used to go at Sunday. They thought they would be safe at the places of worship. Their grandparents and parents were safe in the churches during the riots of 1959, 1963 and 1973. But this time they were wrong. Many of these ordinary believers prayed and sang together till the very last moment. The pictures of the church in Ntarama near Kigali are widely known. The walls are bloodied, bones are scattered all over the church. A skull of one of the victims lies on the altar. Thousands of Tutsi took shelter in this house of prayer. They were surrounded by militia who smashed holes in the walls to throw grenades in the crowd. The remains of the victims still lie on the floor of the church.³⁹¹ On the side of the main road between Kibuye and Gitarama one finds the ruins of the church of Nyange. Tutsi were encouraged to seek refuge in this church. Once they were inside, militia and soldiers threw grenades through the windows. Their attempt to set the church on fire failed. That is why they brought bulldozers in. Thousands of Tutsi were crushed to death or buried alive as the bulldozers reduced the church to ruins.³⁹² The Rwandan Ministry of Local Government estimated that eleven percent of the victims of genocide were killed in churches and parishes.³⁹³

The priests and nuns who stayed at the churches and parishes had to find a way to deal with the Tutsi that took refuge in their buildings. These people could not count on the moral, spiritual or practical support of their leaders. They had to make up their own mind and come to terms with both victims and killers. The divisions in the Catholic Church were reflected by the role of priests, nuns and laity in the killings. Many Tutsi clergy were killed by their catechists, by militia groups and soldiers. One has to keep in mind that the Church still harbored many Tutsi.³⁹⁴ Large, extensive, lists have been drawn up of the priests and nuns who did not survive the genocidal wave.³⁹⁵ But it should be noticed that the Church not only knew victims. Des Forges states that a small number of clergy actively participated in the killings. They lured the victims into the church, incited the people or even tortured their victims. Witnesses told about two Rwandan nuns who provided gasoline to a mob that burned about 500 people to death in a convent's garage in Sovu, Southern Rwanda.³⁹⁶ Others refused to protect Tutsi who had come to the churches to escape from the massacres. Longman discovered a more hidden violent tendency that also appeared during the genocide. The author claims that the orthodoxy used the genocide to regain the power they had lost to progressive movements in the 1980s.³⁹⁷ In his view, the church was transformed into a battlefield. Longman convincingly shows that some local orthodox priests used the genocide to bolster their own positions.³⁹⁸ But the author cannot substantiate his claim that similar power struggles took place at other levels. The Church was not only a place of violence. There are examples of brave and courageous Hutu nuns and priests who stood up

³⁹⁰ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 191 and Des Forges 'The Clergy' " *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qwXfwz> , accessed August, 31 2011].

³⁹¹ James M. Smith and Carol Rittner 'Churches as Memorial Sites' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda Complicity of the Churches?* Aegis Trust (Paragon House: St. Paul, 2004) 188-191.

³⁹² Smith and Rittner 'Churches as Memorial Sites' 196-199.

³⁹³ *Idem*, 181.

³⁹⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 158.

³⁹⁵ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 873-893.

³⁹⁶ Paul Ames 'Two Rwandan Nuns Convicted of War Crimes' *ABC News* (Brussels, June, 8 2001) [available online ,<http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=80960&page=1> accessed August, 31 2011].

³⁹⁷ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 316-317

³⁹⁸ *Idem*, 200-202.

for their fellow believers. Some of them even sacrificed their lives and died together with the people they wanted to protect.³⁹⁹

Many Tutsi were killed by people they knew. They were killed by people from their villages, sometimes even their neighbors, in most cases by fellow Christians. The genocide was organized by a small elite, but the level of popular participation was incredibly high. How could ordinary Christians kill their fellow believers? Why did being human did not prevent them from slaughtering? Why did being Christian not prevent them from engaging in the killings? It should be kept in mind that being a Christian did not prevent earlier generations from supporting genocidal regimes.⁴⁰⁰ It is known that Jewish Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal was almost executed by Nazi auxiliary forces. He only survived because the executioners were called to attend prayers.⁴⁰¹ The fact that Christians were involved in genocide before, does not explain the fact that many Rwandan Christians were involved in the killings. Scholars from all over the world have tried to come to terms with this difficult issue. Some authors claim that Christians in Rwanda did not really convert themselves to Christianity. They did not really believe the message of love and forgiveness they were told by the missionaries.⁴⁰² Others claim that Catholicism in Rwanda was perverted and promoted divisions. Christians in Rwanda did convert wholeheartedly, but they converted themselves to a racist religion.⁴⁰³ Longman, for example, states that the killers did not feel a contradiction between killing Tutsi and the religious ideas they were taught in Church.⁴⁰⁴ The first view entails that the Rwandan people were hypocrite and without any –Christian or other- moral convictions. The second view entails that the Church was a bulwark of racism and violence that had created docile believers who could not think for themselves.

It is impossible to give a comprehensive explanation that clarifies the link between popular participation in the genocide and Catholicism. The reactions of ordinary Catholics were as diverse as the reactions of the clergy. The pictures that have been painted by scholars are too black-and-white. Both views discussed above do not take the genocidal context into account. A close examination of the genocidal process discredits the view that Christianity in Rwanda was only thin veneer that hid underlying immorality. The statement in itself is highly disputable. It suggests that only religious convictions could withhold the Rwandans from killing. It has been shown that the genocide was preceded by a dehumanization process. Tutsi neighbors turned into cockroaches, foreign oppressors and enemies. They were no longer considered to be human. In this context, it is possible to feel no contradiction between the commandment ‘you shall not murder’ and killing a Tutsi. This argument, however, only holds on the theoretical level. In reality, the dehumanization process never fully completed. Some people hid their Tutsi friends or neighbors. They considered their friends to be human. But there is another argument that holds ground. The accusation that many Hutu were

³⁹⁹ Des Forges ‘The Clergy’ ” *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qwXfwz> , accessed August, 31 2011].

⁴⁰⁰ Examples can be found in Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack eds. *In God's name: genocide and religion in the twentieth century* (Berghahn books: Oxford, 2001)

⁴⁰¹ Tim Flynn and Victor Smart ‘Simon Wiesenthal "The Nazi Hunter" Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team [available online <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/wiesenthal.html> , accessed September, 6 2011].

⁴⁰² Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 34, Aguilar *The Rwanda Genocide* viii and Van Hoyweghen ‘The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda’ 387.

⁴⁰³ Mbanda *Committed to Conflict* 19-22.

⁴⁰⁴ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 163, 196-197.

immoral, hypocrite Christians derives from the idea that they liked and approved the killings. Recent research has shown that many Hutu killed because they feared either the RPF or the consequences of resistance. The social pressure to engage in the killings was enormous. Moral convictions were under extreme pressure. Marie Césarie Makurwego, a member of the Catholic order of the Sisters of the Assumption, writes about the fact that many Catholics handed over fellow believers to the killers: 'Today that is interpreted as a betrayal of the people who were being hidden, but few consider the psychological pressure that such a state of stress constitutes, or the fact that every day one was harassed and threatened with death.'⁴⁰⁵ Many people believed that they had to kill to prevent themselves from being killed –either by fellow Hutu killers or by the RPF.⁴⁰⁶ They felt that they had no choice but to participate in the genocide, whether they approved it or not.

A close analysis of the genocide shows that ordinary Christians in Rwanda were no hypocrite, immoral human beings. But what about Longman's statement that the Church was a stronghold of racism? Is it true that Catholic killers did not experience a contradiction between the preaches they heard in Church and killing Tutsi? Stanton's model about the genocidal process has shown that at a theoretical level any religious message about Tutsi as human beings would be irrelevant because of the dehumanization process. But it has been said before that the dehumanization process was never fully completed. That's why the message of the Church never lost its relevance during the genocide. It has been shown in the previous chapter that the Church promoted cultural and structural violence in Rwanda. The Church fostered the racial division between Hutu and Tutsi. But Longman goes one step further. He claims that the killers did not experience a contradiction between the message of the Church and their participation in the massacres is a sweeping statement. Some killers indeed felt no contradiction between the killings and their religious convictions. They wore rosaries, carried crucifixes and even attended mass between the killings.⁴⁰⁷ But Longman also shows how local clergy of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda in Biguhu actively opposed ethnic divisions. Thus, the clergy hindered genocide.⁴⁰⁸ Examples like these might be scarce. But there is another indication that many killers did experience a divergence between their behavior and the message of the Church. African Rights claims that many killers displayed a 'destructive anger towards the church.'⁴⁰⁹ The attackers not only stole valuable artifacts. They also damaged and destroyed everything in the churches they attacked.⁴¹⁰ The deliberate desacralization of the churches indicates that the killers felt anger and hatred towards the Church. This would not have happened if they felt that the Church promoted the genocide. That's why the claim that the Church was only a bulwark of violence clearly does not hold. The divisions within the Church were too big for sweeping statements like these.

In the face of genocide, ordinary Catholics could not count on the moral support of their bishops.⁴¹¹ After April 17, the Rwandan bishops remained silent for almost one month. Pope John Paul II did raise his voice. On April 27, he was the first world leader who publicly called the massacres

⁴⁰⁵ Mukarwego 'The Church and the Rwandan Tragedy of 1994' 121.

⁴⁰⁶ Strauss *The Order of Genocide* 9 and Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 202.

⁴⁰⁷ Saur 'From Kibeho to Medjugorje' 215.

⁴⁰⁸ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 297.

⁴⁰⁹ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 868.

⁴¹⁰ *Idem*, 867-868.

⁴¹¹ *Idem*, 895.

a genocide. He asked the international community to end the genocide.⁴¹² About two and a half weeks later, a joint publication of four Catholic bishops, five Anglican bishops and the leaders of the Presbyterian, Free Methodist and Pentecostal churches reached the world. On May 13, they released a message and urged the government and the RPF to stop the 'systematic decimation of the people of Rwanda while pretending to protect their interests'. They condemned the desacralization of the churches and the killing of clergy (in that sequence). The leaders of the churches expressed that they were willing to talk with both the government and the RPF about a peaceful solution. They asked the international community to send troops. Friendly nations were called upon to help and search for a peaceful solution. The bishops asked Christians of good will to refuse to take part in the massacres.⁴¹³ Unlike the pope, the bishops did not mention the word 'genocide'. It seemed like they did not want to acknowledge what was going on in Rwanda. The ethnic character of the massacres was not mentioned at all. All over the world, the message was received with frustration and disbelief.⁴¹⁴ The pope continued to speak out regularly against the violence and the massacres. But it took another month before a new message was released by the bishops. On July 20, it became clear that the bishops had not revised their opinion. In a message written with their Protestant counterparts, the bishops stated that 'thousands of people, including three bishops and our religious personnel have been massacred either by the Rwandan government or the RPF'. The bishops finally acknowledged that Tutsi were structurally massacred. At the same time, they accused the RPF of 'eliminating the Hutu they found in their region or while passing.'⁴¹⁵

The only hope for Tutsi on the run or in hiding was the advance of the RPF. On June 13, the RPF finally took Gitarama, where the interim government was seated. The ministers and the military leaders fled to Kibuye and later to Gisenyi. Their defeat was imminent but still they incited their followers to eliminate all Tutsi. The Security Council approved a French mission to establish a 'safe zone' for Tutsi in southwest Rwanda. In practice, the French troops mainly protected the defeated government and its genocidal allies on their way to Zaire.⁴¹⁶ They were accompanied by Hutu civilians, including those who participated in the genocide. These people fled to Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania in fear of the RPF. Some of them feared the RPF because they had been involved in the killings. Others were frightened because rumors spread about massacres. The fears of the refugees were grounded. As the RPF advanced, the troops killed tens of thousands of civilians, probably even a hundred thousand.⁴¹⁷ The rebel army killed unarmed civilians on several occasions.⁴¹⁸ The militant archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva of Kigali, the liberal bishop Thaddée Nsengiyumva of Kabgayi and bishop

⁴¹² Carol Rittner 'Chronology' Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth eds. *Genocide in Rwanda Complicity of the Churches?* Aegis Trust (Paragon House: St. Paul, 2004) 13

⁴¹³ 'Communique des responsables des Eglises Catholique et Protestantes au Rwanda' (Kabgayi, May 13, 1994) personal collection of G. van 't Spijker, Utrecht.

⁴¹⁴ Van 't Spijker *Indicible Rwanda* 13.

⁴¹⁵ 'Mémorandum des représentants des Eglises Catholique et Protestantes a l'intention du Gouvernement Rwandais, du Front Patriotique Rwandais et de la Communauté Internationale dans la recherche d'une paix durable au Rwanda (Cyangugu, July, 20 1994) personal collection of G. van 't Spijker, Utrecht.

⁴¹⁶ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 111.

⁴¹⁷ Filip Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on: from genocide to dictatorship' *African affairs* (April 1, 2004) vol.103, no. 411, 194.

⁴¹⁸ Des Forges 'Killings and Other Abuses by the RPF, April to July 1994' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/rihNEa>, accessed August, 30 2011].

Joseph Ruzindana of Byumba were among them.⁴¹⁹ Thus, an exodus occurred of between one and two million Hutu refugees.⁴²⁰ The RPF announced a one-sided ceasefire on July 20. Finally, the Rwandan army was defeated and the genocide stopped. Nobody knows exactly how many people got killed. It is estimated that between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were massacred.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 893-894.

⁴²⁰ Mironko *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder* 111.

⁴²¹ Des Forges 'Numbers'" *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/pi3QRj>, accessed August, 30 2011].



After the genocide, the prisons in Rwanda were overcrowded with genocide suspects. This picture was taken in Gitarama Prison.

Chapter 7

After Genocide

*'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed'*⁴²²

UNESCO

§ 7.1 Religion and post-conflict peacebuilding

The RPF inherited a devastated country. The newly installed Government of National Unity faced numerous challenges with few resources. On a population of almost 8 million people about 1.1 million had lost their lives during genocide and war. About 2 million Hutu had followed their leaders into exile abroad.⁴²³ One of the extremist Hutu leaders prided: 'It [the RPF] has only the bullets, we have the population.'⁴²⁴ In Rwanda, about 1 million people were internally displaced and over a hundred thousand orphans tried to survive on their own. Tens of thousands of genocide survivors were deeply traumatized. Many Hutu were psychologically damaged and feared for repercussions of the RPF.⁴²⁵ The social fabric in the society was completely ripped apart. The situation became even more chaotic as over half a million Tutsi refugees returned from neighboring countries to Rwanda after decades of exile.⁴²⁶ These people had not endured the traumatic experiences of the genocide and just wanted to find a better place to live. The RPF had difficulties maintaining internal security in the midst of chaos. The war was over, but the violence had not stopped. Many young boys had joined the army and the control over the new recruited troops was only thin.⁴²⁷ Some doubted whether the leadership of the RPF even wanted to exercise control over the new recruits. Thousands of Hutu were killed by RPF soldiers in the aftermath of the war. The material damage of the war and the genocide was also substantial. The infrastructure was ruined; banks, shops and businesses were plundered. The crops and livestock of Tutsi families were destroyed. The fields of many Hutu families lay abandoned. Civil services like the judicial system, health care and education had collapsed.⁴²⁸ The country and its people were ruined.

Rwanda had to go a long way to become a peaceful society. The days that peace was understood as the absence of war and violence were long over.⁴²⁹ In the late 1960s, the Norwegian scholar Galtung introduced an influential analytic tool to describe the difference between the absence

⁴²² *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization UNESCO* (London, November 16 1945) 1 [available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001337/133729e.pdf#page=7>, accessed September 17, 2011].

⁴²³ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten year on' 178.

⁴²⁴ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 657.

⁴²⁵ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 327.

⁴²⁶ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on' 178.

⁴²⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 322-323.

⁴²⁸ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on' 178.

⁴²⁹ Monica Llamazares *Post-War Peacebuilding Reviewed A Critical Exploration Of Generic Approaches To Post-War Reconstruction* Working Paper 14 (Centre for Conflict Resolution Department of Peace Studies: University of Bradford, February 2005) 4-6.

of violence and the presence of peace: 'Just as a coin has two sides, one side alone being only one aspect of the coin, not the complete coin, peace also has two sides: absence of personal violence, and absence of structural violence. We shall refer to them as negative peace and positive peace respectively.'⁴³⁰ In Galtung's view, a country emerging from war should strive to abolish not only direct violence, but also violent structural and cultural patterns underneath. Only then, peace could be really sustainable. The distinction between negative peace and positive peace is still widely used. A new generation of conflict scholars built upon Galtung's ideas. Ho-Won Jeong of the George Mason University, for example, states that sustainable peace can be defined as 'a collective good to redress the past legacy of violent conflict, helping the population overcome extreme vulnerability and move toward self-sufficiency.' He claims that 'integrative social development, geared toward meeting human needs, should be the ultimate focus of post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.'⁴³¹ Over the years, different blueprints have been developed to build sustainable peace in post conflict societies. Jeong distinguishes between four building blocks of peace; security and demilitarization, political stability and democratization, economic development and social rehabilitation and reconciliation.⁴³² Other scholars developed similar models.⁴³³ Jeong's model might seem straightforward. But scholars quarreled about the ownership of the process and sequence of activities. Who should be in charge of a peace process? The international community, the government of the country involved or the people that have been affected by the conflict? What sort of peace should be build? A liberal, democratic form of peace? What should be done first? Is a reliable political system a precondition for social rehabilitation? Or does it work the other way round?

In the context of this thesis, it is not necessary to discuss questions like these in detail. Only a little corner of the veil is lifted here because it reveals the complexity of the field of peacebuilding. The possible contribution of religion has to be situated within a variety of approaches, actors, tracks and activities. One cannot build sustainable peace with economic growth, reliable political institutions and public security only. These processes have to be rooted in a broader culture of peace. That's why Jeong defines social rehabilitation and reconciliation as a building block of peace. The author explains that the ties between groups have to be renewed through justice and reconciliation. At the personal level, people should be offered a possibility to overcome psychological trauma, fear and hatred. According to Jeong, personal struggles like these interact with processes of truth and justice at the collective and the public level.⁴³⁴ Truth and justice have long been the key-issues when it came to the so called soft aspects of peacebuilding. In the mid-1990s, however, the issue of reconciliation appeared on top of the agenda. Reconciliation can be defined in many ways. This thesis uses the definition of Clark who describes reconciliation as the restoration of 'fractured individual and communal relationships after conflict, with a view towards encouraging meaningful interaction and cooperation

⁴³⁰ Galtung 'Violence, Peace and Peace research' 183.

⁴³¹ Ho-Won Jeong *Peacebuilding in postconflict societies: strategy and process* (Boulder: London, 2005) 21.

⁴³² Jeong *Peacebuilding* 15-18.

⁴³³ The Belgian peace researcher Reychler, mentioned earlier in this thesis, clusters peacebuilding activities into five comprehensive categories: an effective system of communication, consultation and negotiation, an integrative political-psychological climate, peace-enhancing structures and institutions, a critical mass of peacebuilding leadership and a supportive international environment in: Reychler 'Challenges of Peace Research' 6.

⁴³⁴ Jeong *Peacebuilding* 155-157.

between former antagonists.⁴³⁵ One could say that reconciliation minimally entails peaceful mutual acceptance. It aims at a renewed bond and cooperation between formerly hostile groups. It goes beyond truth and justice.⁴³⁶ These aspects of peacebuilding are highly important in a country that endured genocide. In Rwanda, processes of polarization and dehumanization took place. The social fabric was deliberately torn apart. The killings in Rwanda were not some sort of collateral damage. Killing was the aim of the campaign. Issues like justice, reconciliation, healing, truth, forgiveness and reconciliation would therefore form the biggest challenges in the peace process. The Belgian scholar of religious peacebuilding Hertog claims that this is the place where religion naturally comes in.⁴³⁷

Hertog convincingly argues that religion and religious actors are most relevant in the social reconstruction of a country emerging from war. In this chapter, the focus will be therefore on what Jeong calls the building block of social rehabilitation and reconciliation. Religious actors can provide maximal added value to a peace process if they deal with issues that are somehow related to religion. Many ideas associated with reconciliation like forgiveness, repentance, mercy and healing have emerged from a religious context.⁴³⁸ Along the way, the last part of the central question of the thesis will be examined. How did the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide affect its role in the peace process? But the theory about the possible role of religion in post conflict peace processes will be analyzed first. What did scholars say about the role of religion in post conflict or post genocidal societies? In the previous chapters, the work of renowned scholars like Ter Haar, Gopin, Appleby and Sampson has been used to build a theoretical framework concerning religion in the dynamics of conflict and peace. It is worthwhile to investigate how these authors think about the role of religion in post conflict peacebuilding. The definition of Ter Haar will be used to structure the ideas of the academics. To refresh the reader's memory, this definition describes religion as a set of religious ideas derived from a religious worldview, rituals, a social organization and spiritual experiences.⁴³⁹ The remainder of this paragraph will be used to find out how scholars of peacebuilding think religion can contribute to social rehabilitation and reconciliation.

In the literature about religion and peacebuilding, at least three options are mentioned when it comes to the contribution of religious ideas to peace processes. The Jewish scholar Gopin focuses on the contribution of religious values to the transformation of conflict. He explains that values like empathy, non-violence and pacifism, interiority and compassion are known and appreciated in many religious traditions. These pro-peace values can be used in the process towards peace.⁴⁴⁰ In some traditions, values like these are well developed and spread. In others, they are more hidden. Gopin calls upon religious leaders to examine the ideas about peace and conflict that have been developed in their religious tradition over the years. Religious leaders have the power to mold and spread theological ideas that contribute to peace.⁴⁴¹ Appleby agrees with Gopin. He focuses on one of the pro-peace religious values in particular: forgiveness. Appleby explains that forgiveness is often the

⁴³⁵ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 44.

⁴³⁶ *Idem*, 40-43.

⁴³⁷ Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding* 89.

⁴³⁸ Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 276.

⁴³⁹ Ter Haar 'Religion: Source of Conflict or Resource for Peace?' 22.

⁴⁴⁰ Gopin 'Religion as an Aid and Hindrance' 16.

⁴⁴¹ Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding* 39.

only way to end the spiral of vengeance.⁴⁴² A second option related to religious ideas has not been explored thoroughly. Gopin calls upon fellow scholars to investigate the power of religious worldviews. Most religions have ideas about a messianic peaceful world.⁴⁴³ The capability of religious people to imagine a world that is really peaceful could contribute to peace processes. The scholar, however, does not give practical examples of this use of religious ideas. It has yet to be explored. A third option of religious ideas is also related to religious worldviews. It has already been mentioned in previous chapters that a religious worldview has strong normative, moral and existential character. This characteristic of a religious worldview has important consequences. Said and Funk explain that religion is a powerful constituent of cultural norms and values. It addresses the most profound existential issues of human life. Religion deals with freedom and inevitability, with right and wrong, with fear and faith. As a result, religion is deeply implicated in individual and social conceptions of peace.⁴⁴⁴ That's why Appleby states that religion can provide a country emerging from war with a cultural foundation for peace.⁴⁴⁵

Many authors emphasize that religion as a social organization has a great potential to contribute to peace processes. The organizational capacity of religion, the role of religious leaders and the communal character of religion can all be used to further peace. The ideas of Sampson have already been introduced in the course of this thesis. Sampson argues that the organizational strength of religion enables it to act in conflict prevention as advocates for justice and peace-educators. In conflict resolution she adds the roles of mediators and observers.⁴⁴⁶ Appleby mentions the same roles and adds the role of election monitors.⁴⁴⁷ Religious leaders have a special role when it comes to post-conflict peace processes. Authors like Sampson, Appleby and Harpviken and Røislien stress the fact that religious leaders often have the moral authority to lead people in a process of reconciliation.⁴⁴⁸ They can be involved in processes of truth-finding.⁴⁴⁹ They can help distinguish between real and genuine reconciliation and superficial imitators.⁴⁵⁰ They also can mobilize their constituency to further reconciliation at the grassroots level. The communal character of religion is an important aspect when it comes to post-conflict reconciliation. Religious communities at the grassroots level often play an important role when it comes to the reintegration of those excluded by society.⁴⁵¹ The social fabric that is ripped apart through violence can be repaired in local communities. This is a natural religious process since religion, in the end, is about connecting people to their gods and to each other.⁴⁵²

The peacebuilding potential of the ritual and the spiritual character of religion received considerable less attention in the literature. In 1997, Gopin already argued for more research to

⁴⁴² Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 195.

⁴⁴³ Gopin 'World religions, violence, and myths of peace' 42-50.

⁴⁴⁴ Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C. Funk, 'The role of faith in cross cultural conflict resolution' presented at the European Parliament for the European Centre for Common Ground (Brussels, September 2001) [available online: <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pca/ASNC83PCS.htm>, accessed September 16, 2011].

⁴⁴⁵ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 169.

⁴⁴⁶ Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 280-294.

⁴⁴⁷ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 217-218.

⁴⁴⁸ Idem 203, Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 276, Harpviken and Røislien 'Faithful Brokers? 265.

⁴⁴⁹ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 220-221.

⁴⁵⁰ Idem 203.

⁴⁵¹ 'Religion & Peacebuilding Processes' International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (Brussels: April 7, 2009) [available online: <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index.cfm?pagelD=1827>, accessed September 23, 2011].

⁴⁵² Ramsey and Ledbetter 'Studying Religion' 2.

understand the inner spiritual and psychological dynamics that precede acts of forgiveness or repentance.⁴⁵³ Other academics, however, did not focus on spiritual processes at the individual level. Sampson does pay attention to the value of rituals and spiritual experiences at the communal level. She states that spiritual exercises like meditation and prayer increasingly find their way into peacebuilding practices.⁴⁵⁴ Sampson describes an interreligious conference about the Sudanese conflict. The religious practices of the participants were integrated in the peace conference. Each day was started with a prayer breakfast and the sessions were complemented with readings from the Bible and the Qur'an.⁴⁵⁵ Despite several examples like these, Sampson does not integrate spiritual and religious practices in her theoretical framework. One can definitely argue that religious and spiritual practices like prayer and meditation can strengthen the bonds between religious people from different groups. Appleby and Gopin also mention several examples of prayer in interreligious peace dialogues.⁴⁵⁶ Gopin elaborates further upon the transforming power of religious rituals. He describes religious peace marches in Jerusalem as 'rituals of immense power.'⁴⁵⁷ On another place, the author explains that processes of forgiveness and reconciliation have a ritual character in certain religions.⁴⁵⁸ Appleby mentions yet another function of religious practices. He states that rituals like prayer, fasting and meditation form and strengthen religious peacebuilders in their commitment for peace.⁴⁵⁹ It seems like the potential of the ritual and spiritual element of religion is promising but not yet fully explored.

Religion in all its facets clearly has a great peacebuilding potential. But could this potential be realized in Rwanda? The Catholic Church was clearly a part of the problem. What did scholars write about situations like these? It has already been explained in the *status questionis* that 'decoupling religion and national identity or hoping that religion will "go away" is unrealistic and shortsighted.'⁴⁶⁰ On the other hand, Sampson sharply observes 'if religious adherents have no faith in the normative system then the religion eventually ceases to exist.'⁴⁶¹ The Scandinavian scholars Harpviken and Røislien add that the level of dependence of the believers on their religion determines the peacebuilding potential of a religion.⁴⁶² The Catholic Church would have to regain credibility if it wanted to continue to influence the lives of believers. Scholars like Gopin and Appleby emphasized that this was certainly not impossible. According to Gopin, the damage done in the context of war could be contained if religious leaders would acknowledge their mistakes and come up with a public repudiation.⁴⁶³ The character of religion implies that the Catholic Church of Rwanda could still become a part of the solution. A religion is no changeless and ancient system.⁴⁶⁴ Gopin states that even the most orthodox religious communities can become peacemakers. Appleby also argues that religious

⁴⁵³ Marc Gopin 'Religion, violence and conflict resolution' *Peace & Change* (January, 1997) vol. 22, no. 1, 5.

⁴⁵⁴ Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 274.

⁴⁵⁵ *Idem* 288.

⁴⁵⁶ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 157, 189, Gopin 'Religion, violence and conflict resolution' 12.

⁴⁵⁷ Gopin 'Religion, violence and conflict resolution' 12.

⁴⁵⁸ Marc Gopin 'Forgiveness as an element of conflict resolution in religious cultures: walking the tightrope of reconciliation and justice' Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution (January 1, 2011) **23** [Available online: <http://scar.gmu.edu/publication/11461>, accessed September 23, 2011].

⁴⁵⁹ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 129, 149.

⁴⁶⁰ *Idem* 76.

⁴⁶¹ Harpviken and Røislien 'Faithful Brokers?' 363.

⁴⁶² *Idem* 366.

⁴⁶³ Gopin 'Religion as an Aid and Hindrance' 15.

⁴⁶⁴ Gopin 'World religions, violence, and myths of peace' 35.

traditions are internally plural, fluent and evolving over time. Religious leader can add new interpretations.⁴⁶⁵ As a consequence, it would still be possible for the Catholic Church to engage in meaningful peacebuilding activities.

§ 7.2 *The quest for justice*

The Government of National Unity faced the difficult task to restore the social fabric that once existed between Hutu and Tutsi. The ethnic polarization in the country was virtually complete. The transitional government tried to gain some legitimacy by claiming that it followed the provisions of the Arusha accords. This was not entirely true. The victorious RPF took all cabinet seats that were previously assigned to the MRNDD. The RPF also introduced a vice-president that was not accounted for in the peace agreement. General Paul Kagame of the RPF became both vice-president and minister of defense. But the leadership of the RPF was intelligent enough to include a large number of Hutu ministers in the government. The cabinet was presided by Pasteur Bizumungu, a Hutu who had joined the RFP just before the invasion in 1990. The cabinet counted 22 ministers, of which 16 were Hutu and only five RPF Tutsi.⁴⁶⁶ The transitional government would rule for only a couple of years. In 1999, elections were to be held. Meanwhile, the relation between the government and its people was quite odd. A large part of the government feared its citizens and many Hutu citizens feared their rulers.⁴⁶⁷ This mutual fear reflected the divisions in the Rwandan society. The government of Rwanda had to find a way to promote unity and reconciliation among the people of Rwanda. Victims, perpetrators and bystanders had to find a way to live together after genocide. It was not possible for the victims and the perpetrators to avoid each other on the densely populated hills of Rwanda. The Rwandan government had to address issues like justice and reconciliation. Many difficult questions had to be answered. What punishment would be appropriate for taking part in genocide? How could the truth about the genocide be uncovered? What would be the best way to heal the traumatized people of Rwanda?

The government of Rwanda rather quickly made the important decision to take the path of justice to get to reconciliation. Justice can be administered in different ways. Restorative justice revolves around the needs of the victim and the community. The focus is on the restoration of the bonds between the victim and the perpetrator and the normalization of relationships in the wider community. Restorative justice is an informal legal process that includes the community through dialogue and negotiations.⁴⁶⁸ Retributive justice on the other hand, is a mainly state-driven process. The focus is on the punishing the offender. The victim and the community are often peripheral to the process. Scholars have often described restorative justice and retributive justice as opposites. In practice, restorative justice generally includes punitive elements while retributive justice often provides reparation for the victim.⁴⁶⁹ The government of Rwanda chose to pursue a retributive, punitive form of justice. It aimed to end the cycle of impunity. Vice-President Kagame said in December 1994: "There

⁴⁶⁵ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 281.

⁴⁶⁶ International panel of eminent personalities *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity (IPEP: Addis Ababa, 2000) 17.12-17.14.

⁴⁶⁷ *Idem*, 17.11.

⁴⁶⁸ Kathleen Daly 'Revisiting the Relationship between Retributive and Restorative Justice' Paper presented at Restorative Justice and Civil Society Conference (Australian National University: Canberra, 1999) 6.

⁴⁶⁹ *Idem*, 4-5.

can be no durable reconciliation as long as those who are responsible for the massacres are not properly tried.⁴⁷⁰ Justice was seen as a precondition for reconciliation. On the one hand, the focus on retributive justice and punishment meant a rupture in Rwandan history. The cycle of impunity that had existed for so many years was about to be broken. On the other hand, the choice for retributive justice revealed a striking continuity in Rwandan history. The state had always played an important role in Rwanda. The choices that were made in the process towards justice and reconciliation put the state in an important position again. The rehabilitation of the national justice system became one of the focus points of the reconstruction efforts.⁴⁷¹ Rwanda's justice system was already weak before the genocide. But after the genocide, it was completely wrecked. The Minister of Justice had no budget and no car. Only a handful of judges and fifty lawyers were left in the entire country.⁴⁷² Meanwhile, the number of prisoners accused of genocide grew rapidly. The government arrested tens of thousands of people. It didn't take long before the prisons were completely overcrowded.⁴⁷³

The leaders of Rwanda knew that it would never be possible to try all suspects of the genocide in Rwandan courts. That's why the United Nations were requested to establish an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The Security Council quickly responded and the ICTR was created in November 1994. Here, the architects of the genocide had to be brought to justice. The ICTR, however, immediately had to run the gauntlet. Not only were the resources attributed to the tribunal limited. The Rwandan government did not agree with the provisions of the ICTR. They wanted to have the leaders of the genocide tried in accordance with Rwandan law. The United Nations, however, decided that the suspects would be convicted in accordance with international law. As a consequence, the organizers of the genocide could no longer be sentenced to death. Moreover, the government of Rwanda wanted the ICTR to be established in Rwanda. Only then, the ICTR really could become a part of the domestic reconciliation process. But the Security Council decided to locate the court in Arusha, Tanzania. One could argue that many people in Rwanda were disappointed about the ICTR even before the actual trials began.⁴⁷⁴ As a result, the government worked even harder to reestablish the national justice system. Training programs were set up, court buildings were rebuilt and more and more suspects were taken into custody.⁴⁷⁵ By early 1995, preliminary hearings began for 35,000 prisoners, but the trials immediately had to be suspended due to a lack of funds. The situation in the overcrowded prisons rapidly deteriorated. Meanwhile, the most important suspects and organizers of the genocide were still in Zaire.⁴⁷⁶

The process towards justice and reconciliation was hindered by the absence of a substantial part of the Rwandan population. About 270,000 refugees were stranded in Burundi, 577,000 resided in Tanzania, 10,000 stayed in Uganda and about 1,2 million Hutu lived in Zaire.⁴⁷⁷ In July and August 1994, a cholera epidemic had ravaged the large refugee camps on the shores of Lake Kivu, Zaire. The

⁴⁷⁰ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.3.

⁴⁷¹ Timothy Longman 'Obstacles to Peacebuilding in Rwanda' Taisier Mohamed, Ahmed Ali, Robert O. Matthews eds. *Durable peace: challenges for peacebuilding in Africa* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2004) 68.

⁴⁷² *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.4.

⁴⁷³ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 343.

⁴⁷⁴ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.10-18.14.

⁴⁷⁵ *Idem*, 18.34.

⁴⁷⁶ Longman 'Obstacles to Peacebuilding in Rwanda' 69-70.

⁴⁷⁷ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 312.

refugees had lacked access to clean water, proper latrines and medicine. About 50,000 refugees had died in the first month of their arrival.⁴⁷⁸ Images of suffering Hutu were broadcast around the world and the genocide was relegated to the background. The international community responded and huge funds were allocated to refugees.⁴⁷⁹ The humanitarian situation improved as soon as aid started flowing into the camps. But the political situation in the camps only worsened. Former ministers and military leaders exercised control over the refugees from nearby hotels and villas. It did not take long before they were in charge of the humanitarian aid that flowed into the camps. They coordinated the distribution of food, medicine and made sure nobody returned to Rwanda. Militia groups and ex-FAR soldiers controlled and intimidated the refugees.⁴⁸⁰ People who dared to stand up against their leaders were executed. Although this news did not reach the public, international agencies soon became aware of the situation. They faced the dilemma to support both the leaders of the genocide and the ordinary refugees or neither of them. It is widely assumed that many NGO's choose to stay because both donors and the general public supported them with large amounts of money. They could simply not afford to withdraw from a disaster of this magnitude.⁴⁸¹ Meanwhile, they supported a system in which many refugees were taken hostage by their leaders.

In the first years of exile, the genocidal leaders strengthened their hold over the refugees that were gathered in Zaire. The developments in the camps became an important obstacle to the reconciliation process. But the political situation in Rwanda also changed for the worse. By mid-1995, the Government of National Unity no longer functioned as a symbol for national reconciliation. The Hutu Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu and two of his Hutu colleagues, Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga and Justice Minister Alphonse Nkubito had resigned. The withdrawal of these prominent Hutu was followed by a wave of other high-ranked Hutu who decided to leave Rwanda. One of them explained: 'For thirty years, the Hutu had power and today it belongs to the Tutsi assisted by a few token Hutu among whom I figured...some of us believed the RPF victory would enable us to achieve real change. But the RPF has simply installed a new form of Tutsi power.'⁴⁸² Others talked about intimidation, human right abuses by the secret security service and discrimination against Hutu.⁴⁸³ Slowly but steadily, Tutsi began to dominate the leading positions in Rwanda.⁴⁸⁴ In this context, the rehabilitation of an impartial justice system became increasingly important. After a long debate, a new law to expedite the process was passed by the Assembly in August 1996.⁴⁸⁵ The accused were classified into four categories according to the crimes they were thought to have committed between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994. Category one entailed the planners, organizers, instigators, supervisors and leaders of genocide and crimes against humanity. Members of political parties and other persons in positions of authority that fostered these crimes were included in this category. As were notorious, zealous killers and persons who committed sexual torture. Anyone who would be

⁴⁷⁸ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 19.10.

⁴⁷⁹ *Idem*, 19.13, 19.17.

⁴⁸⁰ *Secretary-General Report of the Secretary-General on the security in the Rwandese refugee camps* United Nations Security Council (November 18, 1994) S/1994/1308, paragraph 9, 10.

⁴⁸¹ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 19.24.

⁴⁸² *Idem*, 17.15.

⁴⁸³ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten year on' 180.

⁴⁸⁴ *Idem* 188.

⁴⁸⁵ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.35.

found guilty in category one could be sentenced up to the death penalty. Category two involved perpetrators, conspirators and accomplices who had caused other people's death. These suspects faced sentences up to life imprisonment. Category three included people who seriously assaulted other people but did not cause their death. Category four covered up for offences against property.⁴⁸⁶ The perpetrators in category three faced imprisonment and the payment of damages while the looters of category four only had to deliver reparations to the victim.⁴⁸⁷ Now that the legal framework was established, the trials against some 70,000 detainees were about to begin.⁴⁸⁸

One thing was for sure. The architects of the genocide did not intend to be persecuted in Arusha or Rwanda. The majority of high-ranked extremists, between 50 and 230 politicians and military leaders, still lived in Zaire.⁴⁸⁹ They planned to return to Rwanda with a liberation army to end the Tutsi domination once and for all. An estimated number of 70,000 militia and soldiers resided in the camps. The ex-FAR leaders reorganized the army, conducted military training exercises and recruited new combatants. They even managed to have arms shipments delivered in the camps.⁴⁹⁰ The refugees functioned as a cover up for the military activities. Only a minority of the refugees, about 150,000 to 225,000 refugees were genocidal killers or their families.⁴⁹¹ They were scared to go back to Rwanda. But the majority of the refugees were taken hostage by their leaders to extract foreign aid and as a propaganda tool that displayed the monstrousness of the RPF.⁴⁹² The military comeback began after small bands of Hutu extremist began to cross the border into Rwanda. They attacked Tutsi and raided the country. Rwanda urged UNCR to separate real refugees from their armed counterparts. Although UNCR acknowledged the problem, it did not want to get involved in political affairs. Thus, the refugee camps remained under control of the killers and were used as bases for raids into Rwanda.⁴⁹³ The situation gradually slid into a regional security problem as the Congolese President Mobutu took side with the genocidal leaders of the refugees. He provided them with political and military support. Together with the Zairian army, the Rwandan extremists also murdered local Tutsi Banyumulenge in large numbers.⁴⁹⁴ In October 1996, the situation escalated after Rwandan government troops secretly invaded Zaire to round up the refugee camps. They fought the Hutu extremist together with anti-Mobutu rebels from Zaire and forced the refugees back to Rwanda.⁴⁹⁵ About 640,000 Hutu returned to Rwanda and followed the path of 15,000 other refugees who had been repatriated by the Zairian army just months before.⁴⁹⁶ Other refugees were chased in Zaire's large forests. Many of them suffered

⁴⁸⁶ Assembly of Rwanda *Organic Law no. 8/96 on the Organization of Prosecutions for Offences constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity committed since October 1, 1990* (Kigali, August 30, 1996), article 2.

⁴⁸⁷ Des Forges 'The Rwandan Prosecution of Genocide' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qCXRKN>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁴⁸⁸ Longman 'Obstacles to Peacebuilding in Rwanda' 70.

⁴⁸⁹ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 19.25-19.27.

⁴⁹⁰ *Idem* 19.25-19.27.

⁴⁹¹ Adelman 'The use and abuse of refugees in Zaire' [available online <http://www.stanford.edu/~sstedman/2001.readings/Zaire.htm>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁴⁹² *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 19.43.

⁴⁹³ *Idem*, 19.37-19.40.

⁴⁹⁴ Adelman 'The use and abuse of refugees in Zaire' [available online <http://www.stanford.edu/~sstedman/2001.readings/Zaire.htm>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁴⁹⁵ Longman 'Obstacles to Peacebuilding in Rwanda' 69.

⁴⁹⁶ Adelman 'The use and abuse of refugees in Zaire' [available online <http://www.stanford.edu/~sstedman/2001.readings/Zaire.htm>, accessed October, 4 2011].

from atrocities and an unknown number, perhaps several thousands, were killed. The resistance from Hutu extremists was tough. In 1997 and 1998 north-west Rwanda again suffered from a full scale military operation by ex-FAR and Interahamwe,⁴⁹⁷ The counter insurgency operations of the government troops were often ruthless, killing Hutu civilians and rebels alike. In north-west Rwanda, the ongoing violence hindered the process towards reconciliation.⁴⁹⁸

The reconciliation process became increasingly important as large numbers of Hutu refugees returned to Rwanda. The government soon acknowledged that justice alone was not enough to restore the social cohesion among the people of Rwanda. As one government official put it: 'divisionism and the genocidal ideology had to be stamped out of the people's minds.'⁴⁹⁹ All Hutu refugees therefore were compelled to go on a six-month 're-education training' called *ingando*. The Tutsi refugees who had returned to Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide had been there before.⁵⁰⁰ The government stated that *ingando* built upon an old Rwandan tradition. It claimed that there were times that community leaders would retreat from their daily lives to contemplate and solve the nation's larger problems. Scholars were critical about this story and described *ingando* as a tradition invented by the RPF.⁵⁰¹ The government used *ingando* to lay the ideological foundation for the new Rwandan society. A variety of topics was addressed, ranging from civic education and reintegration in society to HIV/Aids.⁵⁰² What was more important, a whole new history of Rwanda was introduced. In this version of Rwandan history, the European colonizers and missionaries were depicted as the bad guys. They were told to have invented the divisions and rivalry between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Pre-colonial Rwanda was described as a harmonious paradise where Banyarwanda, Rwandans, lived happily and prosperously together.⁵⁰³ What was at stake was not only the past, but also the present. The government of Rwanda replaced one distorted version of Rwandan history by another to dismantle the ethnic identity of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Not surprisingly, talking about Hutu, Tutsi and Twa became politically incorrect in the late 1990s.⁵⁰⁴ A narrative appeared that divided the people of Rwanda into new categories like victims, survivors, returnees, old caseload refugees, new caseload refugees and suspected *genocidaires*.⁵⁰⁵ Despite the new categorization, people were pressed to feel Rwandan 'again'. Unity and reconciliation became buzzwords in the new Rwanda.

An *ingando* crash course, a new history and a new way of categorizing Rwanda's people could not solve the problems that accompanied reconciliation. The confrontation between the returning

⁴⁹⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio, Paul Nantulya, Tyrone Savage *Building nations: transitional justice in the African Great Lakes region* (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation: Cape Town, 2005) 70.

⁴⁹⁸ Jeremy Sarkin 'The Necessity and Challenges of Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda' *Human Rights Quarterly* (1999) vol. 21, no. 3 782-784.

⁴⁹⁹ James Kearney 'A Unified Rwanda? Ethnicity, History and Reconciliation in the Ingando Peace and Solidarity Camps' Julia Paulson ed. *Education and Reconciliation: Exploring Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* (Continuum: London, New York, 2011) 169.

⁵⁰⁰ Idem, 155.

⁵⁰¹ Chi Mgbako 'Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda' *Harvard Human Rights Journal* vol. 18, 208.

⁵⁰² Idem, 210-211.

⁵⁰³ Kearney 'A Unified Rwanda? 160-162, Mgbako 'Ingando Solidarity Camps 220.

⁵⁰⁴ Mamdani *When Victims Become Killers* 266.

⁵⁰⁵ Mamdani includes Tutsi victims who were killed during the genocide, survivors, returnees, old and new caseload refugees in: Mamdani *When Victims Become Killers* 266. Helen Hintjens distinguishes between survivors, old and new caseload refugees and suspected *genocidaires* in: Hintjens 'Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda' *Ethnicities* (2008) vol. 8, no. 1, 14. The difference between the categorization probably derives from the fact that these scholars investigated Rwanda in a different period.

Hutu who were now called 'new caseload refugees' and the Tutsi was extremely difficult. Despite the *ingando* course, many Hutu still denied the fact that genocide had occurred in Rwanda. On their turn, the Tutsi population thought all the refugees were *genocidaires*.⁵⁰⁶ In reality, only about 10 per cent had actually participated in the killings.⁵⁰⁷ Hutu refugees who were allowed to settle again after the *ingando* course experienced political and economical marginalization. Their houses and lands were taken by Tutsi. In the cities, Tutsi dominated the economy.⁵⁰⁸ But not only the tensions between Hutu and Tutsi increased. Now that the Hutu extremist bulwark in Zaire was largely defeated, the rivalries between the various Tutsi groups became increasingly visible. The indigenous Tutsi were almost completely annihilated during the genocide. The remainders of this group were called survivors.⁵⁰⁹ The RPF and its followers formed the second group. In the new language of the government, these people were called returnees. Both the survivors and the returnees were outnumbered by a large group of about 700,000 Tutsi who returned to Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide. These so called 'old caseload refugees' were the urbanized, educated Tutsi who had taken over the businesses and shops of Hutu after they had fled the country. On the street, they were often referred to by the country they came from, Ugandans, Tanzanians or Zairians. Newcomers from different countries competed for the best positions. Slowly but steady, the Ugandans managed to take control over the government and the economy.⁵¹⁰ Whatever the government ideology claimed, the Rwandans were all but a united people.

Initiatives like the *ingando* tried to foster a new ideology of unity and reconciliation among the people of Rwanda. But justice remained an important tool for the Rwandan government to foster reconciliation among its people. By 1998, it was clear that this tool had profound limitations. Some 135,000 persons were locked up behind bars.⁵¹¹ It would take decades before all these people were tried. The Rwandan government aimed to try at least 5,000 suspects in 1998. But by the end of the year, the government had to face the fact that only 864 persons had been judged.⁵¹² The ICTR turned out to be a bitter disappointment. Only one suspect had been judged by the end of 1998. Jean-Paul Akayesu, a politician of the MDR and major of the Rwandan town Taba was found guilty of genocide. Two other trials were about to come to an end.⁵¹³ The problems of the justice system went beyond sheer numbers. The credibility of the system was not guaranteed. New judges only received a four months training and made many errors. Military and political leaders would often interfere with the juridical process. One could still benefit from family ties or connections. Many suspects of genocide

⁵⁰⁶ Gérard Prunier 'Rwanda: the Social, Political and Economic Situation' 2 WRITENET (June 1997) [available online: <http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/1018.pdf>, accessed October, 5 2011], Mamdani *When Victims Become Killers* 266-267.

⁵⁰⁷ Adelman 'The use and abuse of refugees in Zaire' [available online <http://www.stanford.edu/~sstedman/2001.readings/Zaire.htm>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁵⁰⁸ Sarkin 'The Necessity and Challenges' 785-786.

⁵⁰⁹ Mamdani *When Victims Become Killers* 267.

⁵¹⁰ Prunier 'Rwanda: the Social, Political and Economic Situation' 6.

⁵¹¹ Des Forges 'Detentions' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qCXRKN>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁵¹² Des Forges 'Trials' *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qCXRKN>, accessed October, 4 2011].

⁵¹³ General Assembly Security Council *Third annual report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994* (September 23, 1998) S/1998/857, 5-7.

could probably live with this situation since the justice system had always been weak. But things took a turn for the worse as ethnic tensions also found their way into the system. The rehabilitated justice system began to look like a disguised victor's justice system. Most of the newly appointed judges were Tutsi. Three of the four presidents of the courts of appeal were Tutsi. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary was dominated by Tutsi.⁵¹⁴ As a result, the atmosphere in the courts was often hostile towards the accused.⁵¹⁵ The focus on punitive justice also damaged the fragile social fabric at the community level. Many Hutu were terrified to be accused of participation in the genocide. An accusation by a jealous neighbor or a returning Tutsi who had an eye on your land could be enough to be sent to prison.⁵¹⁶ Detainees suffered from a lack of medical treatment, food shortages and poor hygiene.⁵¹⁷ Something would have to change to uphold the legitimacy of the justice system.

§ 7.3 Catholicism in the aftermath of the genocide

Not only the government experienced difficulties. Immediately after the genocide, the clerical landscape was as ravaged as anything else in Rwanda. The churches and parishes were left bloodied, desecrated and looted. Many had turned into mass graves. The corpses of the victims lay where they had fallen, the altars were stained with blood, latrines were full of dead bodies. Catholicism lay shattered. The social organization, both on the level of the hierarchy and the community-level, was torn apart. Many priests, nuns, religious brothers and sisters, seminarians and chaplains had died in the genocide. The Catholic Church lost up to a third of its clergy.⁵¹⁸ These people were often killed by ordinary Catholics who had participated in the killings in large numbers. Some priests and nuns had actually participated or encouraged the killings. The clerical structures were so intertwined with the administrative structures that the fall of the state almost automatically resulted in the fall of the Church.⁵¹⁹ Spiritual divisions had always characterized the Catholic Church of Rwanda. But now, the Church also faced a physical breach. The Hutu refugees that had fled to Zaire established a Catholic Church in exile as opposed to the Catholic Church of the people who had stayed in Rwanda. The bishop of Ruhengeri and almost all priests from the diocese had moved to Goma.⁵²⁰ The Church was decapitated. Archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva of Kigali, bishop Thaddée Nsengiyumva of Kabgayi and bishop Joseph Ruzindana of Byumba were killed by RPF-soldiers.⁵²¹ About 200 priests were left in Rwanda, half of the number that had been there before the genocide.⁵²² But not only Catholicism as a social organization lay shattered. The genocide also rocked the Catholic worldview to its very foundations. The churches had always been associated with God's presence.⁵²³ But where was God when his followers were slaughtered? Many ordinary Catholics felt like God had left them. They felt

⁵¹⁴ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.38.

⁵¹⁵ Sarkin 'The tension between Justice and Reconciliation' 157.

⁵¹⁶ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* Organization of African Unity 18.39.

⁵¹⁷ Sarkin 'The tension between Justice and Reconciliation' 156.

⁵¹⁸ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 394.

⁵¹⁹ Idem, 379.

⁵²⁰ Diocèse de Butare Commission pour la Relance des Activités Pastorales (CRAP) 'Document No 6: Prêtres et Religieux en exil depuis juillet 1994' (Butare, January 1995) 1.

⁵²¹ *Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance* African Rights 893-894.

⁵²² Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 395.

⁵²³ Aguilar *The Rwanda Genocide* 56-57.

betrayed by both their leaders and by God. Rituals like the celebration of mass that had always provided comfort were no longer carried out. Many people endured a profound spiritual crisis. Catholicism in Rwanda had to be rebuilt from scratch.

The divisions in the Church were deeper than ever before. One of the first messages of the clergy that found its way to the public after the genocide came from Goma, Zaire. On August 2, a group of refugee priests wrote a letter to the Pope. In this letter, they stated that the RPF was responsible for the massacres that had occurred in Rwanda. They refused to acknowledge that genocide had taken place. The priests even claimed that 'the number of Hutu civilians killed by the army of the RPF exceeds by far the Tutsi victims of the ethnic troubles.'⁵²⁴ They wrote the Pope about the fact that the Hutu population in the camps suffered from diseases and death. They thought the RPF deliberately left the indigenous Hutu population to die in the camps while they repopulated Rwanda with foreigners. The clergy in Rwanda embraced a totally different version of history. In the midst of chaos, the diocese of Butare was the first to publish several documents concerning the situation in Rwanda. The diocese quickly established a *Comité de Relance des Activités Pastorales* (Committee for the Recovery of Pastoral Activities: CRAP). The documents published by the CRAP reveal a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the clergy in Zaire. On the one hand, the authors acknowledged that the priests in the camps showed solidarity with people in difficult circumstances. On the other hand, they expressed doubts about underlying motives of the clergy. It was stated bluntly: 'Most of them, if not all, have participated in the massacre of persons within their own parishes in Rwanda.'⁵²⁵ The authors also reproached their colleagues in Zaire for blaming the RPF for the killings. According to the CRAP, the racist ideology should be blamed for causing the genocide. Despite these harsh words, the CRAP wanted the clergy to reunite. The authors called for an open dialogue to discuss both the problems of the people in Rwanda and the refugee camps.⁵²⁶

The divisions in the Church were only one of the urgent problems in the Rwandan Church. Top-level clerical structures in Rwanda were rebuilt rather quickly in the course of 1994. Rome appointed a new Apostolic Nuntius in July. The bishops who had survived the genocide and the war assembled to discuss the problems in the Church in September 1994. About one month later, Rome appointed five so called Apostolic Administrators to provisionally replace the murdered bishops and those who were about to retire.⁵²⁷ In January 1995, the bishops of Rwanda published a priority list. Three core priorities were established. First, the pastoral activities of the Church had to be resumed. Mass had to be celebrated, the sacraments had to be distributed again, schools had to be reopened. To achieve this goal, the bishops wanted to attract personnel from other countries or indigenous laity. In this way, the basic clerical infrastructure could be rebuilt. The first priority reflected a strive towards normalization of the situation. A second priority was the in-depth evangelization of the people of Rwanda. The bishops wanted to reach the people of Rwanda on a deeper level than before. Like the

⁵²⁴ Prêtres diocésains 'Lettre des prêtres des diocèses du Rwanda Réfugiés à Goma (Zaire) Adressée au très saint père, le Pape Jean Paul II' (Goma, August 2, 1994) KDC, Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 500.

⁵²⁵ CRAP 'Document No 6: Prêtres et Religieux en exil depuis juillet 1994' 3.

⁵²⁶ *Idem*, 4-5.

⁵²⁷ Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda (CEPR) 'Bref aperçu historique de l'Eglise Catholique au Rwanda (jusqu'en janvier 2010)' (CEPR : place and date unknown) 7 [available online: <http://www.eglisecatholiquerwanda.org/images/documents/apercuhistorique.pdf>, accessed November 7 2011].

government, the Church aimed to promote justice and reconciliation. According to the bishops, reconciliation revolved around the gospel of forgiveness. They also wanted to promote justice through the establishment of commissions for justice and peace on inter-diocesan, diocese and parish level.⁵²⁸ On the strategic level, the leadership of the Church committed itself to promote what Gopin called pro-peace values.⁵²⁹ Third, bishops prioritized the cooperation between the Church and the state. It was said that the mutual autonomy of the institutions had to be recognized. Reflection was needed on the cooperation in health care and education. Together with the government, the bishops also aimed to solve the refugee problem.⁵³⁰ The priority list reflected the major problems the Catholic Church had to deal with in the wake of the genocide. All but one. The bishops did not prioritize to reflect upon the role of Catholicism and the Catholic Church in the genocide. Whereas scholars like Appleby and Gopin focus on reflection and public repentance to uphold long term legitimacy, the bishops just wanted to rebuild the Church quickly.

It is only a matter of record that the Church had never been quite good in things like open dialogue and reflection. Its leadership had never seriously reflected on the role of the Catholic Church during the colonial period, its influence on the Hutu revolution or the ethnic divisions in the Church. Issues like these had always been had been swept under the carpet. Now, in the aftermath of genocide, it was almost impossible to not reflect on the role of the Church. The CRAP already called for an extensive research in September 1994.⁵³¹ Later that month, the commission argued that the leadership of the Church had to bear a large share of responsibility for 'Christianity's rack and ruin'. According to the CRAP, the clergy had to be highly self-critical without falling into the complacency trap. Moreover, they had to find a way to ask forgiveness from the believers.⁵³² In September 1994, the *Association des Conférences Episcopales d'Afrique de l'Est* (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa: AMECEA) concluded among other things that the leadership of the Rwandan Church had been obsessed with power.⁵³³ In *Dialogue*, articles appeared that called upon the Church to investigate its role in the genocide.⁵³⁴ Some clerical bodies took the call for self-criticism to heart. The *Association des Supérieures Majeures* (Association of Major Religious Superiors: ASUMA) that represented the Catholic congregations in Rwanda confessed that they 'had not remained faithful enough to the Gospel and her mission.' It admitted: 'We were mediocre and divided. We lacked insight to denounce injustice.' But confessions like these were scarce, the leadership of the Church refused to wash its dirty linen in public. A range of Catholic NGO's working in Rwanda gathered for a workshop in Belgium in January 1995. They optimistically concluded that the Church of Rwanda should be helped to reflect on the past, present and the pastoral vision on the future. The

⁵²⁸ Evêques catholiques du Rwanda *Priorités pastorales établies par les évêques catholiques du Rwanda pour la période de l'après-guerre* (Kigali, January 13, 1995) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁵²⁹ Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding* 39.

⁵³⁰ Evêques catholiques du Rwanda *Priorités pastorales établies par les évêques catholiques du Rwanda pour la période de l'après-guerre* (Kigali, January 13, 1995) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁵³¹ CRAP 'Document No 1: Tentative de Constat loyal' (Butare, September 21, 1994) 2-3.

⁵³² CRAP 'Document No 2: Propositions concrètes pour le travail de deuil' (Butare, September 26, 1994) 1-2.

⁵³³ 'l' Association des Conférences Episcopales d'Afrique de l'Est *What does the Rwanda tragedy say to Amecea Churches?* (Nairobi, September 15, 1994) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 486

⁵³⁴ M. Donnet 'Comme animaux de boucherie' *Dialogue* (June, July 1994) no. 176, 61-67.

NGO's stated that the Church needed courage to admit that they were wrong. In their view, the Church forgot about his mission and focused on rituals, regulations and structures.⁵³⁵ But the bishops were not exactly eager to hear such advice. A rift began to appear between those who wanted to investigate the Church's collective guilt and those who did not.⁵³⁶

The bishops did not want to take the time to reflect, they wanted to rebuild. The resumption of the pastoral activities was a top priority. It proved to be difficult to rebuild a church that was more or less in shock. Many priests and nuns had been killed in genocide and the war. The remainder of the clergy and the laity tried to help the people wherever they could. They were involved in the numerous burials on the hills of Rwanda. They provided spiritual, material and pastoral emergency aid.⁵³⁷ But the efforts were not coordinated. In April 1995, a year after the genocide had started, Tharcisse Gatwa, director of the Bible Society of Rwanda, travelled through Rwanda. He was disappointed to see that the churches of Rwanda did not play an important role in the reconstruction of the country. The churches were still in the process of rehabilitation themselves. According to Gatwa, they lacked true spiritual leadership like Desmond Tutu provided in South-Africa.⁵³⁸ The churches were not even present at the first annual remembrance of the genocide.⁵³⁹ As long as the basic clerical structures were not rebuilt, the second priority of the bishops, in-depth evangelization of the people of Rwanda, would remain an illusion. One could say that this focus point was based on critical reflection. The leaders feared that the Church had never reached the believers' hearts. Many analysts thought that Catholicism in Rwanda had always been superficial. It had focused too much on rituals.⁵⁴⁰ Now, the message of reconciliation and forgiveness had to find its way to the people in a more profound way. The bishops wanted to promote what they called a gospel of forgiveness. But only the CRAP launched initiatives to make these words reality on the ground.⁵⁴¹ It described a number of possibilities for churches to grieve together, pray together, repent and remember the dead together.⁵⁴² Some churches tried to start working towards reconciliation. In the parish of Ruhango, for example, Catholics were invited to talk about what had happened during the genocide. They also discussed about their possibilities to contribute to peace. Thousands of people participated.⁵⁴³ But efforts like these remained fragmented and nobody knew exactly how the work should be done.⁵⁴⁴

The third priority of the bishops dealt with the cooperation between the Church and the State. Throughout Rwandan history, religious leaders had always allied themselves with the political leaders.

⁵³⁵ Caritas Internationalis and CIDSE Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité *Final Report Workshop on Rwanda* (January 1995, Leuven) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁵³⁶ Andrew Maykuth 'Killings create a rift among Catholics' (September 8, 1998) [available online: <http://www.maykuth.com/Projects/rwan3.htm>, accessed November 12, 2011]

⁵³⁷ Claudine Vidal 'La commémoration du génocide au Rwanda Violence symbolique, mémorisation forcée et histoire officielle' *Cahiers d'études africaines* (2004) no. 175, IV. Violence symbolique, mémorisation forcée et histoire officielle

⁵³⁸ Th. Gatwa 'Impressions d'un pays' *Dialogue* (September 1995) no. 185, 61.

⁵³⁹ R. de Gendt 'L'Eglise du Rwanda n'arrive pas à surmonter la crise' *Dialogue* (May, June 1995) no. 183, 69.

⁵⁴⁰ J. Rutumbu 'Le refus des différences et la christianisation au Rwanda' *Dialogue* (November, December 1994) no. 179, 80-81, C. Lombriser 'Christianisme et génocide' *Dialogue* (May, June 1995) no. 183, 75.

⁵⁴¹ De Gendt 'L'Eglise du Rwanda' 69.

⁵⁴² CRAP 'Document No 2' 2-3.

⁵⁴³ J. Vleugels 'Le pardon est-il possible après le génocide ? Une approche pastorale' *Dialogue* (April 1995) no. 182, 40-41.

⁵⁴⁴ Redaction 'Eglise d'Ici et d'Ailleurs' *Dialogue* (March 1995) no. 181, 41.

But now, the situation was completely different. The leadership of the RPF did not exactly favor the Catholic Church. Missionaries and members of religious congregations were not allowed to return to Rwanda.⁵⁴⁵ The Church was regularly accused of participation in the genocide on the national radio and in newspapers.⁵⁴⁶ On the one hand, the leadership of the Church aimed to improve the relation with the government. In January 1995, the Apostolic Nuntius offered the government the spiritual and moral support of the Church. But the Papal envoy also had some favors to ask. He wanted the government to control the slander about the Church that was broadcast on the radio. Moreover, he asked the political leaders to release the priests and nuns that were imprisoned without any proper evidence. In the same letter, the Apostolic Nuntius asked the government to respect human rights, to have the prisoners without proper files released and for an acceleration of the juridical procedures.⁵⁴⁷ For the very first time, the Catholic Church of Rwanda was in the position to develop an independent view on society. The government was irritated to see that the bishops advocated for more security. It disliked to hear that bishops pleaded for better living conditions for the detainees. It detested to be remembered that it had to stick to the Arusha Accords.⁵⁴⁸ The government felt the bishops tested how far the Church could go.⁵⁴⁹ In their eyes, the pot called the cattle black. In September 1995, the government and the Catholic Church clashed. During a homily in Nairobi, Pope John Paul II called for forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda and Burundi.⁵⁵⁰ The government of Rwanda answered sharply that it preferred to see justice administered instead of 'superficial reconciliation'.⁵⁵¹ Incidents like these showed that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State was constantly under pressure.

In this politically tense situation, bishops and priests looked for ways to reestablish the bonds with their counterparts who had fled to Zaire. The communication was hindered by prejudices. The Catholics in Zaire thought that their brothers and sisters in Rwanda were all pro-RPF. On the other hand, Catholics in Zaire were thought to have participated *en masse* in the genocide.⁵⁵² Despite the difficulties, several letters were published in 1995. The priests in Rwanda declared that they wanted to establish a dialogue with their colleagues in the camps. They even offered to visit their brothers. This visit never took place, it was prohibited by the RPF.⁵⁵³ The situation in the camps also seemed to change. The priests in exile published another letter to the Pope. The tone of voice in this letter was considerably different from that in the first one, which was widely published. It reflected the fact that divisions also existed within the camps. The priests told the pope that the lack of communication with

⁵⁴⁵ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 398.

⁵⁴⁶ Henryk Hoser, Visiteur Apolistique and Mgr. Pierre Nguyễn Van Tô, charge d'affaires of the Nonciature Apostolique in Rwanda 'letter to Minister of Justice Nkubito' (Kigali, January 9, 1995) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁵⁴⁷ Idem.

⁵⁴⁸ Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda 'Préoccupations adressées aux autorités Rwandaises' (Kigali, January 12, 1995) published in *Dialogue* (April 1995) no. 181, 42-43.

⁵⁴⁹ Idem.

⁵⁵⁰ Pope John Paul II 'Homélie du 19 septembre au *Uhuru Park* de Nairobi (Nairobi, September 19, 1995) published in *Dialogue* (October, November 1995) no. 186, 125-126.

⁵⁵¹ A. Gasana 'Déclaration du Gouvernement Rwandais' published in *Dialogue* (October, November 1995) no. 186, 127.

⁵⁵² V. Linguyenzeza 'Les divisions dans l'Eglise du Rwanda' *Dialogue* (February, March 1996) no. 189, 10-12.

⁵⁵³ Idem, 5.

the Church in Rwanda and Rome was felt.⁵⁵⁴ On the other hand, they were glad to see that many refugees accepted the gospel. Observers from humanitarian NGO's told different stories about the situation in the camps. They saw a spiritual breakaway from the religious authorities. A host of different sects flourished and religion was practiced more freely than ever before.⁵⁵⁵ The bishop of Goma, Mgr. Ngabu, took the refugees in exile under his patronage. He published several declarations about the continuing violence.⁵⁵⁶ The bishop of Bukavu, Mgr. Munzihirwa, also tried to turn the tide. He wrote a letter to the ambassador of the United States of America to raise awareness about the situation of the refugees. Both the refugees in the camps and the indigenous population suffered from the presence of the Zairian army.⁵⁵⁷ But the refugees also tried to reestablish contact with their Rwandan counterparts. In mid-1996, the bishops and priests in Rwanda received a short but optimistic letter. The refugees wrote that they were convinced that reconciliation would be possible. They invited all bishops to come to the camps to make the first steps on the road of reconciliation.⁵⁵⁸ It seemed like priests from both sides wanted to reestablish the bonds, but the political situation made it impossible to visit each other and talk things through.

A stream of refugees returned to Rwanda after the government intervened in the camps in October 1996. For more than two years, the Church had reflected on its role in the reconstruction of Rwanda. A profound re-evangelization of the people had been prioritized. Bishops and commentators agreed that the gospel had to be preached again in a new and more profound way. The word of God had to be given a more prominent place.⁵⁵⁹ Delegations of the churches and the government had been brought together in the Newick Park Conference. They agreed that the churches fulfilled a unique role in the reconstruction of the country. The churches had to preach the word of Jesus, heal the spiritual and psychological wounds, restore the social fabric that once existed, foster justice by encouraging individuals to repent or forgive.⁵⁶⁰ High ambitions like these were formulated in meetings that had been organized over the past two years. But as the refugees returned it proved to be very difficult to put words into practice. The wounds were still open. People didn't feel safe to share their stories.⁵⁶¹ One of the few bright sparks of hope came from outside Rwanda. In the German city of Detmold, Christians from all denominations gathered for a meeting of prayer and reflection in December 1996. They were convinced that the people of Rwanda would never be reconciled with each other 'unless each party accepts to kneel down before the suffering of the other party, to confess their own offense and to humbly ask forgiveness of their victims.'⁵⁶² The twenty-four men and women gathered in Detmold provided their brothers and sisters in Rwanda with an encouraging example of confession and

⁵⁵⁴ *Idem*, 8.

⁵⁵⁵ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 397.

⁵⁵⁶ F. Ngabu 'Renoncez au mensonge (Eph. 4, 25)' (Goma, April 20, 1996) published in *Dialogue* (August, September 1996) no. 192 103-108.

⁵⁵⁷ Ch. Munzihirwa 'Lettre à l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis d'Amérique à Kinshasa' (Bukavu, April 18, 1996) published in *Dialogue* (June, July 1996) no. 191, 94-97.

⁵⁵⁸ Communauté catholique en exil 'Lettre aux évêques et au prêtres du Rwanda' (Bukavu, date unknown) published in *Dialogue* (June, July 1996) no. 191, 93.

⁵⁵⁹ Presbyterium de Kibungo 'Résolutions et recommandations au terme de la session des 10 et 11 octobre 1995' (Kibungo, October 11, 1995) published in *Dialogue* (January 1996) no. 188, 49-50.

⁵⁶⁰ Newick Park Initiative 'Le rôle de l'Eglise dans la reconstruction du Rwanda' (Ashburnham, June 6, 1996) published in *Dialogue* (August, September 1996) no. 192, 109-110.

⁵⁶¹ Auli van 't Spijker-Niemi 'Verzoening in Rwanda?' *Wereld en Zending* (1998) vol. 27, no. 1, 58-59.

⁵⁶² *Confession of Detmold* (Detmold, December 12, 1996) I.

forgiveness. The Hutu present confessed that their group had oppressed and massacred Tutsi. The Tutsi expressed remorse over the fact that their group had been arrogant and contemptuous. Western Christians confessed that their group had contributed to the increase of divisions. They regretted that their group had done nothing to prevent the genocide from happening. Hutu, Tutsi and Western Christians asked mutual forgiveness and reconciled. The Detmold confession was applauded, but also criticized, in particular because of the assumption of collective responsibility by ethnic groups.⁵⁶³ The initiative was never repeated on Rwandan soil.

Meanwhile, the efforts of the Rwandan government towards reconciliation got an increasingly ideological character.⁵⁶⁴ In the *ingando* camps, a new version of history was introduced to foster unity and reconciliation. According to the government, the Catholic missionaries were the ones to blame for ethnic divisions in Rwanda. The Church was said to have preached hatred and violence. The leadership of the Church cherished a different view. In January 1997, the bishops shared their ideas in an interview with the Catholic journal *Kinyamateka*. Parts of this interview were reproduced in *Dialogue*. Archbishop Thaddée Ntihinyurwa reflected critically upon the ideology of the government. He explained to the interviewer: 'You ask me how ethnicity can be eradicated. Is it true that Rwandans experience conflict because of ethnicity? First, we have to say: it is God who created Hutu, Tutsi and Twa.'⁵⁶⁵ The archbishop stated that ethnic identity was something given by God. Therefore, it couldn't have caused the violence. In his view, the totalitarian ideology of the *Akazu* had to be blamed. The archbishop and his colleagues all rejected the accusations that the Church had preached hatred, violence and ethnic segregation. In their view, the Church had only preached the gospel of love.⁵⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, the churches clashed with the government when it came to the way the genocide should be remembered. The disagreement resulted in a symbolical struggle over the churches where the slaughter had occurred. The authorities wished to turn a number of Catholic churches into genocide mausoleums. The remains of the bodies had to be exposed as silent witnesses of the genocide. In the view of the Church, this was an obvious attempt of the government to link the Church with the genocide in the memory of the Rwandans.⁵⁶⁷ Church leaders wanted to have the bodies buried and the churches sacralised again. In July 1997, the government nevertheless requisitioned the church in Nyamata. The bodies in the church would remain to be seen for the public. It was obligated that every celebration in this tomb-church would be conducted for Tutsi massacred in 1994.⁵⁶⁸

The bishops stood up against the ideology of unity promoted by the RPF. The leadership of the Church finally raised a prophetic voice. The bishops questioned the structural violence that was conducted by the government. They talked about the failing justice system, the situation of the detainees, violations of human rights and disappearances.⁵⁶⁹ They even dared to question the new form of cultural violence, the new version of Rwandan history, which was taught in the *ingando* camps.

⁵⁶³ A. Ngamije 'Je signe sans condition' *Dialogue* (March, April 1997) no. 197, 36.

⁵⁶⁴ Van 't Spijker-Niemi 'Verzoening in Rwanda?' 55-58.

⁵⁶⁵ Evêques Catholiques du Rwanda 'Avis des évêques catholiques du Rwanda' *Dialogue* (March, April 1997) no. 197, 84.

⁵⁶⁶ Idem, 85-90.

⁵⁶⁷ Vidal 'La commémoration du génocide au Rwanda' XIX

⁵⁶⁸ Editorial 'Defamation campaign in Rwanda' *L'Osservatore Romano* (Rome, June 2, 1999) 8.

⁵⁶⁹ Evêques Catholiques du Rwanda 'Message des évêques catholiques sur l'état de la sécurité dans le pays' (Kigali, February 27, 1997) published in *Dialogue* (May, June 1997) no. 198, 90-91.

One could say that the Church was finally free to say what it wanted now it was distanced from the government. But the Church was still divided. Some Catholics agreed with the bishops' critique on the RPF. They feared that the interim bishops, the ones who were appointed by the Pope in 1994, would be replaced by pro-RPF clerics.⁵⁷⁰ Others felt that the ideology of the RPF should not be rejected. They wanted the Church to honestly look at itself first. According to them, the bishops had to acknowledge the mistakes that had been made during a century of Catholicism in Rwanda.⁵⁷¹ But this was not about to happen. Even the Pope had told the people of Rwanda that: 'The Church... cannot be held responsible for the guilt of its members that have acted against the evangelic law; they will be called to render account of their own actions. All Church members that have sinned during the genocide must have the courage to assume the consequences of their deeds they have done against God and fellow men.'⁵⁷² The leadership of the Church was still not willing to reflect critically on the way Catholicism functioned.

The Catholic Church could not exercise moral authority as long as its leaders refused to look at themselves. This became painfully clear in April 1998. At that time, the Pope interfered with the public execution of 22 people who were convicted for their involvement in the genocide. In a message to President Pasteur Bizimungu, the Pope said that carrying out the sentences would only deepen the serious divisions within Rwanda.⁵⁷³ The relation between the Church and the State deteriorated even further. But also the media in Rwanda reacted furious. According to some, the Pope felt more pity for the killers than for the victims of the genocide.⁵⁷⁴ Others argued that the Pope should have asked for forgiveness. In the aftermath of the incident, the London-based NGO African Rights accused the Church of harboring at least 'three dozens of suspects of genocide' and named fifteen clerics.⁵⁷⁵ The refusal of the bishops to investigate the behavior of the clergy during the genocide came back like a boomerang. In September 1999, the bishops talked about the difficulties during a *visite ad limina* in Rome.⁵⁷⁶ The Pope advised them in veiled terms that they should admit that mistakes had been made in the history of the Church. The bishops were advised: 'do not be afraid to confront the reality of history.'⁵⁷⁷ But by that time, there were others who aimed to confront the Church with the reality of history in court. About six months after the visit in Rome, bishop Misago of Gikongoro was arrested and charged with helping orchestrate the genocide.

§ 7.4 Towards restorative justice

By the turn of the century, two opposing trends could be distinguished in Rwanda. On the one hand, the government of Rwandan launched important initiatives that indicated a shift from a purely punitive

⁵⁷⁰ J. Rutumbu 'L'épiscopat comme un enjeu de luttes au Rwanda: une lecture critique de Privat Rutazibwa' *Dialogue* (January 1997) no. 195, 66-67.

⁵⁷¹ J.D. Bizimana 'Réponse à l'abbé Rutumbu' *Dialogue* (March, April 1997) no. 197, 94-98.

⁵⁷² Tom Ndahiro 'Genocide and the role of the Church in Rwanda' (April 16, 2005) [available online: http://www.newsfromafrica.org/articles/art_10231.html, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁵⁷³ 'Pope urges Rwanda to call off executions' *BBC* (April 23, 1998) [available online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/82443.stm>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁵⁷⁴ Editorial 'Relations entre le gouvernement et l'Eglise catholique' *Dialogue* (May, June 1998) no. 204, 76.

⁵⁷⁵ Rakiya Omaar 'Lettre ouverte à Sa Sainteté le Pape Jean-Paul II' *African Rights* (London, May 13, 1998) 3.

⁵⁷⁶ Th. Ntihinyurwa 'Visite *ad limina* apostolorum' *Dialogue* (September, October 1998) no. 206, 101.

⁵⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II 'Affronter la vérité historique' *Dialogue* (September, October 1998) no. 206, 108.

approach to a more restorative approach.⁵⁷⁸ Reconciliation became more important. One of the first landmarks of this change was the establishment of a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in March 1999. The NURC was explicitly mandated to promote unity and reconciliation among the people of Rwanda. The existing *ingando* programs were taken over and expanded by the NURC. Traditionally, returning refugees had participated in the *ingando* camps. Now, specific programs were set up for released prisoners, demobilized soldiers and students who were about to go to university.⁵⁷⁹ The NURC also organized workshops, seminars and conferences. All activities were based on the new ideology of the Rwandan state. Time and time again, the people of Rwanda were told to reunite and overcome the ethnic divisions that had been created by the colonial rulers. That though, was but one side of the coin. The quest for unity and reconciliation had important political repercussions. In practice, the ideology of unity was not only the foundation of a new Rwanda. It was the foundation of a new Rwanda ruled by the RPF. It became increasingly clear that there was no place in Rwanda for everybody who did not agree with the RPF. In 1999, the government of Rwanda decided to 'extend' the period of political transition with another four years. Elections were postponed.⁵⁸⁰ In 2000, the tensions between RPF Tutsi from Uganda and genocide survivors resulted in a political clash. The Speaker of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the President of Rwanda resigned. Even high ranked RPF military leaders followed. All these people hated to see that the government of Rwanda slowly turned into an authoritarian regime.⁵⁸¹ In 2000, the ICTR also noticed the changes in the Rwandan political landscape. After Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte announced that she planned to investigate the crimes committed by the RPF, she could no longer count on the cooperation of the government.⁵⁸² Under the flag of unity, the divisions in Rwanda only seemed to increase.

Meanwhile, reforms in the domestic justice sector were on their way. The year 2001 marked a sea change in the Rwanda's justice and reconciliation process. The Parliament unanimously enacted the Gacaca Law. A fundamentally different form of justice emerged to deal with the problems of the national justice system. Gacaca was an local traditional conflict resolution mechanism that had existed in Rwanda for a long time. The practice of gacaca was hybrid and had taken different forms over the years. In pre-colonial Rwanda, the elders of a community would organize a gacaca meeting when conflicts arose over issues like land use, marriage or livestock. The parties involved would gather on a patch of grass to discuss the conflict. The community elders would listen to the claims of both parties. They would resolve a conflict in such a way that the bonds in the community would be rehabilitated. Usually, the offender would have to provide restitution to the victim. A gacaca meeting would often end with sharing beer or food to celebrate the reconciliation between the parties and the restoration of the communal bonds. The gacaca system changed as the colonial administration tried to gain control over the domestic judicial system. Tutsi administrators often appointed the judges, gacaca meetings were held regularly and the whole male community was encouraged to participate in the meetings. The colonial administration in Rwanda officially recognized gacaca but also formed a national court system. Traditional issues over land rights and personal disputes were often solved at gacaca courts

⁵⁷⁸ Zorbas 'Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda' 40.

⁵⁷⁹ Mgbako 'Ingando Solidarity Camps' 201-203.

⁵⁸⁰ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on' 182.

⁵⁸¹ *Idem*, 180-182.

⁵⁸² Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 20.

while more complex cases were taken to the official courts. After independence, the gacaca system changed again. The courts were now presided by local administrators and associated with state power. It turned into a semi-administrative body. Now, the government of Rwanda was about to remold the hybrid gacaca system once again to deal with the legacy of the genocide.⁵⁸³

The Gacaca Law built upon the Organic Law that was enacted in 1996. Everybody who was accused of acts put in category two, three or four of the Organic Law was answerable to the gacaca courts.⁵⁸⁴ All suspects in category one still had to face trial at a national court. Although the state tried to retain control over the process towards justice, the Gacaca Law inevitably promoted the decentralization and popularization of justice.⁵⁸⁵ Courts had to be established at the level of the cell, the sector, the district and the province. Each court consisted of a General Assembly, a Seat and a Coordinating Committee. At least 50 people had to be involved in each court.⁵⁸⁶ Thousands of honest and trustworthy Rwandans would have to be recruited to fulfill the potions at all levels. Once trained, these judges would have to try the suspects and punish them. The system promoted plea bargaining to collect evidence. A suspect who confessed the truth about his crimes and apologized in public saw his sentence reduced significantly.⁵⁸⁷ Suspects found guilty of category two crimes, for example, faced prison sentences ranging from 25 years to life imprisonment. After a guilty plea, the prison sentence would be reduced to a maximum of 15 years. Only half this time in prison would actually be spent in prison, the rest would be commuted into community services. Suspects in category three faced a maximum sentence of 7 years in prison. They would only serve half of this time in prison and the other half in community services.⁵⁸⁸ After a guilty plea, these people also saw their time in prison significantly reduced. Suspects in category four did not have to go to prison. Unlike the traditional gacaca, the new system still had a large punitive element and focused less on retributive justice. The objective of accountability prevailed in the original Gacaca Law.⁵⁸⁹

The gacaca courts knew a swift start. On October 4, 2001 elections took place for gacaca judges in every cell in Rwanda. More than 250,000 judges were elected and the elections were widely considered to be very successful. In April 2002, these judges received a six day training by experienced and educated judicial experts. The government started a pilot of gacaca in seventy-three cells in June 2002. The pilot was expanded to another 623 cells in November 2002. Various weaknesses in the system were revealed like inadequate training of the judges and logistical difficulties. The law had to be adapted before the gacaca courts could start their work throughout the country. In the mid-2000's, however, major social and political events hampered the implementation of gacaca courts throughout the country. Governmental elections were organized in mid-2003. The elections reflected the fact that that the RPF had taken over control of Rwanda. The main opposition party MDR was banned from the elections. The popular moderate Hutu party was accused of spreading 'divisionism' amongst the people of Rwanda. The election campaign was marked by arrests,

⁵⁸³ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 49-54.

⁵⁸⁴ Transitional National Assembly *Organic Law n° 40/2000 of 26/01/2001 setting up "Gacaca Jurisdictions " and organizing prosecutions for offences constituting the crime of genocide* (October 12, 2011), article 2.

⁵⁸⁵ Ingelaere 'The Gacaca courts in Rwanda' 39.

⁵⁸⁶ Transitional National Assembly *Organic Law n° 40/2000* article 5-7.

⁵⁸⁷ Ingelaere 'The Gacaca courts in Rwanda' 39.

⁵⁸⁸ Transitional National Assembly *Organic Law n° 40/2000* article 68-71.

⁵⁸⁹ Ingelaere 'The Gacaca courts in Rwanda' 38.

disappearances and intimidation. In August 2003, President Kagame was elected by 95 percent of the voters. The RPF gained about 74 percent of the votes, while the PSD won about 12 percent and the PL about 10 percent.⁵⁹⁰ Critics argued that the 'Tutsization' of the Rwandan state was now complete. The RPF had succeeded in consolidating its grip on the government, the military, the judicial system and the economic realm. Despite, or perhaps, because of, the fact that the government preached unity and reconciliation Rwanda was ruled again exclusively by one ethnic group.

One of the first major events that reflected the dominance of the Tutsi discourse on the genocide was the tenth commemoration of the genocide in April 2004. The remembrance of the genocide had always been an important issue in Rwanda. Genocide memorials had been erected all over the country. Many places of slaughter were turned into museums where the bodies of the victims were exposed as they were fallen. Every year, on April 7, the government organized a national day of mourning for the victims. One of the most important rituals on this day was the exhumation of genocide victims from mass graves and their official reburial. This ceremony was led by the President and broadcast on television.⁵⁹¹ In 2004, the commemoration was officially called the commemoration of the genocide on the Tutsi. The suffering of moderate Hutu was completely pushed to the background. The Hutu who were killed in the advance of the RPF were not mentioned. The Hutu who died in refugee camps or were hunted down in the large forests of DR Congo were not remembered. Only that part of the truth that fitted the RPF government was remembered. The people in power instrumentalised the commemoration for political purposes.⁵⁹² This caused tension among the people of Rwanda. As one Hutu woman put it: 'There will be no reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi, because Tutsi have a tendency to see themselves as the only survivors, the only victims of the genocide. When a Hutu dares to say that he is also a victim, he is quickly blamed and made to feel uneasy. So how can there be reconciliation in such a situation?'⁵⁹³

In this political and social tense context, the government eventually published a revised version of the Gacaca Law in June 2004.⁵⁹⁴ The modified law aimed to streamline and strengthen the process. Gacaca had always been an hybrid system. Again, it was adopted to the needs of the society. The levels of gacaca jurisdictions and the number of judges required to run a gacaca hearing were decreased. The number of judges was reduced to 70,000. The remaining judges were better qualified and could handle more difficult cases. The assembly also added fixed sentences for people who harassed gacaca witnesses or interfered with the court's investigations. Moreover, victims of sexual violence did not have to tell their story in front of the whole community. They could choose to give evidence to a judge or the public prosecutor in private.⁵⁹⁵ The goals of the gacaca courts that were described in the revised law were much broader than stated in the original Gacaca Law. Like the national courts, the gacaca meeting aimed to 'eradicate forever the culture of impunity in order to

⁵⁹⁰ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on' 184-187.

⁵⁹¹ Zorbas 'Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda' 41-42.

⁵⁹² C. Vidal 'Les commémorations du génocide au Rwanda'

⁵⁹³ Timothy Longman and Théoneste Rutagenwa 'Memory and Violence in post-genocide Rwanda' Edna G. Bay and Donald L. Donham ed. *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa* (University of Virginia Press: Virginia, 2006) 254.

⁵⁹⁴ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 68-70.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

achieve justice and reconciliation in Rwanda.⁵⁹⁶ Both justice and reconciliation were a top priority for the gacaca courts. But the law also mentioned that the truth about the genocide had to be revealed in the courts. The government claimed that the courts were set up 'not only with the aim of providing punishment, but also reconstituting the Rwandan Society that had been destroyed by bad leaders who incited the population into exterminating part of the Society.' This aim matched with the ideological conviction that an harmonious Rwandan society once existed but had had been disrupted by bad leadership. The gacaca courts also had to foster the suspects' reintegration into the Rwandan Society without jeopardizing the people's normal life.⁵⁹⁷ More than in the pilot phase, the gacaca courts had to function to reweave the social fabric that was torn apart by the genocide. To meet this end, gacaca hearings were about to take place in more than 11,000 cells across the country.

Many people held high expectations about gacaca. In January 2005, the gacaca courts started collecting information in every cell through confessions and accusations. People could share information about genocide suspects in the weekly meetings. The government also provided the judges with files about the suspects and government interfered if judges diverged from the Gacaca Law.⁵⁹⁸ In the initial phase, the courts only collected evidence against the suspects. The participation of the population was crucial. Many people were indeed involved. As time passed by, however, less people participated in the meetings for a host of reasons. For some, the gacaca meetings simply absorbed too much time. They needed this time to work on the land. Others were disappointed about the process. The truth was not always told. Some perpetrators told lies either to cover up for the crimes they were involved in or invented crimes to benefit from the plea bargaining scheme. Some survivors lied about the property they had lost during the genocide to receive more compensation. Neither was the whole truth told. The gacaca courts did not deal with the RPF crimes against the Hutu.⁵⁹⁹ And even when the truth was revealed during the meetings, it was often hard for both the survivors, the perpetrators and the community. Many people experienced emotional and psychological difficulties because of the horrific stories that were told in the gacaca meetings. Survivors were often frightened to see the perpetrators again. The tense social and political climate also affected the level of participation in the courts. Some people were scared to talk about their experiences.⁶⁰⁰ The gacaca meetings were difficult and confronting for all people involved. The journey towards reconciliation would be a long and difficult one.

§ 7.5 *The quest for reconciliation*

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church was sitting in the dock. Bishop Augustin Misago was charged with genocide and other crimes against humanity. Survivors accused the bishop of complicity in the murder

⁵⁹⁶ Parliament of Rwanda *Organic Law N° 16/2004 of 19/6/2004 Establishing the Organisation, Competence and Functioning of Gacaca Courts Charged With Prosecuting and Trying the Perpetrators of the Crime of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity, Committed Between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994* (Kigali, June 19, 2004) introduction.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹⁸ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 146-148.

⁵⁹⁹ *Idem*, 210.

⁶⁰⁰ *Idem*, 148-156.

of 28 children. He faced the death penalty if he would be found guilty.⁶⁰¹ Misago admitted he had been present at meetings where massacres were planned. But the bishop said he had only been there to urge the militia to stop the killings.⁶⁰² The diplomatic relations between the Catholic Church and the Rwandan government reached an all time low. *Dialogue* published a special edition that was called 'A bishop among the traitors'. It quoted the Vatican saying: 'The arrest of a bishop is an extremely serious act that goes beyond the Rwandan Church, it hurts the entire Catholic Church.'⁶⁰³ Both the Vatican and the bishops of Rwanda were enraged about the arrest and called for the bishop's release. Even the bishops of Burundi refused to meet the president of Rwanda who paid an official visit to Burundi.⁶⁰⁴ But the indignation of the Catholic Church could not hide the fact that the Church was in serious trouble. The bishop was the most prominent Catholic leader who was arrested. After a trial of about one year, Misago was found innocent. But the bishop was not the only one who faced persecution. By 1999, nineteen priests had been convicted of genocide and jailed. Two priests were even sentenced to death for their role in the massacre.⁶⁰⁵ One could argue that reconciliation was needed within the Church.⁶⁰⁶ The refusal of the Church to reflect on the role of the clergy during the genocide had major consequences. The leadership of the Church lost its credibility.⁶⁰⁷

The religious demography in Rwanda changed after the genocide. Protestants churches surged by nearly 20 percent in half a decade. The number of Catholics declined by nearly 8 percent during the same period.⁶⁰⁸ Some left the Church because they were disappointed with its leaders. Others were haunted with memories about the things that happened in their local churches during the genocide.⁶⁰⁹ Karasira Venuste, one of the tens of thousands who left the Catholic Church, explained to a reporter: 'I no longer go to Mass because of what I saw and heard. The killers yelled: 'Even God has forsaken you.' I no longer see the Church as a holy place.'⁶¹⁰ Many Rwandans turned to new charismatic communities. An evangelic movement already spread on the African continent since the 1970s, but it never reached before Rwanda because Habyarimana had always favored the traditional churches. Now, the RPF-government linked itself with the evangelical churches.⁶¹¹ Charismatic movements mushroomed all over the country. About 150 new Christian communities existed in 1997. Their number was doubled in 2000.⁶¹² The majority of the new communities were established by Tutsi

⁶⁰¹ Chris McGreal 'Bishop's arrest over genocide enrages Vatican' *The Guardian* (April 17, 1999) [available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/apr/17/chrismcgreal>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶⁰² 'Pope meets Rwandan bishop acquitted of genocide' *CNN* (September 8, 2000) [available online: <http://edition.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/09/08/vatican.rwanda/index.html?iref=allsearch>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶⁰³ 'Les réactions à l'arrestation de Mgr. Misago' *Dialogue* (March, April 1999) no. 209, 25.

⁶⁰⁴ *Idem*, 27.

⁶⁰⁵ Chris McGreal 'Bishop's arrest over genocide enrages Vatican' *The Guardian* (April 17, 1999) [available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/apr/17/chrismcgreal>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶⁰⁶ Anne Kubai 'Post-genocide Rwanda: Monumental challenges' *New Routes* (2005) vol.10, no.2, 12.

⁶⁰⁷ Brynn Muir 'Faith & Reconciliation: A Study of Christian Forgiveness in Post-Genocide' *Rwanda ISP Collection* (2010) no. 888, 28-29.

⁶⁰⁸ Anne Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape' *Exchange* (2007) no. 36, 202.

⁶⁰⁹ Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 204-205.

⁶¹⁰ Joanna S. Wong 'Rwanda's Evangelical Churches bring revival to the nation' *The Christian Post* (April 26, 2004) [available online: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rwandas-evangelical-churches-bring-revival-to-the-nation-177/>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶¹¹ *Idem*.

⁶¹² Gerard van 't Spijker 'New Christian Communities in Rwanda after the Genocide' Summary of a paper to be presented at the 11th International Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) (Port

refugees who returned to Rwanda. They did not want to engage themselves with the existing churches which they thought were guilty of complicity of genocide.⁶¹³ Others were introduced by international evangelists who came to Rwanda with well sounding mission projects like 'Operation Open Heart' or 'Hope Rwanda'.⁶¹⁴ The Catholic Church also claimed a share in the new spiritual movement. The Kibeho apparitions were officially recognized as authentic in 2001. The bishops warned the people of Rwanda against the proliferation of other visionaries.⁶¹⁵ But the bishops warned in vein. Pentecostalism offered something new. Catholic services were characterized by the Holy Mass, a rather formal ritual. The new churches offered clapping, singing and dancing.⁶¹⁶ Catholic leaders had disappointed many of their followers. The leaders of the new churches offered spiritual, material and social support. Catholic communities were often large. The new churches offered small fellowship groups where individuals experienced a sense of belonging.⁶¹⁷

Scholars argued that even if a religion was part of the problem in a conflict, it can be part of the solution in the process towards peace. In this process, a first step would be for religious leaders to acknowledge their mistakes and come up with a public repudiation of the sins of the past.⁶¹⁸ The Rwandan Church was about to reach a milestone that was perfectly suited for such a public confession of guilt. The Church was to celebrate its centenary in the year 2000. This jubilee coincided with the worldwide Catholic Year of Jubilee. In Rwanda, the three-year preparation period for the Year of Jubilee was marked by reflection.⁶¹⁹ But even after a process of self-examination the Church did not ask for forgiveness. Yes, Archbishop Ntihinyurwa did ask forgiveness for the lack of courage of certain Church members, and for the crimes committed by certain Christians.⁶²⁰ But Ntihinyurwa did not ask for forgiveness for the collective mistakes that had been made in hundred years of Catholicism. Catholicism in Rwanda was not as easy to change as it could have been according to the scholars of religious peacebuilding. There are indications, however, that the Catholic Church in Rwanda contributed to the peace process. Unfortunately, the role of the Catholic Church in the reconciliation process has not been researched thoroughly. Most scholars concentrated on the Church's complicity in the genocide and the loss of legitimacy in the aftermath of the genocide. Others wrote about the rise of charismatic movements in Rwanda. In general, one could say that scholars focused on the weaknesses of the Catholic Church. The contributions of Catholicism to the reconciliation process

Dickson, Malaysia 2004) [available online: http://www.missionstudies.org/archive/conference/1papers/Gerard_spijker.htm, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶¹³ Van 't Spijker *Indicible Rwanda* 69-72.

⁶¹⁴ Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 206.

⁶¹⁵ Jean-François Mayer 'There will follow a New Generation and a New Earth' From Apocalyptic Hopes to destruction in the movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God' James R. Lewis ed. *Violence and New Religious Movements* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011).

⁶¹⁶ Wong 'Rwanda's Evangelical Churches bring revival to the nation' *The Christian Post* (April 26, 2004) [available online: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rwandas-evangelical-churches-bring-revival-to-the-nation-177/>, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶¹⁷ Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 205.

⁶¹⁸ Gopin 'Religion as an Aid and Hindrance' 15.

⁶¹⁹ Fabien Rwakareke 'La Communauté Ecclesiale de Base (CEB) comme Espace de Paix et de Réconciliation' Paper presented on a conference called The Church in Rwanda : Reconciliation through Base Communities (Bujumbura, July 24-28, 2006) [available online: <http://cpn.nd.edu/topics-in-catholic-peacebuilding/reconciliation/reconciliation-in-rwanda-through-base-communities/>, accessed November 12, 2011] 2.

⁶²⁰ Ch. Ntampaka 'Controverses sur la responsabilité de l'Église catholique au Rwanda' *Dialogue* (March, April 2000) no. 215, 50.

have not yet been investigated. As a consequence, the information about the Catholic Church is more fragmented as this thesis reaches the present. It is too soon, therefore, to provide the reader with a thorough reflection on the contribution of the Catholic Church in the reconciliation process. In the remainder of this thesis, some trends that can be discerned will be described.

Six years after the genocide, the Catholic Church was still the single largest church in Rwanda. It was a powerful player in civil society.⁶²¹ About half of the Rwandan population was Catholic in 2000.⁶²² The Church held a place of great influence in Rwandan society. It was omnipresent in the education sector. The Catholic Church ran 896 primary schools throughout the country, about 43 percent of the total number of schools. The clergy managed 89 secondary schools, about a quarter of the total number.⁶²³ The Catholic Church was also highly present in the health sector. It ran 7 hospitals, 100 health centers and 79 social work organizations.⁶²⁴ It is estimated that this was about a quarter of the total number of health facilities in Rwanda. One should not underestimate the resilience of the structures that the Catholic Church had built during a period of 100 years. The Church sought to use its organizational strength to participate in the reconciliation process. It received support from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) to get the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP) up and running again.⁶²⁵ The CEJP was responsible for programs of unity and reconciliation fostered by the Church.⁶²⁶ Justice and Peace commissions were also present at the diocesan and parish level. In 2001, Archbishop Ntihinyurwa asked the diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions to implement a system of truth-telling, public confession and requests for forgiveness.⁶²⁷ A large program was organized which combined Scripture study and reconciliation ministry. This program was led by parish justice and peace commissions. Through activities like these, the Church' perceptions of reconciliation and justice influenced the Rwandan public consciousness.⁶²⁸

The rehabilitation of the *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base* (Small Christian Communities: SCC's) became one of the focus points of the reconstruction of the religious community.⁶²⁹ The SCC's had to be transformed from an administrative structure into a system of communities. They had to be places where families could experience renewed trust and mutual understanding. In 2002, this was not the case. A research of CRS-Rwanda showed that the level of trust in the base communities was low. The people who wanted to talk about justice or reconciliation were isolated. Many SCC's functioned

⁶²¹ Kees Ton, interview with the author (The Hague, July 2011).

⁶²² Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 202.

⁶²³ Anna Obura 'Never Again : Educational reconstruction in Rwanda' *International Institute for Educational Planning* [available online: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001330/133051e.pdf>, accessed November 12, 2011] 111-112.

⁶²⁴ Ntampaka 'Controverses sur la responsabilité' 37.

⁶²⁵ Maureen Capps *Rwanda Program Annual Public Summary of Activities* Catholic Relief Services (Kigali, 2010) 6-7.

⁶²⁶ Jean Claude Ngendanumwe 'Expériences de réconciliation dans les Communautés Ecclésiales de Base' Paper presented on a conference called The Church in Rwanda : Reconciliation through Base Communities (Bujumbura, July 24-28, 2006) [available online: <http://cpn.nd.edu/topics-in-catholic-peacebuilding/reconciliation/reconciliation-in-rwanda-through-base-communities/>, accessed November 12, 2011] 1.

⁶²⁷ Jeffrey Odell Korgen 'Forgiveness Unbound Reconciliation education is helping Rwanda to heal' *America The National Catholic Weekly* (September 10, 2007) [available online: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10171, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶²⁸ Idem.

⁶²⁹ Rwakareke 'La Communauté Ecclesiale de Base' 1-3.

mainly as places of rituals and common prayer. Scholars often emphasized the positive contributions of rituals to peace processes. But in Rwanda, it was said that there was a 'danger of returning to old mass ritualistic and sacramental practices without a real change of heart and a bold commitment for justice, truth, respect for life and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.'⁶³⁰ The diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions and CRS-Rwanda worked together to change this. About 20,000 diocesan staff members, parish leaders and base community animators received a peacebuilding training from CRS in community trauma healing, conflict management, Catholic social teaching and human rights.⁶³¹ Once trained, the local parish peace and justice commission members were equipped to bring about change in their communities. They fostered examinations of conscience in the BEC's and encouraged their fellow believers to talk about the things they had done during the genocide. The approach seemed to bear fruit. According to an evaluation report that was published in 2006, the climate in the SCC's had changed over the years. The religious communities slowly turned into places where people could talk about what had happened during the genocide, the problems in the prisons and their daily chores. Here, restoration of relationships took place in a religious context. But the progress was fragile and could easily be damaged by social and political tensions.⁶³²

The Catholic Church not only focused on the restoration of the social fabric in the religious communities. It also interfered with the gacaca process. Gacaca dealt with truth, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. Issues like these were indissolubly linked with religion. The bishops urged the people several times to participate in gacaca meetings.⁶³³ Survivors were asked to refrain from hatred. They were reminded of the words of Jesus: 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.'⁶³⁴ Detainees were told to meditate about the words of John: 'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'⁶³⁵ But the interference of Catholicism with gacaca went further than occasional pastoral letters. In many prisons, religious detainees and pastors formed special confession teams. They encouraged prisoners to confess before they would go to gacaca.⁶³⁶ Moreover, hundreds of members of Catholic parish justice and peace commissions were elected judges. CRS-Rwanda estimated that 80 percent of the judges had received their training.⁶³⁷ In many rural communities,

⁶³⁰ Simon Gasiberege 'Conversion, aveu et échange de pardon au Rwanda : le processus de réconciliation chez les individus et dans les communautés ecclésiales de base' Paper presented on a conference called The Church in Rwanda : Reconciliation through Base Communities (Bujumbura, July 24-28, 2006) [available online: <http://cpn.nd.edu/topics-in-catholic-peacebuilding/reconciliation/reconciliation-in-rwanda-through-base-communities/>, accessed November 12, 2011] 11-12.

⁶³¹ Jeffry Odell Korgen 'Forgiveness Unbound Reconciliation education is helping Rwanda to heal' *America The National Catholic Weekly* (September 10, 2007) [available online: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10171, accessed November 12, 2011].

⁶³² Gasiberege 'Conversion, aveu et échange de pardon au Rwanda' 13.

⁶³³ Evêques Catholiques du Rwanda 'Pour la période des Juridictions Gacaca, Pour une Justice qui Réconcilie' (Kigali, June 13, 2002) and Evêques Catholiques du Rwanda 'Message des évêques Catholiques Exhortant les Chrétiens a prendre une part active aux Juridictions Gacaca' (Kigali, March 27, 2006).

⁶³⁴ *The Holy Bible (New International Version)* Matthew 7:12.

⁶³⁵ Idem, 1 John 1: 8-9.

⁶³⁶ Timothy C. Morgan 'Healing genocide' *Christianity Today Magazine* (April 2004) vol.48, no. 4 [available online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/april/4.76.html>, accessed November 13, 2011] 2.

⁶³⁷ Jeffry Odell Korgen 'Forgiveness Unbound Reconciliation education is helping Rwanda to heal' *America The National Catholic Weekly* (September 10, 2007) [available online: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10171, accessed November 13, 2011].

unofficial Christian Gacaca meetings were organized. In these meetings, Church officials would encourage the returned prisoners to confess their sins and ask forgiveness from the community and their victims. Survivors were stimulated to grant forgiveness to the perpetrators.⁶³⁸ It is difficult to determine the exact nature of the influence of Catholicism on gacaca. Many factors influenced people's behavior in the courts. The government, for example, promoted confession by reducing the punishment for those who pled guilty.⁶³⁹ Others requested forgiveness because they thought it would hasten their reintegration in the community.⁶⁴⁰ Who can tell what the influence of religion was in such a complicated mixture of religious, pragmatic, political and social motives?

Extensive field work is necessary to be able to reflect on the exact nature of the influence of Catholicism on the reconciliation process. Based on the resources available, however, it can be argued that the Catholic worldview influenced the way Rwandans dealt with the genocide and the reconciliation process. There are many examples of Rwandans who interpreted the genocide in a religious, spiritual framework. Gitera Rwamuhuzi, one of the killers, explained his actions to a journalist: 'It was as if we were taken over by Satan. We were taken over by Satan. When Satan is using you, you lose your mind. We were not ourselves.'⁶⁴¹ Scholars noticed that many Rwandans blamed the genocide on the devil. Political scientist Sarah Lischer remarked 'At first, people would say, 'We don't know why it happened' because it was incomprehensible. Then, people would turn to a more spiritual explanation.'⁶⁴² Biblical ideas, stories and songs formed a strong spiritual backbone for many people to fall back on.⁶⁴³ Christian ideas about truth and forgiveness also influenced the reconciliation process. The popular perception of truth-telling in gacaca was colored by the Christian idea that 'the truth will set you free.'⁶⁴⁴ Jesus used this metaphor to explain to his audience that they had to recognize the fact they were sinful. Only then, they could be given the liberation gift of salvation. In the context of gacaca, many Rwandans emphasized the liberating potential of confession and truth telling.⁶⁴⁵ In the popular perception, forgiveness was one of the major goals of gacaca.⁶⁴⁶ Many Rwandans felt that the survivors had to forgive the perpetrators because this was a Christian obligation. Catholic preachers often referred to Matthew: 'For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.'⁶⁴⁷ As one Catholic author declared, 'That's it. You have to forgive if you want to be forgiven.'⁶⁴⁸ Forgiveness became the social norm.⁶⁴⁹

It has been said in this thesis that reconciliation revolves around the restoration of 'fractured individual and communal relationships after conflict, with a view towards encouraging meaningful

⁶³⁸ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 66-67.

⁶³⁹ *Idem*, 300

⁶⁴⁰ *Idem*, 202-203.

⁶⁴¹ 'Taken over by Satan' *BBC* (April 2, 2004) [available online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/3582011.stm>, accessed November 13, 2011].

⁶⁴² Lisa O'Donnell 'Rwandan genocide was work of 'devil'; Rwandans still recovering' *Winston-Salem Journal* (July 6, 2009) available online: <http://www2.journalnow.com/news/2009/jul/06/genocide-was-work-of-devil-ar-156859/>, accessed November 13, 2011].

⁶⁴³ Kees Ton, interview with the author (The Hague, July 2011).

⁶⁴⁴ *The Holy Bible (New International Version)* John 8: 32.

⁶⁴⁵ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 196-197.

⁶⁴⁶ *Idem*, 279.

⁶⁴⁷ *The Holy Bible (New International Version)* Matthew 6:14-15.

⁶⁴⁸ Muir 'Faith & Reconciliation' 15.

⁶⁴⁹ *Idem* 22.

interaction and cooperation between former antagonists.⁶⁵⁰ In Rwanda, the government promoted justice as the road to reconciliation. The question whether justice has been done in the gacaca courts is still much debated. But justice was not the single most important goal of gacaca. The government claimed that justice was a precondition for reconciliation. Catholic ideas about truth, justice and forgiveness influenced the justice and reconciliation process. But did the focus on justice and forgiveness bring reconciliation? Along the track, the reconciliation process became heavily politicized. The political and religious leaders talked about truth. But they did not tell the truth about their behavior before and during the genocide. The government slowly turned into a regime with dictatorial characteristics. Under the flag of unity and reconciliation the population was silenced. This became a major obstacle on the way to reconciliation. The Hutu woman who has been quoted before put it blunt: 'There will be no reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi, because Tutsi have a tendency to see themselves as the only survivors, the only victims of the genocide. When a Hutu dares to say that he is also a victim, he is quickly blamed and made to feel uneasy. So how can there be reconciliation in such a situation?'⁶⁵¹ The Church added the word forgiveness to the reconciliation process. Forgiveness became a religious obligation. One wonders if true reconciliation flows from an obligation to forgive. According to some, the exclusive focus on justice and forgiveness left the Rwandans with psychological wounds.⁶⁵² Others fear that the true reconciliation process could only begin after gacaca.⁶⁵³ True reconciliation, if it can ever be reached, can only be established in a political and religious context where people feel free to tell the truth about what happened to them, where people feel free to express their ethnic identity, where people feel free to grant or withhold forgiveness. It seems like Rwanda has to go a long way before its people can truly reconcile.

⁶⁵⁰ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 44.

⁶⁵¹ Longman and Rutagenwa 'Memory and Violence in post-genocide Rwanda' 254.

⁶⁵² John Steward 'Only Healing Heals' in: Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman (eds) *After genocide transitional justice, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation in Rwanda and beyond* (Hurst & Company, London, 2008) 175.

⁶⁵³ Madelon de Wit, interview with the author (The Hague, July 2011).



Life after the genocide. A Rwandan woman tilling the soil.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

*'I wondered how people could change in such a short time. How could someone turn against you who has been your friend—who you've lived with in the same neighborhood without any problem, your kids visiting each other—and all of a sudden they start calling you names and killing you.'*⁶⁵⁴

Jeanne Sinunuayabo, genocide survivor

Who can truly understand what happened in Rwanda in April 1994? Who can imagine why young men took up their machetes day after day? Who can grasp why between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed as a part of a political strategy? This thesis presents an effort to understand the role of Catholicism in processes of violence and peace in the Rwandan society. Only a few decades ago, scholars would probably argue that this subject was irrelevant. But in recent years, the study of religion became highly topical in academic circles. Many scholars focused on religiously motivated terrorism or the religious dimension the new wars that erupted in the 1990's. Only a few investigated the contribution of religion to peace processes. It has been described in the *status questionis* that this paper can be situated in that small stream of publications about the contributions of religion to peace processes. It is located on the intersection of history and conflict studies and aims to contribute to both the field of religious peacebuilding and the study of Rwandan history. The thesis revolves around a central question: *How did the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide, affect its role in the peace process?* Religion is always part of a larger societal context. It is shaped by, and has an effect on, political, cultural, and economic processes. This is particularly true for Rwanda. Consequently, this thesis places the contributions of Catholicism to violence and peace in both a theoretical and a historical context. The role of Catholicism in Rwandan history has been researched from the very beginning in 1900 until the mid-2000s. The scope of the research made it possible to discern trends in the history of the Church. In this conclusion, the main themes in each period will be summarized and elaborated upon.

§ 8.1 Catholicism before the genocide

The role of Catholicism in pre-genocide Rwanda has been described in the first five chapters of this thesis. Each chapter started with a reflection on theoretical insights on the role of religion in different stages of conflict, violence and the peace process. These theoretical paragraphs served as a mirror to the situation in Rwanda and highlighted the possibilities of religion in different contexts. Theories of different scholars have been used to describe the dynamics of violence, conflict and peace. They are all related to each other. Galtung's ideas about violence and conflict, which have been described in

⁶⁵⁴ Lane Hartill 'Love and Forgiveness After Rwanda Genocide' *Catholic Relief Services* [available online: <http://crs.org/rwanda/love-and-forgiveness/>, accessed December 5, 2011].

chapter four, play an important role in this thesis. They illuminate the fact that direct violence is always rooted in violent structural and cultural patterns. Galtung uses the term direct violence to refer to killings or rape and the term structural violence to refer to institutionalized violent process like exploitation. He argues that both direct violence and structural violence are embedded in cultural violence.⁶⁵⁵ In Rwanda, misconceptions about history and ethnicity became embedded in the culture. Scholarly approaches about the origins of ethnicity have been described in chapter two. It has been shown that ethnicity is not some ancient, primordial 'given'. Ethnic ethnicity is socially constructed.⁶⁵⁶ The ideas about race and ethnicity that were introduced in Rwanda by the colonial rulers could be described as cultural violence. They glorified the Tutsi minority and discriminated the Hutu majority. This led to different forms of structural violence, discrimination and exclusion of Hutu. After the Hutu revolution in 1959, the tables were turned and the myths about history and ethnicity were used against Tutsi. Many Tutsi fled to neighboring countries. For decades, the structural violence against Tutsi only turned into direct violence in times of political turbulence. At this stage, there was no direct violence between Hutu and Tutsi. Only in the 1990s, an army of mainly Tutsi refugees invaded Rwanda.

Scholarly theories about ethnicity and different levels of violence illuminated the fact that Rwanda's population was prone to conflict as a result of the social construction of ethnicity. But what could Catholicism theoretically do to counter these violent tendencies? What is religion exactly and how can it promote peace? In this thesis, Ter Haar's functional definition of religion has been used to define Catholicism. It has been explained in the third chapter that Catholicism consists of a set of religious ideas, rituals, a social organization (both a hierarchy and a community) and spiritual experiences.⁶⁵⁷ They derive from a religious meaning system, a worldview with a strong normative, moral character. In chapter five, it has been explained that religion in all its facets has the capacity to foster peace. When it comes to conflict prevention, most scholars focused on religion as a social organization and the influence of religious ideas. Gopin, for example, focuses on peace promoting values that are existent in all religions.⁶⁵⁸ Sampson argues that religious actors can use their ideas and organizational capacity to counter cultural and structural violence. Religious leaders can stand up as advocates, prophets who use their moral authority to demand justice for the oppressed. They can also combine their religious values and ideas about peace and their organizational capacities to educate their adherents in peace programs.⁶⁵⁹ Once a conflict escalates into direct violence, religious actors can get involved in conflict containment or conflict resolution. They can function as mediators between the conflicting parties or act as observers to discourage violence by their presence.⁶⁶⁰ But religion is not always well positioned to play a role in peace processes. Appleby introduced the concepts 'strong religion' and 'weak religion' to refer to the potential of religion in a peace processes. He explains that both internal and external factors determine whether religious actors can be engaged meaningfully in peace processes. A strong religion is well positioned: its functions independent from

⁶⁵⁵ Galtung 'Cultural Violence' 295.

⁶⁵⁶ Joireman *Nationalism and political identity* 54-56.

⁶⁵⁷ Ter Haar 'religion: source of conflict or resource for peace?' 22.

⁶⁵⁸ Gopin quoted in Moshe Cohen 'Untitled book review' *Association for Jewish Studies* 155.

⁶⁵⁹ Sampson 'Religion and Peacebuilding' 280-294.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

the state, its institutions are well developed, its adherents are literate in its moral teachings and experienced in its rituals and spiritual tradition.⁶⁶¹ But not all religions are that well positioned.

So far, so good, as far as the theory goes. It is clear that violence knows different levels and that there are many ways in which religion can get involved in peace processes. How did Catholicism actually function in Rwanda in the period leading up to the genocide? Catholicism influenced the Rwandan society in many ways for almost a century. One of the major issues that run as a common theme through Rwandan history are the ideas of the Church about ethnicity. The first missionaries preached about a God who created the earth and looked after his creation. They told the people of Rwanda about God who became human in Jesus Christ to save the world. They called upon the people to convert to Christianity.⁶⁶² As a matter of fact, they preached what you might expect from missionaries. But the mindset of the missionaries was colored by the scientific ideas of the early twentieth century. It has been explained in chapter two that the meaning of the concepts Tutsi and Hutu evolved over time. By the time the first colonizers arrived, they had a political meaning.⁶⁶³ But the Europeans interpreted the differences between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa according to the scientific conventions of their days and added a racial connotation. Theories about race-inequality were used to legitimize the superior power position of the Europeans and subsequently the Tutsi. These ideas were supported by a socio-religious idea called the Hamitic thesis.⁶⁶⁴ In this view, Tutsi were perceived to be descents of Ham, son of the biblical figure Noah. Originally, they were said to have come from Ethiopia. Tutsi were thought to have introduced civilization in Rwanda upon their arrival. These ideas were spread through the education system of the Church. The Catholic Church long favored Tutsi over Hutu. But in 1959, the Church shifted support. Young missionaries arrived with ideas about democracy and equality. In a violent revolution, the Hutu came to power with support of the Church. The myths about Rwanda's early history were now turned against Tutsi. Hutu were seen as the authentic Rwandans. Tutsi were portrayed as foreign invaders and oppressors. Many Tutsi fled to refugee camps just outside Rwanda's borders. The Church never recognized the fact that its missionaries had introduced a dangerous form of cultural violence in Rwandan society. Neither did the Church acknowledge that the Hamitic thesis legitimated structural violence in both the state and the Church. Tutsi were discriminated through quota-systems. The distorted ideas about history and ethnicity stayed present until they eventually played a role in the legitimation of the genocide.

Another theme running through the history of the Rwandan church is its social, economic and political power. In the early 1900s, the first converts were Hutu peasants who turned to Christianity because they received protection from the missionaries. Initially, many Tutsi leaders rejected Christianity because they felt threatened by the power of the newcomers. Only in the 1930s, Tutsi began to turn to Catholicism *en masse*. By that time, the bonds between the Church and the colonial rulers were tight. The Church educated a new generation of Tutsi who wanted to get a job within the Belgium administration.⁶⁶⁵ For the Tutsi, a conversion to Christianity paved the way for a place in the

⁶⁶¹ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 77.

⁶⁶² Kalibwami *Le Catholicisme et la société Rwandaise* 117.

⁶⁶³ Mamdani *When Victims become Killers* 74-75.

⁶⁶⁴ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 65-69.

⁶⁶⁵ Rutayisire *La christianisation du Rwanda* 68-69.

rising political power of the Belgians.⁶⁶⁶ As a consequence, many people turned to Catholicism. The Catholic Church continued to have a prominent economic, social and political place in the post-colonial period. Many Hutu joined the Church after independence in 1962. They favored the Church because it had played a major role in the 1959 Hutu revolution. In this period, the Church became the second largest employer after the state. It served as an important portal to social and economic upward mobility.⁶⁶⁷ The bonds with the state remained tight as Rwanda slowly transformed into an authoritarian state under President Habyarimana in the 1980s. It became difficult to distinguish between the Church and the state. President Habyarimana involved religious leaders in political institutions. The economic and political power of the Church made it possible to exercise a considerable degree of social power throughout the twentieth century. Mass attendance was high, adultery was prohibited and prostitution was punished.

Scholars often focused on the strength of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. But that is only one side of the coin. The divisions and weaknesses of the Catholic Church of Rwanda in the period preceding the genocide should not be underestimated. Ethnic divisions haunted the Church. On the surface, the Catholic Church seemed to be the place where Hutu and Tutsi were united. But ethnicity was a rock of offense. This became highly visible during the Hutu revolution. By that time, Tutsi clergy allied themselves with Tutsi politicians. Younger missionaries provided Hutu's with education and career opportunities within the Church.⁶⁶⁸ In the decades that followed, the Church was the only institution where Tutsi could have some sort of a career. But due to structural discrimination, they never made it to the most important positions. The Church never reflected upon the racial tensions, but they never ceased to exist. The Church, however, not only knew racial divisions. In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, disagreements arose between conservative and progressive clergy.⁶⁶⁹ The first group tried to hold on to the close relation with the state. On the other hand, the progressives wanted to see the Church regain its independence from the state. They wanted to have the reforms of the Second Vatican Council implemented. A third weakness of the Church was probably most difficult to recognize. The Church lacked a profound influence on its adherents. The Catholic community was large but not well educated in the doctrines and traditions of the Church. In 1992, the bishops stated: 'many Rwandans have not yet heard of the Gospel and even those baptized were not really converted: some go to Mass and afterwards get involved in killing their neighbors, looting and other acts of hatred and violence.'⁶⁷⁰ Rituals like baptism and the Holy Mass were widely practiced. But like the leadership of the Church, many ordinary Catholics had never developed theological ideas about violence, justice and war.

The weaknesses of the Catholic Church became increasingly visible in the turmoil of the early 1990s. By that time, Rwanda faced an economic and a political crisis. Western countries had forced President Habyarimana into a democratization process. This process became increasingly violent as the tensions between political parties heightened. In this already tense situation, an army of mainly

⁶⁶⁶ Linden *Church and Revolution in Rwanda* 152.

⁶⁶⁷ Van Hoywegen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 382.

⁶⁶⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 31-32.

⁶⁶⁹ Pope John Paul II 'Discours aux Evêques de Rwanda en visite "Ad limina Aposolorum"' (Rome, May 27, 1897) printed in *Dialogue* (Sept.-Oct. 1987) no. 124, 47-53.

⁶⁷⁰ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 200.

Tutsi rebels invaded the country from the refugee camps in Uganda in October 1990. The bishops published several letters about democratization, peace and unity among the people of Rwanda. But the divisions within the leadership of the Church led to vague compromises.⁶⁷¹ The practical efforts of the Church to mediate in the conflict between the government and the RPF were initially more successful. An ecumenical body, the *Comité des Contacts* was set up that consisted of ten church leaders. The *Comité des Contacts* succeeded in bringing the RPF and the government to the negotiation table. But the church leaders withdrew from process afterwards. They were too inexperienced and ill prepared to participate in the real negotiations.⁶⁷² During the peace processes, war and violence erupted several times. Within the opposition, many parties did not agree with Habyarimana's compromises with the RPF. It could be expected that Hutu extremists rejected the agreement that was signed in Arusha in August 1993. They saw their country delivered into the hands of an aggressive Tutsi rebel army. Moreover, they were threatened by the fact that they were about to lose their privileged position. The *Comité des Contacts* tried again to mediate but failed. The bishops were silent and no longer published pastoral letters. Only courageous individuals and religious organizations continued to speak out for peace as the situation deteriorated.⁶⁷³ But they could not counter the genocidal forces that strengthened their hold over the people of Rwanda.

§ 8.2 Catholicism during the genocide

The sixth chapter that concerns the role of Catholicism in the genocide starts with a theoretical paragraph about the concept genocide. The Polish-Jewish lawyer Lemkin coined the concept genocide in a book about the holocaust. The concept is much debated, particularly because the United Nations (UN) considers genocide to be a crime against international law. In the UN-Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it is defined as 'the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group.'⁶⁷⁴ Scholars tried to develop models to describe the process towards genocide. Stanton introduced an influential framework in the 1990s. He distinguishes between eight stages of genocide.⁶⁷⁵ The first stages take place at the level of cultural and structural violence and are called classification and symbolization. The genocidal process begins to turn from structural to direct violence at the stage of dehumanization. From there, it turns to organization, polarization between the groups, the preparation of the killings, and the actual extermination. A genocide is often followed by denial.⁶⁷⁶ Religion has the opportunity to foster or counter genocidal tendencies at each stage. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

⁶⁷¹ Gatwa *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology* 196-199.

⁶⁷² Gatwa 'Church involvement in Conflict resolution' 8.

⁶⁷³ Komissie Rechtvaardigheid en Vrede, Werkgroep Centraal Afrika 'Verslag van de bijeenkomst van 27 mei 1994' (Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles) KDC, Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, Commissie Justitia et Pax, Werkgroep Centraal Afrika: Rwanda, serial no. 486.

⁶⁷⁴ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* Adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the U.N. General Assembly (9 December 1948).

⁶⁷⁵ Gregory Stanton 'Eight stages of genocide' (US state Department: Washington, 1996) [Available online: <http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/8StagesBriefingpaper.pdf>, accessed August 30, 2011].

⁶⁷⁶ Stanton 'Eight stages of genocide' 3-4.

published a paper about the role of religion in genocide prevention.⁶⁷⁷ The research institute described various ways for religion to contribute to genocide prevention. Religious institutions can function as a bulwark against genocide, religious leaders can mobilize their communities to stand up against violence, and religious ideas about non-violence can be promoted in the communities.⁶⁷⁸ Like most academic publications, the paper of the USIP focuses on the possibilities of religion as a social organization and religious ideas. But it has to be added that the unique moral character of religion is also an essential characteristic in the face of genocide. Religion is a powerful constituent of norms and values. It addresses existential issues. These unique features could have important repercussions if religious actors choose to counter genocidal tendencies. If religious leaders choose to radically denounce or support a genocidal process that would probably have a major impact on their followers.

In Rwanda, things turned out different from what they could have according to the theory about genocide and religion. The genocide in Rwanda started on April 7, 1994 after the airplane of President Habyarimana was shot down. A small group of Hutu extremists at the highest level of the army, the secret service and certain political parties managed to force Rwanda's population into a genocide. They used the genocide to unite the Hutu behind them. These people aimed to annihilate all important Hutu political opponents and every Tutsi in the country. Meanwhile, they wanted to win the war against the RPF. The Church was probably the only Rwandan institution that could take a stand against the genocide. The bishops could use their network to reach the Rwandan population with a strong moral message. But the Rwandan bishops wasted the chance to use to use their moral weight to counter the genocide.⁶⁷⁹ Pope John Paul II was the only Catholic leader who strongly denounced the massacres at an early stage. The bishops reacted slowly and only halfheartedly condemned what they called the 'ethnic violence' in four letters. Neither the ordinary Catholics nor the priests and nuns could count on the moral, spiritual or practical support of their leaders. The divisions that had always characterized the Church now reached an all time low. Many Tutsi clergy were killed by their catechists, by militia groups and soldiers. A small number of priests and nuns even participated in the killings. Many ordinary Catholics joined in the killings because they feared either the RPF or the consequences of resistance. The social pressure was enormous and moral convictions were under extreme pressure. Many Tutsi fled to the churches and parishes where their parents had been saved during periods of turmoil. But this time, the holy places were not safe. Many Tutsi were killed in churches and parishes.

Both scholars and politicians blamed the Catholic Church for complicity in the genocide. The Church had a large share in the formation of the ethnic identity of Hutu and Tutsi. It contributed to the classification of Rwanda's people into Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Did Stanton not say that classification was the first stage of genocide? The Church promoted a history of Rwanda that pictured Tutsi as rulers and Hutu as servants. Did Stanton not learn that symbolization was the second stage of genocide? The leadership of the Church supported the state that eventually turned into a genocidal power. In the

⁶⁷⁷ Susan Hayward *Averting Hell on Earth Religion and the Prevention of Genocide* Special Report 248 (United States Institute of Peace: Washington, 2010) 7-9.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁷⁹ Longman *Christianity and Genocide* 191 and Des Forges 'The Clergy' " *Leave None to Tell the Story* [available online <http://bit.ly/qwXfwz> , accessed August, 31 2011].

aftermath of the genocide, the leadership of the Church denied any responsibility for the massacres. Did Stanton not say that denial was the last stage of genocide? Many of these scholars and politicians understand Rwandan history from the perspective of the genocide. They describe it as a prelude to genocide. The history of Rwanda shows the strength of (perceived) ethnic bonds. It shows the immense power of stories and ideas on people's behavior. The missionaries introduced the idea of race-inequality in the early 1900's. Half a decade later, these ideas were scientifically totally outdated. But the 'reversed edition' of the Hamitic thesis stayed present in the popular perception of ethnicity. The Church never reflected upon these ideas. In this way, it contributed to and sustained cultural and structural violence in the Rwandan society. The idea that Tutsi were foreign, rich oppressors, alien and hungry for power was persistent. The organizers of the genocide built their ideology upon this myth. But it goes one step too far to make the Church in Rwanda complicit of genocide. Genocide is about the intentional destruction of a group.⁶⁸⁰ It is of a different nature than structural or cultural violence. Yes, the Church introduced cultural and structural ethnic violence in Rwanda. Yes, the Church did provide the building blocks for a genocidal ideology. Yes, the Church said nothing while it should have reacted. But no, the Church never took part in the organization of the genocide.

§ 8.3 Catholicism after the genocide

The genocide ended on July 20, 1994. The efforts to establish peace in Rwanda have been analyzed in chapter seven. In the first paragraph, academic views on peace building and religion have been described. Again, these theories draw upon Galtung's ideas about peace and conflict. Galtung explains that a country emerging from war should not only address direct violence, but also the violent structural and cultural patterns underneath. Based on this idea, different models have been developed. Jeong, for example, distinguishes between four building blocks of peace; security and demilitarization, political stability and democratization, economic development and social rehabilitation and reconciliation.⁶⁸¹ The possible contribution of religion has to be situated in one of these building blocks. According to Hertog, religious actors can provide maximal added value if they deal with issues that are somehow related to religion.⁶⁸² That's why the seventh chapter of this thesis focused on the contribution of religion to social rehabilitation and reconciliation in Rwanda. Religion in all its facets can contribute to post-conflict peace processes. Appleby and Gopin emphasized that religious ideas like about empathy and non-violence can be used.⁶⁸³ Gopin thinks that the capacity of religious people to imagine a peaceful world can also be used. Appleby even argues that religious ideas can form a cultural foundation for peace.⁶⁸⁴ Religion as a social organization can also contribute to peace. Religious leaders often have the moral authority to lead their followers in peace. And the influence of the communal character of religion should not be underestimated. Communities at the grassroots level

⁶⁸⁰ Shaw *What is genocide?* 28-29.

⁶⁸¹ Jeong *Peacebuilding* 15-18.

⁶⁸² Hertog *Religious Peacebuilding* 89.

⁶⁸³ Gopin 'Religion as an Aid and Hindrance' 16.

⁶⁸⁴ Appleby *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* 169.

often play an important role in the reintegration of both victims and perpetrators in society.⁶⁸⁵ Scholars published considerably less about the ritual and spiritual aspects of religion in peace processes. Some acknowledge that religious and spiritual practices like prayer and meditation can strengthen the bonds between religious people from different groups. Gopin and Appleby provide examples of the power of religious rituals in processes of forgiveness and reconciliation. But it should not be taken for granted that religion can play a positive role in peace processes. Scholars stress the fact that religion can only play a meaningful role in peace and reconciliation processes if their adherents have faith in it.

At this point, the thesis gets to the core. How did the way Catholicism functioned in Rwanda before and during the genocide affect its role in the peace process? Could it still contribute, despite the mistakes that had been made in the past? Or did it lose its legitimacy due to the silence of its leaders? Initially, Catholicism in Rwanda was ruined. The churches and parishes had turned into mass graves. Catholicism as a social organization no longer functioned. The hierarchy was decapitated as three bishops got killed in the aftermath of the genocide. Moreover, the Church had lost up to a third of its clergy in the genocide. This was disastrous for a hierarchically led organization like the Catholic Church. At the local level, religious communities were torn apart. A lot of people were stuck in the refugee camps in Zaire and other neighboring countries. Many of them wondered where God had been when his followers were slaughtered. They felt like God had left them. Comforting rituals like the celebration of the Holy Mass and the sacrament of confession were no longer carried out.⁶⁸⁶ But it did not take long before the first signs of resurrection were there. The bishops formulated three priorities to rebuild their Church in January 1995. First, the pastoral activities of the Church had to be resumed. Mass had to be celebrated again and the mission schools had to be reopened. Second, the bishops prioritized an in-depth evangelization of the people of Rwanda. They wanted to reach the Catholics on a deeper level than before. The Rwandans had to be converted to the gospel of forgiveness. The bishops also prioritized cooperation between the Church and the state. They were determined that the role of Catholicism was not over, yet. They even wanted to play a role in the process of reconciliation.⁶⁸⁷ But their efforts to contribute to the peace process were hindered in at least three ways by ghosts from the past.

The French scholar Prunier already said: 'history is as much the study of discontinuities as the reflection on the coherence of things.'⁶⁸⁸ This is certainly the case in Rwanda. The Catholic Church never seriously reflected upon its role in the dynamics of violence and conflict in Rwanda. This seriously hindered the Catholic Church in its efforts in the peace process. There were many issues that needed reflection. The role of the Church in the evolution of the ethnic identity of Hutu and Tutsi, for example. Or the participation of the Church in the Hutu revolution. Or the persistent ethnic divisions within the Church. The Church should have reflected upon its behavior many times before. But it had always swept difficult questions like these under the carpet. In the aftermath of the genocide, many

⁶⁸⁵ 'Religion & Peacebuilding Processes' International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (Brussels: April 7, 2009) [available online: <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index.cfm?pagelD=1827>, accessed September 23, 2011].

⁶⁸⁶ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 394.

⁶⁸⁷ *Évêques catholiques du Rwanda Priorités pastorales établies par les évêques catholiques du Rwanda pour la période de l'après-guerre* (Kigali, January 13, 1995) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁶⁸⁸ Prunier *The Rwanda Crisis* 74.

Catholics wanted the Church to reflect upon its role in Rwanda's history. The *Comite de Relance des Activités Pastorales* (Committee for the Recovery of Pastoral Activities: CRAP) in Butare, for example, asked the leadership of the Church to reflect upon its role during the genocide.⁶⁸⁹ The CRAP thought that the leadership of the Church had to ask forgiveness. But the Church was not used to reflect upon its behavior. The collective mistakes that had been made in hundred years of Catholicism were never acknowledged. The Church never apologized for its mistakes. The Church spoke about truth and confession, but it did not live up to its own standards. Divisions began to occur between those who thought that the Church should admit guilt and those who refrained from reflection. The refusal of the Church to bear responsibility for their role in Rwandan history had a profound impact on the possibilities of the Church to contribute to the peace process. Neither the government, nor the people of Rwanda believed that the Church was completely innocent. The refusal of the leadership of the Church to reflect and apologize resulted in a low level of trust in clerical leaders, governmental skepticism and a lack of moral authority of clerical leaders.

The Church turned a blind eye to the mistakes that had been made in the period before and during the genocide. The government did not. The relation between the Church and the state radically changed after the genocide. From the early 1900s, the Church had always supported those in power. The relation between the Church and the state had always been excellent. But the RPF detested the Catholic Church. This had everything to do with the actual and perceived role of Catholicism in Rwanda before and during the genocide. The RPF thought the Catholic Church had introduced the differences between Hutu and Tutsi. One could doubt whether this statement holds ground. But one cannot deny the fact that the Church had been involved in cultural and structural violence for decades. The Church had discriminated against Tutsi. It had even allied itself with a repressive Hutu government. The Church had been so close to the government that the RPF thought that the Church was complicit in the genocide. In the new political constellation, the actual and perceived offenses of the Church were not lightly taken. Initially, the government turned against the Church. Missionaries and members of religious congregations were not allowed to return to Rwanda.⁶⁹⁰ The Church was accused of participation in the genocide on the national radio and in newspapers.⁶⁹¹ Over time, the relation between the Church and the state got better, though tense it remained. The times that one could hardly distinguish the Church from the state were definitely over. The moral authority of the leadership of the Church suffered from the accusations of the government. This became painfully clear after Pope John Paul II interfered with the public execution of 22 people who were convicted for their involvement in the genocide. The public reacted furious.⁶⁹² The Pope was said to have more pity with the killers than with the victims. He lacked the moral authority to stand up for those who were about to be executed.

The relation between the Church and the state was not the only thing that changed in Rwanda as a result of the behavior of the Church before and during the genocide. Many scholars examined the

⁶⁸⁹ CRAP 'Document No 1: Tentative de Constat loyal' (Butare, September 21, 1994) 2-3.

⁶⁹⁰ Van Hoyweghen 'The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda' 398.

⁶⁹¹ Henryk Hoser, Visiteur Apolistique and Mgr. Pierre Nguyễn Van Tô, charge d'affaires of the Nonciature Apostolique in Rwanda 'letter to Minister of Justice Nkubito' (Kigali, January 9, 1995) KDC Nijmegen, Collection Pax Christi International, serial no. 501.

⁶⁹² Editorial 'Relations entre le gouvernement et l'Eglise catholique' 76.

changing religious landscape in post-genocide Rwanda. Five years after the genocide, the Protestants churches were grown by nearly 20 percent. Evangelic movements mushroomed all over the country. The number of Catholics declined by nearly 8 percent during the same period.⁶⁹³ It is known that some left the Church because they were disappointed with its leaders. Others were traumatized and did not want to relive the things that happened in their local churches during the genocide. Tutsi returnees established the majority of the new evangelic communities. Others were established by foreign missionaries. One could argue that the role of the Catholic Church before and during the genocide had a major impact on the decision of ordinary Catholics to leave the Church. In many cases, this is probably true. But one should also take the changing political context into consideration. Already in the 1970s, evangelic movements spread on the African continent. They had never been able to set foot in Rwanda because President Habyarimana had always protected the traditional churches. In the 1980s, members of charismatic movements were even prosecuted. In post-genocide Rwanda, the government favored the new churches instead of the traditional churches.⁶⁹⁴ But nevertheless, one can say that the rise of the new movements affected the role the Catholic Church played in the peace process. The Catholic Church in Rwanda was no longer the only important voice of religion in the Rwandan society. The government preferred to work with the newly established churches, also in the peace process. This notwithstanding, the Catholic Church was still an important player and influenced the lives of many Rwandans.

After the genocide, the Church had to face the repercussions of the mistakes that had been made in the period before and after the genocide. But Catholicism remained important in the lives of almost half of the Rwandan people. In the period before and during the genocide, foundations had been laid for a positive contribution to the peace process. First, the Catholic Church was still the single largest church in Rwanda and cautiously began to use its position to speak out for peace and justice. The Church still had an important share in the education and health sector. It was one of the most powerful players in civil society. One has to keep in mind that the Catholic Church remained the second- most influential and powerful institution in Rwanda.⁶⁹⁵ Since the Church was no longer allied with the state, it was more or less free to speak out. One could argue that the worsened relationship with the state not only had a negative influence on the possibilities of the Church to contribute to the peace process. In chapter four, it has been explained by Appleby that the degree of autonomy enjoyed by religious leaders and institutions determines to a large extent how religious actors react on conflict. For decades, the leadership of the Church was not in the position to comment on the state. Now, the Church was free to raise its voice about injustice and violence. This became more and more important. Subsequent governments in Rwanda had always been strong, intolerant and violent towards those who did not agree with them. Initially, the RPF looked more friendly and democratic. Over time, however, the RPF showed itself a true Rwandan government. Human right violations, disappearances, repression became par for the course again. The state even forced a new history and a new identity upon the Rwandan people.⁶⁹⁶ The Church continued to see ethnic identity as a creation

⁶⁹³ Anne Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 202.

⁶⁹⁴ Idem.

⁶⁹⁵ Kees Ton, interview with the author (The Hague, July 2011).

⁶⁹⁶ Reyntjens 'Rwanda, ten years on' 208.

of God. It challenged the politics of the government. Only time can tell if the Church continues to find the courage to stand up for justice and human rights.

Second, the Church could build upon the work that had already been done in the period before the genocide. Not all was lost in the genocide and the war. The clerical structures that had been established before the genocide were rather quickly rebuilt in the years after the genocide. One has to keep in mind that the Church of Rwanda was part of a worldwide network. It received aid from all over the world.⁶⁹⁷ The leadership of the Church used its organizational resilience to foster reconciliation within the Catholic community. It is interesting to see that the Church tried to counter the weaknesses that had plagued the Church before and during the genocide. It was no longer good enough to perform rituals like the celebration of the Holy Mass. The bishops aimed to educate ordinary Catholics in the spiritual and religious traditions of the Church regarding to peace. They received aid from Catholic NGO's to get the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP) up and running again. The CEJP developed unity and reconciliation programs. In dioceses and parishes, branches of the Justice and Peace Commissions fostered Bible-study, truth-telling, public confession and requests for forgiveness. But the Church not only educated people. It also aimed to renew the bonds that once existed between ordinary Catholics at the local level. Local leaders were trained in trauma healing and conflict transformation to transform the *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base* (Small Christian Communities: SCC's) from an administrative structure into a system of communities.⁶⁹⁸ They tried to turn the SCC's into places where people felt a sense of belonging. In this way, the social fabric that was ripped apart by the genocide was slowly rewoven. The Church built upon the clerical structures that already existed in pre-genocide Rwanda. It tried to counter the weaknesses that the Church had known. In this way, the Church contributed to the reconciliation process within the Church.

Third, the Catholic Church interfered with the national justice and reconciliation process. The state tried to diminish the political, economic and social power of the Church. The RPF considerably reduced the influence of the Church on the political level. But despite the trials against clergy and the mistakes that had been made in the past, Catholicism was still a powerful social force. About half of the Rwandan population was still Catholic in 2000.⁶⁹⁹ The influence of the Church on the national justice and reconciliation process became increasingly visible after the government introduced the gacaca courts in the early 2000s. By that time, the government realized that it would never be able to judge all the detainees in the overcrowded prisons in an acceptable timeframe. Many suspects had to face trial in local courts run by the population. The government lost a considerable degree of control over the justice and reconciliation process as this form of justice depended upon popular participation. The Church gained influence over the reconciliation process as the government had to step backwards. Gacaca dealt with issues like truth, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. These could not be refrained from their religious context. As a result, Catholic ideas about forgiveness and reconciliation played a large role in the gacaca process. Based on biblical doctrines, the Church

⁶⁹⁷ Maureen Capps *Rwanda Program Annual Public Summary of Activities* Catholic Relief Services (Kigali, 2010) 6-7.

⁶⁹⁸ Rwakareke 'La Communauté Ecclesiale de Base' 1-3.

⁶⁹⁹ Kubai 'Post-Genocide Rwanda' 202.

encouraged people to forgive the perpetrators.⁷⁰⁰ Whether the focus of the Church on forgiveness has been a right choice, remains to be seen. True reconciliation, assuming it can ever be reached, cannot be forced upon people.

§ 8.4 Concluding remarks

This thesis aims to contribute to both the field of history and the field of peace and conflict studies. It is characterized by the cross-fertilization between social science and history. Theories from the field of conflict and peace studies have been used to illuminate the potential of religion in different stages of violence and conflict. The other way round, an historical overview of the role of Catholicism in the dynamics of peace and conflict in Rwanda has been given. This thesis shows that religion has an enormous potential for both peace and conflict. Generally speaking, one could say that the theories that have been used in this thesis are supported by the evidence on the ground. All, but one. Academics focused on the fact that a religion has to regain credibility if it played a role in conflict. Only then, scholars argued, it can contribute to the peace process. This was not the case in Rwanda. The Catholic leaders never repented for the contribution of Catholicism to cultural and structural violence in Rwanda. Neither did they confess that they should have spoken out for peace and non-violence during the massacres. As a result, some scholars concluded that the disintegration of the Catholic Church was at hand. It has already been said in the *status questionis* that only a few authors performed in-depth research about the role of religion in the process towards peace and reconciliation. These studies tended to downplay the role of the church in the reconciliation process. They focused on the lack of moral authority of the leaders, the problematic relationship with the state and the rise of the evangelical movements. But this thesis makes perfectly clear that the influence of religion goes far beyond the legitimacy of its leaders. Seventeen years after the genocide, the Catholic Church is one of the most important players in civil society that also seems to find ways to contribute to the peace process. The sustainability of the reconciliation efforts depends heavily on the political developments in the country. It is therefore probably too soon to provide a real historical perspective on the role of religion in post-genocide Rwanda. It would be worthwhile to reflect upon the role of religion in Rwanda again in a few decades from now. Catholicism in Rwanda is there to stay. It will continue to play a role in the lives of many Rwandans, for better or for worse, for peace or for conflict.

⁷⁰⁰ Clark *The Gacaca Courts* 66-67.

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Mr. Van 't Spijker worked in Rwanda from 1973-1982. He served as a pastor for the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda. From 1995 to 1999, he returned several times for shorter periods to set up a theological course for the Protestant churches in Rwanda.

Kees Ton, interview with the author (The Hague, July 2011).

Mr. Ton works for Mensen met een Missie, a Dutch NGO committed to international cooperation from a Catholic missionary perspective that aims to promote of justice and peace in the South. Mr. Ton is head of programs for the Great Lakes Region.

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Ms. De Wit is Senior Program Officer at Cordaid. The Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid is a Dutch development agency that operates worldwide. It aims to fight poverty and exclusion in fragile states and areas of conflict.

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