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Being church in post-genocide Rwanda

The challenges of forgiveness and reconciliation

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Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden

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BEING CHURCH IN POST GENOCIDE RWANDA
THE CHALLENGES OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION
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About the author

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BEING CHURCH IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA THE CHALLENGES OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

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Introduction

Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda is reported to have said that genocide is the marking event in the history of Rwanda.¹ As a result, it is impossible to speak of the Rwandan Church without foregrounding the thousands of women and men who were subjected to inhuman atrocities during the well-organised and senseless slaughter of 1994, in which over one million people perished. It is within this context that I want to address the challenges that face the Church in Rwanda today.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide that shocked the world and left the country so deeply traumatised, has been described as unique because it was not "just Hutu killing Tutsi, but husbands killing their wives, uncles killing their nephews and mothers killing their children. Women were not always the peace keepers."² As Kaggwa has graphically described, "the fighting .was hand to hand, intimate and unspeakable, a kind of blood lust that left those who managed to escape hollow eyed and mute."³ People who knew each other well carried it out – neighbours killed their neighbours and teachers killed their students, while colleagues killed their colleagues at the places of work, including hospitals and Church premises. When several thousand Tutsi were killed in the 1959 massacre, Bertrand Russell is reported to have described the slaughter as "the most horrible and systematic massacre we have had the occasion to witness since the extermination of Jews by the

¹ P. Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow we Will be Killed With our Families*. (Picador: London, 2000), 221.

² Statement by Ms. Aloise Inyumba, past Secretary General of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

³ Robert Kaggwa, "Is Reconciliation the new Model for Mission: Reflections on Religion and Ethnic Conflicts with Special Reference to the Great lakes Region of East Africa." St. Edmund's College, (February 2003), 1.

Nazis".⁴ One wonders what words could best be used to adequately describe the senseless slaughter of one million people. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 set new standards of barbarity.

Tremendous achievements have been made by the present Government under the Genocide Statutes of 1996; facilitating as they did the reduction of detainees from 200,000 in August and September 1994 to 130,000 by December 2000.⁵ Following a further release of 40,000 in May 2004, it is estimated that 90,000 detainees remain incarcerated. Yet the trauma and suffering emanating from the detention of such a large number of persons still lingers on, a situation that will long continue to have a negative impact upon the entire society.

The challenges of the aftermath of genocide are monumental; many women who were victims in the genocide, having suffered immense sexual violence and trauma, now face numerous new challenges, not only as heads of largely deprived households, but as widows bearing both the physical and psychologically indelible marks of genocide. As will be illustrated below, their burden has been made heavier by the inevitable predicament of having to live side-by-side their loved ones' tormentors and killers, now released from prison. It is in this context that forgiveness and reconciliation becomes the only way out of the spiral of violence in which Rwanda has found itself.

Efforts to facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation are being made by the Government,⁶ but reconciliation in Rwanda is a complex series of layers, and hence requires a multifaceted approach requiring enormous resources and time. As Zorbas rightly observes,

In the wake of violence on a societal scale, finding the right balance between justice and reconciliation, or between retribution and

⁴ J. Carling, "New dawn in Rwanda as a nation forgives", *The Observer*, (24th August, 2003), 4.

⁵ Source: Ministry of Justice Records, 2003. These figures are changing as prisoners are being released.

⁶ The establishment of the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation (NCUR) in 1999 shows the political will on the part of Government to facilitate reconciliation. The NCUR has a wide mandate and therefore it involves all levels of society in its activities.

forgiveness, is an extremely delicate process and this is all the more so in cases of genocide.⁷

What then are the challenges that face the Church as it struggles towards peace and reconciliation in a beleaguered post-genocide Rwanda?

Churches and genocide: "bloodied" and haunted

Today the Church in Rwanda is haunted by its role in the genocide. The tragedy of the 1994 genocide shook the Christian Church to its very foundations. Not only were members from every denomination in Rwanda responsible for the most appalling of atrocities, but most significantly, many of these massacres took place in the Church buildings where many of the targets of the genocide sought sanctuary.

One may ask, Why the Churches? The answer to this important question lies in the role the Church took as an institution in Rwanda. Over the years it (particularly the Roman Catholic Church⁸) had become the most important of all social institutions, "all things to all men" [*sic*]⁹ as Prunier has put it. The clergy enjoyed an indisputable moral authority and were deeply revered by the majority of their parishioners. During the genocide, this reverence played a double-edged role: to the victims, when the killing started, the first impulse was to run for sanctuary to the nearest place of worship, for as in 1959 massacre, the Tutsi who found their way into Churches were allowed to live. But this time around the situation had

⁷ Eugenia Zorbas "Towards justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: taking stock." *Pambazuka News* 150, 1st April 2004. *Pambazuka* is a weekly electronic newsletter for social justice in Africa, see. <<http://www.pambazuka.org/petition/alerts.php>>

⁸ Rwanda was said to be the most Catholic country in Africa. Nearly 90% of the population was Christian before the genocide: 62.6 % Catholic; 18.8 % Protestant and 8.4 % Seventh Day Adventist. Though the Catholic Church retains the majority of the Rwanda Christians, the percentages have changed after the genocide due to a variety of factors, including the emergence of numerous new Churches. See Government of Rwanda, Kigali, 1994: 126-128.

⁹ G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of Genocide*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995), 33. See also, P. Urvin, *Aiding Violence*. (Kumarian Press, Hartford, 1998), 22 and I. Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997), 189.

changed and the "mistake of 1959 was not to be repeated"¹⁰ as some survivors described it. To those inclined to kill, the silence and the participation of the clergy in the acts of genocide brought a sense of legitimacy to the killing, not only because they looked up to their leadership, but because in their eyes, the ordained were "holy", even saintly women and men of God. People even attended mass before going out to kill. Hence, it is no wonder that Bishops and other clergy are among those who have been indicted for their active participation in the slaughter.

Numerous accounts of Priests killing members of their congregations who had sought refuge in Church buildings in the belief that the "Reverend men (and women) of God" would protect them abound. Among these, the well known case of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) is important, as one out of every twenty-seven Rwandans was an SDA member.

Priests killing members of their congregations who had sought refuge in Church buildings in the belief that the "Reverend men (and women) of God" would protect them

At the Mugonero Church complex, 8000 refugees gathered, not only believing that the president of their Church, Pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, would protect them from the murderers, but also because he had lured them there. On 16th April 1994, the Adventist Sabbath, the President of the Church drove into the complex, leading a motorcade of soldiers and militia. When the seven pastors in the crowd wrote to him asking him to intercede in prayer to God for them, Ntakirutimana is said to have responded, "Your problem has already found a solution. You must die...You must be eliminated. God no longer wants you?"¹¹ The killing continued for a total of eleven hours. A survivor, who provided this evidence to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, stated that her three-year-old son begged the killers not to kill him, begging pardon for being Tutsi, saying that he would no longer be Tutsi if they "pardoned" him.¹²

¹⁰ Author's interview with survivors: Kigali and Gitarama, October 2003.

¹¹ Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 28.

¹² Elizaphan Ntakirutimana was recently sentenced to a ten-year prison term for his role in the Mugonero Church complex massacre. Cf., Andrew Maykuth, "The Tutsis' faith in a man of God proves fatal", *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 30th, 2003
<<http://www.maykuth.com/Projects/rwan4.htm>>. See also *ICTR Reports* <<http://news.telegraph.co.uk>> (29 December 2004).

The Church is now a memorial to the thousands who went there for safety but met their death on the Sabbath. Young Adventists "proposed that bodies should be placed in glass coffins all around the Church. The government supported the plan, but Adventist administrators objected, saying that the building was built and consecrated as a Church....¹³" However, the administrators were over-ruled by the government and now the building is a museum of death. It is bizarre that the administrators argued that this very "building was built and consecrated as a Church,"¹⁴ yet such an argument did not arise when it served as the place of slaughter of the faithful on the Sabbath.

The Roman Catholic Church of Nyamata stands as a stark and horrific reminder of the massacre of thousands that took place in that Church, housing as it does the many skulls and decrepit bodies of its hapless victims. One gets an eerie feeling inside the Church building, with the smell of death still present and the statue of the Virgin Mary surrounded by blood-stained broken pews and yet apparently not destroyed or splattered with blood. As John Carlin reported in *The Observer*

Nothing remains and the statue of the Virgin Mary, tall, white and thin, on a narrow stand. Head tilted, she gazes down where the faithful used to kneel – the faithful whose last prayers she failed to answer – her hands clasped in prayer, her face beatifically self-absorbed.¹⁵

It took the local people, and the intervention of the Holy Father, to convince the Rwandan Roman Catholic Church hierarchy to accept the peoples' demand that this Church no longer be used for divine worship, but rather be retained as a living memorial of the genocide.

Today, bloodied, desecrated and completely looted, it is the Churches and Parishes of Rwanda that speak most eloquently of the horrors that have ravaged this beautiful country. Mass graves...bullet-riddled doors, and shattered windows bear testimony to the killers' determination to kill - and to kill the belief of the Rwandese people that the Church protects the innocent.¹⁶

¹³ See Alita Byrd "Rwanda Slaughter, Eyewitness Accounts", *ICTR SDA Slaughter* Reprinted from *Spectrum* 25, Vol. 4, (June 1996), 3-9.

¹⁴ Byrd, "Rwanda Slaughter" 5.

¹⁵ Carling, *The Observer*, 24th August, 2003.

¹⁶ *African Rights*, 1994, 862. African Rights is a Human Rights Organisation based in the United Kingdom.

A widespread feeling exists that the Church did not act fast enough to acknowledge its complicity in the genocide. Indeed, the Church is still being urged to offer an apology for those of its leadership who stand accused of genocide. Although they acted in their individual capacities, they were ordained by the Church, and did form part of its hierarchy being its representatives or spokespersons by association. It is therefore not surprising, that for many Christians horrifying memories "of the servants of God abandoning their vows and joining in wholesale slaughter,"¹⁷ are still fresh ten years on.

The failure of the Rwandan Churches to confront these crucial issues, and particularly how it became pathologically overwhelmed by a message of hatred and death, thus facilitating ethnic genocide, has never been adequately answered. The challenge is to look at the past honestly, face the painful truth, and to renounce revenge and violence. Indeed we are tempted to agree with Mamdani's assertion that "the violence was marked with greater fury in the Church than in any other institution in Rwanda" and "but for the army and the Church, the two prime movers, the two organising and leading forces, one located in the State and the other in the society, there would have been no genocide."¹⁸ Caplan concurs with this assertion in his observation that the social hierarchy that pre-dated the advent of colonialism was "turned on its head by the Belgians and for forty years since the 1960's Rwanda was run by a Hutu dictatorship. None of this would have happened without collaboration between the Church and State."¹⁹ It has moved with the times at each point in Rwanda's history, hence, "if the Church heralded the Tutsi as 'supreme humans' in 1902, the same Church would turn into a prime site for the slaughter of the Tutsi in 1994."²⁰

The same Church, which failed in its prophetic and pastoral role, and stands accused of complicity in the wanton slaughter of its flock, today faces the enormous challenge of fostering forgiveness and reconciliation.

¹⁷ Andrew Maykuth "Killings create a Rift Among Catholics", Rwanda: Aftermath of Genocide part 3, (September 8th 1998).

<<http://www.maykuth.com/Rwanda.htm>> (21 October 2003).

¹⁸ M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, (Kampala: Fountain, 2001), 232-233.

¹⁹ G. Caplan, "Why we must not Forget Rwandan Genocide" *Pambazuka News*, 150, April 1st 2004 <<http://www.pambazuka.org>> (20 December 2004).

²⁰ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 88.

Enumerating the challenges of forgiveness and reconciliation

In his illuminating discussion, Goping observes that forgiveness is characterised by such contradictions as,

...apology, repentance and acknowledgment of the past; a willingness to suffer punishment as part of forgiveness; ritualised bilateral exchanges that give efficacy to forgiveness only in a prescribed set of interactions; unilateral expressions of the gesture; forgiveness that is offered and received that cancels all other obligations; forgiveness only in the context of legal compensation, justice, restoration, or the righting of wrongs; and finally, interpersonal versus collective executions of remorse, apology, and forgiveness.²¹

He goes on to suggest that the aspect of collectivity remains the problematic, for there is a tendency to hold whole groups responsible for the actions of individuals, or individuals responsible for the actions of large groups. This is particularly relevant for Rwanda, where one group may be held responsible for the genocide, without acknowledgment that there were individual members of that group who tried to save the lives of victims, offering protection in their hour of need.

Additionally, there is "the unspoken assumption that all Hutu who opposed genocide were killed in 1994, and thus the Hutu who were in the country during those months and alive today are morally, if not legally, responsible."²² In view of these contradictions, forgiveness presents a tremendous challenge not only to the Church, but also to the course of justice and national reconciliation in Rwanda. Forgiveness, as a human action precedes reconciliation. Hence, only human beings "can resolve the predicament of the irreversible,"²³ and begin to undo the evil that led to the genocide.

During the last decade, there has been an appreciable increase of interest in the theme of reconciliation, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa setting new standards for troubled societies. As Kagawa

²¹ M. Goping, "Forgiveness as an Element of Conflict Resolution in Religious Culture: Walking the Tight Rope of Reconciliation and Justice", *Reconciliation, Justice and Co-existence*, edited by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, (New York: Lexington, 2001), 88.

²² Zorbas "Towards justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda", 10 <<http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php=21166>>

²³ S R. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2000), 194.

has pointed out, "reconciliation is not in itself a univocal concept."²⁴ For some, it is an ideological device created in order to deal with past crimes and thereby face the future; others use it as a means of resolving conflict; and for still others, it is a means of ensuring justice for the victims of violence. Finally, it can be a method of coining to terms with the experience of pain, and/or facilitating the moral reconstruction of a shattered society.²⁵

Both the Government and some human rights organisations still challenge the Church to make such an admittance of guilt,

It is a matter of record that in the aftermath of the genocide, the Roman Catholic Church was rocked by a rift between those on the one hand who felt that the Church should accept collective responsibility; and those on the other, who felt that the Church could not be held responsible for the acts of its individual Priests, Religious and laity. The latter group were represented by the Rwanda Bishops Council, who disapproved of the activities of a commission formed by a section of the clergy who called for an investigation into the role of the Church in the genocide. This group advocated for a change in the liturgy, one which reflected the situation of deeply traumatised congregations, rather than merely celebrating the Mass. The commission however was disbanded by the Episcopal hierarchy, and its members reassigned to various parts of the country.²⁶ The official position of the Church regarding the role of its clergy in the genocide was well reflected in a statement attributed to Pope John Paul II,

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.²⁷

This, we can argue, has complicated the situation, and constitutes the first challenge that the Church must face -- that of acknowledging its corporate responsibility, and offering a formal public apology to the people of

²⁴ Kagawa, "Is Reconciliation the new Model for Mission", 7.

²⁵ Kagawa, "Is Reconciliation the new Model for Mission", 7.

²⁶ See Maykuth, "Killings create a rift among Catholics".

²⁷ "Vatican puzzled by verdict against Rwandan nuns". *Afro News*, (June 10th 2001), 1.

<<http://www.globalpolicy.org/intljustice/tribunals/2001/0610rwnd.htm>>

Rwanda. Both the Government and some human rights organisations still challenge the Church to make such an admittance of guilt, especially for those members of its clergy who have been found guilty of genocide crimes. Its failure to do such has resulted in the development of a crass historical revisionism in order to deny the horrendous crimes of their colleagues.

Realistically, acknowledging complicity in genocide requires tremendous courage on the part of the Church leadership, yet to do so will constitute the first step towards meaningful reconciliation. As a member of the Church laity could admit,

We used to think that the priests and nuns were without sin; they played the role of God; and the Church was a sacred place. But now many people have realised that they are like everyone else and the Church is just a house where you can pray without the rain falling and the sun shining on your head. Many people do not put their faith in the priests any more, they just believe in God.

Evidently, the Church has to improve its image, which has been severely damaged in the view of many of its faithful. Nevertheless, a large number continue to attend Mass in spite of the trauma that still occupies their minds.

Another great challenge for the Church is that of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation from within itself. Pastors, Priests, Religious and laity alike need to talk openly among themselves as to what really happened in 1994 and discover what it means to confess the Church's own sin first. Unfortunately "religion is strong in many of the bleak situations in the world" and "religious people may be pitiless to other religious people, and sometimes to members of their own communities,"²⁸ as was the case in the country that was said to be "the most Catholic in Africa." It is no wonder then that among the survivors are some clergy, who also need to reconcile with their colleagues. Thus the real challenge for the Church, one can argue, is to heal itself of an internal malaise resulting from the genocide.

Surviving members of the clergy grieve for their loved ones and wrestle with profound spiritual dilemmas provoked by the trauma of genocide. For them, the spiritual, familiar, social and material losses of genocide are intertwined in unique and painful ways. Their ability to

²⁸ B. Butler, (ed.) *Open Hands: Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Work Around the World*, Suffolk, Kevin Mayhew, 1998, 25.

recover is heavily dependent upon the support of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution. It is regrettable that they have not been able to depend on the wholehearted support of their superiors...Members of the clergy have often felt personally let down when...in need of moral sustenance or tangible assistance, Survivor priests, nuns, novices and monks describe serious past and present failings within the Church which are undermining its mission.²⁹

The congregations are also divided, and therefore preaching forgiveness to worshippers becomes an arduous task. According to African Rights', survivors experience such distress "when they attend Church services. One reason that they give is that 'killers' are in the congregation or among the clergy,"³⁰ Some of the victims of rape during the genocide today pray in the very Churches where they were tortured and raped. Priests and Pastors who are accused of rape and other crimes of genocide are still going about their pastoral duties as if nothing happened. Although the presence of suspects in the congregations is a matter for the country's judicial system, the Church has a responsibility to provide an environment that is conducive for the worshippers to pray in peace.

In May 2003, 40,000 of those in detention accused of genocide crimes, were granted amnesty and are now living as neighbours with survivors whose families they are said to have butchered.

These days the released *genocidaires* stroll around the remote dusty town of Nyamata. But sitting around a table talking to the women at a Church — all wearing long cotton dresses in bright oranges, greens and reds at odds with the prevailing mood — the memory of the terror is laceratingly alive. Their stories show how extraordinary the effort is going to be, to what unprecedented limits the boundaries of tolerance will have to be pushed, if Tutsis and Hutus are to live together in peace. Immaculate...is the first to speak: my mother, father, sister, and brothers were killed inside this Church. They made the mistake of thinking that because it was God's place these people would be afraid to do so such things here, Especially because the very people that were hunting them down had sat next to them at mass, Sunday after Sunday, had been baptised here, taken their first communion here.³¹

²⁹ Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 6.

³⁰ Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*, 3.

³¹ Carling, *The Observer*, 24th August, 2003.

Is it possible for these people to live together? With those accused of killing in the community "walking freely", for instance in the dusty town of Nyamata, as if nothing happened in 1994? Rwandans are determined to give it a try. As Carling has observed, "it is an experiment in reconciliation unlike anything ever tried before."³²

To forgive and reconcile in such a case, is to "turn the other cheek" and to "love your enemies" to describe it in religious terms. Christians are called to love their enemies and bless those who curse them. In the post-genocide Rwanda, the biblical commandment to love, as the core facet of the Christian faith, is the litmus test for survivors of genocide.

The people that Immaculate (as a Christian) is called to forgive, reconcile with and love are the very people who demonstrated their hatred and enmity by chopping off the heads of her loved ones. Difficult as it is, Immaculate and many others are trying to forgive. She confirmed this tremendous effort by saying that "they (the killers) have stood before us...and apologised to us, begged forgiveness. Now we meet and we talk and even go to Church together again."³³

Is there hope for the Christians of Rwanda?

In view of these tremendous challenges, what are the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation? What can these "bloodied" and "desecrated" Churches and parishes offer women and men who are still suffering and bear the immutable marks of genocide upon their lives? Is there any hope for the Christians of Rwanda? I believe the answers are in the affirmative in spite of the enormous challenges that remain. The Church, as part of its spiritual mandate, is called to work for peace, justice and true reconciliation, and thereby assist in creating an inclusive society where people can live together in dignity. The Church that failed in its God-given task to transform its people from ethnic hatred to Christ must now pray and work towards ending centuries of hatred and strife, and seek to recover from the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Christians and live according to the Christian teaching of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. Desmond Tutu in referring to the spiral of violence and hatred that has consumed the history of Rwanda, suggests that forgiveness is the only way out,

³² Carling, *The Observer*, 24th August, 2003.

³³ Carling, *The Observer*, 24th August, 2003.

Forgiveness has to do with practical politics, without forgiveness, there is no future, there can be no real future. Forgiveness deals with the past in such a way that the future becomes possible.³⁴

Tutu goes on to say that this is not to allow impunity, but to acknowledge the wrong publicly, to accept responsibility, accountability and repay retribution, "even symbolically."³⁵ But, we must admit that forgiveness is not an easy matter, especially in such grave circumstances as genocide. In his discussion of twelve approaches to reconciliation, Johan Galtung observes that in the apology/forgiveness approach, a sense of guilt arises from the consciousness of having wronged someone. "This establishes a relation to the victim, to one's own ego and to any God/state believed in."³⁶ In describing this process however, he notes that in offering and accepting apology and forgiveness, the real causes of violence are not addressed. However, this transaction is spiritual – the one who forgives is supposed to stand on the moral high ground, extending forgiveness to the other. But the perpetrator has to deserve forgiveness.

Should victims extend this unconditional forgiveness to the perpetrators, whether they deserve it, or ask for it?

For Christians, forgiveness is a faith principle. As in the Lord's Prayer, forgiveness by God is linked to forgiveness of others by those who have been wronged. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," (Matthew 6:12 RSV). Also, there is scriptural warrant for forgiveness and the biblical injunction is to forgive unconditionally (Ephesians 4:32). To forgive is more important than to pay tithes (Matthew 5:24, 6:14-15, 18:21-35). Most importantly, forgiveness brings healing (Isaiah 58:6-9).

Should victims extend this unconditional forgiveness to the perpetrators, whether they deserve it, or ask for it? If they are forgiven unconditionally does forgiveness remove the possibility of the recurrence of violence in the future? And what of the spiral of violence that has characterised community relations in Rwanda over the past decades? These are some of the questions that arise from Galtung's approach – the injured victim, in

³⁴ Quoted in Butler, 1998, 10-11.

³⁵ Quoted in Butler, 1998, 10-11.

³⁶ J. Galtung, "After Violence, Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Resolution: Coping with Visible and Invisible Effects of War and Violence", in *Reconciliation, Justice and Co-existence*, Edited by Mohammed Abu-Nimer (New York: Lexington, 2001), 7.

this case, the Tutsi survivor, would be the one standing on the moral high ground, extending forgiveness to the Hutu perpetrator. Commenting on this situation, Bishop Kohn of the Rwanda Anglican Church is reported to have said that,

The genocide is a shame to the whole Church... Some Church leaders are even telling people not to confess. Is this what it means to leave judgement to God? God forgives, but will God forgive without repentance? And without repentance, what is the meaning of the cross? Can you ask the Tutsi to forgive and not ask the Hutu to repent? Repentance meets forgiveness in the middle. Both are acts of love.³⁷

Admittedly, the Church in Rwanda cannot fulfil its mission unless it practices reconciliation. Again, the leadership of the Church has to realise that "reconciliation premised upon smoothing things over, on hiding the truth, on forgetting, is not reconciliation, but rather perpetuates injustice and encourages continued violence."³⁸ It has to be said that it is not enough for the Rwandan Church to simply speak about forgiveness and to preach peaceful co-existence. The Church must endeavour to change the ideologies and social attitudes that drive such societies to war. It is not enough to indulge in the rhetoric of repentance; rather what is important is to assist in the dismantling of the social structures that perpetuate marginalisation, oppression, victimisation, dehumanisation and demonisation of one group by another. The Church must name the evil. As Mc Spadden asserts in her introduction to *Reaching Reconciliation*,

These are truly spiritual issues and Churches have a unique responsibility to provide sensitive spiritual leadership. Churches are called to be the community of believers striving to show forth the love of God as experienced in Jesus Christ.³⁹

...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your

³⁷ J. Boynton "Rwanda Bishop takes thread and needle to a tattered Church", <<http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal-life/rwanda.html>> (17 October 2003).

³⁸ J.J. Carrol, *Forgiving or Forgetting?* Life & Peace Institute & Foundation for Worldwide People Power, 1999: vi.

³⁹ L. Mc Spadden, *Reaching Reconciliation*, Life & Peace Institute, 2000: xv.

neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37 RSV).

Many people in Rwanda have experienced deep pain and are still suffering and perhaps do not understand that to reconcile is not to condone the crime. But as Staub observed in Rwanda, understanding the root cause of violence is an avenue to healing and reconciliation. Survivors can see the violence they suffered "as the outcome of understandable human process."⁴⁰ Since the Church has been the major social institution in Rwanda, it is now important for it to play a major role in the process of reconciliation. "Religion practiced in a different way may provide the social imagination required to bring about reconciliation",⁴¹ hence the Church can teach its people that humans are capable of committing such atrocities.

The Church that once supported the policy of exclusion and taught that salvation was achieved through the social hierarchy that characterised the traditional Rwandan society, cannot now abdicate from its responsibility in the national process of reconciliation. This becomes even more of an obligation for the Christian Church in Rwanda because reconciliation is God's work and in line with contemporary missiology. No one can bring back the dead or undo the suffering visited upon the victims. Reconciliation is the basis for a new beginning, a new creation. The Church is commissioned to create an inclusive society in which there is peace, justice and true reconciliation, which can liberate both the victim from being consumed by hatred and bitterness, and the perpetrator from guilt and fear of revenge. The challenge is arguably unique; a society devastated by the attempt of one group to wipe out another, must now strive to establish the trust needed to carry on as one people.

The need to develop new theological categories

During the past decades, liberation theologies have shaped theological reflection in issues of economic exploitation and political domination. In the same way, there is a need to develop a new theological lens through which to view the ethnic conflicts of the twenty-first century. As Kaggwa

⁴⁰ E. Staub, "Preventing Violence and Generating Humane Values: Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda", IRRRC December 2003, Vol. 85, No. 852, 802.

⁴¹ Cited in R Kaggwa, "Is reconciliation the new model for mission?" St. Edmund's College, <<http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CKaggwa.htm>>, 7, (20 December 2004).

has rightly observed, in some ethnic conflicts the lines of division are blurred, as both parties may have been oppressed and suffered oppression at different times in their respective history. Now that they must live together as neighbours, they "must work towards reconciliation". In order to do so, a different set of categories of theology must be developed.⁴² He agrees with Miroslav Volf that the categories of "exclusion" and "embrace" are central to what he calls "a theology of embrace."⁴³ Such a theology I believe can provide the necessary underpinning to a meaningful theological reflection on ethnic conflict. Through it, the Church in Rwanda can find a theological basis for re-humanising the relations that should exist between the two groups of people, since they must live together as citizens of one country, with obligations and duties towards each other in a just, safe and peaceful society.

The Question of Justice – the Gacaca system.

Germane to the complex question of forgiveness and reconciliation is the issue of justice. In post-genocide Rwanda, this poses one of the greatest challenges to both the present Government and the Church. As Drumtra has pointed out,

Westerners tend to discuss Rwanda in terms of 'reintegration' and 'reconciliation'. Aid workers and diplomats note the desirability of 'justice' and 'development.' These are worthy objectives, but the dispassionate technical jargon used by outsiders risks making Rwanda's healing sound simple, as if it were a straight forward four-step process.⁴⁴

It has been said time and again that reconciliation is the way out of the spiral of violence and revenge for the Rwandan communities. Hence the Government is perusing reconciliation with great fervour, in the belief that it is not only a moral alternative, but the only one. As I have referred above, finding a balance between justice and reconciliation or between retribution and forgiveness is a delicate process and hence a major challenge, not only for the Government, but also for the Church. The Government has demonstrated a strong political will to facilitate the process of reconciliation by setting up the National Unity and

⁴² Kaggwa, "Is reconciliation the new model", 8.

⁴³ Kaggwa, [citing Miroslav Volf, 1998: 101-105].

⁴⁴ J. Drumtra, "Life After Death: Suspicion and Reintegration in Post-genocide Rwanda," in *World Refugee Survey*, 1998, 2.

Reconciliation Commission⁴⁵ and formalising the traditional *Gacaca*⁴⁶ justice system.

Traditionally, *Gacaca* served four important functions: "it brought together the offender and the offended; it sought the truth; it addressed the conflict; and it reconciled the parties."⁴⁷ Hence the choice to revive and adopt the *Gacaca* system was not based on a romantic glorification of traditional Rwandan culture. Instead, in spite of the attendant logistical problems, it appeared to be the most viable and tenable system of justice at the community level available, where the collective frenzy of hatred led to the dehumanisation of the victims and hence the attempt to exterminate them.

...the *Gacaca* system offers the most viable option for both reconciliation and justice.

Since many thousands of Rwanda's citizens were gripped by the killing frenzy, administration of justice through the country's law in the formal law court system would take more than a century. Instead, the *Gacaca* system offers the most viable option for both reconciliation and justice. The goal of *Gacaca* hearings would be to promote reconciliation by providing a platform for the perpetrators to acknowledge their wrong; come to terms with the enormity of their crimes; and apologise. For the victims, it gives opportunity to express their feelings and to speak out because "healing requires that people face up to their painful experiences

⁴⁵ The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission were appointed in 1999, with a broad mandate to facilitate national reconciliation. The NURC has organised workshops and seminars and national summits around the theme of reconciliation. The Commission has also endeavoured to promote civil education in *ingando* or solidarity groups for released prisoners and demobilised soldiers. Its critics say that it is a Government instrument which is too vertical, with little impact at the grass roots.

⁴⁶ Legislation establishing the *Gacaca* tribunals was enacted in early 2001. In late 2001, 260,000 adults of "integrity, honesty and good conduct" were selected by local communities to serve as magistrates on the more than 10,000 *Gacaca* tribunals. These magistrates received limited training in early 2002.

⁴⁷ B N. Rutikanga, "Struggle for Healing at the Grassroots", in *Artisan of Peace*, Edited by M A. Cejka & T. Bamat, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 156.

under supportive conditions. "⁴⁸ Amnesty International is on record as acknowledging that,

The *gacaca* system of community tribunals may represent an opportunity for genocide survivors, defendants and witnesses to present their cases in an open and participatory environment. This could be an important step towards national reconciliation and resolving Rwanda's prison crisis⁴⁹.

But, "can the balm of reconciliation sooth away the suffering of people?"⁵⁰ As some scholars would say, "reconciliation does not replace justice; it is the result of justice."⁵¹ There exists a complex relationship between repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation: the offender must be genuinely sorry and therefore willing to offer a sincere apology; while the victim must be willing to accept the apology and offer forgiveness. As has been noted above, it is a two-way process that is not without contradiction.

Although *Gacaca* Courts can hand down sentences, the system is more concerned with restorative justice rather than punishment, thereby bringing about the healing and rehabilitation of both the victim and the perpetrator. The challenge here is to deal not only with the need for doing justice, but also to ensure restraint from an uncompromising pursuit of justice which can lead to further conflict. As Estrada-Hollenbeck⁵² has observed in his discussion of the attainment of justice through restoration, that while peoples' perception of fairness is important, the challenge is to bring about reconciliation and justice in the midst of a people who are still

⁴⁸ E. Staub, "Preventing Violence and Generating Humane Values: Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda", *IRRC* 85, No. 852, (December 2003), 791-806.

Staub, 2003, 799.

⁴⁹ See Amnesty International, "Rwanda: *Gacaca* Gambling with Justice", <<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent>> (19 June 2002), 1.

⁵⁰ P. Oestreicher, "Reconciliation: a Search for its Meaning", in Butler *Open Hands*, 33.

⁵¹ H. Wells, "Theology for Reconstruction", in *Reconciliation of Peoples: A Challenge to the Churches*, Edited by G. Baum & H. Wells, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 4.

⁵² M. Estrada-Hollenbeck, "The Attainment of Reconciliation Through Restoration, not Litigation; the Subjective Road to Reconciliation," in Mohammed Abu-Nimer (ed.) *Reconciliation, Justice and Co-existence*, (New York: Lexington, 2001), 66.

experiencing deep pain and suffering. To ask victims to forgive appears to many to be an insensitive demand, and even an emotional burden. Is it possible to ask a woman who has lost six children, husband and relatives to forgive those responsible for her deep pain and loss? Again, and without justice, forgiveness alone can perpetuate impunity. Admittedly, it is difficult, in spite of the numerous efforts being made, to manage the complex interaction between justice and reconciliation.

While on the one hand retributive justice provided through the Courts is necessary, on the other, it competes with the need for reconciliation that is needed for the healing of both victim and perpetrator. Some victims feel there is no justice when perpetrators who make confessions are forgiven, or their prison sentences commuted. Hence, the question of justice as a prerequisite for reconciliation has been said to obstruct efforts at unity and reconciliation. Some even accuse the Government of providing simple solutions to what are sensitive issues, by encouraging people to confess and plead guilty, and in return, have their sentences commuted. "Does a confession subcontracted in this way allow them to really acknowledge their guilt which appeals for forgiveness? Is this not a way of refusing to administer justice."⁵³

Some feel that there exists a vendetta against one community, while still others even speak of "victors' justice." It is insightful here to refer to Galtung's discussion of the juridical/punishment approach, where the relationship becomes that of "perpetrator-state relation...the process is submission-confession-readmission into society but again this does not include the relation with the victim."⁵⁴ Galtung goes on to suggest that for this to serve the intended purpose of reconciliation, what rather is needed is an expansion to include "restitution, apology and genuine inner change."⁵⁵ The *Gacaca* comes close to this, but it possesses no mechanism whereby it can be ascertained that the received confessions are genuine and that an inner change has taken place. Of course, there are cases where victims have accepted the confessions and apologies, and are even taking food to prisoners. Some prisoners are even challenging victims who seem to think that reconciliation is a way of smoothing things over in order to provide an opportunity for perpetrators to go unpunished.

⁵³ "Sustaining Peace in Rwanda: Voice of the People", Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, Kigali: nd, 60.

⁵⁴ Galtung, 2001, 10.

⁵⁵ Galtung, 2001, 10.

It may be insightful here to acknowledge that, "debate and disagreement may be crucial stages in the process of reconciliation, precisely because they expose the hurt and pain that must be healed if reconciliation is to be real and not a sham."⁵⁶ The Church is called to bring healing to the people and the issue of justice is inextricably intertwined with forgiveness and reconciliation.

The question of memory.

Reconciliation is costly, for someone has to pay a price – to denounce revenge or retribution and turn the other cheek. Yet, someone has to break the cycle of aggression and retaliation. Closely related to this is the question of memory – can the victims forgive and forget? As we know, forgiving is not forgetting.⁵⁷ Victims will remember, and have to live with the memory of painful experiences. On the one hand, remembering allows people to draw lessons from their past experiences; yet it serves to hinder reconciliation . if it continues to re-traumatise the victim by re-opening wounds and accentuating feelings of insecurity. On the other, memory must be retained both as a tribute to those who lost their lives, and as an integral part of the process of reconciliation. It is important to note that monuments are embodiments of a collective memory, which as we have already seen, includes the Church buildings where countless thousands were massacred. There may be different interpretations of memorials, however many will agree that retaining memory remains an important safeguard against any future recurrence of genocide.

Evidently, dealing with memory and justice can be a serious challenge to the process of reconciliation. Options remain however rather limited. One possible solution is to expand the principle of forgiveness to the whole range of experiences. Here, I am in total agreement with the proposition of Volf when he states that forgiveness, "breaks the power of the remembered past and transcends the claims the affirmed justice, and thus makes the spiral of vengeance grind to a halt."⁵⁸ Goping, also makes the same point when he says "forgiveness as a means of peacemaking, depending on how

⁵⁶ K. Clements, "Building Bridges: Reconciliation as Gospel Calling", in Butler, *Open Hands*, 64.

⁵⁷ J H. Powel, "Forgiveness and Healing in Conflict", in *Making Peace With Conflict*, Edited by C. Schrock-Shenk & L. Essler, (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 122.

⁵⁸ See Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 194 [citing Miroslav Volf, 1996].

it is realised brings into sharp relief the perennial challenge of balancing peace and justice."⁵⁹

Since the Church in Rwanda is an institution, and if we agree with van Ness that "institutions identify themselves with the status quo, which they often have helped to create, and in which they have a stake"⁶⁰ and that "the Church becomes conformed to a world that it helped to create,"⁶¹ then we can understand why the Church must face the challenge of resolving the issue of peace with justice. The Church is called "to administer true justice,"⁶² which implies action, not empty rhetoric. Perhaps in an attempt to fulfil this mandate, the Roman Church has to establish the 'Christian *Gacaca*', as it is called, but this too is encumbered with similar logistical problems to that of the Government system. It is nevertheless hoped that the Church can draw from its theological and doctrinal resources when dealing with the issues of justice and peace.

Women Church: A Sign of Hope

With the now familiar phenomenon of the emergence of numerous new Churches and religious movements throughout Africa, Rwanda is no exception. The fast growth rate of such new Churches in this previously predominant Roman Catholic country has by many been attributed to a feeling of betrayal and disillusionment with the "official" Church. As we would expect, some have confessed that "many of us in Nyamata hated the Catholic Church because they did not try to protect the people there... They just left. Does a father leave his children? Is that what Jesus would do?"⁶³ Some have never returned to the Churches to which they belonged before the genocide. They have rather turned to the new Churches, which have emerged after the genocide. Now Rwanda, previously known as the most Roman Catholic country in Africa, boasts over one hundred of these new denominations. The emergence of the new Churches is a clear sign that all is not lost.

⁵⁹ M. Goping, "Forgiveness as an Element of Conflict Resolution in Religious Culture: Walking the Tight Rope of Reconciliation and Justice", in Mohammed Abu-Nimer (ed.) *Reconciliation, Justice and Co-existence*, (New York: Lexington, 2001), 87.

⁶⁰ Daniel W. Van Ness, "The Role of the Church in Criminal Justice Reform", Justice that Restores Forum, Orlando, (March 2002), 4. <http://www.restorativejustice.org/asp/listing.asp>

⁶¹ Van Ness, "The Role of the Church".

⁶² See Zechariah 7:9 (RSV).

⁶³ "Advent of the Church", African Rights files, Kigali, July 2003, 3.

And now Rwandans are again flocking to Churches, this time seeking spiritual instead of physical refuge. But the religious landscape, at least from outward appearance, has changed considerably. Dozens of new, so-called charismatic Churches have emerged across Rwanda, many funded by European and North American sponsors. There are an estimated 300,000 Seventh-day Adventists, for example. Rwanda's Baptist Churches claim about 400,000 members, an eightfold growth rate since 1995.⁶⁴

To illustrate this growth, we can cite the case of Sammy Tippit who travelled to Rwanda in 1995, conducting countrywide Conferences and Crusades for "the healing of a Nation". His preaching conferences were greeted with tremendous response by thousands of people, and the resultant Restoration Church has continued to grow. Many former Roman Catholics attend Zion Temple Pentecostal Church in Kigali and Zion's pastor says that "this is where people can start again. The Catholics and others come here with wounded hearts, and here they can heal. They know they are safe here."⁶⁵ Similarly, Christian Life Assemblies, founded by Canadian Pastors, has grown within a short period of time into an important Church in Kigali, from where it is now beginning to spread to other parts of the country. This is an English-speaking congregation and one observes that the congregation is relatively affluent, with many key figures as its members.

Some of the new Churches were introduced into Rwanda by returnees coming from far and wide. For instance, it was while thousands of refugees lived in camps in north-east Tanzania that they came into contact with the Elim Pentecostal Church. When in 1997, thousands of refugees in the Banaco camp were repatriated; a group of Pastors had been ministering to them. This resulted in the establishment of the *L'Eglise Elin Pentecote au Rwanda* (EEPR) a Pentecostal Church which now numbers over sixty congregations.

⁶⁴ See Government of Rwanda, "Provisional population census report", National Office of Population, Kigali, (August 2004). The statistics however change each year. Cf. De Sam Lazaro, "Reconciliation in Rwanda", *Religion and Ethics Weekly News*, 429. Kigali (March 16th 2001), 2. According to information reported to *Afrol News* by Christian Schaffler of the Switzerland-based Adventist headquarters, the Adventist Church in Rwanda, is growing. *Afrol News*, <<http://www.afrol.com/articles/13884>> (15 January 2005).

⁶⁵ African Rights files.

As one woman pastor has said, these Churches "attract many people because they employ a personal approach, they give a sense of belonging and fellowship. There is a different type of Church where people help one another and another type where people are just bored, going to Church every Sunday when they do not even greet one another".⁶⁶ Thus there may be good reason to suggest that the growth of these smaller fellowship groups is due to their being more readily available to individual members than the larger and more traditional Churches, in providing spiritually therapeutic support for grieving survivors.

This woman Pastor went on to explain that the majority of the leaders and members of these Churches are women, not only because there are more women than men in Rwanda,⁶⁷ but because they have realised that they too are joint-partners in the Kingdom of God. A woman Pastor returnee to Rwanda says that she has been inspired by the Old Testament story of Deborah. For her (and many others for whom she speaks) restoration and reconciliation include "restoration of many things that the tradition has taken away from us".⁶⁸ Leadership in the Church is one of those things. Women should be able to find solace in a Church where, for instance, "single mothers are appreciated", and where all are truly children of God (as they say "Our Father") in the Lord's Prayer.⁶⁹

While it has become an acknowledged fact, that the position of women is a theological and ecclesiological issue, in Rwanda, women are rapidly rising from the "ashes" of the genocide and becoming actively engaged in reconstruction and reconciliation. For example, Sandy Rosen, reporting on a delegation of Canadian Church leaders in 2001, could describe the Rwandan women participants in this mission as "dancing widows". She observed that they danced with a "tremendous vibrancy and joy"⁷⁰ which

⁶⁶ Interview, the author and a woman pastor, Calvary Temple, Kigali, October 27th 2003.

⁶⁷ There are more women than men - the ratio is 87 men to 100 women, see National Office of Population "2000 Demographic and Health Survey", Kigali, (November 2000) 2.

⁶⁸ Author's interview: Senior Pastor of Calvary Temple in Kigali, October 2nd 2003.

⁶⁹ Author's interview: Senior Pastor of Calvary Temple in Kigali, October 2nd 2003.

⁷⁰ Sandy Rosen, "Dancing Widows", Report on the Canadian Church in Rwanda, (Kigali, 2001), 2.

gave no "hint of the grief of the last seven years"⁷¹. She went on to say that although "the memorial sights, where they left the bodies of those slaughtered in Churches, are a gripping reminder of how potentially tenuous the Gospel is in a nation where some Church leaders aided in the killings yet – people are still responding to the Gospel in large numbers and the Churches are growing"⁷². This is a veritable sign of hope.

Rwanda is also experiencing what has been termed "Gospel explosion", as Evangelists and Bible Teachers from different parts of the world conduct large interdenominational "Revival Conferences" or "Crusades". At one such Conference, it was reported that,

Miracle Mission, where Don Egan preached, hundreds gave their lives to Christ...In just seven days, 2, 238 people came forward to accept Christ as Saviour...During the healing ministry, many told of immediate relief from long term pain. One lady demonstrated her healing by throwing away her walking stick and striding around the mission ground. Later her husband received a similar healing. The mayor of Kayonza publicly interrupted Don's ministry on the final night to affirm the positive work of RSVP in the area. Every night, after Don had finished ministering, the Jesus film was shown dubbed into the Rwandan language and many more responded to Christ in addition to the confirmed number above. Every day in schools, team members told the good news of Jesus and many responded. Alison Payne led a women's seminar on 'Grief and Restoration'.⁷³

The authenticity of such claimed healings is not at issue. The point for us to note is the powerful attraction that this is having on many who have been Christians before. Do they really see a religious renewal in this phenomenon? Do they experience conversion to a different doctrine or do they see a hope for their future in these so-called "crusades"? To attempt a comprehensive answer is beyond the scope of this paper, but whatever the nature of the revival, it is evidently impacting heavily upon Rwanda's return to religious affiliation. Furthermore, it is worthy to note the measurable impact it is having on the process of reconciliation where some of the new Churches are encouraging survivors of violence not to denounce

<<http://www.upstream.ca/Rwanda/Mar2001/index.htm> (29 October 2003).

⁷¹ Rosen, "Dancing Widows", 2.

⁷² Rosen, "Dancing Widows", 2.

⁷³ Rosen, "Dancing Widows", 2.

those accused of killing, "but to forgive them as a way of seeking salvation",⁷⁴

The theme of the 2000 Conference⁷⁵ was taken from 2 Chronicles 7:14-15, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (RSV). The August 2002 Pastors Conference⁷⁶ held in Kigali, in which 180 Pastors and Women Church leaders from various denominations across Rwanda participated, the reconciliation agenda was given pride of place. During this Conference, "the Government called on the Christian leaders...to bring about reconciliation in Rwanda and rebuked Pastors for not being reconciled with one another".⁷⁷ The overall aim was to bring people together in order to discuss repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. These conferences not only signify hope, but also provide a much-needed platform for reconciliation and reconstruction of the shattered faith of the Rwandan people.

Conclusion

The most important issue before the Church in Rwanda today is not only the absence of conflict and war, but the creation of a sustainable peace. In searching for real reconciliation, many are beginning to acknowledge "it is only through reconciliation with God that the Banyarwanda⁷⁸ will reach a position of reconciliation with each other."⁷⁹ Being Church in Rwanda means being able to forgive; able to live as neighbours with people who

⁷⁴ Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, "Sustaining Peace in Rwanda: Voice of the people", (n.d), 60.

⁷⁵ The event, which was dubbed Explo' 2000, took place in January of the same year. Many Christian groups came together for a week of prayer, fasting, meditation, scripture reading and discussion, involving as many people as possible in intercession for the Nation. See Report, "organisers' files", Kigali, January 26th 2000, 4.

⁷⁶ The Pastors' Conference, held in Kigali, was part of Summer 2002 Reconciliation Conferences, which were organised in various countries of the great lakes region.

⁷⁷ See, GreatLakes Regional Conference <http://www.cav2000.org/great_lakes_regional_conf.htm>

⁷⁸ *Banyarwanda* means the people of Rwanda. The term is now being consciously used to foster a national, rather than an ethnic feeling in an effort to facilitate reconciliation.

⁷⁹ Statement attributed to a prominent Church leader, commenting on the process of reconciliation in the country, October, 2003.

have been accused of killing others; and most importantly, attending the same Church together, as before. It means claiming that which has been taken away by tradition from certain categories of people. It is in these tenuous circumstances that the Church in Rwanda is being called to bring forth reconciliation, first from within its own ranks; then with God; and finally with the wider society. It must regain its prophetic role, and thereby facilitate the process of national reconciliation in which all people of Rwanda must participate, if sustainable peace and harmony are to be achieved and thus break the spiral of violence.

In spite of the difficulty in finding the balance between justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, there is a realisation that people have a common national heritage. In their commitment to live together as one Nation, Rwandans are determined to facilitate the national healing process. It is expected that the formalised traditional *Gacaca* justice system, to which the Churches must subscribe, will not only render punitive justice, but also provide an opportunity for reconciliation through conflict resolution by the communities themselves. It is viewed as a means of creating awareness of the enormity of the crimes of genocide, in which the responsibility of every member of the society is at stake.

Reconciliation is the most urgent need in the Rwandan Nation. It is being sought in the new Churches, in makeshift Church halls and prayer gatherings. The Churches in Rwanda have a duty, a scriptural warrant, to teach love, not hate, for both Tutsi and Hutu are made in the image of God. It is amazing that many people still have faith in God and that this faith gives them sustenance and hope from day to day. It is not possible to bury the memory with the dead, so integrating the concept of forgiving and remembering is the greatest challenge for the Church, the present Government and for all Rwandans. In spite of the enormity of this challenge, we can conclude that there is hope, first because Rwandans still believe in God, and hence forgiveness is a faith principle; and secondly because there exists a strong political will to foster reconciliation and thereby heal the nation.

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