

**THE TEST OF FAITH: CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN THE
RWANDAN GENOCIDE**

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Table of abbreviations

ACHPR	:African Commission for Human and Personal Rights
ADEPR	: Association des Eglises de Pentecôte au Rwanda
ADFL	: Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
AEE	: African Evangelistic Enterprise
AMUR	; Association des Musulmans au Rwanda
APROSOMA	: Association pour la Promotion Sociale des Masses
CMS	: Church Missionary Society
CPPCG	: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
EER	: Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda
EPR	: Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda
GPU	: Global Peace and Unity
ICTR	: International Tribunal for Rwanda (in Arusha)
MLS	: Mission Libre Suédoise
MOUCECORE	: Mouvement Chrétien Pour L’Evangélisation, Le Counseling et La Réconciliation
NUR	: National University of Rwanda
NURC	: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
PARMEHUTU	: Parti du Mouvement de l’Emancipation Hutu
RADER	: Rassemblement Démocratique Rwandais
RPF/A	: Rwandese Patriotic Front /Army
SDA	: Seventh Day Adventists
SMA-PB	: Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique- Pères Blancs
UNAMIR	: United Nations Mission in Rwanda
UNAR	: Union Nationale Rwandaise

Abstract

This thesis is a critical inquiry into the response to the Rwandan genocide of 1994 by Christians and Muslims. Structured around the thesis that Muslims resisted the genocide better than Christians, it explores the historical, cultural, political and theological causes that motivated and explain the actions of both faith communities in the face of genocide.

The first chapter offers a critique of the dominant colonial perspective from which the topic of religion and genocide has been studied so far. It presents pre-colonial Rwandans as evolving in a complex spiritual universe, *Gakondo*, where religion, morality and politics were closely linked. The rise of a centralised state and sacred monarchy resulted in the theological marginalisation of the Rwandan divinity *Imana* and the deformation of the political conscience of the Rwanda subject.

The second and the third chapter deal respectively with the beginnings of Christianity and Islam in Rwanda within the context of colonization. They show the genealogy of Christianity's political ambivalence and Islam's marginalisation, both which played an important role in the genocide of 1994. One significant contribution of the second chapter is to problematise the epistemological confusion between Rwandan Christianity and Roman Catholicism.

Chapter four suggests a framework for the understanding of 'Rwanda 94' as an instance of evil. It offers a critique of the epistemic hijacking that characterises research in the Rwandan events. The chapter argues for a historical and naturalistic approach to the study of 'Rwanda 94', which should be qualified as 'autocide' instead of genocide because of the intimacy between victims and perpetrators.

Chapter five and six tackle the thesis that Muslims resisted the genocide better than Christians. Examination of the factual data and revisionist discourses in post-genocide Rwanda lead to the conclusion that the imputation of success to Islam and failure to Christianity is operated by virtue of expectations on both faith communities. More specifically, chapter six provides a theological reading of Christianity's shortcomings as sin.

Chapter seven addresses the paradoxical phenomenon of religious blossoming in post-genocide Rwanda and argues that it is faith-based resistance to genocide shown by many Muslims and individual Christians which made 'God-talk' possible and ensured the survival of institutional religion. Chapter eight gives a summary and critique of the process of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. It argues that Islam and Christianity need to develop an alternative model of reconciliation that challenges and moralises the State-engineered politics of reconciliation.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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General Introduction: Faith and Violence

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3). The Psalmist's haunting question constitutes one of the many starting points of this thesis on Christianity and Islam in the Rwandan genocide of 1994.¹ There is something bewildering when one's world falls apart and crumbles under repeated or sudden blows of powers of evil and destruction. Faith is deeply challenged when the foundations of law and order are brutally destroyed by acts of wanton lawlessness. It struggles for a foothold when all the landmarks of a worldview espoused from birth are annihilated by violence of such ferocity that even the sacred, the myths and taboos cannot put it in check. More particularly, faith reaches aporetic limits when these acts of violence and evil are the work of believers.

'Rwanda 94' conjures up the Psalmist's bewilderment and posed such a dilemma to many Rwandan believers. In only three months between April and July 1994, it claimed an incalculable quantity of lives, within the Tutsi ethnic group predominantly.² As such, it ranks as the most brutal genocide of the twentieth century³, not just because of the vertiginous speed of its execution and the sheer number of victims, but by the way in which it assaulted and pulverised every pillar that constituted the foundation of the Rwandan people such as family, alliance, pacts, hospitality, motherhood, childhood, respect of the dead and fear of the sacred.

Violence that turns into pure evil is a challenge not only to faith but also to reason and academic inquiry. It has been suggested that by their nature, crimes such as genocide are an absurdity; events that challenge explanation and understanding because they allow for the impossible to be true.⁴ Schmidt pointed to the limited contribution of Anthropology to the study of violence and religion stemming from the sheer nature of violence and the impossibility of studying the topic empirically whilst maintaining an academic distance.⁵ In

¹ In subsequent pages, the Rwandan genocide is referred to as 'Rwanda 94', 'the genocide', the '94 event' or 'the Rwandan tragedy' to avoid repetitions.

² The number of victims remains a contentious issue. Most studies suggest a number between 500, 000 and one million Tutsi. However, these figures are contested because they rely on statistics provided by the census of 1991, which is claimed to have played down the number of Tutsi. See the report of Human Rights Watch by Alison Des forges, *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda*. March, 1999. Online Version. For a direct access on the topic of numbers click on this link below: <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno1-3-04.htm#TopOfPage>

³ See for instance Gérard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis. History of a Genocide* (London: Columbia Press University, 1995), 255-265.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Harvest Books, 1968), 459.

⁵ Bettina E. Schmidt, "Anthropological Reflections on Religion and Violence", in ed. Andrew R. Murphy, *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 66.

other words, witnessing acts of evil is problematic in itself and trying to understand them presents an even greater challenge. For his part, Ricoeur showed what a challenge evil is to Philosophy and Theology.⁶

Justification and interest of the thesis

The formidable challenge that these authors highlight is at the same time the main justification for this work. As for any meaningful research project, this study of how Islam and Christianity responded to ‘Rwanda 94’ stemmed from a combination academic and personal interests. This researcher witnessed the acts of evil of ‘Rwanda 94’ as a believing Christian born in a mixed family where Tutsi, Hutu, Muslims and Christians were all represented. Evil was not witnessed remotely as a spectator but intimately in the form of loss (relatives as victims) and betrayal (relatives as perpetrators). Therefore, this research is the work of what Romanyshyn calls a ‘wounded researcher’, quite literally.⁷

Does this intimacy with and exposure to acts of evil studied in this work compromise the necessary academic distance Schmidt alludes to? Despite this strong personal interest, this research is not an autobiographical or witness account. In fact, personal ‘experiences’ both as narrative and hermeneutical lenses are rarely called upon. Rather, the effort of faith and reason to seek understanding of a phenomenon unique in its singularity and complex in its plurality informs or helps to make sense of the personal experience, not other way round. Furthermore, this unique position forces the researcher to adopt a ‘methodological kenosis’ necessary to do justice to all the protagonists of ‘Rwanda 94’ studied in this project.

Despite this statement, the researcher more than recognises that this thesis would have benefited from more autobiographical narratives or diverse oral histories provided by witness accounts. In the original design there were plans for field work to collect and use oral histories from genocide survivors in Rwanda or various *diasporas* in western countries. However, different factors contributed to the final format which preferred a more diachronic approach and historical analysis.

Firstly, working with different archives and historical documents revealed a wealth of knowledge on Rwandan religions and religious beliefs that historical and political events

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “Evil, A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology.” In *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53I/3, 635.

⁷ R. D Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind* (Louisiana: Spring Journal Books, 2005).

have made inaccessible to the majority of this work's audience. Thus it became necessary and important to provide a clearer and extended historical background to the events of 1994.

The second set of factors came from the ethical and political complexities surrounding the research on the Rwandan genocide, conducted in Rwanda by a Rwanda and among Rwandans. This research will make allusion to the political need to control knowledge and knowledge making in post-genocide Rwanda. The academic courtesy extended by the authorities to foreign researchers does not extend to their native counterparts. This preferential treatment is not gratuitous but instead it corresponds to the level of overt or covert control that can be exerted on the respective researchers. On the other hand, as a Rwandan genocide survivor, this researcher was aware that due to the sensitive nature of the genocide, any collection of oral histories from Rwandan survivors comes with the risk of collecting data that corresponds to what the researcher wants to hear rather than factual truth.

Furthermore, even in the eventuality of genuine and truthful accounts, the researcher had to acknowledge his limited competence and skills in the handling of oral histories in the context of genocide. In that case, it was felt that it would be unethical and counterproductive not to do all due academic justice to stories that are very important to genocide victims and survivors.

Therefore, in the uncertainty of how the combination of these factors would affect the quality of the research and the integrity –academic and personal- of the researcher, it became apparent that there was need for personal and geographical distance from the subject-matter. This said, it is important to locate this thesis within an ongoing research project of which it constitutes the initial stage and foundation. The methodological skills acquired as well as the knowledge accumulated will certainly contribute to further research that will use methodological approaches that have been suspended rather than discarded in the present work.

This research was also prompted by the scarcity of scholarship on faith and non-religious violence. It is important to point out that the choice of 'Faith' instead of 'Religion' in the title is deliberate. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, academic literature on Religion and Violence has steadily increased. Unfortunately, this body of literature is very narrow in

scope since more often than not it focuses exclusively on religious violence or the potential of religion to be an agent of violence. ‘Rwanda 94’ was not a religious conflict; it was, in its most basic description, an ethnic genocide of the Tutsi minority by some elements of the Hutu majority.⁸ Yet, its victims and perpetrators all belonged to one of the three main faith communities in Rwanda: Christianity, Islam and *Idini Gakondo*⁹ or traditional religion. Works that explore how believers in their individuality or as a group use their faith to respond to acts of extreme violence are rare. For instance, since the publication of Merton’s *Faith and Violence*¹⁰, it is difficult to find Christian theological works in the same mould.

The interest to study the responses of Christians and Muslims to ‘Rwanda 94’ also arose out of a particular post-genocide discourse in politics and epistemology; a discourse which represented the two faith communities comparatively and claimed that Muslims had been more faithful to their religious identity than Christians in the face of the killings. This discourse is referred to as the ‘Thesis of Good Muslim versus Bad Christian’ and forms the core of this research project. Rather than taking these political and epistemic claims at face value, this thesis problematises them and relocates ‘facts’ to a hypothetical level. The task thus becomes one of uncovering what would have been the reasons behind the performance of both faith communities, if these claims were true.

Finally, the interest was also triggered by the scarcity of theological voices in the literature and research on the genocide *per se* and on the response of faith communities more particularly. Inevitably, the Rwanda genocide has integrated the universal patrimony both in the academia and the media. The quasi absence of theology in post-genocide knowledge-making becomes even more noticeable when compared to other academic disciplines whose representatives have dissected ‘Rwanda 94’ to such a point that where Religions and Theology are still at a very embryonic stage, disciplines such as history, political science, law, anthropology and sociology have regularly produced a cumulative body of knowledge; allowing further research to become more focused and specialised. Linden (Church history), Gatwa (History of missions), Grey (Feminist Liberation Theology), and Aguilar

⁸ Up until 2008, the Rwandan tragedy was known as the ‘Rwandan genocide’, however an amendment of the 2003 Constitution, which created the much decried ‘Genocide Ideology Law’; decreed that the event should be known as ‘the Genocide of Tutsi’. See Amnesty International, *Safer to stay Silent: The Chilling effect of Rwanda’s laws on ‘Genocide Ideology’ and ‘Sectarianism’* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2010).

⁹ ‘Gakondo’ will be the short version in the following pages.

¹⁰ Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame: university of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

(Public/Liberation Theology) are to date the only serious efforts from Religion and Theology that are trying to reverse the trend.

Most of these studies must inevitably address the question religious dynamics in ‘Rwanda 94’ given the role and place of religion in Rwandan society. However, the majority adopt a ‘colonial’ stance in their approach to religion and genocide. The colonial character lies in the assumption that before Christianity and Islam, Rwandan people had no experience of religion or spirituality. Little reference is made to *Gakondo*, its influence on Christianity and Islam and its possible ramifications and manifestations in the genocide.

Research aim

Reference to faith (and reason) seeking understanding already indicates that this project approaches the subject matter from the perspective of Religion and Theology. This research is essentially the work of faith politically and epistemically committed not just because of the author’s religious faith (Christian) but also because, as Ricoeur pointed out, faith believes in the tradition of thinking and its ability to draw meaning from experiences and texts.¹¹ It is also a work of faith into faith because it seeks to understand the response of faith (Christianity and Islam) to situations of extreme violence (Rwandan genocide), even if and especially when those conflicts are not religious in essence. Thus, this thesis explores questions such as why Christian and Muslim beliefs were expected to make a difference, whether faith did or could not help to face genocide and more broadly, the extent to which religious solidarity can supersede ethnic allegiances in conflicts deeply rooted in and influenced by the quest for identity.

This research contributes a broad starting point to a more comprehensive representation of Religion and Theology in Rwandan genocide studies. It offers a seminal theo-political reflection on the situation of religion and spirituality in Rwandan politics prior to, during and after ‘Rwanda 94’. In its dialogue with *Gakondo*, Christianity, Islam and Rwandan politics, it seeks to uncover the genealogy and archaeology of the ambivalent and contrasting responses of Islam and Christianity to the politics of atrocity and extermination qualified as moral or political evil and sin.

Set in the context of post-genocide theo-political context where religious identities, hierarchies and hegemonies have been reconfigured and recast, this thesis aims to explore

¹¹ See Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.

the relation between the rise of a centralised political state and the decline of morality, including religious morality, at the micro (individual), meso (families, social groups) and macro (national) level. This decline is seen as a result of the displacement of *Imana y'I Rwanda*, the God recognised in Rwanda, from the centre of the Rwandan polis to the outer margins; combined with the progressive disappearance of the Rwandan as a free subject of politics and free worshiper of *Imana*.

The thesis intends to probe and problematise the order of knowledge about the success or failure of Islam and Christianity to affect the outcome of the genocide by showing that this knowledge is constructed in a post-genocide context where epistemology, politics and theology are contained within a hegemonic State soteriology. As a positive theological inquiry, this research seeks to downplay the 'satanic greatness of evil' represented by the failure of religion, especially Christianity, by amplifying the greatness of faith-inspired resistance to politics of fear and atrocity unleashed by an atheist state. This research sets testifying to this resistance as *the* future task of a relevant Islamic-Christian political theology that seeks to foster a possible political reconciliation in post-Rwanda 94.

Content, Scope and Methodology

The thesis is divided into eight chapters which broadly represent three epochs. Chapters four, five and six represent what can be called the 'present' of the events studied. Chapter one, two and three represent the past whereas chapters seven and eight represent the future. This 'temporal' subdivision is deliberate: it focuses on 'time' as a key factor in understanding 'Rwanda 94'. In terms of presentation, the ideal would have been to present chapter four, five and six at the beginning and work backwards or forward. However, after careful consideration of knowledge about the subject matter and of the audience, it felt more appropriate to use a more 'linear' approach: past – present – future.

Thus, the first three chapters provide a genealogical narrative, not just a historical account of the religious, but most importantly it offers an archaeology of the 'coupling' of religion and political life in Rwanda which as the first chapter shows, predates Christianity and Islam. In this context, chapters one and three are important. They challenge the dominant trend in the presentation of religion in 'Rwanda 94' which assimilates religion to Christianity (and in most cases Roman Catholicism). Engaging Christianity alongside

Gakondo and Islam allows a more comprehensive understanding of the religious and moral landscape that led to the events of April-July 1994.

It is chapter four which deals with genocide not as an instantaneous event but as a culmination of historical and structural processes of ‘sinning’. It concludes that considered from a diachronic perspective, ‘Rwanda 94’ should be seen as *autocide* instead of genocide. Chapter five and six present a critical analysis combining facts and hypotheses to study the respective positions of Christianity and Islam in the genocide. It argues convincingly that success or failure of either faith community in resisting genocide has to be measured through a combination and a comparison of factual actions and expectations; with a special emphasis on the leadership of both communities.

The seventh chapter serves as a theological act of witnessing through a reflection on testimonies of resistance to genocide. It is closely related to chapter six and shows that resistance to genocide has to be seen as pivotal theological moment which allows ascribing responsibility whilst opening up possibilities for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the theme of the final chapter. The merit of the chapter is that it problematises the current State-led reconciliation in Rwanda and its uncritical acceptance by religious communities. The chapter suggests that the theological future of Islam and Christianity in post-genocide Rwanda is to adopt an attitude of suspicion toward State soteriology and offer an alternative framework for reconciliation which takes into consideration the whole history of violence in Rwanda by Rwandans over other Rwandans.

From this outline, it is obvious that the scope of this research is broad. However this ambitious breadth is intimately linked to the seminal and precursory nature of this research. The scope was made wider by the need to research Rwandan Islam. Yet again this choice is vindicated by the role played by Islam during the genocide and the post-genocide period as well as the increasing influence of Islam in African and global geopolitics. It will become apparent that the sources and material on Islam are limited. This thesis reflects on this scarcity which opens new possibilities for research.

Given the breadth of the scope (history, political philosophy, law, religion, theology) and the variety of sources (documents, films, unstructured conversations, witness’ accounts, myths and other oral sources, popular wisdom,...), this thesis uses a combination and variety of methods and approaches. For this reason, each chapter provides a methodological

introduction which captures the salient methodological issues pertaining to that specific chapter. However, a genealogical-archaeological approach, a historical-naturalistic approach and a post-colonial approach are more prominent than others. Another preponderant methodological feature is the use, implicit or explicit, of abduction and inference.

Ultimately, it is a diachronic approach to the study of Islam, Christianity and genocide which ties the thesis together. The overall methodology situates the work in the vicinity of what Aguilar calls 'Historical Theology'. By this concept, Aguilar understands a theology of liberation in which the reading of history becomes a theological tool that provides a contextualised narrative about 'God who can be found within the messy lives of human beings.'¹² Among other implicit theoretical approaches, Post-structuralism allows for an examination of the rise and radicalisation of 'otherness' as a result of a pre- and postcolonial political culture which culminated in the entrenched and ideologised ethnic identities Hutu/Tutsi out of which emerged the categories of killers and victims in the genocide of 1994.

A Liberation theology theoretical framework will help to situate the content within the ongoing story of anti-colonial liberation, decolonisation and re-humanisation of the Rwandan subject. More specifically, it will explore the place of *Gakondo* beliefs, Christianity and Islam within this historical process, i.e the instances of resistance, subversion, silences, collaboration and outright oppression by religious agents. From the subversive and messianic *Nyabingi* movement, through the period of the king-makers up to the failure of 1994, liberation theology approach will help to analyse to what extent religious leaderships succeeded or failed to side with the oppressed, embraced a bourgeois attitude leading to the ambivalent and mixed behaviours and actions during the genocide.

Note on sources in foreign languages

The majority of sources used in the first three chapters were originally written in French or Kinyarwanda and they have been translated into English by the author. The reliability of this translation rests on the fact that the writer of this thesis already holds a previous degree in Latin and Modern languages (French, English, Swahili and Kinyarwanda).

¹² Mario Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide. A Theology of the periphery* (SCM Press: London, 2009), 18.

The most recurring Kinyarwanda concepts such as the three ethnic groups will be presented in the anglicised form as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa without a plural 's' at the end in the same way one would say the English or the French. Other Kinyarwanda words might be presented differently in which case the usage will be clarified in the text.

The work and its audience.

The content and methodology of this thesis have been chosen with the intended audience in mind. Ideally, this audience is made of all 'believing Rwandan subjects' who have been and are still confronted by the reality of genocide. Practically and in accordance with the Rwandan wisdom maxim of *Zitukwamo nkuru*¹³, it is intended for the spiritual leadership – including the political leader who for all intents and purposes has a divine mission.

The emphasis on audience is important because knowledge-making after 'Rwanda 94' amounts to something of an 'epistemological plundering'. This tragedy that befell Rwandans has contributed invaluable 'raw' material to academic disciplines all over the world, especially in the West. The end product ultimately benefits an already rich sophisticated and cumulative wealth of knowledge.

This thesis was imagined as a work about Rwandans for Rwandans. For this reason, there might be more space ascribed to narrative and description than the author would have done in another context. Also, theological critique does not always reach the level of high abstraction in conceptualisation that one would normally associate with a doctoral thesis in theology. Yet, albeit with this disclaimer in mind, this work claims to be an embryonic theology that reflects on Rwandan culture, religion, history and politics.

¹³ Lit. 'the oldest/greatest among them is called out or insulted.' By this maxim, Rwandan traditional wisdom held that representative accountability is taken by the oldest member of the group.

Chapter 1. Religion, Society and State in Pre-colonial Rwanda

1.0. Introduction

De Lame pointed out that it would be impossible to dissociate religion, justice and politics in Rwandan culture because religion suffuses most of the gestures of everyday life.¹ This remark made in 1997 echoes almost verbatim a similar comment made by De Lacger² exactly sixty years earlier; “Here (...) one cannot fathom the spirit that animates individuals and communities without taking into consideration beliefs and religious practices.”³ The validity of these comments cannot be underestimated considering the contribution of these two authors on the study Rwandan history³ as well as the history of knowledge about Rwanda.⁴ These two scholars agree with this thesis on the pervasiveness of religion in pre- and post-genocide Rwanda, and the importance of taking religion seriously in the bid to make sense of the Rwandan tragedy.

Methodologically and content wise, this chapter is key to understanding the subject matter treated in this thesis. First of all, by presenting *Gakondo* and the socio-political dynamics of ancient Rwanda, the chapter responds to a much needed post-colonial imperative to retrieve the ‘Rwandan’ as a subject of history, politics and theology. There has been a consistent epistemic and epistemological ‘reductionism’ in the representation of ‘religion’ and religious experience among Rwandans which takes into consideration only the century or so of Christianity and Islam in Rwanda. This chapter offers a corrective to this academic deviation and shows that the ‘religious’ that De Lame and De Lacger speak of is one that predates Islam and Christianity by millennia.⁵ By implication, it is impossible to understand the Christian and Muslim Rwandan without the genealogical matrix of *Gakondo*.

There is of course the risk that this retrieval could be based on a misguided romanticizing of the past. However, the content of this chapter dispels such fears. Whilst it highlights many positive aspects of *Gakondo*, care is also taken to show their limitations, their need

¹ Danielle De Lame, “Le genocide rwandais et le vaste monde des liens de sang” in *Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 1996-1997* (L’Harmattan : Paris, 1997), 169.

² Louis De Lacger, *Le Ruanda Ancien*. (Kabgayi, 1939), 138-9

³ De Lacger wrote a two-volume study on the history of Rwanda. *Le Ruanda ancien* (above) starts from the period of myths and legends to the eve of European colonization. *Le Ruanda Moderne* (Kabgayi, 1939) retraces the history of Rwanda from 1890 (arrival of the first European) to the time of publication.

⁴ See Danielle De Lame and D’Hertefelt, *Bibliographie Nationale du Rwanda : Société, Culture et Histoire du Rwanda* (Musée Royale D’Afrique Centrale : Tervuren, 1987).

⁵ Van Grunderbeek proved that archaeological evidence (metallurgy and iron artifacts) support the existence of human population in Rwanda around 685 B.C. See M.C Van Grunderbeek et al., 1983, *Le Premier Age du Fer au Rwanda et au Burundi. Archéologie et environnement*, nr. 23: VIII + 57 pp (INRS: Butare, 1983), 10.

for renewal and their ultimate cooption into the political. In this way, the chapter implicitly provides the beginnings of Rwandan political theology, which this work criticises as negative, passive and compliant. Therefore, this chapter lays down two premises that permeate the whole thesis, namely that the entanglement between religion and politics in Rwanda and the theological deficiencies in clarifying this relationship started long before colonialism, Christianity and Islam.

Ultimately, it provides a comprehensive theologico-political ‘ancestral’ context out of which modern Rwanda –the people and their conflicts, emerged.⁶ Whilst the chapter is genealogical and archaeological in its approach, there is a great deal of history in its content. As Aguilar rightly argued, Rwandan post-genocide theology must put great emphasis on historical processes and the communion with ancestors.⁷

Two clarifications seem important at this point, namely what constitutes ‘Rwanda’ and what represents ‘traditional religion’. Regarding the first, there are at least two schools of thought regarding the time when Rwanda became a unified state and its inhabitants became known as *Abanyarwanda*. Most Rwandan historians represented by Kagame retain the year 1090 as the beginning of the Rwandan monarchy under Gihanga. Most western historians favour the reign of Ruganzu Ndoli (the 14th-15th century) as the starting point of the centralised Kingdom of Rwanda.⁸ However, whichever school one follows, it is important to note that long before the emergence of Rwanda as a political entity, a very important segment of the future *Banyarwanda* people lived on the geographical area that became Rwanda. They lived in small clan-kingdoms such as *Abagesera*, *Abazigaba* and *Abasinga*.⁹ It is these people who gave Rwanda its cultural identity and more importantly, its religion, at the centre of which reigned supreme the all-encompassing figure of *Imana*.

⁶ Basing his argument on the work of African theologians such as Laurenti Magasa and Charles Nyamiti, Aguilar argued for the importance of not denying possible links between African Christians and the world of their ancestors. Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide*, 47.

⁷ Aguilar, *Theology*, 51.

⁸ See Alexis Kagame’s two volumes, *Un Abrégé de ethno-histoire du Rwanda* and *Un Abrégé de l’histoire du Rwanda de 1853 à 1972* (Presse Universitaire : Butare, 1972); Jan Vansina, *L’évolution du Royaume Rwanda des origines à 1900* (Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales: Bruxelles, 1962) and *Antecedents To Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (The University of Wisconsin Press: Wisconsin, 2004).

⁹ Muzungu suggests seven pre-Nyiginya kingdoms: *Abenengwe*, *Abasinga*, *Ababanda*, *Aboongera*, *Abazigaba*, *Abagesera*, *Abagara*. Bernardin Muzungu, *Histoire du Rwanda pre-colonial* (L’Harmattan: Paris. 2003), 60-70.

Parrinder suggested two reasons that make the study of African traditional religions difficult: the diversity of the peoples and orality.¹⁰ These difficulties are reflected in studies on the set of beliefs and practices of ancient *Abanyarwanda*. Whilst Bigirumwami has no qualms with accepting all those traditional beliefs as a religion in its own right;¹¹ missionaries and other members of the indigenous clergy discarded them as simple superstitions and put them in the category of Otto's 'numinous'.¹² After warning against uncritically applying the concept of religion to ancient Rwanda's spirituality, De Lacger called this spiritual universe 'a monotheistic and national paganism'.¹³ One author who is certainly worth mentioning is Muzungu who is probably the only Rwandan theologian to have attempted to theologise systematically on Rwandan traditional spirituality in his three-volume work, *Le Dieu de nos Pères*.¹⁴

Although his main contribution will be discussed in the section on "*Imana*", it is worth mentioning that Muzungu distinguishes Rwandan spiritual belief and practices in what he calls "*causalités metempiriques*", meta-empirical causalities, and hence non-religious in nature, and genuine religious practices. Muzungu maintains that one can talk of religious attitude only when there is a reference to the divine or a supreme reality/being.¹⁵ Hence, aspects of *Gakondo* such as taboos, omens, magic, divination and the cult of the dead are dismissed as beliefs in meta-empirical causalities.¹⁶ Whilst recognising the full merit of Muzungu's argument, this work leans more towards Bigirumwami's inclusive understanding of *Gakondo* as a religious system in its own right.

1.1. 'Imanism', a Rwandan doctrine of God.

The lives of ancient *Abanyarwanda* were dominated by the invisible but ever present *Imana*, the name which they used to refer to the divine. *Imana* represented a unique reality

¹⁰ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions* (Sheldon Press: London, 1976), 17.

¹¹ Aloys Bigirumwami, *Imigenzo y'imihango n'imiziririzo* (Nyundo, 1968).

¹² Rudolf Otto, *Le Sacré*. (trans. A. Jundt) Paris: Payot, 1949.

¹³ De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 138.

¹⁴ Muzungu Bernard, *Le Dieu de nos Pères. Volume 1* (Bujumbura: Editions Lavigerie, 1974), *Volume 2* (Bujumbura: Editions Lavigerie, 1975), *Volume 3* (Bujumbura: Editions Lavigerie, 1981). It is mainly in Volume II "*Une reflexion théologique sur les données de la Religion Traditionnelle du Rwanda et du Burundi*", that he gives careful treatment to the concept of religion in general and the nature of Rwandan traditional spirituality in relationship to his understanding of religion.

¹⁵ Muzungu, *Dieu 3*, 145.

¹⁶ Muzungu, *Dieu 2*, 23.

far beyond everything in the scale of values in the worldview of ancient *Abanyarwanda*.¹⁷ Surprisingly, for all the interest that traditional Rwandan spirituality has generated, one would be hard pressed to find a systematic study on *Imana*. Fathers Arnoux, Pagès, Schumacher, Loupias, Hurel and other early missionaries have briefly, yet objectively to an extent, wrote on the subject.¹⁸ De Lacger, followed by Pauwels made an improved effort to systemise the data available.¹⁹ However, in the late 1950s and soon after the independence, some Rwandan scholars, particularly theologians from the Roman Catholic clergy, began to reflect seriously on the nature of *Imana* and the implications of monotheistic beliefs in *Imana* on Christian faith. Written on the subject; Kagame approaches the matter from a philosophical perspective in 1956²⁰; Bigirumwami gives a short but substantial consideration to the question in the second volume of *imihango*²¹ and of course Muzungu's three-volume *Le Dieu de Nos Pères* mentioned above.

1.1.1. Nature and Person of *Imana*

The Rwandans' deity was *Imana y'i Rwanda*, literally 'the God recognised in Rwanda'.²² However, this saying was completed by a more chauvinistic belief that *Imana yirirwa ahandi igataha i Rwanda*, like a land owner who spends the day visiting different properties; *Imana* was understood to go all around other nations settling business but come the evening, he retired to his home of predilection, Rwanda. Curiously, the word *Imana* does not seem to have any particular meaning in the *Kinyarwanda* language. For this reason, scholars have puzzled over the etymology of the word *Imana*.

Kagame found similarities between *Imana* and the *Mana* of Polynesian that one finds in the studies realised by Kessing, Mauss and Howells.²³ As a noun, *imana* is associated with a host of objects and concepts, most of which are connected in one way or the other with the supernatural.²⁴ However, it is important to note that *Abanyarwanda* never confused these

¹⁷ Marcel Pauwels, *Imana et le Culte des Mânes au Rwanda* (Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales: Bruxelles, 1958), 5. In Rwandan theology, *Imana* is gender- less. The use of a masculine is a deliberate choice of the author.

¹⁸ For an in-depth theological dialogue on 'Imanism' between Muzungu and opposing views held by other catholic theologians, see the 'Conclusion' of the third volume of *Dieu des nos Pères*..

¹⁹ Pauwels, *Imana*, pp 3-23; De Lacger, *Ruanda*, pp.138-169

²⁰ Kagame Alexis, *La philosophie Bantu-rwandaise de l'Etre* (Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales: Bruxelles, 1958).

²¹ Bigirumwami, *Imihango* 2, 1968.

²² Kagame, *Philosophie*, 334

²³ See for e.g Kagame, *Philosophie*, 336. Pauwels makes the same comparison in *Imana*, 4-5.

²⁴ Muzungu offers a typology of the "real meaning" (*sens réel*) of *Imana* in 5 categories: i) *Imana* as the Supreme Being, ii) *Imana* as chance/good fortune, iii) *Imana* used in the rituals of divination, iv) *Imana*

objects or persons with *Imana* himself, nor did they believe that *Imana* referred to an impersonal supernatural force, as in the case of Melanesian *mana*. Muzungu was right to argue that all ‘connotations’ given to *Imana* had a certifiable common denominator, an underlying watermark that connects them all to the primary meaning of *Imana*, the supreme reality of *Abanyarwanda*.²⁵ *Imana* meant really and truly the equivalent of ‘God’²⁶ and in person and attributes, he was one and unique.

If the existence of a Supreme Being has been a source of many metaphysical questions in other theological and philosophical systems; it was reduced to its simplest expression in ancient Rwandan thought; the existence of a Creator of the world was a matter of fact and came from a deep intuition.²⁷ Similarly intuitive was their assumption that *Imana* was a person with attributes of essence and attributes of action. In essence, *Imana* was *Iyambere* (the first in everything), *Iyakare* (the eternal) and *Rugabo* (the almighty). In action, *Imana* was *Rurema* (the creator of all things)²⁸, *Rugira* (the providence)²⁹ and *Rugaba* (the generous ruler).³⁰

1.1.2. Sources of knowledge about *Imana*

In the absence of an elaborate metaphysical thought, sources of knowledge about *Imana* can be grouped into three categories: (i) Onomastics, (ii) Folklore and popular wisdom and (iii) Ritualistic and religious formulas.³¹

1.1.2.1. Onomastics

The first source of data on Rwandans’ belief in *Imana* is the proper names of people. Every new born Rwandan child was given a name after the eighth day. The concept of a family

represented by mythical, fictive or legendary characters in folk tales and, v) *Imana* as some human beings, e.g the king.

²⁵ He argues that the name of *Imana* was applied to them by a process of analogy as ‘*analogués secondaires*’. Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 61.

²⁶ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 337.

²⁷ Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 64.

²⁸ Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 70.

²⁹ Pierre Crepeau, *Parole et Sagesse. Valeurs Sociales Dans les Proverbes du Rwanda* (INRS: Butare, 1985), 152.

³⁰ Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, p.75

³¹ The typology adopted in this work is close to De Lacger’s who distinguishes (1) names of person, expressions/formulas of every day’s life, proverbs, (2) ritualistic formulas and (3) myths and legends. *Ruanda*, 140-141.

name, i.e children taking the name of the father, was nonexistent in ancient Rwanda; every child had a personal name. A significant number of those names were ‘God names’³²

All these names are compound names in which the name *Imana* or one of his attributes are explicitly included or implicitly alluded to. In addition to the attributes presented above, these names reveal other dimensions of *Imana* such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. These *Imana*-related names express, in the simplest way, the most profound theological truisms, reflections and beliefs in the person and work of *Imana*. One could argue that when Rwandans named their children, the utterance of the name was a religious ritual, a theological statement, a creed, a prayer. Thus, one could conclude that onomastics was one of the most original and common sources of ancient Rwandan doctrine of God.

By giving an *Imana*-related name to their children, *Abanyarwanda* were theologising about their faith in and relationship to the divine. The name being the principal identifier in ancient Rwanda,³³ naming a child in connection with *Imana* was like engrafting or encoding the divine within the identity of the new born. It was also a sort of tacit acknowledgement that the real genitor is *Imana* (*Habyarimana*) and biological parents are mere guardians. Thus, the child was undoubtedly *Uwimana* (*Imana*’s child), *Icyimpaye* (*Imana*’s gift to me) or *Akingeneye* (the little one that *Imana* chose for me) and the parents were grateful, *Ndayishimiye* (I thank *Imana*).

Another feature of these names is a kind of implicit bilateral contract between *Imana* and the parents that if the child were to grow and live a happy life, each party would have to play their role. Therefore, *Nzayisenga* (I will pray to *Imana*) was a statement that parents will implore *Imana* for whatever is needed, with the firm trust that *Imana* will intervene, *Ndayizeye* (I trust *Imana*).

1.1.2.2. Folklore and Popular Wisdom

This second source of knowledge about *Imana* is more diverse. It is a category that includes expressions and phrases of everyday life such as greetings, blessings, exclamations, proverbs, riddles and myths. These expressions, phrases and sayings are numerous owing to

³² De Lacger suggests a number of around thirty *Imana*-related names (*Ruanda*, 141) but this is a very small number compared to the impressive number of 171 similar names proposed by Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 81.

³³ It is followed immediately by the person’s belonging to the family/lineage. A Rwandan was –and still is X son/daughter of Y.

the linguistic richness of ancient Rwanda and its literary genius. Inevitably, the 'theological' value of these different sources varies significantly.

a) *Expressions and phrases of everyday life* are characterised by the superficial casualness that is proper of theological truisms that have slipped and stayed in daily life and discourse for so long that they have become one with secular language. A good example of this can be found in greeting phrases such as *Urakagira Imana* (May you have *Imana*!) or in the case of someone imploring another, *Wo kagira Imana we!* Faced with a predicament with an uncertain outcome or an impending disaster, Rwandans would say *Nah'Imana* (only *Imana* can do something), or they would utter an exclamation *yebaba mana we!* In the presence of a happy ending, they would say with relief, *Habaye ah'Imana* or *nagize Imana!* (it is *Imana* who did it/ I had *Imana* on my side!). However, if for example the issue was an illness and the patient died, they would say *Yitabye Imana* (he/she answered the call of *Imana*).

There is no doubt that these formulas hail from a religious language but their relative theological value should not be exaggerated. In many cases, they are the equivalent of expressions such as 'Thank God', 'O my God' or 'Lord have mercy' and their genuine meaning may depend on the tone of the voice.³⁴ Nevertheless, it can be argued that their intrinsic value reflects trust and faith in the divine and in some cases they keep their full and deep meaning, for instance for a mother in the presence of a dying child or a region facing a disaster.

b) *Proverbs and riddles*³⁵ are on a superior plane in terms of the depth and the maturity of thought of their content. They are formulations of a much more synthesised reflection on *Imana* and some of them have a theological value comparable to the maxims of the Hebrew Bible. More than the previous category, these sources in general reflect more extensively on most of the attributes of *Imana* and give tremendous insights into what it was like to be a *munywarwanda* believing in and living under the undisputed sovereignty of *Imana*.

Regarding the reflection on *Imana in se*, the overriding idea is the superiority and supremacy of *Imana* above all other existing reality. No reality is equal or similar to *Imana*. For instance, the proverb *Inyundo ntisumba uwayicuze* (the hammer cannot claim

³⁴ On the theological value of these expressions see De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 141.

³⁵ For a rich reading on Rwandan riddles see, Alain Boucharlat, *Le Commencement de la Sagesse. Les Devinettes au Rwanda* (SELAF : Paris, 1975).

superiority over the smith) implies that *Imana* as the creator cannot be transcended by his creations. He is stronger than the abyss, *Imana iruta Imanga*; the master of the worlds below and those above, *Imana ni Nyamugenda hasi no hejuru*; he is more powerful than mighty armies, *Imana iruta ingabo* and he can break the powers of the occult, *Imana imena impigi*. If he is omnipotent, he is also all-knowing and nothing can be hidden from *Imana*, not even the extremely secretive *Mututsi*'s thoughts because *Akari mu nda y'Umututsi kamenywa n'Imana na nyirako*. The list of this kind of proverbs and sayings is endless.

Similarly detailed, if not more so, is the description of the relationship between *Imana* and *Abanyarwanda*. *Imana* is a national deity, *Imana y'I Rwanda* that they can go to for any request. Going to another deity would be disastrous since *wambaza Imana y'undi ikaguha ubuheri*, the reward for worshiping an alien deity is shingles. Since *Imana* is their creator, ancient Rwandans had the belief that nothing could befall them unless it is the will of *Imana*, *Iyakaremye niyo ikamena*, only he who created the frail life can break it. In the presence of enemies or threats, there was nothing to fear because the tiny shrub planted by *Imana* cannot be blown away by a might wind, *agati katewe n'Imana ntikarandurwa n'Umuyaga*. Whilst enemies are busy plotting against you, *Imana* has already planned an escape route, *Umwanzi agucira akobo Imana igucira akanzu*. However, if *Imana* has decided to put an end to a life, nothing can prevail against the decree, *Uwo Imana yatanze ntarara*.

A feature that has a preponderant place in ancient Rwanda's wisdom is the goodness and bountifulness of *Imana* towards the people. This generosity is not dependent on any kind of goodness from the beneficiary; *Imana* makes gifts without expecting a counter-value, *Imana iraguha ntimugura*. When *Imana* gives, the measure is at its fullest, *Imana ikunanurira itakweretse icebe*. On the other hand, it would be irresponsible to assume that *Imana*'s generosity is a license to idleness. To a lazy person who sits around and complains that *Imana* does not help, ancient Rwandans would say that a smear of ashes is the only reward for a person who implores *Imana* while sitting near the fire place (a sign of laziness). Instead, *Abanyarwanda* were encouraged to cooperate with the actions of *Imana* and demonstrate their faith by actions because *Imana ifasha uwufashije*; *Imana* helps those who help themselves. In case the plans of the divine were too unfathomable, there was a more pragmatic approach, if a *Muhutu* cannot rely on *Imana*, he better be able to rely on his strong arms.

It would be inappropriate to finish this section without highlighting an important quality of *Imana* that is emphasised by Rwandan ancient wisdom, namely his justice. In some quarters, experts on ancient Rwanda's morality have argued that *Abanyarwanda* had a limited or superficial understanding of evil and its punishment since a person is a thief only if caught, *Ufashwe niwe gisambo*.³⁶ However, a study of proverbs shows that Rwandans' perception of evil was more refined than that and they emphasise the role of *Imana* in exacting justice. First of all, by asserting that *Uwububa abonwa n'uhagaze* (one who crawls is seen by the one standing up), they affirmed that no one can hide from *Imana* who sees all from high above; and no crime goes unpunished even if in people's eyes that might take time, *Imana ihora ihoze*. In the meantime, the criminal might have the feeling of eluding justice and escaping punishment whilst the divine spell of *Imana* is leading the poor soul to the gallows, *Imana yerekeza umugome aho intorezo iri naho we ngo arayobya uburari*.³⁷

c) *Myths and legends* are the last wisdom source about *Imana*. However, this source needs to be handled with caution for a number of reasons. Most of these myths and legends are extremely fragmented, which suggests that they were written with imagined beginnings and endings to make them cohere.³⁸ Besides, most of these myths were written down by missionaries and inevitably a Christian hermeneutics crept into their transcription. Most importantly, these myths and legends did not have the same popularity among the common people as did the previous sources.³⁹ This remark is particularly important given the fact that these myths seem to have been developed during the consolidation of sacred monarchy by the *Nyiginya* dynasty; a time of political ideologising of significant segments of ancient culture and beliefs.⁴⁰

Despite all these notes of caution, stripped of unnecessary and ideological revisionisms, these myths and legends present *Imana* as the creator of the universe; his dwelling *ijuru* is high above the humans' world. Humans originally lived in *ijuru* with *Imana* but following a

³⁶ See for instance Dominique Nothomb, 'La Conception Rwandaise du Mal Moral'. In *Revue de Psychologie des Peuples*, vol.23, nr2, 1968, 157-171 and the opposite view in Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 85-87.

³⁷ Although most of these proverbs are naturally known to the author, their contribution to 'Imanism' theology follows Pauwels, *Imana*, p.34ff and Muzungu, *Dieu de nos Pères*, Vol.1.

³⁸ See for instance, Alphonse Pagès, « Visions, Oracles et Prophéties » in *Grands Lacs*, 51e Année, nr 11, 12, Sept. 1935, p.522.

³⁹ See among others Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Mythes et Stratégies autour des origines du Rwanda (XIXe-Xxe siècles)' in Chrétien, J.-P. & J.-L. Triaud (eds) *Histoire d'Afrique : les enjeux de mémoire* (Paris : Karthala, 1999) pp.281-320.

⁴⁰ Marcel D'Hertefelt, "Mythes et Idéologies dans le Rwanda Ancien et contemporain" in Jan Vansina, ed., *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (Oxford University Press: London, 1964), pp.219-238.

sin, they were banished to the underworld, which is no other than our world. They also show that ancient Rwandans believed that *Imana* had created their different families, clans and tribes as equals and descendants of one eponym ancestor, *Kanyarwanda*. At this point and for the sake of later developments of this thesis, it is important to note that in ancient Rwanda's mythology the antithesis of *Imana* is not Satan or the devil but *Urupfu*, death.⁴¹

1.1.2.3. Ritualistic and religious formulas

As there was no public cult of *Imana*, a fact that will be discussed in the next section, the religious rituals referred to here are those in relation to divination (*kuraguza*), the cult of the ancestors (*guterekera*) and the cult of Ryangombe (*kubandwa*).⁴² Even though none of these practices is a cult to *Imana* per se, the latter is not entirely absent in the rituals. In fact, the belief in *Imana* is the implicit backdrop of these cults in which the sacrificial animal (*igitambo* in *Kuraguza*), the ancestor (*umukurambere* in *guterekera*) and Ryangombe (in *Kubandwa*) play the role of intermediaries between the supplicant and *Imana*.⁴³

Despite their somewhat esoteric language, these ritualistic formulae show that although Ryangombe and the protecting ancestors are the direct subjects of the supplications, they cannot provide the necessary blessing without the intervention of *Imana* to whom the formulae allude directly or indirectly. As for the incantation over the sacrificial animal, it is more obvious that the expected oracle has to be provided by *Imana* in the viscera of the animal. The overriding impression is that of an intuitive, and almost fearful, understanding by ancient Rwandans that *Imana* permeated the whole of their lives and was the ultimate

⁴¹ Pierre Smith, *Le récit Populaire Rwandais* (Armand Colin.: Paris, 1975), pp.129-133.

⁴² The cult was introduced in Rwanda by Ryangombe around the time when Ruganzu Ndoli was King in Rwanda (15th-16th centuries)⁴². Ryangombe had a group of followers called *Imandwa*, hence the verb *Kubandwa*. Legend has it that he was killed by a buffalo, *imbogo*, and left hanging in the branch of a wild tree called *Umuko*, which, since then, became sacred and has had a significant role in religious rituals other than *kubandwa*. At his death, Ryangombe would have commanded all Rwandans; Abatutsi, Abahutu and Abatwa; males, females and children to invoke him. His reputation must have been so great that this injunction was followed all over the country. Legend also has it that at their death, Ryangombe and his *Imandwa* went to live in the volcanoes in the northwest of Rwanda. There, they became the highest order of *Abazimu* with Ryangombe considered as the Zeus of this peculiar pantheon. On the myth of Ryangombe see Iris Berger, *Religion and Resistance: East African kingdoms in Precolonial Africa* (Tervuren: Musée Royale D'Afrique Centrale, 1981).

⁴³ In the prelude to *kubandwa*, Ryangombe, the head of *imandwa* is invoked in this manner 'Have *Imana* always with you Ryangombe, give me wealth, give me children, give me a long life! In *guterekera*, ancestor is invoked in a similar language, 'Laugh, you *Gasani* (*Imana*) that protects Rwanda, laugh and be favourable, defeat enemies, defeat poisoners, listen o ancestor, lord of this place!' In *kuraguza*, these words are pronounced over the insides of the sacrificial animal: 'Listen o *Imana* of Rwanda, listen o great royal bird that drinks water looking up, if *Imana* has built in your belly (the oracle that we seek), reveal it to us this way...'. Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, p.34

source of their happiness, even if they could not come up with the fitting language to invoke him directly.

1.1.3. Imana, a national deity without a public cult.

This last comment brings to the fore a somewhat bewildering facet of the belief in and religious practices about *Imana*, namely a total absence of a public cult of worship to *Imana*. For a divinity that was so readily on the lips of Rwandans, it is perplexing that *Imana* had no altar, no organised public and collective worship, no priest and no festivals as far back as one can go in the history of the land. This lack of the usual liturgical paraphernalia has intrigued scholars and consequently prompted different explanations. After a long process of elimination, De Lacger suggests two possible reasons behind this lack of a public cult to *Imana*. He finds the first reason in the absence of a royal decree by the monarch, *umwami*, institutionalising the cult. Following their nomadic life, Rwandan monarchs failed to see the relevance of such an institution.⁴⁴ The second reason resided in the particular understanding of Rwandans with regard to the nature and person of *Imana*.⁴⁵

The first reason is flawed because of the assumption of simultaneity between belief in *Imana* and monarchy in Rwanda. However, it has been already proved that ‘Imanism’ predates the Nyiginya dynasty. Therefore, the nomadic life of the kings and the lack of royal decree cannot account for this lack of national and public cult of *Imana*. The second reason carries more weight for within the framework of a natural religion or theology; *Abanyarwanda* understood intuitively that the whole land was *Imana*’s temple. Besides, since *Imana* was the creator of everything and needed nothing; prayers, praises and sacrifices added nothing to his majesty. His blessings were gratuitous and beyond bargaining.⁴⁶

Muzungu adds another important contribution. He points out that if what *Abanyarwanda* knew of *Imana* explains partly why they did not institutionalise his cult, what they actually did not know about their deity played an even bigger role. There was a great deal that Rwandans ignored about *Imana*. *Imana* remained in his absolute transcendence; he never sent a prophet to speak to the ancestors and had required no cult from them. This theological barrier explains the ‘*apophatic*’ attitude that permeates their relationship to the

⁴⁴ De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 167.

⁴⁵ *Id*, 165.

⁴⁶ Muzungu, *Dieu* 2, 93

divine. *In dubio*, ancient Rwandans chose to abstain. The cult to *Imana* was therefore reduced to the simplest expression of gratitude, request and trust in the course of events of every day's life.⁴⁷

1.2. Negotiating the 'Supernatural'

In this section, the 'Supernatural' refers to what can be loosely called the Rwandan 'spiritual world' other than the sphere of *Imana*.

1.2.1. Living secure in a dangerous world

"*Kuba mu Rwanda ni ukwiziriza*".⁴⁸ This ominous proverb was supposedly proffered by a *Murundi* (people from Burundi) who was staggered by the sheer number of taboos and *vitanda* that one had to observe in order to survive and live happily in Rwanda. The brief but more than cursory outline of ancient Rwanda's *Imanism* sketched in the previous section was far from being representative of the vast and rich spiritual universe of the land. *Imanism* was only a part of a more complex religious and metaphysical system, the ultimate end of which was achieving happiness and minimizing harm to the individual, the community and the land.

Ancient Rwanda's *Imanism* was also an embryonic theodicy that accommodated two seemingly irreconcilable realities: an unshakable belief in the goodness of *Imana* and a pragmatic understanding that the universe is a dangerous place; an existential space in which different natural phenomena and supernatural forces operated, at times randomly, and could or did cause great harm.⁴⁹ Living was very much like walking in a minefield. One had to be aware of the treacherous terrain since a simple mistake, carelessness, or sheer bad luck could trigger a fatal outcome. This universe seemed to be governed by the old legal principle *nemo censetur ignorare legem*; one's ignorance or innocence did not excuse the error or prevent the disaster.

Harm came in many guises and had many names. It could have natural causes, be a result of human agency or of an incursion of the supernatural in the world of the living. Natural causes included weather (thunder, drought), locusts, mosquitoes, snake bites, epidemics,

⁴⁷ *Id.*, 94.

⁴⁸ Literally, 'To live in Rwanda is to live in a land of taboos.'

⁴⁹ Contrary to Christian and secular theodicies in Western thought, ancient Rwandan theodicy did not try to explain or understand this dilemma and the challenge that the existence of evil posed to divine sovereignty. Rwandans simply accepted it as a fact of life.

etc. Human agency refers to the actions of sinister individuals such as *abarozi*, *abacuraguzi*, *abagome*, and *abahennyi*⁵⁰ who could cause harm by natural means (poison, for example) or by tapping into dark supernatural powers. Finally, the neglected spirits of the deceased, *Abazimu*, could launch attacks on the living.

This brief picture gives an insight into the psychology of ancient Rwandans. Their lives were so dominated by this constant awareness of clear and present danger that it has been suggested in some scholarly quarters that a *Munywarwanda* is a creature of fear.⁵¹ However in reality, this was not the case because ancient Rwandans did not regard themselves as accursed prisoners of life or defenceless toys in the hands of ineluctable tyrannies.⁵² They might have been surrounded by hostile forces and occult influences, but they found in their traditional pharmacopoeia all the necessary and efficient recipes to appease them or vanquish them completely.

1.2.2. *Rituals for peaceful co-living with the 'spiritual world'.*

Popular beliefs about ancient African societies in general and Rwanda in particular would have one believe that the pharmacopoeia of those societies consisted exclusively of superstitious rituals and magical practices. However, if these were preponderant in the arts of conjuring ills and evils, they were not exclusive; natural sciences and medical ingenuity occupied a significant place as well. As Kagame notes in the case of Rwanda, data of scientific nature were put into practice regarding the destiny of man and the problem of evil to be immunised against.⁵³ Rwandans believed firmly in the principle of causality and held that no event could occur in nature without having a cause. Whatever the cause, if the ill-effect charged event (illness, wound, fracture,...) could be treated and healed by means of medical skill, then the services of *umuvuzi* (healer) were required and they could treat many diseases.

1.2.2.1. Umupfumu, healer of bodies and leader of souls.

If the medication prescribed by the healers did not yield the healing hoped for, the harm was understood to come from an unknown cause, which in turn suggested that the

⁵⁰ This category should be understood as what is commonly called “black magic”, and only practitioners of this dangerous craft could be really called “sorcerers” or “witches”. They are to be distinguished from the *Bapfumu*.

⁵¹ De Lame, *Liens de Sang*, pp.167-168

⁵² De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 251

⁵³ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 289.

supernatural had invaded the natural order of things. Kagame referred to such as a 'Being of Intelligence' (*Etre d'intelligence*) which was at work, using the ill-happening to exact vengeance or demand a service. In this case, a specialist of the unknown, *Umupfumu*, was called upon to reveal the hidden cause and identify the causal link between the observable effect and the principle that had to be discovered.⁵⁴

At this point, it seems important to shed more light on this character whose preponderance in the social, cultural, political and spiritual life of the Rwandans could never be overemphasized. Etymologically, *Umupfumu* comes from *gupfumura*, to pierce; to drill through a wall.⁵⁵ There does not seem to be any unanimity on the origins of the institution.⁵⁶ As for the practitioners, there were no limitations based on clan or ethnicity of origin, gender or age. With the arrival of Christianity, the profile of *umupfumu* has been much derided, assimilated to charlatans and soothsayers or, in the worst case, to professionals of the dark arts.

However, Rwandans held authentic *umupfumu* in the highest esteem, going as far as considering them as *umubyeyi* (parent figure). This popular respect was due to the fact that a genuine *umupfumu* was reliable to fulfill the functions of healer and spiritual leader. They combined theosophy and theurgy,⁵⁷ albeit in the narrowest sense of both concepts. *Abapfumu* considered their insight as a gift from *Imana* and for this reason their craft was at the service of good causes only. They passed to the offensive only to prevent an attack. *Umupfumu* was not a priest or minister of a cult in the strictest sense, considering there was no organised cult of any form in the country. Like the rest of the population, they made sacrifices for themselves. However, their importance in the secure wellbeing of the communities; spiritual, physical and political, was unequalled.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 289.

⁵⁵ De Lacger notes that the concept is impregnated with the idea of an energetic, penetrative, and victorious act/ion. , *Ruanda*, 304.

⁵⁶ The Myths of Kigwa, the mythical founder of the Nyiginya dynasty says the Batutsi found the art in the hands of Abazigaba, known also as Abakara. At the zenith of Rwandan monarchy, the practitioners of this art purported to hold their craft from the Ruganzu Ndoli, the great King-mupfumu. Historically, the first version seems the most likely. For an in-depth study on *Umupfumu* see Kagame, *Philosophie*, pp. 285-297; De Lacger, *Ruanda*, pp.300-311 and more generally Bigirumwami, *imihango*, vol.1.

⁵⁷ For this reason, De Lacger has drawn parallels between *Abapfumu* and the Sybils, calchas, tiresias, pythies and Jewish Nebiim. *Ruanda*, 304-305.

⁵⁸ De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 306-308.

The two principal functions that made *umupfumu* so indispensable in ancient Rwanda were revealing the hidden (*kuragura*)⁵⁹ and healing (*kuvura*). In the presence of disaster, illness or any other form of harm for which a cause could not be determined, *Umupfumu* was immediately consulted because he/she was able to provide the means to appease a troubled soul, to cajole and win over a vindictive *umuzimu/imandwa*. It was in his/her powers to nullify evil spells, save lives and properties or prevent unintended offences towards the spirits.⁶⁰ The intervention of *umupfumu* could lead to one of at least four solutions or *Indagu*. In the first place, he/she could pinpoint the illness/disease that was affecting the patient. In that case, she/he could provide the medication or refer to a specialist.⁶¹ In the second case, *umupfumu* could uncover the evil intervention of a practitioner of dark magic and provide the countermeasures to the evil spells. The third situation, and the most common, was when *umupfumu* had to deal with the spirit of a dead person who was attacking the patient for a given reason. This is the complex world of *guterekera* and *kubandwa*; which, given their relevance for later reflection in this work, deserves a special mention.

Before that, it would not be an exaggeration to relate the role of *umupfumu* to that of pastoral care currently fulfilled by Muslim or Christian leaders (Imam, Pastors, Priests, etc.). In most cases, they, like *umupfumu*, are first-stop and emergency contacts to provide guidance in difficult situations, prayer, counselling and comfort. There is no doubt that such a character would have been important in difficult pre- and post-genocide periods of fear and uncertainty.

1.2.2.2. Guterekera

Guterekera is a generic term which refers to the complex of rituals and practices of honouring, remembering and communing with the spirit of a dead person. It has also been called the cult of the ancestors or the cult of the dead. Even though *guterekera* could be suggested by *umupfumu*, it was generally a daily ritual practiced in almost every household. In fact, within the *Banyarwanda* system of belief, the mystic interaction with the spirits of

⁵⁹ On the meaning, definition and rituals surrounding *kuragura*, see Bigirumwami, *Imihango*, volume 1.

⁶⁰ De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 103.

⁶¹ There was a variety of such specialists: *Umuvuzi* (medical healer), *Umugangahuzi* (specialist in cases involving people struck by thunder), *Umuholyo* (property targeted by thunder), *Umupyisi* (in the case of cattle loss due to wild animals), *Umuvubyi* (in the event of drought) or *Umuyege* (attack by locusts).

the deceased monopolised the external and public cult so much so that an ill-advised observer would believe that they constituted the whole of the traditional religion.⁶²

Guterekera rested on two major foundations: the belief in the continuity of life after death and the continuous contact between the living and the dead. For ancient Rwandans, life did not stop at the moment of death. A living person is a combination of two things: *ubuzima* (physical life) and *igicucu* (soul). At the moment of death, *igicucu* is separated from *ubuzima*, but the person does not cease to exist but operates a transition or a kind of rebirth in the form of *Umuzimu*. The description of this new entity is not easy because although *umuzimu* did not have a physical shape, they could eat and drink. Personality-wise, *umuzimu* kept all the traits of the deceased person.⁶³

The relationship with the living was a complex one as well. By nature, *umuzimu* was at the same time a diminished being and a powerful spiritual entity. Regarding the former, it appears that the happiness of *umuzimu* in their new universe depended on being remembered by the living. This memory was acted out, among others, through offerings of food and drinks and the building of a dwelling, *indaro*, for the *umuzimu*. Being forgotten in the afterlife was a terrifying eventuality and seems to have been one of the main reasons why ancient Rwandans dreaded to die without leaving a descendant, referred to as *kuba incike* or even more sinister, *guhambanwa ikara*.⁶⁴ On the other hand, *umuzimu* was a powerful spirit who could move everywhere freely. In this capacity, they offered protection to their living relatives and friends. However, the opposite was also true: they could launch dangerous attacks on these same people if they forgot to honour them. Pauwels provides two main categories of *Abazimu*; those related to the family *abazimu b'umuryango* and those external to the family, *abazimu b'indengaryango*. Rwandans behaved differently depending on whether they were in the presence of a friendly *umuzimu* or in the presence of a hostile one.⁶⁵

⁶² However, De Lacger is adamant that what he calls a 'mediocre religion' did not cancel the more discrete and less explicit cult of *Imana*. 'The power of *Imana* presides over these diverse manifestations and envelops them with an aura of the supernatural'. *Ruanda*, 191.

⁶³ Bigirumwami, *Imihango* 2, 119-120.

⁶⁴ Lit. *being buried with an extinguished charcoal*. On the importance of having an heir who would honour one's *Umuzimu* see an interesting anecdote provided by De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 200-1.

⁶⁵ See Pauwels, *Imana*, 105ff and Bigirumwami, *Imahango* 2, p.127ff. For the different categories of *Bazimu*.

Unfortunately it is impossible to go into the detailed descriptions of rituals of *kuragura* and *guterekera*.⁶⁶ What is of interest though is to demonstrate how these religious practices interacted within the context of mending the relationship between the living and the dead, human reality and supernatural realms. As said above, *umupfumu* was called into action when a hidden cause was behind whatever harm was afflicting the individual/family consulting them. More often than not, the ritual of *kuragura* pointed to the attack of *umuzimu*. *Umupfumu* pinpointed the nature of the hostile spirit, the reason behind that hostility and prescribed the solution which would satisfy *umuzimu* and make them retreat to their realm.

The *bazimu* did not always intrude in the world of the living to cause upset and harm. Some of them, like the *muzimu w'inganirizi* – the chatty spirit – would drop by just to have a chat with an old friend. Other *bazimu* invaded the space of the living when the latter had forgotten about them and they felt the need to ‘nudge’ the living and remind them of their obligations. The most dangerous attacks came from the hostile *bazimu*. These attacks could reveal themselves in the form of serious harm like physical and mental ill-health, repeated accidents resulting in the loss of crop and cattle and even death.

Once the *muzimu* involved was revealed and his demands made clear, the afflicted person/family had to take the necessary steps to assuage their anger and soften their bitterness. In most cases, an offering, *igitambo*, in the form of a domestic animal (goat, lamb, calf) was necessary. It was offered with the cajoling formula “*Seka, Gororoka*” (smile, stop being angry). They also made the promise of never forgetting the *muzimu* ever again. If the concerned spirit was a *muzimu* of a nameless child or a young person who never married, they received a name or were offered a ‘ritual’ bride/groom. At the sight of this offering and the obvious contrition of the afflicted, the righteous anger of the offended *muzimu* disappeared and a peace banquet followed where both the living and the deceased guests embraced.⁶⁷

Of course, not every hostile attack of *muzimu* ended in this peaceful manner. Some *bazimu* attacked with the intention of seeking revenge or destroying the attacked person. This was the case for the *muzimu* of a murdered person or a person hanged following a false

⁶⁶ Bigirumwami's *Imigenzo y'imihango* (1964) is the most comprehensive authority on this topic.

⁶⁷ De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 204.

accusation.⁶⁸ In this scenario, the *muzimu* disdained the wheedling words and rejected all the offerings, requesting an extreme form of justice in the absolute sense of the *lex talionis*. Fending off this form of attack was not an easy task and sometimes drastic measures were required, most of which involved symbolic expiatory rituals.⁶⁹

The general impression that emerges from these special rituals is that the *muzimu* of any person who died a violent death received a special treatment. With regard to ‘Rwanda 94’, this clearly has serious implications for the ‘Hermeneutics of bones’ and ‘Skeletal theology’ suggested by Aguilar.⁷⁰ It also opens up possibilities for theological dialogue between *Gakondo*, Islam and Christianity around the theme of reconciliation between the living and the dead; especially in the presence of so many violent deaths.

1.2.2.3. Ryangombe and Nyabingi.

Beside *kuragura* and *guterekera*, the cult of Ryangombe, *kubandwa* and *Nyabingi* were two other religious practices that enriched the spiritual world of ancient Rwanda. Both practices were a form of *guterekera* but with significant peculiarities. The other feature shared by both practices was their foreign origin; namely the north of Rwanda in what is the current Uganda. Unfortunately, it is not possible to explore in detail the fascinating rituals and ceremonies surrounding these cults.⁷¹ However, it is important to highlight that they both had significant socio-political repercussions in Rwandan society.

For instance, *kubandwa*’s ceremonies were performed using a deliberately ‘lewd liturgy’ which intended to be socially and politically subversive by providing what De Lame calls a pacific and imaginary inversion of the existing socio-political order. It created an egalitarian space where derision operated as socially liberating.⁷² The cult of *Nyabingi* was more direct in its political subversion because it literally reproduced a ‘ritual’ copy of the Rwandan monarchy. Whilst this ‘posturing’ made *Nyabingi*’s followers target of royal

⁶⁸ Note that in some cases it did not matter whether the murder was intentional or accidental.

⁶⁹ E.g: One such measure involved a specialist called *Umuhuza* who would use the remains of the dead person to create a shield against this posthumous vendetta. In this way, the *muzimu* could not strike for fear of hurting themselves by hurting the person who wears parts of their body. Musinga and the Queen Mother Kanjogera had to go through the ritual of a symbolic death by fire, in expiation of the death King Rutalindwa and his partisans. The ritual of *Igihitasi*, literally the journey into the abyss (*hasi, ikuzimu*) was intended to implore the mercy of the *bazimu* of the people who had been buried alive. See De Lacger, *Ruanda*, 213-214, 249.

⁷⁰ Aguilar, *Theology*, 33-51.

⁷¹ Many scholars have written extensively on *Nyabingi* and *Ryangombe*, however a comprehensive and accessible source on both is Pauwels, *Imana*, pp.112-254. on *Ryangombe* see also Luc De Heusch, *Le Rwanda et la civilisation Interlacustre* (Université Libre de Bruxelles: Bruxelles, 1966), 158-362.

⁷² De Lame, *Liens*, 170.

persecution, it also served as a powerful *foyer de resistance*; especially in the north and north west of Rwanda where the vestiges of this ritualistic-political freedom have not completely dissipated.

1.2.3.3. A conclusion on *Gakondo*

So far, this chapter has introduced terms and concepts that are rather unfamiliar to an English speaking audience such as *Imana*, *umupfumu*, *kuragura*, *kubandwa*, *Ryangombe*, *Imandwa*, *guterekera*, *Nyabingi*, etc. This excursion in ancient Rwandan's religion was not intended to satisfy one's interests in esoteric practices of a time gone by or even enriching academic vocabulary with some exotic concepts. Rather, these concepts represent *Gakondo*, the religion which informed, gave meaning to the lives of *Abanyarwanda* and set their land apart as a nation. They unravel religious practices that were integral to national identity and social life. They open a window onto a spiritual universe where, despite the lack of institutional coordination and theological systematization, a common thread (*Imana*) linked different components of *Gakondo* while *kuragura*, *guterekera* and *kubandwa* had the *mupfumu* as the connection and shared the purpose of bringing harmony between the living and the departed. Ultimately, these concepts put this question before any researcher: is it possible to know the present without understanding the past? Can one study the Rwandan of today without reflecting on how this present being was shaped and still carries in the subconscious the ancestral spiritual genes?

For the purpose of this study, this revisiting of the past was not a futile exercise because the information provided helps in engagement with, critique of and reflection on the subject matter of this thesis. For instance, the doctrine of *Imana* would play a role in the critical evaluation of the missionaries' theological approach to indigenous spirituality, which they considered a mere stepping stone.

With hindsight back to the practice of *guterekera*, how could the work of memory and reconciliation work in post-genocide Rwanda? How could the desire of being (well) remembered bring an added spiritual value to Christian and Muslim understanding of paradise and eschatology in general and how would such an attitude inform the day to day political and social living together?

Kubandwa and the cult of *Nyabingi* point to the fact that political leadership was not oblivious to the impact and the influence of religious movements in ancient Rwanda. In

particular, the subversive nature of the cult of Nyabingi gives a small glimpse into the possibilities of religious resistance in the face of political pressure. More particularly, it might help to understand better the kind of faith-inspired resistance to genocide that was shown by some Christians and Muslims during the genocide.

1.3. Relating to the living: morality in ancient Rwanda.

In order to complete the overview of ancient Rwanda's universe, two short sections are needed; one on ethics and culture and the other on politics. This section is concerned mainly with the moral code of ancient *Banyarwanda* irrespective of their religious beliefs, although in many respects, especially in traditional African societies, morality and religion are profoundly intertwined and at times indistinguishable. Mbiti suggests that African morals deal with human conduct and this section follows his typology of conduct to deal with individual, family and extended community or social morality.⁷³ However, it is necessary to clarify in advance the main philosophical categories within Rwandan morality.

1.3.1. Moral categories: -iza, -bi, -zira

The moral of ancient Rwandan life recognised three categories: the good (*-iza*), the bad, (*-bi*) and the forbidden/taboo (*-zira*).⁷⁴ In the category *-iza*, one finds the sum of acts, attitudes, conduct and behaviours which Rwandans considered to be positive, essentially good, life-affirming and society-enhancing. The category *-bi* expresses the opposite or the antithesis. Some concepts need the adjectival or adverbial forms *-iza* and *-bi* in order to be classified on either side of the moral divide, whereas other virtues are intrinsically known to be either good or bad.

It is impossible to emphasise the importance that Rwandans attached to high morals and dignified conduct, in private and public life. Good values were encouraged and bad ones discouraged. The measuring stick in terms of goodness was nothing short of *Imana* himself. People would say that *kanaka* (so and so) *ni* (is) *Imana y'I Rwanda* to refer to someone against whom no reproach could be formulated. In more human terms, the highest virtue was *ubupfura*,⁷⁵ a quality normally associated with aristocracy or the rights of a first born as if to say that even though not everyone could rise to the rank of royalty or nobility in

⁷³ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed., (African Writers Series: Heinemann, 1991), 174.

⁷⁴ Kinyarwanda has at least 16 classes of nouns plus 3 extremely rare classes, therefore the adverbial and adjectival forms are listed following their root or stem.

⁷⁵ On *Ubupfura* see, Dominique Nothomb (aka Semakuba), « *ubupfura* ou noblesse du coeur » in *Servir* XXIV, nr 5, 1964, pp.179-200 ; Crepeau, *Parole*, 180-186.

politics, one could be aristocratic in morals, a first born in goodness. To arbitrate among the people, one had to be *inyangamugayo* (one who hates a bad reputation), a quality that encompasses wisdom, impartiality, justice and empathy.

Obviously, other moral virtues were cultivated and encouraged in Rwandan society. Bravery and courage, *ubutwari*, were encouraged in a country which grew out of century-long wars of expansion with neighbouring kingdoms. Patience and endurance, *kwihangana*, were at times pushed to the limits of stoicism in a place where adversity under multiple forms was a common occurrence. Sobriety and self-control, especially in terms of refraining from anger and food consumption, were also important moral qualities.

At this point, it is important to make a note on the difference between the categories of *-bi* and *-zira*. As briefly mentioned above, the former refers to what is bad, evil, even ugly. Nothomb quoting Muzungu adds that whenever the adverbial form *nabi* is used with verbs *kugira* (have or act) or *gukora* (do), it takes exclusively the moral sense of doing evil.⁷⁶ The moral category of *-zira* and the substantive *umuziro* refer to a specific category of what is taboo. What is *-bi* is not necessarily *-zira*, but all that is *-zira* is simply considered bad, dangerous and totally forbidden.⁷⁷ Acts falling in the category of *-bi* were considered unlawful and undesirable, however they were not strictly forbidden, therefore they could happen and the society expected them to happen. For example, the lack of respect towards an elder was *-bi*, but not *-zira* and social sanction or legal punishment with varying degrees of severity could be pronounced against the offender.

However, acts in the category *-zira* were taboo, strictly forbidden and dreaded. As such, it was imperative that they did not happen because once they did, they triggered an automatic and infallible punishment for the offender, or their family, descendants, a whole region or even the whole country.⁷⁸ Ignorance, accidental awkwardness or remorse *post eventum* were not mitigating circumstances or causes of excuse; immanent sanction followed the act because it had violated a kind of natural law and disturbed the harmonious order of the universe. In this way, acts *-zira* are closer to religious observance than to moral conducts.

⁷⁶ Nothomb, *conception*, 158.

⁷⁷ E.g. there is nothing strictly bad for a woman to climb up to the roof of a house. Yet in ancient Rwanda it was a taboo because that act would lead to the premature death of her husband.

⁷⁸ Nothomb, *Conception*, 160.

1.3.2. *Morality and the individual*

It is commonly held that in traditional African society, the community takes precedence on the individual. Nothomb and others are certainly right to point out that Rwandan morality went against individualism because it was guided by the social utility of the sum of acts posed by the individual members of the society.⁷⁹ However, this teleological and communal character of Rwandan morality implied that the acts were performed by morally conscious individuals. It would be too much to assume that Rwandans were some kind of social automatons, programmed or conditioned to satisfy the social common good.

The moral impetus came from within the individual conscience, *umutimanama*; as the saying goes, *kami ka muntu ni umutima we*, literally a person's miniaturised king is their conscience. Nothomb helpfully explains that the recognition of the internal value of a person in Rwandan tradition stems from a careful examination of the concept of *umutima* (heart). In this tradition, *umutima* is the intimate centre and the unifying thread of cognitive, sentimental, intellectual, voluntary and conscious life.⁸⁰ All the positive moral virtues (-iza) were communicated to an individual through and from a great variety of social channels but ultimately the processing centre was their *umutimanama*, the counsel from their heart. It is only this process which guaranteed, in Rwandan society like in any other, the existence of individuals of a higher morality and social deviants who could not comply with the moral code communicated to them.⁸¹

1.3.3. *Morality and family*

Rwandans live in and survive thanks to their family. Significant sociological and anthropological studies both in French and English have provided extensive information on the role of the family in Rwandan society, past and present.⁸² What is of interest here is to

⁷⁹ Nothomb, *Conception*, 168.

⁸⁰ Nothomb, *Conception*, 169.

⁸¹ On the concepts of '*umutima*' and '*umutimanama*' see, Dominique Nothomb, *Un Humanisme Africain. Valeurs et pierres d'attentes* (Lumen Vitae: Bruxelles, 1965).

⁸² See among others, Jacques J. Maquet, *Prelude of inequality in Rwanda* (London/Ibadan/Accra: Oxford University Press, 1961), Alexis Kagame, *Les Organisations socio-familiales du Rwanda* (Académie Royales des Sciences Coloniales: Buxelles. 1954), and Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1988).

show to what extent the family participated in the moral education of the individual.⁸³ A Rwandan proverb is fitting to illustrate this point, *Uburere buruta ubuvuke*, which emphasises the importance of social education (*uburere*) to further the ability that the individual was born with (*ubuvuke*, from *Kuvuka*, being born). In this paradigm of nurture over nature, the family was the centre of learning *par excellence*, especially when one remembers that there were no formal schools to speak of.

It is within the family that the child received the earliest rudiments of moral life. Early in their lives, young Rwandans would have been taught the importance of *Ikinyabupfura*, or showing respect to their parents, the elders and whoever was in a position of authority. Sitting around the fire place, they would have also learnt the necessity of generosity, *ubuntu*, which went hand in hand with the virtue of hospitality, as this proverb fittingly expresses, “*Umushyitsi akurisha imbuto*”; to honour a guest, seed for the following season are served as a meal.

It is in the family that the sense of duty and responsibility was grasped as children observed their parents and adults in the extended family. There, young Rwandans would also learn that it was a moral obligation to support each other and to show solidarity with their kinship. In the familial circle, children were taught the importance of keeping confidence as divulging information about the family to strangers could jeopardise the wellbeing of the members. Young girls were taught the importance of *ubusugi* (virginity) and to be *umukobwa w’umutima*, the obligation of being welcoming, *Umunyokobwa ni nyampinga*, *umukobwa ni umutima w’urugo* and the onus that was on their shoulders to preserve the honour of the female contingent of the family since *umukobwa aba umwe agatukisha bose*; a maiden’s dishonour affected all maidens.

Thus, the family was the *locus* for moral education through a variety of pedagogies. Young boys learnt the value of courage and bravery by listening to men telling tales of battles and saying their *ibiyivugo*.⁸⁴ Through *imigani*, *ibitekerezo*, *ibisakuzo*, *inshoberamahanga*, ...a

⁸³ I took the liberty of including neighbours within the broader understanding of family. If a bad neighbour was worse than a heap of ruins as a Rwandan saying goes, the opposite is also true that a good neighbour was valued as much as a family member.

⁸⁴ Autopanegyric poems.

great deal of common folk wisdom was passed from generation to generation, moral pathways were taught, personalities were moulded and role models intuitively chosen.⁸⁵

1.3.4. Community and social morality

As Mbiti clarifies, when one moves from family to community social morals and patterns of moral conduct become more complex as they involve a vast number of people. Plus, the boundaries between morality, religion, customs, tradition and politics become increasingly blurred.⁸⁶ This section limits the reflection on those moral values which helped this vast number of people to reduce the levels of alienation. In fact, only the concept of *Ubucuti* will be considered here.

A literal translation of *ubucuti* would be friendship, but friendship taken in its most serious or absolute value. *Ubucuti* was the main channel through which two aliens became friends and strangers became family members. It created networks that went beyond blood kinship, clan belonging and regional neighbourhood. *Ubucuti* happened in most cases due to the difficulties of transport and mobility in a society where motor locomotion did not exist.⁸⁷ Therefore long distances had to be travelled on foot, which explain the quasi sacred duty of hospitality that every Rwandan owed to a traveller. On many of these occasions of hospitality, friendships were sealed and they were reinforced by reciprocal visits between individuals and families. Rwandans codified this state of matters in a very evocative proverb, *Ifuni ibagara ubucuti ni akarenge*, the foot is the little hoe that gets rid of weeds in the garden of friendship.

Ubucuti also happened in the occasion of marriage. Ancient Rwanda was essentially an exogamic society;⁸⁸ thus grooms and brides had to come from a different family or clan. Marriage extended friendship to family inclusion with all the moral duties and obligations that went with this new change. It is very interesting to note that when friendship was evoked in the context of marriage, the expression used was that of *Guhana umugeni*, exchanging brides. Considered alongside what was aforementioned about the role of girls,

⁸⁵ See for instance Edouard Gasarabwe, *Soirées au Pays des Mille Collines* (L'Harmattan : Paris, 1988) and *Soirées d'autrefois au Rwanda*. (L'Harmattan : Paris, 1997) .

⁸⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction*, 177.

⁸⁷ Even more surprisingly, Rwandans did not use domesticated animals for transport such as horses and donkeys.

⁸⁸ This is a very general view of marriage in Rwanda and I am aware of Maquet's argument in *Inequality* on the development of endogamy which emerged with the increasing dominance of Tutsi aristocracy and Nyiginya monarchy. However, endogamy was mostly respected between Hutu and Tutsi and exogamy persisted within both groups and their respective clans.

this fact shows how important women were in the patriarchal society that was ancient Rwanda. *Umukobwa ni gahuzamiryango*, girls were the bridge between families. Together with brides, the exchange of cattle, *guhana inka*, was another sign of friendship. This gesture was significant because cows were the sign of wealth and elevated social status.

Ubucuti was also sealed and reaffirmed through the important rituals of *kunywana*, a swearing of friendship between individuals and families. *Kunywana* created a binding pact called *igihango* between the parties involved and this binding promise of friendship was so important that people would swear during the ritual “*Nintatira iki gihango, igihango kizanyice*”, may I be stricken dead if I betray this pact.⁸⁹ The most binding of pacts was the blood pact. Pauwels, Bigirumwammi, Kagame and others have written extensively about this important sign of friendship.⁹⁰

The pact made brothers of two men⁹¹ who were thus far strangers or unrelated and operated an incorporation of one’s family into the other. When the two partners in the pact shared their blood they swore undying and faithful friendship to one another and subscribed to a pact of mutual help and support between their respective families. Showing disloyalty to one’s pact and breaking it was, as aforementioned, a serious offence especially when one bears in mind that for a Munyarwanda one of the greatest crimes was to abandon or let down their relatives. This is why *gutatira igihango*, was said to bring the worst of misfortunes and in the extreme case, death.

1.3.5. Other morally reprehensible conduct

The last point made regarding blood pacts makes it necessary to talk about what the Rwandan society considered as moral evil and reprehensible conduct. Drawing on Muzungu’s study on sin in Rwandan mentality, Nothomb proposes a typology of social evil comprising seven categories. The first two categories are concerned with the categories –bi, –iza and –zira examined above so they will not retain our attention here. The remaining conducts were *igicumuro*, *icyaha*, *guhemuka*, *kugoma* and *gutatira*.⁹² These will be developed in the fourth chapter in connection with the genocide.

⁸⁹ Bigirumwami, *Imihango* 2, p.177

⁹⁰ For a comprehensive study of the pact see Marcel Pauwels, “Le Pacte de sang” in *Annali Lateranensi*, Vol.XXII, 1958, pp.1-40.

⁹¹ Only men could make this kind of pact, see Pauwels, *Pacte*, 14.

⁹² Nothomb, *Conception*, 158-160

With this short reflection, the discussion on morality comes to a close. A legitimate conclusion would be to say that even though morality had a personal character, for ancient Rwandans an act was truly morally bad and evil in as much as it was detrimental to harmonious relationships among people. In Nothomb's words the moral criteria of any given act was its social utility.⁹³ If it were useless or harmful to the individual and the social community, then it was immoral and evil.

1.4. Sacred Monarchy: from religion to ideology

The Rwanda that was revealed to the first Europeans more than a hundred years ago was a united and centralised state, hierarchal in its organisation with heterogeneous populations living in what could be qualified as total harmony. At the eve of the twentieth century, Tutsi, Hutu and Twa lived in peace, ruled by a sacred monarch, mindful of their own business and respectful of hierarchies in place. However, this socio-political reality was a recent achievement; the result of a long and complex process of migrations, socio-economical adaptation and finally political domination by the Nyiginya dynasty over the land and the peoples of the territory that came to be known as Rwanda.⁹⁴

1.4.1. Myths of Origins

From the beginning, this work has taken the liberty to use the words Rwanda, Abanyarwanda, Twa, Hutu, Tutsi, ... as they are known in the contemporary world and one could be led to believe that they have always been in use in the land to which they came to belong. However this was not the case. So where did they come from? What was the name of the land before it was named Rwanda and who bestowed the name upon it? Who are the people who came to be known as Abanyarwanda? How did the categories Twa, Tutsi and Hutu emerge? Quite simply, nobody knows with certainty. Ethnology, ethnography and historiography cannot provide fully satisfactory answers because compared to the 'real' history of Rwanda, they are still in their infancy. This is not to say that these disciplines have not garnered and generated information and knowledge about Rwanda and its people. However, despite formidable academic endeavour, there is still a lot to learn about the origins of the people of Rwanda.

⁹³ Nothomb, *Conception*, 168.

⁹⁴ Vansina's *Antecedents* is certainly the most reliable authority in the history of Rwanda's monarchy prior to the final establishment of the Nyiginya dynasty.

The people currently known as Abanyarwanda seem to have asked themselves the same questions about their origins. The answers to their quests were consigned in their myths, legends, tales and other categories of popular wisdom that modern scientific enquiry calls 'oral tradition'. Not surprisingly, these myths situate the origins of Rwandan people within the realm of the mysterious creative work of *Imana*.⁹⁵ Myths of origins imply that *Imana* created all the people of Rwanda.⁹⁶ It is apparent that these myths were introduced in the oral traditions long after the stratification of Rwandan society as they present the eponymous ancestors of Rwandans as Gatwa, Gahutu and Gatutsi. Earlier tales use clans' eponymous ancestors such as Abazigaba, Abacyaba and Abega, which reflect better the demographic composition of Rwanda in those remote times. However, what is really important to keep in mind is that the earliest versions of these myths trace the origin of ancestors back to *Imana*, that they were brothers and that they all have the same claim on the land.⁹⁷

The ambiguity of the myths is a mirror of the difficulties that researchers have faced to explain how and when Rwanda was populated. The infamous Hamitic Myth makes of the Twa the first inhabitants of Rwanda, followed by Bantu Hutu and finally the Nilotic/Hamitic Tutsi came from the east with cows that they used to conquer the two previous groups.⁹⁸ Sounder researches rather point to a slower and progressive population of the land and the centralization of political power. De Heusch even considers the possibility that there were a people called *Abarenge* living in Rwanda long before land tillers and cattle herders arrived in the land.⁹⁹ What all written sources have in common is the socio-economic nature of the categories Hutu and Tutsi at the beginning and the very late arrival of the Nyiginya dynasty in Rwanda.

1.4.2. *Revision of Myths of Origins and the ideology of sacred monarchy.*

⁹⁵ Chrétien, *Mythes et Stratégies*, 281-320.

⁹⁶ Pierre Smith, *Recit*, 1975.

⁹⁷ For a critical analysis on the myths of origins see Maniragaba Balibutsa, « Le mythe de Gihanga ou l'histoire d'une fraternité toujours manquée ». In Bangamwabo F.X. et al., *Relations interethnique à la lumière de l'agression d'Octobre 1990* (Editions Universitaires du Rwanda: Ruhengeri, 1991), pp.61-129.

⁹⁸ See Smith, 'Récit n3', 141-147

⁹⁹ De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 82.

At some point between the 11th and 16th centuries¹⁰⁰, the dynasty of *Abanyiginya* from the *Abasindi* clan managed to impose itself on other clans and proceeded to extending the land and rule over it with a line of kings that stopped in the first years of 1960s. To achieve this political longevity, remarkable by its rarity in pre-colonial Africa, the Nyiginya proceeded step by step. The first step was to revise the myths of origins; a task entrusted to palace *Abacurabwenge* (the Crafters-of-knowledge) and *Abiru* (keepers of the royal mystic and esoteric code). Two main revised myths emerged out of the disparate and unstructured myths of origins: the myth of *Ibimanuka* and the myth of Sacred Monarchy.

1.4.2.1. Myth of Ibimanuka

Levi-Strauss wrote that a myth can never be considered as just a mere reflection of reality; rather a proper myth of origin has to be confidential and esoteric.¹⁰¹ The history of the earliest Tutsi clans in Rwanda is very obscure as highlighted above. This lack of knowledge was filled with a confidential and secret myth, the myth of *Ibimanuka*. The word literally means ‘those-who-descended’ and this is the name that the founders of the Nyiginya dynasty gave to themselves because, as the myth goes, they had fallen down from heaven.¹⁰² The *Ibimanuka* were the brothers Kigwa and Mututsi with Nyampundu their sister. They were miraculous children given to their mother Gasani by *Imana* and when she failed to keep this secret as *Imana* had requested, her children were banished from heaven and their landing zone happened to be the north east of Rwanda. There, they received the hospitality of Kabeja, the Chief of Abazigaba. Later, Kigwa married his sister and they had Muntu, the father of Kimanuka, father of Kijuru, father of Kobo, father of Merano, father of Randa, father of Gisa, father of Kiriza, father of Kazi, father of Gihanga. It is this Gihanga who is the first king on the official list of Rwandan Kings.

Vansina has been one of the first voices to demystify Gihanga’s halo and muse that the historic reality behind the myth is simply the immigration of a group of Tutsi among others.¹⁰³ Even Kagame, the major advocate of the official version, acknowledges that Gihanga’s empire was rather symbolic and nominal.¹⁰⁴ De Heush is right to point out that

¹⁰⁰ This monumental gap reflects the divergence in historical sources about the date of the emergence of Rwandan monarchy; namely Kagame’s official version (11th century) and Vansina’s recently revised version (15-16th century).

¹⁰¹ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Mytologiques. Le Cru et Le Cuit* (Paris: Plon, 1964).

¹⁰² Different versions of this myth will be provided in the appendixes.

¹⁰³ Vansina, *Antecedents*, 47.

¹⁰⁴ Kagame, *Ethno-histoire*, 23.

the myth of celestial origin of *Abanyiginya* was not so much about sacred monarchy but an attempt to assert and justify their superiority among other Tutsi clans.¹⁰⁵ The myth also served to validate their emergence as a dominant force from humble beginnings. From the small region of Buganza, they would absorb most of the other Tutsi clans and start the kingdom of Rwanda.¹⁰⁶

1.4.2.2. Myth of sacred monarchy

After asserting their celestial origins, the next step became the necessity to give a constitutionally sacred nature to the new power in place. The myth held that along with their celestial origin, the Nyiginya had also received a mandate to exercise political power in the stead of *Imana*. Most scholars are in agreement that the institution of sacred monarchy existed already in what was to become Rwanda long before the Nyiginya monarchy and the later simply recuperated it and incorporated it in *ubwiru*, the royal mystic and esoteric code to reinforce royal power. This sacralisation of monarchy conferred divine, religious and mystic attributes to *Umwami*. It introduced the cycle of succession and the rituals that each king will have to follow. More importantly, it enshrined the principle of the continuity of monarchy and made it clear that for Rwanda not to have *Umwami* would be a divine curse synonymous with total annihilation.¹⁰⁷ From then on, the enthronement of a new king was at the same time a religious ritual and a political act.

1.4.3. Political and theological implications of Sacred Monarchy

1.4.3.1. Symbol of national identity and unity

At the end of the process described in the previous sections, the royal ideology had made its way into every region of the country and into the conscience of the individual. The king became the centralising figure, the depository of national identity and destiny. A powerful army guaranteed the security of its borders and allowed the king to assert his internal control over administrative authorities and powerful aristocratic lineages. Through the combination of the myths of celestial origins and sacred monarchy, the Rwandan monarch had elevated himself beyond castes, clans and lineages and as such he was the supreme judge of the people. Finally, this ideology had imposed the monarch as a paternal figure,

¹⁰⁵ De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 175ff.

¹⁰⁶ Rwanda comes from old Kinyarwanda *kwanda*, which means meaning becoming large.

¹⁰⁷ For a controversial critique of this myth, see Lizinde Théoneste, *La découverte de Kalinga ou la fin d'un mythe. Contribution à l'histoire du Rwanda* (SOMECA: Kigali, 1979).

father of all Rwandans. The impact of this paternalistic attitude with regard to political conformism will be discussed below.

1.4.3.2. Premises of inequality

Unfortunately, if all Rwandans were vertically connected to their monarch ideologically, there were those whose reach was more direct than others, and most importantly, the people were horizontally unequal. The royal ideology had set up a platform for inequalities so fundamental that they could not be suppressed or overcome. This fundamental difference operated on different levels: between the monarch and the Tutsi notables, between the latter and the ordinary Tutsi and finally between all the above and the mass of Hutu land tillers.¹⁰⁸ Maquet translates this inequality in terms of a premise of inequality because, he argues, the differences were not based on individual qualities or possession. Myths, legends, tales, stories and their translation in social and political interactions showed repeatedly that the qualification required to be in a given stratum was simply to have been born into it.¹⁰⁹

1.4.3.3. An ethic of dissimulation and intrigue

To a large extent, *Umwami*'s absolute control rested on the age-long policy of *dividere ut imperet* with regard to the notables and the chiefs under his orders. This astute strategy *de facto* created a system of checks and balances *sui generis*. Different chiefs spied on each other vying for the status of the monarch's favourite. Dissimulations, intrigues and cut-throat manoeuvres were rife and royal central authority benefited from this. The downside of it however, was the emergence of undignified ethics within the ruling class, of a lack of truth, trust and honesty; something that Rwandan politics has never recovered from.

Unfortunately, this attitude of dissimulation and slyness filtered through the relationships between the lower levels of *ubuhake*.¹¹⁰ Maquet has shown in his sixth theorem that despite

¹⁰⁸ The Batwa seemed to have an ambivalent status; on one hand they could have direct access to *Umwami* and serve at the palace, on the other hand, they were considered almost as having a less-than-human status. See Smith, *Récit*, 39-41

¹⁰⁹ Maquet expresses this inequality in theorems that can be summed up in this manner: a) superiority and inferiority as the *foci* of Rwandan social structure, b) attitude of dependence of the inferior *vis-à-vis* the superior, c) a lack of private sector in the life of the inferior *vis-à-vis* the superior, d) the impossibility of strictly contractual relations, e) an inevitable authoritarian behaviour in the chief of the superior, f) frustrated lack of free opinion from the inferior led to an attitude of dissimulation, g) obsequious conformism is preferred to truth telling. Maquet, *Inequality*, 164-168.

¹¹⁰ *Ubuhake* was a 'feudal' contract which attached a *mugaragu* (client) to a *Shebuja* (patron). Technically every Rwandan, except the *umwami* was a *mugaragu* to someone on the higher level of hierarchy. Obviously the poor were only *abagaragu*. However, although it was an enslaving contract, it was fluid and allowed a

the severity of the caste system, the inferiors were not totally and perfectly conditioned to be self-effacing and submissive. On the other hand, since a Muhutu client for example was not subjected to an unbreakable bond to his *Shebuja* –master-, there was always a narrow margin for them to manoeuvre.¹¹¹ A straightforward resistance to an oppressive *shebuja* or challenging an order openly would have been considered an insult or constituted as an act of revolt. As a consequence, dissimulation became a highly valued skill necessary to master if one wanted to survive.¹¹²

1.4.3.4. The seeds of conformism

The royal ideology of sacred and absolute monarchy ultimately reduced the people to become yes-men and yes-women. People followed orders. Whether they trusted in their justice and righteousness was a different matter. When the king had spoken, whether directly, or through his chiefs, his uttering was nothing short of a *vox Dei*. Obeying *Umwami* was the highest requirement for every Rwandan; rebelling against him the worst act of treason, likely to be sanctioned by death. Insidiously, the thought must have penetrated in the people's conscience that the king and the political authority that he represented were synonymous with unquestionable obedience.

1.4.3.5. The political displacement of Imana

Muzungu has suggested that the political philosophy of the Nyiginya dynasty was nothing more or less than a theocracy. This theocracy had a linguistic vehicle, an ideological foundation and of course a 'vicarial' monarchy.¹¹³ As evidence, he uses the following dynastic poem;

The King is not a man/ I see *Imana* in this very palace
I find that he is the *Imana* that we pray to/The other *Imana*, he only knows
As for us, we see the king/*Imana* milks for this lord
And (this lord) milks for us.¹¹⁴

The words of the poem reveal to what extent the ideology of sacred monarchy also became a theological dogma and how slowly but steadily the king became the visible *Imana* of

mugaragu to seek the protection of a better *shebuja*. Newbury's *Cohesion* offers the most comprehensive study of *ubuhake* and other forms of clientship.

¹¹¹ De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 133

¹¹² Maquet, *Inequality*, 169. Interestingly, this attitude of dissimulation slipped in the evangelisation process of the country, as the common people viewed the missionaries with the same suspicion in which they held any dominant authority.

¹¹³ Muzungu, *Histoire*, 89-99.

¹¹⁴ Muzungu, *Dieu 2*, 32.

Rwanda. Historical facts show that *Umwami* really held quasi-divine authority. He was considered infallible in his judgments and his verdict could not be appealed against. He disposed of the life and death of his subjects. The whole land was his with everything that grew and all cattle that grazed on it. He was considered as sacred, he expected to be honored and his subjects obliged. The visible deity took centre stage while the invisible *Imana* retreated into the peripheral realms of people's consciences. This situation would persist until the 1900 when the first European missionaries set foot on Rwandan territory and undertook to bring God back to a more fitting place.

Chapter 2: Colonialism, Christianity and Rwandan Society

2.1. A methodological introduction

The previous chapter attempted to present as succinctly as possible the Rwandan society before it came into full contact with foreign influences, namely Western-Christian-colonial influence and Arabic-Islamic-trade influence.¹ The closed, centralised and hierarchical pre-colonial Rwandan society was to undergo profound changes as soon as it was introduced to Christianity and Islam within the framework of colonialism, which Gandhi defines as ‘the historical process whereby the “West” attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the “non-West”’.²

This chapter analyses the initial reception and perception of Christianity by Rwandans and its impact on Rwandan traditional society. Like most of this thesis it does not offer so much a history as a genealogy.³ There is a rationale behind this insistence on beginnings instead of historical processes. Working from the perspective of post-genocide reality, it becomes obvious that Christianity’s religious history only reproduced and perpetuated what this work calls ‘congenital defects’ or the political ‘faux-pas’ and theological misjudgements of the beginnings. Thus, it seems more pertinent to scrutinise the beginning in order to understand what makes the strain of these ‘defects’ so resistant to the positively transforming work of time.

Another important aspect of this rationale is to draw the attention on the often overlooked fact that from the beginning and for a long time, the Christian church in Rwanda was not a church of Rwandans. Missionaries were not peripatetic evangelists; they were church-planting settlers who framed the social, political and theological identities of faith

¹ The emphasis here is on ‘full’ because it is obvious from historical data that Rwandans had already initiated trade contacts with the outside world; a fact evidenced by the introduction of new items of clothing such as pearls and even guns in the country. See WM. Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi 1884-1919* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963), 102.

² Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1998), 17.

³ Here is a short but representative bibliography on the historiography of the Christianity in Rwanda. Kalibwami Justin, *Le catholicisme et la société Rwandaise: 1900-1962*. Editions Présences Africaines: Paris, 1991. ; Gamaliel Mbonimana, *L’instauration d’un royaume chrétien au Rwanda :1900-1931*. Louvain:Université Catholique de Louvain, 1981. ; Rutayisire Paul, *La Christianisation du Rwanda 1900-1945*. Fribourg : Editions Universitaires, 1987. ; Ian Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. New York : Manchester University Press, 1977. ; Ian Linden, *Le Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda 1900-1990*. Paris : Karthala, 1999. ; Rudakemwa Fortunatus. *L’évangélisation du Rwanda : 1900-1959*. Paris : L’Harmattan, 2005. ; Jean Paul Harroy, *Rwanda, De la Feodalité à la démocratie*. Paris : Academy des Sciences d’Outre-Mer, 1984. , Gatwa Tharcisse, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in Rwandan Crises, 1900-1994*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007.

communities of which they assumed leadership for a long time.⁴ Therefore, they have to be directly implicated in the critical appraisal of Christianity's failure in 'Rwanda 94'. Thus, this chapter is better read alongside the sixth chapter which serves as a critical theological complement to the argument developed here.

This last aspect also explains the reasons why the beginning of Christianity has to be located within the colonial framework, even if it was not concomitant to the scramble for Africa. Nandy noted that there are two chronologically distinct genres of colonialism; the first being bandit-mode, simple-minded in its focus on territorial conquest and the second being more insidious in its commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves and cultures.⁵ Whilst the first was more violent, more transparent in its self interest, greed and rapacity; the second was pioneered by rationalists, modernists and liberals who saw in imperialism the messianic harbinger of civilisation to the uncivilised world.⁶ Christian missions to Rwanda belong to the second category. They incontestably represent one of the religious faces of the imperialism of the late 19th and early 20th century. However, the first type of colonialism also needs to be addressed if only because it offers the political framework which supplanted sacred monarchy and in which Christianity and Islam came to operate and interact with traditional Rwandan society at large. In fact, historians like Rumiya believe that the colonial dimension alone can provide the key to the mutations in Rwanda's social and political structures.⁷

Therefore, there is a strong postcolonial⁸ undercurrent in the methodology adopted in the presentation and analysis of the data in this chapter. The line of argument follows Young's opinion that colonialism operated internally as well as externally.⁹ Applied to the Rwandan case, this position helps to detect in pre-colonial Rwandan society structures of oppression operating internally and how they were perpetuated by external colonial influences. Colonialism, internally and externally understood, becomes an unavoidable topic because 'Rwanda 94' constitutes undoubtedly one of the 'violent disruptions' in its wake. Young

⁴ In the cases of the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church, the direction of the church by missionaries exceeds half a century.

⁵ Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford university Press: Oxford, 1983), 80-81

⁶ Gandhi, *Postcolonial*, 15.

⁷ Jean Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le Régime du mandat Belge 1916-1931* (L'Harmattan: Paris, 1992), 10.

⁸ The "postcolonial" is understood as a multifaceted theoretical framework, which involves, as Young suggests 'multiple activities with a range of different priorities.' Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishings, 2001), 62.

⁹ Young, *Postcolonialism*, 9.

further comments that postcolonial theory always intermingles the past with the present and is directed towards the active transformation of the present out of the clutches of the past.¹⁰ It is this past that this chapter visits in order to ‘liberate’ the post-genocide present.

2.2. The Political colonisation of Rwanda

Mudimbe has drawn a sharp contrast between the brevity of the colonial experience in African history and its profound repercussions. ‘The moment’, he argues, ‘is still charged and controversial, since, to say the least, it signified a new historical form and the possibility of radically new types of discourses on African traditions and culture.’¹¹ If the colonial enterprise in the Americas, Africa and Asia spans over almost half a millennium¹², Mudimbe’s comment on the brevity of Africa’s colonial history is even more vindicated in the case of Rwanda. The colonial period spans over only six decades; a fact that puts its significant impact on Rwandan society into even sharper focus.

As it so happened, Rwanda became colonised before its inhabitants were aware that the political destiny of their country had been dramatically altered and before a single white person had set foot on Rwandan soil. The colonisation on paper happened during the first Berlin conference in 1884-5 when the so-called colonial powers, using imprecise maps drawn by explorers and adventurers, divided the explored and unexplored Africa among themselves in what is commonly known as the ‘scramble for Africa’. After this strange gathering about Africa but to which no African was invited, Rwanda fell in Germany’s lot. Germany’s rule over Rwanda lasted until May 5th 1916, the day the last German left Rwanda after defeat by Belgian troops from the Belgian Congo¹³. The Belgians then ruled the country until July 1st 1962, the official date of Rwandan independence. Meanwhile, between December 1921 and 1923, the province of Gisaka in the east was a ‘colony’ of Britain at the time of the ambitious ‘Cape to Cairo’ railway project. More importantly and of direct incidence on this thesis, these two years yielded one noticeable fruit as far as

¹⁰ Young, *Postcolonialism*, 4.

¹¹ V.Y. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the order of knowledge* (Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, 1988), 1.

¹² Young suggests a life span bracketed symbolically between 1492 and 1945. *Postcolonialism*, 4.

¹³ Rumiya, *Rwanda*, 28.

religion is concerned, namely the introduction of the Anglican Church in Rwanda by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1922.¹⁴

2.3. Christian missions in the context of colonial politics in Rwanda.

The beginning of the colonisation of Rwanda was almost simultaneous with its Christianisation, although there was not a direct relation of dependence between the two events.¹⁵ Uke argued that of all the bearers of the ‘African burden’, the missionary was paradoxically the best symbol of the colonial enterprise.¹⁶ Christopher adds that missionaries, possibly more than members of other branches of the colonial establishment, aimed at the radical transformation of indigenous society and sought, whether consciously or unconsciously, the destruction of pre-colonial societies and their replacement by new Christian societies in the image of Europe.¹⁷ These two quotes demonstrate the position supported in this work that the colonisation of Rwanda was as much a Christian enterprise as its Christianisation was a colonial one.

In this work, Christianity is represented by four Christian denominations: the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda (EPR), the Anglican Church also known as the Episcopalian Church of Rwanda (EER) and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of Rwanda (ADEPR).¹⁸ In the majority of works that tackle the complex relationship between religion and politics in Rwanda, as briefly argued in the introduction, there has been a strong tendency to assimilate religion to Christianity and Christianity to the Roman Catholic Church. Arguably, this simplification owes much to the label of ‘state church’ attached, rightly or wrongly, to Rwandan Catholicism.

Most of these works clearly argue from the ‘*zitukwamo nkuru*’ approach mentioned in the introduction. There is certainly little doubt that the Rwandan Catholic Church was and probably still is the most numerically visible and politically influential faith community in

¹⁴ On this British colonial interlude in Rwanda, see R Bourgeois, *Banyarwanda and Barundi*. (Kabwayi: 1953); Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 79-119 and David B Barrett, *Rise up and walk!: Conciliarism and the African indigenous churches, 1815-1987*(Oxford University press: Oxford,1989).

¹⁵ De Lacger, *Ruanda* 2, 42.

¹⁶ In Mudimbe, *Invention*, 47.

¹⁷ A. J. Christopher, *Colonial Africa* (Barne and Noble: New Jersey, 1984), 83.

¹⁸ Four other main Christian denominations were operational in Rwanda before 1994: the Association of Baptist Churches, the Union of Baptist Churches, the Free Methodist Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The methodological decision to exclude them is not arbitrary. Firstly, it would be impossible to deal with all Christian churches in this thesis. Secondly, these churches were less helpful than the selected four in terms of relevance (political and historical influence, statistically, etc.) to the topic. Lastly, the lack of access to reliable sources represented a rather daunting obstacle.

Rwanda. Yet this does not mean that it is the only Christian church and that what applies to it automatically applies to other Christian faith communities. More significantly, as it will be demonstrated, it is among others, the threat and presence of other Christian denominations that spurred the Catholic Church to seek the greatness and political influence it reached over the years in Rwanda.

It is beyond the scope of this work to present an extensive history of Christian missions in Rwanda and critically explore their impact and ramifications on the culture, the society, and the politics of traditional Rwanda. Rather, its modest contribution is to focus on the way in which upon their contact with Rwandan traditional society, the four missionary societies; The Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (SMA), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Mission Bethel and the Mission Libre Suédoise (MLS), adapted their politics and theologies, negotiated socio-political dynamics and fought for power and influence in order first to survive and then proselytise. This archaeological approach hopes to excavate from these early politico-missionary activities pathways and trajectories that might shed some light on the indifferent attitude of Christian communities during the genocide.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to make a note regarding the exclusion of Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) from this study; a religious group to which this work refers to in different places, albeit sparsely, and yet is reported to have represented 8,5 percent of Rwandan Christians in the 1990s.¹⁹ Most Studies in the history of religion in Rwanda generally include them among mainstream Christianity although the Adventists themselves would refuse this absorption; preferring to be known as 'Adventists'. Little research has focused on SDA as a religious group. To date, the only history of this church to have been written is the work of Ngabo Birikunzira Jerome.²⁰ The SDA was started by two missionaries, the Belgian Delhove and the Swiss Monnier in 1919, Gitwe being their first station.²¹

The distinctive doctrinal features of the SDA in Rwanda are the emphasis on the celebration of the Sabbath (seventh day) and a rigorous observance of the Commandments. In pre-genocide Rwanda, Seventh day Adventists experienced frictions with local

¹⁹ Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 4.

²⁰ Ngabo Birikunzira Jerome, *Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Rwanda : 1919-2000*. unpublished Mater's Dissertation. University of South Africa. August 2008. Available online at <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2322/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1>

²¹ Ngabo, *Implantation*, 75ff. Kagame also reports that Musinga repeatedly invited Pastor Monnier, a Seventh-Day Adventist missionary, to preach at the Palace (Kagame, *Abrégé*, 174-178).

administrations because they met on Saturdays, day when the community work *umuganda* was normally organised. The SDA were also very influential in secondary and higher education as well as the health sector.

With regard to the situation of the SDA during the genocide, it is important to note it is this Church that inspired the title for Gourevitch's much acclaimed book on the genocide. The book shows that like other religious groups, Seventh-day Adventists were affected by the genocide both as victims and perpetrators.²² However, it is not possible to estimate how many believers were in either group. It is a regrettable fact that Ngabo puts concisely, 'My own investigations revealed that about 100 pastors and workers such as teachers and nurses were killed, without numbering their children and wives. Even now the exact number of Adventists who died in the genocide is not known.'²³

2.3.1. Roman Catholicism in Rwanda

Roman Catholicism is the most documented Christian denomination in Rwanda; a fact which will prevent this work to venture into the complex task of historiography. The first Christian missionaries in Rwanda were the White Fathers of the *Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique* (SMA-PB)²⁴ led by Mgr Hirth who arrived in Rwanda in 1900.²⁵ Within five years of their arrival, the Catholic Church had established stations in very strategic areas covering almost the whole territory of Rwanda. There was Save (1900) in the South, Zaza in the East and Nyundo in the North West (1901), Mibilizi (1903) in the South West, Rwaza (1903) in the North and Kabgayi (1905) in the centre.²⁶

An overview of the literature on Catholic missionary activity in Rwanda shows that its history can be roughly divided into three periods. From 1900 to 1916, a period of hardship culminated in the First World War. From mid 1920s to 1945, a period of rich harvest culminated in the *Tornado* event (see below), and from 1945 to 1959 came a period of

²² Philip Gourevitch *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families. Stories from Rwanda* (London: Picador, 1998). The title refers to a letter addressed by Adventists who were about to be killed to one of their Pastors. Rather than attending to their rescue, Pastor Ntakirutimana Elisaphan would have conspired in their killing in the Hospital of Mugonero. 3,000 people are reported to have been killed in that Adventist hospital.

²³ Ngabo, *Implantation*, 116.

²⁴ Started by Cardinal Charles-Martial Allemand-Lavigerie in Algiers in 1869. For a brief biography of Lavigerie, see Rudakemwa, *Evangélisation*, 55-69.

²⁵ For an in-depth historical study of the early years of Catholic missions in Rwanda, alongside Linden, it has been illuminating to read Rudakebwa's *Evangélisation*, especially pp. 50-155.

²⁶ Rudakemwa, *Evangélisation*, 87-96. Rudakemwa makes a very interesting remark that all these mission stations were built in areas where the authority of *Umwami* was limited.

indigenous maturing culminating in what is known as the Popular Revolution of 1959. SMA's missionary practice in Rwanda, its ethics, politics, success and failures are closely linked with the philosophy of mission outlined by Cardinal Lavigerie, its founder. The following sections expose the way in which some of these rules were applied in the Rwandan context and to what extent their interpretation laid the foundations for a political theology and an ecclesiology full of paradoxes.

2.3.1.1. Incarnational mission: a metaphor of two bull heads in a cooking pot.

The first rule of the society was a cultural assimilation or *enculturation* with indigenous people; 'in everything, the spirit that has to prevail is to get closer, with all required wisdom, to the life style of the Africans, that is, in all things compatible with Christian and sacerdotal life.'²⁷ This rule was inspired by Paul's missionary calling to 'be all things to all people in order to save most' (1 Corinthians 9:22) and related to a variety of practices ranging from Christian charity and compassion to clothing and diet. It is important to keep in mind that Lavigerie started the SMA in the Islamic context of North Africa. Following the resilience of Islamic culture, this kind of adaptation was not just a missionary condescendence; it was an essential and integral missionary component.²⁸

However, although the missions in sub-Saharan Africa were an extension of the work in North Africa, the interpretation of this rule became largely subjective. Understandably, it would have been stretching the missionaries' compassion too far to ask them to walk around in thongs and sheep skins in a mosquito-infested climate. However, subjectivity in interpretation went deeper than clothing items. Missionaries established a subtle hierarchy of cultures based on what they knew of the Islamic/Arabic culture and the prejudices that they held about African cultures south of the Sahara. Linden noted that the cultural abyss between North Africa and equatorial Africa and the prejudice of 'debasement' which constituted the basis of the evangelical zeal of the missionaries influenced the thought and practice of the mission.²⁹ Concretely, this prejudice took a more racial coloration in missionary discourse and in the rapports with Rwandans. Whether they tried it or not –and there is little evidence to suggest that they did, the White Fathers did not manage to elevate themselves to the ideals of their calling in Rwanda. In their eyes, the indigenous Rwandans

²⁷ Quoted in Linden, *Christianisme*, 50. My translation.

²⁸ Incidentally, SMA missionaries came to be known as the "White Fathers" because of the long white robes and beards that they adopted to look more like North Africans.

²⁹ Linden, *Christianisme*, 50.

remained ‘savages’, ‘our blacks’, ‘our poor negroes’ and other similar racial, possessive and paternalistic concepts.³⁰

From an anti or post colonial perspective, this latent racism and this essentialising of African cultures warrant criticism in their own right. They exemplify the first deficiency of the Christian message within the missionaries themselves who are exposed as men of their time and culture. Through anthropological lenses deformed by racial theories of the time, the missionaries failed to see the indigenous culture in terms of difference and the indigenous as equals. Epistemological advantage was primarily used to assert superiority and domination rather than a blessing to share with fellow believers and a mere tool for service. However, beyond these mere anthropological considerations, this subjective application of missionary rules undermined the very core of Christianity, namely the equality of all God’s children. It also invalidated the very identity of the missionary by depriving it of the kenotic and servanthood aspects exemplified by Christ as presented in Philippians 2:7. Furthermore, in terms of hospitality, there is something utterly offensive when a guest is warmly welcomed and ends up behaving like the master of the place.

It is always difficult to remain within the boundaries of objective fairness when judging people of another time who might not have benefited from the advantage of hindsight that the present offers. However, the failure of the SMA missionaries to live up to the rule of incarnational mission brought about the implicit or explicit condemnation from the Rwandans of their generation. First of all, the premise of superiority is at the heart of their tumultuous relationship with Rwandan aristocracy. It put them on a collision course with a class of courtesans who prided themselves with cultural finesse, who had claim to superiority by birth stretching for generations; a class of great ability and craft, used to commanding and being obeyed.

Rwandan wisdom says that two bull heads cannot fit in one cooking pot. Rwandan Tutsi notables were famous for their xenophobia and protection of their privileges and power. Missionaries on the other hand could not tolerate what they considered as arrogance from an inferior people. The initial admiration for prince *Batutsi*’s intelligence and manners quickly turned into genuine resentment for some missionaries who resorted to different

³⁰ See for instance Léon Classe, *Lettre du Père Classe à Mgr Léon Levinhac* of 28 April 1911(Rome: Archives de la Maison Générale des Pères Blancs. I 095-226 to 095-230). Translated from French by the present author (Appendix 2) and quoted subsequently as *Letter to Levinhac*.

humiliation and violence tactics. Indigenous aristocrats retaliated by treating missionaries with even more contempt and launched armed attacks on missionaries' caravans and stations, killing some of their aids.³¹ If this simmering conflict stopped, it was not because the missionaries retreated in Christian humility; it was because the two protagonists yielded to political pragmatism and also due to the military might of Germany, the colonial power, standing between them.³²

Another unfortunate result of cultural essentialism was that missionaries never appreciated Rwandan culture, especially its religious component, at its just value. The first chapter alluded, insufficiently it has to be said, to the richness and sophistication of Rwandan traditional culture and religious practices. Had the White Fathers given it the same value and respect that they allowed to the Islamic culture,³³ they might have made an important ally in their cultural and spiritual crusade.³⁴ A latter missionary who has never hidden his admiration for the potential of Rwandan culture wrote that the gospel preached by missionaries met a people whose traditional humanism and ancestral wisdom constituted a fertile ground for faith's grace.³⁵

As it were, when traditional culture and religion were not seen as barbaric and superstitious, they were deemed a threat to Western civilisation and Christian evangelisation. Either way, the missionaries did not have much use for them.³⁶ Ironically, indigenous movements such as the cults of Nyabingi and Ryangombe became a revolutionary '*foyer de resistance*' to aristocratic and colonial oppression and bearers of hope for the poor more than Christian missions ever managed in the first four decades of their presence in Rwanda.³⁷

2.3.1.2. A Top-Down Mission

The second most important pillar of SMA's missiology was concerned with the strategy to adopt in order to win African souls. The ruling elites were to be the primary targets of the

³¹ Rumiya, *Rwanda*, 13-14; Linden, *Christianisme*, 62ff.

³² For a detailed account of the early tugs of war between the Court and the missionaries, cfr Rudakemwa, *Évangélisation*, pp 105-122. See also Linden, *Christianisme*, 110-117.

³³ Lavigerie went as far as advising his missionaries to develop friendly relationships with Arabic slave runners and use this channel for food supply. See Rudakemwa, *Évangélisation*. 110-115.

³⁴ Linden establishes a well known parallelism between the content of Catholicism and traditional religion to show how easily Christianity could have been easily accommodated –and it was in the end- by Rwandans. Linden, *Christianisme*, 143.

³⁵ Dominique Nothomb, "La Vie de l'Eglise: Le Rwanda es-il Chrétien ?" in *Etudes*, Mai, 1964, pp 703ff. In fact Nothomb calls Rwandan humanism a '*pierre d'attente*' of Christianity.

³⁶ Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 75-76; 200.

³⁷ See the scathing attack of these movements from Father Nicolet in Linden, *Christianisme*, 40-41.

missionaries' efforts and attention. With assiduity they had to court them, keep the friendliest rapport with them and work ceaselessly for their conversion. Inspired by church history, Lavigerie was convinced that once the elites were won to the gospel, their subjects would follow suit.³⁸

Here, the essentialising of African societies reappears once again. For someone without personal knowledge of the sub-Saharan continent, Lavigerie seemed to have a clear idea of how his strategy would work out. He expected a violent patriarchal society split into a multitude of warring tribes; one in which once the chief's trust was won, the path for massive conversion would be clear. The best way to earn the chief's favour was to trust them, take their power seriously and seduce them with gifts; and finally introduce them to Christian doctrine. Lavigerie instructed the missionaries not to forget to point out to the local political elites that the Christian doctrine was in fact their ally because it taught that they were the true representatives of God on earth in secular matters.³⁹

It goes without saying that sub-Saharan African societies were more varied, socially complex with varied degrees of political centralisation and cultural sophistication; and the Great Lakes region more so. In some of these societies including Rwanda, SMA missionaries executed Lavigerie's instruction to devastating effect. The most immediate and bloodiest was certainly the Buganda tragedy where a three-way religious struggle (CMS Protestants, Catholic White Fathers and Muslims) for political influence over the Buganda royal court of *Kabaka* Mutesa between 1885 and 1887 ended in the tragic death of twenty two young Baganda catechumen.⁴⁰ This war of religions *à l'Africaine* went on until 1894. In the process, the White Fathers were supplanted by the Protestants of the CMS, with a helping hand from British colonial officials.⁴¹

³⁸ Classe, *Letter to Lezinha*, p.2 (trans.)

³⁹ Rudakwemwa, *Evangelisation*, 72, especially note 99.

⁴⁰ In fact, they were killed on the orders of Mwanga, the successor of Mutesa. Twenty of them were Catholics and two were Protestants. In 1964, during the Council of Vatican II, all the victims were canonized by Pope Paul VI and are generally known as the Uganda Martyrs. The Uganda Martyrs shrine provide more information on this incident. See <http://www.ugandamartyrsshine.org.ug>. Accessed 6 June 2012.

⁴¹ Rudakwemwa, *Evangelisation*, 75-76. See also Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 14. It has been suggested in some quarters that from then on, French missionaries of the SMA were spurred on to block CMS protestants by a sort of missionary "Fashoda Syndrome"; allusion to the incident in the village of Fashoda, Sudan (1898) where British and French armies clashed for territorial control of north-east Africa. For more details, cfr Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (Public Affairs: New York, 2006), 493.

Thus Mgr Hirth and his group⁴² had an extra incentive to get a foothold at the Rwandan royal palace and keep the Protestants and the Muslims at bay and, along the way, present the Christian doctrine. This explains why on their arrival in Rwanda the missionaries headed straight for the royal palace in Nyanza with the firm intention of obtaining a piece of land in the vicinity of Musinga's palace.⁴³ In Rwanda, the missionaries found the hierarchical society alluded to towards the end of the first chapter.⁴⁴ From the first contact, missionaries were impressed by the intelligence of the ruling elite, their physical attributes and their natural ability to command. Although in Rwanda the application of Lavigerie's mistaken top-down proselytising did not have the same immediate dramatic effects as in the kingdom of Buganda, the subsequent chains of events raise the question whether any other political instruction has had the same impact on Rwandan society ever since. In the long run, it paralysed fluid social dynamics into frozen and polarised ethnic groups, it divided the missionaries, it opposed missionaries with their own flocks, it created a divided indigenous clergy and the revolution of 1959 was, in more ways than one, a direct result of it.

The application of Lavigerie's instruction meant that the missionaries had to befriend the king and the Tutsi aristocracy and support their authority as much as possible even in the face of the most blatant injustices and oppression. Such a missionary policy put the White Fathers in an awkward position; one which is reminiscent of Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*.⁴⁵ What they had to do was no less than choosing between Jesus' missionary option for the poor and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-20) and a form of "*Constantinism*"; a tradition in Catholic political theology supported by Augustine, Aquinas, and finally Lavigerie.⁴⁶ In the end, considering what was at stake, the tried and trusted rational

⁴² The caravan of Mgr Hirth which arrived at the Musinga's royal palace on 2 February 1900 comprised, besides Hirth, Father Alphonse Brard, Father Paul Barthélémy, Brother Anselm, a dozen of Baganda catechists and 150 porters.

⁴³ However, mindful of the prophecies made about these strangers and the complex code that insured the safety and purity of the king, palace ritualists advised Musinga to send the missionaries to a further place. It took hard negotiations and the intervention of the German Governor for a plot to be granted in Save, five-days walk from the palace.

⁴⁴ However, it is important to keep in mind Newbury's *Cohesion* realized in Kinyaga where she convincingly argues that this situation was far from identical for the totality of the Rwandan territory.

⁴⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Trans. David McDuff (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1993), 283-304.

⁴⁶ However, it is rather Classe who single-handedly drafted the kind of political theology that the Catholic Church in Rwanda has not deviated from until now.

pragmatism which has guided the Catholic Church through many historical hurdles emerged as the best methodology for mission.

Yet, this was not going to be a smooth operation; Rwandan society was much too complex for easy options and, unknown by the missionaries, its politics had reached such a critical point that the newcomers became embroiled in intricate political intrigues and social upheavals without always grasping the rules and the stakes.⁴⁷ The very beginning of Catholic mission was marked by ironies, paradoxes and contradictions. In the first place, the coveted noble Tutsi and the court of Musinga were not interested in embracing the new religion. Instead, it was the common people who saw in the missionaries a chance to break the yoke of the oppressive social structures who embraced the new faith. Involuntarily, the White Fathers found themselves in Christ's predicament: rejected by those they had come to seek and found by those they were not interested in. The ecclesiological result of a 'Hutu church in a Tutsi state'⁴⁸ was one of great subversion.

For a time, missionaries like Brard were happy with the idea of having a Christian church for the poor and the oppressed.⁴⁹ However, the most politically perceptive among them like Classe realised what a precarious position the church would be in without the support of the court and powerful chiefs in a German-Protestant colony.⁵⁰ The situation was even more urgent since the Protestant missionaries of the Mission Bethel had been in the country since 1907 and their initial actions showed their determination to convert Musinga and his entourage.⁵¹

2.3.1.3. 'Give to Musinga what is Musinga's': Missionary Political Theology.

Another important rule for SMA missionaries was the respect of established political authority. In many ways and for obvious reasons, this rule overlaps with the previous instruction, but one might argue that it clarifies the political theology of the mission in the narrow sense of the relationship between the church and the state's political power. It did not concern only indigenous authority but colonial administrations as well. With regard to

⁴⁷ See for instance Newbury, *Cohesion*, 54-59.

⁴⁸ Linden, *Christianisme*, 103. Heremans finds this "lapidary statement exaggerated ...yet containing a great deal of truth." See Roger Heremans, "Eglise, Politique et Société dans le Rwanda de 1911. In *Etudes Rwandaises*, Vol.1, nr 4 July-September 1987 (Butare : Editions de l'Universités Nationale du Rwanda, 1987), 443.

⁴⁹ Heremans, *Eglise*, 443.

⁵⁰ Classe, *Letter to Levinhac*, 2-4.

⁵¹ Butselaar and Twagirayesu, *Don*, 40-41.

European colonial powers, Lavigerie advised a clear separation of secular and sacred authority, collaboration with and non-allegiance to any colonial administrations in place. In highlighting the illusory nature of this rule in Rwanda, Rumiya argued that from their arrival in 1900, the White Fathers were rather conscious agents of political mutations thanks to their integration in the interaction of traditional social forces.⁵²

Before going any further in agreeing or disagreeing with Rumiya, it is important to present as clearly as possible what social forces were in operation in the Rwanda that welcomed the missionaries. First, there was the *Umwami* Musinga and the Tutsi elite who claimed to hold direct and total control over land and people. Understandably, they strove for a social, political and economic *status quo*. Secondly, there was the German colonial administration represented by a small but powerful military contingent.⁵³ Their mission was to protect and consolidate the central power of *umwami*, and indirectly introduce western civilisation. Thirdly, there were Catholic missionaries, French in majority if not exclusively,⁵⁴ who were determined to convert the country to Christianity, beginning with the very elite who ruled the country.

Finally, there was the mass of the people, the socio-economic category known as the Hutu.⁵⁵ In the grand scheme of things they belonged to everyone and nothing belonged to them. They answered to almost everyone and no one was accountable to them. Yet, these people were aware of inequalities and injustices in the system. With the passive subversion of the oppressed and the indistinct rumble of disenfranchised masses, they wanted a fairer social deal and more just masters. In some regions, especially in the north, the desire for freedom had taken the form of sectarian messianism exemplified by the Nyabingi movement presented briefly in the first chapter.

In this context, missionaries had the unenviable calling to 'be all to all'. Suppress their national feelings to respect and collaborate with German colonial forces; tame their racial prejudices to court pagan indigenous elite, whilst speaking the truth to power. To the mass of the poor, they would announce the gospel, the truth that would set them free but as in

⁵² Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 13.

⁵³ Germany did not appoint a civil Resident until 1907-1908, when Dr Richard Kandt became the first German Resident and chose Kigali as his capital; approximately 100km from Nyanza, the royal capital.

⁵⁴ The emphasis on German and French nationalities is crucial here, bearing in mind the Franco-Prussian war that had just ended and the loss for the French of the Alsace-Lorraine territory to the newly unified Germany.

⁵⁵ Gatwa disputes the term 'Hutu' with reference to the common people and argues that this group comprised both poor Hutu and Tutsi. *Church*, 19-20.

everything, they had to wait for the elite to be serviced first. In this context, mission was equivalent to martyrdom, and the White Fathers might rightly have felt that they had already paid a heavy price in converting Africa.⁵⁶

It is not surprising therefore that the rule of separation, simple in theory, proved rather impossible on the Rwandan missionary field; a place where traditionally the binary opposition of secular-sacred had never existed. The missionaries themselves were not zealous supporters of the imposition of the state's authority over the church in 19th century Europe. Some of the missionaries considered this to be a historical aberration and adhered to Dante's Thomism, 'Let Cesar show to Peter the reverence that the first born son owes to his father so that enlightened by paternal grace he might bring light to the world...' ⁵⁷ Also, empirical facts like the traumatic Buganda experience would dictate how they negotiated with German colonial military and civilian authorities.

This might explain why the missionaries who were received by Musinga were impressively armed.⁵⁸ This was certainly a statement that the missionaries were in Rwanda to stay, even if they had to conduct their mission with bibles and missals in one hand and a gun in the other. They were not coming as the suffering servant of Isaiah nor did they think that Paul's stance that power is manifested in weakness would be relevant to their context. They chose to come in a position of a power to be reckoned with and soon enough the German authorities, the royal court and the poor would take notice; a new political actor was on the scene.

It is possible that this show of power was merely for deterrent purposes. However, in the social context of ancient Rwanda, power went with privileges and one of those privileges was to be courted and have *abagaragu* (servants). Inevitably, it was the poor mass of Hutu who were attracted by the new masters and the possibility of a better *ubuhake*. As Linden rightly notes, 'it was the political dimension of their presence that the Hutu acknowledged before anything else.'⁵⁹ Thus, against their best judgment, beliefs and principles, the White Fathers were drawn into the socio-political dynamics of the country. The stations became like palaces. Rumiya is certainly not the only voice to argue that the recruitment of the first

⁵⁶ Linden reports that between 1868 and 1878, SMA registered 172 members and 48 of them would perish on missionary duty before the turn of the century. *Christianisme*, 49.

⁵⁷ Quoted by Linden, *Christianisme*, 83-4.

⁵⁸ Rumiya signals that each station had enough firepower to intimidate the hostile peasants of the surrounding localities in case chiefs decided to attack the mission station. Rumiya, *Rwanda*, 14.

⁵⁹ Linden, *Christianisme*, 64.

catechists was seen as a master-client relationship⁶⁰ Missionaries acquired, at times illegally, vast lands and heads of cattle. Before too long, they were dealing with legal matters in their stations and surrounding areas.⁶¹

As one would expect, the Tutsi aristocracy did not appreciate the competition and soon enough they began to harass the stations and some of the missionaries' helpers were molested or killed. On the other hand, the Germans were not happy with what they saw as interference of religion in their reserved political space. Von Grawert went as far as accusing the missionaries of wanting to set up a theocracy in the country and the missionaries were not entirely blameless.⁶² Hence Captain, and later Resident, Witgens' lapidary exclamation, 'give to Musinga what is Musinga's!'⁶³ To make matters worse, the new converts, confident of the protection of the missionaries, began to behave like oppressors by rebelling against their former *shebuja*, stealing cattle and physically assaulting people. The Kinyarwanda maxim "*uhagarikiwe n'ingwe aravoma*"⁶⁴ was fully justified here as the missionaries would step in to defend their Christian protégés.⁶⁵

In the end, under pressure from German officers, king Musinga and the SMA Headquarters, missionaries went back to supporting Germans and the aristocracy, turning their back on the mass of Hutus in which a wild hope of liberation had been awakened.⁶⁶ This volte-face, one of many in the history of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, did not go without violence. A rebellious movement arose among the disillusioned *Bahutu* of the north. It took all the might of the German army and a hecatomb to quash the movement. In the process, Father Lupias was killed by Rukara, one of the ring leaders.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 14.

⁶¹ Linden, *Christianisme*, 87 ff.

⁶² See Roger-Louis, *Ruanda*, 176-188.

⁶³ Quoted in Linden, *Christianisme*, 132.

⁶⁴ Literally, 'if one has a panther for a bodyguard, they can draw water from the well', that is even if it were not their turn to do so. By this saying, Rwandans meant that if you have a stronger backer or *shebuja*, you can do as you please in the confidence that he will protect you.

⁶⁵ Linden, *Christianisme*, 64, 91. Curiously, this was in keeping with the article 16 of the Berlin Act on the protection of the followers of Christianity.

⁶⁶ According to Linden, an alliance between Germans and missionaries happened because the former had realized that if Rwanda were to be governed by a handful of officials, they would need the cooperation of missionaries. Besides, after 1904, a kind of triple alliance was tacitly formed between missionaries, Germans and aristocrats, by which each part ceased hostility towards the other. Linden, *Christianisme*, 82-97.

⁶⁷ The 'legend' of Rukara has since passed in the Rwandan liberation and resistance folklore, immortalised in songs and tales by artists such as Appolinaire Rwishyura, Ben Rutabana and many others.

The history of the Catholic Church ably studied in the works provided above shows that this political theology⁶⁸ did not change or improve. Linden and Gatwa most certainly followed its rigid trajectory from 1900 to 1994, the year of the Rwandan calamity. However, before 1994, this same theology influenced the key period of 1955-1962 when the massacres of Tutsi in 1959 overshadowed a genuine ‘church-sponsored’ social uprising and the independence of 1962.⁶⁹ It also led to an ecclesiology of estrangement in which divisions among believers were peppered over. One even wonders to what extent it is possible to talk of ‘church’ in the presence of this situation and the events of April-July 1994 will put the question in an even sharper focus.

2.4. Protestantism in Rwanda

A major difficulty in studying Protestantism in Rwanda is how little documented the movement is and the scarcity of works and literature that systematise its history. This thesis focuses only on three Protestant denominations that were operational in Rwanda before, during and after the genocide of 1994. These are the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda (EPR), the Anglican Church also known as the Episcopalian Church of Rwanda (EER) and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of Rwanda (ADEPR). The Presbyterian Church was introduced in Rwanda by German missionaries of the Bielfeld or Bethel Mission in 1907.⁷⁰ The Anglican/Episcopalian Church was started by missionaries of the CMS in 1922 and the Pentecostal Church started courtesy of the *Mission Libre Suédoise* in 1940⁷¹. Rather than studying each denomination separately, this section will survey their missionary history together thematically in order to show how they were perceived and received by Rwandans, their relationship with the White Fathers and their attitudes toward political authorities; indigenous and colonial.

⁶⁸ In this work, ‘Political Theology’ is broadly understood as that aspect of Public Theology that studies the relationship between religious bodies and the power of the State. However, the contours of Political theology are more complex than this narrow definition. For an overview of different definitions of Political Theology, see Michael Kirwan, *Political Theology: A New Introduction* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008), pp.3-15.

⁶⁹ On these events and the role of the Catholic Church see René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 93-195.

⁷⁰ The most comprehensive study of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda can be found in Twagirayesu Michel and Jan Van Butselaar, *Ce don que nous avons reçu* (EPR: Kigali, 1982).

⁷¹ The most recent and only work on the history of the Pentecostal movement in Rwanda was produced in 2009 by Joseph Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Pentecôte au Rwanda* (Svenska Tryckcentralen Vällingby: Sweden, 2009).

2.4.1. Colonial missions

All three Protestant missions studied in this section started their work in Rwanda during the colonial period and most of them, if not all, had clear connections with the colonial power of the time. The Bielfeld or Bethel Mission was an offshoot of the *Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft Fur Ostafrika* created in Berlin in 1886, mainly on the instigation of influential politicians and Dames at the Imperial Palace. It had the ambition of equipping the newly acquired territory with a missionary society that would ‘convert the Africans into children of the universal Lord or into useful Christian citizens of the German empire’.⁷² Despite a later redefinition of the mission’s goals which put more emphasis on its Christian vocation, the Bethel mission remained associated with German colonial administration in the eyes of indigenous populations.

The association of the CMS with British colonial presence in the region has already been alluded to. Had Britain not occupied the territory of Gisaka in 1921-1923, it is still debatable whether CMS missionaries would have been granted access to Rwanda. The animosity of the White Fathers, the historical tensions between Germany and Great Britain and the suspicion of the Belgians would have constituted a formidable obstacle against a missionary society of a church so closely linked to the state.⁷³ As for the Mission Libre Suédoise, although not connected to any colonial power, its penetration in the South West of Rwanda from the Belgian Congo is anecdotally connected to the Belgian Territorial Resident of the then territory of Shangugu.⁷⁴

It was not only their origins that gave Protestant missions a colonial cachet. It was also the fact that in the eyes of the indigenous population they were perceived as agents of the colonial administration, albeit with different degrees of collaboration. Rwandans worked out from the beginning that the Germans of the Bethel Mission were the same as the German politicians and soldiers who governed the country. Besides, in (Lutheran) Protestant schools pictures of Kandt and the Kaiser were displayed whilst the learning

⁷² The nationalist impetus of the mission was slightly atoned and reoriented towards a Christian mission under the influence of Pastor Friedrich Von Bodelschwingh, the Superior of the Bethel House of Deaconesses who was consulted in the elaboration of the mission’s statement and goals. Butselaar and Twagirayesu, *Don*, 18-19.

⁷³ After the retrocession of the Gisaka, the CMS managed to remain only because Anet, the then Representative of the Belgian Protestant Missions interceded for his fellow missionaries. See Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 108-110; Linden, *Chrsitianisme*, 205.

⁷⁴ The anecdote is reported by Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire*, 47-48.

material extolled the greatness of Europe and Germany.⁷⁵ The fact that German missionaries were enlisted as soldiers when the war broke out shows to what extent this perception was vindicated.⁷⁶ In the minds of those who supported the mission, there was no doubt that this mission was an instrument of civilisation and colonisation in the German way of thinking. For their part, missionaries viewed German colonial rule as an essentially good and positive agent of the development of Rwanda.⁷⁷

The association of Protestant missions and colonialism did not change after the SBMPC (Société Belge des Missions Protestantes au Congo) took over the congregations left by the Bethel Mission in 1921. Not only were the Belgian missionaries heavily subsidised by the Government, but in the government officials' opinion, the work done by the SBMPC was a patriotic one, profitable to Belgium and to the indigenous people.⁷⁸ Initially, the SBMPC was keen to work closely with the CMS, one would assume in order to counter the increasing stronghold of the White Fathers on Rwandan society. However, this effort was thwarted by the relations that these two societies entertained with their respective governments. Put simply, the Belgian authorities of Ruanda-Urundi were wary of dealing with missionaries in English military uniform, suspecting they would meddle in how they ran their colonies.⁷⁹

Like their Catholic counterparts, Protestant missionaries were inevitably seen in the deforming prism of Rwandan politics. It seems that before the otherworldly soteriological content of their message, Rwandans saw the missionaries as agents of social, political and economical change. Nsanzurwimo reports that the first person to ever convert to the Pentecostal church was their night guard.⁸⁰ Nothing suggests that Presbyterians and Anglicans proceeded differently. When it was not the poor looking for a better life, it was a lower chief who could not manage a better relationship with the White Fathers and wanted

⁷⁵ Linden, *Christianisme*, 160. Also, Roger-Louis notes that the Germans had tried to enlist the Catholic missionaries for the diffusion of German culture and nationalism without success. This was not necessarily due to the international and religious identity of the White Fathers as Roger-Louis seems to imply. There was also a strong French-German power struggle going on as it has been argued in other places in this work. The evidence is that the White Fathers would gladly collaborate with the Belgians after WWI. In *Ruanda*, 188.

⁷⁶ Many of these missionaries were either killed or captured. Butselaar and Twagirayesu. *Don*, 70-79.

⁷⁷ Butselaar and Twagirayesu rightly add that the missionaries "were unable to discern to what extent the first goal of European colonisation was more about promoting European interests than those of indigenous populations." *Don*, 39.

⁷⁸ Butselaar and Twagirayesu, *Don*, 84.

⁷⁹ Butselaar and Twagirayesu, *Don*, 80.

⁸⁰ See the testimony of Mr Sagatwa Louis, the first Rwandan Pentecostal Christian in Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire*, 54.

to wriggle out of their control. As in the case of Catholicism, early conversions were inspired more by pragmatism or political opportunism than a personal conviction of sin so dear to evangelical Protestants.

In their canny evaluation of the different new comers, Rwandans quickly worked out that Protestants wielded less political power and influence than Catholics. Therefore, in keeping with Rwanda socio-political tradition, Rwandans opted for the White Fathers because they offered better guarantees of protection and safety. Even the Germans and Belgians had recognised this fact and relied more on the Catholic missionaries, bypassing their Protestant compatriots. However, this apparent lack of power did not stop Musinga from using Protestants as leverage against the ever increasing influence of the White Fathers.⁸¹

2.4.2. *Incentive for the Catholic Church*

It would be wrong to consider Protestants only as playing the role of ‘underdogs’ to the Catholic Church. In many ways, Protestants were the driving force behind the zeal and strategies of the White Fathers. It might sound a bold statement, but the Catholic Church would not have become so powerful without the threat of Protestantism or the ‘heresy’ as the White Fathers referred to it. Almost all the sources point to the frosty relations that existed between Catholic missionaries and their Protestant counterparts.⁸² In his instruction, Lavigerie had actually instructed his missionaries to literally observe a distance of at least fifteen to twenty kilometres between their stations and Protestant stations.⁸³ On the positive side, this reflected a missionary desire to respect other Christian denominations and avoid unnecessary confrontations that would not have borne a good testimony for the natives.⁸⁴ However, this noble concern masks very poorly the spiritual and intellectual disdain that Catholic Fathers felt for Protestant missionaries.⁸⁵

On the theological front, Butselaar and Twagirayesu highlight the important fact that for the White Fathers there was not a significant difference between Protestantism and Islam in

⁸¹ Following the arrival of Johanssen, Musinga used to invite the minister to the palace in order to assess the political effect that this manipulation would have on the Catholics (Linden, *Christianisme*, 140). When Anet, the representative of SBMPC visited Musinga in 1921, the monarch would have told him, ‘I wish for strong Protestant missions to balance the influence of the White Fathers. It is like a scale with two plates. I am in the middle and the missions on either side. If the balance slants on one side, I cannot maintain the impartiality.’ (Butselaar and Twagirayesu, *Don*, 82).

⁸² Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 187.

⁸³ Rudakemwa, *Evangélisation*, 71

⁸⁴ Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 115.

⁸⁵ Inevitably, this mutual ‘dislike’ was reproduced in the newly converted Rwandans and persists to this very day among many Christian denominations.

terms of doctrinal orthodoxy.⁸⁶ They were both poisonous plants in the Lord's missionary field. Linden reports that one day Musinga told Classe that the Protestants and the Catholics preached the same doctrine. Classe retorted that the two denominations were as similar as *Bahutu* and *Batutsi* were!⁸⁷ No doubt Musinga would have appreciated the pertinence of the analogy and there would have been no confusion in both men's mind as to who would qualify as *Mututsi* and *Muhutu* in this suggestive comparison.

For all the importance of theological divergences, it was mainly within the political threat of Protestants that one has to situate the lenient, compromised and pragmatic ecclesiology that the White Fathers developed; particularly towards the aristocracy and Tutsi elite. When reflecting on the culture of impunity that has been entertained by Rwandan politicians under both republics and the indolent attitude of the churches, one has to bear in mind that the seeds had been planted long in advance and this is in no way an unsubstantiated claim.

It is not that Protestants did not try to emulate the White Fathers in their effort to convert the chiefs, especially after the demise of Musinga. However, as mentioned above, they lacked the necessary resources in every respect. Very few chiefs wanted to become Protestants because those who did ran the risk of losing their chieftaincy altogether. Not converting to Christianity was tolerable; defecting from Catholicism to Protestantism amounted to political suicide. In fact, collaboration with Protestant missions could land a chief in trouble.⁸⁸

One of the reasons why Protestants remained second best to Catholics was their limited involvement in education. Linden posits that Protestants saw in education a short cut to the kingdom of Satan.⁸⁹ This might be a slightly severe comment, but it is fully reflected in the control of the White Fathers on the system of knowledge, which ensured them unequalled influence on the elite of the country, political and clerical. On the other hand, Catholics did not miss an opportunity to discredit the potential of Protestant education as lacking in academic value; their spiritual input being a revolutionary ingredient susceptible to generating anarchy in the feeble minds of the savages.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Butselaar&Twagirayesu, *Don*, 54; Linden, *Christianisme*, 51.

⁸⁷ Linden, *Christianisme*, 103

⁸⁸ Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 200. Nsanzurwimo (*Histoire*, 57) reports a case in the territory of Shangugu where chief Biniga was summoned to the mission of Mibilizi to explain the reason why he and some sub-chiefs had attended a ceremony of welcoming a Pentecostal missionary from Sweden.

⁸⁹ Linden, *Christianisme*, 280.

⁹⁰ Taken from a letter to Classe and quoted in Linden, *Christianisme*, 208.

2.4.3. Inevitable racial and ethnic prejudices

Like the White Fathers, Protestant missionaries could not escape the racial and ethnic theories that were widespread in Europe and the social divisions of the societies in which they had grown up and studied. In the case of Rwanda, they adopted the hierarchy of social groups that they found in place. For instance, Lutherans accepted as a matter of fact that members of the Tutsi aristocracy were born to command and maybe because of the missionaries *de facto* submission to the German authority, missionaries never tried to undermine the authority of the *umwami* or the chiefs by protecting their catechists when they were responsible for rebellion or disobedience.⁹¹

Missionaries of the CMS never hid their admiration for the Tutsi aristocracy, especially elite troops *Intore*, and could not imagine the future of the country without the leadership of the Tutsi. Their only concern was whether the Tutsi could be moulded into fair and just masters and rulers. This admiration is also apparent in the book of Nsanzurwimo on the early days of the Pentecostal churches in Rwanda. The missionaries of the MLS had been told that Tutsi would never embrace the new faith and they made it a point to emphasise the fact that their first convert was a Tutsi, albeit of modest stock.⁹²

2.4.4. Individual salvation and the problem of sin

Roger-Louis remarked that from the beginning of their respective missions, the Protestants placed a greater emphasis on preaching whereas Catholics were more into baptising. For instance, in 1911, Catholic White Fathers had around eight thousands converts and Protestants had baptised seventeen people. Yet, both missions seemed content with their results.⁹³ This interesting comment sheds a light on the most significant difference between the Catholic politics of mission and that of Protestant missionaries. The White Fathers targeted the structure of Rwandan society as a whole with the aim of converting the elite, which in turn would trigger the conversion of the masses and the emergence of a Catholic state. To achieve this, the individual and his morality were, to a great extent, played down. For this reason, Catholicism was accused by Protestants of being a religion of the state, introducing a fictive and superficial form of Christianity; an institution that had become the very ratification of a stratified society, a religion of the powerful. It had lost its Christian

⁹¹ When the mission resumed under Belgian leadership, Anet had the same opinion regarding the superiority of the Tutsi and their right to command. Butselaar&Twagirayesu, *Don*, 41.

⁹² Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire*, 52.

⁹³ Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 183.

prophetic streak and could not offer holistic solutions to a people oppressed politically, socially, psychologically and spiritually.⁹⁴

It is true that the Protestants too tried especially to educate the Mwami and the great chiefs.⁹⁵ However, they insisted more on the spiritual and moral aspect of their gospel: they assured the king that they were preaching a different kind of *mwami*, one who is more important than all other *bami* including the Rwandan monarch and the German emperor.⁹⁶ Being shunned by the chiefs, Protestants were able to care more directly about the problem of injustice and evil in its social and individual aspects. From the beginning, Protestants seem to have insisted on the priority of the problem of evil and sin, and offered solutions in a language that could quell the fears generated by witchcraft. The radical wing of Anglican evangelicalism represented by the CMS in Rwanda insisted on the importance of sin, repentance and total conversion.

The Pentecostals of the MLS were more radical. Their message seemed to target directly what could be termed the sins of traditional Rwandan society: polygamy, consumption of alcohol, practice of witchcraft and the cult of ancestors. On the other hand, by insisting on the need for personal salvation, the confession of sin, prayer, fasting and the casting out of evil spirits and demons, they offered a way out of a spiritual life dominated by the terror of *abazimu* and a framework to deal with a life of fear, suspicion and dissimulation. It is important to highlight the fact that Protestant missionaries encouraged their congregations to read the Scriptures and be individually acquainted with the Christian Gospel; something that was not tolerated by Catholic missionaries who preferred a selective catechism as means of knowing the Word of God.⁹⁷

2.4.5. Christianity in the period between 1950s and 1960

It would be desirable but ultimately impossible to recount the whole history of Christianity in this thesis. Chapter two and chapter six engage with the key moments of the Christian church until the mid 1940s; the time of the *Tornado* and massive conversions involving members of the ruling aristocracy. This limit responded to the methodology adopted in this work to focus more on ‘beginnings’. This methodological approach was also based on the

⁹⁴ Linden, *Christianisme*, 273

⁹⁵ Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 185

⁹⁶ Butselaar&Twagirayesu, *Don*, 41.

⁹⁷ E.g. the first Pentecostal convert had been a runaway who was fleeing a Catholic missionary after he was found reading a copy of the New Testament. See Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire*, 51-52.

hypothesis that irrespective of shifting loyalties and allegiances between 1950s and 1994, there was little if any real change in the political theology of the Christian Church.⁹⁸

This period of Rwandan Church history has been expertly studied by Linden, Gatwa and Longman to name but the most prominent scholars.⁹⁹ Gatwa certainly makes the most detailed account of the situation of the church; especially in the war period between 1990 and 1994. Key moments of this history include the arrival of new Western Catholic missionaries more influenced by the theological ideas behind Vatican II and the Second World War. These missionaries were more sympathetic to social movements championing the liberation of oppressed masses rather than an aristocracy whose claim to power was a matter of bloodline. This situation ultimately led to frosty and fractious relationship between the two, resulting in the volte-face of the Catholic Church to support the Hutu social uprising between 1957 and 1962.¹⁰⁰

This period is also marked by the increasing mutual cooption between secular leaders and clergy. Longman dedicated three well researched chapters to what he calls a period of ‘working hand in hand’ between church leaders and leaders of the first and second republic.¹⁰¹ The situation reached its paroxysm when the Archbishop became member of the Executive Committee of the ruling party MRND. For Protestantism, this period saw the arrival of new protestant missions and churches such as the Free Methodists in 1942 and the Association of Baptist churches in 1967.¹⁰² Also, within Protestant churches, the 1980s was a period of many intradenominational struggles for leadership in which it was not hard to detect a strong ethnic and regional colouring.

Between 1980 and 1994, with increasing abuse of human rights and the threat of civil war, grass root protest against social injustices and religious inertia was manifested by the Kibeho apparitions and revivalist movements in Protestant churches. Church leaders who were more alert to the political signs of time also began to speak against the compromising

⁹⁸ Gatwa argues that in the period between 1960s and 1990s the churches were a ‘quiescent presence’ (*Churches*, pp.106ff); underscoring the ‘passivity’ and ‘negativity’ of Christian political Theology alluded to in different parts of these research.

⁹⁹ Linden, *Le Christianisme*, pp.280-350; Gatwa, *Churches*, 106-148; 181-218; Longman, *Christianity*, 81-197.

¹⁰⁰ On the role played by the churches in the tragic events of 1959-1964, see Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, pp.106-110.

¹⁰¹ Longman, *Christianity*, pp.82-197.

¹⁰² see Leonard Rwanyindo, *Le Protestantisme belge dans la region des grands lacs* (Paris : Publibook, 2009)

situation of the church¹⁰³ or join the civil society movement. André Sibomana makes a poignant study on the situation of Church leadership in the political chaos of the war period 1990-1994.¹⁰⁴

2.5. A Critical conclusion: what happened to the stepping stones?

The dawn of the 20th century brought a whirlwind of changes in Rwandan society principally in the form of colonisation and Christianisation. At the contact with the very stratified Rwandan socio-political structures, these two new agents would combine to significantly alter the way of living, thinking, believing and knowing of the indigenous society of the time. They set in motion a chain of events that would dramatically affect their future and the future of their children. Both German and Belgian colonial administrations adopted an elitist approach, aiming at supporting the ruling aristocracy and maintaining the *status quo*. Christian missions, some more than others, followed an identical methodology despite a social reality calling for a more liberationist approach to mission and the repetitive subversion of their flocks. A very slanted colonisation would later create an extremely polarised political society and a compromising missiology resulted in a highly paradoxical church.

Although a theologian or student of religions can cast a regretful eye on the failure of colonialism in Rwanda, the politics thereof are not the principal preoccupation of religion and theology after all. Besides, it would be extremely naïve to expect too much good from a political enterprise which, from its inception, was not intended so much for the good of the colonised people as for the colonial powers. In agreement with the lucid verdict rendered by Rumiya, colonialism was not a crusade for democracy; it was rather a very self-interested operation conducted with pragmatism more akin to cynicism than altruism.¹⁰⁵ However, for a theologian working from a Christian tradition, the missionary enterprise as it was conducted in Rwanda cannot escape a stern critique.

In the appraisal of Christian missions, a critical question needs to be asked: Did the Rwandan society described in the first chapter and alluded to in this second chapter require ‘salvation’? Another way of framing the question is to ask whether the people were happy

¹⁰³ The seriousness of this situation for the Churches is shown by the fact that between 1990-1993, the Episcopal Council of the Catholic Church issued at least eleven pastoral letters whereas the Protestant leadership issued at least four similar documents. See Gatwa's bibliography in *Churches*, 264-265.

¹⁰⁴ André Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda. Conversations with Laure Guilbert and Hervé Déguiné* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁵ Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 138.

with their situation and whether an external agent, a Christian mission in this instance, offered the best remedy for the ills of the people?

Writing from an ‘insider’s perspective’ can be a treacherous thing, especially when one is trying to be fair to what one imagines to be their past. There are real risks of amplifying the harm done and an almost irresistible desire to glorify and romanticise the past. However, towards the end of the first chapter, this work showed that Rwandan society, at the eve of encountering western influence, was far from being an homogenous, harmonious socio-political entity that is depicted in some historical accounts, especially Kagame’s and De Lacger’s. Even if it were, postcolonial thinkers such as Gandhi and Fanon have shown what unhelpful a solution going back to a nostalgic pre-colonial past would be.¹⁰⁶

Politically, the oppressive effects of a centralized state started under Rwabugiri were widely felt and resented. There were too many injustices and inequalities in a highly stratified society. There were far too many privileges in the hands of a few and since the Rucunchu coup; these privileged few were locked into a bitter fratricidal *règlement de compte* which nearly decimated the ruling class.¹⁰⁷ Some factions in the north of the country had taken advantage of this weakness to start small-scale uprisings and rebellions, stirred up for the most part by Nyabingi priests. The country was ready for a change towards better politics.

What about the people? More specifically, what was the spiritual, mental and psychological state of the people who lived in this society? Three words seem to sum up the lives of the majority, if not all Rwandans: fear, survival, dissimulation. According to Rumiya, the whole society lived in a state of constant fear.¹⁰⁸ The mass of poor were terrorised by their *shebuja*, the threat of losing everything including their lives and the less palpable anguish caused by the spiritual world. The lower chiefs lived in a paralysing fear of losing their authority and their possessions. Not even the greatest chiefs were safe since the king could decree their death, their exile or their dispossession. As for the king himself, the *coup d’état* of Rucunchu had shown that even the rightful *umwami* could be deposed and killed.

¹⁰⁶ Gandhi, *Postcolonial*, 20.

¹⁰⁷ The ‘Rucunchu Coup d’Etat’ refers to the struggle for kingship between the partisans of Mibambwe Rutalindwa, the rightful heir of Rwabugili, and Yuhi Musinga supported by the queen mother Kanjogera and her brothers Kabare and Ruhinankiko. The struggle ended with the defeat and death of Rutalindwa, and the coming to power of Musinga. For more details on these events, see Kagame, *Abrégé*, 100ff.

¹⁰⁸ Rumiya, *Rwanda*, 224.

The precariousness of life had made living a matter of daily survival, and to survive, one had to weave a web of dissimulation, deceit and secrecy. Ironically, this survival tactic was referred to as *ubwenge* (intelligence, wisdom). One of the things that confused the Westerners was the level of secrecy and mistrust that the whole society bathed in. Unfortunately, this social framework had become the cultural norm and there did not seem to be an antidote from within. Much has been said about the richness of the traditional religion and the sophistication of ethics and culture in Rwanda. Yet, as argued in the first chapter, even religion had become agency in the service of sacred monarchy. *Umwami* had become the visible and living *Imana*; holding the right to life and death without necessarily having the charismatic and merciful attributes of the divinity he was identified with. Through this instrumentalisation, a rich religious tradition had plunged into a murky stagnation, without a prophetic voice to call for renewal. Wisdom had become fatalism. Therefore, going back to the question as to whether Rwanda needed the good news, the answer should be positive in the presence of all these elements. If this good news were freedom from captivity, justice for the oppressed, peace and comfort for the traumatised and fearful, the spirit and the word of truth that would break the chains of dissimulation and the shackles of deceit, and love for and among all the children of *Imana*, then Rwanda was mature and ready for the Kingdom of God. The next question then becomes, ‘Did the missionaries bring this good news and live up to its full potential?’ With incontrovertible historical evidence, this chapter has argued that they did not.

Christian missions did not affect and challenge the core of the social, political and spiritual problems; rather they brought a new dimension to them. Rwandan religion, spirituality and culture; lauded by Nothomb as ‘*pierres d’attente*’¹⁰⁹ for Christianity, were merely discarded as paganism or backwards superstitions by Protestant and Catholic missionaries alike. From stepping stones, they become the proverbial stone rejected by the builders even if it had the potential to become the cornerstone of a Rwandan Christianity adapted to the local context.

The existence of *Imana*-centred monotheism would have been an important starting point for this adaptation. However, even at this level, missionaries were resistant to the idea of *Imana* and refused to use the traditional name of *Imana*; preferring the Kiswahili translation of ‘*Mungu*’. This choice was prompted by missionaries’ fears that by using the name *Imana*, Rwandans might relapse back into ‘pagan’ religious habits of *Gakondo* by

¹⁰⁹ Nothomb, *African Humanism*, 1965.

confusing the one true God with their more unfathomable deity. The use of *Imana* in catholic liturgy reappeared only in the early 1980s; nearly 20 years after the second Vatican Council. Name such as *Twagiramungu* or *Bizimungu* are vestiges and reminders of the ‘*Imana* versus *Mungu*’ dilemma.¹¹⁰

Yet individual fears and social psychoses were not always dismissed as simple fears of the occult. Most of the missionaries were very well educated people who could and did make connections between these different manifestations of fear and social-political injustices and oppression. However, missionaries and earlier indigenous clergies failed to develop a strong positive political theology, inspired and based on the liberating message of the Gospel to help the converts move from fear and ignorance to freedom, truth and light. Instead, a new dimension of ‘spiritual’ oppression was created as missionaries tried to find ways of asserting pastoral authority and control upon their flocks. New fears, new categories of sins and demons were created to add to the multitude already in place. Thus, the truth of the Gospel did not set people free.

This last comment raises the more fundamental question whether converts did actually know this truth, namely the liberating message of the Gospel. Two essential distinctions have to be made clear: first, between Protestant and Catholic methodologies of mission and pedagogies of the scriptures and second, within Catholicism, between theologians and parish priests. Proceeding from the latter to the former, it is possible to observe a distance between those Catholic theologians who reflected on the potentialities and promises of Rwandan traditional spirituality for Christianity and priests in ‘bush parishes’ who were confronted with what they judged to be paganism and threats to the Christian message. The latter’s immediate concerns were pastoral practicalities rather than theological and metaphysical connections. Methodologically, total eradication of *Gakondo* beliefs was simpler and less risky than any form of syncretism or enculturation.

This disconnection between theology and church practice is a common thread in Christian tradition and Rwanda was more a continuity than an exception; a critique that applies to Protestant missions as well. Whatever the place and the denomination, such a disconnection produces a weak and socially inept ecclesiology. Furthermore, and this leads back to the first distinction, any church practice that gives less importance to the study of Scriptures at

¹¹⁰ For more details on this theological dilemma see *Dialogue’s cahiers Lumières et Société*, issue 41. NUR Archives.

the expense of a paternalistic catechism (Catholic missions) removes a powerful and liberating component from the Gospel, thus greatly disempowering the community of believers. On the other hand, the Protestants encouraged the study of Scriptures for personal and inward salvation of the soul. Thus, they operated another kind of disconnection between the Gospel and the historical reality of the believers. Protestant churches developed almost into ascetic bodies, estranged from the political context and lacking a political theology that establishes a clear link between the salvation of the soul and the liberation of the Rwandan subject as a whole.

This chapter closes with these critical observations on the added value of Christian missions without pursuing the historical growth of Christianity until the eve of the 1994 genocide. However, the sixth chapter will ‘look back’ to this period (1950s-1994) to highlight the chasm between the qualitative and quantitative growth of Christianity. It is within this chasm that a very passive and negative political theology developed, sustaining faith communities that theoretically knew what was good and right yet could not muster the necessary resources to stand in the way of a rampant ethnic discourse and ultimately, genocide. Yet, even in these much criticised beginnings, genuine revivals symbolised by *Abaka* pointed to the existence of a ‘remnant’ that would witness to the liberating possibilities of the good news.

Chapter 3: Islam in Rwanda: history of marginalisation

3.1. Introduction

It is virtually impossible to understand Rwandan Muslims in 'Rwanda 94' without a grasp of the political history of this faith community. This chapter will argue and demonstrate that the actions of Muslims in 'Rwanda 94' were in accordance with their historical negotiation of previous political tensions from a 'marginal' position. Despite the desire to be as historically comprehensive as possible, this will be an insufficient presentation of the origins of Islam in Rwanda but one which makes the most of meagre available data. Chronological facts and statistics have been avoided for the simple reason that either they do not exist or they cannot be trusted. The chapter aims instead at sketching the religious and political context of the origins of Islam in Rwanda and to what extent it was shaped- and continued to be- by this very context. Other parts of the thesis will proceed to situate the isolation and marginalisation of Muslims within the genocide as a political event and how it brought them back into the political arena of the Rwandan society in the post-genocide era.

Islam was introduced in Rwanda later than in neighbouring countries, where it had been introduced before European colonisation¹, and almost at the same time as Christianity. Very little is known of the beginnings of Islam and Muslims in Rwanda owing to the limited number of written sources and the complete absence of other sources. In agreement with Kagabo, this constitutes a serious handicap to a systematic study of Rwandan Islam.² It can be argued that the lack of Islamic voices in academia and history is a result of three circumstances: (i) the cultural background of the first Muslims, (ii) the need to negotiate knowledge-power gatekeepers and (iii) the reliance on outsiders, i.e non-Islamic voices for representation. A reflection on these three points will constitute the bulk of this chapter.

The first point refers to the fact that Islam was introduced to Rwanda mainly by black Africans used to oral tradition and dedicated to other trades rather than Western

¹ For instance, Islam entered Rwanda almost half a century after its arrival in Buganda. See Suleiman I. Kiggundu and Isa K. K. Lukwago, "The Status of the Muslim Community in Uganda" in the *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* (King Abdulaziz University Press: Jedah, 1988).

² Kagabo José Hamim, *L'Islam et les "Swahili" au Rwanda* (Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales: Paris, 1988), 11. Kagabo rightly points to the fact that Kagame, the native specialist of Rwanda and Rwandan history has managed the incredible task of dedicating few pages to foreign monotheistic religions present in Rwanda without making the slightest allusion to Islam.

missionaries used to the written word and obliged to compile reports for their missionary societies. The second point alludes to the fact that Islam was not welcome in Rwanda and actively opposed by colonial administrations, Catholic and Protestant missionaries and Rwandan aristocracy. This meant that for any knowledge about Islam to filter through, this trio of ‘gatekeepers’ had to be negotiated and/or subverted. Finally and as a consequence of the first two points, any knowledge about Islam, especially in the earlier days, came through negative portrayal by non-Islamic sources.

3.2. *Askaris*³ and Traders as ‘missionaries’

As in the case of Buganda, Arab slave traders had tried to enter Rwanda before the colonial era but Rwandan monarchs had been reticent to establish direct contacts with them.⁴

Consequently, it was the Black African Muslims of diverse origins who contributed to the diffusion of Islam in Rwanda. These were ‘*askaris*’ or African soldiers who accompanied and supplemented German troops, traders, cooks, interpreters, etc. Anciaux suggested that, “All the colonial agents who have been interested in the study of Islam in one way or the other agree that every Muslim trader is a missionary, bearer of doctrines and instructions.”⁵ These Africans were called *Swahili* to distinguish them from true Arabs and the *assimilés* (Muslims of mixed parentage). However, the Muslims of Rwanda have always considered ‘*Swahili*’ as pejorative and prefer to be called *Aba-Islamu*, literally, those-who-belong-to-Islam.

In the absence of oral or written data on the profile of these *ad hoc* missionaries of Islam in Rwanda, one can only proceed by abduction. First of all, it is clear that most of these Muslims of African descent were far from the “bearers of doctrines and instructions” that Anciaux claimed. They were most probably not well read in the doctrines and theology of Islam and would be the equivalent of practising Christian laypeople. These were not missionaries in the strict understanding of the concept, as a group trained and sent to spread a religious belief. Islam would have been a significant element of their identity but proselytising would have happened as an accessory to the exercise of their respective trade.

³ *Askari* is the Swahili word for “soldier”.

⁴ A popular tale narrates how Rwabugiri was approached by Arabs who wanted to buy Rwandans as slaves and give him guns in return. After a careful reflection, the king asked the Arab where the guns came from. He was told that they were handmade in factories. Rwabugiri then declined the offer and said “in that case, we might be able to make guns with our own hands sometimes, but people cannot be handmade!”

⁵ Léon Anciaux, *Le Problème Musulman Dans l’Afrique Belge* (Librairie Falk Fils: Bruxelles, 1949), 27.

However all Muslims were not traders. For a repertoire of different crafts of Muslims in colonial Rwanda and Burundi, see Anciaux, *Problème*, 17.

This factor could explain, among other things, the extremely slow spread of Islam in Rwanda.

Not only would these improvised missionaries have had a limited knowledge of Islam, they would have had a limited education in secular knowledge; a fact which might account for the lack of diaries, journals, letters or other writings containing their religious activities in Rwanda. A background in a culture of oral tradition and limited formal education is a poor combination for the production of a written account of any sort. Unfortunately, these newcomers would have been mainly foreigners speaking Swahili; a fact that not only isolated and marginalised them but also prevented an inclusion of their religious beliefs in local oral tradition.

Therefore, whilst folklore and cultural practices provide an insight into indigenous religious beliefs, and missionaries' archives disclose the early days of Christianity in Rwanda, there is little indication as to how Islam fared at first contact with Rwandan society. Kagabo surmises that Islam must have struggled to be accepted and only managed to survive by making a few converts in the most important commercial centres of the country that developed during Belgian colonisation, around the 1920s.⁶ There are fragments of information about the social, cultural and political obstacles that Islam was faced with; unfortunately there are no insider's accounts of how they were dealt with. This omission seems even more acute once one details the hostility faced by the new faith.

3.3. A difficult entry

3.3.1. Mistrust of the indigenous populations

Early attempts by Arab Muslims to penetrate in the interior of Rwanda and the consistent and categorical refusal of Rwandan monarchs have already been alluded to. The reasons for this refusal were more political than religious. The Rwanda of 19th century was a great military force in the region and its reputation had reached the coasts of Zanzibar where from the late 17th century Arabs from the Persian Gulf had imposed their political power and their religion.⁷ From the Indian Ocean coast, these Arabs initiated business contacts

⁶Kagabo, *Islam*, 14.

⁷ Humphrey Fisher, "The western and central Sudan and East Africa." *The Indian sub-continent, South-East Asia, Africa and the Muslim West*. Eds. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis. Cambridge University Press, 1970, 396. Cambridge Histories Online. Cambridge University Press. 13 December 2010 DOI:10.1017/CHOL9780521219488.016

with African kingdoms, including Rwanda,⁸ in the interior of the continent; selling goods manufactured in Europe in exchange for ivory, precious minerals and slaves.⁹

It is probable that through these trade contacts, Rwandan monarchs must have perceived the political dangers of letting the Arabs into the country. Keeping the Arabs and Islam out was a matter of national sovereignty and protecting the integrity of the kingdom reached xenophobic proportions at times. Therefore, the Arabs could only conduct business with and in Rwanda through their African intermediaries, who did not carry the same cultural and political threat.¹⁰ Besides, the Rwandan aristocrats would have considered themselves natural superiors to these Africans.

It is not only the aristocracy that resisted Islam; the common people were equally suspicious towards foreigners. Used to manoeuvring in a complex stratified society, Rwandans relied heavily on trusted structures such as family and lineage. An unknown guest was welcomed with courtesy and treated with great consideration without necessarily being befriended. Relationships were complex between different segments of Rwandans themselves for reasons briefly explored in the previous chapter. However, they preferred those complex social dynamics that they knew their way around rather than dealing with strangers. Christian missionaries themselves admitted that they faced great difficulties with the reserved and mistrustful character of the Rwandans who disdained any foreign religion, including Islam.¹¹ White Christian missionaries had been more tolerated than accepted because of the power they yielded and the opportunities they offered; not necessarily because of spiritual hunger. Power and opportunities, Muslims seemed to offer none. As for spirituality, Rwandans were more than content with their own. Islam could not offer them much more.¹²

⁸ According to De Lacger, Arab traders initiated trade contacts with Rwanda since the reign of Gahindiro IV, the grandfather of Rwabugiri who welcomed the first Germans in Rwanda. See *Ruanda* 2, 8.

⁹ De Lacger, *Ruanda* 2, 7.

¹⁰ According to Kagabo, 'Les arabes avaient tenté de s'introduire à la cour rwandaise à l'époque coloniale, mais les rois du Rwanda s'étaient montrés réticents à établir avec eux des rapports directs.' Kagabo, *Islam*, 16.

¹¹ Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 183.

¹² Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 186.

3.3.2. Hostility and opposition of colonial authorities

In 1970, Fisher wrote that the effect of European colonial influence upon the development of Islam in tropical Africa was far from fully analysed;¹³ a statement which clearly applies to colonial Rwanda. In his outline of the main responses of Africans to Islam, Humphrey noted that for the greater part, the effect of European colonialism was to enlarge Islamic opportunities through three main channels: indirect rule, direct employment of Muslims, and generally increased mobility.¹⁴ In the case of Rwanda, Islam entered with German colonial agents and it seems paradoxical to suggest conflict between the two.¹⁵

However, after facilitating its introduction and implementation in Rwanda, colonial authorities could not remain impervious to the cultural and political challenge that it posed for Westerners. In fact, Kandt's superiors were much opposed to the development of Islam in the country, forcing Kandt to reluctantly adopt the same position.¹⁶ During German rule, rumours and conspiracy theories about the "Islamisation" of the country abounded, most of the time forged by missionaries and uncritically accepted by German officials less enlightened than Kandt. Opening the country to trade or a large influx of Muslim *askaris* was the kind of chance Islam was awaiting to overwhelm the country.¹⁷

Western gatekeepers were determined to block Islamic cultural influence at all cost. For this reason, a number of administrative and legal measures were taken to discourage the growth of Islam. For instance the German authorities imposed a restricted immigration policy towards Muslims, heavy taxes on the *Walimu*¹⁸ and strict control over Muslim cattle traders to prevent them from proselytising. Official schools focused on teaching secular subjects in order to counter the teaching of Arabic.¹⁹ In fact, during the German

¹³ Fisher, *Western*, 396.

¹⁴ Humphrey, *Western*, 396.

¹⁵ In fact, Kandt, was well inclined towards Muslims and wanted to bring more of them in the country from East Africa to work in administrative positions. He encouraged Muslim business and built 'Islamic quarters' in Kigali and Gisenyi. See Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 187.

¹⁶ Linden, *Christianisme*, 106, 156-157.

¹⁷ The Resident had rightly projected that Islam would not make much progress in a foreseeable future. He tried his hypothesis on a group of thirty five Muslim *askaris* who had had between themselves fifty five "boys" for years. Yet except those among the "boys" who were born Muslim, none of them converted to Islam. He concluded that either the *askaris* were poor proselytizers or that Islam, *especially in unfavourable circumstances*, was not the force it was often said to be. See, Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 187.

¹⁸ Swahili term for "Teacher", a category of Muslim leaders who specialised in the teachings of the Koran.

¹⁹ Kagabo, *Islam*, 35

protectorate; one small Koran school in Bujumbura was the only noticeable Islamic centre of learning in Ruanda-Urundi.²⁰

However, this stringent treatment under the Germans was rather benign compared to the open hostility that Muslims faced from the Belgian colonial administration. Kagabo argues that this hostility found its roots in the clashes between the Belgians and the Arabs in the Independent State of the Congo. These clashes had been so violent that the relationships between the two communities remained strained for a long time.²¹ One can argue though that for the Belgians, the opposition against the Islamization of the colonies proceeded from a variety of sensitive issues: it had cultural, political as well as economical reasons.

Anciaux, once one has come to terms with the engrained racism of his writings, is the most vehement champion of anti-Islamisation in Belgian colonies. The title of his work, *Le Problème Musulman*, is telling: Islam is a *problem* and Muslims are seen as some chaff in the otherwise perfect colonial garden²² because they tolerated things that Christian Belgian morality found abject such as polygamy, and heterosexual and homosexual marriage with underage young people of both sex.²³ Yet for all his racial and cultural bias, Anciaux assessed the political philosophy of Islam with admirable lucidity. The real danger of Islam, he argued, resided in the political potential of the Koran, which could instill a subversive and revolutionary attitude in the hearts of the Blacks; a form of pride which set Muslims against all the 'infidels'. This pride conferred to Muslims a disconcerting self-belief, a sort of 'inaccessibility' that one finds even in the most uncouth as far as education is concerned and the commonest in matters of morality.²⁴ This 'inaccessibility' coupled with polygamy, Anciaux argued, were the two formidable forces that threatened Western civilisation. The former created a political, social and spiritual universe that colonial and missionary actions could not penetrate.²⁵ The latter gave Islam an irresistible attraction for Africans.²⁶

However, there was a more alarming and tangible dimension to this political threat. Like many Belgians in Africa, in the Belgian Congo more particularly so, Anciaux was convinced that Muslims were simply biding their time to pounce and drive the Whites out

²⁰ Roger-Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, 186.

²¹ Kagabo, *Islam*, 37.

²² Anciaux calls Muslims 'deceitful and opportunistic people' who perturbed the *pax Belgica* that the colonial authorities had brought to the region. *Problème*, 79.

²³ Anciaux, *Problème*, 25-26. Anciaux viewed this last point as constituting a form of slavery.

²⁴ Anciaux, *Problème*, 78.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

of Africa.²⁷ He was certain that in Belgian Africa, Muslims harboured towards the Belgians feelings of ‘permanent hostility.’ This antagonism could be interpreted as an opposition against everything Western in general or just against the Belgian authority. It could also be seen as a form of hostility with religious and political aspects against both the Christian and the Western elements characteristic of the colonial regime. Either way, Anciaux concluded, Islam constituted an ‘irreducible antinomy, absolute politically and religiously’ directed against Belgian authority, the West and everything non-Muslim.²⁸

Finally, alongside the cultural and political threats, Muslims were considered a menace on economic grounds. A journalist of *Le Soir* warned readers in 1923 to keep Arab and Indian traders from earning money that should go in Belgian economy.²⁹ Similarly, Anciaux noted that Belgian *rightful possessions* (my emphasis) were threatened by an increasing immigration of Indian and Arabic merchants.³⁰ The argument does not lack solidity: Arabs and Indians had been making profits during WWI and WWII when the Europeans were embroiled in two costly wars. If the former were to invest all the millions they had made during that time, then Belgian businessmen and women would have had serious competition on their hands and would have been in a very delicate position financially. In that case, the Belgian business people could not be happy with a lifestyle lower than that of their compatriots without shamefully debasing themselves.³¹

Thus, Islam was perceived in the most negative light: wholesale Islamic cultural revolution, political sedition to overthrow Western masters and Asiatic economical invasion; enough to worry an already paranoid Belgian colonial administration. In Rwandan politics, this paranoia was translated into a selective policy in religious matter to such an extent that Islam was almost prohibited.³² Prohibition might be too absolute here, especially when one reads it alongside Kagabo’s information about Islam starting to make adepts in the 1920s.³³ However, if Kandt could talk of “unfavourable circumstances” under German rule,

²⁷ These revolutionary instincts were not always sly and secretive. During public celebrations on a national day in Bujumbura, Muslims had burst into the British national anthem and totally boycotted the Belgian national anthem. Anciaux, *problème*, 24-25.

²⁸ Anciaux, *Problème*, 26-28.

²⁹ Kagabo, *Islam*, 37-39.

³⁰ Anciaux, *Problème*, 30-31.

³¹ A clear indication, if any is needed, that ultimately, colonial authorities strove for the protection of western interests more than the wellbeing of the indigenous populations.

³² Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 207.

³³ Kagabo, *Islam*, 12.

Belgians made these circumstances almost impossible. The progress of Islam, both as a cultural and religious influence was seriously hampered throughout colonial times.

3.3.3. *Christianity against Islam*

Almost every available source points to the fact that behind colonial policies to foil Islam, were the relentless and wide-ranging efforts of the missionaries, Catholics and Protestants alike. The Passion narrative innocuously reports that Herod and Pilate were sworn enemies but one event brought them into solidarity for a brief moment: the condemnation and crucifixion of the Christ.³⁴ In another time and another place, the same could be said of Protestants and Catholics with regard to Islam in Rwanda. Previous sections have pointed to the icy climate that existed between the two Christian traditions. However, Protestants and Catholics were in agreement when it came to opposing Islam. Both considered that Islam was nothing but a perversion of morals that should be opposed.

De Lacger pointedly noted that Islam was a semi-civilisation akin to Rwanda's own barbarism.³⁵ However, Cardinal Lavigerie had already sounded the charge against Islam in unequivocal terms:

Islam is truly the chef-d'œuvre of the Spirit of Evil. It gives into the deepest needs of the human heart: to religious aspirations, it provides some sort of satisfaction owing to the portion of truth that it possesses, and at the same time, it opens all barriers to human passions. It legitimises carnal disorders, it deifies brutal force. How can [we] pluck souls out of its dominion? Islam will perish by its own undoing, out of the excesses that are a consequence of its doctrine and because of the death that it carries everywhere within itself. It is what the Arab proverb states strongly, 'the Shadow of a Turk renders the land that it crosses barren for a century.'³⁶

This radical statement provoked a strong reaction and caused a diplomatic incident when Turkey's Ambassador in France complained about the cleric's comments. Lavigerie was not deterred and reverted to the well rehearsed anti-slavery rhetoric,

In the whole of Africa, only Muslims organise and lead bands that ravage it with raids and the trading of slaves.... I do not know of any Muslim who in principle is not a slave trader.³⁷

Catholic missionaries in Rwanda echoed and amplified the position of their Superior. The success of Islam in Buganda and the Eastern Coast of Africa provided them with abundant

³⁴ Luke 25:12.

³⁵ De Lacger, *Ruanda Moderne*, 6.

³⁶ Kagabo, *L'islam*, 22.

³⁷ Kagabo, *Islam*, 22.

ammunition and they found in Rwanda's suspicion of foreign customs a strong ally. However, they warned that the arrival of Muslim merchants might sway the allegiance of the locals.³⁸ The recruitment of the catechists would become more and more complicated for the Catholic missionaries, according to Hirth.³⁹ As for Protestant missionaries, Mörchen suggested that the credulity of the population was exploited by Muslims who predicted the departure of the Europeans in order to attract new followers.⁴⁰

Besides denouncing the ills of Islam, Protestants took practical steps to nullify its impact in threatened towns. They had rightly singled out commerce and trade as the main channel for Islam's penetration in towns; therefore they had to block these access points. A *Société missionnaire commerciale* (commercial missionary society) was created to challenge the monopoly of Muslims on commerce by teaching indigenous populations to develop an honest business. In 1912, Rudolf Rohde the first missionary-cum-businessman was established in Bukoba. His colleague Weiss had the same mission for Rwanda and his headquarters would be in Kamembe; an important centre for Islam.⁴¹

3.4. Social and political marginalisation

3.4.1. Social alienation

The situation described in previous sections led inevitably to Muslims being socially and politically marginalised. For most Rwandans, Islam was a religion of foreigners since the Muslim minority was made of a few nationals and more foreigners, mostly of Asian descent. Other Rwandans wondered whether the Swahili were Rwandans at all, if they had clans and other similar criteria that identified a Rwandan. The reasons behind this wondering were to be found mainly in the fact that Swahili/Muslims lived at the margins of Rwandan traditional society. Their homes were concentrated in what was referred as

³⁸ Thus in the missionary report of 1905-6, Hirth wrote 'The chiefs are happy to stay away from religion. When the traders will be allowed to settle in the country, Islamic influences... hostile to [Christian] religion could encourage the chiefs to hinder the work of mission.' In *Rapports Annuels de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique*, n°1. 1905-1906, pp.141-151. His Protestant counterpart Johanssen wrote, 'Islam has not yet taken root in Rwanda but the *Askaris* and the traders who follow them are fervent Muslims.' Ernst Johanssen, 'Was ist gerade jetzt für Ruanda nötig.' In *Nachrichten aus der Ostafrikanischen Mission*, 1909, 23/9, s.140-144.

³⁹ Joseph Hirth, 'Rapport Général du Vicariat Méridional'. In *Rapports Annuels de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique*, n°2. 1905-1906, pp.119-121.

⁴⁰ O. Mörchen, 'Kunst und Zauber.' In *Nachrichten aus der Ostafrikanischen Mission*, 1909, 23/5, s.48-50. on the threat of Muslim merchants see also K. Roehl, 'Die Ausbreitung des Islam im südwestlichen Ruanda.' In *Nachrichten aus der Ostafrikanischen Mission*, 1911b. XXV, 7, 132/134.

⁴¹ M. Weiss, 'Erlebnisse eines Missions Kaufmanns'. In *Nachrichten aus der Ostafrikanischen Mission*, 1913, 28/7, s. 108-113.

“Swahili quarters”⁴². Besides, each Swahili village was relatively autonomous since there was no community structure on the national level.⁴³

Muslims also lived outside and independently of the jurisdiction of Rwandan traditional authorities (chiefs and sub-chiefs) and they would not have colonial authorities handle matters of importance since Europeans would not have known the Koran.⁴⁴ As a result, even politically they were considered as foreigners. Consequently, as usually happens with most minorities and subcultures that live on the margins of a majority and hegemonic culture, stronger bonds of “brotherhood” and a more cohesive solidarity must have developed within Muslim communities; reinforced by belonging to the same religion and sharing one language.

Before going any further, it seems important to reflect on the significance of the early marginalisation of Muslims and the ambiguities surrounding their identity. Understandably, this marginalisation was socially and politically detrimental. However, one can also argue that it was a positive and protective marginalisation, as references to solidarity and brotherhood have already showed and their importance with regard to the increasing ethnic polarisation within the broader society. More significantly, this isolation would have, to a great extent, sheltered them from the internal upheavals that were threatening to shake the country as they were not involved in social contracts that enshrined inequalities and injustices such as ‘*Ubugake*’, ‘*Ubugetwa*’ and ‘*Ubugonde*’ with all the bitter resentment they generated.⁴⁵

Muslims were, to a great extent, outside the cultural sphere of colonial influence and this allowed them to develop a more ‘nationalist’ –as opposed to ethnic- attitude toward the political events leading to the independence of the country. Religious cohesion, isolation from indigenous ethnic polarisation and insulation against colonial influence were three aspects of the ‘inaccessibility’ evoked previously that set the Rwandan Muslim community apart from the beginning and would define on more than one occasion how they responded to the different political crises that the country has traversed to this day.

⁴² According to Anciaux, Arabic Muslims lived in symbiosis with African Muslims and consequently there were many mixed children or *chotara* in the Swahili “*cités*”. Anciaux, *Problème*, 18.

⁴³ Kagabo informs that every *quartier* was made of a few rows of houses and had its *Imam*, *Walimu* and *Wazee*. There was a mosque and a multipurpose building used for matters such as the celebration of religious festivals or the resolution of legal quarrels by the *Wazee* before, if necessary, taking them to court. *Islam*, pp.210-211.

⁴⁴ Kagabo, *Islam*, p.211.

⁴⁵ *Ubugake*, *Ubugetwa*, *Ubugonde* are summarily defined at the end of this thesis.

3.4.2. Mitigating political marginalisation

One important aspect that should not go unnoticed, is the ‘political’ role played by religious leaders within these marginalised and self-contained Muslim communities since the *quartiers* were a political *terra nullius* as far as colonial and indigenous authorities were concerned. *Walimu, Imam and Sheiks* must have had a significant political mandate recognised by the community. For the society lying outside the *quartiers*, however, it is self-explanatory that Muslims were excluded from the spheres of political power. There is no evidence that any member of the Tutsi elite ever converted to Islam and no Muslim was ever appointed Chief or Sub-chief and such an appointment would have been met with hostility from one or more of the four political adversaries: colonial agents, missionaries, aristocrats and the local people. Thus, the political marginalisation of Muslims was marked with ambivalence: relative political autonomy in the *quartiers* and total exclusion with regard to the affairs of the wider Rwandan polis. This important aspect will help to understand better the comportment of the same leaders before and during the genocide of 1994.

On the evidence one can observe of the Muslim community in post-independence Rwanda, this ambiguity surrounding Muslim political identity did not disappear after the independence.⁴⁶ Fanon’s verdict that the postcolonial does not immediately bring about the disappearance of the colonial apply here; although within post-colonial Rwanda political discourse, the ‘colonial’ comprises European colonisation (*ingoma ya gikolonize*) and monarchist oppression (*ingoma ya gihake*).⁴⁷ Even in this post-colonial context, there were still questions as to where their national and ethnic allegiance lay, especially considering the role that they had played during the period leading to independence and immediately after.⁴⁸ In the beginning of the decolonisation period, Muslims took an active part in the political debate. Inevitably, following what has already been hinted at, they were attracted mostly by the more virulent and incendiary anti-European speeches of nationalist movements. Here is what Kagabo says

⁴⁶ Contrary to the previous chapter, the account of Islam’s political history transgresses the ‘genealogical’ boundaries and takes the narrative almost to the eve of the civil war of 1990. This methodological transgression is the result of a lack of data and literature but also intends to remedy this limited representation of Islam.

⁴⁷ In Gandhi, *Postcolonial*, p.15.

⁴⁸ Kagabo, *Islam*, 210-211.

The AMUR (Associations des Musulmans au Rwanda) started at a time when Rwanda was going through a profound political crisis from 1959 to 1963. Beginning of anti colonial nationalism, opposition between monarchists and non monarchists crystallised in the bloody confrontations between Hutu and Tutsi... In this climate of invectives and armed conflict, Muslims in Rwanda reacted like Congolese and Burundian Muslims: they sided with those leaders who were the more vehemently opposed to European rule; ie UNAR.⁴⁹

Kagabo further argues that Muslims chose UNAR because it was a party of *citadins* or city dwellers in opposition to APROSOMA and PARMEHUTU perceived as parties of *washenzi* or rustic villagers. Very conveniently, UNAR used Swahili as the language of their political rallies. For the Muslims-Swahili, it was evident that their political and economical interests deeply diverged with those of *washenzi*; a natural consequence of the socio-demographic differences between the two groups. Therefore, the injustices denounced by the Hutu parties did not directly concern Muslims who had never been involved in any form of traditional or colonial servitude. On the other hand, while the Hutu blamed the elitist character of education on the Tutsi, Muslims considered that the Europeans were responsible. Thus, Muslims found themselves opposed to and distanced from Hutu parties in their analysis of political interests.⁵⁰

Linden in fact goes as far as suggesting that UNAR was born out of a coalition between Tutsi chiefs from the North of Rwanda, monarchist nationalists and Muslim traders with the intention of countering the ever increasing proletariat-based propaganda of the PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA.⁵¹ Historical evidence shows that Muslims were in solidarity with UNAR at least on three fronts: against Hutu propaganda, Belgian colonial presence and Catholic monopoly.⁵² This solidarity was not always acted out peacefully but included acts of intimidation, terrorism and physical aggressions.⁵³

⁴⁹ Kagabo, *Islam*, 237. There were 4 major political parties vying for power: Union des nationalistes Rwandais (UNAR), Parti pour l'Emancipation des Masses Hutu (MDR-PARMEHUTU), Association pour la Promotion Sociale des Masses (APROSOMA) and Rassemblement Démocratique Républicain (RADER).

⁵⁰ Kagabo, *Islam*, 243.

⁵¹ Linden, *Christinisme*, 354. The date of this creation is 15.08.59

⁵² Marcel Pochet, *Rétrospectives: le Problème Ruandais (1957-1962)*. These important historical documents are being collected and progressively published by "Synergies Africaines en Belgique", Asbl since 2006. They are based on the original documents and manuscripts of Marcel Pochet who was Advisor to the Mwami and member of the Superior Council of the Nation from 1948 to 1962. The events referred to above are in the 6th and 7th Dossiers, published in March 2006, pp27-28.

⁵³ In his note to the Vice-Gouverneur Général of Ruanda-Urundi on 27 October 1959, Bwanakweri Prosper, the President of RADER, reports two significant incidents: first, a sub-chief was beaten by Muslims of Nyanza because he was against UNAR. Secondly, an anonymous tract was posted everywhere in Nyanza with names of "enemies of the nation" that should be found and eliminated. Among them were Mgr Perraudin and

This turn of events highlights a number of significant landmarks as far as the relations between political powers and religious institutions are concerned. First of all, it shows to what extent Tutsi nationalists had distanced themselves from the Catholic Church to the point of joining forces with Muslims; a position that would prove to be heavy with consequences. Also, the events showed that Muslims played a more significant role in the events leading to the independence than history credits them for. Finally, the material shows that historically, Muslims sided with the Tutsi monarchists, more on political than purely ethnic grounds. Yet, this collaboration must have led to a transfer of allegiance or solidarity that could have led the Muslims to draw a parallel between theirs and Tutsi royalists' interests and destinies.

Unfortunately, Muslims paid heavily for this when the PARMEHUTU won the elections on the eve of independence. Collectively, Muslims were considered political enemies by the ruling party. Individually, people were put in prison. If one is to believe Kagabo, and there is no reason to do otherwise, Muslims vowed an unconditional backing for UNAR and supported the infiltrations of 'INYENZI',⁵⁴ until 1966 because they held the firm belief that the exiled King will come back for them.⁵⁵

Stories from my Father

In 1961, my father S and his brother A were students in Bukavu/Congo and lived in the important Muslim *cité* of Kamembe. They were both tall, athletic youths who played volleyball for the 'Equipe des Colons' in Bukavu. On Christmas Eve 1961, they made their way across the border from the Congo to Rwanda after a volleyball game. However, political events had taken a violent turn for some time and there was a strong military and police presence at the border. Muslims and Tutsi, indiscriminately, were being rounded up, and put in prison. My father and his brother were arrested on account of being Muslims and conferring with the enemy in the Congo. For two weeks, they were beaten day and night and their families did not have any knowledge of their whereabouts.

important members of the opposition. UNAR was found out as the author of the tract, but the Mwami Kigeli Ndahindurwa made the Muslims bear the responsibility for the tract. See Pochet, *Rétrospectives*, p.p.27-40.

⁵⁴ The military troops sent by Tutsi exiles in neighbouring countries. Contrary to post-genocide popular knowledge, 'Inyenzi' or 'cockroaches' was not a coinage of militia intended to dehumanize Tutsi victims. It was coined by Tutsi royalists themselves and operated at the same time as a password and a rallying name.

⁵⁵ Kagabo, *Islam*, 244-247.

After two weeks, military vehicles came to the prisons –it was night time- and all the prisoners were stacked in at the back with the promise of being released and transported back to their homes. Little did they know that instead of freedom, they were being taken to their execution. The night convoy took to the road heading north in a lugubrious concert of groans and moans from hungry and emaciated prisoners. In the back of one of the vehicles, my severely beaten-up father was sitting next to his brother and drifting in and out of consciousness. His brother was trying to keep him as comfortable as possible while whispering unintelligible prayers in Arabic.

After two hours of a tortuous trip, the convoy stopped and prisoners ordered to disembark. At this point, most of them had realised that this was no trip to home and freedom since the stop was somewhere in the middle of the natural forest of Nyungwe. The prisoners got off the vehicles or were simply dragged off by men in uniform. As they staggered off the vehicles, my father lost consciousness again and sagged to the floor. Not for long though. He was awakened suddenly by a staccato of firearms and the body of his brother toppling on top of him. The executions had started. Soldiers were shooting and prisoners were falling. The shooting lasted around ten minutes. When it was over, the soldiers simply pushed the bodies in one of the many ravines of Nyungwe, boarded their vehicles and took off. Two hours later, my father crawled out of the nefarious pit; having fallen first he was slightly closer to the top after the hasty burial and the body of his brother had protected him against bullets. My father never played volley ball again; he never crossed the border to the Congo and he lost his faith.

Collected in Copenhagen, May 2011.

With the Hutu of PARMEHUTU firmly in power after the independence of July 1962, the annihilation of the attacks of Inyenzi by the national army and serious repressions, Muslims had to swallow their bitter *vae victis* pill and realise that the only way to survive in the new regime was to align with the ideology of the ruling party.⁵⁶ From then on, AMUR went through what Kagabo calls “Hutu politicisation”, with most of its leadership coming from the Hutu majority regions of Ruhengeri or Gisenyi. However, this process did not go down well with the majority of its members considering that most Muslims lived in urban areas,

⁵⁶ In the constitution of AMUR put forward in 1964, Islam as a faith was not at the forefront. In fact, only one article alluded to religious activities! But they were more vocal and detailed in their support for the ideology of the PARMEHUTU. In return, leaders of the party agreed to consider the Muslims no longer as animals but as brothers with whom to build the Rwanda of tomorrow. Kagabo, *Islam*, 247-249

especially in Kigali, and had sided with UNAR. For this reason, AMUR began to lose its members *en masse* and in 1971 there was an official split within the AMUR.⁵⁷

As everything Rwandan, even Islam, originally dubbed the religion of aliens and foreigners, could not escape the ethnic fever that gripped Rwanda immediately prior and forever after the independence. During the genocide of 1994, it can be argued that these old allegiances and divisions within the faith resurfaced and informed the behaviours of many Muslims. However, with 'Rwanda 94' in mind, one can already see that despite its main disadvantages, 'marginality' can be advantageous in the long run. In the case of Rwandan Islam, this marginal position generated an identity consolidated by religious beliefs which proved to offer an alternative type of solidarity, one that has the potential to trump ethnic essentialising.

⁵⁷ Kagabo, *Islam*, 250-251.

Chapter 4. A Great Evil: Accounting for ‘Rwanda 94’.

Capable scholars have already alluded to the difficulty of accounting for the Rwandan genocide; the topic tackled by this chapter.¹ Eltringham uses the evocative metaphor of ‘the blind men and the elephant’² to convey the complexities of representing this multifaceted phenomenon. After offering a critical overview of the state of research on the Rwanda event, this chapter takes a diachronic approach to account for the horror of ‘Rwanda 94’ from the perspective of religion, theology and philosophy. Rather than just describing the historical events and social dynamics that culminated in ‘Rwanda 94’, it attempts a philosophical and theological critique of these historical processes and qualifies them as instances of sinning and evil.

The particularity of this chapter in the field of the Rwandan genocide studies is that the accounts it makes of the genocide focuses solely on internal factors and Rwandan agency. Rejecting theodicy as an explanatory paradigm, it connects ‘Rwanda 94’ to the historical rise of a centralised Rwandan state which was paralleled by a decline in the traditional ideals of morality and ethics. Having showed the inadequacy of ‘genocide’ and its Kinyarwanda translation ‘Itsembabwoko’, the chapter delves into Rwandan traditional morality and its categories of ‘evil’ to demonstrate that they provide a better understanding of ‘Rwanda 94’. This approach has the important merit of representing ‘Rwanda 94’ in a way that reclaims all the Rwandan victims of a shared history of mutual affliction, ‘autocide’, yet manages to ascribe responsibility for the genocide as a particular instance of this history of violence.

There is a perceptible discontinuity between this chapter and the previous three and to some extent with the next four chapters. It is almost a stand-alone chapter, a rupture or an interruption which deals with a ‘fracture’ event in the Rwandan timeline. Therefore, quite involuntarily, the story of this thesis reflects the history of Rwanda in many ways.

Although the previous three chapters attempt a religious background and the following four deal with religious engagement with the genocide, the former cannot truly account for what

¹ See for example Robert Lyons and Scott Straus, *Intimate enemy: images and voices of the Rwandan Genocide* (New York: Zone Books, 2006); Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror: Post-genocide debates in Rwanda* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

² Nigel Eltringham, ‘The Blind Men and the Elephant: the Challenge of Representing the Rwandan Genocide.’ In ed. Pat Caplan, *The Ethics of Anthropology: debates and dilemmas* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 96-112.

happened in 1994 and the latter cannot fully capture the phenomenal legacy of the genocide.

4.1. *The State of Research.*

‘The Rwanda genocide is a very difficult, even impossible, story to tell.’³ In a single sentence full of understatement, Straus captures the challenge of academic inquiry in the Rwandan genocide. He argues that this quasi-impossibility is twofold: conceptualising the scale of violence and escaping generalization by capturing each act of violence in its specificity and locality. The methodological outcome is that most presentations of the genocide use either an approach that insists on historical processes or a sensationalist approach by returning to standard clichés images of horror. According to Straus, the inherent problem of these presentations is the perpetuation and mystification of the unimaginable nature of the genocide.⁴

The challenges of narrating the Rwandan tragedy do not remove its reality. Thus, as with other similar human tragedies, ‘Rwanda 94’ has attracted intensive research across the board with a combination of repulsion and fascination. The result is a rapidly growing body of work in the area of genocide studies. An overview of this growing body of research would prove invaluable to any researcher seriously interested in the subject matter, yet within this thesis such is not possible. The best it can do, besides providing a rich bibliography at the end, is to refer to the most accessible and most reliable resources dedicated to surveying and updating this growing body of knowledge.

One such resource is the *Online Encyclopaedia on Mass Violence*; a regularly updated electronic database focusing on mass massacres and genocides of the 20th century.⁵ Not only does the *Encyclopaedia* offer theoretical studies on mass violence in Rwanda, it also endeavours to provide extensive knowledge on the main actors in the events of 1994 and the immediate period leading to them.⁶ More particularly, *Rwanda: The State of Research*, a scholarly review provided by René Lemarchand on the behalf of the *Encyclopaedia* is

³ Lyons and Straus, *Intimate enemy*, 13.

⁴ Lyons and Straus, *intimate.*, 14-15

⁵ <http://www.massviolence.org/-The-Project->

⁶ See for instance Emmanuel Viret, *Rwanda - A Chronology (1867-1994)*, Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 1 March 2010, accessed 14 March 2011, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Rwanda-A-Chronology>, ISSN 1961-9898

worth mentioning.⁷ The work provides an excellent and concise overview of the most important and relevant works on the Rwandan event up to its publication in 2007.

The impressive array of printed sources that Lemarchand surveys makes *The State of Research* a compulsory starting point into the most complex genocide of the 20th century. Lemarchand's work is not just an efficient bibliographical review; it is an attempt to categorise and synthesise the current body of research on the Rwandan events. It is also a point of departure for new questions arising from this research and requiring a thinking more and differently about the form of evil that befell Rwanda.⁸ Unfortunately, *The State of Research* does not seem to have been updated since 2007 and thus is lacking in terms of new strands of research currently developing around the subject matter.⁹ Perhaps the most helpful aspect of '*The state of Research*' is that it reveals important lacunae, gaps and flaws in the study of 'Rwanda 94'. Two such flaws will be addressed in this chapter, namely the overwhelmingly secular character of the sources and their western(ised) origins.

4.2. 'Hijacked' Experiences': an insider critique of research on 'Rwanda 94'

'Rwanda 94' is a case of mass violence *sui generis*. Of the five major genocides of the twentieth century¹⁰, the Rwandan genocide holds the record of being the fastest and having the highest level of mobilization and participation of civil populations in its execution.¹¹ These particularities and the general characteristics that it shares with other crimes against humanity have made of the Rwandan tragedy one of the most studied phenomena of the last

⁷ René Lemarchand, *Rwanda: The State of Research*, Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 4 November 2007, accessed 14 March 2011, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Rwanda-The-State-of-Research>, ISSN 1961-9898+

⁸ Lemarchand divides his sources into six categories: (i) In the belly of the beast (pp4-7), (ii) the Manichean temptation (7-9), (iii) The Limits of the Holocaust paradigm (9-10), (iv) The Witness literature (10-11), (v) The Revisionist agenda (11-16) and (vi) Need for a more nuanced assessment (16-20).

⁹ New strands of research can be found in the increasing body of writings by Rwandans, especially Hutu, living in the Diaspora and the questions raised by the recent report of the UN on crimes against Humanity committed by the current Rwandan Regime in Eastern Congo. See United Nations Human Rights, *Democratic Republic of The Congo, 1993–2003*. New York. August 2010.

¹⁰ The twentieth century witnessed at least five instances of mass massacres that are generally accepted and qualified as 'genocide'. These are the *Mec Yegern–Great Crime-* or the Armenian genocide (1915-1917), the *Shoah* or the Jewish Holocaust (1939-1945), the Cambodian Genocide (1975-1978), the Rwandan Genocide (April-July 1994) and the Srebrenica Genocide (1995). Against this number, Destexhe accepts only three genocides: Armenian and Rwandan genocides and the *Shoah*. Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 21-33.

¹¹ 'A Hundred days' is the popularised version on the duration of the Rwandan genocide. However, depending on which date one takes as the final day, the genocide lasted either 88 days (April 7 to 4 July, date of the capture of Kigali) or 103 days (up to July 19, date of the inauguration of the first post-genocide government).

two decades. However, it is of critical interest to analyse who is doing the research and what frameworks and concepts are being used to study 'Rwanda 94'.

4.2.1. Alien concepts

It is already apparent that the word 'genocide' has been used cautiously in this chapter with reference to the events of April-July 1994 and there are reasons for this guardedness.

However, this precaution does not imply the denial that the crimes carried out during this period do fall into the 'genocidal' category. The reasons for this hesitation are exclusively epistemological; translating the deliberate suspicion of an insider towards a concept coined from outside by spectators-outsiders and applied to a lived experience that they can only approach by analogy. Concepts and definitions are of great epistemic importance because they provide a threshold for meaning and understanding, therefore setting the agenda for subsequent reactions and actions to the phenomenon being defined and conceptualised.

Speaking of a hijacked experience in the representation of the Rwandan events of 1994 is pointing to the fact that what happened in Rwanda and to Rwandans was quickly seized upon, analysed, conceptualised, defined and named by outsiders using historical models and legal frameworks of a different era and a different context.¹² One month after the Rwandan catastrophe unfolded, after semantic and legalistic temporising and hesitations, the United Nations accepted that crimes which were taking place in Rwanda constituted genocide.¹³ Genocide studies are replete with literature showing the inadequacies and limitations of the legal definition of genocide, found in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG).¹⁴

What is of great importance is the fact that once the concept coined by Raphael Lemkin¹⁵ was applied to the Rwandan happenings, any debate on any particular conceptualising was

¹² This thesis argues that politically and historically, the Nazi genocide provided conceptual boundaries whereas the genocide convention of 1948, which was actually enshrined in the Rwandan constitution, became the legal threshold.

¹³ This less than laudable attitude of the international community has been described by many authors. See for instance Colette Braeckman, *Rwanda: Histoire d'un genocide* (Fayard: Bruxelles, 1994), 215. See also Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to murder: the Rwandan Genocide* (London/New York: Verso, 2004).

¹⁴ Article 2 of this convention defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with 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; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

¹⁵ Lemkin coined this concept in 1934 in an attempt to describe the Armenian experience.

pre-empted and foreclosed before it started. From one day to the next, a concept that was totally unknown in the country's language became the main lens through which the world came to understand Rwanda and Rwandans. All of a sudden, in some sort of surreal way, perpetrators and victims learnt that what they were doing and what was happening to them had a name. What was left was to translate 'genocide' in the local language to make it accessible to the majority of Rwandans who could not speak English or French. Indigenous linguists came up with their own newly coined concept of '*Itsembabwoko*'; a straight literal rendering of 'genocide'.¹⁶

Is it worth asking the question; 'How would Rwandans have understood what was happening to them? How would they have defined the event and how would they have conceptualised and conveyed it within the specificity of their epistemic world?' A reference to two previous genocides helps to understand the validity of these questions. Whilst almost all the rest of the world calls the annihilation of European Jews 'the Holocaust', Jewish people themselves refer to this event as the *Shoah* in Hebrew or *Churban/Hurban* in Yiddish. It was a *calamity* and a *destruction*, concepts which are less general and convey a distinctive emphasis on how the *victims* experienced the event. An abominable calamity befell them bringing an irreparable destruction of their humanity. Similarly, the Armenians use the concept of *Meds yeghern*¹⁷ to refer to the tragedy that was brought upon them by the rulers of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, the question should be asked and the answer should be a positive one.

*Itsembabwoko*¹⁸ is satisfactory as a functional term much like 'genocide' but it is inadequate for a number of reasons. For one thing, it is epistemologically alien despite the linguistic veneer. This raises the important question of appropriation and ownership of the calamity of 1994, which have an impact on issues such as responsibility, justice and reconciliation. Can perpetrators, victims and bystanders fully and retroactively integrate a concept that they did not know of during and before the event? Straus' interviews with Rwandan perpetrators provide an interesting insight. To his question 'What did people call

¹⁶*Itsembabwoko* is a compound word made *Itsemba* -from the infinitive (Gu)tsemba: exterminate and (u)bwoko -genotype, an umbrella term which can mean ethnicity, race, clan, lineage, etc.

¹⁷ From մեծ (*meç*, "great") + եղեռն (*yegern*, "crime, evil deed; calamity").

¹⁸ Sometimes, the word '*Itsebatsemba*' is added to *Itsembabwoko* to convey the idea of total extermination.

what they were doing?', one participant replied, 'We said we were on an attack (*igitero*), but today the government says "exterminate" (*Gutsembatsemba*).'¹⁹

It is not this kind of ideologically misguided or deliberate denial that is of interest here. What is being argued here is that *Itsembabwoko* was absent in the cognate, sensate, cultural, legal and spiritual epistemic patrimony of Rwanda. Actions and abstentions exhibited during the atrocities of 1994 had equivalent linguistic concepts which can describe their material, moral and legal elements while at the same time conveying the sense of betrayal, horror, absurdity and helplessness. They do not require an artificial concept to make sense; even if this concept serves political convenience.

Another problem with '*Itsembabwoko*' is the emphasis that the concept puts on the *act* of extermination and on *what* is exterminated. It could be argued that in this way the victims are excluded, as persons –not just as 'ubwoko'– who experienced a great tragedy in their particular individualities. The concept wants to incriminate the perpetrators, yet in a certain way, it vindicates them albeit in the form of diabolical actors in a macabre saga. In events like the Rwandan tragedy where the lines between perpetrators and victims are significantly blurred, photographer Lyons is right to argue for a presentation of the human face of all the people involved.²⁰ It is the sense of a morally responsible and a suffering Rwandan humanity in the presence of evil that '*itsembabwoko*' fails to translate.

Finally, within the context of post-genocide politics, '*itsembabwoko*' is something of a contradiction. Considering the corrosive and divisive nature of '*ubwoko*' when applied to ethnic terms 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu', the post-genocide regime decided to blot out *ubwoko* from national identity; there are only Rwandans in post-genocide Rwanda. Although the success of this drastic decision is still being monitored, there is no doubt that it is a step in the right direction for the sake of national unity and potential reconciliation. Strangely, national unity and reconciliation are implicitly undermined by reference to the tragedy of 1994 as '*itsembabwoko*' as inevitably minds are conditioned to think of the Tutsi as the implied *ubwoko* of the victims, and the Hutu as the perpetrators. The result is a dangerous Manichaeism which fails to present the losses as a national tragedy and the recovery as a shared effort. Therefore, there is a need for an indigenous concept which encapsulates all the phenomenological dimensions of 'Rwanda 94'.

¹⁹ Lyons and Straus, *Intimate*, 89.

²⁰ Lyons and Straus, *Intimate*, 32

4.2.2. Foreign voices

A cursory reading of the *State of Research* shows that the overwhelming majority of narrators of the 'Rwanda 94' are Westerners. 'Westerner' refers to authors from Western countries, including Rwandans living in the West. Therefore it applies more to the epistemic perspective and immediate background –especially with reference to language, culture and audience- than to the individuals as such. Even with this concession in mind, Rwandan voices are still timid whispers.

There are historical precedents that might explain this silence from Rwandan sources. Reflecting on the lack of philosophical reflection in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Neiman writes; 'the reason given for the absence of philosophical reflection is the magnitude of the task. What occurred in Nazi death camps was so absolutely evil that, like no other event in human history, it defies human capacities for understanding.'²¹ In Arendt's words quoted in the introduction, the impossible became true. In a moving personal reflection, Aguilar writes that after moments of great crisis and/or intense violence, the need to speak gives way to a certain overwhelming tiredness which brings the mind and body to ordinary concerns. 'The desire for food and warmth came first, the desire for God and others came second. However, the desire to understand came last and took years of national and international investigations.'²²

This silence in Rwanda has been broken unevenly by insiders and outsiders, the latter more than the former and the prominent role of media in this reporting cannot be emphasized enough. Media gave to the Rwandan events what previous genocides and mass crimes might have lacked: a global audience. Thus, the Rwandan calamity was a loss for humanity in its entirety, and as such, it calls for the entire humanity to tell, hear and know the story. The point that is being made here is not that an insider's narrative should be given exclusivity or precedence on outsiders' accounts; in fact and to a great extent, the scale of the tragedy collapses those binary considerations. The problem is rather that the story is told almost exclusively by Westerners to a Western audience. If things are to remain this way, knowledge will be incomplete and incomplete will be its virtues to heal and mend.

²¹ Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University press, 2004), 2.

²² Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide*, 33-34.

4.3. *A secularised narrative*

It is worthwhile to mention that the *State of Research* does not mention any work on the Rwandan genocide from Religious studies or Theology. It is true that this discipline is still limited but it is growing and deserves to be mentioned considering the significance of religious beliefs in Rwandan society.²³ One possible explanation for this omission could be the secular perspective from which Lemarchand writes. However, he is too thorough a researcher and a veteran student of Rwandan politics to ignore the important role of faith communities, especially Christianity.²⁴ This lacuna is even more felt if the genocide is understood as paradigmatic of moral evil as this work suggests. Neiman argued that the problem of evil is considered a theological one which is classically formulated as the question, 'How could a good God create a world full of innocent suffering?'²⁵ Transposed to the Rwandan reality of 1994, the question would be how *Imana* could let an evil of 'genocidal' proportions take place in Rwanda.

This current state of research raises the issue of how to approach the study of and how to qualify theologically the events of April to July 1994. These events have been studied mainly by social sciences. The fundamental questions that these studies do not ask are those of metaphysical, moral and theological order: what is the intrinsic nature of the phenomenon called genocide or each of the acts constitutive of the aggregate phenomenon? Why are these acts qualified as morally wrong? What makes them repulsive to the heart and the mind of humanity as a whole and irreconcilable to the Rwandan theological and political worldview in particular?

4.4. *'Rwanda 94' as paradigmatic of evil, sin and suffering*

4.4. 1. *Facing conceptual devastation*

This thesis opened with a quote from the Psalms that seems to imply a situation of devastation which goes beyond loss of life and material desolation. Neiman rightly points

²³ Hence, although Timothy Longman, *Christianity and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) was published after Lemarchand's survey, one would have expected Linden's *Church and Revolution* (1977) to get a mention or Gatwa's *Churches and Ethnic ideology*. From the field of Theology, Grey's *To Rwanda and back* and Aguilar's *Theology, Liberation and the Genocide* present stimulating readings of genocide and reconciliation from Feminist and Liberation theologies. Witness' accounts such as Guilbeau's *Rwanda, the Land God forgot* (2003) and *After the Locusts* (2006), and Rutayisire's *Faith under fire* are absent as well.

²⁴ This oversight is even more remarkable considering Lemarchand's careful study of the role of the Catholic Church in the revolution and massacres of 1959. See Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 106-110.

²⁵ Neiman, *Evil*, 3.

out that despite an obvious loss of absolute standards about good and evil and the absence of a general principle that proves torture and genocide wrong, this does not prevent one from taking them to be paradigmatic of evil.²⁶ In other words, it does not take reason too much effort to apply the concept of evil to 'Rwanda 94'. As a concept, evil is impossible to define and as a subject of academic inquiry it is a vast domain to venture in.²⁷ Therefore, although it seems very obvious to qualify 'Rwanda 1994' as evil, it is important to be precise about what sort of evil it is, considering the distinct conceptual space in which the events are located. In the absence of a definition of evil or a criterion that distinguishes evil acts from very bad acts, Neiman suggests that to describe the problem of evil, one might proceed by establishing the difference between evil and for instance crime against humanity, since they could be interchangeable. She suggests that a crime is something for which a society has procedures for punishing if not preventing. However, to call an action evil is to suggest that it cannot be ordered or domesticated.²⁸

One of the reasons why evil cannot be conceptually domesticated is its ability to shatter those very procedures supposed to order human experience. Writing after and about the Holocaust, Lyotard argued that Auschwitz operates like an earthquake that destroys not only lives and buildings but also instruments used to measure earthquake so that the devastation cannot be gauged.²⁹ 'Rwanda 94' was a three-month absurdity that claimed many lives, mainly within the Tutsi ethnic group. It stands out among other genocides of the twentieth century, not just because of the vertiginous speed of its execution and the sheer number of victims, but by the way in which it assaulted and pulverised every pillar that constituted the foundation of the Rwandan people.

The *Shoah* has been introduced –not so subtly, in this section, as paradigmatic genocide. This approach is not without risk since this work is not in the field of comparative genocide studies. Furthermore, Fein has cautioned against the unquestioning use of the *Shoah* as the apotheosis of and paradigmatic genocide.³⁰ However, considering the fact that the *Shoah* and the Rwandan genocide are 'two of the most terrifying and complex catastrophes of the

²⁶ Neiman, *Evil*, 9.

²⁷ On these difficulties, the most recent arguments are discussed in the Stephen de Wijze's soon to be published *Political Evil: Warping the moral landscape* (University of Manchester, 2013).

²⁸ Neiman, *Evil*, 8

²⁹ See sections 152-160 of *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1988), and "Apostil on Narratives" and "Missive on Universal History" in J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1992): 27-32 and 33-48, respectively.

³⁰ Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological perspective*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993).

20th century’³¹, comparisons are inevitable. In the words of Yehuda Bauer, ‘the only way to clarify the applicability of definitions and generalizations is with comparisons... When one discusses unprecedented elements in a social phenomenon, the immediate question is, unprecedented in comparison with what?’³²

Furthermore scholarly comparison with or reference to the Holocaust is inevitable because much of the analysis of the Rwandan genocide emerged from study of the Holocaust. Some students of ‘Rwanda 94’ such as Levene make a strong case for ‘connecting the threads’ between this tragedy and the *Shoah*.³³ Lemarchand, on the other hand, emphasises differences and particularities, arguing that the two events should be academically disconnected.³⁴ Eltringham also acknowledges the inevitability of comparing ‘Rwanda 94’ and the Holocaust.³⁵ However, he warns that such an approach must be distinguished from the political use of this comparison which may distort realities in contemporary Rwanda and, possibly, intensify division as in the case of the Havila Institute.³⁶

Therefore, reference to and comparison with the *Shoah* must be explicitly acknowledged. However, in this chapter such comparisons have the limited ambition to show that the sort of conceptual barrenness which occurred in its aftermath might help to understand the similar intellectual drought that followed the Rwandan genocide, especially from within Rwanda.

The sense of conceptual *aporia* surrounding ‘Rwandan 94’ stems from two (mis)conceptions of post-colonial Rwandan society, especially its image put forward by the Habyarimana regime since 1973.³⁷ On the one hand, Rwandans were represented as a peaceful and hardworking people, a homogeneous society where, despite the compulsory mention of ethnicity in identity cards, Hutu and Tutsi intermarried and lived in a symbiosis

³¹ Rene Lemarchand, “Disconnecting the Threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust Reconsidered”, in *Idea Journal*. Vol.7, No 1, 29 March 2002.

³² Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, p. 39; Quoted in Lemarchand, *Disconnecting*, 1.

³³ Mark Levene, “Connecting Threads: Rwanda, the Holocaust and the Pattern of Contemporary Genocide”, in Roger W. Smith ed., *Genocide: Essays Toward Understanding, Early-Warning and Prevention* (Williamsburg, Va.: 1999), 27-64.

³⁴ This is the argument of Lemarchand’s article mentioned above.

³⁵ Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror*, pp.51-68.

³⁶ See the article by Yochannan Bwejeri, *Havila and the Tutsi Hebrews* on the Institute’s website <http://www.kulanu.org/tutsi/havila.php>. Accessed 27.02.2013.

³⁷ Juvenal Habyarimana was president of Rwanda between 5 July 1973 to 6 April 1994 in the Second Republic. He came to power after a military coup which overthrew Gregoire Kayibanda. Habyarimana’s death in the missile-provoked plane crash is widely considered as the immediate trigger for the genocide of 1994.

made of shared culture, history and relentless economic progress. On the other hand, Rwandans were deeply religious people. The overall impression was that every Rwandan confessed allegiance to a religious community. Alongside political harmony and religious allegiance, Rwandans were reputed for a high social ethics based on friendship, hospitality and solidarity among others.

Clearly, experts on and students of Rwanda have shown that this image was more the projection of an ideal than reality; a construct of political ideology. It did not take much searching to discover cracks underneath the veneer of political rhetoric and religious ostentation. Moreover, it was possible to foresee that the longer the cracks were overlooked, the faster the country was heading towards trouble and tragedy. However, even for those blessed with foresight and realism, 'Rwanda 94' reached the dimensions of evil defying even the bleakest predictions and dismantled the very foundations of Rwandan political society.

4.4.2. Accounting for Evil in 'Rwanda 94'

In the presence of the kind of evil represented by 'Rwanda 94', the argument for silence is quite understandable. Long before some post-*Shoah* thinkers called for silence in the aftermath of the Nazi Holocaust, the prophet Amos had observed great acts of wickedness in the land and concluded that '*the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it [is] an evil time* (Amos 5:13). For his part, Ricoeur suggested that the greatest thinkers in both philosophy and theology are willing to admit that both these disciplines encounter evil as a challenge unlike any other. 'What is important', he says, 'is the way in which this challenge, or this failure, is received: do we find an invitation to think less about the problem or a provocation to think more, or to think differently about it?'³⁸

With respect to this invitation to think, Nieman argues that regardless of the sort of evil studied, be it natural or moral, there are two main standpoints; 'one from Rousseau to Arendt which insists that morality demands that we make evil intelligible and the other from Voltaire to Jean Améry which insists that morality demands that we don't.'³⁹ As an

³⁸ Ricoeur, "Evil", 635.

³⁹ Nieman, *Evil*, 8. Clearly, evil had been subjected to thought and discussion, at least from the time of Augustine and the Manichean controversy. Leibniz and Pope prior to the Lisbon Earthquake, Voltaire after the event to name but a few addressed the problem of evil in the form of theodicy. However, Nieman is right to suggest that 'Rousseau was the first to treat the problem of evil as a philosophical problem –as well as to offer the first thing approaching a solution to it.' p. 41.

attempt to explain ‘Rwanda 94’, this work follows the direction taken by the former line of thinkers whilst acknowledging the merits of the later. From a faith perspective, it follows in the footsteps of philosophers of faith like Ricoeur whose philosophy ‘was motivated by a Christian need to explain the origin of evil in the world.’⁴⁰

The pertinent two-pronged question here is why –and most importantly how one should undertake the effort to make radical evil like ‘Rwanda 94’ understandable? Is it not better to heed Nietzsche’s warning about looking into the abyss that looks back at you? It is quite impossible to face the Rwandan genocide without an instinct of repulsion that says ‘this should not have happened!’ ‘Evil’, Ricoeur says, ‘is what is and ought not to be, but we cannot say why it is.’⁴¹ As soon as one makes such a judgement, the next movement of reason is to find an explanation for the inconsistency between what *is* and what *ought to be*. The reason for such a demarche stems from the fact that ‘Rwanda 94’ created a world of absurdities, a Rwanda without meaning where the ability for understanding and action was threatened.

Classically, the task of explaining the origins of evil was understood to be in the exclusive competence of theology as it was presumed that the desire to understand evil responds to a religious impulse.⁴² However, Neiman has convincingly argued that the problem of evil is as hardly theological as it is moral.⁴³ Whether it is expressed in theological or secular terms, the problem of evil is fundamentally a problem about the intelligibility of the world as a whole and the demand that the world be intelligible is a demand of practical and theoretical reason.⁴⁴ Does such a position agree with work done by researchers from a faith perspective? If a philosopher of faith such as Ricoeur is a model to go by, then the answer

⁴⁰ Karl Simms, *Paul Ricoeur* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, « Le scandale du mal », in *Esprit*, n°140-141, 1988, p. 62.

⁴² In his *Letter to Voltaire, par.23*, where Rousseau discusses Pope’s system, he writes ‘... the question regarding evil is, without a doubt, derived from the question regarding providence. If both these questions have been dealt with equally unsatisfactorily, it is because Providence has always been reasoned about so poorly that the absurd things that have been said about it have greatly muddled all the corollaries that could be drawn from this great and consoling dogma.’ In Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *The Discourse and other early political writings*. Ed. Paul Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 240-241.

⁴³ Neiman, *Evil*, 5. Neiman posits that the task of understanding evil is ‘the point at which ethics and metaphysics, epistemology and aesthetics meet, collide and throw up their hands. At issues are questions about what the structure of the world must be like for us to think and act within it.’

⁴⁴ Neiman, *Evil*, 7. In fact, Neiman’s book argues that evil is the dominant theme that runs through the History of Philosophy as a whole.

is affirmative because as a consequence of religious faith, the researcher also has faith in the tradition of thinking and the language or discourse in which the thinking is expressed.⁴⁵

Therefore, making the Rwandan tragedy understandable is an imperative of critical and practical reason, whether it is prompted by secular inquiry or religious impulse. The practical reason seems clear enough: it is impossible to understand the dynamics of life or attempt any meaningful action in Rwandan post-genocide society without a clear understanding of the event of which this social reality is the consequence. The radical claim being made here is that the genocide of 1994 gave birth to the Rwandan society of its aftermath so completely that any foray of reason and praxis in the later requires an epistemic acquaintance with the former. After all, evil is not so much what one speculates about as what one struggles against.⁴⁶

These developments lead inevitably to the issue of the theoretical approach most appropriate for an explanatory discourse on evil. In this quest, one can end in anything from myth like the Fall to metaphysics like Hegel's phenomenology, suggests Neiman.⁴⁷ Others opt for Manichaeism, theodicy (religious and secular), silent revolt or systematic rationalization. Rousseau and Arendt favour a historical and naturalistic approach. Ricoeur takes the path of myth and symbol; a methodology which stands midway between silence and rationalisation. Some authors have taken the Manichean approach to explain the Rwandan tragedy and they have been rightly and comprehensively criticised by Lemarchand for simplifying a complex event.⁴⁸ The 'silent revolt' approach championed by the likes of Voltaire, Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov and Jean Améry presents a strong appeal on moral grounds. However, what is at stake is the very viability of post-genocide Rwandan society. Therefore, silence as response would be a suicidal option. This thesis, it has been said, prefers a historical and naturalistic approach enriched with Ricoeur's symbolism.

4.4.2.1. Argument against a theodicy

By problematizing the role of faith communities in the 'Rwanda 94', this thesis stops short of questioning the place of God in the calamity. It is an interesting hermeneutical debate whether it is possible to question the Body (church) without taking the Head (Christ) to the

⁴⁵ Simms, *Ricoeur*, 2.

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, *Le Scandal*, 60.

⁴⁷ Neiman, *Evil*, 5.

⁴⁸ Lemarchand, *State of Research*, 7ff.

task at the same time. Where was *Imana*? Why did *Imana* leave the land he ‘favoured’? How could *Imana* leave the innocent to die ignoble deaths? How could he let ‘Satan’ seduce the people to commit a monstrous betrayal? All these questions may call for a theodicy with respect to ‘Rwanda 94’. However, this thesis would find that approach unhelpful and some of the reasons for this are explained below.

The first problem of theodicy as a response to acts of evil like the Rwandan genocide is the perennial partiality leveled against it by different thinkers of different epochs. Thus after the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, thinkers like Leibniz⁴⁹ and Pope⁵⁰ who had offered theodicy as an explanation on the origin of evil came under attack. Voltaire called them ‘mistaken philosophers who shout that all is well’. He questioned the moral validity of a theodicy in the presence of the ruin of a whole city, of mutilated women who died in horrible agony with children in their bosoms.⁵¹ Although the poem deals with a natural disaster, the description of dead bodies strewn among ruins, rubble and destruction conjures up similar images to ‘Rwanda 94’.

According to Ricoeur, the inadequacy of rational theodicies is to be found in the propositional form in which the problem of evil is presented (God is all powerful, God is absolutely good; yet evil exists) along with the rule of coherence which any solution it presupposes must satisfy.⁵² In other words, logical coherence is challenged when ‘theodicians’ have to resolve the seemingly logical, or theological, contradiction between the last proposition and the previous two. In the pursuit of logical non-contradiction and systematic totalization in the presence of evil, theodicies fail to satisfy the norms of impartiality.

However, more than the reasons evoked above, the inadequacy of theodicy as an operative paradigm in the case of ‘Rwanda 94’ rests on two important aspects of pre-colonial Rwandan thought, namely the doctrine of *Imana* and the conception of moral evil. In this respect, the first chapter laid the foundations with its presentation of a doctrine of God which emphasizes the transcendence and the absolute goodness of *Imana*. In essence and

⁴⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origins of Evil*. EBook version produced by The Gutenberg Project, Commemtor Austin Ferrer. Trans. E.M. Huggard. November, 2005.

⁵⁰ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man and other poems* (London: John Sharpe, 1829).

⁵¹ Voltaire, *Poem on the Lisbon Disaster or an Examination of the Axiom ‘All is Well’*. Online access at http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=349&chapter=28298&layout=html&Itemid=27. Accessed 11 Apr. 12.

⁵² Ricoeur, *Evil*, 635.

action, *Imana* was beyond the categories of good and evil, hence Rwandans could not drag the divine into any theological, ethical or moral discourse on the origin of evil.⁵³

Intuitions on the origins of evil rested on something approaching the ‘Argument from Design’. *Imana* created Rwanda as a perfect and perfectly provided for place, suitable for life in all its dimensions. *Imana* would then have left to people the care and responsibility to make sure that this harmonious nature of life was maintained. Nothomb rightly argues that Rwandans did not have anything resembling a Decalogue. Institutions destined to create and maintain harmonious life, as well as the obligation to respect them, were part of the gifts of *Imana*, who made the Rwandan responsible for their happiness and their misfortune. This is why *Imana* could not be held responsible for evil because he was not the ‘legislator’ for Rwandans; on the other hand an act could not be considered as morally evil because it offended the deity.⁵⁴ It follows from this state of things that *Imana* could not unleash evil-punishment as a retribution for evil-sin; this being true even in the case of *umuziro* (see above 1.3.1. and 4.4.2.2. below).

As a conclusion, *Imana* could not be considered a source of evil and by the same token, Rwandans would have considered it an absurdity to put their deity on trial in the presence of a tragedy, be it natural or caused by human agency. Contrary to what Muzungu says, Rwandans did not consider the absence of *Imana* in the running of the society as a sign of aloofness or lack of interest in petty human affairs.⁵⁵ Rather, everyone interpreted the divine gifts in the most radical way: a perfect universe which did not need the constant intervention of the giver to run smoothly. Therefore, when things went wrong, and go wrong they did, the causes were to be sought among and determined by the stewards, by means and devices that were part of *Imana*’s gifts. Once the causes were determined, remedies, if applicable, were provided by those among the people gifted with that ability. If the calamity was the result of a wrong/sinful/evil act that had profoundly disturbed the natural order of things (in the case of the transgression of *umuziro* for instance) and subsequent punishment was immanent and inevitable, the blame was never on *Imana* but on the offending person.⁵⁶

⁵³ Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 115.

⁵⁴ Nothomb, *Conception*, 167.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Nothomb, *Conception*, 167.

⁵⁶ Human agency here includes the agency of Abazimu by virtue of the principle of the continuity of life between the living and the dead. Kagame calls this agency of a being-of-intelligence in *Philosophie*, 297-298.

Most Rwandans would have agreed with Neiman's gloss on Rousseau's thought that '...every sin contains its own penalty as natural consequences, every virtue its own reward. We are the author of our own suffering and could be the source of our happiness –not because God is keeping score and meting justice, but because he has so arranged the world that such justice is part of a natural order.'⁵⁷ In the light of oral literature and folk wisdom, ancient Rwandans seem to have had a more radical understanding of *Imana's* gifts, their freedom and the responsibility which is its pendant. Stewards of a perfect land, it was up to them to keep it that way or make it right when it had been affected by any kind of evil. This was an *Imana*-knowing anthropocentric society in all aspects of life; an aspect of the Rwandan society that persists to this day.

4.4.2.2. Morality and the nature of evil in Rwandan society.⁵⁸

To complete this argument against theodicy as a path to understanding 'Rwanda 94', it seems important to make a succinct presentation of the Rwandan traditional understanding of moral evil before Islamic and Christian influence. This presentation shows conclusively that the qualification of an act as morally good or evil depended on its 'social utility' rather than on metaphysical considerations. Such a conclusion and its criticism reinforce the claim made in this chapter that the aetiology of 'Rwanda 94' should be grounded in the historical development of the Rwandan society and its responsibility through successive generations.

To begin with, it is essential to point to Kagame's remark, that in Rwandan moral and ethical discourse there did not, and still does not, exist a substantive to translate the concepts of 'good' and 'evil', especially in relation to morality. Contrary to classical philosophy, in Rwandan thought 'good' and 'evil' are applied to concrete human acts or behaviours, either in adjectival or adverbial form.⁵⁹ In the adjectival form, 'good' and 'bad/evil' can express both the 'sensorial/sensual' and the moral whereas the adverbial form is exclusively concerned with moral categories. It is this last category that interests this section with regard to the study of evil.

⁵⁷ Neiman, *Evil*, 47.

⁵⁸ This section aims at a synthesis on the subject matter drawing upon the works of Kagame, Nothomb, Crépeau, and more recently, the critical reflection that Balibutsa realised on these three authors.

⁵⁹ Especially regarding 'evil', Kagame argues that the lack of an equivalent substantive derives from the conviction in Rwandan thought that there could not be an entity in which the transcendental property of being, namely goodness, would be so totally absent that it would be essentially evil. Given this metaphysical impossibility, it was natural for Rwandans to qualify only concrete acts. *Philosophie*, 382-383, 398-405.

There are three categories of ‘evil’ in Rwandan traditional thought: evil-proscription/(*umuziro*, *ikibi kizira*), evil-prohibition/unlawful act (*ikibi kibujijwe*) and evil-punishment/privation/pain/suffering (*icyago*). However, bearing in mind what has just been said about qualifying concrete acts and behaviours, Rwandans seemed to emphasize the two first categories as moral evils keeping the third category more ambiguous, as will be demonstrated later. In this sense, Rwandans understood ‘moral evil’-or sin in religious discourse, in the strictest sense suggested by Ricoeur as that which makes of a human act an object of imputation, accusation and blame.⁶⁰

The hierarchy of these categories of evil depended primordially on what Rwandans considered to be the ‘ultimate end’⁶¹ of a person; namely self-perpetuation through fecundity. As Nothomb states, whatever lives –the human in this instance, must produce an offspring equal to oneself.⁶² Kagame, Nothomb and Crépeau agree that in Rwandan traditional society, the worst curse or the most abominable evil-privation was to die without leaving an offspring, whether because of bareness or following an accidental event that would have wiped out one’s children.⁶³ Kagame adds that since in every philosophical system the greatest misfortune is to fail in fulfilling one’s ultimate end, the greatest evil for a Rwandan was to die without a descendant.⁶⁴ In this context of ‘extinction’, ‘extermination’ or ‘wiping out’, one begins to see the extent and the farreaching meaning of ‘Rwanda 94’.

a. Evil-Proscription (umuziro)

Umuziro covered an innumerable series of acts that were not only strictly forbidden but dreaded as well. Kagame refers to acts in this category as religious-mystic prohibitions.⁶⁵ Once performed, they provoked an immediate and infallible punitive sanction (sterility, illness, curse,...) for a person, that person’s lineage, family, or even a whole nation.

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Le Mal: un défi à la philosophie et la théologie* (Geneve : Labor et Fides, 2004), 22. He explains that, “l’imputation consiste à assigner à un sujet responsable une action susceptible d’appréciation morale. L’accusation caractérise l’action elle-même comme violation du code éthique dominant la communauté considérée. Le blâme désigne le jugement de condamnation en vertu duquel l’auteur de l’acte est déclaré coupable et mérite d’être puni. »

⁶¹ ‘*Fin Ultime*’ in French.

⁶² For Nothomb, fecundity was one of the eight values that characterised Rwandan culture. It was such a dominant note in Rwandan and African culture in general that it gives this culture the right to claim the title of an authentic humanism. in Balibutsa, *Archéologue*, 105-106.

⁶³ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 410-415 ; Nothomb, *Conception*, 168; Crépeau, *Paroles*, 152.

⁶⁴ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 410-411.

⁶⁵ Kagame, *Philosophie*. 391-392

Ignorance, knowledge, consent or lack of it had no bearing on the outcome of the transgression, namely setting off the immanent sanction. The cause and effect sequence could not be prevented, unless the culpable person scrupulously and satisfactorily performed the necessary rituals to reverse the effect. Even in this latter case, there was no absolute guarantee of escaping the sanction.⁶⁶

This concept bears a close resemblance to that of '*defilement*' used by Ricoeur as one of his 'symbolics of evil'. Defilement has always to be read symbolically as 'ethical dread', the dread of impurity or contamination. Yet this dread of the impure is not physical; it has already been sublimated, carrying with it the fear of losing something essential to one's being, and consequently the need to face a threat. With this need comes a demand for just punishment.⁶⁷ However, in echo to Rwandan tradition of '*kuzirura*' (lit. to reverse umuziro)⁶⁸, Simms rightly points out that for Ricoeur punishment does not only mean retribution; it implies removing the defilement and restoring the wronged party to a state of purity.⁶⁹

b. Evil-prohibition

This category refers to acts which were considered evil because they were declared unlawful (*ikibujijwe*) by a legitimate authority, social norms or customs underwriting natural law. All acts of evil/sin except *umuziro* fall into that category. As such they are as innumerable as the gamut of human activity and would be impossible to enumerate. Yet, Nothomb has attempted a categorisation of these acts. The typology that he suggested is far from being exhaustive, but it has the merit of providing an insight into this form of evil that involved the will, the conscience and hence the responsibility of the culprit.⁷⁰

**Igicumuro* (pl. *ibicumuro*) refers to any fault/wrong of a subaltern towards a superior. Closely related to this concept was that of *icyaha*; a term which has an extensive scope and refers to any wrong caused to another person. The Christian notion of 'sin' is generally translated as *icyaha* but is rendered as *igicumurio* when the sinful act has a vertical connotation of a breached relationship God-human.

⁶⁶ For mechanisms of reversing the consequences or '*kuzirura*'; see below in the section on moral responsibility.

⁶⁷ Ricoeur lists three symbols of evil: defilement, sin and guilt. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*. Trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Bacon, 1967), 47.

⁶⁸ This procedure was not always complex. Thus, if for instance one had stepped over a sleeping child (a *muziro*, because one condemns the child never to grow up, *kuzinga*), the reversing ritual consisted in stepping over the same child in the opposite direction and say '*ndakuzinguye*'; lit. 'I uncoil you!'

⁶⁹ Simms, *Ricoeur*, 22.

⁷⁰ Nothomb, *Conception*, 158-160.

**Guhemuka* is a deliberate act that disrupts a harmonious relationship with another person; especially a person who expected a better or positive outcome. It has a special emphasis on the breach of a contract or pact.

**Gutatira* and *kwanguha* both carry a sense of disloyalty, infidelity and betrayal. *Gutatira* carries a specific contractual connotation as in the breach of a contract/pact (for example breaching a blood pact). *Kwanguha* has a more intimate connotation and refers to an act/behaviour that caused profound and painful disappointment to a person for whom the betrayer was a lifeline or last hope.

**Kugoma*: *Kugoma* refers to an act of rebellion against the supreme legitimate authority. In ancient Rwanda, the greatest ‘sin’ was rebellion against *Umwami*. *Urugomo* refers to wanton violence, injustice or nastiness towards the poor, the weak and the powerless. The substantive *Ubugome* refers to the abstract (and metaphysical) wickedness and malevolence of the heart. *Umugome* is the quintessential wicked and evil person.⁷¹ According to Maniragaba, two categories of crime professionals fitted best in this category: *abarozi* (poisoners) and *abahotozi* (assassins).⁷²

c. Evil-punishment/suffering/privation

As briefly alluded to, Rwandans did not seem to give a moral dimension to evil manifested as suffering, privation or sanction. In this sense, they avoided what Ricoeur calls the ‘enigma of evil’ in Judeo-Christian Western thought which puts under the same term, concepts as disparate as sin, suffering and death or in other words blame and lament.⁷³ As for evil in general, this particular category did not have a generic definition; *icyago/ibyago* is the closest to a generic meaning. Evil as privation/pain could affect a person directly, their family or their material possession. However if the privation caused was a privation of ultimate end, then that form of evil was called *ubucike* or extinction.⁷⁴

Ricoeur helpfully points to the fact that in wisdom literature, every suffering was deserved because it was considered as a result of a sin, personal or collective; known or unknown. It was a retribution; a situation similar to the suffering resulting from *imiziro*, although Rwandans believed that other forms of suffering could result from other agencies,

⁷¹ According to Nothomb, this is the most profound dimension of moral evil, *Conception*, 159.

⁷² Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 82, 87-88.

⁷³ Paul Ricoeur, *Le Mal: un défi à la philosophie et la théologie* (Geneve : Labor et Fides, 2004), 21.

⁷⁴ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 410-411.

especially *abarozi* or *abazimu*. However, in wisdom literature, the sufferer had the option of voicing their pain in form of lament addressed to God.⁷⁵ In that way, suffering as the opposite pole to evil was validated. Yet, this was generally impossible in Rwanda because there was no covenant with the people and *Imana*, thus there was no possibility of a dispute.

In summary, pain/lament as the opposite pole of moral evil/sin was not very developed in Rwandan thought. If suffering was deserved, lament was a waste of time and pain or *poena* had to be endured stoically. If it was the result of an aggressive agent and thus undeserved, the reaction was not lament but pragmatic counteractive measures which could take the form of a consultation of *umupfumu* or retaliatory vendetta, *guhora*. There did not seem to be room for the lament of the victim affected by suffering that could not be avenged or countered. However, this situation does not seem to have been the primordial norm. Myths and folk wisdom show time and again people lamenting their *fatum* and in last resort, taking their case to the very court of *Imana*.⁷⁶ Therefore, the stifling of lament and victimhood was itself the manifestation of evil in the development of Rwandan political society; its cumulative force culminating among others in the calamity of 1994.

This detour in Rwandan traditional morality is important within the context of this work for at least two more reasons. First, it can be safely argued that all these categories of ‘evil’, including *umuziro*, were substantiated in all the acts constitutive of the genocide. Secondly, and most importantly, these categories are actually better suited to qualify the different ‘act-ual forms’ that genocide took more than the different aspects of ‘crime’ and ‘délit’ provided by the existing codes of Rwandan criminal law. Finally, they are more likely to fit within local understanding in terms of accepting moral responsibility/failure, pursuing justice and assessing the possibilities for reconciliation; all of which are key aspects of the restorative justice pursued by the post-genocide government (see chapter eight below).

4.4.2.3. Rwandan society and a ‘conscience-free morality’⁷⁷

To what extent did Rwandans feel ‘morally obliged’⁷⁸ to respect the proscriptions and prohibitions presented above? It was only the category of *umuziro* that appealed to the

⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Le mal*, 30.

⁷⁶ The myth of *ibimanuka* (appendix), as part of the myths of origins is a good example of this. It puts in play a woman affected by sterility and taking her case to *Imana* who provided a ‘solution’.

⁷⁷ ‘*Moralité sans conscience*’ in the French original text.

conscience.⁷⁹ Yet, this kind of ‘obligation in conscience’ is not easy to define given the fact that one could transgress *umuziro* unknowingly, involuntarily and unconsciously.

Therefore, Balibutsa is right to question the possibility of moral obligation and responsibility in the presence of so many prohibited acts, the lack of intention and will combined with automatic and immanent sanction.⁸⁰ The enigma of *umuziro* thus resided in the fact that an unconscious fault was considered as the worst of moral evils.

Moral obligation and responsibility were more intricate in the case of non-forbidden unlawful acts. It is at this point that students of traditional morality and ethics are perplexed. It is also an important aspect that anybody interested in the archaeology and aetiology ‘Rwanda 1994’ has to wrestle with. That an act is illegal, unlawful or prohibited does not automatically entails that all the members of a given community will abstain from such reprehensible acts. Were this the case, disciplines like criminology, criminal law and forensic sciences would be irrelevant. A prohibition is always an implicit recognition of and an invitation to transgress, which is why in the modern polis the matter has long moved from the field of morality and ethics to that of law.⁸¹ A person is morally condemnable only when the said person has been proved guilty by a court of law. Whether citizens abstain from unlawful acts for fear of punishment or out of moral rectitude is an open debate for moral philosophers, legal theorists and criminologists.

Kagame, Nothomb and Crépeau came to similar conclusions with regard to morality and prohibited acts. All three scholars agree that in traditional Rwandan society, morality took the form of a ‘conscience-free morality’. Unlawful acts such as theft, murder, rape or lies did not constitute evil *qua* evil and did not generate a sentiment of culpability or remorse in the perpetrator’s conscience. They were not avoided because they were adjudged to be intrinsically evil but only because they could be harmful for the person who commits them, in the eventuality of their being connected to the act. In Kantian discourse, one could say that there was no categorical imperative attached to the non-commission of these acts; only fear of ulterior trouble acted as a moral deterrent.

⁷⁸ This is a literal translation of the French ‘*obligé en conscience*’ which does not seem to have a direct equivalent in English.

⁷⁹ Kagame, *Philosophie*, 400-405.

⁸⁰ Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 100.

⁸¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in fragments. Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford-UK&Cambridge-USA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995),10-43.

To understand their conclusions, it seems useful to use as a guide a maxim in which all three scholars grounded the justification of their argument: *Ufashwe niwe gisambo*, lit. the one that is apprehended is *the* thief, or in legal and forensic discourse, a person was innocent until proved guilty of being a thief. The ‘skewed’ moral of this maxim rested on certain propositions.

First of all, a person was ‘not morally obliged’ not to commit a prohibited act. It was up to the competent authorities to ensure that the perpetrator of an unlawful act was duly punished. Punishment could only be exacted when and if the person was found guilty by any means necessary, including magic and divination procedures. However, and this was the next proposition, this did not mean that the person was actually a culprit but that they were found guilty. In this way of thinking, being apprehended and found to be the thief and being the actual thief was not the same thing. Ironically, the fault and consequently moral blame was attached to the former rather than the later. What was evil was not to commit an act but to be apprehended and convicted.

It follows that not to be a thief was synonymous of not to be called a thief. Morally and legally; it was up to the authority to make sure that responsibility was ascribed and punishment exacted. The obligation of the perpetrator was to avoid being caught and if caught to fight off conviction because in the eventuality of a conviction, the consequences could be calamitous for the concerned person or their family. Being a canny and smart ‘*igisambo*’ was more morally praiseworthy than being innocent but ending up in the gallows.

Therefore, if most people chose not to ‘be the thief’, it was not out of a high sense of morality but following a careful consideration of interests and a meticulous calculation and weighing of pros and cons; taking into account all the circumstances surrounding not only the act but the moral judgement which would follow it.⁸² The essence of evil was not in the act itself but in its punishable consequences and the basis of morality was fear of punishment and subsequent fallouts in terms of privation and or social shame. This leads Maquet to conclude that Rwandan moral culture was more a ‘shame’ culture than a ‘guilt’ culture.⁸³

⁸² Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 118.

⁸³ J J Maquet, “The kingdom of Rwanda”, in *African Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1963), 184.

Ultimately, Kagame, Crépeau and Nothomb concluded that the overriding criterion for morality was the ‘social utility’ or *akamaro* of an act or an abstention. This utility was considered with regard to the ‘ultimate end’ of a Rwandan person; namely continuous being through fecundity and a harmonious life of the community manifested by prosperity, strength and cohesion. Evil was that which hindered the prolongation of the individual/group and the birth of new members in it. It was any act or omission that weakened, divided, impoverished and humiliated the group as well as anything that provoked punishments and the anger of law enforcers of every kind or hatred and revenge from another powerful group. Conversely, what was good, praiseworthy and dignified; was everything and anything that protected, reassured, fortified and restored the wellbeing of the individual and the group.⁸⁴

4.4.3. *Archaeology of evil: structural violence, inequality and moral erosion.*

How does this ‘conscience-free morality’ relate to ‘Rwanda 94’? Also, how does one explain the contradictions this form of diluted morality and the high morality of *ubupfura* traditionally associated with Rwandan society? Balibutsa suggests that to account for the evil of ‘Rwanda 94’ is to follow the path back to the archaeology of individual and structural violence in Rwandan society to which he associates the kind of diluted morality sketched above. Balibutsa argues that the latter is a syndrome of the former in a Rwandan political society that had progressively grown into an aggressive society. Such a society must have had, at least partially, a morality charged with this aggressiveness and latent violence. Only this can explain the obvious contradiction between the high morality of *ubupfura* and the conscience-free morality described above.⁸⁵

Where Balibutsa sees violence and aggressiveness, Maquet sees inequality as an explanation for the degradation of morality. As he points out, the structure of Rwandan traditional society as a hierarchical society was founded on the ‘principle of inequality’ in which dissimulation was the condition for survival. Putting this dissimulation in the context of moral degeneration and applying it to the use of language and discourse, Maquet suggests that in such a society, truth could not be recognised as a dominant value. One used language not to say what was thought but to conform to the ruler’s opinion. On the other hand, rulers did not expect the truth but the expression of submission and the verbal

⁸⁴ Nothomb, *Conception*, 169.

⁸⁵ Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 120.

behaviour towards a superior expressed dependence, not truth.⁸⁶ How could a society descend so low in its moral code?

To account for the apparent contradiction between the two aspects or stages of Rwandan morality is by the same token an attempt to chart the progressive degeneration of individual and social morality. This degeneration is understood as the gradual emergence of political 'iniquity' manifested through individual and structural violence, socio-political inequality and unvoiced/unvoice-able laments of many generations of victims. The rise of a centralised, hierarchical and aggressive state corresponded to a decline in genuine morality and made room for shallower, more superficial rapports in the public and private arena. In other words, as morality degenerated in the political community, evil increased.

This presentation of the aetiology of evil in Rwanda takes a historical, naturalistic, and anthropocentric approach because Rwandans considered moral evil as the affair of humans. They were its cause, its solution and its victims. They were also the beneficiaries of the good. A study of evil in Rwanda that culminated into the genocide has to take into account the core anthropocentrism of this culture in order to apportion responsibility and give full voice to lament but also, as befits appreciative inquiry, find venues for hope in the aftermath. Arguments made from this approach make sense for different generations of Rwandans. In general, Rwandans would have agreed with Rousseau that there is a 'natural' connection between transgression and suffering and this connection required no intervention from God to be direct as much as the transgression did not require a nudge from some supernatural forces.⁸⁷ The importance of this demarche is that it makes Rwandans responsible without damning them.

Rousseau's reflection on human civilization in general⁸⁸ can be used as a paradigm for the emergence and increase of political evil in Rwandan political society to show that a conceptualization of the 1994 calamity is possible in a scientific inquiry. The archaeological and historical approach taken by this thesis therefore is fully vindicated, not because it provides a major new historical insight but because it problematises and questions the moral and ethical dimension of the political processes that marked the

⁸⁶ Maquet's premise of inequality rests on eight theorems, see *Premise*, 163-170.

⁸⁷ Rousseau, *Inequality*, 199.

⁸⁸ It is interesting that Rousseau's seminal treatment of evil in the *Second Discourse* occurs when he deals with the origins of inequality among men. Even though Maquet does not make reference to Rousseau, one wonders if his 'Premises of Inequality' were not influenced by the latter's work.

emergence of the Rwandan state. In his account on the emergence of evil in human society through the process of civilization, Rousseau suggested some of the key stages such as sexual desire, the discovery of iron and wheat, the division of labour and the private ownership of land.⁸⁹ Yet, as Neiman points out, no one moment was decisive; rather Rousseau intended to show that once certain processes began, the move to the next stage of civilisation –and misery, is almost, but not quite, inevitable.⁹⁰

A parallel can be drawn between these situations and the concomitant rise of political state in Rwanda, the dwindling of morality and the structuralisation of evil. Vansina, Lemarchand, De Heusch, Kagame and others who have dedicated their research to the emergence of the Nyiginya kingdom (see chapter one), describe a process of expansion through annexing and conquest. Some wrote about this history of state formation with the enthusiasm of a nationalist⁹¹, others like Vansina wrote with the sobriety of a historian. From the content of their works one can safely assert that any argument about pre-Nyiginya⁹² kingdoms that dotted what came to be the centralised kingdom of Rwanda is a matter of guessing and hypothesising; so scarce is any kind of data about those societies.⁹³

Were these communities more egalitarian? Were they more moral? Was the ideal of *Ubupfura* already present or did it develop later? Regarding the first point, it is more than probable that these ‘pre-Rwanda’ societies were not egalitarian since the institution of *Ubwami* was borrowed by the Nyiginya from them. However one can assume, based on the information available, that relationships were more direct between individuals and families because community dynamics were less complex and politics were somewhat basic. Therefore, at a political level, hierarchies would have been minimal and subsequently inequality would have been less felt and less visible. It is more difficult to evaluate the moral code of *Ubupfura*. However, since the language of *Kinyarwanda* was another institution borrowed from those local kingdoms, it can be assumed that it was an already

⁸⁹ Rousseau, *Inequality*, from paragraphs 15 to 35, pp.164-174.

⁹⁰ Neiman, *Evil*, 47.

⁹¹ Kagame’s *Inganji Kalinga* falls especially in this category. Vansina levelled against him the accusation of forgetting the basic responsibility of a historian, namely curbing one’s enthusiasm.

⁹² Note that the continuity of the Nyiginya dynasty over nine centuries defended by Kagame is ably challenged both by Vansina and De Heusch; the latter two having the double merit of being critical towards Rwandan oral sources and incorporating the history of Rwanda in the wider context of the Great Lakes region.

⁹³ The name of ‘Hutu kingdoms’ that De Heusch applies to these small entities seems inappropriate as the concept ‘Hutu’ was a late creation, a retrospective application deformed by a politicization of certain social dynamics.

existing ideal. The lack of wars of annexation would have tremendously reduced the levels of aggressiveness and violence. If violence existed, as indeed it must have as in any human society, it would have been localised and less bloody.⁹⁴

Even the arrival of the pastoral populations who later started the Nyiginya rule on the country was not immediately followed by war and conquests. Most reliable historical sources report peaceful early contacts and harmonious relations with local people, based essentially on commercial exchanges.⁹⁵ If one follows De Heusch, it would appear that war and violence did not erupt between previous occupiers and the newcomers but between rival groups and lineages in the later group. In other words, these 'Nilotic' groups, to borrow from De Heusch, would have brought with them old conflicts that had started much earlier beyond the northern and eastern borders of Rwanda.⁹⁶ In fact, it is not until the 'Great Expansion' under the third dynasty that violent annexations of and direct conflicts with 'Hutu' kingdoms intensified and were completed under the reign of terror of Rwabugiri, the real founder of the centralised Rwandan kingdom.⁹⁷

Therefore, state building started and finished in violence. However, arguably the most terrifying aspect of increasing political evil that historiography reveals is the disappearing of the common people from the political scene. History becomes dominated by wars, victories and defeats, kings and dynasties. Almost nothing is said about the people who were caught up in these wars, the little kingdoms that were dismantled, the local monarchs whose genitals came to ornate royal drums and more generally the lives that were destroyed. In this respect, the silencing of the subjects of history is a syndrome of violence. Outside this violent political process, everything else began to appear lifeless, bloodless, meaningless and unreal, to use Arendt's words.⁹⁸

Progressively, evil had been engraved in the very structural fabric of Rwandan society in the form of violence and inequality. Two types of radically different violence characterised

⁹⁴ In fact, building on the myths of origins as developed later by the *abacurabwenge* of the Nyiginya dynasty or even older narratives, one gets the impression that these societies were essentially farming communities and rather peaceful. Cfr. for e.g the story of Kabaja, the local suzerain who, as the myth has it, welcomed peacefully Kigwa, Mututsi and Nyampundu, the ancestors of *Abanyiginya*.

⁹⁵ De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 90.

⁹⁶ See De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 95-140 ; Vansina, *Antecedents*, 51ff. In fact, both authors argue that the impetus towards militarization and conquest was a direct influence of devastating attacks from northern kingdoms such as the *Bunyoro*.

⁹⁷ Mid-18th century to mid-19th century following the chronology of Vansina. See De Heusch, *Interlacustre*, 129.

⁹⁸ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, viii.

the historical passage of Rwanda from a clan-based society to a caste society, namely military violence through plundering and annexation and the more latent socio-economic violence symbolised by *Ubugake*. The former transformed Rwandan society into a 'destructive society'.⁹⁹ It is impossible to read the military auto-panegyric poetry "*ibivugaga*" without being shocked by how killing is glorified, and how gruesome, sadistic and graphic some mutilations were described. Balibutsa points out that killing a whole race or a country could be envisaged in a positive light.¹⁰⁰ Evil and violence had become glamorous and aestheticized; a 'puerile and dangerous' situation, Arendt rightly notes albeit with reference to a different context.¹⁰¹ Death became the most expedient means to conquering political power and, 'as in insult to order and a shock to reason, the honour of spilling human blood came to rank among the highest virtues.'¹⁰² Bravery, *ubutwari*, was measured by the number of people one had killed in battle or the number of the enemy's genital organs decorating one's shield or spear.¹⁰³

Socio-economic violence enshrined in the perversion of contractual relationships *Ubugake* was certainly the most damaging form of evil. It regulated day-to-day social rapports in a vertical and hierarchical order which justifies Maquet's premise of inequality. At the top of the axis of inequality was *shebuka*/lord/master and at the bottom pole was the *Umugaragu*/servant/slave. Every Rwandan, except *umwami*, was *umugaragu* of a *Shebuka*, even the princes and the great chiefs. Furthermore, everything *umugaragu* owned including their person belonged to *Shebuka*.

Socially, *ubugake* engendered a steep pyramidal society, unequal and iniquitous.

Economically, it created a handful of 'have-it-alls' and a mass of 'have-nothing-at-alls'. It

⁹⁹ According to Balibutsa, the Rwandan state then possessed the seven characteristics that anthropologists attribute to a destructive society: 1) a strong dose of destructivity and aggressiveness among different social groups and towards other tribes, 2) delight and pleasure in warmongering, 3) a generalized atmosphere of fear, hostility and tension, 4) high level of competitiveness (agonal spirit), 5) rigid hierarchies, 6) many military campaigns or war enterprises, 7) the system is fundamentally cruel and destructive, i.e, sadistic and necrophile. *Archéologie*, 143.

¹⁰⁰ Balibutsa is, in the opinion of this research, the only scholar who has provided something approaching a synthetic study of 'violence' in Rwandan society, culture and ethics. For instance, he dedicates six chapters to the study of latent, structural and direct violence in politics, culture and ethics of traditional Rwandan society. See especially *Archéologie*, 55-153.

¹⁰¹ This is the reason why Arendt called evil 'banal'. In her correspondence with Gershom Scholem, Arendt herself calls evil a 'fungus' without depth or demonic dimension. See Neiman, *Evil*, 302.

¹⁰² 'The most honest men learned to count it as one of their duties to slay their kind; in time men were seen to massacre one another by the thousands without knowing why.' Rousseau, *Discourse*, II:34, p174.

¹⁰³ « *Umudende* » and « *Kuvuna Uruti* » were some of the honours given to a person who had killed respectively seven and fourteen people. Rwandan warriors were particularly fond of genital mutilation of their fallen enemies, a practice known as *gushahura*.

is possible that ethnicity in its psychological and political dimensions emerged around this time due to the system of *Ubahake*.¹⁰⁴ Progressively, the term 'Hutu', which was routinely given to beaten enemy kings was applied to the mass of *abagaragu* and 'Tutsi' was applied to the *shebuja*. As the gap between these two groups widened, rapports became more strained; an inevitable outcome of the passage from clans to castes. When finally colonial intervention froze them into political binaries, the gap became an abyss out of which all sorts of political nightmares have crept; the genocide of 1994 being the worst.

It is also the inequity of *Ubuhake* combined with the absolutism of monarchy that led to the perversion and depreciation of morality in the form of an ethic of survival rather than an ethic of duty. Appearances became more important than reality since almost everyone had lost their freedom and almost everybody lived in fear of losing their life. This precarious life was not encouraging for morality, since virtue was not always rewarded and evil punished. Vertical relationships became almost 'surreal', marked with formalism and a sense of 'legalism'. Most of the oppressed *abagaragu* developed a mentality of the 'bare minimum' and a morality of what one could get away with.¹⁰⁵ This is where the historical increase of evil rejoins the superficial morality advocated above. As evil begets evil physical; political and socio-economic violence led to a subversive perverse morality of survival. Thus, through clear and contingent historical process, violence (structural and individual) and low morality became two dominant features of Rwandan society as if one evil had to cancel out another.

Colonization and Christianity introduced more forms of violence in Rwanda and exacerbated a situation which had already reached breaking point. Both supported the premise of inequality and its latent violence without challenging a low morality that had become the norm at the expense of a higher humanist morality and religion of which they could see the vestiges. Here is where evil in Rwanda appears in its most contingent dimension. Missionaries and colonial agents could have acted differently in many ways but they chose the side of power and oppression. They ignored the weak and the victims. Furthermore, they provided ammunitions to both groups to harm each other better, as if it

¹⁰⁴ Vansina's attempt to situate the emergence of the 'hutu' and 'tutsi' around military campaigns seems tentative at best. See Vansina, *Antecedents*, 134-140. For an accessible and succinct history of 'ethnicity' in Rwandan society, see David Newbury, 'Understanding Genocide', in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Apr., 1998, 73-97.

¹⁰⁵ Hence the subvertive maxim that *Akazi k'i bwami kica utagakoze* meaning that *umugaragu* could avoid death by just being at the master's palace even without doing any actual work.

were true that *Uwo usanze asenya urwe umutiza umuhoro* (Lit. if you come across someone destroying their own house, you lend them a machete so that they can get the job done faster and better).

At least this situation has the merit of making Rwandans responsible for their own miseries, contrary to what has become a convenient trend in post-genocide discourse, namely blaming colonisation for all the ills of Rwandan society. However, historical data and records suggest that from the time of Rwandan kings to the last days of the Second Republic in April 1994, Rwandans have used every available opportunity to increase alienation from one another and affliction among themselves. 'Rwanda 94' is the culmination of this historical descent in reciprocal affliction that the next section qualifies as 'autocide'.

4.5. Genocide as 'Autocide': A diachronic approach to 'Rwanda 94'.

Most scholars who have dealt with the aetiology of 'Rwanda 94' have used the same historical data and related it to similar political developments used in this work. However, they have stopped short of offering a moral critique of these processes for what they were: sinful and evil practices which confiscated freedom, caused suffering, institutionalised inequality and structural violence, engendered bitterness, suspicion and dissimulation, stifled individual morality and compromised a higher original morality and ethics; creating not so much sub-citizens as sub-humans and potential mass murderers.

A methodological error that is made about genocide and politicide is that instances of violence become relevant or alert the scholar when there are great numbers of people killed in atrocious conditions. This synchronic approach isolates instances of evil that offer a more unified picture from a diachronic perspective. Yet, it has to be repeated that even though the causes and origins of political evil in Rwandan society can be explained in a way that satisfies reason, it does not follow that the evil of genocide can be excused, justified or even fully comprehended. The importance of this approach is that it helps to cast victims and perpetrators in their humanity, equally seduced and overwhelmed by evil in its sinful and suffering connotations.¹⁰⁶

To sustain this line of argument is to claim that the kind of political evil that occurred in 1994 as a particular aspect of moral evil was not a parachuted phenomenon; it was the

¹⁰⁶ On perpetrators as victims of evil see Ricoeur, *Le mal*, 24-26.

result of historical processes and consequently can be undone by others.¹⁰⁷ This emphasis on history is meant to show that ‘Rwanda 94’ arose through a process of transgressing and suffering that was thoroughly understandable but contingent.¹⁰⁸ It certainly constitutes the most ‘shocking’ stage but it is by no means isolated or inexplicable. It casts previous and subsequent violence in its shadow; paling them and somewhat emptying them of any substantial meaning.

This process of demystification and explication is not always easy, forthcoming or eagerly undertaken. There is a certain apprehension that if other events are recognised as sharing the continuum of evil and evildoing, the genocidal events of 1994 would lose their specific nature, thus denying its very happening.¹⁰⁹ However, one could argue that it is rather the opposite, i.e the denial of previous or subsequent instances of (mass) violence that tend to undermine it.¹¹⁰

The critique of political history attempted above shows that Hutu and Tutsi participated in the historical processes of violence production as they both alternated in power positions. However, without collapsing the categories of victims and perpetrators, it is imperative to particularize every historical moment of violence in order to recognise variations in intensity and responsibility. In this way, it becomes possible to apportion blame and validate lament, to give a voice to every victim as well as giving to every perpetrator the opportunity to take responsibility.

The aggregate sum of these moments of evil helps to see ‘Rwanda 94’ not as an isolated event but as a particularly qualifiable moment in a continuous movement of ‘*autocide*’ or self-destruction of varying intensity and cyclical occurrence. The emerging picture is one of sustained cutting down of members of the Rwandan *genos* by other members of the same *genos*. It is when every moment of violation of *Bunyarwanda* humanity is represented, that the atrocity of 1994 comes in full focus and absoluteness. In 1994 one part of the *Banyarwanda genos* took violence to levels of evil never equalled before.

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau has made the same observation in *Discourse 2* and Neiman suggests that this position makes his work a long witness to Providence, better than any rational theodicy could have managed. See Neiman, *Evil*, 45.

¹⁰⁸ Neiman, *Evil*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ This apprehension is arguably the reason behind recent legislations on the ideology of genocide and genocide denial that have been developed in Rwanda, such as the Genocide Ideology Laws.

¹¹⁰ Hence the emergence of the ‘Double Genocide’ theory purported by some factions of Rwandans in exile and supported especially in Continental scholarship or simply the categorical denial of ‘genocide’. See among others Ndagijimana J M V, *Paul Kagame a sacrifié les Tutsi* (Paris: La Pagaie, 2009).

‘Autocide’ is not a concept that one comes across frequently in political or philosophical discourse on evil. In fact, of the three definitions of the concept in use, only one relates to human violence.¹¹¹ Surprisingly, it is the definition offered by bacteriology which comes close to an understanding of ‘Rwanda 94’. Autocide is a substance produced by a bacterium that is fatal to that bacterium or a chemical created by bacteria that is toxic only to other bacteria of the same species. By analogy, one can say that the violence produced by successive Rwandan generations has been particularly fatal to the Rwandan ‘species’.

Understanding the Rwandan tragedy of 1994 as ‘autocide’ is a better way to problematize the artificial construction of ethnicities and the alienating myths underpinning these constructs. Here, ‘alienating’ is understood in its etymological sense of artificially creating an ‘Other’ as the enemy.¹¹² Folk wisdom understood as the voice from below has always claimed that all the three social groups in Rwanda have the same ‘genitor’ and share the same destiny. It is easy or acceptable to oppress and enslave a ‘Hutu’ as the inferior ‘Other’. Similarly, it becomes acceptable to eliminate the ‘Tutsi’ as the alien/invader/enemy ‘Other’. However, if the ‘Other’ is revealed as sharing the same destiny as the ‘Self’, any violence done to them becomes self-affliction or *kwikora mu nda* in Rwandan thought. (Literally this means ‘to reach down into one’s gut’ and has the meaning of killing one’s own).

In their history of self-affliction, Rwandans have been like Jacobs and Esau trying to run away from each other. Unfortunately distance-alienation was somewhat put in check by geo-physical boundaries. Yet, even for those who went into exile, Rwanda always remained the ‘home’ of every *Munyarwanda*, or as Arendt puts it, the ‘normal’ where they could return without having to answer questions; the place where they know their way about.¹¹³ Rwanda as conceptual ‘home’ for the longings and destiny of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa makes the three groups truly one people. For this reason, Newbury is right to argue that in the study of ‘Rwanda 94’, two immediate contexts have to be accounted for: the war with the

¹¹¹ Definitions of the concept in usage are: a) an act of suicide by crashing a car, b) control of a pest through propagation of sterile males, c) a substance produced by a bacterium that is fatal to that bacterium. One obsolete definition is a suicidal person.

¹¹² David Newbury has brilliantly demonstrated that ethnicity was not primordial in Rwanda. He argues that ethnicity was one of several forms of social identity and relations among ethnic groups were not confrontational, although ethnicity could be called upon to sharpen a conflict as race and religion in other places. It is only from 1920s that ethnicity became a factor of oppression and the main feature in social and political identity. See Newbury, *understanding*, 86ff.

¹¹³ Arendt quoted in Neimann, *Evil*, 304.

RPF in the north (as Rwandans trying to come back ‘home’) and the ‘practice’ of genocide within Rwanda (as an extreme case of internal alienation between Rwandans of the inside).¹¹⁴ Better than genocide or even *Itsembabwoko*, ‘autocide’ helps to account for both these movements of self-affliction.

More concretely, the identities of the victims and the perpetrators vindicate the concept of ‘autocide’ or *Kwikora mu nda* in 1994. With the exception of big cities like Kigali and Butare or major town centres where killings were conducted mainly by militia and soldiers, the majority of killings were local and intimate.¹¹⁵ The two groups were in most cases neighbours, blood relatives or relatives by marriage. Lyons and Straus captured in words and images the sense of confusion, betrayal, *aporia*, shame, guilt and loss of people who knew that they had betrayed their own.¹¹⁶

It is this intimate aspect that makes the Rwandan tragedy a peculiar instance of what is commonly called genocide. Yet, when genocide takes the form of a fratricide, parricide, and infanticide, is one really still in the presence of genocide in the classic sense or is a more appropriate concept required? ‘Autocide’ certainly goes a long way to account for the genesis of self-destructive evil and the absurd intimacy of the atrocities. As argued above, the traditional concept of evil as *imiziro* and *ibyaha* find their full meaning here.

Finally, arguing from a religious perspective renders decisive force to the concept of ‘autocide.’ One of the most fundamental and radical pillars of the Christian theology and faith is that belief in Christ makes all believers children of the same Father, brothers and sisters in Christ; members of one body. Vertically, horizontally and within the confines of Christian ‘genetics’; believers are bound in a unity of body and blood which is by essence superior to any pre-existing ties and solidarity. Thus, spilling the blood of a Christian by another Christian is self-destructive, self-mutilating and self-dismembering. Talking of ‘genocide’ within the Rwandan Christian community amounts to watering down this intertwined relationship to the extreme. Pushed even deeper, the reasoning is a simple antithesis to Christianity. Later on, it will be shown that Muslims did not even see it as a possibility for one Muslim to kill another. The death penalty reserved for any Muslim

¹¹⁴ Newbury, *Understanding*, 78. The notes in parenthesis are mine.

¹¹⁵ Scott Strauss, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp.41-64.

¹¹⁶ In this respect, the work of Straus and Lyons is truly helpful as a new way of representing ‘Rwanda 1994’ by highlighting the ‘intimacy’ between victims and perpetrators.

guilty of such a crime is recognition that it is impossible to take a life of a fellow believer without fatally forfeiting one's own.

4.6. Concluding observations: Contingency and responsibility in 'Rwanda 94'.

A diachronic approach to the Rwandan tragedy allows a better understanding of its origins and its 'autocidal' nature. More importantly, it vindicates the lament of all victims as members of the *Banyarwanda* *genos* for whom the flow of life was cut short by members of their own. It is at this juncture that the case of Tutsi victims of 'Rwanda 94' comes into focus. It has been argued conclusively that members of this group contributed significantly to the emergence of the kind of political evil that led to the tragedy of 1994. Does it then follow from this, that the evil-suffering that befell them can be interpreted as a deserved '*peine*' in Ricoeurian's sense of *poena*-retribution?¹¹⁷

Scholars such as Newbury and Lemarchand have critically explained the retributive aspects of 'Rwand 94'. The historical role of Tutsi aristocracy combined with the invasion of the RPF would have provoked the Hutu to plan and execute a 'final solution' so that they would not be enslaved and subjugated by the former once again.¹¹⁸ Ricoeur has also drawn the attention to the tendency of survivors and victims to enter into the cruel game of the expiatory victim.¹¹⁹ It would be cruel for the victims to self-inflict blame. *A fortiori* it would be immoral for anyone, least of all the perpetrators, to make the victims responsible of their suffering. Neither *Imana* of Rwanda nor the Christian God can be the source of this retribution. Furthermore, even Rwandan culture tolerated retaliatory justice, *guhora*, not pre-emptive murderous rampage.¹²⁰ If solidarity among Tutsi victims on ethnic lines could not find its place in the divine, it was similarly denied to the perpetrators. Ethnicity's ancestry did not run deep in Rwandan society and any solidarity attached to it was simply an ideological artifice.

Responsibility for the suffering of Tutsi victims therefore rests squarely on the shoulders of those among the Hutu who transgressed proscriptions and prohibitions to molest and

¹¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Mal*, 25-26. In this sense, suffering, any suffering, is reputed deserved as retribution of an individual or collective fault/sin; known or unknown.

¹¹⁸ This attack caused massive exodus from north and north east. People from those regions were sheltered in the big camp of *Nyacyonga* on the outskirts of the capital Kigali. This camp along with camps of Hutu refugees from Burundi were important centres of recruitment for the militia killing machine.

¹¹⁹ Ricoeur, *Mal*, 61.

¹²⁰ On family vendetta or *guhora*, see Léon Classe, 'Le Droit de Vengeance dans le Ruanda' in *Missions d'Afrique des Pères Blancs*, XXXVII, 7, 208/214 ; 8, 239-247 ; 9, 258-266.

massacre their own. If the rejection of Manichaeism vindicates the perpetrator as a human seduced by evil, contingency puts the same person face to face with inescapable responsibility. Contingency here applies to history as a challenge to Hegelianism and to moral choice in the Kantian sense.¹²¹ Working from a Kantian perspective, Arendt maintained that moral responsibility demands acknowledgement of the radical contingency of moral choice.¹²²

Arguing for contingency is to say that recourse to extermination was not the ultimate necessity because events could have gone another way. The outcome of the war in the north could have been a victory for the Rwandan government or a stalemate forcing both parties to pursue the road to peace offered by the Arusha protocols. As it turned out, the pre-emptive killing of innocent men, women, children and unborn foetuses did not lead to the Tutsi-free salvation that the perpetrators expected but ironically to the feared rule of a Tutsi-dominated regime. Hence was verified Kant's claim that people have little control over the consequence of their moral choices; what lies in one's hands is only good intention.¹²³ If this good intention and good will were present, most perpetrators had other options, as indeed many instances of heroic solidarity by Hutu with the hunted Tutsi showed.

Scholars have alluded to the 'epistemology of obedience' that characterizes African societies¹²⁴ and particularly Rwandans' reverential respect for authority. However, in 'Rwanda 94', people were terrorised into complying with extermination, which was another aspect of the tools that successive regimes and governments had developed to sap the political will and the freedom of the people.¹²⁵ Behind the mindless acts of killings by willing yet frightened peasants, one has to point to the manipulative and terrorising power of the leaders who betrayed their people. Responsibility exists in both instances of perpetration but levels are different in terms of political criminality. Alluding to the politics

¹²¹ Although it is worth noting that Rousseau had already alluded to contingency and evil before Kant.

¹²² Quoted in Neiman, *Evil*, 261. Similarly, Hans Jonas argued regarding Auschwitz that the calamity did not need to be charged to some dialectically wise necessity, 'as if it were a step to an antithesis demanding a synthesis or a step on the road to salvation... It remains on our account, and it is we who must again wash the disgrace from our disfigured faces...' Quoted in Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 4.

¹²³ In Neimann, *Evil*, 74.

¹²⁴ Zoe Bennet, 'Studying Pastoral Theology in an Ecumenical Context', in *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, Vol 8, No 1 (2011). Lyons and Straus have demonstrated how this epistemology was acted out by convicted genocidaires whom they interviewed in *Intimate enemy*, 48, 49, 61.

¹²⁵ Ian Linden, "The church and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Tragedy", in Baum and Well, eds., *Reconciliation of people: Challenge for the churches* (Geneva: WCC publications, 1997), 48.

of fear and atrocity is by no means an attempt to water down this responsibility, *effectively* because of contingency. Contingency played such an important role in the events of 1994 that even extreme pressure cannot act as an excuse. The causes for capitulation must be found somewhere else. They can be found in the moral choice of what Arendt calls 'selling one's soul',¹²⁶ in exchange of small privileges, false security or just banal greed.

Yet, even after all this has been argued and explained, there remains something absolutely unfathomable to reason and discourse in the sort of evil that took place in 'Rwanda 94'. Some of the crimes that were committed and their technology go beyond what can be accounted for by even the most consistent effort of critical thinking. As Ricoeur rightly argued, this kind of evil remains an enigma that is never completely overcome. 'The initial enigma', he argues, 'is finally elevated to the rank of terminal *aporia* by the very work of thinking that fails.'¹²⁷ The 'demonic' aspect of evil led Ricoeur to turn towards symbolism, religion and faith as way of engaging evil, not as something to think of but something to fight against. It also seems a good point to turn to the role Islam and Christianity in 'Rwanda 94'.

Thus, despite the complexities of academic inquiry into 'Rwanda 94', a diachronic approach to the political history of Rwandans which takes seriously the decline and decay of their beliefs and morals offers a more balanced model for a judicious understanding of 'Rwanda 94'. It makes it possible to qualify the Rwandan tragedy of 94 as a culmination and extreme embodiment of 'autocide'. The responsibility of Rwandan agents is ascribed in a manner that vindicates all victims of particular and contingent instance of political violence.

¹²⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 231-233.

¹²⁷ Ricoeur, *Mal*, 57.

Chapter 5. Religion in Genocide (1): Islam as a paradigm for resistance

5.1. Introduction

The kind of evil embodied in ‘Rwanda 94’ calls for an examination of the response to that event by religion, represented by the faith communities introduced in the first three chapters. In most worldviews religions are, after all, the earliest depository of the binary good-evil and the primordial and incessant battle that opposes the two. The core question asked by this thesis is, ‘How did Christians and Muslims respond to ‘Rwanda 94’ given their historical context and circumstances?’ in other words, when it was thrust in the furnace of unimaginable atrocity, did faith triumph or did it succumb to evil as secular political morality did?

Underlying this inquiry is a belief that religion is the last bastion of righteousness and morality, that if other factions of the social and political body were to succumb to evil; faith communities would stand up and be the ‘one person who saves Jerusalem’ (Jeremiah 5:1). Furthermore, this assumption appears to rest on the traditional philosophical belief that the problem of evil is essentially a theological one and is better answered by religion and theology.

After reading the four previous chapters, the question could now appear somewhat rhetorical. The ‘secular’ Rwandan society which was so overwhelmed by evil in 1994 was an undistinguishable replica of the religious society. If it is true that well over 90 percent of Rwandans belonged to either Christianity or Islam,¹ then it follows that when one speaks of the religious, the secular is also implied and vice versa; unless secular society refers to the remaining less than 10%. Especially with regard to Christianity, the second chapter argued that modern Rwanda is largely a product of Christianisation. So if one follows the logic of Rwandan reproductive philosophy that *imfura na se barangana*², it becomes illogical to distinguish between the begotten and the begetter. It also follows that, as in pre-colonial Rwanda, the boundaries between the sacred and the secular; between religion and politics were extremely blurred to the point of total confusion.³

¹ According to Longman, the census of 15 August 1991 reports that 62.6 percent of the population declared themselves Catholics, 28.8 percent Protestants, 8.4 percent Seventh day Adventists, 1.2 percent Muslims and 1.1 percent ‘traditional’. See Longman, *Christianity and genocide*, 4.

² Lit. ‘the firstborn child and the father are equals’.

³ Bauman makes the same observation for society and religion in general in the introduction of *Life in Fragments*. 1-9.

Ultimately, since a genocide happened in Rwanda in 1994 as an apotheosis of a politics of fear and atrocity, the obvious ‘pre-emptive’ answer is that faith communities did not rise up to the challenge. This is where the real questions asked by this thesis become pertinent. How and why did such evil find room in a society where religious resources should have been preponderant? Or, to use a Johanine metaphor, how could darkness overcome light so radically? More importantly, it is relevant to critically assess whether the capitulation of faith communities was actually as radical as pre-critical observations would suggest.

These questions presuppose an even more fundamental question, namely what was or should be expected of faith communities (Islam and Christianity in this case) in a situation like genocide. The pertinence of this question is underscored by two paradoxical components. First, by the very nature of genocide, there are no clear blueprints, no exact proviso with regard to how a faith community should handle such events. For all intents and purposes, it is a genuine case of ‘legacy without a testament’⁴. The second component is more troubling: how does one reconcile the ‘instinctive’ expectation that Islam and Christianity would respond to genocide from a peaceful, life affirming, morally upright baseline when in their pillars (Jihad) and scriptures both religions seem to accommodate the very concept they are supposed to resist?⁵

This section introduces the core theme of religion in genocide which, for the sake of presentation and clarity, will be treated in two chapters; the first dealing with Islam and the second with Christianity. It is important to read the two chapters as one unit in content and argument; the transition from one chapter to the other is more a hiatus than a major break. The task of these next two chapters is to critically engage with the questions asked above through a combination of the historical background provided in the second and third chapters and an investigation of the actual comportment of Muslims and Christians in ‘Rwanda 94’.

Concretely, this chapter will proceed first by examining the ‘Thesis of Good Muslim versus Bad Christian’ (shortened to ‘Thesis’ below) in order to dispel sensationalism from genuine faith-motivated resistance. The deconstruction of the ‘Thesis’ deliberately (if not entirely

⁴ Comment of Arendt on Char’s experience during the *Résistance*. The French quotation is ‘Notre héritage n’est précédé d’aucun testament.’ In Hannah Arendt, *Between the Past and the Future* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 3.

⁵ See Richard Rubenstein, *Jihad and Genocide* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), Kindle edition. On the violent legacy of Christianity, different alternatives are provided in the *Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence* (2011).

fictively) recasts Islam as paradigmatic of 'expected religious agency' in situations of identity-based political violence. Thus, it confirms the first part of the 'Thesis' with this exception that the 'Muslim' gains the meaning of any faith-inspired *résistant* to the politics of atrocity.

In the second instance, which becomes chapter six, the supposed failure of Christianity will be brought into more focus. As regarding Islam, the chapter will confirm the said failure which will be qualified theologically as sin and this sin be named as the idolatry of power; both in term of the seduction by and the terror of power. Christianity will be made –and again not entirely by fiction- to endorse the mantle of a failed religious agency. In this paradigm, 'Christian' stands for all faith-denying compliants to the atheism of fear.

5.2. The Thesis of Good Muslims versus Bad Christians

5.2.1. Presenting the 'Thesis'

*'KIGALI - President Paul Kagame, yesterday, received the 2010 Global Peace and Unity Services to Humanity Award, in recognition of his role in spearheading the cause of justice, peace, reconciliation and unity of the Rwandan people.'*⁶ On the face of it, this online short article published by *The New Times* is not sensational. Since the RPF troops put an end to the massacres of 1994 followed by his accession to the presidency, Paul Kagame has received too many awards to count from all manner of people and institutions keen on rewarding his efforts or simply being associated to the man's success story.⁷ Yet, the award presented by the GPU is of special interest to this research, considering what this particular group stands for.⁸

The significance of this event cannot be overlooked by anyone interested in the increasing visibility and importance of Islam in Rwandan post-genocide politics. It certainly caught the attention of Ally Hassan Mugenzi, the producer of BBC *Gahuzamiryango*⁹, who

⁶ <http://newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14470&article=36455>. Accessed on August 20th, 2011.

⁷ From 2003 to 2010; President Kagame has been awarded at least twenty honours and accolades (<http://www.africandictator.org/?p=1744>) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kagame). Accessed 21 August, 2011.

⁸ Global Peace and Unity is a recurring two-day conference held at the ExCeL Exhibition Centre in Royal Victoria Dock, London, England and organized by the Islam Channel. Its purpose is to promote "global cohesion across all communities", as well as "break barriers and build bridges between the variety of cultures and groups that follow the Islamic faith. For more details on the GPU and GPU events, see <http://www.theglobalunity.com/>

⁹ A section of BBC Africa which specialises in the Great Lakes region; especially Rwanda and Burundi. The official website is <http://www.bbc.co.uk/gahuza/>

produced two *Imvo n'Imvano* programmes on the event. The first broadcast (*imvo1*) was an interview with two prominent Muslims, namely the Mufti of Rwanda and the President of the former Islamic Party and Minister of Local Government. The second programme (*imvo2*) consisted of a reaction of the public, mostly Rwandan Muslims, to the earlier interview.¹⁰

The relocation of Islam from the margins of Rwandan society and politics started immediately after the genocide of 1994. Media, academics and politicians put forward a thesis that Muslims somehow managed to fare better than Christians when they were faced with the furnace of 'Rwanda 1994'. Prunier set the tone in 1995, 'The only faith which provided a bulwark against barbarity for its adherents was Islam. There are many testimonies to the protection members of the Muslim community gave each other and their refusal to divide themselves ethnically.'¹¹ As a consequence of this exemplary behaviour, many Tutsi survivors would have converted to Islam. According to Emily Wax of the Washington Post Foreign Service,

Since the genocide, Rwandans have converted to Islam in huge numbers. Muslims now make up 14% of the 8.2 million people here in Africa's most Catholic nation, twice as many as before the killings began. Many converts say they chose Islam because of the role that some Catholic and Protestant leaders played in the genocide. ...In contrast, many Muslim leaders and families are being honoured for protecting and hiding those who were fleeing.¹²

Mark Lacey of the New York Times was even more positive. He wrote that the Muslim community boasted so many converts that it had to embark on a campaign to build new mosques to accommodate all of the faithful. He put forward staggering figures: about five hundred mosques scattered throughout Rwanda and an impressive 15% as the quota of Muslims within the general population of Rwanda. Inevitably, this phenomenal growth was

¹⁰ 'Imvo n'imvano' of 15/11/2010

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/gahuza/umviriza_kandi/2010/11/101115_imvo_kagame_award.shtml) and the first part of 'Imvo n'Imvano' of 03/12/2010

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/gahuza/umviriza_kandi/2010/12/101203_imvo-nimvano271110.shtml)

¹¹ Prunier, *Rwandan Crisis*, 253. See also African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance* (London: African Rights, 1995), 419.

¹² Emily Wax, "Islam Attracting Many Survivors of Rwanda Genocide: Jihad Is Taught as 'Struggle to Heal'". *Washington Foreign Post Service*. Monday, September 23, 2002; Page A10. Accessed on August 24, 2011.

attributed to ‘their ability during the 1994 massacres to shield most Muslims, and many other Rwandans, from certain death.’¹³

Albeit a short piece, the article is full of the kind of stereotypical statements which have been used to describe Rwandan Muslims in post-genocide discourse. They read as follows; ‘The Muslims handled themselves well in ’94, and I wanted to be like them... With killing all around (...), the safest place to be back then was in a Muslim neighbourhood. (...) Hutu Muslims did not cooperate with the Hutu killers. They said they felt far more connected through religion than through ethnicity, and Muslim Tutsi were spared. (...) ‘Nobody died in a mosque. (...) No Muslim wanted any other Muslim to die. (...) We stood up to the militias. And we helped many non-Muslims get away.’

Laurie Goering of the Chicago Tribune wrote in the same vein. She starts by pointing to the rather insignificant popularity of Islam in Rwanda until 1994. However, in opposition to hordes of Christians succumbing to violence and Christian leaders failing to offer guidance and protection, Muslims offered haven; hence the blossoming and blooming of Islam after 1994. This outstanding behaviour created a radical shift in national opinion. One of Goering’s interviewees put it succinctly; “Today, we see Muslims as very kind people (...) what we saw in the genocide changed our minds.”¹⁴

It is difficult to say whether the ‘Thesis’ moved from the media and academia to political discourse or the other way round. However, as will be argued further below, the latter option seems more plausible when one takes into consideration, as Pottier does, the project undertaken by the government to re-think Rwandan society and politics as well as re-writing its history.¹⁵ What is incontestable is that the apparent shift in opinion regarding Muslims was translated into political recognition by the RPF-dominated regime which took power after the events of April-July 1994. At local and national levels, politicians commended Muslims for their exemplary conduct during the massacres.

On the other hand, Muslims began to rise and multiply in positions of power and authority to such an extent that it has been suggested that there was a disproportion between the

¹³ Mark Lacey, ‘Since ’94 Horror, Rwandans Turn Toward Islam’. Significantly, the author of the article acknowledges that these numbers were suggested by Muslim leaders in the absence of a formal census. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/international/africa/07RWAN.html>.

¹⁴ Laurie Goering, ‘Islam blooms in genocide’s wake.’ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-08-05/news/0208050150_1_tutsis-kibuye-hutu.

¹⁵ Johan Pottier, *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the later twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

quotas of Muslims in the general population and their representatives in instances of power.¹⁶ This political recognition has been reciprocated by Muslim leaders who have become some of the staunchest supporters of the new regime in Kigali. In fact, it can be argued that it is in this spirit of mutuality and reciprocity that the GPU presented President Kagame with the aforementioned award, despite protests to the contrary from the President, Rwandan Muslim leaders and the GPU.¹⁷

A reading of these articles and statements seems to suggest that all Hutu Muslims stood up to be counted during the killings and withstood the pressure to join in massacring innocent Tutsi civilians. This resistance to the genocide frenzy and its rewards in the shape of many conversions would have been prompted by, according to Prunier, the fact that being Muslim in Rwanda, where Muslims were a very small proportion of the population, was not simply a decision dictated by religion but a global identity choice. He rightly pointed to the fact argued in the second chapter, that Muslims were often socially marginalised people and this reinforced a strong sense of community identification which superseded ethnic tags, something the majority Christians were unable to achieve.¹⁸ Furthermore, Muslim leaders showed more moral and spiritual leadership in comparison to their Christian counterparts.

In its main argument, the ‘Thesis’ steers clear of the challenging testimonies of the many Christians who put their lives literally on the line to save hunted Tutsi or surprisingly, the well documented stories of the Muslims who are notoriously connected with the genocide like Ngeze Hassan, the author of the infamous ‘Hutu Ten Commandments’¹⁹, or Yusuf Munyakazi whose band of *interahamwe* ravaged the prefectures of Cyangugu and Kibuye.²⁰ The core of this ‘Thesis’ is straightforward: in terms of participation Muslims did less, if anything at all. In terms of protection, they did more, if not all they could. Conversely, Christians did more in terms of participation and less in terms of protection.

¹⁶ Mugenzi in *ImvoI*. When the African Commission on Human and People’s rights visited Rwanda; they met the Mufti of Rwanda on January 28, 2004. The latter emphasised the newly acquired political status evidenced by a Prefect of province, a Cabinet minister, 5 members of parliament, officers in the army, etc. See African Commission on Human & Peoples’ rights, *Report of promotional mission undertaken by Commissioner Mohamed Abdellahi Ould Babana in Rwanda*. p.14. Online version of the report is available at http://www.achpr.org/english/Mission_reports/Rwanda/Mission%20report%20to%20Rwanda.pdf

¹⁷ In *ImvoI*, Sheikhs Harelimana and Habimana categorically denied any influence over GPU in their decision to present President Kagame with the award.

¹⁸ Prunier, *Rwandan Crisis*, 253.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hassan_Ngeze. The commandments are provided in the appendices.

²⁰ <http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Munyakazi/indictment/munyakazi.pdf>

In the tradition of logical thinking, any thesis under scrutiny calls for an antithesis and ultimately for a synthesis. This rule applies to the ‘Thesis’ under discussion in this chapter. *Nta kabura imvano* is a Rwandan saying which means that even the most farfetched statement in interpretation has a core of truth in its origin. To get to this core and beyond, four steps are necessary. The first step consists in finding the evidence for the positive conduct of the Muslim communities and individuals. The second step consists of establishing the reasons behind this outstanding behaviour. Thirdly, these first two steps are compared and contrasted to Christianity. The final step tackles the politicization of Islam’s new visibility in Rwandan society. The first three steps will make use of Doughty and Ntambara’s *Resistance and Protection* for evidence and critical engagement, whilst Pottier’s *Re-imagining Rwanda* provides a platform for critical engagement with the fourth step.

5.2.2. Evidence confirming the ‘Thesis’

These two propositions of the ‘Thesis’ call for a critical analysis. The two main questions that need addressing are, first, whether there is sufficient evidence to confirm these propositions. This point calls for the question as to whether the thesis is supported by empirical facts or stems from and serves other purposes. Secondly, whether whatever evidence there is should be evaluated quantitatively in terms of figures and statistics exclusively or qualitatively, based on expected agency. The second point begs the question as to whether Muslims’ outstanding conduct stands out because it exceeded what was expected of a small and marginal community whereas Christian failure is cast in dismal proportions because much more was expected from a bigger and privileged community.²¹

Any researcher treating the topic of religion and the Rwandan tragedy has to face the difficult imperative for validity by finding evidence not only in available resources but also in what these resources leave unsaid. In fact the scarcity of written evidence serves to amplify the silences and points the researcher in the direction of inferential critical engagement. A comparative approach to research on Christianity and Islam in the genocide offers a profound contrast. Even though Christianity is still inadequately represented in its relation to ‘Rwanda 94’, there is at least a significant body of literature, of varying academic value (see chapter six).

²¹ The emphasis on ‘community’ is of great significance. ‘Muslim’ and ‘Christian’ are not studied as individuals but as members of their respective faith communities.

When it comes to Islam however, the researcher is literally clutching at straws. In fact, there are very few written sources besides the press dispatches already quoted above. Alana Tiemessen's research attempted to engage the topic of Islam and the genocide.

Unfortunately, the paper offers little as a study and relies heavily on the same aforementioned press dispatches.²² There is no categorical imperative for academics not to rely on press dispatches or investigative and analytical journalism. However, academic over-reliance on this particular source in the case of Rwandan politics in general and 'Rwanda 94' in particular, can be a harmful approach. The overriding fear is that they could end up giving an academic added value to a source that has no such quality in essence and purpose.

Of much greater quality and usefulness is the case study realised by Kristin Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara between 2002 and 2005.²³ It undoubtedly presents the most comprehensive reflection on the subject matter to date; in the absence of much needed in-depth empirical research. In their case study on Muslim community actions during the Rwandan genocide, Doughty and Ntambara conducted action research in five Muslim communities: Biryogo, Rwamagana, Mabare, Mugandamure and Kibagabaga. Their research covered between thirty and fifty people in each community and their final report gathered findings from two-dozen interviews and ten community discussions.²⁴ The study classifies the actions of the Muslim community into actions of the Muslim leadership and the actions of the Muslim community in general. According to the study, the proof that Muslims resisted the genocidal tide can be found in the following points.

5.2.2.1. A pastorally-minded and uncompromised leadership

For Doughty and Ntambara's communities, the fact that no Muslim religious leaders have been charged or arrested for participating in the genocide is the first evidence for Muslims' good conduct.²⁵ Indeed, this outstanding behaviour started well before the genocide as the leaders anticipated the increasing violence and the potential for further escalation. In this way, they were able to proactively shape the community's actions. Their actions were then

²² Alana Tiemessen, *From Genocide to Jihad: Islam and Ethnicity in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. Paper for Presentation at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) in London, Ontario, 2-5 June, 2005. <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2005/Tiemessen.pdf>. Accessed on September 5, 2011.

²³ Kristin Doughty and David Moussa Ntambara, *Resistance and Protection: Muslim Community Actions During the Rwandan genocide*. CDA. Collaborative Learning Projects. 2003-2005.

²⁴ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 2-3

²⁵ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 8.

primarily pastoral and were directed towards themselves as well as towards their flock. In this respect, the leadership “corrected” each other if they perceived that others were becoming too closely involved in negative politics or other activities.²⁶

This pastoral care was then directed towards the Muslim community at large. Steps were taken within the community to sensitise the Muslim population, to counter the hate propaganda. For this ‘sensitisation campaign’ based on the ideals of the Koran to succeed, Muslim leaders enlisted the help of Muslim schoolteachers who could pass the message of non-violence, resistance and protection to their students.²⁷

The third movement of this pastoral effort would have been directed towards the wider public. Whilst the first two steps in political pastoral care might be indisputable, this third aspect carries less credibility. For one thing, the ‘wider public’ turned out to be mainly, if not exclusively Muslims.²⁸ Besides, despite the interviewees’ argument that regardless of State censorship, several broadcasts got through to the public, there is no substantial evidence to that effect. In fact, one could argue that Muslim leaders could have made a far better use of “*Inzira y’Ukuri*”, Islam’s main programme which was aired weekly on the national radio, to counter hardliners’ ethnic propaganda.

Muslim leaders also wrote letters to the President as the situation was escalating, imploring the state leadership to recognize its responsibility to the people and end the violence. This gesture was purely an interpellation²⁹ of the supreme seat of political authority to prevent the country from sinking into chaos. In this sense at least, Muslim leadership showed concern for the wider population; a step out of their usual ‘it is their war, not ours’ mindset.³⁰ Therefore, it could be said that prior to the genocide, Muslim leaders prepared their flock to be a community of spiritual and moral passive resistance.

During the genocide, some Muslim leaders are understood to have spoken against the killings in the mosques. According to the communities interviewed by Doughty and Ntambara, and according to the general opinion, no Muslim leader ever spoke in support of

²⁶ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 9. At the time, Rwandan Muslims were represented in their majority by the Association des Musulmans au Rwanda (AMUR) and Ansar Allah, a relatively new group of preachers who worked primarily in rural areas. The later, noticing that AMUR was getting close to the circles of power, would have approached its leaders and advised them to take their distance and remain neutral.

²⁷ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 9-10.

²⁸ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 10.

²⁹ ‘Interpellation’ here is taken in its political (parliamentary) sense rather than in the more technical ‘Althusserian’ definition, which relates to how ideology addresses pre-ideology individuals.

³⁰ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 20.

the killings or appealed to followers to participate; let alone participate in the killings themselves. Instead, they emphasised the fact that killing is a serious sin and encouraged Muslims to protect the people as much as they could.³¹ There does not seem to be any indication that Muslim leaders appealed to the wider public during the genocide to refrain from the killings.

5.2.2.2. Communities of Resistance and Refuge

The commendable conduct of Muslims during the genocide involved a range of actions.

i. Refusing to participate

First of all, following the pastoral action of Muslim leadership, Muslim communities and individuals adopted a passive resistance stance and refused to participate in the genocide. Thus, not only did they refuse to join the militia in ‘hunting down’ the Tutsi but they were also unwilling to reveal where potential victims were hiding if and when they knew where hiding places were. On the face of it, this stance sounds almost ordinary, yet it was heroic given the circumstances. Many, if not all civilians, i.e non-militias, who joined in the killings later claimed that they were forced to participate.

ii. Hiding Muslims and non-Muslims

‘Whoever managed to arrive in our *quartier* was hidden and protected, and survived.’³²

This comment captures perfectly the unexpected high rate of survival in Muslim-populated areas. Hutu Muslims took full advantage of their relative safety to hide and protect hunted Tutsi, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Doughty and Ntambara’s interlocutors provided accounts of Muslims hiding people in ceilings, of women given veils and scarves to disguise themselves or paying money to the militia to look the other way.³³ However, these actions were not an exclusive Muslim endeavour; many non-Muslims all over the country hid hunted Tutsi. What is exclusive about Islam is the collective aspect of this effort and the quasi certitude of survival in Muslim-populated areas. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that the opinion that Muslim *quartiers* offered better safety seems to have been held even before the genocide started.³⁴ It could have been one outcome of the pastoral work done by Muslim leaders before the tragedy.

³¹ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 10

³² Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 11.

Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 11.

³⁴ A personal experience anecdote illustrates this point. When the news of President Habyarimana’s death broke out, I was on a Christian retreat in the premises of a Christian church house and almost everyone had a

Maybe unsurprisingly, there were almost no cases of Muslims being hidden by non-Muslims. This lack is understandable considering the approach that has been taken by most studies, i.e. what Muslims did or did not do. The methodology has been so one-sided that nobody seems to have asked the question as to whether non-Muslims were in the position to hide and protect Muslim victims. A plausible explanation for this situation might be purely demographic. Most Muslims lived together in close-knit communities in geographically delineated areas which enabled them to hide most of 'theirs'. However, this explanation does not account for the Muslims who lived outside the *quartiers* or those Muslims who might have been caught up in the conflict whilst away from their homes.

This 'anomaly' became obvious in situations like the resistance of Mabare which will be discussed in the next section, where around three hundred Muslims actively and hopelessly fought off an attacking mob of around seven thousands killers.³⁵ What is curious about this situation is that when the lines of engagement became ethnically redefined, only Hutu Muslims defended Tutsi, Muslims and non-Muslims alike but none of the non-Muslim Hutu who had switched sides felt the need to protect Muslim Tutsi.³⁶ Muslims in Mabare were mainly members of Ansar Allah and in virtue of the last line of Surat 61 that inspired their creation, they acted as *Ansari Allah*, the Helpers of Allah.³⁷

iii. Active Resistance and confronting killers

Resistance was therefore not only passive for Muslim communities as the previous case has demonstrated. It took an active and at times pugnacious form in Mabare, Rwamagana and Kibagabaga.³⁸ Two important things deserve mentioning: first, it was only Muslims, both as a social group and as a community of faith who decided to resist actively against the killings. The other group known to have confronted the killers were the brave hunted Tutsi such as those of Bisesero.³⁹ However, the significant difference is that the people at

premonition of what was coming. The house was two miles away from the Islamic 'Cité' of Kamembe. Two of the Christians who were at the retreat, S and T, immediately decided to head for the Cité, feeling that they had more chance of survival there. 'S' survived but 'T' was captured before arriving.

³⁵ Emmanuel Viret, "Les Musulmans de Mabare pendant le Génocide Rwandais" in *La Résistance aux génocides. De la Pluralité des Actes de Sauvetage*. Sous la direction de Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu, Sarah Gensburger (Paris: Presse des Sciences Politiques, 2008), 498-502.

³⁶ For this whole episode, see Viret, *Résistance*, chapter 29.

³⁷ For a sociological reflection on the motives behind the conduct of Mabare's Muslims, see Viret, *Résistance*, 502-504.

³⁸ For more details on Muslims' actions in Rwamagana and Kibagabaga, see Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 12-13.

³⁹ For Bisesero Resistance see among others, Russel Schimer, *Indications of genocide in the Bisesero Hills, Rwanda, 1994* at <http://www.yale.edu/gsp/gis->

Bisesero were Tutsi fighting for their survival whereas in places like Mabare, many of the fighters were Hutu fighting other Hutu to protect Tutsi. The second point is the collective nature of the resistance. In every case mentioned, Muslims resisted as a group, not just as individuals. Other acts of resistance included setting up roadblocks to prevent killers getting to the *quartiers* or mosques to snatch people; verbally confronting killers at the risk of losing their lives; subversion and simulation, joining to spy and bringing people to safety to secure Muslim hiding places or to the zone already under the control of the RPF.

iv. Keeping each other accountable

Finally, Muslims resisted the genocide by correcting each other and keeping one another accountable. One could suggest that this attitude agrees with the collective aspect of the resistance mentioned above. Doughty and Ntambara mentioned the case of Mugandamure where a community turned the tables on a Muslim who was trying to get them to participate in the genocide. They were also told of parents encouraging their children not to get involved in the killings or carry weapons.⁴⁰ Parental guidance was, among other things, cruelly missing during the tragedy.

5.2.3. Identity factors behind Muslims' conduct.

Speaking of the active resistance of Mabare's Muslims, Viret provided this insight with regard to the motives behind their collective action;

[Muslims's] cohesion during the state of exception that was the genocide rests on the same causes which formerly marginalised them : the '*rupture*' provoked by their conversion, the inclusive circle in which it maintains the adepts as well as its extensions in the practices of everyday's life.⁴¹

Here, Viret is arguing that Muslims' actions during the tragedy of 1994 were prompted by doctrinal, theological, historical and socio-political factors which, over the years, have imprinted a specific group identity on the Muslim population of Rwanda. Most of these factors are interrelated as is made obvious in the following paragraphs.

files/rwanda/Indications_of_Genocide_in_the_Bisesero_Hills_Rwanda_1994_GSP_Working_Paper_No.32.pdf (accessed on 12 September 2011); Fondation Hirondelle, *Bisesero, the Hill of Death*, 2003.

⁴⁰ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 12.

⁴¹ « Ce qui garantit leur cohésion pendant l'état d'exception que constitua le Génocide, repose sur les mêmes fondements qui auparavant les marginalisaient : la rupture induite par la conversion, cette seconde relation au monde, et le cercle inclusif dans lequel elle maintient ses adeptes, ses prolongements dans les pratiques quotidiennes. » Viret, *Mabare*, 503.

5.2.3.1. Doctrinal and theological factors

When Viret speaks of '*conversion*', '*rupture*', '*seconde relation au monde*' and '*prolongement dans les pratiques quotidiennes*', he is providing theological and doctrinal hermeneutics of Muslim communities' actions. Most Muslims in discussion with Viret or Doughty and Ntambara put forward the Koran as the main inspiration behind their actions. Key inspiring teachings were the Koran's stance on non-violence, where killing one person is a sin equivalent to killing all of humanity. Most scholars and schools in Koranic hermeneutics put killing among *kaba'ir* or mortal sins.⁴² The Koran also teaches not to differentiate based on labels but rather that all people are equal. This tenet seems to have developed a particular religious identity that transcends other social solidarities such as ethnicity, that other segments of the Rwandan society never seemed to transcend. Furthermore, the Koran teaches to protect the weak, and assist people who are discriminated against.⁴³

These teachings are just a sample and they are all clearly diametrically opposed to a genocide ideology. In fact every evil act that happened in the genocide, not just killing, could be said, according to some authorities in Koranic exegesis, to constitute *kaba'ir*.⁴⁴ The ethical implications of these teachings are not to be taken lightly by Muslims. Although within Islamic theology there remains the problem of how human free will and responsibility are related to God's overall control on the destinies of every living soul, human accountability has never been debated.⁴⁵

For this reason Muslims of all times and places including Rwanda accept that humanity stands responsible for its actions before the divine.⁴⁶ This accountability stems from the connection that Muslims make between the appointing of humans as Vicegerents or *Khalifa* of God, the responsibility that comes with that honour (responsibility to do what is right, *al salihat*), and its reward in the eschaton. 'All will ultimately be returned to God and called to

⁴² Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*. Published to Oxford Scholarship Online, 2002.

⁴³ This last point was taken seriously by Ansar Allah who considered it to be a calling to be God's Helpers.

⁴⁴ One tradition holds that the Prophet would have said that '*Shirk*' (the sin of idolatry or polytheism) is the greatest sin, then comes the killing of one's child, followed by adultery or bearing false witness. Another tradition cites the prophet as having enumerated several deadly sins, namely *shirk*, magic, murder, robbing orphans, Usury, apostasy, and slander against faithful women. See Smith and Haddad, *Islamic*, note 49. p.22

⁴⁵ Smith and Haddad, *Islamic*, 14.

⁴⁶ Smith and Haddad, *Islamic*, 16.

account for individual deeds of commission and omission in a reckoning that takes absolutely seriously the reality of human liability.⁴⁷

However, there is a difficulty with advocating the Koran as the first inspiration of Muslims' conduct during the genocide. The Christians had the Bible and all these doctrinal points are part of fundamental Christian teaching. Islam and Christianity arrived in Rwanda at the same time; therefore both sets of believers had been exposed to these teachings for the same length of time. The question remains as to why one community would have been more influenced by the teachings of its holy scriptures than the other. More concretely, why did the Koran inspire Muslims collectively whilst the Bible guided only isolated and individual Christians? Yet, one has to bear in mind what Viret says about the dangers of generalizing and romanticizing about Muslims. He notes that while the Muslims of Mabare were dying for the Tutsi, the Muslims in the neighbouring Gahengeri did nothing to help the Tutsi in their area.⁴⁸

One answer might be the lack and inaccessibility of the Bible within Rwandan Christian communities for many years. Surprisingly, for a vibrant and constantly growing church, Catholics did not have a complete Bible in Kinyarwanda until 1993.⁴⁹ The Protestants had published their *Bibiliya Yera* in 1958⁵⁰. Irrespective of the 35-year gap, it was usually more common to see a Protestant carrying or reading a Bible than a Catholic. The habit of not reading or carrying the bible among the Catholics had theological roots. Bible reading and studying was replaced by catechism deemed more intelligible by church members. There was little theological input from the Episcopal Council and certainly little encouragement for personal devotion centred on the Bible.⁵¹

An even stronger reason might be found in what Viret calls '*prolongement dans les pratiques quotidiennes*'. In theological discourse this refers to those pastoral and practical aspects of Islam as lived by and within the community of believers in their everyday lives. It has been said before that Muslims lived in close-knit communities within which they were brought together at least five times a day to pray. Rwandan Muslims singled out these

⁴⁷ Surate 32:17-21

⁴⁸ Viret, *Mabare*, 492.

⁴⁹ See Gatwa, *Churches*, 132. note 66.

⁵⁰ It was revised in 1993 to meet the standards of contemporary Kinyarwanda.

⁵¹ Gatwa, *Churches*, 132ff.

daily devotions as a strong deterrent to killing their own.⁵² These devotions were mediated and encouraged by leaders and elders who lived within the same *quartiers*, something which makes the pastoral care of the community easy and part of the practicalities of daily life. Although Doughty and Ntambara insist on respect and obedience towards leadership as the factor which inspired Muslims⁵³, one can strongly argue that respect and trust are born out of daily contact between communities and their spiritual leaders.

It can also be argued that this is one aspect of Rwandan Christianity that left Christian communities exposed to the seduction and temptations of genocide. Big churches, lack of grassroots organisation, and little contact between leaders and flock made pastoral care impossible. Therefore the emphasis on devotion and personal holiness, despite daily masses and services was limited. As it will be shown later, groups of ‘*Abarokore*’ offered a different way but most Christian churches had been reduced to a Sunday Christianity.

Another aspect of Muslim devotional life which was decisive in channelling a positive faith response during the genocide was the month of Ramadan. The genocide began just a few weeks after this holiest of Muslim periods. Most Muslims interviewed by Doughty and Ntambara suggested that during this period, solidarity within the community is particularly strong as they all perform this ritual together. Therefore, when the genocide began, this strong cohesiveness and the ideals of the Koran were very fresh in their minds.

Surprisingly, Christians had also emerged from a holy month. The genocide started only four days after Easter 1994; which is the culmination of Lent and a celebration of life. It would be interesting to make a comparative study on how seriously Christian Lent and Muslim Ramadan are observed. The general feeling is that few Rwandan Christians observe Lent and/or fast. In fact, Protestant churches as a rule do not seem to hold Lent in high esteem.⁵⁴ On the contrary, as a general rule, even the most lax Muslims seem to become more faith-conscious during Ramadan.

5.2.3.2. Historical and Sociological factors

Muslims who dialogued with Viret, Doughty and Ntambara, returned to their historical beginnings and settlement to explain why their communities were less tainted by ethnic

⁵² Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 17.

⁵³ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 17.

⁵⁴ The Association of Pentecostal Churches in Rwanda for example does not recognize Lent in its annual rituals even though it insists on the discipline of prayer and fasting as two of the main pillars of individual spiritual growth. The other important pillars are Bible reading, worship and baptism in the Holy Spirit. See Nsanzurwimo, *Histoire*, 189ff.

ideology. Chapter three of this work has presented this historical data as concisely and analytically as possible. However, it is important to highlight that even a hundred years later, Muslims still considered themselves and were considered as a marginal and marginalised people. In surprising irony, they seem to fulfil Christ's injunction to 'be in the (Rwanda) world without being of the (*Rwanda*) world.' Much has been made of -and sometimes written about- the marginalisation of the Muslims by successive political regimes in Rwanda; most of it in a negative vein.⁵⁵ Little has been written about the extent to which Muslims themselves contributed to and benefited from this exclusion.⁵⁶

However, Muslims interviewed by Viret, Doughty and Ntambara were quick to recognise that it put their predecessors and subsequent Muslim communities in a better position to deal with the political upheavals that have shaken the Rwandan society from 1930s onwards. Ultimately, it helped most Muslim communities to better negotiate the tragedy of 1994, both in its ideological and factual aspects. Living in the *centres extra-coutumiers* (lit. areas outside customary or traditional law) insulated Muslims against injustices pertaining to traditional society and the exacerbations between the Hutu and the Tutsi.⁵⁷ Within the confines of their *quartiers*, Muslims managed to assert Islamic identity and solidarity over ethnic duality. Political exclusion resulted in positive distancing from the seat of political power and an increasingly ethnicised political identity and citizenship.

In conclusion, doctrinal and theological factors moved Muslims to protect each other and non-Muslims as a response to imperatives of their faith. Historical and socio-political factors reflected a lack of interest in solidarities based on ethnic identities. In either case, Muslim actions testify to the importance of faith taken seriously and its political potential in moment of great crisis. They provide an insight into how to resist and subvert a politics of atrocity from the margin; but also the void and dangerous gap which is left when that faith capital is withdrawn from the wider society and political debate. Was Islamic impact on the tragedy very limited because of their historic marginalisation? Could Muslim leaders have inspired other faith communities had they spoken publicly? These are questions left without answers but which call for more reflection.

⁵⁵ Kagabo gives a better and balanced view on the exclusion of Muslims throughout his study.

⁵⁶ See for example what Muslims told Mugenzi in *Imvo2*.

⁵⁷ Hence, Muslims were not involved in the clientelism of *Ubuhake* and were spared forced labour, *akazi*, *Shiku*, *Uburetwa*, *ikiboko*, etc... which was forced upon chiefs and populations; turning the latter against the former and ultimately resulting in the violent episode of 1959-1964.

5.2.4. Deconstructing the 'Thesis'

5.2.4.1. A critique of media sensationalism

First of all, in order to set the argument in the context of academic critique, it is imperative to highlight and expel as much as possible of the sensational statements and unsubstantiated conclusions made by the media. The most obvious case of sensationalism can be found in the use of statistics. Wax (2004) suggests a figure of 15 percent of Muslims in relation to the whole population of Rwanda, against 14 percent mentioned by Goering (2002). Yet, in his meeting with the African Commission for Human and People's rights in January 2004, the Mufti of Rwanda said that Muslims represented 2 percent of the Rwandan population and growth had stalled around the 2002-2004 period.⁵⁸ Whichever way one looks at it, the gap is quite big.

Another journalistic eccentricity is the method of drawing 'universal' or general conclusions from unrepresentative and isolated cases. The conclusion that Islam is blooming in post-genocide Rwanda following massive conversions of disenchanted Christians relies heavily on isolated and limited interviews strategically arranged for maximum impact on readership. Furthermore, the idea of Islam growing exponentially is wishful at best and is lacking in terms of comparisons with the unexpected and yet visible growth of Christianity in the aftermath of genocide. The penultimate chapter of this work will attempt to account for the growth of both Islam and Christianity in Rwanda at a time when most would have expected survivors to lose interest and trust in religion.

The point which is and will be consistently made throughout this thesis is that Islam has undeniably acquired an important status in post-genocide Rwandan society. However, this status rests more on political visibility and popular credibility than quantitative increase. It is a recognition based on qualitative repositioning, from margin to centre, rather than on numerical growth.

Interestingly, there is a contrast in the casting of the post-genocide Muslim by foreign 'experts' or outsiders and how the Muslim community itself assesses and experiences its new status. Ostentatious exaltation in the former is contrasted with modest satisfaction and

⁵⁸ ACHPR, *Report*, p.14, par.78.

more realism in the latter.⁵⁹ A reflection is necessary on the role of media reporting in promoting a re-imagining of Rwanda suggested by Johan Pottier in his solid study of Rwandan post-genocide society.⁶⁰ Of great importance are Pottier's second and third chapters which deal with how the international media and academia reported on Rwandan society, politics and history.⁶¹

5.2. 4.2. Accounting for Muslim Participation in the genocide

Contrary to the narrative constructed by the media and politicians, Rwandan Muslims accept the obvious: that there were Muslims who did commit acts of genocide. The communities that spoke to Doughty and Ntambara mentioned notorious participants that they knew of.⁶² There are also the cases of Muslims already sentenced by the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTR) in Arusha including famous *Interahamwe* such as Omar Serushago⁶³, the notorious killer Yussuf Munyakazi⁶⁴, and most famous of them all, Ngeze Hassan, the journalist labelled the 'Rwandan Goebbels' because of the anti-Tutsi hate propaganda relentlessly championed by his weekly *Kangura* between 1990 and 1994.⁶⁵ These are only the most notorious cases and there were certainly many more Muslims who got caught up in the killings.

Doughty and Ntambara's interlocutors called these Muslims renegade members. As they put it, '*Nta muryango utagira ikigoryi*', even the best families can have a deviant child.⁶⁶ These were Muslims 'only by name' or 'superficial Muslims', 'bad Muslims' who had 'broken out of the Muslim solidarity'; people who had already been at the margins of the Muslim community.⁶⁷ Some went as far as saying that these people had 'become non-

⁵⁹ The article that appeared in the *Crescent Reader* is a good example of this external bias.

<http://www.islamicpopulation.com/africa/Rwanda/Growth%20of%20the%20Muslim%20community%20in%20Rwanda.htm>

⁶⁰ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 2002.

⁶¹ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 109-150.

⁶² Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 23. The names mentioned included Jumatatu Nzeyimana, an advisor to the minister for internal affairs and Amri Karekezi, an administrator in Biryogo sector.

⁶³ <http://www.unictt.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Serushago/indictment/index.pdf>; access on 12 Sept. 2011.

⁶⁴ <http://www.unictt.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Munyakazi/indictment/munyakazi.pdf>; access on 12 Sept. 2011.

⁶⁵ Especially with regard to Ngeze, his newspaper 'Kangura' was, with Radio RTLM, the medium of genocide par excellence. For a comprehensive reading on the media and the Rwandan tragedy see Allan Thompson, ed., *The media and the Rwanda genocide* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ 'Ikigoryi' has a pejorative meaning like 'stupid', 'idiot' but also carries a connotation of a potential to cause unnecessary harm.

⁶⁷ This position would agree with Gourevitch's assessment of Ngeze's religious beliefs that 'Although he was a practicing member of Rwanda's Muslim community, Ngeze's true religion was Hutuness.' Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador), 87.

Muslims' before or during their actions.⁶⁸ Put under the microscope, this explanation cannot withstand criticism because it fails to explain why and how in the first place these Muslims became deviant; how they lost their faith or how they ended up on the fringes of the Muslim community. If the effort is to prove that good Islam triumphed, the explanation fails to explain how bad Islam, no matter how minimal, appeared.

Yet, the implicit strength of this tentative explanation resides in the exceptional, isolated and individual nature of these deviations. As a general rule and collectively, Muslims opposed the genocide. Those among them who acted otherwise did so by breaking out of the community and entering in solidarity with non-Muslim elements. The Muslim community rightly felt that this was a kind of 'apostasy'. What was less convincing and downright controversial was the argument made by some Muslims that somehow even those Muslims who joined in the killings had nobler motives than the rest of Rwandans. Supposedly, they were only motivated by the desire to protect their families and not by a visceral hatred of the Tutsi.⁶⁹ Without going into the debate about what is 'noble' in this conduct, it is sufficient to mention that almost every convict interviewed by Straus suggested that they joined to avert mortal threats over their families.⁷⁰ This might not be intentional bad faith but it certainly is an attempt *post eventum* to 'redeem' or tone down the failures of those deviant members of the Muslim community.

In fact, the reason for this attempt is understandable for one important reason: as a general rule, none of these deviant Muslims killed other Muslims. Doughty and Ntambara report the case of a Muslim killer who told a Tutsi that if he became Muslim, he would not kill him. The man converted and was spared.⁷¹ This bizarre episode shows clearly that Muslim killers kept a portion of their beliefs to the point of proselytising by the sword, literally. One wonders how many of these forced conversions happened in the genocide and what shadow they might cast upon the post-genocide blossoming of Islam advocated by some international media. Yet, as highly reprehensible forced conversion for the sake of protection is, it gives a great deal of weight to the provocative comment made by one Muslim: if other religions had defended theirs, to the point of forcing them to conversion *in*

⁶⁸ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 23-24.

⁶⁹ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 25.

⁷⁰ See Lyons and Straus, *intimate enemy*, 41, 89-90.

⁷¹ Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 24.

extremis and in exchange for their lives, there would simply not have been a genocide.⁷² This said, the conflict might have moved from ethnic to a religious one.

5.2.4.3 Political connotations of the ‘Thesis’

This hypothetical question cannot be avoided however: Had the Muslim been in the dominant position that Christianity enjoyed, would they have behaved differently? An attempt to answer this question takes one back to the beginning of this chapter to reflect on the new prestige that Islam and Muslims continue to enjoy in post-genocide Rwanda. In other words, it is necessary to offer a critical analysis of the politicization and political hermeneutics of Muslims’ actions in 1994.

Muslims have been praised for their overall outstanding conduct during the calamity of 1994 and rightly so. It is almost impossible to articulate how vital this recognition is at a time when acts of goodness and humanness in the face of dehumanizing evil were an exception and a result of exceptional sacrifices. In the wake of tragedies like genocides and holocausts, the need for justice tends to divert attention from victims and heroes to concentrate on the criminals and evildoers that need punishing. Arendt makes a strong point that in the presence of radical evil; it is not evil but goodness that needs to be portrayed with depth and dimension. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt recalls the story of German Sergeant Anton Schmidt who supplied Jews with false papers and trucks. When the Sergeant’s name was mentioned in the trial, it was ‘...like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impenetrable darkness, a single thought stood out (...) how utterly different everything would be today (...) if only more such stories could have been told.’⁷³ Wrath and indignation almost always overshadow recognition and gratitude. Publicly recognising Muslims’ actions during ‘Rwanda 94’ is recognising and rewarding virtue; it is to bring goodness into sharp focus and in doing so, highlight the importance of practical and practicing faith.

Inevitably with high praises from secular powers and authorities comes the danger of cooption. Leaving political wilderness and isolation is appealing and opens one to temptations which may be more dangerous because of their subtlety. This danger and this temptation are apparent in the way Muslims’ actions have been reported by Western media and academia and the political amplification they have been given by the RPF-led

⁷² Doughty and Ntambara, *Resistance*, 25.

⁷³ Arendt, *Eichmann*, pp.230-233.

government. They transpire in the way individual actions have been imputed to a whole community, how actions of isolated communities accredited to the Muslim community as a whole and finally how this group aura almost occulted the fact that a number of Muslims played an important role in the extermination of the Tutsi.

Using Pottier's concepts of 'moral sympathy' and 'information manipulation',⁷⁴ and in light of available historical data, it is possible to argue that there is a political motivation behind the praise of Islam by the RPF-led government. This agenda consists of two operations which, although seemingly unrelated, have the same objective of concentrating a monopoly of moral authority in the hands of the state apparatus. The first operation, and the most important for the state, is to undermine, weaken and subvert the influence of Christianity, especially, Catholicism by repeatedly pointing to the complicity of leaders and believers in Rwandan tragedies.

The second chapter has shown and the sixth chapter will confirm that the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda is the second most potent institution, politically and economically, behind the State represented by the RPF-led government. This status, seen through the historical lenses of Catholicism's political influence makes Catholicism a real concern for the state. Protestants may not command the same historical acumen, but the increasing number of members throughout the country and their important involvement in key sectors such as education and health, turn them into a social force to be reckoned with.⁷⁵ By constantly brandishing the spectre of complicity in the genocide over and against the Church, secular powers 'turn the tables' on the churches, forcing them to retreat into endless introspections. By the same token, the State is able to stake a claim on the public and political space they vacate and set out to fill the moral vacuum left by this engineered retreat. Put simply, a Christianity incriminated and associated to dehumanising acts is a crippled political adversary. This situation is compounded by the fact that the international community, horrified by the scale of the genocide and partially informed is eager and quick to amplify and almost immortalise the 'sins' of the Rwandan Church.

⁷⁴ Pottier deals with a different subject matter, namely the conflict in the DR Congo and the role of the Rwandan Government in this event. However the epistemological and methodological framework of his study is applicable to the topic of this research.

⁷⁵ Especially in Universities where "Groupes Bibliques Universitaires" are very active, very influential and put forward an agenda to develop leaders of the future.

The second operation could be referred to as a ‘pay-back’ strategy because Muslims stood side by side with UNAR, the ‘ancestor’ of the RPF, in the struggle against “*washenzi*” Hutu, the Catholic church and colonial Belgium in the pre-independence troubled period, as previously mentioned in this work. The recognition of Muslims’ exemplary conduct in 1994 becomes an opportunity to reward not only the current generation but also to pay a posthumous tribute to the many Muslim lives lost during that time.⁷⁶

This strategy has also to be read within the context of the image of Islam after 9/11, American policy in Africa after the bombing of the United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-salaam, and the diplomatic relations between Rwanda and the United States of America in general.⁷⁷ By securing the support of the Rwandan Muslim community, the government goes a long way to pre-empt the rise of radical and militant Islam and reassures the USA; a key and strategic ally. On the other hand, AMUR and Rwandan Muslims become the symbol and paradigm of positive, life-affirming Islam; an antithesis of *Al queda-esque* groups. Heroes of the Rwandan genocide, Muslims become, almost *malgré eux*, heroes of the American anti-terrorism campaign.⁷⁸

These passages could be wrongly construed as developing a purely political argument. (From a political perspective, depending on one’s views on anti-terrorist policies, there is nothing essentially wrong in enlisting the support of Muslim communities.) Rather, the thrust of the argument is essentially epistemological, from a perspective of public and practical theology. It arises from the examination of ‘how narratives about history, society and politics are structured It consider[s] the gap between dominant narratives and established academic perspectives’, as Pottier phrases it.⁷⁹ The analysis is interested in the work of knowledge construction; who is the initiator and how faith communities are affected by this work. Furthermore, it is a convergence point between political philosophy

⁷⁶ There is a personal aspect to this story; Abdul, uncle of the author was killed in these mini pogroms against Muslims in 1963 after many days of imprisonment and torture. With the Muslims were members of local Tutsi elites including priests. *Discussion with my Father*, Copenhagen, 2011.

⁷⁷ A cursory examination of articles written and studies done on Islam and the Rwandan genocide shows a sharp rise after the 9/11 event.

⁷⁸ One evidence of this is the increase in aid towards Muslims by Western embassies including the American, German and Dutch embassies. See *Discussion with Mufti*, 5-6.

⁷⁹ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 53.

and theology, if one locates the religious politics of the RPF-led government in a Machiavelian context of (new) state (re)building, foundation or new beginnings.⁸⁰

It is possible to show how the accolades bestowed on Islam fit within the state founding (or building anew) project in post-genocide Rwanda. An important component of this project is the revision and redefining of the historical rapports between the State and religious communities –instead of politics and religion as if religion stands out of the political realm. Pottier rightly argues that within this broader project, the RPF-led government in Rwanda has managed to impose a certain narrative and preferred version of history which has become mainstream in Western media and academia; more particularly in the USA and Great Britain. This project, Pottier argues, ‘has benefited from the empathy and services not only of journalists unfamiliar with the region, but also of newcomer academics, diplomats and aid workers. All have helped, although to varying degrees, to popularise and spread an RPF-friendly but empirically questionable narrative.’⁸¹

To substantiate his argument, Pottier draws from press reports that appeared in the USA, Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands to review three episodes in the recent history of the Great Lakes: the end of the war in Rwanda (July 94), the Kibeho Massacre in South-West Rwanda (April 1995) and the Banyamulenge/ADFL campaign in Eastern Congo. He highlights the more balanced portrayal of post-genocide society in continental media as opposed to an RPF-biased one in British and American media⁸². He also engages with and critiques what he calls ‘instant academics’ or ‘academic scriptwriters’ who, wittingly or unwittingly ‘turn into scribes who re-present partial versions of a reality they have just begun to uncover.’⁸³

The re-writing and re-imagining project rests on two pillars; a presentation of a certain version of history which de-emphasises Rwandan social complexities and a narrative of post-Rwanda society which casts the RPF in the role of the single most reliable source in terms of morality in its every form. This revisionist narrative was persuasively but firmly ‘fed’ to the journalists and academics⁸⁴ under the conditions of a sophisticated doctrine of

⁸⁰ On this particular aspect of Machiavelli’s political philosophy, see Arendt, *Between past and future*, 136-140.

⁸¹ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 53.

⁸² Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 53-108.

⁸³ See particularly chapter 3 ‘For beginners by beginners: knowledge construction under RPP’, pp.109-128.

⁸⁴ For an up to date discussion of this revisionism, it would be helpful to watch a live debate entitled ‘*Revising Kagame: Myth and Reality after the Rwanda Genocide*’, produced by the Open Society Foundations and

information control and received through what Pottier calls ‘lenses of moral sympathy’.⁸⁵ As he rightly points out, this moral sympathy itself was a result of the failure of Western media to report adequately on the Rwanda genocide.’⁸⁶ Thus, the conviction that the RPF produced a more truthful account on society and history became the mainstream narrative, especially in Britain and the United States where a new intellectual climate emerged, inspired by moral righteousness but crippled by its blind trust in the absolute objectivity of the RPF/governmental perspective. Critics of the RPF were quickly branded irresponsible, immoral, and in the league with *génocidaires*. It was politically incorrect.⁸⁷

Clearly, theological and epistemological problems are raised by this mainstream narrative. In terms of knowledge construction, influenced by the state-engineered ‘correct reading’, which did away with local complexities and set the beginning of relevant history at July 1994; most journalists and instant academics dismiss thirty years of academic literature and research (1960-1994). Keane refers to impressive research done by Catherine Newbury, David Newbury, Lemarchand, Reyntjens and many others as ‘fanciful nonsense, a carry over from the colonial era’.⁸⁸ If these instant academics propose views and theories that ignore the findings of three decades of post-colonial research,⁸⁹ they obtain their information from the state.⁹⁰

One area where this simplified view of history and engineered knowledge harms the study of religion in Rwanda is certainly the complex role played by the Church –especially the Roman Catholic Church, on the political scene between 1959 and 1994. Most of the journalists and academics who subscribe to the mainstream narrative offer an essentialist reading which portrays the Catholic Church as a static, perpetually cohesive, opportunistic unit. It is difficult not to agree with Pottier that such a reading is ‘dangerous’.⁹¹ It is dangerous because it undermines an institution which played a significant role in the conscientization of a significant portion of the Rwandan population. Furthermore it is

broadcast live by FOR A.TV (97 min, 19 September 2011).

http://fora.tv/2011/09/19/Myth_and_Reality_After_the_Rwanda_Genocide#fullprogram

⁸⁵ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 76.

⁸⁶ Pottier, *Re-Imagining*, 56.

⁸⁷ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 63.

⁸⁸ Fergal Keane, *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 12.

⁸⁹ Catherine Newbury’s *Cohesion of Oppression* and Lemarchand’s *Rwanda and Burundi* are just two examples of such sources.

⁹⁰ Listen for instance to Rudasingwa’s confession about controlling information when he was still General Secretary of the RPF in *Revising Kagame*, 36th minute onwards.

⁹¹ Pottier, *Re-imagining*, 108.

dangerous because by consistently portraying the church negatively, there is a risk of depriving the country of an irreplaceable partner in reconciliation .

5.3. A Synthesis: ‘Good Muslim’, a paradigm by imputation and expectation

As a conclusion, the thesis of good Islam versus bad Christianity is for the most part a product of political re-imagination, characteristic of political new beginnings and foundational discourse in post-genocide Rwanda. It is based on verifiable facts, i.e certain acts of certain Muslim communities but it also carries a political agenda which wants to recognise past solidarities and redefine religious political agency within a new state. The deconstruction of the ‘Thesis’ has shown that Islam is not totally innocent in the history of Rwandan self-affliction.

By taking issue with the thesis that Muslims behaved better than Christians, this work rejects its oversimplification of a highly complex event, yet builds on its basic facts and propositions. It also emphasises the fact that in the presence of genocide, all comparisons between both communities destined for self-congratulation are irrelevant, inappropriate and ultimately immoral. The most righteous acts are truly like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) and many Rwandan Muslims would be the first to decline any position of ‘righteousness’ on the basis of their acts. The ‘Thesis’ rather operates an ‘imputation of righteousness’ and despite the deconstructive argument developed above, this work subscribes to this imputation, albeit from a different hermeneutical baseline. The imputation of goodness is not based solely on empirical facts but is operated by virtue of expectation.

However important Muslims’ good actions were in ‘Rwanda 94’, they do not provide a conclusive ground for the imputation of righteousness, not because of their ‘rags-like’ character but because they were not an exclusivity of (all) Muslims. Christians can also be credited with similar actions and there is no statistical evidence to compare the number of individual acts from both faith communities. Yet, the imputation is not entirely hypothetical or fictional either. The key of the imputation resides in the religious identity factors which ‘exerted themselves’ to inspire the response of Muslims as a community or Islam as a religious group. In fact, this ‘exerting’ followed three important trajectories: (a) group accountability exerted itself over individual isolation, (b) religious identity was exerted over ethnicity and (c) religious beliefs were exerted over genocidal reality. To genocide, Muslims responded with spiritual ‘Jihad’, understood as the exerting of oneself in the way

of God.⁹² Thus, the attitude of Muslims can be qualified as ‘*virtù*’ in a Machiavellian sense.⁹³

Therefore, by imputation, Islam and Muslims become a paradigm of religious agency in situations like genocide primarily on the basis of expectation. Expectation here has two connotations. In the first place, Islam responded to genocide in the manner expected of a body that identifies itself or is identified socially and politically as ‘religion’. Muslims resisted evil by means and resources specific to such a body, that is to say as an institutional body inspired by faith, in solidarity for good against evil and striving in the way of God. The other connotation is more subversive and refers to the oft repeated ‘marginality’ of Islam. It is indubitable that the actions of Muslims came into sharper focus because virtually nobody expected them from such a socially and politically marginalised group. Put simply, in a country of Christian hegemony, Muslims ‘surprised’ everybody –most probably even themselves, by acting out of and beyond expectation.

Ultimately, Islam/Muslim becomes paradigmatic of religious agency in its expected and subversive dimensions. Applied to ‘Rwanda 94’ Islam/Muslim becomes representative of all those who chose to be only ‘submissive’ to their faith and used its resources to ‘exert themselves’ against evil-genocide. In this imputed understanding, some nominal Muslims are excluded from this category whereas many denominational Christians become ‘Mujahedin’ who fought the good fight, resisted evil and kept the faith. Thus, in the context of genocide, ‘Good Muslim’ and ‘Bad Christian’ refer to imputed paradigms of ‘submission’; the first submitted to the way of God the second compliant to the seduction and fear of secular power.

⁹² On the meanings two main meanings of Jihad, see *Rubenstein, Jihad and Genocide*, 12-13. See also James T. Johnson, ‘Jihad and Martyrdom in classical and Contemporary Islam’, In the *Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*, 282-292.

⁹³ For Machiavelli, ‘*virtù*’ as the highest political virtue referred to the ‘response, summoned up by man, to the world, or rather to the constellation of *fortuna* in which the world opens up, presents and offers itself to him, to his ‘*virtù*’. In Arendt, *Past and future*, 137.

Chapter 6. Religion and Genocide (2): Christianity as a Paradigm of Compliance.

6.1. Methodological pitfalls on the topic

6.1.1. Acts of indictment

“At the level of faith, this is horrible. Ours is a church which celebrates a hundred years of Christianity. I can’t explain it. The tragedy is that the horror of the massacres surpassed the limits of people’s faith.”¹

‘The churches played an essential role in [the] descent into violence.

- As the primary voices of moral authority in Rwanda, the churches not only failed to speak out forcefully against the increasing exclusion of Tutsi and the growing violence against Hutu activists and Tutsi but also lent strong support to the regime that was encouraging exclusion and violence.
 - Since the churches had a long history of engaging in ethnic politics and of encouraging loyalty to state authority, Rwandans understood the failure of church leaders to criticise the regime and to decry ethnic scapegoating as an endorsement of the government’s inflammatory anti-Tutsi policies.
 - Because the churches did not use their influence to expose the government’s responsibility for much of the expanding violence and insecurity, they left Rwandans vulnerable to the regime’s supporters who attributed the country’s problems to the minority Tutsi
 - Although some individuals and groups within the churches spoke against the ethnic and political divide, theirs were isolated voices that the wider institutional churches not only failed to support but actively repressed as a threat to the established structures of church authority.
 - Because church officials at all levels of the institutions refused to condemn specific instances of ethnic and political violence, even when church personnel and buildings were targeted,
 - Because they encouraged continuing loyalty to the very state that was instigating this violence, many Rwandans concluded that ethnic and political violence was consistent with church teachings.
- The church thus failed to provide an obstacle along the path towards genocide but actually helped to create a moral climate where genocide was possible. Since its inception in Rwandan(sic), Christianity has consistently been, not a faith that preached brotherly love, but rather one that endorsed obedience to authorities, ethnic discrimination, and power politics. When the genocide finally occurred, thus, Christians, including some pastors and priests, felt little or no contradictions between their religious beliefs and their participation in the slaughter of Rwanda’s Tutsi.²

¹ Hugh McCullum, *The Angels have left us: The Rwanda Tragedy and the churches* (Geneva: WCC, 2004), 68.

² Longman, *Christianity and Genocide*, 162-163.

This long excerpt represents the kind of unabashed indictment of Christianity for its complicity in 'Rwanda 94'. Longman's strong condemnation of Rwandan Christianity is far from being an isolated voice. If one takes McCullum's *Angels have left us* (1995) as the starting point and Longman's *Christianity and Genocide* (2010) as the most recent, almost all studies on religion and 'Rwanda 94' during these fifteen years unanimously agree on the failure of the Christian churches to affect the outcome of the conflict. This should come as no surprise if, as argued above, the existing academic research on Rwandan society in general and the history of Christianity in particular have been taken into consideration.

From a purely methodological point of view, two critical remarks need to be raised against different studies on the role of Christian churches in "Rwanda 94". Firstly, the overwhelming majority of these studies unequivocally condemn the churches and blame has certainly to be apportioned. However critics apportion blame without succinctly presenting the expectations that the indicted community failed to meet. In other words, these critics do not clarify or reflect deeply on the theological, social and political mandate of the Christian churches in Rwandan society. Very rarely do studies on Christianity and genocide venture in the prescriptive sphere and offer a model of what a Christian community caught in the midst of a situation like genocide should be or do.³

Secondly, the scope of conceptualization is rarely clear. Concepts such as 'Rwandan Church' 'the churches' or 'Christianity' are thrown into the debate in the vaguest fashion, as if Rwandan churches or Christianity were one homogeneous group; synchronically and diachronically. Yet "Rwandan Christian Church" is an umbrella term for a diversity of denominations and a range of movements within the same denominations. In addition, it is not always clear whether the 'multinational' character of the institution is taken into consideration. In 1994, most Christian churches were still made up of indigenous people and foreigners, especially missionaries who still held leadership positions. Hence, the 'Rwandan Christian Church' is not a Church of Rwandan Christians; it is a Church of Christians in Rwanda. This subtle difference is vital.

As stated above, this research goes beyond denominations and national compositions and offers 'Rwandan Christianity' as a metaphorical concept for faith's compliance and

³ Grey's *To Rwanda* and Aguilar's *Theology, liberation and genocide* make the attempt but insufficiently and for understandable reasons.

complicity in politics and political situations that deny life and the ‘God of life’⁴ for Rwandan subjects; not only in 1994 but in the years that went before.

6.1.2. ‘Inheritance without a testament’: case for mitigation?

When these necessary conceptual complexities have been taken into consideration and prior to apportioning blame, it is important to bear in mind the unprecedented nature of ‘Rwanda 94’. In his *Feuillets d’Hypnos*, René Char wrote, ‘Notre héritage n’est précédé d’aucun testament’⁵, in reference to the unexpected situation of the ‘intellectuals’ who joined the French resistance movement. Ironically, the same lack of historical and traditional landmarks needs to be taken into account with regard to the perceived failure of Christianity to engage the Rwandan conflict. Put succinctly, there was no manual for a Christian caught up in the genocide. There were no blueprints to navigate the hundred days of bewildering chaos reminiscent of the Tocquevillian obscurity without any lights from the past to illuminate people and their actions.⁶

If McCullum is unrelenting in his condemnation of Christian churches, Prunier and Longman try to bring some sort of mitigation in their studies. The latter especially documents the failures and complicity of religion in general and Christian churches more specifically in violent episodes of recent human history.⁷ Longman’s argument echoes the work done by prominent Catholic scholars to settle the culpability of the ‘official Catholic Church’ in Germany.⁸ This line of thought might sound contradictory; if history is replete with examples of church’s complicity in political violence, why did Rwandan churches fail to use them as a springboard for resistance? The answer might be in Char’s missing ‘testament’, or more prosaically, in the lack of a tradition which, ‘selects and names, (...)’

⁴ In agreement with Aguilar’s argument that genocide is a denial of God; a rejection by humans of the possibility of God’s acceptance because they have rejected the possibility of loving others. Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide*, 116.

⁵ Arendt translates the stanza as ‘our inheritance was left to us by no testament’. Arendt, *Past and future*, 4.

⁶ A reference to Tocqueville’s statement, “since the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man waders in obscurity”. Quoted from Arendt, *Past and Future*, 6.

⁷ Longman offers as examples the complicity the Christian churches with Nazism, the ties between Croatian Nationalists and Catholicism; the role of religious identity in the Armenian genocide and more recently, the role of religion in the ex-Yugoslavia. Longman, *Christianity and genocide*, pp.10-18

⁸ According to Arendt, this thorough work was done by Catholic scholars ‘fully aware...that German Protestantism would fare hardly better, and possibly even worse if studied in the same admirable spirit of truthfulness.’ She singles out the work of Gordon Zahn and Friedrich Heer. Arendt, *Responsibility*, 220.

hands down and preserves.’⁹ Without such a tradition, there is no continuity; no possibility of the past informing the future.

However, if this mitigation can be advocated to tone down the blame, it does not remove the failure and the blame it calls for. What Islam and Muslims in Rwanda showed is that even without specific indications of how to cope with violence of genocidal proportions; sacred texts, traditions, rituals and common sense offer substantial guidance. Therefore, blame does not need to be leveled against vague expectations but against failure to conform to basic and fundamental tenets of the Christian mandate shared by all Christians. What is expected of any Christian is the ‘love of God and the neighbour’, as Jesus summarised all laws and prophecies. What is expected of the church as a social (and political) agent is to be the ‘salt of the earth’, injecting a never ending taste for life when political life has become putrid and petrified. What is expected of Christian leadership is honouring their tri-dimensional identity and mandate: as fellow pilgrims, to be in solidarity with other Rwandan citizens; as ‘peers’¹⁰, to be in dialogue with and minister to other leaders of *Imana*’s people and finally, as prophets appointed by *Imana* to speak the truth to power. In other words, what was expected and should have been expected of Christian believers was Christian freedom in action; freedom understood in its essentially political meaning, namely the possibility to act out of a principle.¹¹ It is out of this principled Christian freedom that the Rwandan churches should have responded to genocide; freedom that is a miracle, acts out miracles and expects miracles.

Once these expectations are clarified and analysed, it becomes possible to assess, to a certain extent, the failure of Christian communities and their leaders. In this research, such a demarche allows casting Christianity in the *persona* of ‘sinner’ because the events of 1994 testify to reactions and actions far below the expectations of a community of faith that so dominated the lives of Rwandans in spiritual and secular matters. Therefore, whilst engagement with the ‘Thesis’ in the previous chapter led to a reflection on how and why Islam exceeded expectations, this chapter shows how and why Christianity fell short of its faith capital in a situation of extreme political violence.

⁹ Arendt, *Past and Future*, 5

¹⁰ ‘Peers’ here emphasises the *equality in status* between secular and religious leaders in virtue of their respective role as ‘leaders of bodies, souls and minds’.

¹¹ Rather than the contemporary understanding of Christian freedom as the ‘freedom from politics’ inherited from Plato. See for more details Arendt, *Past and future*, 150-152.

6.2. *The failure of Christian communities as Sin.*

‘Since the Church is the institution claiming the monopoly of moral sanction, the acts of its leaders should be source of public definition of the situation and the emergent norms in times of crisis.’¹² Fein’s claim helps to resume the point made above that the discussion on faith communities in the Rwandan tragedy is better served when the dialogue is relocated on theological grounds. Thus, failure of faith communities *putatively* represented by Rwandan Christianity –but also any Muslim who became *ikigoryi*- needs to be understood as ‘Sin’. This sin is qualified as idolatry; idolatry of power both in its seductive (desire) and awe-inspiring (fear) aspects.

6.2.1. *Why ‘Sin’*

Different disciplines have concepts to qualify an evil moral act. For Christian Theology, ‘sin’ is the only possible qualification for a morally bad act; an act which, in Aquinas’ words, is not in accord with reason informed by the divine law.¹³ Qualifying acts and omissions of the Christian community in ‘Rwanda 94’ as sin is even more justifiable when sin is taken in the theological tradition of Eastern Christianity where it is viewed in terms of its effects on relationships both among people and between people and God.¹⁴ Furthermore, sin is the fitting qualification because it accounts for the ‘wrongdoing’ of individual Christians as well as institutional bodies; a provision which would be impossible if for instance only the ‘criminality’ of the acts was considered. In some legal systems, including pre-1994 Rwanda, only physical persons can be held responsible for a crime at the exclusion of ‘*personnes morales*’ like institutional churches, which acquire legal personality by fiction of the law.¹⁵

Hence, it is the task of theology to state that by not loving God and the neighbour, individual Christians sinned. By failing to be salt for the Rwandan morally decaying society, the church as a social agent sinned. By failing in their duty to tell the truth to their peers, i.e secular political leaders, Christian leaders sinned. By failing to fulfil their pastoral

¹² Helen Fein, *Accounting For Genocide* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 46.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*. 7:3, Translated by Richard Regan. Edited by Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 430ff. Applied to ‘Rwanda 94’ failure-sin has to be taken in its omission and commission aspects.

¹⁴ On Sin in Eastern Christian tradition see Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern orthodoxy through Western Eyes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 75-76.

¹⁵ For this reason, some Christian leaders have consistently maintained the innocence of the ‘Church’ and diverted the responsibility solely on individual believers who got involved in the genocide. See the statement of Archbishop Thadeus Ntihinyurwa in Gatwa, *Churches*, 229-230.

duties for leaders and people as loved flocks, church leaders sinned. For failing to assume their prophetic mantles and be shepherds of souls in dire circumstances, Christian leaders sinned. For giving into the enticement and fear of secular power(s), both flocks and shepherds sinned.

In all fairness, it is not only theology that makes this imputation of sin. In discourses specific to their respective disciplines, this is the stark truth that different scholars have tried to tell about the attitude and actions of Christian churches in the face of 'Rwanda 94'. The contribution of this work is to provide the theological language for a relevant hermeneutics of the event by not only highlighting its *peccant* nature but also by insisting on the historical processes that led Christian churches to becoming *peccable* communities. Therefore, this chapter has to be read alongside the historical data provided in the second chapter.

6.2.2. *What sin?*

It is not sufficient to qualify the acts (commission and omission) of the Christians as sin. Rather, it is important to ascribe a name or a description to that sin. This work argues that the compliance and complicity of Christian churches fulfill the criteria of idolatry; an idolatry of power. 'Idolatry' is the qualification capable of representing the sins committed in the genocide *per se* as well as the 'historical' sins of the Christian bodies, especially in its relationship with secular power.

Idolatry is a grave category of deviances from divine law, if not the gravest. The first commandment of the Decalogue warns exactly against this type of wrongdoing.¹⁶ However, this work does not use idolatry for the sake of matching the gravity of the commandment. It wants to emphasize the fact that prior to and during 'Rwanda 94', Christian churches and individual Christians chose the 'wrong option' in terms of committing their allegiance; an option for power and the powerful instead of the poor, the oppressed and God. Idolatry also brings into focus the theological aspect of Christians' compliance to sovereignty other than God's. Idolatry through compliance becomes an antonym of submission to God/Allah through resistance. Thus, as suggested by the propositions of the 'Thesis', Christianity stands in contrast with Islam.

¹⁶ The Decalogue is based on Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:4-21. In his "Questions of Exodus" (*Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri VII, Book II, Question lxxi*) Augustine suggests that in the Talmudic and Philonic divisions, idolatry is the theme of the first and second commandments. See Nancy Mahusay, *The History of Redemption* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2007), 345.

To say that with respect to 'Rwanda 94' Christianity stands guilty of historical idolatry of power takes one back to the idea of 'expectation' mentioned above. There has to be an ideal framework of reference and/or a historical model which provides a *modus vivendi* and expectations of any community of faith living under harsh political rule. Such a framework would show not only how that community strives to keep its identity under intense persecution, but most importantly how it resists the 'call' from secular powers to act against the provisions of the divine law as that community understands it. The subtle precision is very important because persecution or coercion only happens as retribution against non-compliance; that is to say if the invitation to partake in the sinful enterprise is turned down by the religious community. Alternatively, participation has its reward in the form of a share in the privileges of power.

For instance, the Jews of the exile found such a framework in the figure and the book of Daniel, which, according to Provan, is a portrayal of the 'historical struggle of the people of God under the domination of the rulers of the present world order.'¹⁷ During Babylonian captivity, Greek and Roman domination; retaining Jewish identity was difficult and carried with it certain risks as the 'People of God' were required to surrender allegiance that they could not give in all conscience.¹⁸ Another model would be the situation of the early Church where the imperatives of the new faith contrasted starkly with the paganism of the ruling Romans. A further example could be the concept of '*Dhimmitude*' which refers to the historical situation (from the 7th century) of Jewish, Christian or Pagan communities confronted with Islamic Jihad.¹⁹ Finally, South American churches confronted to oppressive military regimes could provide a paradigmatic framework.

Whatever model one chooses, the Christian community confronted with violence has basically two responses. The first, which conforms to expectations, is overt or subversive resistance and refusal to relinquish allegiance and identity. It translates into the declining of the invitation to sin against God; a case of 'here we stand, we cannot do otherwise.'²⁰ The second is acquiescence to the 'sinful' enterprise; a collaboration which takes the form of

¹⁷ Iain Provan, 'Daniel', in *Eerdmans commentary on the Bible*, ed James DG Dunn and John W. Rogerson, (Michigan -US and Cambridge-UK: Eerdmans Publishing company, 2003), 665.

¹⁸ Provan, *Daniel*, p.668.

¹⁹ On the concept of "Dhimmi" or "Dhimma" and 'Dhimmitude', see Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam. From Jihad to Dhimmitude. Seventh-Twentieth Century* 'NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses, 1996).; *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* 'NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses, 2003).

²⁰ Harry Bultema. *Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988. p.114.

compliance because it happens within a hierarchical partnership where the community of faith acknowledges and surrenders its allegiance to an authority other than God. In other words, the call to collaborate is in fact a demand of allegiance.

This transfer of allegiance can be the result of ‘seduction’ whereby members of the community or the whole community are enticed by the promises of power and privileges. It can also be the product of ‘fear’ or ‘terror’. In this case, the faith community might not trust so much in the promise of power privileges but is rather swayed by the awe of punitive retribution from secular powers. In either case, Bultema suggests, the community assesses a situation, takes stock of times and circumstances and decides to comply with them.²¹

At this stage, nothing can be said or even known on the ‘actual’ outcome because of the oft argued point in this work, namely contingency of moral choice and historical events.

Applied to the framework that is being presented and which reflects ‘Rwanda 94’ along with the political history leading to it, it means that there are no guarantees that resisting the idolatry of power and remaining faithful to the divine law would keep one from harm and pain. Similarly, the compliant believer has no insurance that the secular ruler, who is likely to be a fickle tyrant, would honour the promises made. What appears to be the decisive difference is that for the resistant faithful, the present is secure (having done what is ‘right’) whereas the future is open to possibilities such as providence, miracles and ultimately to God the ultimate judge. For the compliant believer, the future is closed either following careful deliberations or simply unbelief.

Applying this framework to ‘Rwanda 94’ leads to the conclusion that Christian communities opted for compliance, qualified here as idolatry. This choice happened diachronically and synchronically. The diachronic aspect of idolatry refers to historical compliance instead of historical struggle to maintain a Christian identity or what Gatwa calls a state of habitual sin from 1900 to 1994.²² The synchronic dimension focuses on the event-genocide of 1994. Both forms of idolatry carry aspects of ‘seduction’ and ‘fear’ although it will be argued that ‘seduction’ was more preponderant in diachronic idolatry whereas ‘fear’ became more predominant in the synchronic idolatry of 1994.

²¹ Bultema, *Commentary*, 113.

²² Gatwa’s *Churches and ethnic ideology* makes this argument from the perspective of the history of mission.

6.3. *'Bent Saplings and Spoilt Babes': Metaphors for a diachronic idolatry*

Contrary to Straus who challenges historical approaches—and rightly so to some extent (see above chapter 4), this work has consistently preferred genealogical, archaeological and historical approaches to the subject-matter. Like Benjamin's *Angelus Novus*, where a chain of events might be perceived, this work sees a single catastrophe.²³ This section is in keeping with this methodological choice. 'Bent saplings' and 'spoilt babes' as genealogical metaphors for Christianity's idolatry of power originate from two Rwandan maxims: *igiti kigororwa kikiri gito* and *Umwana apfira mu iterura*.²⁴ Both maxims are metaphors for compromised beginnings and their inevitable consequences. With reference to 'Rwanda 94', they point to the inescapable truth that the ineffectiveness of Christian communities and the incoherence of their acts should be traced to the initial dealings between Christian leaders and local political realities.

The 'Christian Church' in Rwanda, portrayed often and wrongly through Roman Catholicism, has not always been the dominant force that it became over time. From its first entry into Rwanda, Christianity constantly evolved in a political context marked by changing yet essentially similar totalitarian regimes. Contacts between political power and the church took the configuration of claims of allegiance by the former over the latter. Idolatry arose from the way in which these first Christians responded to the 'seducing' invitation of local opportunities for power or to its terror. Missionaries and early Christianity defined and redefined their political theology in response to *ad hoc* socio-political circumstances that they found themselves in, as proved by excerpts from Classe's *Letter to Levinhac* below. The key factor is that at some stage, the young churches felt the need to 'think of the future with more logic'²⁵ when it came to adapting to local political challenges.²⁶

²³ The excerpt on the Angel of History from Walter Benjamin's *Theses* was borrowed from Kirwan, *Political Theology*, 125.

²⁴ Respectively and literally, *A tree is straightened while it is still a sapling* and *A Child gets spoilt when they are still babes*.

²⁵ See Leon Classe, *Letter to Levinhac*, p.3 of translation in the appendix.

²⁶ This is what Aguilar calls a 'high Rwandan theology'; a way of theologizing which prevented Rwandan churches from challenging the possibilities of oppression and injustice, unlike their Latin American counterparts. See Aguilar, *Theology*, 17.

6.3.1. 'Going to Nyanza': idolatry through seduction

« *La route de Nyanza est peu sûre* ». ²⁷ As a supplemental metaphor to the previous two, 'Going to Nyanza' or 'Nyanza' in short refers to what one could term an 'ecclesiology of courtship' ²⁸; an instance of missionaries' political theology which believed, wrongly in this work's opinion, that the success of Christianity in Rwanda depended on the friendship and the help of *Umwami* and his Great Chiefs. Therefore, 'Nyanza' becomes a metaphor for the idolatry of power. ²⁹ Although the archival document that will serve as reference comes from Catholic sources, the second chapter has proved beyond doubt that there were no substantial differences in Protestant and Catholic political theologies. In that sense, Father – and later Monsignor- Classe has to be understood as the representative figure of Christian leadership, not only of his time but also of those who came after.

On the strategically (theological) importance of 'Nyanza', Classe complained to his superior Levinhac.

Alas! We are neglecting more and more that work in Nyanza. It is a mistake that we will bitterly regret. In my humble opinion the most vital, most important before all others in Rwanda, is the [evangelisation] of Batutsi or chiefs. For this ministry to be efficient, it must be carried out simultaneously in all our stations, but with its completion absolutely necessary in Nyanza. The struggle between the Protestants and us will be decided by who will have the chiefs. The posting of three missionaries in Nyanza was impossible until now: it was not the right moment and it would have created more difficulties. Even now is not the most favourable time. But to completely abandon what has been accomplished in Nyanza so far is to deliberately concede the dividends of five years of *rapprochement*. ³⁰

'Nyanza' was therefore the site and the seat of power where dwelt *Umwami*, the 'heart of the land'. ³¹ It was the frequent destination of chiefs and courtesans who wanted to accrue their sphere of influence. It was imperative, for missionaries to 'look toward and go to Nyanza' as courtesans among other chiefs because,

Their sympathy towards us will be even stronger as *they will see us go more regularly to Nyanza*, being (in) good (terms) with the King. Sympathy and personal politics will be joined. On the other hand, the benevolence of the King towards us

²⁷ Literally, 'the road to Nyanza is a treacherous one.' J Saverio Naigiziki. *Escapade Ruandaise. Journal d'un clerc en sa trentième année* (Bruxelles : G. A Deny. 1949), 175.

²⁸ Bayart speaks of 'Ecclesiologie de Chefferie' in his assessment of the post-colonial African church.

²⁹ 'Kigali' would also be a complement of this metaphor with reference to the seat of the *Résidence*, i.e. to supreme authority of colonial Germany in Rwanda.

³⁰ Classe, *Letter*, 2.

³¹ Classe, *Letter*. 2.

must be reinforced by small services that we will render to him, by the good relations that we will have with the chiefs (and) their good words on our behalf.³²

In order to secure this support,

[O]ur stations ... have to win the chiefs over at all cost, even if we think that they cannot be converted, which is an unfortunate thought in itself and in its practical consequences. *We should think of the future with more logic.*³³

There is nothing idolatrous in trying to secure the help and protection of local authorities in order to spread the Christian message. In fact, this approach was standard missionary procedure. It is equally valid that the Christian message must be adapted to local realities; something that unfortunately few missionaries managed to achieve positively in Rwanda. What is theologically reprehensible in the case of Christianity's beginnings in Rwanda is the manner in which that message was compromised –in its theological interpretation and ecclesial manifestation, in order to secure the friendship of power and the powerful. Social inequalities were translated into theological double standards whereby the aristocracy got into the church through the main gate whereas the weak and the poor had to take the narrow way. In the same way, adaptation becomes outright sinful if the operation results in emptying the Christian message of its core values to fit in local practices, structures and dynamics.

The need to think of the Church's future *with more logic* refers back to Bultema's point about weighing options and complying with circumstances. Within the framework of idolatry, this attitude also betrayed a sort of 'Prometheus syndrome', the Titan who distrusted Olympian gods and stole the fire for humankind.³⁴ With regard to the beginnings of Christianity in Rwanda and in light of Classe's comments, this 'promethean' attitude refers to the challenge that early Christians faced on the missionary field whether they could trust in God's power and love to carry out the salvific mission or whether 'fire' (light, spirit, knowledge of God) could come out of human ingenuity. Here, 'promethean' refers to an ecclesiology which distrusts God and is self-reliant.

This initial 'promethean' demarche adopted by Christian missionaries contrasts for instance with the onset decision to remain loyal to Yahweh one finds in the Daniel model. The historiography of the Rwandan church shows that Protestant missionaries relied more on German officers and officials whereas Catholic White Fathers used their great intelligence

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Classe, *letter*, 3. My emphasis.

³⁴ This thesis follows Aeschylus' version of the myth, *Prometheus bound* instead of Hesiod's *Theogony*.

and resources to get the Germans, the Belgians and the Rwandan aristocracy on their side.³⁵ With God's help only, the Christianisation of Rwanda might have failed but with the help of the aristocracy and colonial officials it was guaranteed to succeed.

Another element that reinforces the promethean beginnings of Christianity is the need for a 'foothold' championed by Classe;

We have to ready ourselves so that when, by the decree of the government, Nyanza becomes an open city (*ville ouverte*), we will only have to strengthen our foothold and from intermittent, make our presence more stable and definitive.³⁶

This element not only reinforces the promethean aspect of the missionary enterprise but also reveals its forceful -if not violent, nature. The 'sinful' character of this need of a foothold becomes more salient if one compares it with another model of mission, for instance 'the sending of the seventy' in Luke 10:1-12.³⁷ The latter presents a pressure-free model for mission; the disciple-missionaries were under no pressure to gain a foothold in the city and the inhabitants of the said city were under no obligation to accept the message. The spirit and politics of Christian mission rest on the principles of faithful obedience (to go) and freedom (to receive), which are at the heart of the person and work of Christ as well. As such, they undermine the very idea of unsolicited stay or foothold and the necessity to enlist any kind of 'enforcers' (the great chiefs) to achieve this stay or to help the message along.

Thus, diachronically the archaeology of idolatry is sunk in the very beginnings of Christianity and early Christian political theology like a congenital defect. By courting 'Nyanza' and seeking the support of great chiefs, early Christians yoked the Church with secular powers; thus establishing fellowship between righteousness and lawlessness, and communion between light and darkness.³⁸ To paraphrase Naigiziki's words, ultimately 'Nyanza' became the scene where the church figured more in bad than good, a sad place for opulence and ruin where Christianity might have buried the best of itself.³⁹

Yet again it is crucial to mitigate this criticism. A reading of missionaries' diaries and writings paint the picture of men –and women in rare cases- confronted with corrosive

³⁵ See Rumiya, Linden and De Lacger's contribution as shown in the second chapter. See also Classe, *Letter*, 3-4.

³⁶ Classe, *Letter*, 2.

³⁷ Some versions of the Bible and manuscripts have 'seventy two' disciples.

³⁸ 2Cor.6:14-15

³⁹ « Et Nyanza, la scène où j'ai fait figure en mal plus qu'en bien, le lieu sinistre de mon opulence et de ma ruine, où j'ai enseveli le meilleur de moi-même », Naigiziki, *Escapades*, 173.

socio-political circumstances and a complex and perplexing cultural reality in which they needed a foothold in order to spread the Gospel. Referring to the Rwanda of late nineteenth to early twentieth century as a 'crucible' is not an exaggeration. Only when early Christian missionaries are weighed alongside the formidable challenges they were faced with can one begin to understand why it was difficult to resist the insidious invitation of power. Compromise and failure become understandable if not excusable; sinful rather than criminal.

Lord Acton's famous words that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely apply aptly to the situation of Rwandan Christianity. The first step of early Rwandan Christians was to secure the support of power to ensure their foothold in the country. Gradually, they took the dangerous route of wanting that power for themselves and at some stage this desire became the overriding force behind missionary work; a choice that had very profound ecclesiological repercussions. The second chapter provided ample insights on the topic. However, two important examples help to see to what extent Rwandan Christianity got embroiled with power all along its history and how this situation had a direct impact on 'Rwanda 94'.

6.3.2. *Rwandan Constantinism*

In the case of Rwanda and with regard to the scope of this research, 'Rwandan Constantinism' has to be understood as the quasi obsessive efforts deployed by early Rwandan Christians, the White Fathers especially, not only to convert *umwami* and the aristocracy, but also to build a Christian Kingdom at the heart of Africa; an African Christendom. The ultimate end of this engineered 'constantinism' was to have a king made by and for the church and through whom the Church would actually exercise total control over the country by proxy. Linden stated that the period between 1924 and 1943 was a 'delirious time for Classe' as he could see the fulfilment of his vision of a 'Tutsi Catholic Aristocracy'. Moreover, he signed a '*contrat scolaire*' with Belgian colonial administration which put the whole education system in the hands of missions. Yet, the jewel in the crown was certainly the baptism of Mutara III and the dedication of Rwanda to Christ the King. Ironically, this event marks the beginning of a theological movement within the Rwandan church to question the wisdom of an alliance between the monarchy and the church.⁴⁰ Heremans called this approach a special missionary strategy elaborated progressively with

⁴⁰ Linden, *Christianisme*, pp.206-219, pp.220-22, pp.263-266.

the intention of making an ally and adept of the Rwandan ruling class so that through them missionaries could act upon the whole country.’⁴¹ It reads more like a strategy for indirect conquest of political power.

This stage of the idolatry of power and its privileges turned Christianity on its head in Rwanda. If Christ’s ‘disempowering’ kenosis,⁴² obedience and servanthood were to be taken as a model and an authority in matters of Christian mission and ministry; early Rwandan ministers and missionaries strayed in the opposite direction. They turned literally into kingmakers and power brokers at the highest level of national politics. The Christian Church grew in political stature to such an extent that neither *Uwami* nor the chiefs or successive colonial officials could govern the country any longer without the help of the church.⁴³

The history of Christianity is there to dissuade any attempt to pursue temporal and secular power, whatever the real motives are. When the Church retained this sort of absolute power following the Edict of Milan, the end result was not salvation and liberation of the masses of believers. Rather it descended into the violence of the Inquisition and other medieval horrors. Classe needed the chiefs in order to ‘have the people in a serious manner’⁴⁴ supposedly for conversion purposes, but one gets a clear impression that the power sought and acquired was not intended for the converts as subjects of salvation and liberation. Rather, the lack of power would ‘put Catholicism in the situation of inferiority befitting a slave, to condemn it to be constantly faced with the hardship of oppression’⁴⁵. Power benefited ‘Catholicism’; in other words, power was needed for power’s sake. Thus, the imputation of idolatry and corruption is justified.

The pursuit and acquisition of this *potestas indirecta sui generis* –for in reality it was very much direct and political- is ‘sinful’ in at least two serious ways. First of all, by instrumentalising the chiefs, the Church fully replicated the colonial practice of the Belgian administration. Instead of being an agent of liberation, the Church then became a colonizing and oppressive element. When one bears in mind that this ‘intermediary’ role of indigenous authorities was at the heart of the increasing resentment of the mass (of

⁴¹ Heremans, *Eglise, Politique, Société*, pp. 439,447.

⁴² Grey speaks of ‘kenosis of cruciform vulnerability’. See *To Rwanda*, p.98.

⁴³ See Linden, *Christianisme*, pp.200ff.

⁴⁴ Classe, *Letter*, 2.

⁴⁵ Classe, *Letter*, 2.

oppressed Bahutu) and the violence of 1959, the connection between Christianity's colonial position and 'Rwanda 94' is no longer as tenuous as one might think.

Secondly, in terms of ecclesiology or practical theology, this situation resulted in a sort of 'disconnected' pastoral practice. It created a real distance between the pastors and the flocks, especially within the Catholic Church. Converts did not come to faith through the direct efforts of the priest/pastor but following the actions, positive influence or coercion, of the go-in-between chief. There exists a deep bond, a pact between a convert and the person who 'leads them to faith' (Paul and Timothy can serve as a biblical illustration). In the case of the 'indirect' converts, this intimate connection was absent and historically it became arguably the 'missing link' between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of Rwandan Christianity. In this sense, Classe's *logic* spelt real disaster for the future of Christianity because it almost created flocks that could not recognise the voice of the shepherd and respond to it. Thus, pastoral authority, so crucial for Christian leadership, was compromised from the beginning. Once again, the pathway from this type of ecclesiology to the reality of Christians' participation in 'Rwanda 94' becomes less convoluted.

The 'Constantinism' adopted by Rwandan Christianity in its beginnings continued to have detrimental effects on the church as well as the society in general. Historically, it became an actualisation of what Bayart has called a 'reciprocal cooption of elites'⁴⁶. This reciprocal courtship and assimilation of elites triggered by the church's constantinism led progressively to its complicit silence in the face of repetitive massacres and abuse of human rights. This silence was offered in return for and was part of what Bayart called the '*Politique du ventre*'. Through this concept, he alludes to a series of political and economic practices by means of which the Church participated in or identified itself with the authoritarian nature of the state and the control of the economic channels of production. This led Christianity to a political *ecclésiologie de chefferie* in which the pastor, the priest or the bishop required a '*rituel du chef*'. On the economic front, the Church became an abrasive economic entrepreneur whose activities responded to the exploitative and predatory logic of the state. According to this logic, those who possess political powers also

⁴⁶ Bayart, *State in Africa*, Chapter 6.; *Religion et Modernité*, 290. The scope of Bayart's work covers the whole of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa and he adds traditional elites (*chefs coutumiers*) and intellectuals to the categories of religious and political elites. But for the purpose of this study and with regard to the realities of Rwanda, these supplemental categories are subsumed in the religious and the political.

have total control on the means of the accumulation of wealth and strive to keep hold of this control.⁴⁷

6.3.3. The 'Hamitic Hypothesis' and the reality of a failed 'uncoupling'.

Another example of the corrosive and corruptive effect of power on the church was the application of the 'Hamitic Hypothesis' (also referred to as the Hamite Thesis or Hamitic myth) to Rwandan socio-political dynamics. This hypothesis has received extensive treatment, especially from African scholars who have traced its origins from an implausible hermeneutics of Genesis 9-10 by the early church and its mutation into pseudo-scientific racism in the writings of people like Gobineau and Renan.⁴⁸ In these works, there is a progressive displacement of the 'curse' from Cham, the third son of Noah, to the people of black skin, especially populations of the African continent. This curse is reversed when these black descendants of Cham bring civilisation to the inferior Bantu peoples of Africa⁴⁹ An indicative definition of the hypothesis applied to the Great Lakes Region is provided by Bashizi Cirhagarhula;

In the Great lakes region, the Hamitic Hypothesis refers to that process of considering whatever good there is in (Great Lakes) African culture as an invention of populations other than Bantu; populations who respond to the archaic appellation of "Hamites" such as the Cwezi, the Tutsi, the Hima, the Hinda, etc.⁵⁰

Gatwa and Balibutsa have both shown in detail how explorers and Christian missionaries applied this hypothesis to Rwandan society and popularised its implications through their writings.⁵¹ These explorers and missionaries repeatedly described the Tutsi as a splinter of the African Hamites; a caste of aliens of Semitic descent whose gigantic size could go well above two metres and whose physical beauty made one think of fairies.⁵² These Hamites would have subjugated the indigenous Bantu populations and brought civilization to

⁴⁷ Bayart, *Religion*, 141. Until this day, the amount of land to which different churches claim entitlement is quite huge if one bears in mind the importance of land in a small country like Rwanda. The situation becomes revealing when one realizes the vital role that land appropriation played in the execution of the Genocide by masses of villagers.

⁴⁸ Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines. Oeuvres Complètes de Gobineau*. Ed., J. Gaulmier (Paris : Gallimard, 1983), Ernest Renan, *Histoire Générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*. 2nd ed. (Paris : Michel Lévy, 1858).

⁴⁹ For a succinct yet informative summary of the Hamitic Hypothesis see Serge Tornay "Pour Mémoire" in Verdier et al, ed. *Rwanda: Un génocide du XXe siècle*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995. 57-63.

⁵⁰ Bashizi Cirhagarhula, "The Hamite Myth, State formations and inter lake acculturation". In Anon., *The ancient civilization of the Great Lakes people*. Paris and Bujumbura: Karthala, 1981.

⁵¹ Gatwa, *The Churches*, pp59-82, Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, pp.212ff.

⁵² Baumann calls them the purest of African Hamites, better than the Masai, the Hima, the Ha and closer to the Hamites of Galla and Abyssinia. See Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 247.

them.⁵³ In particular, Balibutsa has ably demonstrated how the hypothesis recuperated and adopted local simmering ethnic tensions and transformed them into an abyssal chasm between the Tutsi and the Hutu.⁵⁴

This section is not concerned with the Hamitic Hypothesis *per se* but intends to show to what extent the application of this twisted racial theory to Rwandan society reflects idolatry of power by Rwandan Christianity. It argues that by popularizing this hypothesis, Christian writers were in effect, deliberately or unintentionally, magnifying and sacralising the power that they were 'yoked' with and from which they drew their own power by association. Most pre-independence Christian writers and thinkers, the majority of whom were religious figures, subscribed to this hypothesis.⁵⁵ For instance, in his programmatic letter referred to above, Classe was emphatic that in Rwanda more than anywhere else, (Tutsi) rulers and (Hutu) ruled mass, the conquerors and the conquered were not the same race.⁵⁶

Fathers Pagès and Kagame produced systematic studies about the hypothesis and established radical political connections between the mythical Hamites and the Tutsi elite in power in Rwanda.⁵⁷ In their study of Rwandan political history, both Kagame and Pagès remain staunch defenders of the hamitic hypothesis. Even if they discarded the scientifically implausible celestial origins of the ruling Nyiginya dynasty, they still reprised the theory that all the Tutsi were an external civilising race, lords among men, born to rule and command. Originally, this birthright to command applied to the political, but with the emergence of indigenous clergies, it was automatically extended to the religious sphere of power as well.⁵⁸

In relation to power, this epistemic position operates at two levels. First, it acts as self-reassurance for early Western Christians in Rwanda that there was nothing reprehensible in

⁵³ In England, such a position was developed by C G Seligman, Professor of Ethnology at the University of London; See Gatwa, *Churches*, 69

⁵⁴ Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, pp241ff

⁵⁵ Gatwa shows in great detail that both Catholic and Protestants subscribed epistemologically to and encouraged the propagation of the Hamitic Hypothesis. Gatwa, *Churches*, 68-98. See also Linden, *Christianisme*, 218-219.

⁵⁶ Classe, *Letter*, 2.

⁵⁷ The former wrote *Un Royaume Hamite au Coeur de l'Afrique* (1933); the latter has published extensively on Rwanda but the work which is relevant to the present argument is his *Inganji Kalinga* (1950), Literally, *Kalinga the Triumphant*. Kalinga was the royal drum of the Nyiginya dynasty between the 18th and 20th centuries.

⁵⁸ According to Linden, Classe and other missionaries did not think much of the Bahutu's capacity to command and in any case, if the privilege of birth of the Tutsi were to be maintained politically, it followed that the church had to be led by the Tutsi as well. *Christianisme*, 219.

sharing power with remote, albeit degraded, Caucasian relatives. In that case, the ‘constantinism’ evoked above was only a ‘pedagogical’ support for the Tutsi aristocrats to realise a destiny that was rightly theirs. However, and this is the second and more detrimental level, by assimilating all the Tutsi to the aristocracy in power and presenting Rwandan monarchy as a higher stage in civilization, Kagame and Pagès also underwrote its inequalities and injustices.⁵⁹

This is where a supplement on the analysis made by Gatwa and Maniragaba is needed. Both rightly situate the hamitic hypothesis in the context of the rise and development of ethnic ideology. However, this ideology was developed within a broader context, namely power and hegemony not just ethnicity. It is an unquestionable fact that through the epistemic validation of the hypothesis, Christian thinkers like Kagame and Pagès added fuel to ethnic ideology in the making. Yet, the ultimate result was the justification and vindication of an oppressive political regime whose power the institutional church shared and basked in. In all fairness, Gatwa almost rejoins this line of argument when he rightly rules out ignorance of these writers of the differences among the Tutsi. He singles out the colonial project and the motto of *divide and rule* as the ultimate end served by discourses on the Hamitic hypothesis. Unfortunately his analysis remains cursory and the motif of triangular power between colonial officials, missionaries and local elite –including indigenous clergy- does not receive satisfactory engagement.⁶⁰

Clearly, the selective use of Pagès and Kagame as the ‘voices’ of the hypothesis, accepted or unchecked by the institutional church, is intended to be representative of other minor works from Protestant and Catholic sources.⁶¹ It is not possible to overestimate the idolatrous nature of the adoption of the hypothesis by the Church. Maniragaba is right to

⁵⁹ Balibutsa makes this critique even more forcefully: “Kagame was writing, as was Pagès, in a deceptive and dangerous time; when the church, the colonial power and Batutsi aristocracy and clergy were pulling in the same direction. It was an era of triumphalism in the Rwandan church. It was a period of optimism for the church and the Tutsi aristocracy; a time of reciprocal exaltation for both institutions. [...] it must have appeared as the appropriate time to re-write the history of the kingdom. The result was a revisionism which read the past with the deforming lenses of the present. The end result was an ideological historiography intended to maintain the *status quo*.” Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 376-377.

⁶⁰ Gatwa, *The Churches*, 69.

⁶¹ This approach serves another aim implicit throughout this chapter, namely the refusal to distinguish between missionaries and indigenous clergy. The reason behind this position is the recognition that internal and external explanations are inextricably linked. Missions and colonisation might have contributed to amplify or polarize structures of inequality in Rwanda, but this inequality already existed before and continued to exist outside the direct influence of the new comers. Bayart makes this point in his reflection on the relations between African modern state and religion. Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp.30ff.

call Pagès' book a 'fantasist *roman*' and a time bomb because of the profound and negative repercussions it had on the Rwandan knowledge system, politics and society.⁶² However, Kagame's *Ingnaji* had an even bigger impact in terms of the fracturing and polarising of Rwandan society; especially because it was written in Kinyarwanda and therefore accessible to a broader audience. The blame is not so much on these two sources and their authors as on the hypothesis they championed and its wide acceptance in early mainstream Rwandan Christianity. Whilst the intentions of the Christian leaders and these selected authors might receive the benefit of doubt, the consequences of their theological and intellectual acquiescence to the hamitic hypothesis are too tragic to be excused.

As argued above, the choice of a hierarchical myth of origin over alternative variances which championed common, therefore equal, ancestry of all Rwandans was motivated by the seduction and corruption by power. At the level of faith and theology the choice is even more tragic since the discarded variance of the myth actually link Tutsi, Hutu and Twa to a common ancestor, Kanyarwanda; himself son of *Imana*⁶³. The position of the church on the matter rendered theological and intellectual legitimacy to structural inequality by legitimizing the thesis of three races or ethnic groups predestined to meet and constitute a hierarchical society of masters and slaves.

In this sense, Rwandan Christianity failed to operate the 'uncoupling' that Žižek deems to be at the core of Christianity and the Christian message. Kirwan suggests that Žižek was inspired by Schelling's notion of *entscheidung* or 'slicing' as the dominant feature of Christ's appearance.⁶⁴ Christian uncoupling or unplugging is, Žižek suggests, an active work of love in which Christians have to disengage themselves from the inertia that constrains them to identify with the particular order in which they were born.⁶⁵ For Žižek, Christianity's essence lies in the uncoupling from given ethnic and political identities.⁶⁶ Gatwa's work is a well researched, historically detailed and powerful indictment against Christianity's failure to realise this 'uncoupling' in Rwanda.

⁶²Balibutsa is not the only one to have questioned the academic validity of Pagès' work. Chrétien was also very critical of his methodology that he calls a "*bricolage* of sources, a falsifying manipulation of historical sources; especially the myths of origins." Quoted in Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, pp.243-247.

⁶³ For this version provided by the Mutwa Kadogo, see Maniragaba, *Archéologie*, 353.

⁶⁴ Kirwan, *Political Theology*, 49.

⁶⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or Why the Christian Legacy is worth fighting for* (London: Verso, 2000), 129.

⁶⁶ Kirwan, *Political theology*, 50.

Rather than ‘slicing’ through ethnicity and emphasising the unity of humankind through Christ’s work, the Hamitic hypothesis contributed largely to the reinforcement of ethnicity. It provided the Hutu leaders with a virulent racial rhetoric whilst confirming Tutsi aristocrats in their advocacy for a political *status quo*.⁶⁷ It resurfaced in the political discourse of the 1990s following the start of the civil war and the introduction of political parties, before ultimately exploding in the scandalous tragedy of 1994. Even after the genocide, the hypothesis continues to divide Rwandan society and scholarship on Rwanda. Lemarchand and Newbury have shown that the idea of ‘retributive genocide’ based on the ‘provocation thesis’ is closely tributary to this old myth.⁶⁸ On the other hand, De Lespinay has accused Overdulse of using an irresponsible interpretation of the myth in his work on the Rwandan genocide.⁶⁹

Constantinism as a form idolatry can be somewhat understandable as necessity for political survival of the church. The adoption of the hamitic hypothesis, however, reflects a higher order of idolatry. It translates a deliberate intention to reinforce and endorse divisions within the Rwandan body politic. The sinful nature of this endorsement is compounded by the fact that against this segregationist and divisionist hypothesis; Rwandan popular wisdom offered alternative myths which emphasised the unity of all Rwandans as sons of Kanyarwanda, the son of *Imana*. The theological outcome was the option for more oppression for the oppressed and more support for the oppressor. Through the church’s endowment, the hypothesis became the overarching paradigm in politics, theology and the overall order of knowledge, carrying within itself a dangerous structural pathology that Balibutsa rightly calls a ‘logic of vampirism’ (*logique vampirique*) that fed on ethnicity.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Linden thoroughly documents how both Hutu elites and Tutsi Royalists used the myth to justify their positions in the 50s, and especially the crucial period of 1955-59; leading to the first major massacres of Tutsi from November 1st onward. Linden, *Christianisme*, 314-330.

⁶⁸ Lemarchand, *Disconnecting*, np.; David Newbury, *Understanding Genocide*, 73-97.

⁶⁹ Charles de Lespinay, ‘Religion and the Genocide in the East African Great Lakes Region’. In Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack, ed. *In God’s name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (USA: Berghran Books, 2001), pp173-176. Against Cornelis-Marinus Overdulse, *Rwanda: Un Peuple avec une Histoire* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 1997), pp.181-186.

⁷⁰ Balibutsa, *Archéologie*, 376.

6.3.4. *Bourgeois ecclesiology and the emergence of 'Negative' Political Theology*

At the level of ecclesiology, Constantinism and the Hamitic hypothesis generated a bourgeois Christianity, not unlike the one criticised by Metz⁷¹ but peculiar to the Rwandan context of the time. This bourgeois character was captured by Naigiziki in his satirical comment on Sunday masses in Nyanza. According to Naigiziki, Sunday mass in the royal capital had become *une affaire du beau monde* or a gathering of the trendy and the beautiful in high society. There, as everywhere else, the indigent, *le poulleux*, was made to feel out of place and ashamed to mix his rags with such fine costumes on display.⁷² Church attendance was thus not an occasion of pious worship but an occasion for competing members of the high class to flaunt wealth and the finest things of this world.

Conversely, it was a place where the poor were made to feel unfit to be or simply accepted as a spectator; an admirer of the powerful. It stands to reason that such a situation would give rise to sentiments of envy, jealousy, resentment or in a slightly positive way, a desire to emulate such wealth; to be part of the *beau monde*. Poverty was no longer a source of beatitude; it was something to be ashamed of. Aesthetics and economics were the marks of worship rather than piety and devotion. To a certain degree, this place would have been dangerous to faith similarly to the 'den of robbers and money changers' that Christ castigated. The religious spectacle that Naigiziki describes belongs to the 1950s, yet an honest observer of Rwandan mainstream Christianity at the eve of the war and genocide (1990-1994) would still have detected fragilities under the disguise of growth and success.⁷³

An additional consequence of seduction by power, which reinforces the previous point, was the development of extremely hierarchical Christian communities that reproduced a model of power and obedience present in the secular body politic. All Christian churches became progressively centralized. Even the relatively recent Pentecostal church created on a more biblical and egalitarian basis ended up following the trend.⁷⁴ This model of church was conducive to the same logic of power struggle that marred the secular space. Longman has

⁷¹ On German bourgeois Christianity that Metz is so critical of, see among others J. B Metz, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in postbourgeois world* (New York: Crossroads. 1987).

⁷² Quoted in Linden, *Christianisme*, 267.

⁷³ On the weaknesses of Rwandan Christianity in the years leading to and during the genocide, Longman is the recommended authority, although his work seems to owe much to Linden for historical analysis. However, he acknowledges that his contribution is lacking in theological depth. See Longman, *Churches and Genocide*, 2010.

⁷⁴ Nsanzurwimo. *Histoire*, p.121

engaged with churchly infightings and power struggles and connected them to churches' inertia in the face of genocide and genocide ideology.⁷⁵ These power struggles sometimes, if not often, followed ethnic lines or were simply fought for the sake of keeping power.

Clearly, wealth versus poverty and absolute authority versus abject obedience do not augur for healthy ecclesiology. Previous sections alluded to the distance that 'indirect proselytising' created between shepherds and flocks. Hierarchy reinforced by ethnic polarisation created vertical and horizontal fractures within the Christian bodies. Beyond practical challenges like the need of priests for big congregations, clergy and congregations did not have an 'intimate' relation out of which a healthy pastoral leadership and authority would prosper. Conversions were not always a result of coercion but they were rarely a result of conviction.⁷⁶ Ethnic injustices translated into class inequalities, thus a place where the absorption of slave and masters in Christian oneness could not be realised. Lack of pastoral intimacy was matched by lack of communion within the body of believers; both interdenominationally and intradenominationally. It can be suggested that with regard to the study of Christianity and genocide in Rwanda, Norman Geras' 'contract of mutual indifference' started a long time before the tragedy rather than being a consequence of it.⁷⁷ With time, indifference grew into fear and hatred, which placed the prospective victims 'outside the universe of obligation.'⁷⁸

Although the majority of this chapter associated the seduction of power with religious leaders, the rank and file of Christians themselves were not indifferent to the 'crumbs from the table.' It has been argued previously that conversions often followed a utilitarian trajectory; be it access to education or political position. However, the greatest seduction of power for common people, including the majority of Christians, was manifested through the almost abject and unquestioning obedience to authority. This situation had basically taken away their subjectivity and humanity. As one of Straus' interviewees pointed out; "I

⁷⁵ Longman, *Churches and Genocide*, 155ff. See also Gatwa, *Churches*, 143-147.

⁷⁶ As Rumiya reflected, 'It is on the ground of political and economical realism that the Rwandan church was built.' Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 18. See also Gatwa, *Churches*, pp.95-98; Linden, *Le Christianisme*, pp.250-251.

⁷⁷ Norman Geras, *The Contract of Mutual indifference: Political Philosophy after the Holocaust* (London: Verso, 1998).

⁷⁸ Quoted in Lemarchand, 'Disconnecting', *Idea Journal*. Accessed 30 July 2012.

will tell you that Rwandans, *we are like cows* (my emphasis). When the authorities say move to the left, we move to the left.”⁷⁹

At the level of theology, idolatry through seduction by power testifies to what is referred to in this work as ‘negative –or passive Political Theology of obedience’. This Theology rested on the premise that Christians must obey authority because all authority comes from God and therefore whoever obeys the authorities obeys God. What makes this Theology ‘negative’ is that it fails to operate a necessary hierarchy of Christian norms, of which love is the first and the greatest. It can be suggested that a Christian pedagogy that values obedience at the expense of love constitutes the best argument for religious leadership’s desire for power.

More importantly, this negative political theology failed Rwandans as subjects of theology and politics. It has already been suggested that Kagame argued that the greatest failure is failure to achieve or realise one’s ultimate end. For Christianity, the ultimate end is freedom through knowledge of the truth. In this sense, Christianity failed to elevate the Rwandan subject-believer to this end. As a consequence, believers failed as well in as much as they could not reach this stage of full maturity. It can be argued confidently that in Christian doctrine and theology, obedience must be freely given otherwise it becomes a product of malice or fear.

Thus, theologically speaking, the most tragic outcome of idolatry through the seduction of power was the failure of Christianity to communicate God; the ultimate truth that sets free. Only then, could it have led believing subjects to a fully grown stature of truth-knowing and love-giving freedom which is capable of surrendering allegiance to what is good and right whilst resisting what is evil and wrong. The alternative was, unfortunately, the mass production of believers easily swayed by political events and prone to relativising norms that should remain absolute and trading in allegiances that should never have been negotiable.

This state of spiritual stagnation was made obvious by the rise of charismatic churches and movements (*abarokore*). The Pentecostal church recruited from non-practicing Catholics, Anglicans and Presbyterians. At the same time, renewal movements (*ububyutse*) created

⁷⁹ Lyons and Straus, *Intimate*, 39. See also the analysis made by Lemarchand on ‘Grassroots killers’ in *Disconnecting*. Reyntjens whom Lemarchand refers to uses the concept of “social conformism” to describe this attitude.

groups of *Abarakore* in traditional Protestant churches and the ‘Charismatics’ were causing a stir within the habitually tightly controlled Catholic Church. These dissenting voices were questioning theologies –and epistemologies- of obedience, leaders without spiritual and moral accountability and a soporific spirituality in the face of impending ‘rivers of blood’.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, these were isolated voices.

6.4. “Kill or be killed”, Idolatry through fear

On April 18, 1994 I found myself running for my life after the place where some friends and I were hiding was discovered and attacked. In my flight, I inevitably came across one of the many roadblocks that had been set up by gangs of killers. The people manning the makeshift roadblock carried all sorts of traditional weapons. Next to the roadblock lay a slain dog, an old man whose Achilles tendons had been cut and had bled to death, and a priest’s robe.⁸¹ The whole spectacle had a surreal cold horror to it and it genuinely filled me with utter panic.

After stopping me and checking my identity card, the mob obliged me to lie flat on the tarmac and called the ‘boss’ or chief executioner to come and ‘do the business’. When I saw the man coming and wielding two knives, one long and the other short, my panic turned to terror. The feeling was so sickening and abject that it made me almost despise myself. The trembling, the sweating, the tears, the possibility of dying in such a desolate place at such a young age and on such a beautiful day, for no reason whatsoever created a form of paralysis of the brain.

Fortunately, the ‘boss’ seemed to have had enough of killing that day and after poking my neck with the tip of the big knife he concluded that he knew me and therefore would not kill me. Rather, he would settle for money, if I did not have money he could just do with cigarettes. Fear and irrationality are intimate bed fellows and I started mentally castigating myself for not having either, even though I was not a smoker and all the money

⁸⁰ During the Kibeho apparitions; the young people warned consistently against impending disaster, violence and bloodshed. In Charismatic protestant churches, prophecies used biblical imagery such as the barbarism and violence of the Medes and the Persians. For a summary of the Kibeho apparitions see Augustin Misago, “Eglise Catholique: Signes d’espoir” in *Vivant Univers* 357/2/Mai-Juin, 1985. See also Longman, *Christianity and genocide*, 155ff. The prophecy about the Medes and the Persian was delivered by a man called Meschac in Gihundwe Pentecostal church in November 1993.

⁸¹ Later on, I would learn that Fr Joseph Boneza, the curate of my catholic parish of Mibilizi was killed at that same road block. He had dedicated his life to protect refugees at the parish churches. For a tribute to his memory and courage by African Right Watch see, <http://rwandablog.wordpress.com/16-stories-from-tribute-to-courage-african-rights-publication/>

had been spent trying to stay alive. Fortunately again, the 'boss' thought for a minute, asked me to stand up, gave me a vicious kick in the side and told me to continue on my way with a laconic 'I am sure somebody else will take care of you!'

Contrary to the style used in this work up to this point, this section starts with a personal experience which might serve better the analysis of faith and fear in the face of brutal, genocidal violence. The reason for this demarche is a simple one; as one who has been faced with the crudest and most dehumanising form as well as its paralysing effects, it is then possible to understand the concept fully. This section focuses almost exclusively on fear as the indicator or component of idolatry that became paramount during the genocide-event in 1994. It does not ignore the seductive promises that motivated some of the killers; promises of a Tutsi-free country, land, wealth, women but most of all, the most pernicious form of seduction which is the feeling of having the power of life and death over another person.

6.4.1. Politics of Fear and Politics of Atrocity

The brief personal experience of fear provided above was shared by many victims and more importantly, most perpetrators, especially those that Lemarchand calls 'Grassroots killers' who were motivated by the same feeling only seen from a different perspective.

The argument that crisis situations generate irrational fears that are rationally exploited by perpetrators of mass violence is nowhere more dramatically illustrated than by the renewed outpouring of racist propaganda diffused through Kigali's hate-radio in the days following the crash. (...) Many Hutu were driven to kill their Tutsi neighbours because they knew they had no other option; refusal to comply meant that they themselves would be killed the next day.⁸²

As a political act, the genocide was triggered and accompanied by a 'Politics of fear'. The Hutu extremists feared and instilled the fear that all the Tutsi had to be eliminated to prevent them from capturing the state.⁸³ This politics of fear explains to a great extent the overwhelming receptivity and initiative that the organizers of the genocide found from the mass of Hutu populations. Not only were many terrorized into taking part, but also the Tutsi were presented as a formidable enemy, a bloodthirsty breed of vipers that would stop

⁸² Lemarchand, *Disconnecting*. Accessed 30 July 2012. See also the discussion of local dynamics of the genocide by Straus, *The order of genocide*, pp.61-94 and the general conclusion.

⁸³ Ian Linden, "The church and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Tragedy", in Baum and Well's *The Reconciliation of People: Challenge to the Church* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2009), 48.

at nothing to conquer power and reduce Hutu back into slavery.⁸⁴ Theories of ‘retributive genocide’, ‘genocide by provocation’ and ‘pre-emptive genocide’ echo this politics of fear which is another use of the Hamitic hypothesis.

The Rwandan genocide particularly embodied what Humphrey calls ‘politics of atrocity’; a concept that refers to acts of face-to-face violence intended to torture, rape, massacre and mutilate the victims as a political strategy. These acts of excessive violence identify and victimise categories of individuals in order to terrorise both potential victims and those who become its spectators. The excess is in the transgressive character of the acts against innocent non-combatants, in public places and in its bodily mutilations. The violence is transgressive because it is beyond any expectation of the victims and beyond their comprehension. The very horror of atrocity terrifies those who face it and causes disbelief in distant audiences. The efficacy of the politics of atrocity depends on its victims being witnesses as cruelty must be made visible to terrorise.⁸⁵

Two additional features of ‘Rwanda 94’ reflect this politics of atrocity. As a general rule, the victims did not pose any resistance even when the killer could have been physically weaker. With the exception of a few places like Bisesero, Mbare and Mibilizi where victims resisted or fought back, the majority died literally like the proverbial lambs taken to the slaughterhouse. The politics of atrocity set in motion by the *genocidaire* regime had done a thorough job and convinced the victims and spectators that the extermination of the Tutsi was inescapable; the issue being how and when they would die. Secondly, most killers repeatedly said that they were coerced to kill because otherwise they would have been killed or they would have lost their loved ones. Hatzfeld⁸⁶ and Straus captured and gave voice to this fear in their interviews with killers and victims. Straus, more than most, captures the ‘pathetic’ aspect of this fear, both in its terror and its shame.⁸⁷ If the politics of fear and atrocity caused a visceral fear in victims, there is no reason to deny that it did not have the same effects on the killers. In fact, whereas the ‘genocide’ aspect of the massacres

⁸⁴ This rhetoric crucially omitted the fact that all low-class Tutsi were in the same predicament as Hutu masses; a clarification that Gatwa makes very ably. See Gatwa, *Churches*, pp.32-33.

⁸⁵ Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 97.

⁸⁶ See Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: The killers in Rwanda Speak. A report*. Trans. by Linda Coverdale (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 2003).

⁸⁷ Lyons and Straus, *Intimate*, 84-86

targeted only Tutsi, everybody else was a target –and most fell victim- of the politics of fear and atrocity, including the engineers of this abhorrent strategy.⁸⁸

6.4.2. *Atheism of force and Atheism of fear*

Like non-believers or believers from other faiths, Christians were also targeted and inevitably fell victims of the politics of fear and atrocity. These few excerpts from Straus' interviews with Christians convicted of genocide provide a painful insight in their predicament during the genocide.

Reply: I stayed at my house, I am a Christian ...

Question: Why were the children and women killed?

R. There is an expression in Kinyarwanda: "if you kill a rat, you must also kill the rat in gestation. It will grow up to be a rat like others.

(...)

R. If the serpent wraps itself around a calabash, to kill the serpent you have to break the calabash.

Q. What does that mean?

R. If there were Hutu who hid Tutsi, they had to be killed along with the Tutsi.

(...)

Q. Did you Kill?

R. Me. My maternal uncle hid in my house, and I had to kill him. The soldiers arrived at my house...and found my uncle. They said, 'you must kill him or we will kill you.' I killed him. Afterward, they still said they would kill me. They put me on the ground with five others. They asked for money, for 14,000 Frw. I gave it.

(...)

Q. Why did you confess?

R. I felt first that I had sinned. I first asked for pardon from God, but I found that was insufficient, so I asked for it from the state. I was never instructed; I asked for paper [on which to write a confession] and I did it voluntarily. I hope these things never happen again.

-In Lyons and Straus, *Intimate*, 46-48 (interview in Butare Prison)

If a politics of fear and atrocity can serve as mitigation for Rwandans caught up in the whirlwind of 'Rwanda 94', it does not operate as an exemption of responsibility or an excuse. From a theological perspective, 'Rwanda 94' corresponds to the two 'Atheisms' that George Adam Smith finds in the story of Daniel: an 'Atheism of Force' represented by a politics of despotism and the call to idolatry and the 'Atheism of Fear' represented by the

⁸⁸ As the genocide went on and the eventuality of losing the war became a reality, the dominant effect of the politics of fear and atrocity on the killers became paranoia. Killers turned against each other; former leaders of the militia lost control of their mobs or were executed. Anyone who stepped out of the line could become a collateral casualty of the genocide following this logic.

prostration before and worship of the statue-idol.⁸⁹ According to Smith, ‘the wielding of apparently absolute power may persuade those against whom it is wielded that it really is absolute (Atheism of force) and that they have no resources to withstand it (Atheism of fear).’⁹⁰ Stories like Daniel 3⁹¹ have insisted that there is such a resource and according to Gowan, this accounts for the popularity of the book among communities of the oppressed throughout the centuries.⁹²

Applied to ‘Rwanda 94’, atheism of force corresponds to the terrorizing killing frenzy –the denial of human life being equal to the denial of God, hence an atheism- unleashed by the genocidal mobs and the threat of death to anyone who would not join in that godless and bloody orgy. The three months of genocide reminds one of the furnace of Daniel 3, a white-hot crucible that would test Rwandan Christians in ways they had never imagined. The threat of death was real, the testing had started, the flames were lit; there was no bluff to call. There were only two options; a recanting apostasy triggered by fear at the entrance of the furnace (atheism of fear) or a bold trust in God that ‘gives Caesar what is his but reserves what is God’s for God.’⁹³

Most Rwandan Christians seem to have chosen the first option. Passive bystanding and active participation, deliberate or coerced, by Christians has to be understood within the context of an atheism of fear, which was the almost inevitable response of a ‘disconnected’ Christianity. Christian bystanders and killers seem to have shared the belief that there was really no God capable of delivering them from evil or their victims from the killings. Rwandan Pentecostals coined three theological euphemisms that disguise this atheism poorly; ‘*Imana yarabatanze*’ (God has given them up), ‘*Umugeni aratashye*’ (the Bride [of Christ] is going home) and ‘*Akayunguruzo kaje kuyungurura*’ (the winnowing fan has come to winnow). Therefore, participation and passivity could be justified.⁹⁴ Aguilar is

⁸⁹ Donald E Gowan, *Daniel*. In Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), p.73.

⁹⁰ Gowan, *Daniel*, p.73.

⁹¹ Note is taken of how particularly contested the third chapter of Daniel is in a book whose genre, date, structure, purpose, etc, are all fiercely contested. Of the most rigorous academic works on the book, this work follows John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. In Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

⁹² Gowan, *Daniel*, 73.

⁹³ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, in Word Biblical Commentary, Vol.30 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 74.

⁹⁴ After Muslims, Pentecostal ‘*Abarokore*’ are believed to have been the other group of believers that did not participate actively in the killings, with a few reasonable exceptions. However, such theological stances

right to talk about the ‘collapse of theology’ while pointing to the inability of Rwandan communities of faith to challenge the possibilities of oppression and injustice.⁹⁵

The atheism of force and its fear-filled response affected both shepherds and flocks. First of all, Christian leaders of the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian (Anglican), Presbyterian, and Pentecostal churches were shocked and terrorized into silence. Of all the aspects of the Rwandan tragedy, the silence of Christian leadership stands out the most, especially from a theological perspective. Although this attitude becomes less surprising once one takes into account the progressive self-muzzling associated with the seduction of power, it is nonetheless shocking and Des Forges’ strong criticism is appropriate.⁹⁶ When they issued a public joint statement, it was towards the end of the genocide and the uncalled for equanimity of this statement makes Eugenio Pacelli’s condemnation of Nazism sound almost prophetic.⁹⁷

The first public and joint comment on the events from Christian leaders was made almost forty days into the genocide, on May, 13. It was signed by four Catholic bishops, four Anglican bishops, the President of the Presbyterian Church, the legal representatives of the Methodist, Pentecostal and Baptist churches. According to Mcallum, the “...conciliatory document (...) apportioned blame equally to the RPF and the Rwandese government and called on both to stop the massacres. (...) The document never mentioned genocide and refrained from naming the organizers of the evil. In essence, it expressed condolences to the victims, called for an end to massacres by both sides, offered to mediate between the two sides to set up a new transitional government; requested a neutral military force from the UN, called for help from friendly governments to look for a negotiated solution, disapproved of acts of apostolic workers, and requested all Christians to refuse participation in massacres and acts of pillaging and vandalism and instead to pray for peace.”⁹⁸

Drawing on significant earlier works realised by Des Forges, McCullum and Gourevitch, Longman attributes the attitude and (in)action of church leaders solely to the kind of seduction and cooption by power sketched above. He argues that they were not just

derived directly from the Bible are objectionable at many levels yet reflects the paucity of theological and biblical teaching in most Christian churches.

⁹⁵ Aguilar, *Theology, liberation and genocide*, 17-23.

⁹⁶ For the immediate ramifications of this silence, see Des Forges, *Leave none*, pp.245-263.

⁹⁷ For short analysis on the responsibility of Pope Pius XII (Pacelli) and the Catholic church during the Holocaust, see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2002), 303ff, Hannah Arendt, “Deputy” in *Responsibility and judgement*, pp 214-225.

⁹⁸ McCullum, *Angels*, 68-69.

bystanders who can only be charged with ‘leaving the way clear’ but willing and major players in the genocide.⁹⁹ In dialogue with Longman, this research argues that in addition to historical compliance, the aspect that he ignored or failed to emphasise enough is that fear was the most overriding reason behind the failures of Christian leadership in 1994. Instances of politics of atrocity were so factual, so graphic, so public and so repetitive that it overrode many virtues including faith.

Rwandans have at least two concepts to express the feeling of fear, ‘*ubwoba*’.¹⁰⁰ The first is *kugira ubwoba*, (lit. having fear), which refers to a general feeling of varying intensity of fear. The second is *Gukuka umutima* (lit. to have one’s heart ripped out) and conveys a sense of overwhelming fear that one almost loses their mind. It is this kind of fear that the politics of atrocity created in the heart of most Christian leaders; an irrational fear which ultimately led to falling in line with what the government of terror wanted; either as active participants or stunned bystanders. Also, one has to remember that these leaders had families, wives and children (Protestants) or at least dependants. Like the rest, they had dreams and plans for the future.

6.4.3. *Fear of Death and the Power of Words*

Yet, as understandable as fear is, it becomes and remains inexcusable particularly for leaders. This is again the point where this work is critical of works and scholars who offer a critique of religion in genocide without attempting an alternative. Christian leaders are blamed for what they *did not* do without pointing to what they should have done; especially for the flocks terrorised by militia and armed forces.¹⁰¹ The metaphors of ‘shepherd’ and ‘flock’ or ‘*Umushumba*’ and ‘*intama*’ were very relevant and understandable in a society where cattle-herding was held in such high esteem. From a tender age, Rwandans knew that a herd could sometimes ‘be terrorised’ whether by an imminent danger or an instinctive panic. On such occasions, the animals would scatter in every direction; causing potential injuries to themselves and destruction to the crops in the fields. The role of ‘*Umushumba*’ was to keep the herd safe either by defending them or in the case of an irrational outburst,

⁹⁹ Longman makes this point consistently throughout his study; see for instance *Christianity and genocide*, pp.189-196.

¹⁰⁰ There is ambivalence about the relation to ‘fear’ in Rwandan culture. On one hand, cowardice leads to one being compared to a dog, *imbwa*. On the other hand, one who has fear of nothing is called foolish, *utagira ubwoba ntagira ubwenge*. The key for an individual is to strike the balance between the two extremes.

¹⁰¹ Although the late Des Forges, for instance, insisted on the fact that religious leaders should have spoken out early and condemned the genocide, she also points to the theologically negative message of following orders. Des Forges, *Leave none*, p.263.

to proffer calming and soothing appropriate words or touches, '*kwagaza*', so that they would calm down and resume walking or grazing.

These metaphors apply to 'Rwanda 94'. Words and touch -or presence- were the initial support that was needed in most cases from Christian leaders but they did not speak to offer pastoral guidance to either the politicians or the mass held hostage by the politics of fear. At the outbreak of 'Rwanda 94', the pastoral task was to utter words of comfort and to speak 'tenderly' to the people, none of which means a watered down message. Muslim leaders' words point to the importance of words in pre-genocide context. Quite apart from the living, how many Christians perished without actually having the comfort of a pastoral blessing, last rites of any kind or a *viaticum* to reassure them in what was literally a journey in the 'Valley of the Shadow of death'? Conversely, staying with the theme of 'fear of death', it would have been important to reassure the potential perpetrators, threatened of death that the Greatest Shepherd was with them; walking with them in that Valley of death so that they might not 'fear evil'?¹⁰².

One is painfully aware that these are merely words and in the context of academic research they feel almost out of place yet they happen to be the 'Word of God', taken from the highest source of Christian doctrine and theology, namely the Holy Scriptures. That alone would have made them fit for purpose. However, they become vital when one realises that 'Rwanda 94' was also a 'war of words' or 'a battle of discourses' over the souls and minds of the population. *Genocidaire* politicians and media used every rhetorical trick to instil a sense of fear, define and portray the enemy 'other' so that it became very clear that the 'imperative of security' passed inevitably through the elimination of that Tutsi enemy.¹⁰³ Radicalising discourses led to radical acts of evil.

In fact, all critics of Christian leadership, secular and religious, agree that what was needed most was a religious authority voicing these words. After all, the 'Word' is the 'Sword', the only real offensive weapon of a believing Christian. Words like 'Thou shalt not kill, steal or loot, covet your neighbour's wife, cows or land' should have rang from every pulpit and position of leadership from the earliest days of the killings. As *genocidaires*' voices called for hate, enmity and death, there should have been Christian voices answering back calling

¹⁰² Allusion to Isaiah 40:1-2 and Psalm 23.

¹⁰³ Again, Des Forges showed that these politicians and media of genocide did not hesitate to use a 'religious rhetoric' to convince people that God and the Virgin Mary were with the killers. See *Leave none*, p.246.

for love, friendship and life. Against threats of retaliation and death, there should have been messages of life eternal and the reality of punishment as separation from God's love. Also, one fails to see why church leaders should not have issued the threat of 'religious sanctions' such as withholding sacraments; things that are important for any believer and actually contribute to the more tangible and legitimate authority of religious bodies.

In the end, fear of death muzzled many Christian leaders. It can be argued that ministering involves the possibility of 'dying in the line of duty'. This is where Schelling's 'slicing' and Žižek's 'uncoupling' becomes a test of faith. It is no longer a case of ethnic 'separation' alone but also the possibility of tearing oneself away from everything one cares for, including one's life for the sake of God. Could it be that the tradition of religious leadership had been associated with power and privileges and less emphasis put on obligations and responsibilities that when the time came to stand and be counted and accountable, they were found wanting?

It is absolutely vital for theology to understand genocide and call to genocide as idolatry and call to idolatry. The methodology and technology of the event called for not just political but also a quasi religious obedience. Not to comply with the killing decree became illegal.¹⁰⁴ It was also an idolatrous event considering the manner in which God-given life was denied to the victims. Some acts went beyond criminality and took a sacrilegious and apostate form. This was evidenced by the assaults on human and material symbols of the divine, the rape of nuns, the killing of priests and the destruction of temples and religious monuments.¹⁰⁵ In the case of Rwanda, genocide was sin and idolatry both metaphorically and literally.

In conclusion, it is important to recall that the generalisation with which Christianity has been treated in this chapter follows a deliberate methodological choice to cast it in the 'persona' of compliance and complicity. Therefore, this should not constitute another explicative 'metanarrative' on Rwandan Christians and genocide. There are many facts and evidence that would support such a narrative but there are also many exceptions; many marginal acts and dissenting voices who have forced the future to remain open. They made it possible for Tutsi lives to continue to exist, for Tutsi bodies to be spared and represented

¹⁰⁴ See Arendt's analysis of German culture and the Holocaust in *Eichmann*, 231-232.

¹⁰⁵ On the violence against religious people and the desecration of sacred spaces, see Nadine Donnet, "Le massacre des religieux" in André Guichaoua, ed. *Les Crises Politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda* (Paris : Karthala, 1995), 702-704.

in the many families of humanity and as an integral part of the Rwandan peoples. These marginal groups and people stood in the stead of the institutional church and its leadership, acting as a bridge for institutional renewal and continuity. Finally, like their Muslim counterparts, they sowed the seed for possible reconciliation in the aftermath; having resisted the call to enmity during genocide.

7. In the Aftermath: Witnessing to Faith-inspired Resistance

7.1. Introduction

The two final chapters focus on Islam and Christianity in the aftermath of 'Rwanda 1994' by trying to establish a common thread between faith-inspired resistance to genocide, unexpected religious revival in post-genocide Rwanda and reconciliation. It aims to ask and address questions such as: What better way to represent acts and attitudes of faith-motivated resistance to the genocide other than the dialectical and comparative approach of the two previous chapters? What share of credit could the different praxes of resistance have with regard to the phenomenon of religious growth in post-genocide Rwanda? What kind of opportunity do resistance and post-genocide religious growth provide for Islam and Christianity with regard to the process of reconciliation?

The questions asked above point to resistance as the thread, the bond, even the glue that connects religious revival and religious praxis in reconciliation. Resistance operates like a bridge between the past, the present and the future; a stepping stone from a painful and humbling period to an uncertain but grace-filled future. Resistance by faith spoke of and reclaimed God in the midst of suffering. This section seeks to reclaim and retrieve acts of resistance by Muslim communities from exclusive political 'instrumentalization', alongside the least told acts of resistance and bravery by Christians in order to assess their theological meaning and value. To do so, it is important to make an inventory of the different forms that acts of resistance to the genocide of 1994 took.

A methodological disclaimer is necessary. This section makes frequent reference to scripture; particularly the Bible. This is due to the fact that the majority of testimonies analysed were given by evangelical Christians who viewed their experiences through a model of faith and experience provided by the Bible. In other words, they compared their tribulations to those of biblical characters and applied God's action in the biblical stories to their own circumstances.

7.2. *Forms of Faith-inspired Resistance to Genocide*

Even outside the sphere of religion, testimonies to resistance to or bravery during the genocide have been honoured. The motion picture *Hotel Rwanda*¹ was a tribute to Paul Rusesabagina, an ordinary maitre d'hotel at *Mille Collines* who saved many lives threatened by *Interahamwe*.² It is possible to go beyond the controversy that surrounded the person of Rusesabagina³ shortly after the film release and see in him a representation or a face of many ordinary people who put their lives and family in danger to rescue and protect many Tutsi. These many stories and testimonies are still the least represented in the discourse on the Rwandan tragedy, yet their importance in the rebuilding of the nation is invaluable.

The fifth chapter has already introduced faith-inspired resistance to the genocide with regard to the actions of Rwandan Muslims. It used Doughty and Ntambara's research to show that Muslims' resistance to the genocide took the following forms: refusing to participate, hiding Muslims and non-Muslims, violent resistance and confronting killers and keeping each other accountable. The weakness of this work as a 'witness' resides in its general character, which make the interviews 'faceless' so to speak. It is a weakness that the film *Kinyarwanda*⁴ sets out to remedy. *Kinyarwanda* is based on true accounts from survivors who took refuge at the Grand Mosque of Kigali and the *madarasa* of Nyanza. It recounts how the Imams opened the doors of the mosques to give refuge to the Tutsi and those Hutu who refused to participate in the killing. *Kinyarwanda* interweaves six different tales that together form one grand narrative that provides the most complex and real depiction yet presented of human resilience and life during the genocide. With this amalgamation of characters, the producers wanted to pay homage to many, using the voices of a few.⁵

¹ *Hotel Rwanda* was co-produced by United Artists and Lions Gate Films and directed by Terry George in 2004. See also the Official website at <http://www.mgm.com/view/Movie/900/Hotel-Rwanda/>

² Rusesabagina's biography, *An Ordinary Man*, with Tom Zoellner, was published by Zach Bell in 2006.

³ After being accepted as a hero even by the Kigali regime, Rusesabagina saw his credit decline steeply when he fell out with President Kagame. The 'Rusesabagina Controversy' shows the difficulties of politically representing action of resistance by Hutu in post-genocide Rwanda. On this controversy, see among others <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/04/04/us-rwanda-genocide-film-idUSL0420968620070404>; see also, Linda Melvern, *Hotel Rwanda- Without the Hollywood ending* in the Guardian online, 17 November, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/17/hotel-rwanda-hollywood-ending>

⁴ Directed by the American Alrick Brown in 2011; Screened in Manchester (Zion Arts House) in December 2011. The author of this research was invited to this screening preview by 'Insight Films', the organiser of the event.

⁵ <http://www.kinyarwandamovie.com/thestory.html>

Considering the avalanche of criticism that has engulfed Christianity in the wake of the genocide, it comes as no surprise that works on faith-inspired resistance by Christians are at a premium. In fact, Rutayisire's collection of testimonies⁶ remains the only substantial effort that tries to show that the Christian faith and Church did not totally fail during 'Rwanda 94'. Despite its obvious methodological lacunae and limited scope, this work will provide the main resource for discussion in this chapter.⁷

There are at least three main flaws in the representation of faith-inspired resistance to the Rwandan genocide. First, it is almost instinctive to associate resistance to genocide with the three crucial months when acts of genocide took place. This research argues that resistance to genocide started long before the actual killings started; an aspect that Doughty & Ntambara and *Kinyarwanda* allude to but without real depth. A second flaw consists in focusing on acts and attitudes of 'potential perpetrators', mostly the Hutu who resisted participation in the killings. This stance ignored victims' resistance. Finally and as a direct consequence of the second point, resistance tends to focus on the 'living', denying a voice to those who died without renouncing their faith.

7.2.1. Resistance before the genocide

Faith-inspired resistance to genocide among Muslim and Christian communities started before the event itself. Doughty and Ntambara have already been quoted to this effect with regard to the preaching and teaching of Muslim leaders in the years and months leading to the genocide. In the Christian camp, organisations such as the African Evangelical Enterprise (AEE) had made it their mission to spread the message of peace and harmony, especially in the difficult war years 1990-1994. Israel Havugimana, the leader of AEE, was one of the first casualties of the genocide; even though he was a Hutu.⁸

Resistance also came in the form of 'prophetic' messages. In most cases, these messages had apocalyptic tones: impending violence of unprecedented proportions, prediction of believers being seduced by bloodshed, call to repentance and exhortation to stand firm. As shown in the previous chapter, the messages used biblical imagery like the savagery of the

⁶ Antoine Rutayisire, *Faith under Fire: Testimonies of Christian Bravery*. London: African Enterprise, 1995.

⁷ The work consists of thirteen 'testimonies' of Christian resistance to genocide provided by people from the Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Presbyterian and the Methodist churches. There are no methodological indications regarding the limited number, the selection of the sample or how the veracity of the testimonies was established.

⁸ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 14.

Medes and the Persians. Fasting and praying were other means of resisting the seemingly inevitable 'Rivers of blood'.⁹

7.2.2 Resistance by victims (survivors and deceased)

In the space of three months, the genocide transformed radically the lives and identity of one segment of the Rwandan people. From Rwandans, they became simply Tutsi, from citizens, they became enemies of the country; the punishment of this imagined treason being death by extermination. Like their kinsfolk, Tutsi believers of different faith allegiances were targeted by the extermination decree. They faced this ordeal with the vulnerability of a people abandoned by their own government, often by their friends and in some cases by their families.

No stories of how Muslim believers faced the reality of extermination are available in writing. The explanation might be found in the tight protection that Hutu Muslims provided for Tutsi Muslims, that the later did not have to come face to face with evil. Therefore, by utilizing the testimonies and stories of Christians this work uses a form of 'argument *a pari*' ; assuming that in the case Muslim Tutsi were, or were to be, confronted with the horror of death, they would have reacted with the same faith-instinct that Christians used. This approach is vindicated by the fact that there are no qualitative differences between the 'saving acts' of Muslims and those of Christians.¹⁰

7.2.2.1. Prayer as resistance

Time and again, *Faith under Fire* presents believers confronted with death and using prayer as a shield against evil and as a weapon of deliverance for the killers. For instance, 'Rosalie' knew the people who were going to kill her; all were neighbours. So, she asked them to give her time to pray *for them* before they started cutting her, which she did until she lost conscience.¹¹ Prayer was defensive and offensive. When the reality of extermination became obvious after initial hopes of another short pogrom, death became a certainty for the majority of Tutsi believers; however it needed not be a hopeless entrance into Dante's hell. Physical death was dreaded but most believers dreaded a spiritual death; dying in despair, anger or hatred. Thus, when 'Jacqueline' was faced with a mob of killers,

⁹ Reference to the messages from the 'apparitions' of the Virgin Mary at Kibeho in Misago, *Signes d'espoir*, 34.

¹⁰ This section deliberately excludes violent resistance to genocide, like the case of Mbare studied by Virets.

¹¹ Rosalie's testimony in *Faith*, p.12.

she despaired of escaping death, so she asked them for a time of prayer before being killed.¹²

In *Faith under Fire*, believers prayed for their souls to be shielded against hatred and contamination by evil. They prayed for a quick and righteous death. They prayed for the souls of their killers. They prayed and forgave so that they could be forgiven. Some prayed for God to spare their lives and confound the hordes of killers. In the testimonies collected by Rutayisire and those heard in churches after the tragedy, surviving believers talked of the need they felt to put on the whole armour of God: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, etc.¹³

7.2.2.2. Death as resistance

Prayers did not always lead to rescue; in fact, in most cases believers experienced rescue and survival as a ‘miracle’. Most of them were prepared, not resigned, to die ‘in faith’ and go to heaven or paradise, since both Muslims and Christians believe in rewards in the hereafter for those who persevere in their belief. So if death was inevitable, what makes it an act of resistance? The answer is in the climate of contingency in which the whole macabre affair was shrouded. Killers sometimes gave the victims the opportunity to opt out of death. ‘Jacqueline’ was offered a chance to save her life if she consented to have sexual intercourse with one of her killers, who, incidentally, was another Christian.¹⁴

Some Hutu priests and pastors preferred death to surrendering people hiding in their churches. Some, like the above mentioned Father Joseph Boneza of Mibilizi and Israel Havugimana of AEE died. Others like Father Bosco of Mukarange escaped with incapacitating injuries. Felicity Niyitegeka was a Hutu nun and sister to a high ranking officer. Out of respect for her brother, the militia offered to save her life but she refused and preferred to die with her sisters; a story which has many similarities with the martyrdom of St Perpetua and St Felicity in Carthage on March 7, 203.¹⁵

Death as resistance refers to the embracing and accepting of death rather than causing harm; whether death happened or not was no longer in the hands of those who made that decision. For the Hutu victims, death was simply martyrdom. It was an example of the

¹² In *Faith*, p.49.

¹³ As found in Ephesians 6:10-16

¹⁴ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 49.

¹⁵ The story of Sister Niyitegeka is told among others by Longman, *Christianity and Genocide*, 195. The reference to the Carthage’s martyrdom is mine.

Socratic moral principle of ‘suffering evil rather than doing evil’ so dear to Arendt¹⁶, but taken by faith to radical limits. Death for the Tutsi victims was a refusal to compromise their faith. For these men and women who resisted until death, there was not a price that a person could put on his or her soul, even if it were the whole world.¹⁷

7.2.3. *Resistance by potential perpetrators*

This title calls for a preliminary clarification on the category of ‘perpetrators’ and the significance of the adjective ‘potential’. It is probably impossible to determine exactly the number of people who participated in the genocide.¹⁸ The phrase ‘potential perpetrators’ displaces the argument from quantity to aggregative quality to suggest that following the nature of the call to genocide, all Hutu were effectively ‘nominated candidates’; even though not all of them responded or participated with the same level of dedication.

This work has already shown that Hutu believers, Christians and Muslims, responded positively to the call to genocide and participated actively. However, there were many who resisted on grounds of their faith and at great risks. The works of Virets, Doughty and Ntabara, the film *Kinyarwanda* and many other untold stories have shown how Hutu Muslims disregarded such an impious decree. Read alongside Rutayisire’s collection, they make it possible to sketch the portrait of the resistant Hutu believer in the genocide.

7.2.3.1. Refusal to participate

The government’s decree of extermination placed Hutu believers in the proverbial ‘between the rock and the hard place’. A positive response was sinful, immoral and illegal but so was refusal to comply since the ‘passive’ Political Theology evoked above had elevated obedience of secular laws to the rank of divine law. As Adorno aptly put it, there seemed to be no right way to live when everything was so wrong.¹⁹ Moreover, there was the persistent

¹⁶ See among others Arendt’s reflection on the political philosophy of Socrates, in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Book. 2005), 5-39.

¹⁷ Reference to Christ’s question in Mark 8:36-37.

¹⁸ Scott Straus, “How many perpetrators were there in the Rwandan genocide? An estimate.” In *Journal of Genocide Research* (2004), 6(1). March, 85-98. Straus is to date the most reliable authority in researching ‘perpetrators’ of the Rwandan genocide. He distinguishes between ‘high-end’ estimates up to three million perpetrators which effectively criminalise all Hutu and ‘low-end’ estimates which put responsibility on a small fraction of Hutu male population. Straus is critical of the arbitrariness of the methodology behind these estimates and suggests an alternative methodology which bases estimates of perpetrator population on average group sizes per *cellule*, the smallest administrative unit in 1994. In the end, he comes up with an estimate of 200,000 Hutu perpetrators of whom only 20,000 were hardcore killers and might have carried out 75% of the killings.

¹⁹ Quoted in Neiman, *Evil*, 305.

pressure and threats from civil and military authorities, the militia, neighbours and family to join in the extermination of Tutsi.²⁰ Many Muslims and Christians found in their faith a moral law more ancient and superior to the government's decree and upon that law they founded their refusal to compromise. They refused to kill, to loot, to rape or to indicate the whereabouts of persecuted Tutsi.

One very noticeable instance of faith-inspired resistance was provided by Hutu Pentecostal soldiers (*Abarokore*) who defied their superiors' orders. Instead, they confronted the militia and rescued Tutsi who were taken to be killed.²¹ This was a perfect example of the legal theory of '*baïonnette intelligente*' in action. The theory could be said to be an exception against or a reversal of the *plea (or defense) of superior orders* which states that a soldier should not be held guilty for actions which were ordered by a superior officer. The 'plea/defence' was made popular during the 1945–46 Nuremberg Trials, such that it is also called the "Nuremberg defense".

However, Principle IV (of the Nuremberg Principles) upheld the accused responsible and ruled that, "The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him".²² The defence or plea of superior orders again arose in the trial of Eichmann.²³ Other famous cases involving the plea and its exception included the case of Maurice Papon in France; who was found guilty according to the exception of '*baïonnette intelligente*' on the grounds that the illegality of a superior order is always obvious in the case of a crime against humanity.²⁴

Is it possible to make a case that Rwandan civilians had been 'militarized' and could have invoked the same exception to avoid participation in the genocide? If the legal aspects of this question are better left to legal theorists, the moral aspect certainly stands as evidence against those who bowed to the conformist logic of following the orders from authorities. It

²⁰ On intra-ethnic pressures, see Scott Straus, *Order of the Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2006.

²¹ Testimony of Pastor Bimenyimana in Rutayisire, *Faith*, 35ff. The action of these soldiers is consistent with what Longman observed regarding the general non-involvement of 'Abarokore', especially Pentecostals, in the genocide. See Longman, *Christianity*, 195-196.

²² A copy of the Nuremberg principle can be found at <http://deoxy.org/wc/wc-nurem.htm>

²³ Arendt dedicated chapter 8 'Duties of a law-abiding citizen' of *Eichman in Jerusalem* to a philosophical rejection of this principle. pp. 135-150

²⁴ Jean Bruno and Frédéric de Monicault, *L'affaire Papon, Bordeaux 1942-1944* (Paris : Editions Tallandier, 1997).

also shows that the politics of fear evoked in chapter 6 was possible because of the moral crisis presented in chapter four.

7.2.3.2. Unleashing spiritual warfare on the genocide

There is a side of faith-inspired resistance to genocide that has gone almost unreported most probably because it is not easily noticeable; the purely ‘spiritual’ aspect of opposition to the decree of extermination. Christians would call this form of resistance ‘Spiritual warfare’²⁵, whereas for Muslims it constituted a different form of ‘Jihad’.²⁶ This type of resistance uses tools and actions such as prayer, fasting, symbolic prophecy and ‘cursing’ or speaking against someone or something. For a non-believer, this way of resistance is simply absurd; for Muslim and Christian believers however, it constituted the ultimate, most powerful weapon in a situation where the ‘foundations of law and order’ had been destroyed. For keen believers, the nature of crimes that were being committed and the manner of the commission gave a sinister, demonic or satanic outlook to the massacres against which conventional weapons and laws were clearly useless.

Prayer was the key to this spiritual resistance. Doughty and Ntambara reported how Muslims prayed during the genocide.²⁷ The missing ingredients in their work though, are examples of such prayers or at least a hint at the content. Personal experience and sources like Rutayisire’s collection make it possible to do justice to prayer as an instance of active resistance. Like the victims, these believers, who were potential killers, used prayer to keep away the spiritual toxicity of the genocide. Prayer was for them a shelter and a shield against evil.²⁸ However, prayer combined with fasting was also used as an active means to stop the war and genocide. ‘N.A’ was hiding some people in a house that he shared with his brother in Gihundwe. From the first day of the genocide, ‘N.A’ refused to eat any solid

²⁵ Spiritual warfare is a well documented concept within Christianity, especially in Evangelical and Pentecostal circles. Its scriptural basis can be found throughout the Bible. One of the most quoted biblical references is Ephesians 6:11-18. Academic and popular works have been published on the topic, however a comprehensive starting point is *Deliver Us From Evil* published in 2000 by the the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. A summary of the key points can be found at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/all/nairobi-2000/179-overview.html>

²⁶ In the words of Imam Raghīb, Jihad is of three kinds; viz., the carrying out of a struggle against : 1. a visible enemy, 2. the devil, 3. one's self (*nafs*). Sarah Ahmad, *The True Spirit of Islam*.

²⁷ Doughty&Ntambara, *Resistance*, 16.

²⁸ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 25; 31ff.

food, and slept on the floor. All this time he prayed against the killings and the killers. He arose from that floor and ate after the genocide stopped.²⁹

Other believers opted for a more open ‘speaking against’ or ‘cursing’;³⁰ daily bringing before God the numbers of people killed and demanding the removal of the genocidaire government, the defeat of the militia, and the hurrying along of RPF-Inkotanyi. The latter are credited to have stopped the genocide but how could anyone easily dismiss the contribution of these prayers and ‘curses’. One convicted perpetrator remarked that they were planning to get the job done and finished, unfortunately ‘God hurried the (RPF)Inkotanyi along’.³¹ One could argue that the aim of the believers’ actions was just that: to involve God in righting a wrong that had gone beyond human reach.

7.2.3.3. Reclaiming faith-based solidarities and identity.

The most outstanding and visible instance of faith-inspired resistance to the genocide was the ability of some Muslims and Christians to reclaim faith-based solidarities and privilege spiritual kinship over ethnic predeterminations. Doughty and Ntambara emphasized this ‘faith over ethnicity’ mindset in Islam and Rutayisire’s collection gives voice to this attitude within all the main Christian denominations. Before and during the tragedy, Hutu believers had befriended fellow Tutsi believers and they refused to recant this bond even under extreme pressure. For some believers, this friendship had become similar to a blood kinship; they could not consider Tutsis as outsiders and refused to betray them simply because it would have been like handing over a blood relative.³²

Testimonies shared with Rutayisire give poignant instances of Hutu believers identifying themselves totally with the victims to the point of going through the same ordeal together. One young man was so worried about the friends he was hiding that he lost alarming amounts of weight. His family forced him to take a HIV test to make sure that he was not suffering from AIDS.³³ ‘JB’ would not leave his two friends, ‘L’ and ‘W’ so the killers

²⁹ The author of the current research was one of the people sheltered in this home during the genocide.

³⁰ This practice is an acknowledged part of warfare ritual in Rwandan society as well as biblical wars. For e.g. *guhenera* and *kuvuma*; the story of Balaam and Balak (Numbers 22), Moses and the Amalakites (Exodus 17). Some perpetrators associated the believers with the power to curse. See Rutayisire, *Faith*, 90. Ntambara and Doughty have also drawn attention to the fact that Muslims were reputed to have the ability to call bad fortune on a person.

³¹ Quoted in Aguilar, *Theology*, 139.

³² Rutayisire, *Faith*, 13-14; 37-38

³³ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 66.

grew impatient and killed him with them.³⁴ Still others took long and perilous journeys to get friends and people they had never met before to safety.³⁵ The film '*Kinyarwanda*' shows the story of one Muslim woman who pretended to be 'mad' (*umusazi*) in order to keep safe the people she was hiding; Muslims and non Muslims.

Around seven hundred Hutu and Tutsi Pentecostals hid in the Church's buildings in Gakinjoro for more than two months; sharing everything and keeping each other strong in the faith through prayer and testimonies. When food and fuel ran out, Hutus ventured out to find provisions and Tutsi cooked and performed other important chores.³⁶ This spiritual bond and kinship was also ultimately shown in the way some believers mourned and lamented the dead; putting their own lives at risk to give a proper burial to those who had fallen.³⁷

7.2.3.4. Rescue, Refuge and Hospitality

The most obvious and practical example of reclaiming this spiritual identity and kinship was the effort of Hutu Muslims and Christians to rescue, hide and care for hunted down Tutsi. Imams opened their mosques and priests opened their churches to the displaced and the persecuted. It is a well documented fact that houses of worship, especially churches, became slaughterhouses.³⁸ The horror of what happened in them often overshadows the fact that they had been opened as shelters for hospitality in the first place. Had those responsible for churches and mosques kept the doors closed, then it would have been a great wrong. How fair is it to expect ministers of religion to provide shelter and security in a volatile situation and against the might and the will of a government determined to exterminate a portion of the population?

However, it was not only ministers and houses of prayer that were involved in sheltering people. Individuals put their lives in great peril to rescue fellow believers, hide them, feed them and refused to hand them over, even with the threat of death. Hutu believers relinquished luxuries and comforts to accommodate strangers threatened with death. It is a

³⁴ Conversation with the three surviving widows in Gihogwe, November 1994.

³⁵ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 59; 80

³⁶ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 31ff.

³⁷ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 91

³⁸ The Catholic Church of Nyamata, now a genocide memorial, has become a symbol of desecrated places of worship. See <http://www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=Nyamata>

great testimony to faith that even in such fearful times, hospitality as a Rwandan and Christian virtue was present in the actions of these believers.³⁹

With many believers involved in the killings, it is easy to overlook the actions of those who sold out their business to feed people they had rescued or to buy them out of a certain death.⁴⁰ It can be easy to ignore the actions of someone like Pastor 'Fabian' who, throughout the genocide, organised a 'network' of rescue to ferry people across Lake Kivu to the island of Idjwi; transforming his house into a restful stopover, for the body and the soul.⁴¹ When many believers were involved in looting, it is easy to overlook the efforts of those believers who looked after the properties of the fugitives or tried to rescue a few belongings and mementos from fires and looting so that the survivors could have something to remind them that they had actually lived before death and fire engulfed every shred of their past.⁴²

Other believers fulfilled a more complex role, namely to spy on the killers on the behalf of the victims so that the latter could be moved from one hiding place to another depending on the movements of the killers.⁴³ This complicates the definition of 'bystanders' during the genocide because standing by could have been less passive than it appeared. For instance, how could one tell simple bystanders from people who were monitoring the movements of killers and the position of roadblocks in order to facilitate the escape of fugitives at night? Rescuing, hiding and getting people to safety involved different people performing different tasks. Some Hutu believers literally put their lives on hold and dedicated their time and effort to ensure the safety and protection of Tutsi fugitives.⁴⁴

7.2.3.5. Shepherd in extreme circumstances

'These are the children the Lord has given me. This is the flock the Lord has put under my care. How can I, a father and a shepherd, leave my children and the Lord's sheep and go? I will stay with them up to the end.' Pastor Kayihura of ADEPR-Gakinjira uttered these

³⁹ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 35-37, 43, 76.

⁴⁰ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 73. In one testimony, a man bargains for the lives of people hiding under his roof. When the price is finally settled, he asks for a receipt just in case another group of killers came calling.

⁴¹ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 50-51.

⁴² Rutayisire, *Faith*, 54. It is a frightening truth that for some survivors, pre-1994 almost never existed as there are no properties, relatives, photographs or even official archives testifying to their existence before the genocide!

⁴³ For Muslims see Doughty&Ntabara, *Resistance*, 14; Rutayisire, *Faith*, 73-75

⁴⁴ Case of 'NA' and his brother 'JP' mentioned above. They used their house to hide people, including this researcher, and JP's truck to smuggle Tutsi survivors into Burundi.

solemn words when RPF fighters were closing in on the church where seven hundred Hutu and Tutsi had taken refuge. (In the chaos of the genocide, rebels and militia inspired equal terror across the ethnic divide). A few days before saying these words, a member of the Hutu militia had held a gun on the old pastor's head and requested the keys to the compound where Tutsis were hiding. He refused to hand over the keys and the militia man fired, not to kill but to frighten him. Still he refused to open the door.⁴⁵

This case highlights an important aspect of faith-inspired resistance to genocide that is worth mentioning, namely the effort of some Muslim and Christian ministers to shepherd and provide pastoral care for victims and non-victims in extreme circumstances. It is worth emphasizing the bravery of those shepherds who remained with beleaguered flocks and staunchly refused to abandon them. *Kinyarwanda* pays tribute to the Muslim leaders in Nyamirambo and other places. Rutayisire pays similar respect to Christian ministers like Father Munyaneza, Pastor Kayihura, Bishop Norman, Pastor Fabian and many others.⁴⁶

7.2.4. Resistance and witnessing to resistance as Theological imperatives

What is the relevance of telling these stories and testimonies of resistance? They witness to the potential of faith to salvage humanity in dehumanizing circumstances and a monument to lives committed to love of God and creation. One is reminded of Arendt's words that such stories should be told because politically speaking, they affirm that 'under conditions of terror most people will comply but some people will not (...). Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation'.⁴⁷ In other words, these stories redeem Rwandans' humanity and freedom, as well as ensuring that Rwanda survives as a polis fit for life.

For public or political theology, the importance of this witness is paramount. More than any highly elaborated abstract theodicy, the testimonies 'speak of God' in the midst of genocide; they are a practical theodicy and effectively an instance of political theology. Without forceful and protracted arguments, these stories say and show that God was in the furnace of genocide; among and with the faithful, the living and the dying. For the Hutu

⁴⁵ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 34-35 and many conversations between the author and Pastor Kayihura between 1995-1997.

⁴⁶ Pastoral care was not exclusively provided by leaders. In some instances, congregations looked after leaders who were threatened with death, both in terms of spiritual encouragement and material care such as feeding and hiding them. See for instance chapters 4 and 6 of *Faith under Fire*, pp.36-45; 53-57. Also, the film *Kinyarwanda* offers an intriguing story of a Muslim *Imam* providing pastoral care for a Catholic priest.

⁴⁷ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 233.

and Tutsi believers, Muslims as well as Christians who lived through and resisted the horror of 'Rwanda 94' under the shield of faith there was little doubt where God was. The most pressing issue was to let the will of God unfold and not be found wanting in the process.

However, these believers were not just passive spectators. Their stories of resistance to genocide confirm that where there is practical faith in the God-with-us, there has to be practical action, in this case political action, which radically subverts any politics that deny life, such as the politics of atrocity implemented in the genocide. As said above, most of these believers were simple people; the majority were poor and powerless and they had certainly not set out to become heroes or martyrs. In fact, their testimonies show vulnerability, fear and even panic. In some instances they lied to protect those hiding in their home. As Arendt remarked, people who resist and say no are neither heroes nor saints, when and if martyrdom comes to them, it is against their will and in a world where brute power counts, they are powerless.⁴⁸ Yet in this weakened state, strength and resilience were perfected by God's grace⁴⁹ and these humble believers accomplished great deeds in saving the lives that were threatened with destruction.

By challenging the government's decree to exterminate the Tutsi, these instances of faith-inspired resistance subvert the 'negative' Political Theology mentioned above by invoking a different, higher and supreme source of political power and authority. They reveal state soteriology as a dangerous 'heresy' and the often cited defence of unquestioning obedience to secular authorities to be what it was, namely a form of idolatry. They embody a political alternative to atrocity and extermination; thus presenting faith as a reliable hermeneutical lens for politics.

Practically these actions argued that stating and accepting the premise of Rwandan political theology –that all power comes from God- does not necessarily command absolute obedience to the temporal entity entrusted with such power. The condition for obedience must be that power, in this case political power, must be assumed and exercised according to due and rightful processes, in the best interest of the people, with respect for life, collective and individual freedom. The genocide constituted a betrayal of this moral condition to the exercise of power since it embodied the most extreme abuse of power and

⁴⁸ Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 79.

⁴⁹ As St Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9.

hence antipolitical. In this case, it fell upon believers to reject such power; for prophets to speak against the injustices, for spiritual leaders to call secular leadership to accountability, for prayer to become lament before God and disobedience the right and virtuous course of action.

Resistance in the face of an incredible death machine was an example of faith's openness to other possibilities, including miracles. In most testimonies of resistance, the word 'miracle' occurs many times. These miracles were experienced as concrete instances of divine intervention; moments of providential rescue when all hope seemed lost. Yet for these miracles to happen, believers had to be open to that possibility and put themselves in the position –precarious at times, to experience them. That is why, given the circumstances, the greatest miracle was that of freedom. Despite the politics of atrocity within the state-inspired atheism of fear, there was one person or more people who refused to compromise their freedom; spiritual and political.

For the pastoral branch of practical theology in particular, acts of resistance to genocide offer a practical redefinition and critique of ecclesiology. During the genocide, institutionalised religion represented by church buildings became a trap; like a magnet attracting victims and killers. On the other hand, homes of the faithful and the faithful themselves became the 'church', visible, invisible, practicing, dedicated, prayerful, sacrificial, loving, giving; the tent of God among the people. True religion, morally watchful and politically engaged to care for the distressed and fugitives, was among the poor, the common people, those who in many ways had not been polluted or stained by the evil that was rampant in the Rwandan polis.⁵⁰

More importantly, witnessing to resistance as a theological task is itself resistance *post eventum*. However, speaking of *post eventum* -or post-genocide for that matter- is a chronological convenience, but epistemologically it is an aberration. It is simply unsustainable to think that the genocide-event finished in July 94. In its legal nature, genocide is an imprescriptible crime, because its threat and its legacy have an enduring character.⁵¹ Societies that have been affected by tragedies such as genocide are for ever

⁵⁰ Allusion to the definition of true religion in James 1:27

⁵¹ See for instance *Article 37* of Organic law No. 08/96 of August 30, 1996 on the Organization of Prosecutions for Offences constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity committed since October 1, 1990. Full text available at <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/domestic/rwanda.htm>

associated with their scarred past.⁵² For Rwandans, genocide is a ‘fracture event’ and ‘94’ is a year of ‘rupture’ which will mark its historical timeline for any foreseeable future and will always be associated with death and desolation. (Re)Telling stories of resistance is a refusal to be consumed by death and glorify evil. It is already a sad fact that there are few of such stories to tell, as Arendt argued above, however it would be even more disempowering for faith communities and Rwandan society in general if those few existing testimonies to resilient humanity, faith and life were to be kept quiet.

A theology that witnesses to resistance is also relevant to the epistemology and pedagogy of the event. In a society like Rwanda where history has been ‘ethnicised’, written and revised frequently to suit the victor of the moment; telling these stories could bring some sort of balance in knowledge-making about ‘Rwanda 94’. This point cannot be emphasized enough, especially if one thinks of the future and asks what kind of knowledge younger and future generations will be equipped with.⁵³ To put it plainly, magnifying resistance to genocide could go a long way to set standards for knowledge making, learning and action in the unlikely event of recurrence of similar events.

These voices of resistance are important for the sake of justice, confession and repentance. They stand in silent contradiction to any defensive argument, excuses and justifications for those who failed. Against the fear as an excuse, they are a reminder that true love banishes fear.⁵⁴ In opposition to fatalism in the presence of threats, they speak of a resilient hope and openness to God’s presence as a real possibility. They confront the criminal with their crime and the sinner with their sin. It is not so much the voices of the dead that stand against them as much as the acts of those who refused to comply, compromise, yield and surrender. Yet, the challenge to face one’s responsibility is also an invitation to embrace the openness to the possibility of grace, mercy and forgiveness alongside repentance and justice.

⁵² What post-colonial thinkers like Memmi and Said argue about colonialism apply, *mutatis mutandis*, for genocide. According to Gandhi, both thinkers make a convincing case that the colonial aftermath does not yield the end of colonisation. The triumphant subjects of this aftermath inevitably underestimate the psychological tenacious hold of the colonial past on the postcolonial present....the colonised live for a long time before the new subject appears. Gandhi, *Postcolonial*, 6.

⁵³ Gatwa also insists on this point in his final chapter of *Churches and ethnic ideology*.

⁵⁴ 1 John 4:18.

Finally and inevitably, these stories are vital for reconciliation.⁵⁵ Reconciliation does not require a *tabula rasa*; a removal of ethnicity by law.⁵⁶ These stories of resistance show that people can be Hutu or Tutsi and yet be humane to one another; that faith can be a challenge to ethnic determinism. Many Muslims and some Christians demonstrated this possibility. Reconciliation, theologically and politically understood, rests on –and is– a ‘miracle’. According to some in Christian religion and theology, that miracle is the incarnation of Christ. In Rwandan post-genocide politics, it is an attitude of resilient openness to the possibility of Rwandans, Hutu and Tutsi, to be free and to love. This openness is what made resistance to genocide possible and it is certainly to this openness that Rwanda can look to for inspiration.

7.3. Effects of resistance to genocide on religious experience

7.3.1. Expectations and Unexpected

As stated in the general introduction, this research project was prompted by the discursive representations of Islam and Christianity after the genocide. It was not so much the fact that at the time those discourses were not supported by verifiable evidence but rather the contrast between discourse and reality. At the level of discourse, Christianity had failed and was in decline while Islam was growing due to the bravery of Muslims in resisting genocide. In reality, churches were still full of worshipers and mosques registered a steady if not dramatic growth. Religious growth and or decline are phenomena which are not easy to study. Surveys, polls and censuses produce statistical evidence that is officially indicative at best.⁵⁷ Therefore, as a methodology this section uses heuristic and abduction approaches with all their potential pitfalls.⁵⁸

The Rwandan tragedy of 1994 is one of those events that are expected to deeply affect religious beliefs and practices in societies where they take place. This deep impact can be

⁵⁵ On the importance of resistance stories in reconciliation see Paul Conway, “Righteous Hutus: Can stories of courageous rescuers help in Rwanda’s reconciliation process?” In *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 3(7), July 2011, pp. 217-223.

⁵⁶ After the tragedy of 1994, ethnicity as an aspect of Rwandan identity has been outlawed. Using ethnic mentions ‘Hutu’, ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Twa’ in public discourse is equivalent to harbouring a ‘genocide ideology’. Some have seen in this a form of repression and intimidation. see Susan Themson, *Resisting Reconciliation: State Power and Everydaylife in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. Phd Thesis (Dalhousie University: Nova Scotia, 2009), 167-168.

⁵⁷ Rutayisire suggests that the 2002 general population census showed that Christians stood at 94%, Muslims having grown only to 1.8%, with the other religions sharing the rest of the 4%.” Antoine Rutayisire. *Rediscovering the Gospel of Reconciliation*. Cape Town 2010, 3.

⁵⁸ Jeppe Sinding Jensen, ‘Epistemology’ in Stausberg and Engler, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp 40-51.

felt immediately or gradually over time. Rutayisire observed that Rwandan Christianity was *expected* to experience decline due to its failure to affect the outcome of the genocide.⁵⁹ Conversely, Islam was expected to blossom. In other words, and ideally, Muslims' political virtue was expected to be rewarded while Christians' moral collapse would result in decline as sanction. It is effectively these 'ideal' results that are 'imagined' in post-genocide representations of Christianity and Islam; especially in Anglo-Saxon media and scholarly works.

However, what happened unexpectedly in reality is that both Christianity and Islam grew after the genocide. Christianity grew even faster than Islam, as chapter five has already demonstrated. This outcome is not as paradoxical as it might look. Schweid has shown that genocides and similar atrocities, despite their absurdity, do not generate an essential turning point in the faith or religiosity of believers and non-believers.⁶⁰ He based his claims on a thorough study of outlooks of Holocaust survivors before, during and after the Holocaust by R. R. Brenner.⁶¹ According to Schweid, 'The Holocaust (...) strengthened pre-existing views. While [it] caused a crisis of faith for some of the respondents in the study, most of them returned to their faith following the Holocaust.'⁶²

Similarly in Rwanda, very few 'lost their faith' in God or abandoned their congregations because of the genocide. Thus, at least quantitatively, religiosity followed the same trajectory dictated by pre-existing historical and socio-cultural patterns. The genocide and the outstanding behaviour of most Muslims did not change the perception of religious experience although they led to questioning this *status quo* in some quarters. In reality, conversions to Islam as a by-product of rescue were minimal because statistically and demographically, Muslims could only be in touch with a small number of non-Muslims. Furthermore, Muslims did not request conversion as price for their 'hospitality', thus reducing even further the number of potential converts.⁶³

As far as the growth of Christianity is concerned, it is fair to say that a researcher in post-genocide ecclesiology goes through at least two moments of what Fackenheim

⁵⁹ Rutayisire. *Rediscovering*, 3.

⁶⁰ Eliezer Schweid, "Faith, Ethics and the Holocaust. The Justification of Religion in the Crisis of the Holocaust". In the *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4. 1988. pp. 395-412.

⁶¹ R. R. Brenner, *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* (New York, London: The Free Press, 1980).

⁶² Schweid, *Faith, ethics*, 395.

⁶³ In fact, it can be argued by inference that Islam benefited more from the returning of Muslims from the diaspora and post-genocide demographic explosion.

calls ‘*Erschütterung*’ or ‘shock’.⁶⁴ If the first shock is the failure/compromise of institutional Christianity in the face of the genocide, the second and more profound ‘shock’ is the recovery –and subsequent growth– of Christianity not just as a socio-cultural reality but a meaningful spiritual presence. From the perspective of Christian religious experience, genocide was an apostasy, therefore the ‘shock’ relates to the possibility of seamless continuity after so many acts of recanting.

7.3.2. *An hypothesis: Religious renewal as vindication of faith-inspired Resistance.*

Rutayisire claimed that the post-genocide Rwandan Church grew because it discovered a message of reconciliation in the Gospel.⁶⁵ Whilst this claim has genuine merit after sixteen years of evangelisation, it does not address a more primordial theological question: How was it even possible for Christianity to recover from the debacle of 1994 and what made ‘God talk’, in the form of a Gospel of reconciliation, a possibility? Without attempting a theodicy, this work argues that recovery of religion and religious talk was made possible by faith-inspired, resistance to the genocide. This applies to Islam and Christianity equally.

As a matter of fact, a theoretical theodicy is unnecessary for the simple reason that the stories of faith-inspired resistance are a theodicy themselves. It is true that these stories show, that at times faith existed, ‘as a miraculous spiritual strength from within the crisis of religion and despite it. The revelation of the faith attested to itself without providing explanations for the events that religion failed to explain.’⁶⁶ If, according to Metz, talk about God after Auschwitz is made possible because Jews prayed in Auschwitz,⁶⁷ it becomes almost irrelevant to question the whereabouts of *Imana* in the Rwandan genocide in the presence of the testimonies of resistance.

To some extent, what Rutayisire says in 2010 is a natural progression from his collection of testimonies. The acts of believers who refused to compromise, constitute the thread which joins faith communities before and after April-July 1994. Had prayers gone quiet, had martyrdom and hardship been shunned, the religious phenomenon in post-genocide Rwanda would have been different. However, testimonies of resistance showed that church

⁶⁴ Emil L Fackenheim, *Faith in God and Man After Auschwitz: Theological Implications*. Yad Vashem, April 2002. Posted at <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/fackenheim.htm#fn11>. Accessed on February 21st, 2012.

⁶⁵ Rutayisire, *Rediscovering*, 3-4.

⁶⁶ Schweid, *Faith, Ethics*, 404.

⁶⁷ Johannes B. Metz, *The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in postbourgeois world* (New York: Crossroads. 1987), 19.

life and faith practices were not suspended by the call to genocide. People showed love in their homes. Refugees prayed in the camps. Fugitives prayed in their hideouts. The genocide triggered a wholesale institutional breakdown, including institutionalised religion; but individual and to some extent small-scale ecclesial expressions of faith never stopped but were re-enforced during the tragedy.⁶⁸

Fackenheim commented on how Raul Hilberg's *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* begins with the indispensable Hitler, through derivative, but essential "perpetrators", relentlessly through "victims" and "bystanders", to end with one person; ailing Berlin priest Bernhard Lichtenberg. Fackenheim concludes, 'Lichtenberg (...) is "indispensable": there were other Christians; but this one prayed for two years in Berlin, the Nazi capital, bold enough to name "Jews", which his pope never did and, while saving not a single Jew, saved Christianity, or what remnant of it there was.'⁶⁹

Fackenheim and Arendt say what stories of resistance in 'Rwanda 94' do as well; that one person can save a whole religion, even humanity; although their actions might have touched only a single person. Does not the Talmud say that whoever saves one life saves the whole of humanity?⁷⁰ Religious expression was possible after the horror of genocide because faith existed even in the furnace of the genocide. What Schweid says about the survival of Judaism can apply to Rwanda's Christianity and Islam; religion in the institutional form and personal and social leadership was saved from the confusion by the great manifestations of faith of the individual.⁷¹

7.3.3. *Qualitative critique of religious renewal in the aftermath*

It follows from the hypothesis advanced above that what is of critical interest is not quantitative growth but the qualitative nature of the 'religions' that emerged from the genocide. As far as Islam is concerned, this work argues convincingly that its flourishing is better understood qualitatively. The real indicators are social, political and moral credibility; respect by Christian communities and leaderships, partnership with the

⁶⁸ In agreement with Schweid, faith survived at times as a protest, a rebellion, or a cry of confusion. *Faith*, 396. See also p.404. The informal 'church' that emerged in the survivors' camp of Nyarushishi is one of the most vibrant and defiant expressions of faith this author has ever seen!

⁶⁹ Fackenheim, *Faith in God*, 2002. Arendt also establishes a similar parallel between Eichmann and Sergeant Schmidt in *Eichmann*, pp.230-232.

⁷⁰ Mishnah on *Folio 37a* of the *Tractate Sanhedrin* (Babylonian Talmud) which deals with legal proceedings, crime and punishment, etc. The full content of the Folio is available at http://come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_37.html#37a_40

⁷¹ Schweid, *Faith, Ethics*, 404.

government and other institutions, etc. Islam's growth in stature is one of the most remarkable religious phenomena in post-genocide Rwandan society. In many ways, Islam moved from the margins and the periphery when faith-inspired political values that were internal to this minority of believers became the public paradigm of how a community of faith resists political violence.

It can be safely argued that the behaviour of Muslims in the genocide positively 'demystified' Islam in the eyes of most Rwandans; even the mosques, so dreaded by many Christians as lairs of magic, were demystified. Friendships and partnerships have developed between Muslim leaders and their Christian colleagues, Rwandan Muslims and the international community in ways that would have been rare, if not impossible before the genocide.⁷² It is also in this way that 'conversion to Islam' should be interpreted; it was not just the few who changed religious allegiance who were affected but the whole nation made a radical turn in its outlook on Islam.

As for Christianity, one is compelled to reflect on the disquieting seamless continuity observed in religious practices after the tragedy. Fackenheim refers briefly to his correspondence with Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer. In one letter, Fackenheim asked Bethge whether, had his friend lived, he would have begun a "post-Holocaust Christian theology". Bethge is on record that, had his friend known Christian theologians would return to theology "seamlessly", after 1945, where they left it in 1933; he would not have believed it.⁷³

Similarly, the 'seamless' continuity of Christian practices after the genocide almost beggars belief. There was something eerily fascinating about church services immediately after the genocide. Analysis of them would be more effective in the hands of a psychologist or a sociologist of religion.⁷⁴ Testimonies were public yet one also had the impression that they were not addressed to anyone in particular; they were like a self-cleansing ritual or a *lament* to God. People could not wait to be in churches because they needed to be there to be unburdened.

⁷² See the interview given by former Mufti Habimana at the Barkley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-sheikh-saleh-habimana-head-mufti-of-the-islamic-community-of-rwanda>. Accessed 17.02.2012. A transcript is given in the Appendix.

⁷³ Fackenheim, *Faith in God*. Fackenheim insightfully points to the fact that Bonhoeffer had not even known of the Holocaust, only of Jewish expulsion from Germany.

⁷⁴ The experiences described above apply to the Pentecostal church the author was part of from 1994 to 2002. However, the author was privileged to visit many other Protestant churches in that period (Presbyterians, Baptist and Episcopalian) and the dissimilarities in rituals were far less than the similarities.

Genocide-related testimonies as a liturgical novelty wore off towards the end of 1994, after which church services returned to the way they used to be before April 1994. Metz wrote decades after the Holocaust, ‘the dead of Auschwitz should have altered everything; nothing should have remained as before, in our nation, in our churches. Especially not in our churches!’⁷⁵ Yet remain the same they did, and in the words of Walter Benjamin “The fact that ‘everything continues as usual’ is the catastrophe.”⁷⁶ That is the greater ‘shock’. The worst had passed, the Church had recovered and the pews were still full and filling up.⁷⁷

It is the desire to ‘settle back’ in normality, without soul-searching self reflection which is rather disquieting. The pressing reflection at this point was, and still is, mostly pastoral; one of practical ecclesiology. The renewal should have provided a moment of pause and reflection on the failure to offer pastoral guidance during the genocide but it did not. This pastoral ‘recklessness’ is revealed by the cracks that appear beneath the visible growth of Christianity. Most Christian churches were shaken by internal power struggles as they struggled to combine ethnic integration and church leadership within new congregations; as Tutsi ministers challenged leaderships previously dominated by Hutu. There is also the planting of monoethnic churches, even tribal churches. Is this only an exclusion-limitation that marks most beginnings or is it a symptom of ‘ethnic ghettos’ forming from within the Christian fellowship?⁷⁸

If intra-denominational relations can be feisty at times, inter-denominational collaboration is on the frosty end of the spectrum. Then of course, there is the issue of relations with Muslims. Despite collaboration at the level of national leadership, the majority of evangelical Christians still see Muslims as people headed for destruction. If anything, a little bit of self-reflection after the genocide would have generated a deal of humility and charity towards their ‘Abrahamic’ relatives. As it were, Amery’s lament is more than

⁷⁵ Metz, *Emergent Church*, 29.

⁷⁶ Jurgen Manemann, “The Depoliticization of God as a challenge for Political Theology” in Hoelzl and Ward, ed, *Religion and Political Thought* (London-New York: Continuum, 2006), 272.

⁷⁷ In Rwandan wisdom, this situation is captured by the proverb ‘*Ushize impumu yibagirwa uwamwirukansaga*’; once a person is in safety, they quickly forget what they were running from.

⁷⁸ For e.g it is not uncommon to hear or come across a ‘*Banyamulenge church*’ or a ‘church of people from Uganda’, etc.

applicable to post-genocide Rwandan Christianity, “we did not become wiser (...), deeper (...), better, more human, more humane and more mature ethically.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Jean Améry, "At the Mind's Limits," in *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, , trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 19-20.

Chapter 8. In the Aftermath: Religion and Reconciliation

*Sakwe! Soma!: Twavamo umwe twashira! Amashyiga.*¹

-A Rwandan riddle.

8.1. 'Necessity' of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda

Reconciliation, *ubwiyunge*, is a term heard and used as often as 'genocide' in post 'Rwanda 94'. 'Rwanda-Genocide-Reconciliation' has become a sort of 'trinity' in public discourse. For Rwandans, genocide is the plague; reconciliation the cure. This is the main political axiom, other concerns are secondary. As soon as the worst of the genocide was over (July 1994), *ubwiyunge* instantaneously appeared in political discourse alongside its twin 'unity', *ubumwe*. The transitional government which took over from the '*genocidaires*' was tellingly called the Government of National Unity.

Then and now 'unity' and 'reconciliation' are not a fanciful discursive pairing. The two concepts are the antithesis of the brokenness and fragmentation brought about by the genocide. For the politicians of 'post-94', the concepts are the two cornerstones thrown into the unfathomable abyss upon which a new nation must be erected. The premise is this: there is no future Rwanda without unity and no unity is possible without reconciliation.² Hence the riddle at the beginning of the section: without any one of the three, the whole national structure would collapse.

Reconciliation thus emerged as a political necessity and each segment of the body politic has responded in various practical ways. This final chapter provides a survey and critique of these responses. It studies the reconciliation phenomenon with particular focus on the place and contribution of Islam and Christianity in this complex of responses. However, before satisfying this specific aim, it is important to provide a succinct critical overview of the state of the reconciliation process so far.

¹ Approximate translation: *Riddle! Ask! : If one is removed from among us we would all perish*: The three fire stones.

² Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 168.

8.2. Reconciliation: the state of process (and research)

This section approaches the critical overview just mentioned by looking at three areas of the process of reconciliation: its methodology, its politics and its ethics. It will argue that (1) the process of reconciliation is ‘spontaneous’ in its methodology, (2) top-down and authoritarian in its politics and (3) secular in its ethics.

8.2.1. Methodology of reconciliation: Spontaneous effervescence versus theoretical vacuum.

In his typology of post-genocide societies, Drumbl argued that Rwanda falls into the category of ‘dualist’ post-genocide societies.³ However, Drumbl’s classification of Rwanda as a dualist society is based on the stereotype of post-genocide Rwanda as a society of two homogenous groups; victims/Tutsi and perpetrators/Hutu. More recent studies (Straus (2006, 2010) and Thomson (2009)) have ably challenged these stereotypes and showed that not only is it dangerous to uncritically put a whole ethnic group in one category, but that there is diversity in and different levels of victimization and perpetration. It follows that Rwanda would better qualify as a ‘pluralist’ post-genocide society.

Drumbl offered this typology to show how difficult it is to pursue retributive justice in dualist and pluralist post-genocide societies, because of the close proximity of victims and perpetrators as well as the complex web of relationships that connect them. Retributive justice might lead to more violence and unrest.⁴ The argument can be made *mutatis mutandis* with regard to reconciliation in post-genocide Rwandan society; its complex make-up and political fragility is a challenge to reconciliation. This situation might account for the dominant role, if not the monopoly, that the State has continually played in the reconciliation agenda because the process is seen as a matter of national security.

A cursory survey of the process of reconciliation shows an interesting pattern: repeated calls for reconciliation and multiple spontaneous initiatives without a clear framework. As the first chapter showed, Rwandans have always had conflicts and consequently devised ways of making peace. *Ubwiyunge* is thus not a novel concept to them. However, the first

³ Mark Drumbl, “Punishment, Post-Genocide: From Guilt to Shame to Civis in Rwanda.” in *New York University Law Review*, (November 2000): 1237; 1241-1253. According to Drumbl, a ‘dualist’ post-genocide responds to the following criteria: (1) victims and oppressors coexist within the nation-state and territorial division is not possible. (2) A variety of characteristics including: control of political and economic power (and the groups’ numerical significance), level of participation in the violence, and geographic distribution of the two groups.

⁴ Drumbl, “Punishment”, 1239-1241.

thing that a reconciliation framework would clarify is how to move from private practices of peacemaking to a public and national reconciliation. The genocide was an unprecedented conflict involving a multiplicity of victims and perpetrators. Therefore, the political economy of reconciliation does not fit easily in the traditional framework which was primarily private (between individuals or families); even with the retrieval of the *Gacaca* system.⁵

Furthermore, without contesting the vital importance of reconciliation, it seems important to clarify the scope of this reconciliation. Put simply, a strong case can be made that although some aspects of the genocide necessitate reconciliation for a possible future 'living-together'; other aspects of the genocide simply cannot be reconciled with. At least reconciliation should not be a response to a Hegelian necessity to reconcile after the finest and noblest individuals were immolated on the altar of history.⁶ Neiman noted that serious thinkers on genocide have been consistently suspicious of or categorically repudiated any justification of suffering and reconciliation as part of a dialectical necessity for historical progress.⁷ It can be argued that the political regime in post-94 Rwanda has espoused this line of thought.

So what should stand outside the sphere of reconciliation? According to Adorno, for the victims' sake no reconciliation is possible with the world of their murderers⁸; the world capable of producing horrors such as Auschwitz or 'Rwanda 94'.⁹ In Rwanda, this world becomes a metaphor for a place and politics of transgression that denied and broke the bonds and bridges that had been created and erected between the Rwandan people over

⁵ *Gacaca* was a traditional 'court' for restorative justice in any given small community. In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, it was estimated that at least 120,000 people alleged genocidaires; a number of cases that the combined efforts of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha and Rwandan ordinary courts could not tackle in less than a century. The *Gacaca* system was reintroduced by Organic Law n° 40/2000 of 26/01/2001 revised and replaced by Organic Law n° 16/2004 of 19/06/2004 as the swiftest way of providing a forensic platform that combines truth telling, justice and grassroots reconciliation. A comprehensive study on the *Gacaca* Courts is provided by Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, introduction to the lectures on the philosophy of world history. Translated by H B Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 43.

⁷ See Neiman, *Evil*, 258-261

⁸ In Neiman, *Evil*, 261

⁹ Thomson's research among the poorest of victims reveals this clear separation between the perpetrators and the 'political universe' that turned them into 'monsters'. Surprisingly, a high number showed empathy and understanding towards the perpetrators and were open to being reconciled but they were adamant about the impossibility of reconciliation with those circumstances themselves or any policy which wanted to include them in the realm of the excusable. See Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, pp.170; 214.

centuries. A world in which life, alliances, family, friendship, hospitality and neighbourhood became empty or were denied meaning. A world where death, fear, cowardice, betrayal, but most frighteningly, mutual indifference allowed the extermination of a third of its ethnic make-up.¹⁰ Such a world stands outside of reconciliation because as Arendt rightly pointed out, no one would dare to reconcile themselves with the reality of extermination.¹¹

Another crucial clarification that has been overlooked or oversimplified pertains to who should be reconciled with whom. The current policies and practices of reconciliation, which take a synchronic view of the genocide, make two implicit presumptions. First, that reconciliation is only possible between (Tutsi) survivors and (Hutu) perpetrators. Secondly, that reconciliation can only happen between the living. The first presupposition fails to locate the Rwandan tragedy in a 'continuum of violence'¹² and qualify it as an 'autocide'. As a consequence, the victims (Hutu and Tutsi) who came before and after April-July 1994 are uninvited to reconciliation.¹³ The second presupposition effectively breaks any continuity of fellowship between the living and the dead; denying the surviving perpetrator the possibility of reconciliation with their victims. This undermines one of the most important tenets of the Rwandan worldview which crucially, as the first chapter argued, provided symbols and rituals for making peace between the living and the dead.

Finally, a theoretical framework would clarify the relation between reconciliation and time.¹⁴ It has already been shown that a synchronic view of the genocide leaves many victims and perpetrators outside the boundaries of reconciliation. More importantly, because reconciliation is embedded within policies and time-constrained programmes (NURC, *Gacaca*), it is expected that there will be a time when these will come to an end. However, success of policies and programmes does not necessarily mean that genuine reconciliation will have been achieved. It becomes imperative to think of the future of reconciliation at the end of specific initiatives and provide for flexible parameters because

¹⁰ Here, 1/3 is not to be taken numerically but as one of the three groups that made up the human population of Rwanda.

¹¹ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 239.

¹² Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, pp.112ff.

¹³ This situation also effectively ignores all the Hutu victims of the genocide. Crucially, it excludes a Hutu-Hutu reconciliation even though reliable sources have shown that a great deal of physical and psychological harm was visited by Hutu upon other Hutu.

¹⁴ One author who has given attention to this topic is Jean-Paul Lederach in *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (Scotdale: Herald Press, 1999).

like any relational concept, reconciliation will change with time as new events and groups are allowed in the process.

These are just the most pressing and salient points that a clear framework would have straightened out. In its absence, it becomes difficult to evaluate the impact of reconciliation so far and to determine exactly what kind of reconciliation post-genocide Rwandan society is aiming for.

8.2.2. *The politics of reconciliation: an authoritarian top-bottom process*¹⁵

Thomson has conducted a brilliant critical study of the politics of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda through her thorough examination of the NURC. Hailing from political ethnography,¹⁶ the study is an inverse rejoinder to the current politics of reconciliation. It describes a grass roots resistance to a top-down authoritarian model of reconciliation. At present, the State, represented by the RPF-led government, has an exclusive monopoly to design and implement the model of reconciliation needed through the NURC.¹⁷ In fact, the State's model of reconciliation reflects perfectly Cavanaugh's argument about state soteriology.¹⁸ Having credited itself with stopping genocide, the programme of national reconciliation gives the government a moral upper hand in shaping the future for Rwandans, including reconciling them according to its own vision of how things should be done.¹⁹

This top-down model of reconciliation also exemplifies Foucault's power-knowledge relation. Since the State-government only recognises its own interpretation of genocide, it maintains a monopoly of knowledge-power over what should be done to achieve reconciliation. In this position, it also designs strategies of disseminating and implementing this 'knowledge-to-reconcile' by means of a sophisticated network of surveillance, discipline and punishment. Reconciliation then becomes a 'power technology' with its own

¹⁵ For a concise and most recent overview of reconciliation from the government's perspective see NURC, *Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer Report* (Kigali: NURC, 2010). The 110-pages document is more than a comprehensive report; it also provides a conceptual framework with clear theoretical, contextual and political dimensions.

¹⁶ Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 10-11.

¹⁷ NURC's main activities consist of organising re-education camps 'ingando', the mourning week, 'Icyunamo' and working in close collaboration with *Gacaca*.

¹⁸ William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002).

¹⁹ A government official quoted in Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 124.

specific transpositions, functions and effects.²⁰ Basically, the State puts in place a power-charged framework where (Hutu) perpetrators *have to* tell the ‘truth’ about what they did and (Tutsi) victims *must* forgive, thus enabling reconciliation.

Inevitably, this model has been met with suspicion, especially by the poor, many of whom have no confidence in its success. Tutsi/survivors have questioned the overbearance and intrusion of the State because they see reconciliation as ‘an affair of the heart’ rather than an administrative matter. Hutu/perpetrators have seen it as another coercive one-way process which oversimplifies a complex event and indiscriminately criminalises all adult Hutu.²¹ Both groups see this model of reconciliation as enforced, thus wrong; another daily hardship which adds a political dimension to their everyday economic struggles.²² For this reason, they have developed subversive practices of resistance which include standing on the sidelines, irreverent participation and withdrawn muteness.²³

8.2.3. *The ethics of reconciliation: A secular reconciliation*

Ethics of reconciliation refers to the ‘moral’ resources available to all parties involved in the intricate process of reconciliation. Following from what was argued in the previous section, it can be suggested that post-genocide reconciliation happens within the context of political secularity. As it will be shown later, reconciliation in Rwanda relies heavily on truth-telling. Perpetrators are expected to tell the truth about what they did and witnesses about what they saw. Like ‘reconciliation’ itself, the Kinyarwanda concepts used have very religious connotations.²⁴ Yet surprisingly, in comparison with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was set up after Apartheid, the key component “truth” is missing in the conceptual scope of the NURC. In Rwanda, the necessity of unity trumps truth.

Here again, truth is to be taken in the Foucauldian understanding. Foucault suggests that truth is a thing of this world produced by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. Thus, each society has its regime of truth or its ‘general politics’ of truth and a particular ‘political

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 135.

²¹ On the survivors’ criticism of the process of reconciliation see for e.g Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (New Jersey: Wiley & Son, 2008), 216-218.

²² Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 188. For other weaknesses of this model see pp.111-124; 154-155 and 251-253.

²³ Thomson, *Resisting reconciliation*,

²⁴ Some of the most common concepts are *Kwemera icyaha* (to accept one’s sin), *Kwirega* or *kwatura* (to confess), *Gutanga ubuhamya* (to witness), etc.

economy' of that truth.²⁵ The regime of truth one finds in the process of reconciliation in Rwanda bears all these specificities because some 'truths' are considered more reliable than others and some testimonies are considered as 'untrue' even if their factuality is verifiable. What is of value is not so much the 'veracity' of facts but a kind of 'performance' that respects the mechanisms that decide what qualifies as true or false (i.e. state apparatus) and the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (i.e. witnesses and confessing perpetrators).²⁶

This secular 'political economy' of the truth has retrieved traditional moral values such as '*inyangamugayo*', or people of integrity. However, this work has already shown that traditional Rwandan morality had been in steady decline before the colonial era, in the form of a 'conscience-free morality' that culminated in the genocide of 1994. Yet again, the decision about who qualifies as *inyangamugayo* is not for individuals and communities to make; it is made for them or they are given an 'incentive' to make a particular choice.²⁷

Another aspect of the secular ethics of reconciliation is the climate of fear that one encounters in spaces that are supposed to foster a return to social cohesion like *Gacaca* hearings. One of Thomson's interviewees put it simply, 'you know, I don't think there is an adult Hutu inside this country that doesn't fear *Gacaca*.'²⁸ *Gacaca*, the place of peacemaking has become a place of fear, an arena of accusation, betrayal, trauma, hurt and brokenness.²⁹ There are more *ubuhamya bushinja* (testimony against the accused) than *ubuhamya bushinjura* (testimony for the accused) and many innocent lives have become a casualty of this accusatory platform and a relativist regime of truth. Apart from the State's power of persuasion and dissuasion, nothing else seems to give an incentive for a truth that leads to justice and justice that fosters genuine reconciliation.

8.3. Islam and Christianity in Reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda

This critical engagement with the process of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda was a long and necessary prelude to the main content of this final chapter, namely the role and

²⁵ Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, 131-132

²⁶ Foucault, *Power/knowledge*, 131.

²⁷ There are at least six pre-scripted roles in *Gacaca* trials: 1) citizen spectators, 2) judges, 3) witnesses; 4) prisoners who have confessed to acts of genocide; 5) prisoners who have not confessed; 6) survivors (NURC, 2003)

²⁸ Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 248,

²⁹ My experience of *Gacaca* in July 2007 was certainly a confirmation of all these feelings. See also Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation*, 248-251.

place Islam and Christianity have in this process. A treatment of reconciliation in Rwanda that ignores religion would lack context and substance. It would be lacking contextually given the preponderance of religion in this society; substantially because reconciliation originates from sacred texts and theology.³⁰ To use a phrase coined by Max Weber, there still is an ‘elective affinity’ between religion and reconciliation.³¹

8.3.1. *From worship to political discourse: a contribution from Christian theology.*³²

The biblical root of reconciliation signifies a ‘change’ or an ‘exchange’. Schwöbel notes that before the New Testament, classical Greek authors used the concept in a metaphorical sense for exchanging enmity, wrath and war for friendship, love and peace.³³ It seems likely that it is in this sense that pre-Pauline traditions used by Paul and the deuterio-Pauline literature understood this concept. In these early Christian materials, reconciliation is predominantly a theocentric relational metaphor; it is defined as a theological context and not developed analogically from interpersonal relationships.³⁴

This centrality of reconciliation in the understanding of the salvation event has been hinted at by theologians such as Baur³⁵ and Ritschl³⁶ whilst Barth’s treatment of the theme can be found in the fourth volume of his *Church Dogmatics*.³⁷ However, none of them gave to reconciliation the role that it seems to have in Pauline theology; a fact that prompted Otto Weber’s comment that there is a ‘quiet consensus’ against the central place of the doctrine

³⁰ In its biblical use, reconciliation is mainly a theocentric concept. Of the eight instances of the use of καταλασσο/καταλλαγε in Paul, only one (1Cor.7.11) refers to an interpersonal human relationship, the rest refer to the relationships between God and the world, especially the fallen part of it. Another striking point is how sparsely the word is represented in New Testament literature. Martin notes that apart from Matthew 5:24, the term ‘reconciliation’ is only found in the Pauline corpus. See for e.g. Colin E. Gunton, “Introduction” in Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Theology of Reconciliation* (London: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003). On reconciliation in Pauline corpus, see Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1989), 79-80.

³¹ Quoted by Daniel Philpott, *Religion, Reconciliation and Transitional Justice: The state of the Field* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 4.

³² Most of the material in this section is based on Christian theology in the absence of a theoretical basis for reconciliation in the Koran and in Islamic theology in general.

³³ Christoph Schwöbel, “Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction” in Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Theology of Reconciliation* (London: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 16.

³⁴ Gunton, *Theology*, 2.

³⁵ Ferdinand C. Baur, *Die Christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrer geschichtlichen entwicklung von der ältesten Zeit bis auf die neueste* (Tübingen: C.F Osiander, 1938).

³⁶ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive development of the Doctrine*. English translation, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay, 2nd edition. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902).

³⁷ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of reconciliation*, Church Dogmatics IV, Part 1, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1974), 285

of reconciliation.³⁸ This work espouses the thesis of Martin and others who see in reconciliation the *leitmotiv* or the overarching rubric which encompasses other soteriological motifs.³⁹

As a relational metaphor and a soteriological concept, reconciliation presupposes conflict and Christology. Conflict is understood as enmity of humanity against God; this relationship of brokenness and alienation being restored in the historical person and work of Christ.⁴⁰ Reconciliation also has a strong eschatological motif with a dual aspect of a once-for-all completion⁴¹ and yet-to-come hope.⁴² For this reason, Rae understands reconciliation as hope more than dogma⁴³ whilst Lederach calls it a ‘journey of wander, wonder and wait’ for the already accomplished reconciliation to fill the universe.⁴⁴ This essentially eschatological nature of reconciliation has profound ecclesiological implications for the present times. In this time, argues Barth, it is the Church with its perception and experience of grace which is ordained for the ministry of reconciliation.⁴⁵

As far as the content of this ministry of reconciliation is concerned, Webster argues that this ministry should be solely the *logos* of reconciliation. He rejects certain medieval theologies which held that God’s work of reconciling the world to himself could somehow be repeated or made effective by the work of the church. This leads to what Webster calls ‘industrial-strength ecclesiologies’, which assume a certain coherence of the divine work of reconciliation and the church’s moral action. Therefore, since the moral *diakonia* of reconciliation has its origin in divine appointment, its content should be primarily speech.⁴⁶

While this type of ecclesiology could be satisfactory when reconciliation is taken in a certain theological tradition, its relevance becomes questionable when reconciliation is transported to the field of politics, represented in this case by the Rwandan genocide. It has been strongly argued above that reconciliation, both in its once-for-all and its eschatological aspects, is the condition for the possibility of a new logic of relationship between God and creation. Therefore, it is not surprising that in modern politics, especially

³⁸ Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag. 5. Aufl. 1977), 203.

³⁹ Martin, *Reconciliation*, 80ff.

⁴⁰ For reference, see Jean-Paul Lederach, *The Journey toward Reconciliation* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1999) 164ff.

⁴¹ Barth, *Doctrine*, 285.

⁴² Gunton, *Theology*, 173.

⁴³ Murray Rae, “A Remnant People: The Ecclesia as a Sign of Reconciliation” in Gunton’s *Theology*, 108.

⁴⁴ Lederach, *Journey*, 176-186

⁴⁵ Barth, *Doctrine*, 150-151.

⁴⁶ John Webster, “The Ethics of Reconciliation” in Gunton’s *Theology*, 110-113.

in the branch that deals with the resolution of political conflicts and peace-building, reconciliation is constantly called upon to overcome violent conflicts and put an end to oppression.

There is no doubt that the concept of reconciliation as it is used in social and political discourse has its roots in the language of Christian proclamation. However, in the transition from the sphere of proclamation and worship to the discourse of political and social life, reconciliation undergoes sometimes subtle, sometimes dramatic changes, but ultimately seldom retains its original meaning. In political rhetoric, as is the case in post-genocide Rwanda, reconciliation refers to a wide range of processes or a framework that aims at helping groups of people to move from a state of conflict to one of peace and harmonious coexistence. Lederach suggests that this framework must provide ‘a comprehensive approach to the transformation of conflict that addresses structural issues, social dynamics of relationship building, and the development of a supportive infrastructure for peace.’⁴⁷

Mainly because of this purely political and secular understanding of reconciliation and also because of the limitations that church theologians have imposed on themselves; the processes of reconciliation have been, until recently, the monopoly of realpolitik practitioners.⁴⁸ However, Luttwack observed that the absence of religion in the politics of reconciliation does not necessarily originate from the reticence of politicians as much as that of theologians and believers.⁴⁹

Understandably, there are essential problems inherent to this framework. Leaving reconciliation in the hands of politicians and diplomats is opening the door to soteriological claims from political powers. As Cavanaugh pointed out, politics is at its most dangerous where it claims to offer salvation and tries to instrumentalise the human need for salvation in order to achieve its aims.⁵⁰ Besides, the framework uses a paradoxical methodology because it departs from a biblical/theological concept and aims at achieving its theological benefits using assumptions that are foreign to Christian faith and practice. More

⁴⁷ Jean-Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: USIP Press, 1999), 21.

⁴⁸ See Philipott, *religion, Reconciliation*, 1.

⁴⁹ Edward Luttwack, “The Missing Dimension”, in Johnston and Sampson, *Missing Dimension*, 15.

⁵⁰ Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, 5.

importantly the political framework makes the church virtually ‘redundant’ in its ministry of reconciliation.⁵¹

8.3.2. *The response of Islam and Christianity to the necessity of reconciliation*

For the most part, Muslims and Christians showed little urgency for reconciliation immediately after the genocide and even to date, despite a variety of initiatives or practices of reconciliation, there is not a systematic faith-based approach to reconciliation in Rwanda. Despite the similarities, there are slight differences in the reasons behind the sluggish responses of Muslims and Christians to the imperative of reconciliation.

8.3.2.1. *Islam and Reconciliation: A Rwandan Jihad*

Tiemessen noted that Muslims have viewed the reconciliation process through a different lens to non-Muslims. She quoted a new convert to Islam who explained that reconciliation was not necessary for Islam because Muslims do not view the world through a racial or ethnic lens.⁵² This comment is quite revealing: since for the most part Muslims had nothing to be ashamed of with regard to their actions during the genocide, reconciliation did not seem to be their concern *ab intra* or even *ab extra*. The comment is also reminiscent of statements made by the Muslims interviewed by Doughty and Ntambara who felt that the genocide was not ‘their problem’ because they did not have any ethnic hatred within their faith community.

However, as time passed Muslim leaders were convinced that although the ethnic problem was minimal internally, they were part of a larger Rwandan community which had been torn apart by ethnic divisions and Muslims could not be indifferent to the national plight indefinitely. In an interview at Berkley in 2009, the Mufti of Rwanda said that Islam had the upper hand in reconciliation because Muslims did not have blood on their hands.⁵³

Practical initiatives in reconciliation focused on the Muslim youth to correct and counteract negative ideologies, entering in dialogue with non-Muslims and involvement in interfaith activities around issues of social reintegration.⁵⁴

⁵¹ For a comprehensive theoretical treatment of reconciliation applied to a South African context, see John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (London: SCM Press 2002).

⁵² Tiemessen, *From Genocide to Jihad*, 15.

⁵³ Interview with Jason Klocek at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. Available at <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-sheikh-saleh-habimana-head-mufti-of-the-islamic-community-of-rwanda>. A Transcript of the interview is in the appendixes.

⁵⁴ In the *Interview*, pages 3 to 6 of the transcript.

However, the most exciting contribution Islam has made to reconciliation, at least from a theological perspective and in terms of theoretical conceptualisation, is the framing of reconciliation as Jihad; a Jihad to heal. In the words of Mufti Habimana, Rwandan Muslims have their ‘...own jihad, [a] war against ignorance between Hutu and Tutsi. It is [a] struggle to heal ...to start respecting each other and living as Rwandans and as Muslims.’⁵⁵ This is a tremendous theological and political stance, especially considering the meaning and place of ‘Jihad’ in Islam. The leader of Rwandan Muslims clearly wanted to establish a parallel between Al Qaeda’s fundamentalism and Rwandan Islam when he told a reporter that those Muslims who resisted the genocide were ‘our freedom fighters.’⁵⁶

By adapting Jihad to the process of reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi in post-genocide Rwanda, Muslim leaders wanted to operate a double deconstruction. First of all, Tiemessen has argued that by resisting the genocide and subsequently making converts from both ethnic groups, Muslim communities were capable of changing group boundaries and thus deconstructing ethnicity.⁵⁷ Secondly, the Mufti deconstructs the very idea of Jihad. The basic meaning of Jihad is to ‘exert oneself’ and it carries two connotations. The most common understanding of Jihad is that provided by the Encyclopedia of Islam which emphasizes the military aspect of Jihad, with the object of the expansion of Islam and if needs be, its defense.⁵⁸ The second connotation is the idea of ‘self-mastery’ or fighting against one’s passions. In one tradition, the Prophet Mohammad would have said that this is the greater Jihad.⁵⁹

Does the Rwandan Islamic Jihad-reconciliation espouse the first or the second meaning? Given the non-radical and peaceful nature of Rwandan Islam combined with the very idea of reconciliation, one would lean towards the second connotation. Yet, the Mufti’s use of words like ‘war’ and ‘struggle’ suggests an external enemy to fight by all means, that enemy being ‘ignorance among Hutu and Tutsi’. The use of this militaristic language has at least one paramount importance, namely that Rwandan Muslims see ethnicity as a dangerous opponent and reconciliation as a long and arduous battle for faith. Another way of applying both connotations to Jihad-reconciliation is to posit that *ab intra* Muslims and

⁵⁵ Tiemessen, *From Genocide*, 14-17.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Tiemessen, *From Genocide*, 16.

⁵⁷ Tiemessen, *From Genocide*, 17.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Rubenstein, *Jihad*, 12.

⁵⁹ The saying is attributed to Umar II (c.682-720) and is fully quoted in Rubenstein, *Jihad*, 13.

non-Muslims would be encouraged to master their ethnic hatreds/passions whilst fighting politically to uproot the idea of ethnicity from the Rwandan body politic.

The idea of Jihad-reconciliation is certainly an attractive one but its application is more complicated than meets the eye. In the first instance, traditionally only Muslims can engage in Jihad whilst non-Muslims are actually a target of Jihad. This raises the serious question of whether reconciliation then passes through, or is preceded by conversion. By deconstructing ethnicity, Islam would attract Hutu and Tutsi converts who in return would live their lives as good Muslims and Rwandans.⁶⁰ This approach, which is indeed close to Webster's advocacy of witnessing to and speaking the *logos* of reconciliation, is theologically sound but it would have a very limited effect in terms of reconciliation. Most students of Rwandan religions agree with the point made earlier in this work that despite the heroic behaviour of Muslims during the genocide, it is unlikely that Islam will supplant Christianity in Rwanda in any foreseeable future. In that case, Jihad-reconciliation would affect an extremely limited percentage of Rwandans and conversely be ineffective for the majority of non-Muslims who happen to be the needy group.

The success of Jihad-reconciliation depends on how Muslim leaders introduce this new Jihad to non-Muslims who, for the most part, (a) are not acquainted with its meaning and (b) remain suspicious of Islam in general. For instance, how can Jihad-reconciliation be attractive and relevant to Christians without requiring them to convert to Islam? Muslim leadership in Rwanda has taken an important practical step in removing this stumbling block by being actively involved in different interreligious initiatives whose main objective is reconciliation. Different Muftis of Rwanda have been active in the creation and leadership of inter-faith initiatives with the purpose of addressing major issues affecting Rwandan society at large, such as reconciliation, HIV-AIDS, poverty and education.

In most of the inter-faith bodies interested in reconciliation, a Muslim leader is either the chair person or the deputy chair person.⁶¹ For instance, in one meeting of such bodies, Sheikh Harelimana Saleh delivered the key notes and encouraged all faith groups to work together in order to streamline reconciliation activities towards achieving effective

⁶⁰ This is certainly how Tiemessen envisages this Jihad *à la Rwandaise* when she links reconciliation and the growth of Islam. Rather than growth as an outcome of resistance as this work does, she sees growth as the result of reconciliation (pp19-20).

⁶¹ Tiemessen, *From Genocide*, 15.

reconciliation for the good of the nation.⁶² ‘Good of the nation’ here is similar to the idea of *Maslaha* or ‘public good’ in Islamic thought. Thus, one can argue that Rwandan Muslims want to see reconciliation as a ‘Public Good’ long-term project that different faith communities can contribute to, using methodologies that are specific to their particular beliefs.

In this way, Jihad-reconciliation is a methodology of reconciliation which (i) encourages Muslims to keep resisting ethnicity or renounce it, (ii) invites non-Muslims to embrace Islam and join in this ‘fight’ and finally, (iii) collaborates with leaders of other faiths by challenging them to make their congregations into reconciliation-friendly communities. Whether deliberately or not, Rwandan Muslims would then be using Rawls’ argument that the ends of religion, in this case Jihad-reconciliation, is not mutually exclusive with public good as long as this religious ideal can be supported by a public rationality that is not grounded specifically in religion; but rather in logic for the public good.⁶³

8.3.2.2. Christianity: Rediscovering the *logos* of reconciliation

There is a similarity in the sluggishness that Christianity showed during the genocide and in the immediate aftermath. It was argued previously that Christian leaders failed to critically reflect on the growth of Christianity after the genocide and hence did not offer clear guidelines on how believers should negotiate the genocide’s aftermath. Gatwa argues that one of those missed opportunities is the absence of genuine repentance by the majority of Christian churches in Rwanda.⁶⁴ Also, Christian leaders and thinkers delayed a necessary and urgent reflection on the possibilities of reconciliation. Therefore, there is no clearly articulated Christian theology of or even a cohesive reflection on reconciliation. This section draws mainly on the seminal efforts by Rwandan (Rutayisire, Gatwa) and foreign (Grey, Aguilar) thinkers to highlight salient features of a nascent Rwandan theology of reconciliation.

⁶² Grace Mugabe, “*Religious leaders Vow to continue reconciliation activities*”. The Anglican Communion Official Website. Posted December 16, 2005.

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/provincialnews/rwanda/client/news/client_news_detail.cfm?naid=670/

⁶³ Yousra Y. Fazili, *Explorations of Peace and Reconciliation in the Islamic Traditions: A Case Study of Kashmir*. Analysis, posted 11.07.2010 on IslamOpedia Online.

http://www.islamopediaonline.org/sites/default/files/kashmir_and_peacebuilding.pdf

⁶⁴ A member of the Presbyterian Church, the only church that has officially apologised for its failure in the genocide, Dr Gatwa was also a participant in the “Dethmold confession” in 1995, in which leading Christians, Hutu and Tutsi, confessed structural sins that led to the tragedy of 1994. See Gatwa, *Churches*, pp. 219-234.

As argued before, there should be no ambiguities about Christians' involvement in reconciliation, since that is exactly the ministry of the Church. In fact, Rutayisire argues that the flourishing of the Rwandan church in the aftermath of 'Rwanda 94' is to be related to the rediscovering of the Gospel of reconciliation. This rediscovery came in the shape of six important themes: (1) a new perspective on sin and alienation, (2) the power of preaching Christ crucified, (3) a new perspective on identity, (4) a new perspective on the Gospel of reconciliation, (5) a new perspective on social relationships and (6) a new perspective on the power of unity.⁶⁵

One can only lament the fact that it took a genocide for all these 'new perspectives' to be re-discovered; a lament that Rutayisire fails to emphasise strongly before highlighting the triumphant growth of the church. Rutayisire's logic rejoins the point made by Martin that the recovery of reconciliation as the core of the Christian Gospel is the guarantee for a flourishing Christianity. Or to put it eschatologically, the Rwandan church has rediscovered 'the once-for-all' aspect of reconciliation and her challenge is to make this *logos* speak to the 'not-yet' reality of post-genocide suffering and animosity.

For the majority of Christians, Rutayisire included, reconciliation is inseparable from soteriology; Rwandans cannot enter into reconciliation without a strong faith. Only faith can empower them to initiate the process and possibly see it through. Rutayisire uses a harrowing personal experience to make this point. Shortly after the genocide, he went back to his hometown with his sister and their respective partners to perform the most hallowing duty of any survivor, namely giving a decent burial to the bones/remains of dead relatives.⁶⁶ In this case, it was the bones of their cousin 'James'. There are no words available to describe what a survivor goes through during this ritual, as they sift through hundreds or thousands of 'remains' to find a minute detail, a piece of clothing, a shoe,...which would help to identify their lost ones. In Rutayisire's case, a relative had mercifully performed this difficult duty.

'He was waiting for us on the side of the road with a small bundle next him (...)

⁶⁵ Rutayisire, *Rediscovering*, 2-3. In this new perspective, (1) sin is seen as the dividing factor among Rwandans, (2) Christ is the pain-bearer as well as sin-bearer, (3) identity is rooted in Christ rather than ethnicity, (4) the church is the depository of reconciliation, (5) Not Hutu or Tutsi but a Holy Nation unto God and (6) unity entails a life of discipleship.

⁶⁶ Aguilar has written a thought-provoking theological reflection on 'the bones' and the challenge they represent for ecclesiology and reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. His reflection is based on Mamdani's *Murambi*; a fictional novel on the same theme. See Aguilar, *Theology*, pp.33-52.

‘Is that small bundle *everything*?’ I asked him.

‘Yes’. He said. ‘He had been thrown into a very shallow ditch and all the body was totally decomposed. But I’ve collected all the bones.’ A feeling of heaviness descended on my heart and I looked aside to hide the tears that were churning in my eyes.

‘How insignificant can human life be,’ my sister who was sitting next to me said quietly. ‘Who can believe that this small bundle is what is left of James?’

(...)

Everybody in the car was silent. We drove for a distance and then my sister broke the heavy silence. ‘I just wonder how the people who don’t know the Lord can cope with the anger one feels at such a sight!’ I was thinking the same thing. Most of the people in the car were believers, and we turned our conversation towards the grace that the Lord gives to bear with such grief.⁶⁷

This excerpt provides only a glimpse into the challenges that surround reconciliation. Pain, grief, anger, hate, confusion, hope...it takes the reader into the tortured, traumatised and fragmented universe of a survivor, ‘standing on the roadside with a bundle of bones’. In the presence of such a powerful and vivid image, the question of how one can cope without faith is highly relevant; especially if the unspoken subtext is taken into consideration: if those who have a strong faith are struggling, what of those deprived of this fragile safety net? For Rutayisire, the answer is to bring the grace of the Lord to these people through the preaching of the *logos* of reconciliation, intentionally and repeatedly until reconciliation becomes a lifestyle and not a mission or programme.⁶⁸

What has been argued above regarding reconciliation and conversion for Islam applies equally to Christianity: the experience of conversion is a vital precursor to the work of reconciliation. Thus the Gospel of reconciliation operates at two levels: *ab intra*, it is efficacious to reconcile the individual victim or perpetrator with God and themselves; *ab extra*, it provides the paradigm for these two parties to enter into a difficult but possible mutual relationship of repentance and forgiveness. The question asked about Islam applies equally to Islam: is reconciliation impossible between people without a religious faith or between people of different religious beliefs, for instance Christians and Muslims or Christians and animists? Rutayisire seems to suggest that once a person has appropriated

⁶⁷ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 98-103.

⁶⁸ Rutayisire, *Re-discovering*, 4

the ‘six new perspectives’, they are reconciled *ab intra* and freed to initiate the process of reconciliation *ab extra*.⁶⁹

The Christian methodology of reconciliation takes its cue solely from this theological stance: the Gospel is the only possible source of reconciliation. The majority of Christian churches and organisations working in the area of reconciliation have adopted this way in practice. The difference is in the channels that the Gospel travels through. Churches privilege sermons, biblical studies and prayer meetings. Organisations such as AEE, MOUCECORE, Catholic Relief Service, Norwegian Church, Solace ministry and others⁷⁰ use seminars, conferences, workshops, short films, plays and radio programmes. An in-depth theoretical study of these practices is long overdue.⁷¹ However, there seems to be a pattern to these Christian initiatives for reconciliation. Two features deserve a special mention.

The first feature is represented by ‘prison missions’ or ‘prison fellowship’. The first step of this initiative consisted of intensive preaching and proselytising of the prison population most of whom were suspected of genocide. The next stage was dominated by the Muslim and Christian interfaith body and focused on reconciling released prisoners and genocide survivors across the country.⁷² The second initiative targeted ‘vulnerable’ women, i.e widows of the genocide and women whose husbands were in prison suspected of crimes of genocide. Across the country, these women form the backbone of entire districts, regions and communities. They were the most affected by the imperatives and challenges of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda.⁷³ Any reconciliation project with the ambition of healing the nation would simply fail if these two groups were not actively involved. It is fair to say that these initiatives have yielded some truly inspirational stories of healing and reconciliation.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ It can be argued that this second phase of reconciliation falls into the realm of contingency and the believer might have to live what Wolf calls ‘peace in the absence of reconciliation.’ Miroslav Wolf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 115.

⁷⁰ For various Christian ‘Ministries of reconciliation’ see Meg Guillebaud, *After the Locusts* (London: Monarch, 2005).

⁷¹ An attempt for such a reflection from the Rwandan Anglican church is provided by Henry Settimba, *The Anglican Church Role in the Process of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Perfect Publishers Limited, 2009).

⁷² See Mugabe, *Religious Leaders*, 2005.

⁷³ Gatwa, *Churches*, 249

⁷⁴ <http://crs.org/rwanda/love-and-forgiveness/>

8.4. Critique and perspective for the future

Reconciliation represents the theological future for both Islam and Christianity in Rwanda, whether as '*Jihad*' or 'the *Logos* of reconciliation'. In this respect, it deserves a full and comprehensive research project in its own right, sooner rather than later. It looks as if after a sluggish start, Muslims and Christians have joined the great effort of national reconciliation separately at times, conjointly at others. Both anchored reconciliation in the most important pillars of their respective beliefs; Jihad for Islam and the Gospel for Christianity. For both faiths, expectations are high from within and without and although their efforts are still in their infancy, they warrant at least some critique and a speculative, not prescriptive, reflection on their future trajectories.

Even within its maligned politics of reconciliation, the government is finally recognising the potential of religion in restoring harmonious living between Rwandans. An obvious proof is the substantial number of Muslim and Christian leaders among the NURC commissioners.⁷⁵ However, for a comprehensive faith-inspired and sustained reconciliation to become effective, it will take more than just appointments in the NURC. As it has been shown above through the dialogue with Bayart, this could be another step toward the cooption of elites. This visibility within the politics of reconciliation should encourage Muslim and Christian leaders to think of a more systematic way in which Jihad-reconciliation and the *logos* of reconciliation can breathe a new impetus in this process. The following are some of the areas where this reflection is needed.

8.4.1. Lack of alternatives to State Soteriology

The greatest critique against the reconciliation agenda of Islam and Christianity is that they effectively do not have a clear roadmap of their own. The government has firmly set the tones and parameters of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda and despite the 'irregularities' discussed above, faith communities have not been able to provide a viable and comprehensive faith-based alternative or at least a substantial corrective to the government's plan. As argued before, the most pressing matter for the government's reconciliation roadmap was to avoid another genocide; this time from angry Tutsi survivors over the Hutu. It was an emergency protocol with the aim of laying down 'drastic measures

⁷⁵ Of the current 12 members of the Commission, 4 are religious leaders, including the chairman of the Commission Bishop John Rucyahana. The numbers were 5 out of 11 for the last term, including the current chairman and most probably the longest serving Vice Chairman, Antoine Rutayisire. See <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/about-nurc/commissioners.html>

to dam the river before it turned into a flood.’⁷⁶ However, over almost twenty years this political ‘*garde-fou*’ has become an unchallenged soteriology.

Religious actors felt that they could not deviate from the government-led initiative as it is evidenced by Mugabe’s article. After the interfaith meeting mentioned above, the Great Lakes regional coordinator for Norwegian Church Aid, the sponsor and facilitator of the meeting, issued the following comment, ‘in all we are trying to do, we should build on the government’s plan of action and surely this would give us a definitive path for effective reconciliation.’⁷⁷ In light of Thomson’s research, one wonders if it is not a defeatist approach to rely heavily on the government’s project that has been mutely criticised, subverted and resisted; not only by outsiders but even by some of the survivors themselves.

It is time for Rwandan faith communities to come out with a systematic framework to reconciliation that combines theory and practice. On the theoretical level, there is a need to retrieve and articulate reconciliation as the core message of Islam and Christianity. As argued above, reconciliation does not have to pass through or be preceded by conversion to Islam or Christianity. A normative, prescriptive and exclusively Muslim or Christian theology of reconciliation will fail to speak to all Rwandans. Therefore, there seem to be at least two trajectories for future theoretical reflection. The first is already *en route* through the interfaith committees and initiatives and will consist of deepening the rapprochement between Islam and Christianity around significant theological themes that both faiths have in common; with the agenda of peacemaking and reconciliation in mind. In this case, reconciliation can become truly a *maslaha*, a common good for all Rwandans.

Furthermore, both Muslims and Christians need to rediscover affinities between their Abrahamic roots and Rwanda’s traditional values of peace and reconciliation, be they in the form of pure humanism, religious and spiritual in a broad sense, or what this work has referred to as *Gakondo*.⁷⁸ To a great extent, both religions have to ‘reconcile themselves’ with Rwandans as a people who had a history, a culture and a worldview prior to their arrival and that these were more than just *pierres d’attentes* ready to be supplanted by Christianity or Islam. In this way, they can engage Rwandans as the people of *Imana* and

⁷⁶ Rutayisire, *Faith*, 102

⁷⁷ Mugabe, *Religious leaders*. Anglicans Online. December 16, 2005.

⁷⁸ Gatwa refers to this approach as ‘visiting the whole spectrum of Rwandan fundamental values’. He suggests that important aspects of traditional Rwanda’s model of peacemaking such as ‘*Igihango*’, ‘*inzira ya Gicurasi*’, ‘*Igihitasi*’ etc, provide invaluable foundation for a Rwandan theology of reconciliation. Gatwa, *Churches*, pp.248-251.

rediscover with them what *Imana*, with the added value of Christianity and Islam, would require of Rwandans living in circumstances such as theirs.

In other words, ministers and thinkers from both faith communities will have to return to where this thesis started; to view Rwandans as historical and theological subjects whose relationship with the divine stretches back to a past that predates Islam and Christianity. This is a necessary step of post-colonial deconstruction of Islam and Christianity that thinkers and practitioners of both faiths have to undertake in order to ‘decolonise’ themselves and their followers in order to reconcile them fully with what it means to be a Rwandan believing in Allah or the Father-Son-Spirit God.

This faith-based alternative to reconciliation must provide a clear ‘theology of ethnicity’ that deconstructs and demythologises Rwandan identity binaries. The removal of ethnic criteria from identity cards is desirable; unfortunately, it did not and could not lead to the erasure of an ethnic mentality which has been engraved in Rwandan psyche for almost a century. Without going as far as Gatwa’s statement that ‘our ethnicity is a gift from God’⁷⁹; it is possible to relegate them to their socio-historical context, denounce the effect of power and show ways in which faith-inspired solidarities transcend and sublimate ethnic determinisms.

8.4.2. *Connecting resistance to reconciliation*

This work suggested that the greatest asset that religions can bring into the process of reconciliation is represented by the many Muslims and Christians who stood up against the decree of extermination. These people showed the importance of not betraying social bonds between Rwandans at the height of a brutal genocide, demonstrating a conviction that both Hutu and Tutsi can and are meant to live together in peace in Rwanda. This faith potential which empowered these *intwari* (heroes) is still available within churches and mosques to inspire those among the community who ‘struggle with a reconciling heart’, as Grey phrases it.⁸⁰

Unfortunately, there are only loose connections between resistance to genocide and reconciliation. A strong case can be made that, if it were to succeed, the process of reconciliation needs the same heroic and sacrificial faith as that which was demonstrated

⁷⁹ Gatwa, *Churches*, 246

⁸⁰ Grey; *To Rwanda*, 168ff.

during resistance to genocide. When the Mufti of Rwanda states that reconciliation needs people with ‘the heart of a lion’⁸¹ and Rutayisire doubts the possibility of reconciliation in the absence of a strong faith, they are both implicitly reemphasising this point without, unfortunately, drawing on faith-inspired bravery in 1994.

In the so called ‘Chapter of Faith’ (chapter 11 of the Epistle to the Hebrews), it is only the first two verses which consist of dogmatic formulations. The remaining verses present a phenomenology of faith based on the historical witness of what is commonly known as the ‘Heroes of Faith’. The testimonies alluded to in previous sections provide inspirational accounts of normal believers who kept the faith and lived right when many things were very wrong. An advocacy of Jihad-reconciliation and a commitment to the *logos* of reconciliation are laudable efforts but should they not be given substance, meaning and hope by testimonies and witnesses of those men and women who fought the good fight and kept the faith, or what the Mufti calls true *Mujahidin*?

It is absolutely vital that after an event like genocide pride of place be given to the lament of the victim and tending to the survivors. However the kind of faith that made survival possible should not be relegated to oblivion, for hope’s sake. Ethnic reconfigurations within new sensitive political stakes made it ‘awkward’ to publicly acknowledge the heroism shown by Hutu inspired by faith or pure humanism. What the stories of resistance show is a reconciliation that started to happen in the middle of the genocide. They tell good tidings of ‘rays’ of faith that were not overcome by the darkness of violence. They speak of Hutu refusing to consider Tutsi as enemies or dehumanize them as snakes or cockroaches. They speak of a solidarity that goes beyond ethnicity; in fact they are practical instances of the deconstruction of ethnic identities.

In this respect, faith as the marker of religious identity provides a unifying and inspirational narrative which, it is fair to say, the government’s message crucially lacks. A political soteriology inspired by State or the bitterness and anger of Tutsi survivors can be legitimately defended as valid reason to ascribe a low key to these testimonies of faith-inspired bravery. However, at the level of religious leadership, silence would be equivalent

⁸¹ The Mufti was making giving an *Ikhutbah* (public sermon) about reconciliation on the Islamic gateway *The Radical Middle Way*. <http://www.radicalmiddleway.org/ikhutbah/inspirational/heart-of-a-lion>

to betrayal; not necessary to the men and women who showed extreme measures of faith but to faith itself and the God who inspires the faith to will and do.⁸²

8.4.3. *A theology of reconciliation that laments all victims*

Faith communities, like States, exist on the principle of continuity. For this reason, they have a perspective which encompasses longer periods of time in the past as well as the future. One of the greatest challenges to reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda is the lack of voice given to victims of political violence other than the Tutsi victims of 'Rwanda 94'. A theology of reconciliation that takes history seriously has to give voice to all victims of all epochs, what Ricoeur calls *espace d'expérience*⁸³ for grief, lament and memory. Because of time elapsed, some of those victims just need a place in memorisation and symbolic rituals of remembrance. Here again, Muslims and Christians can draw from or adapt the traditional 'theology of Muzimu' suggested by De Lacger.⁸⁴ As argued throughout this work, it provides a theological way of making peace between the living and the dead.

Some other victims who are ignored in the State's politics of reconciliation are Hutu Victims of 'Rwanda 94', the victims of the RPF before 1994 (war in North and North-East), during 1994 (massacres of civilians in the East; retaliation, vendetta) and after 1994, such as massacres in Kibeho and other camps for internally displaced people, killings of Hutu populations in Eastern Congo and killings of civil populations in the North West during the 'infiltrators campaign'. These victims are now well documented nationally and internationally but more importantly they are internalised by the surviving victims and/or their families.⁸⁵

Religious leaders have a significant role to initiate reconciliation in this particular instance. It would be too much to expect from the State to be 'judge and party' of its own misdeeds. Alongside pastoral support to the survivors and victims of these crimes, religious leaders have to make room in theology and practice for these 'Hutu' voices, living and dead. They

⁸² In *Righteous Hutu*, Conway reports that finally the national commission in charge of the prevention of genocide and the Kigali Genocide Memorial have started to collect stories of Hutu rescuers. Twelve such stories are already on display in Gisozi Memorial and there are plans to collect more of those. See pp.219-220.

⁸³ Lit. 'A space of experience' Quoted in Gatwa, *Churches*, 249

⁸⁴ De lacger, *Ruanda Ancien*, 175.

⁸⁵ See among others Ndagijimana, *Kagame a trahi*, pp. 50ff and Ferdinand Nahimana, *Les Virages ratés* (Lille : Editions Sources du Nil, 2007), 357-424 and Pierre Péan, *Noires Fureurs, Blancs Menteurs: Rwanda 1990-1994* (Paris : Editions Fayard, 2005).

also have to instigate a faith-based diplomacy with representatives of the State; show empathy and understanding of the reasons behind political reticence to ‘memorise’ these victims but ultimately provide an alternative for a memory which laments all victims. It is only when every ‘Rachel’ has lamented her children, when the voice of revenge of every ‘Abel’ has been brought under the altar;⁸⁶ that a genuine reconciliation will become a real possibility.⁸⁷

8.4.4. Capital for reconciliation: Accessibility and authority

It has been shown that both Islam and Christianity registered growth after the tragedy of 1994 as more and more Rwandans, Hutu and Tutsi, attended services in mosques and churches. This attendance put Muslim and Christian leaders in a privileged position in terms of access and contact with potential parties to reconciliation.⁸⁸ Whereas a dialectic of ‘coercion-resistance’ between State and people has been observed in the State’s politics of reconciliation, believers attend religious services freely. The greatest potential of faith communities lies in the relation between spiritual authority and receptivity. This work has repeatedly emphasised the predisposition of Rwandans to obey authority. However, there is a clear qualitative difference between the obedience towards political figures and religious/spiritual authorities (leaders as well as scriptures). In the first case, obedience is by law but in the second case obedience is an act of faith, a willing surrender in response to God. This type of obedience comes with a certain abandon, a desire for release and relief, openness to ‘lay bare’ and cast down one’s cares, worries and burdens which, as one can imagine, exist aplenty after a traumatising event like ‘Rwanda 94’.

Talking of access to burdens and cares goes hand in hand with the expected ‘help’ from spiritual resources such as prayer, hearing the word of peace (*salaam*) or the logos of reconciliation, healing, miracles, promises, repentance, forgiveness, restoration, a space for confidence and counsel, etc. It seems impossible to emphasize the importance of ‘pastoral care’ in post-genocide reconciliation.⁸⁹ It would help to face the daily challenges of living in post-genocide reality. Concretely, it would provide invaluable guidance to all who are

⁸⁶ Reference to Jeremiah 31:15 for the lament of Rachel and Genesis 4:11 combined with Revelation 6:9-11.

⁸⁷ The Archbishop of the Catholic Church in Rwanda put it more prosaically, ‘there will be no reconciliation if all groups are not allowed to mourn their victims.’ In Gatwa, *Churches*, p.251

⁸⁸ Beside accessibility through attendance to worship, Christian Churches and the Muslim community are in charge of a vast network of social and cultural infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, universities, clubs, recreational and retreat facilities, etc which guarantees steady access to different categories of Rwandans.

⁸⁹ Richter et al. have shown the vital role of psychological support in this process. See, Richters et al. “Reconciliation in the Aftermath of violent conflict in Rwanda” in *Intervention 2005, Volume 3, Number 3*.

involved in the efforts of reconciliation; not just prisoners in need of confessing. Witnesses and judges need spiritual guidance to consider alternative ‘economies’ of the truth, even if they go against the official expectations. Faith-based economies of truth would go a long way to ensure fairness in justice but also provide a strong shield against the previously mentioned fear which infuses the politics of reconciliation.

8.4.5. An arduous but possible pilgrimage

This short reflection does not do justice to a topic which has vital academic, political and theological importance for the people of Rwanda. The ideas presented are the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Other theologians have suggested other possible ‘venues into reconciliation’. Gatwa has suggested a theology/ecclesiology of reconciliation structured around at least seven themes: (1) repentance, (2) justice, (3) a pedagogy of peace that focuses on young generations, (4) mediating between the three Rwandan communities through a revisiting of the whole spectrum of Rwandan fundamental values, (5) restoring relational harmony through an ‘ecclesiology of listening’, (6) the healing of memories by telling stories of suffering and violence and (7) interpreting suffering with an appropriate hermeneutics.⁹⁰

Writing from a feminist-liberationist perspective, Grey brilliantly captures the ‘struggles’ of reconciling Rwandan hearts. She draws on an impressive array of theological thinking and peacemaking praxis to suggest that a Rwandan theology of reconciliation will (1) be a theology of re-membering understood as putting together fragments in a new way, (2) take seriously a feminist spirituality of reconciliation, (3) develop a spirituality of care and compassion; (4) grow out of communities of reconciliation, (5) seek structural justice and reconciliation with non-human creation, (6) seek to bring back the beauty of life and hope.⁹¹

Aguilar dialogues sympathetically with Grey’s robust and thoughtful study but finds it ultimately European-centred. He suggests that reconciliation can only come out of strong Christian communities where structural and generational sins are confessed. A Rwandan Theology of reconciliation will have to be a public liberation theology, which (1) is in dialogue with Rwandan history, culture, tradition and religious rituals, (2) is in dialogue with other world religions; and most importantly (3) a public theology from the periphery

⁹⁰ Gatwa, *Churches*, pp.238-255

⁹¹ Grey, *To Rwanda and Back*. 2007.

that allows the victim and the theologian to speak and bring God back to the centre of Rwandan humanity's affairs.⁹²

There is no doubt that the process of reconciliation needs a renewed moral impetus. A theological framework for reconciliation, in theory and practice, is and will continue to be a 'struggle' and a 'Jihad'. The work is cut out for Muslims and Christians, their leaders and their theologians. However, the challenges are balanced by potentialities and resources. In *Imana*, the God who was with the victims in 1994 and is coming along on this pilgrimage to reconciliation; in Rwandan *Gakondo* and traditions; in Christian and Islamic scriptures and theological traditions; in the testimonies of the remnant that resisted evil; in the renewal of religious life; in the many practices of reconciliation and theoretical contributions presented above, there are resources to explore the possibility of reconciliation.

Yet, despite all the negative criticisms, the last word on the process and politics of reconciliation by faith communities must be a positive apology for communities of 'wounded healers', to use a phrase famously coined by Henri Nouwen.⁹³ Muslims and Christians, Hutu and Tutsi, have all been deeply scared by the genocide. Yet, it is of these traumatised souls that a lot is expected; on these fragile shoulders rests the hope of a nation. Much of this responsibility lies upon Muslim and Christian leaders; ministers and thinkers who share the same wounds and suffering as the Rwandan people that they are called to usher into a reconciled polis. However, it is this shared 'woundedness' that provides them with an invaluable capital to develop a fitting phenomenology, methodology, epistemology and pedagogy of reconciliation.

⁹² Aguilar, *Theology*, pp.8-9, 55-56, 68-69.

⁹³ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary society*. London: Doubleday, 1979.

General Conclusion

The response of Rwandan Muslims and Christians to the genocide of 1994 showed that faith as religious belief is a multifaceted spiritual phenomenon. It can be held individually and collectively, expressed or practiced privately and publicly. The debate is not about one dimension or another. Confining religion to the individual and private sphere or allowing its collective and public manifestation is a political arrangement that a given society finds constitutionally adequate. Another indisputable fact is that faith, where and when it is taken seriously, is called upon to provide an ethical and moral framework for action. In other words, the reality of living, individually or collectively, is the testing ground for faith which in turn must offer an answer to the riddles and challenges posed. The debate whether faith should be a private or public, individual or collective matter is a spurious one for the simple reason that faith does not pick its battles. If faith is called to respond privately it has to do so privately; if called upon collectively and publicly then the response of faith to ethical and moral difficulties must be done publically.

Previous studies on religion and 'Rwanda 94' perpetuated two erroneous assumptions. The first is a colonial view of religion, which unquestionably assumes that genuine religious experience started only with the arrival of Christianity and Islam in Rwanda. Secondly, this scholarship fails to shake off the perennial Western dichotomy sacred-secular and its expectations that the religious stands separate from the political and the cultural. The reflection on *Gakondo* (Rwandan traditional religion and culture in general) in the first chapter was intended to rectify both assumptions by showing on one hand that genuine and profound religious expression (*Imanism, Kubandwa, Guterekera and Nyabingi*) predated colonialism and Christianity in Rwanda, and that the binary secular-sacred was inconceivable.¹

As a result of skewed understanding of religion and politics in Rwandan society, scholars offered unsatisfactory explanations about the reasons why religious sentiments or faith never seemed to exert themselves in times of political turmoil. This work argued convincingly that for Rwandans, the religious or the political, taken separately or in combination, were not ends in themselves. Rather, they both existed and combined to serve

¹ Among others, Cavanaugh makes the same observation regarding Western societies –West European might be better- prior to the rise of modern states in the post-Westphalian era. See William T. Cavanaugh, "The Myth of Religious Violence", in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*, 25ff.

an ultimate end, which was the continuity of life or being; through reproduction and preservation (individuals/family) or the uninterrupted line of *Abami* (political entity). The arrival of Christianity and Islam did not change that worldview substantially; in fact, the tragedy of Christian missions was their determination to break asunder this symbiotic tandem. If religion appeared to be absorbed within or subservient to politics, it is because the political had a scope which transcended its narrow definition in Western modern thought. In other words, the political was not the same as the secular and the antinomy of the sacred; it was comprised of both. The surprising resilience of Islam during 'Rwanda 94' can be traced back to the fact that from the beginning, it managed to keep this integral unity of identity.

A worldview in which the political integrated the sacred and the secular also provided framework for thought and action with a hierarchy of complex structural values. Although the political aspect could appear dominant owing to the ultimate end of continuity, in reality political action more often than not took its moral and ethical compass, cue and inspiration from a well established religious tradition. For instance, in the majority of the ritual ways *inzira*, *Umwami* was the chief ritualist. However, this thesis has showed that this model had its vulnerabilities since in the course of time the unfathomable figure of *Imana* was gradually replaced by the more visible *umwami*; resulting in sacred monarchy. As a political regime, sacred monarchy operated a concentration of real secular power and symbolic divine power within the person of *Umwami*. By the same token, the destiny of the land and the people depended on the wellbeing of the monarch who, for all intents and purposes, was believed to represent *Imana*.

Cavanaugh has convincingly argued that the rise of modern state in the post-Christendom West resulted in nationalism as the new religion of most Western countries.² In this case, religion is understood as that transcendental norm or reality worth killing and dying for; capable of mobilising violence.³ Pre-colonial Rwanda's nationalism was a different phenomenon. It can be defined as a total allegiance to *Umwami* as the focal *locus* of the nation, the people and *Imana*. The religious dimension of kingship was the foundation of *umwami*'s unquestioned authority, national allegiance and goodwill. Here, one is beyond

² Cavanaugh, *Myth*, 25.

³ John D. Carlson, "Religion and Violence: Coming to Terms with terms" in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*. 11-13.

the categories of right or wrong, good or bad, but simply engaging with a political model that at a point in time Rwandan people accepted as their vital universe.

By weakening kingship and dismissing the religious support from *Gakondo*, colonialism and Christianity all but collapsed Rwandan national identity. More significantly, the new institutions (Christianity/church and colony/nation-state) were compromised by this ‘destructive’ approach. Chapters two and six showed how Christianity failed to capture the unifying mystic of *Gakondo*. They also argued that Rwandan Christians retained the political as the most transcendental norm since most Rwandans turned to Christianity as a form of allegiance after *Umwami*’s conversion. This attitude was maintained even when colonial politics descended into ethnic cleavages. Colonialism and Christianity never achieved the separation between religion and politics, church and state; rather they managed a more dangerous division: the promotion of the fictional ethnic categories Hutu and Tutsi to full political binaries which could mobilise hatred, violence and implacable synergies of death. Thus, ethnicity became the new real religion.

This work argued that this religious, political and historical background must be considered as the matrix out of which arose the Rwandan genocide of 1994. ‘Rwanda 94’ was the confluence of the many historical contingencies and ‘*virages ratés*’⁴; the history of a *fraternité toujours manquée*, as Balibutsa put it aptly. More than just the intimate character of the killings, it is this failure to rise to the ideal of brotherhood that has led this work to qualify ‘Rwanda 94’ as a pronominal act; an ‘autocide’ or *Kwika mu nda*. From a religious perspective, the ‘autocidal’ nature of the tragedy compounded the fact that many believers killed other believers or brothers and sisters in faith.

The key question asked by this thesis arose out of post-genocide politics in Rwanda dominated by State soteriology as the theopolitical framework for new beginnings. More specifically, it stemmed from the way in which Islam and Christianity have been ‘constructed’, compared and contrasted for the sake of asserting control over religion. Dunn argued that

‘Using religion as the tool of the state and treating religion as a threat bear many similarities. Each recognises the organising and motivating power of religion as a social force potentially competitive or antagonistic to the state. Each seeks to limit or mitigate that threat by asserting control over religion. Nor are these exclusive approaches. Many states that use religion as a tool (...) will nonetheless allow for

⁴ Nahimana, *Virage ratés*, 15.

some type of limited religious freedom. Similarly, liberal states that seek to separate religion from the state to a greater or less degree adopt practices that use religions as administrative tools for governance.⁵

Failure to see the new political discourse on religion and genocide in post-94 Rwanda as a deliberate effort to redefine the balance of power between the state and religious institutions reflects a naïve understanding of post-genocide Rwandan society. For the most part, this discourse operates in the same manner as the myth of religious violence which, for example, serves to marginalise certain 'religious' practices while at the same time promoting American civil religion.⁶

Throughout the key historical moments that culminated in 'Rwanda 94', Christianity and Islam were put to test politically and, in response, they developed respective particular political theologies which were fully revealed in 'Rwanda 94'. This thesis argued that in the new discourse, the concepts 'Muslim/Islam' and 'Christian/Christianity' have to be significantly deconstructed on the grounds of expectations. 'Islam' should be recast in the representative model of the marginalized, subversive and resisting voices; whether Muslims or Christians from whom little was expected. 'Christianity' should be understood as a paradigm of failed theological witness in the presence of the politics and atheism of fear when much was expected from those who were found wanting; especially Christian leaders.

Faith-based resistance to genocide is what rescued institutional religion from total political and moral discomfiture. It also makes possible any 'God talk' in post-genocide Rwanda. It stands as a non-violent complement to the military victory of the RPF which put an end to lawlessness and death. Faith-based resistance to genocide points to the real question that should be asked in the aftermath of 'Rwanda 94', namely, what should be religious agency as an integral part of the political because this is the Rwandan *Zeitgeist*. It is the reintegration of Christian religious experience in the overall political canvass that failed and the success of Islam regarding the genocide stems from its moving to the margin in order to preserve this original integrity and indivisibility of religious and political identity. To expect Christians and Muslims to react to genocide as a political event in a manner incongruent to their 'normal' or historical reaction to other state-ordered political actions would be to misjudge and misunderstand civil identity in post-colonial Rwanda.

⁵ David E. Guinn 'Religion, Law and violence' in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*, 106.

⁶ Cavanaugh, *Myth*, 30.

The theological task of Christianity and Islam is one of addressing the revisionist agenda set within the State's roadmap and deconstructing the new identities politically ascribed to both faith communities. This task can be achieved through the retrieval of the witness to faith-based resistance to genocide as the springboard for the new beginnings and offer a theopolitical alternative, or at least a substantial complement, to state messianic claims. This work argues that reconciliation is this alternative, but a reconciliation which is the radical and uncompromising future of politics, theology and knowledge. Such reconciliation must go beyond state-monitored practices and isolated faith-based efforts. It must be set within a critical political theology of reconciliation whose end must be recovery and retrieval of vital components to the safeguarding and continuity of life.

Arendt has brilliantly highlighted the tendency of modern political thought to focus on progress and future with their endless possibilities at the expense of past foundational values.⁷ Post-genocide political impetus in Rwanda has taken a similar trajectory; the emphasis being on building a future united Rwanda. This thesis suggested that a viable political theology of reconciliation needs to 'travel back', not in the pursuit of some nostalgic past (the fourth chapter has shown that this romantic past was fraught with much violence), but to aim for the retrieval of the Rwandan subject -as subject of their history and politics. This task is important because in the past that led to 'Rwanda 94', this Rwandan subject has been denied fundamental rights on one hand, whilst failing to face up to responsibilities on the other, as if an alien invisible hand was pulling the strings like Benjamin's Turkish puppet and the little hunchback.⁸

This work has argued that a crucial contribution of this theological retrieval of the Rwandan subject consists of reclaiming all the victims of all historical instances of violence, especially those refused a voice and deemed unworthy of memory by political arrangements of any given period. The thesis used biblical metaphors such as 'Rachel's lament' and 'Abel's vengeance plea' in combination with the reflections on '*Umuzimu*' to show the preponderant role of the dead in the Rwandan psychological and political life. However, these victims should not be reintegrated in the work of reconciliation because they are a threat. Rather, they are 'stubborn' evidence that violence always existed on both sides and demand to be acknowledged as having died at the hand of their 'brothers'. Yet

⁷ Arendt, *Promise of politics*, 51-52.

⁸ In Kirwan, *Political Theology*, 47-49.

their ‘remoteness’ reduces acrimoniousness and serves as a platform to negotiate more recent forms of violence and makes forgiveness a possibility. The task of remembering then becomes truly an act of ‘re-membering’ as memory becomes part of rebuilding a new Rwandan humanity.

For this reason, a Rwandan political theology of reconciliation in a society at crossroads should not shrink from (re)searching, rediscovering and appropriating those ‘ancient paths’ that ensured connectedness among the living, *Abazima*, whilst also facilitating communion, communication and conciliation between *Abazima* and *Abizimu*, the dead.⁹

Among others, a theology of reconciliation has to emphasize the non-negotiability of ‘freedom’ as the ultimate end of politics and theological truth. Post-genocide political theology in Rwanda has to push forward an agenda for a politics of freedom and service where the leader’s role is to release, free, and unleash the creative freedom of the Rwandan subject to think of and actively pursue the rebuilding of a polis where living together is a real possibility. The political, i.e State power, does not need to be a *katechon*, the political force whose function is to restrain social forces for the sake of peace and order.¹⁰

Ultimately, for Muslim and Christian thinkers who take Rwandan identity, history and cultural heritage seriously, a political theology of reconciliation is only possible if *Imana* returns to the centre of Rwandan society. In the new beginning of post-Rwanda 94, *Imana* is needed as the abundantly generous *Rugaba*, the source of goodness, redeemer of broken covenants and betrayed fraternity, the ultimate judge; *Imana Rurema* who can recreate a Rwandan body politic which will not be shaken by the winds of time. In this relaying of foundations, it is the role of Christian and Muslim theologians to make sure that the builders do not cast aside the stone which is meant to be the cornerstone. More than that, *Imana* has to be chief mason behind the reconstruction and re-membering. As the Psalmist observed, unless the Lord builds the house, the builders toil in vain (Psalm 127:1) and Rwandan wisdom echoes; *Agati gatewe n’Imana ntikarandunwa n’umuyaga*. If a sapling is planted by *Imana*, it will not be swept away by winds nor will it grow crooked and bent.

⁹ The concept of ‘Ancient Paths’ is not only reminiscent of biblical narrative of repentance and return (Jeremiah 6:16). It also redirect the reader to the ancient concept of ‘*Inzira*’ (path, way); a series of ritual ‘paths’ or ‘ways’ which ensured the flow of life and happiness, coping with adversity, atoning for sins and mistakes, rediscovering balance in life after disaster, etc. In her website dedicated to *Gakondo*, Rose-Marie Mukarutabana lists eighteen such ‘paths’. <http://webspinners.com/Gakondo/en/Rituals/index.php>

¹⁰ For a summary of the doctrine of the *Katechon* in the New Testament and the works of Augustine, Hobbes and Schmitt, see Kirwan, *Political Theology*, 23-29.

Amidst outcry against *genocidaire* politicians and blame against religious leaders, the shady figure of the Rwandan intellectual has strangely passed under the radar of criticism. However, whilst it is undeniable that politics and faith failed before, during and after ‘Rwanda 94’, academia and reason fared even worse. Historically, the first modern university, the National University of Rwanda (NUR), was founded in 1963 by a Canadian Catholic priest.¹¹ Thus, secular knowledge was firmly anchored within God’s salvific action. Moreover, like politics and religions, Rwandan academia felt invested with a messianic mission. The NUR’s motto was and still is ‘*Lumen et Salus Populi*’ -Light and Salvation of the people. In 1994, the light went out; victims and perpetrators lost life and reason, and the ‘saviour’ was incapable to save.

In a recent interview about the Rwandan events, Noam Chomsky made this insightful comment,

The standard picture over and over again, is that the intellectuals either deny or minimise the crimes for which they are responsible, namely those of their own state and which they can do something about, and become eloquent and passionate about the crimes of others.¹²

Chomsky’s comments addressed the issue of the moral high ground that Western academics have taken in their studies on the Rwandan tragedy. Ironically, this eruption of Western intellectuals in the study of the Rwandan genocide has peppered over a very dangerous gap: the absence of the Rwandan academia in the creating and disseminating of knowledge about ‘Rwanda 94’. Furthermore, the absence of a critical examination of the role of Rwandan intellectuals in the genocide has gone almost unnoticed. Why did the Rwandan intellectuals fail to generate knowledge that would enlighten the people in the face of impending and predictable disaster? Did they make sufficient use of their *liberté académique* to question partisan politics and revisionist histories? The existing academic literature, the lack thereof more significantly, and the critical study realized by Bayart on the assimilation of elites in Africa point to a negative answer.

¹¹ The majority of other High Education Institutions were also affiliated to religious denomination, such as the Adventist University of Mudende, the *Grands Séminaires* of Rutongo and Kabgayi.

¹² Recent interview to appear in a film on Rwanda *Witchdogs of Watutsiland. Selected interviews*. http://rwandinfo.com/eng/kagame-heading-towards-tutsiland-creation/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Rwandinfo_EN+%28Articles+on+Rwandinfo+English%29. Frame: 25’00’ to 25’30’’.

Like the other elite duo, the Rwandan intelligentsia was engulfed in the irrational violence of 'Rwanda 94'. Many intellectuals died while others killed or conspired to exterminate their colleagues.¹³ Reason failed; knowledge that enlightens and knowledge that saves was lacking. Where Foucault establishes equality between knowledge and power, the Bible establishes a causal relation between lack of knowledge and destruction (Hosea 4:6). In the case of 'Rwanda 94', this premise was verified; quite literally. As the fourth chapter argued, this capitulation of the Rwandan intelligentsia is vindicated by their absence in the study of the Rwandan genocide, in both national and international forums.

The retrieval of reason and academic knowledge in the conceptualization of 'Rwanda 94' is long overdue, not just to confront and come to terms with academic inertia but mostly because rebuilding and re-memembering the Rwanda polis requires a new order of knowledge and, as in every society, it is the role of '*Abacurabwenge*', forgers of knowledge, to mould such a theoretical and practical epistemic framework. Critical reason is also needed because the intellectual is the heir-elect of Socrates' gadfly¹⁴ with the task to challenge the status quo, denounce the wrongs in the polis, to form and inform. It is this task that this researcher attempted as a Rwandan *umucurabwenge* reflecting on the failure of politics-freedom, religion-faith and academia-reason from the perspective of committed faith and critical reason; a perspective that sees all three as 'gifts' from *Imana* to Rwandans.

Inevitably, a thesis that tackles a topic as complex as Islam and Christianity in the Rwandan Genocide comes with significant challenges. The broad scope of this project in terms of the period and themes covered constitutes one of such challenges. The desire to address the key question as factually as possible called for a variety of themes that require great effort to fit in a single project. However, this work is undoubtedly a valuable theological contribution to the scholarship on the Rwandan genocide. Besides its attempt to verify the factual truth behind the suggestion that Muslims fared better than Christians during the genocide, its greatest value is that it makes the difficult decision to step away from the evil of April-July 1994 and go back to the beginnings. In doing so, it lays down conceptual and methodological foundations, as well as unearthing major themes that future research in

¹³ In fact the ravages in the ranks of the intellectual elite were so great that between 1994 and 2000 the National University had to rely in visiting lecturers provided by the United Nations.

¹⁴ On Socrates' definition of a social gadfly, see Arendt, *Promise of politics*, 25-27.

faith communities and the Rwanda genocide or politics in general should explore. The deliberately wide breadth of the thesis leaves open many topics that invite follow-up inquiries.

For a better understanding of Christianity and Islam in the 'Rwanda 94', the thesis set the background of their comportment in a historical context that predates the colonial era; one that critically integrated religious experience, myths, legends, oral history and historiography. In this process, this researcher came across a mine of knowledge in the area of religions and politics scattered in different languages, libraries and archives which threaten to disappear from epistemic patrimony because they are not reproduced, translated or republished. There are practical and political reasons behind this situation, but well organized research can navigate these challenges and rescue these endangered theological resources.

The reflection on Gakondo revealed it as the repository of cultural, political and theological frames of reference, codes of conduct and social ethics. From a theological perspective, further research is needed to show to what extent *Gakondo* can be said to contain a theological system *sui generis* with its own sources, hermeneutics and deficiencies. Such research would also explore the zones of intersection and interaction between Rwandan traditional religion and Semitic religions such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

A Rwandan Islamic political theology is another area for future research. A significant contribution of this thesis was to critically evaluate the increasing visibility of Islam in Rwandan politics, especially after 'Rwanda 94'. Yet, scholarship on this marginal religious community with an explicit and solid socio-political identity remains rudimentary. Finally, the question left wide open is that of how post-genocide reconciliation can be theoretically framed as the only possible future for religion, politics and knowledge in Rwanda.

Ultimately, this thesis intended to be a positive and experimental inquiry into the 'limits' that Rwandan society in general, and faith communities in particular, have been historically confronted with.¹⁵ These historical limits were described as *virages ratés*; a series of missed

¹⁵ The concept of 'limits' is borrowed from Foucault for whom the philosophical ethos of self-critical inquiry has to be characterised as a *limite-attitude* which moves beyond the outsider-insider alternative to move to the frontiers. 'Limits' then have to be understood as 'what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory; what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent and the product of arbitrary constraints'. Michael Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?' in *The Foucault Reader*, ed, Paul Rabinow (London, Penguin Books, 1994), 45-46.

turns and opportunities to realize not necessarily the ideal land of *Imana*, but more importantly to make of Rwanda a polis where all Rwandans feel at home, know their way around and understand themselves as sons and daughters of *Kanyarwanda*.

Thus, to paraphrase Foucault's thought, this thesis sought to open up a realism within historical inquiry on one hand, and on the other to put itself to the test of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable and to determine the form this change should take without claiming to be global or radical. As such, it aimed to provide a historical investigation into the events that have led Rwandans, represented by Muslims and Christians, to constitute and to recognize themselves as subjects of their action, thought and discourse.¹⁶ To borrow Foucault's distinctive idea, this research aspired to be a critical ontology of Rwandans; a historical, practical test of the limits that they may go to beyond what was carried out by a Rwandan upon Rwandans as free beings.¹⁷

Finally, as the introduction has attempted to clarify, this research is genealogical in design and archeological in method. As such, it does not claim to deduce from what the particular Rwandans studied (i.e. Muslims and Christians) are, what it is not impossible for them to do and to know, but to separate out, from the contingency that has made them what they are, the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what they are/were, do/did, or think/thought. In other words, it is a contribution towards a new impetus as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.¹⁸ As for an absolute conclusion concerning whether Christians or Muslims fared better during the genocide, the factual truth is still a long way from being fully expounded.

¹⁶ Foucault, *The Reader*, 46.

¹⁷ *Id.*, 47.

¹⁸ *Id.*, 47-48.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. The ‘Hutu Ten Commandments’ as published in *Kangura*, No. 6 (December 1990).

1. Every Hutu must know that the Tutsi woman, wherever she may be, is working for the Tutsi ethnic cause. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who:
 - Acquires a Tutsi wife;
 - Acquires a Tutsi concubine;
 - Acquires a Tutsi secretary or protégée.
2. Every Hutu must know that our Hutu daughters are more worthy and more conscientious as women, as wives and as mothers. Aren't they lovely, excellent secretaries, and more honest!
3. Hutu women, be vigilant and make sure that your husbands, brothers and sons see reason.
4. All Hutus must know that all Tutsis are dishonest in business. Their only goal is ethnic superiority. We have learned this by experience from experience. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who:
 - Forms a business alliance with a Tutsi
 - Invests his own funds or public funds in a Tutsi enterprise
 - Borrows money from or loans money to a Tutsi
 - Grants favors to Tutsis (import licenses, bank loans, land for construction, public markets...)
5. Strategic positions such as politics, administration, economics, the military and security must be restricted to the Hutu.
6. A Hutu majority must prevail throughout the educational system (pupils, scholars, teachers).
7. The Rwandan Army must be exclusively Hutu. The war of October 1990 has taught us that. No soldier may marry a Tutsi woman.
8. Hutu must stop taking pity on the Tutsi.
9. Hutu wherever they be must stand united, in solidarity, and concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers. Hutu within and without Rwanda must constantly search for friends and allies to the Hutu Cause, beginning with their Bantu brothers.
Hutu must constantly counter Tutsi propaganda.
Hutu must stand firm and vigilant against their common enemy: the Tutsi.
10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961 and the Hutu Ideology must be taught to Hutu of every age. Every Hutu must spread the word wherever he goes. Any Hutu who persecutes his brother Hutu for spreading and teaching this ideology is a traitor.

APPENDIX 2.

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Letter of Father Leon Classe to Monsignor Levinhac

Kabgayi, 28 April 1911.

Archives of the Headquarters of the White Fathers in Rome. I 095-226 to 095-230

Kabgayé (sic), 28 April 1911

Monsignor and Revered Father,

May this letter convey to Your Highness my humble vows of filial veneration and total devotion! By the grace of our Lord and the powerful intercession of St Léon, I hope that these vows will not be just mere words. May our prayers and our modest works bring some comfort to your Highness in current difficulties!

In our dear Rwanda, it is time for hardship rather than consolations. However, God does not deprive us of these altogether. Easter has seen our Christians increase by 200 units; yet this figure had been slightly exceeded at Christmas. I believe that in all our stations, the number of our poor Christians forgetful of their baptism, who have not fulfilled their paschal duty will not exceed fifty. Our greatest consolation comes from our little Christian children that we prepare for first communion every three months. Issave and Nyundo have given us seventy seven young candidates to communion. Kissaka (Nsaza), thanks to children, will soon take pride of a place and will grow. Rulindo has had its first baptisms. Nyaruhengeri will soon bring in its first contingent of neophytes: here (there) are all the elements of a very good mission and in the best conditions.

For the Christians, a big difficulty currently comes from trade and travels that many have to undertake. The Europeans, traders in hides and goats, hides for exportation and goats for the extraction of a bit of ivory, and gum from Gishari and kamurunza; have created needs and have inflated the price of everything out of proportion. Forced labours of all kind have multiplied and taxes are an already decided thing for the *étrennes* or official gifts in 1912. For the most part, Rwanda has very poor soil and no natural resources: only the Kissaka produces peanuts, and maybe offers prospects for cotton. In other places, the cold, long rainfalls,...do not provide ideal conditions for cash crops. In Issavi, we are trying (to grow) coffees for our Christians, but most hesitate to take the risk. The right to (of) property does not exist: in principle everything belongs to the king, in fact to the chiefs. The people wonder if they are not cultivating for other people's benefit. Salvation for most seems to rest in the small commerce for Arabs and Indian merchants, despite its risks and perils. A man has to clothe himself and his wife. Back in the days, the woman would wear a piece of goat hide, cheap and long lasting; nowadays, the same hide costs 6 to 9 rupees! And the plots (fields) are small and on precise measure: the big and many herds need large pastures because they are so gaunt. Le cattle herds are the honour, the life of the chief and very much his cult. These are the inconveniencies of civilisation particularly in a country far from any communication network and without any other means of carriage except portage on man's back.

In Nyanza, the royal capital, there is a small progress to signal. First of all, among the young courtesans/pages who attend the school, a small movement is taking shape.

Around ten of them are being schooled in secret and they brought their parents along. Two were suspected, and despite insults and mockeries, they confessed openly and have remained firm. The king and the queen mother have not said anything yet. It is an encouraging sign. More importantly, the children of the real Great Chiefs have begun to attend that school. It is a movement that should be strongly encouraged.

Alas! We are neglecting more and more that work in Nyanza. It is a mistake that we will bitterly regret. In my humble opinion the most vital, most important before all others in Rwanda, is the (evangelisation) of Batutsi or chiefs. For this ministry to be efficient, it must be carried out simultaneously in all our stations, but with its completion absolutely necessary in Nyanza. The struggle between the Protestants and us will be decided by who will have the chiefs. The posting of three missionaries in Nyanza was impossible until now: it was not the right moment and it would have created more difficulties. Even now is not the most favourable time. But to completely abandon what has been accomplished in Nyanza so far is to deliberately concede the dividends of five years of *rapprochement*.

Without the chiefs, we will never have the people in any serious manner. Without them it is, with the current social regime that will be strengthened, to put Catholicism in the situation of inferiority befitting a slave, to condemn it to be constantly faced with the hardship of oppression. We have to ready ourselves so that when, by the decree of the government, Nyanza becomes an open city (*ville ouverte*), we will only have to adjust our foothold and from intermittent, make our presence more stable and definitive. In this country, as in Uganda, the king is the soul of the country. In our stations, we must win the benevolence of the chiefs in order to have the freedom to proselytise and peace for our people. However the Chiefs will always look towards Nyanza. Their sympathy towards us will be even stronger as they will see us go more regularly to Nyanza, being i(n) good (terms) with the King. Sympathy and personal politics will be joined. On the other hand, the benevolence of the King towards us must be reinforced by small services that we will render to him, by the good relations that we will have with the chiefs, their good words on our behalf. When time comes, if we keep acting regularly, with order, method and understanding, the benevolence of the king and his advisors will be lenient towards those from the noble race who would be ready to take the step. For their part, the latter would hesitate less knowing the good intentions of the kings and protected by the immixing of the European government in indigenous affairs.

It is a gross error/mistake to say that the people here will become Catholics without the chiefs, more grave than anywhere else; chiefs and people are not of the same race. There is an antagonism of races, between conquerors and conquered. In some provinces, not to say most, the conquest is very recent and has left intense desires for independence. This dual antagonism will be soon intensified by the antagonism of religions. Protestantism is the religion of the government; it has and will always have their favours. If the chiefs throw themselves into it for political reasons, the Tutsi race will be supported by the government. It needs to use this race to govern, and because it is its religion. The other race, catholic, will identify themselves with us, in spite of us! Even now we are often told that rightly or wrongly we have appointed ourselves defenders of Bahutu. From there to an open political antagonism/conflict, it is just a short step. And if it does not exist in reality (in facts), people will take care of making believe it exists, and they will not be

short of whispers, attempts, isolated facts from the bahutu to prove that it (the antagonism) exists. Another aggravating circumstance which will help these tendencies in the government's thinking is the fact that we do not have German missionaries, and for our religious adversaries nationalism comes before Christianity!

It seems to me that instead of almost abandoning Nyanza, we should show our faces there more often, go to the school as regularly as possible. In our stations as well we have to win the chiefs over at all cost, even if we think that they cannot be converted, which is an unfortunate thought in itself and in its practical consequences. We should think of the future with more logic. This supposes that first of all we take care of our works/ministries. We laugh of the little progress made by the protestants until now. We are fooling ourselves. Time will give them success, the government and their nationality will take care of the rest/will complete the task.

There is a custom here according to which every Rwandan King with the (royal) name Yuhi cannot cross rivers. The royal name of Musinga is Yuhi III (sic). Kigali, the seat of the German Government, is on the other side of the [Nyavarongo (sic)] river. The government wants to make the king stay in Kigali half of the year. Will he ignore the customs? It is probable; the matter being of great importance. In the affirmative Yuhi Musinga will be living in Kigali for six out of twelve months with his entire entourage and pages. Nyanza will be almost deserted. If we are not in Kigali, the Protestants will go there, and Yuhi and his court will fall into their arms. It is destroying a part of our work. The government has accepted my request to set up (a station) in the *Résidence* but we cannot move forward. Throughout the year we have around a hundred Christians; the number had risen up to 250 and more during the dry season. It will increase. Kigali is the final destination of all caravans and merchants crossing Rwanda towards the Congo in the West of Kivu, or going to Bujumbura. This means that we will always have some of ours there. Our caravans, colleagues in Rwanda, and the three stations of Mgr Roelens, from the shores of Kivu, must camp there. European capital, start of the line for all the ships that are going to be put on the Nyavarongo in order to prolong or connect the railways from Nyanza to Kivu; Kigali will become the Muanza of these regions. This area, irrespective of the many miseries it will cause us due to Islam, the instability of people and the immorality prevalent in military and commercial centres (our colleagues in Muanza and Tabora know these very well!), becomes very important in many respects for us to ignore it any longer. There, the Protestants will fast create a big German school, under the watchful eye and with he help of the government. Already in Bukoba we arrived too late. Here, we have a right of precedence recognised even by the *Résidence* and we will lose it. This thought pains me deeply, more especially so because we are regarded as foreigners. In moving ahead and proceeding to this establishment, fast and seriously, we would flatter the German mentality. It would be a shield in front of our works.

Alas. We do not have those schools. It is on this issue that the Protestants will try to trip us (to make us fall). We must teach Kiswahili and German in all small schools of our stations. On the coast, schools are already subjected to the control of the government, as is the case in the Sudan according to the most recent reports. Soon it will be our turn and all our regrets will be useless. Recently, a German officer was asking me if it was true

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that we had forbidden the teaching of Kiswahili in our schools of Unyanyembe and Nyanza-South. This gentleman was telling me : "yet, if you teach Swahili you would be doing us a service: we cannot learn all the indigenous idioms of the colony." Six weeks

ago, the governor himself was saying, “alongside the chiefs, we will place young people from Tanga school or another because the missions cannot provide us with all the cadres we need. It will be dangerous because all the young cadres from the coast are muslims!” Currently, a Christian of Issavi, from the School of Rubia, has been one of the interpreters at the *Résidence* for a month. However, we have only a few young people with such training.

Mr (le Prassens) Johannsen told me one day “we came to Rwanda because there were no German teachers. So we thought that there was a place for us.” It is the word of the situation: German teachers, to teach also what can please the government, to show that there is no chauvinism on our part. And even then, we will still have all to do to please the German gentlemen!

Deign, Monsignor and Revered Father, forgive me for all these reflections. I took the liberty to express them while the crisis is not yet sharp from the Gouvernement and the protestants and especially because we have not yet been attacked by the Muslims. The latter will arrive mainly with the railway and the merchants.

Next month I will go to Nyundo. Their Highnesses have asked me to set up a convent for sisters.

Deign, Monsignor and Revered Father, bless our dear missions in Rwanda and their missionaries. Also, kindly accept my wishes and the expression of my profound respect and devotion in our Lord and our God.

Leon Classe,

Kabgayi, 28 April 1911.

APPENDIX 3:

A Discussion with Sheikh Saleh Habimana, Head Mufti of the Islamic Community of Rwanda

Background: As part of the Peacebuilding Practitioners Interview Series, Jason Klocek interviewed Sheikh Saleh Habimana, who has served as the head Mufti of Rwanda since 2001. In this interview, Sheikh Habimana shares information about the Islamic community's involvement in working toward reconciliation in Rwanda. He also discusses the historical relationship between the Christian and Muslim communities.

Interview Conducted on May 25, 2009

Sheikh Habimana, can you please begin by telling me about the Islamic community in Rwanda?

There is some disagreement about whether Muslims first arrived in 1894 or 1896, but either way, Muslims have been present here for over one hundred years. Before WWII, Muslims had very good relations with the Germans, who at that time controlled the region. In 1913, the first mosque was built in Rwanda and this upset many of the Christians because there was still no official church built. So after the mosque was finished, Sainte Famille, the first Church in Rwanda, was built as a sort of retaliation.

Was there much tension between Christians and Muslims at that time?

You have to understand that the arrival of Islam to Rwanda was not accompanied by strong proselytization. The arrival of Islam to Rwanda does not equal the propagation of Islam. The Muslims who first came to Rwanda were traders and not particularly interested in spreading Islam in the region. However, these Muslim traders were not married; they left behind families and traveled far to get here. They were very concerned with avoiding the sins of fornication, so one of the first things these traders did upon their arrival was seek marriage. And as there were no Muslim women, these traders married local women & very often Tutsi women.

Over time other Rwandans came to see that Muslims lived very good lives. They were very attentive to good living habits & eating and dressing well, etc. This impressed locals, especially the families of those women these Muslim traders married. These families then were interested in Islam and many converted. So you can say that one way in which Islam was propagated in Rwanda was through good behavior. Muslims set an example for their brothers and sisters to follow, and this attracted many people to our faith.

At the same time, Muslims also enjoyed a closeness with the German army and authorities in the country. This was especially due to the fact that Muslims could communicate with the local population since they had married into their families and learned the language. This meant that they could translate for the German officials.

And how were relations between Muslims and the local population?

Muslims also enjoyed close relationships with the Rwandan monarchy of that time. As a result of their good living habits and closeness with the colonial rulers, Muslims enjoyed an elevated place in Rwandan society. As such, they eventually began to marry into the Rwandan elite, even into the family of the monarchy. You might even say Muslims were a type of “super-class” in those days.

Did this elevated social position last?

No. After WWI when control of Rwanda was taken away from the Germans and given to the Belgians, the status of Muslims changed, just like that of the Tutsis. The Belgians did not like either group and saw both groups as closely linked. Both groups were labeled Anti-Christians. As a result, the Islamic community suffered greatly under Belgian rule. Starting in 1925 proper education, ownership of land and jobs were denied to Muslims. Muslims were even denied the right to move freely around the country, requiring written permission to visit their families if they did not live nearby or to have those family members visit them. Really from 1925 until 1994 the Muslims were second-class citizens in Rwanda.

Can you please talk about the role of the Islamic community during the 1994 genocide?

First, you have to remember that Muslims represent one of the only & perhaps the only & truly integrated community in Rwanda. What do I mean by this? I mean that most mothers of Muslims are Tutsis and most fathers of Muslims are Hutus & let's say something like 80% on each side. And while many Muslims share the appearance of Tutsis, we are really a mixed community. We are a community built by intermarriage.

Since Muslims suffered much as the Tutsis did from 1925 on, and especially from 1959 on, we felt a friendship with them. We lived in the same places as them, the same towns, and realized that genocide was never productive, never the answer. So even in the lesser genocides and periods of violence before 1994, Muslims never participated or facilitated such killings. And, of course, in the 1994 genocide, we were not involved in any of the killings. In fact, many, many Muslims helped to hide and protect Tutsis during that time.

Was this not a dangerous task? Many people who tried to hide Tutsis, even moderate Hutus, were killed for such actions, were they not?

This is sadly true, but we Muslims had an advantage. You see, for many years Hutus had been taught to fear Muslims. They were scared of our mosques, so we could hide Tutsis there without fear of Hutus entering. Hutus had been taught that our mosques were houses of the devil. They were taught that the devil lived in Muslim homes, too. It went even further. It was also believed by many Hutus that if you shook the hand of a Muslim something bad would happen to you, maybe get sick, because Muslims were dirty people. So for all these reasons, Hutu militias were afraid of Muslims and left us alone for the most part.

It has been said that there were many conversions to Islam in the years immediately after the genocide. Is there any truth to that?

There is some. The number of Rwandan Muslims did increase after the genocide. This was for two main reasons. First, people, in particular Tutsis, felt protected in our communities. They saw that we had protected them and knew that they would be safe. This was one major reason why people converted after the genocide. Second, many people converted as a type of purification. Muslims did not kill during the genocide; we did not have blood on our hands. So, converting to Islam for some was a way of purifying one self.

Can you talk about how the Islamic community thinks about reconciliation in Rwanda? Do you have a vision as a community of what reconciliation looks like?

We have a very positive view of reconciliation. We know there is much pain in the hearts of many people in Rwanda and that the process will take time. We know that in many ways, reconciliation in Rwanda is asking people to forgive the unforgivable. But we are confident in the future of Rwanda.

In what ways have the Islamic community participated in the reconciliation process?

In many ways we have an upper hand when it comes to unity and reconciliation. As Muslims, we can say that there is no blood on our hands; we didn't kill. In fact, we can say that we saved many lives. So, many people can trust us in ways they may still not be able to trust other communities.

With that said, it is important to point out that as a community, we Muslims do not place blame on any one person or group. We are all responsible in some way for what happened. Also, I would like to say that it was not the churches that failed during the genocide; rather, it was church goers. The teaching of the churches has always been to protect life, but some people did not respect this teaching during the genocide. So, people must accept their complicity and responsibility as individuals. At the same time, we must remember that God hates sins, but not sinners. He loves all of us. This is our challenge then when facing people who killed or committed other acts of violence during the genocide & to hate their sins, but not them as fellow human beings.

Can you please talk about the Islamic community's involvement in interfaith work?

We have been involved in interfaith work since almost right after the genocide, but the biggest efforts have been over the last 11 years. There is, you know, the Interfaith Commission of Rwanda headed by Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini, the Anglican Archbishop. I am the second person in charge of this commission. We launched this initiative in 2003. The work of this commission has dealt mainly with bringing together survivors of the genocide, victims' families and released prisoners.

We believe that faith is tangible action, so our commission focuses on what we can do for Rwandans today. We have focused on three main areas. First, we have tried to provide shelters for those persons affected by the genocide that lost their homes and families. Many people had no place to live, no one to turn to. So we have tried to support them by providing the basic need for shelter. Second, we have focused much on the need to address poverty in Rwanda. We run programs that challenge survivors of the genocide, victims' families and released prisoners to work together on a project so as to earn some income. Of course, we run first workshops and seminars that help each group come to terms with what they experienced. But when they feel ready to begin to move on and face one another, we provide opportunities. For example, we may help buy some cows to be shared by both a group of survivors, victims' families and released prisoners. These people learn to work together, to care together for this animal. And they see that by working together the cows stay healthy and provide milk for both their use and perhaps even extra to sell. We have also done this with machines that may be needed for farming. Again, the community must work together. Of course, just bringing these people together in the first place is a part of reconciliation.

Third, the Interfaith Commission of Rwanda supports the education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, as well as provides support for those living with the disease. This may include providing medical treatment and medications for those who don't have access or can't afford such things, as well as trauma counseling for those who were raped. You must remember that mass rape was one of the tools of genocide. Many of the women who were raped have been left with psychological trauma. And also, many of the rapists have guilt for what they did and need to be helped.

Finally, I would like to add that just this year, March 2009, we had a major summit in which religious leaders from across faith traditions came together to share their experiences working for reconciliation. This was a wonderful opportunity to see what lessons we can learn from one another and plan together for the future of Rwanda.

What kind of reconciliation programs do you have specifically in the Islamic community?

We are particularly focused on our youth. One of the underlying causes to the genocide was the fact that a genocide ideology was taught in schools. Ideas of ethnic divisions were taught. We now know this to be the case as it is even in a report of our Parliament on the causes of the genocide. So, we focus very much on teaching our Muslim youth about respect for everyone. We are after all a mixed people, as I said before. Not only a mix of Hutus and Tutsis, but many of Muslim children's fathers come from neighboring countries & Uganda, Tanzania, the DRC, etc. & and most mothers are Rwandan. So our community very much understands the need to respect everyone and live together peacefully.

Also, reconciliation efforts today have been an opportunity for our Islamic community to come to live closer with non-Muslims in Rwanda. We were once seen as second-class citizens, but today we

work together. You know I consider Archbishop Kolini a very close friend. We work together; sometimes eat together. This friendship is a result of being put together, in a sense, as partners in reconciliation efforts.

We as an Islamic community have also been very fortunate to benefit from international funding, from Muslim and non-Muslim communities. In particular, we now have new secondary schools teaching 1,000 students thanks to a grant from the American Embassy. And recently we received another large grant from the German Embassy to provide training for women in our community, focused on literacy and professional development skills.

To what extent do reconciliation efforts led by both the Islamic community and interfaith projects collaborate with government efforts?

In Africa, the government is everything. Reconciliation in Rwanda depends very much on the government. We are, after all, asking people to forgive the unforgivable. And it is a very slow process. How do you motivate perpetrators to come forward and confess, or tell victims to forgive? **So I would say in a very real sense that the reconciliation effort is the government's baby. It is good to have the authority of the government behind these efforts so we can say never again.** You know, there are still some who have hatred, who would try and finish what they started if they had the chance. But, these people cannot oppose the will of the government. **They know they will immediately go to prison.**

I was recently watching the troubles your president, Barack Obama, is having in closing the Guantanamo Bay prison. People oppose his decision, and this isn't such a bad thing, maybe. But in Africa, here in Rwanda, the government carries much weight. **And our Rwandan leaders say we will move forward; we will not be afraid; we will face our challenges and make a peaceful Rwanda.**

What do you see as the role for the international community in reconciliation efforts?

We need the international community. But immediately after the genocide there was much resentment towards those countries that did not help us in our hour of need. We have begun to own our conflict now and I think the best thing the international community can do is to support our government, our current leaders. People in other countries do not truly know what happened here, many have never experienced such a thing, so they must be patient with our leaders and never underestimate the difficult job they have, the torture our leadership goes through in their hearts as they work for a peaceful Rwanda.

Finally, what do you see as the biggest challenges to reconciliation in Rwanda today?

First, there is the issue of exiles & those who fled Rwanda after the genocide. They do have a right to return, but they must give up their desire for violence. They must become part of the reconciliation effort, not remain opposed to it.

Second, the survivors of the genocide still have many needs. Many genocide survivors have a very low quality of life. Poverty is a big problem. This needs to be addressed if we are to have lasting peace in Rwanda.

Sheikh Habimana, thank you very much for your time today

Source: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

<http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-sheikh-saleh-habimana-head-mufti-of-the-islamic-community-of-rwanda>

Appendix 4. (Indicative) Bibliography of the Rwandan Genocide

Personal accounts

Do I still have a life? : voices from the aftermath of war in Rwanda and Burundi (2000). By John M. Janzen and Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen.

Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda (2003). An account by Michael N. Barnett, a political officer at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations during the genocide and constructivist scholar, analyzing the international community's response during the Rwandan genocide.

Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory (1999). This account is an amalgam of authorships, by the editors John A. Berry and Carol Pott (Berry). It is a broad look at the cultural dynamics before and after the Rwandan Genocide. The editors of the contributions were residents in Rwanda before the genocide and left in April of 1994 with the evacuation of foreign nationals returning in October of 1994 with the UNHCHR's Field Operation in Rwanda. The book stems from a conference organized by the editors and includes witness testimony and sections written by Rwandans with expertise in the history and culture of Rwanda.

Justice on the Grass (2005). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by the author Dina Temple-Raston. This book focuses on the trials of three Hutu broadcasters of anti-Tutsi sentiment. It queries whether they are as guilty as the perpetrators of the violence.

Left to Tell: One Woman's Story of Surviving the Rwandan Holocaust (2006). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by the author Immaculee Ilibagiza. She was a Tutsi whose family were murdered when the Hutu nationalists ran riot throughout the country killing men, women, the elderly, and children. This book tells her story.

Life Laid Bare: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak (2007). A collection of accounts in the same general region. Compiled by Jean Hatzfeld.

Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak (2006). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by journalist Jean Hatzfeld. This book looks at the killers themselves, and features testimonies of ten men, now in prison, with the attempt to understand their state of mind, and the forces behind the atrocities.

An Ordinary Man (2006). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by the author Paul Rusesabagina. He was a Hutu owner of a hotel in Kigali, and his conscience led him to shelter a number of people under threat of death by the militias. This book tells his story. It is the basis for the film *Hotel Rwanda*.

Season of Blood (1995). Fergal Keane's Orwell Prize-winning account of his journey through Rwanda during the genocide and its aftermath.

The Shallow Graves of Rwanda (2001). An account by the author Shaharyan M. Khan. He writes this book from the point of view of a special UN representative. It chronicles the struggle for national reconciliation and the role of the UN in the aftermath.

Shake Hands with the Devil (2003). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by the author Romeo Dallaire. He was the commander of the United Nation Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), who did not leave the

country when the massacres began, and kept the media in touch with the situation. This book tells his story. It is the basis of two films of the same name, a documentary and a docudrama.

Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire (2004). An account by sociologist Marie Beatrice Umutesi, a Hutu often mistaken for a Tutsi, who was forced to flee into then-Zaire during the Rwandan Genocide.

The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence (2009). An account of 17 testimonials of survivors of sexual violence (sixteen women and one man) who bear witness to the crimes committed against hundreds of thousands of others. By Anne-Marie de Brouwer, Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Samer Muscati. Foreword by Stephen Lewis; afterword by Eve Ensler.

We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families (1998). An account of the Rwandan Genocide by the author Philip Gourevitch. He is a journalist. Events, and causes, in Rwanda throughout the genocide, and in the aftermath, with interviews of Tutsis and Hutus, are the subject of this book.

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Analysis

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