

10-1-2010

Faith & Reconciliation: A Study of Christian Forgiveness in Post-Genocide Rwanda

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Faith & Reconciliation: A Study of Christian Forgiveness in Post-Genocide Rwanda

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10 December 2010

School for International Training

Uganda/Rwanda: Post-Conflict Transformation

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Fall Semester 2010

This paper is dedicated to those affected by the genocide: whose faith was broken, whose families were shattered, and whose superhuman strength holds the country together today.

Also to my family, who teach me everyday what it means to live in love and grace.

Abstract

If we are to study reconciliation in Rwanda, we cannot avoid studying the influence on religion, specifically Christianity. This paper will assess the reality of the Church's influence in the genocide and in the overall reconciliation effort, using the theological foundations upon which the reconciliation movement is founded. After discerning which theological principles are most relevant to reconciliation as a whole, this paper will evaluate which methods employed as a result of those principles are most effectively making a positive impact on Rwandan society. It will assess how faith-based reconciliatory efforts are influenced by Rwanda's past and by the larger global Christian community and will evaluate how best to focus those influences into constructive solutions for the country.

By viewing reconciliation in Rwanda through the lenses of the three of the most commonly practiced Christian denominations in the country, Catholicism, Adventism, and Pentecostalism, the paper will assess the theological framework that has created the existing climate of reconciliation. Through interviews with members of those congregations as well as with people who work within organizations existing solely for the purpose of aiding reconciliation, the paper will paint a picture of what reconciliation space is like in Rwanda in a practical sense, and will thereby identify flaws in the system which could be improved.

The paper will argue that because of the political space created by a history of hierarchical influences and religious expectations, social norms and expectations of forgiveness and reconciliation are incomplete in their effectiveness. A space for honesty and for forgiveness philosophy innovation needs to be endorsed by the government in order for the reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda to be complete.

Table of Contents

Introduction & Justification	5
Objectives	6
Background	7
Methodology	20
Findings	28
Recommendations	44
Conclusion	52
Bibliography	54
Appendix A: Rwanda Religion Demography Statistics	56
Appendix B: Glossary of Terms	56
Appendix C: Bible Verse Text Collection for Reference	57
Appendix D: Interviewee Information	62
Appendix E: Interview Transcript One: Annette	62
Appendix F: Interview Transcript Two: Jean Bosco	68

Introduction/Justification:

After the genocide in 1994, Rwandan society lay in ruins, its condition due in no small part to the various actions and inactions of the organized Christian Church in the country. In an effort to reconcile itself and its message to believers it had betrayed, the Church leapt at the opportunity to influence the way forgiveness and reconciliation were achieved. This paper will compare the diverse array of denominational perspectives on forgiveness and reconciliation through examination of four of the most common denominations of Christianity prevalent in Rwanda. I chose this topic because it appears that religion makes a frequent appearance in forgiveness and reconciliation literature in Rwanda and elsewhere in places which have experienced violent conflict. If there are many people who claim that their faith is the catalyst to their ability to forgive and be forgiven, then the possibility that faith provides perspective and influences effectiveness of the process of reconciliation must be explored. I also chose this topic because what I have read about the role of the Church in the times before and during the genocide has led me to wonder how the Church justifies theologically and ethically both its involvement and noninvolvement, as well as its explanations for why these things were allowed by God to happen at.

Religion tends to act as a frame of reference for the lifestyles and attitudes of their followers, but the Church's role in the genocide now begs reconciliation. This paper will first outline the role of the Church in the genocide and provide a framework for looking at why faith is relevant, and will provide examples of other places in which faith has played a role in reconciliation after violent conflict. These examples of faith in reconciliation are important because they help to assess the effectiveness and relevance of faith discussion in reconciliatory discourse. Is faith relevant in reconciliation? These examples will help us decipher the answer.

This paper will then assess the need of the Church to reconcile itself and its cause to the people of Rwanda and will seek to evaluate what the important influences are in the reconciliation effort. By doing so, it will examine the different ways in which people define forgiveness and think about it, explore different ways in which people choose to manifest their beliefs about forgiveness, and will consider the main motivations for why people choose to forgive their victimizers. It will also examine outside influences which

may be adversely affecting the reconciliation efforts of the people in Rwanda. This background is important to know in the event that some motivations may not be entirely genuine, therefore providing the risk that the peace which stands on such a foundation may fall. Conversely, motivations which will help to uphold that peace can then be identified and promoted to ensure an environment conducive to long-lasting reconciliation.

Based on different opinions from secondary sources and personal interviews, I will assess the importance of faith in Rwanda's overall efforts to maintain a lasting peace and will provide recommendations for how the society should deal with the forgiveness which results from that faith. If the people of Rwanda wish to maintain what has often been described as this tenuous peace, Rwandan society needs to maximize the effectiveness of its most effective solutions. If faith can be a method through which peace can be achieved and a method through which there may be enduring healing, then the Church must have a plan to stay relevant and at the fore of the minds of a hurting people.

Objectives

In the interest of building peace from reconciliation efforts which are already in motion through the vehicle of Christian faith, this paper will address the following objectives:

- To assess the reality of the Church's influence in the genocide and in the reconciliation efforts after-the-fact; this is to determine the level of influence which the Church holds over Rwandan reconciliatory efforts;
- To decipher the theological starting point and thus the starting point of reconciliation perspectives from each of the three most commonly practiced Christian denominations within Rwanda;
- To assess the effectiveness and relevance of theological teachings of forgiveness and repentance and how that teaching is manifested in communities of faith;
- To evaluate what outside influences, if any, are contributing to the growth or inhibition of reconciliation in Rwanda;
- To evaluate the aspects of faith-based forgiveness and reconciliation which are most effective and least effective respectively, and to determine if those most effective

aspects may be maximized to benefit the community more efficiently, or if they may be replaced with more efficient methods.

Background

Introduction

Since there have been organized groups of people, there have been conflicts between those groups. Likewise, the organization of these groups into subgroups based on religious frames of reference have been the driving cause behind some of the most bloody conflicts in human history. Religious groups have worked hard to fill in the gaps of faith and hope that these conflicts have left in their wake in places such as Sierra Leone and South Africa in an attempt to right the wrongs created and helped by religion in the first place.

Rwanda's religious reconciliation efforts are no exception to the cycle of division and unity to which faith groups have been party over the centuries. The Catholic Church in particular has played an influential role in the events that led to the conflict, and that church itself as well as other denominations have tried to pick up the pieces of the society they have helped destroy.

This background section will explore the history of the Church (especially the Catholic Church) and its role in creating a space in Rwanda which would foster the genocide. It is important to acknowledge this history so that we can discern the motives of the current Christian-based reconciliation programs. Is it guilt, responsibility, altruistic compassion, or something else which inspires the Church community to work toward healing? By finding the motives, we will hopefully be able to look forward to the ultimate goals of the Church in the reconciliation effort and how this community expects to achieve those ends and for whose benefit.

The background will continue to lay the societal history framework by briefly touching on the early and far-reaching influence of religious or faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations on reconciliation efforts. Following this, the section will then examine briefly other instances in Africa specifically where a religiously-based reconciliation was employed in post-conflict areas. By looking at the efforts of religion to reconcile South Africa and Sierra Leone, we will establish a pattern of religious

influence in times of post-conflict healing and reconciliation, thereby suggesting the validity of the idea of such an influence.

The background will then outline the basic doctrinal views on forgiveness and reconciliation as outlined by the official dogma of the traditions of three of the most commonly-practiced Christian denominations within Rwanda. If the country is mainly Christian, then statistically most of the people who would be operating within society would be operating from a Christian frame of reference. The most influential (and most commonly practiced) religions are Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and Seventh Day Adventism. By examining the ideals which these denominations pursue, we can begin to make out the framework of perspective in which the people of Rwanda are attempting to operate.

The Institution of the (Catholic) Church and the Genocide:

Linda Melvern paints a disturbing picture of the role of the Catholic Church in the Tutsi Genocide in her book, A People Betrayed. She records the history of the Church's intricate involvement in the events which led to the division and eventual hatred that gave rise to the genocide of 1994, and in so doing affords us the opportunity to see a very different side of the motivations of the events that grew a society bent on vengeance.

Before colonization the Catholic Church, in association with governmental colonizing members, sought to convert the King of Rwanda to Christianity so that his nation would operate under the power of the Church. If the Church could achieve this power status, it could facilitate the kinds of education and government that it saw fit, essentially Westernizing Rwanda for its own ends. The king of Rwanda in 1931 had been a force for opposition against Belgian colonial rule, and so was unseated and replaced by Mutara Rudahigwa, a man the Belgians hoped would be more helpful to their colonial ends. "Rudahigwa became known as the king of the whites...His conversion to Christianity in 1943 was part of a Belgian policy to encourage mass conversions. Christianity became a prerequisite for membership of the Tutsi elite."¹ Herein lies the first example of how the Church created elitist divisions in Rwandan society, and this

¹ Melvern, Linda. *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. 2. New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2009. 13. Print.

elaborate effort to associate Christianity and being a member of the Tutsi class is only the beginning of the religious influence on the Rwandan genocide.

The Church perceived the already-existing economic divisions between the Hutus and the Tutsis and strove to keep the dichotomy between them thriving: One priest “wrote in 1930, ‘The biggest mistake the government could make would be to do away with the Tutsi caste. This would lead the country to anarchy and communism, and to be viciously anti-European.’”² The Church believed that if Tutsi and Hutu were living in equality, that there would be no societal structure which necessitated a hierarchy. This would perhaps allow people to think outside the schema of hierarchy altogether, causing the Catholic Church to retain even less of its power. The Church’s actions throughout history have shown that its priority is to retain structure and authority, even to this day in its methods of universal governance. The Rwandan faith body and later government was to be no exception.

When the Church and its cohort Belgium were finally able to convince the Rwandan king to commit Rwanda to Christianity, they seized this prime opportunity to exact control over all other facets of empowerment and lifestyle in Rwanda. “Although the monarchy had initially opposed missionary schools because of imposed conversions to Christianity... King Mutara Rudahigwa was persuaded to dedicate Rwanda to Christ...Catholic missions sprang up everywhere in Rwanda.”³ The Catholic Church and the Belgians took advantage of their newly-granted power and worked to create more division, furthering the divide between the Hutu and Tutsi based on economic (and now religious) status:

“Most of the Hutu students who did acquire education found there were fewer jobs for them, and those who did eventually graduate from mission schools and seminaries took up posts in the lower administration...Hutu women were not allowed an education at all. The Catholic Church encouraged the creation of a new Christian ruling class, to be composed entirely of Tutsi, and this in turn served to

² Ibid. Melvern. 13.

³ Ibid. Melvern. 14.

increase the resentment of the dispossessed Hutu.”⁴

While the Church was going to great lengths to ensure that the Tutsi Christian minority remained in power, “Many priests came to identify with the Hutu masses. The priests understood the Hutu demand for liberty of expression, and a powerless mass ruled by a callous aristocracy.”⁵ The environment of inequality which the Church had worked so hard to foster between the Hutu and Tutsi was beginning to breed discontent among the Rwandese. The Church realized that it had succeeded in pulling Rwanda’s society into a spiral of hatred and resentment between the Belgian-fabricated ‘races.’ Even so, the Church’s power remained its priority: “The second-largest employer, after the state, was the Church...Around the churches there grew schools, health clinics, and printing presses for religious tracts...The Hutu were told to be proud to be Hutu, and the poor to bear their poverty with dignity.”⁶

By fostering the idea that the Hutu were poor and always would be, questions arose as far as why this was to be the case and why the Church was encouraging such a system. The Church risked attracting attention for its own role in the way society had evolved. “Not all members of the Church [during Kayibanda’s regime] were as close to the regime and some priests preached in favour of reconciliation,”⁷ but it was too late to take back the damage the Church had inflicted. A combination of the Church’s sympathies with the oppressed Hutu and its eagerness to absolve itself of its own sins of influence prompted the Church to set out to prove its innocence. In doing so, the Catholic Church worked to prove the guilt of the Tutsi and lay the blame and responsibility on the ever-oppressive minority in lieu of employing the Christian honesty and accountability it preached from the pulpit: “There were Catholic journals willing to publicize the Hutu cause; a key ideological ingredient of [the] emerging Hutu revolution was the belief that Rwanda had been overrun by Tutsi invaders who had enslaved the

⁴ Ibid. Melvern. 15.

⁵ Ibid. Melvern. 16.

⁶ Ibid. Melvern. 23.

⁷ Ibid. Melvern. 24.

Hutu.”⁸

The Church’s involvement did not end when the genocide began. John Rucyahana, the president of Prison Fellowship Rwanda describes the Rwandan faith community as having often been abandoned by its spiritual leaders: “There was a priest who brought a bulldozer and bulldozed the church over the people...who were hiding in the church. So they bulldozed the whole building...on top of the people.”⁹

An article by Ndahiro Tom, a Human Rights Commissioner here in Rwanda, also provides an interesting perspective on the role of the Catholic Church during the genocide in his article, “Genocide and the Role of the Church in Rwanda.”¹⁰

Ndahiro describes a Church body which did not actually foster the loving compassion and justice that it preaches on Sundays, but instead which was the “only institution involved in all stages of the genocide.”¹¹ By exerting its far-reaching and powerful authority over the ways in which historical and anthropological research was conducted, the Church could focus the ways Rwandan history and the importance of the Belgian-manufactured ethnic groups on the way society related to itself. By helping to create the Hamitic and Bantu myths and then helping to build the Rwandan society’s structure on these myths, the Catholic Church directly contributed to any and all ethnic divisions which resulted in the 1994 genocide.¹² The Church did nothing in its considerable power to quell the influence of ethnic conflict, and even actively participated in worsening the problem through education in its seminaries and its Churches. Ndahiro records the opinion of Paul Rutayisire, church historian and academic advisor to this very research project, that “the stereotypes used by the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government to dehumanize Tutsis, were also spread by some influential

⁸ Ibid. Melvern. 16.

⁹ Waters Hinson, Laura, Dir. *As We Forgive*. Dir. Laura Waters Hinson. McPower Pictures: 2009, Film.

¹⁰ Citation: Ndahiro, Tom. “*Genocide and the Role of the Church in Rwanda*” from “News From Africa.” (2005), http://www.newsfromafrica.org/articles/art_10231.html. (accessed November 30, 2010).

¹¹ Ibid. Ndahiro.

¹² Ibid. Ndahiro.

clergymen, bishops and priests, before and after the genocide.”¹³ The Church repeatedly and consciously used their influence to propagate the messages of division which ultimately resulted in the mass murders of 1994.

This negative history does not only affect the perspectives of Catholics when trying to reconcile a broken and guilty church with a hurting world which feels in need of the religion that helped them before the genocide was an issue. Many people look at the Church in its ecclesiastical sense as having failed, and that the wounds have come not solely from the Catholics, but from organized Christian religion in general. John Rucyahana, a priest and the chairman of Prison Fellowship Rwanda who was featured in the documentary “As We Forgive” has opinions which mirror this thought process: “...The reality and the truth remains that the Church has failed - not only during the genocide but long before the genocide ...And during the time of the genocide the Church failed miserably.”¹⁴

The Church’s actions directly affect public perceptions (and utilization of) communities of faith, and therefore its history is relevant to ways in which reconciliation is manifesting itself in Rwandan society today.

The Influence of Religious NGOs Focusing on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Because of the number of times that religiously-affiliated Non-Governmental Organizations have surfaced in discussions I have had while conducting this research, I believe that these NGOs have a greater influence on the overall reconciliation effort than their immediate impact as individual organizations. The tendency of NGO work to become more publicly prevalent and the nature of how these NGOs work toward forgiveness and reconciliation necessarily color the ways in which forgiveness is manifested socially. Even differences in denominational approach to forgiveness must pass muster with the societal norms on forgiveness, and these norms have been created out of the genocide. Since NGOs were quick with their response after the conclusion of the genocide, they found themselves in a unique position which would allow them to be some of the most powerful influences on the reconciliation effort and to shape the way

¹³ Ibid. Ndahiro.

¹⁴ Waters Hinson, Laura.

reconciliation programs grew out of the crisis. Because they were the first groups who could effectively lead large groups of people toward a particular method of reconciliation, the forgiveness norm appears to have become that of the NGOs.

The impact if NGOs is relevant to the topic of reconciliation not only for its obvious impact, but because we cannot look at the effectiveness of forgiveness on a larger scale without knowing which factors have shaped the ways it is taught. NGOs and the theological perspective from which they work, combined with the fact that the Rwandese government depended heavily on them immediately after the genocide, have shaped the societal norms and expectations for how forgiveness is practiced, even outside the communities of faith which have shaped those norms.

Other African Manifestations of Religion and Reconciliation

One important example of the role of organized religion and faith-based community in reconciliatory efforts is made manifest in Sierra Leone. Though the religious efforts and reconciliation techniques differed from Rwanda's in the fact that the majority of the population was Islamic (60%) and that the nation employed the use of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the religious impact was similar.¹⁵ In the wake of a bloody civil war caused by the fight for control of the country's diamond wealth, victims of mutilation and families of the 75,000 people who were killed desired to move on with their lives.¹⁶ Their pressing needs were not going to be met by vengeance, but by being able to move on. Sierra Leone was not going to hand out "forgiveness on a silver platter," as it had to be earned with honesty and admittance of one's crimes.¹⁷ The project

¹⁵ Graybill, Lyn. "*Religion and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone*" from 'all academic research.' (2008), http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/5/3/5/0/p253504_index.html. (accessed November 22, 2010).

¹⁶ De Sam Lazaro, Fred. "*Sierra Leone: Truth and Reconciliation*" from 'Religion & Ethics News Weekly.' 619 (2003), <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week619/cover.html>. (accessed November 22, 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid. De Sam Lazaro

is influenced heavily by religious leaders, and therefore carries the weight of their doctrine in the TRC. This style of reconciliation has even set a precedent for the role of faith communities in other countries such as East Timor.¹⁸

An earlier and more well-known example of religion, forgiveness, and reconciliation (upon which Sierra Leone's TRC was based) is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of post-apartheid South Africa. "In contrast with other truth commissions, the TRC was led by clerics rather than lawyers and judges, and the TRC's approach to reconciliation was shaped by and imbued with religious content."¹⁹ The religious nature of the reconciliation toward which South Africa strove set the bar high for religious reconciliation in places like Sierra Leone and Rwanda. The religious efforts did not end in South Africa with the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, however. Theological efforts continued into the sphere of individual faith communities, manifesting a new movement to keep religion a viable option for peace and community in Public Theology.

Public Theology seeks to reconcile God to the world after a wounded public had lost faith. It considers "the public nature of God's love for the world, the public rationality of this love, and the public implications of God's love for the world."²⁰ South Africa saw a need not just for religion to influence the justice process, but for theology to prove itself to the people of its nation once again and for that religious thought to permeate the national consciousness. If love and forgiveness could be the doctrine of the entire community, perhaps South Africa could not only heal but prevent this from happening again.

A background knowledge base consisting of other examples of religious reconciliation after violent conflict in Africa is important because it helps to establish the relevance of the idea. Faith seems to be where people first turn to for reconciliation when they find themselves in such hopeless situations, and so we must explore faith-based

¹⁸ Ibid. De Sam Lazaro

¹⁹ Spong, Bernard. *Religion and Reconciliation in South Africa*. 1 ed. Audrey R. Chapman. West Conshohoken: Templeton Foundation Press, 2003.

²⁰ Koopman, Nico. "Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa." *International Journal of Practical Theology*. 14, no. 1 (2010): [123-138].

reconciliation as a viable option for peace-building. These two examples prove that there can be successful faith-based reconciliation efforts, and this gives validity to Rwanda's attempt at the same end.

General Forgiveness and Reconciliation Doctrine: Catholicism

Catholicism is the most widely practiced religion in Rwanda.²¹ As such, it holds a place of great influence and high regard in Rwandese society. As a result, perceptions of forgiveness, reconciliation, atonement, and justice as perceived by the greater population have influenced the way Rwandese public consciousness functions. There are even parallels between the way Gacaca is run and Catholic forgiveness doctrine regarding guilt and truth-telling. Catholicism views forgiveness look to Matthew chapter six in the Bible where Jesus states that God will forgive a person if he or she is able to forgive others.²² As one Catholic author declares, "That's it. You have to forgive if you want to be forgiven."²³ This kind of forgiveness doctrine tends to suggest that forgiveness by Catholics is a self-motivated action, allowing one to feel that he or she is 'in the clear' regarding his or her own forgiveness before God. Could a Catholic forgive with altruistic intentions? Can anyone do so, or is forgiveness necessarily always self-preservation in either the heavenly or psychological spheres? In Catholicism it seems that there is a definite possibility that forgiveness is driven by a higher concern for one's own eschatological safety.

Catholicism maintains that when sins "are committed against us, it raises the question of forgiveness, since Jesus made it clear that we must be willing to forgive."²⁴ Even so, Catholicism admits that forgiveness is not the end-all remedy to a soiled relationship like the ones which have been created by the events of the genocide.

²¹CIA World Fact Book 2001: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook//fields/2122.html?countryName=Rwanda&countryCode=rw®ionCode=af&#rw>

²² Matthew 6:14-15; full text in Appendix B, reference 12.

²³ Akin, Jimmy. "Limits of Forgiveness." *This Rock*. 14. 7 (2003), <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2003/0309bt.asp>. (accessed November 22, 2010).

²⁴ Akin, Jimmy.

“Forgiveness thus does not mean treating someone as if they had never sinned. That would require us to let go of our reason as well as our anger.”²⁵

Catholicism also acknowledges that admission of guilt is an essential part of the forgiveness process, and therefore reconciliation. The denomination’s perspective on God’s sense of forgiveness colors the perspectives of those who practice religion, and it is here that we can see parallels in Catholic forgiveness doctrine and the practice of Gacaca courts. An excerpt from the Catholic periodical, “This Rock” references Luke 17 and teaches that “If someone isn’t repentant, you don’t have to forgive him...[In terms of God,] not everybody is forgiven...If God doesn’t forgive the unrepentant, and it is not correct to tell people that they need to do so, what *is* required of us?”²⁶

The author encourages Catholic Christian believers to allow themselves to be angry and to wish for punishment as a catalyst toward good influence on the offender, but its ultimate goal in forgiveness is to hope for repentance. Without repentance, the person in question does not deserve or receive forgiveness from God, and likewise those who would bestow forgiveness upon said offender would not be required to. Forgiveness in Catholicism is earned and granted, not given as a free gift.²⁷ In a similar way to this discussion on forgiveness as practiced with commonplace sins between one another, Gacaca has employed a similar strategy of forgiveness. People who have “sinned” in the genocide are brought to fully account for their sins and are shown mercy if they repent of them and admit that what they have done is terribly wrong. However, if the perpetrator is not repentant or denies any wrongdoing, the mercy falls less lavishly upon him. In order to receive forgiveness from Rwanda, as in Catholic doctrine, one must ask for forgiveness and mercy.

The preceding theology is accepted as doctrine, but what is Catholicism’s forgiveness as practiced on the ground here in Rwanda, and how, besides indirectly through Gacaca, is this thought implemented?

General Forgiveness and Reconciliation Doctrine: Seventh Day Adventism

²⁵ Ibid. Akin.

²⁶ Ibid Akin.

²⁷ Ibid Akin.

Seventh Day Adventism plays a dominant role in many parts of Rwandan society. In order to examine how Adventists view forgiveness and reconciliation, one must first study how this denomination believes that God and Humanity relate to one another. For Adventists, the Bible and what it says about divine-human relations colors every human interaction in the same way.

Adventists believe that the Bible is a roadmap which, when followed correctly, will set believers on the path to ‘heaven.’²⁸ This is relevant because it shows, according to Adventist doctrine, that God is willing to work with humanity to get it to a place where it can represent an accurate and living depiction of the “character of God.”²⁹ God’s love is personal to each individual and sin is seen as something which separates humans from being perfect representations of God, thus inhibiting humanity’s ability to stand in full benefit of the love of God.

Sin, therefore, must be dealt with by the individual. When one fully admits the responsibility of his or her follies and wants to repent (that is, to become transformed into a more accurate representative of God’s character at work in the world), the salvation and the absolution that is always available begins to have an effect on said believer. Though humanity “doesn’t have to be ‘good’ for [God] to accept” it, there is an essential element of personal transformation that must occur if this salvation is to be fully obtained. This happens through the personal choice of “accepting [God’s] promise” cognitively and changing one’s behavior (or, as some believe, allowing one’s behavior to be changed by God) to match the beliefs which should dictate one’s actions.³⁰

This denomination operates on an emphasis of love and forgiveness based on particular verses in the New Testament which do not abolish the laws of the Old Testament, but instead place particular importance on two of them. The Gospel of Mark in its twelfth chapter describes Jesus’ proclamation that there is nothing more important for a follower of God to do than to acknowledge that there is only one God and to love that God, and then to, as a result of that love, bestow love upon your neighbors as it has

²⁸ *Beliefs*. www.Adventism.org. Accessed 24 November 2010.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Adventism.org

³⁰ *Ibid.* Adventism.org. Paragraph heavily dependent.

been bestowed upon you.³¹ It is this commandment that Adventists look to when discerning how to interact with their fellow humanity and how to make manifest the tenants of their faith.

One recurring theme in the faith and doctrinal statements made by the Adventists revolves around the sense of community and personal relationship, both with God and between people. The belief that God loves unconditionally and requires only effort as in a relationship to bestow the love that God is willing to give breeds the attitude that we as humans in communion should treat one another as such. This raises the question of the effectiveness of forgiveness that does not necessitate an apology or an admission of guilt between non-divine beings in order for love and forgiveness to be deserved.

General Forgiveness and Reconciliation Doctrine: Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal church practices its theology in the more current and charismatic style of the modern-day Protestant Church and is less a specific denomination than a philosophy that permeates several different types of congregations. Pentecostalism is manifested more accurately within Rwanda as a denomination, and as such is one of many denominations of its kind, but is one of the most-commonly practiced of its type within Rwanda.

“Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer.”³² It emphasizes the importance of having an emotionally-charged, ‘Spirit-filled’ experience where the believer is influenced directly by the Holy Spirit. The emotional emphasis placed on the practice of this religion filters down into the way it sees transformation, repentance, and forgiveness.

Transformation occurs when the believer makes the conscious and public choice to ‘invite Jesus’ into his or her own heart, thereby invoking the power of the Holy Spirit and thus acquiring the ability to live within the parameters of a Christian lifestyle.³³ This

³¹ Mark 12:28-31; full text in Appendix B, reference 16.

³² *BBC Religions*. online database.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/pentecostal_1.shtml

³³ *Ibid.* BBC Religions.

is relevant because of the way repentance has been practiced here in Rwanda. If someone is able to transform into a new person through repentance, then there should be no excuse for him or her to commit the same sins. This provides those who subscribe to this view some comfort, as they believe that the Holy Spirit has transformed them and, having been changed by the power of God, they are now unable to commit the same atrocities as before.

Forgiveness is also something which is viewed to be God's job in relation to humans, and therefore a secondary responsibility of humans. If God has forgiven a perpetrator because he or she has confessed their sins and repented, then they are members of the faith body and are no longer subject to the spiritual ramifications of their actions.

The members of these faith communities are bound to one another by their belief that "a person is sanctified when their life is dedicated to God and they are...born again to Christ through the Holy Spirit and turn away from the bad behaviours and thoughts of their old life."³⁴ There is a communal sense of the experience of God, and so when this transformation happens, the community accepts the person as having been inducted into their life together.

The Pentecostal church looks at this transition as an ongoing dedication of one's life to God, and this process may be interpreted in terms of forgiveness as well. Though the perpetrators are accepted into the community and forgiveness has been granted, the process of reconciliation of that perpetrator to God and to the survivors is an ongoing process. The process of redemption is less of a one-time event and more of a one-time commitment to the process.

The evaluation of these denominations and their beliefs on forgiveness and reconciliation as well as repentance provides the opportunity to observe their actions and behaviors as having come from a specific spiritual framework.

Methodology

Introduction to Methodology section:

This section will justify the methods I used in my research and will explain my

³⁴ Ibid. BBC Religions.

reasoning for using these methods. First, it will explain how my interviews and literature review were conducted and why I chose to conduct them in such a way. Second, it will reflect on my identity as a researcher and provide perspective on why I wanted to research this particular topic, as well as explain what may be slanted views on certain aspects of the information I gathered. Finally, this section will assess the obstacles and challenges that stood in the way of my research.

Interview Methodology:

I chose to interview people who hold leadership positions within or are members of the three most common denominations of Christianity practiced within Rwanda. The most commonly practiced divisions of Christianity practiced in the country are as follows, in order from most common to least: Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism, and Pentecostalism. To get an idea of how the majority of the population feels about forgiveness and its role in reconciliation, I needed to first discern which denominations are most relevant and have the most influence on reconciliation as a whole.

I interviewed a woman from my host family's church, a Seventh Day Adventist congregation in Kimihururua, in order to attain her perspective as a layperson within her religious community. I wanted to hear her interpretation of her denomination's forgiveness theology and how she chose to manifest that theology in her life as someone whose personal history necessitated an effective forgiveness philosophy.³⁵

I also interviewed a woman who subscribed to the Pentecostal denomination because she lived in my neighborhood and often came to my host family's house for visits. I knew her well enough from spending time with her that I could ask her some personal questions about how she was affected by the genocide, how she chose to put into practice her beliefs on forgiveness, and her thoughts on what could be done better.³⁶

I chose these two women because of their personal histories that made the practice of forgiveness and the space in which to practice it in their communities relevant. Among several people who were willing to talk with me, I chose these women in part specifically because of their gender. The Church has historically been a male-dominated

³⁵ "Annette" personal interview. December 2010.

³⁶ "Mary" personal interview. December 2010.

organization: the theology written by men, the leadership positions occupied by men, and the way a congregation manifested its teachings decided by men. I thought, especially in Rwanda where there always seems to be one group feeling oppressed by the other (for the purposes of this paper, the oppressed group being those who may not be able to forgive), that I would give women specifically the opportunity to be the mouthpieces for their faith.

I asked these two interviewees questions about their involvement in the church to assess how much the church mattered to them personally, their feelings on forgiveness (and in relation to their denomination of subscription), their thoughts on reconciliation between the Church and its parishioners as well as Rwanda at large, and their assessment of the importance of Religion in post-genocide Rwanda. I also unintentionally found themes of social pressure and governmental influence in both of their interviews, which led to my further research on political space and the history of the Church's role in creating Rwanda's hyper-structuralized society.

To balance out perspectives with different interviews from different levels of authority in the Church and reconciliatory organizations, my other two formal interviews were with men who had more influence because of their offices. My advisor, Dr. Paul Rutayisire, gave me the contact information of these gentlemen, and they were more than willing to meet with me.

The first of the two interviews of this sort was with a man who had, until the day before I interviewed him, been an employee of the Council of Protestants in Rwanda. He was associated with this consortium through his Presbyterian Church, but shared less with me about his denomination's own theology, and more about his perceptions on the effectiveness of the space created by the government for forgiveness. His opinions were useful in discerning the efficiency of forgiveness doctrine, not because of his theological analysis but because of how he framed forgiveness in the environment in which it had been created.

The second such interview was with a man who holds a position of authority in the Justice and Peace Commission. He helped to put some more perspective on the importance of creating an environment that is not only merciful for the perpetrators (for the survival of the country), but merciful as well for the survivors who have not only

been made to endure the horror of the genocide, but have been obliged to refrain from metering out justice themselves and to actively move the country forward using Christian-style altruistic forgiveness philosophy. He was also helpful in painting a picture of the motives which people use to forgive and which methods of forgiveness implementation are the most fair and the most effective.

Research Method Justification

I chose to utilize personal interviews in lieu of focus groups because of the nature of reconciliation. Though Rwanda's community at large has adopted forgiveness as a social norm and continues to work to perfect its practice, the successful reconciliation of the entire country is not possible without the success of individual forgiveness interactions. Large-group forgiveness is not only impossible, but irrelevant without the forgiveness being achieved within individual interactions between perpetrators and survivors. I did not use focus groups because I wanted an environment for sharing that was not colored with societal norms on forgiveness that may have been shaped by differing denominations, as well as a place which was welcoming and open to facilitation of sharing personal and painful details of the genocide and the subsequent forgiveness-thought-process.

My interviews yielded many things that I expected they would, such as traditional doctrine, personal stories, honest descriptions of how the interviewees saw fit to employ forgiveness, etc; they also yielded several other things which I did not expect, such as a picture of forgiveness as a social norm to which Rwandese are pressured to conform, and a notion of forgiveness as a force which is influenced by the government, among others. These new considerations led me in several different directions with my literature review research.

I needed a background section which would outline doctrinal basics of forgiveness and reconciliation without the influence of interpretation inspired by the genocide, so I went directly to the websites that are meant for public understanding of each doctrine. To get to the truth of how a denomination aspires to manifest its faith in the world and in human relationship, these websites are helpful. There is not usually a book of Biblical interpretation per each denomination, and so we are left, when

examining the public effectiveness and the community trend (if the denomination's doctrine were followed perfectly, which is nearly impossible but the best we can do when speaking of religious groups), to examine the most public and often the most proselytizing records of dogma. In this technology age, websites have dominated the publicity efforts of the Church, and so websites became my primary source for general 'baseline' denominational theological doctrine. This method was very effective as far as getting a background of what each denomination considered to be the ideal manifestations of its faith. Of course each congregation differs in its practice of its denomination's faith declarations, but it is helpful to get a sense of what the Church's active goals are ideally regarding its involvement in reconciliation and forgiveness education when talking to a person who may have more power or influence over the process which congregations will actually carry out.

My interviews prompted me to explore the history of the Church, which I found to be intricately intertwined with the history of Belgian colonialism in Rwanda. By discovering just how far-reaching the Church's influence has become in Rwanda, I was led to investigate the ways in which that influence manifested itself. This brought about the ideas of a history or hierarchy, power struggles, and structuralism. I needed to investigate this influence because it created the Rwanda we have today. The environment to which something like forgiveness doctrine is born necessarily colors the ways in which it is finally manifested.

These methods worked well, though I would have liked to interview several more people and maybe even try a focus group to observe whether or not there truly exists social pressure to utilize forgiveness in a certain way.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher played a large role in my interviews and in the way in which I researched, both to my awareness and subconsciously. There were several factors which influenced the way I read articles, the way I viewed certain denominations and their beliefs, and the way I interacted with people. The fact that I am a female American Lutheran with a colorful religious history necessarily shapes the way I look at this project, and thus likely influences my findings.

As an American, I find it difficult (but possible) to wrap my head around the idea that an experience such as forgiveness or reconciliation would function communally. American culture (at least what I have experienced) has fostered within me a deep sense of individuality, so I have had to force myself consciously to adjust my perspective. I find it difficult to imagine that forgiveness is possible by individuals, but I have changed my mind after talking to people who have actively, because of their faith and other influences, been convinced that they are able to forgive the genocidaires who destroyed their lives.

In America, religion tends to be a more individual experience, and thus a reflection of the overall spirit of our culture, whereas here everything is much more communal. Because of this communal spirit in Rwanda, the role of any aspect of its society is relevant not solely to the individual but is relevant to the community as a whole. This makes the country's policy of and tendency toward forgiveness (or at least the act of reconciliation for the survival of the society) as a group-guiding-force much more important to the survival of any smaller community, including those which are religiously affiliated. It is a technique of community survival and practice that, as someone who has grown up in a relatively personal and private society, I had not considered before. My American perspective brought me into this project expecting to find that forgiveness from human to human was impossible when the animosity between the two parties was caused by such an utterly terrible series of events.

I was also expecting there to exist a motivation to move on and for a societal dismantling of Christian religious groups. I thought this would happen the way I would imagine it happening in America in the face of a similar event: people would shy away from Churches and faith-based groups because of a feeling of betrayal compounded with a sense of individual strength which need not be gleaned from interaction with others or with a sociological authority and peer pressure of sorts in regards to the adherence to and acceptance of religious forgiveness doctrine. I was incorrect in my assumptions because of the difference in styles between America and Rwanda in regards to cultural awareness and how individualistic (or not) the nations' societies are that I had not before considered.

My views have been most importantly influenced by the fact that I am a Pre-Seminary religion major. As such, it is evident that I believe in the relevance and the

beneficial nature of organized religion. I have experienced a strong, supportive religious community that has actively helped me through some hard situations. I have even experienced a smaller and obviously less-intense form of faith-based reconciliation within that community and seen it work well. I honestly believe that, given the right circumstances, religious leadership and its doctrines (no matter the denomination) can provide one of the best methods to peace building after conflict on a variety of degrees, including genocide. Studying religion for the past three years and preparing for four more plus a career in the field makes the conclusions that I find here infinitely more relevant to me than other topics concerning reconciliation; there's a strong possibility that I can put what I learn to use, and I plan to by working to create a space which is merciful for everyone involved in the conflict at hand.

Probably the most important influence on my perspective and my role as a researcher is one which follows from my religious orientation, specifically my commitment to the Lutheran denomination. As per the Lutheran tradition's teachings, I believe that grace is a free gift given to everyone who hears the promise that this grace exists. This means, in regards to Rwanda's reconciliation for example, that though punitive actions may be taken, forgiveness would be given to perpetrators whether they asked for it or not. Forgiveness is viewed by my tradition as a spiritually-based cleansing of one's status before God, and so before humanity. In a similar vein, grace is a free gift to the survivors as well, regardless of how they would handle forgiveness. If a survivor reacted to a perpetrator with violence, forgiveness, hate, or love, in regards to God they would be in nothing but good standing. The law for Lutherans is an entirely different issue altogether. This theology would acknowledge the need for punitive action and restorative justice to make a human society function properly, but as far as eternal ramifications, there would be nothing but the acknowledgement that humans have no choice but to make terrible mistakes and that even so there remains nothing but love for them in every circumstance.

This theological background made it difficult for me to look at certain denominations and viewpoints that arose in my research, such as forgiveness based on guilt or societal obligation. I had to examine my own perspectives and assumptions to ensure that I was not jumping to conclusions based on my own faith history and my own

life experiences. When I started to self-reflect on my own reactions, I realized that it was not so much the denominational differences that I had trouble coming to terms with, but that what was instead more upsetting to me was the notion that people here do not feel welcome to share their honest feelings about the genocide, perpetrators, and their abilities to forgive.

Obstacles and Challenges to Data Collection

There were several challenges to this research project. One major obstacle for the two interviews with the women was the language barrier. I don't speak French or Kinyarwanda and my translator had some occasional trouble understanding how to convey messages without interjecting her own opinion or her own words for convenience of translation. Another language barrier was simply the definition of key terms. People define forgiveness differently according to their denominational beliefs, their life experience, their own abilities, and what they have been taught is correct as far as the practice of forgiveness by outside influences and social norms.

The fact that for the two interviews regarding personal experience and history with the genocide I needed to delve into extremely sensitive material made it difficult to ask blunt questions and to get the answers I was hoping to get. Having to sidestep because of the threat of emotional harm to my interviewee made the interviews only slightly more awkward than I had anticipated, but I was able to circumvent the verbal and relationship stumbling blocks with sensitivity and ended up fulfilling my expectations with the interviews.

I encountered another issue with sensitive material in researching the relationship between the Church and the social structure creation that ultimately contributed greatly to the genocide. Catholics especially are unwilling to speak with me about the role the Church itself and its leaders had in perpetuating the genocide, and furthermore why they feel responsible to help so fervently in the reconciliation effort.

My interview with Jean Bosco helped to fill in the blanks left by the history of the Church and Belgium, but also presented a challenge when trying to decipher the true condition of political space for forgiveness and reconciliation. It was very clear to me from my interviews and from my research that governmental pressure is at least

perceived if not present, and therefore relevant in a discussion about the readiness and effectiveness of forgiveness techniques. It is hard to get anyone to talk outright about the role of the government in creating (or not creating) this space, but my interview with Paul was helpful in that regard.

Another challenge was the fact that there have not been many comparative studies which span Christian denominations and their forgiveness operations, here in Rwanda or after any violent conflict. It was hard to find very many books which would help me discern the most important factors in faith-based reconciliation, so most of my background research had to come from interviews and journal articles which were not as in depth as I would have liked them to be. Given more time, I think that there are other sources that I could find that would help, but time constraint seems to have been the final and most important hindrance to the research project.

Findings

Introduction to Findings Section

This section will present my personal findings from researching from the framework of the objectives outlined at the beginning of the paper. This section will be organized according to those objectives and what I have encountered in my research of them, as quoted from that section.

Objective 1: “To assess the reality of the Church’s influence in the genocide and in the reconciliation efforts after-the-fact; this is to determine the level of influence which the Church holds over Rwandan reconciliatory efforts.”

My research into the history of Rwanda’s government and society has left me with several interesting perspectives on the role of the Church in the times before, during, and after the Tutsi genocide. I began this project thinking that I would find the Church to have been disappointingly silent during the genocide and to have limited influence over the whole of the reconciliation effort, its effects confined to its own organizations. What I found, however, was that the Church (Catholic in particular but all other denominations contributed with compliance) was involved far more intricately in creating the conditions which led to the genocide.

Even immediately after the conclusion of the genocide until now, 16 years into the reconciliation attempt, “the call for remorse and repentance still seems unnecessary and problematical for the Catholic Church.”³⁷ The Pope has publicly expressed his dissatisfaction with the behavior of the Church leadership members who committed atrocities, but maintains that they are individuals acting outside the will of the Church and must be held accountable as such.³⁸ This stance essentially absolves the Church proper of its responsibilities. Perhaps the Pope and those who serve under him to act as the hands and feet of the Catholic Church itself did not take up their own machetes, but they certainly contributed with their silence.

-The Rwandan religious population of survivors has not forgotten the Church’s silence. When asked about whether or not she could trust her Adventist church leadership having known about how Catholic preachers often helped to betray and kill their congregants, Annette observed a similar experience and her response:

“Also in our church there was a person, a guilty man, also tried to tell the government that in this church there were some people. Some people talk God just in their mouth, not in their heart. You cannot trust them, but if you have a problem, you can tell them. But not to trust them. It’s like, we trust only God....some don’t trust anyone because...earlier could trust someone and tell them everything, but after you see, he’s the one who came to kill your family. So it become so hard for you to trust another person. And also, there are many churches, as many as possible. Before genocide, you had only Adventists, Protestant, Catholic, and Muslims. But after, there are many many. Some are moving from that Church, you came back and you know what you did, so they move away and make their own church.”³⁹

The Church’s inaction and the efforts of the people who acted outside of the will of the Church (according to the Pope) have left congregants unable to trust Church

³⁷ Ndahiro, Tom.

³⁸ Ibid. Ndahiro.

³⁹ “Annette” personal interview.

leadership. The entire purpose of priests and pastors leading congregations is so that people may have a safe place to go to find comfort and to be reminded that their faith is the foundation upon which they may depend. The Church, in its divisive actions before the genocide, its silence during the genocide, and its unwillingness to accept responsibility after the fact has left a chasm between the people and an effective faith body. “The Church lacks a sense of remorse and therefore cannot repent; hence its active involvement, in my view, is the last stage of genocide – denial.”⁴⁰ Of course there are many congregations which have found ways to reconcile themselves to the believers whom they shepherd, but a perfect reconciliation has yet to be forged. The Church is no different from others who aided the work of the genocide: in order for real reconciliation to occur, there must be an acknowledgement that wrongs were committed. Until that happens and the Church is able to finally admit its role in the deaths of a million people, there will exist a chasm and a distrust.

“Accepting failure is a virtue. Even so, it is difficult for institutions like the Catholic Church that are known to command respect world wide – above all when such institutions, have been party to policies of racial discrimination and genocide.” The Church must atone for its sins and reconcile itself to the people, so that the people may move forward even more effectively with the aid of faith.

Objective 2: “To decipher the theological starting point and thus the starting point of reconciliation perspectives from each of the three most commonly practiced Christian denominations within Rwanda.”

In order to investigate how reconciliation is practiced from a faith-based perspective in a predominantly Christian society, one must first find the most common (and thus most influential) church bodies. The CIA World Fact Book records Catholicism as the most commonly practiced denomination of Christianity, with Protestantism and Seventh Day Adventism following. Protestantism is divided here according to old or new styles, and so I chose Pentecostalism both for its common practice in the country and to contrast styles with the more traditional theology of the Catholic Church.

⁴⁰ Ndahiro, Tom.

There seem to a few different definitions of forgiveness at work in the religious communities of Rwanda, and they for the most part follow the doctrine of these three denominations. Though these denominations look at forgiveness and redemption differently, every person I talked to agreed that, for them, the influence and the sustaining presence of God was essential to the reconciliation process. For Annette, “if you don’t have faith in God, it’s impossible.”⁴¹

The Catholic tradition acknowledges the importance of repentance and acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Through its sacrament of confession, it seeks to bring honesty and profundity to the perpetrator (to put the theology in context) and to really bring a conscious significance to the act of repentance and apology. It acknowledges the importance of a promise of forgiveness once the confession is accomplished, and emphasizes the importance of compliance with the command to forgive one another infinitely found in the Gospel of Matthew.⁴²

It acknowledges that there needs to be a transformation of behavior, but does not expect perpetrators to become different people altogether. Catholicism recognizes the fact that sinners are sinners because they were created human and they will continue to make mistakes. Salvation and comfort are given on a rolling-basis, and therefore there are no expectations for superhuman powers of perfection.

The Seventh-Day Adventist tradition, similarly, believes that sinners sinning is an inevitability, but expect a conscious choice to transform one’s self into a representative of God and the teachings found in the Bible. Adventists are more concerned with humanity’s relationship with God than the relationship sin damages between one another. They acknowledge that sin separates God and humanity, and that the job of the Adventists is to reconcile that relationship for one another. It seems to be a rather selfless religion, working to forgive because it is what God commanded and they know that if they do not forgive they are less effective at loving these people as they were ordered to. They seek conversion to bridge the gap between God and sinful humanity as a result of their readings of the Bible.

Because of those same texts and their desire to be representations of God, they

⁴¹ “Annette” personal interview.

⁴² Matthew 18:21-35; full text may be found in appendix B, reference 15.

strive to forgive as God does. When they find themselves unable to meter out a Christ-like forgiveness, they are caught in a Catch-22 and are forced to acknowledge that they have failed and have sunk into their human tendencies, which produces a feeling of failure. This could potentially result in further resentment toward those who put them in a position to fail at forgiveness in the first place, and it would be helpful if Adventism could acknowledge more clearly the fact that humans will be unable to be God himself, and that what they can accomplish in order to best serve their neighbor should be acceptable.

Pentecostals are of a different breed altogether from the former two denominations based on their views of repentance and transformation. They acknowledge that humanity is sinful and that that humanity has put perpetrators in a position which separates them from God, but there is hope. As one woman I interviewed described her forgiveness experience, “this transformation happens. You are a genocidaire one day, and then you hand your life over to Christ, and then you are never going to be a genocidaire again.”⁴³ Repentance is a process of transformation and it is a permanent one. For Pentecostals, saying “sorry” and receiving forgiveness is only the beginning of the story. When one, as Mary puts it, ‘hands life over to Christ,’ there is an utter disconnect between what one was and what is now. This kind of freedom of expression also affected Church membership both in its own congregations and in the Catholic Church. The freedom of expression was attractive, and is an important element in discerning how people are beginning to look at the ways reconciliation needs to manifest itself. Jean Bosco shares, “I think that people needed to recover emotionally, and there is so much structure in the Catholic tradition. You go from one worship element to the next...I think that the youth needed an outlet for self-expression, and these Pentecostal churches provided a space for that.”⁴⁴

Even though there exists a symbolic monumental transition from sinful being to ‘child of God,’ the process of transformation is one which is ongoing throughout the life of the perpetrator. In the same way, confession by the survivors of other sin makes them in the same condition: their process of becoming godly includes the process of

⁴³ “Mary” personal interview.

⁴⁴ “Jean Bosco” personal interview. December 2010.

forgiveness they undertake when attempting to reconcile with their victimizers. Godliness seems a lofty and perhaps at times unrealistic goal to impose on a body of people who are suffering, and it can result in disappointment at the lack of ability to overcome human anger and other emotions, or it can result in liberation if that forgiveness can in fact be achieved.

The theological starting point for faith-based Christian reconciliation efforts in Rwanda seems to necessitate an acknowledgement of wrongdoing, a choice of transformation or at least an acknowledgement that effort needs to be made, and an attempt to forgive as Christ forgave and described in the New Testament.⁴⁵

Objective 3: “To assess the effectiveness and relevance of theological teachings of forgiveness and repentance and how that teaching is manifested in communities of faith.”

The effectiveness and relevance of forgiveness doctrine is contained solely in its behavioral and societal manifestations. The ways in which forgiveness is manifested in a community and between individuals and their effects on overall reconciliation are reflections of the doctrine from which they arise. These manifestations are motivated by various influences, and constitute forgiveness as a practical concept. As Annette says of the most common motivations for forgiveness, “the first is God, for those who believe in Him. The second is the government, the third, people.”⁴⁶

Many instances of forgiveness and reconciliation are, amazingly, motivated solely by faith and desire for fulfillment of that faith’s teachings. One woman whose testimony is documented in the “As We Forgive” documentary describes a forgiveness based on gracious reciprocation for the forgiveness she herself has received: “How can I refuse to forgive when I’m a forgiven sinner, too? According to God’s Word, I am called to forgive him for I did not create him...His crime was against God who created the people he killed.”⁴⁷

This opinion is grounded in many New Testament teachings, specifically from the Gospels, that forgiveness is freely given and therefore should be freely practiced. There

⁴⁵ Relevant verses may be found in complete text in Appendix B.

⁴⁶ “Annette” personal interview.

⁴⁷ Waters Hinson, Laura.

are also two ways of looking at strictly Biblically-based forgiveness. The first is a compassion-based practice inspired by the compassion of Jesus found in places like Romans 12:14-21, which states a need for believers to practice the art of love for one's enemies and "blessing those who persecute" them.⁴⁸ Annette exhibits this altruistic forgiveness when she maintains that "forgiveness should be given freely because you can't get anything for forgiveness, or offer anything for forgiveness."⁴⁹

The second comes from verses which perhaps create a fear or guilt complex about forgiving a neighbor, threatening things like "the fire of hell,"⁵⁰ judgment,⁵¹ and forgiveness being withheld from them if they do not find it within them to forgive.⁵² With a societal history of compliance-or-consequences, it is not hard to imagine that the latter motivation may be more prevalent. This definitely raises the question of the level of effectiveness that Gospel-based forgiveness practice not for society, as I am sure it is just as effective at getting people to be functional, but for the mental and spiritual health of the individuals involved.⁵³

Another obvious and important motivation for forgiveness is manifested in the ways in which it benefits those who are doing the forgiving. Bishop John Rucyahana observes its importance to victims individually: "Why do you think victims of the genocide should forgive? First of all, forgiveness releases them. The bitterness of the loss, the hurt of the loss...eats them up. When they forgive, they get released."⁵⁴ Reconciliation as a society cannot be achieved if much of the population still feels imprisoned by grief and rage. A peace built on hate and not dealt with cannot last, which why it is so important that a space be created for sharing and honesty now, in the post-Gacaca time period when there is still hurt that needs to be (and deserves to be)

⁴⁸ Appendix B, reference 21

⁴⁹ "Annette" personal interview.

⁵⁰ Matthew 5:21-26; full text found in Appendix B, reference 10

⁵¹ Matthew 7:1-5; full text found in Appendix B, reference 13

⁵² Matthew 6:14-15; full text found in Appendix B, reference 12

⁵³ If I had more time, I would interview people to discern the difference and prevalence of those motives.

⁵⁴ Waters Hinson, Laura.

expressed by surviving victims.

Forgiveness can help the survivors get to a place where they can function and move on with their lives, not even motivated by how it would be of benefit for society, but because of the need of mental health and closure for themselves and for their families.

This individual need for forgiveness is not always positively fulfilled, however. “Sometimes, even in some villages there was only one survivor. And he needs to forgive to stay alive. He needs the good graces of his neighbors even though he knows what they maybe did to his family...it’s just a survival strategy, but they may not have actually gotten over it.”⁵⁵ Herein lies the need for the government and powers-that-be to take an honest appraisal of the need for a safe sharing space and of the latent tensions that still exist, and to create a space wherein people with testimonies like this may be addressed, heard, and provided for.

The need for Rwandan society to heal and become functional is another important motivation for forgiveness that is often fulfilled through the carrying-out of justice for perpetrators. “[Victims and perpetrators] can live together, and solve the problems [between] each other, but they don’t live as friends.”⁵⁶ This fact needs to be acknowledged and dealt with so that even this condition between two people may serve to benefit those individuals and society. Society needs to function, and it can function even when there is civility and not forgiveness. Forgiveness, however, seems to be the best option, and it seems to be easier for people to forgive when they are given a confession and see that the government is going to look out for their best interests.

Since many Rwandese cannot forgive those who harmed them and their families without a confession and without an acknowledgement of guilt by those parties, punitive action against perpetrators must take place first. Rwanda cannot fully reconcile if cannot constructively deal with perpetrators, and programs like Gacaca and TIG have gone to incredible lengths to ensure that this happens.

“[Forgiveness] also releases [the perpetrator] and then they can think right. They can contribute to the reconstruction of their country...And now they are building houses

⁵⁵ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

⁵⁶ “Annette” personal interview.

for their victims.”⁵⁷ John, a perpetrator whose story is recorded in “As We Forgive,” tells of the way he was taught by faith and by his experience in prosecution that he was part of this community and needed to serve it: “I came to my senses while in prison because of the teaching I heard on the word of God. We learned the importance of confessing and repenting of your crimes and how important it is to healing our hearts and rejoining the Rwandan community.”⁵⁸

The complication of this system remains the fact that not everyone, even with the help of faith and confession by the perpetrators, will be able or even willing to forgive according to the Christian doctrines most prominent in reconciliation rhetoric within Rwanda. Just as the perpetrators have the right to think what they want as long as they live in peace, survivors must have the right (and be aware of it) to do the same. This is where the need for a space of honesty, allowance, and patience needs to be created by the government as the body which sets the tone for the rest of the operations within the country.

Rwanda’s government and its people have decided to move forward with the country in a condition which is as unified as it can be. The release of genocidaires into society for the purpose of moving forward with the country’s development and healing process was the first step in a long line of actions which are meant to include everyone in the new Rwanda. The attempted homogenization of the Hutu and Tutsi into one Munyarwanda ethnic group is the ultimate end-goal, and Rwanda has accepted that, regardless of whether it is an ideal situation, the only way this can happen is with the involvement of the perpetrators of genocide. This is why forgiveness motivated by a desire for the survival of Rwandan society necessitates discussion about the need to heal the offenders and reintegrate them successfully with an attitude of compassion borne of necessity.

Jean Bosco indicates his support of this necessity not only for the cognitive acknowledgement of wrongdoing and self-accountability of the perpetrators, but to create a sense of safety and public accountability to benefit the survivors as well:

“The perpetrators...need to be guilty in front of the community of

⁵⁷ Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁵⁸ Waters Hinson, Laura.

people they perpetrated genocide against and held accountable for their actions. Many times people will confess to their crimes and ask for forgiveness and get a reduced or lightened sentence because they look at their situation as a cost-benefit negative. They say to themselves, ‘No, I will not do this again because I thought it would benefit me, and it did not.’ But sometimes it is not necessary for them to live alongside one another.”⁵⁹

Even if reconciliation is not always necessary because of victims and perpetrators being forced to live alongside one another, accountability is necessary for the perpetrators. If we cannot know who is sincere and who is not, then all of them need to know that their actions will not occur again under any circumstances. Punitive action has so far achieved this end.

In addition to accountability and creating an awareness of the reality of one’s guilt, perpetrators being required to confess their actions and to attempt to reconcile with the survivors they harmed provides access to survivors who would forgive if only they had the opportunity. If no one comes to them seeking forgiveness, these people are forced to reside in a forgiveness-limbo where they are willing but unable to put a face and closure on their experience and move on with their lives. “Sometimes, and this is more often, people say, ‘I am ready to forgive these people, but they have never come to me and asked, so I cannot.’ There needs to be honesty, at least.”⁶⁰ A system which requires face to face apologies, even if they are not always accepted, liberates both the victims and the perpetrators, and is thus an essential step on the path to reconciliation.

Church doctrine about forgiveness and atoning for one’s sins against another person has sparked widespread Church involvement in post-genocidal reconciliation efforts. Out of adherence to scriptures (after-the-fact though it may be) and guilt have prompted the Church to work toward community forgiveness and so atone for its own actions and inactions which contributed to the deaths of 1994.

President Paul Kagame has observed that “certainly the Church had a very negative effect before and during the genocide. They have influence in society, they have

⁵⁹ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

⁶⁰ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

influence on the minds of people. So if they play out their role negatively, then terrible consequences has to happen here in Rwanda.”⁶¹ The Church knows that it remains in no small part responsible for a million senseless deaths. The only thing worse for the Church than that fact is the awareness of the public and governmental leadership of that responsibility. For an organization that thrives as a direct result of respect for hierarchy, the fact that the Church was caught in an extremely compromising position does not bode well for its influence if it cannot somehow recover its credibility with the people. This seems to be a real motivation for the Church’s reconciliation efforts. The Church has worked very hard with its recovery efforts because it knows it is responsible and, just as the TIGiste need to reconcile themselves to society, the Church needs to reconcile itself to the people it has helped to betray as well. The Church’s active involvement in reconciling Rwanda and moving it forward “is the only way that the Church can restore its credibility, and thus be what it is called to be: a witness to faith, hope and love, to truth and justice.”⁶²

The Catholic Church itself will not acknowledge its involvement, but many members of its leadership do: John Rucyahana, president of Prison Fellowship Rwanda agrees: “People ask me, ‘Why should the church be involved in the reconciliation?’ I apologize. I apologize because the truth is that the Church is not free from the guilt.”⁶³ He observes that the Church, until the time of the genocide, had been more concerned with getting people into the Churches and less concerned with giving them the peaceful doctrine that could have prevented this genocide. He knows now, however, that the mission of the Church goes beyond butts-in-pews and extends to maintaining peace: “So, we have to change. And be exemplary to the people of Rwanda that repentance is a requirement. Transformation is our calling.”⁶⁴ Even so, “the reality and the truth remains that the Church has failed...during the time of the genocide the Church failed miserably.”⁶⁵ Bishop Rucyahana and other members of Church leadership here in

⁶¹ Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁶² Ndahiro, Tom.

⁶³ Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁶⁴ Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁶⁵ Ibid, Waters Hinson.

Rwanda know this, even if the Catholic Church at large fails to recognize it. Just as perpetrators need to admit their responsibility in order to be forgiven, the Church must do the same and liberate into forgiveness the survivors who depended on it and who were disappointed.

Objective 4: “To evaluate what outside influences, if any, are contributing to the growth or inhibition of reconciliation in Rwanda.”

When the Belgians came to Rwanda and first imposed their governing methods, they brought with them a system of monarchy as well as the Catholic Church’s authoritative hierarchy. By doing so, they contributed to the building of Rwanda’s society and cemented in place a way of relating to authority that amounts to absolute respect and obedience. Though it may be more willing to accept differences than people have perceived, Rwanda’s government has a reputation among at least part of the population of retaining absolute control over the behavior of the public. Annette maintains that the reason for peace or war comes down to which message the Rwandan government decides to propagate: “That bad government came, they told me to hate this person. And now, you have another government which is saying that love this person...The problem is the government, not people.”⁶⁶ Though this means that the government is currently a positive influence, it is worrisome that the government is at the very least perceived to have such a large amount of power.

Rwanda’s government eventually gained independence and grew out of its hierarchical roots into the government which stands today. Though the government is now providing freedom and peace, the way in which the Rwandese public obeys its orders and adopts its principles absolutely and without reservation is evidence of a society ingrained to subscribe wholly to its authorities. When the Rwandese government from independence until the genocide maintained its relationship with the Catholic Church and its hierarchical ideology, it created an abiding tendency within the Rwandese to obey social norms. The fact that people went along with mob mentality during the genocide even though they may have had no personal problems with the Tutsi is evidence to support this theory, and the fact that some went so far as to take a life because it was

⁶⁶ “Annette” personal interview.

the social expectation demonstrates the importance of being aware of the social norms which dominate the field of reconciliation today.

Those norms have been shaped almost entirely by the influence of faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations. Immediately after the genocide, the country found itself in a position where it had to depend almost entirely upon foreign aid. Not all of that aid was religiously-affiliated, but much of it was. At first, upwards of 90% of Rwanda's national budget was comprised of foreign aid.⁶⁷ When Rwanda found itself dependent on aid from other organizations, it was at the mercy of the ideologies behind those reasons, whether it wanted to employ them or not. Thus, when NGOs moved in immediately with their denomination or religion-specific doctrines of forgiveness and reconciliation, Rwanda was forced to adopt and implement those ideologies.

Rwanda was used to absolute submission to the ideas of those in authority, and so the people of Rwanda created a social norm based on what they saw exemplified in their government, which was based on what the NGOs who were helping the reconciliatory efforts believed was necessary. Because the NGOs established their systems of forgiveness so early on after the genocide and because Rwanda at that time was scrambling for stability, Rwandan society adopted these beliefs as the primary expectation and as the only way in which their society could recover. The problem with this lies in the fact that not everyone in Rwanda subscribes to Christianity. Not only this, but often religious expectations from the denominations prevalent in the reconciliation the NGOs have created the social norm for forgiveness, which may not work for everyone who *is* a member of these Christian denominations.

Rwanda needs to be aware of the fact that the influence of the NGOs it utilizes and its reputation as an authoritarian state among at least some parts of the Rwandese population (unintentional and untrue as that reputation may be) play a role in the healing of the society. As the governing body and primary source of perceptions of space for freedom of opinion, the government of Rwanda must make a conscious effort to not only validate the current efforts toward reconciliation, but to also actively open the floor for discussion of alternative philosophies of forgiveness and reconciliation. Many people feel that the government expects too much out of them, and if this is not the case, then the

⁶⁷ Kabahizi, Manu. Lecture for SIT. 2010.

government needs to clarify its expectations of the public: “The government tells us to forgive each other but in my personality, nothing I can do to that person.”⁶⁸ The time is ripe for innovative reconciliation structures and philosophies now that Rwanda’s dependence on foreign aid has decreased from 90% to less than 45%. This compounded by the fact that Rwanda’s public is still in many ways searching for more effective solutions to the problem of reconciliation begs action and awareness not only on the part of the government, but on the part of the NGOs which have shaped the reconciliation climate of the country thus far.

“Kagame cannot force anyone to forgive, and he is okay with that. But right now he is using his control to create stability in the country. And what the government is doing is trying to create a safe space.”⁶⁹ Safe space is what this country needs, but not at the expense of the freedom of people who are suffering. A space is not safe unless it is safe for all, and the space that has been created by certain religions has left people who do not subscribe to those religions and cannot live up to those expectations in the dark of self-doubt and what is sometimes perceived as failure to live within the bounds of their faith.

Objective 5: “To evaluate the aspects of faith-based forgiveness and reconciliation which are most effective and least effective respectively, and to determine if those most effective aspects may be maximized to benefit the community more efficiently or if they may be replaced with more effective solutions.”

The influence of religion, whether that religion happens to ultimately be true or not, is an important factor in creating social functionality. Though it can create conflict, it seems to have been a stabilizing force in post-conflict Rwanda and needs to be expanded on to maximize the beneficial impact it is having on society, as well as mend the harm it is potentially creating to individuals. Religion also, however, tends to bring victims outside of themselves and facilitates consideration of the needs of the community in lieu of making the emotional fulfillment of the victim the primary priority. This is

⁶⁸ “Annette” personal interview.

⁶⁹ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

good for the overall community, but potentially negative for the mental health of the survivors.

Through my research in the area of faith-based forgiveness and reconciliation I found several things to be true. There are several different ways of defining forgiveness, depending on life experience and personal forgiveness behavior and beliefs, position in the field, and relationship to a particular denomination. In these various differences, there are also present various ways in which people tend to manifest that forgiveness. Still more intriguing is the fact that there seem to be many different motivations for enacting forgiveness in a community.

One problem with the system of faith and reconciliation seems to be present in many aspects of Rwandan life. Submission to the government, to the will of the majority, and to authority figures such as (historically) the Catholic Church and Belgium have been the tendency of the Rwandese public. A hierarchical religion like Christianity comes into a society which has already been aligned according to respect for such authority and provides a solution. This leads to popular opinion that this solution is the only solution, and it potentially marginalizes legitimate and justifiable solutions which do not fit within the theological social normative box. Submission through obedience is a Rwandese trend, and in the case of faith it is defeatist and potentially plays a role in setting people up to be abused again in a different way. Forgiveness has been described as a “divine” endeavor⁷⁰ and religious followers are tempted to assume that because they cannot fully submit to the will of God that they must put all of their efforts into doing so until they are able to. This pressure to submit inhibits the overall goal of reconciliation: to reconcile. Focus is placed on the inability of some to achieve forgiveness instead of the forgiveness itself and the emotional and spiritual progress that comes along with the efforts. Forgiveness is for forgiveness’ sake, not for the sake of fulfilling societal expectations, but it is not always perceived as such. This type of teaching (which is upheld by the government and so by society) is not conducive to success, and so Rwanda must look at different ways in which to frame the forgiveness efforts of individuals within Rwandese society.

A rather successful theme in faith-based reconciliation as far as it has been

⁷⁰ Waters Hinson, Laura.

considered and taught is manifested in these denominations' commitment to the ongoing process of reconciliation. All of the denominations acknowledge that ideally perpetrators would wholly and with repentant hearts confess and make amends and that survivors would wholeheartedly forgive them with a heart and spirit of Christ, but that humanity is, by Christian definition, never going to operate within an ideal Christian setting. Humanity resides 'on the ground' and as such necessitates a process-style system of repentance and forgiveness. Although there may be for some denominations a desire for an 'about-face' repentance style and an altruistic, superhuman, 'Christ-like' forgiveness, and even attempts toward that end, there is an acknowledgement by these faith communities that people are dealing with real pain, remorse, guilt, and anger, and that concessions must be made in order to keep these people working with the faith and not feeling alienated by it.

The churches individually have worked to create a safe space for honesty and sharing and have really tried to funnel the energies created by this post-conflict reconciliation into constructive ways in which to create a more functional society. The Church's acknowledgement of wrongdoing and accountability would prove these faith communities more effective and would reconcile them to their followers. Showing that they are responsible for their actions and are not only facilitators but are willing participants in the reconciliation effort would give the Church the credibility it needs to further its benefits within Rwandan society.

Teachings of love and forgiveness together can be both productive and counterproductive. Forgiveness is something which is essential to reconciliation, but when the two are paired together there is a tendency to think of them as inseparable accomplishments. Realistically, forgiveness can only be expected as far as coexisting with one's attacker, if that can even be expected at all. Annette maintains the same view: "I can help [the perpetrator] in what condition is he or she, but to be my friend, it is not good."⁷¹ Survivors cannot be expected to love their neighbor against their will, and the perpetrators do not deserve this love enough to force that kind of good will from their victims. The Church should not be a vehicle for a feeling of failure if a survivor cannot forgive to this extreme, but instead should provide hope that what they are is enough and

⁷¹ "Annette" personal interview.

that God loves them even when they cannot love perfectly themselves.

Recommendations/Personal Opinion

Introduction

This section will examine what I found through my research and attempt to outline a possible solution to the problems presented therein. The first subsection will cover implementation of a plan which could maximize the effectiveness of forgiveness doctrine and practice within Rwandese society. First, this section will outline the influences which have led to the current climate of forgiveness. Second, it will argue that punitive actions for genocidaires and their subsequent reintegration into Rwandese society are essential to the act of reconciliation. This section will then advocate for the importance of recognition of difference of forgiveness ability, and will suggest the creation of a safe space for people who remain in the midst of transition from resentment to tolerance. The roles of the government, the Church, and Rwandese society are essential elements to the resolution of the problem of forgiveness, and their respective influences will be called upon at junctures where improvements upon them could be made. The second subsection will outline changes that I would make to my own research methods and conclusions if I had the opportunity to conduct this project again, and the third subsection will provide suggestions for further study of the topic.

Possibilities for improvement and implementation:

Rwanda's need to move its society forward has left it with no more time and few options. Its decision to release prisoners and operate under the philosophy of mercy and forgiveness has already begun to move the nation forward. Its efforts will only continue, however, if Rwanda fosters within its society a consciousness of its own tendency to create divisions and expect homogeneity and obedience, as well as an awareness of the problems which arise as a result. Because of the history of consistent oppressive and absolute structuralism which Rwanda inherited from Belgium and the Catholic Church, Rwandans have become accustomed culturally to adhering to societal norms. When the Church stepped in after the genocide to mop up its own mess theologically, it created a social norm and therefore expectations about how forgiveness should be practiced. The

fact that the government has adopted an attitude of certain behavioral expectations of forgiveness and has made those expectations known to the general public is cause for this society to assume that this is the only way in which anything can be done. As Annette mentioned in her interview, people will do what the government tells them to, whether that is good or bad or whether they agree with the philosophy behind it or not. I worry that if Rwanda is not aware of its tendency to place people in boxes (even the “Munyarwanda” designation is a designation in itself and creates a norm), it will marginalize people who cannot live up to the admittedly superhuman expectations of Christian forgiveness doctrine and breed further resentment.

It is important to note that making a conscious effort to unite the community under the guise of honesty and forgiveness and not leaving anyone out does not mean that forgiveness is free. Reconciliation in the environment described above cannot take place when crimes are pushed under the rug. There needs to be open and honest communication about the crimes committed, and Rwanda has succeeded in working tirelessly to ensure that there is a record of the events of 1994. Rucyahana advocates the need for punishment in order for offenders of genocidal atrocities to fully re-enter the communities from which they were expelled.: “For us, reconciliation does not oppose justice. What the Rwandan people are doing us to bring the offense to condemnation, but the offender be restored into the fullness of life.”⁷²

If restoration is done fairly and honestly for the genocidaires, then it must necessarily be as open to honesty for survivors who cannot achieve the potentially impossible act of “loving those who persecute you.”⁷³ For people like one woman whose testimony was documented in the documentary “As We Forgive,” forgiveness is not a feasible option: “In my heart I have absolutely no mercy for these people. They wronged me terribly and gave my father an awful death. The blood splashed and flowed down his face. He died miserably...It feels like God has abandoned me.” Do the government, society, or religious communities marginalize people like this woman by invalidating the ways in which she can act in mercy? In a society where the government is at least perceived to have total control and authority over thought and opinion, I argue that this is

⁷² Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁷³ Romans 12:14-21; full text may be found in Appendix B, reference 21.

indeed the case. The woman admits, “I don’t know if anything can remove what is inside of me. Although I believe God is able. I don’t know what can remove what is on my heart.” Why should this woman have to overcome her grief and her anger sooner than she’s able? If she can move herself and her nation forward and retain that anger, should she not be able to be provided a space where she feels welcome and where her anger at these atrocities is valid and accepted? Only by dealing with the fact that these emotions and these reactions are a reality can Rwanda take steps to channel them into healthy modes of expression.

By accepting only these ideals as the sole reasonable solutions to the problem of forgiveness in post-conflict reconciliatory society, Rwanda inadvertently marginalizes other methods of forgiveness and the people who can only operate within those boundaries. “Fourteen years after the genocide, beneath the sometimes peaceful veneer of communities across Rwanda, old antagonisms still fester, and the release of detainees...have only magnified many of these tensions.”⁷⁴ Rwanda can only avoid the implosion of these tensions by acknowledging that the animosities behind those tensions are birthed from justified anger.

The NGOs which laid the foundation for the government’s policies on forgiveness by becoming involved so quickly after the genocide have shaped the expectations that Rwandese people attempt to live up to and expect others to achieve. These expectations are admittedly, by leaders in the reconciliation effort, lofty goals: “Forgiveness is not human, it is divine.”⁷⁵ By believing this and preaching its achievement of the utmost importance, admittedly superhuman expectations are placed on those members of society who have experienced the most hardship in their lives. The religious influence which extends from NGOs to all aspects of society in Rwanda (though the influence may be dwindling as the country develops) has left the government in an awkward position. By accepting aid, Rwanda accepts the ideologies that come with that aid. The President has said of forgiveness, “It’s a choice people have to make, it’s a choice a nation has to make

⁷⁴ Clark, Phil. *The Rules (And Politics) of Engagement: The Gacaca Courts and Post-Genocide Justice, Healing, and Reconciliation in Rwanda*. From the SIT reader.

⁷⁵ Waters Hinson, Laura.

and we've made that choice."⁷⁶ Who has made that choice? Of course the government of Rwanda (and its constituents by compliance) have decided that forgiveness is the only way which will serve to pull this society out of the vortex of genocide and hate, but what kind of forgiveness? What does that forgiveness look like, and are other kinds welcome?

Rwanda's people have instilled within them a need to fulfill the needs of the government. Rwanda's citizens listen to the government and place their trust in the actions they carry out for that government. "That bad government came, they told me to hate this person. And now, you have another government which is saying that love this person. That's how it is. The problem is the government, not people."⁷⁷ One man I interviewed worked for the Council of Protestants in Rwanda, and he maintained that there is fear here that there is no freedom to speak one's mind if that mind is not also of the government, even down to forgiveness and reconciliation. "These people are not free," he says, to share the fact that they cannot forgive.⁷⁸ Since they do not feel as if they can express their needs, the government perhaps does not know that there is a lack of space for sharing and for working toward the forgiveness ideal, and thus the needs of people in forgiveness-limbo are not met.

As a society which is striving for the best way to heal a society, Rwanda needs to focus on nurturing an environment of honesty, justification, and mercy not just to the perpetrators of genocide, but to the victims as well. Society must especially have mercy on survivors of whom much has been taken and much has been expected. Jean Bosco, leader of a Catholic reconciliation organization whose comments will remain anonymous, maintains that "Our biggest concern is that we are creating a space that is safe for people to use to be honest and to have people listen to them about their trauma."⁷⁹ By having a more flexible attitude toward how forgiveness is achieved, people will naturally be more willing to open up and less apt to become resentful and feel stifled. Flexibility is not a value to which Rwanda is accustomed, but employing it in order to help people heal will only be an asset to the ultimate condition of the country.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Waters Hinson.

⁷⁷ "Annette" personal interview.

⁷⁸ "Paul" personal interview, December 2010.

⁷⁹ "Jean Bosco" personal interview.

One genocidaire admits that “Paying people back for my crimes is beyond my comprehension. There is no price that can be paid for a human being.”⁸⁰ Though people will never be able to make up for it, they can make an effort to acknowledge that they understand the gravity of what they have done, and thus begin to restore unto themselves the trust of the surviving victims. Accepting guilt and punishment is a good faith effort toward the honesty that is required to move the country forward, and shows the victims that they are not expected to carry the country forward on their own shoulders using superhuman powers of forgiveness. Punitive action acknowledges that wrongs were committed and therefore validates the anger of the survivors. When these feelings are justified, victims will not feel as stifled and will feel as if the country is working *with* them for their best interests, not simply having those interests forced upon them.

Jean Bosco advocates the need for forgiveness, but also for accountability: “[The perpetrators] need to be guilty in front of the community of people they perpetrated genocide against and held accountable for their actions. Many times people will confess to their crimes and ask for forgiveness and get a reduced or lightened sentence because they look at their situation as a cost-benefit negative. But sometimes, and this is more often, people say, “I am ready to forgive these people, but they have never come to me and asked, so I cannot.” There needs to be honesty, at least.”⁸¹ An approach inclusive of punishment and guilt admission acknowledges the fact that the system of repentance and forgiveness is not perfect. The entities who are repenting and forgiving are not more than human, and so the fact that people may be held publicly accountable and then receive forgiveness helps to fulfill forgiveness desires and to keep people safe, regardless of the sincerity of the confession.

Rwanda needs to push through difficulties and pursue peace while acknowledging the fact that the situation is not ideal and as much as society would love to be able to have everyone perfectly and completely forgive, this is not a possible scenario: “Whatever their motivation, as long as this is happening, we cannot teach the children that it is okay to continue the cycle of hate. And as long as people are talking and behaving in peace,

⁸⁰ Waters Hinson, Laura.

⁸¹ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

we are teaching the children and this will not happen again.”⁸² Realize that it is not dangerous to acknowledge anger and the downfalls of this system of forgiveness the Rwandan society is left with, and that it may only be perfected by dealing with the issues that inhibit it, such as differing opinions and manifestations of forgiveness and subscription to different religious forgiveness doctrine.

The Rwandese public opinion is a powerful thing. We see evidence of a society which values swift and dedicated public response in the way the Church in Rwanda, once overwhelmingly Catholic, has responded to the pressure of the rigidity of the Catholic Church by leaving and creating or joining new congregations and denominations. In these Churches, Rwandans create an environment that is more apt to foster individuality and freedom of expression over submission and acceptance of what is often viewed to be archaic and outdated teachings. This is evidence of the desire of the Rwandan people to speak out when they feel they must, but this same kind of freedom to speak is not flowing as readily through the veins of forgiveness and reconciliation. The public’s response to this kind of pressure by society, the government, and religious authority has not always been consistent ideologically, but it has been immediate and fierce in the directions it chooses to travel, proving the public to be a formidable force for whatever agenda it so chooses to support. If the government and NGOs with religious affiliations could allow more freedom of forgiveness practice and could create more venues for open dialogue, there is nothing stopping the public from pursuing passionate justice as it has for every cause it has undertaken before. If the government and NGOs can create a space wherein people feel allowed to share and be honest, there is no limit to the ways in which people may be able to forgive and become more functional members of society while feeling validated, justified, and non-resentful.

“There could always be violence. There are people out there in the world who will always be waiting for an excuse to hurt other people... We have to stop them with forgiveness and show them peace.”⁸³ By showing faith in humanity and by treating one another as human beings, we give permission for open dialogue and maybe people won’t feel the need to resort to violence to be heard. A continuing trend of a societal rulebook

⁸² “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

⁸³ “Jean Bosco” personal interview.

written by the ruling party will only create more animosity by the non-ruling party, and the cycle needs to end. It can end here, with open forgiveness and by creating a climate conducive to honesty and acknowledgement of the profound negative realities created by the genocide. In short, Rwandese society needs to find itself in a state of grace: Grace for the perpetrators manifested through forgiveness, and grace to the survivors, manifested through a lifted burden of superhuman altruism.

Hypothetical modifications for the improvement of the research:

I would have spent more time finding opinions from different denominations to emphasize the different ways in which people forgive more. The paper turned into more of an argument for a safe space for sharing and less of a denominational comparative study. Though the denominations' perspectives are relevant because they influence how people 'on the ground' manifest their forgiveness-driven behavior, it would have been nice to see which denominations did a better job of making people feel welcome to share and to be honest about their abilities as humans in the face of Rucyhana's "divine forgiveness."⁸⁴

I would have interviewed more people on the subject, perhaps including an atheist opinion and more layperson opinions, as well as a few opinions from each denomination who are in charge and therefore more closely studying the doctrine which they preach. I would have asked them about their theological justifications for the way they preach about forgiveness, and tried to see which practices were more effective for the healing of individual circumstances and why.

If I could do this research again I would not limit myself to the three most common denominations, but would instead expand the scope of study to include all of the major Christian denominations practiced here, as well as Islam and indigenous faiths. The study of faith in reconciliation is not complete without taking into account all faith manifestations which are present in the process.

Suggestions for further research on the topic:

It would be interesting to do a more in-depth discovery of the theological

⁸⁴ Waters Hinson, Laura.

reasoning behind each denomination's forgiveness doctrine and to hear an 'authority' in the church describe that reasoning, then to compare that logic with how a layperson in the Church has interpreted it and integrated it into his or her lifestyle.

Finding people who are involved in reconciliation efforts and who will talk with an interviewer about the history of the Catholic Church in Rwanda and its role in the genocide is very difficult, and so churches outside the Catholic sphere are good places to consult when looking for contacts. One positive aspect of the close-knit network that is the Christian theological circle is that when someone does want to help, they will provide you with countless contacts.

The role of faith in the reconciliation effort here in Rwanda is not exclusively Christian, and if one aspired to do a study on the real and complete role of faith in forgiveness, one would necessarily find him or herself researching the role of Islam and indigenous faiths as well. It would be interesting to compare indigenous views on forgiveness and their effectiveness and relevance to the overall efforts toward reconciliation.

Conclusions

This study sought ultimately to maximize the benefits reconciliation brings to a post-genocidal society. By examining the theological foundations upon which reconciliation stands and the outside influences that have worked to help create that foundation, the paper evaluated how forgiveness doctrine is manifested and if and how those manifestations are beneficial to the well-being of Rwandan society. By examining the history of the formation of the society and how that has formed the current climate and by then combining that information with information about the effectiveness of forgiveness methods, the paper attempted to discern what could be done to improve the effectiveness of reconciliation efforts here in Rwanda.

Through a brief study of additional African post-conflict situations that have been remedied by faith-based reconciliation efforts and through other secondary source reviews about the effectiveness of reconciliation, the paper proved that the study of religious faith is an essential part of the overall study of reconciliation, especially here in Rwanda in the post-genocide state in which the nation finds itself. By utilizing

denominational sources to find doctrine and then conducting interviews of members of those religions who manifested forgiveness doctrine in their own lives, the paper discerned that there seems to be a widely varying array of ways in which forgiveness is taught and practiced. By interviewing those church members and some authority figures in various reconciliation-oriented organizations, I discovered that there seems to be a disconnect in the Rwandese general public sphere between what forgiveness means and what types and degrees of forgiveness are possible, and what is expected by the government and religious bodies of people who are directly involved in the repentance/forgiveness process. Interviews and secondary sources in the study of the history of the nation's society yielded notions of a more closely-linked relationship between previous authoritarian governments, the Catholic Church, and a climate of resentful compliance with social norms of reconciliation and the forgiveness doctrines from which those norms emerged.

As a result of these findings, this study suggests that the government utilize its current increasingly independent state to reform the ways in which forgiveness and reconciliation are taught and practiced, open the floor for suggestions from outside the current dominant denominational spectrum, and be conscious of its own role in marginalizing people who cannot achieve the lofty expectations of Rwandese society. It suggests that the government distance itself when it can from the expectations of religiously-based NGOs and pursue options for reconciliation which will reconcile those who are still finding the current teachings on forgiveness insufficient for their needs, and create a space for sharing between parties involved in reconciliation. By doing so, the study hopes that this will result in a more cohesive societal unit and that people will feel less obligated and more free to express their grief and anger, and thus will become more productive, content members of Rwandese society.

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Appendix A: Religious Demography Statistics

The CIA World Fact Book provides demographics on Rwanda's population as it pertains to religion. These statistics as of 2001 describe the population as divided into the following religious affiliations: Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, none 1.7% (2001)⁸⁵

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms:

Listed in alphabetical order, these terms may be defined differently elsewhere but for the purposes of this paper retain the following definitions and functions:

- Catholic & catholic - "Of, relating to, or forming the church universal." The capitalization of 'Catholic' usually refers to the Catholic Church proper, which is a denomination claiming Apostolic authority, power given directly from God. Catholic in the non-capitalized sense usually refers to the Church as a whole community of believers spanning the divides of the Christian religion.
- Christianity - A religious faith which has been divided into countless differing denominations, some differing more and some less, but which all contain the commonality of a belief that the man Jesus, whose life and teachings are recorded in the Gospels of the New Testament, was the Son of God and (sometimes potentially the) Savior of all humanity from its own sin.
- Dogma- "Something held as an established opinion, especially a definite authoritative;" Also, a "code of tenets."⁸⁶
- Faith - "Belief and trust in and loyalty to God;" "Belief in the traditional doctrines of religion."⁸⁷
- Forgiveness: release of the responsibility of the forgiver to meter out punishment; the absolution of all punishment-worthy histories. Does not indicate a lack of punishment but offers an end to the punishment; (implied) gift which one does not deserve by actions.
- God-That in whom or in which one places one's ultimate trust. For the purposes of this paper, the Judeo-Christian God believed by all researched denominations to be manifest in the following three parts: The Creating force, or Father; The Holy Spirit, or presence of God invisibly present in the world today and which did reside in the person of Jesus; The Son, who is the Redeemer, simultaneously fully God and fully Human.
- Grace- Gift of forgiveness without merit; Patience; Absolution.
- Justice - "The quality of being just, impartial, or fair;" also, "conformity to truth, fact, or reason;"⁸⁸ also, one's actions resulting in 'fair' consequences.
- NGO- Non-Governmental Organization. For the purposes of this paper, specifically a religiously-affiliated or faith-based non-governmental aide organization.
- Reconciliation - The achievement of a state of nonviolence and coexistence between

⁸⁵ CIA World Fact Book 2001: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook//fields/2122.html?countryName=Rwanda&countryCode=rw®ionCode=af&#rw>

• ⁸⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online: Merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/dogma

• ⁸⁷ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online: Merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/faith

• ⁸⁸ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online: Merriam-Webster.com/dictionary/justice

two opposing parties based on the unjust actions of one of the parties.

- Religion - Here, religion is defined as “That in whom or in which one places one’s ultimate trust.” In the context of this paper, this will be a scope narrowed to include religions which define themselves in terms of the Christian denominational spectrum.
- Repentance - The act of acknowledging one’s own sin and attempting to behave in a way different to what one has previously practiced; Trying to act with more justice; An externally-manifested internal transformation of perspective.
- Salvation- Used here to refer to salvation from the eternal punishment that Christians believe humanity deserves to receive as a result of its sinful or evil actions. This salvation comes from Jesus, who they believe to be the Christ and the one who reconciles humanity to God after its fall from perfection.
- Sin- Misdirected trust; Placing one’s ultimate trust as mentioned in the definition of “God” above in something which is not ultimate. I.e. placing one’s trust in one’s own ability to judge right from wrong and finding that belief to be ill-aligned with the ultimate truth present in the will of God.

Appendix C: Bible Verse Text Collection for Reference

All references taken from: The Harper Collins Study Bible. 1 ed. Harold W. Attridge. Wayne A. Meeks. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. 2006.

Bible Verses Re: Mercy, Forgiveness, Repentance, Reconciliation, Atonement; Organized according to the order in which they appear in the New Testament with individual book classifications; Also numbered for in-text reference convenience.

Gospel 1: Matthew

10) 5:21-26 - “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his neighbor, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

11) 5:38-47- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

12) 6:14-15 - “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

13) 7:1-5 - “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

14) 18:15-17 - “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Gacaca)

15) 18:21-35 - Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. He fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

Gospel 2: Mark

16) 12:28-31 - One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Gospel 3: Luke

17) 15: 11-31 (verses condensed and listed here: 11-14, 20, 28-31) - Jesus continued, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give

me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need...So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him...The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Romans

18) 3:21-31 - But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

19) 5:1-11, 18-19 - Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation...Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many

were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

20) 11:28-32 - As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have no received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have no become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

21) 12: 14-21 - Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

2 Corinthians

22) 5:11-6:2 - Since, then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to command ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and have us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Ephesians

23) 4:25-5:2 - Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin:" Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the

Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Colossians

24) 3:12-14 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Hebrews

25) 12:14-15 - Make every effort to love in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

James

26) 2:12-13 - Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

1 John

27) 3:11-24 - This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

28) 4:7-21 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We

know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Appendix D: Interviewees

Interviewee Information:

Names are coded for anonymity.

- Annette: Age 39. Married with 4 children. Father and several siblings and extended family killed in the genocide. Seventh-Day Adventist. Works as an interior decoration supply store owner. Lives in Kimihurura with her family.
- Mary: Age 45. Three children. Pentecostal. Husband was killed in the genocide, as well as several extended family members. Works and lives in Kimihurura as a house assistant to a family in her neighborhood. Resides with her family.
- Jean Bosco: Approximately age 40. Married with children. Catholic by religious preference. Works with reconciliation in the Justice and Peace Commission.
- Paul: Approximately 50 years old. Scottish Presbyterian formerly associated with the Council of Protestants in Rwanda. Married with children. Lives in Gikongoro.

Appendix E: Interview Transcript One

Interview Transcript One: Annette*

Q: You are Seventh Day Adventist, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you attend Church services very regularly?

A: Yes

Q: And you are very involved in your congregation?

A: Yes

Q: So do you consider yourself a very religious person as far as letting faith play into your decision making and how you look at the world on a daily basis?

A: Yes

Q: I am wondering how you define forgiveness? What does forgiveness mean to you personally?

A: it's a very big problem to answer, but on my own behalf, forgiveness should be given to a person who asks to or who didn't do anything.

Q: Okay, so is forgiveness something that you think people need to earn, or is it something that you should give freely, just unconditionally?

A: Yes. Forgiveness should be given freely because you can't get anything for forgiveness. Or offer anything for forgiveness.

Q: Do you get that opinion from the way you believe God forgives? Is the way God forgives you something that makes you feel this way about giving forgiveness yourself?

A: The Bible makes me to say that and also my education makes me say that.

Q: Do you think that people who committed genocide crimes, do you think that they deserve forgiveness and do you think that it is possible to fully forgive people for that?

A: I think that people who committed genocide need forgiveness, and those who genocide was done to need forgiveness.

Q: I apologize if this is too sensitive, but do you know personally who committed genocide against your family members?

A: Yes.

Q: And have you found yourself able to forgive them for that?

A: The government tells us to forgive each other but in my personality, nothing I can do to that person. I can't kill him. Even if the government say that "Take this person, do whatever you want for him." But, I can help him in what condition is he or she, but to be my friend, it is not good.

Q: Is forgiveness to you just being able to not hurt them, and to help them if you can, or is it also something which makes the anger go away, too? Or can you have forgiveness and still be angry, is what I am asking.

A: No. Yeah, if you forgive one person, it comes from your heart. And then you see which kind of person you are going to forgive. And also, if you forgive him and you remain angry it means you didn't forgive him. I'm not angry because of forgiving that person, but I'm angry with what happened before that forgiveness.

Q: So now that you've forgiven these people, you are not angry at them anymore?

A: I'm not angry with people who committed genocide, but I'm angry with genocide.

Q: I understand. Do you think that, as far as the genocide goes, that the majority of the people who are survivors have been able to forgive, or are they still harboring anger or resentment?

A: A few people are the ones who have forgiven them, and they are no longer angry. Because: Many people who are survivors didn't know who are the people who killed their family. So, you cannot forgive someone who you don't know. That the reason there are only a few people who have done it.

Q: Do you think that Rwanda can be reconciled, so people can live alongside each other, if they do not forgive each other?

A: Yes. They can live together, and solve the problems to each other, but they don't live as friends. An example is that if I am working in the government and that person needs a visa to go outside the country, I can give it to him or her but if my child has a birthday, was baptized, I have a marriage, I cannot invite him.

Q: So you can work together, but not be friends.

A: That's how I feel.

Q: How do you feel about the idea of loving your enemy? So, is there love there for you? Or, is it just tolerance, being able to put up with one another?

A: Yeah, it's like when you are with that person and he is having problems, you help him or her. Also, if you have a good word for him you tell him or her. That's how. But, like my uncle is the friend to the family, we can invite him anywhere, but he can't invite that one.

Q: So do you think that reconciliation without forgiveness can make a lasting peace for Rwanda?

A: That without forgiveness, we cannot live as good as you want.

Q: Do you think that if the country cannot forgive, that there would be violence again?

A: Yes. Before, before, before that time, I and she (mom) can have a child and get married, but when that bad government came, they told me to hate this person. And now, you have another government which is saying that love this person. That's how it is. The problem is the government, not people. And you see, it is very easy by now. It is not as hard as people think. Somehow. Because in the earlier time they could get married for long but when the bad government came also I could kill my parents or kill my husband.

Q: Do you think forgiveness and reconciliation are motivated by a need to move on with life, because the government tells you to, or because that is what you are taught that God wants?

A: Yeah the first is God, for those who believe in Him. Yeah the second, is the government, the third, people.

Q: Do you think reconciliation and forgiveness of perpetrators of genocide, do you think it would be possible for you to forgive them and reconcile with them if you did not have faith in God?

A: If you don't have faith in God, it's impossible.

Q: During the genocide, what were you thinking about God and why this was happening and why God was allowing this to happen?

A: God's programs, you remember God first if you have any problems. So they could think of God. And those people who died, it's the same way people are dying now. It's the same. God is there, but also God is like a punishment. He don't stop people to die.

Q: Did you ever experience any anger at God?

A: No. No! God has its only problems. For us, we are angry that our people died, but we don't know. Maybe God is happy because those people died, it is part of the program. The people who remained, it doesn't mean that they didn't hate them. No! Also, there were people where in the first place who were wanted so much and they didn't die. That's what God wanted to teach us.

Q: What you're saying is that there was a plan?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that this was God's will?

A: No this was not God's will. It's like for us we are angry that people died.

Q: But you were just angry that it happened, not at God?

A: Yeah, that it happened. But we don't know. But God, we don't know his program. Maybe he wanted to teach us something or we didn't see it or some people saw it. Maybe he wanted to teach us something. Because it was like a list. And some people were on high levels and that's why. It's God, His programs. God created this person and said, "You are going to live only two days," another one five days, another 100 years. For us, we are angry that this person died, but God cannot let you die if you will be angry.

Q: So was there ever a feeling during the genocide of having been abandoned? (Explanation to translator: Like being left alone to take care of yourself and you ask for help, but it did not come. Was there ever that feeling?)

A: A child can kill a person like me. If they didn't have faith in God, you can fight with me because you are older than me. But you just take it how you are and then they kill you.

Q: Okay, so when they just stayed and did not fight back? That's why?

A: No, you see that if they are about to kill someone they say that only one Tutsi who remains is going to tell God what happened in Rwanda. But all of them are going to kill them, all, all, all. But when they kill people from this house and you have faith in God, also some like could come five children and when they are playing with other children, you think that what's happening is love between each other, and after they come and kill them. And also, I can come and then I kill this one who is older than me, but he don't want to fight with me, I kill him. That shows that people had faith in God?

Q: Because they let it happen?

A: No, if you couldn't have faith in God, you can say "how can this child kill me? Let me kill her first."

Q: Okay so because there was no killing in return it was because of the faith of those people?

A: Yeah, there are types of people: Some people fought for themselves and they won. Other people fought for themselves, but the killers, they were stronger than them. Other people could not fight like old people, young children. And other people were found in churches, and they took them another place where they should be killed, and they went when they were singing.

Q: So they had just accepted that they were being allowed to die because there was a reason, because of God?

A: Those people they didn't have anything to fight for themselves, they were priests, old people, and children and they went in the church. When the genocide started, they just when in their churches. So then the government sent people to come and kill them.

Q: And it was just people in churches who could not fight back?

A: Yeah.

Q: There were many after the genocide who were catholic priests and they were arrested because they had helped to kill the people who were hiding in their churches. Does that make a difference for you even though you are not Catholic in the how you think about church leadership?

A: Also in our church there was a person, a guilty man, also tried to tell the government that in this church there were some people. Some people talk God just in their mouth, not in their heart. In churches there are so many people. But there are two types. Some are good in their hearts and their mouths, others, only on their mouths, they just talk good in their mouths and not in their heart. Also in pastors and priests, also there are two types. Like for example, my mother. A person who first helped her because she had no husband, the first person who helped her is a Mutwa. Okay, that one, even don't have churches, but I don't know. Maybe God is wishing it.

Q: Even though there were many people who were turning in people so they would be killed, even when pastors were doing this, you still trust your church, you trust your pastor, and you trust the people in your church now?

A: You cannot trust them, but if you have a problem, you can tell them. But not to trust them. It's like, we trust only God.

Q: So if the person is human, they have the potential for doing bad things?

A: No, some people.

Q: But you don't know who is who, so you trust God?

A: Yeah, but some people, I don't say all of them, but some don't trust anyone because before earlier could trust someone and tell them everything, but after you see, he's the one who came to kill your family. So it become so hard for you to trust another person. And also, there are many churches, as many as possible. Before genocide, you had only Adventists, Protestant, Catholic, and Muslims. But after, there are many many. Some are moving from that Church, you came back and you know what you did, so they move away and make their own church.

Q: So when you cannot trust the people who are leading your church, does that

A: no, it's not like that they trust them, but you can't trust them as God.

Q: I see. So, do you think that the Church's efforts at helping with the reconciliation process are ever negative? Is it ever a bad thing, what they are teaching about forgiveness and reconciliation?

A: It is always good.

Q: Do you think that the government's way of promoting reconciliation, Gacaca, forgiveness, things like that, do you think Kagame and his plans are influenced by religion?

A: Gacaca was there before. And then when the bad government came, and then Kagame came with it again, and people said that no one could have come and given it themselves. They say that [Kagame] is with God.

Q: As long as people put their faith in God first, and work hard to forgive and live alongside people here, you think there will be peace?

A: Yes, peace. It is impossible for all Rwandese to have faith in God. That is why there is no peace in the Earth.

Q: Now that we've decided that faith in God provides peace, why do you think it was easy for people who were Christians to kill other people, other Christians?

A: You know how I said that there are two parts, maybe those are in second part. They were in church but they didn't have faith in God.

Q: Do you think it is possible that the genocidaires were killing people and believing in God at the same time?

A: No, no. They did not have faith in God. Because if you had faith in God, you would know that you were a human being and that you are killing another human being.

Q: So, is that why you think the people in TIG, is that why people apologize, because they have been preached to and now they do believe in God when they did not before?

A: Most of them ask for forgiveness not for trust in God, faith in God, just to save themselves.

Q: Do you think that those people, even now if they do not believe in God, do you think they can still be peaceful without faith?

A: There is no peace when you don't have faith in God. But if you have faith in God, you can even have peace when you are still dying.

Q: So do you think these people can keep themselves from hurting other people even if they don't believe? Can they still live a life of nonviolence?

A: Yeah, some people for survival. Some people, if they got power to kill those ones who killed their families, they will. And some, if the bad government came again and said to kill those people again, they would. There is some people who like they say, "go and kill this one" and I say "No, no, no, I have faith in God, I cannot kill this person." And they take the person to their house and hide them. In the Earth, there are some good people and also bad people, and not because they have faith in God. All people who pray do not have faith.

Q: So in Adventism is it important to convert people to Christianity?

A: Yes.

Q: And is that effort important to you in the effort to keep peace? Is it important to convert people so they will keep the peace?

A: Yes.

Appendix F: Interview Transcript Two

Interview Transcript Two: John Bosco*

Q: What is the role of the Peace and Justice Commission? Has it been successful?

A: We work a lot with reconciliation and women's rights. We do informal counseling and let me say that we are not professionals, but we are working to create a space. Our biggest concern is that we are creating a space that is safe for people to use to be honest and to have people listen to them about their trauma.

Q: What are the church attendance numbers like after the genocide? Did they diminish or stay the same when things started getting back to normal?

A: Obviously they diminished. The charismatic and transformative Christian denominations like Pentecostalism came immediately after and took advantage of the state of trauma that everyone was in. I don't know the statistics for sure, but before the genocide this country was upwards of 80% Catholic. Now it is 50% or even less Catholic, and there are so many of these other churches popping up. Those people who have joined, almost all of them were baptized Catholics.

Q: Do you think that this exodus of Catholic believers to other charismatic and emotionally-charged congregations has anything to do with the fact that after the genocide there were many priests arrested for helping to perpetuate the killing, and for turning safe haven churches into houses of slaughter?

A: Yes and no. I think that people needed to recover emotionally, and there is so much structure in the Catholic tradition. You go from one worship element to the next to the next as we always have, and there is not a lot of room for self-expression. I think that the youth who have grown up in a society where oppression and too many rules and structure needed an outlet for self-expression, and these Pentecostal churches provided a space for that. I don't have the statistics, but I don't think that these people left because of the arrests specifically. No one could trust anybody, so it was not unique to hear about the priests. I think it was more just a product of growing up in this society and this time with this amount of youth and individuality and defiance going on.

Q: Do you think people are at least outwardly working so hard at reconciling and forgiving because of the influence of the government? Would they be working so hard if it weren't for the social pressure incurred by the government?

A: No, I don't think it's the government's pressure. Kagame cannot force anyone to forgive, and he is okay with that. But right now he is using his control to create stability in the country. People in the West always think that there is such a lack of freedom of speech here, but really it is just not how it works here. Do I think that people should be able to peaceably share opposing opinions? Yes, but that's not what happens. People want to come on the airwaves and preach hatred and try to destroy the country's stability. Do I think they should be allowed to do that? No, not me. And what the government is

doing is trying to create a safe space. Kagame needs to have control over the country right now, and I think that is so that this space can be safe for everyone.

Q: So do you think he would feel less apt to exert authority over the country if this were, say, 100 years past the genocide as opposed to 16 years?

A: Yes, I think it's just a time of transition right now and we are never that far off from violence and genocide. And that is why it is not a problem for me that people do not totally have free speech here like you do in the West. And you over there notice and you say there is a lack here of that freedom of speech, but that lack right now is keeping people alive, and it is not bad. One may share an opinion, but one may not try to get our society to divide or crumble.

Q: What do you think is the primary motivation for people to at least act as if they have forgiven one another? Is it governmental pressure like that, or is it religious belief, or is it just a need to get on with life? Why do people make such an effort to forgive one another?

A: Well, it is not so much due to the government, as you suggested earlier. It may be some social pressure, it may be poverty and the fact that people just need to live and don't have time to continue these divisions. It may be the fact that they really can find it in their hearts to honestly forgive and be that selfless. Sometimes, even in some villages there was only one survivor. And he needs to forgive to stay alive. He needs the good graces of his neighbors even though he knows what they maybe did to his family. If he remarries and has children and needs to tend his crops, he needs to know that there is someone there who he can entrust his family to who he knows will not harm them. That happens. There is sometimes one survivor and it just a survival strategy, but they may not have actually gotten over it. Whatever their motivation, as long as this is happening, we cannot teach the children that it is okay to continue the cycle of hate. And as long as people are talking and behaving in peace, we are teaching the children and this will not happen again.

Q: Do you think that confession and punishment are necessary steps in the process of reconciliation?

A: Yes, in a way. On the part of the perpetrators, because they need to be guilty in front of the community of people they perpetrated genocide against and held accountable for their actions. Many times people will confess to their crimes and ask for forgiveness and get a reduced or lightened sentence because they look at their situation as a cost-benefit negative. They say to themselves, "No, I will not do this again because I thought it would benefit me, and it did not." But sometimes it is not necessary for them to live alongside one another. The people who killed others will sometimes never come to those they victimized for forgiveness, and before they are even out of prison the families of those they killed have forgiven them. In these cases, it is not necessary. But sometimes, and this is more often, people say, "I am ready to forgive these people, but they have never come to me and asked, so I cannot." There needs to be honesty, at least.

Q: Do you think that this peace is going to last if we have people of both of those kinds running around, sharing opinions? People who will never forgive except for the social

pressure of it, and people who will not confess except for feeling obligated because of the things they want to accomplish in life and how they wish to be viewed? What I am asking is, will people make this peace last if they do not humble themselves in potentially uncomfortable ways to truly forgive and truly repent? Could there be violence if this does not happen?

A: There could always be violence. There are people out there in the world who will always be waiting for an excuse to hurt other people, and those people only need pressure from the government or the chance to try this again. There are people out there who are ready to commit all of the killings that they committed before. We have to stop them with forgiveness and show them peace.

Q: Is forgiveness a possible, plausible solution to the condition of Rwanda right now? Are people employing forgiveness in the manner that we are often taught that God forgives us? I read these verses in the Bible about forgiveness and it always sounds to me that the act of forgiveness as God intends is sort of a clean-slate system. You are no longer in trouble, and all is well. It feels a little unrealistic, honestly, to expect that out of people. What is forgiveness like on the ground here, and is that method working?

A: I think forgiveness is definitely working here in Rwanda. It is not usually the way that we would all like to see within ourselves, the way you just described. We are angry, and we are humans, and that's the way we are. But it is survival, and it is more like as you put it, a promise that the punishments one deserves are not going to be carried out and that the violence will stop, sometimes the promise even coming with nothing expected in return as far as a promise of non-violence. As far as if this reconciliation will last, I do believe that one day there will be a reconciled Rwanda.

Q: Have you found, maybe in the period of time more immediately following the genocide, a crisis of faith among members of the Church?

A: Yes, of course. Of course. There are some people who have thrown up their hands and said "Me and God, we are through. I will never, NEVER again go back and be in the presence of that thing which deserted me." And then, there are some people who are strengthened by this.

Q: How does your church, or even the Church at large, deal theologically with the pain and the questions that come about in reference to why God allowed all of this to happen? What answers can you give?

A: The Church has had to reconcile itself to a community which also needs to reconcile the relationship broken by God and the people. The perpetrators broke that relationship, and the fact that many people who are survivors and victims have gone away from the Church is the fault of the perpetrators. The Church is in a position to reconcile these people. The purpose of the Church, and not just the Catholic Church, but the Church as a whole, is to accompany this process [of reconciliation and forgiveness] and to guide it. For me, it all comes down to the problem of suffering. And this is a very hard question so ask, and an even harder one to answer. Why is there suffering in the world? Why does God allow people to suffer and die?

After a long pause:

Q: And why do you believe that this happens?

A: We need to look at the suffering itself. And we need to look at God in the suffering. Why does it happen? We don't know, but we know that God's roadmap is bigger than anything we could think about and understand. We will never know why these things happen, but I think the difference in what you're implying with your question and how I think about this is the role of God in all of it. We were created with this free will. And people use that free will to kill one another, and then the only thing we know for sure is that God is in the healing. Where is God during these times? He is allowing humans to be human and letting them exercise their free will. Period. What we can count on, however, is the fact that these people, if they want and if they allow themselves, can and will be helped and comforted by the Word of God. We do not proselytize, it is not part of our doctrine, but these things have been with us for a long time and we know that God's promises are true. God fulfills His promises, and we can count on that in the healing period after something like the genocide.

Q: And now, having talked about how difficult the job of reconciliation is for the Church as far as helping people get through this immense grief, how do people answer these questions for themselves when they find that outside answers may not be satisfactory?

A: Some of them say they will never go back to Church and that if there is a God, He abandoned them a long time ago and there is nothing left for them there. Other people do not say that God had a hand in the conflict itself, but that He had a hand in keeping them alive. God gave them the opportunity for more time, and they will never know why, but they know that it was by God's will that they survived. It was not God's will that people would die, but it was God's will that some lived. It is a mystery, but people think this way. Others say that there is a plan and we do not know this plan and we will never know why things happen, but that God is in control and that we can trust in His promises. We are only human and we have to know and remember that this is why we need to trust in God.