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Religious and Cultural Foundation of Reconciliation: The “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in South Africa as a Suitable Model for Rwanda and Burundi

Egide Ndayisenga

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**RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION OF RECONCILIATION: THE
“TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION” IN SOUTH AFRICA AS A
SUITABLE MODEL FOR RWANDA AND BURUNDI**

A thesis by

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Presented to

The Faculty of the

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Committee Signatures

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Date

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Abstract

The problem this thesis tackles is the difficult cohabitation between two ethnic groups found in Rwanda and in Burundi, namely *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. From the time of Independence, these two countries have known different tragedies, conflicts, lack of tolerance and exclusion of the other because of a gradual loss of deep cultural values that had sustained commonality and mutual respect for many years in both countries. The colonial rule and missionaries have contributed to the exacerbation of differences between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* by neglecting or erasing those values. Violations of human rights and genocidal acts that the history has recorded in those countries are rooted in that loss. The experience of South Africa through the work of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” which succeeded in bringing together South Africans, whites and blacks, can be tremendously inspiring for Rwanda and Burundi. The success of the South African’s process lay in the taking into account, in a harmonious way, of religious considerations of forgiveness and reconciliation with the African jurisprudence of *Ubuntu* which supports togetherness, harmony, inclusiveness rather than separateness or apartness. In the same way, Burundi and Rwanda whose populations are in their majority Christians can take advantage of this model of reconciliation especially because they have values that are close in meaning and effectiveness to the value of *Ubuntu*, values that need to be retrieved for a better future of these countries.

William R. O’ Neill, Director

Date

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The topic of reconciliation and respect for human rights is a topic dear to me because it is a path my country Burundi and Rwanda need critically to engage in after many years of open conflict between two ethnic groups that are found in both countries, the *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. I felt compelled to give my own contribution to the reconciliation between the two ethnic groups because I found that it is the only way that is opened to both countries if they want to lead their populations to a genuine human flourishing and to a sustainable development in which all, *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, will be beneficiaries. I was moved to write on this topic after studying the experience of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission " in South Africa as a political option chosen by Nelson Mandela and his team for the transition from Apartheid and oppression to democracy. The world has witnessed the incredible results this process has generated not only for the South Africans but also for the future resolution of conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. I was deeply amazed by the religious aspect of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in South Africa, not only because it was chaired by a religious person (the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu) but also because there were all along in the commission religious considerations during its proceedings. This religious experience of forgiveness and reconciliation was coupled with a deep consideration of the cultural richness or the traditional jurisprudence of South Africa known as "*Ubuntu*". This South African experience has something to teach us in the context of Rwanda and Burundi, two countries which are still struggling to come out from their ethnic confrontation and which, nevertheless, have more than 80% practicing Christians. The confrontation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* reached its climax in 1993 for Burundi and 1994 for Rwanda

with what has been seen as one of the bloodiest genocides of the twentieth century. The goal of my thesis is to show the root causes of such conflicts, the different actors in these conflicts, the stumbling blocks on the way to reconciliation and how Religion, especially Christianity, can be highly instrumental in bringing together people who used to fight each other, and more importantly, how deep cultural values, *Ubuntu*, *Ubushingantahe*, *Ubupfasoni*, *Ubugwaneza*, ramifications of the African concept of *Ubuntu* in the context of Burundi and their counterpart meanings in Rwanda namely *Ubuntu*, *Agacyiro*, *Inyangamugayo*, *Ubusabane* cannot be left out of the process of reconciliation those countries are called to engage in. The thesis will show that the neglect or the lack of those values has been the main cause of human rights violations in both countries. The goal is also to show the necessity to retrieve those values in close dialogue with the values promoted by the Christian message of love for a better future for the populations of Burundi and Rwanda who are so tired by years of bloodily conflicts between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*.

This work comprises four chapters. The first chapter tries to recapture the historical account and the genesis of ethnic conflicts between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* both in Burundi and in Rwanda. The second chapter gives a critical analysis of the development of the crisis by singling out the key actors or those responsible for the systemic distortions that occurred as the result of intolerance and reject of the other. The third chapter presents the South African model of reconciliation and the reasons of its success. In the light of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's achievements, the fourth chapter presents some proposals for better relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Burundi and in Rwanda. In this chapter, the focus is on the contribution of religion

especially Christianity which is practiced by the majority of the population in both countries, but most importantly on the contribution of the cultural heritage of these countries for a genuine reconciliation and a respect for human rights.

Chapter 1: History of conflicts between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Rwanda and in Burundi.

A history difficult to decrypt.

The history of Burundi and Rwanda is made of multiple facets that are not always easy to decrypt, analyze and explain to a public that is not familiar with the cultures of these countries or to someone who has not immersed himself for a long time with the people of these countries. André Guichaoua says: “The history of these two countries is subject to polemical interpretations, approximations and schematizations.”¹ This is the reason that prompts me to say that the history of these countries is difficult to analyze. In Rwanda in particular, there have been claims from some people that there is a need to rewrite the history of Rwanda, so that it might be faithful to what really happened in this country. The Rwandan ministry of education has expressly asked the designers of curriculum programs in high schools to revisit how the history of Rwanda has been written and has been taught from the time of Independence to our days. For the current authorities in Kigali, the history of Rwanda has been written not according to what really happened but according to a hidden agenda of regimes that have ruled the country after Independence. In Burundi, thank God, there have never been contestations neither in the content nor in the way the history of this country has been written and handed on.

What do historians agree with in both countries is that ethnic confrontations as such were not a reality before the penetration of the colonizers. In this regard, Gérard Prunier writes about Rwanda, but the same principle holds for Burundi: “Although Rwanda was definitely not a land of peace and bucolic harmony before the arrival of the

¹ André Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)*. 2nd Edition (Lille: Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille. Faculté des Sciences économiques et sociales, 1995), 20.

Europeans, there is no trace in its precolonial history of systematic violence between *Tutsis* and *Hutus* as such.”² Rwanda and Burundi can be rightly labelled “Twin countries” according to their geopolitical situation, their respective cultural background and the history they share. They have a common long history of kingship model of administration, the same history of colonization, decolonization, the same context of accession to Independence and a similar history of ethnic composition. Historians agree that in both countries, ethnic conflicts are a modern invention. André Guichaoua writes this: "The colonial historiography has committed itself to founding scientifically the racial model that is up to now believed in the Burundian and Rwandan societies. Thus, the *Bantus* (assimilated to the category of *Hutu* farmers) would have occupied a space that had been first occupied by a group of pygmoids called *Twas*. The *Hutus* and *Twas* would be themselves confronted by the arrival of the Hamite pastoralists called *Tutsis* who, with their livestock, would have occupied the free space. Progressively, because of their wealth, the *Tutsis* imposed their authority on other groups.”³

Guichaoua goes on to say: "Most of the people from abroad, including Africans, have expressed their incomprehension and powerlessness in face of the repetitive cycles of interethnic violence, violence of a brutal cruelty in spite of the lack of differences between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, of cultural, linguistic, religious or habitual physical characteristics that are found normally in ethnic oppositions in most of the countries facing such problems.”⁴ This is the reason why any attempt to explain the root causes of hatred and animosity between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* has not yielded significant results. People

² Gérard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis. History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 39

³ *Ibid*, 21

⁴ *Ibid*, 1

used to say jokingly that among other things that weakened the health of President Mandela and President Nyerere when they were mediators in the Burundian conflict might be their involvement in the search for a lasting solution for a better cohabitation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Burundi.

Before the time of colonization: Unity around one King (*Mwami*) in both countries.

Before colonization, both countries had been ruled, each by a unique King who had authority over the entire population and who was obeyed by all, regardless of the clan, tribe or belonging to such or such region. In both countries, the King was the symbol of unity of the population and the fertility of the soil. Among many ceremonies that were organized in both countries, a good number of them were directed towards the honor of the *Mwami* (King) and were opportunities to wish him long life. I mentioned that the King was the symbol of fertility of the soil. There was especially in Burundi the feast of the seeds (for the soil) which was at the same time an opportunity to commemorate the one who was linked directly to the fertility of the soil (the King). When the King was not able anymore to reign or govern because of age or physical health, it was his responsibility to do what was called in Burundi, *kwiha ubuki*, which means to commit suicide so as to let his son take over. This is to show that the common good or the interests of the population had to be prioritized over personal ambition. This explains the high esteem that the populations in both countries had toward the King. He was given in both countries beautiful names that show the closeness of the population to the King and vice versa. In Burundi he was called *Sebarundi* (or the Father of all Burundians) and in Rwanda *Sebanyarwanda* (The Father of all Rwandans). Things were turned upside down

with the contact with the European colonizers. The King did not enjoy the same esteem or serve as the same uniting symbol as he used to.

Unity compromised with the arrival of colonizers.

In both countries, after the coming of the colonizers, relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* were no longer the same. I do not mention on purpose the *Twas*, a kind of pygmoid people, because this category of the population has always preferred to isolate itself in forests, away from contact with other groups. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives such information about pygmies: "Pygmy, in anthropology, is a member of any human group whose adult males grow to less than 59 inches (150 cm) in average height".⁵ These characteristics describe well the *Twas* of Burundi and Rwanda. Those groups, because they have been isolating themselves from the population in Rwanda and in Burundi, have not been involved in the different ethnic conflicts that the history of these countries has recorded.

As we have seen, before the time of colonization, there were no signs of confrontation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. The colonizer succeeded in making differences between them more visible and more objects of strife. Instead of seeing differences as tools and assets for strengthening interdependence and harmony, *Hutus* and *Tutsis* began suspecting each other. Differences that used to be only on the level of economic specialization for the exploitation of the common soil, grew quickly into political ones when each was seeing the other as a hindrance to one's wellbeing. *Hutus* began gradually to see *Tutsis* as people who have always cheated them and taken advantage of them. There was a propaganda exploited by the colonizer that claimed that *Tutsis* were of a

⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Pygmy people*. LAST UPDATED: 2-9-2007.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pygmy>. Accessed on February 12, 2017.

Hamitic origin and thus were not real *Bantus*. J.J. Carney writes: “Late nineteenth-century European theorists ranked a so-called " Hamitic race" of North African and Ethiopian pastoralists (*Tutsis*) as superior to what they termed the *Bantu* populations of sub-saharan Africa (*Hutus*).⁶ The word "Hamitic" was used to refer to “the Berber, Cushitic and Egyptian branches of the Afroasiatic family.”⁷ And *Bantu* peoples are “the approximately 85 million speakers of the more than 500 distinct languages of the *Bantu* subgroup of the Niger-Congo language family, occupying almost the entire southern projection of the African continent.”⁸

Thus, *Tutsis* were portrayed as having a Nilotic resemblance and had invaded lands that were originally occupied by *Twas* and *Hutus* considered real *Bantus*. There was also a growing resentment in the minds of *Hutus* that people who were invaders, who did not have the same origin with the real *Bantus* (*Hutus*) and furthermore who were just a minority compared to the *Hutus* who were represented in both countries with nearly 80 per cent of the population, could continue to dominate other groups and take advantage of the resources available in Burundi and Rwanda.

Hutus were specialized in the work of digging the land and the *Tutsis* as pastoralists were specialized in the activity of rearing the cattle. This double specialization would create a situation of exchange of goods. It is important to note that there was not the system of trade using money as the means of exchange. The use of

⁶ J.J. Carney, *Rwanda before the Genocide. Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11

⁷ Allan Keith, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*. Oxford: OUP. 275. Accessed at <https://books.google.com/books?id=BzfRFmIN2ZAC&pg=PA275#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Bantu peoples*. Accessed at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bantu-peoples>. On March 19, 2017

money was introduced the first time by Germans. In place of purchases and selling through the use of money, there was rather the system of bartering. *Hutus* needed products coming from cattle rearing and *Tutsis* needed products coming from the work of the land. Both. Each saw the other of the opposite ethnic group as precious for one's survival. Differences were rather an asset to build harmonious relationships.

The demographics of Burundi as well as of Rwanda have roughly shown *Hutus* as the majority of the three ethnic groups with more than 80 % of the population. The *Tutsis* number around 15% of the population and *Twas* have only 1%. Despite these figures, the colonial rule began by giving more privileges to the minority *Tutsis* over the majority *Hutus*. In the beginning, Belgians favored *Tutsis* in whom they had detected talents and ability to be good collaborators of the colonial rule. The situation was the same in Rwanda. Mgr Léon Classe, Vicar Apostolic of Rwanda, 1922-1945, said: "Generally speaking, we have no chiefs who are better qualified, more intelligent, more active, more capable of appreciating progress and more fully accepted by the people than the *Tutsis*."⁹ Over the years, the situation of *Tutsis* superiority continued and finally *Hutus*, tired of being treated as second class citizens, began finally seeing *Tutsis* with suspicion. The relationships between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* that used to be of interdependence and mutual assistance became progressively relations of competition and mutual suspicion for the control of the limited resources.

In 1957, a group of *Hutu* intellectual Rwandans wrote what they called the "*Hutu* manifesto."¹⁰ Drafted by nine people, this political document earnestly called all *Hutus* for more solidarity to get rid of the supremacy of *Tutsis*. What was underscored in

⁹ Classe quoted in Carney, 33

¹⁰ Carney, 80

this document was the need for *Hutus* not only to be disenfranchised from the minority *Tutsis* but also the need for self-preservation for *Hutus* who were threatened by those invaders who came from Egypt. This document denounced in clear terms the discrimination *Hutus* had suffered from for many years. It denounced also the responsibility of the German and the Belgian colonial regimes which gave to the minority *Tutsis* a privileged status.

Germany (1894-1916) and Belgium (1916-1962) both chose *Tutsis* as their close collaborators and gave them more privileges. They were taking into consideration the lighter-skinned physical character of *Tutsis* and their sense of organization and they concluded that *Tutsis* were a superior ethnic group. Both countries accessed Independence from Belgium on the very same day, July 1, 1962. But right before the accession to independence, Belgium had realized that it had to create strong relationships with *Hutus* who were numerically superior. Thus, for electoral purposes, Belgium knowing that it had to engage those countries in an exercise of voting in order to decide by themselves how they wanted to be governed in the near future, began favoring *Hutus*. The Church also, especially in Rwanda, was starting to support *Hutus*, who were regarded as the little ones, the poor, the marginalized whom the Gospel requires to defend and protect. Both the colonial administration and the Church in Rwanda supported the *Hutu* cause and the *Hutu* manifesto having had a widespread support of the *Hutu* population, all the elements for a social revolution were put in place. Carney referring to some authors like Gourevitch, Mamdani and other critics, sees “connections between the institutional Church and emerging *Hutus* political movements.”¹¹

¹¹ Carney, 115

The social revolution of 1959 in Rwanda was an endeavor to reverse the situation of domination by *Tutsis* for many years. Many *Hutus* felt that it was normal and more than expedient to politically rule the country as they were the majority of the population. This social revolution called a "*Hutu* revolution" dispossessed the *Tutsis* of their power in all respects: politically and economically. The 1959 revolution in Rwanda was not just a coup. It was followed by targeted and systematic massacres of *Tutsis*. Some people have called such massacres genocide. At the 5th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on Peace and Security held in Luanda, Angola, on January 15, 2014, the Ugandan President Museveni said: "The Belgian sponsored genocide of 1959 in Rwanda created a Tutsi Diaspora that dispersed in the region -- Uganda, Congo, Burundi and Tanzania--. The colonial manipulation of the indigenous castes (occupational specializations) of Rwanda and Burundi in the colonial period climaxed into the first genocide organized by the Belgians in Rwanda in 1959 and 1960."¹² The 1959 *Hutu* revolution in Rwanda was not a work of one day or few months. It was the result of a long process that had begun with the feeling of *Hutus* that they had been cheated by *Tutsis*. But the success of this revolution depended largely on the help of the colonial administration and the Catholic Church.

The *Hutu* success to overpower *Tutsis* in Rwanda led a group of *Hutus* of Burundi to seek to do the same thing. But things were not as easy as in Rwanda. *Hutus* in Burundi stumbled on more determined and organized *Tutsis*. Another factor that did not make the *Hutus*' job easy in Burundi was the lack of the same support *Hutus* of Rwanda enjoyed from the colonial rule and the Catholic Church. Another factor that contributed

¹² Speech by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni President of the Republic of Uganda at the opening of the 5th Summit of Heads of State and Gov'ts of the Great Lakes Region. January 15, 2014. Luanda, Angola.

to the failure of the *Hutu* mobilization against *Tutsis* in Burundi was the presence of the charismatic figure of the Prince Louis Rwagasore, who is the hero of independence in Burundi. Louis Rwagasore, son of the King Mwambutsa, had created a political party, the National Union for Progress (UPRONA), a party that wanted at the outset to be a party for all, *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. Rwagasore was very loved by the population at the grassroots. He created cooperatives for the empowerment of the ordinary people, *Hutus* as well as *Tutsis*. This party became the de facto party that was close to the real needs of the population, educated and uneducated. Being the son of the King, he considered himself a person who had to transcend the ethnic cleavages and dissensions. As an important figure, having a king's bloodline, and having excelled in his studies in Europe, he was a man with a promising political career. In spite of all his titles and credentials, he, a son of the King, wanted to get closer to the ordinary population and preferred to live in a poor area of Bujumbura (Buyenzi). He became popular as did the party he had created. In these conditions, a *Hutu* mobilization against *Tutsis* as had happened in Rwanda was quite difficult. The political party Rwagasore had created was made of *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. It won the legislative elections organized in 1961 overwhelmingly. He and his political party wanted an immediate independence for Burundi unlike other political parties which were supported by the colonial rule. Those parties were less straightforward in claiming the accession of Burundi to independence. Many of these political parties were arguing that Burundi was not yet mature enough to take charge of its destinies. They were saying that Burundi needed at least 30 years to get independent. This is the reason why the colonial rule supported them and the party of Rwagasore which was advocating for an immediate independence was considered by the colonial regime an enemy. But being close to the

population who were in favor of the immediate accession of Burundi to independence, his party won the legislative elections and the referendum for independence.

Burundi became independent in 1962. Rwagasore did not have the opportunity to enjoy the victory he had tirelessly worked for. He was killed in October 1961 by a man who, it was later on recognized, had received a certain amount of money from the colonial rule to carry out the murder. There were even some brothers to Rwagasore, princes like him, who were convicted of having participated in this assassination. All of them including the one who shot Rwagasore were tried and judged. Capital punishment was pronounced against them.

Evolution of relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* after Independence.

With Rwagasore gone, the party he had created in Burundi, UPRONA, was not henceforth the same and did not have the same united focus. The party became quickly ethnically institutionalized in such a way that some years after his death, the party was considered a party for *Tutsis*. There were few *Hutus* who remained members of the party, and they were marginalized and did not have much to say in the midst of a multitude of *Tutsis* who had been recruited by this party. The party became the party of the ruling *Tutsi* minority after independence and gradually became also a party of *Hutu* repression for many years.

In 1965, the first legislative elections after Independence were organized in Burundi. Pro *Hutus* political parties won these elections with the majority of 23 seats out of 33. These figures reflected the ethnic composition of the population. But amazingly, King Mwambutsa did not choose a *Hutu* to be the prime minister. It was instead a *Tutsi* of royal kinship who was appointed: Leopold Bihumugani. This angered *Hutus* a lot.

They attempted a coup against the King and the institutions that he had just put in place. This happened the same year of 1965. This coup met with a strong and organized *Tutsi* army and hence did not succeed. *Hutus* were very few in the army of the young independent country. Meanwhile, King Mwambutsa who had a habit, after the aborted coup, of spending the large part of his time in Switzerland, was deposed by his own son, Charles Ndizeye in 1966. The latter was crowned as king with the name Ntare V in July 1966. He was the last king of Burundi. He did not stay long in power. In November of the same year, he was deposed by a military coup that brought to power Michel Micombero. That was also the end of the monarchical regime. The accession of Michel Micombero, a *Tutsi*, to power marked the entry of Burundi into a Republican regime. Micombero was the President of the first Republic of Burundi. Micombero was the one who reinforced the isolation of *Hutus* from all spheres of life in the country.

Rwanda on the other side of the border became also a Republic under the control of *Hutus* right after Independence. Gregoire Kayibanda became the first President of Rwanda. Like his peer in Burundi who was threatening *Hutus*, Kayibanda excelled in his zeal to mistreat *Tutsis*. It is during his rule that *Tutsis* fled the country in great numbers.

Hutus of Burundi had not forgotten about their failure to overpower *Tutsis* in 1965. They were noticing that the party UPRONA which was originally a party for all, *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, was moving away from the inspiration of its founder. Some *Hutus* withdrew from the party and in 1972, they attempted another coup. This coup had tremendous negative effects on *Hutus* who were living in Burundi. The *Tutsi* army aborted the coup but what happened after this *Hutu* failure was more tragic than the coup

itself. *Hutus* who had organized this coup, after having realized their failure, urged ordinary *Hutu* people to kill their neighboring *Tutsis*. Fortunately, this did not touch the whole country. It was just in the southern part of Burundi that was the scene of *Hutus* attacks against *Tutsis*. The *Tutsi*-led army as a reprisal for what this group of *Hutus* had done carried a systematic killing of all who were considered intellectuals among the *Hutu* population. This event has been called genocide in the final report for Burundi presented to the United Nations Security Council in 1996. Paragraph 85 of this report is formulated as follows: "In April 1972, *Hutus* trained outside the country carried out a massacre of several thousand *Tutsi* men, women and children in the region adjoining Lake Tanganyika in the south, while other armed groups attempted attacks in Bujumbura, Gitega and Cankuzo. The Micombero regime responded with a genocidal repression that is estimated to have caused over a hundred thousand victims and forced several hundred thousand *Hutus* into exile. *Hutus* with any degree of education who did not manage to flee into exile were systematically killed all throughout the country, down to high school students."¹³

In Rwanda, the *Hutu* Government that was led by Gregoire Kayibanda was busy persecuting, killing and harassing *Tutsis*. Realizing that the Kayibanda regime had gone far with the mistreatment of *Tutsis*, Juvenal Habyarimana succeeded in a coup that overthrew Gregoire Kayibanda in 1973. Juvenal Habyarimana, a *Hutu*, was hence considered the right man for a good cohabitation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. As if the events in one Country were meant to influence the political situation in the other, Jean Baptiste Bagaza, a *Tutsi*, realized that the Micombero regime in Burundi had also gone

¹³ United States Institute of Peace, *International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi: Final Report*. 1996. Paragraph 85

far in the repression and banishment of *Hutus* and carried out a coup against Micombero and his regime in 1976. He was proclaimed the President of the second Republic and as Habyarimana in Rwanda he was seen as the providential president who would put an end to antagonisms between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. The fact is that both presidents did well in their first 5 years in power. But the divisions and the wounds of the past were still strong. The administration and the army in both countries were still concentrated in the hands of one ethnic group. In Rwanda, all the services were still under the control of *Hutus* and in Burundi, it was the same with all authority put under the control of *Tutsis*. But the intensity of repression of one ethnic group by another in both countries decreased notably during the first five years of Habyarimana in Rwanda and Bagaza in Burundi.

As was already said, these countries influenced each other in the events that happened. The 1965 and 1972 revolts of *Hutus* in Burundi were attempts to copy what had happened in Rwanda in 1959. As we will see later, the 1994 genocide in Rwanda had something to do with what happened in Burundi with the murder by the *Tutsi* army of the *Hutu* President democratically elected in 1993. This is to say that events that take place in one country have an influence or an impact on the unfolding of the history in the other country. As it always happens, refugees who would flee one country following massacres, would find a safe haven in the other country. This explains the presence of many *Tutsis* refugees in Burundi after the massacres of 1959 in Rwanda; and after the massacres of 1972 in Burundi, Rwanda mainly hosted the wave of *Hutus* refugees from Burundi.

In the same line of understanding the mutual influence of events that took place in both countries, there is one event in Burundi that is worth noting. President Jean

Baptiste Bagaza, who was in power in Burundi since 1976, was deposed by means of a coup carried out by the army and Pierre Buyoya became the new President of the so called third Republic. Jean Baptiste Bagaza had put in his agenda the complete eradication of the ethnic conflict by imposing a rule of not mentioning the words *Hutu* or *Tutsi* in all conversations or writings. This was his way of understanding the solution to the ethnic conflict. No one would be referred to as a *Hutu* or a *Tutsi* or a *Twa*. This measure was not welcomed by *Hutus*. For them, to not mention *Hutu* or *Tutsi* was similar to being hindered to speak out about injustices and the marginalization *Hutus* were going through in this country ruled by *Tutsis*. President Pierre Buyoya came with an opposite agenda. People were allowed to speak out about their sufferings, including ethnic injustices. It is in these conditions that *Hutus* who had the sense of having being silenced by President Bagaza began to speak openly about ethnic imbalances they were victims of. Following the model of the "*Hutu* manifesto" of 1957 in Rwanda, a group of intellectual *Hutus* wrote in 1988 to President Buyoya an open letter where they pointed the finger at injustices *Hutus* had undergone since the time of independence. The difference between this open letter and the *Hutu* manifesto of 1957 was that the open letter was mainly advocating for a greater recognition of *Hutus* and for a better cohabitation with *Tutsis* whereas the *Hutu* manifesto in Rwanda sought a strong mobilization of *Hutus* around the idea of marginalizing *Tutsis* and finally of chasing them back to where they came from (Egypt).

After the *Hutu* open letter episode, a group of *Hutus* decided to kill their neighboring *Tutsis* in August 1988 in two localities of the North of Burundi: Ntega and Marangara. This time around, President Buyoya, who had rather a conciliatory mindset,

did not send his army to repress *Hutus* who had carried out those killings. The events of August 1988 were a signal for Buyoya that a new approach in the politics of national unity was necessary. For President Buyoya, there was no other alternative for his project of national unity to succeed than engaging the country in an exercise of dialogue and concertation at all levels of life in the country. His goal was to listen to all in order to find durable solutions to the ethnic tensions that had been a reality in Burundi since the time of Independence. He created a commission that would study all aspects of the ethnic problem in Burundi and propose solutions for a better cohabitation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. A significant step made by President Buyoya in his politics of national unity was the appointment of a *Hutu*, Adrien Sibomana as the Prime Minister. This happened in October 1988, only two months after the massacres. It is in these conditions that many *Hutus* were introduced in the Burundian Government. But *Hutus* were not entirely satisfied as long as the army was the monopoly of *Tutsis*.

The Burundian commission in charge of studying the question of national unity finished its work. And the Charter of National Unity was published in February 1991. This Charter mentioned specifically the abolition of the ethnic discrimination *Hutus* were facing and urged the Government to rewrite a new constitution. These changes were well-received by the majority of the population and they showed it in a referendum organized in February 1991: 89 % of the Burundian population were in favor of the Charter. This gave more energy to President Buyoya to continue his aggressive policy of national unity. He announced his willingness to create conditions for the return of thousands of *Hutu* refugees who had fled the country to neighboring countries or elsewhere.

The drafting of a new constitution would follow the referendum for the charter for national unity. The new constitution promulgated in March 1992 was approved by 96 % of the population. The new Burundian constitution included the openness of the country to the multi-party system of governance. It was during the sixteenth Franco-African summit held June 1990 in La Baule (France) that France declared that it would condition its aid to African countries on their willingness to democratize their institutions and especially by allowing a pluralistic competition between many political parties. This definitely changed the political outlook of the African continent including Burundi and Rwanda, countries which depended largely on foreign aid. This decision was welcomed by *Hutus* in both countries, Burundi and Rwanda, where, as we said, more than 80 % of the population are *Hutus*. *Hutus* knew that the organization of elections on the basis of "one man, one vote" would turn definitely in their favor.

Thus, Burundi and Rwanda entered the "phase of democratization" because they were pressured to do so. Rwanda had been ruled by a unique political party, the MRND (Rwandan National Movement For Development) since the coming to power of Juvenal Habyarimana in 1973. It was the same situation in Burundi. Burundi had been under the rule of the party UPRONA (Union for the National Progress) from the time of Independence. The Constitution of Rwanda adopted in 1991 and the Constitution of Burundi promulgated in 1992 both led the entry into the phase of democratization made of pluralistic elections.

In the meantime, Rwanda was facing one of its most important threats in its history. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) made mainly of Rwandan refugees who had fled the country over the years (since 1959) to neighboring countries especially to

Uganda, carried out its first attacks on Rwanda in October 1990. The main argument of this rebel group was that Rwanda had never taken seriously the problem of Rwandan refugees in its agenda. These rebels, first led by Fred Rwigema and after his death by Paul Kagame, were supported logistically and militarily by the National Resistance Army (NRA), the army that took power in Uganda in 1986 with Kaguta Museveni as its leader. Most of the first recruits in the first Rwandan rebellion were former members of the National Resistance Army. The current President of Rwanda Paul Kagame himself was one of the influential army officers of Kaguta Museveni. As a way of thanking those *Tutsi* refugees for their involvement in his victory, Museveni helped them in their own struggles aimed at taking control of Rwanda.

Realizing that the rebels were stronger than he had first thought, President Habyarimana accepted the need to engage in a series of negotiations with the Rwandan Patriotic Front, negotiations that were concluded by an agreement on a power sharing between the Kigali regime and the Rwandan Patriotic Front in 1993. These negotiations took place in Arusha (Tanzania). This is the reason why the agreements for a power sharing were called "Arusha agreements." But things were not easy with the Rwandan internal radical opposition. This opposition looked at these agreements with an eye of suspicion and disdain. According to radical *Hutu* members of this opposition, Habyarimana, by signing these agreements, had betrayed Rwanda. They read the gesture of Habyarimana as a handshaking with the devil. This radical opposition organized itself into what has been called "*Hutu* power". The "*Hutu* power" with the logistical help of France, created and trained *Hutus* militias whose work officially would be to defend the country against the invasion of *Inyenzi* (Cockroaches), the name given to the rebels but a

name that will be very soon extended to all *Tutsis*. The attacks of The Rwandan Patriotic Front had exacerbated the radicalization of some *Hutu* movements within Rwanda. Those groups saw *Tutsis* not as a people they would have to live with but as a race to wipe from the surface of the earth. The President Habyarimana himself was seen by those radical movements as an enemy to fight against.

In the meantime, in Burundi, after the phase of democratization begun with the promulgation of the Constitution, ethnic affinities began to show up as people were campaigning for the future elections scheduled June 1993. One big party emerged, a party composed mainly of *Hutus* and some few *Tutsis* who were disappointed by the management of the country from the time of Independence. This party, Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) had more success mainly in rural areas where the majority of the Burundian population was concentrated.

Finally, the party with the majority of *Hutus* won the elections of June 1993. President Buyoya accepted without any difficulty his loss and the loss of his party, The Union for National Progress. The World looked with admiration to the success of this process. But this hope lasted just for three months. In October 1993, a military coup carried out by a handful of the *Tutsi*-led army attempted to demolish what Burundians had built by electing their President. Melchior Ndadaye had won the elections with a score of more than 60 % of the population. He did not enjoy his victory for long. He was killed along with some of his cabinet on October 21, 1993. This event definitely caused a widespread wave of killings in the whole country. This plunged Burundi in a civil war for many years. Some *Hutus* killed their neighboring *Tutsis* to avenge their President who had been murdered and some elements of the army tried to avenge *Tutsis* killed and

indiscriminately attacked innocent *Hutus*. The 1993 killings of *Tutsis* by *Hutus* has been called genocide in the final report for Burundi presented to the United Nations Security Council in 1996. Paragraph 496 of this report reads: "Having concluded that acts of genocide against the *Tutsi* minority were committed in Burundi in October 1993, the Commission believes that international jurisdiction should be asserted with respect to these acts."¹⁴

The unfolding of the events in Burundi, especially the murder of the *Hutu* President by members of the *Tutsi* army, supported the belief of radical *Hutu* groups in Rwanda that *Hutus* had to do something to protect themselves against the menace of *Tutsis*. The official rhetoric in Rwanda was that *Tutsis* had shown what they were capable of in Burundi by killing a President and that they would do the same in Rwanda. Radical *Hutus* in Rwanda had released what they called the "*Hutu* Ten Commandments", a kind of anti-*Tutsi* propaganda. This propaganda was calling the conscience of *Hutus* to dissociate with *Tutsis* who had become, in their eyes, their worst enemies. These commandments were used extensively by a Rwandan private newspaper, *Kangura* (which means "wake up") that was calling *Hutus* to hate and exterminate all *Tutsis*.

After the signing of the Arusha agreements for peace in Rwanda in 1993, the United Nations sent a mission of assistance to Rwanda called United Nations Mission of Assistance for Rwanda (UNAMIR). The mandate of this mission was to oversee the application of the Arusha agreements. The commander in chief of this mission, Roméo Dallaire, who witnessed the killings of *Tutsis* in some areas in 1993 and especially after having come to know that a kind of Apocalypse against *Tutsis* was being prepared by some officials and members of the radical *Hutu* movements, sent a fax to the UN

¹⁴ International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi: Final Report. Paragraph 496

headquarters in New York, asking for permission to take action in order to protect the targeted *Tutsis*. A local media called the Free Radio-Television of Thousand hills (RTLHM) along with the Newspaper *Kangura* were intensifying the messages of hatred and threat against *Tutsis*. In a response from the UN headquarters, Dallaire was told that to take action in that context would go beyond the UNAMIR goals as a peacekeeping mission.

What Dallaire was afraid of finally happened, starting on the evening of April 6, 1994. The genocide of *Tutsis* and moderate *Hutus* broke out after the shooting down of the airplane that was carrying the Rwandan President Habyarimana and the Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira from a regional summit in Tanzania. To the present, the responsibility for the attack on the airplane has not been determined. The Rwandan genocide against *Tutsis* and moderate *Hutus* lasted until the military victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Army in July 1994.

The Burundian President killed along with Habyarimana was the one who had been chosen to succeed to Melchior Ndadaye, the democratically elected President. He had thus been in power only for two months. The former minister of foreign affairs under the regime of Ndadaye, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya succeeded him. As a *Hutu*, Ntibantunganya's work was not easy, called to work with an army made mainly of *Tutsis* who had killed President Ndadaye. Finally, Ntibantunganya himself was deposed by another military coup that brought back the former President Pierre Buyoya, a *Tutsi*, in 1996. The International community expressed its disagreement with this coup and earnestly asked for the return to constitutional legality. The leaders of the Eastern African Community imposed on Burundi an economic ban of all products coming from or going

to Burundi. This forced the Government of Buyoya to enter into negotiation with the opposition and especially the armed rebel movement that had been formed after the return of *Tutsis* by force to power. This rebel movement, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD) made mainly of *Hutus*, fought for many years against the regime of Bujumbura. When negotiations began between the regime of Bujumbura with its opposition, this rebel movement reconverted itself into a political party. Negotiations took place in Arusha, Tanzania, the same place where President Habyarimana had signed a power sharing with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. These negotiations gave birth to what was called, as for what happened with Rwandans, "Arusha Agreements". These agreements were signed in 2000. President Mandela and President Nyerere as successive mediators had been really instrumental in the signing of these accords. Among many protocols that were part of these accords, there was the project of rewriting the Burundian Constitution, the formation of a Government of transition open to all and the organization in the near future of elections. These elections were organized in 2005. Pierre Nkurunziza was elected after these elections. The Arusha Agreements had made clear the time limit of a president in Burundi. The article 7.3 of the Arusha agreements states: "The President of the Republic shall be elected for a term of five years, renewable only once. No one may serve more than two presidential terms."¹⁵ Now Burundi is in a deep political crisis, isolated by the International Community because the current President, who had been elected in 2005 and in 2010, is now ruling the country for a third term. Pierre Nkurunziza, a Hutu, has been arguing that in 2005, he

¹⁵ Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Arusha, Tanzania. August 28, 2000. Article 7.3

was elected by the Parliament and not by the entire population. Thus for him, this gives him the possibility to run for another term. That is where Burundi is now.

In Rwanda, President Paul Kagame, a Tutsi, who has been in power since 2000 after leading the Rwandan Patriotic Front that put an end to the 1994 genocide, is still in power in spite of the end of his term in 2014 as the Constitution of Rwanda made clear. He won the elections of 2003 and of 2010 with an overwhelming majority. Rwanda has now a good record of economic development that continued to get better from 1994. Normally the Constitution of Rwanda allows the President to run for two seven-year terms. But there has been in the Rwandan media, media controlled by the Government, growing requests for Kagame to run for a third term. This is the reason why the Constitution that had a time-limited presidency in one of its articles, has recently been changed by the Parliament. Rwanda is now running with a new Constitution that gives a "green light" for the President to run for a third term or maybe for the rest of his life, who knows? It is difficult to know what the *Hutus* think about Kagame's third term because in Rwanda there is no freedom of speech or of the press. That is where Rwanda is now.

Chapter 2: A critical analysis of the history of the conflicts *Hutus/Tutsis* in Rwanda-Burundi.

In the first chapter, I tried to show what the history of conflicts between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* looked like, its genesis and how it evolved over the years after Independence in Burundi and in Rwanda. Now, in this chapter, I want to go farther presenting a critical analysis of this history and trying to single out the key actors in these conflicts, the deep reasons of the systemic distortions that have led to the explosion of the situation that had been lying dormant for many years in both countries. The reason for not finding a solution to the ethnic problem in Burundi and in Rwanda over the years was that either political actors did not want to face it responsibly or the populations of both countries as well as the International Community had been made ignorant of the real issues Burundi and Rwanda were dealing with. I compare the situation of Burundi and Rwanda as a bomb that had been programmed to explode one day. This explosion happened in Rwanda in 1994 and in Burundi in 1972 and 1993.

I showed in the first chapter that the conflicts between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* were really an invention of the colonizers. They were created and nourished by the colonizers who were trying to subdue the populations of Rwanda and Burundi who were tightly united. They were united around certain values that I will develop in the fourth chapter when I will present some proposals for the normalization of relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, the respect of the dignity of every person and for a genuine reconciliation after the nightmares of the past. The demons of division have not gone away in both countries because the attempted solutions by political actors aided/or forced by the International Community have not yet touched the heart or the root cause of these conflicts. For me,

the solutions that have been proposed and attempted were just superficial. This is the reason why tensions between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* are still a reality in Burundi and in Rwanda. Solutions do not come because such or such have gained victory over the others or because there has been a tacit agreement on power sharing. The problem is more complicated than that.

The responsibility of colonizers in the conflict between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Rwanda and in Burundi.

My first assumption is that Belgium, the former colonizer of both countries, is the most to be blamed for the creation and the nourishment of ethnic divisions. It was under the rule of Belgium that specific physical characteristics of *Hutus* and *Tutsis* began to be theorized and “scientifically” explained. Those characteristics, I find, were devoid of any reasonable foundation. *Tutsis* are described as tall, with a straight and flawless nose whereas *Hutus* have flat noses. These are clichés and stereotypes brought about by the colonizers who, in the process of convincing *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Rwanda and in Burundi that they were different, having different origins shown by their morphological differences, were trying to suppress the rich culture of these people. But the reality in Burundi as in Rwanda, as people who have been living in those countries for a long time, can confirm, some people can come from the same family and have physical characteristics that are drastically different. I know some people, if we stick to those physical characteristics theorized by the colonizers, who would be put definitely in the category of the opposite ethnic group of their own. For example, in my own family, I have a brother who is short with characteristics of a *Hutu*. I share with him the same mother and the same father and we are supposed to come from the *Tutsi* ethnic group. I

am tall but my Dad was not. This has prompted people to say that those characteristics were just superficial and artificial and could not by any means be determining factors for categorizing ethnically people from Rwanda and Burundi. Many people in Rwanda and in Burundi were killed just for having physical characteristics of a targeted ethnic group. Even if those physical differences were real, in Burundi as in Rwanda, there have been and there will continue to be intermarriages. How in these cases would children born from mixed families be described? Yes, in Rwanda and in Burundi, there is the patriarchal system of lineage that ascribes the identity of the child to his father. But there are many cases of single parenthood whereby children have grown up without a father figure or many children who were born out of rape. Cases like that are many for countries which have known wars for many years and where rape was considered a weapon of war. Survivors who got children after such horrors would not be keen to tell their children who their real fathers were and the kind of mistreatment they went through. In Burundi as in Rwanda, few women would disclose that they were raped. Not only it is shameful for them but also this disclosure would decrease their chance to have a husband. No one would tell a child that his father was a rapist. In these circumstances, how to retrieve the ethnic identity of the child? We see how absurd and crazy the theory about *Hutus* and *Tutsis* created by the colonizers in Burundi and Rwanda can be. My problem is that people in Burundi and in Rwanda and even outside those countries, have come to acknowledge and endorse those fantasist theories developed by the colonizers just for their own selfish interests.

It had been observed that in Burundi as in Rwanda, to be a *Hutu* or a *Tutsi* was not a permanent state. One could move from one ethnic group to another. For our case,

one could shift from being a *Hutu* to the status of *Tutsi*. In other words, to change from being a *Hutu* to being a *Tutsi* was a kind of promotion that allowed one to shift from a lower status to a higher one. A *Tutsi* who was not a good hard working person could easily become a *Hutu*. For this reason, *Hutus* and *Tutsis* were not recognized at all through the morphological characteristics created by the colonial rule. Moreover, the colonizer, realizing that those physical characteristics that he had forged were not really convincing and appealing since people could easily move from one ethnic group to another, imposed in Rwanda ethnic identification on the national identity card. In this way, it was not possible to continue with mutations from one ethnic group to another. Also because of the intermarriages between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* which were not a rare phenomenon before colonization, it was not easy to distinguish a *Hutu* from a *Tutsi*. This was not playing in favor of the colonizer who wanted to make differences real and perennial. He wanted *Hutus* to be *Hutus* forever and the same for *Tutsis*. It was for the first time in the history of Burundi and Rwanda that instruments to measure certain parts of the human body as an evidence for belonging to such or such ethnic group were introduced. This was a pure absurdity because as I have said, people from a same family can have very different physical appearances. As we could imagine and experience, a physical appearance can depend on many factors, including the conditions of life, the diet or the climate one finds immersed in. And from the laws of genetics, a human person can develop traits that are not easily explained. According to the Encyclopedia of Genetics, GeneEd, there is what is called phenotype. A phenotype is “an individual’s observable traits, such as height, eye color, and blood type. The genetic contribution to the phenotype is called the genotype. Some traits are largely determined by the genotype,

while other traits are largely determined by environmental factors.¹ Hence, to ascribe to *Hutus* such characteristics and to *Tutsis* such other ones, seems to me illogical and dangerous. It is dangerous because this would be similar to what Hitler and the Nazis attempted to do by imagining the conception of what they called a “pure race” called the “Aryan race.” The doctrine developed after such conceptions/ or misconceptions was called “Aryanism”. This doctrine was meant to convince the world that there existed Aryan peoples who “were superior to all others in the practice of government and the development of civilization.”² This led to the treatment of other races as inferior. We know the implications of such a fallacy. Hitler wanted to eliminate all those who were not considered part of the “pure race”, especially the Jews, the Gypsies, etc. In the same way, the colonizer by convincing *Tutsis*, that they were a superior race, a Caucasian race reputed to be smart and intelligent, would create in the minds of *Tutsis* the belief that they were meant to reign forever over *Hutus* and in the minds of the latter, the need to get disenfranchised. As the history of Burundi and Rwanda has shown, in this struggle for legitimacy and recognition, those who used to be victims would become themselves victimizers and vice versa. The theory created by the colonizers that *Tutsi* people were smarter and more organized than *Hutus* would create in *Tutsis* a certain arrogance and pride. For example, in 1993 when *Hutus* won the elections in Burundi after a heated and ethnicized political campaign, *Tutsis* would not easily accept their defeat. After a rule over thirty years, some *Tutsis* would not put up with this change of the situation. The military coup against the *Hutu* President who had been democratically elected, a coup

¹ Encyclopedia GENED (Genetics, Education, Discovery), *Genetic traits*. Accessed at https://geneed.nlm.nih.gov/topic_subtopic.php?tid=5&sid=162. On March, 3, 2017.

² The Online Free dictionary By Farlex. *Race: Aryanism*. Accessed at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/race>. On March 3, 2017.

carried out by a group of *Tutsis*, was a signal that *Tutsis* were not ready to swallow the evidence that henceforth they would be ruled by *Hutus*, a kind of people they used to look down on. Considering themselves a “pure and intelligent race”, some *Tutsis* could not accept to be ruled by people they used to call “*Umuhutu wanje*” which means “My *Hutu*” or “my worker”. In Rwanda, *Hutus* with the help of the colonial rule and the Catholic Church, were the fastest to change the situation of being ruled by the minority of the population. They wanted to bury completely and once for all what they saw as the arrogance of *Tutsis*. As events unfolded in Rwanda in subsequent years, *Tutsis*, this “arrogant race” would be mistreated and forced to flee the country. After thirty years of exile, *Tutsis* of Rwanda attempted to make their voice heard again through attacks they started to carry out on Rwanda beginning in 1990. With the entry of Rwanda into a multiparty system, one can understand that *Tutsis* would have a word to say in this new environment, after being marginalized and silenced for a long time. Especially the attacks of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, made mainly of *Tutsis*, since 1990 showed *Hutus* that *Tutsis* are people they have to enter into dialogue with. But there was also a growing fear in the minds of *Hutus* that this “arrogant race” was trying to find its way to rule again. For radical *Hutus*, every concession made to *Tutsis* in the negotiations was a step forward made by *Tutsis* in their way of reconquering power. This is the reason why during the negotiations of Arusha in Tanzania, *Hutu* radical groups vehemently opposed sitting with the representatives of the Rwandan Patriotic Front and looked with suspicion on any resolution of power sharing with *Tutsis*. And after the plane crash that was carrying the President Habyarimana, rumors spread quickly among *Hutus* that the plane was shot by

Tutsis who wanted to come again and rule over the majority *Hutus*, maybe for the rest of their lives.

This created in the minds of *Hutus* a visceral hatred against *Tutsis*. As we saw, to avoid any sharing with *Tutsis* and to dismiss them from any presence in the political scene of Rwanda, radical *Hutus* wrote and spread what they called the “Ten *Hutu* commandments”. These commandments were publicized by the bimonthly newspaper *Kangura* No 6. Marcel Kabanda writes: “Through these commandments, the paper strongly exhorted the *Hutus* to understand that the *Tutsis* were first and foremost an enemy and that they should break all ties with them, whether those links derived from marriage, business or professional relations.”³ To stress the aspect of purification that *Hutus* had to carry out, urged by the Newspaper *Kangura*, Kabanda writes: “*Kangura* also called for the dissolution of the historical, political and cultural community of Rwanda and for the building of a new community, one that would supposedly be authentic and pure.”⁴ This can give an idea of how far the generalization and the portrayal of a *Tutsi* as an “incarnate devil” in Rwanda had gone. In Burundi, after the killing of the President *Hutu* by *Tutsis*, some *Hutus* were calling *Tutsis*, “*Umucafu*”, meaning a “dusty race”. I remember that in 1993 after the killing of the President and the mass killings that followed, I was a college student at the University of Burundi. Many *Hutus* deserted the campus because their colleague *Tutsis* who were the majority at the University, had started using strong words such as “*Dukwiye gukubura umucafu*” which means “We should clean up the University and remove from it all impurities”. These impurities were nothing else than the group of *Hutus* who were studying at that time at the University.

³ Allan Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 62

⁴ *Ibid*

This reminds us of the treatment of *Tutsis* by the colonial rule as a "pure race". The depravity and the blind generalization touched not only the youth but also some people who could be considered more educated. I remember as if it were yesterday the views and the positions taken by some people after the killing of the Burundian president and massacres that followed this murder. There was particularly one of the editorialist of a well known journal in Bujumbura who had written on the front page of this journal in French: "*Est-ce que le Hutu a une âme?*" Which translates: "Does a *Hutu* have a soul?" This editorialist was not by any means an apprentice writer or a newcomer in the scene of politics. He had been for several years the mayor of Bujumbura, the capital city. I can say that hatred had attained its climax in the minds of some *Hutus* and some *Tutsis* in the years 1993 and 1994 that they were no longer able to control their words and their acts. Horrendous acts went as far as removing babies from their mothers' wombs and smashing them as well as their mothers. It was no longer acts of killing, but rather for those who were carrying out such acts, just a "cleaning up of impurities". In Rwanda, *Tutsis* were given the name "*Inyenzi*" which means cockroaches. This was to put in the minds of *Hutus* that such a race was to be wiped out without any scruples because they were no longer human beings. Being just small insects, *Tutsis* were to be killed with no real consequences. Thus, *Tutsis* were just candidates for death the same way all animals are at the disposal of the human person. To not kill *Tutsis* and moderate *Hutus* was simply considered by some radical *Hutus* groups irresponsibility and a betrayal of the nation. There were some *Hutus* who were not willing to kill and who did hide victims. Whenever their behavior had come to be known, the "betraying people" were asked to

kill those they were hiding, immediately in presence of everybody and afterwards they were killed themselves. At one point, killing had become a virtue.

How had people come to such a perversity of heart? For me, the explanation is quite simple. People had been trained and conditioned to kill by all kinds of rhetoric that was broadcasted through certain media qualified as media of hatred. In Rwanda, the “Free Radio Television of Thousands Hills” (RTLH in French) and the journal “*Kangura*” had become instruments of propaganda and spreading of hate messages against *Tutsis* and moderate *Hutus*. Furthermore, it is said that Rwanda and Burundi are countries whose populations are traditionally very obedient to orders that come from the hierarchical chiefs. To disobey the order of a superior is another form of crime in the minds of Burundians and Rwandans. Coupled with that fact was the reality of the poor school education of the majority of the population in Rwanda and in Burundi. More than 90 per cent of these populations make their living from the activity of the soil and live in villages. In these conditions, we can understand that the poor village people who have never been to school, believe whatever is said by those they consider educated and smart.

The responsibility of the populations of Rwanda and Burundi in the persistence of the conflict between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*.

In Burundi and in Rwanda, there is another disease that has developed over the years and explains partly what happened in those countries as systemic distortions and human rights violations. It is the vice of hypocrisy. I call it a disease because it is not a normal situation in a human person and it can at the end cause a lot of damage in Society. Rwandans and Burundians are known for their camouflage when it comes to telling what they feel deep down within them. Burundians and Rwandans are traditionally a reserved

people, they are quiet and they do not easily show their emotions. There is an expression in French that describes well what Burundians and Rwandans are: “*Un peuple au bois dormant*” which means a “people who are like a sleeping tree.” That is how people describe Burundians and Rwandans compared to other African people like their neighbor Congolese or people from the western world. A Burundian and a Rwandan when he or she wants to tell something, starts by recounting stories or something that is not related directly to what he or she wants to say. Not be straightforward when one is making a speech is considered a virtue where others who do not know the Burundian and Rwandan cultures would be annoyed and embarrassed. A stranger who is not immersed in those cultures and who does not know what is happening would get upset because the speaker is making him waste time for nothing. For example, during the ceremonies of giving and receiving the dowry for marriage, it is customary for the one who makes a speech from the bridegroom’s side to not say straightforwardly that his family is requesting a wife from the bride’s family. Instead he says that he has come to request a cow. This might be considered an isolated case that just happens during ceremonies of marriage, but the reality is that such a way of behaving has succeeded in permeating the everyday life of a Burundian and a Rwandan. Crises in Burundi and in Rwanda have become what they are because Rwandans and Burundians have never learned to tell each other the truth. Not to tell about one’s deep feelings, or to tell half-truths, or what I call the habit of a double language, are what has characterized Burundians and Rwandans, to such an extent that different negotiations and opportunities of dialogue that were carried out with the help of the international community have most of the time yielded insignificant results. People who seemingly were living in symbiosis and in mutual understanding have come to carry

out what has amazed the world. Up to now, some people who do not know Burundians and Rwandans well, cannot succeed in understanding how a people so reserved, so easygoing, so taciturn, so kind, came to horrendous acts such as what happened in the 1994 Rwandan genocide and other massacres that happened in Burundi and in Rwanda. I remember the words of a parish priest in the parish where I grew up. He was pondering and musing about what happened in Burundi and in Rwanda and he said: “Now I am starting believing in the miracles of the devil.” How can we understand that the one who is smiling at you today and who has always been with you, helping you day in and day out, standing by you through thick and thin, becomes tomorrow the very person who will direct his machete at you just because you do not share his ethnic group.

Another disease of Burundians and Rwandans that I have witnessed myself is negative solidarity. Negative solidarity occurs when people are afraid to confront people they consider are on their side either in politics or in other points of contention. It has been observed that *Hutus* strive to explain what their fellow *Hutus* have done as harm to *Tutsis* and it is the same with *Tutsis*. It is as if people of my ethnic group or who share my political opinions cannot make mistakes. I remember that in 1993 during the Burundian crisis, some politicians would use the word “*Agashavu*” which means a small anger to explain why certain members of their political party or from their ethnic group have killed people of the opposite ethnic group or the opponents of another political party. Using this word *Agashavu* in the context of Burundi and Rwanda was similar to condoning what the perpetrators had done. In other words, it is as if the evil stops to be evil only when it is done by members of my group. This negative solidarity has led to

Burundians and Rwandans being powerless to find a lasting solution to the ethnic problem they have been engulfed in from the time of independence to our days.

The negative solidarity made people kill without any scruple. There was what was called the “group effect”. When people were together shouting and screaming against the opposite ethnic group, their wickedness and depravity increased. They could do together what individuals isolated from groups could not do. In the case of Burundi and Rwanda, there were groups that were considered privileged over others. And to maintain these privileges, they would not hesitate to kill whoever would be a stumbling block to their interests. To explain this fact, I find the words of Martin Luther King, Jr, quite enlightening: “Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.”⁵

I said earlier that it was the colonial rule that was the primarily responsible for the virus of division in Rwanda and in Burundi. Belgium inoculated to the minds of Burundians and Rwandans their own racial struggles. We know that Belgium is divided into Walloons and Flemish. But the fact is that those ethnic groups have specific geographic locations, speak different languages and have specific cultures, folklores and religion. But this is not the case in Rwanda as in Burundi. In both countries, there is only one language (*Kirundi* for Burundi and *Kinyarwanda* for Rwanda). Even these languages are close to each other in such a way that one can speak one of the languages and be understood in both countries without the need of a translator. As a Burundian priest, I

⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, *The Atlantic Monthly*; *The Negro Is Your Brother*; volume 212, No 2

have celebrated many masses in Rwanda, speaking my mother tongue and I have never heard people complain once that they had not understood my message. This is quite different in Belgium. One can be in an area in Belgium where French and the Walloon language is not understood (in the Flemish area) and have problems to communicate with people. I was once in a Jesuit community in Brussels which was located in a Flemish area. I was told that people who hosted me in that community could speak French, my language, because they had to learn it as a condition to enter the Society of Jesus. And they would speak French just for courtesy to make me feel comfortable and welcomed in their community but after my departure they would switch to the Flemish language in their conversations. And for me, to extrapolate ethnic differences that were real in the context of Belgium to another context where those differences were just artificial, was a very big mistake made by Belgium. The consequences of this mistake have been enormous and maybe they will continue to show up for many more years if nothing is done.

I have shown earlier that it was Belgium that introduced instruments to measure certain parts of the human body in order to characterize such or such one as a *Hutu* or a *Tutsi*. Belgians introduced for example instruments made for measuring the length and the breadth of the nose. If such one had a nose of such inches, the conclusion would be drawn that he was from such an ethnic group. Linked to such an absurdity, Belgians convinced *Tutsis* in the beginning that they were a superior race because they had a good looking faces and flawless noses. What the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said jokingly was and is still the reality in Burundi and in Rwanda. Tutu said:

Frequently we tried to point out the absurdity of racism in the hope that our white compatriots would be embarrassed into dropping something

that could be so ludicrous. And so I would suggest that instead of skin color we should substitute a large nose, since I possessed one. Can you imagine if we were to say that this university was reserved not for whites, as happened under apartheid, but for large noses only and that would be the chief requirement, not academic ability? And if you were afflicted with a small nose, to have to apply to the Minister of Small Nose Affairs for permission to attend the university reserved for large noses. Everyone in most audiences where I told this story would be rolling in the aisles at the stupidity and the absurdity of it all.⁶

With words said in such way, one might think that is a mere joke that has nothing to do with the reality. Yes, in the context of South Africa, one could say that these words of Tutu are just an illustration for the point he was making but in Burundi and in Rwanda what Tutu is describing has really happened. We have been accustomed to label *Hutus* with big noses and *Tutsis* with small ones. At one point, people were saying that the wars in Burundi and in Rwanda were wars of noses. It happened that in both countries, jobs and privileges of all kinds were given according to the form of the nose and not according to the merits or the competence. What Tutu refers to as "ministry of big or small noses" really happened in Burundi and in Rwanda. After the signature of the Arusha agreements in 1993 for Burundi there were some ministries of the government whose head was a *Hutu* (big nose) and others led by *Tutsis* (small nose). It was not uncommon to see in a ministry led by *Hutu* people with big noses and the same thing would happen for a ministry whose head was a *Tutsi*. As Tutu was saying, I find this situation really absurd and a mere nonsense. I cannot imagine how Burundians and Rwandans have come to be drawn into such absurdities. As far as I know, there is no one who has chosen to be born with such a nose or such an ethnic group. The question I always ask myself is to know why a person may be a victim of what he has not chosen in his conscience. Children were not spared. I was moved by the story of killing of children at Mugonero Church In

⁶ Desmond Tutu, *No future without forgiveness* (New York: DoubleDay, 2000), 93.

Kibuye (Rwanda) during the genocide. The killers were arguing that those rebels who were attacking Rwanda from the north of the Country had once been babies too. In this folly of killing, there was a three year old child who after seeing his brothers and sisters slain, entreated the killers by saying: "Please, don't kill me. I'll never be a *Tutsi* again." He was finally killed."⁷

All this folly and all these absurdities came as a result of a propaganda that was created and nourished by the colonizers in their effort to subdue peoples who had strong relation ties and who had strong reasons to live together in harmony. The colonizer was not happy with such a reality and he did what he could to weaken those populations by inoculating in their minds the virus of hate of the other. This was the policy of the colonizer, a policy that people have come to call "divide and rule." What the colonizer did to achieve his goal was to fight against any value held by the indigenous people that was likely to promote unity, cohesion and harmony. Some of these cultural values in Rwanda and in Burundi wiped out by the colonizer with the benediction of the evangelizers will be treated in the fourth chapter of this work.

The responsibility of missionaries.

Missionaries came to Africa with an agenda of bringing the good news of salvation and the knowledge of the name of Jesus Christ to people who did not know him. They came with preconceived ideas that they had to face a pagan, a godless, a barbarian people who did not have any morality at all. This explains the methods they adopted in their evangelization. Burundi and Rwanda were not an exception. Missionaries did not take the culture and customs that had been forged for many years seriously. They replaced the values they found on the ground by what they called the

⁷ Human Rights Watch Interview, *Children targeted in the Genocide*, Kigali. September 13, 1995.

Christian message. In this, they did not follow the good example of evangelization adopted by the Apostle Paul. When he faced in Athens a people who were worshipping many gods, he used a language that I find smart and appealing: "Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because I noticed, as I strolled around admiring your sacred monuments, that you had an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. Well, the God whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship without knowing it."⁸ Paul wanted to build from what the Athenians believed in and unlike the missionaries in Rwanda and in Burundi, he recognized what good he found on the ground: Athenians were, he said, extremely religious. He recognized that there was a God Athenians worshipped without knowing it. Likewise in Rwanda and in Burundi, people had a belief in one God "*Imana yaremye vyose*", which translates "God who created all things that exist". What missionaries did was simply assume a tabula rasa, replacing all that sounded Burundian and Rwandan which they judged as evil. Furthermore, missionaries, instead of bringing the teaching of Jesus who said that the Spirit blows where he wills, strived to impose a European culture. To give just an example, missionaries believed that all the names given to Burundians and Rwandans before the arrival of missionaries, were all pagan even if they bore the name "God": for example, *Havyarimana* (which means "It is God who begets children"), *Nzeyimana* (I trust in God), *Ndayisenga* (I pray to God), *Nduwimana* (I belong to God)..., all those names, for missionaries, were pagan names because they carried with them a "false god". This is the reason why after baptism, a European name would be added to the name of the catechumen, and this European name would be seen as a Christian name and not the Burundian or the Rwandan one. For example, my name is Egide Ndayisenga.

⁸ Acts of the Apostles 17: 22-23

My Christian name is not what people would expect (*Ndayisenga* which means I pray to God) but Egide which has a Belgian origin and has nothing to do with God. I know another example of a man whose name was Lenine Nkurunziza (*Nkurunziza* means good news). His christian name was not *Nkurunziza* at all but Lenine which, not only has nothing to do with God, but also which is the symbol of anti-Christianity. Missionaries played, hence, also a bad role in failing to recognize the dignity of Burundians and Rwandans by imposing by force a kind of European Christianity instead of the message of Jesus Christ who said himself “I have come not to abolish but to complete them [The Law and the Prophets].”⁹ These examples and many others show that traditional virtues in Rwanda and in Burundi that were highly instrumental for respecting the dignity of each and every person, were wiped away and missionaries had a responsibility in that.

Economic poverty as an explanation for the persistence of the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi and in Rwanda.

The divisions brought by the colonizer in Rwanda and in Burundi did not stop with their departure from those countries. Systemic distortions born from the time of colonization continued even after Independence in Rwanda and in Burundi. People in Rwanda and in Burundi have not up to now succeeded in getting rid of the somber colonial heritage for many reasons. I want to just mention one of these reasons. In fact, Burundi and Rwanda have been poor countries, having no real natural resources that would help them to be self-reliant. They continued to rely on foreign aid, including the assistance of the former colonizer. It was not easy for these countries to be really independent. Belgium continued to have an eye on the unfolding of events after independence. This is to say that systematic distortions did not go away with the

⁹ Matthew 5:17

departure of the colonizers. There is what is called "neo-colonialism" that continued in most of African countries that had undergone the experience of colonialism. In other words, in some former colonized countries, a kind of disguised colonialism continued. Burundi and Rwanda are part of these countries which experienced and continue to experience neocolonialism. This neocolonialism has manifested itself in the conditions imposed by the former colonizers for the release of their foreign aid. It is in these circumstances that countries like Burundi and Rwanda have never been in position of taking their destinies in their hands.

Another factor that explains the continuation of distortions in the relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* both in Rwanda and in Burundi is the conditioning that peoples of these countries have undergone that made them believe that whatever comes from outside, especially from rich countries, is always better than what they have in their own soil. This is not a particularity of Burundi and Rwanda. It is a reality in most of the poor African countries who continue to idealize products that come from rich countries. It is quite shocking to see how people in Burundi and in Rwanda are eager to buy products that come from Europe or from the United States when they have the same products with much cheaper prices. For example, in Burundi, there is a company that specializes in manufacturing clothes that are easily the equal of clothes that come from outside. But the funny thing is that clothes produced by this company are not worn by Burundians. They are instead exported outside because the local consumption is very weak. The same thing is true of a kind of coffee produced in Rwanda and in Burundi. What people like instead is *Nescafe* which is produced outside in spite of the appreciation of the local coffee that has gained international awards. In the same way the local coffee is exported outside and

not consumed locally in spite of its good quality, divisions and ethnicity have been imported by Rwanda and Burundi from Belgium and Burundians and Rwandans continue to "wear" them instead of wearing their traditional values that are likely to promote peace, harmony, the respect of human dignity and reconciliation. This is the reason why the solution of an African renaissance has come up strongly in the debates in recent years as a way out for a peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa. I will come back to this aspect in the fourth chapter of this work.

Lack of genuine leaders in Burundi and in Rwanda as an explanation of the persistence of systemic distortions.

Other factors that explain the ethnic divisions in Rwanda and in Burundi over the years and systemic distortions that were their immediate consequences are linked to the lack of an "intelligentsia" after Independence in both countries who would seek the common good or lasting remedies for suffering populations on the ground. Politics meant to be a service to the citizens was gradually seen as a way of nourishing one's personal ambitions or securing a juicy future for oneself and the close family. In poor countries like Burundi and Rwanda, such realities are not uncommon. The greater good for the greater number has not been the real concern of our politicians that inherited the management of our countries, Burundi and Rwanda, from the time of independence. We have never had leaders of the same caliber as Rwagasore. As we have seen, Rwagasore, the son of the King Mwambutsa in Burundi, in his actions and in his charismatic leadership for the few years he lived, was close to the needs of the population at the grassroots. That is the reason why he was liked by *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. Many politicians in Rwanda and in Burundi were behaving as representatives of their ethnic group or fighters

for the wellbeing not only of their particular ethnic group but also for the particular region where they came from. Regionalism has not been talked about much but it was observed that it was another strong disease of Burundians and Rwandans in the years that followed Independence. Some people say that at one point, regionalism was stronger than ethnicity in both Burundi and Rwanda. In Burundi, for many years, most of the leaders of the country were natives of the South and in Rwanda the majority of the intelligentsia came from the North of the country. In both countries, there have been dictatorial regimes where people were not free to express their views about the way these countries were ruled. It is a reality that distortions in both countries continued to grow as people were not allowed to have a critical eye on their leaders. As a result, distortions in both countries came to be perceived as normal. The lack of transparency, truth, and accountability has led to the perpetuation of flaws and weaknesses in the system of governance. The media has always been controlled by men in power. The media had become the means of the propaganda in favor of men in power and against every person who differed from the rulers. To say or write something against the rulers or their system of governance was enough to be categorized as "*Inyankaburundi*" (the enemy of Burundi) or *Inyangarwanda* (enemy of Rwanda). I am describing this situation as if it were just a heritage of the past, but the truth is that such lack of truth and accountability is still a reality in Rwanda and in Burundi but maybe with less intensity than before.

I grew up in a situation where *Hutus* were looked down on and many opportunities were closed to them. I had never questioned that because I did not know and had never been told that the mistreatment they were going through was an abnormal fact. What I was hearing in the media controlled by a Government of *Tutsis* was that

there was not a troubled situation in Burundi at all. I used to hear over and over that Burundi was a country open to all, *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. That was not the truth. It took the entry into a democracy with openness to free speech that I came to realize what really happened in my country. I did not know for example that there were opportunities of study in some schools and branches of study at the unique university of Burundi that were reserved to *Tutsis* only. Hutus were not allowed to complain against such injustices. The services of the intelligence or secret police were really efficient in such a way that one could not say something that was against the government without being trapped and jailed. I have the bitter experience of my own brother-in-law who was jailed for two years just for having said a small thing against the President.

The same situation was unfolding in Rwanda but this time around with *Hutus* who had closed all possibilities and opportunities to *Tutsis*. Rwandan *Tutsis* like Burundian *Hutus* were not allowed to express their grievances. One could say that it was like a bomb that was lying dormant in both countries and that would explode one day. Burundian media in the time of the single party had never mentioned the massacres of intellectual *Hutus* in 1972. I came to know about such horrible massacres after the defeat of the single political party that had ruled the country from the time of Independence. The same thing happened in Rwanda. Rwandan media would refer to the 1959 events as just a social revolution and would never mention the massacres of thousands of *Tutsis* who had no other alternative than fleeing the Country to neighboring countries.

My worry is that the same situation of hiding the truth or telling half-truths is still unfolding in Burundi and in Rwanda. Rwanda has taken a dangerous step of silencing all the opponents to the regime. Burundi was slowly progressing in the way of

open speech and free media, but with the running of a third term by the current President, Burundi has stepped back to the situation before the entry of the country into the system of democratic elections. In both countries, there is an increase of anger on the part of one ethnic group which is hindered to express its grievances. In Rwanda, it is *Hutus* who are silenced and in Burundi it is rather *Tutsis*. What the colonizers have started is presently what our politicians have continued from the time of independence.

The danger of any kind of victimization and the liberation that follows is that former victims can turn out to be victimizers. *Hutus* in Rwanda who had experienced the arrogance and disdain from *Tutsis* wanted to reverse the situation in 1959. This time around, it was *Tutsis* who were and who would remain victims for more than thirty years. *Hutus* did exactly what they were accusing *Tutsis* of. Now that *Tutsis* are in power in Rwanda, it is once again their turn to be victimizers. Although the current president of Rwanda has made some steps to include *Hutus* in his government, *Hutus* cannot express their views freely. In Burundi, it is the same situation which is unfolding. *Hutus* who used to be victims of oppression and arrogance of *Tutsis* are now trying to get revenge on them. The current president who is running a third term, decried by the International community and the United Nations, is currently busy ethnicizing the current crisis in Burundi. His goal is to convince people that those who are against his third term are *Tutsis* who want to come again as rulers over *Hutus*. Now one can understand that people who are the most marginalized and threatened by the current government of Burundi are *Tutsis*.

There is something significant that Desmond Tutu told Rwandans when he visited this country after the genocide, and I find that it can apply to Burundi as well. He

described what he found on the ground and he said this: "It was a sad history of reprisal provoking counter-reprisal. I reminded the *Tutsis* that they had waited for thirty years to get their own back for what they perceived to be the injustices that had been heaped on them. I said that extremists among the *Hutus* were also quite capable of waiting thirty years or more for one day when they could topple the new government, in which the *Tutsis* played a prominent role, and in their turn unleash the devastation of revenge and resentment."¹⁰

Some leaders in the aftermath of Independence in both countries, were poorly educated. It even happened that some administrators at the local level did not know either how to read or how to write. Their administration was mediocre and they failed to handle properly different ethnic crises that arose. This explains why different ethnic crises that occurred in Burundi and in Rwanda were solved either by violent oppression or by denying the management of limited resources to an entire other group.

What reinforced ethnic violence and stigmatization of the other in both Burundi and in Rwanda was also, in my view, the lack of military and patriotic formation of those who were in the military force, especially in the years that immediately followed Independence. The former President of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, used to say that a military without a patriotic formation is just a potential criminal. And Burundi and Rwanda were for many years ruled by military regimes since there was no other means to get to power than through a military coup. For this reason, we can understand that to solve social issues such as ethnic conflicts, we cannot look, in my opinion, to the competence of a military.

¹⁰ Tutu, 259-260.

A medicine prescribed to a wrong disease

A misunderstanding that is worth noting in the attempts to solve ethnic divisions in Rwanda and in Burundi was the belief that the major stumbling block that those countries had to face was a long abiding hatred between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. In other words, the major problem of Burundi and Rwanda is not, according to many political analysts who have studied extensively the past of these countries, an ethnic one but a political one or rather a problem of governance and of power sharing. The 2000 Arusha Agreement meant to solve the crisis in Burundi, states this: "With regard to the nature of the Burundian conflict, the parties recognize that the conflict is fundamentally political with extremely important ethnic dimensions. It stems from a struggle by the political class to accede to and /or remain in power."¹¹ And I think that the lack of the grasp of the real illness can lead to the prescription of a wrong medication. Many analysts of the Burundian and Rwandan history of conflicts maintain that the ethnic differences between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* were just a camouflage for real issues that were born after the coming of the colonizers. That lack of the trust in the other, the lack of the common vision for the future led to social conflicts that needed a tangible grounding to express themselves. This grounding has been nothing else than ethnicity.

Burundi and Rwanda need to breathe again after many years of nightmares of political conflicts that took the color of ethnic conflicts. They need to get inspired by positive experiences of reconciliation that have happened elsewhere. One of these experiences that is worth treating in this work is the experience of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in South Africa that succeeded in bringing together white

¹¹ Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Arusha, Tanzania. August 2000. Chapter 1, Article 4

and black people of this country after many years of strife, divisions and human rights violations. This will be the focal point of the third chapter.

Chapter 3: The "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in South Africa as a success of reconciliation and an instrument of a rebirth of a country: Its biblical and cultural grounding.

The world has witnessed the power of reconciliation in the aftermath of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Of course, there was at the outset the charismatic figure of Nelson Mandela who put all his energy in the process of building up a new South Africa freed of racial hatred and violence. There is a lot that has emerged as Mandela took up the challenge of reunifying the Country, leading it to a development open to all South Africans. The best way to achieve this noble goal was for Mandela and his team to set up the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (TRC) whose mission would be to shed light on all human rights violations that had occurred during the dark years of Apartheid. Among other goals, the TRC had the purpose of healing wounds in the hearts of victims as well as of the oppressors. The whole process was aimed at insuring a peaceful transition from Apartheid and oppression to a democratic regime and a peaceful cohabitation.

The task of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was immense and full of challenges. The world looked on in amazement at what has been accomplished by this commission. The success of the commission was obviously dependent on the willingness of South Africans to reconcile with one another and their readiness to bury the past after having dealt responsibly with it. To bury the past was synonymous with saying "never again" in view of building a better future for all South Africans regardless of skin color (black, white, people of Indian or Asian origin). Among many things that made for the success of the TRC, was its religious and biblical grounding. From the beginning,

Mandela who was the initiator of the TRC understood that the journey he wanted to embark South Africans on was nothing else than a spiritual one. This is shown by his choice of the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu in spite of his limited background in matters of Law or juridical studies. There were many lawyers who could be chosen to chair the TRC. But Mandela did not choose them. Not only was the commission chaired by a religious man, but also in the commission, there were four ordained ministers. This is how Tutu interprets this fact: "you could say that there were four ordained persons and that was bound to have a marked influence on our deliberations and on how we carried out our work. The President must have believed that our work would be profoundly spiritual. After all, forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation were not the normal currency in political discourse."¹

The Spiritual outlook of the TRC: The parallels between the TRC and the Word of God.

God is on the side of reconciliation. God seeks always to reconcile with the human beings he has created and to see all human beings reconciled with one another. Reconciliation becomes part of God's mission given to human beings. Paul calls it the "ministry of reconciliation." He writes: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people'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."² We all know what the work of an ambassador

¹ Tutu, 80

² 2 Corinthians 5: 18-20

looks like. Paul is calling Christ's disciples "ambassadors" to urge them to carry out the ministry of reconciliation as if it were Jesus himself who would be doing the job.

Desmond Tutu, as a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ, was well aware that whatever he and his team were going to do in the TRC would be definitely a response to Jesus' summoning his disciples: "I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."³ Antjie Krog says that "from the beginning, Tutu unambiguously mantled the Commission (TRC) in Christian language."⁴ No need to stress that the outcome of this commission has been hailed by the international community as one of the major achievements not only in the history of South Africa but also of the whole world.

The path initiated by Mandela and which was manifest in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had an important focus, namely healing. Restorative justice was given priority over retributive justice. Perpetrators were asked to reveal all the truth about their involvement in human rights violations in exchange for the granting of amnesty. It is quite interesting to note that the work of the TRC began by a spiritual retreat in Robben Island, the very place where Mandela had been jailed for nearly 27 years. This shows the direction towards which the work of the TRC would head. Another detail worth noting is that there was in the beginning the question about the dress Tutu as the chairman of the TRC would wear during the proceedings of this commission. Tutu writes: "When I asked before our first hearings in the Eastern Cape whether I should preside over the proceedings in my purple Archbishop's cassock, part of my public

³ John 14:12

⁴ Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull. Guilt, sorrow, and the limits of forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Random House, 1998), 153.

persona, the commission said I should, with my Hindu colleague insisting."⁵ The religious experience of the TRC would not be limited to the dress of Tutu during the proceedings of the Commission. Prayers and suffrages continued to be offered, to accompany and uplift the work of the TRC. Tutu writes:

As soon as I was appointed to the TRC, I asked the secretariat of the worldwide Anglican communion to alert the nuns and monks of the religious communities of our Church to our desperate need for regular intercession during the life of the commission. Thus we knew that we were surrounded on a regular basis by the fervent prayers of at least this group of Christians. We know from other contacts that we were being sustained by the love and prayers of many around the world and we want to say a very big thank you to them for this wonderful work. Whatever we may have achieved is due in large measure to this cloud of witnesses surrounding us and upholding us. For most of us, what we were being asked to undertake was profoundly religious and spiritual, and consequently spiritual resources were appropriately brought to bear on our task.⁶

Tutu goes on to say: "Very few people objected to the heavy spiritual and indeed Christian religious emphasis of the commission. When I was challenged on it by journalists, I told them I was a religious leader and had been chosen as who I was. I could not pretend I was someone else. I operated as who I was and that was accepted by the commission. It meant that theological and religious insights and perspectives would inform much of what we did and how we did it."⁷

Mandela and his team saw the TRC as an ideal solution for a good transition from Apartheid to a democratic regime open to the participation of all South Africans. This transition had to begin with the healing of wounds that had been caused by many years of oppression and violations of basic human rights. It is with this view of a

⁵ Tutu, 81

⁶ Ibid, 81-82.

⁷ Ibid, 82

wounded South Africa that needed a genuine healing that Mandela engaged South Africans to embark in this process of rebirth of the Country with an emphasis on reconciliation.

The conflict between whites and blacks had existed before the formal institution of the Apartheid regime. What is obvious is that the apartheid regime reinforced racial hatred and oppression and this led to many deaths and casualties. The Apartheid regime deepened the hatred between people who were supposed to share one country and the same destiny.

The Apartheid policy was viewed by those who were implementing it as the best policy for the context of South Africa. Some were even giving to it a theological explanation. For example, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa played an important role in fostering in the minds of South Africans that they had to live separated from one another. It became easier for this teaching to take root in the minds of the dominant race (white) because the Dutch Reformed Church was the “official religion” of the National Party during the apartheid era.⁸ The influence of this Church was more than religious. It is said that the “reformed church life and theology played a formative role in the development of South African culture and society.”⁹ This Church, highly influential

⁸ Manavhela, G.F, *An Analysis of the Theological Justification of Apartheid in South Africa: A Reformed Theological Perspective*. An article accessed at <http://rowlandbookcollections.blogspot.com/2010/11/analysis-of-theological-justification.html> on October 29 2015.

⁹ J.N. Gerstner, A Christian monopoly: The Reformed church and colonial society under the Dutch rule. In: R, Elphick, & R Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa: A political, Social & Cultural history*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1997: 16. Quoted by Manavhela at <http://rowlandbookcollections.blogspot.com/2010/11/analysis-of-theological-justification.html>. Accessed on October 29 2015.

in South Africa, advocated for the Apartheid regime, explaining it from a Calvinist consideration of the predestination theory. Just as Aristotle used to stress that there are some people who were born to be slaves of others, the Reformed Church in South Africa stressed the natural superiority of the white over the black people. For this reason, whites had to enjoy more privileges than blacks.

In my view, if we use hermeneutic tools, we can say that the Reformed Church at the time of the Apartheid regime had simply a theologically erroneous idea of the relationship between white and colored. Sometimes, theological mistakes or misinterpretations of the Bible and the misreading of our history can lead to the breaking of social bounds that make a country, especially when this fallacy reaches the level of structures or institutions. This leads to what we call institutional sin or structural sin. Black people were labeled along with the communist party as anti-religious, thus ungodly. For this reason, whites had to avoid blacks and not mingle with them so as not to be stained by this ungodly people. In a similar fashion, before the genocide in Rwanda, *Hutus* were labelled as a godly people who had been invaded by ungodly *Tutsis* who migrated from Egypt and who wanted to rule over the “chosen people”.

With this background in view, one can imagine that to fight this theological misconstruction, one had to adopt also a theological critique. This is the reason why one can see the process of reconciliation in South Africa through the work of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as a spiritual endeavor geared towards the correction of mistakes of the past that had convinced South Africans that they were different from one another and thus that they had to live separated. The Psalmist says: "See how good and

pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in harmony and unity!"¹⁰ This is to show that the separation of human beings from one another is never God's intent for them. Jesus showed clearly this fact by praying for the unity of his disciples in what is known as " Jesus' sacerdotal prayer" which he made before joining his Father. He prayed: "I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us."¹¹ Jesus knew that the community he had formed had to live in unity in order to remain strong and be able to withstand all obstacles that would come their way. He said once: "If a household is divided against itself, that household can never stand."¹²

The word Apartheid was borrowed from the Afrikaans language and in this language it means "separateness or apartness."¹³ It was undoubtedly this theological fallacy of the Dutch Reformed Church that promoted such separateness that Desmond Tutu and his team in the TRC opposed. The Scripture states: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."¹⁴ The book of Baruch in the Old Testament allows us to see the metanoia process that takes place in the human person and which enables him to move strongly and fast toward the good: "As your hearts have been disposed to stray from God, turn now ten times the more to seek him..."¹⁵

Desmond Tutu affirms that he was accompanied and uplifted during his work in the TRC by his relation with God, his theology and his belief in the power of the Word of God. His theology, as he says, enabled him to see the victory of the oppressed with other

¹⁰ Psalms 133:1

¹¹ John 17:11

¹² Mark 3:25

¹³ The Online dictionary Wiktionary. Accessed on <https://en.m.wiktionary.org/wiki/apartheid>. On March 23, 2017

¹⁴ Romans 5:20

¹⁵ Baruch 4:28

eyes. He writes: “The victory was for all of us, black and white together— the rainbow people of God. It was theology that enabled me to assert that this was a moral universe. That theology undergirded my work in the TRC.”¹⁶ Tutu goes on to say that he as a Christian who believes in the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross was shaped by his understanding of the Paschal Mystery. The meditation of this mystery accompanied him all along in his endeavor aimed at moving South Africans toward the forgiveness framework and social reconciliation. He says:

Theology helped us in the TRC to recognize that we inhabit a moral universe, that good and evil are real and that they matter. They are not just things of indifference. This is a moral universe, which means that, despite all the evidence that seems to be for the contrary, there is no way that evil and injustice and oppression and lies can have the last word. For us who are Christians, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are proof positive that love is stronger than hate, that life is stronger than death, that light is stronger than darkness, that laughter and joy, and compassion and gentleness and much, all these are so much stronger than their ghastly counterparts.”¹⁷

These words of Desmond Tutu are echoed by Robert J. Schreiter, in his book *The Ministry of Reconciliation*. Schreiter writes:

The process of reconciliation that creates the new humanity is to be found in the story of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ...Our narratives of suffering, of experience of violence and violation, can find their form and their transformation in the story of what God has done in Christ. His passion and death are recounted, not for the gruesome and unjust treatment they were, but as a “dangerous memory” of how God subverted power that was used for perpetrating injustice. The resurrection confirms and manifests God’s power over evil, which is why we are able to read the resurrection stories of God’s healing and forgiving power in the world.¹⁸

¹⁶ Tutu, 87

¹⁷ Tutu, 86

¹⁸ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation. Spirituality and Strategies* (New York, Orbis Books, 1998), 18

Theological analysis

The ultimate victory of Jesus, displayed in his resurrection after his death on the cross and his burial, was the way God chose to reconcile the world with Himself. The attitude of Jesus vis-à-vis his disciples who denied him and forsook him at the moment he needed them the most, underscores the attitude of God aimed at favoring reconciliation over punishment. After his resurrection, Jesus did not come with an accusing voice towards those who betrayed Him, rather he expressed these consoling words: “Peace be with you”. To show them that He wanted His relations with them be renewed and that He had buried the past, He commissioned the very people who betrayed him to continue the mission of healing and reconciliation He had begun. Jesus did not choose other people to take over his ministry in the world. He did not disqualify those who had failed to follow Him to the very end. His attitude after His resurrection from the dead shows a willingness to encourage and give confidence to the former betrayers to move forward in their discipleship. This would give them a renewed energy and an enthusiasm to continue to be fishers of men and women. After appearing to the women who had journeyed with Him, He commissioned them to give the message of hope to the disciples. The disciples were invited to meet Him in Galilee. He deliberately chose Galilee and not Jerusalem, the place of betrayal. He wanted to meet them at this very point of departure (Galilee) where He had begun a love story with them. To meet them in Jerusalem, the place of betrayal, would remind them that they had failed to follow Him to the end in contradiction to what they had openly promised Him. Peter once said: “I am ready to give my life for you”¹⁹ but afterwards he denied Him three times by saying that he did not know Him. What is striking is that Jesus did not disqualify him after this failure. According to human

¹⁹ John 13:37

standards, Peter should have been dismissed and replaced by somebody else. It is said instead that it is the same Peter, the betrayer, who was given the charge to be the head and the Shepherd of the Church. Jesus said to Peter three times: "Feed my lambs."²⁰, "Look after my sheep"²¹, "Feed my sheep"²². What is more interesting is that when Jesus commissioned women to tell His disciples that He was alive, He specifically mentioned the name of Peter. It is said: "As they (women) entered the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right, and they were amazed.... (The young man told women): Now go and tell his disciples and Peter: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you."²³ All this is to show that the resurrection of Jesus is a clear sign of God's willingness to reconcile with sinners. This means that God's message disclosed in the Bible is that hope, forgiveness and reconciliation will have the last word over situations of strife, vengeance and despair. To read the pascal mystery of Jesus in this perspective can lead people to grow in reconciliation with one another.

God looks beyond sins and offenses committed. He does not identify people with their sins. In other words, even if sins affect God's relations with human beings, they do not define who the human person is. The human person is defined by his or her inner relation with God, a relation that is fundamentally dependent on this reality: We are created in God's image. This would mean that it is our essence to resemble God. St Augustine would say that he had tried to find God elsewhere but had realized that God was interior to himself.²⁴ In other words, to sin is to be outside oneself. To repent is to find one's self and to regain communion with oneself, according to Augustine. And to

²⁰ John 21:15

²¹ John 21:16

²² John 21:17

²³ John 21:5-7

²⁴ St Augustin's *Confessions*, III, 6, 11

stress the need of a constant proximity of one's soul with the Divine Creator, Augustine would pray like this: "You created us for yourself, Lord, and our heart is restless, until it reposes in you."²⁵

The experience of reconciliation in South Africa, even if it was not a direct reading and inspiration of God's Word or the Pascal mystery of Jesus as such, recalls what Jesus did to his disciples after His resurrection. The aspect of not essentializing sins or perpetrators' misdeeds in the experience of South Africa was similar to the way Jesus behaved: He did not condemn the disciples who had forsaken Him, He did not condemn Peter. He did not blame the doubting Thomas but instead He bypassed the other disciples and went straight to Thomas to show him the marks of His suffering. And He let Himself be touched by the doubting Thomas who became afterwards the believing Thomas.

We can also say that the work of the TRC was an application (conscious or not) of the biblical "Agape" principles as Jesus lived them out. Agape as a biblical principle requires that we make some concessions and accept some compromises. And for Tutu, compromises do not betray those who engage in this path. He says: "A readiness to make concessions is a sign of strength, and not weakness. And it can be worthwhile sometimes to lose a battle in order in the end to win war."²⁶ And for Tutu, negotiations are aimed at reaching a situation with a win-win outcome. He says: "Those who are engaged in negotiations for peace and prosperity are striving after such a splendid, such a priceless goal it should be easier to find ways for all to be winners than to fight, for negotiations to

²⁵ Ibid, I, 1, 1

²⁶ Tutu, 281

make it a point that no one loses face, that no one emerges empty handed, with nothing to place before his or her constituency."²⁷

We have seen that God's will to forgive is a way of uplifting the sinner, of giving him a second chance to rise higher and do better next time. This benefits the one who forgives at the end, who accepts some compromises. It is how Tutu explains negotiations of the TRC. He writes: "In negotiations, we are, as in the process of forgiveness, seeking to give all the chance to begin again. The rigid will have a tough time. The flexible, those who are ready to make principled compromises, end up being the victors."²⁸

Tutu wanted to put all his energy, his whole soul into forgiveness and reconciliation because, as he explains, it was the only way the nation as a whole could survive, and not only the nation, but individuals as well would greatly benefit from the outcome of the negotiated peace. Tutu writes: "On its success does hinge the continued existence, the survival of our nation, of all of us as a people and as separate individuals. It is ultimately in our best interest that we become forgiving, repentant, reconciling, and reconciled people because without forgiveness, without reconciliation, we have no future."²⁹

Despite many objections that there were unforgivable crimes in the history of South Africa, the TRC went ahead in its commitment to bury the past, even to the point of forgiving outrageous crimes. The book of Chronicles shows the unconditional forgiveness granted by God to the one who humbly repents for his past mistakes. There was a king called Manasseh who spent fifty-five years in power in Jerusalem, doing nothing but evil. Not only did he build altars for foreign gods (Baals) in the house of God

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 165

and worshipped them, but he went as far as burning his own sons as an offering for these foreign gods. This king was attacked afterwards by the king of Assyria who captured him and bound him with chains of bronze. It is said that “when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before God of his fathers. He prayed, and God was moved by his entreaty and brought him back again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.”³⁰ This is to show that God's mercy has no limit. And again we read in Ezekiel: “As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”³¹ I think that the work of the TRC directed toward amnesty of the perpetrators was a way of living out this injunction of God as portrayed by the book of Leviticus: “You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”³² This means that to be the Lord's disciple requires going as far as loving the unlovable. And Matthew's Gospel stresses the same injunction showing the distinctiveness of the children of God in their conduct and love of enemies: “I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”³³ It is because God is different from human beings, his ways different from theirs, that people have to strive to be like Him: to be forgiving without limit.

³⁰ 2 Chronicles 33:12-13

³¹ Ezekiel 33:11

³² Leviticus 20:26

³³ Matthew 5: 43-48

The experience of Amnesty adopted by South Africans as a way out that would lead the country to a lasting development is highly responsive to God's calling to all humankind: "Be Holy as I am holy." God does not lose hope in the human. If he did, all human beings would be disqualified as we read in the book of Psalms: "If you should mark our evil, O Lord, who could stand? But with you is forgiveness, and for that you are revered."³⁴

The path of amnesty granted to perpetrators in exchange for their recognition of the participation in human rights violations is similar to the willingness of God to forgive all people who recognize their guilt. The first Letter of John shows it clearly: "If we say, "We have no sin," we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all wickedness."³⁵ And the Bible shows clearly that the one who is forgiven is able to accomplish much for the kingdom. This is to stress that the TRC wanted at the outset not to lose the vital strength of the perpetrators in the process of building the new South Africa. Even those who were convicted of grave crimes were given amnesty if they confessed fully politically motivated crimes.

The process engaged in South Africa through the work of the TRC was a way of trying to understand the former perpetrators as themselves victims of an ideology or a conditioning that had led them to behave the way they did. To listen to one another in the TRC helped some people to forgive because they came to realize that evil could be found in all human beings. Tutu writes: "As I listened in the TRC to the stories of perpetrators of human rights violations, I realized how each of us has this capacity for the most awful

³⁴ Psalms 130: 3-4

³⁵ 1 John 1: 8-9

evil- every one of us. None of us could predict that if we had been subjected to the same influences, the same conditioning, we would not have turned out like these perpetrators."³⁶ The TRC was very instrumental in making people engage in dialogue in order to sort out as one people, problems of living together. The TRC created good opportunities for people to come to an understanding of each other's worldviews. For the victims, the TRC helped them to not continue to look at former perpetrators with the same eyes, namely to see them as the incarnation of evil. It also helped perpetrators to see how far they had gone in harming the victims and finally to humble themselves by asking for forgiveness. It was a heartbreaking experience to see people who used to be powerful in the apartheid regime publicly ask pardon. Even some influential members of the Dutch Reformed Church recognized their theological errors that had contributed to the marginalization and ostracization of an entire people. Tutu narrates:

One of the more significant, indeed deeply moving, moments at the hearing was the presentation by the white Dutch Reformed Church Presbytery of Stellenbosch, where that church had one of its major theological seminaries. The confession of having been less than faithful to the demands and imperatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ was one of the most direct and unequivocal we have had from that quarter. The Presbytery did not mince words in condemning its collusion with an unjust sociopolitical dispensation and for not identifying with the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed. It was like a breath of fresh air where there was frequently a great deal of self-justifying cant.³⁷

The Process of reconciliation through the work of the TRC came to appreciable results because it made possible the process of a genuine communication between South Africans. The process of communication as Jurgen Habermas gives us to understand helps people to create bridges of understanding between them. Habermas says that the

³⁶ Tutu, 85

³⁷ Ibid, 187

process of communication that leads to the meeting and interpretation of other's worldviews and even to the entry into the other's worldview in order to understand him better is highly crucial. The truth comes to light and mutual understanding comes about after engaging in a process of communication whereby people try to "put themselves in each other's shoes."³⁸

We know the fruits that this process of communication has yielded over the years from the TRC's work in South Africa. In the process aimed at coming to understanding, Saint Ignatius of Loyola offers to us a good example of what he calls a good presupposition: "Let it be presupposed that every good Christian is to be more ready to save his neighbor's proposition than to condemn it. If he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it badly, let him correct him with charity. If that is not enough, let him seek all the suitable means to bring him to mean it well, and save himself."³⁹ Nowadays, it seems that in some countries, reconciliation through the process of dialogue, of truth telling, the demand and offer of forgiveness are not among their priorities. What is privileged is the mere judgement of the former perpetrators. This cannot lead in the long run to a genuine reconciliation and mutual understanding.

In Tutu's opinion, retributive justice is not in the long run beneficial to a country. In one of his visits to Rwanda, after the 1994 genocide, Desmond Tutu clearly told Rwandans that unless they move away from retributive justice, Rwanda cannot have a bright future. In the same line, Martin Luther King once said, referring to the difficult

³⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Introduction by Thomas McCarthy, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1990). Page viii.

³⁹ St Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, no 23.

cohabitation between whites and blacks of his time: “We must learn to live together or we will perish together as fools.”⁴⁰

The process of reconciliation in South Africa was also a way of grasping the truth, and the whole truth, not a biased one about what had happened in the past in the Country. The dialogue between former perpetrators and victims would be a good opportunity to grasp together the truth, even the unpleasant one if people want to bury the past and come to a negotiated way of living together. Tutu explains: “Reconciliation based on falsehood, on not facing up to reality, is not true reconciliation. It cannot last.”⁴¹

We have given the theological color of the TRC in South Africa. A process of reconciliation has to be conceived in the realization that God Himself does not despair of the capacity of the human person to come back to life and be a better person. It is the same intuition that the conceivers of the TRC in South Africa had in mind: All South Africans, regardless of what they had done in the past, were potentially needed for the development of the Country.

In the Gospel and in many passages of the Bible, we see that God is never tired of giving forgiveness to all who have sinned against Him. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father did not despair of him. When the son came back to his senses, the father did not impose any burden on the son as a condition for rehabilitating him in the family. The same scenario happened in South Africa. The New Government included all in the construction of the Country. Tutu explains the reasons for not being rigid and harsh towards former perpetrators. He writes: “How one wishes that negotiators would avoid

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., Commencement address at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. June 1965.

⁴¹ TRC Report, Volume one Chapter one, Foreword by Chairperson, no 69.

having bottom lines and too many preconditions."⁴² He explains the reasons of not losing hope for the conversion of formal perpetrators: "After the grueling work of the commission, I came away with a deep sense - indeed an exhilarating realization - that, although there is undoubtedly much evil about, we human beings have a wonderful capacity for good. We can be very good. That is what fills me with hope for even the most intractable situations."⁴³ Linked to that, there was an objection that was made to the TRC. Some people were arguing against the granting of amnesty for some people who were singled out as having committed grave mass killings. The answer of Tutu to those objections is as follows: "Amnesty is not for nice people. It is intended for perpetrators."⁴⁴ Tutu also explains the *raison d'être* of the commission. He says that what was targeted by the commission was "the need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation not for retaliation, a need for *Ubuntu* but not victimization."⁴⁵

The concept of *Ubuntu* in the process of reconciliation in South Africa

As a way of privileging togetherness in the construction of a new South Africa, Tutu explains the tactical choice of his country by what is known in Africa as the concept of *Ubuntu*. The understanding of *Ubuntu* carried the TRC and Tutu in particular. It is his theological, anthropological and cultural understanding of the concept of *Ubuntu* that was the driving force that carried him all along during the time of his work in the TRC. He explains a bit the meaning of *Ubuntu*. He says: "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, "Yu, u nobuntu"; "Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*." Then you

⁴² Tutu, 281

⁴³ Ibid, 253

⁴⁴ TRC Report, no 49.

⁴⁵ Tutu, 45

are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.”⁴⁶ Looking at these characteristics of *Ubuntu* as Tutu describes them, there is a way to see that they were displayed and embodied by Jesus himself in the whole of his life. Jesus did not want at all to lose his friendship with people who journeyed with him during three years but who showed frailty and limitedness when He endured the passion of the cross. This was to recognize that despite their misconduct and their denial, He still shared with them a common humanity as “the first born of many brethren.”⁴⁷ The Letter to the Hebrews says: “He himself is not ashamed of calling us brothers and sisters.”⁴⁸

To put into practice the notion of *Ubuntu* in the context of reconciliation engaged through the work of TRC would mean to learn to forgive even those who are unforgivable for the sake of recognizing the common humanity that binds or should bind South Africans as brothers and sisters. The path undertaken by the TRC with the focus on a forgiveness framework was a way of showing this togetherness, this generosity and compassion, riches that the concept of *Ubuntu* carries with it. Jesus as truly human and true God had in certain sense *Ubuntu*. He never lost his confidence in the human. The words that he uttered to his disciples after his resurrection are highly suggestive: “Peace be with you”. These are not words that one would speak to betrayers. Instead of holding a grudge against his disciples, Jesus chose to comfort them with words of encouragement. Despite their past failure, He wanted them to continue the path of discipleship and to go ahead in the mission of extending God's kingdom: He told them: "As the Father has sent

⁴⁶ Tutu, 31

⁴⁷ Romans 8:21

⁴⁸ Hebrews 2:11

me, so I send you."⁴⁹ In the context of South Africa, there was a sense that a lot had to be expected from former perpetrators. Mandela chose some white people to be his close advisers and to the amazement of many, he chose some to be his close guards. Like Jesus who did not lose his confidence in the human by missioning the very people who had failed in their discipleship's journey, Mandela did not hesitate to have in his entourage some white people.

All these acts of forgiveness displayed in South Africa in the aftermath of the apartheid regime were and still are mainly the fruits of the concept of Ubuntu. For Mfuniselwa John Bhengu, a South African writer and researcher, *Ubuntu* reflects tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness and means that "the person cannot be thrown away like trash."⁵⁰ And according to Lyn S. Graybill, a teacher of African politics in the Department of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia, *Ubuntu's* understanding of the indivisibility of humanity creates a capacity for forgiveness.⁵¹ For Njongonkulu Winston Ndungane, a retired South African Anglican Archbishop, *Ubuntu* is exclusively part of what Africans are and this concept gives rise to the concern for the well-being for all. He writes: "Once an African detects that a person means well, and that there is readiness to move away from the wrongs of the past, there is a willingness to move forward to a future that seeks to enhance the well-being of humanity."⁵² And the South African Constitutional court judge Yvonne Mokgoro, on her part, argues that "*Ubuntu* principles such as collectivity, unity, and group solidarity could promote harmony between society's members rather than the desire for retribution, embodied in

⁴⁹ John 20:21

⁵⁰ Lyn S. Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. Miracle or model?* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 25

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 33

⁵² *Ibid*

the adversarial approach in litigation.”⁵³ And Tom Lodge, a British writer, points out that the concept of *Ubuntu* “expresses a compassionate social etiquette that, if everybody adhered to it, would make life more agreeable.”⁵⁴ In the context of the TRC, people were asked to compromise their rights and face up to the duties that *Ubuntu* required. Furthermore, Graybill writes: “Taken a step further, victims are expected to forgive and accept into the fold the perpetrator in the interests of traditional African values, and may feel guilty if they cannot.”⁵⁵ To stress the fact that the notion of *Ubuntu* was not limited to Mandela, Tutu or scholars of African traditions, Graybill gives this testimony about this South African mother: He writes: Cynthia Ngeweu, mother of Christopher Piet, one of the Guguletu Seven (young men from Gulugetu township executed by police in 1986), understands *Ubuntu* this way: “This thing called reconciliation... if I am understanding it correctly... if it means the perpetrator, the man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, thus man. So that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back... then I agree, then I support it all.”⁵⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the path of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission adopted by South Africa had a real grounding in the Scripture and a strong emphasis on the notion of Ubuntu that gives more importance to brotherhood and sisterhood, forgiveness, compassion and well-being for all. For the sake of peace and a peaceful transition, South Africa has chosen an inclusive process that gives a second chance to perpetrators exactly as God did for many people. We know that people who

⁵³ Ibid, 34

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

could not be forgiven according to human standards ended up accomplishing wonders for the Kingdom of God. Human beings can fail but God does not see them as a failure. We have seen that it is the way the concept of *Ubuntu* looks at the fallen humanity. From this perspective, we can say that the example of South Africa is ethically and scripturally recommendable to other contexts that are still struggling in the area of reconciliation and respect for human rights. Religious considerations accompanied the work of the TRC through and through without forgetting this cultural asset of *Ubuntu* that South Africa shares with many other African countries. As we have seen, *Ubuntu* gives precedence to the togetherness as opposed to separation or apartness.

Restorative justice has been chosen by South Africa as a win-win process in contrast to the retribution justice that oftentimes culminates in a win-lose process. When national reconciliation is not well negotiated, there is a high probability that the victims can themselves become oppressors. And this leads to nothing else than a vicious cycle of reprisal, counter reprisal and blind vendetta. This is what South Africa wanted to avoid. The inclusive process made possible by the work of the TRC aimed at welcoming all in the construction of the country or rather in a joint effort for the rebirth of a nation from its ashes. The amnesty granted to the perpetrators in exchange for the full disclosure of the truth about the atrocities of the past has been found to be beneficial to the victims as well as perpetrators. Victims were healed by those revelations and their story telling. Their humanity and their dignity that had been denied during the long years of apartheid regime were regained by this process of reconciliation. Perpetrators were given a chance to be readmitted as full members of the same Nation with full humanity even if their past behavior had shown the opposite. This was the price to be paid for a peaceful transition

from oppression to democracy, from racial hatred to pacific cohabitation. It was a negotiated transition. And in this negotiated transition, religious and cultural considerations were integrated in a harmonious way. This is for me the key of the success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

I like what Hannah Arendt said, defining the act of forgiving. She writes that forgiving “is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven.”⁵⁷ It is the act of forgiving that helped the country of South Africa to be reborn from its ashes.

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), 241

Chapter 4: Some proposals for a genuine reconciliation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in Rwanda and in Burundi and for a future respect of human rights.

The example of reconciliation in South Africa has amazed many in the entire world. We have seen how the country succeeded to negotiate a smooth and smart transition from oppression and apartheid to democracy and respect of every South African's dignity. Of course, this does not mean that everything is now perfect in South Africa. But at least, there is tangible progress from the pre-apartheid era to the post-apartheid times. All this progress came because people took the opportunity to talk to each other with sincerity of heart. People came to the point of deciding together to move on, leaving behind the ashes of the past. This is for me the key of the success of the South African's experience. It was not through magic power that South Africa has had one of the most awe inspiring experiences of reconciliation. It was rather a fruit of hard work, sacrifices and manifold positive compromises. People in South Africa accepted to engage in the process of reconciliation with magnanimity of heart. It was not an imposition of the leaders of the country, but it has been proved that almost the entire population from the top to the bottom was willing to draw a final stop to the long standing state of violence, oppression and to replace it by peace, harmony, and forgiveness. There were many actors in this success, but the most striking one was President Mandela who showed at the outset the color of what he was committed to do when he was released from prison. He did not show a revengeful attitude or a provocative triumphalism that would put his former opponents in an uncomfortable situation. He rather said: "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and

with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realized. But, My Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."¹ How many people in the world would succeed to not hold a grudge against those who had kept them confined in an uncomfortable jail for 27 years and thus who had deprived them of enjoying the fruits a good family life, from seeing their children grow up, etc.? I think there are not many in this world. This is the reason why I see Mandela as an outstanding and incredible person who should be regarded as a model of leadership in Africa. For me, before presenting the model of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in South Africa as recommendable to other contexts that have struggled with oppression, violence and neglect of human rights, such as Burundi and Rwanda, it is rather the person of Mandela as a charismatic leader to whom attention should be directed before anything else. I am convinced that any genuine political system or option can be transferable from one nation to another, but if there are not genuine leaders to implement it, it will be useless. Another point worth looking at in the success of the South African experience is its combination of religious and cultural aspects in an amazing way. In other words, South Africa succeeded so well to engage in a genuine path of inculturation of the Gospel of love. We have seen in the third chapter how religious considerations coupled with a deep grounding in the African philosophical, anthropological and cultural richness of *Ubuntu* (embedded in the Zulu tradition that says "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" which means literally "a person is a person through other people"), have yielded fruits on the road to reconciliation in South Africa. Burundi and Rwanda desperately need to be

¹ Kader Asmal, David Chidester and Wimot James, *Nelson Mandela: from freedom to the future. Tributes and speeches* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003). 62

inspired by such an incredible experience because they have deep cultural values that are quite similar to the concept of *Ubuntu* that were unfortunately wiped away by the colonizers with the assistance of missionaries. I talked a bit about this fact in the two first chapters of this work. Furthermore, Burundi and Rwanda are countries with the majority of their populations who are practicing Christians. It is in this sense that I believe that Burundi and Rwanda can take advantage of the model of the South African's "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" which was really religiously grounded as we have seen in the third chapter. Burundi and Rwanda can not only take advantage of their deep cultural values for the restoration of peace and harmony between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, but also they can make as their own the Gospel values that can be seen in the reading of the Scripture or participating in the Church liturgical sacraments that are at their disposal. Especially one of the best contributions of the Scriptures to the building up of harmony between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* can be seen in Jesus' core teaching: the love of one's enemies and "turning the other cheek" to one's opponent as found in the Sermon on the Mount.

The need of leaders committed to peace and reconciliation in Burundi and in Rwanda.

We have seen that the success of the South African experience in general and the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in particular is to be credited first and foremost to the magnanimity of heart of Nelson Mandela who showed from the beginning his openness to the forgiveness framework. There is a proverb in Kirundi (The language of Burundi) that says: "*Umwera uva I Bukuru ugakwira hose,*" which translates "a light that comes from the top of the hierarchy is more likely to spread to all the places." As a matter of fact, also the opposite is unfortunately true: a darkness that comes from the top

is more likely to spread to all the places. The Scripture says: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”² Again, we read in the Matthew’s gospel: “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your vision is clear, your whole body will be full of light.”³ From these two passages, I strongly believe that if there is no vision of unity, forgiveness and reconciliation in the leaders of Burundi and Rwanda, it will be difficult to talk about reconciliation in those countries. There will rather be strife, divisions and what people are used to call in the context of Burundi and Rwanda “*the policy of the stomach*”. The policy of the stomach means the endeavor to secure one’s security and well-being, the interests of the population coming last or not coming at all. The example of Mandela is outstanding in the context of Africa when we see leaders, once they are in power, look for opportunities and excuses to remain there, either by changing the constitution, or by manipulating the credulity of the population, all this with a hidden agenda to continue to be leaders forever. Mandela showed an example by stressing that he was in power just for one term, and afterwards, he would step back. How many African leaders have come to the point of considering themselves small “messiahs” on whom the survival of their respective countries would depend?

In Burundi and in Rwanda, if they want to engage in a real process of reconciliation and especially if they want to come out from the ashes of the past caused by divisions and strife, they critically need leaders of the same caliber as Nelson Mandela who put first the interests of the nation and the common good before his personal interests. Yet, although it is true that the forgiveness framework was his idea, the truth is that the process could not succeed if the population was unwilling to cooperate and show

² Matthew 26:31

³ Matthew 6:22

its own magnanimity to forgive and move forward. As a matter of fact, Mandela had suffered more than anyone from the apartheid regime and the oppression that went with it; he had been humiliated more than anyone else and seen almost a third of his life span spent in jail. But more than anyone else, he made a move in the direction of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I think that the first thing our countries, Rwanda and Burundi, are called to look at, is the need to have leaders who are committed to reconciliation, forgiveness, respect of the other in his or her difference and to a development open to all populations, regardless of belonging to such an ethnic group, region or political party. As long as Burundi and Rwanda do not have such leaders, the road to reconciliation will be very difficult to follow. I mentioned in the first chapter that Burundi, unlike Rwanda, in the 1950s and in the early 1960s, succeeded to maintain unity between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* in spite of the efforts of the colonizer who was striving for the opposite. The reason for this fact was nothing else than the presence of the charismatic figure of Prince Louis Rwagasore, the hero of independence, who, from the beginning, fought for the satisfaction of the needs of all the categories of the population, regardless of the ethnic group, the region or the affiliation to such or such political party. We read this in the Burundian Peace Agreement secured in Arusha in 2000: “On the eve of independence the colonizer, sensing that its power was threatened, intensified divisionist tactics and orchestrated socio-political struggles. However, the charismatic leadership of Prince Louis Rwagasore and his colleagues made it possible for Burundi to avoid political confrontation based on ethnic considerations and enabled it to attain independence in

peace and national harmony.”⁴ But Rwagasore paid a heavy price for his audacity: He was killed. Things changed dramatically in Burundi after his death. As we have seen, leaders who came after him were not as committed as he was to the ideals of unity, reconciliation and development open to all. For me, one of the major problems Burundi and Rwanda have been facing from the time of Independence is a problem of governance and leadership. Ethnicity was just an excuse for politicians to nourish their own agendas, agendas they were (or are still) hiding from the populations so as not to lose their support.

The need to retrieve cultural values wiped away by the colonizers.

In the second chapter of this work, I pointed out that one of the biggest causes of human rights violations and genocidal acts in Rwanda and in Burundi is the lack of connection of those countries with their deep cultural values that had been the pillars of those societies for many years before the arrival of the colonizers. This is the reason why solutions presented in the wake of the ideas of the African Renaissance can be owned by Burundi and Rwanda in their way to true reconciliation and to development open to all, *Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas*.

African solutions to African problems

In the wake of decolonization and search for authenticity in Africa, African countries have begun a process of searching for authentic and genuine remedies to African problems in what has been known as the "African Renaissance". In this understanding, there is a strong emphasis on retrieving deep African traditional values that have been lost because of western imperialism that has shown itself through the lens of colonialism, neocolonialism and slavery. This is the definition of African Renaissance

⁴ Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Art 2.6

given by Charles Mutyasira: “The African Renaissance is made up of two words, which are ‘African’ and ‘Renaissance’. The word ‘African’ clearly indicates that this Renaissance has to be explained within an African context. The word Renaissance is made up of two components, that is, a prefix ‘Re-’, which means again or back again, with return to a previous state, and a French noun, ‘Naissance’, which means ‘re-birth’.”⁵ With this definition, one can understand that this concept of African Renaissance is critically needed for Burundi and Rwanda if they want to breathe again and be reborn again after the damage caused by colonialism and the wrong methods of missionaries.

Many countries in Africa which have known conflicts with an ethnical or tribal character have, most of the time, inherited these problems from the time of colonization and are continuing to experience them because of what analysts see as neocolonialism. Solutions that have been attempted were most of the times an imposition or a copy from what has worked out in western countries. It is in this understanding that there is now more than ever in Africa an awakening of consciences to the need to try original strategies drawn from local or traditional African wisdom.

It is in this context that South Africa has chosen to take into consideration the concept of *Ubuntu* embedded deep in South African jurisprudence, to sort out the problem of the living together of Whites and Blacks. We could say that the use of *Ubuntu* in the process of reconciliation in South Africa was a direct application of the concept of African renaissance. In Tanzania, there is what is almost similar to the notion of *Ubuntu*: It is the notions of *Undugu* and *Ujamaa*. *Undugu* is a Swahili word which means familyhood. Close to *Undugu*, is *Ujamaa* which is also a Swahili word which means

⁵ Charles Mutyasira, *African Renaissance. The Revival of the Black People* (Norton, Zimbabwe: Foka College, 2002). 1

kinship. All these terms along with *Ubuntu* constitute what John S. Mbiti calls the African ontological perspective known as “I am because we are and since we are I am.”⁶ In the same line of thought, Bénédet Bujo writes: “The community has a central place in African ethics. This ethic is not the product of Western rationality with which we are familiar (as in Descartes or Kant) where discursive reason is central... For Black Africa, it is not the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”) but an existential *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* (I am known, therefore we are) that is decisive.”⁷

Hence, for example, during the Burundian and Rwandan peace negotiations in Arusha (Tanzania), *Ubuntu*, *Undugu* and *Ujamaa* were strongly mentioned as driving forces for the pacific solution to the political and ethnic problems of these countries. No one should be surprised by that, at least in Burundi, because as I have mentioned earlier, President Mandela and President Nyerere, who were among the great figures of the fight for the African Renaissance, were part of the facilitation that led Burundi to the historical Arusha Peace Agreement in 2000. The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance suggests among many other recommendations the need to “strengthen the role of culture in promoting peace and good governance and develop all the dynamic values of the African cultural heritage that promote human rights, social cohesion and human development.”⁸ It is in this context, as already mentioned, that the concepts of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa* and *Undugu* that had been tried successfully in other contexts were outlined during the Burundian peace talks in Arusha in 2000. These concepts put a high emphasis

⁶ John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 214

⁷ Bénédet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic. Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 3-4.

⁸ Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, article 3. J and k

on human interconnectedness and on the dependency of one's survival on the community. Unlike what happens in the west where generally individualism is prized, there is a strong consideration of the concept of family, a family that extends itself to the level of the clan or lineage affiliation and even that goes as far as the level of the nation. Ikaweba Bunting in his article *Ubuntu, Undugu and Ujamaa* writes: "These cultural based formulations were aimed at transforming life negating European colonial social arrangements into a life affirming, people centered society. It also meant transforming the people from colonial objects to mentally liberated subjects able to determine their own destiny within the overall framework of an African ontological construct."⁹ To stress the aspect of liberation, Bunting maintains that these African solutions to African problems wanted more than anything else to get Africans "liberated from the hegemonic, Afri-pessimistic occidental epistemological and cultural dominion."¹⁰

In conclusion, we can say that the contribution of the concept of African Renaissance can be of a precious help for the solution to the political and ethnic problems of Rwanda and Burundi which have in the past been given remedies that were coming from the West, solutions that did not benefit at all populations of Rwanda and Burundi. The driving motto of the African Renaissance has been, as already mentioned, finding African solutions to African problems. It is in this context that I find it highly crucial that Burundi and Rwanda find original strategies drawn from their deep cultural and traditional heritage. My suggestion is to retrieve and develop the virtues of *Ubuntu*, *Ubushingantahe*, *Ubupfasoni* and *Ubugwaneza* in the context of Burundi and their

⁹ Ikaweba Bunting, *Ubuntu, Undugu, and Ujamaa: The Foundational Principles of the Facilitation of the Burundi Peace Negotiations*. Accessed on <http://www.lhcolloquy.com/IB%20article.htm>. On March, 24, 2017.

¹⁰ Ibid

counterpart meanings in the context of Rwanda, namely, *Ubuntu*, *Agacyiro*, *Inyangamugayo* and *Ubusabane*. This will be the object of my second point.

Importance of cultural values of Burundi and Rwanda in the way to reconciliation and the respect of human rights.

Before developing cultural values that need to be retrieved in the context of Rwanda and Burundi for a smooth transition from violence and strife to harmonious relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*, I find it worthy to be inspired, besides the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, by the example of Buddhists who were faced with the necessity to comply with the requirements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I was also inspired by the experience of Gandhi in India who discovered the richness of his Hindu culture after contact with other religions such as Christianity. This responds to the spirituality of “passing over and coming back”¹¹.

Some Buddhist scholars made some proposals in the process of application of the Universal Declaration of Human rights by World Religions to their own context. One of these proposals is formulated as follows: "a return to the time-honored values of the Buddhist traditions with their implicit doctrine of human rights."¹² According to those scholars, there is already an implicit doctrine of human rights in the Buddhist tradition.¹³ As a matter of fact, the Buddhist tradition is in favor of freedom from all egoistic attachment, one of the incredible assets that are conducive to the respect of the rights of others, especially the rights of the poor and the most vulnerable. There is an emphasis of

¹¹ Darrell J. Fasching, Dell Dechant & David M. Lantigua, *Comparative Religious Ethics. A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics*. Second Edition. (United Kingdom: Wiley,-Blackwell, 2011), 157.

¹² Joseph Runzo, Nancy Martin and Arvind Sharma, *Human Rights and Responsibilities in the world religions* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2012), 249

¹³ Runzo, 248-250

an egalitarian society¹⁴ in the Buddhist tradition because every human person has a Buddhahood in himself.¹⁵ This reminds us the *imago Dei* that Christianity and Judaism display as a reason for the respect of the dignity of every human person. Hence, according to Buddhist scholars, the Buddhist tradition is not only in favor of human rights, but also it has moral demands that require higher standards than what was laid down by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For them, human rights contained in the Declaration give a minimalist approach to the respect of the dignity of every person. There is thus more to be found in the Buddhist tradition according to those scholars.¹⁶ In the same way Buddhist scholars find incredible assets in their tradition for the respect of human rights, I strongly believe that there is lot to be found in the traditions of Rwanda and Burundi for the respect of the dignity of every *Murundi* or *Murundikazi* (every Burundian, male or female) and of *Munyarwanda* or *Munyarwandakazi* (every Rwandan, male or female) and for reconciliation. Many traditional virtues in Burundi and in Rwanda give preeminence to the community over the individual. This makes the reintegration of an individual into the community easier and even the readmission into full membership of a wrongdoer. There is a proverb in Kirundi that says "*Igito gitabwa iwabo*" which translates "there is no other place to throw the wicked into than his own community." This is what made Graybill say that "in African traditional thought, the emphasis is on restoring evildoers back into the community rather than punishing them."¹⁷ Tutu says: "if I undermine your humanity, I dehumanize myself. You must do what you can to maintain this great harmony, which is perpetually undermined by

¹⁴ John Witte, Jr & M. Christian Green, *Religion & Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 108

¹⁵ Runzo, 255

¹⁶ Runzo, 251-252

¹⁷ Graybill, 33

resentment, anger, desire for vengeance. That's why African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive."¹⁸

As we have seen earlier, people of Rwanda and of Burundi have been generally living in harmony and in peace. About Rwanda, Jean Pottier writes: "Living together in harmony has been part of the Rwandan society, and traditional values supported a culture of peace. A proverb in Kinyarwanda says, *Aho amahoro ari, umuhoro urogosha* (where there is peace, a machete could cut the hair)."¹⁹ There is a similar proverb in Kirundi with almost the same words with a corresponding meaning. The deep meaning of this proverb is that a machete which is normally designed to cut branches of a tree can be used to cut the hair in a situation where there is peace and harmony. In other words, in the minds of Burundians and Rwandans, peace is everything and can allow the occurrence of everything positive. Burundians and Rwandans show that by the formula of greeting: *Amahoro!* (Peace). They have understood that this is the best wish one can formulate towards others. This was emphasized by the participants in the Burundian peace agreement in Arusha. We read in this Accord: "Peace, stability, justice, the rule of law, national reconciliation, unity and development are the major aspirations of the people of Burundi."²⁰ Let us now see in details those deep cultural values of Burundi and Rwanda that had built peace and harmony in these countries for many years before the arrival of the colonizers.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*. (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 6

²⁰ Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Introduction

The virtues of *Ubuntu* and *Ubusabane*.

In both countries, Burundi and Rwanda, the concept *Ubuntu* means the same thing: the quality of being human. As we have seen, the language spoken in Burundi, *Kirundi*, is very close to the one used in Rwanda, *Kinyarwanda*, in such a way that many words can be used interchangeably in both countries. The concept of *Ubuntu* is included in this category of common words used in both countries and which have the same meaning. To have a quality of "*Ubuntu*" means that you have what it takes to live a genuine human life which is different from any form of bestiality. It means that you are true to what you are called to be as a human. For example, if someone is said to lack "*Ubuntu*", this means that there is no difference between him and an animal. Everybody is afraid of him and he himself finds that he is not fit to live with others. The one who lacks "*Ubuntu*" is the one who is trying to build his own world without any connection with the world around him. He is withdrawing from the community and is depriving himself of what the community has to offer. In the traditional Burundi and Rwanda, people were aware of the necessity to build unbreakable bounds with one another. This quality is not something Burundians and Rwandans have imported from outside. It was acquired as an outcome of everyday practice and realization how life can be meaningless and unfocused when people isolate from one another.

The virtue of "*Ubuntu*" is among the virtues that have been wiped away by the colonizers because this concept was alien to the western individualized culture from which the colonizers came. This virtue of *Ubuntu* has been highly instrumental in coping with land conflicts that were frequent in the traditional Burundi and Rwanda. In times where people did not succeed to sort out problems of land, the virtue of *Ubuntu* would

help to go past the conflict and build again friendship. There is a proverb in Kirundi that says: "*Igitsindo si igitsima*" which translates "one's victory is not what he ends up possessing". This reminds us of the passage in the Scripture where a man went to complain before Jesus by saying: "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." We know how Jesus responded to such a request: "My friend," he replied, "who appointed me your judge, or the arbitrator of your claims?" Then he said, "Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs."²¹

In Burundi and in Rwanda, people were well aware that it is through talking and listening to each other, as happened in South Africa, that people can come to terms with their past conflicts. There is a proverb in *Kinyarwanda* that says: "*Ifumbire y'ubucuti ni amagambo*" which translates "the fertilizer of friendship is made of encounters". The lack of *Ubuntu* has brought much damage in Burundi and in Rwanda, including the reluctance to sit together for long abiding solutions to the ethnic crisis. As already mentioned, people who used to see each other as sharing the same destiny have ended up seeing each other as enemies and competitors for the control of the country and its wealth. In Rwanda, local authorities dread to hear the word "negotiation" with the former "*génocidaires*". In Burundi, the current Government does not want to sit with people it calls "the enemies of the Country". To see the other as a brother, no matter what he has done, or the person without whom I cannot find fulfillment, is now lacking in Burundi and in Rwanda, because the notion of *Ubuntu* has almost disappeared. The proverb in *Kirundi* (The Burundian language) that says: "*Umuntu agirwa n'uwundi*" which translates "a person is what he is because of others" is no longer applicable in Burundi

²¹ Luke 12:13-15

and in Rwanda as long as there are people who are still excluded from the construction of the nation. In Ancient Burundi and Rwanda, the practice of hospitality made possible by the virtue of *Ubuntu* made people undertake long journeys without fear because they were sure to find a warm welcome wherever they would go. Hospitality to the stranger was very strong in Ancient Burundi and Rwanda. He or she, being a human person, was the sole reason to welcome him (or her). All these good practices were made possible by the virtue of *Ubuntu* that states that my humanity and my well-being are bound with yours. I cannot see you as a stranger who has nothing to do with me. If I continue to see you as a stranger, I would be denying myself. This is the deep meaning of *Ubuntu* in the context of Burundi and Rwanda. This understanding of interrelatedness and interdependence was turned upside down by the colonizers with his policy of "divide and rule" as we have seen. It is necessary to understand the urgency of re-imagining ways for living out this important virtue of *Ubuntu* first because it corresponds to the essence of what Africans in general are and Rwandans and Burundians in particular, and secondly wherever this notion has been called upon for the rebirth of a nation like in South Africa, it has worked perfectly. There is no reason for it to not work in Burundi and in Rwanda. The past experience of Burundi and Rwanda is not too desperate that it would be impossible for these countries to make a salvific "U turn". In my opinion, the fact that *Hutus* and *Tutsis* were calling each other either *Umucafu* (dust) or *inyenzi* (coacroaches) is a clear sign that in both countries, the recognition of the humanity in the other made possible by the virtue of *Ubuntu* had somehow undergone serious wounds that need healing.

The virtue of *Ubusabane*, used only in Rwanda is very close to the virtue of *Ubuntu*. It carries within it the notion of togetherness as for the concept of *Ubuntu* but *Ubusabane* is especially used to characterize relations between people who are different from one another or who used to fight. It denotes a willingness to overcome the divisions of the past and to remember that it is in diversity that people are called to embrace togetherness. This virtue along with the virtue of *Ubuntu* have almost been forgotten in Burundi and in Rwanda after colonization and the bad experiences of ethnic confrontation. Now, what is prized is no longer the belonging to a united people or nation but the participation in the activities of a political party or the belonging to an ethnic group. And most of the time, political parties have come to be identified as the voices of one particular ethnic group at the expense of other ones.

The virtues of *Ubushingantahe*, *Agacyiro* and *Inyangamugayo*.

The virtue of *Ubushingantahe* used mainly in Burundi is an uncompromising integrity. It is to be steadfast to the good to be done, no matter the cost, and to never compromise one's stand for justice for all. People endowed with such a quality, called *Bashingantahe*, had, before the contact with the western colonization, the trust of the whole population in such a way that they had come to be genuine arbitrators of conflicts of lands and many other conflicts. The non-wavering honesty of *Bashingantahe* coupled with their omni-impartiality made this virtue attractive to many. Many people were longing to reach such a promotion. People came to take this quality seriously that rituals and swearing in were organized to incorporate new members in this dignified position. Along with the virtues mentioned above, this notion also has been wiped away by the colonizers. The notion of *Ubushingantahe* no longer has the prestige it used to have.

Philippe Ntahombaye and Liboire Kagabo along with a group of Burundian experts made a survey meant to gather impressions from some Burundians about the virtue of *Ubushingantahe* in the aftermath of the 1993 crisis in Burundi. This is what they wrote:

The crisis due to war and killings that Burundi has been going through over the past years has severely handicapped the development of its people. It occurred to some people to wonder: Are there no advisors? Are there no *Bashingantahe* but only lawless people and those who incite others to kill, destroy and steal? Some people answered that there are no more *Bashingantahe*, because, had there been some, the disaster which, by the way is still going on, would not have happened. Others said that there are still *Bashingantahe* because, according to them, if there were none, the situation would have become worse. Still other people, although not publicly, said that in certain areas, some *Bashingantahe* advised successfully others not to do evil. In this way, they prevented disaster, stopped it or reduced its extent.²²

In Rwanda, a notion that is similar to the notion of *Ubushingantahe* is *Inyangamugayo*. The literal translation of this concept is “the one who strives for a moral excellence in such a way that no one can find a fault with him”. People with such a virtue called “*Inyangamugayo*” were given the best roles in ancient Rwanda. They were likely to promote the common good in the society more than anyone else because of the character of integrity and irreproachability they were displaying. This notion also lost its strength in the time of colonization.

The virtues of *Ubushingantahe* and *Inyangamugayo* after losing their strength have been gradually replaced by some other anti-values. For example, there are two proverbs, especially in Burundi, that show and express the loss of such values: “*Mpemuke ndamuke*” which means “Let me betray so as to survive” and *Umugabo ni uworya utwiwe n’utw’abandi* which translates “The genuine human being is the one who, after

²² Philippe Ntahombaye and Liboire Kagabo, *Traditional Institutions of Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts* (Bujumbura: University of Burundi, Life and Peace Institute, 2003), 1

enjoying his own property, will go on to invade what belongs to others.” This is to show that when values are trodden under foot, what will follow will be their replacement by anti-values. This will have a tremendous effect in the way the rights of individuals will be defended. With the virtue of moral integrity and impartiality having been trodden under foot, what will remain will be in both countries what is called in the Burundian language *Nsumirinda*, which translates “People who cannot stand for the truth and justice, but who are interested in gathering goods for their stomach”. We understand that in this situation, the poor and the downtrodden will not be defended. Only the rich and the powerful will enjoy the goods of the nation at the expense of the weak and the voiceless.

The virtue of *Agacyiro* in the Rwandan language means “value”. When people say in Rwanda *Uwagacyiro*, they mean a person endowed with an inherent value, a noncompromising value that cannot be shaken by dangers or threats. It is a kind of Socratic behavior that does not comply uncritically with what is not right or with what is devoid of honesty or truth. Persons called *Abagacyiro* did not show up during the time of genocide in Rwanda. People were more concerned about their political party affiliation and their ethnic group. It is said that the genocide in Rwanda spread so quickly because people were very disposed to listening uncritically to what their hierarchical rulers were telling them. Otherwise, how can one explain that a neighbor with whom you have lived so well for many years turns out suddenly to be your worst enemy and ends up killing you for no other reason whatsoever than your belonging to such a political party or such an ethnic group? Hence, the virtues of *Ubushingantahe*, *Agacyiro* and *Inyangamugayo* are critically needed if Burundi and Rwanda want to stand again and get rid of the divisions of the past that led to the violations of human rights, especially the right to life.

The virtues of *Ubupfasoni* and *Ubugwaneza*.

These virtues were practiced mainly in Burundi. The virtue of *Ubupfasoni* often ascribed to women, means a right conduct full of self-restraint and discretion. A woman with the virtue of *Ubupfasoni* is pleased by all and is a good candidate for marriage. She does not speak arrogantly and is not easily irritable. Even if she gets angry, she is smart enough to not express it and she forgives easily, she does not render evil for evil. People have come to find this virtue admirable in such a way that nowadays, it can be ascribed to all, not only to women. If someone is said to behave with *Urupfasoni*, it means that he/she behaves in an exemplary way, is easygoing and attracts the admiration of all. The lack of such a value has led many to the point of not respecting the other in his or her difference and even belittling the other, especially during the electoral campaigns. The value of an individual would therefore be measured by the intensity and energy he/she would use to denigrate the dignity of the other who does not share the same political party affiliation or ethnic group.

Close to the virtue of *Ubupfasoni* is the virtue of *Ubugwaneza*. This word means literally "To fall down in a positive manner". Burundians were aware that there can be occasions to fall, to not succeed, to not be understood or to undergo injustice. Someone with the virtue of *Ubugwaneza* is not shaken by misfortunes that befall him. He does not get rude to others because of the difficulties he has in life. He continues to be equal to himself, to be easygoing, good to others where others would be full of bitterness and harshness. This means people with such qualities are highly needed in times of generalized turmoil because they are the ones who are most likely to boost the morale of others when it goes down. I remember that in Burundi and in Rwanda during the somber

days of 1993 and 1994, there were some politicians who were using the word *agashavu* which translates a small anger to justify why their members had slaughtered their neighbors. They were explaining that it was because their dear president had been killed. To justify such killings means that the virtue "*Ubugwaneza*" had disappeared. The former Regional Superior of Jesuits in Burundi and in Rwanda, Father Tite Mutemangando, lost almost all his family during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He did not choose to hate and get revenge on the ethnic group that was responsible for the slaughter of his family. Immaculée Ilibagiza, a survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, was one day faced with the man who had killed her family and who was tirelessly looking for her, yelling her name where she was hiding in the bathroom. It is heartbreaking to see her attitude when she met this murderer, the one who was so close to killing her, who was raging, yelling her name and thirsty for her blood. She uttered these beautiful words to him: "I forgive you". The man who made arrangements for Immaculée to meet the murderer of her family was dumbfounded when he witnessed this scene of forgiveness. He said: "What was that all about, Immaculée? That was the man who murdered your family. I brought him to you to question ... to spit on if you wanted to. But you forgave him! How could you do that? Why did you forgive him?" Immaculée had no other answer than this: "Forgiveness is all I have to offer."²³ These attitudes of forgiveness display so well the virtue of *Ubugwaneza*. If in Rwanda and in Burundi, there had been many people with the virtue of *Ubugwaneza*, which means people who "fall down in a positive way", the tragedies that happened in those countries would not have had the same depth and viciousness. There is a proverb in *Kirundi* which says: *Ihorihori yamaze umuryango*,

²³ Immaculée Ilibagiza, *Left to tel. Discovering God amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (New York: Hay House, 2006), 204

meaning "vengeance has wiped away the entire human family". The experience of South Africa is really suggestive. Many people in South Africa accepted giving up their right to get revenge or to claim for retribution for the sake of building a better future for all South Africans. These people in my view were genuinely endowed with the virtue of *Ubugwaneza*.

Importance of religious considerations for the success of reconciliation in Rwanda and in Burundi.

We have seen in the third chapter how religious considerations were really present in the conception and the proceedings of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. This was so because South Africa is a country with a majority of its population who are practicing Christians. Rachida Manjoo writes: "The vast majority of South Africans are Church members for whom Christianity is the most important ideological frame of reference. Biblical language and Christian discourse resonate powerfully, and theological discourse on political matters is taken seriously."²⁴

In the same way, Rwanda and Burundi are countries with a majority of Christians. This means that a biblical or theological language of reconciliation can receive a warm welcome in these populations. Immaculée Ilibagiza, a survival of the 1994 genocide, was able to forgive those who killed her family. She explained that she owed the strength to forgive to her relationship with God. She writes: "No matter where I go, others seem astonished that I've been able to forgive those who persecuted me and murdered my family. People often tell me that there is something different or remarkable

²⁴ Rashida Manjoo, *Peace and Reconciliation in South Africa: What lessons?* (Sri Lanka: Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum, 2003), 15.

about me, saying, “You’re a saint for forgiving those killers the way you did. You truly are a saint.” Of course I’m not a saint. Nor is there anything remarkable about me—I still struggle with pain, fear, and anger like every other human does. But whenever those feelings surface, I remember how God saved me and gave me strength.”²⁵ Immaculée goes on to give another testimony of someone who underwent almost the same ordeal as she did. It is the testimony of Jean Baptiste Ganza, a Jesuit priest, who is currently the Jesuit Regional Superior of Rwanda-Burundi Region. At the time he gave this testimony, Jean Baptiste Ganza was a Scholastic (a Jesuit in studies). He was orphaned in the 1994 genocide and lost many members of his family. He himself survived because when the genocide started in Rwanda, he was teaching at a high school in Congo. This is what Jean Baptiste Ganza said after trying to reread his experience: "After what happened, all I felt was hatred. My life was over, and I couldn't see a future. But one day I just knew that God was the only way... and that's why I'm here. I've come to study with the Jesuits because God has called me. I'm going to become a priest."²⁶ Both Ganza and Immaculée met at "Centre Christus", a spiritual Center run by Jesuits in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda. They both had come to Centre Christus for spiritual nourishment and they met unexpectedly after many years of separation. They are cousins to each other. This is how Immaculée gives an account of their meeting at "Centre Christus": "It turned out that Ganza had been teaching French at a Jesuit college in Zaire when the genocide started. Returning to Rwanda afterwards, he found that his mother and too many relatives and friends to count had been murdered. I took my cousin's hand in mine; we shared the same pain. We talked about what had happened to our country, our lives, and our loved ones.

²⁵ Immaculee Ilibagiza, *Led by Faith. Rising from the Ashes of the Rwandan Genocide*. (New York: Hay House, 2008), XV-XVI

²⁶ *Ibid*, 41-42

His father had died years before. So, like me, Ganza had been orphaned by the holocaust. Miraculously, we'd both come to the Christus center to connect with God."²⁷ For both of them, God was the only way out to come out from the nightmares of the past and be able to see the perpetrators with renewed eyes. Ganza has written extensively about the genocide in Rwanda. Not one single time has he ever shown hatred towards *Hutus* who murdered his family. Immaculée is always invited in many parts of the United States and in some other countries to give a living testimony about forgiveness. She always refers to God as her strength and her shield who protected her when she was confined in a tiny bathroom along with seven other women during three long months during the Holocaust that struck Rwanda in 1994. After what happened in Rwanda, Immaculée is in favor of having people in Rwanda committed to reconciliation and forgiveness and especially pastors and priests. She writes: " Rwanda was (is) in dire need of new priests and pastors. The genocide had turned the clergy into killers and victims, and churches - which had always provided sanctuary to *Tutsis* during earlier acts of genocide - had been among the worst killing fields in the country. Entire communities had been betrayed by their church leaders²⁸ and slaughtered in the pews by the thousands."²⁹ Tutu explains the spiritual strength of the TRC by the fact that there were four ordained ministers in the Commission. He writes (as already quoted in this work): "there were four ordained persons and that was bound to have a marked influence on our deliberations and on how we carried out our work."³⁰ Paul the Apostle would recommend strongly to his spiritual sons, Titus and Timothy, to put enough diligence in choosing spiritual leaders in each

²⁷ Ibid, 41

²⁸ For the Church's involvement in the Rwandan genocide, Pope Francis has recently publicly apologized.

²⁹ Immaculée, *Led by faith*, 42

³⁰ Tutu, 80

community for the wellbeing of the whole Church. In the same way, to have good spiritual leaders in Rwanda and in Burundi can have tremendous good effects on the process of reconciliation and of rebirth of these nations. The famous Saint John Mary Vianney, the Parish Priest of Ars in France, would say that if a parish is left without a priest or a pastor, people would be tempted to worship beasts. In the Catholic Church, a priest stands for God and his presence makes a big difference in his ecclesial community. In the same way, a pastor or a priest who is not doing his job well, can be a stumbling block for the entire ecclesial community, if not for the entire human family.

The need of a harmonious integration of religious considerations with cultural assets of Burundi and Rwanda for a better cohabitation between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*.

We have seen that the context of South Africa is a good example of a harmonious inculturation of the Gospel message. South Africa has been able to take advantage of both the deep meaning of love, compassion, forgiveness as taught by the Gospels but also of the jurisprudence of *Ubuntu* that gives more importance to togetherness, to communion rather than to strife, vengeance and apartness. No wonder this experience succeeded because in my view it had God's anointing in it. Jesus said that he had not come to abolish but to accomplish or fulfill.³¹ Thus, what missionaries did in Rwanda and in Burundi by neglecting or wiping away cultural assets of Rwanda and Burundi was fundamentally wrong, as we have seen, and was against God's will. Reconciliation requires moving on from the strife of the past to forgiveness that gives a second chance to former perpetrators, what God does and as the cultures of Rwanda and Burundi do also. Graybill would say about the experience of South Africa: "The fact that enemies can be reintegrated into the community is based not only on the expectation that black Christians

³¹ Matthew 5:17

would forgive as their religion teaches them, but also on the understanding of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*.³² As Tutu would say, "African jurisprudence is rather restorative and not retributive."³³ But this African wisdom needs to be enlightened and fortified by the originality of the gospel message, especially Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The originality of the Sermon on the Mount is that it teaches a love that requires more than the usual precepts of justice. Justice normally means giving each what is due to him. The Sermon on the Mount does not give the injunction to give what is due to each one but to go beyond that: "If one slaps you on one cheek, give the other one as well. If one asks you to do one mile with him, do even two miles with him,"³⁴ etc. The love that can extend itself to one's enemies is critically needed in the process of reconciliation Burundi and Rwanda need to engage in. Vincent MacNamara points out, quoting Charles E. Curran that "non-Christians can and do arrive at the same ethical conclusions and also embrace and treasure even the loftiest of proximate motives, virtues and goals which Christians in the past have wrongly claimed for themselves."³⁵ But at the same time, MacNamara acknowledges, on the question of agape that is characteristic of Christianity, this: "Christians cannot be satisfied with an interpretation of love that stops at duty. Its only model of morality is Jesus. And to love as Jesus loved is to love in a way that goes far beyond not injuring others, that is not satisfied with merely acting impartially and fairly, that involves a concern that even forgets one's own claim or rights."³⁶ This said, deep Burundian cultural values of *Ubuntu*, *Ubufasoni*, *Ubushingantahe*, and

³² Graybill, 25

³³ Ibid, 33

³⁴ Matthew 5: 43-48

³⁵ Vincent MacNamara, *Faith and Ethics. Recent Roman Catholicism*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1985), 165

³⁶ Ibid, 176

Ubugwaneza and their counterpart meanings in the context of Rwanda, namely *Ubuntu*, *Agacyiro*, *Inyangamugayo* and *Ubusabane* are necessary for the process of reconciliation those countries are called to engage in but also they need a motivation and an agape teaching that Christianity is able to provide them.

To stress the need of a healthy collaboration between the Gospel and particular cultures, the second Vatican's document *Lumen Gentium* says this:

Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Savior wills that all men be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel.³⁷

Those cultural values, since they support the well-being of the human person, are not in contradiction with the Gospel and are even willed by God or come from Him. The Letter of James in the Scripture supports such an assertion. It says: "Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens."³⁸

³⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*. No 16

³⁸ James 1:17

General conclusion

The road to reconciliation and forgiveness, far from being the exclusivity of a religious endeavor, is non-avoidable in the process of finding healing in our wounded humanity. We have seen this fact with the example of South Africa which, in the process of seeking a lasting solution for the question of living together between Whites and Blacks, has chosen a smart way of dealing with its somber past with the perspective of moving forward in the direction of development opened to all South Africans. This was made possible by the willingness of South Africans to embark in this path. It was an ambitious but achievable route.

Burundi and Rwanda, two countries which have been living in a situation of conflict between *Hutus* and *Tutsis* for many years, need critically inspiring examples like the one of South Africa shown through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As we have seen, the success of the South African model lay in its harmonious inspiration of both religious considerations and deep cultural riches of this country. These considerations allowed the process to be more inclusive, more cohesive and more future oriented rather than being hindered or handicapped by the past. This was a tactical choice that revealed itself afterwards more rewarding and more fruitful. This is the reason why I think that this model can be inspiring for Burundi and Rwanda which are struggling to come out from the tribal divisions of the past. The same way South Africa got inspired by the African jurisprudence of *Ubuntu*, Burundi and Rwanda can take advantage of the cultural values that had been forgotten or neglected from the colonial era as we have tried to show it. The values of *Ubuntu*, *Ubushingantahe*, *Ubupfasoni* and *Ubugwaneza* in the context of Burundi and *Ubuntu*, *Agacyiro*,

Inyangamugayo and *Ubusabane* in the context of Rwanda have a tremendous role to play in the process of reconciliation and respect of basic human rights in Burundi and in Rwanda as we have seen. Those values had been cultivated in the consciousness of Burundians and Rwandans through the means of education carried out by elders towards the younger generations. The system of instructing the young during evening gatherings after meals whereby the youth were keen to listen to the wisdom of the elders has slowly disappeared in both countries. It is now sadly a matter of fact that the radio, television and internet are more and more becoming the babysitters in many households, including some rural areas. This is to say that it will not be enough for Burundi and Rwanda to show a willingness to retrieve those cultural values that have disappeared. It is also necessary to rehabilitate the traditional means by which those values were preserved and handed on. Nowadays, parents, because of lack of time, leave the major part of the education of their children to the School or to hired nursing persons. This is not likely to help the preservation of deep cultural values that had been considered the pillars of harmonious cohesion between populations for many years. In my opinion, the school cannot replace the warmth, the genuineness and the depth of the parental education.

As I tried to show it in this work, religious considerations cannot be left out in the process of reconciliation Burundi and Rwanda are called to engage in. Christianity that is practiced by the majority of Burundians and Rwandans can constitute a major contribution in the process of reconciliation and of rebuilding harmonious relations between *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. Christianity, especially, Jesus' teaching of love of the other, a love that includes the love of one's enemies can be an irreplaceable motivation for the practice of the tolerance of the other or at least the respect of his dignity, regardless of his

past mistakes. The sad events that history has recorded in both Rwanda and Burundi, where the majority of their populations are believing Christians, show that evangelization in those countries has not been done in a genuine manner. Those countries need what Pope John Paul II called a new evangelization, an evangelization which this Pope called the building of a civilization of love. Pope Paul VI in his famous discourse in Kampala in 1969, called Africans to be missionaries to their own peoples. Pope Paul VI wanted to stress an evangelization of Africa that would be carried out by Africans themselves and an evangelization that would be highly grounded on the respect of realities on the ground with all that this implies as inculturation. After all, God wants always to reveal God's self in the ordinary events of life and in cultural values in which God is not absent at all. As we have seen, those values don't contradict the Gospel but rather they are a real preparation to it. Burundi and Rwanda, if they want to embark in a genuine process of reconciliation, a reconciliation built on the value of truthfulness like in South Africa, have a lot to gain by letting themselves be inspired by the Word of God and their cultural heritage. Burundians and Rwandans should bear in mind this proverb that exists in both countries: *Imana ifasha uwifashije*. Which translates "God helps the one who is willing to help himself." St Ignatius of Loyola would put it this way: "Pray as if everything depended upon God, then act as if everything depended on you."

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