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A Generation After Genocide: Catholic Reconciliation in Rwanda

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Abstract
Despite the Catholic Church's majority status and deep historical influence in Rwanda, Catholic reconciliation work in postgenocide Rwanda has received scant scholarly attention. This article addresses this lacuna through analysis of four separate Rwandan Catholic reconciliation initiatives in prison ministry, parish ministry, justice and peace commissions, and a spiritual retreat center. The author argues that these case studies provide a theological tapestry of reconciliation themes concerning ritual, community, dialogue, forgiveness, and grassroots leadership. Deep ambiguities remain, especially concerning the institutional Church's need to repent for corporate complicity in the 1994 genocide.

Keywords
Catholic Church in Rwanda, forgiveness, *gacaca*, genocide, politics in Rwanda, reconciliation theology, ritual

For over a century, the Catholic Church has been the single most important religious institution in Rwanda. Missionaries of Africa (also known as "White Fathers") first arrived in the country in 1900. After several decades of limited conversions, the Church in Rwanda under the leadership of Bishop Léon Classe (1874–1945) began successfully recruiting Tutsi elites in the 1920s and 1930s. By 1950, Rwanda had become "the nearest approach to a Catholic country in black

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Africa,"[1] led by a Catholic king and predominantly Catholic chiefs. Even the Hutu Social Revolution of 1959–1962 did not fundamentally alter the Catholic character of Rwandan political culture; several of the Hutu elites who led the revolution were former seminarians with close ties to local Catholic missionaries and bishops. The Catholic percentage of the Rwandan population grew markedly in the 1960s as Hutu peasants flocked to the Church. By the early 1990s, an estimated two-thirds of Rwandans were baptized Catholics, and another quarter belonged to Anglican and Protestant churches. Less than a century after the introduction of Christianity, Rwanda seemed to be a remarkable example of successful evangelization.[2]

Such optimism was shattered in 1994. Over the course of 100 days between April and July, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans lost their lives in a government-directed genocide against Tutsi and Hutu political opponents. The genocide also tore the fabric of Rwanda's national church. As has been attested in a host of critical studies, tens of thousands were killed on the grounds of Catholic parishes, schools, and medical centers.[3] A significant minority of Catholic priests, religious, and lay catechists actively collaborated in the killings, and the Catholic hierarchy was notable for its silence during the early weeks of the genocide. Thousands of lay Catholics were killed by other lay Catholics; both groups often clutched rosaries in their hands. Although the genocide revolved around political and ethnic rather than religious identities, many have commented on the failure of Catholic social identity to resist the violence. Speaking to a group of Rwandan Catholic leaders shortly after the genocide, the papal envoy, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, famously observed, "The blood of tribalism proved stronger than the waters of baptism."[4] Although Pope John Paul II forcefully condemned the genocide in its first days, the Vatican's tone changed after the violence ended. In many cases, Rome seemed more concerned with protecting clergy and religious accused of genocide than with encouraging full accountability for the local church.[5] In sum, the genocide severely tarnished the institutional reputation and moral credibility of the Catholic Church both inside and outside Rwanda.

1. Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950–1975* (New York: Cambridge University, 1979) 62.
2. On Rwanda's Catholic history, see J. J. Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (New York: Oxford University, 2014).
3. Some of the more influential works on this genocide include Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth, eds., *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon, 2004); Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010); Saskia Hoyweghen, "The Disintegration of the Catholic Church of Rwanda: A Study of the Fragmentation of Political and Religious Authority," *African Affairs* 95 (1996) 379–401. For a balanced first-person account that neither exonerates nor blames the Church for the genocide, see André Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda*, trans. Carina Tertsakian (Sterling, VA: Pluto, 1998).
4. Quoted in J. J. Kritzinger, "The Rwandan Tragedy as Public Indictment of Christian Mission," *Missionalia* 24 (1996) 340–57, at 345.
5. See Matt Kantz, "Vatican Accuses Rwandans of Defaming the Church," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 4, 1999; Matt Kantz, "Vatican Defends Priest Accused of Genocide,"

For most commentators on the Rwandan Catholic Church, this is where the story ends, namely, with the complicity of the institutional Catholic Church in the 1994 genocide.[6] In turn, if one surveys the voluminous literature on reconciliation efforts in postgenocide Rwanda, "theology" and "the Church" emerge as relative afterthoughts, overshadowed in most cases by the national *gacaca* process.[7] Yet even as its numbers have fallen, the Catholic Church remains Rwanda's majority church two decades after the genocide. Parishes are filled on Sundays, and the Catholic Church continues to operate an unmatched network of educational, healthcare, and social ministries. Christian theological discourse is a lingua franca for much of the citizenry. And although Rwandan Protestant and especially Anglican reconciliation efforts have garnered more visibility in the United States in recent years,[8] reconciliation is a pastoral priority for the Rwandan Catholic Church. What has been missing, however, is theological analysis of these Catholic reconciliation efforts, especially by scholars outside Rwanda.

With this article I seek to address this lacuna. I begin with the broader contexts of the field of Christian reconciliation theology on the one hand, and Rwanda's cultural and political discourse of national reconciliation on the other. The heart of the essay analyzes four grassroots Catholic pastoral initiatives in contemporary Rwanda. First, I examine the prison ministry of the Good Samaritans, a group I see as embodying a Pauline vision of Christians as "ambassadors of reconciliation." Second, I discuss the *gacaca nkirisitu* (Christian *gacaca*) program at Mushaka Parish in southwestern Rwanda, offering insight into how Catholic parishes have used liturgical ritual and catechetical formation to build social trust at the local level. Third, the Catholic Church's legion of Justice and Peace Commissions represent the Church's commitment to connecting reconciliation and social justice, especially concerning issues of land distribution and fair trials. Fourth, I consider the interpersonal reconciliation ministry at Ruhango, a center for spiritual healing in Rwanda. Through face-to-face discussion, prayer, and reflection, Ruhango contributes to social reconciliation by healing wounded souls. Building from these case studies, I then synthesize five key themes of ritual, community, dialogue, forgiveness, and grassroots leadership. Finally, I consider the lingering ambiguity of Catholic reconciliation in postgenocide Rwanda, especially concerning the ambivalent legacy of the institutional church itself.

National Catholic Reporter, December 10, 1999; Gill Donovan, "Vatican Criticizes Conviction of Nuns in Genocide Case," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 29, 2001.

6. This has been true for my own past work on Rwanda as well; my *Rwanda Before the Genocide* considers the period through 1994 but does not address the postgenocide era.
7. Most social scientists studying reconciliation in Rwanda have focused on the national *gacaca* process discussed later in this article; church-based reconciliation ministries have been largely peripheral to their analyses.
8. See here the influential work of Anglican Bishop John Rucyahana, *The Bishop of Rwanda* (Nashville: Thomas Crown, 2006); and the related 2009 film by Laura Waters Hinson, *As We Forgive*. Anglican priest Antoine Rutayisire led Rwanda's National Unity and Reconciliation Commission for over a decade, and Rucyahana enjoys very good relations with the RPF/Kagame government. If the Catholic Church remains Rwanda's majority church, the Anglican Church may now have a better claim to being "established" in the corridors of power.

Theological Contexts: Christian Reconciliation Theology

The theology of reconciliation has emerged as an important contextual theology in the post-Cold War era. As with the rise of Latin American liberation theology in the 1960s and 1970s, social context is essential to understanding the resonance of this theology. If liberation theology emerged out of the structural poverty and deep social injustice of 1960s Latin America, reconciliation theology has emerged out of situations of tremendous sociopolitical violence in communities with large Christian populations such as Northern Uganda, Northern Ireland, Chile, South Korea, Nigeria, South Africa, and Burundi.[9] As with liberation theologians, many of the most important theologians of reconciliation have written out of their own sociocultural contexts. One thinks here of South African voices like Desmond Tutu, John W. De Gruchy, and Charles Villa-Vicencio, and the influential works of Croatian-American theologian Miroslav Volf.[10] At the same time, reconciliation and forgiveness have become broader themes for North American Protestant theology since the 1990s; I would highlight here the works of Donald Shriver, L. Gregory Jones, and, more recently, Veli-Marti Kärkkäinnen.[11]

Many political scientists and restorative justice theorists, although they would not self-identify as theologians, have recognized the salience of Christian theological themes for political reconciliation. With growing influence across the Western and non-Western worlds, the restorative justice movement—often drawing on indigenous and traditional models of justice that emphasize rehabilitation over vengeance—has

9. For case studies in recent Christian social reconciliation, see Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, eds., *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997); and David Little, ed., *Peacemakers in Action*: *Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (New York: Cambridge University, 2007). It should be noted, however, that "religious identity" was not the primary dividing point in most of these cases (Northern Ireland and Northern Nigeria would be the most prominent exceptions). Rather, shared religious faith was seen as offering a path forward in the midst of other identity-based divisions of class, ethnicity, or political party.

10. As head of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu also had considerable public influence on political reconciliation in postapartheid South Africa. His definitive work here is *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999). See also John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen; Political Reconciliation in Africa* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2009); Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) and *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

11. See Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York: Oxford University, 1995); L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); Veli-Marti Kärkkäinnen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). The works by Jones and Shriver are more substantive studies of the theology of forgiveness and social reconciliation; Kärkkäinnen uses the term "reconciliation" largely in relation to atonement theory but connects this to contemporary issues of cross-cultural social reconciliation.

been a critical intellectual, legal, and social context for the rise of reconciliation theology. One could point here to the influential works of Howard Zehr, John Paul Lederach, and Daniel Philpott.[12] Philpott in particular has convincingly argued for an "overlapping consensus" between reconciliation and restorative justice, contending that, at its core, reconciliation "equals justice that entails comprehensive restoration of right relationship."[13]

Catholic theologians are conspicuously missing in much of this literature on social reconciliation. Reflecting the Second Vatican Council's reframing of the Catholic sacrament of penance in terms of reconciliation, postconciliar North Atlantic theologians have often approached the "theology of reconciliation" first and foremost through a sacramental lens. Karl Rahner's important work on the early church's understanding of penance comes to mind, as do Kenan Osborne's, James Dallen's, and Frank O'Loughlin's more recent studies of the historical development of the sacrament of reconciliation within the Catholic tradition.[14] One can mine these works for insights into the sociopolitical contexts of communal violence that shaped Catholic reconciliation during the patristic and medieval eras, but these are subsidiary themes.[15] Even in the African context, the initial waves of postcolonial Catholic theology were marked by themes of inculturation and, to a lesser extent, liberation.[16] This has begun to change

12. See Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2002); John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University, 2005); Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (New York: Oxford University, 2012); Daniel Philpott, ed., *The Politics of Past Evil: Religion, Reconciliation, and the Dilemmas of Transitional Justice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006).
13. Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace* 20, 53.
14. See here Karl Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church*, Theological Investigations 15 (New York: Crossroads, 1982); James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance* (New York: Pueblo, 1986); Kenan Osborne, *Reconciliation and Justification: The Sacrament and Its Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1990); Frank O'Loughlin, *The Future of the Sacrament of Penance* (New York: Paulist, 2007).
15. Some of the most in-depth historical case studies in Catholic social reconciliation can be found in works on medieval social history. See, e.g., Thomas Head and Richard A. Landes, eds., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1992); and Cynthia Polecritti, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy: Bernardino of Siena and His Audience* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2000).
16. Influential works in African Catholic inculturation theology include Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective* (Gwero: Mambo, 1984); Bénézet Bujo, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1990); Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004) and *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013); Agbonkhianmege E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008). Most African liberation theology emerged from South African Protestant writers like Allan Boesak and Manas Buthelezi (see Basil Moore, *Black Theology: The South African Voice* [London: Hurst, 1973]). The most important African

in recent years, especially in light of the 2009 Second African Synod's focus on themes of reconciliation, justice, and peace.[17]

I would highlight, for example, the University of Notre Dame's Emmanuel Katongole, Ugandan native, diocesan priest and, until recently, codirector of Duke Divinity School's Center for Reconciliation; his thought has been shaped especially by that of Protestant social ethicist Stanley Hauerwas as well as by the Catholic Church's failures during the Rwanda genocide.[18] Katongole's writings have emphasized the distinctive nature of Christian social identity vis-à-vis the idolatrous identities of nationality and ethnicity alike; he has also called for the cultivation of a "new theological imagination" shaped by concrete practices of lament, forgiveness, and pilgrimage. For Katongole, a reconciling church consists of "interrupted and interrupting communities" that live according to a different story than the violent narratives of modernity, a "church of people who can say no to killing."[19] For my purposes here, I would especially highlight Katongole's theological image of the "ambassador of reconciliation," for which Katongole draws on Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 5:18–20,[20] emphasizing the connection between God's vertical reconciliation with the world through Christ and the Christian's graced call to embrace a "ministry of reconciliation" within the world. For Katongole, "ambassadors of reconciliation" are "mixed-up" groups of pilgrims and sojourners, reflecting a Pentecost jumbling of ethnicities, races, and nationalities. In the world but not of it, these ambassadors stand

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Catholic voice in liberation theology was the late Cameroonian Jesuit Jean-Marc Éla; see his *African Cry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986) and *My Faith as an African* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

17. See Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, ed., *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011); and Pope Benedict XVI's postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Africae munus*, November 19, 2011, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html. All URLs cited herein were accessed August 17, 2015.
18. Katongole's doctoral dissertation analyzes Hauerwas's social ethics; see its published version, *Beyond Universal Reason: The Relation between Religion and Ethics in the Work of Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2000). For Katongole's most developed reflections on Rwanda, see Emmanuel Katongole with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008). His most important pastoral work in reconciliation theology is Emmanuel Katongole and Chris P. Rice, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008). Katongole develops this theology more systematically in his *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).
19. Katongole and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Mirror to the Church* 133; Katongole and Rice, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* 114–15.
20. "And all this is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:18–20; all biblical quotations are taken from the New American Bible).

with and for Jesus, embodying a "kingdom realism" that challenges modernity's performative narratives of race, tribe, or nation-state.[21] As we will see, this theological image of "ambassador of reconciliation" is a critical one in the Rwandan context, especially for the Good Samaritan prison ministry.

I would also highlight the work of Robert Schreiter, an American Precious Blood priest and foremost North American Catholic scholar working on the theology of reconciliation.[22] In addition to his writings, Schreiter has influenced generations of missionaries and ministers through his teaching at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Like Katongole, Schreiter highlights Paul's theological emphasis on "new creation," whereby God initiates a life-giving relationship that leads to both personal and social transformation. Reconciliation does not simply return us to the status quo ante; it takes us to a new place. In this sense, reconciliation entails not just "restoration" but also "revisioning"—a new way of seeing. Like resurrection, the resulting "new creation" was often unimaginable in the previous paradigm.[23] Second, Schreiter highlights the need for contextual studies of social reconciliation. As with fauna and flora, reconciliation practices that flourish in one habitat can wither and die in another. Fruitful theologies of reconciliation will likewise vary according to the local "soil." Third, Schreiter argues that the Catholic Church can offer three key contributions to social reconciliation—a robust spirituality of reconciliation based on the Gospels, deep ritual, and sacramental resources, and the potential to create local communities of reconciliation marked by hope, memory, and trust.[24] As we will see, the Rwandan case I sketch here offers such a contextual study in Catholic social reconciliation reflecting the importance of biblical visions, ritual, and community.

Political Contexts: The National Discourse of Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda

Although I focus here on Catholic reconciliation efforts in postgenocide Rwanda, I cannot discuss them without considering the national and cultural discourse and practices of national reconciliation in contemporary Rwanda. The "Ndiumunyarwanda" or "I am Rwandan" campaign embodies the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) government's

21. Katongole and Rice, *Reconciling All Things* 13. In this sense Katongole argues that he is presenting neither a heroic nor a utopian narrative; he and Rice support their vision by providing numerous examples of "kingdom realism" in Africa, Korea, and the United States.
22. Among Schreiter's many works, I would highlight *The Ministry of Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); and "A Practical Theology of Healing, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation," in *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010) 366–97. Growing out of the international Catholic Peacebuilding Network, this latter volume also includes essays by leading Catholic theologians such as Kenneth Himes, Lisa Sowle Cahill, and Peter Phan.
23. Schreiter, *Ministry of Reconciliation* 15.
24. Ibid. 126–30.

approach to national reconciliation.[25] In its vision, Rwanda will overcome its past violence and social divisions by replacing ethnicity and other "potentially divisive substate loyalties with an undifferentiating concept of Rwandan-ness."[26] This campaign is often associated with the Kinyarwanda phrase "*ubumwe n'ubwiyunge*," roughly translated as "national unity and reconciliation." As Jennie Burnet notes, the term "*ubwiyunge*" literally means "to bring together by placing end to end," connoting traditional concepts of government and military authority.[27] In postgenocide Rwanda, there is thus a close—many commentators would say too close—association between "reconciliation," national unity, and hierarchical political authority.

In this vein, the RPF government has instituted a wide range of practices and symbols as part of what Susan Thomsen terms an "ambitious social engineering project to forge a unified Rwandan identity."[28] These include eliminating public reference to Hutu and Tutsi ethnic identities; creating *ingando* "reeducation" camps for former Hutu *génocidaires* and other political opponents; adopting a new national flag and anthem; mandating community participation in *umuganda* work projects on the last Saturday of every month; organizing one-day seminars on national identity; and instituting annual genocide remembrance periods between April and July.[29] One could argue that the "I am Rwandan" campaign even has its own martyrs, namely, a group of secondary school girls killed by Hutu militia in 1997 for refusing to separate on ethnic grounds, declaring that they were only Rwandans.[30] Western critics like Thomsen, along with many Rwandan expatriates, see

25. The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) party grew out of the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) that invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990, sparking a three-year civil war. The war came to a temporary end in 1993 with the Arusha peace accords. The RPA mobilized again following the outbreak of the genocide, ultimately taking Kigali in July 1994 and ending the genocide. After a brief period of power-sharing, the RPF party under the leadership of former military general Paul Kagame came to dominate postgenocide Rwanda. Kagame has served as president since 2003, and in 2017 is expected to stand for a third presidential term.
26. Martha Mutisi, "Local Conflict Resolution in Rwanda: The Case of Abunzi Mediators," in *Integrating Traditional and Modern Conflict Resolution: Experiences from Selected Cases in Eastern and the Horn of Africa, Africa Dialogue Monograph Series* 2 (2012) 41–74, at 54, special issue, ed. Martha Mutisi and Kwesi Sansculotte-Greenidge.
27. Jennie Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2012) 151. "Ubwiyunge" also stems from the Kinyarwanda root word used for "setting a broken bone" (Timothy Longman and Théonèste Rutagenwa, "Memory, Identity, and Community in Rwanda," in *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*, ed. Eric Stover and Harvey Weinstein [New York: Cambridge University, 2014] 162–82, at 173).
28. Susan Thomsen, *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2013) 110.
29. Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us* 154–55; Thomsen, *Whispering Truth to Power* 111–24. "*Génocidaires*" is a French term referring to the masses of "ordinary perpetrators" of the genocide, including local militia members, neighbors who killed other neighbors, rapists, bystanders who failed to defend victims, and property looters.
30. This story has been retold in many works; see esp. Emmanuel Katongole, *A Future for Africa: Critical Essays in Christian Social Imagination* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton, 2005) 112.

such practices as manipulating the "language of ethnic unity and social inclusion . . . to consolidate the political and economic power of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front."[31] On the other hand, more sympathetic voices—including many Catholic leaders who spoke with me in Rwanda—express appreciation for a government committed to the ideal of reconciliation, whatever its practical shortcomings. As one leader told me, the alternative ideals—such as the genocidal ideal of purifying society of "the other"—are much worse.[32]

On a local level, the dominant judicial means of postgenocide reconciliation has been *gacaca*.[33] Literally translated as "on the grass," *gacaca* harkens back to traditional community justice methods in which local elders (*inyangamugayu*) mediated local disputes, meeting on the grass of the inner courtyard of a Rwandan homestead. It also emerged out of a broader late 20th-century turn toward restorative justice and national truth and reconciliation commissions, as seen in places as diverse as South Africa, Chile, Guatemala, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, and Indonesia.[34] In 2001, the RPF government announced that it would introduce a modernized version of *gacaca* to help process Rwanda's burgeoning prison population of over 120,000 accused *génocidaires*.[35] In exchange for a full disclosure of crimes, the naming of accomplices, and expressions of remorse, *génocidaires* could receive reduced prison

31. Thomsen, *Whispering Truth to Power* 7.
32. Interview with a lay Catholic, Butare, Rwanda, May 22, 2014. (Throughout this article, wherever I withhold an interviewee's name, it is by prior agreement; all these interviews were private.)
33. This section draws on Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (New York: Cambridge University, 2010); Phil Clark, "The Rules (and Politics) of Engagement: The *Gacaca* Courts and Post-Genocide Justice, Healing, and Reconciliation in Rwanda," in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, ed. Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman (New York: Columbia University, 2009) 297–319; Max Rettig, "Gacaca: Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Postconflict Rwanda?," *African Affairs Journal* 51.3 (2008) 25–50; Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us* 196–211; Janet McKnight, "The Anatomy of Mass Accountability: Confronting Ideology and Legitimacy in Rwanda's Gacaca Courts," *Conflict Trends ACCORD* (2014) 35–42; Thomsen, *Whispering Truth to Power* 160–82.
34. Among many other works, see the case studies in restorative justice and social reconciliation in Schreiter, Appleby, and Powers, eds., *Peacebuilding*; Baum and Wells, eds., *Reconciliation of Peoples*; Little, ed., *Peacemakers in Action*; Helena Cobban, *Amnesty after Atrocity? Healing Nations after Genocide and War Crimes* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm: 2007). On the theoretical underpinnings of restorative justice and late 20th-century truth and reconciliation movements, see Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson, eds., *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2000); Naomi Roht-Arriaza and Javier Mariezcurrena, eds., *Transitional Justice in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Truth versus Justice* (New York: Cambridge University, 2006); Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon, 1998).
35. The political and military organizers of the genocide continue to be tried through the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania.

sentences and/or community service within their home villages and provinces. *Gacaca* retained a punitive framework, however. If found guilty, *génocidaires* could be given prison sentences ranging from seven years to life; these sentences were often compounded if the perpetrator failed to demonstrate sufficient remorse or honesty in the eyes of the *inyangamugayu*. Between 2005 and 2012, upward of two million cases—approximately 25% of the national population—were tried through the *gacaca* process, and around 65% of suspects were convicted.[36]

Rwanda's *gacaca* system remains controversial. Foreign critics have lambasted *gacaca*'s lack of legal due process, exclusion of RPF human rights violations, implicit incentivizing of false confessions and accusations, and alleged manipulation by RPF officials. For more sympathetic foreign observers, *gacaca* is an imperfect but necessary means of ending impunity and facilitating the face-to-face encounters necessary to reestablish social trust in Rwanda.[37] My own interviewees in Rwanda generally viewed national *gacaca* as a crucial first step in the country's long journey toward social reconciliation. For Catholic historian Paul Rutayisire of the government-sponsored Center for Conflict Management, *gacaca* stopped the postcolonial cycle of impunity, and genocide survivors "are no longer afraid for the future."[38] For others, *gacaca* served a constructive role in reestablishing social peace in the aftermath of mass violence, but such political and legal processes could not get to the "core of the issue," namely, the deeper, longer-term healing of wounded human hearts and restoration of broken human relations.[39] It is here that many of my interlocutors saw the potential contributions of Catholic reconciliation initiatives. To these efforts I now turn.

Case Studies in Catholic Reconciliation in Rwanda

Catholic reconciliation efforts in contemporary Rwanda take a variety of forms and cover four key areas of Catholic pastoral work in postgenocide Rwanda: prison ministries, parish reconciliation efforts, justice and peace initiatives, and spiritual healing. These areas are distinct but interrelated components of a broader pastoral "tapestry" of Catholic reconciliation. This section, which is not meant to be exhaustive in its treatment, focuses on the theological and pastoral visions of each ministry. My conclusion synthesizes common themes shared across these case studies.

36. McKnight, "Anatomy of Mass Accountability" 41.
37. Among international scholars, Rettig and Thomsen would be representative of the critical school; Clark's works offer a nuanced but ultimately positive endorsement of *gacaca*'s impact on postgenocide reconciliation.
38. Paul Rutayisire, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 14, 2014.
39. Joseph Rurangwa, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 16, 2014; Josephine Munyeli, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 17, 2014. Rurangwa works with the US Agency of International Development (USAID) in Kigali; Munyeli coordinates reconciliation programs for the Christian NGO World Vision. Both self-identify as Roman Catholics but also work with Protestant ministries.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation: The Good Samaritans

Like Luke's narrative of the Good Samaritan, the roots of Anne-Marie Mukankuranga's *Umusamaritani z'impuhwe* ("Merciful Samaritan Association," popularly known as the "Good Samaritans") emerged out of a violent, near-death experience. In 1985, nearly a decade before the genocide, a group of local Hutus targeted Anne-Marie and her husband, Emmanuel Mungangendo (both Tutsi). Their house outside Butare was ransacked, and both were seriously wounded. Her husband emerged from a coma after two weeks, inspiring his attackers to later say, "your husband refused to die."[40] Echoing the maxim that "that which does not kill you makes you stronger," Anne-Marie saw this experience as giving her both the courage and vulnerability that underlay her later ministries. "I wasn't afraid after this. I am in the world as someone who can die tomorrow and go to heaven tomorrow. . . . Because I have suffered, I can help others."[41]

In the early 1990s, Mukankuranga and Mungangendo brainstormed ways to provide a Christian counterwitness to the political and ethnic tensions swirling around them. They began bringing food to refugees and hospital patients and started organizing community meetings to discuss ethnic tensions. The local bishop, Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi of Butare, gave his blessing, and several Catholic priests involved their local parishes. Their work also raised opposition; Mungangendo was fired from his job as a chemist in 1993. Shortly after the outbreak of the genocide in April 1994, an elite presidential guard unit arrived at their home. Forewarned, Mukankuranga and Mungangendo, having received money from Gahamanyi, escaped to the nearby town of Gikongoro. After several more close calls, they managed to survive the killing frenzy that swept Rwanda over the next 100 days. Even as she endured what she described as the "unimaginable period" of the genocide, Anne-Marie Mukankuranga felt God calling her to be a vessel of forgiveness and conversion. Two key messages kept coming to her in prayer: God has no frontiers and is open to everyone, and God will judge Christians based on whether they have forgiven and loved others.

As Rwanda's jails filled with accused *génocidaires* in the months after the genocide, Mukankuranga discerned that God was calling her to the prisons. Her relatives questioned her sanity in attempting to reconcile with the very people who had been trying to kill her during the genocide. Prison officials initially scoffed at her boldness. For their part, accused *génocidaires* typically saw her as a spy working on behalf of the new government. Even her husband had to pray for three days before he could accept his wife's invitation. Not unlike the biblical Good Samaritan, Anne-Marie Mukankuranga was living and ministering in the volatile border region between two hostile communities.

Despite these conflicting cross-pressures, Mukankuranga's work bore fruit. Prisoners gradually opened up about their crimes and spoke of interior conversions; the initial

40. Anne-Marie Mukankuranga, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 16, 2014. Much of the subsequent narrative is drawn from this interview.

41. Ibid.

skepticism of prison officials softened, and some even joined her ministries.[42] Bishops and priests responded to Mukankuranga's call to "bring the church to prison," holding prison masses as early as October 1994 in which both perpetrators and victims were encouraged to share their stories. The Good Samaritans began expanding their ministries to aid families of both perpetrators and survivors, especially widows and orphans. In 1998, Pope John Paul II officially granted the Good Samaritans the Vatican's seal of approval. For Mukankuranga, the Good Samaritan ministry reflected God's grace and her Christian conviction that with God's help, "good will win over evil." In her words, "God helped me escape my bitterness and desire for revenge. This enables me to forgive them. . . . Forgiveness has no grudge, and God's love has no boundaries."[43]

Such sentiments were shared by Consolée Munyensanga, a Tutsi survivor who lost her father and five of her siblings during the genocide. She first encountered the Good Samaritans in 2000 but could not bring herself to forgive those who had killed her family members. After six years of singing in a Good Samaritan choir and participating in sharing sessions, she experienced a "liberation" in 2006 that enabled her to forgive "without grudge." She then began joining the Good Samaritans in their prison visits, coming to see the prisoners as "brothers." Echoing Mukankuranga, Munyensanga described a Good Samaritan as one who overcomes dividing lines of ethnicity, nationality, and religion, recognizing that "God's love is without boundaries."[44]

As "ambassadors of reconciliation," what do these Good Samaritans teach us about a Catholic theology of reconciliation in Rwanda? First, they demonstrate the fundamental theological conviction that, in Anne-Marie Mukankuranga's words, "God's love has no boundaries." Significantly, the Good Samaritans understand these boundaries in terms of not just ethnicity but also religion and nation. To echo Katongole, this conviction is important for checking both the nationalistic and denominational "tribalism" that afflicts Christians around the world.[45] Second, Mukankuranga reminds us that "ambassadors of reconciliation" live between worlds, engaged in a ministry to the marginalized. In this sense, the Good Samaritans do not wait for the marginalized to come to church; they rather bring the church to the legions of prisoners, widows, and orphans that populate postgenocide Rwanda. Third, Anne-Marie Mukankuranga reflects a vision of the "ambassador of reconciliation" as a fearless, wounded healer, echoing Pope Francis's recent call for the Church to be a "field hospital after battle."[46]

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42. Jean-Pierre Mashariki, former head of a military prison in Kigali, was one of these converted prison officials. Initially skeptical about both organized religion and Anne-Marie's Christian vision of reconciliation, he was nonetheless impressed with her fearlessness, especially her refusal to accept the armed guards he offered her during her prison visits. Mashariki eventually received Catholic baptism in 1996 and joined the Good Samaritan ministry shortly thereafter (Jean-Pierre Mashariki, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 16, 2014).
43. Mukankuranga, interview.
44. Consolée Munyensanga, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 16, 2014.
45. See Katongole, *Mirror to the Church.*
46. See Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America*, September 30, 2013, http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview.

Her own past suffering gives her empathy for victims. It has also given her a fundamental trust in God that enables her to courageously encounter the inevitable skepticism, adversity, and piecemeal nature of postgenocide reconciliation in Rwanda. Finally, the Good Samaritans demonstrate the centrality of forgiveness in the process of reconciliation. Critically, though, forgiveness is viewed as a divine gift rather than a political obligation, and it is a gift received over years rather than instantaneously.

Gacaca Nkirisitu: Restoring "Life Together" in the Parish

Gacaca Nkirisitu (Christian *gacaca*), also known in Rwanda as *synod idasanzwe* (extraordinary synod), was conceptualized in the late 1990s prior to the launching of Rwanda's national *gacaca* program.[47] As the Rwandan Catholic Church approached its 100th jubilee in 2000, there was a growing sense that this celebratory event should also entail a critical reflection on the meaning of the genocide for the Catholic Church. Local church leaders developed a ministry that would combine Rwanda's traditional *gacaca* process with the ancient Christian church's process of "synods," understood in Rwanda as "communions of members of God's family" for resolving and reconciling local disputes.[48] Involving seminars, workshops, and victim and perpetrator testimonies, *gacaca nkirisitu* had a national profile between 1998 and 2000 before declining due to lukewarm hierarchical support and growing suspicion from government circles.[49] However, *gacaca nkirisitu* continued to flourish throughout the early 2000s in the Diocese of Cyangugu in southwestern Rwanda, a border area where cyclical episodes of anti-Tutsi violence recurred from the early 1960s through the late 1990s.

The key leader in Cyangugu was a garrulous, charismatic priest named Fr. Ubald Rugirangonwa. Described to me as "the most famous Catholic priest in Rwanda,"[50] Rugirangonwa is known locally as both a minister of reconciliation and a charismatic healer. Like Anne-Marie Mukankuraga, his own commitment to reconciliation grew out of personal experience with ethnic discrimination and violence. His father was killed in 1963 during a local ethnic pogrom against Tutsi. Rugirangonwa himself was

47. This background section draws on author interviews with Fr. Eric Nzamwita, pastor of Mushaka Parish, Diocese of Cyangugu, May 21, 2014; Fr. Emmanuel Rutangusa, priest from the Diocese of Cyangugu, April 29, 2014; Paul Rutayisire, who served on the Catholic Relief Services commission that helped brainstorm *gacaca nkirisitu*, May 16, 2014; Fr. Valens Niragire, president of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Cyangugu, May 22, 2014; and Philippe Ngirente, local government director of social affairs in Rusizi Province, May 19, 2014.

48. "Complementarity between Synod and Gacaca," 7th Formation of Jubilee Commission, Catholic Episcopal Conference of Rwanda, 1998. I am grateful to Bishop Philippe Rukambwa and the Diocese of Butare archives for sharing this document with me, and I thank Olivier Sempiga for his translation assistance from the original Kinyarwanda.

49. These two reasons—the recalcitrance of the Catholic hierarchy and the government's suspicion that Christian *gacaca* could rival the national version—were repeated by many firsthand sources in Rwanda.

50. Interviews in Kigali and Rusizi, Rwanda, May 2014.

forced to flee to Burundi in 1973 after Hutu seminarians drove him and other Tutsi seminarians out of the local minor seminary. After spending years in exile, Ubald returned to Rwanda in the 1980s. He was again chased out of his local parish in 1994, taking refuge with the local bishop. After the genocide, he left Rwanda for six months to discern whether and how he should continue his priestly ministry. During this time, he went on pilgrimage to Lourdes in France. During prayer at Lourdes, he sensed God telling him, "Ubald, accept your cross." After "crying for many nights," he decided to return to Rwanda in 1995 to help heal his own wounds and the wounds of his community. He found particular inspiration in Paul's exhortation to "not be conquered by evil but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).[51]

Over the next five years, Rugirangonwa helped implement *gacaca nkirisitu* within Mushaka Parish in the Diocese of Cyangugu.[52] Significantly, his discernment did not happen in a vacuum, nor was the ultimate outcome simply imposed on the laity by clerical fiat. Rather, leaders of each of Mushaka Parish's 250 *Communautes Vivantes du Base* (CEVBs, or "living ecclesial base communities") gathered to discuss the appropriate pastoral response to the looming reintegration of hundreds of released prisoners. The leaders reached three major conclusions. First, perpetrators of genocide had committed the gravest of sins,[53] and this required a public process of repentance and reconciliation within the local church. Second, the parish would establish a formal method to enable perpetrators and victims to express remorse and/or forgiveness. Third, both victims and perpetrators would be enrolled in a long-term catechetical teaching and learning program facilitated by a small group of local mediators.

How did the pastoral process of *gacaca nkirisitu* actually work? First, genocide perpetrators were asked to abstain from the sacraments for six months. During this time, they participated in a weekly catechetical program on Saturday mornings. These sessions examined the connections between human rights, sacramental practice, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Over the course of the six-month program, perpetrators were encouraged to share the full truth concerning their actions during the genocide (e.g., by informing survivors where their deceased family members were buried). Perpetrators were also encouraged to overcome their shame and seek forgiveness from victims. To facilitate this process, retreats were organized on three separate occasions. The first retreat involved small groups of perpetrators, the second focused on small groups of victims, and the third brought perpetrators and victims together.

At the end of the six-month process, survivors were given the opportunity to forgive perpetrators. If they consented, survivors would join perpetrators in privately receiving the sacrament of reconciliation. Then, at the subsequent Sunday Mass, each perpetrator knelt in front of a representative of the victim's family, who in turn placed a hand on the perpetrator's shoulder. Echoing ancient church penitential traditions, the

51. Fr. Ubald Rugirangoga, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 18, 2014.

52. Fr. Eric Nzamwita, interview by author, Mushaka, Rwanda, May 21, 2014.

53. *Gacaca nkirisitu* organizers even came up with a Kinyarwanda neologism, "*amahano*," to describe genocide crimes. *Amahano* was a worse sin than either *amacaso* (venial sin) or *icyaha* (serious or mortal sin) (Nzamwita, interview).

priest and/or bishop then performed a ritual rite of reincorporation, including the sprinkling of baptismal water. After Mass, the entire community shared a celebratory *ubusabane* feast with the perpetrator, victim, and their families, symbolizing the community's desire to once again "live together" in peace and harmony. Going forward, individual victims and perpetrators were asked to participate in the same workers' cooperatives and community associations. This grew out of organizers' convictions that long-term reconciliation could grow only through sharing life together daily.

Mushaka Parish's *gacaca nkirisitu* program formally ended in 2011, although the process continues on a less formal basis. Several Catholic parishes in Rwanda have adopted similar programs, and local Protestant and Adventist churches have also borrowed from Mushaka's model. The parish has written a Kinyarwanda book entitled *Imbabazi* (Pardon), which is currently being translated into French and English in hopes of expanding regional exposure to the program. Over the course of a decade, nearly 75% of participants or roughly 300 families in Mushaka Parish completed the reconciliation process.

I had the privilege of meeting representatives of two of these Mushaka families in the persons of Bernadette Mukakabera and Gratian Nyaminana. Nyaminana took part in a Hutu militia that killed Mukakabera's husband on April 14, 1994. After the genocide, he was arrested and spent 13 years in prison before being released back into his home community in 2007. Encouraged to seek forgiveness from Mukakabera, Nyaminana demonstrated his remorse not through words but through actions such as cleaning Bernadette's banana grove. Touched by these gestures, Mukakabera agreed to participate in the *gacaca nkirisitu* program with Nyaminana. After six months, they went through the ritual reconciliation initiatives discussed above, culminating in a shared Eucharist and *ususabane* feast. Nyaminana's daughter had helped Mukakabera while her father was in prison, and Mukakabera's son fell in love with her after returning home from army service with the RPF. He approached Nyaminana to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. Nyaminana responded simply, "Since your mother forgave me, I cannot refuse you my daughter."[54] Both Nyaminana and Mukakabera see this marriage as symbolizing a new unity between their families.

In terms of sketching a theology of reconciliation in postgenocide Rwanda, several key themes emerge in *gacaca nkirisitu*. First, there is an emphasis on community ritual. Sacramental practice is taken seriously, to the point that perpetrators are ritually excommunicated and reincorporated into the community. Echoing ancient church penitential practices,[55] this public process is designed to counter what Fr. Rugirangonwa described

54. Bernadette Mukakabera and Gratian Nyaminana, interviews by author, Mushaka, Rwanda, May 21, 2014.

55. In the ancient church, much reflection on reconciliation focused on the ritual and sacramental means of dealing with serious postbaptismal sin. In general, emphasis fell on protecting the holiness and integrity of the minority Christian community by excommunicating public sinners. At the same time, there was a growing acceptance of a degree of mercy for the repentant, such as the Shepherd of Hermas's notion of "second penance." In the aftermath of the third-century persecutions and fourth-century legalization of Christianity, a more

as the "magical" and "hypocritical" attitudes of many Rwandans toward the sacraments (symbolized by the infamous 1994 cases of *génocidaires* receiving daily Eucharist to "strengthen" them in their work).[56] Second, dialogue is an essential principle in this process. Private, interpersonal dialogue creates a safe space for free speech that in turn helps facilitate social trust. For Rugirangonwa, only free speech and social trust can forestall the periodic "volcanoes" that have marked Rwanda's history. Dialogue also helps counter the danger of ethnic stereotyping or scapegoating. In Rugirangonwa's words, "not all Hutu are bad people," and Hutu rescuers who shielded Tutsi during the 1994 genocide modeled what it means to be a "good Christian."[57] Finally, forgiveness is seen as an essential element of Christian identity. To again quote Rugirangonwa, "If you don't forgive you die spiritually. . . . To be a Christian is to forgive." In my conclusion I consider whether such exhortations to forgiveness problematically transform a divine gift into a divine mandate.

Justice and Peace Commissions: Connecting Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda

If there is one persistent critique of reconciliation practices, it is the perceived tensions between justice and reconciliation. For critics, reconciliation compromises the retributive dimensions of justice, or what Richard Wilson has termed "proportional punishment for wrongdoing."[58] In so doing, reconciliation contributes to impunity, thereby making future social violence more rather than less likely.[59] Rwanda's RPF government has shared many of these concerns over impunity, which is why the national *gacaca* process has not allowed for "amnesty" along the lines of South Africa's Truth

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formal "order of penitents" developed in Latin Christianity for sins of adultery, murder, idolatry, and in some cases apostasy. Often known as *conversi*, these public sinners were ritually excluded from the Christian community, undertaking a penitential life of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. On ancient church penitential rituals, see O'Loughlin, *Future of the Sacrament of Penance* 15–65.

56. For this and other similar examples, see Longman, *Christianity and Genocide* 191–97.
57. Rugirangoga, interview.
58. Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (New York: Cambridge University, 2001) 228.
59. For skeptics like Wilson, Christianity's "religious-redemptive" vision of reconciliation stresses forgiveness, repentance, and an exclusion of vengeance, making it difficult to actually hold perpetrators accountable and deter future criminal acts (ibid. 109). Although Wilson's strong distinction between reconciliation and justice is characteristic of human rights advocates and political liberalism alike, it is not without challengers. For example, Daniel Philpott has argued that at its core, reconciliation *is* justice, and vice versa: political reconciliation "is a concept of justice that aims to restore victims, perpetrators, citizens, and the governments of states that have been involved in political injustices to a condition of right relationship within a political order or between political orders—a condition characterized by human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for international law; by widespread recognition of the legitimacy of these values; and by the virtues that

and Reconciliation Commission.[60] Such disputes also raise the issue of how to define "justice." Critics of reconciliation often lean toward a more punitive, rights-based vision of justice, whereas reconciliation theologians generally reflect a more restorative vision of justice entailing the rehabilitation of perpetrators and healing of ruptured social relations rather than retributive punishment.

It is in this contested relationship between "reconciliation" and "justice" that one can see the important contribution of Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions in Rwanda.[61] Initiated globally by Pope Paul VI in 1976, Justice and Peace Commissions are designed to be the Church's "front lines" in addressing issues of good governance, electoral monitoring, human rights violations, and social injustice. In Rwanda, Justice and Peace Commissions were active during the 1990–1993 civil war, focusing on serving the needs of refugees and the internally displaced. Suspended after the 1994 genocide, diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions were restarted in 1997. Since then, they have worked extensively in areas of conflict resolution, *gacaca* monitoring, electoral observation, and land disputes. For example, Justice and Peace representatives from the Diocese of Butare helped facilitate the acquittals of over 730 falsely accused *gacaca* defendants between 2004 and 2008.[62]

In tandem with national reconciliation efforts, Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions have focused in recent years on building a "culture of peace" in Rwanda. Recognizing that young people dominated the ranks of *génocidaires* and *interahamwe* militia in 1994,[63] youth education has emerged as a particular focus in recent years—for example, there are now over 500 secondary-school "Justice and Peace Clubs" in the Diocese of Cyangugu alone.[64] Since then there has been more regional collaboration

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accompany these values" (Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace* 58). For more contextual studies on the intersection of reconciliation theology and restorative justice, see Daniel Philpott and Jennifer Llewellyn, eds., *Restorative Justice, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford University, 2014).

60. In South Africa most perpetrators were offered amnesty from criminal prosecution in exchange for a full explanation of their crimes. Rwanda's *gacaca* process has commuted some sentences and substituted community service for prison, but many *génocidaires* have been sent back to prison after their local *gacaca* trials.

61. Information in this section is drawn from Emmanuel Benimana, Diocese of Cyangugu Justice and Peace Commission, interview by author, May 20, 2014, as well as from two 2014 pamphlets published by the Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix Rwanda (CEPR): "Justice et Paix" and "Contribution de l'Église Catholique pour la promotion de l'unites et la réconciliation." I am grateful to Anastase Nkundimana of the Diocese of Butare Justice and Peace Commission for sharing these documents with me.

62. Diocese of Butare, "Contribution de l'Église Catholique pour la promotion de l'unites et la réconciliation," 2014 (available only from the diocese).

63. *Interahamwe* refers to the youth political wing of the Mouvement Révolutionnaire Nationale Developpement (MRND), Rwanda's ruling party at the time of the genocide. Assisted by regular army and police forces, *interahamwe* were the primary perpetrators of the genocide, and the term remains a common descriptor for genocide perpetrators.

64. Fr. Valens Niragire, President of the Diocese of Cyangugu's Justice and Peace Commission, interview by author, Butare, Rwanda, May 23, 2014. I spoke separately with two

between Justice and Peace Commissions in Rwanda, Burundi, and the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This collaboration has entailed organizing trust-building activities between youth on the DRC–Rwanda border such as soccer matches. In October 2013, 5,000 Rwandan and Congolese youth gathered for a cross-border prayer for peace. Such grassroots activities have in turn encouraged better communication between the region's bishops who have begun meeting more regularly. In light of the vicious violence in DRC's Kivu provinces—much of it instigated and sustained at least in part by Rwanda[65]—such cross-border Catholic initiatives seem especially critical for building long-term peace and reconciliation in the region. In the words of Emmanuel Benimana with the Diocese of Cyangugu's Justice and Peace Commission, the goal is to "show the unity of the church" across national borders.[66]

In terms of an emerging theology of reconciliation in Rwanda, Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions offer two important contributions. First, they remind us that the construction of social justice in postgenocide Rwanda is an essential element of long-term reconciliation. In this regard, one sees that the challenge of reconciliation entails not only adjudicating the 1994 genocide but also navigating ongoing land disputes, family rivalries, and international tensions. Rural development is an especially important issue in contemporary Rwanda. Rwanda's recent economic development has disproportionately favored urban elites, many of them Anglophone Tutsi returnees from Uganda. Foreign observers marvel at Kigali's clean streets and smart shopping malls, but they often overlook the persistence of grinding poverty in Rwanda's predominantly Hutu countryside. Economic and infrastructural development and a fairer distribution of resources are thus crucial elements of long-term reconciliation in Rwanda.

Second, the collaborative work of the Cyangugu Justice and Peace Commission, local youth groups, and regional bishops' conferences demonstrate the potential of a social Christian identity to transcend the borders of ethnicity and nationality alike. In this sense, postgenocide reconciliation will ultimately entail a deeper, transnational reconciliation across Africa's Great Lakes region, particularly in the Rwanda–DRC

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secondary-school participants in one of these youth Justice and Peace clubs. Their "Unity and Reconciliation" group meets weekly to discuss and resolve internal conflicts within the school. These conflicts are often seen as originating with the students' parents (Cecile Micomyiza and Oreste Dancyuzuzo, interviews by author, Mushaka, Rwanda, May 20, 2014).

65. Rwanda initiated the 1996–1997 war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect its western border from Hutu *interahamwe* militias in DRC's eastern Kivu provinces. In turn, RPF units and Rwandan-backed militias played key roles in perpetuating the cycle of violence that enveloped the Kivu districts well into the 2000s. On Rwanda's involvement in the brutal Congolese wars that began in 1996, see Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York: Oxford University, 2009); Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War for Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011); Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996–2006* (New York: Cambridge University, 2009).

66. Benimana, interview.

border regions.[67] The universal nature of Catholic identity—and the church's dominant social presence in Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC—offer the Catholic Church an unparalleled opportunity to make a key contribution to this effort.

Ruhango, Reconciliation, and Spiritual Healing

If the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commissions remind us that social reconciliation can never neglect social justice, the retreat center of Ruhango in central Rwanda demonstrates the integral place of a "spirituality of reconciliation" in post-genocide Rwanda. Overshadowed internationally by the Marian site of Kibeho,[68] Ruhango is seen in Rwanda as the most important Catholic retreat center for facilitating interpersonal reconciliation. Like the Good Samaritans, Ruhango's reconciliation ministries grew out of the remarkable witness of committed lay Catholics. As ethnic and political tensions accelerated in Rwanda in the early 1990s, small groups of Catholic laity began meeting at Ruhango for prayer, biblical reflection, eucharistic adoration, and charismatic healing services. The overarching message was simple: "take the faith seriously and stay united."[69] Remarkably, these cross-ethnic groups maintained this mission during the 1994 genocide. Hundreds of Tutsi took refuge on the grounds of Ruhango. Not a single one was lost to *interahamwe* militia; Ruhango was one of the few Catholic parishes in Rwanda that did not experience genocidal massacres.[70] This collective witness only strengthened Ruhango's reputation, and it

67. During interviews for a separate project in Tshumbe, DRC, in January 2013, I was struck by the level of local animosity toward Rwanda and the sense that reconciliation would not be possible until Rwanda repented for its destruction of Congo. For their part, Rwandan officials accuse the Congolese of unfairly blaming Rwanda for a war driven by intra-Congolese divisions and motivations (see "Rebooting Rwanda: An Interview with Paul Kagame," *Foreign Affairs* 93.3 [May–June 2014] 40–49).

68. Kibeho is one of the more famous 20th-century sites of alleged Marian apparitions. Three young Rwandan women began receiving apparitions in 1981–1982, which continued off and on for much of the next decade. The local church and the Vatican have given their imprimatur to the Kibeho apparitions, and the site is becoming a major pilgrimage destination. On the Kibeho miracles, see Immaculée Ilibagiza, *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2008).

69. Fr. Jean-Baptiste Mvukeyehe, Rector of Ruhango's Pallotine Community, interview by author, May 25, 2014.

70. The following story illustrates Ruhango's reputation as a refuge. A Tutsi woman, after losing all ten of her siblings and her parents during the early weeks of the genocide, lived in the bush for weeks but held out hope that she could find safety at Ruhango. "I would tell myself [during the genocide] that if I could maybe get to Ruhango, I would live. There was someone I was living with during those hard times, and eventually she was able to get to Ruhango before I did. She told of my story, and by the grace of God, three people came for me, risking their own lives in order to get me there. They would carry me most of the times and sometimes I would try to walk myself. . . . It was a miracle that we got to Ruhango Parish. We stayed there until the war was over." This written testimony and many others are located in the archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish. I am grateful to Fr.

has become one of Rwanda's most popular pilgrimage sites for prayer, eucharistic adoration, and charismatic healing.[71]

Far from offering "spiritual escapism" from a broken community, Ruhango has become one of Rwanda's preeminent places for walking the long road of reconciliation. On Thursday nights, upward of 700 participants come for sessions on reconciliation facilitated by several dozen spiritual directors and over 100 counselors. Ruhango encourages participants to confront their own "woundedness," embracing spiritual practices that allow participants to "unload their burdens," along the lines of Matthew 11:28–30.[72] These include physical gestures such as writing their feelings on a piece of paper and dropping them in a basket; sacramental rituals such as confessing to a priest; and participating in longer retreats that focus on inner healing and spiritual freedom. Most of all, Ruhango is designed as a place of encounter and conversation where victims and perpetrators alike can gather, pray, and share their stories and testimonies. For Fr. Jean-Baptiste Mvukeyehe, a recent pastoral coordinator of Ruhango's reconciliation ministries, reconciliation grows from the sense that "life is still possible even in the presence of those who did wrong to me," opening a path for a deeper interpersonal encounter in which both sides can "overcome hatred and walk together again." For Mvukeyehe, interpersonal reconciliation is not a magic bullet for broader social reconciliation, but reconciled individuals can "work like leaven in society," showing others that people have the freedom to allow God to heal their hearts.[73]

Ministries like Ruhango allow Rwandans to reflect and pray through some of the deeper theological mysteries of the genocide; these would include reconciling God's providence with the massive human destruction of the genocide. Traditionally, Rwandans had a strong sense of God's providential care; for example the Kinyarwanda religious proverb *Imana ishobora byose* is translated as "God can do everything."[74] God also had a preferential option for Rwanda. The "high God" Imana came home to sleep in Rwanda at night, reflecting his benevolent care for the Banyarwanda people. In traditional culture, the blessings of material success and children were attributed to God, and sin/suffering was seen through a retributive prism, namely, as punishment for acting against God's will. Such cultural notions of God's providential care merged

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Désiré Ruvamwabo, rector of the Ruhango Shrine, for granting me access to 24 of these testimonies in June 2015. Many thanks also to Janvier Masabo Kwizera for his translation assistance from the original Kinyarwanda. Some of these testimonies were given anonymously. Even for those who are named, I have minimized identifying details to protect the privacy of these individuals.

71. For example, in May 2014, 15,000 Rwandans showed up for Ruhango's monthly outdoor healing Mass.
72. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light" (Mt 11:28–30). This passage was highlighted by Fr. Mvukeyehe as an important biblical inspiration for Ruhango's ministries.
73. Mvukeyehe, interview.
74. Olivier Sempiga, interview by author, Butare, Rwanda, May 23, 2014.

easily with biblical visions of God as a protector along the lines of Psalm 91.[75] After the genocide, to quote a priest familiar with Ruhango's ministries, "you can no longer have this image of God. The genocide requires an entirely different understanding of God."[76] Likewise, for many participants in Ruhango's ministries, their spiritual journey facilitated a shift from viewing God as a failed protector to viewing God as the essence of love.[77] In other words, ministries like Ruhango can facilitate open spiritual dialogue on the mystery of God and suffering, a key part of a theological journey of reconciliation. At the same time, Ruhango emphasizes human freedom over divine omnipotence. Mass murder and mass suffering are not preordained by God; the August 1982 Kibeho vision of "rivers of blood" was intended as a warning, not as an inevitable destiny.[78] In the words of Fr. Mvukeyehe, "I am the person holding my destiny in my hands."[79]

Recent literature on political reconciliation in Rwanda, written largely by social scientists, mostly ignores the spiritual dimensions of reconciliation. Ruhango reminds us that spirituality suffuses reconciliation in Rwanda; the healing presence of God is often seen as the only possible way to salve the seemingly insurmountable wounds of genocide. In the words of one Ruhango participant who found a way to forgive the killer of her father, "I can now say the 'Our Father' in its entirety. I praise God for all the great things he has done for me; because what man can't do, Jesus can."[80] Existing outside *gacaca* trials or even the local parish, Ruhango also strives to create a climate in which participants can speak openly, freely, and truthfully. In the words of one Rwandan priest, "Ruhango is one of the only places of genuine reconciliation because people can receive true healing there, and they can speak freely."[81] I return to this critical theme of "free speech" in short order.

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75. To quote the end of this psalm, "Whoever clings to me I will deliver, whoever knows my name I will set on high. All who call upon me I will answer; I will be with them in distress; I will deliver them and give them honor. With length of days I will satisfy them and show them my saving power" (Ps 91:14–16).
76. Interview with Rwandan Catholic priest, Rwanda, May 2014. Further identifying information is withheld through mutual agreement with the interviewee.
77. In the words of one participant, "I would always say that God must be sadistic for letting all that happen to me; I had all kinds of psychological wounds. I was a Tutsi and I hated Hutus. When I came to the home of *Yezu Nyirimpuhwe*, it helped me to get cured of all of that, and I came back to God. I accepted without prejudice those of different ethnic background than me and I forgave my family, particularly my father. I learned that God was love" (anonymous testimony, archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish, accessed June 2015). Ruhango and the Pallotine priests who oversee the shrine encourage a vision of Jesus as the mediator of divine mercy, or *Yezu Nyirimpuhwe*.
78. This point was reiterated to me during a public presentation at Kibeho shrine, Rwanda, May 23, 2014.
79. Mvukeyehe, interview.
80. Testimony of a female participant from Charles Lwanga Parish, accessed in archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish, June 2015.
81. Interview with a Catholic priest, May 2014.

Shared Themes in Catholic Reconciliation in Rwanda

The Good Samaritans, *Gacaca Nkirisitu*, Justice and Peace Commissions, and Ruhango's spiritual ministries offer a tapestry of postgenocide Catholic pastoral efforts in the area of reconciliation. In their own distinctive ways, each ministry makes important contributions to a pastoral theology of reconciliation. I would highlight five overarching themes that recur in these ministries.

First, the pastoral examples discussed above remind us of the fundamental importance of ritual in mediating the journey of reconciliation. As I have indicated above, *gacaca nkirisitu* stretches over six months and involves both private and public markers. Its liturgical rites harken back to the early church's penitential rituals, especially the public excommunication and reincorporation rites associated with the ancient "order of penitents."[82] As Fr. Rugirangonwa and others have claimed, *gacaca nkirisitu* is not looking to reject Catholic sacraments but to take them more seriously, connecting love of God with love of neighbor. In turn, Ruhango's retreats, weekly meetings, and prayer spaces are suffused with ritual; and Mass, the sacrament of reconciliation, and eucharistic adoration lie at the heart of Ruhango's ministry.[83] For their part, the Good Samaritans make a point to celebrate Catholic Mass in the prisons, bringing the liturgy to the margins. This emphasis on ritual could even be seen as a unique element of a distinctively Catholic vision of social reconciliation. In Schreiter's words, the Catholic Church's "ritual mode of action" is an essential part of a "Catholic social imaginary."[84]

One could also highlight a common emphasis on community, especially "sharing life together" across hostile boundaries.[85] In this sense, the *gacaca nkirisitu* process asks participants to continue interrelating through small Christian communities and workers' cooperatives. Similar to the South African theme of *Ubuntu*,[86] the tag line from the Diocese of Cyangugu's reconciliation initiative captures this sense of fundamental interrelatedness: "I

82. See James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community* 63–81.

83. For example, one participant in Ruhango's ministries recounted losing her faith after the genocide and then coming back to faith through her experience of the sacraments at Ruhango. "I was profoundly touched by the Mass. . . . I felt in me an interior peace that enveloped my heart. . . . I was able to reconcile myself with Jesus in the sacrament of penance, and I have been liberated of the bitterness that blocked my heart" (female participant from Kigali, accessed in archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish, June 2015).

84. Robert Schreiter, "The Catholic Social Imaginary and Peacebuilding: Ritual, Sacrament and Spirituality," in *Peacebuilding*, ed. Schreiter et al. 221–39, at 221–24.

85. This latter phrase is partly inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper, 1954). I also credit Rwandan Jesuit theologian Elysée Rutagambwa. Reflecting on the Johannine image of Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), Rutagambwa posited that Africa's emphasis on "the life" complements Europe's focus on "the truth" and Asia's focus on "the way" (Fr. Elysée Rutagambwa, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 18, 2014).

86. Made famous through the work of Desmond Tutu among others, the South African cultural tradition of *Ubuntu* emphasizes the individual's fundamentally communitarian identity, namely, achieving life in its fullness through participation in community. See Andrea M. Ng'Weshemi, *Rediscovering the Human: The Quest for a Christo-Theological*

will never forget that you are my brother and sister."[87] At the international level, Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions have begun connecting Catholic communities across the volatile Rwanda–DRC border. As we have seen, the Good Samaritans also encourage a vision of God's love that crosses national, ethnic, and religious boundaries. This can be seen in one of the Good Samaritans' affiliate groups, the "Impuhwe" ("Mercy") group of blind veterans that includes former soldiers who fought against one another in Rwanda's civil war. These soldiers now live together, running farms and advocating on behalf of other military veterans.[88] This sense of reconciliation as "sharing life together" reminds us that presence is often more important than proclamation or programs. In the words of the Catholic priest Emmanuel Rutangusa, "My methodology [after the genocide] was not to talk about reconciliation and forgiveness but to be with the people, visiting with the people, showing presence with the people."[89] Likewise, one should not underestimate the importance of the community's ministry of presence at Ruhango. In the words of one participant, "I came here to Ruhango and I was able to find someone to accompany me on my journey to being healed of my wounds."[90]

Third, these cases demonstrate the importance of dialogue in helping universalize the memory of suffering, which entails remembering and empathizing with others, including one's enemies.[91] One sees this in *gacaca nkirisitu*'s emphasis on months-long dialogue between perpetrators and victims; one should also recall Ubald Rugirangonwa's comments about the potential for dialogue to reduce ethnic stereotyping. As discussed earlier, Ruhango's ministry was praised for allowing Rwandans to "openly share their stories." Throughout Rwanda, reconciliation was described to me as "the ability for everyone to tell their stories freely." The subtext for many of these remarks is Rwanda's general climate of political authoritarianism and political correctness.[92] On one level, Rwandans can no longer publicly refer to themselves as Hutu or Tutsi. On the other hand, genocide memorials and public commemorations have shifted in recent years

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Anthropology in Africa (New York: Peter Lang, 2002) 26–27; and Joe M. Kapolyo, *The Human Condition: Christian Perspectives through African Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005) 35–40.

87. This is the title of a 2012 DVD film on reconciliation produced by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Cyangugu ("Sinzongera kwibagirwa ko uri umuvandimwe wanjye" [I will never again forget that you are my brother and sister]). Rwandan leaders of religious communities like the Benebikira Sisters and the Brothers of Charity also claimed that reconciliation proceeds most fruitfully through the mundane, daily sharing of life together (Br. Deogratias Rwamasasi, Regional Superior of the Brothers of Charity, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 18, 2014; Sr. Thierry Dominique, Superior of the Benebikira Sisters, interview by author, Butare, Rwanda, May 24, 2014).
88. Impuhwe Association of Blind and Disabled Soldiers, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 17, 2014.
89. Fr. Emmanuel Rutangusa, phone interview by author, April 29, 2014.
90. Testimony of female participant, archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish, accessed June 2015.
91. Fr. Marcel Uwineza, phone interview by author, April 30, 2014.
92. On Rwanda's growing postgenocide authoritarianism, see Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, eds., *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Atrocity* (Madison:

toward explicitly ethnic language—for example, by referring to the "genocide against the Tutsi" rather than the "1994 genocide." While the genocide's systematic elimination of Tutsi should never be forgotten, there are also dangers to exclusively "ethnicizing" the social memory of genocide. When I asked one Hutu Catholic leader if the government recognized the sufferings of Hutu—whether during the 1990–1993 civil war, the genocide, or the post-1994 exile and war in Congo—his reply was short and categorical: "Absolutely not."[93] It seems, then, that Catholic reconciliation in Rwanda could take inspiration from the theological work of Johann-Baptist Metz, especially Metz's commitment to universalizing the memory of suffering.[94]

Fourth, forgiveness is a central theme of nearly all these ministries. Anne-Marie Mukankuraga's commitment to a ministry of forgiveness enabled the Good Samaritans to launch their work with prisoners and veterans; forgiveness is one of the ultimate goals of the *gacaca nkirisitu* reconciliation journey; Ruhango highlights the potentially liberating and healing power of forgiveness for the individual.[95] Here I would stress the importance of seeing forgiveness—and reconciliation itself—as gift rather than obligation. There is a mystery to reconciliation and forgiveness that cannot be wholly understood or rationally explained, especially in the aftermath of genocide.

University of Wisconsin, 2011). Burnet's *Genocide Lives in Us* and especially Thomsen's *Whispering Truth to Power* echo many of these criticisms. These scholars are in turn dismissed by pro-RPF academics inside and outside Rwanda as "genocide deniers."

93. Anonymous personal interview by author, Rwanda, May 2014. For a searing first-person account of RPF abuses of Hutu refugees during the Congolese war, see Marie-Beatrice Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter: The Story of a Hutu Refugee in Zaire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2004).

94. Developing a theological method based on the "authority of those who suffer" has been a central theme in Metz's political theology in the wake of the Holocaust. For Metz, "theology after Auschwitz" means reflecting on God *primarily* in response to the unprecedented human suffering of the 20th century. Theology should therefore develop an "open-eyed mysticism" that enables one to "perceive more acutely the suffering of others," even and including one's enemies (Johann-Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley [New York: Paulist, 1998] 14, 69, 143). See also Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

95. Among many powerful testimonies that cite the challenge of the forgiveness clause of the Lord's Prayer, I will share an anonymous one from a female participant in Ruhango's ministries from the early 2000s: Ruhango facilitators "asked me to join one of the prayer groups. . . . During the Our Father prayer, I would always skip the part that says, 'forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' One day on Good Friday, we were praying, each one in their own hearts in silence. I heard the Lord's voice asking me to forgive; I said 'I forgive those who killed my family but not the one that killed my child right in front of me.' I heard that voice again, asking me to forgive him too. I don't know what happened, but I was suddenly filled with strength, and I shouted out loud, 'I also forgive him!' From that day, I felt at peace. After that gift of forgiveness, the Lord gave me the strength to not accuse everyone of killing just because of what they looked like; I was also healed of the fear of those who were not of the same ethnic background as me" (anonymous testimony, archives of Ruhango Shrine and Parish, accessed June 2015).

Demanding forgiveness negates the freedom that lies at the heart of the mystery. The danger in a postgenocide Rwanda dominated by a "discourse of reconciliation" is that human freedom is lost, and reconciliation becomes just another political imperative to achieve a superficial social harmony. Discourse that defines Christians as "those who forgive" can run roughshod over the process of forgiveness as well as the necessity at times for resentment. In the words of Rwandan Jesuit theologian Elysée Rutagambwa, the famous parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15 says more about God than about us—the father offers forgiveness to the prodigal son out of his own mercy, but the older son's resentment is understandable. Significantly, the older son is not forced to forgive; the story in fact ends with considerable ambiguity as to his final decision.[96] Such ambivalence reminds us that a genuine journey of reconciliation necessitates the free response of all involved parties. At times this response may be negative, as one Catholic religious reminded me in Rwanda. This individual had lost his mother and many other family members during the genocide, and his father was killed years later before he could testify in a local *gacaca* hearing. Skeptical about me and the broader "cottage industry" of Western observers coming to Rwanda to explore *gacaca* and other reconciliation initiatives, he questioned the very possibility of forgiveness or reconciliation in Rwanda: "How do you speak about reconciliation to someone who has lost their entire family to genocide?"[97]

Finally, these pastoral initiatives underscore the importance of grassroots leaders in postgenocide Catholic reconciliation ministries. The Good Samaritan prison ministry originated not from a bishop's pastoral directive but from the inspired vision of Anne-Marie Mukankuraga. *Gacaca Nkirisitu* had a brief national profile, but it bore fruit in the Cyangugu region due to the commitment of local leaders like Ubald Rugirangonwa and Eric Nzamwita. Ruhango gained its initial credibility because lay Catholics refused to separate during the genocide. Led today by Pallotine priests and lay spiritual directors and counselors, Ruhango exists outside any formal diocesan structure. And even the most "institutional" structures discussed here—namely, the diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions—are not completely "top-down" initiatives. As we have seen, the process can work in reverse, with local youth rallies helping inspire the region's bishops to further dialogue.

Whatever their critical contributions to long-term social reconciliation, these inspiring local efforts cannot substitute for a broader ecclesial reckoning with what happened before and during the genocide. The Catholic Church's own history in Rwanda is marked by a deep ambiguity, including Catholic colonial "cohabitation" with the Belgian state, the Church's postcolonial failure to denounce government violence, and church leaders' silence during the early weeks of the genocide itself. All this has contributed to what one Rwandan Catholic priest described as the Church's "loss of moral authority" in Rwandan society.[98] Unfortunately, Rwanda's Catholic bishops have refused to issue a formal statement of corporate confession for the Church's failures

96. Rutagambwa, interview.
97. Interview with author, Rwanda, May 2014.
98. Rwandan Catholic priest, interview by author.

and shortcomings before and during the genocide.[99] For much of the late 1990s and early 2000s, Catholic leaders invested far more public capital in defending themselves and their history than in admitting any corporate fault.[100] In more recent years, hierarchical attitudes have become less defensive, but they are still characterized in terms of "prudent silence" and a more "future-oriented" perspective.[101] Even Pope Francis's recent appeal for reconciliation in Rwanda remains largely on the level of platitudes, encouraging closer cooperation between church and state and stopping short of any call for robust ecclesial introspection.[102] For the most part, Catholic leaders are looking to the future, keeping their heads down and avoiding controversy.

After a century of vociferous, state-sanctioned Catholicism, a humbler, quieter Catholic leadership could be very good. And clearly the institutional Church's journey toward regaining "moral credibility" will be a long one. In the words of one Rwandan Catholic layman, "It is not yet their [the bishops'] time to shine."[103] In this regard, pastoral initiatives like the Good Samaritans, *Gacaca Nkirisitu*, Ruhango, and the Justice and Peace Commissions may go much further than all the eloquent pastoral letters in the world. On the other hand, such ministries can feel like ad hoc, grassroots initiatives led by charismatic individuals, lacking broader coordination and consistent institutional support. In turn, hierarchical silence leaves unchallenged the national discourse of reconciliation and any authoritarian excesses of the government. I do not advocate a Rwandan *Kulturkampf*,[104] yet I

99. In general, Rwandan Catholic bishops admit that many individual Catholics (including priests) wrongfully participated in genocide. But these continue to claim that the bishops always condemned genocide and do not need to issue a formal apology or statement of corporate complicity. There are also fears that the RPF government would manipulate such an apology to further blame the Church for the genocide. In contrast, the Protestant Council of Rwanda issued a strongly worded statement of corporate confession as early as 1997. It should be noted that many Protestant and Anglican churches also enjoy positive relations with the current government.

100. Catholic relationships with the ruling RPF government were also under more strain during the first decade after the genocide. Not only did RPF soldiers assassinate three Catholic bishops in the final weeks of the genocide, but Catholic leaders were targeted in several high-profile judicial cases. These included the 2001 trial of Bishop Augustin Misago on charges of genocide complicity and the 2005 trial of White Father missionary Guy Theunis on charges of "genocide ideology." Misago was widely suspected of genocide complicity. Theunis was a respected human rights campaigner who had run afoul of government censors. "Genocide ideology" is a nebulous phrase often used to entrap RPF political opponents. For a detailed, if laudatory, account of the RPF campaign against Misago and the White Fathers, see J. D. Bizimana, *L'Église et le genocide au Rwanda: Les Pères Blancs et le négationnisme* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004) 96–129.

101. Lay Catholic leader, interview by author, Butare, Rwanda, May 23, 2014.

102. See Cindy Wooden, "On 20th anniversary of Rwandan genocide, Pope Urges Reconciliation," April 7, 2014, http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2014/on-20th-anniversary-of-rwandan-genocide-pope-urges-reconciliation-cns-1401421.cfm. Pope Francis's comments came during an April 2014 *ad limina* visit of Rwanda's bishops.

103. Lay Catholic leader, interview, Butare, Rwanda.

104. I refer here to the internecine church–state struggles in Otto von Bismarck's Germany during the late 19th century.

also do not underestimate the importance of the Church's prophetic role in society, especially in the area of government accountability.[105] The credibility of this voice depends first and foremost, though, on church leaders grappling with the social sins of their own past.

This note of ambiguity is perhaps an appropriate one on which to close. If nothing else, Catholic reconciliation efforts "a generation after genocide" remind us that reconciliation is a long-term journey toward "becoming whole again after brokenness."[106] It involves many types and layers of reconciliation, far beyond the stock Hutu–Tutsi narrative assumed in much political commentary outside Rwanda. The journey is not always a linear one, and it requires sustained, honest, and hopeful commitment, as well as an openness to the unexpected grace of what Pope Francis likes to call the "God of surprises." In the words of one Brother of Charity in Rwanda, reconciliation is not an "achievement" but an ongoing process that "must be addressed again every day."[107] To return again to the Lord's Prayer, Catholic reconciliation in Rwanda reminds us of the Christian community's fundamental dependence on God for life, sustenance, mercy, and the grace to forgive and reconcile with others. "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."[108]

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105. In Africa's Great Lakes region, the Burundian and Congolese bishops have stronger reputations for embodying this role of "prophetic gadfly" on behalf of the people. For a recent example of this rhetoric in the context of the contested 2011 Congolese presidential election, see Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO), "Le Peuple Congolais a faim et soif de justice et de paix," January 11, 2012, in *Actes de la CENCO & Documents, Année III*, no. 3 (November 1, 2012) 27–34. Burundi's bishops have been in the forefront of calls for President Pierre Nkurunkiza not to serve a third term as president. See here Christina Goldbaum, "In Burundi election, Catholic Church could be swing vote," http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2015/0614/In-Burundi-election-Catholic-Church-could-be-swing-vote.
106. Rurangwa, interview. The theme of "restoration after brokenness" or the related idea of "coming together after conflict" arose in many other interviews on reconciliation with Catholic leaders in Rwanda.
107. Brother of Charity, interview by author, May 16, 2014. Further identifying information is withheld by mutual agreement with interviewee.
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