

## **Genocide and Reconciliation in Rwanda: From Complicity to Credibility**

Stephen D. Lowe, Associate Dean and Professor, Erskine Theological Seminary

### **Abstract:**

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda divided Hutu from Tutsi and involved the complicity of the Christian church. Reconciliation efforts sponsored by the government of Rwanda, NGOs, and other similar organizations have been underway since 1995. Churches, church groups, denominations, and religious organizations are part of this reconciliation effort but the church needs to do more if it hopes to regain credibility and witness. Churches that target reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi among street children and youth may go a long way in achieving justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity while restoring their credibility.

### **Introduction**

The world stood by and did nothing for one hundred days from April to July 1994. At that time Rwanda was one of the poorest countries in the world on a par with my wife's adopted homeland of Haiti. Drought and war diminished food production significantly. Estimates at the time put the number who would need food to survive at 800,000. In an ironic twist of fate this is the figure used for the total number killed in the genocide when Hutu took up machete against his Tutsi neighbor. According to Gourevitch, the genocide "was the most efficient mass killings since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" and on average the perpetrators terminated five and a half lives for every minute of the genocide.<sup>1</sup> By the time they were finished killing, dead, mutilated, decomposing, and bleached skeletal bodies were all that remained. The total number killed represented 10% of the 8 million citizens of the country of Rwanda. Atrocities included killing, rape, torture, and maiming of babies, children, youth, and adults of every age. Eyewitnesses reported watching in horror as perpetrators beheaded children. In addition to the hundreds of thousands killed, there were hundreds of thousands who perpetrated violence and killing.

### *Colonial and Missionary Roots of the Genocide*

A report commissioned by The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda in 2005 traced the roots of the 1994 genocide.<sup>2</sup> Anastase Shyaka who wrote the report on behalf of the Commission identified several causal factors that precipitated the carnage in April 1994. He views the conflict as one that is "identity-based" and fueled by fears that one group feels threatened by another and thereby perceived as an enemy (p. 8). The identity mechanisms in place in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis arose from a complex interweaving of both external and internal factors. Colonization of Rwanda by European oppressors brought a foreign ideological conception of the racial heritage and makeup of the African people. The biblical story of Noah's three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth according to some interpretations of Genesis 9-10) seemed to support this racial theory. The so-called "Hamitic myth" (p. 11) explained the various distinctions between "genuine Negroes" and "less Negroes." The genuine Negroes were the branch placed under the "curse of Ham" and seen as servants of the other branches of the Noetic line. The "less Negroes" came from a more "Caucasoid" branch seen in Egypt and Abyssinia.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with our Families: Stones from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998:133).

<sup>2</sup> Anastase Shyaka, "The Rwandan Conflict: Origin, Development, Exit Strategies," The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, 2005.

In Rwanda, many believe that European explorers, traders, businessmen, and missionaries brought with them this racial ideology and imposed it on the three tribes designated as Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas. Within the ideological matrix imported with the Germans and Belgians the Tutsi minority (14% of the population) viewed as the superior non-cursed branch while they viewed the Hutu majority (85% of the population) as those under a curse and destined for servitude to the superior brothers. With this ideology in mind, the colonizers identified the Tutsis for important government positions and for selection to attend private schools. This practice of “indirect colonization” (p. 14) gave practical impetus to the “divide and rule” strategy of the colonizers. The Tutsis became the natural choice for assisting in the control of the other “inferior” groups who could be “naturally dominated” and controlled by proxies (p. 14). The Commission provided an example an example in the exclusion of all the Hutu chiefs from the political and governmental structures in the 1930s based upon previous colonial administration of the country under Morthehan Law. Instead European and American missionaries, with the full agreement of the government, placed Tutsis in administrative positions. Ethnic choices in favor of the Tutsis, made at the administrative and political levels of government, trickled-down to selections about who attended the elite government run and missionary sponsored boarding schools. According to Shyaka over 80 percent of those enrolled in the School of Astrida were Tutsis.

When the Tutsis rebelled against colonial rule in the 1950s the colonizers countered this ingratitude by inciting the Hutus to free themselves from the “invader Tutsi” (Shyaka, p. 16). Some characterized the Tutsi usurpation of power from their colonial oppressors as anti-democratic and described them as nothing more than troublemakers and instigators of chaos. In their grab for power the Tutsis also took over the ownership of plantations, companies, and land owned by the former colonizers. In November 1959 a Hutu-led rebellion (*Jacquerie*) against Tutsis resulted in Hutu rule by military force as well as the migration of thousands of Tutsis to nearby countries including Congo and Uganda. On July 1, 1962, Belgium formally recognized Rwanda’s independence and Hutu took over the government from the Tutsi. The oppression tables turned once again. As Salzman puts it “The Hutu turned the ‘Hamitic theory’ against the Tutsi, who were recast as ‘Hamitic invaders’ and colonialists.”<sup>3</sup> In early 1990 President Juvenal Habyarimana lost his grip on power and used the pretext of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) incursion from Uganda led by exiled Tutsis on October 1, 1990 to his political advantage. He planned to use the “invasion” as a way to curry Hutu favor and support for his fledgling regime against the Tutsis. The Habyarimana government ordered all Rwandans to kill the *ibytso* (“accomplices of the enemy”) rebels who were attempting to overthrow his regime and foment rebellion.

By 1992 Habyarimana provided military training and weapons to the youth of his party in office so that they could remain in power. This youthful militia, known as the *Interahamwe* (“Those who attack together”), carried out reprisal attacks against Tutsis and their Hutu sympathizers, all under the cloak of secrecy and under the radar of the world press. By 1993 the work of the Interahamwe created a climate of uneasiness with their tactics and the partisan flavor of their propaganda. Those in authority proposed that former soldiers train a civilian defense force. Although originally armed with rifles, the cost became too prohibitive and a new weapon of choice emerged: the machete. Businessmen paid for enormous shipments of the weapon and

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<sup>3</sup> Todd Salzman, “Catholics and Colonialism: The church’s failure in Rwanda,” *Commonweal*, May 23, 1997.

according to estimates every third Hutu was equipped with a machete.<sup>4</sup> The RPF learned of these preparations for slaughter and increased their ranks in the capital city of Kigali.

On April 6, 1994 a heat seeking missile shot down the plane carrying President Habyarimana. Although no one claimed responsibility for the assassination, many blamed the RPF and their Tutsi collaborators. Colonel Bagosora, leader of the Presidential Guard backed by the militia, ordered the killing of Tutsi government and political leaders as well as their Hutu sympathizers. The killing spree spread from organized and systematic killings to the recruitment of anyone willing to carry a machete and kill. The RPF entered the fray and the battle was on. The U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda tried to keep the peace but quickly retreated to their posts despite appeals to their superiors that the U.N. intervene on behalf of the victims. Appeals went unheeded from RPF leaders and other Tutsi leaders as well as Hutu sympathizers to the governments of the United States, Belgium, and France. The ex-patriots from these countries residing in Rwanda fled like rats from a sinking ship. By July the Tutsi-led RPF re-captured Kigali and with that ended the genocide and began a refugee exodus of some two million Hutus to what was then Zaire but now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In 1994, the Hutu were motivated to commit genocide not simply to kill Tutsis but also to plunder their land, cattle, houses, and possessions. The earlier practice of *kubohoza* or taking over the property of others (primarily Tutsi taking over the property of Hutus) received social sanction and fueled much of the early rage of the Hutus against the Tutsis. Indeed, Hutus codified their rage and published it in the form of the “Hutu Ten Commandments”<sup>5</sup> which stipulated and advocated the killing of Tutsis. The cover of *Kangura* magazine (in which the Ten Commandments had earlier been published) in January 1992 featured a conversation between Jesus Christ, his mother Mary and his father Joseph about how Hutu unity could be achieved. No official or unofficial comments or responses from either Roman Catholic or Protestant church leaders or clergy to the publication of this provocative cover surfaced in the press. The years of jealousy fueled by notions of racial superiority, religious acquiescence, preferential treatment, and a general us vs. them mentality, exploded in the rage that started in April 1994. The issue of property and possessions raises a fundamental ingredient in the divisions that has a superficial connection to tribal ethnicity but may mask more profound economic divisions. One reporter observed a display at the Kigali Memorial Centre stating that one should consider any Hutu who acquired ten or more cows a Tutsi.<sup>6</sup> Desforges describes in grizzly detail the aftermath of the violence:

The sweetly sickening odor of decomposing bodies hung over many parts of Rwanda in July 1994: on Nyanza ridge, overlooking the capital, Kigali, where skulls and bones, torn clothing, and scraps of paper were scattered among the bushes; at Nyamata, where bodies lay twisted and heaped on benches and the floor of a church; at Nyarubuye in eastern Rwanda, where the cadaver of a little girl, otherwise intact, had been flattened by passing vehicles to the thinness of cardboard in front of the church steps; on the shores of idyllic Lake Kivu in western Rwanda, where pieces of human bodies had been thrown down the steep hillside; and at Nyakizu in southern Rwanda, where the sun bleached fragments of bone in the sand of the schoolyard and, on a nearby hill, a small red sweater held together the ribcage of a decapitated child. (p. 6)

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<sup>4</sup> Alison Desforges, “Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda,” Human Rights Watch, March 1999:9.

<sup>5</sup> Published in the magazine *Kangura* as cited in *Genocide in Rwanda*, p. 235.

<sup>6</sup> “The Rwandan Reconciliation,” Sarel Kandell Kromer, *Washingtonpost.com*, Sunday October 16, 2005.

*The Complicity of the Church in the Genocide*

In 1994, most observers considered Rwanda to be the most Christian of all the African nations. Some 90 percent of the population self-identified as Christian and of this number 65 percent self-identified as Roman Catholic (based on 1991 census data). The Roman Catholic Church seemed imbedded in the social and political fabric of Rwanda to such an extent that many analysts had difficulty dissecting the connections between the two.<sup>7</sup> According to African Rights, “more Rwandese citizens died in churches and parishes than anywhere else.”<sup>8</sup> The genocide revealed the saint and sinner in everyone involved, including Christians in general and clergy specifically. A Roman Catholic bishop from Rwanda admitted that “the best catechists, those who filled our churches on Sundays, were the first to go out with machetes in their hands.”<sup>9</sup> Without a doubt, Rwandan clergy displayed many acts of courage and heroism during the 100 days of slaughter. In addition, clergy also disgraced themselves and the churches they represented by acts of treachery, deceit, and complicity. According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu responding to his reading of *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*<sup>10</sup>

The story of Rwanda shows both sides of our humanity. The churches were sometimes quite superb in what they did in the face of intimidation and at great cost to themselves. But there were other times when [they] failed dismally and seemed to be implicated in ways that have left many disillusioned, disgruntled and angry with the churches and their leadership. Many have been alienated and feel badly betrayed.<sup>11</sup>

The most disturbing behavior came at the beginning of the rampage when a strong voice of dissent and condemnation could have turned the tide or at least slowed its advance. The first synod of African bishops took place in the Vatican as the atrocities started. A statement released by the bishops from the Vatican, promised their “support to the new government” and called upon Rwandans to “respond favorably to calls” from the new government so that they would be aided in reaching their goals of peace and security in Rwanda.<sup>12</sup> In future communiqués the bishops left the clear impression that the responsibility for the killings belonged both to the new government and the RPF. The weak response of those in positions of leadership had an impact at the local parish level where local clergy gave “tacit approval to the slaughter by participating in security committee meetings.”<sup>13</sup> While the Rwandan government used radio and the printed press to communicate its racially imperialist views the Bishops used pastoral letters, but the effect was the same. Roman Catholic and Protestant complicity was not just an ad hoc affair but took on an official form by the government sponsored *Comité de contacts* which brought Roman Catholic and Protestant church leaders together in an unprecedented ecumenical spirit. One of the members of this committee, a Bishop Augustin Misago, refused to hide Tutsis due to lack of space in his bishop’s residence.<sup>14</sup>

In 1999 Rwandan authorities arrested Bishop Misago for his alleged collaboration in the murder of children during the 1994 genocide. Survivors who included nuns and priests

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<sup>7</sup> Saskia Van 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.

<sup>8</sup> African Rights 1995, p. 865.

<sup>9</sup> As cited in “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” Miroslav Volf (*Interpretation*, April 2000:158)

<sup>10</sup> Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth (Eds.), Paragon House Publishers, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Accessed from [http://www.paragonhouse.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=327](http://www.paragonhouse.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=327)

<sup>12</sup> Desforges, p. 189.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>14</sup> *Genocide in Rwanda*, p. 239.

implicated Bishop Misago in killings that took place in his Gikongoro diocese. Additionally, the government convicted nineteen priests and sentenced two to death for their role in the killing of several thousand people who sought refuge in their church.<sup>15</sup> In June 2000 a tribunal acquitted Bishop Misago of all indictments brought against him amidst charges and countercharges regarding the undue influence of Pope John Paul II and high ranking church officials in Rwanda. A papal envoy attended the trial each day. The Vatican issued a statement reading in part that the Bishop's arrest "wounds the entire church." To add insult to violent injury, the official post-genocide position of the Vatican states that the church is being "targeted" for persecution by trials such as that of Bishop Misago.<sup>16</sup> On November 10, 2006 a tribunal sentenced Sister Theopister Mukakibibi to 30 years in prison by a *gacaca* (pronounced ga-cha-cha) court (a traditional Rwandan court that provides "justice in the grass"). The court convicted and sentenced two other nuns for their part in calling militiamen to their convent at Sovu to drive out Tutsis who had sought refuge there. The court also found them guilty of providing fuel with which to torch a building in which 500 Tutsis were hiding. According to reports, Hutu perpetrators killed about 6000 Tutsis in the Sovu area during the genocide.<sup>17</sup> In 2006 the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda convicted and sentenced Rev. Athanase Seromba, a Roman Catholic priest, to 15 years in prison. The Tribunal charged him with "directing a militia that attacked with traditional arms and poured fuel through the roof of the church, while gendarmes and communal police launched grenades and killed the refugees. After failing to kill all the people inside, Seromba ordered the demolition of the church."<sup>18</sup> Today more than fifty churches in Rwanda serve as memorial sites for the victims killed in those sanctuaries.

Fair observers both inside and outside the church in Rwanda painfully admit that the Christian church lost any credibility it had before the 1994 genocide because of its complicity in that atrocity. Tom Ndahiro, a former Human Rights Commissioner in Rwanda wrote, "The church has failed in her mission, and lost her credibility, particularly since the genocide."<sup>19</sup> In 2005 the South African Council of Churches led an interfaith delegation to visit the country of Rwanda at the invitation of religious leaders to discuss "the role of faith communities in facilitating national reconciliation." The visit coincided with the Day of Reconciliation in Kigali organized by the South African embassy. The delegation met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Gacaca court officials, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, and church leaders from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. The delegation reported that their "meetings with Rwanda's faith communities were the least satisfying and hopeful aspect of our experience. We encountered denial, apparent lack of trust among church leaders, fear of transparency, and a deep-seated sense of guilt." The delegation reached the conclusion that the churches in Rwanda "have lost their credibility."<sup>20</sup> Ndahiro's recommendation to the church of Rwanda is simple and straightforward: "[The church] needs to repent before God and Rwandan society, and seek healing from God."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Guardian*, Saturday, April 17, 1999

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>17</sup> Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Dec 1, 2006 accessed at [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&s=f&o=325838&apc\\_state=henpacr](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&s=f&o=325838&apc_state=henpacr)

<sup>18</sup> "Catholic Priest Guilty in Rwanda Genocide," *Washingtonpost.com*, Thursday, December 14, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Rittner et al., *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 2004), 237.

<sup>20</sup> "SA Interfaith Delegation Explores Reconciliation in Rwanda," accessed at <http://www.sacc.org.za/news06/rwanda.html>.

<sup>21</sup> *Genocide in Rwanda*, p. 237.

## Reconciliation in Rwanda

### *The Need for Reconciliation*

While there are numerous and often interlocking consequences of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda the major consequence is the rending of the social fabric of Rwanda that has produced anger, hatred, resentment, a need for retaliation, and feelings of mistrust. The genocide fractured families, business partnerships, government coalitions, neighborhoods, civic organizations, churches, friendships, and even marriages.<sup>22</sup> While the precursors of the genocide simmered for decades, the actual 100 days of the genocide and the 800,000 victims the perpetrators produced fractured a multitude of relationships across the country of Rwanda. Straus estimates the number of Hutu perpetrators (*génocidaires*) at 200,000.<sup>23</sup> This represents about 7-8 percent of the adult Hutu population in 1994. He defined a perpetrator as “any person who participated in an attack against a civilian in order to kill or to inflict serious injury on that civilian.” Hutu attacks against Tutsis, fueled as they were by seething rage, became so devoid of normal reason that in some cases perpetrators killed “tall persons” indiscriminately on the pretext that anyone tall was obviously Tutsi even though some of those killed were Hutu. The large scale magnitude of those who engaged in attacks upon civilian Tutsis and Hutu sympathizers complicates the reconciliation process simply because of the massive number of people involved.

### *The Christian Origins of Reconciliation*

The concept of reconciliation has its origins in Christian theology. In particular, it has its origins in New Testament theology and especially the theology of the Apostle Paul. Karl Barth defined the Christian doctrine of reconciliation as “the restitution, the resumption of a fellowship which once existed but was then threatened by dissolution.”<sup>24</sup> One of the most recent Christian scholars to address the subject of reconciliation with any authoritative voice is Yugoslavian Miroslav Volf in his book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. His critique of traditional Christian theology regarding the concept of reconciliation is that it almost exclusively treats reconciliation between God and humanity through Jesus Christ while ignoring what Volf calls “the social meaning of reconciliation.”<sup>25</sup> That is, traditional Christian theology has rightly emphasized “a vertical dimension” to the Christian concept of reconciliation whereby humanity is reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But what traditional Christian theology has missed, Volf argues, is the equal emphasis given in the New Testament and especially in the undisputed writings of the Apostle Paul to a “horizontal dimension” that “involves a turning away from enmity toward people, not just from enmity toward God.” Using Paul’s teaching on reconciliation as his touchstone, Volf argues that Paul understood reconciliation as both a restoration of a broken relationship between God and humanity and a “ministry of reconciliation” that attempted to bring human enemies together and create a state of real peace. The Pauline paradigm for this “social meaning of reconciliation” is the Jew/Gentile relationship that according to Krister Stendahl<sup>26</sup> dominated the Apostle’s theology in every respect. Paul understood the vertical reconciliation offered through Christ to God as holding the power and

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<sup>22</sup> Day 1: Genocide’s Child, *Newsday*, April 30, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> “How Many Perpetrators were there in the Rwandan Genocide? An Estimate,” Scott Straus (*Journal of Genocide Research*, 6 (1) March, 2004:85-98).

<sup>24</sup> *Barth: The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005)

<sup>25</sup> “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation,” *Interpretation*, April 2000:166.

<sup>26</sup> *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles*, Fortress Press, 1976.

hope for a social reconciliation between estranged groups like Jews and Gentiles. St. Paul sets out his concept of social reconciliation in elaborate fashion in his Epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>27</sup> In this epistle to the church at Ephesus comprised of Jew and Gentile Christians, Paul elaborates upon his theological understanding of the significance of Christ's death and its implications for Jew/Gentile relationships. Since Christ has healed the breach that separated both Jew and Gentile from God, Paul argues, he has also "broken down the dividing wall of hostility" between Jews and Gentiles and thus created "one new man in place of the two, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:14, 15). Paul emphasizes this new social reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles through his use of a unique cluster of *syn*-compounds in the original Koine Greek text. While Paul uses *syn*-compounds in his other epistles, there are more of them in Ephesians than any of his other epistles. They cluster here because they help illustrate the pragmatic and practical way in which theological reconciliation (humanity reconciled to God through Christ) has directly impacted social reconciliation between two formerly hostile factions. To use Volf's language, exclusion gave way to embrace.

The vertical dimension of this Christian concept, whether in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Rwanda, heavily influences most Christian understanding of reconciliation. The horizontal dimension that seeks to engage in a "ministry of reconciliation" to bring about social reconciliation between groups hostile to one another is almost completely absent from the discussions. Thus American Christians never fully understood nor appreciated the social demands of reconciliation as it pertained to race relations between Blacks and Whites. In the same way, Rwandan Christians most likely never understood the social meaning of reconciliation and its implications for relations between Hutus and Tutsis. Both were and are failures of the Christian community to fully understand its own teaching regarding reconciliation and wrestle with the implications of that teaching for hostile social relationships in each country. Defective Christian teaching produced defective Christian behavior.

#### *Actualizing Social Reconciliation*

While there are governmental and NGO sponsored reconciliation efforts underway in Rwanda including the creation of gacaca courts in 1996 and the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in 1999, there remains a role for the church in Rwanda to bring about reconciliation. The church's role in Rwandan reconciliation may need to begin with a humble admission of moral failure and complicity in the genocide where appropriate. It would not be inappropriate for the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, through their national leaders, to issue an official apology and ask the victims and the nation to extend forgiveness both for the church's active sins of complicit commission and its passive sins of omission. The complicity of churches in the genocide is documented and deeply disturbing. What is equally disturbing is the church's unwillingness to admit "collective guilt or remorse" and "without remorse, no confession, no forgiveness and no reconciliation."<sup>28</sup> Achieving substantial reconciliation is possible only when there is honest admission of fault and a commitment to restitution and restoration of broken relationships. It is St. Peter who teaches that "It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1Peter 4:17). The Apostle Paul also teaches the Christian faithful that "if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged" (1Corinthians 11:31). If the Christian church in Rwanda is going to have any credibility in the process of

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<sup>27</sup> While the Pauline authorship of Ephesians is disputed there is considerable evidence that could lead one to conclude Pauline authorship. See Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Doubleday, 1974 and *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Judson Press, 1960.

<sup>28</sup> Van Hoyweghen p. 20.

reconciliation (something it apparently has very little of at the moment), it must begin here. Reconciliation between those estranged from one another takes precedence over any other form of religious activity for “how can two walk together unless they be agreed” (Amos 3:3). Jesus set the principle for this in his Sermon on the Mount when he said,

*“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24).

Here reconciliation between estranged brothers takes priority over worship of God. This text illustrates the importance of Volf’s concept of the social meaning of reconciliation. In this text, surprisingly, reconciliation with another human being assumes a higher priority than reconciliation with God through the gift offering. It might be appropriate for the church in Rwanda to perform some act of public contrition for its misdeeds. While some segments and pockets of both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have engaged in public acts of contrition, such as that observed by the diocese of Butare in December 1994, the church needs a national public act led by the highest ecclesial authorities. Apart from such public and genuine national acts of contrition on the part of church leaders, the trend toward an increase in Pentecostal and Independent churches in Rwanda will continue unabated as citizens of Rwanda become more and more disaffected with traditional religious bodies, many of whom actively participated in the genocide. Pentecostal churches did not have much of a presence in pre-genocide Rwanda but in the aftermath of the genocide their numbers have grown while those of the Roman Catholic Church and some mainline Protestant denominations have dwindled.<sup>29</sup>

There are hopeful signs that the church in Rwanda is taking responsibility for its actions and inaction before and during the genocide. World Relief Rwanda is an organization that is seeking to use a network of some 3,000 churches in Rwanda to foster reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi Christians. At a church leaders’ retreat sponsored by World Relief Rwanda both Hutu and Tutsi Christians sought forgiveness from each other for what happened during the genocide. According to Rev. Andre Mfitumukiza who co-facilitated the retreat, “The church has not been responsible enough in building and healing this nation. As church leaders we are ashamed and guilty . . . but we want to take full responsibility for our failure and change our image as we work towards a better society.”<sup>30</sup> These kinds of efforts are multiplying throughout Rwanda as some parts of the church continue to admit guilt and seek to become agents of reconciliation and healing in a country that desperately needs it.

A similar reconciliation effort is underway forged by church leaders through Le Rucher Ministries. Started in 1994 by Dr. Rhiannon Lloyd, this group recognized the “failure of the church” preceding and during the genocide. Their mission is to “gather church leaders from every denomination to look at the role of the church in bringing healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.” Dr. Lloyd developed a set of guiding principles that govern the processes of confession, reconciliation, and healing. One of the ways in which he facilitates the brokering of reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi participants is through what he calls “identificational repentance.” He borrows the concept from the ancient Jewish ritual of the priest confessing sins on behalf of the nation. Admission of guilt is a necessary first step in the process of reconciliation. A representative of an offending group (church leader, government official, medical professional, etc.) confesses genocide sins on behalf of that group to an offended party.

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<sup>29</sup> Anne Kubai, “Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Changing Religious Landscape,” *Exchange* 36(2007) 198-214.

<sup>30</sup> Accessed from [http://aglwrrwanda.blogspot.com/2007/06/church-leading-way-for-rwandas-recovery\\_11.html](http://aglwrrwanda.blogspot.com/2007/06/church-leading-way-for-rwandas-recovery_11.html).

Dr. Lloyd states that the purpose of the exercise is not to “absolve the guilt of the past” but “release grace in the present for the offended to be able to forgive.” One of the benefits of such a personal approach to reconciliation is that it matches the personal nature of the atrocities that were committed. As Stephen Haynes insists “The killing was not perpetrated anonymously in gas chambers, but face to face with machetes, knives, guns and grenades.”<sup>31</sup>

#### Facilitating Social Reconciliation in the Street

Objective observers who read or hear about what took place, removed from the actual experiences, cannot fully appreciate the magnitude of the Rwanda genocide. However, certain statistics convey a sense of the degree to which the majority of Rwandans were touched in some way by the events that transpired during those 100 days in 1994. According to surveys taken of victims of the violence almost 71 percent report having a close family member killed in the genocide (as cited in Boris, Infants, 2006). Based upon reports compiled by UNICEF’s 1995 National Trauma Survey, 80 percent of children and youth between the ages of 8-19 years of age lost family members and almost one-third reported witnessing the death of one or more of their family members during the genocide.<sup>32</sup> One survivor, who had remained in hiding during the genocide said, “When I came out, there were no birds. There was sunshine and the stench of death.”<sup>33</sup>

#### *Children of the Street*

The result of all of this killing and death was the creation overnight of a whole new influx of newly orphaned street children (*mayibobo*). Human Rights Watch reports that “The International Committee of the Red Cross registered more than 120,000 unaccompanied children in the aftermath of the genocide” and that Rwandan government sources “think that as many as 400,000 children were unaccompanied at one point or another” following the genocide.<sup>34</sup> Figures vary but the government of Rwanda estimates that there are 7,000 street children living in the urban centers of the nation.<sup>35</sup> A whole new influx of residents who have no home and most of whom have lost one or both parents invaded the major cities and urban centers of Africa. The geometric increase in the number of street children in the last ten to fifteen years across the continent of Africa vexes governments, voluntary organizations, and local leaders. No more so than in the country of Rwanda and its capital city Kigali.

Despite the reluctance of those who write on the subject to use the term *street children* and prefer instead to use the appellation “urban children at risk,”<sup>36</sup> I will use the term street children because they are children and they still live in the street. Sometimes in our efforts to establish academic distance and objectivity as we study a particular phenomenon, we dehumanize our subjects as persons and turn them into objects of scientific observation and experimentation. Those who claim that the term is stigmatizing or not expressive of the “heterogeneity” or multidimensional realities of the children’s lives seem to be imposing their own ideologies onto the situation. In some respects, it seems as though the constant wrangling over terms referring to the children and taxonomies for classifying the children simply provides a self-serving academic exercise but doesn’t really advance our understanding nor does it go a long

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<sup>31</sup> “In God’s Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century,” *Christian Century*, Feb. 27, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> as cited in Boris, p. 587

<sup>33</sup> “Leave None To Tell the Story,” Desforges, 1999:6

<sup>34</sup> *Lasting Wounds: Consequences of Genocide and War on Rwanda’s Children*, March 2003, Vol. 15, No. 6, p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Swept Away: Street Children Illegally Detained in Kigali, Rwanda,” May 2006:3.

<sup>36</sup> Catherine Panter-Brick, “Street Children, Human Rights, and Public Health: A Critique and Future Directions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2002(31)147-71.

way to solve the present dilemma. I prefer the term street children because my particular concern is on a specific segment of urban children at risk, those left homeless and parentless by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. These children live most of their lives *on* the street and *in* the street or have taken *to* the street or are children *of* the street as their primary locus of existence. When the children themselves describe their plight they use the term “street” to refer to the location of their daily existence.

Most studies and reports on the conditions of street children begin with a litany of statistics and staggering figures designed to impress upon the reader the enormity of the problem. However, no one agency or government has any reliable way to count the children who have been displaced and are no longer living with families and going to school. Part of the problem is related to our previous discussion of terminology. Who are we counting? The problem of fluidity in the situation where children may live on the streets for a time but are then either brought into a shelter, placed through foster care, or re-united with their family of origin or extended family also complicates the ability of observers to gauge an accurate number. The United Nations through its Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) offers statistics worldwide for each of the countries where the problem of street children exists. The number of street children worldwide range from 30 million to 170 million. Local authorities in Rwanda have different figures than those reported by the central government in Kigali. The children and youth who roam the streets of Kigali and other major urban centers in Rwanda did not voluntarily choose to live under these conditions. They had this life forced upon them primarily from two contributing causes: the 1994 genocide and the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is sweeping the continent of Africa.

The *Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS*<sup>37</sup> uses the following definition for an orphan: “An orphan is a child under 18 years of age whose mother, father or both parents have died from any cause.” One can more specifically describe orphans from all causes as follows:

Single orphan—a child who has lost one parent.

Double orphan—a child who has lost both parents.

Maternal orphan—a child whose mother has died (includes double orphans).

Paternal orphan—a child whose father has died (includes double orphans).

In the wake of the up tick in the number of orphans whose parents have both died, a whole new category of orphan emerged: child headed households (CHH). UNICEF reports that according to the last census of the population in Rwanda conducted in 2002, over 1.2 million children have lost one or both parents as a result of conflict, poverty, violence, or HIV/AIDS. Of this number, over 100,000 live under conditions with no surviving parents and no relatives who are still alive or are willing to care for them.<sup>38</sup> The latter situation may be more understandable if we recognize that 35 percent of Rwandan households already have children other than their own living with them. Some families may have been able to absorb one child but in many instances multiple siblings preferred to stay together and not separated. In many cases, the children “adopted” into such blended families are often no more than free labor used to perform domestic chores for the family. Children in such situations are most vulnerable to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse since family members hide the abuse. Since young orphan-girls make up the vast majority (estimates place it at 90% of all CHH) of those adopted into families of relatives or other types of households, the potential for sexual abuse is pronounced. According to one study, 80 percent of

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<sup>37</sup> Global Partners Forum, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Accessed at Orphans & Street Children\UNICEF - The child in the family - The child in the family.mht.

girl heads of households “had been sexually abused or fended off sexual abuse.”<sup>39</sup> Such a situation gives rise to the new term “invisible girls” who are extremely vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation, discrimination, and violence.<sup>40</sup> Many times the adopting families will re-name the orphan-child and even assign them an arbitrary age.<sup>41</sup> By so doing, they deprive the orphan-child of his/her own identity and family roots. The fact that families take in these orphan-children and give them food and shelter, it often creates a feeling of indebtedness and gratitude that may stifle honest reporting of conditions. One researcher dubbed this the “Good, but” response.<sup>42</sup> The children resisted reporting any negative experiences while working in an adopting home situation but always qualified their positive assessment with a “but” that provided an explanation about what the child would rather be doing than working without pay for another family, even though the orphan-child might be related by blood or marriage.

### *Impact of the Genocide and Street Hardships on Childhood Development*

The definition of what constitutes a child varies socially and legally from one country to the next. The United Nations defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years.”<sup>43</sup> But age certainly is not the only factor in assessing whether one is a child or not. What are we to do with children in Rwanda who have had their childhoods ripped from them by the loss of a mother (52%), a father (62%), a sibling (76%), or a member of the extended family (84%); or have witnessed someone being killed (70%), raped (31%), or have directly witnessed any form of violence against another family member (95%)?<sup>44</sup> Childhood development specialists agree that trauma on the scale which these children witnessed and experienced first-hand, stymies and stalemates normal development resulting in an attenuation of childhood beyond what experts consider within the range of normal.

Beyond this more general developmental impact is the more acute effect exposure to life threat and violence has on specific aspects of childhood development. Children exposed to maltreatment, violence, and abuse (psychological, emotional, physical, sexual) experience depression at 3 to 5 times the average, are 12 times more likely to attempt suicide, are 18 to 21 times more likely to become substance abusers (glue sniffing is prevalent in African countries like Rwanda), report increased numbers of sexual partners and thus much higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and AIDS, are 4 times more likely to become pregnant, present lower IQ scores, and register elevated levels of cortisol secretion into the brain which in turn damages or kills neurons in some of the most critical regions of the brain for child development.<sup>45</sup> The Kinyarwanda expression *Guhahamuka Syndrome* that describes the psychological aftermath of genocide experiences includes feelings of despair, hopelessness,

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<sup>39</sup> *Lasting Wounds*, p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> *Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child*, report of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives: Understanding Child Domestic Labour and Responses to It*, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of a Child, Article 1 of the Convention, [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc).

<sup>44</sup> *Child Headed Household: Dilemmas of Definition and Livelihood Rights*, Marion MacLellan, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> “The Impact of Trauma on Child Development,” Frank W. Putnam, *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, Winter 2006:1-11.

worthlessness, excessive crying, attempting suicide, being easily startled, repeatedly dreaming of bad events, and experiencing mental chaos or flashbacks.<sup>46</sup>

As serious as these effects are on children exposed to the levels of violence and harm that was part of the 1994 genocide, experts on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) report that the impact may even be more profound. Experts in PTSD propose that “Both the nature and the magnitude of the survivors’ exposure places them at increased risk for developing long-term psychological reactions and PTSD.”<sup>47</sup> In a study conducted and reported by these researchers among Rwandan children (11-16 years of age on average and evenly split between boys and girls) virtually all the children reported witnessing some kind of violence against others and/or family members and 78 percent experienced the loss of family members. Fifty percent of the children witnessed mass murders, attacks with *pangas* (machetes), and almost all of them reported seeing dead bodies or parts of bodies. In addition, 80 percent of them reported hiding to save their lives and almost 20 percent reported hiding under dead bodies in order to survive the genocide. Almost all of the children (90%) reported that they thought they too would die and two-thirds reported having their lives threatened by the killers. The results of PTSD testing indicated that almost all of the children in the study experienced multiple stressors “each of which alone would be regarded as extremely stressful in a peaceful society.”<sup>48</sup> In previous research on children and PTSD, researchers used a cutoff score of 17 on the Impact of Event Scale (IES) as a sound predictor of PTSD. Researchers in this study found that 79 percent of the Rwandan children in the study had an IES score of 17 or higher, indicating an elevated level of *distress*. Street children who do not have the needed family, social, community, and religious support mechanisms afforded children relocated to refugee centers, for example, are at greater risk of having the negative effects of PTSD persist into adulthood, if they survive. Experts know from comparable studies that “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs) are highly correlated with much higher rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, liver disease, emphysema and will die at a younger age than their counterparts who have not experienced these adverse traumas.<sup>49</sup>

The pernicious effects of the brutality and violence of the genocide and the accumulating adverse impact on the neuro-psychosocial development of children all conspire to render orphaned street children highly susceptible to exposure, disease, maltreatment, and possibly a shortened lifespan. Adding to their already tenuous existence, these children must also cope with the social reality of the ethnic divisions and jealousies that fueled the genocide. Many of these children have regular exposure to and interaction with perpetrators of genocide violence and are often competing for the same meager resources with children from a rival tribe. But these very street children provide the church in Rwanda an avenue for reclaiming their credibility by the church’s efforts at facilitating reconciliation among these Hutu and Tutsi children and youth.

### *Programs Targeting Street Children*

It is the belief of many, including the government of Rwanda that the hope for the future reconciliation and peace of the country will come through its children and youth. To this end, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture has undertaken a policy of national youth reconciliation.

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<sup>46</sup> Infants and Young Children Living in Youth-Headed Households in Rwanda: Implications of Emerging Data, Neil W. Boris et al, *Infant Mental Health Journal*, Vol. 27(6), 2006:588.

<sup>47</sup> “Trauma Exposure and Psychological Reactions To Genocide Among Rwandan Children,” Atle Dyregrov et al, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000:4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Putnam, p. 1.

Along with this government sponsored initiative many grassroots independent organizations sponsored by a variety of agencies and churches have formed youth organizations created to address the various problems confronting children and youth but especially focused on reconciliation and job skill development leading to gainful employment. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission created Student Clubs for Unity and Reconciliation (SCUR). The Minister of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, said in an interview that the reason why the government is targeting youth to be a catalyst for unity and reconciliation is because “they are flexible” and because their “values are different from the others of the society.”<sup>50</sup> One of the ways in which this reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis is being encouraged with youth is through organized sports (primarily soccer) with teams comprised of both Hutus and Tutsis. The Minister explained in his interview that, “When we organize our teams at all levels we don't look out for who is Tutsi and who is Hutu. We look for the best.” Because of the upsurge in locally organized soccer teams through the Ministry and the National Youth Council as well as the many NGO's who are sponsoring similar activities, the quality of the national Rwandan soccer squad has improved dramatically so that they are now competitive at the international level.

Another reason, not cited by the Minister, as to why the government, NGOs, and church-sponsored groups target youth is because rampaging youth carried out many of the killings and property destruction that took place during the genocide. Reports indicate that as many as 5,000 children and youth under the age of eighteen were arrested on charges they committed crimes of genocide.<sup>51</sup> As a way to make restitution for their destruction of property, the government has sponsored a Habitat type program that enlists youth to build homes for widows. The Minister reported, in this same interview, that in 2006 the youth of Rwanda built 60 homes in Bugesera-Nyamata and another 60 houses in Kinyinya. Future plans call for them to build houses for similarly displaced populations in the capital city of Kigali. The ambitious goal the Ministry set is that by 2010 every widow in Rwanda will have a home to call her own.

An example of an NGO using sports to help bring about healing and reconciliation in Rwanda is Women Without Borders based in Vienna, Austria. They sponsor 8 soccer teams a year just for Hutu and Tutsi girls in order to “overcome trauma, hate and resentment.”<sup>52</sup> This group cites research study evidence demonstrating that “youth who play sports are up to 90 percent less likely to be part of street gangs, use harmful narcotics, have unsafe sex, and have unplanned pregnancies.”

One of the most respected NGOs, World Vision, makes concerted efforts to work on bringing about reconciliation among Hutu and Tutsi street children. Trained moderators who worked with street children since 1994 conduct reconciliation workshops. On their website World Vision recounts the experience of one of the street children who participated in one of their reconciliation workshops:

Mutumaliza, a Tutsi who lost all of her relatives in the genocide, attended one of these workshops. “In the workshop I met Hutus who suffered so much,” Mutumuliza said. “We were able to understand each other and what our lives were like. I realized they had just as many or more problems and I realized my mistake of feeling sorry only for myself.”

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<sup>50</sup> “Rwanda: 11 Years After the Genocide,” Muhereza Kyamutetera, *Daily Monitor*, October 5, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> *Lasting Wounds*, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> “Rwanda: Kicking for reconciliation! Self-Confidence, life-skills and healing through sport,” May 24, 2006, International Platform on Sport and Development, accessed at <http://www.sportanddev.org/en/projects/see-all-projects/rwanda-kicking-for-reconciliation-self-confidence-life-skills-and-healing-through-sport.htm>.

Mutamuliza feels that through the workshops, she is healing her wounds and finding a new solidarity with the other participants.

*REACH Rwanda*

One of the thousands of orphaned street children stitched together, from the tattered remnants of his former life before the genocide, something of a new life and in the process offers reconciliation and hope to the street children of Rwanda. Benjamin witnessed the slaughter of both of his paternal grandparents and cousins while he hid in the rafters above where the family atrocity took place. When the killers finished their gleeful spree of death, Benjamin waited for hours until darkness enveloped the darkness and slowly, carefully, quietly, he emerged from the safety of his hiding place and made his way into the protection afforded by a normally hostile jungle. Using great stealth and careful to avoid detection, he set out for his parents' home, often hiding among dead and decomposing bodies in makeshift graves. He looked for women who wore the dress he had last seen his mother wearing, often digging through corpses to do so. For months he wandered along with others hiding and scavenging for tidbits of food and water, even eating plants and squeezing what little water they held onto his parched lips. Eventually spotted by Congolese soldiers, they took him to safety in a refugee camp on the Congo/Rwanda border. Later Benjamin found his mother, father, sister, and brother. He found out that as his father ran from his attackers they sliced his back with a machete. The wound became infected and his father later died. His older brother, overcome with shock from the horrors of the genocide that he witnessed, eventually took his own life to alleviate the pain permanently. His younger sister, a school girl learning to read and write, was dislocated from the life she had known and captured by sex traders while she went to the river to draw water. Fortunately, a squad of soldiers rescued her about a week later and returned her to the refugee camp. But the trauma of her ordeal put her into a state of post traumatic stress, a condition too common among the orphans and street children of Rwanda, as noted above. His mother survived the genocide to care for her only surviving sister dying of AIDS. As a result of her exposure to her infected sister, Benjamin's mother also contracted the dreaded disease. Although Benjamin's aunt died, Benjamin's mother continues to live, thanks to life giving drugs obtained from an NGO serving in the region.

Some time later, while riding his bicycle to his post as a teacher at Alliance High School, Benjamin passed hundreds of street orphans on his way to and from the school. Gradually the plight of these casualties of genocide disrupted the routine of his quasi-normal life and he began to consider what he, one survivor of the genocide, might be able to do for these other survivors who had no one to care for them. A devout Christian, Benjamin examined his obligation to these children of the street through the lens of his own faith tradition. He saw the need for a more holistic approach to addressing the overwhelming needs of these children. Reluctantly he began to imagine what it might be like to see what he could do to improve the conditions and welfare of at least the children he saw on a daily basis.

His efforts started modestly and without any external funding assistance. He created an informal network of people in government, NGOs, and local churches. He began spending time with the street orphans that he passed by previously on his way to teach. As he began talking with them and listening to them he began to sense how hopeless and helpless they were. When he went about his daily routines he found the faces of the children haunting him. Most of Benjamin's early efforts to alleviate the needs and deplorable conditions of the street children in Kigali, were modest and ad hoc. He had no personal resources beyond the meager salary he received and much of that salary went to care for his mother and sister. But eventually, as

Benjamin shared his heart and vision for these children with others, a small band of supporters began to emerge. Soon he was able to begin offering small services and programs targeted mainly toward job skill development, substance abuse interventions, literacy, and Bible studies. He found that the children were most responsive to his words of encouragement that summarized Benjamin's primary message of the Bible study and prayer times: "God has not given up on you!" In 2004 the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C., invited Benjamin to a ceremony where his government recognized the work he had started prior to his entry into seminary.

Upon returning to Rwanda after completing his work at seminary, Benjamin went about the task of re-starting his fledgling organization. In March 2008, Benjamin registered REACH Rwanda as an official faith-based organization with the government of Rwanda. Although his organization has several goals, one of the major goals is "to promote the role of youth in the unity and reconciliation of Rwanda."<sup>53</sup> The work he is doing now is a continuation and indeed a formalization of the work he was doing informally while serving as a school teacher. He established partnerships with the Alliance of Churches in Rwanda, NGOs, the government of Rwanda through its Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, and with the Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda. He recruited student volunteers in colleges and established a formal Board of Directors. He has already established working partnerships with two elementary schools in Kigali and four secondary schools. As a result of Benjamin's efforts, the schools have agreed to accept a limited number of his street children at no cost. Zion Temple in Kigali has graciously offered office space and a place for some of the programs and activities to take place without charge. Currently he has 124 teenagers and children who meet twice a week for a variety of activities and to receive a limited number of services designed to meet the most acute needs facing these orphans of the genocide. Many of these teenagers sniff gasoline as a form of temporary relief from their memories and to mask the pangs of hunger. In the stupor that results from inhaling the gasoline, many of these victims become victims again sustaining injuries they cannot explain. Others engage in risky behaviors that they might otherwise avoid and many have contracted the AIDS virus without any real memory as to how they acquired it. During the month of April on the anniversary of the genocide, hospitals and other medical agencies are flooded to capacity with victims who are traumatized all over again by the recurring memories of atrocities committed against them and members of their family. Benjamin writes: "Fourteen years ago is like yesterday" to many of these children and youth and "the scars are still fresh, the images are still real, and each night is a nightmare."<sup>54</sup>

Benjamin recently reported that he was privileged to attend several celebrations in which former street children (notice that word "former") to whom he had ministered had received certification in carpentry, brick laying, vehicle repair, hair styling, and he was invited to attend the wedding of three former street children who were now forming a home in which to raise their own children, hopefully in peace and continued reconciliation.

One of the most promising strategies for brokering reconciliation in Rwanda is to focus efforts among children and youth who make up almost half of the population of Rwanda and are the only hope for a sustained state of reconciliation and peace. Any hope for a viable future in Rwanda hinges on efforts to create and sustain the healing of broken relationship caused by the genocide among children and youth. It is evident from a recent BBC report in February 2008 that there is still much work yet to do in order to bring reconciliation among Hutu and Tutsi children and youth. Rwandan government officials closed down a local secondary school in the village of

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<sup>53</sup> REACH Rwanda Mission Statement.

<sup>54</sup> Personal communication, May 9, 2008.

Mataba in northern Rwanda for two weeks to conduct an investigation into reports from school officials that Hutu children were harassing and persecuting Tutsi school mates. Bathroom graffiti read "Tutsis are bad and they should be killed." In addition, Tutsi children had garbage placed in their beds, school uniforms torn, and school books destroyed.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

According to a Rwandan saying, "When God wanders the world, at the end of the day he comes to Rwanda to sleep because He considers this to be the most beautiful place on earth." From our limited human perspective it certainly appears as though God slept while Rwanda suffered. Anyone with religious sensibilities finds they are hard pressed to offer easy answers to the questions of Christian complicity that naturally arise when considering tragedies such as the genocide in Rwanda. If the church and its leaders expect to have any credible influence in the ongoing process of reconciliation taking place in Rwanda, public admission of wrong doing and confession of sin ought to take place in order to achieve reconciliation among offended parties. In addition, Christian organizations like those referenced above need to continue to take an active role in healing those most impacted by the genocide, namely, children and youth. Like apocalyptic horsemen, the genocide and HIV/AIDS have taken their toll and as always it seems that it is the children and youth who suffer the most. Such a state of affairs contrasts sharply with the evocative aspirations for children and youth offered by the Rwanda Minister in Charge of Social Affairs who wrote:

"A child is a gift of God to its parents, a precious companion to its brothers and sisters, a continuity to its family and the future of its country. This beautiful human being, cherished and fragile, should be protected and grow up in an environment that is favorable to its moral, intellectual, and physical development."<sup>56</sup>

Our hope, our dream, our prayer, indeed our demand should be that such "cherished and fragile" gifts not only be cherished but protected, cared for, educated, nourished, and given the opportunity to reach their full potential unencumbered by the stupidity, destruction, exploitation, and oppression of adults who never seem to consider "all the little children of the world."

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<sup>55</sup> "Genocide hatred lingers in Rwanda schools," BBC News, February 19, 2008. Accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7246985.stm>.

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