

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
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**COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IN A WAR  
CONTEXT:  
The case of Burundi**

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents Pierre Rurakesha and Constance Ntawusigumwansi, to my late brother Venerand Sinzobakira and to all those, especially the Missionaries, who dedicated their lives to building peace, unity and justice among the Peoples.

May God bless them!

## **EPIGRAPH**

“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me”

(John 17: 20-21).

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am greatly indebted for all whose life completely dedicated to restoring peace and reconciliation among the people has challenged and inspired me. Heartfelt thanks to my family, relatives, friends and benefactors who spared nothing to support me so far. Their generosity made me enjoy life as a student and a researcher of truth.

My sincere gratitude goes to all my tireless and loving teachers and educators that God has put on my way. You have been docile to the hand of the Lord who wanted me to learn and to be useful to the whole world through you. May the same Lord add you more blessings!

Thanks to Sr Paola Moggi who initiated me to the complex reality of the media and who kindly and generously guided me in my work. My thanks to the Tangaza Family!

Special and unique thanks to the Society of the Missionaries of Africa who became my new family. The last but not the least I wholeheartedly convey the expression of my gratitude to, are all those people of good will who humbly accepted to assist me in my field research. My God reward you!

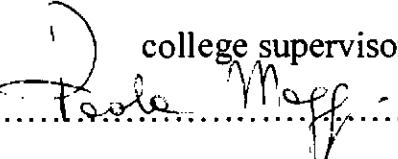
## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:..........  
Alberic MINANI, M.afr

Date:.....24 January 2005.....

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed:..........  
Sr Paola MOGGI, C.M.S.

Date:.....24 January 2005.....

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

“Communicating the Gospel message in a war context: the case of Burundi” is but an exposition of my long personal inner meditation on the unique, hard and complex historical journey of the Burundian people. For quite a number of years, diverse happenings, inner and outside questions have been at the origin of this topic. It is dear to me because what is happening is the history of my people, it is my history: since my childhood, I have been told of my family members, and neighbours who have been victims of the ethnic conflicts. For a couple of times, I myself have been victim of this ethnic hatred (I have run away from school fleeing those who wanted to kill me, my school material have been burnt by my fellow students, just to name a few). Wherever I have been, outside my country, people have always asked me why such a war could break out while most people are Christians. Therefore, this double pressure could not result but to a concern to give my personal contribution in the understanding of the problem in order to foster reconciliation.

### **Motivations**

The motivations and objectives of this essay are to incite people of good will to stand up and say no to those who fight for their selfish interests. I also intend to give my personal contribution in the process of peace-building and reconciliation among the people of Burundi. I remain convinced that the Church, in her pastoral ministry is invited to be more aware that whatever affects her faithful is part and parcel of her evangelizing task.

### **Methodology**

As for the methodology used in this essay, the main work has been that of classical research (books and other writings in relation to the topic). Interviews have been carried out as well. However, to be clear since the beginning, though it keeps its importance, this last method was not the core of the essay. It was done in order not only

to verify whether what was written was closer to the truth, but also to be able to give some recommendations which would be well founded. Therefore the I wanted to get rid of rumours and half-truths. The interviews have been carried out with six different categories of people: church people, youth ministers, media people, refugees, young people (orphans), and members of the Small Christian Communities. Practically, in carrying out the interviews, the author was more concerned about the effects of the war and the realizations of the church achieved so far. Hence, to help the reader to have a full scope of what the essay is all about, some interview-related tables as well as the questionnaire of the interviews have been provided in the Appendix part of the work. As for the biblical quotations, the author chose to use the Jerusalem Bible and the African Bible.

### **Limitations**

In the following pages, I do not intend to give a socio-political description of the conflict, nor do I pretend to give absolute solutions. Rather, mine is a humble, modest and personal reflection on the causes and effects of the moral and spiritual crisis that the Burundian society is undergoing. Being Burundian, it might be difficult to be completely neutral in my views here and there. It is normal for the simple reasons that I have not been the least affected. I beg the reader to be understanding. Yet, despite all these limitations, my innermost desire is not to cultivate or stimulate any ethnic sentiment of hatred or vengeance. Rather, my dream is a new Burundi in which conflict would have given place to truth, concord, unity and pacific cohabitation, like the place that Isaiah dreams about:

“Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbours, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play with the cobra’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea” (Is 11:6-9).

**Structure of the essay**

After elucidating the causes and effects of the war in the first chapter, I intend to reflect on what is the role of the church, as she proclaims the Gospel message, in seeking for lasting solutions to the conflicts. This will be dealt with in the second chapter.

Lastly, in the third chapter, my intention is to see how the church and all the people of good will can make recourse to the strategies of communication in order to effectively restore peace.

## CHAPTER I THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF WAR IN BURUNDI

### I.0. Introduction: Brief History of Burundi

Burundi is one of the countries of Central Africa. For about eleven years this country has been facing a civil war between two ethnic groups: the Hutu and Tutsi. The third ethnic group, the Batwa is almost insignificant. The country has been colonized respectively by Germany (1896-1916) and Belgium (1916-1962). Some people attribute the socio-political crisis to the latter because of their "DIVIDE ET IMPERA" political system. But, the roots of the war can be traced back to the pre-colonial period because one ethnic group had already monopolized the power.

"Since its origins up to the arrival of the first Europeans, Burundi was politically, socially and economically organized by Bami (Kings) and their brothers and cousins Baganwa (Princes), all Tutsi who, at a certain period cleverly constituted themselves in a caste which claimed to be above ethnic groups but which favoured Tutsi enormously."<sup>1</sup>

Burundi got its independence on July 1, 1962, after the republic was proclaimed and respectively headed by Micombero (1966-1976), Bagaza (1976-1987), Buyoya (1987-1993), Ndadaye and Ntaryamira (1993-1994), Ntibantunganya (1995-1996), Buyoya (1996-2003) and Domitien (2004). Note that the last two were heading transition Governments.

From independence up to today, the history of Burundi has always been marked by inter-ethnic conflicts of which the socio-political crisis that the country is undergoing since 1993 is the climax.

### I.1. War: Understanding of the term

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, "War" is the hostility or contention between people, groups, etc." From my personal experience, I can add that war is a threatening lack of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Ndarubagiye, *Burundi: The Origins of the Hutu-Tutsi Conflict*, 17

### **I.1.1. Lack of peace and unity**

War is just the other name of lack of peace. Where there is war, there is no unity. In a war context, there is no peace in all its dimensions. People do not have inner peace, they cannot trust each other any more, nor can they find joy in life. They are in a continuous fear as long as war lasts. In short, life is paralyzed and disintegrated.

### **I.1.2. Disintegration of life.**

War disintegrates life. Not only people lose physically their lives, but also the survivors are completely disoriented. People are affected economically, politically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. As war perturbs the normal process not only of human life but also of the nature, our relationship with each other, and that of one with God become undermined. In short, war disintegrates life in all its dimensions.

## **I.2. Main Causes of the War**

Before going further, I would like to let the reader keep in mind that the war in Burundi is not due to ethnic differences. The latter were made recourse to for political reasons. “Beyond the deplorable diatribes in the definition of the causes of the Burundian conflict, some constants clearly underlie them. The dull spirit of some leaders has entertained a fallacious conception of the way of acceding and running power.”<sup>2</sup>

### **I.2.1. Selfish race for power motivated by greed: Recourse to tribalism**

The causes of war have to be sought in the human heart through exaggerated greed. As mentioned already in the introductory part, it is because of the selfishness of some people who did not want to share power that the present conflicts came about. “The Burundian political elite have manipulated and are still manipulating the populations in order to keep them in ethnic and regionalist logic in view of settling its

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<sup>2</sup> F.Nsengiyumva, “La Réconciliation chrétienne des Burundais à travers leur processus de paix”, in *Au Coeur de l’Afrique* (2001), 38

power and satisfying its sectarian and personal interests.”<sup>3</sup> The war took an ethnic form because tribalism was used by them in order to reach personal interests.

From independence, the history of Burundi has been marked by these selfish tendencies. What can be recalled to support this premise are the massacres of certain individuals who tried to protest against the politics of exclusion. “The Hutu were resolved to acquire their social emancipation but the Tutsi extremists were not ready to grant it. [...] To take the power back, they made recourse to massacres of elected Hutus.”<sup>4</sup> This happened on many and different occasions to discourage whoever would dare to stand for his rights.

Therefore the recourse to tribalism has always been a pretext for some politicians to cover up their intentions to maintain themselves in power.

“Jean NTIRUHWAMA and André MUHIRWA were the two patrons of the Casablanca group and they understood each other on many things such as the Machiavellian plan of sabotaging the democracy in order to maintain at all costs the Tutsi dominion in power by means of intimidation and tyranny.”<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the rest were excluded from the running of the social affairs of the country, especially in the army and judiciary. As it had become obvious that the leaders were not really serving the whole population, people who had been victims of it decided to reclaim changes. That is how the different rebellions were born, for people to defend their rights that had been denied them. But the then leaders who have always tried to distort the truth by depicting the reality the way that benefited them, finally declared their position – no sharing of the power – on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1993 by killing the first democratically elected president. The war became inevitably open.

### **1.2.2. Social and discriminatory injustices**

Social injustices committed against one ethnic group constitute the core of the politico-ethnic conflicts that are tearing the country into parts.

“It is with colonization and the school that certain traditional practices were qualified unjust. Yet colonization came with its own injustices. Nevertheless, the massive violations of human rights became obvious during the post-colonial period. That is why

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<sup>3</sup> E.Nindorera, “Le Long Chemin de la Reconciliation au Burundi”, in *Idem*, 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> A.Nsanze, *Burundi: Le Passé au Présent (I), Une Démocratie Tribalisée (1956-1966)*, 119

<sup>5</sup> A.Nsanze, *Idem*, 116

the protagonists of the Burundian conflict accuse each other not only of the killings but also of genocide, thefts, exclusion and injustices of every kind.”<sup>6</sup>

For example the school system was rotten from within: Hutu were, at least in some regions of the country, cleverly denied the right to accede to secondary education and therefore to the university<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, the national army, which has never been a reality, was almost monopolized by one ethnic group, the Tutsi. According to one member of the clergy who gave his views on the political landscape of Burundi, the same was true as far as the government composition was concerned:

“We notice a deliberate injustice in the distribution of functions and posts of responsibility by favouring the Tutsi ethnic group. While recruiting, the ethnic criterion takes over that of objectivity and competency [...] The National Defense seems to be a defense of one ethnic group since the Hutus are hardly represented”.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.2.3. Distortion of truth: breakdown of communication.**

Truth is very important in relationship and communication. What happened in chapters one and two of the book of Genesis comes to enhance this view. Because Eve and Adam did not say the truth before and to God, there has been a breakdown of harmony. Furthermore, Sapphira and her husband Ananias were punished for not saying the truth (Ac 5: 1-11). What we can learn from this is that lies are destructive; they create a climate of suspicion and lead the one cheated to have everything put into light. That is what is happening in Burundi.

For a long time before 1993, one can rightly say that a culture of lies took root in Burundi. People came to learn how to say that everything is going on well even when it was not. Public acknowledgement of the existence of different ethnic groups was forbidden by the then leaders to cover up what had happened before and to maintain themselves in power.

Worse still, those who attempted to change the face of that unbalanced and partisan politics were systematically mysteriously eliminated or ran away in other countries. As we can see, there was no transparency in the running of the common

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<sup>6</sup> L. Ntsimbiyabandi & E. Ntakarutimana, (Eds), *Le Phénomène de la Société Civile au Burundi*, 38

<sup>7</sup> For quite some time, the national education was unjust and unbalanced. There was for example the practice of the ‘U/I’ ethnic identification (U, standing for Hutu and I for Tutsi) of the candidates during National exam at the end of the primary school.

<sup>8</sup> A. Nsanze, *Burundi: Le Passé au Présent (II), La République contre le Peuple* (1966-1993), 108-109

good. The then key holders of power kept developing strategies to hide the reality. Media played a big role in that.

#### **1.2.4. Media at the service of ideologies**

For a long time, only the government radio and newspapers had the monopoly of information. It implies that they could not but serve the interests of the government. "In our region, those who are in control of media, have a great power on people's minds...Death-advocating media also exist in Burundi."<sup>9</sup> For example the existent national radio would include some programs such as songs, poems, etc, praising the president as the saviour that the people had been waiting for.

That is why those who were aware of those manipulations decided to organize themselves in different movements to let the truth prevail. Unfortunately even amongst the latter, some individuals had the tendency of militating for their own interests as their oppressors. As both sides had no intention to go back, the war became inevitable.

### **1.3. Effects of the war on people**

As it has already been said above, war disintegrates the life of people. In the following pages, we shall see how everything becomes disturbed and put in an up-side - down situation. At the end of the day, there is no one who is exempted.

#### **1.3.1. Increasing mistrust as barrier to true unity and peace**

Because of what they have experienced along the years, and *a fortiori* the killings of 1993, people do not trust each other any more. "How can we trust those who have massacred our people? How can we live together again? They appear to be kind but they are rapacious in themselves!"<sup>10</sup> This is seen through the daily behaviour and relationship among people of different ethnic groups. They are still afraid of each other; opening to each other is still something which many people cannot afford. The sentiments of

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<sup>9</sup> P.Buyoya, *Building peace in Burundi, Mission: Possible*, 135

<sup>10</sup> These are some of the fears expressed by different people asked as to what they think about the unity and peace building in Burundi. They showed an extreme pessimism.

suspicion are still in the heart of the people. This kind of fear-based relationship is not a fertile ground for peace and unity because it leads or rather has led to what can be called 'balkanization' of some residential areas.

**a. "Balkanization Phenomenon": Dangerous partisan 'solidarities'.**

Every human being is imbued with reflexes of auto-conservation. This reality will help us understand more deeply the different aspects of people's life in the context of war in Burundi. People, being afraid of the 'other' will necessarily seek to avoid each other and to stay together with those they think or rather believe to be harmless to them. That is how the main two ethnic groups – Tutsi and Hutu – came to agglomerate themselves in separate places. This has nevertheless been more observed in cities than in rural areas.

This new phenomenon will but increase feelings of hatred, hostility and vengeance in the hearts of people. Not only will they keep alert, but they will also develop means or strategies to attack the other who is considered an enemy. This leads us to the following point.

**b. Mechanisms of self-defense**

In order to defend themselves many people decided to provide themselves with fire arms. This proliferation of arms gave birth to many armed groups such as 'Sans Echecs', 'Sans Défaite', 'Intagoheka' and many others. It is also from 1993 that rebel groups operated openly while some people made again recourse to the phenomenon of "kwihutura"<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kwihutura comes from the word "Hutu". Out of fear, some Hutu politicians or simple citizens opted for denying their ethnic identity in order to survive. They would declare themselves Tutsi in order to feel secure. The Tutsi would consider them theirs and for most of the times they would give them a Tusti bride. However note that there were and are still many genuine mixed marriages outside that phenomenon.

### **I.3.2. Effects of generalized Insecurity**

Due to the uncontrolled proliferation of fire arms, nobody is secure any more. Killings, displacement and poverty have become the sad daily reality that the people are still facing even today.

#### **a. Countrywide killings**

After the assassination of President Ndadaye and many members of his government in 1993, some Hutu started, in retaliation, killing their Tutsi neighbours. From that time killings<sup>12</sup> took place all over the country though more alarming in some regions than others. In return, the army operated systematic repressions against the Hutu population. The situation became chaotic: Hutu and Tutsi would flee or attack each other wherever they were meeting, at least in urban areas.<sup>13</sup> Traveling by public means became extremely risky because the Hutu rebel groups and the army were respectively dangerous to Tutsi and to Hutu. A real manhunt took place.

#### **b. Movements of displaced populations**

In front of this scenario of widespread and mounting mutual hostility, people had to flee from the 'enemy'. Here we can distinguish two different types of displacements. On the one hand, thousands of Hutu people fled to neighbouring countries such as Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. On the other hand both Tutsis and Hutus were displaced and gathered inside the country in places known as 'Internally Displaced People Sites' (IDPS).

As a consequence, life became tougher because most of the economic activities were paralyzed. From a self-sustenance situation, people were forced to embrace poverty and hardships. Families were going to be amputated of their members without hope of seeing them any more. Children had to drop out of school. The hearts of the

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<sup>12</sup> The massive killings of about 40 young and innocent seminarians in Buta Seminary-Diocese of Bururi, and thousands of people killed either in military positions, or in homes and roads by rebels, will never disappear from the memories of Burundians.

<sup>13</sup> The author has witnessed himself to people either being burnt with old tyres especially in Nyakabiga-Jabe (Bujumbura) or being massacred by the "Sans Ehec" (one of the then armed groups in Bujumbura town).

people were going to become 'temples' of distress, nostalgia, questions without answers, hatred and feelings of inner revolt and traumatic experiences. To partially cope with the new situation, people had and still have to survive making recourse to all types of ways of survival.

### **c. Poverty and new ways of survival**

Economically speaking and in normal circumstances, as long as all the productive forces are engaged in working, there can be no poverty. But when the opposite happens, then the whole economic system bleeds. At the individual level, people's needs are no longer met. Yet they have to live or at least survive by crook or hook. The sad reality is that a big number of them find themselves engaged in immoral, dishonest and even dehumanizing ways of life.

Prostitution is one of the ways of survival. Both inside and outside the country, many young ladies are obliged to 'sell' their bodies in order to get money. "We powerlessly witness to the practice of prostitution of some of our children and friends. They opt for such behaviour in order to get something to eat or to wear."<sup>14</sup> This situation is consequently liable to spreading AIDS. For others, robbery makes the affairs go. For others again, using lies in order to win the compassion of 'Good Samaritans' is no big deal. Faced with poverty, people are bound to work harder. As a consequence some of them continuously face health problems, such as tuberculosis, kwashiorkor, and malaria.

### **I.3.3. Traumatic experiences and their correlative mental manifestations**

In any war context, people are affected not only as a society but also as individuals. In the present case, this has not spared any of the strata of the population. The most affected are those at the grassroots level, that is, in the refugees' camps both inside and outside the country. Many people lost either their parents or children. As a consequence, those who are left on their own can or have been affected mentally to the

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<sup>14</sup> Testimony of one of the many refugees interviewed staying in Dagoretti Corner, in Nairobi. Other testimonies of the kind were given in Nduta Camp, one of the refugees Camps in Tanzania.

point of becoming mad. This is also the case for those who have been involved in killing of their fellow citizens and whose conscience has since been tormented.

#### **1.3.4. Violation of human rights**

Human rights have been violated in Burundi. “It is no longer a secret that the rights of the human person have been violated in Burundi in many aspects due to ethnic hatred, regionalism, nepotism, inequality of sexes, etc. Today, the violation of those rights is amplified by the civil war that has lasted for more than ten years”<sup>15</sup>. Up to now, there are still child soldiers who were enrolled by force by both the government army and by the rebel groups. Some children are being engaged in sex industry. Cases of women being raped have been registered as well. We cannot forget many instances whereby people’s homes have been burned down or destroyed while others were robbed by both the army and the rebel groups. Note that the latter have been stealing cattle and food from people. Human beings are being killed like flies. All these happenings, directly or indirectly, affect the life and mission of the church.

#### **1.3.5. The Church swaying in dual trials**

All what has been said above not only challenges the mission but also affects deeply the life of the church as body of Christ. As Saint Paul puts it, the mission of the church, is nothing but building the kingdom of God: “Some Christ has appointed to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, or pastors, or teachers. They are to order the lives of the faithful, minister to their needs, build up the frame of Christ’s body, until we all realize our common unity through faith in the Son of God, and fuller knowledge of him” (Eph 4:11-13).

Yet, what happened is that both the faithful and even some pastors have obviously failed to carry out this noble task given them by the Lord himself. Diverse happenings point out clearly that the church is suffering from a spiritual decline. One regrettably notices that the virus of ethnism has not been the monopoly of non-Catholics. Some pastors have not been able to resist political and partisan solicitations.

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<sup>15</sup> L. Ntsimbiyabandi & E. Ntakarutimana, *Op. cit.*, 35-36

On the other hand, many pastors, both priests and bishops, have been and are still being victims of war-related violence.<sup>16</sup> It is also important to mention that some Christians are still journeying in a spiritual desert. They look for religious satisfaction at all cost; this explains the explosion of religious movements (sects) because “the creation of those new religious spaces gives the impression of finally attaining a religious environment whereby one finds the conviction of praying better, of preaching better, of immersing oneself better in the blow of life, of getting healed and of being better protected.”<sup>17</sup> According to the last investigations, there are more than a hundred religious movements only in the city of Bujumbura.

However, an objective look at the effects of war makes us affirm that the trials that the church is facing entail a positive impulse to her inner life and growth. In some cases, however rare they may be, the war has imparted strong spiritual convictions and human values to some Christians. Because of suffering and being constantly exposed to imminent death, people are living a kind of eschatology and each moment of their life is a gift from God. Hence day to day preparedness becomes a concern, which makes them strive to live their Christian life as fully as possible. And this can be said of both ordinary faithful and their pastors. People from both ethnic groups have witnessed to their Christian identity by protecting their neighbours who were about to be killed. Some of them became martyrs through such brave acts. This is to say that the Church nevertheless did not cease to be missionary despite her defections here and there. In other words, the war can be an occasion for some to rediscover their inner self and therefore their vocation vis-à-vis their Creator and their neighbour.

## Conclusion

After a brief journey in what I believe to be the main causes of the war and its effects on the people of Burundi, one can say that the real question is a tragic case of injustice, whereby some people do want to cling to power while maintaining others in

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<sup>16</sup> We all remember the cases of Archbishop Joachim Ruhuna and the Apostolic Nuncio who were killed while carrying out their pastoral duties.

<sup>17</sup> E. Ntakarutimana, et al, “Quelle Religion par temps de crise”, in *Ethique & Société: Revue de Réflexion Morale* 1 (January, 2004), 43

dependency and submission. We are in front of egoism and selfishness which could not result in nothing else but conflict.

At the same time the people are still in need of interiorizing the gospel message. In other words, what is happening in this country proves that evangelization has been superficial; otherwise how can we explain a total and blind embarkation of a whole people onto such a 'descent into hell'? This leads us to affirm that the question, without ceasing to be socio-political, is finally spiritual. It is my belief that once the human heart has accepted to live under the reign of the Holy Spirit, some vices like lies, untruthfulness, selfishness, greed and lack of forgiveness easily give way to sincere love, peace and unity.

That is why any effort to looking for lasting solutions to the Burundian conflict will be doomed to failure if it does repudiate the idea of going back to the Gospel message. However, there is no naivety; the latter would be in collaboration with the political efforts. Therefore it jointly calls for the personal conversion of our politicians as someone noted.

"For a long time the Burundian elite have fuelled the hatred between ethnies. Because of their responsibility in the Burundian tragedy, they also play an important part in the peace process. They have for a long time been part of the problem, so they now have to be part of the solution."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> P. Buyoya, *Op.cit*, 141

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOSPEL AS A SOLUTION IN A WAR SITUATION

#### II. 0. Introduction

In the first chapter, we dealt with the causes and effects of the war in Burundi. It spelled out the socio-political and spiritual crisis that the Burundians are facing as a proof that the Gospel message has not yet penetrated the interiority of people's hearts. The object of this chapter will be to show how the gospel message can be an answer, among other things, to the causes and effects of the conflict.

As a methodology, we shall start with the Old Testament, then with the New Testament, before turning to the Documents of the Church. Finally, we shall explore the local church in Burundi in her pastoral life as she tries to be the Sacramental Body of Christ.

#### II.1. The Biblical Message as the Answer to the Causes and Effects of War

In a context like that of Burundi, people have a lot to learn from the gospel. To demonstrate this truth, we shall pay attention to the prophets whose message finds its utmost culmination in the Person of Jesus.

##### II.1.1. Biblical teaching on justice and peace: Examples of some prophets.

The Biblical notion of justice and peace has always been the concern of the Old Testament prophets. Their message is still relevant to us today because their situation is not so much different from ours. For the prophet Amos, a champion of justice and peace, "The justice administered in the courts had been changed by the alchemy of greed to bitter calamity. The terms righteousness and justice play a central role in Amos prophecy and deserve special comment"<sup>19</sup>. In his message, he took into consideration what was going on in the society of his time: righteousness was redundant, justice was trodden underfoot. "Woe to those who change justice into wormwood, and discard righteousness; they hate the advocate of right in the gate" (Am 5:7.10). The judicial system was corrupt and had become another instrument of oppression of the poor (Am.

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<sup>19</sup> J. L.Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, 91

5:12; 2:7). Hence the key message in Amos is expressed as follows: “Let Justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Am. 5:24). In today’s Burundi, this is the very invitation God addresses to his people, especially the leaders.

The notion of social justice is also found in Primo-Isaiah. He was worried and indignant about the way the poor of his time were treated (Is. 10:1-2). He condemned the accumulation of property: “Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field until everything belongs to them...” (Is. 5:8-10). We can say that Isaiah’s message was a warning against the greed of the rich which would imminently result in endangering harmony and peace among people. “The position seems to him so threatening that he sees the time coming when all ownership will be accumulated in the hands of a few. The result of this development was bound to be that the inner coherence and legal security of the people of the covenant would collapse”.<sup>20</sup>

Micah is another militant of justice. He was particularly concerned with the ruthless expropriation of peasant farmers by the rich. Though his message seems to be at first sight a message of doom, it reminds us of our responsibility before God. He condemns strife and division in the families (Micah 7:5-7) as he emphasizes the sins of injustice inflicted on the simple people (Micah 2: 1-5.8-10). Hence, Micah invites to a restoration of the people of God and to the peace among the members of the same society. He advocates for a return to human virtues because the then situation was unfavorable for lasting peace.

“The ‘good man’ is, in this context, one who practices the expected pieties toward fellowmen and God. All such are gone, and greed and injustice have gone so far that one would fear to practice traditional virtues. It is the courts that are the worst, to judge from the very difficult text [...]. The appropriate behavior under the circumstances is a universal suspicion, for none is to be trusted.”<sup>21</sup>

The message of Micah can be summarized in the following terms: “To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Finally, the prophet Ezekiel too talks about justice and peace. For him rulers should behave like shepherds. As those of his time proved not to be trustworthy, the prophet condemns them for they have cruelly exploited the people for their own ends

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<sup>20</sup> O.Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 66

<sup>21</sup> D.R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah*, 85

(Ezek 34: 2-3). “In another divine word the prophet (“son of man”) receives the commission to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel”.<sup>22</sup> Instead of gathering the people of God and of being agents of unity, those leaders have scattered them (34: 5-6). As way to conversion for the sake of peace and justice, Ezekiel proposes the docility to the Holy Spirit. That is what Jesus takes up in his ministry.

## **II.1.2. The Teaching of certain commandments of God**

### **a. Jesus’ exhortation to Love and Forgiveness**

Not only does Jesus reflect the love and forgiveness of God the Father, but he also teaches his followers to embrace these values as a condition for peace. Love should be the vital force of his followers (1 Jn 3:14-15).

Forgiveness must not be conditional, but rather Jesus invites us to forgive always “not seven times but seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22). This is possible only if we remain in Jesus’ love (Jn 15: 10. 12). In forgiving others, we realize that God loved us and forgave our sins first and free of charge.

### **b. Jesus’ Teaching on Peace and Reconciliation**

In his teaching, Jesus shows that peace is the fundamental aspiration of the human person. Christ, who reconciled the whole humanity with God, does not only reveal that peace is the fruit of an order willed by the Creator, but he (Christ) also expects love of the neighbour from his disciples.<sup>23</sup>

The notion of peace and reconciliation was so dear to Jesus that it was the first word Jesus pronounced to his disciples when He appeared to them after the resurrection (cf John 20: 20,27; Luke 24: 37). Peace has its foundation in the very nature of the human person. Peace presupposes another very important value, human dignity, because every human being is created in the image of God (Gn 1:26-27). Once human dignity is not respected, then peace cannot be possible. When Jesus asks his disciples to be reconciled, he invites them to keep this divine image untarnished. He also reiterates the

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<sup>22</sup> W.Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48*, 213

<sup>23</sup> B.Vénant, “Paix et Réconciliation dans la Bible”, in *Au Coeur de l’Afrique* (2001),187.

importance of peace to Christian life in the beatitudes. 'Happy are the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God' (Mt 5: 9). This means that whenever disharmony, instead of peace, overrules humanity, we are no longer sons of God.

Furthermore, Jesus, through his life, reveals that he is not only the true source of total peace, but he is peace himself. He accomplishes the hope aroused by the prophets. He wants to make one single people of those who were opposed or enemies before. Therefore, when healing the sick or forgiving sinners, he tells them to go in 'peace,' he means that he brings salvation (Lk 8:48; 7:50).<sup>24</sup>

In short, we can say that wherever there is no peace, there is no true presence of God because his gift – peace – is not welcomed. We can thus conclude that when proclaiming the Good News of salvation, Jesus' innermost desire was to make the people become a family of God's children. In so doing he inaugurated lasting peace – a typical characteristic of the Kingdom of God.

### **c. Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom of God**

From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus' central message was to proclaim the Kingdom. The Kingdom consists in harmony with the self, others and with God. Hence, the most powerful signs of Jesus' kingdom are peace, freedom, justice and fellowship. He is the one who carries out God's plan to 'gather up all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph 1:10) so that 'God may be all in all' (1Cor 15:28). Thanks to him cosmic communion is made possible and 'creation itself is set free from its bondage to decay' (Rom 8:21).<sup>25</sup>

The Kingdom must be understood not as a geographical area as some might be tempted to think, but "the kingdom of God is a symbol of God's will for all creation and of God's plan for all people. God's will or plan is that all people should live according to the dignity and honour given to them by God".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Idem, 194

<sup>25</sup> M. Amaladoss, "The Call to Communion: A Symbol of a New World", in *Vidyajyoti* (July-December, 1997), 448

<sup>26</sup> T. Byrne, *Working for Justice and Peace: A Practical Guide*, 17

This importance of the values of the Kingdom, – peace, freedom, justice and fellowship – are taken up by the Documents of the Catholic Church.

## II.2. Contribution of some Documents of the Catholic Church

The Documents of the Catholic Church made a tremendous contribution towards an accurate and relevant application of the Gospel and its values to different situations throughout history. The role of these documents is to build peace and foster reconciliation which is an indispensable value.

*Ad Gentes* emphasizes the need for the Christian faithful to become living witnesses and militants for unity and reconciliation among the people. It underlines the importance of living according to our Christian identity. “The Disciples of Christ, being in close contact with men through their life and work, hope to offer them an authentic Christian witness [...] they seek to enhance the dignity of men and promote fraternal unity.”<sup>27</sup>

It is the same idea that Pope John XXIII takes up in *Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth)*. It underlines the unique place of social justice based on charity, respect of each other’s rights and dignity.<sup>28</sup> Justice and truth are presented as indispensable conditions for peace which lasts. Consequently, people must revisit and renounce all attitudes and behaviors of hostility which prevents justice from flourishing, such as armament.<sup>29</sup> In short, the core message of the encyclical is but an invitation to consolidate peace in the world.

One can rightly say that Pope John XXIII has shown that harmony is one the main concerns of the Church Magisterium. This he does in another encyclical: *Truth – Unity – Peace*. In it, he showed that true peace is built on truth as he reminded us that all the people were created as brothers<sup>30</sup>; therefore they must foster union and agreement among themselves<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ad Gentes*, no.12

<sup>28</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, no.35

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, no.112

<sup>30</sup> *Truth-Unity-Peace*, no.10-11

<sup>31</sup> *Idem*, no.12

On his part, John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio*, does go in the same line. For him, the role of the church must be that of empowering people to build the Kingdom by transforming human relationships and gradually helping people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another.<sup>32</sup> In other words, peace demands an education.

Finally, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* proposes a holistic conversion as sole condition for peace. It is only when one has welcomed Christ and resolved to live according to his values that he/she can work for justice and peace. In other words, as long as the message of Christ has not yet permeated and transformed our ways of thinking and acting, it will not be possible to become peacemakers.

The church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in these structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook.<sup>33</sup>

In order to achieve this endeavour of building peace, the Church Documents underline the role of communication as well. For example in *Communio et progressio*, they remind us that:

In the Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication and these find their source and model in the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who live in a single divine life. The means of social communication can contribute a great deal to human unity.<sup>34</sup>

This is an invitation to use the means of social communication for the integral development of the human person. Therefore, by this all forms of human alienations are condemned and everybody, inspired by the divine unity, is invited to communion among all the peoples. This same idea is found in *Gaudium et Spes*, which stresses the necessity of taking Christ as our model. By dying and rising for all (2Cor 5:15), Christ does not only show us the way and strengthens us, but he also leads to salvation (Ac 4:12). The purpose and centre of our history are found in Him.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, the same document calls on the Christian faithful to respect the human dignity in all its aspects. It vehemently reminds us that every human being

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<sup>32</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 15

<sup>33</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 36

<sup>34</sup> *Communio et Progressio*, no.8-9

<sup>35</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 10

was created in and is still the image of God. Therefore, whatever man does to man should not contradict the work of God.

When he is drawn to think about his real self he turns to those deep recesses of his being where God who probes the heart awaits him, and where he himself decides his own destiny in the sight of God. So when he recognizes in himself a spiritual and immortal soul, he is not led astray by false imaginings that are due to merely physical or social causes.<sup>36</sup>

Can we say that the church in Burundi is proclaiming the same message? We shall see together and examine this theme in the following pages of this chapter.

## **II.3. Praxis in the Church of Burundi: The Church as Servant of the Gospel**

### **II.3.1. Brief History of the Church in Burundi**

As it is impossible to tell of each and every detail of the history of the church in Burundi, I shall give only a few hints which will give us an idea of the nature of the mission this church is living.

According to Fr Jean Perraudin, “the history of the church in Burundi started on a mountain of Galilee,”<sup>37</sup> meaning that the first mission was somehow founded on a mountain, Misugi, in 1897 under the leadership of Mgr Gerboin, a Missionary of Africa (White Fathers). In reality, the first stable mission was built at Muyaga in 1898. From that time onwards, the Church of Burundi kept on growing, as the first missionaries worked hand in hand with the colonial authorities for practical and pastoral reasons, as one of the Burundian historians puts it:

In proposing the baptism to the chiefs, the missionaries wanted to reach as many faithful as possible. It is partially thanks to that method that in 1958, 65% of the population, that is about one million and four hundred thousand souls, were baptized. But the teaching of the catechism targeted the psychological change of the princes themselves who, progressively, were detached from their traditional beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, no. 14

<sup>37</sup> J. Perraudin, *Notre Eglise a cent ans*, 9

<sup>38</sup> A.Nsanze, *Op. cit.*, 34

In other words, the desire of the first missionaries was to have as many convert Christians as possible. One can, then, ask if evangelization was real or superficial during that period.

On the other hand, the church has contributed a lot in the social welfare of the country: hospitals, schools and even in the process of democratization. The church has always had at heart peace among the Burundian people. This is illustrated by a pastoral letter written by the then Archbishop of Gitega, Mgr Grauls, following an attempted coup d'état by some Hutu rebels in 1965. "[...] Now that peace is at stake, we would like to tell you what are the indispensable conditions for the true peace to be re-established: respect the authority; stop immediately killings, fire, and violence under whatever kind it may be; resist any kind of racial hatred."<sup>39</sup>

As time went by, the church in Burundi would change her physionomy due to the increase in number of indigenous clergy. Today, we count more than 60% of catholics and seven dioceses all headed by local Burundian Bishops. As we mentioned in the first chapter, the church in Burundi has not been spared from the conflicts tearing the country. We remember the persecution from 1984-1986, in which many priests and faithful were put into prison. Moreover, the church has experienced other moments of trials under the government of transition after 1993. Such trials involved a military service imposed on everybody even Major Seminarians. This has been a contentious issue because all the Bishops did not have a common position. One can say that the situation led, to some extent, to division within the hierarchy. Regrettable have been and are still other cases of ethnic considerations and attitudes within the clergy and among the faithful.

Fortunately, despite this sad reality, the church remains the only source of hope to which people can trustfully tend to. Today, we witness many young people joining the local clergy or religious institutions in order to consecrate their lives to the spreading of the Good News.

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<sup>39</sup> J.Perraudin, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'Indépendance*, 33-34

### **II.3.2. The Church as Model of Unity**

By its very nature the church is the sacramental body of Christ. In other words, unity is her intrinsic characteristic. This is what the hierarchy in particular, and some Christians in general, have always been trying to live out. At various times, the Episcopal Conference has tried to be champion of unity. Through pastoral letters, the Bishops have been inviting the faithful to unity and peace. They have tried to defend the cause of harmony among all, thus being unity-inspiring figures for their subjects even on matters which divided many others such as the political leaders. Subsequently, Christians courageously have taken radical and gospel-inspired stands as far as defending, and even dying for unity is concerned. This explains why, in such suffocating situation, still people see the church as source of hope and life.

### **II.3.3. The Church as the source of hope and life**

In Burundi, the words of Thomas Hobbes, “Homo Homini Lupus”<sup>40</sup>, regrettably came to be true. People who can be an exception of such a reality are mainly within the Church. They are trustworthy and give hope to people by both their being and their doing. That is why some people go to see them for spiritual and psychological needs in order to get healed.

On the other hand, the church is playing her role as the mother. She spiritually, morally and physically provides for the widows, orphans and other victims of war fulfilling basic needs necessary to be fully human. That is how youth centres, local humanitarian NGOs, organizations for the defense of human rights and dignity were created by the church as her social contribution and pastoral way of living out the Christian and universal charity. Thus, the words of Jesus became true: “[...] in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

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<sup>40</sup>In his philosophy, Hobbes held that ‘Homo Homini Lupus’, meaning that the human being is a wolf to his fellow human being.

### II.3.4. The Church of Burundi and the process of Peace and Reconciliation

The church of Burundi has wholeheartedly taken part in the process of peace and reconciliation of the Burundian people.

#### II.3.4.1. Justice and Peace Commissions and active non-violence

The Church of Burundi believes that “only the respect of the human rights and social justice promote the return of peace and of national reconciliation.”<sup>41</sup> It is on this conviction that the church has set up commissions for Justice and Peace. These commissions have the noble task of helping people cultivate the culture of truth, peace and unity in order to know and stand for their rights and to feel responsible for their promotion. Through education in peace and active non-violence<sup>42</sup>, it becomes possible to live in a harmonious society by dealing more positively with conflicts. “The civic society must build peace and guaranty its durability. It must be characterized by dialogue which actually plays an important role in the understanding of the other. It must play the role of watchdogs, of resistance, of proposing.”<sup>43</sup>

More concretely the role of the church is to remind people of their respective responsibilities such as the one of the Bashingantahe,<sup>44</sup> whose role is to awaken the moral conscience of the people in order to avoid conflicts and build a society of true and lasting peace. In other words, these commissions aim at spreading all the peace-breeding human values: truth, agreement, dialogue, non-violence, tolerance, etc

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<sup>41</sup> R. Nahimana, “Espoirs et Craintes que suscite l’entrée du CNDD-FDD dans les institutions après la signature de cessez-le feu entre le Gouvernement de transition et le CNDD-FDD de Pierre Nkurunziza”, in *Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix* (2003-04), 17

<sup>42</sup> The Church of Burundi is doing a lot in educating people for non-violence. We have “La Famille NDUWAMAHORO-Le Non-Violent Actif”, different visits and talks initiated by “Accord” (A Local Association that committed itself to reconciling the people at the grassroots level) at the Small Christian Communities level in order to sensitize people from different ethnic groups. This is more advanced in some areas of Bujumbura, such as Kamenge and Kinama (cf D. Murekambanze, “Ndongozi”, p.12, col. 1-4)

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*, 30

<sup>44</sup> Traditionally, the ‘Bashingathe’ are the trustworthy persons in the society whom everybody rely on because of their integrity. Their role is to reconcile people wherever they are. They are peace-makers.

#### **II.3.4.2. Involvement in Peace Talks**

The motives mentioned above led to the church's taking part in different peace talks. The fact is that if left on their own, the politicians may put aside the Christian and moral values, for the sake of their partisan interests. This is why the church has assigned herself to help people avoid empty discussions by reminding them that whatever they decide must never go against the human dignity and honour.

#### **Conclusion: Present Challenges**

At the end of this chapter, one notices that the Gospel is the best custodian of answers to problematic situations. Its message is simple and clear: God wants each and every human person to be in harmony with self and with the rest of creation. This entails the idea of peace, justice, love, unity and forgiveness as we have seen in the prophets and the ministry of Jesus. These elements have been taken up by the church from her foundation up to today.

The Church is sent by Jesus Himself as he sent the first disciples to 'go and make disciples of all the nations and teach them to observe his commands' (Mt 28:19). It is this noble mission that the Church of Burundi is carrying out especially during this time of conflicts. The church has proven herself to be the sacramental body of Christ in different ways. Some Christians have welcomed the message by witnessing to the love of Christ.

However, looking at the present situation, one can but conclude that the church still has a long way to go. The lack of peace and unity among people is a call to rethink her pastoral approach of mission today. Probably putting more emphasis on strategies of communication can be of great help. This is what the following chapter shall try to explore.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

#### **III.0. Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, we have seen how the church in Burundi is doing in proclaiming the Gospel message by taking into consideration the new needs of the people. However, the nature of the general situation in Burundi is but a glimpse to the church to remind her that she still has a long way to go in living out the Gospel values. Up to now, several questions keep popping up in people's mind as to how killings can go on while the churches are always packed on Sundays. Is it a sign that the Word of God is received on the rocky soil? Why are people not able to translate their faith into their daily life? Can we say that much still has to be done at the Small Christian Communities and at youth level? Is it a proof that the local culture of people is not yet permeated by the Gospel values? All these questionings lead us to state that the church still needs to improve her strategies of communication notwithstanding the ones already in use.

#### **III.1. The Need for the church to reconsider her prophetic mission**

##### **III.1.1. Interest in the local culture**

A critical look at the general scenario of Burundi makes us say that one of the weaknesses of the first evangelization of Burundi was that culture had not been taken as a priority. As we have seen already in the first chapter, the aim of the early missionaries was to make as many proselytes as possible, resulting in making the Gospel superficial. Greater emphasis was put mainly on the sacramental aspect overlooking the need for deeper conversion. In other words, they failed to understand that the fruit of conversion is the transformation of a life through a gradual blossoming and ripening rather than spontaneous fructification. True conversion is a radical affair, touching life's very roots.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, 88

The idea of John Locke: 'tabula rasa'<sup>46</sup> does not have room in today's ways of communicating the gospel message. The interest in the local culture, commonly called "Inculturation"<sup>47</sup> therefore consists in taking into consideration the positive elements of people's culture which are not in contradiction with the gospel in order to give them a Christian meaning. In other words, it is very important that the church is aware of the habits and customs of the people, that is, the "soul" of the people's life in order to imbue it with the Gospel. Often times, the churches are always fully packed on Sundays, with lively liturgies. Yet the reality remains that people are not transformed by the word of God nor are they moved by active faith. Therefore, as long as inculturation is not taken into account, the evangelization process is doomed to failure.

### **III.1.2. Religious life as a living witness to Unity and Peace**

By 'religious life' we refer to priests, brothers and sisters. However, we should not be mistaken to think that these three categories have got a superior vocation than the laity. At the same time, it is nonetheless important to realize that their role in the life of the church is of utmost importance. Because of the nature of their vocation and their particular life style that makes them special, they are more outstanding to the eyes of people than the laity.

For this reason, religious people are called, by vocation, to be living witnesses of the Gospel. But one wonders if that is what is happening today. My impression has been that not only do Religious forget this fundamental identity of their *raison d'être*, but they also don't make people out there feel it. Yet, no doubt, there is something extremely positive in religious communities that people outside can learn from as far as peace, unity and reconciliation are concerned. In many religious communities, we find people from conflicting ethnic groups living together: Hutu and Tutsi. If they have

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<sup>46</sup> 'Tabula rasa' refers to the way of communicating a doctrine in pure terms. It is no longer the time of condemning the culture a priori and communicating the Gospel in foreign terms or concepts that people don't understand. Instead, the church is constantly called to adapt her mission to the ambient culture of people so that they may recognize themselves in it.

<sup>47</sup> "Inculturation" is a neologism which is dear to the African Theologians. Local cultures, so long as they are not in contradiction with the Gospel or the teaching of the Church, must be taken into consideration. In other words, the Gospel message and the sacraments must be celebrated in cultural terms that people can understand.

managed to live together, in spite of some difficulties due to ethnic crisis, then they have something to offer to the rest outside. The spirit of patience and of letting go is at work motivated by love.

This is a clear sign that the Person of Christ is the foundational stone of their day to day living. It also implies that religious people need to be more creative in preaching through their testimonies. This could be done either on Sundays or other occasions of church gatherings, for instance Small Christian Communities. In other words, Religious have to make theirs the words of the Saint John when he says: “Something [...] that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life – this is our subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, [...]” (1Jn 1:1-2).

### **III.1.3. Small Christian Communities and Peace building at the grassroots level**

Any initiative of peace building must involve different classes of people in the society. Targeting the Small Christian Communities has its unique value: many politicians usually make use of grassroots people as instruments to attain their own ends. They manipulate them. Thus, the role of the church would consist in sensitizing people by making them understand that they are part and parcel of the peace-building. This they could do by refusing every false teaching which is against the gospel.<sup>48</sup> If one goes in details, he discovers that the members of the same Small Christian Communities do not always live as one body. At times they are not able to transcend the divisionist attitudes. There is therefore a need of revising their living together. Therefore, the pastors at the parish level can help the Small Christian Communities do everything as one body. By being faithful to the prayers (especially to the Eucharistic celebrations), to the brotherhood (through concern about the lot of each other), they would witness to the rest who would learn from them (Ac 2:42-47). Together, they can also denounce

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<sup>48</sup> There are some individuals or movements such as “Cira Imoso Genocide” and “FNL-Palipehutu”, whose teachings incite to hatred instead of building peace and reconciliation. These and many others must be denounced by the church.

injustices committed against their neighbours<sup>49</sup>, refuse to cover the trouble-makers, be it rebels or soldiers who might be committing crimes among people, and take the lead in the Justice and Peace Commissions. This, if it is done countrywide, can be a powerful way of spreading the message of unity and reconciliation.

In order to be more efficient, it can be enhanced by the recourse to the means of the Media of Social Communication.

## **III.2. The Use of Media for a lasting Transformation**

### **III.2.1. Media at the service of Peace building**

The media contribute in the peace-building and in conscientizing the people. "Acceptable point-to-point communication and mass media offer many people a more adequate opportunity (...), to experience freedom of expression and to contribute to the emergence of peace and justice in the world."<sup>50</sup> The Media contribute to the social cohesion. Thanks to the media, in a context like that of Burundi where the human dignity is at times violated, people have now started becoming more and more aware of their rights and then have been able to stand for them. In other words, the media are "able to connect scattered individuals in a shared national, city and local experience. They could be supportive of the new democratic politics and of social reform movements."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the media can be the conscience of the people. They can protect the populations against political abuses. By doing so, they play the role of watchdogs in the society.

In contexts of conflict, they enhance reconciliation processes by making people learn from what is going on in other parts of the world. For instance, it was by establishing an independent black press that African-Americans were able to secure a space of self-representation. Thus, they were able "not only to craft common identities

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<sup>49</sup> "Neighbours" here refers especially to those from the other ethnic group because if people dare to fight for the rights and dignity of their "former enemies", it would be more moving and witnessing as a sign of unity and peace.

<sup>50</sup> P. Granfield, Ed., *The Church and Communication*, 232

<sup>51</sup> *Idem*, 34

and solidarities, but also to develop arguments which might effectively engage white civil society.”<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the media can be of great importance in the mobilization of the population at all levels to rise against an oppressive regime. People of good will are called to use them in order to promote peace education. This task involves the church as well.

### **III.2.2. The Church and Evangelization of the Media**

During political conflicts, the media can be easily manipulated either by the government or by the opposition. In other words, “the news media are more likely to play the role of faithful servants in times of national crisis and war, especially in early stages of such conflicts. [...] The news media are more likely to take the role of semi-honest brokers within domestic debates over controversial issues.”<sup>53</sup> In such a context, the church is invited to be involved in the evangelization of media in order that the truth, which is both a human and spiritual value, may prevail. This finds its importance by the fact that, though they should be a responsible institution, the media do not necessarily promote social harmony. Therefore, the role of the church is to help the media be committed to setting professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, fairness and balance in their work.<sup>54</sup>

#### **III.2.2.1. The Media and promotion of human and moral values**

One of the consequences of war in Burundi is the depravation of human and moral values. We acknowledge and salute the efforts made by some people in order to rehabilitate human and moral values. However there is no doubt that people still have a long way to go. The use of media can be one of the possible effective means because the media can be either a service or a disservice to humanity, depending on whether they are used in accordance with or contrary to the Creator’s plan. Bearing in mind that

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<sup>52</sup> R. N. Jacobs, *Race, Media and the crisis of civil society*, 21

<sup>53</sup> G. Wolfsfeld, *Media and political conflict: News from the Middle East*, 69

<sup>54</sup> G. Candiru, “The Responsibilities of a Catholic Journalist”, in *Leadership*, no. 433 (Nov/December 2004), 12-14

communication is a profound process of human interaction,<sup>55</sup> the Church, in her daily apostolic work, can use the media to condemn whatever is against the human dignity: prostitution, violation of the human rights, rape, theft, lies, just to name a few.

### III.2.2.2. The Media and promotion of spiritual values

The media constitute an important means of transmitting information. The audience of the media is quite large and the church is not blind to this reality. Therefore the media can be a very good channel for the spread of the Good News especially to young people:

While the primary responsibility to teaching the moral principles lies with the clergy, the presumption is that lay people will be engaged in the various activities involving the media. All members of the church – priests, religious and laity – are called to adapt the media to the goals of the church's mission.<sup>56</sup>

Even if some scholars, such as Malcom McDonald (1977), argue that the gospel message cannot be transmitted authentically through the media, there are quite a good number of others who believe the opposite:

Rather than lamenting the media sphere, it focuses on the importance of entering it, and offering religious values as a counterpoint to those proposed by the wider culture. These writings tend to assume an instrumental approach that views the media as 'tools' that are 'neutral' and thus may be employed for good, such as when they are utilized to spread the Gospel (Armstrong, 1979), or to communicate narratives of faith (Benson, 1988; Boomershine, 1987).<sup>57</sup>

In Burundi, it is important for the church to wholeheartedly get involved in the world of the media because by so doing, she will be able to counterbalance the perverse and divisionist teachings of some extremists by proposing the message of mutual love, unity and forgiveness. Furthermore, this would help people realize one thing: the mission of the church is not restricted to the churches' compound; rather, it encompasses the whole of human life. That is why even the political realm is to be reached by the gospel message.

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<sup>55</sup> M. L. Trouvé, Ed., *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, 89-90

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*, 92

<sup>57</sup> H. Stewart M. & L. Knut, *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, 20

### **III.3. The Church and Politics: A reconsidered relationship**

In Burundi, like anywhere else, it was believed that the church should not dare to challenge the political leaders.

Yet, without interfering with the former, the church must rediscover and fulfill her divine mandate of making her message reach everybody.

Moreover, the church while treasuring dialogue with earthly powers, must watch so as not to betray her missionary work. Only the principle of proposing rather than imposing has to guide her actions.

#### **III.3.1. Acquiring the freedom of expression**

For a long time, the church in Burundi has been working hand in hand with the government. Even if this is a good rapport, yet the church has to be on guard against abuses so that the privileges granted her by the government may not make her remain silent. She must be free to denounce the vices of the government, especially when she has to deal with Justice and Peace issues because this commitment calls for concrete and prophetic action, though it might be costly and could eventually make her lose some of her privileges.

In other words, without going beyond the boundaries between church and secular power, the church is nevertheless invited to break down the off-dated and dangerous “old dualism between the spiritual and the material – a dualism that sometimes unconsciously or consciously, placed the social apostolate in a second-class position in the ministry of the church.”<sup>58</sup>

#### **III.3.2. New pastoral approach for leaders: Ongoing catechesis**

This may look idealistic, but venturing into this new apostolate has as its aim the demystification of the political elite. If the church still believes that her mission is destined for everyone without exception, then reaching out even to the political leaders is normal. Put differently, this opening of new horizons is simply an act of charity on the side of the church on behalf of not only the political leaders, but also the entire

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<sup>58</sup> J. Walsh, *Evangelization and Justice: New Insights for Christian Ministry*, 72

population. Because of thirst for power, most politicians, the majority of whom are Christians, have reached to the extent of living contrary to their faith. They have eclipsed and replaced the true God by power and wealth. This justifies why they need to be re-evangelized and re-converted. This is what the normal course of Christian life must be: "Once primary evangelization is begun, constant intensive metanoia has to be encouraged, together with witness. This has to continue till the 'second coming of our Lord'! No going back."<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, introducing this ongoing catechesis for political leaders, which could be extended to other Christians as a whole, would be of importance beyond compare because the common people would consequently be the first ones to benefit from it in the sense that they would no longer be victims of irrational political exactions.

#### **III.4. Youth Ministry: A priority in today's pastoral of the Church**

Today, the youth in war contexts are victims of all kinds of abuses. This has not been an exception in Burundi as it has been underlined in the first chapter. That is why the church is invited to invest more and more in the education of the youth for peace and unity, gearing to rediscovering a sure future of the nation and of the church.

##### **III.4.1. Education for Peace and Unity**

Young people have been among the most targeted by what is happening on the political scenario. What is now needed for the church is, by revalorization of the gospel values, to reverse the wrong teaching of politicians in order to make the young people become peacemakers instead of instruments of destruction or of implementing odious agendas for extremists. In Burundi some youths have been trapped in vicious ideologies of vengeance and hatred. Their heart is no longer capable of mercy and forgiveness. This is against the attitudes characteristic of a Christian.

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<sup>59</sup> *Idem*, 365

However, it is necessary to forgive so that the broken hearts may not remain imprisoned in grief.<sup>60</sup> This can be made possible through the catholic youth movements/groups, with a special catechesis conceived for this purpose involving the parents at the family level. In so doing, the church will be contributing to the laying of strong foundations of a sure future of the nation.

#### **III.4.2. Preparation for future responsible leaders**

In all societies, young people must be treasured. They constitute the hope and the productive forces. As the Kirundi wisdom says: “Uwanka agakura abaga umutavu”, meaning: “The enemy of the growing being kills the calf.” This is already happening in Burundi because many young people have been led astray. Therefore, to ensure a promising future we must necessarily invest in the youth. “Above all we must undertake the training of youth from all social backgrounds if we are to produce the kind of men and women so desperately needed by our age—men and women not only of high culture but of great personality as well.”<sup>61</sup>

The reason for the church be more interested in the world of young people is nothing else but to foster good leadership. This involves the spirit of self-giving, love of justice, and patriotism. It is when the youth have acquired the sense of responsibility, the conviction that the future depends largely on them, that they will be able to discern, resist, and even repudiate what is destructive.

#### **Conclusion**

To conclude this last chapter, the reminder to the church could be expressed as follows: “Evangelization is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative...”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Episcopal Conference of Rwanda, “The Role of each one in Reconciliation and Peace”, in *Dialogue*, no.223 (July-August, 2001), 67

<sup>61</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 31

<sup>62</sup> M. Joachim, “The challenge of Evangelization in Africa today”, in *AFER*, 18 (1976), 365

This, she has to do as she pays a special attention to the importance of inculturating or adapting the Gospel message<sup>63</sup>, and the witnessing character of religious life. Involvement in the world of the media is another key-word because “to remain outside this communication revolution means to isolate oneself. [...]; for no one can have an impact in society without the support of the mass communication”<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, the present political atmosphere constitutes a great challenge to the church’s mission. It is an invitation for the church to make a constant and radical declaration of her identity: free from any distraction or diversion in order to effectively announce the Gospel message. She also has to read the signs of the times, such as by taking into consideration the treasure that the youth constitutes in the life of the church in particular and of the society in general.

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<sup>63</sup> Adaptation or Inculturation has been strongly noted by certain church documents: see *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 44, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 13 and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 18-19.

<sup>64</sup> J. Caramazza, “Media Development”, in *New People (May-June 2004)*, 11

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

At the end of this essay, one evidently notices that only one concern led me not to withhold my silence anymore: Peace and true peace which excludes any kind of double mindedness on the side of all those who are involved in the peace-building process in Burundi. When we speak of 'Peace', it must be distinguished from the theatrical piece whereby some are actors while others are content with watching. In other words, we can no longer afford to theologize about the situation in 'abstracto', without committing ourselves, without getting involved. Problems of gross injustice and violation of human rights will not be solved by mere declarations, however strongly worded they may be. This is what the different chapters have been articulated around.

The first chapter mainly tells us about the nature of the problematic situation in Burundi. This is important because as a Burundian saying puts it: "the one who enters an unknown forest consequently comes out with unknown walking stick."<sup>65</sup> In other words, whoever is involved in the peace process in Burundi must first get familiar with the causes and consequences of the conflict that people are faced with. One discovers that the nature of the conflict is to be sought in excessive greed which has led the human heart to selfish tendencies and behaviours. At the end of the day, it is apparent that the war in Burundi is but a self-disclosure of a spiritual crisis or decline.

The second chapter has been essentially articulated on the study of the contribution of the Gospel in the war-torn Burundi. However sober its content might be this chapter made it clear that the biblical message has a lot to offer to the protagonists in the conflict. Be it in the prophets or in Jesus' teaching, Love, Justice, and Truth have been portrayed as the indispensable stepping stones in building true and lasting peace and reconciliation. It is these same values of which the Church of Burundi has been trying to remind her faithful in particular and the whole Burundian people in general. However, let us not fool ourselves, the way is still long. To arrive to the real establishment of peace and reconciliation in Burundi, the people must undergo total conversion. The reason is because the rupture between man and man is not something

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<sup>65</sup> The saying is literally translated from Kirundi : 'Winjira Ikibira utazi ugaca inkoni utazi' It invites people to have a preliminary knowledge of any problem before envisaging any solution to it.

that begins 'out there' somewhere. If, as Isaiah proclaimed, 'peace is the fruit of righteousness' (Is 32:17), if, as the second Vatican Council taught, 'peace is the fruit of love' (Gaudium et Spes, no. 78), then war is the fruit of unrighteousness and hatred.<sup>66</sup>

Enhancing this idea, the last chapter proposes to reconsider the strategies of communication because "Communication covers everything which brings people closer together, unites and binds them in one way or another."<sup>67</sup>

In the end we realize that any conflict is but the breakdown of communication. It injures the social cohesion. For this reason, the church has to be this "voice in the desert" which cries against wind and snow to let people know that mistrust, violence, hatred and lies are to be banished from the day to day ways of relating with each other. The Small Christian Communities, the youth and the media world must therefore be the field of the first concern.

In this peace enterprise, one thing must be clear for everybody: neither Hutus, nor Tutsis are innocent in what is happening in Burundi. Both sides have what to answer for: all have not only betrayed unity and brotherly concern, but they have also turned away from the will of the Creator. They all need to be healed in order to live again in harmony. They all need to understand that setting traps to each other will never solve the problem. Rather, dialogue, mutual forgiveness, sincere repentance and utter renunciation of what makes the whole Burundian society bleed to death must win the heart of everyone.

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<sup>66</sup> W.J.Burghardt, *Towards Reconciliation*, 21

<sup>67</sup> K. Muller, Sundermeier, Th, et al., ed., *Dictionary of Mission*,73

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2:42-47	28		
<b>Romans</b>			
8:21	18		

## **APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire for the interviews**

## **Section 1: Bishops**

Q1: The church is supposed to be the source of hope for the faithful. How has she been for the victims of war in Burundi?

Q2: What has been the role of the Church of Burundi in the process of Peace-building?

Q3: The Church is by nature Sacrament of unity in the sense that it reflects the Trinitarian love. How far has the Church of Burundi been the bridge, in their daily lives, among divided Christians as she helps them to retie healthier relationships?

Q4: The Church of Burundi underwent a terrible persecution in the 80s. Can we say that it was due to her commitment to Justice & Peace which is part and parcel of her prophetic mission? How far has this experience paralyzed or energized the Church?

Q5: What do you think the Church of Burundi can still do to make her mission more effective with regard to the 10 year-crisis?

Q6: What has the Church done in the healing process of the Burundian people?

Q7: How would you assess the relationship Church-State when the military service was made obligatory even for Seminarians, future pastors of the Church. Can we say you Bishops have witnessed to the Unity of the Church as far as your different positions of then are concerned?

Q8: What is the common policy about media in the Church of Burundi? How would you assess their importance in the spreading of the Gospel? In other words, are they challenges or means for evangelization?

Q9: Some people have accused the first Missionaries have some responsibility in the crisis of today? What is your opinion?

Q10: The socio-political and therefore spiritual crisis in Burundi is a proof that Evangelization has been superficial since the beginning. Your comment.

## **Section B: Parish priests**

Q1: How would you assess the consequences of war in the parish? How does it affect your parishioners and your mission? How do you go about it?

Q2: How are Small Christian Communities involved and contributing in the process of Peace-building and Reconciliation of the People of Burundi? What are the main challenges you are facing?

Q3: The crisis that is shaking the Burundi people invites to passing from a catechesis of the book to that of life. What is your position?

Q4: How would you describe your relationship with the local authorities?

Q5: Do you think that the Justice & Peace Commissions are needed at the Parish level?

Q6: How would you assess the freedom of expression in Burundi?

### **Section C: Those working with Media**

Q1: How are the media contributing in communicating the Gospel here in Burundi?

Q2: The media need to be evangelized. What is your position

Q3: What kind of education are the media providing people with?

Q4: The media affect everybody, and in a special way the youth. What are your strategies with regard to this?

### **Section D: Those working with the Youth**

Q1: What motivations led you to this kind of apostolate? What are the challenges and joys?

Q2: You assist mainly children who have been victims of war. As you move along in your apostolate, what do you feel could be the help from the Church especially concerning the healing process?

Q3: To what extent are you providing the education for peace: How far are you preparing these children to become peace-builders?

Q4: Can we say that such kind of apostolate is the hope of a united and peaceful future Burundi?

### **Section E: Some first Missionaries**

Q1: The crisis that is undermining the Country reached its climax in 1993, but we can say that the "dynamite was hidden already before, namely in 1969, 1972, etc. What did the Church do to prevent its explosion? What have been the main difficulties which made you not succeed?

Q2: Looking at the nature of the crisis, one is tempted to think that Evangelization failed at least partially. Your viewpoint with regard to this statement.

Q3: Would it have not been due to the fact that the first missionaries may have taken cultural transformations for granted? How would you assess the importance of culture in an effective evangelization?

Q4: How would you characterize the process of inculturation in Burundi?

Q5: Some historians or eye witnesses say that one the causes of the worsening of the crisis has been the unfair school system which excluded some citizens. They go on to say that the first missionaries are somehow responsible for that since the first schools were run by them. Your position.

### **Section F: Those involved in Peace-talks**

Q1: Why and how did you take part in the peace talks? Does it mean that the Church felt it as part and parcel of its mission?

Q2: What has been your contribution in the name of the Church of Burundi?

Q3: Having taken part in the talks was a chance for you to know more about what is in the heart of our leaders. Have you felt any need for them of ongoing catechesis or special pastoral for leaders, because being politicians does not take away their being members of your flock.

Q4: How would you characterize the ideal relationship between Church and State for a better collaborative care for the people?

### **Section G: Christians at the grass roots level: Small Christian Communities**

Q1: How does war affect you not only as human beings but also as Christians?

Q2: What are your contributions in the peace-building process and Reconciliation as Christians?

Q3: How does the Gospel touch and transform your daily life?

Q4: Some people say that what is happening is a sign of greed and that tribalism is only a way for our leaders to achieve what they want by putting at odds the population. What do you say about this statement?

Q5: Though the Hutu and Tutsi are fighting, people say that there are some of you who have protected their neighbours of the other ethnic group. And some would have been killed because of that benevolent act. Can you say more?

Q6: Looking at religious or parochial communities, we have the impression that both ethnic groups cohabit peacefully. What do you think about it and what would you learn from that in case it is true?

## APPENDIX 2: Sampling tables

**Table 1**

**100 people interviewed about the consequences of war**

Category of people	Subject of interview	Positive Answers provided in %
55 Refugees (Tanzania)	Existence of prostitution	70
10 Refugees (Nairobi)	Existence of prostitution	65
15 (from NGOs in Burundi)	Cases of rape	80
10 (Orphans in Burundi)	Traumatic experiences	90
10 (Church people)	Traumatic experiences	75

### **Explanatory Note:**

After having interviewed different people, the author came up with alarming results. All the answers provided show that the people, especially the refugees, are really short of the basics. That is why the rate of prostitution is high because many women and young ladies easily give in immoral practices in order to gain their daily bread. As for the cases of rape, it was clear that it occurs mainly to women and even to young girls. It is largely perpetrated by armed groups and the government army. Lastly the traumatic experiences are so common. Some children whose parents or family have been swept away are mostly affected. However even many grown up people are traumatized especially those who have witnessed to killings and tortures. All this has been confirmed by some church people who are carrying out a noble task by accompanying the victims both spiritually and morally.

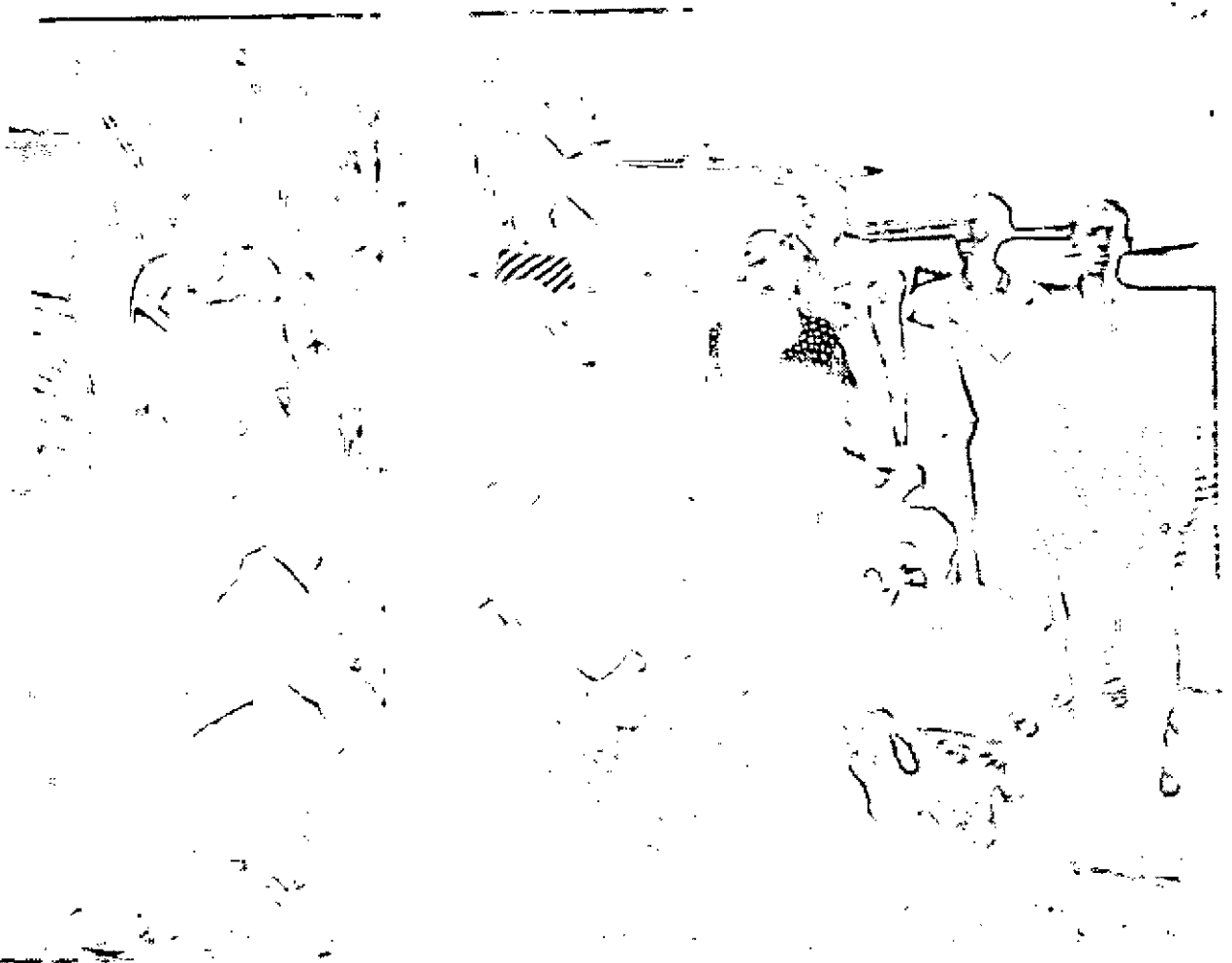
**Table2****100 people interviewed about the role of the Church in conflict resolution**

Category of people	Subject of interview	Answers in %	
		In favour	already in Practice
20 Church people	Inculturation	80	30
	Justice and Peace	60	85
	Youth Ministry	85	80
	Media and Evangelization	75	30
10 Media people	Media and Evangelization	90	30
	Justice and Peace	90	40
10 Youth ministers	Youth Ministry	99	80
	Inculturation	99	20
60 (Grassroots level)	Reconciliation	99	60
	Inculturation	80	20

**Explanatory Note:**

The interviews aimed here at knowing whether “conflict resolution” is really a concern for the church and for the Christians at large. In the double column of the answers, the first part shows the dreams of the people while the second stands for what is already put into practice. Hence, we notice that the big majority of the people interviewed are strongly in favour of the church being involved in the conflict resolution. Though the opinions differ slightly, they do not all agree as to how to go about it. However, as the table above clearly shows, the church is already committed in all the different aspects sampled but still she can do better.

**APPENDIX 3: Pictures taken in one of the Internal Displaced People's Camps in  
Burundi**



**Picture1:** The author himself when he was among his people who were in a Displaced People's Camp at Muyange (Province of Bururi –Burambi District).



**Picture 2:** Two Missionaries of Africa, Fr Waly Neven (with a bag in his hands) and Deacon Walter Tubis (hugging one of the refugees) during their pastoral visit to the internally displaced people in Murago Parish.



**Picture 3:** Fr Waly Neven sharing a meal with a family that had recently gone back home after many years in an internally displaced people's camp.

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