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**PREFACE TO A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF THE BURUNDI'S SOCIO-POLITICO-CULTURAL
IMPASSE AND NEW EVANGELIZATION AS A
REMEDY**

Supervisor

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a
Master's Degree in Theology**

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DEDICATION

To those who are proclaiming tirelessly the Gospel of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa and in the whole world.

EPIGRAPH

“Human peace obtained without justice is illusory and ephemeral. Human justice which is not the fruit of reconciliation ... remains incomplete; it is not authentic justice. Love of truth ... is what marks out the path that all human justice must follow if it is to succeed in restoring the bonds of fraternity within the human family ... reconciled with God through Christ” (*AM, 18*).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With a heart full of gratitude to Almighty God who has graciously helped me to complete this work, I express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped me in one way or another to get this work completed successfully. Many thanks indeed to Fr. Paddy Roe, my supervisor, who guided me in writing this thesis. I sincerely thank all the lecturers of Tangaza University College who exposed my mind to various theological and scientific fields. Without their inspiration I would not have produced this work. I equally thank my classmates for the help and support I got from them.

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Finally, I am very grateful to my beloved parents, my brothers and sister who always supported me through their love and care. To all my friends and all the people who have inspired me in one way or another, I say thank you very much. May the Good Lord bless you and guide you in all that you do!

STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research and critical reflection.

It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed.....

ITUNGABOSE BENJAMIN, M.Afr.

Date.....

This Thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university college supervisor.

Signed.....

Rv. Fr. Dr. Patrick Roe, Cssp.

Date.....

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ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Ad Gentes
AM	Africae Munus
Br	Brother
EA	Ecclesia in Africa
Cf	Confer
ed	edited by
EG	Evangelii Gaudium
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
Fr	Father
Jn	John
LG	Lumen Gentium
Mt	Matthew
Msgr	Monsignor
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RM	Redemptoris Missio
OD	Oxford Dictionary
SCPF	Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

0.1. The Background of the thesis

I wanted to become elite. I was Catholic. I found myself Catholic. They baptised me. They simply baptised me. I was born when my father had already decided to become Christian. He had wanted it, him, my father. My mother too had wanted it. They had endured hunger, fatigue for four years to be initiated into a new life they wanted to live...¹ (*Translation ours*).

The above passage is an extract from Michel Kayoya's book entitled "*Entre Deux Mondes: D'une generation à l'autre*". It gives us an idea of what many people feel when they see what Burundi has become in the past 50 years despite the Gospel of Christ brought by the missionaries over a century ago. Indeed many people wonder if the Barundi converted to Christianity at all because they understood its demands or simply embraced it because they wanted to become elite like Kayoya. However the truth is: The Barundi became divided according to their ethnic affiliation at the time when the missionaries were ready to reap the fruits of their labour. The Belgian colonial administration is accused of engineering this division. In fact, in 1930, they imposed on the Barundi an identification card bearing the terms "Hutu" for a Muhutu and "Tutsi" for a Mututsi.

The Bahutu and the Batutsi had lived together in peace and harmony for centuries under the leadership of the *Mwami* (king) who was helped by the *Baganwa* (princes), the *Banyamabanga* (trustees) and the *Bashingantahe* (wise men seen as a kind of social referees or conflict managers and agents of reconciliation). There had

¹M. KAYOYA, *Entre Deux Mondes*, 107.

never been any problem in terms of political succession because the king always came from the royal family, and all the *Barundi* were happy with that. In fact it is widely believed that the *Ganwa* identity which represented the royal family contained both *Bahutu* and *Batutsi* members.² This then shows us how the inter-ethnic conflict which has ravaged Burundi for decades has nothing to do with its remote history. As many scholars and specialists of Burundian politics and history have argued, it seems that the differences between the *Barundi* were more socio-political rather than ethnic or cultural. Indeed as one of them contends, in the *Barundi* kingdom “power struggles were expressed in different terms, for reasons other than ‘ethnocentrism’ and against external enemies.”³

When the missionaries came towards the end of the 19th century, they found themselves falling into the trap set by the colonial administration. They collaborated with them in reinforcing the division between the *Barundi* by favouring one ethnic group over the other. The consequences proved disastrous as they experienced a cycle of violence between the two groups in the years that followed the independence of the country.

This thesis addresses this impasse and seeks to find a remedy. Since it is obvious that the Gospel message preached to the *Barundi* did not take roots in their hearts, we have suggested the “New Evangelization” of the *Barundi* as a way forward. This “New Evangelization” will consist of the principles of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation since this is what the *Barundi* need most now.

² R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 3.

³ R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 3.

0.2. Problem statement

Most of the Barundi who killed one another were Christians who went to mass every Sunday. The churches were always full and people sang that they loved each other. They received sacraments regularly and most marriages were blessed in the church. Their children were baptised in their infancy and there was indeed an apparent understanding of what being Christian is all about. But this was only a mere appearance. The Barundi's conversion to Christianity was rather exterior than interior. As a result, when the dark days befell Burundi, they did not remember that every Sunday they communicated from the same body and blood of Christ, symbol of communion, and listened to his word. We ask ourselves: why did the word of God preached to them and the sacraments they received not make any impact in their lives? Indeed there is a serious problem which needs to be addressed in the Church of Burundi.

0.3. Hypothesis and the aim of the thesis

The fact that the missionaries fell into the trap of the colonial administration in helping them to implement their principle of "divide and rule", has led to the endless violence which ravaged Burundi for more than five decades. Had they refused to follow their direction, and rather fostered the unity and harmony that had characterised the *Barundi* for centuries, the Gospel would have taken roots in the hearts of the *Barundi*. The truth is: the *Barundi* believed in one God (*Imana*), the creator of the universe and the origin and the master of life. It would have been easier for the missionaries to build on this to preach Christ the source and the giver of true life.

Therefore, this thesis proposes “New Evangelization” as a way forward to resolve the impasse. This New Evangelization will focus on the principles of justice, peace and reconciliation to effect a total transformation of the heart of the *Murundi*. As a way of carrying out this New Evangelization, we propose the revival of one of the traditional institutions which held the Barundi together in peace and harmony for many centuries: the institution of the *Bashingantahe*. As means of implementation of this New Evangelization, the inculturation of the Gospel as well as the catechesis and the Small Christian Communities will be of great help. We want to see the *Murundi* live the Gospel values which to a great extent are reflected in his/her culture and traditions.

0.4. Personal Motivation

In the course of “Mission Theology” at Tangaza University College (Nairobi, Kenya), I became aware of the different types of evangelization, namely, the primary evangelization, the pastoral care of those evangelized already and the new evangelization for those who had known Christ for many years but whose faith has decreased day after day.

After analysing the case of Burundi I came to realise that although Christianity is not all that old in the country, the current situation shows symptoms of a Church whose members’ faith is fading away. What is needed in Burundi is neither the primary evangelization nor pastoral care as such but rather a new evangelization. The *Barundi* are in need of “new evangelization” in order to overcome the inter-ethnic violence which has ravaged the country for decades.

My personal motivation in choosing the topic “*Preface to a theological understanding of the Burundi’s socio-politico-cultural impasse, and new evangelization as a remedy*” is due to this insight I got from the course of “Mission Theology”. Of course there are other courses in relation to this and seminars I attended which motivated me. I can mention a course entitled “Mission Anthropology”, a course on “the Principles of Inculturation and its implementation” as well as a seminar on “New Evangelization and African Crisis”. And since I am a *Murundi*, I felt a strong desire to study the history of evangelization of my country and all its challenges and then suggested the New Evangelization as a way of overcoming them.

0.5. Sources of the Thesis and its Methodology

Apart from innumerable online articles and many more books written by different people that we will use in writing this thesis, our main sources will be principally books written by Missionaries of Africa who worked in Burundi and its surroundings and Church documents which deal with mission and evangelization. Thus, these main sources are:

- 1) “*NAISSANCE D’UNE EGLISE: Histoire du Burundi Chrétien*” and “*CHRONIQUE DE L’EGLISE CATHOLIQUE AU BURUNDI APRES L’INDEPENDANCE*” by Fr. Jean Perraudin;
- 2) “*THE WHITE FATHERS IN COLONIAL AFRICA (1919-1939)* by Fr. Francis NOLAN;
- 3) “*Ad Gentes*” from Vatican II Document;
- 4) “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” by Pope Paul VI;

5) “*Redemptoris Missio*” and “*Ecclesia in Africa*” by Pope John Paul II;

6) “*Africae Munus*” by Benedict XVI;

7) The Synod of Bishops’ “*Lineamenta*” on the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*.

Our research methodology will primarily be of a historical type. We will look at what Burundi was in the past before its contact with the Arabs, the German and Belgian colonisers as well as the missionaries, what it became after its contact with them, and what it is in the present days. That is why before looking for ways of evangelizing Burundi anew, we will first try to understand its history of evangelization and the challenges it came across in the course of history.

0.6. Limitations and scope of the thesis

Our study is about Burundi before its contact with the external world, during the colonial and missionary era and after its independence. Given that those who wrote about Burundi before its contact with the western culture did it after the described events had taken place, we should not expect perfection and precision in the information collected. They mainly relied on oral traditions and reports by missionaries who did not well understand the language and the culture of the *Barundi*. However, the truth is: the events described in the thesis did take place and the consequences are being felt now. And since we have proposed New Evangelization as a remedy to whatever happened in Burundi, we will only single out few areas which we feel need more attention very urgently. These as we shall see include areas of justice, peace and reconciliation. As a way of implementation of this New Evangelization, the principle of inculturation is of paramount importance.

Again here we will only concentrate on a few areas such as family catechesis and Small Christian Communities among many more which need attention in the Church of Burundi.

0.7. Significance of the thesis

The events which unfolded in Burundi over the last five decades have left many people wondering. How can a country Christianised at almost 90 % go through such tragic events? It is our conviction therefore that this thesis will help the reader to see that the challenges that the Burundian Church is facing are shared by most African countries, and that the remedy we have proposed for Burundi's situation could in a way apply to the situation in any African country which might have experienced the same problems. The reader will learn that in present-day Africa new evangelisation is urgently needed if we really want to live the Gospel of Christ authentically in our cultures and current situations.

0.8. The articulation of the thesis

This thesis comprises of four chapters. The first chapter will focus on Burundi before the contact with the external world. We will first describe the geography of present Burundi, the culture and the identity of the *Murundi*, and then proceed to analyse what were the institutional foundations of the unity of the *Barundi*. These institutions include the monarchy, the traditional religion, the *Bashingantahe*, and the *Ubumwe* (unity) and the common destiny of the Barundi. In the same chapter we will analyse the origin of the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi" as they are the source of the impasse.

In chapter two, we will look at Burundi in contact with the external world. In this chapter we will analyse the first and the second attempts of the evangelization of Burundi, (1879-1881) and (1884-1891) respectively, which eventually failed; and then the proper beginning of evangelization of Burundi (1896-1898). Then we will proceed to critically and theologically analyse the situation of the Church under German rule (1897-1918) and Belgian rule (1919-1962), and the role it played in the socio-politico-cultural changes during this time. It is in this chapter that we will describe how the Hutu-Tutsi conflict originated.

In chapter three we will analyse in depth Burundi's long lasting socio-politico-cultural impasse. We will look at the major causes of the impasse and their implication in Burundian politics since independence until today. In the same chapter we will look at the role played by the Church amidst the impasse.

In chapter four, we will propose new evangelization as a remedy for the impasse. In this chapter we will explain what the term "new evangelization" means, and then we will proceed to show how it is urgent for the Church in general and for Burundi in particular. It is in this chapter that we will pinpoint the methods we think would help in evangelizing Burundi anew. The areas which we think are the target of new evangelization in Burundi are: Justice, Peace, Reconciliation, Inculturation, Catechesis and Small Christian Communities. We will then conclude this thesis with a general conclusion and evaluation.

CHAPTER ONE

BURUNDI BEFORE THE CONTACT WITH THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Rockfeler P. Herisse argued in his article “*Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi*” that the crisis which has paralysed Burundi can be attributed to imported and misapplied ideologies such as Christianity, racial superiority and Western-style democracy.⁴ He agrees with notable scholars of the Great Lakes region (Prunier, Lemarchand, Chrétien and Vidal) who contended that the institutions established by the westerners to enforce the above mentioned ideologies replaced the traditional practices and nullified existing social contracts which existed among the *Barundi* for centuries. The consequences of this as we shall see in the course of this thesis could only be disastrous and destructive.

In the following chapter we are going to describe these traditional practices on which Burundi is ‘believed’ to have been built for centuries before its contact with the external world. But before that, let us highlight some of the geographical traits of present Burundi which we think are of great help to the topic.

1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT BURUNDI

Burundi is one of the smallest countries in Africa. Its landmass covers 27,834 square kilometres and its population is estimated at 10,557,259 people (2012).⁵ Hence this makes Burundi one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Geographically, Burundi is situated in east-central Africa. It shares

⁴ Cf. R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 2.

⁵ Cf. Burundi – The world fact book: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>>, (15/03/2013).

borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, the Republic of Rwanda to the north and the Republic of Tanzania to the east.

Burundi enjoys an equatorial climate with high plateaus whose altitude varies between 772 metres to 2670 metres above sea level.⁶ The average annual temperature is between 23 and 17 degrees centigrade and the average annual rainfall is estimated at 150 centimetres. Burundi has two wet seasons and two dry seasons. Being a hilly and mountainous country it is understandable that only a small proportion of the land is used for cultivation. The country's natural resources include arable land, hydropower, nickel, vanadium, niobium, tantalum, gold, tin, tungsten, kaolin and limestone.⁷

Burundi has no nature reserve as such. Wild animals roam about everywhere and as a result this exposes them to poaching. Indeed with the alarming deforestation the wildlife will only exist in history books in future. The cow symbolises wealth, happiness and prosperity. Hence the possession of many cows is a symbol of power in the culture of the Barundi. That the cow is a symbol of power in the culture of the Barundi is expressed by the traditional greeting "Amasho"⁸ which is roughly translated as "may you have many cows."

⁶Cf. M. N. APHANE, *Politicisation of Identities*, 14.

⁷ Cf. Burundi – The world fact book: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>> (15/03/2013).

⁸ Cf. M. N. APHANE, *Politicisation of Identities*, 14.

The population of Burundi is made up of Bahutu (85%), Batutsi (14%) and Batwa (1%). There is no information as to where the concentrations of major ethnic groups are situated. There has also been little evidence of the gender demography in the country because there has never been a census of the people according to various categories. Both the Bahutu and the Batutsi live intermingled within the boundaries of the country and this has been like that for centuries. There is, however, another group of people rarely mentioned when talking about the population of Burundi. This group is made up of people of Euro-Asian origin. It is estimated that there are about 3,000 Europeans and 2,000 South-Asians living in Bujumbura capital city.⁹

All the Burundi speak the same language, *Kirundi*, share the same culture, customs and traditional beliefs. That is why dividing them according to ethnic groups has no anthropological justification. Even the *Batwa* who are said to speak *Kirundi* of a different dialect would hardly be convinced of that because, apart from the slight difference in accent, the grammatical and semantic structures basically remain the same. *Kirundi* and French are the two official languages of Burundi. Swahili is also spoken in some parts of the country especially along Lake Tanganyika and mostly in the capital, Bujumbura. The majority of the Burundi are Christians (82.8%) of whom 61.4% are Catholics and 21.4% Protestants. The other religious denominations are Muslims 2.5%, Adventists 2.3%, other 6.5%, unknown 5.9 (census 2008).¹⁰

⁹ Cf. Cf. Burundi – The world fact book: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>> (15/03/2013).

¹⁰ Cf. Burundi – The world fact book: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html>> (15/03/2013).

1.2. CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF THE *MURUNDI*

It is very important to begin this chapter by situating the *Murundi* in the context of his/her culture and identity. In fact this will help us to understand that whatever happened to Burundi as a country is largely due to the misinterpretation or/and misapplication of these two concepts by the Belgian colonial masters and some missionaries.

To begin with, let us admit that culture and identity are two complex concepts. Whereas “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts”¹¹, identity is an ensemble of characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others (*OD, 2010, 743*). Applied to the *Murundi*, culture and identity will include all that makes him/her to be what he/she is in his/her environment (Burundi) and different from other people around him/her. Hence, a *Murundi* is different from a *Munyarwanda* or a *Muganda* even if these people could be staying in Burundi. Although the “so-called ethnic groups” which make up the Barundi are substantially the same as those in Rwanda, they are altogether two different people. A *Mututsi* from Rwanda is totally different from a *Mututsi* from Burundi. And this applies to the *Muhutu* and to the *Mutwa* as well.

From the anthropological point of view, a *Murundi* is any person whose culture and identity are acquired by being born of *Barundi* parents (at least his father has to be exclusively a *Murundi*). That is why to be merely a *Muhutu*, a *Mututsi* or a *Mutwa* or to hold a Burundian citizenship does not constitute one’s cultural identity

¹¹Culture definition: <<https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/choudhury/culture.html>> (04/03/2014).

in Burundi. One receives his/her culture and identity by being a *Murundi* and not by merely being a *Muhutu*, a *Mututsi*, or a *Mutwa*.

Indeed if an ethnic group has to have a name, customs, values, and its own language, all the *Barundi* make up no more than one ethnic group. The application of terms ‘ethnic group’ or tribe to the *Bahutu*, the *Batutsi* and the *Batwa* as distinct people constituting the Barundi makes no sense at all. The truth is: the *Bahutu* and the *Batutsi* live together spread all over the entire region and have warm relations with intermarriage, exchange gifts, share the drinking straw (*gusangira umukenke*) when beer is consumed, and mutually help one another in agricultural work (*ikibiri*).¹²

1.3. THE INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE UNITY OF THE BARUNDI

Most historians both native and expatriate attest that Burundi’s pre-colonial history bears no evidence of ethnic conflict. Herisse contends that the *Ganwa* identity which represented the royal family contained both *Bahutu* and *Batutsi* members.¹³ In his opinion, it seems that the differences between the *Barundi* are more socio-political rather than ethnic or cultural. He contends that in the Barundi kingdom, “power struggles were expressed in different terms, for reasons other than ‘ethnocentrism’ and against external enemies.”¹⁴ Gerard Prunier also previously observed that in the Barundi kingdom whenever conflicts took place, there were

¹² Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE & G. NDUWAYO, *Identity and Cultural Diversity*, 245f.

¹³ R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 3.

¹⁴ R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 3.

cultural traditions and mechanisms to bring the system to normalcy, like ‘*kubandwa*’ and the *Bashingantahe* courts.

In the following pages we are going to explore these traditions and mechanisms which constituted the foundation of this unity that characterised the *Barundi* before the coming of colonial masters and missionaries.

1.3.1. The monarchy

Burundi was an old and centrally-organised kingdom back to at least 1600s. At the head of the kingdom there was a *Mwami* (king) considered by the *Barundi* as the father of the nation. The *Mwami* was not only a political leader but also a religious leader in whose mystique everybody shared.¹⁵ Besides the *Mwami* there was an aristocratic class of people who helped him in the administration of the kingdom. This political class was made up of the *Baganwa*, a group of high-ranking nobles who, as Gerard Prunier notes, ruled the different provinces of the Barundi kingdom in the name of the *Mwami*.

Those who helped the *Mwami* in the administration of the kingdom were not only the *Baganwa*. At the royal court there was another group of very influential people called ‘*Abanyarurimbi*’ chosen by the king to be his advisers and court judges. The *Banyarurimbi* came from both the *Bahutu* and the *Batutsi*. In addition to these people there were elders called ‘*Abashingantahe*’ who were recognised as sort of social referees and common law judges who arbitrated most of the ordinary conflicts/problems.

¹⁵ G. PRUNIER, “Burundi: A Manageable Crisis,” 3.

One particular thing that we have to note about the *Mwami* is that he was a rather ‘softer’ political leader despite being very influential in religious and social matters. He was regarded by the *Barundi* as the source of life and unity of the kingdom. He was very much respected in the entire kingdom because he dispensed patronage to all the *Banyagihugu* (subjects). And “much of what he dispensed was in the form of land to the landless or those who sought to relocate to other areas.”¹⁶ He also dispensed patronage such as cows and other material things to those who deserved them. As Musawenkosi argues, the patronage that was given to the people had an element of being associated with religion. In fact, such kind of gesture was seen as a service of the *Mwami* in the eyes of God because, the whole kingdom considered him as God’s representative on earth.¹⁷

1.3.2. The traditional religion

Before the missionaries came to evangelize Burundi, the *Barundi* believed in one Supreme Being and in the influence of the dead on those still living. Many rituals were performed for the dead to appease their anger and to foster good relationship with them.

In the following pages we are going to describe the major elements of this Burundian traditional religion which is seen as one of the unifying elements of the traditional Burundian society.

¹⁶M. N. APHANE, *Politicisation of Identities*, 30.

¹⁷Cf. M. N. APHANE, *Politicisation of Identities*, 30.

1.3.2.1. Imana

The *Barundi* always worshipped one Supreme Being known as *Imana*. *Imana* could also sometimes mean “good luck”. For example when one says in *Kirundi* “*nagize Imana*” he/she means that he/she has been lucky. In people’s daily life *Imana* was the giver of all good things and the cause of afflictions. It is worth noting that there were many cults in traditional Burundi and most of them were meant to bring the *Barundi* closer to *Imana*. Some cultic activities were however performed in view of seeking from the spirits of the dead protection of their family or lineage, for soil fertility, etc. Among these cultic activities were: *guterekera imizimu*, *kwambaza Kiranga* and *kubandwa*.

1.3.2.2. Guterekera imizimu (cult to ancestral spirits)

In his book “*Imigenzo y’ikirundi*” (*The Burundian Customs*), Jean Baptiste Ntahokaja argues that the *Barundi* always believed that a human being does not die.¹⁸ It is only the body that dies but the spirit remains unharmed. That is why many rituals were performed to appease the *mizimu*.

By “(i)*mizimu*” (sing. (u)*muzimu*) we mean the ancestral spirits. The *Barundi* held that these ancestral spirits can be the source of good things as well as the source of afflictions. It is for this reason that they held a greater reverence for them and many rituals were performed to win their favour and protection. Moreover, they believed that these spirits had direct access to *Imana* (God), so much so that whatever they asked for from him in their name they got it. The most revered spirit

¹⁸ Cf. J. B. NTAHOKAJA, *Imigenzo y’ikirundi*, 153.

was the spirit of the head of the clan/ family. This spirit was feared because, once angered, it could inflict upon them all kinds of disasters and diseases.¹⁹

1.3.2.3. Kwambaza Kiranga (cult to Kiranga)

In Burundian traditional religion, *Kiranga* was a kind of high priest or intermediary between human beings and *Imana*. On the day of the cult, *Kiranga* was the presiding priest. He was called upon wherever people needed him. *Kiranga* never travelled alone. He was always accompanied by his servants called *Ibihweba*. The leader of the *Bihweba* was called *Rubambo* the son in law of *Kiranga* himself.

This is how Ntahokaja describes the cult to *Kiranga*:

Wherever *Kiranga* went he was accompanied by his servants. The chief servant was called *Rubambo*, his son in law, who always walked before him. *Kiranga* and *Rubambo* did not take the same path. Each one took his own way and they walked in parallel. *Rubambo* was offered a bull-calf whereas *Kiranga* received a heifer. The person who invited *Kiranga* prepared for him a place either in the house or in the courtyard, and offered him a jar of banana beer and invited him to sit around the fire. The firewood to make this fire was provided by the neighbours. They drank the banana beer together and after drinking *Kiranga* went out to bless the cows. If the wife of the man who invited *him* was barren, he could also bless her so that she could start bearing children. All the people who came to see *Kiranga* bowed before him and clapped their hands as a sign of great respect and reverence.²⁰ (*Translation ours*)

1.3.2.4. Kubandwa

Kubandwa was a cult of normalisation of matters probably borrowed by the *Barundi* from elsewhere.²¹ This cultic activity was performed in times of grave diseases, natural disasters, infertility of women and cattle. It is worth noting that the cult of *Kubandwa* was done by the *Bahutu*, the *Batutsi* and the *Baganwa*. Indeed this

¹⁹ Cf. J. B. NTAHOKAJA, *Imigenzo y'ikirundi*, 153.

²⁰ Cf. J. B. NTAHOKAJA, *Imigenzo y'ikirundi*, 155.

²¹ Cf. M. N. APHANE, *Politicisation of Identities*, 24.

explains why it was seen as one of the best unifying elements of all the categories of people who inhabited Burundi.

How was the cult of Kubandwa carried out?

The head of the family in which the cult of *Kubandwa* took place prepared banana beer and many types of food; such as, corn, peas, yam, sweet potatoes, cassava, banana, meat, etc. This food was exclusively to be eaten only by the people living in the house. In the evening they took the food in *the ndaro* (small hut built for the cult) known as *indaro ya Rugabo*, where the head of the family served his wife and children. After eating, he offered to *Kiranga* and his servants a huge jar of banana beer. Then *Kiranga* entered in the *ndaro* and sat on a special stool known as *intebe ya Bigombo* (the stool of *Bigombo*). The head of the house knelt in front of him praying and imploring him, holding in his hands leaves of *mirinzi* and *mimanda* trees. Thus he prayed: ‘may you grant me cattle and children’! At this *Kiranga* responded: *Hiiih!* The head of the family also could ask *Kiranga* to grant him, his family and cattle good health. And at this, *Kiranga* responded *Hiiih* as well.²² In fact the *Hiiih* response of *Kiranga* was a sign of acceptance of the prayers addressed to him.

²²Cf. J. B. NTAHOKAJA, *Imigenzo y'ikirundi*, 158.

1.3.3. Abashingantahe institution

Abashingantahe (sing. *umushingantahe*) is a compound word made up of two words, *gushinga* (to plant or fix) and *intahe* (stick). Basically, *umushingantahe* is the one who plants the stick into the ground.²³ According to Philippe Ntahombaye, it is named so because of the court stick that the *Bashingantahe* strike rhythmically and in turn on the ground to insist on the importance of the words they are using and the decisions they render while arbitrating conflicts, a stick which has been transmitted from generation to generation.²⁴ Symbolically, the word *intahe* stands for the concepts of justice and equity. On the other hand, the word *ubushingantahe* means the set of values which underlie the institution itself.²⁵

Like the other foundational institutions that constituted the unity of the *Barundi*, the *Bashingantahe* institution too had a national character. It included both the *Bahutu* and the *Batutsi*, the two main groups of people which make up the Burundian population. The *Batwa* were however not included in this institution because of their traditional life-style. It is also worth mentioning that among the *Bashingantahe* there was not a single woman. The reality is that, women were invested with their husbands as *Abapfasoni*, persons of wisdom and integrity, but with no right to neither deliberate with the men nor render judgement.²⁶

²³ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

²⁴ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

²⁵ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

²⁶ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

Another important characteristic of the *Bashingantahe* institution was its multidimensionality. In fact, it had a role in judicial, moral and cultural, as well as social and political affairs. Moreover, it was universal due to its underlying values, such as the concern for justice, the love of truth, and concern for the common interest.²⁷ Let us note that the *Bashingantahe* institution had a consensual character in matters of decision-making and deliberations.

It is believed that the *Bashingantahe* institution began with the Burundian monarchy. According to a certain legend, it started with the first monarch of Burundi, Ntare Rushatsi around 1600s. Whereas the *Baganwa* helped the *Mwami* in the administration of the kingdom, the *Bashingantahe* were in charge of the smallest political entities of the Barundi kingdom known in French as ‘*collines*’ (hills). The *Bashingantahe* also played the role of advisers of the local authorities. Ntahombaye notes that this advisory role was informal. In matters of justice, there were formal jurisdictions with the family committee (*Abashingantahe bo mu muryango*), the *colline*-level tribunal (*intahe yo kumugina*), the sub-chief tribunal (*sentare y-i butware*), the chief’s tribunal (*sentare y-i buganwa*) and the king’s tribunal (*sentare y-i bwami*).²⁸

Each one of the above mentioned tribunals had specific issues it dealt with. The family committee dealt with the family members in conflict. The *colline*-level tribunal dealt with minor affairs such as family disputes, insults, minor assault, theft of crops, damages caused by roaming livestock, and debts. The sub-chief’s tribunal dealt with land cases and theft of small livestock. The chief’s tribunal treated cases

²⁷ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

²⁸ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 11.

of greater scale such as homicide, the theft of cows and the provision of dowry. As for the king's tribunal, it dealt with disputes among the chiefs and the most serious cases, particularly high treason.²⁹

In Burundian traditional society, not everybody qualified to be *umushingantahe*. There were some qualities that someone had to have to be admitted to this institution. These qualities included maturity, experience and wisdom, a heightened sense of justice and equity, concern for the common good, a sense of responsibility (individual, family and social), a sense of moderation and balance (in his words and acts), dedication and the love of work.³⁰ Nevertheless, these qualities were not enough for someone to fully qualify to be called *umushingantahe*. Ntahombaye adds to these essential qualities the moral and intellectual qualities of truthfulness, direction, intelligence, a sense of dignity and honour, and courage.³¹

Finally, a *mushingantahe* had to be materially self-sufficient, a good listener and a reconciler. Prior to any decision-making, the *Bashingantahe* attempted reconciliation through an informal process. They provided advice (*guhanura*) through patient and careful use of language. It is only when they had exhausted all the possible ways to bring the people in conflict together that they would proceed to arbitration. Note that once the case had been settled, the parties offered them banana or sorghum beer (*agatutu k'abagabo*) which was shared by everyone. This was a sign of gratitude to the *Bashingantahe*. For the people in conflict and the observers,

²⁹ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, "The Role of Informal Justice Systems", 11.

³⁰ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, "The Role of Informal Justice Systems", 11.

³¹ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, "The Role of Informal Justice Systems", 11.

it was at the same time a way of celebrating and sealing the newly restored relationship.³²

Indeed this institution was one of the many means that strengthened the unity of the *Barundi*. The *Bashingantahe* were very instrumental in maintaining peace, unity and the stability on the whole territory. They played a considerable role in maintaining cohesion or restoring peace on their '*collines*' where the majority of the population lived and worked.

1.3.4. Ubumwe (unity) and common destiny of the Barundi

In a very utopian presentation of traditional Burundi, Prosper Ndabishuriye argues that before colonial time the Barundi cohabited peacefully. In needful situations, he contends, they helped one another regardless of their ethnic affiliation. A person felt at home wherever he/she was received. A traveller got accommodation in any family and was well taken care of. He/she could lack nothing. If a person did not manage to till his/her land on time due to sickness or any other problem, Ndabishuriye argues, he/she could call upon his/her neighbours who came to help him/her without considering his/her ethnic affiliation. He/she paid nothing except food and banana beer that he/she offered them after the work. When inviting people to help him/her to cultivate his/her land, he/she did not consider their ethnic affiliation. Likewise, those called upon did not select in responding to the invitation.³³ Generally, Ndabishuriye insists, people mutually helped and respected one another.

³²Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, "The Role of Informal Justice Systems", 11.

³³ Cf. P. NDABISHURIYE, *Est-il possible de vivre ensemble?*, 4.

Concerning marriage, Ndabishuriye carries on with his argument, young men and ladies could meet, at the well for example, and decided to get married. The *Bahutu* married the *Batutsi* and vice versa. The *Barundi* understood very well that no one is self-sufficient. They lent to one another without expecting interest and exchanged gifts with one another. A *Muhutu* could borrow something from a *Mututsi* and vice versa. This is what was called *Ubumwe bw'Abarundi* (the unity of the *Barundi*).

Indeed as we can see, although Ndabishuriye exaggerates in presenting the traditional Burundian society in a very utopian way, we should not ignore the fact that the *Bahutu* and the *Batutsi* have developed a common culture and customs, shared the same language, and the same spiritual beliefs, political institutions, and cuisine.³⁴ The differences based on ethnic affiliation did not matter a lot as this can be seen even today across Burundi.

1.4. THE ORIGIN OF THE TERMS “HUTU” AND “TUTSI”

Before we talk about the origin of the above mentioned identities in Burundian society it is worth noting that identity, be it ethnic or otherwise, is a complex social phenomenon. Indeed like any other social phenomenon identity is subject to change. Isolated from other realities, it cannot exist in its purest form. It has to be associated with political, economic and social realities that make up its components.³⁵ It is for this very reason that Frederick Barth contended that ethnic identity, just like other collective or individual identities, is formed and transformed in the interaction of social groups by the process of inclusion or exclusion that

³⁴ Cf. R. P. HERISSE, “Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi”, 5.

³⁵ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE & G. NDUWAYO, *Identity and Cultural Diversity*, 242.

establish the limits between these groups and determine the rules.³⁶ Hence, in order to understand the reality of the different identities of the *Barundi* we have to situate Burundi in the context of its traditional economic system.

In effect, in traditional Burundi there have been two main economic activities for centuries, namely agriculture and cattle farming. The *Mwami* possessed extensive land and many cows. His descendants, the *Baganwa*, who were neither *Bahutu* nor *Batutsi* constituted a social class on its own. They were natural leaders and consequently were economically powerful. As Deogratias Ndayishimiye contends in his article “*The Role of Church before, and after Burundi and Rwanda Genocides*”, “the fact of being economically powerful was bringing to them a lot of socio-political consideration and respect.”³⁷

Let us also note that in the Burundi kingdom power did not only emanate from being directly born of the royal family. Cattle owning, which was a symbol of prestige and source of honour and respect, was a source of power as well. Those who owned a lot of cattle acquired a higher social status and became more powerful in society.

In any case, though, people who owned a lot of cows and much land had some connections with the royal family. In fact, they were ranked hierarchically according to their genealogical position compared with that of the reigning monarch. Emile Mworoha states in his book “*L’Histoire du Burundi*” that those who belonged to the lineage of the former kings were given to rule regions which were far from the

³⁶Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE & G. NDUWAYO, *Identity and Cultural Diversity*, 242.

³⁷D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 5.

royal court. With time these people lost their political power and became reduced to mere *Batutsi*. Hence, the *Batutsi* were therefore descendants of former princes and chiefs, degraded throughout time.³⁸

Let us however remark that although the degraded princes and chiefs lost their political influence to become mere *Batutsi*, they still owned some cows and a considerable amount of land. And the cattle owning, being a symbol of prestige and source of honour and respect in traditional Burundi, attracted members of society from lower strata. According to Ndayishimiye, what happened is this: a certain relationship between a prince and people was established through what is called “ubugabire” (donation) from the verb “kugaba” (making a donation).

The above generated relationship was not to be taken for granted. By donating something the donor acquired a lot of power, and for this the beneficiary owed him much respect.³⁹ In economic terms, we can say that the beneficiary of the described relationship became a debtor. And normally a debtor is in a lower position, while the donor is in a higher position. Therefore we can understand that this donation was not only creating alliance and good social relationship, but also a kind of hierarchy.⁴⁰ In this hierarchical logic, the donor had another name “shebuja”. Morphologically, ‘shebuja’ comes from two words: “se” (father of) and “ubuja” (selfdom). Therefore shebuja can be literally translated as the father of selfdom. As a result, the beneficiary of that fatherhood was called “umuhutu” (servant).⁴¹

³⁸Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 5.

³⁹Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 6.

⁴⁰Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 6.

⁴¹Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 6.

On the other hand, the *Muganwa* who owned a lot of cows and extensive land often offered to the needy. Every one envied this position so much so that no one was comfortable with being called *umuhutu*. It is in fact natural to feel uncomfortable with an inferior position due to a bad economic situation. The truth is: everybody would wish to improve and probably shift from worse to better. As Ndayishimiye notes, in traditional Burundi then, a *muhutu* who became wealthy could request to shift to the *Batutsi* social rank through the process called “*kwihutura*” (to get rid of servitude).⁴²

From the above description we understand that social groupings in traditional Burundi were based on socio-economic backgrounds and not on ethnicity as understood by some people. A *muganwa* who lost his political influence shifted to the lower social status of the *Batutsi*, who could also end up becoming a *muhutu* in case he lost both political and economic power. Both the *Baganwa* and the *Batutsi* had dependents called the *Bahutu* and these could come from the two main ethnic groups which inhabit present Burundi.

Nevertheless, as Ndayishimiye argues, with the arrival of the colonial masters and the establishment of their system of “divide and rule”, demographic data on Burundi became very simplified, and events began to get complicated. The *Batutsi*, formally identified as a class of economically wealthy people, started to be described, at the very arrival of Germans as dominant livestock farmers and associated with the cow. The *Bahutu* meanwhile were born to cultivate and hence associated with agriculture. The colonial masters also based this ethnic classification of the Burundi on what some anthropologists had previously established as physical

⁴² Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts”, 6.

differences between the two groups. While the Batutsi were thought of as lighter skinned, the Bahutu were generally considered to be darker skinned, with tones resembling the very dark browns of other central Africans. Other differences pointed out were: higher cheekbones, larger skulls and longer necks for the Batutsi.⁴³ Jean François Médard describes the scenario in his article *Rwanda and Burundi: the Roots of Violence as follows:*

When Europeans, explorers, missionaries and militaries discovered that region of Africa (Burundi and Rwanda), they were struck by the contrast existing between two types of human beings: On one hand Tutsis, aristocrats and livestock farmers, tall and slender, with fine traits. On the other hand, Hutus, agriculturalists and servants, short and stocky, with negroid traits. Europeans based on this to build a real historical myth whereby they distinguished a race of Lords-Tutsis-Hamitic conquerors from the north, a race born to rule, and an inferior race of Bantous, conquered and dominated by the former. It was a kind of application of physical historiography and anthropology, characteristic of the 19th century.⁴⁴

Indeed, Jean François Médard is only affirming what most people who did research about the ethnic conflict in Burundi have found out. The myth of hierarchy and racial superiority between the different categories of people who inhabit Burundi resulted from a misinterpretation or/and a misapplication of the terms by colonial masters and some missionaries who tried to understand them in their own culture and situations, forgetting that they were faced with a totally different reality altogether. As a consequence, they nurtured division and hatred which is still felt among *the Barundi* even today.

⁴³ Cf. "The Physical Differences in the Skin Tone of Hutus and Tutsis",

<http://www.ehow.com/list_7418133_physical-skin-tone-hutus-tutsis.html>, (03/05/2014).

⁴⁴Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE , "The role of Religion in Armed Conflicts", 6.

CHAPTER TWO

BURUNDI IN CONTACT WITH THE EXTERNAL WORLD

2.0. The prospect of evangelization of Sub-Saharan Africa

Before the 15th century, the interior of the African continent was not known to the Europeans. It was around 1480 that Portuguese traders discovered the kingdom of Kongo and Mozambique when they were looking for a new sea trade route to Asia. In these territories, the Portuguese established strong trade relationships with the people they came in contact with. In the kingdom of Kongo, they converted many people to Christianity including their king Nzinga. They enjoyed good relationship with the people of the area until the trans-Atlantic slave trade was introduced in the 1600s.⁴⁵

As a matter of fact, Christianity and the trans-Atlantic slave trade had an apparently contradictory relationship. On one hand slavery was interpreted as part of the divine ordering of the human universe, whereas on the other hand it was practised for purely economic purposes. It is interesting to find that while some pastors did not dare to denounce it, others campaigned tirelessly against it and asked for its immediate abolition. In 1888 Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, the founder of the Missionaries of Africa, toured most European Capitals sensitising political leaders to declare slavery evil and a crime against humanity.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Cf. *African Studies Centre*, “Studying Africa through the Humanities: Christianity in Africa”, <<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/activity4.php>>, 15/8/2013.

⁴⁶Cf. J. C. CELLIER, *History of the Missionaries of Africa*, 281.

When the slave trade was ending in 18th century, there were only few Christian communities remaining in Africa. We can mention for example a community of Coptic Christians in Egypt and Ethiopia and some small Christian communities in the Cape region of South Africa and in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique.⁴⁷ It was in the 1850s that Christianity started expanding again across the continent due to the rise of missionary movements and colonisation. Missionaries were sent across the whole world to spread the message of Christ.⁴⁸ And to be able to reach as many people as possible they were encouraged to learn the languages of the people they were sent to evangelize. This is for example what Cardinal Lavigerie wrote to missionaries he had sent to Kabylia and Equatorial Africa in 1878:

I desire that, as soon as such a thing is possible, and not later than six months after your arrival in the mission, all missionaries shall speak with each other only in the language of the people among whom they live.⁴⁹

Missionaries worked very hard to learn the local languages of the people. In few years they were able to translate some parts of the Bible into those languages. People had to be taught how to read and write in order to be able to read the newly translated biblical passages. Hence, school system became a new method of evangelization in the new missionary territories.

⁴⁷ Cf. *African Studies Centre*, “Studying Africa through the Humanities: Christianity in Africa”, <<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/activity4.php>>, 15/8/2013.

⁴⁸ Cf. *African Studies Centre*, “Studying Africa through the Humanities: Christianity in Africa”, <<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/activity4.php>>, 15/8/2013.

⁴⁹ Cf. Cardinal Lavigerie : *Fondateurs des Missionnaires d’Afrique*, 25.

That school system became a new method of evangelization in the new missionary territories is demonstrated by Vincent Donovan in his book “*Christianity Rediscovered*”. He gives the example of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, a Holy Ghost missionary in Southern Nigeria, who used the money received from Propaganda Fide in view of ransoming slaves, to begin building an extensive school system. By so doing, Donovan contends, Bishop Shanahan “not only affected the destiny of a tribe, the Ibos; he helped to change the missionary history of all of Africa.”⁵⁰

We must admit that from the very beginning of the evangelization of sub-Saharan Africa, missionaries were committed to the Africans’ education. In most cases they collaborated with the colonial governments. In Burundi, for example, an agreement was signed in 1925 which put all schools under the care of the missions. The catechists who were formed by the missionaries to teach in catechetical schools they had set up became school teachers and were paid by the colonial administration.⁵¹

Indeed wherever they were sent, missionaries consecrated their time to catechising people and baptising them, in order to make them disciples of Jesus Christ. In some countries, they were overwhelmed by the number of catechumens who flowed to the missions to be instructed. Francis Nolan reports that the missionaries who were working in Burundi complained that people in Europe were praying too much for the missions. And Bishop Gorju, the then Apostolic Vicar of

⁵⁰V. J. DONOVAN, *Christianity Rediscovered*, 6.

⁵¹Cf. N. FRANCIS, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 220.

Burundi, wrote to Cardinal van Rossum, Prefect of the SCPF, proposing that baptisms might be halted until more manpower was available.⁵²

However, if in Burundi missionaries reached the point of complaining about too much work, they had suffered a lot to settle in the country as we are going to see in the following pages.

2.1. THE ATTEMPTS OF THE EVANGELIZATION OF BURUNDI BY THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

2.1.1. THE FIRST ATTEMPT (1879-1881)

The first missionaries of Africa to come to Burundi were part of the first caravan sent by Msgr. Lavigerie to East Africa. These missionaries were ten in number and were sent to two different areas of the region. Fr. Livinhac, Fr. Lourdel, Fr. Barbot, Fr. Girault and Br. Amans were sent to Uganda; and Fr. Pascal, Fr. Deniaud, Fr. Delaunay, Fr. Dromeaux and Fr. Augier were sent to Tanganyika and Burundi.⁵³ They left Bagamoyo together on June 16, 1878 with porters carrying their things. This was a new life that was beginning as one of them recounts:

It is the beginning of a totally new life for us...We are the first despite our unworthiness to go to represent our Lord and his Church in that unknown world. A hundred, perhaps two hundred million souls waiting for us! What a sublime mission!⁵⁴ (*Translation ours*)

⁵²Cf. N. FRANCIS, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 219.

⁵³Cf. P. C. RABEYRIN, *Vingt ans de Pénibles Semailles*, 2.

⁵⁴Cf. P. C. RABEYRIN, *Vingt ans de Pénibles Semailles*, 2.

In his report, Claudius Rabeyrin asserts that these missionaries knew from the very beginning that their mission was not going to be easy. Indeed during their long journey, they paid heavy tribute to kings and local chiefs to allow them to cross their territories. Many times they were robbed by brigands, and porters deserted them. They endured all sorts of hardships in a totally new and hostile environment.⁵⁵

In a region gravely affected by Arab slave traders and power struggles between local chiefs these missionaries had to be people of peace. In fact, their peace-making attitude would determine their success in their missionary enterprise because, as Las Casas had put it some centuries before,

Peace is a supreme good and there is nothing more beautiful than it in society. Peace makes the word peace also a sign of love. It is a gentle word that teaches all there is to love. Peace is pure salvation.⁵⁶

In addition to being people of peace in the region they were sent, these missionaries had also to be all things to all the people they were to meet. Cardinal Lavigerie insisted on this in most of his circular letters he wrote to them. Using St. Paul's words from his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 9 where he describes his missionary attitude towards different categories of people, Lavigerie urged his missionaries to do the same in Africa if they wanted to save many souls.

Lavigerie's insistence on this Pauline principle can be distinguished at three different levels. The first level is the adaptation to the milieu as he expressed it in his circular letter of November 1874. This level consists in drawing near to the indigenous people of Africa by adopting their exterior manner of life: their language,

⁵⁵Cf. P. C. RABEYRIN, *Vingt ans de Pénibles Semailles*, 1.

⁵⁶B. de las Casas, *The Only Way*, 74.

their dress and their food. The second level is the study of the language of the indigenous people as he expressed it in his circular letter to the missionaries of Africa who were working in Kabylia and Equatorial Africa in 1878. And the last level is practising charity as he expressed it in the presentation of his selected works.⁵⁷He insisted that they had to love Africa and its people as he did, as he expressed it in the following passage:

That is the only sentiment you will find, however variously expressed, throughout these pages. The Patriarchs loved the very stones of Sion. In the same way, I have loved Africa: its past, its future, its mountains, its clear sky, its sun, the great lines of its deserts, the blue waves which bathe its shores.⁵⁸

It is worth mentioning that this Pauline principle which fascinated Lavigerie so much was not new in the missionary circles. In the year 601, Pope Gregory the Great asked Mellitus to tell Augustine of Canterbury to adopt the same principle in England where he had sent him to proclaim the Gospel message to the English people. He urged him not to destroy the temples of their idols but rather transform them into places of worship of the true God. He even commanded him to replace some of their pagan feasts with certain Christian solemnities.⁵⁹

The missionaries of Africa tried literally to live this Pauline principle in Burundi. Rabeyrin reports that they were very simple and devoted to learning the way of life of the Barundi. This paid off for them because the Barundi came to build

⁵⁷Cf. *Lavigerie 1825-1892: Fondateurs des Missionnaires d'Afrique*, 13-15.

⁵⁸Cf. *Lavigerie 1825-1892: Fondateurs des Missionnaires d'Afrique*, 17.

⁵⁹Cf. *Oxford Dictionary of Folklore*, "Pope Gregory's Letter".

their huts near where they had built theirs. The local chiefs were happy with their presence as well.⁶⁰

To prove to the Barundi that they were different from the Arabs, the missionaries started ransoming slaves.⁶¹ Let us put it clearly that this was a type of evangelization adopted by most congregations which had sent their missionaries in the region. The Holy Ghost missionaries did this ever since they arrived in Bagamoyo in the 1860s. Paul Kollman even contends that this type of evangelization initiated by the Holy Ghost missionaries in the region was a transitory phase of evangelization that paved a way for a strong Church in East Africa, as he writes:

Slave evangelization generated African Catholics whose responses to evangelization and whose evolving identities fundamentally determined the unfolding Christian life enacted at the missions and continuing into the present life of the Church.⁶²

In the few years they were in Burundi, the missionaries of Africa too ransomed many slaves and took care of them. Like their counterpart Holy Ghost missionaries in Tanzania, they taught these slaves to pray, to write and to read. During their free time they could also visit people in the villages. There was hope that the Good News was taking roots in the hearts of the Barundi when in 1881 Bikari, the local chief of Rumonge, attacked them after a dispute over a ransomed slave child and set their hut on fire. He killed Fr. Deniaud, Fr. Augier and Mr. D'Hoops, a former Papal Zouave who had come as a military auxiliary. Only Fr. Dromeaux and Br. Jerome managed to escape. This was the first attempt of the

⁶⁰Cf. P. C. RABEYRIN, *Vingt ans de Pénibles Semailles*, 13.

⁶¹Cf. P. C. RABEYRIN, *Vingt ans de Pénibles Semailles*, 13.

⁶²P. V. KOLLMAN, *The Evangelization of Slaves*, 8.

evangelization of Burundi that failed. The survivors left and joined their confreres who were in Tanganyika.⁶³ It would take another year or so for the missionaries to make another attempt to come back to Burundi.

2.1.2. THE SECOND ATTEMPT (1882-1891)

When Jesus sent the 72 disciples on missionary experience in Luke 10, he commanded them to stay in towns where they were received and leave those where they were not received. The situation of the first missionaries who came to Burundi, however, seems different. Despite the massacres of Rumonge in 1881, they did not give up their dream of seeing all the Barundi convert to Christianity.

In effect, in 1882 the superior of Tanganyika mission Fr. Guillet went as far as Uzige (Bujumbura) to meet Rusavya, the chief of the area. He asked him whether he could send missionaries to start a mission station in his country and the chief responded favourably.⁶⁴ However, this did not happen that year. Two years later, Fr. Coulbois, Fr. Randabel and Br. Gerard managed to start a mission station in that area and named it after Saint Michael.⁶⁵ The Arabs, though, were not happy with their presence. The missionaries tried in vain to persuade them. They held several talks with their chief Rumaliza but gave up before any agreement was reached. Finally the missionaries left Uzige and joined their confreres at Kibanga in 1884.⁶⁶

⁶³Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 52-54.

⁶⁴Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 63.

⁶⁵Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 64.

⁶⁶Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 66.

In 1886, the chief Rusavya sent people to the Apostolic Vicar of Tanganyika to ask for the return of the missionaries. Before returning, the missionaries thought that it was wiser to go first to consult Rumaliza. At first Rumaliza accepted their request, but changed his mind afterwards. The missionaries were once again sent away in 1891. This was their second failure to see Burundi evangelized in a period of about ten years.

2.2. THE PROPER BEGINNING OF THE EVANGELIZATION OF BURUNDI (1896-1898)

Before we give a historical account of how Burundi was evangelized, it is best we begin by defining the term evangelization.

What is evangelization?

Simply put, evangelization is “the proclamation of Christ Our Lord to those who do not know him, in preaching, catechetics, baptism and the administration of the other sacraments” (*EN, 17*). Evangelization is not the property of individuals, religious congregations or missionary societies. It belongs to the Church of Christ. Vatican II is very clear regarding this in its decree on the Church’s missionary activity which states that “the Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father; it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*AG, 2*). Henceforth, being the fruit of evangelization by Christ and the twelve apostles (*EN, 15*), the Church has to continue carrying out the task of making disciples of all nations (*Cf. Mt 28*).

Indeed the first missionaries of Africa who came to Burundi bore all this in mind. In leaving their countries of origin, they were responding to this universal call of the Church. Let us note that between their last attempt to establish themselves in

Burundi and the year 1896 when the proper evangelization began, a number of events took place in the region. These events were: the defeat of the Arab slave traders by Germans at Tabora and its surroundings, the establishment of a German military camp at Ujiji, and the publication of a decree which restructured the mission territories in East and Central Africa by the Propaganda Fide in Rome in 1895. Hence Burundi became part of the vicariate of Unyanyembe whose headquarters were at Ushirombo.⁶⁷

It was in 1896 that the missionaries of Africa decided to come to establish themselves in Burundi permanently. On June 30, 1896 Fr. Gerboin, the then Apostolic Vicar of Unyanyembe, sent Fr. Jan van der Burgt and Fr. Jan van den Biesen to open a mission station in the East of the country. These two missionaries left Ushirombo immediately and arrived in Burundi two weeks later. They were well received by the local people and their chief. But after few months, some rumours circulated that the local chief did not want them on his territory. They fled to Ujiji where they prepared themselves to go to start a mission station in Uzige near a place where Germans had established a military camp. There, they built a tent, a storeroom and a small chapel. They were happy to publically celebrate the holy Eucharist after several months. By the end of 1897, they could count about 8000 sick people treated and about 100 catechumens. In less than a year, they had baptised about 60 people. Unfortunately, Fr. Van den Biesen died of fever and Fr. Van der Burgt left the place for Misugi in the East of Burundi.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 76.

⁶⁸Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 81ff.

In Misugi Msgr. Gerboin together with three other missionaries had started a mission station. However, due to insecurity they moved from there to a place called Muyaga where they built their first permanent mission station in May 1898.⁶⁹ Hence from that time Burundi began its long history of Christianity at which we are going to look in the following pages in two different phases.

2.3. THE SITUATION OF THE CHURCH IN BURUNDI FROM 1898 TO 1962

2.3.1. Under the German administration (1897-1918)

Under the German colonial administration, Burundi was part of the immensely populated vicariate of Kivu which in turn was part of the four vicariates which lay in German East Africa.⁷⁰ As a result, Aylward Shorter observes, “the Society had created a German Vice-Province in 1905, separate from the single European Province.”⁷¹

However, despite this German predominance in the region, Fr. Van der Burgt and Fr. Van den Biesen had refused in 1897 to build their hut near the camp of the Germans to avoid giving to the people any impression that they were working with the colonial administration.⁷² Cardinal Lavigerie had previously warned their predecessors about the political competitions which were taking place on the African continent. He had insisted that missionaries had to dissociate themselves from those

⁶⁹Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 88.

⁷⁰Cf. S. AYLWARD, *African Recruits & Missionary Conscripts*, 135.

⁷¹S. AYLWARD, *African Recruits & Missionary Conscripts*, 135.

⁷²Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 82.

who had come to Africa for political purposes. This is, for example, what he wrote to Fr. Jamet, Procurator at Zanzibar on August 26, 1885:

My dear sons, the protectorate established by Germany on one part of the territory of our missions imposes on you certain obligations of extreme prudence. You have to clearly declare by your actions that you are essentially catholic missionaries and that you want to remain foreign to every political competition which may eventually come about around you.⁷³ (*Translation ours*)

The missionaries had to remain neutral in their countries of mission to be able to promote faith and gospel values. They had to respect the local authority wherever they were to establish themselves. Moreover, they had to avoid anything which could tarnish their apostolic and missionary identity.⁷⁴

Let us state clearly that the missionaries of Africa's presence in Burundi did not threaten the German colonial administration. Consequently, the Germans did not do any harm to the missionaries, but rather, they contributed greatly to their work by allowing them to build more mission stations and outstations.⁷⁵ The following are mission stations established during the German rule in Burundi: Muyaga (1898), Mugeru (1899), Buhonga (1902), Kanyinya (1904), Rugari (1908) and Buhoro (1913). Unfortunately, the First World War broke out a year after the foundation of the last station and the expansion of the Church in Burundi was halted until the arrival of the Belgians in 1919.

⁷³C. RABEYRIN, *Les Missionnaires du Burundi Durant la Guerre 1914-1918*, 9.

⁷⁴Cf. C. RABEYRIN, *Les Missionnaires du Burundi Durant la Guerre 1914-1918*, 10.

⁷⁵Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 105.

2.3.2. Under the Belgian administration (1919-1962)

During the First World War, there was no new development in the young Burundian Church. There were no new foundations as far as mission stations were concerned. There was, however, an increase of catechumens and baptised Christians. For example, as J. Perraudin reports, between 1912 and 1922 the number of baptised Catholics rose from 2,865 to 14,426.⁷⁶ The number would have been even bigger than this had the missionaries continued opening new mission stations during the First World War.

In 1912, Burundi was joined to Rwanda to form one vicariate. One of the reasons of this merger was the similarity of languages, customs, climate and political organisation of these two countries. In fact, the Kinyarwanda and Kirundi are so similar that no missionary needed to do any language course in Rwanda or Burundi provided he had lived in either country. However despite all these similarities, Burundi and Rwanda had never been at peace and this seems to have also contaminated the missionaries who were working in both countries. Francis Nolan observes that the Fathers in Burundi never liked going to Kabgayi (the headquarters of Burundi-Rwanda vicariate) for the annual retreat.⁷⁷ Hence, this led to the separation of the two countries to form each a vicariate on its own in 1922.

When Rwanda-Burundi vicariate was divided in two different vicariates, Fr. Julien Gorju was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Burundi. As soon as he took over his new responsibilities, Msgr. Gorju brought about many changes in the Church of

⁷⁶Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Naissance d'une Eglise*, 115.

⁷⁷Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 210.

Burundi. Francis Nolan reports that his manner of dealing with people was very direct and when the General Council appointed him, they were afraid that he might be too demanding on his confreres.⁷⁸ But to their surprise, in his first years, he kept quiet and observed what was happening in the Church of Burundi before proposing any changes at all.

Pastoral-wise, Msgr. Gorju changed the tradition of mission villages. Instead, he proposed the construction of outstations near the homes of the catechumens to allow them to be with their family. He made the conditions for baptism more flexible by reducing the period of catechumenate for young married couples and for girls who married Christians.⁷⁹ This then saw the number of catechumens increase greatly. It is reported that “in 1923 there were five posts with 21,000 baptised Christians. Thirteen years later, there were 21 posts with 216,000 baptised Christians and 85,000 catechumens.”⁸⁰ Indeed under the direction of Msgr. Gorju the number of baptised Christians grew very rapidly in Burundi, and most of them were adults. Many children too were baptised.

The Fathers were very much involved in teaching catechesis in the outstations and this took most of their time. The missionaries in Burundi during the rule of Mgr. Gorju understood the exhortation of Jesus that the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few (*Cf. Luke 10: 2*). Some missionaries even complained that in Europe people were praying too much for the missions. There were so many catechumens that it was very difficult to find enough personnel to baptise them.

⁷⁸Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 210.

⁷⁹Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 216.

⁸⁰Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 216.

That the missionaries did a lot in Burundi during this time to make many disciples of Christ is an undeniable fact. But many historians wonder how they dealt with the question of ethnicity which on many occasions did a lot of harm in the neighbouring Rwanda. It seems the missionaries in Burundi followed the tendency of the Belgian colonial government which favoured the Batutsi and ignored the Bahutu. That this favouritism of one ethnic group over the other was manifest under the Belgian rule is mentioned by Francis Nolan. He quotes Joseph Gahama who wrote in his article "*Le Burundi sous l'administration Belge*", that the Batutsi were favoured by Ryckmans and the civil government to the detriment of the Bahutu leaders who had constituted a fifth of the chiefs in 1920.⁸¹ There were no Bahutu chiefs at all in 1945. But surprisingly, the missionaries never mentioned anything in their reports about the issue of this division between the Batutsi and the Bahutu. It seems that the missionaries were trying to be impartial as one of them wrote to the Superior General Voillard in 1929. Thus he wrote:

Let us refrain from putting between Tutsi and Hutu the distance which exists between the two races in Rwanda...In Burundi, the Tutsi is not above the Hutu; the former has no authority over the latter unless such authority has been delegated to him. In everyday life they are equal and must work like anybody else, even doing corvées, unless they can redeem themselves or attach themselves as clients to a chief, a privilege bestowed equally on the Hutu.⁸²

Joseph Gahama categorically disagrees with what this missionary wrote to his Superior General. According to him, the classification of the communities in Burundi into races was done by the colonial and missionary historiographers who always placed the Batutsi on top of the hierarchy followed by the Bahutu and lastly

⁸¹Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 221.

⁸²Cf. F. NOLAN, *The White Fathers in Colonial Africa*, 221.

the Batwa.⁸³ He contends that the writings of Msgr. Gorju were crucial on this matter. While supporting in a 1932 publication, an oral survey of Keepers of oral tradition that the Bahutu were at the origin of the monarchy, Gahama argues, Gorju suddenly changed his opinion in 1938. According to him, Gahama notes, the issue of races in Burundi had to be made clear once and for all. The dynasty was Hamite, that is Tutsi.⁸⁴

Previously, some anthropologists had come up with theories that the Batutsi invaded the Bahutu and the Batwa, from Ethiopia and Egypt. Others had talked of a peaceful and gradual infiltration, whereas others had argued that the Batutsi and the Bahutu together conquered Northern Uganda and followed the road towards Burundi.⁸⁵ The missionaries and the colonial administration, however, are accused of having reinforced these theories by stressing the physical differences between the Bahutu, the Batutsi and the Batwa. In fact, this is what happened:

The Tutsis were described as a race of giants with aristocratic appearances and the Hutus as stocky with woolly hair and flat nose etc...while the Twas as “grotesque small creatures” and seen as an old and worn out race and bound to disappear. The missionary and colonial ideology mentioned another inequality which linked the minority “Tutsi lords” to the mass of “Hutu serfs” within a feudal system still existing in Africa. Socially and economically, the Tutsi dominated the Hutu.⁸⁶

Realistically speaking, people who know well the history of Burundi would argue that there was no such big economic difference between the two communities. A specialist of the Burundian society once affirmed that he had met poor Bahutu

⁸³Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 4.

⁸⁴Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 4.

⁸⁵Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 4.

⁸⁶Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 4.

living as neighbours with rich Batutsi and rich Bahutu living side by side with needy Batutsi.⁸⁷

What has left many questions in the minds of the people who have been trying to understand the history of Burundi is why all of a sudden in 1932 the colonial administration decided to reorganise the institution of the chiefs. It is difficult to tell whether this was due to the pattern of the indirect rule that was followed by Belgium. The reduction of the number of both the major and minor chiefs during that time can be easily related to the beginning of the division between the Bahutu and the Batutsi. Gahama reports that between 1926 and 1930 all the Bahutu authorities were dismissed without exception.⁸⁸ And as he argues, the first immediate consequence of this policy was a crack within the Burundi communities as the Baganwa and the Batutsi were seen by the colonial power as a ruling group and the Bahutu were naturally destined to obey.⁸⁹ Many writers on the history of Burundi agree that the school of Astrida which was established in Butare - Rwanda in 1929 to train the future managers of the Belgian administration constituted an important line in crystallising the inter community differences. In fact, most of those who were sent to Astrida came from the Baganwa and the Batutsi families at the expense of the Bahutu and the Batwa.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Cf. J. GAHAMA, "Conflict Prevention", 5.

⁸⁸Cf. J. GAHAMA, "Conflict Prevention", 5.

⁸⁹Cf. J. GAHAMA, "Conflict Prevention", 5.

⁹⁰ Cf. J. GAHAMA, "Conflict Prevention", 5.

The year 1930 is regarded by most historians as the year when the division between the Bahutu and the Batutsi was made manifest in Burundi. It is argued that it is at this time that the Belgian colonial administration made it a requirement that the “ethnic group” should be inserted in the national identity card.⁹¹ Deogratias Ndayishimiye argues that the missionaries and the Belgian administration collaborated a lot in achieving this. For him it was from this time that the Church in Burundi set a policy which would increase the visibility of the Batutsi whom the Belgians had started referring to as the true friends.⁹²

During the Belgian colonial administration the Church owned more than 50% of the schools, health centres and hospitals. This made it very powerful because, it became the second largest job provider. With the colonial administration favouring the Batutsi, the Church was inevitably going to fall into the same trap. In fact, as Ndayishimiye argues, the Batutsi became the primary beneficiaries of Church services, especially access to quality education and job opportunity. The Bahutu who were interested in education were only sent to study theology in seminaries established across the region, a subject which would not help them acquire any job in the colonial administration.⁹³

In a situation like this, one would expect a growing frustration among the Bahutu elite. They started to realise that no matter how educated they were it was not going to be easy for them to access the privileges offered by education. Given that a large number of educated Burundians were from among the Batutsi, the

⁹¹Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 5.

⁹²Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of the Church”, 9.

⁹³ Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of the Church” , 9.

Bahutu had to be excluded from any political and ecclesiastical circles. If we are to believe Ndayishimiye, the Church of Burundi was becoming not a universal Church but a Tutsi Church. In fact, as he argues, in 1951 there were as many Batutsi priests as there were missionary priests.⁹⁴

In 1950s Europe too went through some socio-political changes. Egalitarian views spread from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. The Church in Europe was not spared by these changes. Therefore she had to change her strategy in recruiting new missionaries who would come to take over mission in Africa. Most of these new missionaries were recruited from the lower classes. Among those who came to Burundi, there were many Flemish missionaries from Belgium. When they arrived in Burundi they showed no sympathy towards the so-called aristocratic Tutsis.⁹⁵ Rather, they identified with the socially and economically poor Bahutu. This changed the course of the history of Burundi and its counterpart Rwanda.

In Rwanda the political power was transferred to the Bahutu by the missionaries and the colonial administration, and this led to the massacre of the Batutsi in 1959 in what was called “1959 Hutu Social Revolution”. It was Kayibanda Gregoire, a former seminarian and personal secretary of Bishop Perraudin who was chosen to be the Hutu political leader. The Batutsi who survived the massacres fled to Burundi and neighbouring countries. When the Batutsi in Burundi saw what happened in Rwanda, they were seized by fear and decided to hold power by force. The Church which was seen as the organiser of what happened in Rwanda became a mere servant in the eyes of the Burundi ruling power to the

⁹⁴Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of the Church”, 9.

⁹⁵Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of the Church”, 9.

extent that from 1960s to mid 1980s the relationships between Church and State remained tense.⁹⁶

Indeed we can conclude this chapter by asserting that the missionaries who evangelized Burundi contributed a lot in what the socio-politico-cultural and religious situation in Burundi is today. First and foremost, they made Burundi an apparent “Christianised nation”. However, by forgetting what their founder Cardinal Lavigerie had warned their predecessors about, they missed the point by following the path of the colonial administration. Indeed as most Burundian historians contend, by classifying the Burundi into “races”, the missionaries did more harm than good to the people they were sent to liberate. In the next chapter, we are going to see how this plunged Burundi into an abyss from which it is still very difficult to get out of to-date.

⁹⁶Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, “The role of the Church”, 10.

CHAPTER THREE

BURUNDI'S LONG LASTING SOCIO-POLITICO-CULTURAL IMPASSE

For more than fifty years now, Burundi has been on its “way of the cross”, and it seems it is not ending soon. From the time it got its independence on July 01, 1962, it has never been at peace. The inter-ethnic violence between the Bahutu and the Batutsi has become its “identity”.

I remember when I went to Ghana in 2004, the first question I was asked by people to whom I introduced myself was, “are you a Hutu or a Tutsi?” I was shocked and I wondered why they asked me such a question. I ignored the fact that that was the news headline in most international media. Indeed that was the only thing that most people knew about Burundi. The truth is: Burundi was not known to many people before the socio-political conflict of 1993. It was after the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, the first Hutu president and the countrywide massacres that followed, that many people started getting interested in knowing Burundi and its history.

In this chapter we will discuss Burundi's socio-political conflict since independence up to today. We will look at what we think might have led to this conflict, and how it unfolded from 1960s up to now. Simultaneously, we will look at how the Church reacted in the course of this conflict.

3.1. The abolition of traditional institutions

The greatest shock that the Barundi experienced during the colonial administration and missionary era was the replacement of their most revered traditional institutions with western-inspired ones. Christianity replaced the traditional religion and what it entails: the rite of *Kubandwa*, *Imana* (God) and his intermediaries (*Mupfumu* and *Kiranga*).⁹⁷ The *Bashingantahe* institution was replaced by the western judicial system and the monarchy by a republic.

From the socio-political point of view we can understand that the colonial administration wanted to get rid of the traditional institutions in order to rule the country without hindrance. But surely the missionaries did not need to do away with the traditional religion and its elements in order to be effective in their work of evangelization. There are many good elements in the traditions, religion and customs of the Barundi which would have indeed served as foundation for a strong Christianity.

That customs, traditions, religion and cultural elements of a people can serve as foundation for the proclamation of the Gospel message is supported by Vatican II documents. In the Decree on Missionary Activity we read the following:

The seed which is the word of God grows out of good soil watered by the divine dew, it absorbs moisture, transforms it, and makes it part of itself, so that eventually it bears much fruit. So too indeed, just as happened in the economy of the incarnation, the foundations of the apostles, take over all the riches of the nations which have been given to Christ as inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). They borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which could be used to praise the glory of the creator, manifest the grace of the Saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life (AG, 22).

⁹⁷Cf. R. F. HERISSE, "Democracy, Governance and Conflict in Burundi", 4.

It is true that we cannot blame the first missionaries for everything that happened in Burundi. However, we have to acknowledge that the way they preached the Gospel is worth criticising. The Hutu-Tutsi problem, which seems to be at the heart of the socio-politico-cultural impasse, was triggered by the way they favoured one ethnic group over the other in schools and other sectors of life. In the following pages we shall explore the impasse as it unfolded from the time of independence up to today as well as the position taken by the Church during this time.

3. 2. The struggle for independence and the position of the Church

During the struggle for independence, the Church in Burundi avoided any explicit involvement in politics. As a result, her expansion was not hindered by whatever happened. Amid hot campaigns by various political parties, the bishops urged their priests and religious to remain calm and united, and to submit to the hierarchy of the Church. They insisted that the priestly and religious' vocation was mainly the salvation of souls, prayer, teaching of the doctrine of the Church and the administration of sacraments.⁹⁸ It seems the bishops were anticipating what Vatican II would decree a few years later in its document on the Church concerning the role of priests and religious, as opposed to that of the laity. According to Vatican II, priests and religious have been called to announce the Gospel to the world (*Cf. LG, 23*), and lay people have been called to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will (*Cf. LG, 31*).

In his book "*Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*", J. Perraudin underlines some of the activities which concern exclusively the laity that the bishops of Burundi insisted on in their address to priests

⁹⁸Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 10.

and religious during the struggle for independence. These include involvement in politics, the organisation of the state and its economic system as well as its social organisation. However, the bishops reiterated that the Church had the right to intervene in certain issues by the use of her indirect powers derived from the Gospel. Every law, they said, should conform to the demands of justice and the common good.⁹⁹

In the same address the bishops declared that Christians were allowed to participate in the legislative elections. They were allowed to freely choose their political affiliation and to elect a candidate who would rule the country well. Moreover, those who were capable of leading others were encouraged to vie for any political position, provided they fulfilled their mandate as good Christians.

Priests had to explain the above exhortations to their parishioners. This was not going to be easy, though, since people themselves were politically divided. Even the Church leaders were themselves divided. J. Perraudin reports that one of the three bishops was for immediate independence, whereas the other two, as well as some missionaries, were for its delay. The truth is: catholic missionaries were often accused of being disguised collaborators of the colonial administration. Jean Pierre Chrétien asserts that they were engaged in the so-called civilisation of the people. They always preached respect of public order, health measures, and coffee planting.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 10.

¹⁰⁰Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 16.

3. 3. The beginning of the conflict

It all began with the struggle for independence between 1959 and 1961. On September 18, 1961 legislative elections were held to determine whether the country was ready for independence or not. UPRONA (*Union pour le Progrès National*) party led by the Prince Louis Rwagasore came out victorious against a number of political parties whose leaders claimed that Burundi was not ready for an immediate independence. The turnout was estimated at 73%. Of the 64 parliamentary seats available, UPRONA party won 58 and the other parties shared the remaining 6 seats. Let us note that among the members of parliament of UPRONA, 22 were Bahutu, 25 Batutsi, 7 Baganwa and 4 were not sure of their ethnic affiliation.¹⁰¹

A week after the victory of UPRONA, Rwagasore was chosen to be the Prime Minister. He formed a national unity government which included members of the opposition. However, the leaders of one of the opposition parties, PDC (*Parti Démocrate Chrétien*), refused to join the government. This created political tensions which led to the assassination of the Premier -elect on October 13, 1961. Those involved in his killing were arrested, tried and executed on January 5, 1962.

The unfortunate thing is that, all the people who were involved in the killing of Rwagasore were Catholics. As J. Perraudin asserts, the Church was to carry this load in the years that followed. The body of the Prince was taken to Gitega for a funeral mass because the Belgian administration feared an eventual uprising of the masses in the Capital, Bujumbura. Nevertheless, what the colonial administration feared is what actually happened. In January 1962, four trade union leaders from the Bahutu ethnic group were assassinated in Bujumbura. It is exactly these killings that

¹⁰¹Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 17

triggered the beginning of the long lasting conflict between the Bahutu and the Batutsi.¹⁰²

3.4. The unfolding of the Bahutu-Batutsi conflicts

3.4. 1.The precursors of the conflicts

In his article “*Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa*”, Orji Cyril asserts that “tribal affiliation is a positive phenomenon that gives Africans a sense of identity and worth, defining one’s personhood and membership in society.”¹⁰³ He argues that tribal or ethnic affiliation takes on a negative connotation when it is misappropriated. Indeed in most cases, tribalism/ethnic division leads to political conflict and wars (at least this has been the case in Burundi).

In the same line of thought, the 1994 Synod of the Bishops observed that often tribal/ inter-ethnic conflicts derive from the worldwide inordinate lust for power.¹⁰⁴ They also contended that in many African countries these conflicts were initiated by the colonial administration to fit their principle of “divide and rule”. Nevertheless, the blame should not be put only on the colonial administration because, in most of these countries, the post-independence rulers were tyrants, sometimes worse than their colonial predecessors. The case of Burundi explains this very clearly. The conflicts between the Bahutu and the Batutsi have been orchestrated by the post-colonial leaders. The Belgian colonial administration can only be blamed for laying the foundation for these conflicts by favouring the Batutsi during their administration at the expense of the Bahutu.

¹⁰²Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 19.

¹⁰³O. CYRIL, “Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa”, 37.

¹⁰⁴Cf. O. CYRIL, “Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa”, 37.

That the colonial administration favoured the Batutsi over the Bahutu is in fact demonstrated very clearly by J. Perraudin. Let us for instance look at how he presents the disparity between the two ethnic groups in schools and colleges across the region around the year of 1951.¹⁰⁵

Secondary schools/Colleges	Batutsi	Bahutu
School of Astrida (Rwanda)	362	96
Kivu College (D R Congo)	53	8
Minor Seminary	158	168
Major Seminary	22	31
Schools of Monitors	281	317

The above chart shows a massive disproportion between the Bahutu (85% of the population) and the Batutsi (14% of the population) in the existing major schools and colleges during the Belgian colonial administration. It gives a clear idea about who were to become the future leaders of the independent Burundi. Indeed, it was difficult to think of less- privileged Bahutu getting power in a country where all the Batutsi children were offered good education by the colonial administration at their expense. This was inevitably going to lead the country to the tragic events that we will try to describe now.

¹⁰⁵Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 28.

3.4.2. The unfolding of the tragic events in post-independent Burundi

Joseph Gahama situates the first incidents of violence in post-independent Burundi around 1962. At that time some Bahutu leaders were massacred and some houses belonging to the Batutsi burnt in the Capital Bujumbura.¹⁰⁶ He also mentions that similar incidents happened in other parts of the country as well. The violence escalated in 1965 when some Bahutu officers in the gendarmerie and army attempted a coup against the Mwami Mwambutsa IV. At the same time innocent Batutsi were massacred by some Bahutu in Muramvya province. Following these simultaneous incidents, many Bahutu leaders were arrested and executed. And in 1966, the monarchy was replaced by a republic through a military coup led by Captain Michel Micombero, a Mututsi from the southern part of Burundi.

It is worth noting that although these incidents happened between the Bahutu and Batutsi, there were still some bonds of unity existing between them. As quoted by J. Perraudin, Marc Manirakiza asserts that during the Batutsi massacres in Muramvya some Bahutu hid many Batutsi who were threatened with being killed. And among the soldiers who established order in Bujumbura and Muramvya during the time of the uprising, Manirakiza asserts, there were many Bahutu as well. He gives an example of a Muhutu who was asked to kill a Mututsi and who replied that he would prefer to be killed than him killing another child of God.¹⁰⁷

When Micombero took power, he declared himself the leader of the UPRONA party. He replaced the country Motto which was “*Imana, Umwami, Uburundi*” (God, the King, Burundi) by “*Ubumwe, Ibikorwa, Amajambere*” (Unity,

¹⁰⁶Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 6.

¹⁰⁷Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 32.

Work, Progress). He did this in order to do away with anything which would remind the Barundi of their “glorious” past.¹⁰⁸

In 1969, the Bahutu attempted another coup which again failed. Those who were involved in it were arrested and 23 of them were executed.¹⁰⁹ During this time, the Church was accused of being too silent. The bishops did not intervene except with a pastoral letter written by Msgr. Bihonda, the Auxiliary bishop of Gitega, who together with some Bahutu and Batutsi priests wrote these words to all the Barundi: “The pastoral commission have realised the catastrophe which risks to destroy the Burundian society: the hutu-tutsi racism.”¹¹⁰ (*Translation ours*)

The darkest time in the history of Burundi, though, is the year 1972. Some people still refer to this time as “*Ikiza*” (catastrophe), or simply put, the way of the cross of the Barundi. It began with an attack by Bahutu rebels in the province of Bururi, in the south of Burundi. Micombero and his administration estimated the number of these rebels at 25,000.¹¹¹ The aim of this rebellion was to eliminate every Mututsi they came across. About 1000 Batutsi were massacred. This could not go without consequences. Many Bahutu were arrested from every part of the country and were put to death. No one can tell how many were killed. It is estimated that about 100,000 people were killed across the country, most of them from the Bahutu elite, secondary school and university students as well as business men. In the southern part of the country almost all the Bahutu men were killed except those who fled to Tanzania and Congo. It is worth realising that those who were mostly

¹⁰⁸Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 46.

¹⁰⁹Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 48.

¹¹⁰J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 48.

¹¹¹Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 55.

targeted were intellectuals and those who could express themselves about the socio-political situation of the country. In fact, as J. Perraudin notes, the aim of the Micombero regime was to eliminate all the Bahutu elite.¹¹² And indeed to some extent he succeeded. It would take many years to have some Bahutu who could challenge the government.

The Church was not spared by the 1972 massacres, which some historians are not afraid of calling the genocide of the Bahutu. A number of Bahutu priests were killed from different dioceses of Burundi. The following are the names of those who were killed in the 4 existing dioceses:

-In Gitega Archdiocese: Fr. François-Xavier Muteragirana, Fr. Gabriel Ngeza, Fr. Emile Ndigiriye, Fr. Thomas Samandari, Fr. Theophile Karenzo and Fr. Michel Kayoya.

-In Ngozi Diocese: Fr. Gervais Ndarukerege, Fr. Sebastien Ngirukubonye, Fr. Pascal Kayehe, Fr. Marcel Simbandumwe and Fr. Jerome Nsaguye.

-In Bujumbura Diocese: Fr. Marc Gahungu, Fr. Joseph Nikoyangize, Fr. Donatien Nzeyimana, Fr. Melchior Biranda, and Fr. Astère Hakizimana.

-In Muyinga Diocese: Fr. Paul Ntirampeba, Fr. Martin Gakwavu and Fr. Protais Ruhaya.¹¹³

Surprisingly, these massacres that took place in Burundi did not attract the attention of the international community which was basically preoccupied with the East-West confrontation and the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹¹⁴ Perhaps that is why Micombero thought that his plans had succeeded. Nevertheless, he later sank into

¹¹²Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 58.

¹¹³Cf. J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 59.

¹¹⁴Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 10.

personal politicking and heavy drinking¹¹⁵ leading to his ousting by Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, a Mututsi officer from his extended family in 1976.

The Bagaza regime

In the beginning, the regime of Bagaza seemed to be taking the right direction. However, this did not last because he too followed the ideology of his predecessor. This is how Gérard Prunier describes the first years of this regime:

At first, the new regime seemed to try to play the card of a social and political opening, calling upon the UPRONA Party Youth, the Jeunesses Révolutionnaires Rwagasore (JRR), to denounce the social abuses they felt needed redressing. There was a moment of short-lived elation. But this was mere window-dressing and the Bagaza 'revolution' was soon seen for what it really was i.e. a simple palace coup, a change of the guard within the 'Bururi mafia'. There was no apology or attempt at reconciliation concerning the 1972 quasi-genocide.¹¹⁶

In effect, during the regime of Bagaza, nothing changed in terms of the political structures of the country. Civil servants and soldiers were recruited from the Batutsi, and so discriminating against the Bahutu majority. For example, in 1985, out of 20 cabinet ministers, there were only 4 Bahutu - 17 MPs out of a total of 65 - 2 Bahutu out of 52 members in the UPRONA Central Committee - 1 Muhutu out of 22 Ambassadors, and 2 Bahutu provincial governors out of 15. It is also reported that countrywide, the Bahutu teachers represented only 10%, Bahutu students in primary and secondary schools 20%, and only 25% in the university.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 11.

¹¹⁶Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 11.

¹¹⁷Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 11.

It seemed the regime of Bagaza had gone even worse than that of Micombero. The Catholic Church had to pay her own price. As the bishops started to defend the rights of the innocent people, the regime began to persecute the Church, starting by nationalising seminaries and other religious institutions in 1986.¹¹⁸ The Small Christian Communities were forbidden to hold their meetings; many missionaries were expelled out of the country, and others were imprisoned.

The Buyoya regime

In 1987, the regime of Bagaza was overthrown by Major Pierre Buyoya, a young and intellectually open Mututsi from the same family as his predecessors. At first, Buyoya seemed no different. He did not change the administration from top to bottom. However, following a Bahutu uprising in two districts of northern Burundi (Ntega and Marangara) in August 1988, he clearly saw that he had to change. This led him to form a national unity government which saw him appointing for the first time in more than 20 years a Muhutu Prime Minister, Adrien Sibomana.¹¹⁹ The new Prime Minister was encouraged to form a significantly bi-ethnic government. Moreover, a commission to study the question of national unity was formed. This was an effort to look at what had led Burundi to such a massive inter-ethnic violence. We must admit that this was one step towards re-uniting and reconciling the Burundi.

In 1990, a group of Bahutu militant who had come from exile put pressure on the regime of Buyoya to launch a multi-party democracy system in Burundi. A new constitution was put to referendum in 1992, and political parties were allowed

¹¹⁸Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 12.

¹¹⁹Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 15.

to function publically. In June 1993, presidential and parliamentary elections were held and were both won by FRODEBU (*Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi*) party led by Melchior Ndadaye, the first elected Muhutu president. Unfortunately, Ndadaye was killed together with his close collaborators on October 21, 1993 in a military coup attempt by some Batutsi extremists from the national army. This event is qualified by Joseph Gahama as the most serious constitutional crisis in the history of Burundi.¹²⁰ The assassination of Ndadaye was followed by massacres of many Batutsi and Bahutu who belonged to the opposition party, UPRONA. Many Bahutu fled to neighbouring countries for fear of revenge from the army which was mainly made up of Batutsi.

Let us assert that president Ndadaye was seen by the Bahutu masses as their messiah. He was not only a President of the country but also a Christ-like figure who had come to liberate his people from bondage. His assassination was a big shock and disappointment to these masses who had expected a lot from him.¹²¹

The assassination of president Ndadaye and the many innocent Batutsi and Bahutu who belonged to the opposition is seen by specialists of Burundian politics as a result of fear. On one hand, the Batutsi minority feared losing their prestige and even their livelihood. On the other hand, the Bahutu majority feared being victims of another 1972-like genocide. Thus this led to a massive flow of Batutsi to towns where they hoped to be protected by the army. The Bahutu who remained in the interior could hardly enter towns for fear of being killed by the army.

¹²⁰Cf. J. GAHAMA, "Conflict Prevention", 7.

¹²¹Cf. G. PRUNIER, "Burundi: A Manageable Crisis", 25.

The years that followed those tragic events saw many rebel groups being formed. These groups fought the government for over 10 years. To try to solve the crisis, several peace talk initiatives were launched to help the Barundi to come together. The most decisive peace talks were initiated by the late Tanzanian president Julius Kambarage Nyerere who unfortunately died before reaching a peace agreement. Nelson Mandela, the former South African president, took over and led the Barundi to a peace accord signed in Arusha, Tanzania, on August 28, 2000. An interim government was put in place. The former rebel groups laid down their arms and their combatants joined the National Defence Forces while they became political movements. One of these movements, the *Council for National Defence of Democracy – Forces for Defence of Democracy* (CNDD-FDD), won the 2005 and 2010 elections even though the latter was very controversial.

3.5. The position of the Church during the impasse

After the 1972 massacres the tensions between the government and the Church increased. The Church was accused of being on the side of the Bahutu. Some politicians even believed that the language centre built by missionaries at Muyange, in Kayanza province, aimed at teaching the ideology of extermination. They ignored that the Missionaries of Africa value very much learning the language, the culture and the traditions of the people they are sent to evangelize. This centre had nothing to do with politics at all.

It also happened that during this time the Church all over Africa was promoting the idea of Small Christian Communities. These Small Christian Communities were known in Kirundi as “*Inama Sahwanya*”. Again, the regime thought that the Small Christian Communities’ meetings aimed at political discussions and dissemination of revolutionary ideologies by Catholic missionaries.

Ndayishimiye, who seems to agree with this wrong view, ignores the role of Small Christian Communities in the Church. When he argues that the Small Christian Communities were an informal framework set up in parishes whereby people met and talked about political matters instead of religious faith,¹²² he displays his lack of knowledge about their nature and essence. If people did talk about political matters during these meetings, they did so in the context of sharing their life and faith experiences.

However, despite these false accusations by the political leaders against it, the Catholic Church played a very significant role in denouncing the ills committed against innocent people. For example after the Ntega - Marangara massacres in 1988, the bishops issued a message condemning all that had happened. Here is an extract of what they wrote to all the Barundi:

We strongly denounce all who participated in the killings of their compatriots based on their different ethnic affiliation. We call once again for the respect of every human life, created in the image and likeness of God.¹²³ (*Translation ours*)

In the same message, they called upon the political leaders to help establish peace and security and to support the victims. They also called all the Barundi to look for the solution to the ethnic conflict which had paralysed the country for decades. Efforts to reach lasting peace and true reconciliation were also made by the Church. The then president of the Burundi Episcopal Conference, Msgr. Evariste Ngoyagoye wrote a document which he sent to all the priests asking them to reflect upon the problem that the Church was facing, and here is what they came up with:

¹²²Cf. D. NDAYISHIMIYE, "The Role of the Church", 14.

¹²³J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l'Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l'indépendance*, 142.

In order for the Church to contribute to the reconciliation of its members, it has to be reconciled herself. This can only be achieved through dialogue, honesty and sincerity which guarantee the gospel values that we preach.¹²⁴ (*Translation ours*)

Nevertheless, it was realised that there were ethnic imbalances in the Church leadership. Four bishops out of seven were Batutsi. All the rectors of minor and major seminaries and all the heads of important offices in the Church were Batutsi as well.¹²⁵In spite of all this, the Church played a very significant role in peace talks. The Bishops played an important role in mediating these talks. They also met with NGOs and participated in emergency relief efforts to assist internally-displaced persons. Besides the mediation, the Bishops did everything possible to end the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. This is what Msgr. Ngoyagoye reported about the experience of the Church during the time of the crisis in Burundi:

Feeling powerlessness during the decade of blind violence, we found ourselves, at times, overwhelmed by the situation. We had never experienced massacres of such amplitude. We witnessed the progressive armament of the population: machetes, arrows, guns (mugobore, Kalashnikov), mines, heavy artillery, fighter planes, etc. The media (press, radio, TV, internet) was more or less organized. Armed militias started organizing themselves and became real rebellion groups. The regular army in its turn constituted local defence groups called “guardians of peace.” The helplessness feeling in front of massive suffering of civilians and such a scale of murders based on ethnic belonging was resented by us with deep pain. This feeling manifested itself when we had to elaborate and propose a face-to-face dialogue of all actors involved in the conflict. This created in many people misunderstanding towards our stand. However, we succeeded in building a neutral space for dialogue because of our strong conviction that dialogue among all conflicting parties was the solution to ending the crisis that has plagued the country since the assassination of President Ndadaye.¹²⁶ (**Sic**)

Indeed the inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi is multidimensional. It has political, institutional, economic, psychological, and regional dimensions. When we talk of the political dimension of the inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi, we refer to all

¹²⁴J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 143.

¹²⁵J. PERRAUDIN, *Chronique de l’Eglise Catholique au Burundi après l’indépendance*, 143.

¹²⁶E. NGOYAGOYE, “Bishops’ role in the Great Crisis in Burundi”, 2-3.

those killings which took place in the course of history between the Bahutu and the Batutsi. Here we entirely agree with Gahama that in Burundi “politicians seek ethnic solidarity to gain power and to remain in power.”¹²⁷ When we talk of the institutional dimension of this conflict, we refer to the fact that since independence no government has succeeded to maintain peace, unity and stability in Burundi. As Gahama puts it very succinctly, all constitutions as well as freedoms of speech, worship, and human rights were violated by all the regimes.¹²⁸ When we talk of the economic dimension of this conflict we refer to how government posts and jobs were given to one ethnic group at the expense of the other. And concerning the psychological dimension, we refer to the division of the people according to ethnic lines, and the reinforcement of ideologies which created certain hatred between the Bahutu and Batutsi. In fact, “each community is convinced that it has the monopoly of suffering and sees itself as being threatened by the other group as regards its physical survival and/or its political development.”¹²⁹ And finally, the inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi has become regional because whatever happens to Burundi happens to Rwanda in a similar fashion. We have to note that the 1994 Rwandan genocide occurred only a few months after the assassination of President Ndadaye in 1993 and the inter-ethnic killings which followed.

¹²⁷J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 7.

¹²⁸Cf. J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 8.

¹²⁹J. GAHAMA, “Conflict Prevention”, 8.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW EVANGELIZATION: A REMEDY TO THE BURUNDI'S SOCIO-POLITICO-CULTURAL IMPASSE

Let us begin this chapter by asserting in all honesty that Christianity which replaced the Burundian traditional religion and its elements towards the end of the 19th century did not take roots in the hearts of the Barundi. The socio-political and cultural impasse that Burundi has been experiencing for decades now is a clear sign that the Gospel message proclaimed by the missionaries who came to Burundi over a century ago did not transform the heart of the Murundi. It is indeed unthinkable to see a country Christianised at almost 90% going through what Burundi went through since 1960s. Were the evangelization methods employed by the missionaries appropriate? What could have been done to get the heart of the Murundi transformed? Is there anything that can be suggested to overcome or resolve the impasse?

The above are some of the many questions that most people ask today when they look at what happened in Burundi. The answer to these questions, to me, is very simple: the Barundi need to be evangelized anew. And this new evangelization of the Barundi is very urgent looking at where Burundi has reached now. The Barundi need more than ever before to be reconciled with God and with one another. That is why we suggest for Burundi a new evangelization based on the principles of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation. Hence, inculturation, catechesis, etc., will serve as means of the implementation of this new evangelization.

4.1. New Evangelization: Its meaning and implications

In his lecture to the Symposium for the year of faith at Don Bosco Utume theological College in March 2013, Paddy Roe argued that the Church today is experiencing a time of disillusionment comparable to that of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.¹³⁰ As a matter of fact, these disciples like anybody who had followed Jesus during his public ministry “had hoped that the person they were following would be the answer to their deepest problems, but the hope has faded after the traumatic events on Calvary.”¹³¹ What breaks the cycle of disillusionment, as Roe contended, is in fact the meeting with Christ who unfolds the meaning of the scriptures they already were familiar with. Amazingly, once the key is revealed in the breaking of the bread, it all makes sense.¹³² Hence Jesus restores the faith and the hope of these two disappointed men. Our world today, too, needs a similar encounter with the risen Lord. And this encounter is what New Evangelization seeks to effect. But what is New Evangelization all about?

The term ‘New Evangelization’ is new in the Catholic theological circles. It is widely believed to have been popularised by Pope John Paul II in his writings and addresses. As a matter of fact, the Pope used it for the first time during his visit to Poland in 1979.¹³³ Without clarifying what it really means, he used it again sometime later in his address to the Latin American Bishops.

¹³⁰Cf. P. ROE, “Faith and the New Evangelisation”, 3.

¹³¹P. ROE, “Faith and the New Evangelisation”, 3.

¹³²Cf. P. ROE, “Faith and the New Evangelisation”, 3.

¹³³ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta, 5.**)

Thus, he said:

The commemoration of this half millennium of evangelization will have full significance if, as bishops, with your priests and faithful, you accept it as your commitment, a commitment not of re-evangelization, but rather of a new evangelization; new in its ardour, methods and expression.¹³⁴

The above passage clearly shows that new evangelization is not re-evangelization. It is rather a new way of proclaiming the Gospel by using new methods and expressions to respond to the present needs and challenges of the Church and the human society. Hence the primary aim of new evangelization is not to correct mistakes made during and after the first evangelization. Far from doing that, it ventures into finding new ways and possibilities of proclaiming effectively the Gospel of Christ. To put it in a rather different fashion, new evangelization is nothing but deeper evangelization or something of that nature.

Nevertheless, despite its sheer necessity and urgency some people are reluctant to use the expression 'new evangelization'. In fact, they think that it judges the past situations of the Church negatively. For them new evangelization seems to suggest that the primary evangelization was a failure. Others tend to think that the expression may change the whole perspective of evangelization itself.¹³⁵ However, the truth is: The Church needs to rethink her ways and methods of proclaiming the message of Christ in this ever changing world. She has to be innovative so as to respond to the new challenges and situations that she is facing today.

¹³⁴SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta, 5**)

¹³⁵ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta, 5**)

4.2. The urgency of New Evangelization in the universal Church

Having grasped the meaning of New Evangelization, we can affirm that the quest for it was implicitly raised at Vatican II Council. Pope John XXIII who called for this Council might not have had the term ‘new evangelization’ in his mind, but what we cannot afford to overlook is the fact that he really wanted a radical change in the way the Church carries out her mission of evangelization and pastoral activities. The working paper for the preparation of the 2012 Synod on new evangelization re-affirms this in the following paragraph as it states:

Ever since the Second Vatican Council, the new evangelization has increasingly presented itself as an appropriate, timely tool in addressing the challenges of a rapidly-changing world, and the way to respond to God’s generosity in our being gathered together by the Holy Spirit to experience God as the Father of us all and to bear witness and proclaim to all the Good News-the Gospel-of Jesus Christ.¹³⁶

That since Vatican II the Church wished to renew herself is expressed in different magisterial exhortations and teachings of the post-Vatican II Popes. Pope Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is perceived “as a response to the new challenges that the contemporary world creates for the mission of the Church.”¹³⁷ Indeed the dramatic changes brought about by modern technology have raised new questions concerning the relevance of Christ’s message in the world. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* therefore challenges the Church to wake up and become more than ever before prophetic.

¹³⁶ SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization (Lineamenta, 1)*

¹³⁷D. NODAR, “What Are Characteristics of The New Evangelization?,” 1.

For Paul VI evangelization is the specific and fundamental task of the Church because she exists in order to evangelize. However, he acknowledges that evangelization is very complex in that it can never be fully grasped unless all its elements are taken into account.¹³⁸ In his view, evangelization cannot be reduced to mission activity which only consists of the proclamation of Christ to those who do not know him yet. Indeed “evangelization is a process that starts with a witness of life and word that lead to an announcing of the Gospel and which invites the person evangelized to conversion and incorporation into an ecclesial community and sacramental life. The end result is that the one evangelized himself/herself becomes an evangelizer of others.”¹³⁹

The term “New Evangelization” which was implicit in Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* became explicit in the writings and addresses of Pope John Paul II. He used it to show how it was urgent for the Church to re-launch evangelization in the present day situations. In his laudable Encyclical Letter ‘*Redemptoris Missio*’ he presents guidelines for this new evangelization. The Church has to re-focus on her priorities which to him are: commitment to new evangelization and mission ad gentes. He pinpointed what the characteristics of this new evangelization must be. It was his conviction that the new evangelization must place Christ at the centre. He also noted that new evangelization is not just a project of the foreign missions but the responsibility of each and every Christian. Therefore, new evangelization targets every human being and every culture. To be able to effectively carry out this huge

¹³⁸Cf. J. F. GORSKI, “From Mission to New Evangelization,” 5.

¹³⁹J. F. GORSKI, “From Mission to New Evangelization”, 5.

project, the Pope called for a new missionary spirituality¹⁴⁰. Indeed, as he insists, “it is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit” (*RM*, 87).

It is interesting to see how new evangelization continued to be affirmed and re-affirmed by the post-Vatican II Popes. Pope Benedict XVI placed the topic of new evangelization at the top of the Church’s agenda.¹⁴¹ At the Middle East Bishop Special Assembly, the need for new evangelization was very much stressed. And this new evangelization is not only urgent for people who do not know well Christ’s message or those who are no longer interested in going to church, but also for people in countries where Christianity has ancient roots.¹⁴² This urgent need for new evangelization led Pope Benedict XVI to create a Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. Thus, he called for a Synod of Bishops of the entire Church in 2012 to discuss this issue of new evangelization. The theme of the Synod was: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”.¹⁴³

The Synod of Bishops pinpointed certain areas which require this new evangelization. These areas include: culture, society, means of social communication, economy, scientific and technological research as well as civic and political life. Culture here refers to secularization. It has been remarked that secularization is no longer only a western phenomenon but a worldwide phenomenon. We realize that there is a widespread culture of relativism where God

¹⁴⁰Cf. D. NODAR, “What Are Characteristics of The New Evangelization?”, 2-5.

¹⁴¹Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta**, 1)

¹⁴²Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta**, 1)

¹⁴³SYNOD OF BISHOPS on *New Evangelization* (**Lineamenta**, 1)

has little or no influence in human everyday dealings. The phenomenon of migration is also a major concern not only for society particularly, but also for the Church generally. This phenomenon is very much related to globalisation and everything that it entails. Concerning the means of communication the Church is very much concerned with the media and digital culture which risk wiping out of people's minds the heritage of the past and their future aspirations. Concerning the economic sector, the Church is very much preoccupied with the economic crisis which sees the gap between rich and poor widening. As for the scientific and technological research, the Church is worried to see these becoming new idols, a new religion and a kind of philosophy in which knowledge and meaning are derived from an unreal structuring of life. The world political situation too preoccupies the Church.¹⁴⁴

At present the Church is more conscious about transmitting the faith which she herself lives, a faith which forms her proclamation, her witness and her charity.¹⁴⁵ And this transmission of the lived faith of the Church is an on-going enterprise. Of course she cannot do it on her own without the help of the Spirit of God. Just as it is for any type of evangelization, the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of new evangelization. And new evangelization as seen earlier has not much to do with announcing, but most importantly with witness of life. Hence this witness "must be private and public, must embrace thought and action, the internal life of Christian communities and their missionary drive, their educational action, their

¹⁴⁴Cf. N. ETEROVIC, *Press Conference for the Presentation of the "Lineamenta"* 4-5.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. N. ETEROVIC, *Press Conference for the Presentation of the "Lineamenta"*, 7.

charitable activity and their presence in contemporary society in order to communicate to them the gift of Christian hope.”¹⁴⁶

4.3. The urgency of new evangelization in Africa

The 1994 Bishops’ Synod for Africa is widely considered as a Synod which called for a new evangelization of the African continent. During this Synod many questions were raised about the evangelization of Africans. The Synod Fathers pointed out that “the main question facing the Church in Africa consists in delineating as clearly as possible what it is and what it must fully carry out, in order that its message may be relevant and credible” (*EA, 21*). They observed that this was and indeed still is a real challenge for the Church in Africa.

Although the Synod Fathers acknowledged that the Holy Spirit remains the principal agent of evangelization, they insisted that their cooperation through prayer, serious reflection, better planning and the mobilisation of resources is of paramount importance. Indeed, it is not enough to question the relevance and credibility of the message proclaimed. There is a need to look also at those who proclaim it, because the witness of life is very important for the message to appeal to people to whom it is proclaimed. The Synod Fathers wanted to revive what Paul VI had previously asserted when he wrote the following:

It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people, it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty. These *signs of the times* should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud — but always forcefully — we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim (*EA, 21*).

¹⁴⁶ N. ETEROVIC, *Press Conference for the Presentation of the “Lineamenta”*, 7.

This gives us an idea about what African people need now as far as the proclamation of the Gospel message is concerned. Indeed they need not only to hear the message of hope, but also to see this same hope lived. As the Synod Fathers observed, God wills to save Africa from its dark history characterized by socio-politico-cultural problems which date from the slave trade and colonial times. The question the Synod Fathers put was how the Christian message (Good News) can be proclaimed in a continent full of bad news. They wondered how the Gospel of Christ could penetrate the hearts of the people who are in despair. However, as the Bishops reiterated, “evangelization stands for many of those essential values which our Continent very much lacks: hope, peace, joy, harmony, love and unity” (*EA, 39*).

The Bishops also acknowledged that despite differences that one can pinpoint across Africa, there is one common situation. This situation includes “abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available resources, political instability and social disorientation” (*EA, 39*). And such situation leads, as it were, the African people into a profound misery, wars and despair. Indeed, “in a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected” (*EA, 39*). Africa, to the Synod Fathers, could be compared to the man in the parable of the Good Samaritan who fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Africa, they said, “is a continent where countless human beings – men and women, children and young people – are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of Good Samaritans who will come to their aid” (*EA, 41*).

This is the situation in which Africa finds herself and that is why she needs a message of hope, peace, justice and reconciliation. And this was the way forward proposed by the 2009 Second Synod of Bishops for Africa. In this Synod, the Fathers suggested the principles of justice, peace and reconciliation as the new ways of evangelizing Africa. Indeed the Church has a very crucial task. And this task is, as it were, “to bring the message of the Gospel to the heart of African societies, to lead people to the vision of God” (*AM, 15*).

4.4. The urgency of new evangelization in Burundi

The Burundi’s socio-politico-cultural impasse we have described in the previous chapters can be taken as an example of what most African countries are facing today. The divisions of people based on their ethnic affiliation which often lead to endless killings can only be healed by promoting the fundamental principles of justice, peace and reconciliation. Hence the new evangelization which we have proposed for Burundi must be guided by these noble and uncompromising principles to heal the broken hearts of millions of Burundi. As a means to achieve justice, peace and reconciliation, certain traditional institutions which helped for many centuries the Burundi to live in harmony have to be revived and purified wherever necessary. Among the many traditional institutions, we consider the most instrumental one which is that of *Bashingantahe*. The fundamental question will be how can the Church get inspiration from this noble institution which for some years now people of good will have been trying to revive. And this is what we want to explore in the following pages.

4.4.1. The Bashingantahe institution: An instrument for lasting peace, justice and genuine reconciliation in Burundi

Let us first of all recall what this institution stood for in the traditional Burundi and how it helped in conflict resolution and stability of the country. Named so because of the court stick they strike rhythmically and in turn on the ground to insist on the importance of the words they are using and the decisions they render while arbitrating conflicts, the *Bashingantahe* were regarded as social referees who arbitrated individual, social and family conflicts in the traditional Burundi.¹⁴⁷ They embodied *Ubushingantahe*, the set of values underlying the institution itself. We have also to remember that the word *Intahe* from which *Abashingantahe* and *Ubushingantahe* derive stands for the concepts of justice and equity.¹⁴⁸

The *Bashingantahe* institution was seen by the Burundian politicians who signed the 2000 Arusha peace agreement as the right instrument to be used to end the violence and conflicts which had ravaged Burundi for decades. Agnes Nindorera observes that the signatories of the agreement were convinced that certain traditional principles must be revived to achieve lasting peace, the rule of law and genuine reconciliation. These principles include: *Ibanga* or the sense of confidential secret and responsibility, *Ubupfasoni* or dignity and respect, and *Ubuntu* or humanity and sense of personality.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Cf. G. PRUNIER, “Burundi: A Manageable Crisis,” 1.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. P. NTAHOMBAYE, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems”, 10.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. A. NINDORERA, “Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation”, 18.

Indeed there are many reasons why the revival of the *Bashingantahe* institution in present-day Burundi is imperative to help the Burundi achieve lasting peace, justice and genuine reconciliation. Being an institution which was more inclusive than any other traditional institution, it can prevent the old tendency of politicians “to manipulate ethnic sentiments instead of producing clear political proposals.”¹⁵⁰ Moreover this institution can reinstitute the *Bashingantahe* virtues of tolerance, mutual respect, etc., among the young people. It is worth admitting that, the *Bashingantahe* institution can bring about true *Metanoia* that Pope Benedict XVI talks about in his post-synodal exhortation, *Africae Munus*, among the Burundi. If for the Burundi a *Mushingantahe* embodies the virtues of peace, justice and reconciliation, then Christ is the *Mushingantahe* par excellence because, he is the source of true peace, true justice and true reconciliation. The Burundian Church should therefore build upon these values of the *Bashingantahe* institution to evangelize Burundi anew.

To understand how important the *Bashingantahe* institution can be for the new evangelization of the Burundi it is best we start looking at how this institution started and how one becomes a *Mushingantahe*.

¹⁵⁰A. NINDORERA, “Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation”, 18.

According to a certain legend, the *Bashingantahe* institution started at the royal court. This is how it came into existence:

A palace comic, or court buffoon, called Samandari suggested the creation of the *Bashingantahe* institution. One day he was cooking vegetables in the palace and asked the king to keep an eye on his pot for a short while. He went away and when he came back, he found that the volume of his vegetables had been greatly reduced. He then accused the king of having eaten his vegetables. Confused and ashamed, the king asked him to keep silent and promised him whatever he wanted. Samandari laughed and told the king he was trying to show that sometimes people could lie and accuse others in an unjustified way. Samandari's message was that the country needed an institution to avoid injustice and unfairness.¹⁵¹

The above legend clearly tells us that the *raison d'être* of the institution of the *Bashingantahe* is mainly the promotion of justice and fairness. Indeed where justice and fairness prevail there is lasting peace. This is in fact the Gospel message that Christ brought us. Hence, we can understand why the *Bashingantahe* institution is well placed to help the Barundi reconcile with God and with one another.

The role of a *Mushingantahe* in the society is best understood through what he promises to the people during his swearing in ceremonies. During his institution, he swears to respect the customs, obey the rules, and serve as a role model for the people of his country. He also promises to be a peacekeeper and a judge. The oath he takes is in a way a seal of a kind of moral contract not only with the people but also with the country.¹⁵² During his institution, a *Mushingantahe* answers a number of questions put to him by the elders in the institution. He is asked whether he commits himself to serve the community, to obey the rules of the council, and act

¹⁵¹A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 19.

¹⁵²Cf. A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 21.

for the sake of goodness, just like the *Mwami* (the king) did during his inauguration.¹⁵³

This is what he is asked and what he promises:

Do you accept to obey the rules of the country, to be a man of compassion for the unhappy? Do you accept to be the light for the nation, to render justice in equity, to avoid corruption in deliberation?¹⁵⁴

And the *Mushingantahe* answers:

I agree and swear in the face of the king and the *Bashingantahe* to always serve the cause of the truth whenever I will have to arbitrate conflict.¹⁵⁵

After this, the council delegate gives the following remarks about the obligations to which the new *Mushingantahe* commits himself:

I put in your hands the stick of Justice (*Intahe*). The Father of all accords it to you. According to the customs of Burundi, I give it to you in the name of the *Bashingantahe* of this country because you have fulfilled the conditions for being a man of truth. If you pass by a place where there are conflicts, you must resolve them. You will stand for the honour of Burundi; you will not repay in kind to one who insults you. There will always be words of truth in your mouth. And you will always obey the rules that advance this country. Be wise and do not be afraid to tell the truth even if you have to die for it. Those who died for the truth are still praised; there is consideration for their graves. It is their blood that became the seed of the braves who live in this country. You are given *Intahe* to help the king work for Burundi. You will always keep this country in your heart. You will combat all those who wish dishonour the country. You will struggle for the orphans. You will be the rest for the lonely. Be courageous in helping the poor. It is only on this condition that God will assist you. Be aware that you are in the place of God and the king. Combat all laziness in your work. Be insightful during the deliberations; do not search for richness or material interest. You will be the straight path in which the country can trust. You will be the basket full of peace. You will be the joy for the king and for the *Bashingantahe*.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³Cf. A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 21.

¹⁵⁴A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 21.

¹⁵⁵A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 21.

¹⁵⁶A. NINDORERA, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation", 21-22.

We have to note that all this was happening before the coming of the missionaries in Burundi. The *Barundi* already knew the value of truth, love and compassion for the poor, orphans, the lonely, etc. Indeed we can fairly assert that they knew somehow the values of the Gospel of Christ before they were told about Him. It is no wonder the Fathers of Vatican II urged all Christians to be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word (*Semina Verbi*) which lie hidden among them (*A G, II*).

Through the institution of the *Bashingantahe*, the *Barundi* knew that they had obligations towards their fellow citizens and their country, Burundi. Living according to the values of the *Bashingantahe* institution guaranteed peace, justice and reconciliation in traditional Burundi.

Therefore, based on the above observation, we realise that the *Bashingantahe* institution embodies whatever it requires to have the broken heart of the *Murundi* healed and transformed. The new evangelizers of Burundi must emphasize all these values of the *Bashingantahe* institution. If every *Murundi* understands that he/she must become a *Mushingantahe*, there is no doubt that Burundi will recover lasting peace, the rule of law will be established and the *Barundi* will be truly reconciled with God and with one another.

It is our conviction that at the heart of success of the new evangelization of Burundi lie the principles of truth, peace, justice and reconciliation. The new evangelizers of Burundi today must stress that it is the duty of every *Murundi* to care for the widows, the orphans, the displaced, the lonely; in fact all the victims of the conflicts which have ravaged the country for decades to make sure people recover

their rights and dignity. In his/her turn, a new evangelized *Murundi* should be an agent of peace, justice and reconciliation. In other words, he/she should become a true *Mushingantahe*.

Reconciliation itself, as Benedict XVI insists, is the foundation of true justice and peace. He contends that “unless the power of reconciliation is created in people’s hearts, political commitment to peace lacks its inner premise” (*AM, 19*). In fact for justice and peace to be achieved, there is a need for what he calls inner purification. And this inner purification cannot exist without God. That is why no matter what skills and virtues the *Bashingantahe* may be endowed with, the *Barundi* have to be reminded again and again, that “it is God’s grace that gives us a new heart and reconciles us with him and with one another” (*AM, 20*).

Scripture and Tradition keep reminding us how true reconciliation flows from God’s love made manifest in his Son Jesus Christ. Indeed Christ re-established humanity in the Father’s love from which reconciliation springs. Reconciliation between the *Barundi* must flow from the same divine love as well. In fact, as Benedict XVI insists, the experience of reconciliation establishes communion on two levels: communion between God and humanity (*AM, 20*). And when we view reconciliation from this perspective, we realize that it is not limited to God’s plan to draw sinful humanity to himself in Christ but also to the restoration of relationships between people through the settlement of differences (*AM, 20*). We can therefore understand that it is such a reconciliation which can end the socio-politico-cultural impasse in Burundi. And this reconciliation is basically what we term as the new evangelization of the *Barundi*.

That the socio-politico- cultural impasse in Burundi can be resolved only if the *Barundi* genuinely reconcile with God and with one another is an undeniable fact because, as Benedict XVI contends, “only authentic reconciliation can achieve lasting peace in society” (*AM, 21*). He also observes that this task of reconciliation concerns political leaders, traditional leaders as well as people themselves. Hence the Burundian political leaders, traditional leaders and indeed all the *Barundi*, have an important role to play in the new evangelization of Burundi. And since Benedict XVI considers reconciliation to be an important tool to restore a union of hearts and serene coexistence, we believe that this is what the *Barundi* need at the moment.

As far as reconciliation means for the *Barundi* communion with God and communion with one another, their wounds left by the vicious cycle of violence will be healed. The truth is: reconciliation overcomes crises, restores the dignity of individuals and opens up the path to development and lasting peace between people at every level (*AM, 21*).

We must however understand that reconciliation does not allow impunity. In order to be effective, reconciliation must allow justice to do its job. Those responsible for the crimes committed must be answerable for them. Reconciliation between the *Barundi* will be genuine if those who committed crimes against humanity since independence up-to-date are prosecuted and convicted because, as Benedict XVI insists, “victims have a right to truth and justice. It is important for the present and for the future to purify memories, so as to build a better society where such tragedies are no longer repeated” (*AM, 21*). The new evangelizers of Burundi will have to stress this very strongly in their mission.

Nevertheless, as we noticed previously, both the Bahutu and the Batutsi have done injustices to one another. It is now high time to come together and say enough is enough and perform a decisive act of reconciliation. Those who committed crimes have to come forward to ask for forgiveness from the victims, and the victims must forgive those who committed crimes against them. This is not easy, but by following the example of Christ who forgave those who were crucifying him it is possible.

The *Bashingantahe* have a major role to play. In fact, their role will not only be to resolve conflicts but also to facilitate in this act of reconciliation. As for the Church, her role remains that of promoting true justice, true peace and true reconciliation. And this can be done, as Benedict XVI reiterates by “forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct” (AM, 22).

Let us assert that the new evangelization of Burundi we have presented in the above pages can be effectively carried out if the culture and traditions of the Barundi are properly evangelized. To do this there is need for inculturating the Burundian Church. And since inculturation is meant to be a process by which the faith existing in one culture encounters another culture so much so that there is a mutual critique and affirmation,¹⁵⁷ the new evangelizers of Burundi will have to use it as a tool if they want the Gospel message to penetrate deeply the hearts of the Barundi. In the following few pages we will look at how this inculturation can be carried out in the Church of Burundi today.

¹⁵⁷Cf. L. MAGESA, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 17.

4.4.2. Inculturating the Church of Burundi

In his book entitled “*Towards a Theology of Inculturation*”, Aylward Shorter argues that what gives Christian faith a universal character is its ability of being expressed and lived through different cultures.¹⁵⁸Hence, without any doubt Christianity can be lived authentically in the culture of the *Murundi*. That is why inculturating the Church of Burundi is imperative if the Barundi are to live according to the values and demands of the Gospel of Christ.

We must however admit that the idea of inculturating the Church of Burundi is not new. It has been reflected upon and written about by a number of Barundi themselves. Interestingly, back in 1991, the Burundi Episcopal Conference created a centre for research on inculturation and development (CRID). Its aim was to reflect upon new ways of evangelizing the *Murundi* in his/her own culture and traditions. In fact, by inculturation CRID understands faith which penetrates the culture, fertilizes and heals it from within in order to generate a Christianity of synthesis by integrating it in a whole organism of tradition and modernity, pastoral and development, incarnation and liberation.¹⁵⁹

In his intervention at the 1994 African Synod, Fr. Ntabona Adrien, a Murundi theologian, urged the Synod Fathers to take seriously the inculturation of the African Church during the Synod’s deliberations. For him in the African Church in general and in the Church of Burundi in particular, inculturation must be

¹⁵⁸Cf. S. ALYWARD, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 59.

¹⁵⁹Cf. A. NTABONA, “Les impératifs de l’inculturation intégrative”, 1.

integrative, liberating and promoter of the human person and society.¹⁶⁰ To achieve this, he insisted, the family must be the starting point of evangelization.

Indeed, the first target of inculturation in the Church of Burundi must be the family. In fact, the family is seen as the first place where a child is taught about God and moral values. The family is the foundation of the Church itself. According to Ntabona, the inculturation must start with the family because; the family is the first mediation of the sacred. The task of the Church is to help the family to live the traditions in the light of the Gospel. This will thus extend to the Small Christian Communities, religious communities, and to the universal Church.¹⁶¹ Hence, we can understand that inculturation is a tool for the new evangelization of Burundi we have been talking about.

Ntabona also suggests that inculturation has to touch the socio-political sphere of the country. It is his argument that this inculturation must lead the Church to become more prophetic in terms of promoting human rights and justice. As for democracy, it has to be also inculturated so that it becomes integrative and liberating. Inculturation here must be carried out in the light of the paschal mystery. Ntabona also insists that inculturation has to be carried out from within. Thus, the national and international structures of sin often controlled by Christians have to be evangelized. In Africa in general and in Burundi in particular, these structures are

¹⁶⁰Cf. A. NTABONA, “Les impératifs de l’inculturation intégrative”, 1.

¹⁶¹Cf. A. NTABONA, “Les impératifs de l’inculturation intégrative”, 1.

manifested by tribalism. The social doctrine of the Church must target this domain if we really want to be followers of Christ worthy of that name.¹⁶²

We have also to admit that in Burundi like anywhere in Africa, there are certain traditional beliefs and practices which are incompatible with the Gospel message. That is why the Church of Burundi has to carry out a thorough discernment to find out all those elements which prevent Christ's message from penetrating the heart of the *Murundi*. The 1994 African Synod reminded us that our cultures must be preserved because they contain values which "have served as a matrix for fashioning societies marked by a degree of harmony, since they embody traditional formulae for peaceful coexistence" (*EA*, 38). We have seen how for example, traditional institutions such as monarchy, *Abashingantahe* institution, the Burundian traditional religion, etc., have held the *Burundi* together for centuries. As John Paul II insists, "these positive elements therefore need to be emphasized, lit up from within, that Christians may truly receive the message of Christ, and in this way God's light may shine before the eyes of all" (*EA*, 38).

4.4.3. Family catechesis

For the Gospel message to take roots in the culture of the *Murundi* new evangelization has to target certain institutions which constitute the core of the life of the *Murundi* himself/herself. One of the targets for the inculturation must be the family.

¹⁶²Cf. A. NTABONA, "Les impératifs de l'inculturation intégrative", 2.

Since in the Burundian tradition the family is the absolute channel of life transmission, the new evangelizer of Burundi must proclaim the Gospel of life. And since God is the source of life, the *Barundi* must enter into the mystery of the one who creates, redeems, sanctifies and renovates life. Indeed as Sister Ida-Marie Kazina puts it, the promotion of life should explicitly be the content itself of the new evangelization in the Burundian society.¹⁶³

For the Church of Burundi to be fully inculturated Sister Kazina suggests the promotion of an inculturated catechesis. This inculturated catechesis must begin from the family itself and should focus on the promotion of the culture of life in a country which has experienced a lot of divisions and killings based on ethnic affiliations. The Church will find it easier to preach the message of reconciliation through the family. Sr. Kazina proposes that in this work of reconciliation, the Church of Burundi must include the mother of the family who, due to her maternal care, knows how to handle and protect life.¹⁶⁴ It is her conviction that the Burundi's socio-politico-cultural impasse will find lasting solutions when the *Barundi* men will begin to understand that the woman, a mother and a spouse, can be their best adviser and an effective bridge for family and national reconciliation.¹⁶⁵

Pope John Paul II himself had termed that “the family is ‘the sanctuary of life’ and a vital cell of society and of the Church” (*EA*, 42). It is in the family that the human personality is shaped by different phases of initiation. In the family we learn to love, to respect others and to know the face of God inasmuch as we receive a first

¹⁶³Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 4.

¹⁶⁴Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 4.

¹⁶⁵Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 4.

revelation of it from a father and a mother full of attention in our regard (*EA*, 42). The lack of all these values turns the entire society into violence. Indeed, as the Pope insists, “the family is the best setting for learning and applying the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation” (*EA*, 43). Thus he says:

In a healthy family life we experience some of the fundamental elements of peace: justice and love between brothers and sisters, the role of authority expressed by parents, loving concern for the members who are weaker because of youth, sickness or old age, mutual help in the necessities of life, readiness to accept others and, if necessary, to forgive them. For this reason, the family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace (*EA*, 43).

It is therefore imperative for the new evangelizers of Burundi to focus on the family since, as stated above, it is the first and indispensable teacher of peace. To achieve this, the whole catechesis should be restructured by stressing the value of life from the conception of the individual until his/her death. And this will not be difficult for the *Murundi* because for him/her there is a very close relationship between life and religion. In fact, for a *Murundi*, religion is the vital relationship of God the Creator, the source and origin of human existence.¹⁶⁶

In the Burundian traditional religion, as we have seen in the first chapter, everything was done around and in the family. The cult of *Kubandwa* and *Gusenga Kiranga* were carried out at the family level and not in a community temple or shrine. This also applied to the worship of God, *Imana*. That is why the family is very important even in religious matters. The new evangelizer should therefore seek to promote and purify all those traditional elements if he/she wants the heart of the *Murundi* to be transformed. We really believe that this is what the missionaries who carried out the first evangelization in Burundi did not understand. If they had

¹⁶⁶Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 5.

understood that, as Sr. Kazina contends, the Burundian culture is a religious culture which transmits its values through the family, the *Murundi* would have been transformed for the better from the very beginning.

That the Burundian culture is a religious culture can be observed in ways parents and children, as well as the neighbours relate with one another. We see it in blessings said during the celebration of the New Year, family education, and the celebration of stages of life. Concerning the blessings of the New Year, Sr. Kazina observes that the father of the family plays the role of the mediator between the family and God. Everybody in the family participates in the celebration. They eat together the meal prepared by the mother as a sign of communion.¹⁶⁷

For Sr. Kazina the above rite, once purified, can serve as an inculturated liturgy because it contains all the necessary elements for a liturgical celebration, namely, the family assembly gathered around the father for praise, thanksgiving, self-offering to God through signs and words, communion to the same meal, the celebration of God's Bounty and Power.¹⁶⁸ As a way of new evangelization, the Church must exploit this value by decentralising the Christian cult to promote the family liturgy.

Concerning the family education, the new evangelization of Burundi must start by promoting the values of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace rooted in the Gospel of love and brotherhood beyond family ties. As for the celebration of the different stages of life, the traditional rite of presentation of the newly born child to

¹⁶⁷Cf. I. M. KAZINA, "Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi", 7.

¹⁶⁸Cf. I. M. KAZINA, "Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi", 7.

the family and the neighbours to whom from then on the child belonged must serve as the foundation of an inculturated catechesis of baptism. In baptism one is born to new life in Christ. The Christian community must be reminded of their responsibility to help the parents of the neophyte to bring him/her up in the Christian life.

The stages which prepared the young man or woman to become an adult can serve as a very important foundation in the preparation for the sacrament of confirmation. This also could concern the preparation for being instituted as a *Mushingantahe*. Let us remember that the *Mushingantahe* was instituted by the community to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation. The Church of Burundi must get inspiration from this traditional institution to elaborate an inculturated catechesis of the sacrament of Confirmation. As the *Mushingantahe* in the society, a confirmed Christian has to promote the values of integrity, justice, peace and reconciliation. It is the duty of the new evangelizer of Burundi to insist on the commitment made by a confirmed Christian. Indeed, as Sr. Kazina insists,

The candidates for the sacrament of confirmation should be prepared and checked by the Small Christian Community. The Small Christian Community should organise under the guidance of the Church catechetical classes to deepen the sacraments of Christian Initiation, especially to form responsible Christians, authentic witnesses of the newness of Christianity, defenders of faith and the ethics of the community, leaders and light of others.¹⁶⁹ (*Translation ours*)

¹⁶⁹I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 12.

Indeed as expressed in the above passage, the role of Small Christian Communities is irreplaceable in carrying out the new evangelization. In the following pages we will look at their role in this project of healing the broken hearts of the Barundi.

4.4.4. Small Christian Communities

The 1994 African Synod of Bishops encouraged the formation of Small Christian Communities in the Church of Africa. They acknowledged that “the Church as Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships” (*EA, 89*). Small Christian Communities were seen as a great means for a deeper evangelization in the sense that they are capable of bringing the Good News to others. Besides praying and listening to the Word of God, members of Small Christian Communities also reflect upon different problems they face in their everyday life in the light of the Word of God that they share whenever they meet. Small Christian Communities are also capable of fostering love and unity which transcend the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or ethnic groups.

Given that Small Christian Communities as perceived by the Fathers of the first African Synod of Bishops can dismantle walls which divide people, it is pertinent to suggest that the consolidation of these communities in Burundi will help greatly in uniting people who have been divided for years based on their ethnic affiliation. This will obviously help in achieving true reconciliation of the *Barundi*. By sharing their experiences in the light of the Gospel of Christ, the *Barundi* will learn to foster that unity that Christ willed for his followers in his prayer for unity “May they all be one...” (*Jn 17: 21*).

These Small Christian Communities have to be small enough because, as Kazina observes, this will help the members to live concretely the commandment of love.¹⁷⁰ In this, each member will feel truly loved as he/she really is. In fact, as she contends, this is one of the reasons why Christians tend to remain indifferent vis-à-vis their brothers and sisters in difficulties. In most cases, this makes those people who feel not well integrated join other sects or churches where they feel accepted. To counteract this situation the Small Christian Communities must be able to provide an environment of love unity and acceptance for everybody. This will help a genuine sharing of life not only of prayer but also of other dimensions of life. They will reflect the universality of the Church and everybody, Christian and non-Christian will feel at home. And as Kazina argues, these communities will then become places of forgiveness and reconciliation, nurseries of social justice, unity and mutual acceptance.¹⁷¹ In a situation like this, we can understand that there cannot be conflicts based on tribal or ethnic affiliation. In the case of Burundi, Kazina even goes further to suggest that these Small Christian Communities must be composed of the three different ethnic groups, namely, the *Bahutu*, the *Batutsi* and the *Batwa*. In this way, the baptismal communion will take precedence over the family or ethnic communion. Hence Christian identity will become more important than ethnic identities.

¹⁷⁰Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 19.

¹⁷¹Cf. I. M. KAZINA, “Propositions pour une Pastorale familiale Inculturée au Burundi”, 20.

Indeed, after exploring the meaning of New Evangelization and its urgency in the universal Church, in Africa in general and in Burundi, we can assert without any reservation new evangelization is the only way out for a real transformation of humanity. In Burundi, like in any African country, this new evangelization must aim at bringing about justice, peace and genuine reconciliation among people who are divided based on their tribal/ethnic affiliation. The principle of inculturation of Christ's message is very fundamental in any part of the World. As seen, in Africa generally and in Burundi particularly this inculturation must be carried out through family and Small Christian Communities.

GENERAL CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Burundi as a country has experienced times of peace and stability as well as times of socio-political and cultural unrest. Indeed its history is similar to that of many African countries. As seen at the beginning of this thesis, under the monarchical rule, Burundi enjoyed a long time of peace, political stability and unity among the three different ethnic groups which inhabit the country. We do not need to speculate about how this happened, but the truth is that many scholars¹⁷² of the history of Burundi agree to an amazing degree that Burundi did not experience tribal conflicts until the colonial and missionary era. And as pointed out in the first chapter, this was made possible thanks to the genius of a number of traditional institutions which helped in uniting the Burundi. We have seen how well-organised was the kingdom of Burundi. Indeed the *Mwami*, the head of the kingdom, helped by the Baganwa, the *Banyamabanga*, the *Banyarurimbi* and the Bashingantahe did a competent job in maintaining peace and stability in the entire kingdom. The *Murundi* felt at home in Burundi and had no problem about the political succession which was done very smoothly in a traditional way. In fact, as we have seen, the successor of the Mwami came from the same royal family. Unity and mutual support were some of the identity markers of the Burundi. It seems, as Prosper Ndabishuriye demonstrated in his “*Est-il possible de vivre ensemble*”, Burundi was a Utopian society. Although this might not have been the case, it shows that what Burundi was before the colonial and missionary era is completely different from what it is now.

¹⁷²The scholars that Herisse refers to are: Prunier (1995), Lemarchand (1994), Chrétien (1993) and Vidal (1991).

During the pre-colonial and missionary era, the Bashingantahe played a very important role in settling social issues as well as maintaining peace and facilitating reconciliation among the Barundi. This institution which is believed to have started with the Burundian monarchy was more inclusive than any other institution because it comprised of both the Bahutu and the Batutsi. It played a major role in conflict resolution and administration of the kingdom.

Concerning the origin of the terms “Hutu” and “Tutsi”, we saw that these terms had no racial connotation as it has been misinterpreted by many historiographers. Rather they had their origin in the socio-economic system of Burundi whereby a Mututsi was anyone who owned much land and many cows, whereas a Muhutu was anyone who served the Mututsi in order to get his basic needs satisfied. However, the misinterpretation of these terms by the colonial administration and certain missionaries led to the division of the Barundi and this as we have seen led to a disastrous situation of which we are still feeling the consequences even today.

Things started changing in Burundi towards the end of the 19th century. With the coming of the missionaries and colonisers, the socio-politico- cultural and religious situation changed. Certain traditional institutions changed. In fact, the Burundian traditional religion was replaced by Christianity; the monarchy was maintained until early 60s, although it was rather of a ceremonial kind. The Bashingantahe institution was replaced by the western judicial system. It is during this time that the Barundi were divided, and as we have seen in the second chapter of this thesis, this happened in the year 1930 when the Belgian colonial administration introduced in the country an identification card bearing the names “Hutu” and

“Tutsi”. The missionaries who were supposed to preach a message of unity and equality fell into the trap set by this administration. As we have seen, they favoured one ethnic group over the other, and this was to have its consequences in the years that followed the independence of Burundi.

The post-independent Burundi, as we have seen in the third chapter, was characterised by cyclical conflicts between the Bahutu and the Batutsi. There have been a series of killings from both sides. The bloodiest violence was that of 1972 which some historians refer to as genocide perpetrated against the Bahutu by the government. It is estimated that about 100,000 people were killed, and most of them from the Bahutu elite. The Church seems to have been silent during this time. At the same time we can understand its being silent because it was also persecuted. In fact, it was accused of speaking for the Bahutu who were oppressed. The regimes which followed, as we have seen, did not do much except that the regime of Buyoya tried but in vain, to unite the Barundi again. But this did not happen, as in 1993 the country fell into a long civil war following the assassination of the first democratically elected Muhutu president, Melchior Ndadaye. In many regions of the country people killed one another, and others were internally and externally displaced. This led to a formation of several rebel groups which fought against the national army, which was mono-ethnic at that time. Peace talk initiatives were launched and the Barundi reached an agreement which saw the former rebels integrate into the national army. Democratic elections were held and won twice by the former rebel movement, the *Council for National Defence of Democracy – Forces for Defence of Democracy* (CNDD-FDD), which had now become a political party.

Let us remember that the Barundi had converted massively to Christianity. In fact more than 80 percent are Christians who attend mass or service every Sunday. This has left many people wondering how such a Christianised country could go through situations like these. That is why the Barundi need to be evangelized anew. The new evangelization we have proposed for the Barundi as we have seen is based on the principles of justice, peace and reconciliation. Indeed, the Barundi are in great need of reconciling with God and with one another. As we have presented it in the fourth and last chapter of this thesis, this “new evangelization” has to get inspiration from one of the traditional institutions which helped the Barundi live in peace and harmony for many centuries. This institution is that of the Bashingantahe. As we have seen, the Bashingantahe were very instrumental in bringing about peace, justice and reconciliation among the Barundi. Hence Christ, the Mushingantahe par excellence, is the source of true justice, true peace, and true reconciliation. The new evangelizers of Burundi will have to help the Barundi to encounter Christ in their culture and traditions since as Pope Francis argues in his *Evangelii Gaudium* “it is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel” (*EG*, 69). Hence, the inculturation of the Church of Burundi is of paramount importance. And this inculturation of the Burundian Church as Pope Francis insists “means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness which already exists” (*EG*, 69) in the Burundian culture and traditions. This inculturation, as we have seen, has to start from the family, “the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another” (*EG*, 66), the small Christian communities and then to the universal Church.

To effect this inculturation of the Burundian Church certain traditional elements will have to be incorporated in catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments. In this, Small Christian Communities will have a major role to play. They are in fact the target and at the same time the agent of the new evangelization that Burundi needs now.

Indeed the time has come for all the Burundi, namely the Bahutu, Batutsi and the Batwa to say in one choir the following words of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, as it goes:

Let us ask the Lord to help us understand the law of love. How good it is to have this law! How much good it does us to love one another, in spite of everything. Yes, in spite of everything! Saint Paul's exhortation is directed to each of us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (*Rom* 12:21). And again: "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right" (*Gal* 6:9). We all have our likes and dislikes, and perhaps at this very moment we are angry with someone. At least let us say to the Lord: "Lord, I am angry with this person, with that person. I pray to you for him and for her". To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today! Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love (***EG, 101!***)

We believe that there is no greater reconciliation than this. If all the Burundi understand that the law of love must prevail in their hearts, Peace will flow like a river, Justice will reign in every stratum of the Burundian society, and genuine reconciliation will take place among the Bahutu, the Batutsi and the Batwa.

At the end of our study and research, we humbly assert that we could not exhaust this topic. What we have done was to pinpoint certain areas which need more attention in view of healing the broken heart of the Burundi after so many years of socio-politico-cultural and religious impasse. Our research has been limited, given that we could not go into the field to get first hand information from the

Burundi themselves who are struggling to achieve a lasting peace, true justice and genuine reconciliation at the moment. Despite this, however, we believe that the information collected and presented in this thesis can serve as a good foundation for evangelizing Burundi anew. In other words, we have provoked the minds of all those who wish to do a more comprehensive and profound study of the evangelization of Burundi in order to come up with more effective ways and means to proclaim Christ's message with all its demands and efficacy to have the heart of the Burundi transformed for the better.

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