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# *Rwanda — Missionary Reflections on a Catastrophe*

## *J. C. Jones Lecture 1995*

ROGER BOWEN

### ABSTRACT

The J. C. Jones Lectures are lectures in the Church in Wales, sponsored by the Church Mission Society, and given in memory of a former Bishop of Bangor, who was himself a missionary of the CMS.

None of us can forget the images that we saw in 1994 of the slaughter in Rwanda. But nor should we allow ourselves to forget the close involvement of Christians and Churches in the horrors of that ethnic violence. Roger Bowen traces the lines of a disaster, and shows us how, for Anglican Rwandans, the evangelical heritage of the East African Revival, for all the blessings associated with it, failed to equip the churches to challenge the conditions which led to mass murder. Moreover, Rwanda and its tragedy alert us to the challenge of mutual responsibility in our partnership in the gospel.

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**F**OLLOWING the catastrophe in Rwanda with between half a million to a million dead, two million as refugees and one million displaced within the country, we are left with many questions. One of the most acute is for the Churches. How could this catastrophe have happened in such a predominantly Christianised country? In the 1991 census 90% of Rwandans called themselves Christians — 62% Catholic, 18% Protestant, 8% Adventist. For Catholic missions which started in the late nineteenth century, both Rwanda and its neighbour Burundi, were seen as the most successful examples of Catholic mission in Africa. In Rwanda, after the Government, the Catholic Church was the single most powerful institution, being involved in a great variety of educational, medical and social ministries.

The agonising irony of what has happened in Rwanda is also felt very acutely by the Protestant Churches, and not least the Anglicans. For many in the Anglican Communion Rwanda was synonymous with a great movement of the Holy Spirit in the 1930s and 1940s which became known as the East African Revival. It swept through the whole of East Africa but many would trace its source to events in both Uganda and Rwanda in the 1930s which brought new life to Protestant Churches throughout the region. How is it, people ask, that Churches marked by such a profound revival, seem to have been drawn into this appalling slaughter, and by and large have been unable to deal with the ethnic and power issues within the Christian community itself, let alone in the wider society?

In order to situate what happened in April 1994, it is important to sketch in the historical context. Events of such magnitude are always connected to preceding events and it is important to be aware of the world in which the Church in Rwanda existed and the influences that were pressing upon it.

### **Historical context**

In the colonial carve up of Africa following the Berlin Conference on Colonial Question, in 1884, Rwanda and Burundi became part of German East Africa. They were traditional kingdoms ruled by the minority Tutsi pastoralists while the Hutu majority were largely agriculturalists, and the tiny minority, about 1%, of Batwa pygmies were hunter gatherers. They all shared the same language and culture and the distinctions between the different groups were not rigid. It is said that a Hutu who owned ten or more cows could become a Tutsi. Following the defeat of Germany at the end of the First World War, her territories were shared out amongst the victors. Rwanda and Burundi were given by the League of Nations to Belgium to administer. Belgium used the traditional structure of Tutsi chiefs to administer the country but rigidified the ethnic distinction by only educating the sons of Tutsi chiefs. This led to a much more rigid distinction between Tutsi (14%) and Hutu (85%) than had existed previously. In 1959, with imminent independence looming, the Belgian authorities and the Roman Catholic Church switched allegiance from the Tutsi minority to the Hutu majority, bringing about a Hutu revolution and takeover at independence in 1962. Tutsi counter-attacks produced pogroms and many Tutsi fled into exile. It is their sons and daughters who formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front in Uganda which invaded Rwanda in 1990. Their frustration at being in exile and being stateless, (they were neither allowed to return to Rwanda nor to take citizenship of the country in which they were exiled), is the background to their invasion.

The Hutu leader of the newly independent Rwanda in 1962 was President Kayibanda who came from the south of the country. The military coup in 1973 which brought Juvenal Habyarimana from the north west of Rwanda to power, revealed the strong power struggle between north and south among the Hutu themselves. Habyarimana began well but gradually he abused his authority until all the positions of power in the country were concentrated in members of his family and a clique, known as the 'akazu', 'the little house', from his home area in the north of the country. This concentration of power, unscrupulously used, was resented by other Rwandans — Hutu and Tutsi alike. The forced introduction of multi-party democracy, the RPF invasion of 1990, the pressure for power-sharing arrangements, were seen as a threat to Habyarimana's monopoly of power. Moreover, the failed coup in Burundi and assassination of a democratically elected Hutu president in 1993 by members of the Tutsi-dominated Burundi Army gave Hutu extremists in Rwanda further ammunition — the Tutsi cannot be trusted and any attempt to share power with them in Rwanda would be suicidal. The air crash of April 6th 1994, which killed both President Habyarimana and the Burundian

President, led the Hutu extremists in Rwanda to unleash their killing machine and final solution for maintaining power. Opposition Hutu groups were targeted and especially ethnic Tutsi, but it is a mistake to see what happened in Rwanda simply as an ethnic conflict. It is essentially about power and the lengths to which a group will go to hang on to its power.

### **The background to the Anglican Church in Rwanda**

Although Rwanda is predominantly a Roman Catholic Country, my experience is with the Anglican Church and my focus will be there. However, many of the issues I shall focus on relate to all the churches in Rwanda and also speak to the situation of the churches in our own countries.

To understand the Anglican Church in Rwanda, it is important to understand the context and background from which the British missionaries, who founded the Anglican Church there, came. Anglican missionary work in Rwanda began in the 1920s and the missionaries came out of a particular context in the Church of England at the time. They were the heirs of the theological controversy at home which focused around the authority of Scripture and attitudes to Biblical criticism. This was the background to the splits between the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) and the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in 1910, the separation of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (BCMS) from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1922 and the establishing of the special relationship between the Rwanda Mission and its parent society, the CMS, in 1926. The more conservative attitude to Scripture, and the associated controversy, led to an emphasis on evangelism rather than any engagement with the public life of the nation or critique of the sociopolitical context. Indeed, the missionaries were dependent on the goodwill of the colonial administration and sought to be apolitical. This, in fact, was impossible, as a telling extract from Dr Joe Church's diaries reveals. In 1959 as Hutu massacres of Tutsi took place, the missionaries sought to be outside politics and Dr Church writes 'we protested in two memoranda our non-participation in politics as a Mission but our stations became places of refuge for those who were being hunted and killed. One of these was the Queen Mother who came as a patient to Gahini Hospital and became a refugee, and we did not allow her or any others to be molested. This drew the fire on us and seemed unavoidable.'<sup>1</sup> In caring for the fleeing Tutsi they were inevitably seen as political.

Besides being heirs of theological controversy, many of the Anglican missionaries were also influenced by the pietist tradition, the Keswick holiness teaching and the search for the 'higher life'. This hunger for a deeper experience of God in one's life was a deep undercurrent leading to the outbreak of revival. This is not the place to outline the history of the East African Revival which has been done very competently in other places. But it is interesting to note that one of the first marks of that Revival was that it did address very deeply the ethnic issue. First of all it addressed the issue of

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1 J. E. Church, *Quest for the Highest*, Paternoster, Carlisle 1981, p 252.

black and white, as missionaries often had to repent of incipient racial superiority and discovered that the 'ground was level at the foot of the cross'. A new fellowship of forgiven sinners — African and European — was formed who knew that they had been made brothers and sisters in Christ through being cleansed in his precious blood. Equally, the emphasis on repentance and the cross of Christ led to a new sense of identity 'in Christ' where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Hutu nor Tutsi (Gal. 3:28). At its best, the Revival movement spoke very directly to the ethnic issue. The movement was also characterised by fellowship meetings which were marked by mutual confession of sin, Bible study, prayer and testimony and mutual encouragement. Studies of the rise of African Independent Churches have described them as movements in search of a 'place to feel at home'. In the Revival many African Christians did find such a place and a genuinely African expression of spirituality.

This movement profoundly marked the Anglican Church in Rwanda at its foundation. In what follows I want to reflect on some of the possible inadequacies in the theology which undergirded the Church in Rwanda but are also deeply relevant to our own situations and a challenge to the integrity of our Christian witness.

### Church and state

'A church too closely identified with a régime shares its fate.' The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda had sat on the Central Committee of the ruling party of President Habyarimana's government. Some members of the Anglican hierarchy were public supporters of the former President and courted his favour and patronage. There appears to have been little ability to maintain a critical distance vis à vis the governing authorities. The Church hierarchies remained 'too closely linked with the ruling régime to be a credible voice of protest. Their many declarations during the genocide were insignificant and inadequate. Church reaction was too late and too little.'<sup>2</sup> From a Protestant perspective one is bound to ask whether the theological foundations bequeathed to the newly independent African Church by the missionaries were adequate to deal with Church-State issues. I have already mentioned the pietist tradition of the missionaries and this was reinforced within the Anglican Church by Dr Joe Church's frequent use of the Scofield Bible with its premillennialist interpretations. Dr Church in his diaries makes reference to preparing the Bible readings for the Kabale Convention in 1935 'based as always on the Scofield Bible chain references'<sup>3</sup> Scofield's premillennialist perspective meant that in his own words to a prophetic conference in Philadelphia in 1918, there is 'no hope for humanity except in the personal return of the Lord of glory'.<sup>4</sup> This theological combination can lead to one of two reactions: either the withdrawal from the public life of the

2 Fr. W. Schonecke, 'What does the Rwanda tragedy say to AMECEA Churches?', *AMECEA Documentation Service*, Nairobi, Kenya. 17/1994, No. 424.

3 J. E. Church, *op.cit.*, p 116.

4 D. Carson ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, Paternoster, Carlisle 1984, p 200.

nation into a spiritual ghetto, or a naïve and uncritical support of whoever is in power, with biblical justification being most frequently drawn from Romans 13. Both these reactions are discernible within the life of the Anglican Church in Rwanda.

### **Injustice and impunity**

In Rwanda the lesson had not been learned that unresolved injustice in one generation will return to haunt the next. The Tutsi exiles from the early 1960s had never been allowed back to Rwanda and had remained in exile for thirty years as stateless people. The Church in Rwanda failed to plead their cause perhaps because, in the Anglican Church at least, the leadership was exclusively Hutu. It raises the issue as to whether the Church should speak up for any group treated unjustly or only when the Church's interests are threatened? In our own context, if a Muslim minority is being discriminated against and treated unjustly, do we protest on their behalf or remain silent because we see Muslims as in competition with us for the religious allegiance of our people? Gross abuses of human rights were taking place within Rwanda long before the crisis of April 1994, yet the Churches by and large did not speak up. There has been a failure to see that abuse of human beings, created in the image of God, is a very serious issue that the Church cannot ignore if it is to be true to its Lord.

The history of Rwanda and Burundi is scarred by outbreaks of appalling ethnic conflict of an horrific nature. In all cases there has never been a bringing to justice of the major perpetrators. A climate of impunity has been created which gives the impression that people can get away with such behaviour without fear of being brought to trial. There is little doubt that the assassination of President Ndadaye of Burundi in October 1993, and the fact that no one had been brought to justice for that event, gave the green light to the Rwandan Government that they too could get away with their genocidal plans without fear of arrest and trial. Prior to the genocide in Rwanda there had been outbreaks of ethnic violence and considerable abuse of human rights, yet the Churches failed to call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice and for justice to be seen to be done. The climate of impunity created a climate of confidence for those bent on maintaining their power and influence at all costs.

### **Ethnicity and identity**

In many parts of the world today in situations of economic, social or political stress we see people falling back on their ethnic identity with often violent results. In Rwanda in a situation of insecurity and threat caused by the RPF invasion in 1990, by the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes leading to high urban unemployment, by the imposition of multi-party politics, and by economic decline, people fell back on their ethnic identity and were encouraged to do so by unscrupulous politicians. Sadly, within the Church itself the mutual fears between Hutu and Tutsi were not faced up to

and dealt with. Within the Anglican Church it was hard for Tutsi to advance in leadership while the hierarchy remained solidly Hutu. The issue which, in the past in times of revival had been addressed so powerfully, was allowed to remain unresolved. The challenge to find a deeper, more fundamental identity 'in Christ' where there is no Jew nor Greek, Hutu nor Tutsi, seems to have been forgotten by many. There were glorious exceptions to this and the stories have yet to be told, of heroic faith and courage where Christians who were also Hutu helped and protected their Tutsi neighbours from the Interahamwe militias. By and large, however, the Church had allowed these ethnic tensions to continue unresolved, often below the surface, until conditions occurred where the issue exploded beyond their control in horrific violence. What happened in Rwanda is a salutary reminder that the fear and pain preventing the Church from addressing a painful tension within itself needs to be overcome if one is to avoid the far more horrific consequences of not facing it. I believe there may be lessons here for us around ethnic issues and those relating to sexuality within our own Churches.

### **What sort of evangelisation?**

Bishop Nsengiyumva (Roman Catholic) of Rwanda said 'The Christian message is not being heard. After a century of evangelisation we have to begin again because the best catechists, those who filled our churches on Sundays, were the first to go out with machetes in their hands'.<sup>5</sup> It is a heart cry which is relevant to all the Churches in Rwanda and perhaps elsewhere. I am reminded of a comment made to me by a French priest in Burundi, 'we have sacramentalised the Barundi, we have not evangelised them'. The catastrophe of Rwanda raises the issue of how deeply the Gospel has penetrated both individuals and the culture and what sort of evangelism is needed in order to address the issues that really trouble Africans. From the Protestant side, the revivalism-style of evangelism can be very authoritarian, giving the impression that the evangelist knows what people need and all they need to do is sit back and listen to him. In contrast, there is a need to listen to peoples' questions and concerns — a need for a humble, listening evangelism which, like Jesus, asks of enquirers 'What are you looking for?' (John 1:38) Such an approach might help towards the Gospel being allowed to address the deepest anxieties and fears of people and then penetrate more deeply into the culture.

### **What sort of spirituality?**

The pietist, premillennialist background of missionary founders of many of the Protestant Churches in Rwanda and the experience of revival have already been mentioned. These played their part in the spirituality which developed within the Rwandan churches. A number of features of this spirituality give cause for concern and challenge the Church in our own context.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Dowden, *Vocation for Justice*, Summer 1994, Vol. 8, No. 2.

*Converts not disciples.* The revival background of the Church in Rwanda has been strong on the evangelistic task but weak on Christian discipleship and training. There would be many calls in preaching to 'repent and believe the gospel', but little teaching on how to live out Christian discipleship in the secular world and how to be salt and light in society. The Church needed David Bosch's reminder that 'people are not called to repentance and conversion solely with the purpose of securing a seat on the train to heaven: the purpose of conversion is to become followers of Christ, to be enlisted in his service.'<sup>6</sup> The church in Rwanda had been growing on numbers, as it is widely in sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is a sharp reminder that mere growth in numbers, without a quality of costly discipleship, is empty and powerless to confront the pressures of evil.

*Inadequate view of sin.* Perhaps because of the individualistic nature of the background of the missionary founders or because of the surprisingly individualistic nature of Rwandan culture in contrast to other African cultures, the Church has operated with a very privatised and inadequate view of sin. The challenge to repentance has usually focused on a fairly limited range of personal moral questions — lying, stealing, adultery, drunkenness. There is, however, little awareness of the solidarities of sin in which we are all embedded as members of society. In his sympathetic critique of the East African Revival, Max Warren comments that 'sin tends to be simplified to the sin of the individual... the corporate nature of man is lost to view and the full magnitude of evil most seriously underestimated'.<sup>7</sup> In the same work Warren reminds us of the 'collective unconscious down into which stretch the roots of every individual life',<sup>8</sup> and this is horrifically revealed when the ethnic solidarities are manipulated in an act of genocide. Ironically, the Revival doctrine of sin underestimates the power and depth of evil, and by focusing on personal/private morality is quite inadequate to tackle the hideous strength of structural evil and corporate sin manifested in an act of genocide.

*Use of Scripture.* The experience of revival in the Rwandan Church sometimes led to the Church publicly affirming the authority of the canon of the whole of Scripture, while in reality operating with a 'canon within the canon'. There is always a danger for any Church or individual to focus on favourite books or passages in the Bible rather than allowing, in Pauline terms, 'the whole counsel of God' to inform and shape our spirituality. Within the Rwandan Church there has been a lack of teaching on the whole counsel of God and exposing God's people to the whole revelation of his Word from Genesis to Revelation. In some cases all Scriptures are interpreted to give the same message, often seen through the lens of the Revival experience, rather than letting the diversity within the Bible be heard. Inadequate exposure to the

6 David Bosch, 'Mission — an attempt at a definition', paper delivered to Dutch Reformed Church in Southern Africa, published in *Church Scene*, April 25th 1986.

7 Max Warren, *Revival — an enquiry*, SCM, London 1954, p 77.

8 Warren, op. cit., p 79.



whole counsel of God has meant that Church leaders were often left without the theological tools to engage with the complexities of relating to newly independent African states, to issues of economics, development, justice, human rights and ethnicity.

*Substitution of testimonies for biblical exposition/teaching.* In his study of revival movements in South Africa, Dr Bengt Sundkler noted the danger of such an emphasis being put on sharing personal testimonies that biblical instruction was neglected. Within the Revival in East Africa the fellowship meetings put great emphasis on the sharing of testimonies and this was an enormous encouragement to one another. However, it did lead to a lack of biblical input and instruction with the danger that personal experience becomes more important than the Word of God. We need reminding that the Word of God may be challenging us to face up to and move into areas of human life we have not yet experienced, and our personal experience continually needs to be challenged in this way. Equally, we need reminding that the truth as it is in Jesus is always greater than my personal experience of that truth. The danger of an overemphasis on personal testimony is that it leads participants to feel that their grasp of truth is exhaustive and they are blind to its other implications. Max Warren's comment on meeting William Nagenda, one of the pioneer Ugandan leaders of the Revival is worth noting here. 'He is able with single-minded to pursue what he sees to be true. But he is unaware that Truth is more than he can see.'<sup>9</sup> The truth of Christ is indeed more than any one of us can see and it will only be with 'all the saints' that we can come to know close-up' how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ' (Eph. 3:18).

### **What sort of obedience?**

In Rwanda people killed because they were told to by the Government, local burgomasters and the radio. Obedience to authority is inculcated within African culture and we need to ask whether the Churches have adopted the same approach. Within the Roman Catholic tradition there has been an unquestioning submission to Papal authority. Within the Protestant tradition in Rwanda you are wise to obey your Bishop because your livelihood depends on his goodwill. More importantly, the whole teaching method in Rwanda, both in churches and the state education system, does not encourage reflection and questioning. It is often an exercise in rote learning which can then be repeated back to examiners on examination day. I remember an American colleague of mine in Burundi who was expelled from the country during a time of Church-State conflict there. During his interrogation one of the main accusations against him focused on his theological teaching method, which provoked reflection and questioning, rather than giving students the answers. The authorities saw this as highly subversive and duly expelled

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9 Kevin Ward, "'Obedient Rebels'" — the relationship between the early "Balokole" and the Church of Uganda: the Mukono crisis of 1941', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XIX, 3 (1989), p 222.

him from the country. In Rwanda, the Churches' authoritarian teaching style encouraged little reflection, avoided the crucial issues troubling the society, inculcated uncritical obedience to Government authorities, and failed to teach Christians that situations can be so dire that 'we must obey God rather than people' (Acts 5:29).

### **What sort of leadership?**

Another of the tragic ironies of Rwanda was that as the nation was being pushed politically towards more democratic structures, the structures of the Church and the style of leadership offered remained authoritarian. Prior to the genocide some of the Anglican leadership had brought public shame and disgrace on the Church, to the despair of the laity, through an open and public conflict between two bishops which nearly led to schism within the Church. Questions are raised about the accountability of Church leaders to the whole people of God, and what mechanisms could be introduced to allow the Church as a whole to challenge, and if necessary, change their leaders?

There are also questions about the lifestyle of the Bishops and other Church leaders. To what extent have they alienated by the way they live the mass of people who, in a country as poor as Rwanda are peasant farmers? This problem has been openly acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church, but in some cases applies to the other Christian communities as well. 'Having access to foreign currency for projects, many Church leaders developed lifestyles that alienated them from the struggles of the common people and made them appear as part of the exploitative upper class.'<sup>10</sup> One might ask whether a Church leader visiting his diocese in Rwanda in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes really gives the right message about servant leadership modelled on the servanthood of Christ?

In an open letter to the Catholic bishops attending the African Synod before the genocide began, a powerful plea was expressed for a leadership in vital contact with the grassroots of the Church.

'You who are our pastors, how many times have you visited the people who are poor, sick and suffering? Do you know where they live, the condition of their houses, what they eat, the things they are in need of? Can you, yourselves, identify with their problems, the scale of these problems? Why do you make friends only with the well-off people, the oppressors of the workers? Your very affluent style of life, (luxury cars, fashionable clothes, expensive houses) increases the gap between you and us ordinary people, and this adds to our lack of confidence in you. The Christians feel abandoned, whereas you priests ought to be the voice of the voiceless, the outcasts, and serve the common folks.'<sup>11</sup>

This charge cannot be laid at the feet of all Church leaders in Rwanda, but there is sufficient cause for concern that should challenge Church leaders

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10 Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke, *op. cit.*, p 4.

11 Mrs Odette Kakuze, *an Open Letter to the bishops attending the African Synod*, Rwanda Association of Christian Workers, n.d.

everywhere as to whether they are in touch with the grassroots feelings and perceptions of the people they lead, or whether their lifestyle has distanced them from their people.

### **The Role of the Media**

The catastrophe in Rwanda has raised very sharply the issue of the enormous power and influence of media and disinformation, particularly in a context where the vast majority of listeners are illiterate and have no other means of verifying the truth or falsity of what they are hearing. Both sides in the Rwanda conflict had their radio station. The RPF 'Radio Muhabura' was very successful in communicating to the Western media a righteous image of a well-disciplined army, with a just cause, doing battle with a corrupt and abusive government bent on genocide as a means of maintaining its power. The Rwandan Government used the infamous 'Radio Télévision Libre Milles Collines' to pump out vicious and racist incitement to 'kill more Tutsis, the graves aren't full enough'. The unscrupulous manipulation of a largely illiterate peasant population was horrifyingly effective. Part of the policy was to demonise the enemy. The Government propaganda referred to the RPF invaders as 'inyenzi', or 'cockroaches', which you crush! Once the enemy is demonised and seen as subhuman, you can do terrible things to them which people could never bring themselves to do if they saw them as human like themselves (cf. the Nazi attitude to the Jews). In the Rwandan context, the Churches had no significant access to broadcasting to counteract the lies and disinformation put out by the Government. It is an irony that in Africa generally the Churches pioneered the written word in encouraging literacy and Bible translation, but have lagged behind in the use of modern electronic media. In the Rwandan conflict, 'pastoral letters alone were no match for professional radio propaganda'.<sup>12</sup>

### **Land and Population**

Rwanda was the most densely populated country in Africa. There was a dramatic increase in population from 2.8 million in 1962 to an estimated 7.5 million in 1990, with a density of 285 inhabitants per square kilometre. Scarcity of land is a major issue in the conflict and often, perhaps at subconscious levels, the violence and mass-murder of whole populations has been motivated by a desire for living space. Certainly in a society where the vast majority of the population have to live off the produce of their plot of land, the issues of space and ownership are crucial. The tension is only heightened by the increase in population. The Government had promoted family planning programmes using artificial birth control which the Catholic hierarchy opposed on moral grounds. During Pope John Paul II's visit in 1990, he apparently did not mention the subject. In such a stark situation as Rwanda, the Churches as a whole could not afford to ignore the population issue and its relation to wider public health matters in the nation.

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<sup>12</sup> Fr. Wolfgang Schonecke, *op. cit.*, p 5.

### **International dimensions**

Within the global village in which we live no nation can avoid being influenced by events and policies which are decided outside its borders. Many of these events are beyond the power of national churches to influence. However, churches and communions such as the Roman Catholic and the Anglicans, which have international networks, have both the opportunity and the responsibility to make their voices heard. It is sad that through the Anglican Communion, with its observer at the United Nations, some of the issues affecting Rwanda were not brought to public notice, both inside our Church and more widely to the international community before the crisis of 1994.

Like all African cities, Kigali was teeming with thousands of young jobless people living off informal economic activities, occasional labour, petty thieving and prostitution. This hopeless situation of African urban youth has been made worse by Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This pool of jobless urban youth, with no hope of a better future, were easy prey for political agitators and unscrupulous extremists who recruited them for the 'Interahamwe' militias. Here was a catastrophe in the making, fuelled in part by the effect of international economic decisions, and the voice of international Churches remained silent.

The involvement of foreign nations in the Rwandan conflict is also clear. The Ugandan Government infringed the Organisation of African Unity charter by allowing part of its army to leave and attack a neighbouring country. The French actively supported the Habyarimana regime and supplied them with weapons and military advisers. The UN decision to withdraw yet more of its pitifully small force in Kigali at the beginning of the massacres gave a clear message to the militias that no one was going to stop them killing. The situation has raised again questions about the international arms trade. Who armed Rwanda, one of the poorest nations on earth, and provided them with weapons of destruction rather than the economic aid they needed to build a just and stable society? As a world Communion, could the Anglicans not have done more to bring the developing situation in Rwanda to world attention? In this regard, as General Secretary, I feel Mid-Africa Ministry, as the main Anglican mission society relating to the Anglican Church in Rwanda bears some responsibility for a failure in partnership.

### **A flawed partnership**

As Anglican Churches in Africa and other parts of the world have become independent, a partnership relationship has been established with the founding Churches and their mission agencies. Partnership in mission is the dominant theme in international Anglican relations. But one may ask in the light of Rwanda, and perhaps elsewhere in Africa, whether the mission agencies have so leaned over backwards to avoid the charge of colonialism that they have failed to challenge their partner Churches? Within Rwanda

and the Rwandan Churches, we were aware of many of the issues I have touched upon, and yet, as their partners, we failed to challenge them on the basis of that equal partnership in Christ. We failed to 'speak the truth in love' (Eph. 4:15).

In Ezekiel 33 the prophet is challenged to be a watchman for the house of Israel to warn God's people of impending danger. Both the national Church in Rwanda and her overseas partners have largely failed to fulfil the watchman's role. Sometimes it is easier for outsiders to perceive what is happening better than nationals themselves, who are too close and too involved. This gives a special challenge to partners like Mid-Africa Ministry, and all of us in the Church of England as we relate to Churches overseas.

It also means that we in turn need to be open to the challenge and prophetic insight of our overseas partners. We must be reminded that we are members of one another in the Body of Christ, and have a responsibility to mutual challenge and encouragement. Our need of each other is not optional but integral to our growth towards Christian maturity, because it is only 'with all the saints' (Eph. 3:18) that such growth is possible. Properly, then, we can only hope to avoid some of the tragedies, pitfalls and distortions of our particular Church life, such as those which played their part in the Rwandan tragedy, by a conscious mutual openness and accountability.

Church leadership in Rwanda at the time of writing is still in disarray, with some of the Bishops still in exile in Kenya, others with the refugees in the camps in Tanzania and Zaïre. Once official leadership is re-established throughout the Church in Rwanda it may be important for the Church, perhaps on an ecumenical basis and including representatives of external partners, to hold some public service of penitence for all that has happened and the part of the Churches and Christians in it. Where church buildings were used as killing grounds, there will surely be need for a service of cleansing and reconsecration. The events in Rwanda have been a major challenge to our Anglican concept of partnership in the gospel.

## Conclusion

The Rwanda catastrophe has posed many pressing questions for the Church and its mission. Because of the enormity and horror of the events in that land, they have been forced upon our notice very starkly. However, there is no case for a sense of superiority on the part of the Church elsewhere in the world. These issues touch us all and nearly all of them impinge all too closely on the Churches in the United Kingdom. If we are able to take them to heart, and learn some lessons from them, we may avoid similar mistakes. Then, out of the unmitigated disaster of Rwanda, some good may be said to have come.

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