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The Anglican Church of Rwanda: domestic agendas and international linkages

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses the relationship between the Anglican Church of Rwanda and evangelical Episcopalians in the United States. In 2000, the archbishop of Rwanda, Emmanuel Kolini, in a move that gained great support for Rwanda's post-genocide recovery, ordained several bishops to preside over congregations of orthodox, evangelical Americans who had severed their relationship with the Episcopal Church of the United States over issues such as the blessing of same-sex marriages and the ordination of openly gay clergy. The result was the creation of the Anglican Mission in the Americas, a missionary province in the United States that acknowledges Kolini as its archbishop. Such actions have made Rwanda the current *cause célèbre* not only of AMIA but the wider evangelical community. While the relationship offers great support for Rwanda's recovery, the Anglican Church has presented to American evangelicals a misleading narrative of Rwanda's past and present political situation.

INTRODUCTION

On 25 July 2004, the president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, appeared before a crowd of several thousand people in Ruhengeri to offer his remarks on the completion of a new Anglican cathedral. The dedication of the cathedral was the culmination of a five-day evangelistic crusade sponsored by the Shyira Diocese of the 'Province de l'Église Épiscopale au Rwanda' (PEER). The crusade, and the subsequent dedication ceremony, were attended by an estimated 5,000 Rwandans, Anglican bishops and clergy from across the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and a much smaller contingent of Episcopalians from the United States.

Among the Americans in attendance were four priests of an alternative Episcopalian province known as the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMIA). The AMIA pastors were there as special guests of their archbishop, the Reverend Emmanuel Kolini, bishop of Kigali Diocese and archbishop of PEER. The presence of the AMIA pastors, honoured guests throughout the crusade, was the culmination of Kolini's efforts to promote post-genocide recovery in Rwanda by welding together PEER with evangelical, orthodox Americans who had severed their communion with the Episcopalian Church of the United States (ECUSA).

On various occasions, the AMIA pastors were invited to address the crowd and lead workshops on various topics for the Rwandan parishioners. In his closing address at the dedication of the cathedral, Kolini declared the AMIA attendees 'part and parcel of the Church of Rwanda, his spiritual children, indeed Rwandese living in America as missionaries'. During the dedication, the most senior of the AMIA clergymen was invited into the cathedral, along with President Kagame, to take part in the prayers of consecration.¹

Coming ten years to the month after the end of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the crusade and dedication of the cathedral reveal much about Rwanda's efforts to recover from the genocide. The crusade itself was illustrative of the role of the Anglican Church in seeking international aid to promote reconciliation, recovery and development. In addition, Kolini's embrace of disaffected Episcopalians in the United States has made Rwanda the current *cause célèbre* of American evangelicals, holding forth great potential for developmental resources for Rwanda's recovery. The support of the AMIA churches, numbering over one hundred by 2007, has aided greatly in Rwanda's reconstruction, even while its existence indicates the turmoil that American Episcopalians have experienced in recent years over the Church's growing acceptance of homosexual practices. Indeed, the construction of the new cathedral in Ruhengeri was financed in part by wealthy donors from an AMIA church in Alabama.

Yet, despite the close relationship between American evangelicals and Rwandan Anglicans, and despite the genuine efforts made by both towards reconstruction, the evidence suggests that PEER is a politicised 'Tutsi' church, to the detriment of its own efforts at reconciliation as well as AMIA's support of those efforts. This article takes as its thesis that the Anglican Church leaders of Rwanda have elicited great support from AMIA and the wider evangelical community in America, even while taking part in the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) campaign to confirm its legitimacy by obfuscating Rwanda's, and its own, complex history. A politicised

and misleading narrative of Rwanda's past, supported by PEER, has drawn AMIA and its well-financed supporters into embracing a country that has many social and political barriers to overcome. Moreover, the church's relationship to Kagame's regime has disturbing parallels to the Catholic, and Protestant, Church's relationship to the pre-genocide government.

THE POLITICISATION OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE CHURCH

In 1959, the last Tutsi king of Rwanda, Mwami Mutara, died suddenly, sparking an internal revolution in which Hutu rebels attacked the monarchy, sending thousands of Tutsis into Uganda, Burundi and the Belgian Congo. As Belgium relinquished its colonies, elections were held in July 1960, yielding a landslide victory for Grégoire Kayibanda and his anti-Tutsi *Parti du Mouvement de l'Émancipation Hutu* (PARMEHUTU), widely accused of inciting violence against Tutsis in the name of 'Hutu Power'. Formal independence was granted on 1 July 1961, and Rwanda became an independent republic with Kayibanda as president.

By the time it achieved independence, Rwanda was a thoroughly Christianised country. Catholicism arrived first, in 1900, through the efforts of Bishop Jean-Joseph Hirth of the *Missionnaires d'Afrique* or 'White Fathers', and spread rapidly among both the Hutu populace and the ruling Tutsi elites. In 1930, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) established its first mission station at Ruhengeri and the surrounding Shyira Diocese became the first Anglican Province of Rwanda. By the 1940s, both the Anglicans and the Seventh-Day Adventists had attracted significant numbers of converts, though Catholicism remained the majority Church throughout the period before independence and after.

Throughout the colonial era, the Belgian authorities afforded a privileged position to the Tutsis, whom they viewed as the natural rulers of Rwanda, going so far as to issue identity cards that specified Rwandans as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa.² While the Catholic Church, in addition to the Anglicans and virtually all of the others, initially supported such policies, it changed course prior to independence and started promoting Hutus to clerical positions as a means of advancing social justice.

When the 1959 Revolution began, the Church supported Kayibanda's regime and acquiesced in the expulsion of the Tutsis. Moreover, most Tutsis were forced out of government positions, yet continued their predominance in the ranks of the upper hierarchy of the Catholic Church; while Bishop Perraudin was white, Bishop Bigirumwami was Tutsi. The last Tutsi bishop, Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi, was appointed in 1961. Thereafter, and until after the genocide, all appointments were Hutu. Saskia van

Hoyweghen (1996: 382) estimates that, by the time of the genocide, 90 % of the Christian population was Hutu, while 70 % of the lower clergy were Tutsi and most bishops were Hutu. In this sense, 'the Church was penetrated by society and faced difficulties in becoming an independent institution with control over its flock'.

In 1973, General Juvenal Habyarimana led a successful coup against Kayibanda, at a time when Tutsi pogroms were rampant across the country (Hoyweghen 1996). Initially, Habyarimana's regime promised reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi, leading to a reduction in ethnic tensions and promoting considerable development for the country (Mamdani 2001). Despite this, however, the new regime marked the beginning of a complete church-state symbiosis. Health care and education were left to the Church, yet subject to political control, such as the maintenance of an ethnic quota system in clerical promotions (Hoyweghen 1996: 383). Moreover, Vincent Nsengiyumva, archbishop of the Catholic Church, was a member of Habyarimana's inner circle and occupied a seat on the committee of the *Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour la Democratie* (MRND), the ruling party. Leaders of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches were also closely allied with the regime, and local pastors and priests were allied with local burgomasters and councillors (Longman 2001).

In the late 1980s, as the social and economic forces that led to the genocide unfolded, the Church was largely silent. There was no reaction in 1990, for instance, when Sylvio Sindambiwe, a writer with the Catholic journal *Kinyameteka*, was murdered for speaking out against corruption (Hoyweghen 1996). Several Tutsi priests were arrested in the aftermath as well. Hoyweghen (1996: 385–6) argues that the church was 'mute' and did not question 'the political structures in which it comfortably operated'. While several church organisations were critical of Habyarimana's new course, the senior clergy, allied with the regime, 'had no eye for social justice nor the oppression of its own Tutsi clergy'.

When the genocide began in April 1994, the church remained silent and even cooperative in the face of its own destruction. The first place attacked was the Centre Christus in Kigali, where the Hutu priests and laity were spared while the Tutsi priests were killed, along with a group of visiting Tutsi schoolgirls. Reports abounded from across Rwanda of both Catholic and Protestant clergy who stepped aside to allow the *interahamwe* militias to massacre their Tutsi parishioners hiding in the churches, in some cases hiding there because they were invited in by their priests. *African Rights* reported that more Rwandans died in churches than anywhere else (Longman 2001).

By the time the genocidal spree was over, the Catholic Church had lost, in addition to its credibility, roughly half of its priests. Hoyweghen reports that by the summer of 1995 only 200 or so priests were left in Rwanda out of a total of nearly 400, the rest either dead or hiding in refugee camps. In June 1995, Nsengiyumva and two other bishops were killed in retribution for the genocide. Hoyweghen (1996: 395) describes the post-genocide Catholic Church as '*de facto* beheaded' and 'in a state of shock'.

THE UGANDAN ORIGINS OF THE POST-GENOCIDE ANGLICAN CHURCH

In these chaotic circumstances Paul Kagame's RPF and its military arm, the RPA, intensified the military campaign started in 1990, intent on ending the genocide and ousting the remnants of Habyarimana's government. Kagame's forces comprised Tutsi exiles, many of whom had lived most, if not all, of their lives in Uganda. During the 1959 Revolution, and in subsequent waves in the years afterward, tens of thousands of persecuted Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries. The majority of these refugees, described as the '59ers', took up residence in southern Uganda, where they had a close relationship with the indigenous Banyarwanda and related Ankole peoples (Otunnu 1999a). There, they formed the core of a Tutsi refugee community who continually sought the right of return to what they saw as their homeland (Waugh 2004).

Much of the post-genocide church hierarchy in Rwanda, which supports the image of the Tutsi returnees as suffering refugees seeking only to return home, obscures both the complex role played by the Tutsi exiles in Uganda's turbulent political history, and the citizenship crisis that engulfed the region in the late 1980s. Throughout the period of the first Milton Obote government and Idi Amin's subsequent era, the '59ers' were frequently viewed as meddlesome outsiders who had overstayed their welcome. Initially, the Tutsi refugees were welcomed, but as it became apparent that they would remain in the country indefinitely, 'hospitality fatigue set in and generosity turned into hostility' (Otunnu 1999a). In 1980, when Obote gained power a second time, numerous Tutsi refugees, led by Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame, joined Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA) in their struggle against Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC).³

With Museveni's victory in 1986, Tutsi leaders, among them Rwigyema and Kagame, formed the RPF/RPA in 1987 as a unit of the NRA to assist in putting down counter-insurgencies in eastern and northern Uganda

(Otunnu 1999b). While participation in the NRA's struggle allowed the RPF to recruit many more refugees and perfect their military skills, the effect for Museveni of his alliance with the '59ers' was to greatly heighten anti-Tutsi feelings among the Ugandan populace (Pottier 2002). By 1989, Rwigyema was second only to Museveni in the military hierarchy of the NRA, and many other Tutsis had obtained key political, military and economic posts (Waugh 2004). Otunnu (1999a) documents that the increased presence of the Tutsi refugees tended to confirm the claim that the NRA itself was a 'Tutsi organisation' and that Museveni's political opponents frequently referred to him as a 'Rwandese refugee'.

By 1990, the large Tutsi presence in the NRA and elsewhere in Uganda presented Museveni with a significant political problem, the outcome of which has generally been termed the 'citizenship crisis'. When Museveni gained power, the NRA's opponents demanded that indigenous Ugandans receive priority in the new state. To resolve the question of who was indigenous, and thus who was a citizen, the NRA made a distinction between residents and non-residents. Mamdani (2001) argues that the 1990 'squatter uprising' over land entitlements compelled Museveni, who had already removed Rwigyema and other non-citizen '59ers' from their positions, to clarify that only indigenous Ugandans were entitled to state land, to the exclusion of the Banyarwandan Tutsi refugees.⁴

Prior to Museveni's 1990 clarification of citizenship, which excluded the Tutsi refugees, many of them had been content to become naturalised Ugandans. Initially, in July 1986, Museveni declared that any Banyarwanda who was resident for ten or more years would be entitled to citizenship. But with his change of course in 1990, and the realisation that they would have neither land nor political power in Uganda, the refugee community concluded that they would have no future unless they returned to Rwanda. It was thus with Museveni's perceived political betrayal as well as logistical support that the initial 1990 RPF invasion of Rwanda began, which culminated in 1994 in the midst of the genocide.

The complexities and nature of the RPF's involvement in Ugandan politics as well as the 'citizenship crisis' in Uganda and the wider Great Lakes Region are not spoken of by PEER, and its AMIA supporters remain largely oblivious to these issues as well. The narrative that generally persists in AMIA and the wider American evangelical community, a narrative neither refuted nor challenged by PEER, is that Kagame and the RPF invaded Rwanda only to stop the genocide and rebuild the country. Such ignorance allows many of Rwanda's supporters to picture themselves as coming along behind a benevolent RPF to rescue the country from its underdevelopment and help in its recovery, without having to face the

RPF's history or the larger political issues at stake for Rwanda and the region.

The ousting of Habyarimana's regime in July 1994, and the coming to power of the RPF, marks the beginning of the current phase of Rwanda's history. There followed a period of stabilisation and an effort to reconstruct a new civil society, supposedly inclusive of all Rwandans. Ethnic identity cards were abolished and the RPF affirmed its commitment to the Arusha Accords and a government based on power-sharing. Moreover, many 'friends of the new Rwanda' in the United States, the UK and the Netherlands, burdened by guilt, saw the RPF as the 'good guys' (Ryentjens 2004). Foreign aid began flowing and numerous dignitaries made their pilgrimage to Rwanda to apologise for not doing more to stop the genocide.

The victory of the RPF also opened the way for many Tutsi exiles, first and second generation refugees from the conflicts of 1959 to 1973, to return to the country. The return of the refugees, estimated at 800,000, marks the most significant social change for Rwanda's post-genocide history. Chukwuma Obidegwu (2003: 11), the lead economist for Poverty Reduction and Debt Management for the World Bank, notes that the return of the Tutsi diaspora signifies a replacement of the 'old elite, most of whom fled into exile, by a new elite that consisted mostly of English-speaking returnees from Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. English was adopted as an official language, facilitating the transition for the returnees as well as the work of international NGOs and donors from the English-speaking world.'

Among the new elite were numerous Anglican clergymen who returned to rebuild the church and join in the effort to promote reconciliation and recovery. Many of them came back to Rwanda after years of exile abroad, and have capitalised on the virtual destruction of the pre-genocide Christian church to build a new institution, one that shares a close alignment with the new Rwandan state. Virtually all of the Anglican pastors with whom this author spoke in 2004 were raised in Uganda and returned in the wake of the genocide. Educated in Uganda, they speak English as a primary language, and Kinyarwanda as a second language, if at all. Moreover, as the Tutsi exiles generally held the Catholic Church as primarily responsible for the 1959 Revolution, they viewed it with hostility and by and large adopted Anglicanism.⁵

Key figures in the Anglican hierarchy are also Tutsi returnees. In 1996, the Anglican Consultative Council instituted a new church hierarchy to replace the leadership lost during the genocide. While much of the blame for the genocide centres on the Catholic Church, the Anglican hierarchy was just as culpable. The Anglican bishops of the Kigali and Shyira

dioceses were both vocal in their support of Habyarimana's regime and were thus forced out of office after the RPF takeover.

The present archbishop, Emmanuel Kolini, was born in Zaire and came of age in Uganda, where he attended seminary and served as priest and headmaster of several refugee schools. Kolini, who has extensive contacts in the United States, became bishop of Kigali Diocese and archbishop of PEER in 1997. Second only to Kolini in his prominence among American Episcopalians is Bishop John Rucyahana. A Tutsi exile in 1959, Rucyahana grew up in Uganda where he served as a priest until 1997 when he was named bishop of the Shyira Diocese. A similar story holds for several other bishops and executive officials of the church. Most recently, on 29 November 2005, Pastor Emmanuel Gatera, a professor from Mukono University in Uganda, was appointed provincial secretary of the church and acts as a liaison between PEER and AMIA.

The Ugandan origins of the Anglican hierarchy present several barriers to the church being an effective mouthpiece for reconciliation and political inclusiveness. Apart from its clear association with the RPF, PEER is essentially a Tutsi organisation. While church leaders and pastors repeatedly refer to themselves as 'Rwandan', the Hutu populace, still poor and without access to power, continue to see the ruling elites, in both church and state, as Tutsi. Mamdani (2001) confirms that even moderate opponents of the RPF complain that not only are the structures of power in Rwanda being Tutsified, but even civic bodies such as the media and non-governmental organisations are being cleansed of any but a nominal Hutu presence. The author's research and observations confirm that PEER is no exception. Based on numerous conversations the author had in 2004 with people unaffiliated with the church, contemporary Rwandans are acutely aware of the identity of the new rulers.

Moreover, the very prevalence of English in church functions serves as a perpetual reminder of this. Most of the ruling elites in both the government and church, raised in anglophone Uganda, speak French as a third language, if at all. Given that most Rwandans speak French as a co-language, this in itself presents a barrier to the church's programme of reconciliation. Despite Anglicanism's long history in the country, the use of English in many church functions reminds Rwandans that PEER, in its present form, is essentially an outside institution, fostered in Uganda. Considering both the importance of language in creating a sense of identity and the primacy of the church in African civil society, this is not a minor hurdle in Rwanda's road to overcoming the ethnic divisions of the past. PEER's present association with high-profile American supporters also supports the use of English.

Nonetheless, the church has, in its rhetoric, attempted to reach beyond its Tutsi identity to promote unity and reconciliation under the banner of Rwanda's long Christian heritage. Thus, the church has tried to recall the spirit and practices of the charismatic East African Revival Movement of the 1930s. Central to this is the Biblical, and widespread African, belief in prophecy.⁶ The church claims that a divinely inspired prophecy has been issued for Rwanda, asserting that the country will be 'a model of reconciliation and recovery and that the wider world will look in awe upon the ability of Rwandans to heal from the genocide'. The prophecy, printed in the programme guide for the Ruhengeri crusade (PEER 2002), further claims that 'Rwanda will become the source of a "Spiritual Renaissance" for the world. The revelation to His [God's] servants was that Rwanda would be united and reconciled to such an extent that the whole world would marvel. This has inspired them to search after the God of the impossible.' The crusade literature also expressed the hope that fulfilment of the 'Divine Prophecy' would be realised and claimed that Rwanda's destiny was 'Pardon for sins for those who confess' (presumably genocide perpetrators), in addition to 'protection against curses, plagues, poverty and famine' (PEER 2004).

The programme cites the Biblical prophet Zechariah as its authority; specifically, chapter 8, verses 22–23, which reads, 'Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"' (*ibid.*; Bible translation from the Revised Standard Version). Symbolically, for evangelical Christians, the 'Jew' spoken of in the passage is a reference to Christ himself, in whom forgiveness and reconciliation can be found. When the passage speaks of 'men from every tongue' taking hold of Christ, the implicit message is that only Christ can overcome the divisions wrought by the genocide. The very theme of the crusade was 'We Wish to See Jesus'.

In its very Christ-centred approach, the prophecy elicits great attention from both Rwandan Christians and American evangelicals. Considering the history of northwest Rwanda and Ruhengeri as the starting point for the East African Revival, divine prophecy has deep cultural roots.⁷ The Anglicans of Rwanda, while far from being Pentecostal, accept charismatic practices, including prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues, all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Such was communicated to the author by Diocesan Secretary Nathan Amooti, who translated the sermons at the Ruhengeri Crusade from English to Kinyarwanda and vice versa.

Both languages were used interchangeably during the crusade and speak to the fact that the present Anglican hierarchy is generally fluent only in English and Kinyarwanda, while the majority of their Hutu parishioners speak French or Kinyarwanda. Amooti also serves as Archbishop Kolini's assistant, and travels frequently in the United States visiting AMIA congregations, many of whom also accept charismatic practices.⁸

Given the crusade's location in Ruhengeri, the prophecy, with its divine exhortation for reconciliation, carries considerable weight. The 1959–63 violence against Tutsis was especially widespread in the North, and Habyarimana himself was from a traditionally northern lineage, as was the establishment that was responsible for the genocide. Large-scale massacres also took place in the region in the years from 1990–93 (Uvin 1997). Thus, the area was home to many genocide perpetrators, and the author was told that there were many former *génocidaires* in attendance at the crusade.

The Anglican Church is attempting to promote spiritual reconciliation and unification under the banner of the country's Christian heritage. By exhorting Rwandans to find their identification in Christ, the church tries to offer a powerful, constructivist mechanism for rebuilding society and overcoming the deep divisions that still plague the country. In the language of political science, the constructivist approach to nation-building is explained as being that of offering individuals a sense of identity, constructed largely unconsciously or intuitively as a category of understanding. This suggests that institutional arrangements which an individual inhabits may become the defining categories of political understanding concerning their identity, interests and goals (Brown 2000).

This approach suggests that the church in Rwanda is trying to position itself to play a constructive role in recovering from the genocide by defining a new sense of national identity rooted in Christianity. Yet, because of its close alignment with the ruling RPF, the church has allowed itself to become a political mouthpiece for the regime. A case in point is its unwillingness to call attention to the many human rights violations committed by the RPA. For example, while it was pointed out to the AMIA attendees at the Ruhengeri Crusade that the area was home to many genocide perpetrators, no mention was made of the fact that the RPA killed thousands of civilians in northwest Rwanda between January and August 1997, and further, in 1999, hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gisenyi and Ruhengeri were forcibly relocated to 'deplorable' regroupment camps (Reyntjens 2004).

American evangelicals, largely unaware of such crimes, are attracted very strongly to PEER's efforts, and see such actions as a divinely inspired opportunity to join in and support the rebuilding of Rwanda with a

Christ-centred message. Kolini himself has become one of the central figures in the battle between Anglican progressives and traditionalists. In so doing, he has attracted considerable attention and resources for development from orthodox Episcopalians in the United States, even while his church keeps its American congregants in the dark about Rwanda's complex history and socio-political issues.

‘A SPIRITUAL GENOCIDE OF THE TRUTH’: THE HOMOSEXUAL
DIVIDE

Soon after their ordination as bishops, Kolini and Rucyahana attended the 1998 Lambeth Conference of the world-wide Anglican Communion, held every ten years to address matters of faith and doctrine in the church. There, they joined other primates from Africa and Asia who were increasingly angered at what they saw as the growing liberalism of Western Anglicanism. By the late 1990s, the issue of same-sex marriage and the ordination of openly gay priests was becoming a major point of contention between orthodox Anglicans and church liberals.

Liberals, led by the ECUSA bishop, Frank Griswold, endorse a more open acceptance of homosexual practices. The traditionalists, represented strongly by churches in Africa and Asia, condemn homosexuality, and its acceptance, as incompatible with the authority and teachings of the Bible. At Lambeth, bishops from Africa and Asia formed the majority of the votes in the passage of a statement (Jenkins 2002) condemning the ‘evils of homosexuality and the impossibility of reconciling homosexual conduct with Christian ministry’. Prior to the 5 August vote, Kolini joined eight other archbishops from Africa, Australia, Asia and South America in an open letter to the conference urging support for the statement. Its subsequent passage was sternly condemned by the North American church hierarchies. Griswold (Jenkins 2002) labelled it ‘dangerous fundamentalism’.

While the issue threatens to create a permanent rift between the Western Anglican churches and what is commonly called the more orthodox ‘Global South’ churches, the denunciation of homosexuality was welcomed by numerous conservative, rank-and-file Episcopalians in America who increasingly found themselves at odds with their more liberal overseers. On 29 January 2000, Kolini became a lead figure in the controversy when he joined then Archbishop Moses Tay of Southeast Asia in ordaining two American bishops, Charles Murphy and John Rodgers, to serve as ‘missionary bishops’, charged with ministering to orthodox congregations who felt ‘isolated or repressed by liberal leaders’ of the Episcopalian

Church-USA (Jenkins 2002). While Anglican tradition holds that an archbishop is free to ordain anyone he chooses, the bold move was condemned by the archbishop of Canterbury and head of the world-wide Anglican Communion, George Carey, who refused to recognise Murphy's and Rodgers' ordination. The archbishop of Canada, Michael Peers, declared (LeBlanc 2000): 'Bishops are not intercontinental ballistic missiles, manufactured on one continent and fired into another.'

Nevertheless, Kolini, joined by the archbishop of Southeast Asia, Datuk Yong Ping Chung, ordained four more American bishops in 2001 to preside over what became the Anglican Mission in the Americas, a 'virtual province' of the Anglican Church of Rwanda residing in America with Emmanuel Kolini as its archbishop. Jenkins (2002) describes AMIA's purpose as being a 'missionary province', charged with the task of leading the Episcopal Church 'back to its Biblical foundations and restoring traditional teachings' on issues like the ordination of gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex marriages.

AMIA has since grown rapidly, and Kolini presently stands at the head of an American jurisdiction in the United States that claims over 100 churches and an estimated 15,000 members. Kolini and numerous Anglican clergy from Africa have remained actively involved, travelling frequently in the United States to meet their congregations and speaking regularly at AMIA's annual conferences. Additionally, AMIA's numbers have grown as the North American church has continued in its perceived liberalism. In November 2003, when Gene Robinson was ordained as the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopalian Church, the issue again became front page news, prompting a new round of American churches to join AMIA. The issue continues to remain current among Episcopalians, as well as the broader evangelical community, as numerous political debates have erupted in America over gay marriage in recent years.⁹

Kolini first attracted attention in 1996 when he published a brief article in *Christianity Today*, a leading evangelical periodical. In 'Cheap Evangelism', Kolini (1996) endorsed the Anglican commitment to evangelism but took issue with what he called 'wrongful understandings concerning the teaching that the gospel is for all people, regardless of their sinfulness'. He claimed to observe 'a weakening in the Christian commitment to God's call to transformation, particularly when it comes to sinful expressions of sexuality and harmful lifestyle choices'. In that spirit, Kolini's role in the Lambeth controversy was born.

Nor is he alone in his condemnation of homosexual lifestyles. In November 2003, the consecration of Robinson elicited a chorus of criticism from Anglican leaders across South America and Africa. The *New York*

Times (Lacey & Goodstein 2003) noted that opposition to homosexuality was most vociferous in Africa, where 'gays remain closeted and popular sentiment regards same-sex relationships as a vice exported from the West'. Following Robinson's consecration, Benjamin Nzimbi, archbishop of Kenya, declared, 'The Devil has clearly entered our church'. Peter Akinola, former archbishop of Nigeria, home to the largest Anglican population in the world, has equated homosexuals with pigs and dogs. Political leaders have weighed in as well. In January 2006, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (Bigabo 2006) told a conference of Nigerian bishops, 'Such a tendency [homosexuality] is clearly un-Biblical, unnatural and definitely un-African.'

Statements and declarations such as these often lead Western evangelicals to believe that African society is either inherently anti-gay or else that African Christians are particularly literalistic in their interpretation of the Bible. However, African views on same-sex relations must be understood against the historical backdrop of African sexuality. Marc Epprecht (2004: 224) demonstrates that same-sex sexuality was known in pre-modern Africa, yet homosexuality 'as an identity or an exclusive life choice did not exist when the pressures to have sex for reproduction were so overdetermined by material, political, spiritual or other cultural considerations'. In regard to the perception that contemporary Africans are exceptionally hostile to gays, the author argues (*ibid.*: 225) that 'revulsion against same-sex behaviors, acts, relationships and thoughts (that is, homophobia) was introduced into the region by European colonialists and preachers', and that Africans 'were encouraged through these discourses to equate homophobic constructions of sexuality, sensuality, and gender with civilization and progress'.¹⁰

For his part, Kolini has made his message more palatable to American evangelicals by avoiding bombastic public statements, such as Nzimbi and Akinola have made. In interviews and press statements, Kolini has emphasised that the issue is one of scripture, rather than sexuality. In September, 2003, Kolini (BBC 2003) claimed, 'we denounce and declare that the Episcopal Church of USA has departed from the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ'. In August 2004, Kolini (Blake 2004) noted that the Episcopal Church's argument was that 'it's about interpretation of the Bible. We think its culture. You can't impose your culture onto other people. To be Christian, there are some fundamentals, some basics to our faith. The question is "is homosexuality a sin or not?" If the Scripture calls it a sin, then it's a sin.'

At the heart of Kolini's mission is the claim that what happened in Rwanda in 1994 is comparable to the current state of the Episcopalian

Church. Kolini and his bishops have often declared that what is happening in the American church is tantamount to ‘a spiritual genocide of the truth’. As early as 1997, Kolini (1997) expressed his belief that ‘there is not one, but two genocides – a physical genocide and a spiritual genocide. Spiritual genocide refers to the presence of sin in people’s hearts.’ In January 2005, Kolini’s former provincial secretary and bishop of Kibungo Diocese, Josias Sendegeya (Townsend 2005), claimed, ‘The Rwandan people know what it is to suffer. We experienced genocide and the horror that no one in the world came to help us. What has happened in the Episcopal Church feels like genocide, too. But it is spiritual rather than physical.’

In effect, the Anglicans in Rwanda have cast their mission as one of rescue. In one of his remarks about AMIA at the dedication of the Ruhengeri cathedral, Kolini declared: ‘Ten years ago, when Rwanda cried out to the world for help, no one answered. So when we heard the American church crying out for help, we decided to answer.’ Indeed, the prophecy espoused by the church claims that Rwanda will be a source of spiritual renewal for the world.¹¹

Kolini’s message, and the actions of the church in Rwanda, resounds loudly with AMIA parishioners, and the association between Rwanda and AMIA has paid large dividends for the country. The author’s research in Rwanda, and at the AMIA Winter Conference in January 2005, confirms that the majority of AMIA parishioners, as well as many other evangelicals in America, see the Anglican Church’s work in Rwanda as utterly genuine and along Biblical principles.¹² Many of them do indeed see Kolini’s adoption of their churches as a rescue from theological heresy, and they are returning the favour, even while remaining largely unaware of Rwanda’s history or PEER’s relationship to the RPF.

Numerous AMIA congregations give large sums of money for development in Rwanda, in addition to the substantial ecclesiastical contributions that AMIA makes to its new home province. AMIA congregations routinely undertake mission trips to Rwanda to take part in development projects. The cathedral at Rugenheri is one such example. Currently under way is the new Kigali Episcopal Theological College, supported by and financed in large part by American Anglicans.¹³

The support for Rwanda has now gone beyond AMIA. In no small measure because of Kolini, Rucyhana and their AMIA supporters, Rwanda has drawn the attention of evangelical ‘mega-churches’ in America, notably Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church in California and author of the best-selling *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren, whose books have sold more than 26 million

copies since 2003, is one of the most recognised figures among American evangelicals. In the summer of 2005, Warren and several other 'mega-church' pastors travelled to Rwanda and met Kagame and Rwandan church leaders to outline their plan to mobilise American churches to address the problems of poverty and disease in Africa. At a gathering of 9,000 Rwandan Christians, Warren (Morgan 2005) pledged to make Rwanda the first 'purpose driven nation', an initiative to 'harness businesspeople, politicians and pastors against the nation's biggest social problems'.

The purpose of this article is not to question the value of such contributions or the beliefs and faith of Kolini and his followers. Rather, the suggestion here is that PEER, acting in cooperation with the RPF, has been very skilled in forging an international alliance with American church congregants who knew little or nothing of Rwanda's history or the genocide prior to finding themselves in a *de facto* Rwandan church. In this, the Anglican Church supports a campaign by the RPF to present a misleading narrative of Rwanda's history, a narrative that uses language, identity and an idealised version of the past to support its monopolisation of political power.

THE MISREPRESENTATION OF HISTORY AND POLITICS

Regardless of the personal sincerity of PEER's clergymen and their AMIA partners, reconciliation and recovery must take place in the context of a thorough and unbiased understanding of Rwanda's history. As Mamdani (2001) notes, the identification of perpetrator and survivor is contingent on one's historical perspective, and thus it is not possible to think of reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi without a prior reconciliation with history. Without a fair and accurate understanding of the past, any efforts toward reconciliation and development will have the effect of supporting the ruling Tutsi and RPF oligarchy, hindering any progress on genuine political reform. Thus, the conflict will continue to simmer until the opponents of the regime can regroup for the next round. In 2004, Filip Reyntjens (2004) documented a number of political movements, made up of both Hutus and Tutsis, which had formed either in exile or clandestinely to oppose Kagame's regime, including the *Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) which claimed to have 20,000 troops in Congo that could be engaged against the regime.

On one level, the church recognises its own role in Rwanda's history. In 2004, Kolini, who himself had no role in either the genocide or the RPF invasion, admitted that the church must seek forgiveness. He stated

(Morgan 2004a), ‘The failure of the church in the genocide is an opportunity for the church to cleanse itself and ask for forgiveness.’ In other ways as well, PEER recognises the power of history, symbolism and language, at least in its own messages. In a keynote sermon at the Ruhengeri crusade, Rucyahana proclaimed a common theme heard throughout the week. He extolled, ‘It is not the blood of Hutu or the blood of Tutsi that will make you free, but the blood of Jesus!’¹⁴ By invoking the graphic imagery of blood, Rucyahana reminded the audience of Rwanda’s violent past while, at the same time, urging reconciliation in the name of Christ.

Moreover, in the programme guide for the Ruhengeri Crusade, as well as in conversations with the author, the church and its clergymen avoided categorising genocide victims as ‘Hutu Moderates and Tutsis’, as is often done elsewhere. Nigel Eltringham (2004: 76) warned of such constructions in *Accounting for Horror*. Reference to Hutus victimised by the genocide as ‘moderates’ implies that all Hutus who survived are extremists, culpable to some degree in the killings. He wrote that depicting ‘moderate Hutus’ as ‘an “extinct category” contributes to a portrayal of contemporary Rwanda according to a crude, binary framework, composed *only* of “victim-rescapé-Tutsi” and “perpetrator-génocidaire-Hutu”’. This binary segmentation echoes the imagined Manichean construction of Rwandan society found in genocidal propaganda.’

At the crusade, church leaders referred to a Rwandan society inhabited by people of different categories, among them ‘genocide survivors, genocide perpetrators, and those indifferent’. No mention was made of ‘Hutu moderates’ or ‘Tutsi survivors’. In several conversations with the author, Anglican pastors also avoided making such references.¹⁵ Yet, even here, the church adopts a genocidal framework from which to characterise Rwandan society, carrying the implication that the genocide produces the only correct categories for identification and reference (Mamdani 2001).

The most common way in which PEER supports the RPF’s misrepresentation of Rwanda is in their insistence that the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi is no longer relevant. Only after the author pressed the issue, did PEER clergymen admit to being Tutsi. In general, they claim that there are no longer any Hutus or Tutsis, only Rwandans, a practice supported by the government in Kigali and observed by the author elsewhere among contemporary Rwandans. Nathan Amooti explained that the classification system was a false European construct. He claimed that, apart from the old Belgian identification system, ‘Rwandans don’t know who is who until they talk about their fathers and grandfathers.’¹⁶ Similar statements have routinely been made by others to this author and to the wider AMIA community as well.

While the avoidance of classifying Rwandans as ‘Hutus’ or ‘Tutsis’ seems laudable on the surface, the further claim that ethnicity was a European invention supports Johan Pottier’s argument (2002) that the RPF and its sympathisers, such as PEER, have waged an extensive campaign to popularise misinformation about pre-colonial Rwanda, re-write history and make the world believe that ethnicity was and is a non-issue in RPF ranks. Both Jan Vansina (2004) and Catherine Newbury (1988), among others, have made a compelling case that the distinction between ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ was firmly established in the nineteenth-century, during the reign of King Rwabugiri. Pottier (2002) makes the point that the portrayal of Rwanda’s ethnic divisions as a European invention creates a ‘smoke-screen of sameness’ that leads amateur observers of the country to read too much into the fact that Rwandans speak the same language, have the same religion and inhabit the same space.

The projection of a Rwanda that was ethnically harmonious before the European arrival serves two functions that play well with Western church audiences, Rwanda’s AMIA supporters among them. First, blaming the Hutu–Tutsi division on the Europeans exacerbates the culture of guilt that exists in the West for not only failing to stop the genocide but ultimately being responsible for creating the very conditions that caused it. The frequent statements of Kolini and other PEER officials that their ‘rescue’ of American Anglicanism was born out of the West’s failure to rescue Rwanda in 1994 serves this point explicitly. Second, as Pottier (2002) notes, this misleading depiction of Rwanda’s history gives people unfamiliar with the country the false sense that ‘the clock can easily be turned back to those harmonious times’ when the Tutsi elites benevolently ran the country. In that light, the Tutsi elites who are presently in power can easily be seen as long-suffering Rwandans who are simply re-building a once harmonious and united country. Lost in the culture of sympathy surrounding the Tutsi exiles is Mamdani’s (2001) observation that it was the initial RPF invasion of 1990 that gave the proponents of ‘Hutu Power’ the opportunity to raise the spectre of ‘Tutsi Power’ returning to subjugate the populace.

A case in point of PEER’s support for the RPF’s campaign is its embrace of what Pottier (2002) calls the ‘10-cows thesis’. To explain the origins of the European classification system while obfuscating the fixed nature of the nineteenth-century Tutsi oligarchy, the RPF’s spokespersons have resorted to the claim that ‘Tutsi’ was solely an economic term that meant ‘one who owns ten or more cows’, and that the Europeans racialised what was merely a question of economics. At the AMIA Winter Conference in 2005, the author observed a representative of PEER

explain the ‘10-cows thesis’ to a large audience of American attendees. No one challenged the claim. Pottier argues that the 10-cows sound-bite is an exceptionally effective way to convey to the world that the RPF is above ethnicity, while abundant evidence demonstrates that such is not the case.

Eugenia Zorbas (2004) argues that the RPF’s suppression of ethnic identification, a policy supported by PEER, serves to mask the prominence of Tutsi returnees and former RPF members’ dominance of Rwandan government and society. She quotes Gérard Prunier who has said that Rwandan political power is presently in the hands of a few key men who grew up as refugees in Uganda, and who are former RPF officers who maintain close business and political ties within a circle of civilian friends, family and associates who monopolise all key posts in the country.

Prunier (1995) himself quotes Jean-Damascène Ntakirumana, a former Hutu member of the transitional government who defected in 1995. Ntakirumana claims, with first-hand insight, ‘The RPF denies that there is any ethnic problem today with the same energy it used in denouncing the ethnic imbalance of the old regime ... the RPF has simply installed a new form of Tutsi power.’ Elizabeth Sidiropoulos (2002), director of studies at the South African Institute of International Affairs, supports the assertion, claiming that Kagame’s government enjoys support and legitimacy ‘among the new elite, many of whom are returnees. That support is evident among certain elements of the church as well.’ She further observes that ‘the perception that a small elite, primarily made up of Tutsis from Uganda, runs the country has alienated some segments of the population’. *The Economist* (2004) described Rwanda as a ‘thinly-disguised autocracy, where dissidents, who are usually accused of genocidal tendencies, live in fear, or exile, or both’, and that serious domestic opposition or free speech is not tolerated.



The RPF’s misrepresentation of Rwanda’s history, carried out in collusion with PEER, has allowed the country to benefit richly from its embrace of American evangelicals, without having attention called to any programme of real political reform. AMIA pastors, congregants and other evangelical supporters frequently travel in Rwanda under the guidance of PEER, to observe various social projects to which they can lend their support and resources. In so doing, they are subjected to an idealised portrayal of contemporary Rwanda’s history and political culture. When questioned, a convenient, albeit misleading, narrative is offered that presents the following: the RPF were suffering refugees who returned to end the

genocide, a genocide ultimately caused by the Europeans and then ignored when it happened; the RPF, headed by Kagame, is above ethnicity and rules Rwanda strongly only for the purpose of rebuilding a country dishevelled by the West; the Anglican Church is above it all and seeks only Rwanda's development and recovery.

The problems with this narrative are either unknown or ignored by Rwanda's AMIA supporters and the wider evangelical community in America. Otunnu (1999b) demonstrates that the RPA's invasion of Rwanda was calculated and well planned, fuelled by the commencement of the genocide but originally timed by the citizenship crisis in Uganda. Moreover, far from being an organisation bereft of ethnic identity, the RPF is thoroughly Tutsi, as is PEER, and obfuscates its identity by blaming ethnicity on colonialism and presenting a 'new Rwanda' in which there is no Tutsi or Hutu. American supporters are thus blinded both to the divisions that still plague Rwanda and the region, and to the elitist nature of its rulers.

Kagame himself is seen as a visionary leader at best and a benevolent dictator at worst who is ushering Rwanda down the path of reconciliation. Especially troubling is Rick Warren's recent proclamation (Mugabe 2006) that Kagame is a 'man who does what is right; he is a great leader who will save Rwanda. He stopped the genocide and thereafter installed reconciliation; he is a servant leader.' Initially, Kagame offered the promise of an inclusive government that would honour the 1994 Arusha Accords, which promised a multi-party and multi-ethnic constitution. In that spirit, Kagame offered positions to former Hutus who opposed the Habyarimana regime. Among their number were Pasteur Bizimungu, first president of the transitional government, Pierre-Célestin Rwigyema, second prime minister, and Seth Sendashonga, first minister of the interior. However, by 2001, Bizimungu was under house arrest, Rwigyema was in exile and Sendashonga had been assassinated in Nairobi. Even Joseph Sebarenzi, Speaker of the National Assembly and an outspoken voice for the Tutsi survivor community, was in exile (Waugh 2004).

By 2002, the RPF's initial embrace of ethnic and political plurality in government was a façade. Kagame's government has since stifled political opposition and governs as a virtual dictatorship, unopposed by the Rwandan church community or any other civic body. Timothy Longman (1999: 354) observes that in post-genocide Rwanda, 'the RPF-dominated government has been careful to prevent an independent civil society from re-emerging. The government has actively sought to place its allies in charge of all important social organizations. The government has even intervened in the selection of church leaders.'

As to Rwanda's church leaders, specifically PEER, their close association with and support of the RPF, dating back to their own origins in Uganda, have made them a politicised church along the same lines as the Catholic and Protestant Churches under both Kayibanda and Habyarimana. They support the post-genocide narrative offered by the RPF, and have been enlisted in the campaign to re-write Rwanda's history. While their efforts to promote reconciliation have brought many resources and much attention to the country, and while they may be utterly genuine in their own efforts, they have become complicit in presenting the RPF's version of Rwanda's history and politics. As a result, to paraphrase Pottier (2002), AMIA has joined the ranks of numerous groups in the 'aid industry' that prefer to accept the authorities' easy reading of a highly complex situation, and have actively reproduced and spread, wittingly or unwittingly, a vision of Rwanda that bears the RPF's seal of approval. Forgotten is Lemarchand's (1998) warning that 'there can be no reconciliation without justice and no justice without truth'.

NOTES

1. The research for this article, conducted by the author in Rwanda in 2004, comes from notes and observations made in Kigali and Ruhengeri and from numerous conversations both during and since with Rwandan clergy and AMIA pastors in the United States. The author also attended the Anglican Mission in America National Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC in January 2005.

2. Belgium's actions were reinforced by the 'Hamitic hypothesis', which held that because agriculture was the natural occupation of the Negro, cattle-owning Africans, like the Tutsi rulers of Rwanda, were the descendants of Noah's son, Ham, from the Biblical Genesis story, and therefore a culturally superior race meant to rule the inferior agriculturalists, such as the Hutu.

3. In their quest to gain political acceptance, some Banyarwanda supported Idi Amin in his overthrow of Obote. Others, however, Rwigyema and Kagame among them, were recruited by Museveni in his 'bush war' against Obote II following the rigged 1980 election. Rwigyema and Kagame were among the 27 NRA guerrillas who began the war against Obote in 1981.

4. Waugh (2004) also notes that Uganda's legislative body, the National Ruling Council, was seeking to bar Tutsis from land ownership, adding to what he calls the 'push' factors, in contrast to the 'pull' factors, in explaining the RPF's invasion of Rwanda.

5. Author's notes, Ruhengeri, 2004.

6. The East African Revival of the 1920s had a deep impact on the Church Missionary Society, who, operating from Uganda, first planted the Anglican Church in Ruhengeri in 1930, making the present Anglican Church a Ugandan product for a second time.

7. Anglicans in Ruhengeri are the spiritual heirs to the *Nyabingi*, a cult of female prophetesses whose conversion to Christianity helped legitimise the church in northwest Rwanda (Bauer 1977).

8. The author had several conversations with Amooti both during and since the crusade, confirming that charismatic practices are accepted by the church.

9. In January 2007, the largest Anglican congregation in North America, Christ Church of Plano, TX, left ECUSA to join AMIA.

10. See Lindsay & Miescher 2003, a collection of essays that explores the changing definitions and understandings of African masculinity.

11. Author's notes, Ruhengeri, 2004.

12. Morgan (2004b) extolled Rwanda's *gacaca* courts as a genuine form of Biblical justice.

13. Through its network of churches and publications, AMIA has even taken an active role in the American marketing of Rwandan coffee.

14. Author's notes, Ruhengeri, 2004.
15. Unfortunately, references to genocide victims as 'Tutsis and Moderate Hutus' are not entirely absent. The reference presently appears in a 'Rwanda News Round-up' story by Grace Mugabe (2.5.2005) on AMIA's website. The reference is troubling because many AMIA congregants, like Americans in general, continue to see the genocide in the dichotomous, binary terms warned about by Eltringham.
16. PEER 2004; author conversations with Pastor Nathan Amooti, Pastor Samuel Mugisha and Pastor Augustin Ahimana, 2004.

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