BUILDING A CITY ON THE HILL
CAN THE CHURCH BRING RECONCILIATION TO RWANDA?

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By

Eric Brinkert, B.A.

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Part I. Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

Fifteen years after the devastating genocide of 1994 Rwanda may be more complicated than ever. Rwanda has shown rapid and steady economic growth in recent years, brought on by a robust coffee market and generous international support, but the Rwandan countryside is still marred by intense poverty. Today Rwanda can proudly proclaim that it is one of the safest countries in Africa, as even this author did not hesitate to go about the capital city of Kigali alone at night. However, while physical violence may be absent, economic inequalities and discrimination remain rampant in Rwanda. There is no doubt that Rwanda has clearly achieved what Galtung would describe as negative peace, or the absence of violent conflict, but the same cannot be said for achieving positive peace, or the elimination of the social and economic factors that led to violence in the first place.  

This thesis will seek to explore one method for achieving positive peace, social reconciliation. It should be noted that reconciliation can take place at both a political and a social level, and that there are many methods currently being used around the world to promote reconciliation. This thesis will look specifically at one method contributing to the social reconciliation process in Rwanda, and focus largely upon intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup levels of the reconciliation process. In what continues to be considered the most Christian nation in Africa, this thesis will look at the Christian contributions to the reconciliation process generally, and the Protestant community’s

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contributions more specifically. This thesis will show the type of religious actors at work in the Rwandan Protestant community and explore their reconciliation programs and methodologies, including their strengths and weaknesses. In the end, this thesis will contribute to our understanding of the reconciliation process in Rwanda by highlighting the work of the little discussed Protestant Christian community in Rwanda and the methods and theories that inform their contributions to the process.

Before opening the discussion of these Protestant religious actors in Rwanda, this thesis will briefly address the historical context in which these programs are being created, followed by an examination of the theories that will inform the understanding of reconciliation utilized in this project. However, the first thing this thesis will address is the methodology employed in the research and design of this project.

**Research Methodology**

This thesis is a qualitative study of the Protestant Christian community’s contributions to the Rwandan reconciliation process. The primary resource material for this thesis comes from individual interviews conducted in person in Rwanda over the course of eight weeks in February and March 2009. Secondary sources are consulted for the development of the theoretical concepts and historical context that supports this thesis, but the primary data is drawn from the interviews conducted during this time. The research design for this thesis is based off the structured, focused comparison method developed by Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett.² The methodology detours a little from the George-Bennet model in that this thesis does not attempt to explain

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political theory, but simply to apply theoretical models used in different reconciliation projects in Rwanda. The focus on this research is on the Protestant Christian frameworks used in designing reconciliation programs in Rwanda. This thesis considers the role of Catholics and Muslims in the reconciliation process, but only when it is pertinent to a discussion of Protestant reconciliation frameworks and program design. Three frameworks for program design are identified and explored in this thesis: the individual denominational framework, the interfaith or interdenominational framework, and the Christian non-governmental organization framework. There are conceivably more frameworks to identify and study, but these were the three most prominent frameworks identified during my two months in Rwanda. The research inquiries presented to representatives of these frameworks were structured to explore only the reconciliation programs designed in these three frameworks, the methodology that informs those designs, and the strengths and weaknesses of those designs at both the national and grassroots levels.

Within the three identified frameworks, this thesis seeks to identify three organizations that fit the description of the frameworks to conduct comparative case studies. For the individual denominational framework the Lutheran Church of Rwanda (LCR) will be used as a case study and for the Christian NGO framework the organization Reconciliation, Evangelism, and Christian Healing (REACH) was selected. No interfaith organization had the breadth of programming at both the national and grassroots levels of the LCR or REACH, and consequently this thesis incorporates two national interfaith groups – the Protestant Council of Rwanda and the Interfaith
Commission of Rwanda – and two grassroots interfaith groups – located in the towns of Nyamata and Rukira, respectively – to complete the interfaith framework case study. The leaders of all these organizations were confidentially interviewed and when appropriate, participants in the reconciliation programs designed within these frameworks were confidentially interviewed as well. Over the course of eight weeks of field research in Rwanda, an average of six leaders were interviewed for each case study, and between 10-20 program participants were interviewed as well. Interviews were conducted in both the capital city of Kigali, as well as in the rural Eastern and Western Provinces.

**Part II. Historical and Theoretical Frameworks**

**History**

**Rwanda Kingdom**

The Pre-colonial Rwanda kingdom was lorded over by one king – considered a divine being – under whom served a hierarchy of chiefs and sub-chiefs. Gérard Prunier, the French historian, described the kingdoms as a “complex pyramid of political, cultural, and economic relationships,” similar to what was seen in Europe until the 18th Century. The chiefs were divided into three types: the *mutwale wa buttaka* which oversaw land distribution, agricultural production, and taxation; the *mutwale wa ingabo* which oversaw what might today be considered human resources, as well as the military; and lastly the *mutwale wa inka/igikingi* who oversaw the grazing lands. All three chiefly responsibilities could be consolidated into one person or distributed among three people.
The majority of these chiefs were Tutsis, although traditionally the mutwale wa buttaka, the chiefs of the land, were Hutus.  

**Origins of Hutu and Tutsi**

The origins of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa remain an issue of much debate. Aimable Twagilimana, chair of the Association of African Studies Programs, identifies two theories explaining their origins, essentialism and functionalism. Essentialism argues that Hutu and Tutsi are distinct and separate groups, with different histories and identifiable qualities, i.e. one Bantu – Hutu and one Hamitic – Tutsi; whereas functionalism views Hutu and Tutsi as social constructs representing assigned roles in a society, i.e. Hutu – farmer, Tutsi – herder, and Twa – hunters. Jean-Pierre Chrétien, another renowned French historian, argues that these two theories lead to two different myths about the formation of the social cleavages between these groups. Essentialism leads to a clash of two incompatible cultures and functionalism leads to a competition between socio-economic categories, i.e. pastoralists, farmers, and hunters. Today historians largely concur that the history of the Hutu and the Tutsi incorporate elements of all of these theories. During the early part of the kingdom, membership in these groups was somewhat fluid, but, Jan Vansina, professor of history and anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, argues that Hutu and Tutsi became rigid categories in 1870 after a new tax system exclusively targeting farmers was introduced by the Tutsi monarch. The elite

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herders soon came to refer to all farmers, poor working class families, and foreigners as Hutu and claimed the name Tutsi for themselves.\(^6\) Despite this rigidity, Prunier highlights two major “social coagulants” in Rwanda before colonialism: war and religion. Rwandans shared one common indigenous religion and Prunier states that during war “while still unequal, [Hutu, Tutsi and Twa] were first and foremost Banyarwanda facing a common enemy.”\(^7\) Chrétien concludes that while Hutu and Tutsi likely originated in different regions, what it meant to be Hutu or Tutsi changed from the time the kingdom was founded, through colonialism, the first republics, the genocide, and still today.\(^8\)

**Colonialism**

Arriving in 1900, the Germans were the first Europeans in Rwanda and found the kingdom going through a process of centralization.\(^9\) The Germans worked with the king to reinforce his power and their presence was initially appreciated by the royal court allowing the Germans to easily implement their system of indirect rule.\(^10\) After its loss in World War I, the Reich’s colonial possessions were divided among the Allied victors, and Rwanda was given to the Belgians.\(^11\) The Belgians used a policy of direct rule, but still relied heavily on the Tutsi court to administer the colony. Under the Belgians the Tutsi elite consolidated political power in the country, and by 1959, forty-three of forty-five chiefs and 549 of 559 sub-chiefs were Tutsis. One of the lasting legacies of the

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\(^7\) Prunier, 15.

\(^8\) Chrétien, 83.

\(^9\) Prunier, 25.

\(^10\) Chrétien, 253.

Belgian colonial administration, and one that would haunt Hutu-Tutsi relations for decades thereafter, was the abuse of the traditional \textit{ubulerwa} system of forced labor. Traditionally in this custom the king called upon each family to provide one strong man to contribute to public works projects, but the Belgian administrators used this system to demand compulsory labor from all Rwandans. Generally the Tutsi elites would administer these projects for the Belgians and the working class Hutus and Tutsis provided the labor. In the First and Second Republics, the Hutu led governments would accuse the Tutsi group as whole of subjecting the Hutu groups as a whole to forced labor. Prunier argues that the culmination of Belgian authority and control of the Rwandan kingdom came in 1931 when they forcefully removed King Yuhi V Musinga, a Tutsi monarch who consistently resisted Belgian rule and conversion to Christianity, from power, replacing him with his Christian son.\footnote{Prunier, 25-28.}

\textbf{Colonial Churches}

Catholic missionaries from the Society of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa – the White Fathers – arrived in northern Rwanda in 1897 and by 1903 had six active missions in the country.\footnote{Chrétien, 213.} The White Fathers were founded in 1868 by Charles Lavigerie, the archbishop of Algiers. They incorporated themselves into African societies by adopting local languages, foods, clothing, and customs.\footnote{Adekunle, Julius O. 2007. \textit{Culture and Customs of Rwanda}. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 33.} Lavigerie intentionally based the society in North Africa and not Europe to ensure that it would
maintain an African identity.\textsuperscript{15} The White Fathers used two outreach strategies in their missions. Their priority was to reach out to a society’s ruling elites and use their influence to convert their people. If this strategy did not succeed, the White Fathers’ would appeal directly to the grassroots populace. This was the case in Rwanda after the White Fathers found the king and his court highly resistant to conversion upon their arrival. While their grassroots movement was somewhat successful, Rwandan converts numbered only 4,500 in 1910\textsuperscript{16} and 10,000 by 1914, most of whom were middle or working class Hutus.\textsuperscript{17} The slow conversion of the working class Rwandans continued until 1927 when the Belgian administrators began to reorganize the colony and made conversion a requirement to attain elite status under the Belgian administration. This led to a dramatic increase in the number of Rwandan converts by 1930. In 1931 when the Belgians replaced King Musinga with his Christian son, Mutara III Rudahigwa, Tutsi elites quickly converted to Christianity.\textsuperscript{18} As the Tutsi elites joined the ranks of the church the balance of power shifted from Hutu priests to Tutsi priests. The 1930s and 1940s also saw a brief surge in aggressive Anglican efforts to convince Rwandans to leave Catholicism for the Anglican Church, but that strategy was abandoned quickly and Protestant denominations were largely overshadowed by the Catholic Church during colonialism.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Chrétien, 213.
\textsuperscript{18} Prunier, 31.
Hutu Revolution

The philosophical underpinnings of the Hutu revolution came in part from European priests. After World War II, Belgian Walloon priests were being replaced by Belgian Flemish priests from working class Belgium. The Flemish priests identified with the plight of the Hutu after their own marginalization in Belgian society. This new generation of European missionaries was inspired by the ideas of both Christian democracy and social democracy, and spread these ideas to Hutu priests and seminarians. These educated European and Hutu priests encouraged the development of a Hutu counter-elite to rival the Tutsi elite. By the 1950s both Hutu elites and Tutsi elites were growing restless with the political situation in Rwanda. The nationalist Tutsi elite began pushing strongly for independence, but the Hutu elite resisted the independence movement, demanding an end to what they called “Tutsi feudalism” as a precondition for independence. In 1957, nine Hutu intellectuals released a provocative document referred to as the “Hutu Manifesto,” which decried the Tutsi as foreigners of Hamitic origins and claimed that the problem in the colony was not so much the Belgians as the social, political, and economic domination of the minority Tutsi elite over the majority Hutu population. In 1958 a group of Tutsi intellectuals wrote a response called “The First Writing of Nyanza,” which claimed that the Hutu and Tutsi were historically different groups, and that the Tutsi were inherently superior.\textsuperscript{20} Twagilimana argues that upon the release of these documents “the polarization was complete [and the] positions of the two

\textsuperscript{20}Twagilimana 60-66 and Chrétien, 301.
main contending forces were clearly defined." In 1957 a group of Catholic bishops released a pastoral letter accusing Tutsi elites of oppressing the people, symbolically signifying that the Catholic Church was shifting its support to the Hutu elites. Violence soon erupted after both of these documents were released, sparked by the attack of a Hutu sub-chief by a member of a conservative Tutsi political party in 1959, and resulting in a series of reprisals of Hutu activists attacking Tutsi activists around the country.

**The First and Second Republics**

Violence during the Hutu Revolution and independence movement (power over the Rwandan state was given to the Hutu elites by the Belgians in 1962) resulted in the flight of roughly 150,000 Tutsi between 1957 and 1962. Continued violence over the ensuing decade led to additional waves of migration, and the eventual displacement of 700,000 Rwandan Tutsis to Burundi, Zaire, Uganda, and Tanzania by 1973. It should be noted, however, that during these episodes of violence, particularly in 1957 and 1959, churches provided a refugees safety and no one was killed who hid in the churches at this time. Upon independence, Crégoire Kayibanda was elected president of the first Rwandan republic. He ruled, what Prunier describes as, a “land of virtue where prostitutes were punished, mass attendance was high, and hardworking peasants toiled on the land without asking too many questions.” However, behind the public façade of an egalitarian ideology was an elitist and authoritarian government. Kayibanda grew increasingly suspicious and reclusive over his tenure, resulting in a dysfunctional state.

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21 Twagilimana, 66.
23 Prunier, 48-49.
24 Chrétien, 305.
administration. In response to the ethnic violence in Burundi, Kayiband sought to purge Tutsis from all ranks of public life, but after this was completed, overzealous Hutu elites began to turn on each other, creating a regional division that split the country between the north and the south. It was within this rupture between Hutu elites that Major-General Juvenal Habyariman seized control of the state in a bloodless coup on July 5, 1973, thus inaugurating the Second Republic. The beginning of the Second Republic was a relatively calm period which Prunier describes as an “agreeable façade…built on an extremely dangerous ideological framework” reinforced by cultural mythology.\(^{25}\) During the time of the Second Republic, Rwandan refugees – predominantly Tutsis, but also Hutus – were organizing outside Rwanda and planning their return to Rwanda. The culminating of this organizing was the creation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in Uganda in 1988.\(^{26}\)

**Church-State Relations in the First and Second Rwandan Republics**

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the First Republic was characterized as the domination of church over state. The Kayibanda regime relied heavily upon the organization and leadership of the White Fathers. As Kayibanda drew more reclusive the priests in both the churches and in the government administration were given more governance responsibilities.\(^{27}\) During the first few years of the Second Republic, the Catholic Church, while still largely Hutu, was one of the most open institutions in Rwanda, boasting three Tutsis bishops out of the eight total in Rwanda.\(^{28}\)

\(^{25}\) Prunier, 59-61, 75, 82.  
\(^{26}\) Chrétien, 305.  
\(^{27}\) Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth, 53-55.  
\(^{28}\) Prunier, 75.
The Catholic Church remained an influential institution in the Second Republic, but under Habyarimana the government freed itself of dependency on the churches as seen in the First Republic. Habyarimana made it a point to ally with the churches and incorporate church leaders into his administration to eliminate potential threats to his power. During Habyarimana’s two decades in power he centralized the state administration and subsumed all civil society organizations into a one party state. In the Second Republic, the churches were the only independent civil society organizations in the country, but chose to collaborate rather than challenge the government. At the end of Habyarimana’s reign, 89.8% of the country professed a Christian faith. Overwhelmingly the largest denomination was Roman Catholicism, claiming 62.6% of the population, over double the membership of all the Protestant denominations combined as of the 1991 census.

The Civil War and Genocide

The RPF invaded Rwanda in 1990. Two years later, a peace conference was called between the RPF and the government in Arusha, Tanzania, resulting in a power sharing agreement signed on August 3, 1993. Shortly after the peace accords were signed, the United Nations Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) peacekeeping forces arrived in the capital city of Kigali. Early in 1994 Romeo Dallaire, the UNAMIR commander, alerted New York to the growing tensions between the RPF and the government, and the discovery of arms caches, but he was ignored by his superiors at UN headquarters. On

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29 Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth, 53-55.
30 Bartov and Mack, 148-155.
31 Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth, 6-13.
the night of April 6/7 1994, President Habyarimana was assassinated, sparking an almost instantaneous eruption of targeted violence in Kigali. Within hours a prepared list of political opponents, Hutu and Tutsi alike, were killed by government forces. The killing of innocent civilians started soon after the political targets were killed, and within two days violence began spreading from Kigali to the countryside. Tutsi civilians began to flee to RPF occupied territories or seek refuge with neighbors or in churches. In the three month period of April to June of 1994, the Rwandan Armed Forces and civilian militias systematically killed upward of one million people; over ten percent of the country’s estimated population of 7.7 million, and roughly of 80% of the country’s Tutsi population.

**Churches during the genocide**

Several volumes – notable among them are *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* edited by Carol Rittner, John Roth, and Wendy Whitworth and the forthcoming *Commanded by the Devil* by Timothy Longman– have been written on the role of the churches in the 1994 genocide, but needless to say one cannot recount their many arguments here. It is important to acknowledge, however, that despite the actions of a few brave religious actors within both Catholic and Protestant Churches, the churches were largely either silent bystanders or active participants in the genocide. Unlike in 1959, churches became a central place of massacre. Longman indicates that more people may have been killed in and around churches than in any other place in

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33 Bartov and Mack, 139.
Rwanda. Even after the complicity or silence of the churches during the genocide, despite some minor changes, Rwandans today still overwhelmingly identify themselves as Christian. Catholics predominate at about 50% of the population, but there are now more Protestants in Rwanda than ever before, totaling 37% of the population.

**Front Line Report and Rwandan Civil Society**

Today Rwanda is still marred by the legacy of genocide. While the economy has steadily risen under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, the government has come under criticism for its human rights record, especially its treatment of prisoners and human rights organizations. The gacaca courts, the traditional system of justice the Rwandan government adapted for trying genocide suspects, which was initially well received by the international community, has failed to fulfill its mandate to expediently try the approximately 100,000 genocide suspects. The gacaca courts are still in use today, despite initial projections that the process would conclude by 2007 or earlier. The government has also been the subject of a scathing report by the Dublin, Ireland based NGO Front Line, on its treatment of human rights defenders. The 2005 Front Line report accuses the Rwandan government for growing increasingly authoritarian under Kagame and that the government is trying to consolidate power by limiting the space for civil society organizations to operate. Front Line argues that a 2004 parliamentary report concerning the presence of genocidal ideology in civil society organizations was nothing more than a ploy to liquidate organizations that oppose the Kagame administration. The

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34 Bartov and Mack, 155-157.
36 Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth, 16-21.
Front Line report also indicated that the government was targeting churches, based largely on their legacy of collaboration with the First and Second Republics and complicity in the genocide, and that some priests had been arrested for allegedly spreading genocidal ideology. Some parliamentarians proposed creating a government commission to oversee the work of the churches, effectively ending their independence, but no substantive efforts have been made on that suggestion. In fairness, it should also be mentioned that National Unity and Reconciliation Commission publically support the role of the churches in civil society, and wish to empower the churches to take over the leadership of the reconciliation process in Rwanda.

Current Relations Between the Churches and the State

The constitution of Rwanda provides for the freedom of religion for all people. Publically, relations between the government and the churches are good, but the government strictly monitors and scrutinizes the churches’ activities. As the Front Line report indicates, the government has been willing to arrest priests and pastors it interprets as threatening, and in 2008 there was a series of government arrests of Jehovah’s Witnesses who refused to participate in certain national rituals due to their religious customs, but no other abuses of religious freedom or activity were reported in 2008. The government has also been known to restrict certain religious celebrations, such as baptism, during the genocide memorial period every April. All together, however, most

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churches comply with government policies and the roles the government wishes them to play in society, and relationships remain friendly and productive as a result.\textsuperscript{38}

**Theoretical Considerations**

The following section will address the definitions, theories, and typologies that influence this work, with particular attention to the concept of reconciliation. While understandings of reconciliation vary by culture and discipline this section outlines the understanding of reconciliation that guides this thesis.

**Reconciliation Defined**

John Paul Lederach, defines reconciliation in many different ways, as: “reorientation toward the centrality of relationships;”\textsuperscript{39} “a space, a place or location of encounter, where parties to a conflict meet;”\textsuperscript{40} and a “journey toward and through conflict,”\textsuperscript{41} among others. Leslie Vinjamuri and Aaron P. Boesenecker argue that reconciliation means “healing human relationships.”\textsuperscript{42} Everett L. Worthington, Jr. a Professor of Psychology and expert on interpersonal reconciliation says that “reconciliation is restoring trust.”\textsuperscript{43} However, Amy Gutmann and Dennish Thompson argue that within a democratic society, reconciliation should focus on the “fundamental matters of political morality, such as freedom of speech…equal political liberty, equal

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When this project began I chose to align myself with the idea of reconciliation as restoring trust – in a very strict interpretation of Worthington – planning to use trust as a matrix with which to study the reconciliation process in Rwanda. As I spent time working with religious actors in Rwanda I soon came to learn that my focus was too narrow, encapsulating only one part of the process of social intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup reconciliation. Therefore, I am adopting an understanding based on the work of Lederach, Vinjamuri, Boesenecker, as well as Worthington that use a relational definition of reconciliation. These authors posit that reconciliation is a process of building interpersonal and intergroup relationships that overcome the social and economic inequalities and support a society from moving from negative to positive peace. I acknowledge the importance of Gutmann and Thompson’s definition of reconciliation, and agree that such a political process must take place, but in a country with such deep societal cleavages as Rwanda, a social reconciliation process must accompany the political process if positive peace is going to be achieved.

**Reconciliation as a Process**

While for Gutmann and Thompson reconciliation is considered a goal with tangible political achievements, this thesis defines reconciliation as a process along Lederach’s model of reconciliation. According to this model, reconciliation is a process of building relationships between groups or reshaping formerly violent relationships into peaceful relationships. Building relationships is defined as the creation of new, or

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reshaping of old, interdependent relationships between individuals or groups, within an organizational or economic community, whereby the future success of that community is reliant upon the full cooperation of all parties in the process. This is not to say that differences of political thoughts or philosophical ideas – a hallmark of a liberal democracy – should be mitigated in this process, but to suggest that the future prosperity of both groups depends on a degree of social and economic cooperation.

Lederach uses the illustration of a journey to describe such a process. He suggests that the process resembles a journey leading toward the “other” with discreet encounters and places along the way. In this illustration encounters resembles the tangible events along the journey. The “places” represent the time and place in the process where these “encounters” occur. The conclusion of the journey, or process, is described by Volf as an “embrace” of the other. This embrace refers to the re-conceptualization of the other as human, a type of re-humanization if you will.

Lederach draws his illustration of reconciliation in part from two biblical accounts of actual journeys: the Israelites wondering in the desert after escaping captivity in Egypt (see Exodus 12:31-Deuteronomy 33) and Jacob’s reunion with his brother Esau (see Genesis 25-33). Lederach uses these stories to illustrate both a reconciliation process between man and God (the Israelites) and a process of interpersonal reconciliation (Jacob and Esau). In Lederach’s mind, these are both

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48 Lederach 1999, 23.
important parts of the overall process of social reconciliation and will be addressed in more detail in subsequent sections of this thesis. From these stories Lederach pulls two main lessons. The first comes from the Exodus account, which shows that reconciliation is a long, sometimes a generational process. The second comes from Jacob’s reunion with Esau, which shows that reconciliation is a difficult process that requires determination and the willingness to engage the process.

The lesson that Jacob’s story teaches deserves special attention at this point. Lederach warns that reconciliation is achieved only at a high emotional cost for those involved, and Worthington explains that reconciliation is a process which involves a great deal of effort and work on the part of all parties. During the “encounters” along the journey of reconciliation, victims are asked to confront perpetrators and perpetrators are asked to confront their victims. These encounters can lead both parties to feel pain, guilt, and/or fear. Reconciliation asks both parties to be vulnerable in the sight of the other. At this point, the importance of personal or individual reconciliation must not be understated. Worthington points out that through personal process reconciliation the individual – perpetrator or victim – is equipped to make the decision to reconcile with others and confront their fears and traumas.

After a conflict the scale of the Rwandan civil war and genocide, all parties to the conflict are left traumatized. Victims may suffer from many forms of trauma after the

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50 Lederach 1999, 23.
52 Worthington 2006, 199.
54 Worthington 2006, 199.
genocide. They may have suffer physically from wounds received during the war; they may suffer from losing family and loved ones; and can suffer from psychological effects of the war, such as lasting fearful memories of rape or abuse.\textsuperscript{55} Perpetrators, and the families of perpetrators, also suffered traumas that need to be processed as they try to prepare for interpersonal reconciliation. Many perpetrators feel a deep sense of regret, remorse, and guilt over their participation in the genocide. Some perpetrators may also suffer from physical traumas incurred either in the war or in the prisons, or psychological traumas from either being forced to kill during the war or from their experiences in prison. Because of these traumas perpetrators are encouraged to participate in a personal reconciliation process to facilitate an embrace of an interpersonal or intergroup process.\textsuperscript{56} One should bear in mind that for the perpetrators, participation in social reconciliation processes is not a replacement for judicial process, but a compliment to the justice process for the purpose of promoting social cohesion. It should be noted, however, that the Rwandan government gives incentives to perpetrators to participate in social reconciliation process during the judicial process.

Intrapersonal reconciliation prepares individuals to engage in the interpersonal reconciliation process. According to Daly and Sarkin, many perceive interpersonal reconciliation to be the culmination of the process because it provides such compelling visuals as handshakes and hugs, but this is only one component of a larger social process.


This part of the process does, however, stand out because it signifies a transition from a strictly personal process to a public process. Interpersonal reconciliation may represent only one encounter and one place along the journey, but a culmination of these encounters within one place, or one community, can lead to mending the social cleavages in that place and can begin the process of building relationships as defined above.\textsuperscript{57}

According the Miroslaw Volf, the culmination of this process or journey at the interpersonal level is a sincere embrace between the two parties. Such an embrace is not emblemized through a personal ritual like the handshake or hug, but through the conceptual embrace of the “other” as a person, not an enemy. Volf argues that this embrace is a “most fundamental obligation of Christianity.” Volf assert that the Christian tradition defines human relations through the lens of a world mired in evil. This is not to say that there is no right or wrong in the sight of the Lord or man, but rather to remind both parties in the process they too have sinned in God’s eyes and are in need of forgiveness. Therefore, while the perpetrator needs to seek forgiveness from the victim, the victim needs to remember that he too is in need of forgiveness before God and to bear that in mind when they are confronted by the perpetrator of their suffering. Volf does not suggest that victims must forgive their perpetrators, merely to suggest that they bear in mind their own sinful nature during the reconciliation process. The embrace that Volf refers to then centers on this re-conceptualization of the perpetrator from enemy to person.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} Daly and Sarkin, 69-70, 82.  
\textsuperscript{58} Volf, 42-43.
Reconciliation is a process with many components. It is a structure for achieving justice and overcoming structural violence. At the same time it is a process of building or rebuilding relationships. Reconciliation must take into consideration both the historical context that led to the conflict as well as the conditions on the ground in which the process will take place. It is a process that places a premium on speaking and listening as well as hope and love. Lastly, reconciliation is a process that takes place at different levels, from personal, to interpersonal through intergroup, national, and international levels.59

**How do we determine reconciliation?**

Those who posit the definition of reconciliation as a process often argue that there is no conclusion to the process, that reconciliation is an aspiration and not a goal. The reconciliation process as defined in this thesis centers on the development of interpersonal relationships that contribute to overcoming the socio-economic obstacles that hinder the presence of positive peace, like discrimination and economic inequality. As such, we can see the reconciliation process unfolding and the presence of reconciled individuals and communities when these new relationships are present and sustained. Examples of the presence of these relationships would include intermarriage, shared business ventures, or joint membership in churches or local clubs or organizations. While the presence of these factors does not definitively prove that individuals or

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communities have reconciled, it does provide one of the few clear indications that reconciliation has taken place.  

The Rationale for the Presence of Religious Actors in the Reconciliation Process

One of the reasons to talk about religion in the reconciliation process is summed up by Daly and Sarkin with this rhetorical question and answer: “Who should promote reconciliation?...everyone.” What they mean by this is that reconciliation is a process that requires the input of all “sectors of civil society.” Before moving forward with this section, however, it should be stated that this thesis defines religion and religious actors based on self-identified affiliation, not religiosity.

John W. de Gruchy, a political theologian from South Africa who has extensively studied the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), argues that reconciliation is at the center of the Christian faith. He interprets the gospel of Christianity to be about “overcoming alienation and estrangement between God and ourselves, between us and others, and between all of us and creation.” Accordingly, the churches must be involved in the reconciliation process for two central reasons: (1) they should have the expertise and vocabulary, at least in a religious sense, to promote reconciliation in a divided society, and (2) if de Gruchy is correct, churches must participate in the reconciliation process if they wish to maintain their integrity within their [Rwandan] community. De Gruchy goes on to point out that if religious actors are going to be involved in a social or even political reconciliation process, in order for them to speak

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60 Again, it should be noted that Gutmann and Thompson would argue that reconciliation has discrete goals and a discrete beginning and end.
61 Daly and Sarkin, 240.
62 de Gruchy, 1.
authentically, they must be allowed to speak in their own “idioms.” He argues that though others do not need to accept a Christian interpretation of reconciliation, religious actors need to be clear and understood in their own language if they are to be involved in the process. Therefore, they need to speak about reconciliation religiously. De Gruchy also highlights that because many of the dynamic concepts in the reconciliation process – like “forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice” – are often derived from various religious traditions, it is important for those who can speak on those terms in a religious sense to be involved in the process.\(^{\text{63}}\)

Apart from the pragmatic reasons de Gruchy offers for the involvement of the churches in the reconciliation process, he also argues that there is a strong religious conviction within the Christian tradition to promote reconciliation. He argues that for Paul, the first century Christian apostle, reconciliation was one of the core tenets of the gospel of Jesus. De Gruchy admits that Paul does use other phrases to describe the core message of the gospel, including salvation, redemption, justification, and deliverance, but argues that in Paul’s epistles nothing quite captures the essence of the gospel like the concept of reconciliation. This is an important point to consider because, as de Gruchy points out, Paul is “virtually the only New Testament writer” to reference reconciliation,\(^{\text{64}}\) and while Paul may be one of the only to do so, his writing influences Christian doctrine more than any other first century Christian writer. Lastly, de Gruchy illustrates the importance of not only having the churches involved in the process of reconciliation, but that churches be united in the process. He argues that when churches

\(^{\text{63}}\) de Gruchy, 20.

\(^{\text{64}}\) ibid, 45.
unite for the purpose of reconciliation, they are not merely forming an ecumenical body, but are clearly paving a way toward overcoming “ethnic and class divisions.” This is an example of where de Gruchy has been highly influenced by Paul. What Paul refers to as the “body of Christ,” de Gruchy interprets as meaning the universal church, which in Rwanda calls for a united response to the genocide and the reconciliation process. Viewing all churches as part of the body of Christ, de Gruchy argues that it is incumbent on the churches to overcome their denominational differences and unite around this common cause of reconciliation. The unity of the churches takes on particular significance in Rwanda where the majority of the country remains Christian and looks to the churches for guidance. Unifying the churches is also significant in Rwanda because the various Christian denominations were divided amongst themselves and hostile toward one another leading up to and immediately after the genocide. The participation of the churches in the reconciliation process, and the reconciliation and relationship building of the churches themselves represents a significant achievement in Rwanda.

**Typologies of Religious Actors**

The intention of this thesis is not to provide a theoretical exploration of religious reconciliation in Rwanda, but rather to provide a qualitative analysis of the contributions of the Protestant Christian religious community to the reconciliation process in Rwanda. With that in mind it is now appropriate to turn from the theoretical basis for which we will understand reconciliation in this thesis, to our framework for examining religious actors and their reconciliation programs in Rwanda.

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65 de Gruchy, 82, 89.
In a recent book chapter, Leslie Vinjamuri and Aaron P. Boesenecker propose a new typology for understanding the different types of religious actors in transitional justice processes. They list five types of religious actors: peacebuilders, legalists, pragmatists, traditionalists, and capacity-builders. They describe religious peacebuilders as focusing on conflict settlements, such as cease-fires and peace agreements. The work of the Community of Sant’ Egidio in the Mozambican peace process is one example of this typology. Legalists, such as the World Jewish Congress, are more concerned with retributive justice and the protection of the in-group members of a victimized population. Pragmatists, on the other hand, prefer to sacrifice temporal accountability for security, believing there will be divine retribution for those who committed crimes. An organization like the World Council of Churches would be such a group. Traditionalists, like Christians in South Africa who adopted the *ubuntu* tradition into their religious framework, favor grassroots restorative justice measures that incorporate local customs and traditions. The typology that best fits the religious actors in this thesis is capacity-builders. The religious capacity-builders are local actors who define social justice in terms of restoring relationships, exemplified by groups outside Rwanda such as the Mennonite Central Committee.66

For the religious capacity-builder, restoring or healing relationships is the embodiment of reconciliation and social justice. Capacity-builders represent the typology of religious actors, perhaps along with traditionalists, who are committed to a long-term process and who seek a comprehensive strategy of “reconciliation and social justice.”

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66 Banchoff, 156, 167-170.
transformation.” Capacity-builders focus on leaving the process of reconciliation, and its strategies, in the hands of local actors and are guided by that commitment to community. They focus on overcoming social inequality as a “hallmark” of building trusting relationships and promoting justice. They do not focus on punitive justice or strategies that focus strictly on the past, but look for a comprehensive strategy that allows parties to address the past while looking toward the future. The work of capacity-builders at the local level allows them to develop an elaborate grassroots network that provides them with a greater level of local accountability than the other typologies listed above.67

As we will see through the remainder of this paper, the religious actors studied here are best defined as capacity-builders. Individual denominations, interfaith movements, and domestic religious NGOs all focus on grassroots mobilization and training. The emphasis is not exclusively on reconciliation alone, but on social justice and overcoming economic inequality. The groups that we will explore in this thesis offer reconciliation programs that focus on economic development and relationship building at the grassroots level, central elements to the capacity-builders typology. Through the remainder of this paper I will be referring back to this typology to explain the methodology and program design of the religious actors explored in this thesis.

Part III. Protestant Christian Frameworks for Designing Reconciliation Programs

This section of the thesis will look at the Christian, specifically Protestant, contributions to the reconciliation process. The Protestant community was chosen for

67 Banchoff, 156, 167-170.
this thesis because Catholic contributions to reconciliation and peacebuilding have been studied extensively since the 1994 genocide, but such studies only represent half of the Christian contributions to reconciliation in Rwanda. This thesis will look at capacity-builders in the Rwandan Protestant community and explore their reconciliation programs and methodologies, including their strengths and weaknesses. The Protestant religious community organizes and implements reconciliation programs through three organizational frameworks. The first and primary framework is through individual denominations, meaning programs organized within denominations like the Lutheran or Presbyterian churches and implemented largely for their members. The second framework Protestant churches use to produce reconciliation programs is through interfaith and ecumenical organizations. The last framework that I will explore in this thesis is independent religious non-governmental organizations. I will examine each of these frameworks through the lens of a qualitative case study. The case studies are based on field research conducted in Rwanda in February and March 2009. For each case study, an average of reconciliation program leaders and 10-20 program participants were confidentially interviewed for this thesis.

**Individual Denomination Framework: Lutheran Church of Rwanda Case Study**

The Lutheran Church of Rwanda (LCR) is a relatively small and new denomination in Rwanda with a tight hierarchical structure. It was chosen as the case study because its hierarchical structure resembles that of the larger denominations in Rwanda – Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterians – but is still small in size and structure resembling the smaller denominations like the Baptists and the Pentecostals. This case
study will address the history of the LCR, the reconciliation programs it offers, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of this framework.

**History of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda**

The History of the Lutheran Church in Rwanda corresponds with the colonial and post-colonial history of Rwanda. The Lutheran Church first arrived in Rwanda around 1900 with the German colonists. After World War I, the Belgians forced the Lutheran Church to leave Rwanda to remove all possible links to the former colonial authority in its realm of influence. The leadership of the Lutheran Church fled mostly to Tanganyika where the colony and the churches abstained from supporting their – then – German colonial masters. In Tanganyika, and later the unified Tanzania, the Lutheran Church of Rwanda found refuge; while the Lutheran Church of Tanzania (LCT) grew to become a strong, unified, and relatively powerful church within Tanzania. The Lutheran Church returned to Rwanda in 1995 after the transitional government lifted the colonial-era ban on the church. As of this writing, the Lutheran Church of Rwanda boasts around 80 congregations spread throughout the country, though concentrated mostly in the Eastern Province, 15 ordained pastors and about 40 trained evangelists, and one Bishop, who oversees the entire Church with the assistance of the executive council, which includes a General Secretary, Dean, and Treasurer and other pastors and lay leaders.\(^68\)

**LCR Definition of Reconciliation**

When asked directly about the definition of reconciliation the LCR uses to guide its approach to the process, the Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda did not give a

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\(^{68}\) The history of the Lutheran Church was provided through interviews by the LCR executive council.
concrete example. He said that they teach the biblical definition of reconciliation and provided a copy of a booklet listing Bible verses on Christian concepts of peace and Christian love. One of the most prominent passages from the Christian New Testament that the LCR uses comes from 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 which discusses reconciliation between God and man and how to be made right as a follower of Jesus. The core message of reconciliation in this passage come in verses 18-20, which state:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The Lutheran Church of Rwanda interprets this passage as a call for them to bring the message of God’s reconciliation to those in a sinful world, and to act as those who have been reconciled with God by reconciling with their fellow man. While this would seem to indicate that the LCR’s priority is vertical reconciliation, that is reconciliation with God, the national leaders of the LCR suggested that their first priority in their ministry of reconciliation was horizontal, that is reconciliation between people on Earth. However, it should be noted that the presence vertical reconciliation as a component of the LCR message provides an added dimension of moral authority to their projects that are not seen in political, or secular, social reconciliation processes. The concept of reconciliation with God corresponds with Lederach’s journey analogy which largely constructs reconciliation as a deeply religious process. The programs of the church are certainly
oriented around building relationships, so it complies with the understanding of reconciliation used here.  

**LCR Centrally Designed Reconciliation Programs**

- **Reconciliation seminars.** One of the most important models of reconciliation programs designed by the executive council of the LCR are reconciliation training seminars. The executive council, under the leadership of the Bishop, conducts seminars teaching the Christian concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation throughout its congregations around the country. The goal of the executive council is to reach each of its congregations in the country. The curriculum is based upon biblical precepts of reconciliation and uses only the Bible and biblical concordances as guides for program and curriculum development. The main topics addressed in these seminars are the Christian definitions of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. The LCR targets a wide range of individuals for these seminars with the intention of bringing divided groups together. The church leadership has identified three different social cleavages it intends to bridge at the interpersonal level in these seminars. The first, and most noticeable social cleavage they identify are the victims and perpetrators of the genocide; the second is the ethnic divide of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa; and finally, the divide between refugees and long-term residents. The seminars invite individuals from all sides of all these groups, from the congregation and the surrounding communities in which the seminar is offered. The seminars are designed to create a safe space where, for example, a survivor and a released perpetrator may learn about Christian reconciliation.

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together, and begin the process of rebuilding their relationships in an environment in which they feel comfortable, a church.

- **Economic development seminars.** The executive council of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda also identified economic factors as a source of divisionism in Rwanda and has created economic development seminars to combat economic inequalities in and around their congregations. They acknowledged to me their concern that the message of reconciliation will go unheard if people are suffering from a relative deprivation of material resources. The LCR is now providing educational seminars on rural agriculture as well as personal and public health. One of the primary objectives of these training seminars is also family planning. The government of Rwanda has initiated a family planning program encouraging its citizens to limit their family size to three children. The LCR also adopted this policy, concerned with the costs that raising and educating children additional puts on families, the government, and the churches.

- **Training trainers.** The executive council, while conducting these seminars, is also training grassroots actors in their parishes to continue educating the parishes after the council leaves. The executive council only offers one seminar in each congregation, and has yet to even reach all of their congregations. It wants to put in place people at the local level who can conduct both reconciliation and economic development seminars, as well as continue to work with the local congregations and communities on the lessons from the seminars.

**LCR Locally Designed Reconciliation Programs**
• **Preaching.** The first thing any local pastor or evangelist told me when I asked them about their role in the reconciliation process was preaching. They felt preaching was where they were best suited to function in this process, and where the message of reconciliation would be best received. It was explained to me by clergymen and NGO observers that preaching is effective for spreading the message of reconciliation because church attendance is voluntary. This may seem inconsequential, but it was explained to me that people chose a church to attend based largely of a personal respect or affinity for a preacher. They continue to attend said church voluntarily and are therefore more receptive to what the minister says because they identify with the minister and because the minister speaks with a moral authority not found in secular reconciliation actors. This can have a tremendous impact for the reconciliation process considering the vast number of people who attend church regularly in Rwanda.

• **Counseling.** The second most prominently addressed method for promoting reconciliation by the local religious leadership was counseling. Most pastors and evangelists admitted that they do not have training in conflict resolution or reconciliation programs, but they did have training in trauma counseling. One evangelist in the Lutheran Church, a Lutheran evangelist since 1995 who has worked all over the country, told me that he was trained in trauma counseling shortly after he became an evangelist, and that counseling has occupied the majority of his work on reconciliation. He offers counseling to both victims and perpetrators stressing the importance of helping both groups personally process the trauma they experienced. As
referenced above by Lederach, Worthington, Daly, and Sarkin,\textsuperscript{70} the personal process of reconciliation is of primary importance for the overall process of reconciliation to be successful. The counseling offered at these local levels helps prepare individuals for the process of interpersonal reconciliation in the seminars offered by the central administration of the Lutheran Church.

- **Direct services.** A common theme with everyone I spoke to – whether it be government workers, clergy, or NGO staff – was that churches were the civil society organizations best situated to provide immediate direct services at the grassroots level. Churches have the most expansive network, especially in rural Rwanda, of grassroots actors. Congregation leaders are more aware of the needs of their individual community than the local governments or other organizations, and are also better able to mobilize their members when needs arise in the community. For example, one religious leader I spoke with told me how members of his congregation would provide food and care for members who were ill, or would provide transport to a medical facility if it is needed. While most Rwandans lack proper health care, some churches are able to use their limited resources to provide basic assistance.

- **Prison ministry.** While no denomination that I spoke with had a coordinated policy to minister to prisoners, many clergymen and clergywomen took it upon themselves to minister to the prisoners. The presence of the clergy in the prison was widely regarded as one of the most important aspects of the overall reconciliation process both

\textsuperscript{70} Worthington2006, 199.
Daly and Sarkin, 43.
Staub and Pearlman, 208.
nationally and locally. This point was driven home when I met with the leaders of a prison reconciliation organization in a prison in southwestern Rwanda. The leaders of the reconciliation organization in this prison were all convicted genocide perpetrators who had confessed their crimes and reconciled with their victims. One of these men told me that he attributed 95% of confessions in Rwanda to the presence of clergy in the prisons. I was unable to locate reliable statistics on this matter, but such a statement clearly shows the conviction to which this man believes ministers in the prisons contribute to interpersonal reconciliation processes.

Methodology

The reconciliation programs originating at both the national and local levels in this framework focus on grassroots actors. The primary focus is overcoming discrimination, divisionism, and economic inequality. The goal is to build relationships through training in Christian reconciliation and economic development. The design is to bring people together in a community where they can build interdependent social and economic relationships. Such activities clearly correspond with the Vinjamuri and Boesenecker\textsuperscript{71} typology of capacity-building religious actors.

All LCR programs are designed intentionally with longevity in mind. The Bishop of the LCR expressed to me his intention to continue offering reconciliation and economic development seminars indefinitely; stating that reconciliation is an ongoing process that may span the course of a generation or more. Such a long-term commitment to the process not only corresponds with the capacity-builder typology, but also aligns

\textsuperscript{71} Banchoff, 156, 167-70.
with the Lederach\textsuperscript{72} (and others) notion of reconciliation as a journey. Additionally, the church leaders I spoke with at the national and local level all told me that they were focused on this ministry of reconciliation because it was a ministry demanded by God, and a central tenet of the faith, corresponding with the de Gruchy\textsuperscript{73} understanding of the role of Christianity in the reconciliation process.

Interestingly, while corresponding with the theories of Lederach and de Gruchy, the program design by both the local and national leadership does not have access to these resources. Program design is derived by biblical teaching and the limited training of some members of the church by local NGOs – namely the REACH organization we will return to later in the thesis – and international NGOs – namely the Lutheran World Federation. Only one leader in the Lutheran Church of Rwanda has formal university training in conflict resolution and reconciliation, the Secretary General, but he has chosen largely to pursue creating reconciliation programs independent of the church hierarchy. Otherwise, local preachers rely on their understanding of the Bible to devise sermons and seminars on reconciliation. More formal models and theories for program design and conflict resolution processes are not accessible to most practitioners in this framework.

**Strengths of the Individual Denominational Framework**

- **Grassroots organization.** The individual denominations have the most extensive grassroots organizations in the country. They are on the frontlines of the reconciliation process and are better able to understand the individual needs of people and to mobilize their congregants to care for other people. Thus far individual denominations have

\textsuperscript{72} Lederach 1999, 22-26.  
\textsuperscript{73} de Gruchy, 45, 82, 89.
effectively used these networks to provide healthcare, food, education, and other social services for their members. Such networking and social service delivery has major implications for the reconciliation process as well, as the churches are able to work intensively with people on the processes of personal and interpersonal reconciliation.

- **Influential platform.** Because church attendance is voluntary and church leaders are respected members of the society who speak with a moral authority, people acknowledge, their messages are more freely received than other political or secular actors. Pastors are able to use their pulpit both to preach the message of reconciliation and to disseminate other information about the reconciliation process. Many people will not attend community meetings put on by the government or NGOs, but most people attend church, so pastors are also able to communicate the larger strategy of reconciliation to their members.

- **Counseling.** As many of our authors stress, individuals, whether victim or perpetrator, need to process the trauma they experienced and reconcile their own pain before moving on to an interpersonal reconciliation process. Local church leaders are uniquely situated to contribute to this process because of their proximity to the people. Religious counseling is of the utmost importance in a country where the government simply could not afford to provide such services across the whole country.

- **Organizational Structure.** As the Lutheran Church of Rwanda illustrates, for the denominations that have a tight hierarchical structure – like the Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, etc. – organizational relationships and a division of labor can help streamline the process of designing and implementing reconciliation programs. Seminars can be
designed at the national level and then implemented at the local level. Additionally, churches with an international structure, like the Catholics or Lutherans, can bring additional resources into the process that domestic NGOs or the Rwandan government could not access.

**Weaknesses of Individual Denominational Programs**

- **Human Resources.** Individual denominations often simply lack the trained personnel to implement reconciliation programs such as training seminars or counseling. Furthermore, many smaller denominations, particularly Pentecostal churches, may lack clergy who have the theological training to preach reconciliation. Some clergy who do not know the message of reconciliation as articulated in the Bible may simply choose not to preach the message of reconciliation. There is also the fear within some individual clergymen and clergywomen that their congregants will reject a message of reconciliation and may respond hostilely to them if they preach that message, and thus abstain from preaching the message of reconciliation.

- **Material Resources.** While some denominations are well funded and receive much support from their international religious affiliates – particularly the Catholics and Anglicans – smaller denominations – like the Lutheran Church of Rwanda or the Baptists – often receive little to no funding from abroad, and in most churches, receiving sufficient donations from within congregations that consists largely of subsistence farmers is unrealistic. Additionally, churches that do receive international support, including many Pentecostal churches, often do not have functional control of their budgets, but are rather forced to implement programs designed by their donors,
who may not have a firm understanding of the needs of the Rwandan community. This leads many denominations to lack the funds they need to operate effectively, or prohibit those adequately funded to effectively make use of their resources. There is the additional problem that some churches and church leaders have developed a mindset that they cannot offer reconciliation programs without this international funding. As one member of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda told me, there are many talented individuals within the churches who are not being engaged by their leaders to contribute to church reconciliation programs. The resources are there, this person said, but they are not material resources, they are human resources, and many church leaders cannot see past their material resource deficits to use these people.

- **Organizational Dysfunction.** This does not mean to imply only that denominations are actively dysfunctional or in a state of internal conflict, although this is happening with unfortunate regularity, but to also note the disconnect that exists between local religious leaders of a denomination (the grassroots evangelists and parish pastors) and their national leadership. Many times the national leaders of a denomination will organize reconciliation projects or seminars, but are never able to effectively translate those models into functional programs on the ground. Additionally, there are many denominations and congregations who are embroiled in organizational conflict that is taking away from their ability to promote reconciliation programs. For example, currently the LCR is engaged in a feud within its executive council leadership that has resulted in a major misallocation of church funds destined for reconciliation and economic development projects.
Interfaith or Interdenominational Framework

Interfaith, or minimally interdenominational, alliances have existed in Rwanda since before colonialism. This section will look at one national level interfaith alliance created before independence and one created after the 1994 genocide, as well as two grassroots interfaith alliances in the countryside. This chapter will review the history, programs, and methodology of interfaith work on reconciliation and provide an examination of strengths and weaknesses of interfaith reconciliation programs.

History of Interfaith

Today in Rwanda interfaith alliances exist at both a highly organized national level and a more spontaneous local level. They constitute organizations that represent the Protestant churches, the Christian community, and the entire religious community. The first of the organizations that will be explored in this history section is the oldest, the Protestant Council of Rwanda. This organization was formed during colonialism for the purpose of uniting the Protestant churches of Rwanda and Burundi. After Rwanda and Burundi received independence, the Council decided to divide as well, and came to represent only Rwandan churches. For the first 30 years of its existence, the council had a broad mandate to unite the Protestant churches around their shared set of beliefs, but after 1994 the focus shifted to uniting the Protestant community around the ministry of reconciliation specifically.

The second national level interfaith organization explored in this thesis is the Interfaith Commission of Rwanda. This commission was formed by Anglican
Archbishop Kolini in 2001. This organization is a true interfaith alliance and boasts Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, and the Muslim community among its members, although the Catholics only began to participate in full in 2005. The initial goal of the Commission was to unite all religious leaders in Rwanda and to focus their efforts on the process of reconciliation, particularly creating programs to bring perpetrators and victims together as well as trying to promote economic equality and development. After losing a majority of its funding in recent years, the Mufti of the Islamic community confessed that the Commission suspended around 70% of their programs.

At the grassroots level, interfaith alliances are a rather new phenomenon. For decades prior, and immediately after, the 1994 genocide, there was a great deal of divisionism between the denominations. Members of grassroots interfaith communities I spoke with in the Eastern Province told me that it was common for ministers to preach against other denominations in their Sunday morning sermons before 1994. After the genocide and a drastic change in the leadership of most denominations and churches in Rwanda, interfaith cooperation began to appear at the local level in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Today church leaders acknowledge that the churches must be an example of reconciliation to the people and that individual denominations in small communities do not have the resources to promote reconciliation alone, but collectively they can be successful. Consequently there are many more grassroots interfaith alliances in Rwanda today than ever before.
Reconciliation Programs

Whereas we see national and local actors working together in the individual denominational framework, there is little interaction between local and national interfaith organizations. National level interfaith actors do offer grassroots programming, but they generally do not coordinate with local actors. Organizations like the Protestant Council of Rwanda and the Interfaith Commission prefer to work with the leaders of their member churches, not with grassroots interfaith organizations.

Interfaith Definitions of Reconciliation

It is difficult to say that there is one coherent definition of reconciliation used by the interfaith community. Inherent in its multi-denominational structure, there are a plethora of definitions used by the different members of interfaith groups. Largely these groups view reconciliation as a process of putting something back together which was once whole and was then destroyed; referring specifically to the unification of the Rwanda people. No more coherent answer was discovered, though there were several other definitions posited as well. For example, one Anglican leader said that reconciliation is a multifaceted exercise that must address all the historical injustices suffered by the Rwandan people going back to pre-colonial days and that it must also look forward to creating new opportunities for all people. One Muslim leader chose to phrase his definition in much more religious language, saying that reconciliation means forgiving the unforgivable. There was one element that remained constant in most
definitions, and that was building relationships, in line with Lederach, Vinjamuri, Boesenecker, and others.\(^{74}\)

**Reconciliation Programs Designed by National Interfaith Organizations**

- **Unification.** The first and primary goal of both the Interfaith Commission and the Protestant Council is to unite the faith traditions of Rwanda in a ministry of reconciliation. Of course the Interfaith Commission seeks to unite the entire religious community while the Protestant Council largely works exclusively within the Protestant community, but their intentions are the same. The first strategy behind unifying the religious community is to build collaborative relationships between the denominations, particularly amongst grassroots pastors. The second strategy for these organizations, particularly in the first years of the Interfaith Commission’s lifespan, is to use the churches to create the space for the families of prisoners and the families of victims to begin building relationships. Additionally, while these national leaders are not usually the ones preaching Sunday mornings, the national leaders in these interfaith alliances are creating a unified message of reconciliation that they can bring back to their denominations so that the entire religious community can preach reconciliation with a similar meaning.

- **Coordination.** While the Interfaith Commission and the Protestant Council work with their members to create relationship building programs, the Protestant Council also directs its efforts at coordinating the programs that its members are currently instituting.

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around the country. The Protestant Council sees itself as a place where its members can come together and share their methodologies and program models.

- **Direct services.** In the early years of the Interfaith Commission it used some of its funding as part of the process of building relationships to construct new homes for the victims of the genocide, provide school fees for orphaned children, and to provide other material needs for families. It appears that in recent years such programs have been halted as the Interfaith Commission’s main international donor suspended funding to the Commission.

**Reconciliation Programs Designed by Grassroots Interfaith Organizations**

- **Unity.** Unifying local clergy and local parishioners is the primary agenda for grassroots interfaith organizations. I spoke with two different grassroots organizations – one in Rukira and one in Nyamata, both in the Eastern Province – and they both told me that creating a sense of religious unity is their primary priority. These leaders were the ones who informed me about the contentious relationships that existed between denominations leading up to and immediately after the genocide. They acknowledge that if they are to preach reconciliation to their members they need to be united as well. They also spoke about the importance of preaching in one voice. They know that if one church preaches reconciliation but another does not, that sends mixed messages to the community as a whole.

**Methodology**

The focus of the reconciliation programs originating from interfaith associations at both the national and grassroots levels center on uniting the religious community in
Rwanda. The primary import is relationship building among religious leaders, again at
both the national and grassroots level. The Interfaith Commission, Protestant Council,
and grassroots interfaith organizations want to both be an example of unity and work
toward building interpersonal relationships across denominational lines. Such activities
again correspond with the Vinjamuri and Boesenecker typology of capacity-builders.\(^{75}\)
Such an intense focus on unity in the religious community also mirrors de Gruchy’s
rationale for Christian reconciliation processes.\(^{76}\) Granted, the Interfaith Commission
also includes the Muslim community, I do not think de Gruchy would object to their
inclusion in the process. Again, however, like the Lutheran Church of Rwanda, there was
no formal methodology used by these interfaith organizations for program design.

**Strengths of the Interfaith Framework**

- **Unity in Voice.** It might appear that I am belaboring the topic of unity, but in the
  reconciliation process in Rwanda, the unity, or minimally the appearance of unity, of
  the religious community is of the utmost importance. One religious leader I spoke with
told me that it was through the denominational divisions that the government was able
to cement the division of people before 1994. The religious structures leading up to
1994 and the genocide were designed to divide the people. The government used that
divisionism for its own political purposes. The people of Rwanda look to the churches
for guidance, as much, or more, than they look to the government. Everything the
churches do is highly scrutinized by the people and the government. A unified

\(^{75}\) Banchoff, 156, 167-70.
\(^{76}\) de Gruchy, 45, 82, 89.
religious community adds credibility to religious organizations. As de Gruchy also notes, unifying the denominations involves overcoming cultural, gender, doctrinal, etc. divisions, which can lead directly to overcoming those same issues in society.77

**Weaknesses of the Interfaith Framework**

- **Local training.** This is not to say that local interfaith leaders have no training in reconciliation processes, but there is a major problem with the coordination of the training programs these leaders receive. The chief complaint I received while working with local interfaith leaders was that their national leaders and international NGOs did not coordinate the training seminars they offered. This resulted in redundant training in some areas, while other areas were completely overlooked.

- **Resource Dependence.** At the national level and within the Interfaith Commission especially, interfaith organizations feel paralyzed when they lose their funding. As one leader of a national interfaith organization told me, too many members of these organizations have a project oriented mindset, not a philosophical mindset. What is meant by this is simply that churches are not currently philosophically dedicated to the reconciliation process, but are only motivated to become involved in the interfaith reconciliation process when they stand to receive material support for their work. The dependence on resources and not philosophy is one of the greatest weaknesses plaguing the entire reconciliation process, particularly in the churches.

- **Political Correctness.** The national level interfaith organizations work very closely with the government of Rwanda and are highly encouraged to go along with the state

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77 de Gruchy, 82, 89.
policies on reconciliation. One leader in a national interfaith movement told me that the interfaith organizations are reluctant to propose programs that have not been previously proposed by the government or to take the lead in the process because of their concern about retribution from the government. Church leaders are aware that some priests and pastors who have spoken out against government policies or set up development programs the government considered a competitor to their influence in rural communities, have been accused of spreading genocidal ideology and jailed. Because of these reports, church leaders are reluctant to step out of line in their pursuit of government reconciliation policy objective. A spokeswoman for the government informed me personally that the government desires the civil society, including the churches, to take over leadership of the reconciliation process, but there persists a great deal of fear within the interfaith community about being perceived as threatening or opposing the government.

**Domestic Religious NGO Framework: REACH Case Study**

The domestic religious NGO is the final framework for developing reconciliation programs this thesis will address. Such organizations are not represented by the denominations, like the individual denominational or the interfaith frameworks, yet not all the work of religious actors is conducted within these traditional religious structures. In an effort to present a complete image of the contributions of all Protestant religious actors it is imperative to discuss domestic NGOs. The organization to be used for this section’s case study is one of the first religious organizations focusing specifically on reconciliation to begin working in Rwanda after the genocide. The reason REACH was
chosen for this section was because it is an independent organization which has been involved in the reconciliation process from its genesis, and uses a uniquely Christian approach to the reconciliation process.

**History of REACH**

Reconciliation, Evangelism, and Christian Healing (REACH) was created by Anglican minister Reverend Philbert Kalisa. Rev. Kalisa is a Rwandan national who grew up in exile in Burundi before attending university and seminary in England, where he was ordained as a pastor in the Anglican Church. In 1996, along with colleagues from various Christian denominations in the United Kingdom, Rev. Kalisa created an organization called REACH for Rwanda (referred to as REACH/UK) and then moved to Rwanda with his family to begin laying the groundwork for REACH in Rwanda. In 1998 REACH was granted temporary registration as an NGO by the Rwandan government and in 2002 REACH obtained permanent recognition by the government. Upon receipt of their temporary registration in 1998, REACH began operating in what are today the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Provinces, as well as the capital city of Kigali.

To date, REACH has trained 3,680 people around the country including religious leaders, community leaders, and local politicians, as well as women’s groups, youth groups, and released prisoners. REACH is supported largely through the fundraising power of its UK affiliate, the aforementioned REACH/UK. Recently REACH has added affiliates in Japan and the United States, but there is little domestic financial support for the organization. Rev. Kalisa is currently working to construct a guesthouse, conference hall, and restaurant on its main campus in Kigali to create domestic financial
sustainability. It is unlikely that REACH will generate sufficient revenues domestically to supplant its need for international support, but the goal is to at least supplement such assistance and create the ability to sustain itself if international support becomes scarce.

**REACH Reconciliation Programs**

REACH operates reconciliation programs in two stages. When it is first invited into a community it begins by offering training seminars for the religious and political leadership. After these seminars REACH asks the leaders to identify additional groups for training. These subsequent trainings are generally focused on women, youth, and released prisoners. The second stage of REACH reconciliation programming comes when those receiving training start what is called a Unity Group. The REACH training and the Unity Groups will be the focus for this section on REACH designed reconciliation programs.

**REACH Definition of Reconciliation**

Unlike the Lutheran Church of Rwanda or the interfaith organizations, REACH not only has a clear definition of reconciliation that guides their work, but it is also a well informed definition based in Rev. Kalisa’s training from Eastern Mennonite University. The structure of REACH, as an NGO and not a denominational or ecumenical body, means that it has a clearly articulated mission and vision statement concerning the reconciliation process. Rev. Kalisa first stated that in the REACH framework, reconciliation is a process, not necessarily a discrete goal. He went on to say it is a mutual process, requiring two estranged parties to rebuild their relationships. Like the authors listed above, he stressed the importance of starting the process with personal
reconciliation before moving to the processes of interpersonal or inter-group reconciliation. On this he commented that perpetrators as well as victims must participate in the process of personal reconciliation. He went on to say that this process of personal reconciliation may take the longest of any part of the overall process, and that is why national reconciliation in Rwanda is a generational process.

**REACH Centrally Designed Reconciliation Programs**

REACH lists six components of their nationally designed and implemented reconciliation strategy: training, counseling, Unity Groups, reintegrating prisoners, childhood education, and a school for peace. In my time with REACH I was witness to their training programs, Unity Groups, and met with the wives of those in the reintegration programs.

- **Local leadership training.** The first groups REACH trainers will work with in any community are the community leaders. This group represents both the political leadership of a community as well as the religious leadership. Training seminars are offered over the course of several days where these leaders are asked to leave their homes to live and work with their colleagues and REACH trainers exclusively. The purpose for such isolation is both to condense the time needed for the training, but perhaps more importantly, it is designed to build relationships amongst the leaders of a community. While all the members of a leadership training seminar may know and work with each other, the purpose for keeping all the participants in the seminar together is to build real, lasting relationships at the personal, not only professional level. This is particularly important for religious and secular leaders to do with each
other, as well as for leaders of the various denominations to overcome their denominational divisions and build lasting relationships. This is also the reason why these seminars never have more than 60 participants; to maintain an intimate atmosphere. The curriculum of these seminars focuses on what leaders can do to promote reconciliation in their communities and how to empower their community members to buy into the process of reconciliation. Rev. Kalisa adds that while the organization is Christian, and while it delivers its message based on the tenets of Christian love, its curriculum is not religious. REACH hopes to work with all religious communities and non-believers as well. At the conclusion of these seminars, REACH challenges these leaders to identify groups in their community who would need and be receptive to additional REACH training.

• **Grassroots training.** After REACH trains community leaders and these leaders identify additional groups in the community who would benefit the process of reconciliation through additional training, REACH begins its grassroots training programs. While the leadership group is challenged to identify grassroots actors in their community for such seminars, generally these grassroots training seminars break down into three distinct groups: women, youth, and released prisoners. There are other groups as well, but these are the three who are most commonly identified and with whom REACH works most often. REACH trains these groups in what reconciliation means and about reconciliation processes, but it also provides training in specific relationship building and development techniques appropriate for each individual group. For example, women generally represent the most impoverished segment of the
population. They often either widows from the genocide or abandoned by an imprisoned husband and are left to be the sole provider for their family. Unfortunately, women are not trained with the skills necessary to support their families. Part of the REACH training for women is in economic development activities they can use in either agriculture or business. When REACH trains these groups in economic development techniques, these women will then form Unity Groups centered on business or agricultural ventures. The women in the training seminars represent both the wives of perpetrators and victims, when they form economic relationships or Unity Groups, it creates a sense of interdependence between these women. This sense of interdependence is the paramount principal in the REACH grassroots training seminars, and is the purpose behind the REACH objective of creating local Unity Groups. The same process is used when working with youth groups, prisoners groups, and all other grassroots groups REACH trains. The details of these Unity Groups are outlined below.

**REACH Unity Group Designed Reconciliation Programs**

- **Women’s Groups.** Women are one of the most important social groups in Rwanda. Women have been left to care for their families after either losing their husbands to the genocide or to jail. Women also play an influential role in the reconciliation process as mothers, providers, and active members of their community. When women embrace the reconciliation process and embrace each other as Volf\(^\text{78}\) discusses, they can then influence their children and their families to embrace the process as well. This is one of

\(^{78}\) Volf, 42-45.
the functions of the REACH women’s Unity Groups. The most visible part of REACH women’s Unity Groups is their economic development projects. I met with one such group in Rwamagana, in Eastern Province, where women from various religious backgrounds and both sides of the war were engaged in a basket weaving enterprise. These women were raising funds to train themselves in this unique Rwandan art form. Those who showed the greatest skill and potential were then sent to Kigali to be formally trained and given the opportunity to apply their craft for western buyers, like the Macy’s department store. The women who are not chosen to complete formal training in Kigali continue to ply their craft locally, and REACH often sells their products through their affiliates in Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Other women’s Unity Groups are involved in gardening, farming, and herding projects around Rwanda. The outcome of these groups is a source of sustainable economic development for these women, and also marks the creation of interdependent relationships between formerly divided people.

• **Prisoner’s Groups.** One of the important outgrowths of these women’s groups, REACH discovered, was their effect on reintegrating released prisoners into their communities. REACH found that when released prisoners, returned to find their wives involved in Unity Groups, they were more quickly accepted into the community. REACH is currently working with the Rwandan government agency TIG\(^79\) which reintegrates prisoners who confess their crimes and seek redress from their victims. In communities where REACH operates, TIG has allowed released prisoners to join

\(^{79}\) There is no translation for the name of this organization in English.
REACH groups in lieu of their government mandated work release program. REACH prisoner groups receive training from REACH on reconciliation and in return for their release and training, they help to rebuild the homes for widows of the genocide. REACH does not run a strict work release program like the government. Released prisoners working with REACH are allowed to live in their communities, unlike TIG workers, and the widows for whom they are constructing homes are required to provide water and food for these workers. The intention behind this is to reintegrate the prisoners through their contributions to the community, but also to have the community embrace them as well by providing for their material needs. The outcome is designed to be a community where infrastructure and relationships are being rebuilt together.

**Youth Groups.** Youth play a prominent role in the reconciliation process. Training youth in reconciliation and promoting relationship building are key strategies in the generational process of reconciliation. This may explain why I witnessed more REACH youth Unity Groups than either women or prisoner groups. Youth groups focused mostly on relationship building and teaching. The primary activities of these groups center around the arts – choir, drama, and dance mostly – and sports. I witnessed both a REACH youth choir and a REACH youth dance troupe, and was informed that the groups were composed of people from all religious backgrounds, including Muslims. The choir composed and even recorded their own songs, performed and written about reconciliation and Christian love. Even the Muslim members of this group participated in singing Christian songs because of the importance of using the choir to share the overall message of reconciliation. The sports
groups attract a lot of attention in rural Rwanda where football equipment is scarce. These groups use sport to attract young people, but through these games they teach their members about reconciliation. Not only do they use sport as a backdrop to discuss teamwork and unity, but the conclusion of each game is also followed with a seminar about reconciliation. REACH is currently building its own football pitch where it plans to hold a tournament for all the REACH sports groups in the country. Youth groups that offer recreational opportunities, like the arts or sports, provide REACH with a broad audience for their message of Reconciliation.

**Methodology**

Like the Lutheran Church of Rwanda and the various interfaith alliances, the reconciliation programs of REACH are all focused on grassroots level actors. Promoting reconciliation through economic development, and particularly through relationship building, is the hallmark of REACH programming. REACH also focuses on program sustainability by putting the impetus for the Unity Groups on the local actors themselves. The features of REACH reconciliation programming corresponds with the Vinjamuri-Boesenecker typology of capacity-building religious actors.

One of the other hallmarks of the REACH programs is the focus on reintegrating perpetrators into the community through the women’s groups and through prisoner groups. Such attention to the perpetrators corresponds with Volf’s writing and methodology. REACH emphasizes overcoming poverty by empowering women with the skills needed to provide for themselves and their families.

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80 Volf, 42-45.
While Rev. Kalisa and the REACH organization are influenced by the theoretical frameworks of Lederach and de Gruchy, the actual program design of the Unity Groups is left completely to the grassroots level actors. From the people involved in the seminars to the focus of Unity Group activities, all decisions about programming originates from grassroots level actors. This was an intentional policy decision made by Rev. Kalisa; made because he wanted practical solutions to originate from grassroots actors and not theoretical solutions proposed by parties in Kigali.

**Strengths of the Religious NGO Framework**

- **Independence.** REACH does not have to answer to anyone other than its own board. This allows REACH to remain focused on one task. Whereas in the Lutheran Church, pastors would have to report to the executive council and interfaith alliances are accountable to their members, REACH has no bureaucracy to impede its work and is free from the myriad of responsibilities that draw the attention and energies of these institutionally based frameworks. It is right for the churches to focus on a broader cross section of activities because they have many responsibilities, but the directed focus of the NGO framework is one of its greatest strengths. Lastly, albeit REACH is a religious NGO and Christianity plays a role in everything it does, its curriculum and programming is non-denominational, freeing REACH of concerns about doctrine or theology which might impede the work of a denomination or ecumenical organizations.

- **Dedication and training.** Unlike an individual denomination like the Lutheran Church of Rwanda, where pastors must divide their time between preaching, counseling, visitations, and church administration, REACH staff are employed only in the ministry.
of reconciliation. All REACH staff have professional and academic training in reconciliation and peacebuilding. All staff functions are directed toward the ministry of reconciliation and are overseen by a professional manager trained in conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques. REACH attracts workers from all over the world who want to contribute their efforts to the process of religious reconciliation in Rwanda. Consequently, REACH, like other domestic NGOs, is routinely injecting new personnel, new training, and new ideas into its methodology.

• **Independent International Alliances.** REACH has the advantage of organized affiliates in developed countries who are solely devoted to supporting the work of REACH. Even domestic NGOs operating in Rwanda who do not have such affiliations generally receive some sort of support or funding from international organizations and governments. Many of these international organizations are interested in working with local NGOs because they offer more transparency than working with the government or even churches. Even if domestic NGOs do not have a financial relationships with international counterparts, relational affiliations can still go a long way toward promoting their image both nationally and internationally.

**Weaknesses of the Religious NGO Framework**

• **Government Oversight.** Thus far REACH has not had any negative interactions with the government, but as the 2005 Front Line report illustrates, civil society organizations are highly scrutinized by the government, creating little space for NGOs to act outside of the policies set forth by the government. Many organizations that the government considers threatening have either been disbanded or reorganized by the government.
The government, as reported by Front Line, has gone so far as to accuse NGOs of spreading genocidal ideology simply for working independently from the government or seeking government accountability. Even though REACH has not encountered problems with the government, any NGO operating in Rwanda is nervously under the scrutiny of the government.

• **Institutional limitations.** While independence from a religious institution allows organizations like REACH the freedom to focus exclusively on reconciliation programs, such independence can limit the available resources base. Most institutional churches in Rwanda have a network of pastors and congregations around the country, as well as a national or even international hierarchy to call upon. Such a network of pastors and congregations allows individual denominations to quickly mobilize members of their communities and to draw resources from any part of the country, or even the world. When REACH enters a community, it does not have a network in place and must build relationships from scratch. Likewise, while REACH has international affiliates, they do not offer nearly the expansive support opportunities of the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, or even the Lutheran Churches.

• **Continuity.** The vision of a domestic NGO is often largely based on the vision of its founder. This is certainly the case with REACH, although the staff also shares his vision. Concerns arise, however, over the continued viability of an NGO, and the continuance of its vision, if a founding leader leaves. In the churches, perhaps with the exception of Pentecostals and Baptists, the vision of the church is based in its doctrine and theology, not in one individual; allowing the vision to stay constant through
changes in leadership. Theoretically, though perhaps not in practice, this makes the vision of a church less corruptible than an NGO. An NGO guided by the vision of an individual is more susceptible to corruption than a denomination with doctrine, theology, and an institution. We have seen this be the case in Rwanda, especially in cases where the government has restructured an NGO like the Front Line report suggests. In such cases as Front Line reports, of course, leaders are not be corrupted, but pressured to change their vision or mission, and with no institutional structure to fall back on, leaders of domestic NGOs can be easily pressured. Such external pressure or the loss of a founding leader can both drastically affect the vision of domestic NGOs.

**Conclusion**

The Rwandan churches, and the country as a whole, are still marred by the history of genocide. Economically the country is moving forward at an impressive pace, and Rwanda projects to be one of the safest countries in Africa today, but some of the same elements that divided the country before the genocide still persist, including economic inequalities, discrimination, and a failed justice system. While some see the economic and security conditions in Rwanda as a sign that the country is swiftly moving forward on the reconciliation journey, these are merely the indicators of negative, not positive, peace. The level of economic inequality and poverty, the prolonged transitional justice process as seen in the gacaca and international tribunal processes, and the broken relationships in Rwanda all indicate a society that is still torn from the legacy of genocide and the social inequalities that have persisted for generations.
The churches in Rwanda have a large role to play in the reconciliation process. Rwanda remains one of the most Christian nations in all of Africa, and regular church attendance rivals that of before the genocide. The churches today are better organized than before and seem well placed to take the lead in the reconciliation process in Rwanda. However, like the country and its people, the churches are going through their own process of reconciliation. The churches must reconcile themselves to God, their followers, and to each for contributing to decades of social and economic inequalities and their complicity in the genocide.

Today people continue to look toward the religious community for guidance during the reconciliation process. The Rwandan remains a deeply religious individual who requires a religious element to the process of reconciliation. The churches, according to their own scriptures and their own scholars, are called to conduct the ministry of reconciliation. For these reasons the churches cannot shy away from their obligation to engage their members, their communities, and the country as a whole, and participate fully in the reconciliation process.

This thesis sought to explore the contributions of the Christian churches to this process of reconciliation. The Protestant Christian community was chosen as the focus of this thesis because the Catholic Church has been studied at length in Rwanda, and to add another report that focused heavily on Catholicism in Rwanda seemed redundant; and because the contributions of the Protestant community to the Rwandan reconciliation process has gone largely unexplored. To begin to contribute to the understanding of Protestant contributions to the reconciliation process, this thesis explored the pragmatic
reconciliation programs being designed through various frameworks. The Protestant
churches contribute to the reconciliation process, and design reconciliation programs
through various centralized, local, and collaborative frameworks. The three frameworks
selected for this thesis was the individual denominational framework, the interfaith
framework, and the religious NGO framework. These frameworks were chosen because
they were the three most prevalent frameworks being used in Rwanda for Protestant
Christian reconciliation program design in the late 2000s.

Through the Vinjamuri-Boesenecker typology of religious actors we are given a
better understanding of the type and function of religious actors working on the
reconciliation process in Rwanda. All three Protestant Christian frameworks explored
here correspond with the Vinjamuri-Boesenecker typology of religious capacity-builders.
Religious capacity-builders seek a long-term commitment to grassroots actors and
projects. Through a thorough exploration of the frameworks addressed in this thesis, it
was clearly shown that the focus of these Protestant Christian reconciliation programs
was on developing or rebuilding relationships, particularly at the grassroots level. By
using the Vinjamuri-Boesenecker typology we are better able to understand what
motivates the religious actors in Rwanda and why they use their chosen methods for
program design and implementation.

Another concern of this thesis was the understanding of reconciliation and the
reconciliation process in various cultural contexts. Western scholarship defines
reconciliation in many different ways and in many different terms. It was important to
examine this same question of meaning and process in Rwanda and I found that
reconciliation was defined largely as building relationships by the Protestant groups interviewed for this project, similar to the definition offered by Lederach.

From the religious peacebuilding expert John Paul Lederach to the clinical psychologist Everett L. Worthington, Jr., most of our authors view reconciliation as some type of process, or journey in the words of Lederach. While there is still much debate within the reconciliation scholarship as to whether reconciliation is a goal, a process, or some combination of the two, one thing that is clear from reading our Christian authors is a clearly defined understanding of reconciliation as a process. Lederach’s use of the biblical imagery of Moses in the wilderness and Jacob confronting Esau, and John W. de Gruchy’s heavy reliance on the Pauline doctrine of reconciling with God, both describe the process as a long-term commitment. This clearly shows the importance of biblical literature in both the Western academic understanding of reconciliation as a process and the Rwanda Protestant program designs.

Within this process our authors also speak to the many dimensions and levels of the reconciliation process. For the religious writers we see a discussion of reconciling with the self, the other, and with God. Similarly, the secular writers discuss the process of reconciliation having personal, interpersonal, and then inter-group levels. Lederach is clear to point out that reconciliation is not a quick political tool, but much more of an all-consuming process of social transformation. This journey of personal, interpersonal, and intergroup reconciliation was perhaps better articulated to me by my Rwandan colleagues than by any western author. The Rwandan religious leaders and laity I spoke with all clearly understood the need for personal reflection and reconciliation as the genesis of the
social reconciliation process. For many in Rwanda this process is ongoing today, and according to the religious actors I worked with, this personal stage of the process might be the longest and most involved level in the entire process. For this reason, the Protestant capacity-builders are involved in trauma counseling, prison ministry, and prisoner reintegration programs all over the country.

To understand reconciliation as a process is one thing, but to implement that process is something else entirely. Our authors stressed two key points to consider for a successful reconciliation process: building relationships and overcoming economic inequalities. Largely, the Rwandan religious capacity-builders surveyed here are combining these two objectives through training and assistance in building interdependent relationships across group lines. REACH, for example, will take the wives of perpetrators and the wives of victims, train them in reconciliation and economic development techniques, and then challenge them to work together to implement these techniques. As these women grow to know each other and work together, they come to depend on each other for their economic livelihood and for friendship as well. Such strategies are employed by most of the religious capacity-builders surveyed in this thesis.

The Protestant religious capacity-builders explored by this thesis possess an understanding social reconciliation methods and theories consistent with western scholars, even though many have never been exposed to the writing of scholars such as Lederach or Vinjamuri and Boesenecker. Let us not mistake, however, that such knowledge implies efficiently run programs and organizations dedicated to this process. Largely, all the organizations surveyed in this thesis had glaring weaknesses. REACH
was one of the few organizations surveyed here that did not have many of the weaknesses that plagued other organizations, but that can largely be attributed to its relatively small size, which comes with weaknesses of its own.

Throughout the country, religious capacity-builders told me that the unity of the churches was paramount to a successful reconciliation process, yet it appeared that when funding was scarce or materials limited, many of these actors simply removed themselves from the process. There is an absence of philosophical dedication to the process. When resources are plentiful, so seems to be the willingness of the churches to engage the process, but when resources of scarce, that willingness disappears. This is the glaring weakness that was reported to me from both within the religious establishment and from the laity itself.

Another weakness seen especially in the churches and the interfaith alliances, but certainly prevalent in the NGOs as well, is passivity in the face of the government. The Front Line report showcased how the government resists civil society organizations that grow too powerful, but I do not think that is the entire reason for the passivity of the church leaderships. Unfortunately the churches, especially the Catholic Church, are still identified with the genocidal regime of 1994. The churches seem to be quiet in the face of the government because they want to appear to be in lock step with the government, and to avoid drawing negative comparisons to the past. Additionally, there is no one dynamic leader in the Rwandan religious community that can unite and inspire the religious people of the nation. One religious leader I spoke with told me he thought one would emerge when they were at that point in the reconciliation process, but after 15
years I would have to imagine they have reached the point in the process where strong leadership is required. The Mufti of the Muslim Community of Rwanda would seem to have the talents, charm, and intellect, but whether an overwhelmingly Christian religious establishment would follow him seems suspect.

Overall the Protestant Christian religious actors in Rwanda have the intellectual tools and designs needed to make major contributions to the reconciliation process in Rwanda. The churches are needed in this process, and they are willing to contribute, though to date there has been a reluctance to fully philosophically embrace the process. The methods are there, the network is in place, the process has started, what is need yet is the full determination of the Protestant churches, and the whole religious community, to vigorously pursue reconciliation in Rwanda.
Bibliography


