

Is Reconciliation the new model for mission?

Reflections on religious and ethnic conflicts with special reference to the Great Lakes region of East Africa.

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There are no devils left in hell", the missionary said. "They are all in Rwanda." Rwanda - where people were hunted down on the streets like animals and killed where they were caught; where blood flowed down the aisles of churches made into preferred places of massacre by a perverse inversion of symbolism; where butchered bodies floated down the river - on their way to Ethiopia, via the shortcut of the Nyaborongo River, where the hated Tutsi 'intruders' came from. "The fighting was hand to hand", writes the reporter, intimate and unspeakable, a kind of blood lust that left those who managed to escape it hollow-eyed and mute" In only three months a million were dead and more than twice as many driven out of their homes. The protagonists of the genocide were for the most part Christians! [1]

Introduction

The last twenty years or so have seen a dramatic increase in interest in the theme of reconciliation, peace making and conflict resolution. It would appear that despite the enormous number of conflicts that have emerged on the world scene, governments, world organisations, NGOS, synagogues, churches and

religious movements have not ceased making efforts towards building bridges of reconciliation.

Africa has been one of the hot spots for ethnic and religious conflicts, the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and the democratic Republic of Congo) being one of the African regions that has probably seen the most violent of these conflicts. Indeed after the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which an estimated million of Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered, one could easily agree with the missionary's words that "there are no devils left in hell, they are all in Rwanda."

Commenting on these words, the Croatian theologian, Miroslav Volf, of the Yale Divinity School has this to say: The words seem to paint just the right image to express the unfathomable. Yet if we leave the immediacy of Rwandan brutalities and consider the larger world, we sense that the image is skewed on two important counts. First, not all devils are in Rwanda. If the missionary's words were not a cry of desperation, one might even be able to detect a tinge of clandestine racism: a little country in Black Africa has sucked up all the devils. What about Bosnia? What about Nagorno-Karabakh? What about all the fifty spots around the globe - Western countries included - where violence has taken root between people who share the same terrain but differ in ethnicity, race, language or religion? No devils there? Without wanting to diminish the horror of Rwanda's genocide, all the devils of vicious ethnic strife are by no means there. They are dispersed around the globe, sowing death and desolation, even if less vehemently than the devils of Rwanda.[2]

The second way in which the missionary's comment on Rwanda is skewed is even more disturbing than the first. The global presence of devils notwithstanding, hell has by no means become an empty place. Rapid population growth, diminishing resources, unemployment, migration to shanty cities and lack of education are steadily increasing pressure along the many social fault-lines of our globe. Though we cannot predict when and where social quakes will occur and how powerful they will be, we can be sure that the earth will shake. Conditions seem ripe for more Rwandas, Bosnias, Croatias, Serbias, Kosovos etc. there are more devils in hell ready to make more hells on earth. Rwandas, Kosovos and Bosnias of today and tomorrow

challenge the churches to rethink their mission as agents of peace. What vision of the relations between cultures do we have to offer to communities at war? It seems the mission of reconciliation becomes even more urgent. In this particular paper I would like to look at ethnic and religious conflicts in the Great Lake regions (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and DRC). I will not particularly deal with the genocide in Rwanda but will concentrate on a failed attempt to provide a model of social and moral reconstruction by a religious movement in the South west of Uganda (close to the border with Rwanda) before I try to answer the question whether reconciliation can be considered as the new model for today's mission.

I The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG)

On March 17, 2000 an estimated 338 members of The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG) died near the village of Kanungu, Uganda in what appeared to be a mass suicide. Within a few days additional bodies were recovered beyond the site where the explosion occurred bringing the count to nearly eight hundred persons. It was clearly evident that at least some of these bodies had been murdered.[3]

Many have compared *The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God* (hereafter: MRTCG) and the March 17 tragedy with similar tragedies such as the People's Temple Community in Jonestown, Guyana or the Solar Temple in Switzerland.[4] But while the latter movement ended in mass suicide, today it has been established that the tragedy of the MRTCG at Kanungu was a result of mass killings. We will probably never know the full details of what happened at this small village of Kanungu in South western Uganda especially since as it seems today no-one survived the inferno of that day. However, today we know that the death toll is estimated to be about 1000 if one includes the subsequent discovery of mass graves at various other locations of the movement. The people in those mass graves were probably killed at least a year before.

Origins of the MRTCG

Initially not much was known of the movement but in the past two years new light has been shed on this movement. According to the state-run Ugandan Human Rights Commission and contrary to earlier reports, the two main leaders of the movement, Joseph Kibwetere and Credonia Mwerinde were killed in the inferno at Kanungu.[5]

On 24 August 1988, Mwerinde, a young woman who was referred to as a former prostitute, is reported to have had a number of visions of the Virgin Mary. Three years later she was joined by Kibwetere, who was so impressed by her story that he invited her to begin a religious movement at his house. They moved to the little known village of Kanungu in 1992. Kibwetere was separated from his wife and because of his new teachings he was also excommunicated by the local Roman Catholic diocese. Another important figure was Fr Dominic Kataribabo, a Roman Catholic priest who had done postgraduate studies in theology in California. He too had been suspended from active ministry by his bishop. He eventually left the Church and worked exclusively for the MRTCG. Reports about Kataribabo say that while in the USA he must have been influenced by a Roman Catholic Marian movement for priests (MMP) led by Fr Stefano Gobbi as well as by splinter 'sedevacantist' groups not in communion with Rome.

The Doctrine and Practices of the MRTCG

The beliefs and doctrine of the movement are contained in a book entitled 'A Timely Message from Heaven. The End of the Present Time' which was probably written by Dominic Kataribabo, the chief theologian of the movement. "Each member was required to read this document (or have it read to them) many times before being allowed to join the group. This orientation could last up to 4-6 days. The members then joined the first of three groups: the novices, comprised of the newest members, and wore black. The next group were those who promised to follow the commandments and wore green. The fully professed members were ' *those who were willing to die in the ark*,' and they wore green and white"[6]The group was organised around 12 apostles (known as *entumwa*) comprising six men and six women.

The twelve were to lead the group until the Second Coming when Jesus and Mary would return. It appears that the movement's message was not one that would encourage violence; it was rather a message of social and moral reconstruction. According to Kataribabo, it was a movement and not a new religion. Many of their rituals were Roman Catholic. "The defining difference was the movement's emphasis on moral standards dictated by the Ten Commandments and the apocalyptic beliefs espoused by the group".[7] However, the members lived an austere monastic life style. As the *The Uganda Human Rights Group* reports, leaders of the cult made members work like animals, starved them and made them sell all their belongings in anticipation of doomsday and 'going to heaven'.[8] It is understandable that the members awaited a Second Coming and a new beginning after the annihilation of the old world. This old world was to end on 31st December 1999 at the compound of Kanungu, which was also referred to as 'Noah's Ark'. The documents of the group (namely, *A Timely Message from Heaven*, clearly states that the new earth "will begin with year one, after the year 2000." Another document, from the founders themselves to local officials, states, "The year 2000 will not be followed by year 2001 but it will be followed by YEAR ONE in a new generation.[9] Despite all this information, it is difficult to figure out the full doctrine of the MRTCG as the movement lived a secluded existence and was characterised by secrecy. A lot was communicated by sign language.

II The MRTCG: A Failed Attempt or a Challenge for Reconstruction and Reconciliation?

This mysterious nature of the MRTCG led to varied and sometimes contradicting reports after the Kanungu inferno of 17th March. No serious analysis of the causes and challenges of the tragedy were possible because of this. Government and media reports rehearsed the same 'explanations', which saw the tragedy as the result of a failed prophecy of the Second Coming. The MRTCG was portrayed as an evil movement whose members

were manic and depressive. Recent analyses by scholars caution such explanations, as they explain nothing.

The Ugandan scholar, Emmanuel Katongole of Duke Divinity School writes, "there is an impression that there is nothing we can positively learn from groups such as the MRTCG, except to use them as a warning to all against the dangers of fanatical religion which in modern day terms we have come to identify with 'sects' and 'cults'"[10] This would assume that the 'danger' which Kanungu represents lies outside our usual, peaceful forms of social existence. But Katongole is strongly against this interpretation of the MRTCG.

What happened at Kanungu on March 17 "is a parody of the violence and hopelessness that unfortunately are all too apparent within both state and church in Africa today... in many respects, the MRTCG was itself an attempt - *a failed attempt* to be sure - to counter this hopelessness by embodying an alternative, more hopeful form of social existence.[11]

Other explanations would ignore the 'subaltern' or 'popular' character of the MRTCG. Despite its 'underground' character, the movement attracted a good number of followers. In its short term of existence the MRTCG attracted over 5000 adherents scattered around Uganda. It is very probable that it did offer its members an alternative to available forms of social existence, a community that sought to come to terms with the frustrating circle of hopelessness and mere survival in the country.

The movement's doctrine was an ambitious one: *restoring the ten commandments of God*. "The tragic end of the MRTCG cannot itself make sense except against the background of a social history in which nation-state politics has only succeeded in underwriting for the majority of Africans nothing but a life of despair and the violent frustration of individual aspirations." [12] The movement of course failed in providing this alternative to despair but this may only point to the fact the churches "have tended to uncritically assume and even mimic the same patterns of power (as lordship and privilege) as those at home within nation-state politics in Africa." [13] What happened during the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the role the Rwandan Church leaders played in it serves only to affirm this. The tragedy at Kanungu

and the MRTCG are a serious challenge to reconciliation and Christian social imagination in Africa. To what extent can we make this claim?

First, concerning the membership of the movement, the report from the Religious Department of Makerere University in Kampala shows that "contrary to what some sections of the media reported, not all these were simple peasants. It emerged that there were many who were educated and had a number of skills. There were teachers, carpenters, masons, businessmen, and ex-servicemen (police and army, ex-catechists, not to talk of the leaders who included at least three priests...[14] This demonstrates how the MRTCG was an attempt to provide hope and this seems to have appealed to a large cross section of the population. Second, the community at Kanungu was marked by a life of discipline. The ambitious project of the 'restoration of the ten commandments' also involved demands and sacrifices from members and this was exemplified by the austere monastic life-style that was already mentioned above. Third, the MRTCG aimed at become a thriving and self-sufficient community. The Guardian newspaper notes "members lived communally on land bought by pooling the profits from their property, which they sold when they joined the cult. The church buildings were set in plantations of pineapples and bananas. Cows grazed on the hilly land. The followers had their own primary school, as well as dormitories where they slept together on simple rush mats. They had recently completed a new church and decorated it with coloured bunting."[15] Finally, the movement seemed to take its religious beliefs and practices seriously as shown by the type of community and life style that it provided to its members. In that sense it was a community with a vision even if "that religious vision got unfortunately caught in an increasing cycle of hopelessness and violence to which might have seemed as the only way out."[16] It ultimately became a failed attempt to restructuring society but it was an attempt all the same. One can wonder how could a community that had set out to provide an alternative to despair, hopelessness, frustrations, hatred, conflict and strife ultimately turn out to become the very antithesis of what it was offering? Katongole offers three explanations.[17]

The MRTCG had a tendency towards isolation. Secondly, it failed to revision leadership and thirdly, despite originally providing an alternative to despair to its members the vision culminated in a lack of hope and reconciliation.

It was not open to strangers. Indeed the very remote geographical position of Kanungu led the community to live a secluded existence away from any contact with non-members. The members understood themselves as the privileged 'elect'. Gradually people became even separated from family and loved ones. "Members would not leave camp unless necessary (those engaged in the two shops of the movement at Kanungu and those who went for 'evangelisation' purposes). .. occasional visitors to the camp were welcomed though these were restricted to the visitors' area and were not allowed to tour the camp."^[18] This kind of existence certainly led to serious consequences. The outside world had become a 'threat' and unable to meet this 'threat', the movement "turned the violence onto its own members and thus became intolerant of any divergent interpretations within its own ranks. Such a response was in fact predictable. For, a society which is unable to deal with external threats to its integrity, tends to become more totalitarian in dealing with its own members."^[19] This observation may also explain the presence of mass graves discovered at different locations connected with the movement (including the home of Fr Dominic Kataribabo). These mass graves dated back to at least a year or longer. It is very probable that dissidents who held opposing views had been massacred at those sites before the final inferno at Kanungu. The movement thus failed to act as a hermeneutical community in which differing views could be debated peacefully. In the same way the absence of any access to strangers prevented any interaction with other communities and the healthy challenge such communities could have provided. The lack of openness to strangers was a stumbling block to any form of social imagination.

The failure to revision leadership was exemplified by the way authority was practised in the MTRCG. According to Roman Catholic standards the hierarchical structure of the movement was very similar though one could note the presence of six women among the 12 apostles of the movement as a welcome positive development. But apart from this, "the exercise of power

and authority within the MRTCG, rather than being a service for truth, served to silence the group either into total submission or into victims too frightened to raise any questions." [20] Indeed one can say that the leadership of this movement only reflected the potential latent in leadership in many churches in Africa especially as they mimic the power games found in the African nation-states. "The challenge of social imagination, is therefore," as Katongole argues, "one of unlearning the dominant vision and practice of authority, and of learning to embody an alternative practice of authority." [21]

The MRTCG's vision culminated in a lack of hope. Its failure to live as an Eucharistic community of hope and reconciliation contributed to the tragedy of Kanungu. Indeed the Eucharist was regularly celebrated in the community that aspired to take its religious beliefs and practices but again the movement's authority radicalised the rules surrounding its celebration. In its theological handbook, [22] one can read: "Our Lord says the Church should no longer allow his Body to continue being held in the hands by the faithful; anybody who is not anointed should forthwith stop holding his Body in the hands. And the reception of the Holy Communion should be as it was in the past, the people should kneel down and receive Him on the tongue." [23] It was the 'cult of the host'. Thus the Eucharist was 'spiritualised' and revered while its political implications were ignored. "The unfortunate effect of this development however, is that the Eucharist ceases to be regarded as a *practice* which institutes and disciplines Christian hope, and simply becomes an *object* of purity, power and privilege." [24] The Eucharist is not primarily an object. It is the Eucharist that 'makes' the Church and not vice-versa. The MRTCG seems to have failed to perceive this. Legalism surrounded the movement's celebration of the Eucharist in such a way that forgiveness, reconciliation and hope were absent. While the movement was a disciplined community it failed to become a community of forgiveness. "The social imagination which the Eucharist performs is not a church of the 'pure' or of the 'holy', but one of forgiven sinners." [25] Reconciliation with God goes hand in hand with reconciliation with one another. The Eucharist should build a community of reconciliation, a community of hope and forgiveness. This is its political potential.

The MRTCG and its tragic end needs to be taken seriously as it displays the challenges that await the state, the churches and Christian communities in Africa. What sort of skills does Africa need in these times of conflict, wars, poverty, disease, hopelessness and frustrations? The Church in Africa will need to be an agent of reconciliation not by imitating the politics of nation-states but by envisioning a new future based on Kingdom values.

III Is Reconciliation the New Model for Mission?

The discussion above may have shown how conflicts erupt in which religion plays a pernicious role, even becoming a source of violence. However, religion does not only cause violence, it may also serve to overcome it. Religion practised in a different way may provide the social imagination required in bringing about reconciliation.

Mission has often been characterised by such terms as implantation, adaptation, incarnation, inculturation, liberation: models in the understanding of mission in the different ages. In the recent past new terms have particularly been introduced, namely: dialogue, solidarity, inculturation and liberation. As Robert Schreiter writes: "A refocus may be needed"[26]

- Inculturation finds itself caught between official resistance from central church authority, on the one hand, and the ideological use of ethnicity in the local church, on the other.
- Theologies of liberation are caught between similar resistance and changed economic and political circumstances. No alternatives to global capitalism can be pointed to.
- Local communal violence threatens the prospects of interreligious dialogue.
- Resistance to oppression creates one kind of solidarity, but what kind of solidarity can be found in the slow and difficult process of social reconstruction?

But the last decade has also seen a dramatic increase of interest in reconciliation (for example, the Truth and Justice Commission in S.Africa). Of course reconciliation is not in itself a univocal concept, nor are the motivations of those who invoke it universally shared. For some it is merely an ideological device for perpetrators to forget the past of their crimes and get on with the future. For some reconciliation means conflict mediation, for others about

seeking justice for the victims. For some it is a coming to terms with their painful memories while still for others it is about the moral reconstruction of their shattered societies. It is true: reconciliation is about seeking justice, healing memories, rebuilding societies. This is being done today in Rwanda (Gacaca group or other groups like World Vision).[27]

New Theological Categories: Exclusion and Embrace

According to Miroslav Volf, to see the issue of ethnic conflict in the right perspective we need adequate categorial lenses.[28] Under the influence of liberation theologies, in recent decades the categories of 'oppression' and 'liberation' have ruled theological reflection on social issues. They were designed to handle experiences of economic exploitation and political domination, and they did that job reasonably well.

However, these categories are inadequate, even detrimental, in dealing with cultural conflicts. The trouble is that, in a sense, they fit conflict situations too well: both Croats and Serbs (*both* Hutus and Tutsis) see themselves as oppressed and engaged in the struggle for liberation. The categories of 'oppression' and 'liberation' provide them with moral weapons that make their battles so much deadlier. Moreover, in many situations of ethnic conflict we do not have a clear perpetrator and a clear victim; *both* parties have oppressed and both have suffered oppression, though often in varying degrees and at different junctures in their common history. Even when the perpetrator can clearly be named we need much more than simply to liberate the oppressed by defeating the oppressor. Since the former oppressors and the oppressed must continue living together as neighbours, we must work towards reconciliation. Liberation does this only to a limited extent.

To help resolve conflicts between peoples we need a different set of categories. These must both name the evil committed by one or both parties and facilitate reconciliation between them. Volf then suggests that the categories of 'exclusion' and 'embrace' do precisely that. These are central categories of what he calls 'a theology of embrace'. This theology is not meant to replace theologies of liberation, but to relocate these theologies by inserting

them into a larger theological framework, which will both preserve their strength and curtail their weaknesses. It is from the perspective of a theology of embrace that Volf approaches the problem of ethnic strife.

It seems that the language of reconciliation is on the lips of many people today. It will be important to realise that the work of reconciliation is first and foremost God's work and is in line with contemporary missiology, which understands mission first and foremost as 'missio Dei'. The enormity of the misdeeds of the past is so great that it overwhelms the human imagination to consider how they can be overcome. Who can undo the consequences of a war, genocide or of centuries of oppression? Who can bring back the dead? It is only the God of life. Reconciliation is about new creation. Only can God can begin that. But if it is God's work, it is also our task. That's why we can speak of a ministry of reconciliation. Schreier names three ways in which this ministry can be achieved.

1. Create communities of reconciliation - safe places where victims can come to receive empowerment.
2. Engage in the moral reconstruction of broken societies.
3. Articulating and then living a spirituality of reconciliation that is accessible to others and can be shared.

It is difficult to conclude this paper without adding the importance of academia in the work of reconciliation. I am trying to argue that it is also part of this emerging model of mission that we see in the numerous writings on identity, otherness, ethnic and religious conflict. This also means that deep-rooted stereotype images of Africa and other parts of the Two-Thirds World are being abandoned for a more open understanding of societies. While cultural evolutionism has been abandoned, scholars have often looked at ethnic and religious conflicts as "a leftover from a bygone age and a barrier to modernisation." [29] Ethnicity and religion are part of a complex set of dynamic and interactive identities and these may be used politically. The search for reconciliation needs to be attentive to this and to look for reasons why religion or ethnicity may become sources of conflicts and violence. The historical circumstances as well as the processes of political and economic transformation influence the complex causes of conflict. I hope that by looking at religious violence in the tragedy of the MRTCG, some light may have been shed on this complex issue.

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M. Volf, "Europe: Bosnia", in *CONCILUM (Religion as Source of Violence)* 1997/4

Links (adapted from Elisabeth Auten, *Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of*

God<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/mrtcg.html>)>

[CESNUR coverage of Uganda](#)

The Centre for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR) provides several original articles as well as hundreds of news articles dating from the onset of the tragedy. To assist scholars in locating some of the more informative articles in the archive, we offer here a selection of materials selected by the WRNS (World Religious News Service)

http://www.cesnur.org/testi/uganda_updates.htm

<UL [Religious Tolerance Page](#)

This page promotes freedom of religion and attempts to offer a nonbiased approach to religious groups. The facts are not well represented on this page but it does provide some insight as to how the deaths were covered by the

media, and addresses the controversy involved with the reason for the deaths.

[Infoplease](#)

An article that compares the Ugandan group with other groups that met similar ends.

Melton, J. Gordon. 2000

["Was It Mass Murder Or Suicide>," Beliefnet.com](#) . (March 21, 2000)

Melton, J. Gordon

"Tragedy in Uganda: the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, a Post-Catholic Movement," [Cesnur Web Page](#).

Melton, J. Gordon

["Similar Endings, Different Dynamics," Beliefnet.com](#) . (April 4, 2000)

Opolot, Erich, Michael Wakabi, and Abbey Mutumba Lule. 2000

["Government Could be Held Liable for Deaths," The East African](#) (March 27, 2000).

Anti-Cult Perspectives

[Apologetics Index](#)

A counter cult page that includes somewhat biased and unsubstantiated information on the group itself, but has useful background information on Uganda and links to information on other African religious groups.

[Rick Ross Page](#)

Rick Ross runs an anti-cult web page that contains links to a number of related articles and commentaries.

Related Links

[African Instituted \(Independent\) Churches](#)

An informative article about the varieties of independent churches in Africa reprinted from the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, a publication venture of the World Council of Churches.

[All Africa](#)

This resource doesn't have a very good search engine, but it is a good source for continuing news coverage. Many articles published here can be found on the CESNUR page.

["Top 50 African Web Sites - Religion"](#)

[U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Uganda](#)

[Religious Freedom Page: Nation Profiles, Uganda.](#)

[CIA World Factbook: Uganda](#)

[Uganda Page](#)

A significant set of links to many different kinds of information about Uganda from the University of Pennsylvania African Studies Centre

Some Newspaper Articles on the First Anniversary of the Tragedy

"Uganda Cult Mass Murder Anniversary" by Henry Wasswa (Associated Press, March 16, 2001)

"'Evil Cult' Raises Political Temperature" by Ken Kamoche ("The Daily Nation," February 18, 2001)

"Religious Wrongdoings"

by Logan Nakyanzi (ABC News, February 14, 2001)

"Mary's Flames': The Long Road To Horror In Kanungu" ("The East African," (Kampala) February 8, 2001)

"Museveni To Keep Religion In School" ("New Vision," January 15, 2001)

Notes:

i[1] See M. Volf's Introduction, in J. Gundry-Volf & M. Volf , *A Spacious Heart. Essays on Identity and Belonging*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997, 1-2. The quotation from the missionary can be found in Nancy Gibbs, "Whay? The Killing Fields of Rwanda, *Time*, 16 May 1994, 57-63.

i[2] See M. Volf's Introduction, in J. Gundry-Volf & M. Volf , *A Spacious Heart. Essays on Identity and Belonging*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997, 1-2

i[3] Elisabeth Auten,

<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/mrtcg.html>, 1. See this website for a full account of the history and development of this movement which culminated in the 17th March tragedy.

i[4] See J. Goldon Melton, "Similar Endings, Different Dynamics", <http://www.beliefnet.com>. See also Jean-François Mayer, UN "TEMPLE SOLAIRE" À L'AFRICAINNE, ("La Liberté", 16 mars **2001**)

i[5] See http://www.cesnur.org/2002/uganda_001.htm. The commission report, issued two years after the tragedy, also calls for an investigation into the cult leaders' relationship with two local officials. It said police should investigate the former resident district commissioner and his assistant to learn what the men knew about the Movement for the Restoration of God, a cult that police now say was a scam to steal from its members. The 85-page report notes that 444 bodies have been exhumed from the cult's branches around the country and the homes of their leaders. At least 330 other people were killed in a church fire in Kanungu on March 17, 2000, but police indicated that many other bodies were probably reduced to ash in the fire. Police said they believe cult leaders first killed dissidents at branch churches and then later gathered followers in the Kanungu church, nailed the doors shut and set it on fire. The government has never released a final report on its investigation. The commission said the cult was led by a former prostitute, Cledonia Mwerinde, who recruited and became lovers with Joseph Kibwetere, who was later recognized as the cult's leader. The commission said its investigation suggests Mwerinde died in the church fire and that she may have killed Kibwetere in 1999 fearing that he had AIDS. Leaders of the cult made members work like animals, starved them and made them sell all their belongings in anticipation of doomsday and "going to heaven," the report said. Mwerinde probably led the victims of the Kanungu fire into the church on March 17 because growing discontent within the cult meant that "she would have been killed herself". Ugandan police still list Mwerinde and Kibwetere on their wanted list, along with defrocked catholic priests Dominic Kataribaabo, Joseph Kasapuraari as well as Ursula Komuhangi, cult leaders suspected of organising the mass killing

i[6] Auten, <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/mrtcg.html>,3

i[7] Ibid, 4

i[8] See http://www.cesnur.org/2002/uganda_001.htm

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- i[9] Auten, <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/mrtcg.html>, 4
- i[10] E. Katongole, "Kannungu and the MRTCG in Uganda: A Challenge for Christian Social Imagination", 3. Manuscript of chapter 5 of his forthcoming book. I am indebted to him for allowing me to read his manuscript (hereafter: Kannungu). Government, media and some scholarly reports have often referred to the MRTCG as a cult or a sect, terms which carry implicit negative judgements and do not promote religious tolerance. See also Auten, <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/mrtcg.html>, 1 and her caution of against the use of these terms.
- i[11] Katongole, "Kannungu", 3. My emphasis.
- i[12] Katongole, "Kannungu", 3-4.
- i[13] Katongole, "Kannungu", 4
- i[14] Tuhirwe, "Kannungu Research Team's Report." in Kabazzi- Kisirinya, Deus Nkuruziza and Gerald Banura (eds.), *The Kanungu Cult-Saga: Suicide, Murder or Salvation?* (Makerere University Kampala. The Department of Religious Studies, 2000): 12-46. See also Katongole, "Kannungu", 4-6.!
- i[15] *The Guardian*, March 20, 2000.
- i[16] Katongole, "Kannungu", 8.
- i[17] Katongole, "Kannungu", 9.
- i[18] Tuhirwe, "Kanungu Research Team's Report", 30
- i[19] Katongole, "Kannungu", 10.
- i[20] Katongole, "Kannungu", 13..
- i[21] Katongole, "Kannungu", 15
- i[22] *A Timely Message* (Part VIII, # 1-2.
- i[23] It is important to note that this is not different from the way communion is received in some conservative Roman Catholic dioceses in Uganda as well as in some other parts of the world still to this day.
- i[24] Katongole, "Kannungu", 18.
- i[25] Katongole, "Kannungu", 21
- i[26] Schreiter, *Mission in the Third Millenium*, NY: Orbis, 2001, 138
- i[27] Gacaca (Ga-CHA-cha) Tribunals. These are a new form of citizen-based justice, aimed at unifying this scarred nation.Can this system succeed? On

the one hand, the Gacaca Tribunals represent a remarkable democratization of justice for a people accustomed to obeying dictatorial authority. They offer a voice, and perhaps a therapeutic catharsis, to survivors. On the other hand, the system is fraught with potential pitfalls - inexperienced, minimally trained judges deal with complex cases, and there are certainly possibilities of false accusations or confessions, revenge or fear of revenge, inconsistent application of the law, and more.

i[28] M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 101-105; see also 57-98. M. Volf, "Europe: Bosnia", in CONCILUM (Religion as Source of Violence) 1997/4, 31

i[29] E. Braathen et al, *Ethnicity Kills?* 4.