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## **The Bible, the Economy, and the Poor**

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### **14. The Danger of Description**

#### **The Ethnic Labeling of the Poor in Colonial Rwanda**

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#### **Introduction**

As evidenced by this Kripke Center symposium on “The Bible, the Economy, and the Poor,” Christians generally agree that one of the prescriptive obligations of the faith is to help the poor. In turn, many non-Christians who might question Catholic sexual teaching or Trinitarian doctrine would nevertheless support the longstanding Catholic commitment to the impoverished and destitute. In recent months, the new Roman Catholic pontiff, Pope Francis I, has drawn wide acclaim for his calls that the Catholic Church become a “poor church for the poor.” Such calls should not be trivialized. Emphasis matters in Christian theology and pastoral practice. In this sense, Pope Francis’ highlighting of poverty rather than Pope Benedict’s bogeyman of secularism represents a significant shift in emphasis. Pope Francis’ message is especially important for the American Dives who can easily overlook the sufferings of the global Lazarus lying at the foot of his gated community.

It is a good thing, then, if Christians prioritize the needs of the poor and commit themselves to resolving social injustice. However, such proclamations themselves raise difficult questions. Who are the poor? As Ronald Simkins and Roger Nam have demonstrated, the answer to this question was not self-evident even in ancient Israel (see their essays in this volume). How do we label the poor? Are there risks of mislabeling the poor – or the rich for that matter? If so, what are the consequences, especially once these labels have been essentialized and politically instrumentalized? As Richard Horsley reminded us at this symposium, New Testament language of “Judeans” can quickly become “Jews,” raising all kinds of problematic connotations.

This paper offers some brief reflections on an important historical case study concerning such a “misdiagnosis” of the poor – namely Catholic leaders’ mapping of Hutu and Tutsi labels on socioeconomic and political differences in colonial Rwanda. By closely linking “poor” and “Hutu,” Catholic missionaries helped to solidify a growing ethnic consciousness among the Hutu. In contrast, despite the fact that the vast majority of Tutsi were themselves poor peasants, the label “Tutsi” became increasingly associated with economic wealth and political power. In the post-World War II period, Catholic missionary calls for social justice took on an increasingly ethnic cast since “the poor” were defined in ethnically essentialist terms. Not surprisingly in light of the church’s growing social dominance, Hutu political leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s framed their empowerment campaign in deeply Catholic rhetoric of liberation and social justice. Supported by Catholic missionaries and Belgian Catholic colonial leaders, Hutu political movements mobilized huge majorities of the Rwandan population in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This contributed to the toppling of Rwanda’s Tutsi-dominated monarchy in 1959-60 and the rapid establishment of a Hutu-dominated democratic republic between 1960 and 1962. In turn, many Catholic missionaries became staunch supporters of Rwanda’s post-colonial Hutu governments, seeing them as pro-clerical, pro-social justice Catholics who embodied the church’s successful uplift of Rwanda’s peasants. Unfortunately, the close linking of Catholic institutional interests, Catholic social teaching, and the campaign for Hutu rights blinded many Catholic leaders to the darker side of the Hutu social revolution, including massacres of Tutsi in the early 1960s that foreshadowed the cataclysmic genocide of the 1990s.

In the post-genocide period, many scholars have focused on how colonial European pseudo-anthropology racialized the Hutu-Tutsi distinction and set Rwanda on a trajectory of poisonous sociopolitical division. This is an important point, but an obsessive focus on “race” risks occluding other factors that contributed to the hardening of Hutu and Tutsi identities during the Belgian colonial period. In this essay, I will analyze how socioeconomic language of “rich” and “poor” became so closely intertwined with “Hutu” and “Tutsi” labels during the early colonial period. I will then examine how this juxtaposition of class and ethnic labels grew during the post-World War II period when a new generation of Catholic leaders looked to empower the “Hutu” masses over and against their perceived “Tutsi” oppressors. Finally, I will argue that this negative collectivization of social identity was a key factor in the ethnic polarization and violence that exploded in Rwanda in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A brief conclusion considers how the Rwandan case offers cautionary lessons for Christian leaders addressing “the poor” in other parts of the world.

### A Tale of Two Churches: Catholic Missions and the Formation of Hutu-Tutsi Identities in Colonial Rwanda

The first caravan of European Catholic missionaries arrived in Rwanda in February 1900. Accompanied by German soldiers, the missionaries' presence in Rwanda reflected the recent 1897 establishment of a German colonial protectorate over the territory and marked the continuing expansion of the "Missionaries of Africa," a 19<sup>th</sup>-century congregation of Catholic priests and brothers popularly known as the "White Fathers." The founder of the White Fathers was Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892), a French archbishop who dreamt of both re-evangelizing the ancient Christian lands of North Africa and spreading the faith into the sub-Saharan interior. After initial setbacks in Muslim North Africa, the White Fathers found more receptive audiences south of the Sahara, especially in present-day Uganda. Building on these successes, the White Fathers made overtures to German colonial leaders to allow them to establish Catholic missions in Rwanda. The Germans acquiesced, recognizing the potential contributions missionaries could offer in the areas of education and cultural formation.

The Rwandan royal court proved a tougher sell. The Rwandan *mwami* (king) Musinga showed little personal interest in the religion and only allowed the White Fathers to build mission stations away from the royal capital of Nyanza. Lacking a pliable king or eager elite converts, the White Fathers' dream of "top-down evangelization" remained just that in the early decades of Catholic missions in Rwanda. The White Fathers struggled to make converts, and the Hutu and Tutsi who did show interest tended to be poor peasants seeking patronage.

Missionaries arrived in Rwanda with the baggage of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Social Darwinism and pseudo-anthropological racial theory. Observing physiological differences between Tutsi court elites and peasants that they labeled as Hutu, missionaries and colonial anthropologists distinguished Tutsi from Hutu according to the "Hamitic Thesis." Introduced by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century explorer John Hanning Speke and propagated by 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars like C. G. Seligman and Jan Czekanowski, the Hamitic thesis combined the biblical narrative of the "curse of Ham" (Genesis 9:18-29) with the scientific racialism of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century (cf. Sanders; Rutayisire 1996; Mamdani; Seligman; Speke; Czekanowski). Rather than use the curse of Ham to justify slavery as in antebellum America, late 19<sup>th</sup> century European theorists ranked a so-called "Hamitic race" of North African and Ethiopian pastoralists as superior to the "Bantu" populations of interior Africa. For European theorists in Rwanda, the Tutsi fit the role of Hamitic civilizer, and the Hutu were classified as Bantu Africans. Described by one missionary as "Caucasians under a black skin," the Tutsi were seen as culturally and racially superior to their Bantu Hutu neighbors (Mamdani: 82). In the words of Louis de Lacger, an early chronicler of Rwandan history, the Tutsi were originally "brothers of the Nubians, the Galla, the Danakil. They have the Caucasian type and have come from Semitic roots in Asia" (De Lacger and Nothomb: 56). For Mgr. Léon Classe, the influential White Father missionary and Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Rwanda between 1922 and 1945, the "Tutsi are not Bantu. They are, if one wants, Negroids – they are an African people which possesses the strongest Hamitic indices" (1922: 622). Colonial racial theory clearly had a detrimental and polarizing effect on Hutu and Tutsi self-identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such

identities were institutionalized and legally reproduced, most notoriously through the new colonial power of Belgium's 1933 decision to introduce ethnic identity cards that legally classified all Rwandans as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. Despite sharing a common language, culture, and religious traditions, the Banyarwanda were increasingly seen as three peoples – the majority Hutu peasants (85% of the population), the minority Tutsi elites (14% of the population), and the endogamous Twa (comprising 1% of the Rwandan population).

The racialization of Hutu-Tutsi discourse was important, but there were additional (and oft-overlooked) social, economic, and political factors that exacerbated the Hutu-Tutsi difference. For example, in the late precolonial period under the reign of Mwami Rwagubiri, the term “*ababutu*” came into common usage as a socially derogatory term implying political marginalization and servitude. One thinks here of a traditional Kinyarwanda phrase like “*Sindi umubutu wawe*,” literally “I am not his servant” (Ntamahungiro: 5). In the words of the noted scholar Jean-Pierre Chrétien, “the term Hutu meant, in the clientage relationship, the subordinate position of the recipient: even if the recipient was Tutsi, the donor spoke of him as ‘my Hutu.’ In Rwanda, the term ‘Tutsi’ little by little was perceived as an identity closely related to power” (190; cf. Vansina: 134). Such sociopolitical overtones grew more pronounced after the advent of German and then Belgian colonial rule in the early 1900s. Although Rwanda's peasantry included thousands of “*petit Batutsi*” (or poor Tutsi peasants), colonial missionaries tended to describe the poor masses as “Bahutu” and the political and economic elite as “Batutsi.” In the words of Mgr. Classe, “when we speak of the Batutsi, we think very uniquely of the great Tutsi chiefs, who constitute a very restrained aristocracy . . . Tutsi refers not to origin but social condition, a state of fortune . . . whoever is a chief, or is rich, will often be called Tutsi” (1922: 681; see also 1911). By associating Tutsi exclusively with the nobility, Classe estimated in 1916 that Rwandan Tutsi comprised no more than 20,000 people. By 1922 he had raised this figure to 80,000, but his language still ignored the large numbers of poor Tutsi (cf. Rudakemwa: 277; Mbonimana: 63; Des Forges: 266-67).

These social stereotypes were exacerbated by Mgr. Classe's missiological strategy. Following Lavigerie's vision, Classe believed that the Catholic faith would spread most efficiently through first converting political and social elites. He feared that Tutsi elites were dismissing Christianity because of Catholic ideas of justice and defense of the rights of the poor. “Our dear mission can look forward to some dark days if we take no interest in the apostolate to the ruling class, if, by our acts, we give ground for the opinion that the Catholic faith is that of the poor” (1905: 185-86). In the words of noted Rwandan scholar Paul Rutayisire, Classe facilitated the “transformation of a church of the poor into a church of the governing elites” (1987: 104).

Even as Classe looked to ally Catholic missions with powerful Tutsi elites, other missionaries were more concerned with what Mgr. Jean-Joseph Hirth, Rwanda's first vicar apostolic, called “protect(ing) the poor and feeble from the abuses of the powerful” (Minnaert: 314). Unlike his protégé and later successor Classe, Hirth conveyed little ambivalence about establishing the church among the “poor suffering peasants” who showed openness to the Christian gospel. Like Classe, however, Hirth generally described such poor peasants as “Hutu” and associated the “Tutsi” with the royal court (Minnaert: 393). Whatever their leaders' language, early Catholic mission stations themselves embodied a certain pan-ethnic egalitarianism. These early converts also looked to the White Fathers as

political patrons. The White Father Alphonse Brard and several other missionaries obliged them, advocating for Hutu peasants and *petit* Tutsi over and against the exactions of local Tutsi authorities (Mbonimana: 55).

While the legacies of Brard and Hirth remind us of the complexity of early missionary views in colonial Rwanda, Classe's top-down, pro-Tutsi approach ultimately carried the day, especially after Classe assumed leadership over Rwandan Catholic missions in 1922. For Classe, the Hutu-Tutsi question mattered dearly for the Catholic Church. However, it mattered not so much because of racial theory but because of social power and institutional interest. In Classe's words, "the question is whether the ruling elite will be for us or against us, whether the important places in native society will be in Catholic or in non-Catholic hands; whether the Church will have through education and its formation of youth the preponderant influence in Rwanda" (Linden and Linden: 162). Classe's strategy proved numerically successful. Thousands of Tutsi elites began flocking to the Catholic missions in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Classe helped engineer the deposition of Mwami Musinga from power, replacing him with his son Mutara Rudahigwa, a Catholic catechumen. Mutara proved to be a loyal Catholic king. His 1943 baptism was a national *cause célèbre*, and his 1946 dedication of Rwanda to Christ the King marked Rwanda's arrival as a Christian kingdom in the heart of Africa.

### **Restoring Justice for the (Hutu) Poor: The Melding of Ethnic and Class Language in Late Colonial Rwanda**

After World War II, a new generation of Catholic missionaries came to Rwanda with a far more critical attitude towards the missions' Constantinian tradition of cozy church-state cohabitation. Reacting to the excesses of World War II and perceived church complicity with fascist movements in Spain, Italy, and Germany, these younger missionaries strongly emphasized the Catholic commitment to social justice – particularly justice for the poor Hutu masses. Beginning in the early 1950s, White Father missionaries and local Rwandan Catholic elites filled Catholic newspapers with reflections on Catholic social teaching. In particular, Catholic leaders encouraged workers' mutualities and cooperatives. As with American Catholic groups like the Knights of Labor, Rwandan Catholic cooperatives could address the direct material suffering of the poor and provide social security for workers while countering the church's communist and secular rivals ("Pour le progrès": 524-37).

A particular leader in the Catholic social justice movement was Fr. André Perraudin, a Swiss White Father who arrived in the country in 1950 as an idealistic 36-year-old seminary professor. After a brief but successful tenure as rector of Nyakibanda Major Seminary, at the end of 1955 Perraudin was appointed as the new Vicar Apostolic of Kabgayi. He wasted no time in addressing social questions. Even before he was formally consecrated as a bishop, he organized a February 1956 gathering on Catholic social teaching that addressed themes like worker pensions and universal suffrage. In April of the same year, he announced that the upcoming summer retreat for priests would consist of four study days concerning social questions in Rwanda (Perraudin 1956). In his first annual report to White Father leaders in Rome, he wrote of Catholic social teaching as "absolutely necessary in these difficult times where democracy tends to replace the former feudalism" (1957).

At the same time, Hutu elites closely associated with Perraudin and other White Fathers began to publicly demand an ethnic democratization that would free Hutu from what was increasingly described as “Tutsi feudalism.” In 1957, Hutu elites led by the former Catholic seminarian Gregoire Kayibanda and Perraudin’s personal secretary Calliope Mulindahabi released the “Bahutu Manifesto” (Nkundabagenzi: 20-29). The Manifesto described Rwanda’s primary political cleavage as the “indigenous racial problem” between “Hamitic” Tutsi and the Hutu peasantry. To correct these inequalities, the authors advocated what could be termed a Hutu affirmative action plan, calling for an “integral and collective promotion of the Muhutu,” which included naming Hutu as chiefs, sub-chiefs, and judges, expanding rural development to benefit Hutu farmers, and raising the percentage of Hutu in secondary schools. In particular, the authors opposed eliminating ethnic identity cards for fear that Tutsi rulers would continue to occlude the ethnic biases in Rwanda’s educational and political systems (Nkundabagenzi: 20-29; cf. Kalibwami: 375-84; Lemarchand: 149-51; Mamdani: 116-17).

Three months after the release of the Bahutu Manifesto, Kayibanda founded the *Mouvement Social Mubutu* (MSM) in Kabgayi in June 1957. Committed to the political, social, cultural, and economic uplift of the Hutu peasantry, the MSM quickly became one of the largest political movements in Rwanda. After founding the MSM, Kayibanda traveled to Belgium in late 1957 to begin an internship with *Vers l’avenir*, a progressive Catholic publication based in Namur. Kayibanda used this experience to cultivate important political and financial relationships with center-left Christian political parties and trade unions in Belgium (Linden and Linden: 251; Saur: 28-29). As Kayibanda developed international contacts, the Belgian provincial of the White Fathers, Guy Mosmans, began lobbying Belgian colonial officials. In particular, Mosmans encouraged the Belgians to break with Mwami Mutara, promote Hutu elites, and suppress the Tutsi-dominated Superior Council, Rwanda’s highest internal legislative body. For Mosmans, such actions would offer a “genuine LIBERATION” of the people that would “suppress the privileges of the castes and make justice reign” (Mosmans: 659).

In the midst of this ferment, Mwami Mutara remained reluctant to acknowledge any ethnic problem for fears that this would destabilize Rwandan society and threaten his own increasingly tenuous hold on power. However, in early 1958, Mutara agreed to establish what was termed a “Hutu-Tutsi Study Commission.” Composed of leading Hutu and Tutsi elites, this commission was asked to advise Rwanda’s colonial and indigenous leaders on the causes, scale, and possible resolution of Rwanda’s Hutu-Tutsi divisions. In retrospect, what is most revealing in these debates is the polyvalent and class-based language used to describe “Hutu” and “Tutsi” categories. For example, the Hutu leader Balthazar Bicamumpaka posited that “our sense of Bahutu encompasses all the poor people, so that a poor Mututsi is at the same time Muhutu, that is Hutu in a social sense” (Hutu-Tutsi Study Commission 1958b: 13). During the same meeting, the devout Catholic Hutu leader Joseph Gitera described the Hutu as “a poor and simple man, excluding at the same time the racial Hutu who becomes socially Hamitic. The Mututsi for us is the super-human . . . who socially is higher and mistrusts the Hutu, so that the Tutsi who sympathizes [with us] . . . is not a Tutsi in our sense” (Hutu-Tutsi Study Commission 1958b: 13). This “social turn” in understanding Hutu-Tutsi difference extended to the highest colonial offices. Writing in December 1957,

the Belgian colonial governor Jean-Paul Harroy questioned the traditional racial overtones of Hutu and Tutsi. “I am personally convinced that the distinction at stake between Hutu and Tutsi concerns nowadays two social groups identified less and less with two racial groups recognized by physical anthropology” (Murego: 863-64; Perraudin 2003: 134; Reyntjens: 218-20).

Whatever his actions behind the scenes, Mgr. Perraudin publicly avoided connecting social justice issues with Hutu-Tutsi categories until 1959. When he did enter the debate, however, he made a big splash. Proclaimed at every Catholic church in Rwanda and distributed internationally, Perraudin’s February 1959 Lenten pastoral letter “*Super Omnia Caritas*” directly linked Rwanda’s political and socioeconomic tensions with Hutu-Tutsi categories. “In our Rwanda social differences and inequalities are for a large part linked to racial [Hutu-Tutsi] differences” (1959: 33). In Rwandan public opinion, this letter established Perraudin as a pro-Hutu partisan and marked the definitive end of the pro-Tutsi consensus that had developed under Mgr. Classe. In retrospect, Perraudin called this statement the “charter of my episcopate” and claimed that “*Super Omnia Caritas*” represented a faithful application of Catholic social justice ideals to a highly stratified Rwandan society (2003: 187). As he commented in a memoir published just before his death in 2003, “similarly if the Hutu population had enough to eat and was protected by the Tutsi patron, the Hutu was considered as inferior, a workhorse to do his master’s bidding . . . living in very humiliating dependence on his patron, ultimately neither free nor independent” (2003: 194-95).

Not only do such stereotypes exaggerate Rwanda’s precolonial ethnic stratification, but they bear no resemblance to Rwanda’s social situation during the early years of Perraudin’s episcopate. If it ever held true, the dichotomy between the wealthy Tutsi pastoralist and the poor Hutu subsistence farmer no longer applied in the late 1950s. In fact, average Hutu and Tutsi family incomes were almost exactly the same in 1955 (Chrétien: 299). After visiting Rwanda in early 1959, a Belgian colonial task force admitted that only 6,000 to 10,000 Rwandan Tutsi benefitted from the spoils of public office; the other 140,000 Tutsi were no wealthier than their fellow Hutu peasants (Belgian Working Group: 34-35; cf. Harroy: 234; Rutsyisire 1999: 49). In this sense, Perraudin erred grievously – and perhaps strategically – in framing social justice questions in explicitly Hutu-Tutsi terms.

Perraudin’s analysis also parted ways from Mgr. Aloys Bigirumwami, Rwanda’s first indigenous bishop who served as the Vicar Apostolic of Nyundo in northwestern Rwanda. Only months before Perraudin released “*Super Omnia Caritas*,” Bigirumwami wrote on the Hutu-Tutsi question in a September 1958 issue of the Belgian Catholic journal *Témoignage Chrétien*. Admitting his own mixed ethnic background and lambasting the “inanity” of Hutu and Tutsi categories, Bigirumwami called for Catholics to serve all the poor, whether Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. “The very rapid evolution that passes through our country should not and cannot blind us to the point of misunderstanding realities, such as social and economic differences” (1958). Other Catholic voices joined Bigirumwami in protesting the growing links between ethnic and class identity. For example, the Tutsi chief Prosper Bwanakweri took issue with Hutu elites’ tendency to speak in collective ethnic terms, arguing that the majority of Tutsi were poor and that the Tutsi class did not conspire to discriminate against Hutu (Hutu-Tutsi Study Commission 1958a: 4).

Whatever Bigirumwami's and Bwanakweri's cautions, Hutu rhetoric in the late 1950s became increasingly radicalized. Revolution was openly floated as a necessary step to liberate the poor Hutu masses from the structural tyranny of the Tutsi minority. A good example comes from the Hutu-dominated *Aprosoma* (Association for the Promotion of the Masses) party founded by the aforementioned Joseph Gitera. In a June 1958 document entitled "The Voice of the Peasants," *Aprosoma* claimed that the spirit of Hutu brotherhood stood in sharp contrast to the "Hamitic spirit of exploitation and extermination." Their concluding exhortation could have been mistaken for a Jacobin rally in 1793 Paris: "Young men and young women of the Hutu movement: Liberty! Let's liberate ourselves from Tutsi slavery. We have had enough. Justice!" (Murego: 882).

The actual outbreak of ethnic violence did not come for over a year. But when in November 1959 Hutu mobs began burning Tutsi homes and driving thousands of Tutsi into exile, their actions were explained in terms of revolutionary justice and "popular cholera" after years of Tutsi discrimination (Van Hoof; cf. Perraudin 1989). Even as Mgr. Perraudin publicly condemned the violence and the more extreme political rhetoric, he supported the underlying aims of the socio-ethnic revolution roiling Rwandan society. "The revolution has not been only political; it is above all psychological and social. The masses have become conscious of their rights as human persons and will no longer accept . . . the return to a regime which suppressed them" (1962). Increasingly, Perraudin blamed Tutsi intransigence for Hutu violence, such as the massacre of 8,000 Tutsi in Rwanda's Gikongoro region in late 1963 and early 1964 (Lemarchand: 223-25; Eltringham: 41-44). One is reminded of how French Jacobins attributed the violence of the Reign of Terror to the obstinacy of the anti-revolutionary movement.

Even thirty years after the "Hutu Social Revolution" of 1959-62, Hutu political leaders continued to envision social justice questions through a stark ethnic prism. In October 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) – comprised of many Tutsi children of the early 1960s exiles – invaded northern Rwanda to demand the repatriation of Tutsi exiles and destabilize Rwanda's government. In response, Hutu Power militias associated with the ruling *Mouvement Révolutionnaire Nationale Développement* (MRND) began recycling the revolutionary rhetoric of the late 1950s and early 1960s, calling on Hutu to defend their country against internal and external enemies lest they fall back into "Tutsi slavery." Many Hutu militias did just that, massacring Tutsi civilians in six separate incidents between 1990 and 1993 (Longman: 117-86). In the immediate aftermath of the downing of Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane on April 6, 1994, Hutu militia and army units began executing thousands of Tutsi in Kigali and its environs. By the time the RPF ended the genocide three months later, upwards of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu lay dead. Some of the worst killing grounds were Catholic parishes, schools, and hospitals. Even after one of the worst human rights catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Catholic leaders continued to view the war and genocide through the lens of 1959. Having fled to neighboring Congo with two million other Hutu, the Hutu Bishop Phocas Nikwigize and a group of Hutu priests wrote to Pope John Paul II in August 1994 pleading for international intervention and alleging a "double genocide" of both Tutsi and Hutu. In revealing language, these Catholic leaders highlighted the risk of the Hutu majority falling back into what they termed the "pre-1959 slavery" (Prunier 2009: 6).



## Conclusion

At the beginning of their evangelization efforts in colonial Rwanda, Catholic missionaries initially found themselves working primarily amongst Rwanda's poor peasantry. Under the influence of leaders like Mgr. Léon Classe, White Father missionaries later shifted their pastoral focus to winning over local Tutsi elites. After World War II, Catholic leaders like Mgr. André Perraudin combined these emphases, embracing social justice for the Hutu poor while cultivating close relations with emerging Hutu political leaders. One of the tragic results of all of this maneuvering and positioning was the growing linkage of Hutu and Tutsi labels with racial and class dimensions. The negative collectivization of ethnic identity played no small role in the political violence that marked Rwandan society after 1959.

Rwanda's history clearly serves as a cautionary tale concerning the church's mission to bring "justice for the poor." At the same time, one should be careful about extrapolating too far. I am not arguing that Catholics should abandon our commitments to social justice or the poor. (I remain skeptical about broad labels like "the poor" and prefer language of solidarity that recognizes the agency of the poor and the risks of paternalism.) In the United States, the preferential option for the poor seems even more critical after a 2012 American political cycle in which many on the left ignored poverty to focus on the middle class and many on the right stigmatized the poor as lazy "takers." Nevertheless, Rwanda offers important if difficult lessons.

First, I think we need to be more informed and honest about the use of and political manipulation of labels. Shortly before independence in 1962, Rwanda's new president Gregoire Kayibanda promised to follow the dictates of Pope John XXIII's recently promulgated encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*. He told a group of Catholic dignitaries that "the day we deviate from this [the Pope's encyclical], I counsel you to no longer vote for us." Throughout the 1960s, many missionaries argued that Catholic social teaching was by far the most influential political philosophy for Kayibanda, a man whose gravestone in Gitarama proclaims him as "the liberator of the children of God." Perhaps because of their sympathies for Kayibanda's social vision, many of these missionaries looked the other way after Kayibanda's government orchestrated the killings of 8,000 Tutsi in Gikongoro in December 1963 and January 1964. In the latter case, not only did Catholic White Fathers refuse to publicly criticize Kayibanda, but they launched a vociferous public relations campaign in his defense after Vatican Radio utilized the term "genocide" to describe these killings ("Brève réponse"). As Christine Firer-Hinze reminded us at the symposium for this volume, Catholic social teaching is not just about winning over elites; it is about "real bodies," especially the real bodies of the persecuted and the marginalized.

Second, the Rwandan case reminds us of the dangers of allowing noble ends to justify ignoble means. In this sense nonviolence seems to be an especially important check on the potential excesses of revolutionary justice on behalf of past victims. Perraudin spoke often of the exigencies of justice and democratization. Very rarely, however, does one encounter in his speeches references to the centrality of Christian nonviolence – or the risks of "noble ideals" like justice, democratization, and patriotism being manipulated to justify mass violence against one's opponents. Rwanda's history challenges Christians to a deeper

conversation on the meaning and practice of nonviolence in the midst of political revolution and structural injustice.

Finally, this narrative underscores the importance of social analysis. The social stereotype of the Hutu as “poor peasant” and the Tutsi as “wealthy oligarch” was contributed to ethnic tensions as much or more than pseudo-anthropological racial theories. In turn, shared rhetorical support for democracy, social justice, and national defense did not guarantee a united ecclesial voice; Mgr. Bigirumwami and Mgr. Perraudin fundamentally differed on if and how to map such questions onto Rwanda’s ethnic canvas. Perraudin viewed issues through a Hutu-Tutsi prism; Mgr. Bigirumwami questioned the very demarcations between “those who look like Hutu” and “those who look like Tutsi,” arguing that “we cannot consider in the Church Hutu or Tutsi races or clans, but see only souls all equal before God” (1960). In many ways, the political revolution in late colonial Rwanda grew out of this fundamental analytical division over the nature of the Hutu-Tutsi distinction and how these categories related to Catholic social teaching, social justice, and the poor. The results left all involved with blood on their hands.

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