

Introduction

The thesis of Katongole's book, "Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith After Genocide in Rwanda" is that the three senses of body: physical bodies of killed victims and killers, the broken body of Christ, and the body politic helps us to see that the Rwanda genocide is a story about all of us because it poses a significant question about our bodies¹. The question that gets raised by the author is there a relationship between my own body, the body politic of nation to which I belong, and the body of Christ? The author comments that the crisis of Western Christianity resembling betrayal, idolatry, and death is reflected back to the church in the broken bodies of Rwanda¹. The author's main thesis or argument supported by key points and evidence and information discussed and analyzed in this paper includes: (1) An explanation of what happened in the context of the three bodies: the killed bodies, the broken body of Christ, and the body politic; (2) A description of how this happened in the context of the blood of tribalism; (3) Examine the stories that shape our bodies in the context of two silences, a silence of history and a silence of geography; (4) Explore three postures of Christianity (pious, political, and pastoral) without consequence so that we may understand how our ways of reading scripture are held captive by the pattern of the world if we are to experience the freedom of a new posture; (5) Understand prophetic posture that interrupts the world to hear the good news of God's Kingdom (points forward to Jesus's death and resurrection); (6) How do we enable a prophetic posture that points to God's new creation-who, what, where, why and how of prophetic witness; and (7) What are the missional implications of the prophetic posture for the church today in the context of memory, mirror and mission. In addition to identifying and critically analyzing the logic and layout of the author's argument, this paper discusses and analyzes how this book interacts with our present ministry context of missions and theology and the missions of the church today.

Identification and Critical Analysis of the Logic and Layout of Argument

The first key point that the author offers to support the main argument or thesis is an explanation of what happened in the context of the three bodies: the killed bodies, the broken body of Christ and the body politic¹. Characteristics of the bodies that were killed and that were the killers are that they were the neighbors spoke the same language, who lived in the same village, who were married to one another and who were the members of the body Christ killed one another and labeled "Tutsi"; much like the concentration camps of the Jewish Holocaust, the "Hutus" killed the entire communities of "Tutsis" and because Tutsis in the church fled into the Bush, the Hutu in the church went after them to kill them resulting in brothers and sisters in Christ killing one another.

With respect to the broken body of Christ in Rwanda, the journey of the author to Rwanda for pilgrimage after the genocide resulted in the memory of pain and suffering from walking into churches¹. For instance, in Nayarubeye, near the Tanzanian border, he visited the covenant church. Because the priest requested the killers not to damage church property as a result of killing Tutsis, the killers entered the church and killed people by hand so as to not damage the church building with the dead bodies laying there after the massacre¹. Another example of the

¹ Katongole, Emmanuel and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith After Genocide in Rwanda. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

broken body of Christ or brothers and sisters of Christ massacring one another was with the church at Nyanato. The Tutsi minority that had been in power there was overthrown by Hutu led revolution resulting in 8,000 bodies killed and buried behind the church. The outcome of these massacres in the churches of Rwanda resulted in pain and suffering. The whole body of Christ in Rwanda suffered because as the apostle Paul wrote when one member of the church body suffers, the whole body suffers¹.

Lastly, with the body politic although the Rwanda massacre was the six genocide in history, the United States did not acknowledge this as a genocide and not only did not want involvement in Rwanda but also chose to not save Rwandans but evacuate Westerners¹. This was a significant humanitarian crisis as no aid was given to Rwanda. Westerners had also betrayed Rwandans although the people there did for them as servants. All in all, Rwandans experienced betrayal by the volunteers who felt called to protect themselves and not help Rwanda¹. Christians in Rwanda were also betrayed by the church. What does this betrayal result in? This betrayal results in the blood of tribalism taking root deeper than the waters of baptism.

Secondly, the next key point that is offered in this book is how the Rwandan genocide happened in the context of blood tribalism. This explanation of genocide in Rwanda involves “Tribes”. With the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi Tribes, the Tutsi viewed as enemies of Hutu and killed as a result to fix Rwanda’s problems¹. The motivation here insights the question if we are Christians and called to be one in Christ then why the labeling as Hutu and Tutsi and not Rwandans. To understand these social differences between Hutu and Tutsi we need to understand the political history of Rwanda¹. Following World War I, German colonies redistributed to other European powers and Rwanda came under Belgium rule. Because of this redistribution Belgians set out to develop Rwanda into a modern nation state where Tutsi were a natural born leader and Hutus were a inferior descendant of Ham¹. The transformation into a modern nation state contributed to the efficiency and organization of the nation which explains why the genocide happened.

Not only did the transformation into a nation state but also the Belgians discarding the 3 Chief system and ordered that every chief had to be Tutsi fueled the reason for the genocide¹. In fixed rules, Hutus were forced to do communal work that benefited Tutsi’s rulers. European schools were established to educate future leaders and identity cards to identify citizens of Rwanda as Hutu and Tutsi were created. The church also intensified the social differences between the Hutu and Tutsi¹. What we do know is that the church played a critical role in the development of a society where the Tutsi minority ruled a Hutu majority. Similarly, identities were shaped by political and cultural institutions¹. This distinction demonstrates the blood of tribalism runs deeper than the water of baptism.

The third key point that is offered in the book to defend the author’s thesis statement is stories need to be examined that shape our bodies in the context of two silences, a silence of history and a silence of geography¹. It is often not highlighted that is striking how often we assume that tragedies like the Rwanda genocide “just happened”. While only some journalists in 1994 attempted to narrate a series of events that led up to the genocide, at most they went back to 1990, which is the time period when the Tutsi RPF army crossed the Ugandan border and

invaded Rwanda¹. A noteworthy point is that a great silence in all the debates seemed to assume the 1994 Rwandan genocide came out of nowhere. The same principle applies for us today. As we aim to understand the stories shape us, it is important to name the silence of history in so many of the stories we tell. Similar to the 1994 genocide, we can assume that things like race, tribe and terrorism came out of nowhere¹.

Another silence is the silence of geography. In talking to people about the Rwandan genocide in the west they assume it was an isolated event¹. It happened in a place we don't know about. This is the silence of geography. Today a silence of geography happens when the news account of a murder that happened in the west end neighborhood of Durham, NC is communicated. Since the West is over there, the author is told not to get too excited.

When the silences of history and geography are put aside and the story of genocide is genuinely examined, we begin to realize that Rwanda is not as far away as we thought¹. The story of the genocide represents the same patterns of identity formation discovered in the West. The author uses a thought experiment or modern parable to reinforce this point. The things that are taken for granted like Americans singing the National Anthem, saluting the flag, and paying taxes did not just appear out of nowhere¹. The starting point of the system is always connected to a story- a story like the one told by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*¹. Hobbes envisions human beings in a "state of nature" each living independently of everyone else, acting only in his or her self-interest, without taking notice of others. This self-interest speaks to a "state of war" a way of life that is certain to prove "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Hobbes imagines humans getting engaged in contracts that surrender individual interests in order to achieve the advantages of security¹. This investment in one absolute leader is the basis of sovereignty. Hobbes assumes in his story that the only relationship between those who belong to one sovereignty and those who do not, is that of a state of war.

This explains why nations have no problem at all to mobilize citizens to war to defend their national interests. The story of national sovereignty runs far deeper than any bonds that Christians in one country share with Christians of another country¹. Christianity without consequence is a problem that Rwandans and Westerners share. Because of this the church has learned and practiced ways of reading scripture and worshipping God that prevents the Gospel from making a difference in our lives. For this reason, the author explores three postures of Christianity without consequence¹.

Fourth, the author further affirms his thesis by exploring three postures (pious, political, and pastoral) of Christianity without consequence, so that we may understand how our ways of reading scripture are held captive by the pattern of the world to experience the freedom of a new posture¹. In addition, we will learn that there is a biblical precedent for each one.

The pious posture is demonstrated by Simon of Cyrene with single verse from the Book of Mark. "A certain man from Cyrene, Simon the father Alexander and Rutilus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross" (Mark 15:21)¹. To understand the pious posture we must put ourselves in their shoes back in NT times. On the road to Golgotha, the Roman soldiers see a man named Simon coming into Jerusalem. They called out to Simon

and ordered that he carry the cross for Jesus. Out of obedience and respect, Simon takes up the cross and carries it for Jesus. Simon is a model for the pious posture that Christianity resembles and helps Jesus not knowing who he is out of compassion, “Whatsoever you did for one of the least of these...you did for me” (Matt 25:40)¹.

Much like the pious posture of Simon, the obedient Rwandans followed orders of the Hutu power to kill their neighbors without question. Although Rwandans experienced personal salvation and were faithful to church, they were obedient to Hutu power when it ordered them to kill their neighbors¹. Also, many Christians in the West assume pious posture when relating to political authority. They value obedience and bold in faith using social influence to invite political leaders to experience salvation. It is significant to note here that once the gospel is accepted in the hearts of the politically powerful, this will trickle down to the rest of the community. For example, if the president of a nation converts, the rest of the nation will come with him¹.

The official from the temple guard in John 18:19-22 demonstrates to us the political posture¹. The high priest call Jesus in for questioning about his message and his disciples. Jesus rebukes the priest’s request and tells him that he is not preaching in secret and to go ask the people that heard him¹. The official of the temple guard demonstrates a political posture and defends the power of the high priest by slapping Jesus across the face¹. That is he believes in a faith that is politically oriented and is offended when Jesus does not respect the authority of the high priest. By carrying out his political posture, the temple guard shows loyalty to the high priest. Much like the temple guard, the church leaders in Rwanda were loyal to governing authorities. For instance, Father Wenceskus, whose story was told in Chapters 1 and 2, handed over the refugees in his care when the authorities came for them. Christians in Rwanda that practiced the political posture were loyal to government by not only standing by while the genocide took place but also actively engaging in it and killing their brothers and sisters in Christ¹.

The final posture is the pastoral posture and is modeled by Joseph of Anmathea (Jn 19:38-42)¹. After Jesus died, Joseph and Nicodemus came to bury his body. He embodies the pastoral posture by taking care of Jesus’s body-treat it with care, embalm it to custom, wrap it with linen, and provide a proper burial. He then lays Jesus’s body to rest in a tomb with help but never questions who did this to the Lord. In Rwanda during the genocide, priests led worship service and gave communion to members who took a break from killing to go to church. They were hypocrites in that they did not follow up their words with actions. Their political posture led them to take care of and serve the people without asking what is going on in Rwanda¹.

A Prophetic Posture-Missional Implications for Today

It is important to connect here that the three postures taken together did not prevent the Rwanda genocide¹. Also, they are not enough to keep Christians in the West from perpetuating death dealing political and economic systems. If Western Christians examine themselves in the mirror in Rwanda, they will ask the pressing question of what difference does Christianity make? This leads us to find a new posture¹. As the author states we are to reclaim the Lordship of Christ and live as ambassadors of God’s new creation in the world¹. In the next part of this essay, we

examine another way, a new posture. The answer is to turn to scripture which offers another posture of Christian social engagement in the world. This form of radical engagement is also mirrored in Rwanda¹.

The author's fifth point to support his thesis is that we must understand a new way called prophetic posture that interrupts the world to hear the good news of God's Kingdom (points forward to Jesus's death and resurrection)¹. In Matthew 26:13, Mary assumes a prophetic posture and interrupts the world so that they can listen to the gospel and also understand that this interruption changed the atmosphere in the room. Changing the atmosphere in the room is ushering in the Kingdom of God in the here and now¹. Sister Felicitee Niyitegeka invoked a prophetic posture through helping refugees across the border, hiding Tutsis in her home to protect them and refusing to stop when asked by her brother who was an army colonel¹. This resulted in a powerful interruption to stop the killer and those around long enough so they could experience God's manifest presence. Even after the Interahamwe shot all her companions in front of her, she refused to stop protecting the Tutsis. In the midst of her getting shot, she challenged the boundary between her and the militia leader and prayed that God would have mercy on him¹.

The author's six point to affirm his thesis is that we need prophetic interruptions that point to God's new creation. Katongle comments that the witness of the biblical story is that God's people are always invited to say no to idols of their age and rise up by the power of the Holy Spirit as a holy interruption¹. This part of the paper is about the who, what, where, why, and how of prophetic witness.

Carl Wilken, who had worked in development and relief work in Rwanda for forty years and in Africa for 10 years, found himself and more than 200 hundred orphans surrounded by Interahamwe militia, fifty men with machetes and rifle with intent to kill them. Wilkens called for assistance and had 7 soldiers respond, he left the orphanage in their care and went looking for more help¹. In a freak meeting at the local government office, Wilken was able to plead the case of the orphans to the "bogus" prime minister¹. Although Wilkens had not power to fight the interahamwe, the orphanage was miraculously saved. The Interahamwe never entered.

The author comments on 2 Cor 5:20 where the apostle Paul writes, "We are...Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."¹ In response to the question, "Who are we?" Paul answers, "We are Christ's ambassadors. We are called to serve here so God can work and appeal through us." Let us now interact deeply with the text in 2 Cor 5:20 and analyze the text and synthesize a biblical and theological interpretation of the text. Since the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the garden, man was separated from God through sin. Two thousand years ago, God offered his son Jesus to reconcile us to God. Jesus paid the price for our sin and the division between God and us was removed.

As ambassadors of God we are torn between obeying our earthly masters in government and in the workplace and obeying God. Much like the temptation in the garden, we are tempted by Satan to sin and find allegiance in things other than God including material and sexual objects. In response we should meditate on and act on scripture which says, " So submit to God, resist the

devil and he will flee” (James 4:7). Because of our reconciliation to God we are able to assume a prophetic posture and to interrupt the world by spreading the good news to the ends of the earth¹. As God’s ambassador we are able to pray and intercede for others so they can experience personal salvation and also to see the community and nations reconciled to their creator and transformed. The mission of God is our mission.

Our mission is to spread the good news and make disciples to all nations (Matthew 28: 18-20). Jesus, the son of God, is a peacemaker. When we choose to believe in Jesus, God forgives us and we are reconciled in our relationship with him. When we are reconciled, we are God’s children (Gal 3:26). As children of God we are peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Let us embrace our calling as God’s ambassadors and peacemakers and work for the reconciliation not only in the nations like Rwanda but also across the globe.