

CHAPTER 16

L'Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda

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History of the Anglican Church of Rwanda

The Anglican Church of Rwanda has its origin from the time of British missionaries under the Church Missionary Society (CMS). It was under the Diocese of Uganda in 1897 when Alfred Tucker became the first Bishop of Uganda. The Diocese of Uganda at that time covered Western Kenya, Central, Western, and Eastern Uganda, part of Sudan, and Boga in Congo (Byaruhanga 2008, 16). In 1951, it became the Archdeaconery of Ruanda-Urundi with the assistant bishop, the Rt. Rev. Jim Brazier (UCU Archive 1950), who was replaced by the Rt. Rev. Lawrence Barham in 1964 with the mission to create two dioceses with native bishops, respecting the political boundaries. In 1965, the first Rwandan bishop was elected under the Anglican Church of Rwanda, "Eglise Anglicane du Rwanda" (EAR). In 1966, the church had its official inauguration as the Diocese of Rwanda with its native bishop, the Rt. Rev. Adony Sebununguri (Osborn 2000, 185). In 1979, the name was changed to "Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda" (EER). In May 1980, the Francophone Province of Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire was inaugurated under the Congolese Archbishop Bezareli Ndahura of the Diocese of Bukavu. One year later, following his death, he was replaced by a Rwandan Bishop of the Diocese of Butare, the Most Rev. Justin Ndandali (Surton n.d.).

In 1992, Rwanda became a province of its own under the Most Rev. Augustine Nshamihigo. In 1998, the Most Rev. Emmanuel Kolini was enthroned as the second Archbishop of the Province of Rwanda. By November 2007, the college of bishops of the Episcopal Church of Rwanda changed the name of the province to the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda or "Province de l'Eglise Anglicane au Rwanda" (Anglican Communion 2011). On September 18, 2008, the province published its first constitution and canons, replacing those of the Francophone province, which were in use until then (PEAR, History 2011). On January 28, 2011, the Most Rev. Onesphore

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Rwaje was enthroned as the third primate of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

The Anglican Church of Rwanda and the Revival Movement

Two missionary doctors from CMS, Dr. Arthur Stanley Smith and Dr. Leonard Sharp, explored Rwanda between 1914 and 1916; these laymen wanted to start something different from the previous missionaries. They wanted to make a full impact upon the local community by working with the unevangelized people. Therefore, they formed Rwanda Mission, which covered Rwanda, Burundi, and south-western Uganda – “Kigezi-Ankole” (Ward 2011, 14). In 1922, along with Captain Holmes of the British Army, they established a mission in Rwanda. In 1925, they started a missionary station which included building a hospital at Gahini. By 1926, the first indigenous Christians were being baptized by the Rev. Harold Guillebaud.

Other missionaries joined the team of Rwanda Mission as time went on. These were the Rev. Bert Jackson, Dr. Joe Church, and a Ugandan of Rwandan origin named Kosiya Shalita, who remained at Gahini (Church 1981, 33). With the permission of the Belgian authorities, other missionaries spread throughout the country with new mission stations. In 1931, the Rev. Geoffrey Holmes moved to the west and began a mission center in Kigeme, while Dr. Tarbot was stationed in Shyira in the north (Osborn 2000, 57).

From 1929, the revival spirit grew tremendously. Joe Church, Bert Jackson, Lawrence Barham, and indigenous men, mainly Ugandans, such as Yosiya Kinuka, Blasio Kigozi, Erica Sabiti, Simeoni Nsibambi, William Nagenda, and Kosiya Shalita, started prayer meetings asking God for a revival in this region. It is said, “In Revival, God leads people to pray; and, when people pray, God brings Revival” (Osborn 2000, 70).

The revival which began in Gahini spread to all Eastern African countries with the help of Rwandan missionaries and indigenous people. It extended to Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania, Sudan, and South Africa from 1937 to 1945. There was no segregation of religion, tribes, colors, or country. For many living through this period, this was seen as a period of unity.

At the end of World War II, the team was invited to England and Switzerland in 1947; to Switzerland, France, and Germany in 1949; to Malawi in 1951; to Angola in March 1952; and to India in May 1957. The team went to the United States from May to August 1953; to Israel in September 1953; India and Pakistan from January to April 1954; Ethiopia from November to December 1954; Angola in 1956; and to South America in January 1959 (Osborn 2000, 83–4). In all these remarkable tours of these men from the smallest country of East Africa, their aim was to preach the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, and to bring their hearers to acknowledge and repent of their sin, be baptized by the Holy Spirit, and seek sanctification (Ward 2011, 5). Dr. Church gives a profound definition of revival in the following words:

A God-given hunger for more holiness and Christ-likeness had come upon us and what is known as revival followed. We looked at revival in panorama through the Old and New

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Testaments. Mankind was created to walk with God. Revival is a walk or a way and we are people of the way. God is holy God. Man is made to walk with him. But fallen man has a bias to fall away and can only come back through repentance and cleansing from sin. The joy of that forgiveness and the new love for the Lord Jesus and for one's neighbor that follows is revival. It is 'the burning heart'; it is the 'first love'! (Church 1981, 126)

The fruits of revival are still seen worldwide. The children of the revivalists are active in today's church leadership in all denominations in Rwanda. In the Anglican Church of Rwanda, both the former and the current archbishops are descendants of this movement.

The Influence of the Church on the Indigenous/Traditional Cultures and Religion

The Anglican Church of Rwanda has had a great impact on the people of Rwanda and the culture in general. Its impact is mainly related to the teaching of the revival movement. The church, since the beginning, wanted to have people changed socially and physically, as well as spiritually. It encouraged the indigenous people to be "saved" partly to get rid of poverty. They believed that people were poor because they were not repenting (Osborn 2000, 89). In what is a characteristic of many renewal movements, converts were encouraged to improve their lifestyle.

The church founders had a "three-legged-stool" picture to represent the main departments of the church's work and orientation. Their objectives were to have schools, hospitals, and churches. If a leg is missing, cracked, too long or too short, the stool is unsteady and unreliable to sit on (Church 1981, 24). In fact, before teaching the word of God, they would remove jiggers (little fleas that burrow into human flesh) from the people by distributing soft pins and teaching proper hygiene.

The church played a big role in education and health. In each missionary center, there was a school and a health center which have become today's prominent secondary schools and hospitals. The local people were able to study and got good health facilities. The elite leadership of the country was produced by the church's missionary schools.

The church encouraged indigenous people to attend Sunday worship regularly, get baptized and baptize their children, be married to one wife in the church, and to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. The church emphasized that people should not rejoice in the mere fact that they have been baptized, or to see this as a guarantee of being saved. They were told to leave the traditional religion which was practiced by a large number of people in the region. Today, only one-tenth of 1 percent is practicing traditional religion (Theodora 2011).

The theology was a traditional evangelical approach. So, for example, on the question of salvation, the church emphasized that it was by the blood of Christ. Salvation comes only through being washed in the blood of Christ, the bloodshed on the cross of Calvary. The centrality of the atonement is a classic feature of evangelical revivalism (Church 1981, 128). From the perspective of the Rwandan church, this was in contrast

to the traditional religion teaching in which, to get right with the gods, one had to sacrifice an animal and sprinkle the blood on the ground or in the water. The daily teaching of the church was about sin, repentance, and new birth, separation from traditional religion, the victorious life, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The church emphasized the need for the recognition of sin and for repentance to be done in a public confession. The experience of being saved in the blood comes through a deep awareness of one's own sinfulness, often expressed by the "Abakijijwe or Abalokole" (literally, "the saved ones," i.e., the people of the revival movement) as being broken. After recognizing sin, someone was to confess it in public to the brothers and sisters as witnesses. Going back to it would be a shame to the whole society. In the case of stealing or misappropriation of funds, it was expected that a personal confession be made to whoever was wronged, and that restitution be made (Ward 2011).

About family life, the church stood for the dignity of women. Monogamy is an important principle. Polygamy was strongly opposed and discouraged from the beginning of the revival movement. The openness, integrity, and honesty which characterize relations between the believers should apply even within the marriage relationship so that there is a real sharing, and mutual love and respect. The fellowship also gives women a role in their own right. Women can confess, testify, preach, and pray on an equal basis with the men. Today, several women are ordained to the priestly order in the Anglican Church of Rwanda.

Personal piety is stressed. The church sees all believers as a living testimony, which involves witness to those outside the fellowship, in the market-place, outside the church, at the bus garage, in the bus or taxi, outside the chief's enclosure, and in their homes. While speaking of the joys of salvation, they were also a decisive warning to those who were perishing. This was "walking in the light" which involves being completely open and honest about your attitude to your brother or sister, sharing what you have found offensive, and not holding grudges or letting them go undisclosed.

The church was distancing itself from the political arena but could give guidance in one way or another. The preaching of the gospel, since the time of the revival, was that the Abakijijwe had no political parties; whoever is saved was to be looked at as a brother or sister. The division of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa which characterized Rwanda since 1959 did not affect the Abakijijwe. They went in a different direction, sheltering their neighbors and helping them to get refuge, and sometimes going with them to neighboring countries (Church 1981, 251). There is some evidence that the church plays an important role in finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts found in the Great Lakes Region.

Anglican Church Before and After the Genocide

Though the church and the revival movement sowed good seeds in the people of Rwanda, the tensions between politicians and the divisions among the people of Rwanda persisted. That is why Rwanda had several ethnic killings where the Hutu killed their Tutsi neighbors and sometimes forced them to flee into neighboring countries. This is a tragedy. The precise causes of these ethnic killings are complex. A factor was the poor leadership which characterized Rwanda in 1994; this weak leadership led to

the genocide, and a number of Christians and church leaders were involved (Byham 2011). Some bishops were implicated before and during the genocide. Yet, the church has been involved in the work of peace, healing, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, unity, and justice after the genocide (Mukeshimana 2006: 89).

Since the genocide, the Anglican Church has been at the forefront of working to resolve ethnic divisions and noticed the errors committed by its previous leadership. The former Archbishop of Rwanda, Emmanuel Kolini, for the first time as a senior church leader publicly apologized on behalf of the Anglican Church in Rwanda for its silence during the genocide.

This public confession brought all churches together to follow this trend, for Christians to acknowledge their participation and to point out what their fellow brothers and sisters did during the genocide. Through the community-based courts known as “Gacaca,” Christians participated willingly in public confession “revival movement style,” and now most of the prisoners have been tried, and the innocent have been set free.

The Anglican Church has initiated centers for seminars on healing, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity in every diocese. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission is led by an Anglican bishop, the retired bishop of Shyira diocese, the Rt. Rev. John Rucyahana (Nurc 2011).

Upon his enthronement on January 23, 2011, Archbishop Onesphore Rwaje emphasized in his speech that the Anglican Church of Rwanda will make every effort to promote unity in Rwanda and spread it to all other religious denominations within the country and abroad. He said, “We will continue to collaborate with other religious Dominions, including Islam, in fighting against the HIV/AIDS scourge, dealing with its effects and caring for the already affected, the orphans and widows.” The archbishop also offered this reassurance: “I desire to follow God’s will in encouraging Christians to fight poverty and laziness, having people work hard and fight ignorance, beginning at home” (January 23, 2011).

It is widely recognized that the church is doing important work in terms of support programs for orphans, widows, and genocide survivors emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The church does this through prayer meetings, seminars, visitations; by providing school fees; and by building homes for those who do not have them or whose homes were destroyed during the genocide. Also, the role of the church extends to the integration of the repentant perpetrators who are released from jail so that they may live in harmony with the survivors.

In this respect, it is interesting how the church in Rwanda combines a commitment to traditional evangelism with social programs. For the leadership of the church, there is a recognition that although the church’s first purpose is to spread the gospel of Jesus and care for the spiritual life of its people, the church feels that its mission must go beyond that, aiming also to meet the intellectual and physical needs of the people in the context of their own culture.

One good illustration of this commitment to social programs is the work on such problems as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, through awareness campaigns and teaching. Its health centers and social workers are working tirelessly to fight such epidemics. The church is committed to providing spiritual and healthcare to all resi-

dents in order to care for the body and the soul. Christians are receiving bed nets to prevent mosquito bites, water purification syrup to get clean drinking water, and condoms as well as teaching on abstinence and faithfulness to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Growth of the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda

At the time of its establishment in 1992, the Province of Rwanda had the four dioceses: Kigali, Butare, Syira, and Byumba. By 2011, it had seven more dioceses: Syogwe, Kigeme, Cyangugu, Kibungo, Gahini, Kivu, and Gasabo. Out of a population of 11 million, 16 percent are Anglicans (i.e., 1.8 million), dispersed all over the country.

The church is involved in education from nursery level to secondary schools. The province is also training its workers in Bible schools, and it is running a Bible college in Kigali, soon to become Rwanda Christian University. The church has hospitals and health centers in all corners of the country to provide good-quality health facilities. It ordains women and has lay leaders heavily involved in its services.

In every diocese of the province, there is the rural development service. The vision of this service is holistic and aims to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people. It provides regular training of church and group leaders. Through this service, the church trains people in food security, agriculture, farming, and environmental protection. The core of this program is to develop spiritual church members who can self-sustain to help eradicate poverty.

The Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda and AMIA

The Anglican Mission to the Americas (formerly called the Anglican Mission in America) was formed in response to the appeal of American Christians who wanted freedom from what it saw as rebellion against biblical teaching. It started with Little Rock Church in Arkansas in 1997. With the growth and endless consultation meetings of primates in Singapore and Kampala in 1999, Archbishop Kolini of Rwanda and Archbishop Moses Tay of South East Asia consecrated the Rev. Chuck Murphy and the Rev. Dr. John Rodgers as missionary bishops to look after the congregations of the United States. The retired Archbishop of Rwanda, Emmanuel Kolini, said that he was originally moved to respond to America because of the pain suffered in the horrific genocide in Rwanda that left 1 million people dead in 100 days. In his view, the United States was experiencing a “spiritual genocide” while the world was watching, as was the case for Rwanda (The Amia, Rwanda Connection).

The AMiA leadership is fully under the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda where Chuck Murphy is the overseer of the organization as the primeval vicar appointed by the House of Bishops of the Province of Rwanda (Wikipedia 2011). In 2007, the Anglican Mission in the Americas, with the advice of the Archbishop of Rwanda, formed an umbrella of Anglicans detached from the Episcopal Church of America and Canada, the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA). The Anglican Mission is

composed of the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA), the Anglican Coalition in America (ACiA), and the Anglican Coalition in Canada (ACiC) (PEAR, the Amia 2011).

As part of the PEAR, the AMiA is against the ordination of homosexuals to the priestly order. It is a partner of the Anglican Church in the north of America (ACNA) but remains fully under the supervision, spiritually and canonically authoritative, of the Province of Rwanda while the ACNA responds directly to GAFCON (Wikipedia 2011).

While the Province of Rwanda ordains women into full priesthood with the ACiA and ACiC, AMiA ordains women to the diaconate. "The Anglican Mission in the Americas provides a way to maintain the integrity, and honor the consciences of those with differing positions and policies on women's ordination" (The Amia, Identity 2011). The Anglican Mission is under the authority of the Church of the Province of Rwanda, a member church of the Anglican Communion. Its clergy are ordained under the oversight of the Archbishop of Rwanda and other participating Anglican primates and Rwandan bishops.

The Anglican Mission would like to remain under the Rwanda province because of the global connection of close partnership in mission and ministry, fueled by a shared passion and vision for reaching those outside the church in the United States and Canada. Its main purpose is to reach out in evangelism without borders of culture and geographical limitations.

The Doctrine, Faith, and Order of the Anglican Church of Rwanda

The Anglican Province of Rwanda is a church in full communion with all Anglican churches, dioceses, and provinces that hold and maintain the orthodox historic faith, doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic faith in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Anglican Province of Rwanda affirms the Holy Scriptures composed of 66 books of the Bible as the complete foundation and the authority of faith. They were inspired by God and contain all the necessary instruction required to lead a person to salvation. The church adopts the Christian faith, which is summarized in the Creedal Statements found in the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. The church confirms the sacraments as instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist. Finally, the Anglican Church of Rwanda accepts the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion as adapted through the ages (PEAR, Promulgation 2011).

The Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda and the Anglican Communion

The Anglican Province of Rwanda is a member of the Anglican Communion and has been from its creation. With the current controversial matter of blessing same-sex marriage facing the Anglican Communion, the Province of Rwanda is distancing itself from what is not "scriptural" in this trend. The House of Bishops in March 2009 pointed out

that “we hold very strongly, that as we continue to engage and develop this Anglican Covenant, we shall be identified by the Anglican Faith and Practice, based upon the Holy Scriptures, Doctrine and the Anglican Tradition as passed on by the early church” (Anglican Communion 2011).

However, the Anglican Church of Rwanda is still a member of the Anglican Communion as jurisdiction, not in practice. After refusing to attend Lambeth 2008 and deciding to be part of GAFCON/Jerusalem, the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda is part of the growing conservative Global South Anglicans which in April 2011 have confirmed the creation of a general office in London and in Nairobi as a sign of a new Anglican movement split from Lambeth (GAFCON 2011).

The Anglican Province of Rwanda and Current Issues

From its beginning, the Anglican Church of Rwanda has been strongly opposed to the ordination of any person of same-sex marriage (gay and lesbians). In 2009, the House of Bishops' declaration made it clear that the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda believes the office of the bishop is one that develops from the office of the deacon and priest; however, the House of Bishops was also concerned with the previous orders (Anglican Communion 2011). The new archbishop, the Most Rev. Onesphore Rwaje, declared that he will step in the footsteps of his predecessor on the issue of gay marriage. “Anything that is contrary to God's family set-up is not acceptable; there is nowhere in the Bible where same-sex marriage is encouraged. God created a man and woman to be the basis of a family” (All Africa 2011).

The Anglican Province of Rwanda has problems of marriage related to polygamy and many widows left by the genocide of 1994. The East African Revival focused on “one man one wife” as it is recommended in the Bible, based on heterosexual blessing. Culturally, homosexuality is a taboo; therefore, there is no possibility of this new trend of homosexuality penetrating into the Anglican Church of Rwanda. It is what former Archbishop of Rwanda Emmanuel Kolini described as “cultural imperialism.” He said, “They [Western Missionaries] asked us to read the Bible with them, but the difference is culture; it is not the understanding of the Bible. . . . If they interpret it in their own cultural contexts, let them keep it that way with themselves. It is not supposed to be imposed upon us” (Anglicans United 2011). The Bible is read with much authority, in reflection and respect to the people's culture. There is no culture in its formation which supports same-sex union except the new human's thinking.

Conclusion

It is hard to compare the legacy of the revival and the hell of genocide in Rwanda because both happened to the people in this country. The work done by the Anglican Province of Rwanda is remarkable; it has combined a traditional evangelical emphasis on conversion with a deep commitment to social programs. The church in Rwanda is deeply committed to the emergence of AMiA. From the perspective of the church in

Rwanda, all Anglican groups in North America are advised to form one entity and to be fully under one leadership as one church of Christ with one mission to evangelize and re-evangelize the unreached.

Many in Rwanda believe that the time has come to bring the energy and passion of the church in Africa back to the West. The same spirit that enabled the continent of Africa to be touched by the gospel is needed in the West.

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