

How to Overcome Christian Extremism: Christianity's Accomplice in Rwandan Genocide and Its Implication for Korean Christianity*

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- I. Introduction
- II. Rwandan Genocide and Genocidal Mentality
- III. Christian Teachings that made Christians Bystanders
- IV. Christian Ways of Preventing Genocide and Its Implications for Korean Christianity
- V. Conclusion

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• 국 문 초 록 •

**기독교 극단주의의 극복방안: 르완다 인종학살에 공모한 기독교가
한국 기독교에 주는 함의**

이 소고는 한 국가 안에서 기독교인들이 기독교인들을 학살할 수 있게 정당화한 기독교의 폭력적인 요소에 대한 고찰이다. 인종학살이 이뤄질 때는 학살의 정당화, 치유-학살의 역설, 그리고 비인간화가 개입한다. 르완다에서는 이 세 요소 모두가 기독교를 통해 지지되었다. 르완다의 기독교는 르완다 사회 문제 해결의 방편으로 인종학살을 제시했다. 지배층을 구성하는 투치족들은 제거되어야 할 대상으로 규정했고, 기독교는 그 제안에 대해 묵인했다. 투치족들은 비인간화되었다. 심지어는 악과 동일시되었다. 르완다의 정화를 위해서 악을 제거해야 하고 그 악은 투치족이기 때문에 투치족의 제거는 치유-학살의 역설을 정당화시켰다. 르완다의 잔인한 학살에 방관자가 된 기독교인들에게 직접적인 영향을 준 가르침은 스코필드 성서의 전천년설 해석에 기인한 부정적인 현실관, 구원의 초월적 차원 강조, 개인적인 초월에 대한 지식과 경험의 강조, 권위주의적 가르침의 방법 등이다. 이러한 기독교적인 가르침이 르완다 기독교인을 극단주의에 무감하게 만들었고, 인종학살의 방관자가 되게 했다. 기독교는 사람들을 악으로 규정하는 악마화를 떨쳐버려야 극단주의의 유혹을 벗어날 수가 있다. 점점 더 양극화되고 갈등이 증폭되고 있는 한국 사회에서 사회정치적·종교적 극단주의의 극복이 사회의 통합에 기여할 수 있는 첫 걸음이 될 것이다.

주제어: 기독교 극단주의, 인종학살, 비인간화, 학살-치유의 역설, 악마화

I. Introduction

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda poses a serious challenge to Christianity with relation to Christian extremism.¹⁾ It is said that Rwanda is “the Most ‘Christian’ country in Africa,” since 89.8 percent of the population is reported to be Christians.²⁾ The most successfully Christianized country had the worst massacre. In the Holocaust, Christians killed Jews. Although the Holocaust can never be justified, anti-Semitism explained the Holocaust to a certain extent. In the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, however, Christians killed their fellow Christians who had worshiped together.³⁾ What is worse, it is reported that “eleven percent of the victims of genocide were killed in churches.”⁴⁾

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- 1) The term Christian extremism I use in this paper denotes a type of Christian attitude toward demonizing those who express different views of Christian belief, those who practice different religions, and those who adopt certain socio-economic and political stances other than liberal democracy based on capitalism.
 - 2) Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth, eds., *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2004), xi. For a brief summary of Rwandan genocide, see Donald G. Dutton, *The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence: Why ‘normal’ People Come to Commit Atrocities*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 34-35. For more detailed history of Rwandan genocide, see Allan Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, (London: International Development Research Centre, 2007), 20-37. See also Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (London: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2006), 232-257.
 - 3) In terms of the definition of genocide, I accept one summarized by E. N. Anderson and Barbara A. Anderson: Genocide is “systematic, cold-blooded, bureaucratically administered extermination of entire ethnic, religious, or political groups, by their own national governments, in the absence of anything that a rational external observer could consider an adequate reason.” Eugene N. Anderson and Barbara A. Anderson, *Warning Signs of Genocide: An Anthropological Perspective*, (New York, Lexington Books, 2013), 5.

There had been genocide in Rwanda in 1959. At that time “people who sought sanctuary in Rwanda’s churches survived.”⁵⁾ In 1994, unfortunately, Rwanda’s churches were the place of massacre. It means that even some clergies abetted the genocide. The fact that Christians killed their fellow Christians and churches were houses of slaughter of innocent people poses a serious challenge to Christianity, since one of the crucial Christian teachings is to “love your enemies.”⁶⁾ There are many cases in which some Christians bravely stopped the massacre. For instance, there was a sister who stopped a slaughter for a while: “At one point, two militia men put their machetes on the back of one of the Tutsi Sisters and asked her if she had anything to say. She said, ‘You are still my brothers.’ They left that day without killing anyone.”⁷⁾ The sister expressed her love of enemy and miraculously she saved people. Although there were such brave Christians who saved Tutsis and moderate Hutus from the genocide, the sheer number of casualties raises questions: What did Christians do? What did churches do? In this paper, I will deal with the role of Christianity in the 1994 genocide in

4) James M. Smith and Carol Rittner, “Churches as Memorial Sites: A Photo Essay,” in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth, eds., (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2004), 181.

5) *Ibid.*

6) It is true that “religion had served to legitimate and justify hatreds” in medieval Europe as Doris L. Bergen points out in *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, (Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 7. It is no exaggeration to say that religion has legitimated and justified hatreds throughout human history. Nonetheless, Christians are asked to overcome such hatreds and prejudices.

7) Carol Rittner, “Genocide and the Church in Rwanda: An Interview with Tom O’ Hara, C.S.C.,” in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, 136.

Rwanda,⁸⁾ Specifically, I will delve into the role of Rwandan churches in supporting genocide, and teachings of the churches which made many Hutu Christians mere bystanders who were indifferent to the atrocity throughout genocide. I will then suggest how Christianity can prevent genocide and its implications for Korean Christianity.

II. Rwandan Genocide and Genocidal Mentality

Genocidal mentality is the key factor in analysing Christian involvement in Rwandan genocide. There were many other factors such as economic problems and political unrest that affected genocide in Rwanda. Since this article is concerned about Christian involvement in genocide, understanding perpetrator's mentality is helpful to identify the points of contact between Christian practice and genocidal moment.

In their article, Matthias Bjørnlund, Eric Markusen, Peter Steenberg, and Rafiki Ubaldo, discuss the Catholic Church in Rwanda and its connection to genocidal mentality.⁹⁾ Genocidal mentality means, according

8) Dealing with Rwandan genocide, many scholars mentions usually three primary factors such as "an intense civil war, state power, and pre-existing ethnic/racial classifications." See Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 224. See also Kristen Renwick Monroe, *Ethics in an Age of Terror and Genocide: Identity and Moral Choice*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 15. I agree that these three factors are primary ones. Nonetheless, religious factor with relation to ethnic/racial classifications is crucial in the case of Rwandan genocide.

9) Matthias Bjørnlund, Eric Markusen, Peter Steenberg, and Rafiki Ubaldo, "The Christian Churches and the Construction of a Genocidal Mentality in Rwanda," in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, 141-167. Sam Keen emphasizes such genocidal mentality which he refers to creating the enemy or propaganda preceding technology. See Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile*

to Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusen, “the willingness of governments, and their citizens, to engage in the mass killing of innocent people.”¹⁰⁾ There are at least “three elements of the genocidal mentality: ‘legitimation,’ ‘the healing-killing paradox,’ and ‘dehumanization.’”¹¹⁾ Legitimation means that “[g]enocide must be legitimated by tradition, culture, or ideology; sanctions for mass murder must be given by those in authority; the forces of destruction have to be mobilized and directed; and the whole process has to be rationalized so that it makes sense to the perpetrators and their accomplices.”¹²⁾ The healing-killing paradox means that “killing becomes a prerequisite for healing.”¹³⁾ In the Auschwitz, “[t]he healing achieved by killing could also become part of the immortalizing vision, of the ‘holiest human right and...obligation,’ which is ‘to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings.’”¹⁴⁾ Dehumanization means “a psychological-symbolic removal of

Imagination (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 10.

- 10) Eric Markusen and Robert Jay Lifton, “Genocidal Mentality,” *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, Vol. 1, Israel W. Charney, ed., (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 250-251.
- 11) Matthias Bjørnlund, et al, *Ibid.*, 145; In terms of the stages of genocide formation, Steven K. Baum mentions its eight stages referring to a Glenn Stannard’s listing. See, Steven K. Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33-35.
- 12) Roger W. Smith, “Human Destructiveness and Politics: The Twentieth Century as an Age of Genocide,” *Genocide and the Modern Age - Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowski, eds., (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 22.
- 13) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *Ibid.*, 146.
- 14) Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986), 431.

others from the province or group classification of human, and thus removes from the others any entitlement to protection or privilege as human beings.”¹⁵⁾ Specifically, dehumanization regards “members of a targeted group as vermin, subhuman, or less-than-human.”¹⁶⁾ Legitimation, healing-killing paradox, and dehumanization are evident in the churches’ involvement in the Rwandan history which resulted in the 1994 genocide.

In the legitimation of genocide, the Hamitic Myth, which was created and legitimated by missionaries and churches in Rwanda, has played an important role.¹⁷⁾ The historical background of the Hamitic Myth is this:

From the beginning of the German colonialization of Rwanda in the 1890s, Rwandan society simultaneously experienced the disintegration of political and social structures, and the construction of rigid identities – Tutsi, Hutu and Twa – which transformed Rwandan society socially, economically and politically. Throughout a nationwide network of Catholic missions and through Church-dominated activities like education, Tutsis were designated as “Hamites,” literally descendants of Noah’s youngest son Ham, arguing that at some point in the distant

15) Israel W. Charny, “Dehumanization - ‘Killing’ the Humanity of Another,” *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, Vol. 1, Israel W. Charny, ed., (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 155.

16) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *Ibid.*, 147.

17) *Ibid.*, 148. Robert Melson also emphasizes the role of Hamitic Hypothesis. See Robert Melson, “Modern Genocide in Rwanda: Ideology, Revolution, War, and Mass Murder in an African State,” in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, eds. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 325-338.

past the Tutsis must have been exposed to Biblical influence, thus explaining the disposition to embrace Christianity that gave the Tutsis a privileged place in Christian evangelism.¹⁸⁾

The Hamitic myth justified Tutsi dominance over Hutu and Twa as well as Tutsi Christianization. Before colonizers came into Rwanda, however, there were no such races or ethnicities.¹⁹⁾ Instead, people in Rwanda were economically specialized: “the Tutsis were cattle breeders, the Hutu farmers, and the Twa hunters.”²⁰⁾ Considering that there were “ninety percent of the Tutsis” who “belonged to the masses of poor peasants,” even the economical specialization is not accurate compartmentalization.²¹⁾ There seemed to be no adequate differentiation of Rwandan people, since the Rwandan people had “the same language, culture, religion, and habit.”²²⁾ There were, in addition, numerous intermarriages and new occupational possibilities for all Rwandan people.²³⁾ Although “there was both a degree of social mobility and frequent intermarriage among [Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa]” and “the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ‘ethnic groups’ do not correspond with… ‘conventional’ definition of such entities,” missionaries and colonizers made up such ethnic and racial hierarchy in Rwanda.²⁴⁾ In the fab-

18) *Ibid.*, 149.

19) Anthony Court, “The Christian Churches, the State, and Genocide in Rwanda,” *Missionalia* 44:1 (2016): 52-54.

20) Octave Ugirashebuja, “The Church and the Genocide in Rwanda,” in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, 56.

21) *Ibid.*

22) *Ibid.*

23) *Ibid.*

24) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *ibid.*, 150.

ricated ethnic and racial hierarchy, Tutsis “had dominated and exploited the Hutu and Twa ‘races.’”²⁵⁾ The churches in Rwanda were “instrumental in institutionalizing the racist Hamitic Myth and the ethnic division”: missionaries without reservation have taught the fabricated ethnic divisions in Rwanda.²⁶⁾ “In colonial Rwanda, discrimination and the creation and institutionalization of racial cleavages—features that historically have served as important preconditions for a genocidal mentality—were wholeheartedly supported and legitimated by both individual clergy and by the Churches as institutions—especially the Catholic Church.”²⁷⁾

The Catholic Church was deeply involved in proposing genocide as a solution to societal problems in Rwanda. In 1950, when “Tutsi nationalists were considered a greater threat [to the Belgian colonial authorities] because of alleged leftist leanings,” the Belgian colonial authorities, backed by the Catholic Church, supported “Hutu nationalists, especially in the all-Hutu PARMEHUTU (*parti du Mouvement de L’Emancipation Hutu*).”²⁸⁾ There was the “Bahutu Manifesto” of March 1957, which “was supported by significant members of the Catholic Church in Rwanda” and was published by “the printing house of the Diocese of Kabgayi.”²⁹⁾ The manifesto “[designates] Tutsis as not only an oppressive Rwandan ethnic elite that should give up power, but as a foreign race that did

25) *Ibid.*

26) *Ibid.*, 151.

27) *Ibid.*

28) *Ibid.*, 152.

29) *Ibid.*, 152-53.

not belong in Rwanda.”³⁰⁾ It is noteworthy that the Bahutu Manifesto, which justified seclusion of Tutsis, was supported by members of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. In 1991, the Rwandan Magazine Dialogue, which “had strong ties with the Rwandan Catholic Church,” suggested a solution of ethnic cleavages and social trauma: the solution was genocide.³¹⁾ “[I]nfluential parts of Rwandan society, including Catholic clergy, proposed or helped propose genocide as a solution to real or perceived societal problems. And the Catholic Church as an institution did not protest. In the highly Christianized Rwandan society, the combination of Church clergy cooperating with genocidal elements and lack of protest from the Church as an institution would be seen by many as legitimation and tacit agreement.”³²⁾

The Hamitic Myth, which was created and legitimated by the churches in Rwanda and which had justified Tutsi domination over Hutu and Twa, ironically becomes genocidal legitimation (Hutu’s massacre of Tutsi). At first, the churches in Rwanda had supported Tutsis. But, the churches withdrew their support for Tutsis and instead supported Hutu. This changed preference of the churches can be explained by not only Tutsi’s leftist leanings but also the teaching of the church, that is, social justice. Preferential option for the poor is the well-known doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. In Rwanda, missionaries regarded the Hutus as the only poor class.³³⁾ Although ninety percent of Tutsis never

30) *Ibid.*, 153.

31) *Ibid.*, 154.

32) *Ibid.*

33) Octave Ugirashabuja, *ibid.*, 57.

belonged to the category of princes and chiefs, missionaries identified the Hutus with the poor class in Rwanda.³⁴⁾ Octave Ugrashebuja points out genocidal justification of the churches in Rwanda in this way: “Whilst vigorously taking the side of the poor against the rich, the missionaries felt very much in accord with this Christian idea. They could not see that they were preaching a preferential option for one race against another. And when the Tutsi genocide occurred, they had difficulty seeing anything wrong in it. They were proud to see ‘social justice’ finally reign in the form of ‘racial justice.’”³⁵⁾ The church’s identification of social justice with racial justice brought about atrocity in Rwanda.

The Hamitic Myth facilitated dehumanization as the myth “designated Tutsis as ‘foreign invaders’”³⁶⁾: “In Hutu nationalist discourse, Tutsis were frequently portrayed as the ultimate blocking beings – contaminating foreign ‘invaders from Ethiopia’ who were inherently malevolent and obstructed the social flows of the Hutu nation.”³⁷⁾ As foreign invaders, Tutsis were regarded as “them” who were against “us” (Hutus) and who should be killed.³⁸⁾ What was worse, Tutsis were dehumanized as “cockroach,” ‘hyena,’ ‘eaters of our sweat,’ ‘weeds,’ and ‘weight upon our back.’”³⁹⁾ When genocide broke out, Tutsis were identified

34) *Ibid.*

35) *Ibid.*, 58.

36) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *ibid.*, 156.

37) Alexander Laban Hinton, “The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide,” in *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, Alexander Laban Hinton, ed., (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 20.

38) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *ibid.*, 157.

39) *Ibid.*

as excrements and thereby the bodies of Tutsis were thrown into latrines.⁴⁰⁾ With the anti-Tutsi derogatory terms, Tutsis became sub-human which had no right to be protected by human beings.

The healing-killing paradox “is also closely linked to the Hamitic Myth”: “...unity was imagined by the Hutu extremist elite [as] a purified nation with a purified, reified ‘Hutu culture’ expunged of all elements of ‘Tutsi culture’ and rid of all who would resist the encompassing powers of the state.”⁴¹⁾ By killing Tutsis and getting rid of the ultimate blocking beings, Hutu believed that they could purify Hutu nation.

One crucial example of the healing-killing paradox in the 1994 genocide is related to Mary apparition in Kebeho. In November 1981, a student of the College of Kibeho, sixteen year old Alphonsine Mumureke, said that she saw the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus.⁴²⁾ Two other students, Anathalie Mukamazimpaks and Marie-Claire Mukangango, also had visions of Mary in February and in March 1982.⁴³⁾ In May 1982, two more girls, Valentine Nyriamukiza and Stephanie Mukamurenzi, said that they saw the Mother of God.⁴⁴⁾ In the same month, popular gathering of pilgrims took place and the regime in power publicized the apparitions.⁴⁵⁾ The apparitions were appropriated by the Rwandan

40) Alexander Laban Hinton, *ibid.*, 20.

41) Matthias Bjørnlund et al, *ibid.*, 157.

42) Leon D. saur, “From Kibeho to Medjugorje: The Catholic Church and Ethno-nationalist Movements and Regimes,” in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, 212.

43) *Ibid.*

44) *Ibid.*, 212-13.

45) *Ibid.*, 213.

government: For the Rwandan government, closely involved with a Church which was always ready to promote devotion to the Mother of God, one of the best means of reinforcing its own legitimacy was to ensure that the apparitions had a strong impact. Because Marian devotion can be used as a tool of Church propaganda, when that happens, the Church can be said to lend a regime an ideological alibi and a moral legitimacy... Later, during the 1994 genocide, the Mother of the Word, to some extent, literally became 'Our Lady of the Hutus.'⁴⁶⁾

In the 1994 genocide, the Mother of Jesus became One who helped Hutu soldiers kill Tutsis: "some killers wore Marian medallions; others wore rosaries around their necks or tied rosaries on their weapons. When a nun asked a soldier how he could kill with a rosary around his neck, he replied that the Virgin was helping him to discover his enemies."⁴⁷⁾ Marian apparition was used by Hutu extremist mass media to justify extermination of Tutsis: "The sadly famous *Radio Television des Mille Collines* (RTLM), the Hutu Power radio station, broadcast announcements that God and his Mother were fighting on the side of the Hutus. The RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) and the Tutsis were demonized as instruments of Satan and the incarnation of the Antichrist. Extremist newspapers wrote the same... From Hutu extremist point of view, the civil war was the final combat between good and evil, between God and Satan."⁴⁸⁾ During the genocide, it is said that "[k]illers

46) *Ibid.*

47) *Ibid.*, 215.

48) Leon D. saur, "From Kibeho to Medjugorje," 215. In this vein, demonizing can be equated with satanizing. Mark Juergensmeyer prefers satanizing or satanization. Though different terms, both demonization and satanization are ex-

attended mass between massacres.”⁴⁹⁾ For the killers their slaughter was not sin at all; rather, it is good deed. Catholics believed that “the Mother of God ‘will crush the head of the snake’ and vanquish ‘the forces of evil.’”⁵⁰⁾ For the Hutu Catholics killing was demolishing Satan and the forces of evil, and by getting rid of Tutsis they could secure purity and get healing.

Through the Hamitic myth, the churches in Rwanda implicitly provided a matrix for genocidal mentality and sometimes explicitly supported genocidal mentality: legitimation, dehumanization, and killing-healing paradox. It is one side of the role of the churches in Rwanda in terms of genocide. The other side of the Rwandan churches is its theological teachings which made many Hutu Christians bystanders who were unconcerned about the atrocity throughout the genocide.

III. Christian Teachings that made Christians Bystanders

According to the report of Christine Nyiransabimana, when the “*interahamwe* attacked the church in Nyamata, people gathered around to watch the slaughter.”⁵¹⁾ Those who were not extremists became

changeable Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 186.

49) Leon D. saur, “From Kibeho to Medjugorje,” 215.

50) *Ibid.*, 220.

51) Jean Hatzfeld, *Life Laid Bare: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak*, (New York: Other Press, 2006), 139.

bystanders. Considering that almost 90% of Rwandan people were Christians, the most of the bystanders were Christians. A question arises: if they are Christians, what kind of Christian teachings made them bystanders? Answers are the Scofield Bible with its pre-millennialist interpretations, individualistic understanding of repentance and belief in Jesus, emphasis on testimonies instead of Biblical teaching, and authoritarian method of teaching.

First of all, “the Scofield Bible with its pre-millennialist interpretations” impacted on Rwandan Christians’ world view.⁵²⁾ “Scofield’s pre-millennialist perspective meant that...there was ‘no hope for humanity except in the personal return of the Lord of glory.’”⁵³⁾ This theological teaching opens two ways of Christian life: one is “the withdrawal from the public life of the nation into a spiritual ghetto”; the other is “a naïve and uncritical support of whoever is in power, with Biblical justification being frequently drawn from Romans chapter 13.”⁵⁴⁾ Both ways of Christian life were noticeable in the life of Rwandan Christians. They allow Christians to be bystanders, being faced with such atrocity, since there is no hope in humanity. Based on the Scofield’s pre-millennialist perspective, the churches in Rwanda did not raise voices against injustice: “Gross abuses of human rights were taking place within Rwanda long before the crisis of April 1994, yet the Churches by and large did not speak up. There has been a failure to see that abuse of human beings,

52) Roger W. Bowen, “Genocide in Rwanda 1994 – An Anglican Perspective,” in *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?*, 40.

53) *Ibid.*

54) *Ibid.*

created in the image of God, is a very serious issue that the Church cannot ignore if it is to be true to its Lord.”⁵⁵⁾ The pessimistic view of humanity led Rwandan Christians to be unconcerned about human atrocity.

Secondly, repentance and belief in Jesus, which was individualistic and other-worldly oriented, were unable to encourage Christians to resist mass slaughter. “There would be many calls in preaching to ‘repent and believe in the Gospel,’ but little teaching on how to live out Christian discipleship in the secular world and how to be ‘salt and light’ in society.”⁵⁶⁾ The repentance and belief in Jesus is mainly for the afterlife. In addition, sin was individualized and privatized: “The challenge to repentance has usually focused on a fairly limited range of private morality – lying, stealing, adultery, and drunkenness.”⁵⁷⁾ This individualistic understanding of sin and repentance, “underestimates the power and depth of evil, and by focusing on personal/private morality is quite inadequate to tackle the hideous strength of structural evil and corporate sin manifested in an act of genocide.”⁵⁸⁾

Thirdly, Christianity in Rwanda allowed Christians to substitute their testimonies for Biblical teaching. “Within the revival in East Africa the fellowship meetings put great emphasis on the sharing of testimonies and this was an enormous encouragement to one another.”⁵⁹⁾ The em-

55) *Ibid.*

56) *Ibid.*, 42.

57) *Ibid.*, 43.

58) *Ibid.*

59) *Ibid.*

phasis on the sharing of testimonies is powerful in evangelization. Unlike teachings on Christian doctrines, sharing of testimonies was easy for non-Christians to understand Christian belief. However, “[t]he danger of an overemphasis on personal testimony is that it leads participants to feel that their grasp of truth is exhaustive and they are blind to other implications of the Truth.”⁶⁰⁾ In many cases those who think that they grasp the truth are often indifferent to God’s justice in this world but narrow down their concerns to other-worldly matters.

Fourthly, the Christian teaching method in Rwanda led Christians to have a passive attitude to genocide: “the whole teaching method in Rwanda, both in churches and the state education system, does not encourage reflection and questioning. It is often an exercise in rote learning, which can then be repeated back to the examiners on examination day.”⁶¹⁾ Faced with social problems and tragedy, Christians were not trained to think critically: “In Rwanda, the Churches’ authoritarian teaching style that encouraged little reflection avoided the crucial issues troubling the society, inculcated uncritical obedience to government authorities, and failed to teach Christians that situations can be so dire that ‘we must obey God rather than man’ (Acts 5:29).”⁶²⁾ The Rwandan Christians who were trained not to think critically and reflect were unable to raise questions as they encountered with genocide.

There is no doubt that these four factors, the Scofield Bible with its pre-millennialist interpretations, individualistic understanding of re-

60) *Ibid.*, 44.

61) *Ibid.*

62) *Ibid.*

pentance and belief in Jesus, emphasis on testimonies instead of Biblical teaching, and authoritarian method of teaching, were unable to prevent Rwandan Christians from being bystanders in the midst of genocide. Nonetheless, considering that there were several cases in which Christians resisted colluding genocide, these four factors could not explain fully all the reasons why Christians became bystanders. The more crucial factor in Rwandan genocide is demonization of the other.

IV. Christian Ways of Preventing Genocide and Its Implications for Korean Christianity

So far, I discussed how the churches in Rwanda were related to genocidal mentality and how teachings of the churches allowed many Rwandan Christians to be bystanders in the midst of mass slaughters: whereas Hutu extremists actively participated in the genocide, many moderate Hutus passively reacted to the genocide. Both were Christians who worshipped amid the genocide. It raises a question: Is there a Christian position which prevents extremists from active genocide and prevents moderates from being passive bystanders?

To be a faithful Christian seems not to guarantee a genocide-free society. Some of extremists and some of moderates might have thought that they were true believers: Some extremists might have believed that they were embodying God's justice in Rwanda; some moderates might have believed that God's totally new kingdom would come right after the rampant human atrocity.

In order to prevent genocide, I would say that ambivalence of

Christian teaching should be addressed: the dilemma of Christianity between loving enemies and expelling demons. Christians are asked to love their enemies but they are at the same time taught to expel demons. Christians are called to love their enemies whether or not they can do; but, when it comes to demons, they are supposed to expel or crush them. As we have seen above, Hutu extremists demonized Tutsis; Hutu moderates seemed to demonize the devastated Rwanda as they focused only on a Gnostic spiritual life or an otherworldly life. Both kinds of demonization brought about calamity, either actively or passively.

Demonization of human beings is inseparable from healing-killing paradox and dehumanization of the other. As long as Christianity allows for demonizing others, there is no way to prevent mass slaughter.⁶³⁾ Therefore, I would suggest that demonization should not be allowed to Christians. In the Bible human beings are not allowed to demonize others; only God is the judge of human beings. Enemies are discernable to Christians but demons are not unless the Christians assert their Godhead. Demonization such as witch-hunts should not be allowed to any individual or any religious institution. There could be enemies to Christians or Christian institutions but there are no human demons to Christians, Christian institutions, or humanity. Only when Christians do not demonize others can Christianity dismantle genocide mentality.

63) Mark J. Allman puts it in this way: "When an enemy is demonized, negotiation with the demonized enemy is impossible, since it 'becomes cooperation with evil.'" See Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?: War, Peace, and the Christian Tradition*, (Winona, Minnesota: Anselm Academic, 2008), 122.

There are two kinds of demonization that come to my attention in Korea: demonization of Shinchonji, Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony(SCJ) and demonization of socialism. One is religious demonization and the other is sociopolitical demonization. Unlike demonization developed into genocidal mentality in Rwanda, demonization in Korea shows early stages of violence. Though it is in early stages of violent conflict, Korean history reveals instances of demonization related violence. In Korean history, there were mutual killing between Christians and socialists before and during the Korean War. Religious dissidents were expelled without due consideration. Demonization in Korea is a grave matter before, now, and in the future.

One salient example of demonization is a Christian discourse of Shinchonji (SCJ). There is an evident danger for Korean Christianity to abuse or misuse the discourse of the SCJ. The SCJ is notorious for its heretical teachings and missions. It is understandable for Korean churches to prevent the SCJ activities from causing disunity of their members and communities. But demonization of the SCJ is so severe that Christian hatred against the SCJ is beyond reasonable check. Let me introduce a case of a megachurch which would take an advantage of such Christian hatred against the SCJ. For a research project, several researchers and I visited a megachurch. On that day, a guest preacher dealt with the SCJ. According to the preacher, almost every church has resident spies from the SCJ. The preacher yelled at congregants, “get out, Shinchonji!”, feeling confident that SCJ spies were there. Since we were visitors, some members gave us a suspicious look. The preacher’s

remark aroused suspicion on those who did not belong to the church community, or even those in-groups. Such hate discourse of the SCJ spreads distrust of all, specifically, of Christians. Everyone without exception comes under suspicion. It separates us from them. If one belongs to the category of “them,” she is to be expelled from the group of “us” or at least is accepted to the group with a sneaking suspicion.

The discourse of the SCJ can be abused to stifle even legitimate complaints against the church leadership. The megachurch I visited handed over senior-pastorship from its retired senior pastor to his own son. There were those who were against such an abdication of senior-pastorship. The discourse of the SCJ can be misused to mute such complaints, since when a congregant challenges an abdication of senior-pastorship, she could be identified with a SCJ spy. Actually, the visiting preacher at the megachurch emphasized that SCJ spies were to challenge the church leadership and raise different voices. In that scheme, anyone who raises a different voice other than an authorized one by the church leadership could be easily identified with the SCJ. Being identified with the SCJ, she becomes an unreliable person. In this way, any member who raises a different voice other than the leading group of the church would be demonized as the SCJ. In so doing, the church leaders can easily trample those who are against them and consolidate their own unjustifiable leadership through the demonizing discourse of the SCJ.

In this vein, the very problem with Christian hate discourse with relation to the SCJ is that it disallows any constructive criticism or debate.

Those who belong to against-group within a given church are regarded as evil SCJs and expunged from the church, whether or not they accept such one-sided judgment. Though there is no report of portraying a dissident as a victim so far, it is foreseeable that such victimization will happen as long as the demonizing discourse of the SCJ lasts. Though accepting dangers of the SCJ to Korean Christianity, it should find ways in which Korean Christianity addresses issues caused by the SCJ without demonizing it.

The other example of demonization in Korea is related to socialism. Korean Christianity, specifically its conservative group, has defined as evil those who are against capitalism and liberal democracy. In the twentieth National Assembly Elections in 2016, the Christian Liberal Party (CLP), which is supported by megachurches including Yoido Full Gospel Church, declares in its prospectus its blatant refusal of Muslim and Socialism, though it does not provide a persuasive, reasonable foundation for its refusal.⁶⁴⁾ It reveals its ulterior hatred toward socialism and the recurrent tendency of demonization of the other, in this case, Muslim and sexual minority. Insofar as Korean Christianity keeps groundless hatred toward the other, it is unable to eradicate its violent nature which is squarely opposed to reconciliation and a peacebuilding ministry.

Violence of Christianity is not a synonym for conservative Christians or Christian fundamentalists; progressive Christians also could be violent

64) Christian Liberal Party, *Christian Liberal Party Political Principle*, <http://clparty.kr/policy> (accessed April 18, 2016).

agents. In Rwandan genocide, what was striking was that the teaching, 'preferential option for the poor,' was abused by Hutu in justifying the expulsion of or the mass killing of Tutsi. The teaching became a tool for oppressing the other, that is, Tutsi. To be progressive is not the answer to Christian violence. No matter what stance it takes, violence is a trap into which Christianity can easily fall. In this vein, a Christian, whether she is conservative or progressive, right-wing or left-wing, the mainstream or the minority, should not demonize the other in any given situation.

The political situation in the Korean peninsula seems to be more volatile for the next decade. Most of all, the economy is in poor shape and economic conditions will worsen for next years. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening; ideological conflicts are intensified and those who request promotion of equality and the common good are denounced by the right-wing majority. Such ideological conflicts will be worsened when Koreans achieve unification of North and South. Koreans in North have been accustomed to communism for more than a half century. They are left-wing inclined poor people. Since they are poor, their social place in the unified Korea will be the bottom of social ladder. In a democracy limited by capitalism they can hardly have a voice. Like Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda, South Koreans and North Koreans will have an antagonistic relationship to each other. While it was racial difference in Rwanda, it will be ideological and economic difference as well as historically shaped cultural difference in Korea. Koreans from North will be vulnerable citizens as the poor as

well as left-wingers.

Korean Christianity has experienced demonization of socialists and still demonizes left-wing people. Korean Christianity is prone to side with the wealthy, the ideologically right, and the powerful. It can repeat the horrible history of violence, demonizing North Koreans, being indifferent to the violence inflicted on North Koreans, or justifying such violence as the will of God. For instance, pastor Kyoung-Chik Han preached on “Christianity and Communism” in 1947, identifying communists with the red dragon in the Bible; Pastor Sun-chu Kiel and Pastor Myung-Jik Lee put “communism as the sign of the satan or the doomsday.”⁶⁵⁾ From the early days of Korean christianity, Christian leaders blatantly expressed demonization of socialism and communism.

Korean Christianity should stop demonization. Without escaping from the pattern of defining people or ideology as demon, Korean Christianity will be the source of inhumane violence. In South Korea, left-wing people are flatly and severely criticized. Only when Korean Christians avoid the rhetoric of demonizing others and empathizes agony of the powerless, the poor, and the different, can it concretize peace in the Korea peninsular, without repeating the errors of Rwandan Christian predecessors.

65) Heung Soo Kim, *A Study of the Korean War and This-Worldly Blessings in the Christian Churches*, (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Church History, 1999), 76. See also Myungjik Lee, “What is the red dragon?” *Hwalchun*, 1938 (191): 1-2. Kyoung-Chik Han, “Christianity and Communism,” *A History of the North Korean Church Since 1945*, ed. Heung Soo Kim, (Seoul: Dasangbang, 1992), 300.

V. Conclusion

I have discussed how the churches in Rwanda have colluded in the 1994 genocide. The churches in Rwanda allowed Christians to participate in the genocide either actively or passively. The Most Christianized country in Africa killed at least 0.8 million people. In the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Christians killed their fellow Christians who had worshiped together. More than one tenth of the victims were killed in churches which should symbolize forgiveness and reconciliation, acceptance and fellowship. Three elements of the genocidal mentality are legitimation, the healing-killing paradox, and dehumanization. Rwandan Christianity legitimized genocide as a way of addressing Rwandan societal problems, dehumanized Tutsi as evil, which led to justification of the healing-killing paradox. Christian teachings that made Christians bystanders were negative view of reality based on pre-millennialist interpretations, the exclusive emphasis on other-worldly salvation, the preference of Rwandan Christianity for personal testimony, and the authoritarian teaching style of Rwandan Churches. One way to prevent genocide is for Christians not to demonize others and thereby allows no justification of killing anyone. Since demonization is the core of genocidal mentality, the prohibition of demonization can be a crucial way to prevent genocide as well as Christian extremism. Korean Christianity can also overcome Christian extremism only when it avoids the overwhelming temptation of demonization.

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• **ABSTRACT** •

How to Overcome Christian Extremism: Christianity's Accomplice in Rwandan Genocide and Its Implication for Korean Christianity

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This article aims at how to overcome Christian extremism through the lessons from Rwandan genocide. The Most Christianized country in Africa killed at least 0.8 million people. In the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Christians killed their fellow Christians who had worshiped together. More than one tenth of the victims were killed in churches which should symbolize forgiveness and reconciliation, acceptance and fellowship. Three elements of the genocidal mentality are legitimation, the healing-killing paradox, and dehumanization. Rwandan Christianity legitimized genocide as a way of addressing Rwandan societal problems, dehumanized Tutzi as evil, which led to justification of the healing-killing paradox. Christian teachings that made Christians bystanders were negative view of reality based on pre-millennialist interpretations, the exclusive emphasis on other-worldly salvation, the preference of Rwandan Christianity for personal testimony, and the authoritarian teaching style of Rwandan churches. Christianity in general and Korean Christianity in particular can overcome Christian extremism only when it avoids the overwhelming temptation of demonization.

Key words: Christian Extremism, Genocide, Dehumanization, Healing-killing Paradox, Demonization
