

RWANDA: Can only change behavior, not parentage

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Seeing that Rwandan society was actually fairly unified, the colonists sought to divide and conquer by playing up the alleged differences between Hutus and Tutsis.

The Belgian colonists and the Roman Catholic church began bestowing power and favor on the Tutsis, awarding them administrative and political jobs and discriminating in favor of Tutsi schoolchildren in the Catholic schools.

Belgian scientists came to Rwanda and measured the craniums and noses of the people, confirming what they had believed already – that Tutsis, with their longer, narrower noses and more European look, were a more naturally aristocratic people, and therefore justified as rulers. At the Kigali Memorial Center an exhibit shows photographs of these measurements being taken.

These divisions continued to play out in Hutu-Tutsi struggles for power, including some massacres in which thousands of Tutsis were killed, and in Tutsi-led, neighboring Burundi, where thousands of Hutus were killed by the Tutsi military.

The Constant Need for Healing

Eleven years later and with this history in mind, Bishop Rwubusisi found it necessary to revisit the topic of noses at the tiny church in Bugarama.

Long and pointy or short and squashed, he asked his congregation. What does it matter?

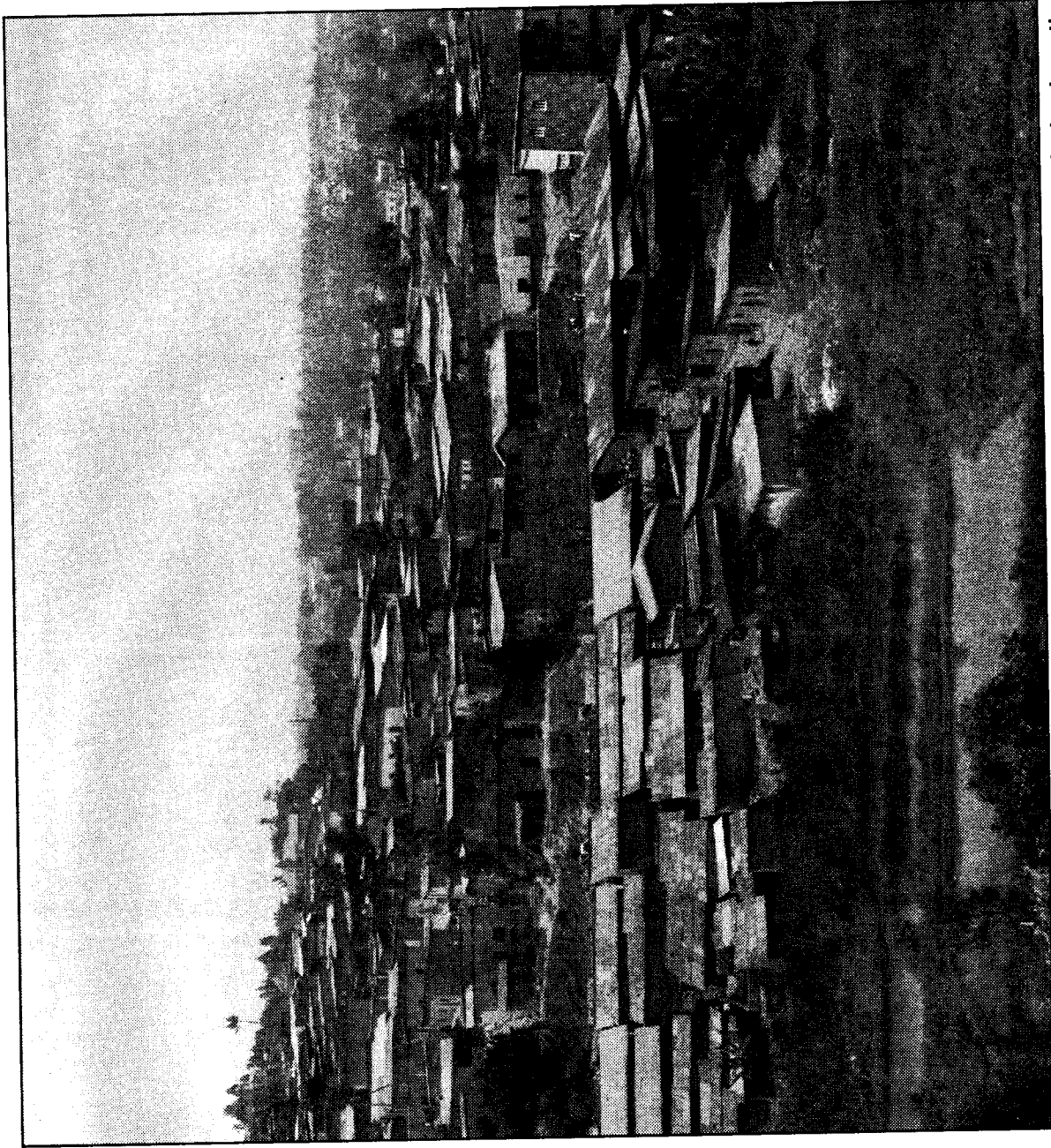
You can be a bad Hutu or a bad Tutsi – if you do bad things. You can't change your parentage or your height. You can only change your behavior.

He believes Rwandans still need to hear the message that a person's value comes from his or her behavior and relationship to God. They need, he said, to hear the message of the Gospel – of repentance and forgiveness.

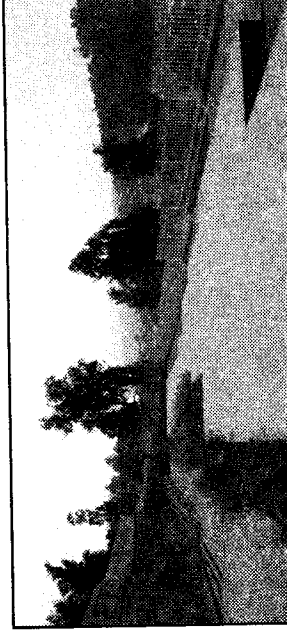
Rwubusisi and others want their congregations to see – rather than just hear – evidence of their leaders' love.

Having survived an era when many pastors betrayed their congregations by leading killers to them or turning into killers themselves, people are still suspicious.

"The church has to love people," said Rev. Sam Mugisha of Kigali. "The people are distrustful. They don't want to hear us preach; they want to see us act."



A view from the Kigali Memorial Center shows the city, which has been rebuilt extensively since the damage caused by the genocide.



I don't have any photos of my family. I couldn't find any souvenirs of my parents or of my brother and sisters. I like volleyball and films. These two things give me courage. I also like to