



Implementation of the Rwandan Law Governing Faith-Based Organisations: A Case Study of Pastoral Ministry in the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda

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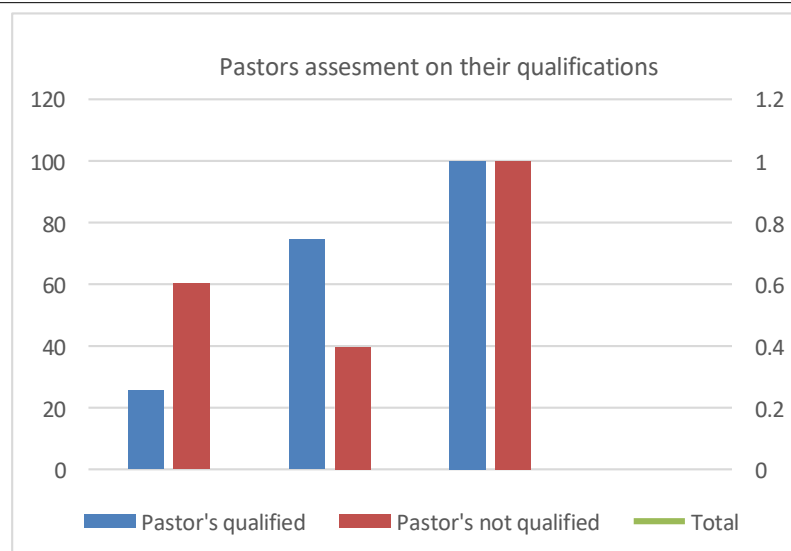
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HIGHLIGHTS

- The law governing Faith-Based organisations increased awareness of pastoral ministry perceptions and professionalism.
- Working for the common good between the state and churches has positive implications for Rwandan prosperous life and churches as well.
- Theological studies should be a key criterion for individuals who feel called to serve God and the Church.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



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ABSTRACT

In 2018, the government of Rwanda released a law governing faith-based organisations that requires all churches to comply with it.

This study, entitled *“Implementation of the Rwandan Law Governing Faith-Based Organisations: A Case Study of Pastoral Ministry in the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda”*, was guided by the following specific objectives: To critically evaluate how the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda is ready to comply with the mentioned law N°72/2018 of 31/08/2018 determining the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations in the Republic of Rwanda, to assess how this law will contribute to/or handicap the practice of pastoral ministry, and to draw a theological reflection of the practice of the aforementioned law.’ To reach the above objectives, the research question that guided the entire study was:

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How is the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda (FMCR) ensuring compliance with the law governing the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations in the Republic of Rwanda?

We used an exploratory study design with a qualitative approach, primarily using interviews with key informants. Additionally, the study incorporated desk research by collecting and analysing existing sources such as official documents, reports, academic publications, online databases, and other relevant literature. Qualitative analysis was used to assess and interpret the support and arguments related to this research.

The key findings indicate that the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda (FMCR) has made significant progress in complying with the referenced law, improving its compliance rate from 25.5% in 2019 to 60.3% in 2022.

With an annual increase of approximately 11.6% over this period, projections suggest that full compliance could be achieved within four years, assuming current strategies and methods continue to be applied effectively.

To support this progress, the FMCR should work to reduce the gap between legal requirements and actual practice. The study recommends encouraging serving pastors to pursue theological education and advises the FMCR leadership to develop a structured recruitment process which considers both spiritual calling and professional qualifications.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Pastoral Ministry in Rwanda has been viewed as a simple job that anyone can join at any time, regardless of their condition, by simply highlighting that they have a calling from God, which is unfortunately spiritual and therefore complex to evaluate using scientific tools. In the law governing faith-based organisations in Rwanda, the ministry is defined as ‘a group of people affiliated with an organisation that carries out development-oriented activities; this organisation is explained as a Faith-based organisation whose values are based on faith and/or beliefs’ (Rwanda Legal Information Institute, 2018, p. 48). In this study, Pastoral Ministry will be comprehended as the practice of pastoral activities in connection with the Church.

This study focuses on ‘Implementation of the Rwandan Law Governing Faith-Based Organisations: A Case Study of Pastoral Ministry in the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda’. It is organised with a background to the study, the summary of the law, its advantages and disadvantages, an analysis of pastoral ministry in the Free Methodist Church (FMCR) through the lens of the mentioned law, a theological reflection on the implementation of the mentioned law, and concludes by drawing some related recommendations.

The Free Methodist Church in Rwanda (FMCR), commonly referred to in Rwanda as ‘Eglise Methodiste Libre au Rwanda’ (EMLR), originates from the Methodist movement that began in Britain in the 18th century by Rev. John WESLEY (Heitzenrater, 2013, p.37). Since then, it has spread worldwide with numerous regional variations. The Free Methodist established its first church in Central- East Africa, in Burundi, in 1935, initiated by John Wesley Haley. To further its evangelisation in 1942, American missionaries Frank and his wife, Hazel Adamson, set up the first Free Methodist mission station at Kibogora, Nyamasheke District, in the Western Province of Rwanda (FMCR, 2014, p.14). The church attained its legal status in 1962 and

achieved full General Conference status in 1985 (Cox, 1990, p.49). Since then, the Church has experienced significant growth in membership, infrastructure, and spiritual matters, with a notable number of converts and various spiritual nurturing programmes such as conventions, Sunday school sessions for children, youth, and cell fellowships.

In 1994, Rwanda faced the most tragic moment of its history, it was ‘the genocide against the Tutsi that wiped away more than one million lives’ (Binagwaho, 2014, Rwanda Constitution, 2003, 2015, 2023); this also hurt the Pastoral ministry in the FMCR. The Church lost qualified ministers who were killed when either targeted by genocide perpetrators or took refuge in the furthest countries and never returned to Rwanda. To fill the gap after the genocide, a large number of ministers were picked out of the ordinary congregants without any further theological formation, and this could not fail to have negative consequences on the church leadership. Significant efforts were made to train a small number of ministers in theology at neighbouring theological colleges and now at Kibogora Polytechnic (KP), one of the Free Methodist higher learning institutions, but their numbers cannot respond to the current need countrywide.

Furthermore, in the FMCR, Ministers are called to lead the congregation, administer the sacraments, and minister to orphans, widows, and prisoners by providing an adequate message of hope. This is done in church buildings, where substantial efforts have been made to refurbish those that were destroyed during the genocide or to build new ones. Besides the main hall where services take place, most FMCR Church buildings feature small prayer rooms where members gather for prayers. Through sharing the word of God, praying, and singing, attendees continually seek prophecies about their future (these may not always be accurate, but occur occasionally) and solutions to their problems, such as healing for the ill and employment for the jobless. This belief is often associated with individuals moving from one prayer room to another, or even from one Church to another. This behaviour demonstrates an unquenchable thirst for the true gospel that offers peace and stability, which sometimes, they are not finding in current Church evangelism practices. Earley and Wheeler (2010, p.58) highlight: “We must be

aware of the spiritual hunger of the unbelievers and should care that they will starve to death without the living bread, Jesus. We need to share the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. We are obligated to share the good news so, spiritual beggars can find living bread.”

Considering this practice, it is perhaps a sign that most shepherds in protestant Churches in general and in the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda in particular lack skills and strategies for ministry. These shepherds, despite their high motivation to spread the gospel, are not equipped to teach the true gospel, run discipleship programs, trauma healing, and reconciliation, instead, they may aggravate raising the wall of indifference and conflicts rather than building bridges of reconciliation.

In regard to the general challenges that are happening in different protestant Churches, the Government of Rwanda has established Law no 06/2012 of 17/02/2012 (Government of Rwanda, n.d., p. 84) determining organisation and functioning of religious-based organisations; this law was revised by the current law N°72/2018 of 31/08/2018 determining the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations in Rwanda. This amalgams together Protestant Churches, Catholic Churches and Islam as the main faith-based organisations in Rwanda.

The law governing Faith-based organisations has been promulgated, and the problem today is to comply with this law as an imperative command from the government. This study wants to critically evaluate how the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda is ready to comply with the mentioned law, as many pastors were picked without any further theological formation, and how this law will contribute to/or handicap the practice of pastoral ministry. Furthermore, this study set out to draw a theological reflection on the implementation of the aforementioned law and to highlight some recommendations that could help the FMCR to sustain the pastoral ministry. Finally, this study will also serve as an alarm bell for the church to take adequate

measures to strengthen the pastoral ministry and encourage pastors in service to join the programs of theology offered at different theological institutions in the country. The time scope for this study was 2018-2022.

To achieve the above objectives, this study has been guided by the main research question: How is the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda (FMCR) ready to comply with the Law N°72/2018 of 31/08/2018 determining the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations in the Republic of Rwanda?

Methodology

The study is qualitative and falls under the discipline of practical theology. Swinton, John, and Mowat (2016, p. 25) argue that: ‘Practical theology seeks to understand and consider how theological theory and practices can be more fully aligned, changed, or improved. It is also an interpretative discipline that offers new and challenging insights into Christian tradition in light of fresh questions that emerge from particular situations.’ Research on Pastoral Ministry in the Free Methodist Church requires a qualitative methodology to deepen understanding, with the perception that the success of the study depends on its methodology. This study used interviews with 5 FMCR church leaders as key informants to obtain rich information. We also employed desk research by collecting and analysing existing sources such as documents, reports, academic publications, and online databases. The researchers also adopted an exploratory study design identified as ‘formulating a problem for a precise investigation, and does not aim at providing final and conclusive answers to the study questions but merely explores the study topic with varying levels of depth, and tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous studies have been conducted’ (Swinton, 2016, pp 1-128).

Data were analysed based on the research questions. Thus, given the subject of the study, the researchers focused on content examination, intending to understand the meaning from different documents. Important themes across data were set to ‘the explanation of a phenomenon and were linked to a specific research

question’(Joshva Raja, 2018). Data collected from a qualitative method was examined in pursuit of detailed information and to provide results or recommendations, often within a short period. Every piece of information was treated with high ethical consideration, confidentiality and secrecy.

Landscape of Protestant churches in Rwanda after the Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in 1994

According to the 2022 national census in Rwanda, approximately 44% of the population identified as members of all Protestant churches (Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (NISR), 2022). This figure reflects the significant presence of Protestant Christianity in Rwanda, encompassing various denominations. Protestant Churches established in Rwanda before 1994 are mostly known as traditional Churches because of being implemented by missionaries. These include mainly the ‘Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR) started in 1907, the Anglican Church in Rwanda (EAR) started in the 1920s the "Pentecostal Church in Rwanda (ADEPR) established in 1940, and the Free Methodist Church (FMCR) in 1942’ (Gatwa, T., Rutinduka, L. 2014). The leadership of the above Churches witnessed the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in 1994, which took place in some Church buildings or their compounds. Longman explains:

‘Organizers of the Genocide exploited the historic concept of sanctuary to lure tens of thousands of Tutsi into church buildings with false promises of protection; then Hutu militia and soldiers systematically slaughtered the unfortunate people who had sought refuge, firing guns and tossing grenades into the crowds gathered in church sanctuaries and school buildings, and methodically finishing off survivors with machetes, pruning hooks, and knives (Longman, 2010, pp. 4-5). Furthermore, in this critical context, as Manuel argues, “the Rwandan Churches, unbelievably, did not protest’ (Manuel, 2006, p.175).

After 1994, with the Rwanda Patriotic Front

(RPF) victory, many Rwandans returned from outside the country, most of whom were Christians, they started to find where they could adhere to exercising their calling to the ministry, but unfortunately, some of the existing church leadership did not give them quick space to integrate the ministry and to share Church leadership responsibilities. Owing to multiple reasons, these newcomers started different Churches commonly called ‘Independent Churches’; independent because they were not affiliated with any missionary Churches existing in Rwanda. The Government implicitly encouraged this kind of Church leadership as the existing ones were accused of playing a negative role during the genocide (Longman, 2001). Besides preaching the gospel, each new Church was running at least one project for supporting orphans and genocide survivors; this led the government to increase trust, as they were not accountable to any guilty of genocide, and therefore the government did not spend much time on the issue of Church leadership.

From 2014 to 2015, a team from the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS), now Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR), conducted a study to investigate how the concept of governance within protestant churches is understood and how its implementation is secured. The researchers assessed the degrees of its implementation and possible shortcomings. It was found that many conflicts are caused by non-compliance with established laws. Furthermore, there is a shortage of qualified theologians. Given this situation, and to prevent the division and proliferation of religious groups, which are sources of conflict, the study recommends that the RGB and the Church make theological training and ongoing training in the management of faith-based organisations a constant concern.

At the time when elevating the level of education of Rwandans, and creating the conditions of harmony and unity among Rwandan people, RGB was also requested to be concerned with the quick fixing of self-appointed leaders, theological illiterate “ministers”, even leaders of well-established churches who still live odd mentality of

refusing formal education to their pastors and members. Churches were encouraged to revisit the existing frameworks and collaborate in designing a chart of good practice for equipping church leaders on a national and local level through the organisations of formal training in favour of the clergy and laity who run or intend to start or run churches (PIASS, 2017).

Law Determining the Organisation and Functioning of Faith-based Organisations in Rwanda

The Churches, as faith-based organisations, are under the responsibility of the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) is a government organ which was established according to the law. Its mission is to regulate and monitor. The RGB was established according to the law, n°56/2016 of 16/12/2016. establishing RGB and determining its mission, organisation and functioning, the first mission of RGB is to regularly monitor the service delivery and compliance with the principles of good governance in the public and private sectors as well as in non-governmental organisations. RGB is also responsible for studying governance; preserving and protecting Home-Grown Solutions; and registering and monitoring civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and political organisations (Government of Rwanda, 2016, p. 9). In addition, concerned about good governance, and given different conflicts that happened in different churches and religions, the government of Rwanda established, through the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), the law N°72/2018 of 31/08/2018 determining the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations (Government of Rwanda, 2016, p. 39).

Purpose of the aforementioned law

This Law governs the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations which would operate in the Republic of Rwanda. With regards to the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 as revised in 2015 and 2023, especially in article 37,

which states 'Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the State in accordance with the law'. Furthermore, the second paragraph of the same article highlights: 'Propagation of ethnic, regional, racial discrimination or any other form of division is punished by law' (Rwanda Constitution, 2015: p. 50).

Discussion

Summary of the law

The stated law is made up of 10 chapters and comprises 50 articles. The first chapter traces the general provisions by presenting the purpose and definitions of some keywords. The second chapter focuses on the common provisions relating to the functioning of an organisation, an umbrella, a forum of an umbrella, and a Ministry; this includes the requirements for membership of an organisation, explains the activities allowed, and highlights the prohibitions in functioning, practices, and preaching. Chapter three relates to the application of legal personality and duties of an organisation, which includes the requirements for applying to the legal personality, requirements for being a legal representative, and the obligations of an organisation.

Chapter four focuses mainly on the preacher and the place of a sermon, and includes the requirements for being a preacher. Article 22 under item 7, states: 'A preacher must possess a degree from a higher learning institution in religious studies or any other degree with a valid certificate in religious studies-related matters delivered by a recognised institution' (Government of Rwanda, 2018, p. 63).

Chapters five and six emphasise the application for legal personality, the responsibilities of an umbrella and a forum of umbrellas, the contents of the statutes, and the application for a legal personality of a ministry and its obligations. Chapter Seven highlights the responsibilities and administrative sanctions imposed on organisations. Under this section, article 36 states: "the preacher is liable for the faults committed by his or her subordinate in the fulfilment of his or her duties. This comes into force when the preacher knew or had reason to know that the fault

was going to be committed and did nothing to prevent it, or the preacher has known the fault after its commission but did nothing to punish it"(Government of Rwanda, 2018, p.76). Chapter eight emphasizes conflict settlement, chapter nine is about the dissolution of the organisation, umbrella, forum of umbrellas or ministry, and the last chapter stresses miscellaneous, transitional, and final provisions of the mentioned law.

In this study, we do not intend to make a complete exploration of the law, but we will mainly focus on chapter four, which focuses on the requirements for being a preacher.

Advantages of the introduced law

The law has advantages in regulating church organisation, thereby reducing conflicts over leadership and establishing a process for dismissing those who cannot manage church affairs effectively. It also promotes theological education for pastors, many of whom were previously appointed without formal training, leading to various challenges. A specific chapter of this law, which focuses on the training of church leaders, has significantly influenced theological education in Rwanda. Consequently, three new theological institutions—East African Christian College, African College of Theology, and Kibogora Polytechnic—have been accredited by the Higher Education Council. These institutions complement the existing Protestant Theology faculty at the Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR). Since 2020, the number of theology students has increased nearly tenfold. Moreover, by implementing this law, the government has the advantage of keeping an eye on the Church's activities by providing mechanisms that help avert any intruder who may disturb the peace and unity of Rwandans through teachings and preaching.

Pitfalls of the law

Although the law provides significant advantages to Church organisations, it does have some drawbacks. This law remains silent on the term limits for Church leaders, which has been the root cause of

many Church conflicts. Some independent Churches emphasise their vision by starting new congregations, and therefore cannot adhere to any form of term limit. The second point concerns the absence of restrictions on the employment of close relatives; to promote transparency in recruitment, the employment of family members should be disclosed and discouraged. It is worth noting that it is common for some independent Churches to refer to the bishop, pastor, or apostle as "dad" and his wife as "mum"; one plays the role of legal representative, while the spouse often assumes the position of deputy or treasurer of the organisation. This has tarnished the image of the Church, and such practices can be associated with those of any profit-oriented organisation. The final pitfall relates to pastors who do not meet the requirements outlined by the law; there is no provision indicating whether the law will be retroactive or will take effect from the date of its implementation.

The Free Methodist Church in Rwanda through the lens of the mentioned law

With regards to chapter four, which constitutes the backbone of this study, article 22 states the requirements for being a preacher (Government of Rwanda, 2018, pp.62-63):

- 1° be of majority age;
- 2° be a person of integrity;
- 3° fulfils the requirements of an organisation for being a preacher at that level;
- 4° possess a statement testifying that an organisation authorises him/her to be a preacher;
- 5° not have been definitively sentenced to a principal penalty of imprisonment equal to or exceeding six (6) months, which was never removed by amnesty or rehabilitation;
- 6° not have been definitively convicted of the crime of genocide, genocide ideology, discrimination, or sectarianism;
- 7° possess a degree from a higher learning institution in religious studies or any other degree with a valid certificate in religious studies-related matters delivered by a recognised institution. The requirement provided under item seven (7°) of Paragraph One of this

article concerns preachers at the levels of the organisation having other levels under their supervision. The Board may issue regulations determining additional requirements for being a preacher.

Results

Considering that the FMCR is one of the faith-based organisations operating in Rwanda, it has to comply mandatorily with the mentioned law. This study intends to establish a connection between the mentioned law, how it is perceived and interpreted, and to what extent it is being implemented, and conclusively draw the related recommendations. In addition to this, we have to note that the law does not employ the terminology of a pastor; instead, it uses the term 'a preacher', which includes pastors and evangelists.

A survey conducted by the Free Methodist Church leadership in 2019, after the promulgation of the mentioned law in the official gazette of the Republic of Rwanda, shows that the FMCR had 337 pastors (Candidates included). Among them, only 86 pastors representing 25.5 % possessed a bachelor's degree in theology or a degree in another domain with a valid certificate in theology (FMCR, 2019). This has had a positive impact on awakening the Church to its mission of training ministers, and recently, this survey was one of the documents that convinced without any doubt the Government, through the Higher Education Council (HEC), to grant the legal personality to the faculty of Theology at Kibogora Polytechnic.

Moreover, article 47 of this law clearly specifies the time frame for enforcing the law: "To conform statutes of an organisation, umbrella, forum of umbrellas, or ministry to this Law, persons required to hold an academic degree, are given five (5) years to comply with this Law starting from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda" (Government of Rwanda, 2018, p.83).

Based on the report of the Bishop at the FMCR

General Conference on 15 July 2022, the FMCR has 350 pastors, among them, 320 are in service, and 30 are in retirement. In view of pastors who are in service, only 97 pastors or evangelists, representing 30.3 %, possess a bachelor's or above degree in theology or a degree in another domain with a valid certificate in theology. Furthermore, 96 pastors or evangelists representing 30 % are undertaking theological studies with the assumption that all will graduate before the enforcement of the mentioned law and join the ministry by being pastors or evangelists. Thus, the FMCR will be at 60.3% in complying with the law. The question remains of what strategies are undertaken to comply fully with the mentioned law and to run successfully all parishes under the FMCR administration. We have to note that the same report has shown that the FMCR has 645 local Churches where they must hear the word of God through the preacher (Pastor or evangelist).

Based on the above information, and with regards to a great step made so far by the FMCR from 25.5 % (in 2019) to the assumption of 60.3 % (in 2022), to comply fully with the mentioned law within one year from now remains a challenge. From the increase of 11.6 % per year (2019-2022), and by projection in using the same methods and strategies, this will take at least four years to comply fully with the mentioned law. Consequently, the FMCR has to do its best to reduce the gap between the law and its execution by following some recommendations highlighted at the end of this paper. It is within the interest of the researchers to firmly establish a connection between the mentioned law and to reflect theologically on its implementation.

Theological Reflection on the mentioned Law

In this study, we aim to bring a theological reflection on the law governing faith-based organisations and their significance for the Church, acknowledging that the Rwandan government has established this law and how the Church is called to implement it.

According to Thompson: 'Theological reflection is a disciplined activity, undertaken methodically and rigorously by ministers, lay people, or practitioners of any

faith who seek consciously and deliberately to integrate belief and practice. This activity relates insight and resources from a theological tradition, specifically and carefully, to contemporary situations and vice versa, so that a mutually enlightening reappraisal may result. Pointers are sought to action, which leads to a response, which is more authentically true to the faith tradition on which it is based (Thompson, 2008. p. 8

With regard to different literature and church history, someone could ask why the government could govern Churches and religious institutions. Although we do not intend to give a systematic and comprehensive treatment of the question, rather we want to offer some reflections on the mentioned law and draw some critical points that have characterised the relation between church and state.

Throughout the Church's history, the states have been engaged hand in hand with the Church or were in opposition to some extent. We will therefore situate the mentioned law vis - a - vis to these approaches, and find out how the FMCR will engage to tease out the ramifications of the complex system of Church ministry.

Ferguson highlights: 'The beginning and end of the story of Jesus relate to the political context in which the Christian movement began. The star followed by the Magi to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-12) had religio-political connotations. Many words in early Christian vocabulary could be read with political overtones. The term 'church', *ekklesia*, was a political term in secular Greek that meant the citizens of a Greek city (Acts 19:39), over against which Christians defined their own community (1 Thess 1.1). Furthermore, the charge against Jesus for which he was crucified was political. The whole passion narrative of Jesus is highly charged with political overtones, climaxed with the inscription on the cross, 'King of the Jews' (Ferguson 2003, p. 47). In the early Church, the emperor Constantine played the main role in spreading Christianity by recognizing its practice,

financially supporting the Church's activities, and allowing for freedom of worship in the empire.

On the contrary, there was a time when Christians lived in clear opposition to the State; consequently, they faced the atrocity of persecution. Although there are different views on the real motif and the extent of persecution and martyrdom in the first century, Hare recognizes that: 'When hostility exceeded the bounds of moderation, Christians were liable to physical violence at the hands of a mob. In some few instances, death may have resulted, as in the case of Stephen, but apart from the chaotic period of the two wars with Rome, it is unlikely that many Christians suffered martyrdom at Jewish hands' (Hare 2005, p.167).

The Church, through its development for a certain time, has taken distance from the State, while they have an intersection that binds them. Barth (1981:444) highlights that: 'the Church could never be a mouthpiece for the State, and would undermine the independence and critical stance of the Church in relation to the State'. Jüngel (2014:45-46), from a doctrinal point of view, sees the Church and State as two opposing forces which will never be able to speak from the same side'. Hood (1984:168) asserts the same conclusion but different: 'Church and State can operate in God's Kingdom on earth, given that the State recognises that its authority is not self-driven, but a God-given gift. If this is true, then the State should be subject to God and therefore accept the voice of the Church as a testimony of what God is revealing'. Moreover, Jüngel describes the different relational approaches of Church and State well when he suggests: 'The Church has the spiritual task of proclaiming the sin-forgiving justice of God and therefore to forgive the sinner in the name of God, and to urge one to a sinless life. The state, however, has to work in worldly ways against sin in its worldly forms, and that means: within the context of threat and, if necessary, also within the context of the use of force'. (Jüngel 2014:50).

Given the different analyses on the relationship of Church and state or politics, and within this, more

complex, differentiated setting, Fergusson has to advise between this tension that: 'discernment will be required on when to offer support for change, contest existing practice, engage in dialogue, and form alliances. In different ways, the Church will find itself functioning as both lubricant and irritant within the systems of its host society' (Fergusson, 2004, p.192). The Church that stands on this ground should learn how to translate religious insights into a language accessible to a wider constituency for effective social engagement.

Furthermore, Jackson highlights that: 'to mix the Church and state is to put the Church in a compromising position. For, we can easily get caught up in political agendas and power plays that have no part in the calling of the Church and can lead us to betray our first loyalty to Christ. On the other hand, to lose a link, or even absenting ourselves from the political process, means we may miss the chance to have a voice on free expression decisions that would serve the common good' (Jackson, 2015, pp. 148-149).

With reference to the texts mentioned above, the State may wish to some extent to influence the church, which can consequently lead to secularism. Secularism is understood as the process of transferring lands and possessions from ecclesiastical to civil control (Livingston, 1989, p.342). It is a belief system advocating that religion should not interfere in the affairs of the state or public education. The modern world has significantly shaped religion and has prompted many changes in belief systems, leading to the distortion of some fundamental beliefs and thereby resulting in secularisation.

On the contrary, as Bradley emphasizes: 'some denominations have focused on bridging the widening gap between Church and culture in part by adjusting doctrine and practice to better suit prevailing attitudes in society. Others, largely from fundamentalist and holiness backgrounds, have been tempted to retreat within the Church, as they await the Lord's return and subsequent removal of the saints from this world of

sin' (Bradley, 2015, p.12). Without presenting much literature on theological reflection in general, it is imperative to relate these theories to the Rwandan context.

In the Rwandan context, evangelization began in the early 1900s while the country was already under German colonial rule. German Lutherans began work in 1908 but were expelled during the First World War, after which Rwanda became a Belgian mandate of the League of Nations. Resulting of Germany's defeat in World War I, the League of Nations presented Belgium with an instruction to administer what was known as Rwanda-Urundi. In this regard, Manuel highlights: 'The White Fathers (Pères Blancs) missionaries settled in the country and recruited adherents. However, they faced resistance from King Musinga, who saw Christianity as a threat to traditional beliefs and national unity. At the urging of Bishop Léon Class, the Belgian colonial administration deposed Musinga and enthroned his son, Mutara III, who soon converted to Catholicism. After the king's baptism, Rwanda was consecrated to Christ the King and became a virtual Christian kingdom (Manuel, 2006, p.174).

Catholic missionaries fractured Rwandan civil society by the omission of native religious and cultural traditions and by imposing on people to renounce their secular beliefs. Specifically, by either hosting a dualistic worldview in which people were "saved" or "damned," the missionaries created significant cleavages in Rwandan civil society as Manuel highlights: 'New converts were separated from their unconverted family members, thereby abolishing the role of their ancestors, who traditionally served as intergenerational "glue," that is, as mediators between the living and the dead. Thus, the Judeo-Christian bipolar vision was divided between the Christians and the pagans. The newly baptized congregants became a distinctive social group having little in common with the non-converts. The social typology distinguishing Christians from non-Christians was realized by relocating new converts away from the nonbaptized and introducing new symbols and rites such as the wearing of rosaries or religious medallions' (Manuel, 2006, p.175).

The Church's collusion with political power proved to be another evil in its mission of evangelization in Rwanda. Since the establishment of the church, in Rwanda, its leaders could not resist involvement with morally questionable political leaders. This continued until the end of the Second Republic in 1994. Throughout the colonial time, as Rutayisire and Muzungu argue, 'The Catholic Church was a component of the State, its right hand. In this system of 'comanagement accomplice,' the Church mixed with political power and could not disown it, since it drew its subsistence from it' (Rutayisire, 1995: 70). Furthermore, Manuel argues: 'On the one hand, the colonial administration relied on the Churches; Catholics and Protestants provide costly public services such as education, health care, and social work. On the other hand, in return for this support, the colonial administration gave missionaries free access to the population and exempted them from taxes, thus strengthening church-state ties' (Manuel, 2006, p.178). In concluding this section of theological reflection on the implementation of the mentioned law, it has been observed that throughout Church history, the state and Church exist side by side, either by working hand in hand for the common good, or the state or politics tending to silence the church to raise its prophetic voice. The attitude of some Church leaders was and is always inclined to one of those tendencies, of being tracked by politics or being in opposition and therefore facing persecution.

In light of the broader pursuit of the common good, the Church, while rooted in divine authority and situated within the context of the state, must actively engage in seeking common ground that fosters mutual benefit for both Christians and non-Christians and promotes constructive collaboration between Church and state.

Moreover, Hollenbach said that: 'the desire to find common moral ground between Christians and non-Christians is theologically warranted by the belief that one God has created the whole of humanity and

that all human beings share a common origin and destiny. Since reason is one of the Creator's greatest gifts to human beings, the use of reason to discover the human good and the consequent norms of social morality is fully compatible with the Christian biblical faith' (Hollenbach: 2002, p.149).

It is within this framework that the law governing faith-based organisations in Rwanda finds its state of being. Yes, we are the people, we are the 'good company' that the world needs now and always, and we must act together and work for the common good. Audi has to add that: 'in the governmental regulatory activities of any sound democracy, the state must justify restrictions of liberty, especially of thought, expression, and free association in cooperative enterprises' (Audi, 2011, p.60).

Based on the above considerations, the FMCR and other Churches need to support and complement the State in its activities, but do not necessarily always agree with it. Wherever the government provides good programs, the Church needs to show strong support but stay open to the idea of being a prophetic voice when governmental policies go against their core beliefs and the true gospel. The Church's mission is to remind the State of this and to assess critically whether the State is working out its power under what the Church believes to be God's word. The aforementioned law falls within the framework of maintaining the public order, and the FMCR has therefore the obligation for its implementation, as in it, there is nothing against the truth of the word of God. It is nevertheless imperative for the Church to be cautious in the way of saying 'No' at any cost when some laws go against the core purpose of its mission. We have to notice that before the publication of the mentioned law, the government gave the draft to legal representatives of Churches for their input, and then the final document was published accordingly.

It nevertheless turns out that the Rwandan Churches, in general, and the FMCR, in particular, should feel ashamed that they needed a government reminder about the importance of having qualified pastors and preachers for their mission. In every aspect of life, the right person

must be in the right place. No one becomes a carpenter, nurse, driver, teacher, or builder without proper training in their field. Imagine someone with no medical knowledge attempting to treat a patient; despite their good intentions, they could cause serious harm by administering the wrong medication.

Similarly, the Church must ensure that those guiding others in leadership and preaching are truly equipped for the task.

Regarding the law governing faith-based organisations in Rwanda, the Church should plan the training and formation of ministers. This should be done not only for complying with the government law as an imperative command but should take the lead by being proactive; otherwise, it seems to open a breach where the State should always think that it has the right to trace the way of leading the Church anyway.

Conclusion and recommendations

Given the mentioned law governing faith-based organizations in Rwanda, and its imperative obligation to comply with it by equipping pastors (preachers) with a required qualification in theology to exercise fully the ministry; with regards to the steps made so far of 60.3 % of the FMCR to comply with the mentioned law; considering the consequences that may result from not complying fully with the law, and based on the lack of adequate strategies in place to fill the gap as mentioned by this study; we would highlight the following recommendations:

- Encourage pastors in service who meet requirements to join theological studies.
- People who have other degrees and callings have to join the ministry by passing through training in theology;
- To support pastors in service to be well-treated and paid according to their full-time work, and consequently discourage those who are double employed by the church and by other government or private institutions;
- To set a good structure of recruitment with suitable conditions, including calling and professionalism;

Adapting the structure of parishes to the availability of qualified pastors/preachers and appointing pastors who are not qualified according to the law as assistants who will be under the leadership of the trained ones;

To set a training plan at all levels of the Church.

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