

# *The God of All Hope*

A novel based upon true events



Dr. Chris Alan Foreman

## **Dedication**

One thousand hills.

One hundred days.

One million graves.

This book is dedicated to my many friends in Rwanda who survived  
an unspeakable horror with an unquenchable spirit.

## **Author's Note:**

This is a work of historical fiction set in the context of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath. While most characters are fictional, several are historical and anchor the narrative into its time and place.

Paul Kagame was the general of the Rwanda Patriotic Front and later president of the Republic of Rwanda.

Juvenal Habyarimana was the president of Rwanda whose assassination sparked the genocide.

Theodore Sindikubwabo was the interim president of Rwanda during the one hundred days of killing.

Theoneste Bagosora was head of the Interahamwe militia, the chief organizer of the ethnic slaughter.

Simon Bikindi was a popular singer and songwriter who was later convicted of war crimes.

Athanase Seromba was a Catholic priest who participated in the killing of his own parishioners.

Zura Karuhimbi was an elderly Hutu who posed as a witch to frighten militiamen and shelter refugees.

Other historical figures are mentioned in passing. Similarities between fictional and actual persons are coincidental.



## **PART ONE: The Unspeakable Horror**

### **Chapters**

#### **1. Evil Unloosed** (April 1994)

In a Uganda refugee camp, 20-year-old Victor Kwizera learns that the aircraft of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana has crashed in Kigali. As a mobilizer of volunteers for the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Victor recruits seven men to cross into his native Rwanda. Along the route, his group listens to motivational appeals by his commander, Major Bidogo,, and by General Paul Kagame. As they march, Victor tells stories of his childhood in the refugee camp. The mobilizers are welcomed into their homeland by a troupe of traditional dancers. Immediately they stumble across twenty half-buried corpses. Welcome to Rwanda!

#### **2. Love and its Opposites** (April 1994)

Victor and his comrades attempt to fathom the horror they are witnessing. What is the history of this genocide? How could his Christian neighbors transform into mass killers? What are the opposites of love: hate, fear, indifference, pride? Sato – one of the eight – becomes Victor's best friend. He is a Hutu scholar who was studying at the Catholic University in Belgium. His righteous parents were butchered in 1993 for opposing the racist regime. Sato has come home to liberate his homeland. The mobilizers survive a militia attack and interrogate a Interahamwe captive, questioning his murderous motives. Genocide leader Theoneste Bagosora delivers an incendiary speech over Thousand-Hills Radio.

#### **3. Spiritual Wickedness in High Places** (May 1994)

The eight mobilizers follow combat troops down the Tanzania frontier. Sato separates from them to visit his hometown of Murambi. He runs across Zura Karuhimbi in the Akagera forest. At first, he is repelled by her witchcraft, but then assists in her scheme to protect refugees. The shaman tells him a local Catholic priest, Athanase Seromba, has participated in the bulldozing of his own church, killing hundreds of parishioners. Sato confronts his former mentor. Refusing to collaborate with wicked clergy, Sato is martyred protecting the innocent.

#### **4. An Eye of Darkness** (May 1994)

In the university town of Butare, interim president Sindikubwabo arrives to enforce the destruction of Tutsi people. College professors and students are massacred. The pop music of Simon Bikindi urges local gangs to kill the "snakes". The president, who is also a physician, provides instruction on murder techniques. Pascazia (museum manager) flees to Burundi with her child. Francis (her professor husband) is martyred with his full classroom of performing artists. Pastor Daniel, an Anglican priest, secretly shelters desperate Tutsis.

### **5. Road to Perdition** (June 1994)

Simon Bikindi leads a caravan of killers beginning in Kigali and continuing through the province of Gisenyi. Using a loud speaker, he urges Interahamwe militia to seek and kill all Tutsis. Near the town of Kayove, a fractured family of five strive to survive the ethnic slaughter. 16-year-old Clementine hides in a sorghum field; 13-year-old Jean-Luk lurks in a ceiling space; baby Annette is hacked, cast upon a pile of corpses, yet survives the ordeal; the mother poses as a demented Hutu; and the father is macheted to death near a road block. A local youth, Gilbert, delivers the killing blow.

### **6. Anchor of the Soul** (July 1994)

Major Bidogo leaves Butare with his RPF battalion in pursuit of the genocidaire. He is halted by UN troops at the “Zone Turquoise” – an area of French occupation. After finally entering the province of Gikongoro, the major disburses a gang of Interahamwe to save the life of Pastor Eric and his two small sons. The pastor tells his harrowing story of hope; surviving in the bush, hiding his boys, but losing his wife.

### **7. Desolation on One Thousand Hills** (August 1994 to May 1998)

The devastation throughout Kigali and Rwanda is outlined as characters re-settle one-by-one in the city of Butare. Pastor Eric launches a Pentecostal church where Victor comes to faith in Christ. He and Clementine matriculate at the National University. Jean-Luk (who is now blind) accompanies his sister. Major Bidogo heads the local army barracks appointing Victor to a military post. Pastor Daniel is ostracized by his bishop for speaking out during the genocide. He hires Gilbert as his watchman. Pascazia (age 42) has ambitiously earned a law degree and is now chief of acquisitions at the National Museum raising alone her only child, Ruth (now age 5).

## **PART TWO: The Unquenchable Spirit**

### **8. Such Delightful People** (June 1998 to June 2002)

Joy Lee Taylor (age 46) is a professor of Education at San Jose State University. Her husband, Ken (age 48) teaches at a community college. As a historian, Ken has named his son *Jefferson* (age 24) and his daughter *Madison* (age 22). Joy reads in her Korean newspaper that Pastor Il-Sung Pak will be sponsoring a trip to Rwanda on a mission of mercy.

Joy joins the evangelical team, taking along her reluctant husband. Because they are both professors, Missionary Pak assigns them to Butare. They meet Victor, Eric, Daniel, and Pascazia. The entire mission team finds the Rwandans “such delightful people”. How could they possibly be killers? It is unimaginable. The couple raise funds and eagerly return to Rwanda in the summer of 1999; again in 2000 with Jeff; and in 2001 with Madison. They establish their own non-profit called “Mission Mates” and rent a house. Immaculate is hired as the full-time hostess and Victor becomes Bible Teacher.

## **9. The One Shall be Taken** (July and August 2002)

Ken's younger brother, Aaron, is a seminary professor in Oregon. He accompanies Ken and Joy to Rwanda in the summer of 2002. Out of their rented ministry house, the three apologists lead a conference called "Joseph in Africa". Victor, Eric, and Daniel, act as interpreters and agree to serve on a local board called "Mission Mates Rwanda".

After Aaron returns to Oregon, Joy spends her final day in town shopping for gifts to provide to donors. While seated on the back of a motorbike-taxi, the vehicle veers headlong into a minibus. The driver survives, but Joy suffers major head trauma. She lingers only three days. Ken is devastated. Madison arrives to be at her mom's side a day before she dies. Jeff arrives a day later. A funeral is held in Kigali and a second in San Jose. Ken is filled with unforgiveness toward the motorcyclist and doubts God's goodness. Pastor Eric urges him to "forgive like a Rwandan."

## **10. The Joy of God** (September 2002 to July 2008)

For a year, Ken is filled with sorrow. Aaron agrees to head up Mission Mates taking on the role of his brother. He goes alone to Butare in the summer of 2003, reinvigorates the ministry, and builds a memorial for Joy. Ken learns that his late wife had heavily invested in tech stock and she has surprisingly left him a portfolio worth \$3 million.

Aaron encourages Ken to return to Butare to establish and underwrite the "Joy of God" Bible Institute. In 2004, the brothers teach about theodicy: "the vindication of God's justice in the face of human suffering". In 2005, they teach the "I am" sayings from the Gospel of John. In 2006, they lead a dating and marriage seminar. Pascazia provides the female perspective. A three-story structure is finally dedicated near the university. Janet replaces Immaculate as hostess and Victor builds a team of four Bible School teachers. Ken decides to become a full-time missionary and relocates to an apartment on the grounds of the institute. He volunteers to photograph historical items at the National Museum, becoming close friends with Pascazia.

## **11. Verdict in Arusha** (August to December 2008)

Simon Bikindi is being held in a UN Prison in Arusha, Tanzania. Finally, he stands before the tribunal. As a government lawyer, Pascazia speaks with Clementine – now the wife of Victor. Would she be willing to accompany her to Kayove to identify townsfolk who were present when Bikindi committed war crimes? Clementine and her brother make a traumatic visit to her hometown. Her mother dies suddenly. She and Victor adopt Annette, now 13 years old. Pascazia provides notarized statements to the prosecution concerning Bikindi's conduct in June, 1994. She attends the UN tribunal as the verdict is read: guilty of war crimes, 15 years in prison.

## **12. Not Good to Live Alone** (January to July 2009)

When Pascazia returns to Butare, she discusses the verdict of Bikindi with Ken. He quotes Andrew Fletcher, “Give me the maker of a nation’s songs, and I care not who makes its laws.” Widow and widower grow closer. The couple talk of marriage, money, and cultural differences. Is re-marriage a betrayal of the first spouse? Ruth is now 20 years old, living in Belgium, and opposes her mother’s re-marriage. Jefferson, Madison, Aaron and his wife attend the wedding of Ken and Pascazia in Butare as well as the gala reception at the national museum. All the Rwandan friends are on hand to celebrate.

## **13. The Battle Line Within the Heart** (August 2009 to July 2012)

While teaching New Testament at his seminary, Aaron speaks with the music professor. Dr. Craig MacDill tells Aaron that his son, Patrick, is a doctoral student specializing in ethnomusicology. Patrick seeks to go on a mission trip to research African music. He shows a special interest in Simon Bikindi.

Patrick hires Victor as his interpreter and guide. Patrick digs deep into Bikindi’s past, tape-recording dozens of diverse voices. With the help of a U.S. congresswoman, he manages to gain entrance to Arusha prison. He and Victor conduct six interviews with Bikindi. Patrick grows fond of the beguiling prisoner considering him incapable of outright genocide. He often quarrels with Victor concerning the culpability of the songwriter. “The battle line between good and evil runs through the heart of every man”, Patrick quotes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Back in Butare, Patrick, Victor, Ken, Pascazia, and Aaron discuss the legality, morality, and theology of the Bikindi conviction. Patrick returns to America to publish his dissertation.

## **14. Love at its Testing Point** (August to December 2012)

Clementine and Jean-Luk attend a gathering at the home of Pastor Daniel. Gilbert the watchman makes an off-hand comment about an obscure location in Kayove. Suddenly Jean-Luk recognizes Gilbert as one of the Interahamwe who killed his father. Gilbert flees but returns the next day to confess his crime to Daniel. He stands before a gacaca court and admits to the murder. He agrees to show the two where their father is buried. Forgiveness is love at the testing point and Clementine forgives Gilbert of his trespass against her. Forgiveness proves more difficult for Jean-Luk and Annette.

Ken and Pascazia decide to settle in California. They spend a final night in Butare talking with friends about old times. What is this crazy country of Rwanda? If justice is not possible, is reconciliation? Ken passes down his broad-rimmed fedora to Victor, honoring him as successor to the ministry. Departing aboard a flight from the Kigali airport, the couple look down over the land of one-thousand hills, one-hundred days, and one-million graves. If two people as different as Ken and Pascazia could join together in hope and healing, could not this troubled nation do the same?