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STORIES FROM RWANDAN CHURCHES PRIOR TO THE GENOCIDE:
A COLLECTION OF ORAL HISTORIES

by

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A THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty of The University of Alabama at Birmingham
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2019

STORIES FROM RWANDAN CHURCHES PRIOR TO THE GENOCIDE:
A COLLECTION OF ORAL HISTORIES

CARMEN A. LAU

ANTHROPOLOGY PEACE & HUMAN RTS

ABSTRACT

As a tragedy in which religion did not serve as demarcation between rival groups, the Rwandan Genocide provides an example of Christians killing Christians. I use interviews from 14 Rwandan survivors who were Seventh-day Adventists, a Protestant group to which both heroes and villains belonged. Based on Eisler's Theory of Cultural Transformation, I assume that narratives inform action. I examine oral histories through a framework that searches for elements of Girard's Mimetic Rivalry that might have influenced Adventists to participate in violence. In addition, using recollections of verbal discourse heard by participants, I identify words or concepts that could demonstrate relevant components from Graham and Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), and I note biblical references that were used to justify action. The stories show evidence that the Adventist church imitated the actions of the Rwandan government and broader society and coalesced into scapegoating based on ethnicity. In addition, the stories show the presence of MFT intuitions that support group cohesion: loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation. For the Adventists I interviewed, group cohesion did not come from religious affiliation, but from the political imprint of ethnicity.

Keywords: Rwandan Genocide, Seventh-day Adventist, Stories, Mimetic Rivalry, Moral Foundations Theory, Cultural Transformation

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to all who challenge labels given,
and stories told, by powerful people.

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STORIES FROM RWANDAN CHURCHES PRIOR TO THE GENOCIDE: A COLLECTION OF ORAL HISTORIES

INTRODUCTION

Rwanda, viewed as a trophy of the African “mission field” by many in Western Christianity, shocked many onlookers in the period during and after the genocide as it became obvious that Christians had killed Christians. Some estimate that most Rwandan Genocide victims were killed in churches, an assertion that stimulated my interest in this project. The Rwandan Genocide differs from other genocides, because religion did not serve as a demarcation to target victims as “other.” Most people in Rwanda identified as Christian, and the religious affiliation did not coincide with ethnic identity. By 1994, over 90% of Rwandans identified as Christian (Des Forges, 1999). At the time of the Rwandan Genocide 62% of the country identified as Catholic. Protestants made up 18% of the population, and Seventh-day Adventists were 8.6% of the population (Safari, 2010).

The purpose of this paper is to examine stories that might have influenced Seventh-day Adventists’ actions to decide to align with authoritarian forces in Rwanda and become enmeshed in ethnic violence, or not. This paper looks at a collection of stories that I gathered from people who attended Seventh-day Adventist, hereafter called Adventist, churches in Rwanda in the time before and during the genocide. The purpose is not to establish detailed historical accounts, but to record some memories that may reflect guiding narratives in place at the time of genocide and to document the varied

realities people experienced, looking for threads that could reveal how narratives might have influenced choices.

This study reports narratives, many from scripture, that could be seen as serving as guiding frameworks to move society away from partnership. The narratives could also be viewed as crafted rationales, for moral intuitions, or the stories could demonstrate entrenched narratives that nurtured *Mimetic Rivalry*. It highlights varied realities that people experienced and looks for threads that could reveal how narratives might have influenced choices, or how narratives provided the framework, that justified actions. Stories can give insight into two categories of Rwandan life. First in a larger context, stories reveal the stance of the church as an institution in relationship to hegemonic entities. Second in a micro sociological context, stories give some insight into the rationale for actions as stated by individuals and small groups

Reflecting on genocide shows a glimpse of what happened at a given time and can allow one to gain insight into one's self and one's context. Such reflection can be an important step in nurturing structural and sociative peace. Verbeek and Peters (2018) define peace as:

Behavioral processes and systems through which species, individuals, families, groups, and communities negate direct and structural violence, keep aggression in check or restore tolerance in its aftermath, maintain just institutions and equity, and engage in reciprocally beneficial and harmonious interactions.

In Rwanda, churches had the opportunity to impact society in the context of structural peace by the validation or negation of educational or power inequities, and churches had potential to function as forces in civil society in the context of sociative peace by providing space for community and fertile soil for the development of personal peace. Stories told in churches can be viewed in a large context of meta-narrative; that is to say stories reflect

how churches relate in civil society as political entities or advocates for justice. In addition, one can examine these stories in a smaller context of interpersonal interaction.

Approaching the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, fewer survivors are available to document their experiences. Memories may have been suppressed or reconfigured. Yet, such documentation can be important to people worldwide, particularly in an American context. Many Americans claim that America is a Christian nation. Despite the accuracy of such an assertion, the story of Rwanda can be instructive to those who identify as Christian, as it highlights blind spots that come when Christianity allies with political entities and fails to create an identity that honors the rights of all humanity.

Starting in 1904, with the German directed extermination of the Herero people in the region that is now Namibia in Southwest Africa, one can use varied metrics to calculate the scope of orchestrated killing by supposedly civilized states in the last 100 years. In Rwanda, perpetrators killed “hill by hill” and “home by home.” For this paper, I will call the genocide that occurred between April 7, 1994 to July 4, 1994 “Rwandan Genocide,” though massive violence occurred on a smaller scale in Rwanda in the years immediately before and after that period.

The Rwandan Genocide was the fastest, most efficient genocide in the twentieth century (Powers, 2003). Factors contributing to the Rwandan Genocide can be viewed from a top down approach which would include political maneuvers within the country, international decisions about how colonialism should end in Africa, the *Hamitic Myth* (which asserted the superiority of Tutsi as descendants of Ham), polarization that was fanned from Belgian rule, the Tutsi killings/expulsions that began with the 1959 Hutu

Revolution, the economic collapse in Rwanda of the late 1980s, and an unfolding civil war that began in October 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF, see Appendix A), comprised of Tutsi refugees, advanced into the country from Uganda. Factors that contributed to the Rwandan Genocide can also be viewed from the bottom up which would include the effect of propaganda, extreme poverty, ignorance and superstition, and a cowed-compliant-land locked peasantry with a tendency toward alcoholism. Brehm (2017) modeled indicators in Rwanda to conclude that the situation was a unique confluence of both types of influences.

Stories heard in Rwandan churches can be seen as influencing society in both directions: 1) top down in light of the fact that powerful entities created narratives 2) bottom up when one considers that stories add justification or synergy to individual choices. Stories are heard in a particular context, and Newbury (1998) sees rural grievances as the most powerful piece of the context that fed bouts of violence in Rwanda in the 1959 Hutu uprising, and again in 1990 when violence escalated.

Unlike the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide featured systemic violent imitation. Since most of the slaughter occurred in public spaces, people had the opportunity to copy others. *Génocidaires* acted as a part of a choreographed whole (Fujii, 2009). Participants imitated one another, displaying *Mimetic Rivalry* (See Appendix A). “Ordinary” citizens joined in violent group activity. While it is impossible to know the reasons why people participated, some have noted that social networks and interaction patterns likely influenced whether or not people acted violently (McDoom, 2014; Bhavnani, 2006).

Literature about the Rwandan Genocide shows that stories cannot be told in a simple manner that places people in categories of “good” and “bad.” Such a simple

description might say that “bad” Hutu killed “good” Tutsi. This paper will reveal confounding issues, showing that a simple description is, simply, wrong. One reason is that estimates state that at least 50,000 moderate Hutu were killed in 1994. In addition, there is some documentation that the RPF, led by Paul Kagame, who is Tutsi, slaughtered Hutu as they entered the country and again as Hutu refugees fled to Zaire (now Congo) immediately after the three-month massacre (Burnet, 2012). So, naming the genocide “Genocide of the Tutsi” is not quite comprehensive, yet this is, in fact, what the current government in Rwanda has named the events of 1994. I saw this angle portrayed in the narratives at the Kigali Genocide Memorial and the Rwandan Parliament Museum. How Rwandans acknowledge and define the atrocities of 1994 could be formative for future societal peace. Time will tell how the ways that naming the genocide impacted healing and the pursuit of peace in the country. The prominent societal narrative will sway future societal well-being. Stories are the equipment for function.

The Rwandan Genocide was made possible by societal leaders’ sustained propaganda campaign that created urgency and fear with a backdrop of a smoldering civil war, precipitated by an invading army. In addition, colonialism’s imprint on Rwanda and the collaboration of churches with political forces created unique conditions that made the Rwandan people vulnerable to exploitation and instability that would come from a guiding story or founding myth. The intimate 1994 killings featured neighbors killing neighbors, mostly with machetes, in prominent locations in the community (Mamdani, 2001).

Rwandan Catholics and Protestants, Adventists, were multiethnic. The literature about Christianity in the context of 1994 Rwandan Genocide includes analyses of

colonialism and political stances of Christian institutions, and some analysis of Rwandan Genocide survivors' oral testimonies, as well as a documentation that no group was monolithic in its approach to ethnicity (Longman, 2010). The literature contains snippets of stories that people heard in churches (Des Forges, 1999; Gourevitch, 1998; Longman, 2010; McCullum, 2005). The literature reveals no specific collection of stories told in Rwandan churches before the Rwandan Genocide.

The Adventist Church is a Protestant denomination founded in the United States. Worshipping on Saturday, an emphasis on health, and a stated belief that the church should not align itself with governmental entities are three components that distinguish it from other Protestant groups (Bull & Lockhart 2006). Adventists were both heroes and villains in the Rwandan Genocide. Carl Wilkens, the only American who stayed during the genocide, was employed by Adventist Development Relief Agency. Eliziphan Ntakirutimana, an Adventist administrator in Mugonero, became the first pastor to be convicted of genocide at the United Nations Tribunal in 2004. Georges Rutaganda, who became a voice for *RTLM* (See Appendix A), had an Adventist upbringing and became the second vice-president of the Rwandan Hutu militia, *interahamwe* (Bull & Lockhart, 2006). Rutaganda received a life sentence for his part in the genocide, and it was said the genocide would not have functioned the way it did without his skills. Rwanda contains the largest concentration of Adventists of any Sub-Saharan country ("Rwanda" 1976). When considering refugees entering Rwanda and numbers attending churches in the 1990s, some estimate that Rwanda had 2 million Adventists in 1990 (Richli, 2014).

Most people find the notion of Christians killing Christians in churches to be puzzling. Casting a wide net, so to speak, I use an eclectic mix of theories to analyze the

stories. Using Eisler's (2002) *Theory of Cultural Transformation* (See Appendix A), I will highlight elements of partnership and domination in Rwandan life as influenced by narratives, biblical themes, and stories. Searching for elements of Girard's (1995) *Mimetic Rivalry* (See Appendix A), I will highlight elements in stories that demonstrate an escalating ethnic rivalry featuring a hardened sense of identity and heightened competition. I will also delineate components of stories that can be mapped using Haidt's *Moral Foundations Theory* (MFT, See Appendix A). Used primarily in Western contexts, *Moral Foundations Theory* has been used in the United States in an effort to understand competing moral values that contribute to the nation's polarization. Assuming that Christians in Rwanda had become polarized, I decided to apply this theory to discover if Christians in Rwanda were enmeshed in violence based on different moral axes.

The next parts of this paper will detail Rwandan history, emphasizing the last 150 years when missionaries have been in the area. It will discuss ethnicity, the Church supporting Tutsi privilege, the Hutu Revolution, the Kayibanda years, the Habyarimana years, and the period of war between 1990-1994. The term, "Church," will refer generally to Christian institutions of all denominations with the realization that no group is monolithic.

Rwandan History

Ethnic Overview

The country now known as Rwanda is a small land locked place featuring mostly mountainous terrain. All of Rwanda lies at an elevation greater than 3000 feet. The natural layout of the country provided a barrier against slave trade, and it was relatively

free from foreign interference until the coming of the White Man in the late 19th century. The hilly terrain provided space that forced Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa to coexist in densely populated spaces.

Rwandan history is intimately linked with what is now neighboring Burundi. Differing from many parts of Africa which featured 100's of tribes, Rwanda and Burundi had three groups with all three in each country speaking the same language, *Kinyarwanda* and *Kirundi*, respectively. Some say ethnic power shifts in Burundi mirrored what occurred in Rwanda in the late twentieth century (Twagilimana, 2003).

In this region, tribal membership was subjective, and boundaries were placed by the members. Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa intermarried and shared religious rituals. There was fluidity between the groups, which some scholars say was based on cattle ownership. One could say that precolonial Rwandan society was more partnership oriented. Each group had a prevailing body type, though not every group member conformed to it. Twa were pygmoids and served as potters or did menial tasks. Tutsi were very tall and thin with sharp facial features, and typically herded cattle. Hutu made up the majority of the population and were farmers. Their physical features included shorter stature, larger noses, and a broader physique (Prunier, 1995). Rwandan oral traditions portray founding myths that involve the three groups functioning with some reciprocity with Hutu being the majority group at approximately 80%, Twa being 1%, and Tutsi comprising about 18% of the population. Family, lineage, and family ties were more important than ethnicity in Rwanda at the end of the nineteenth century. Newbury (1988) asserts that precolonial Rwanda should be viewed through a lens of class, not ethnicity.

From the beginning of colonial imperialism in Africa, Speke's *Hamitic Thesis* guided the powers to reify ethnic identity. Combining a biblical notion of cursed people with nineteenth century scientific racialism, this idea emphasized the superiority of Tutsi, and, without evidence, speculated that they had migrated from Ethiopia, bringing a "superior civilization" to the area. The term, "Hamitic," refers to Ham, one of the three sons of the biblical ark builder, Noah. Scripture states that the son of Ham was cursed for viewing his father's nakedness, and Speke theorized that the indigenous people in Africa descended from the cursed son of Ham (Sanders, 1969). It is unknown when Tutsi came to Rwanda, but a 20th century founding myth stated that their wily habits and manipulation gave them power over Hutu and Twa. Scholars believe such a myth was crafted by colonial entities and was part of the way Rwandan society moved away from cooperation. This complex, but inaccurate, founding myth also stated Twa were the first indigenous residents in Rwanda. Then, Hutu cultivators arrived.

When the Germans initially entered Rwandan society in 1894, they were impressed with lighter skinned Tutsi, collaborating with them to create an administrative structure in Rwanda. Tutsi welcomed the idea that they were superior. Courts were established, dedicated to preserving the rights of the elite not the masses. So, in effect, Rwanda came to exist under a sort of "dual colonialism" with European and Rwandan power holders (Newbury, 1998). After World War One, Belgians continued this stance as they took over Rwandan protectorate. Byilingiro (2002) describes the effect on Rwandans as a sort of "brainwashing."

Ethnicity had existed in Rwanda, but it had been continually created and recreated (Carney, 2014). While not conflict free, the long-standing Rwandan Triple Chieftaincy

had provided a structure for peace and functioned with porous boundaries. The categories were not primordial labels that by nature would devolve into violent tribalism. It is erroneous to attribute the Rwandan Genocide to a sort of mythic narrative of African tribalism. Colonialism and the Church had a role in disrupting the societal framework in Rwanda (Burnet 2012). Mamdani (2001) says the Church was the original ethnographer in Rwanda, and the church reified Rwandan ethnicity. The church and colonial powers had used ethnicity to give form and content to society. Ethnic divisions were harnessed for political purposes (Longman, 2010). One survivor that I spoke with said that, in essence, the Church in Africa was about power, adding that in his view God had been in Africa before the colonizers and missionaries came and joined hands to control Africans.

Crafting a national identity is a strategy aimed to achieve stability and seek wholeness. Gellner (1983) believes that imposing high culture on masses is a main project of nationalism. For the Rwandan Tutsi, first the Germans, and then the Belgians, nurtured a project of implanting opportunity and high culture. Decades later, the same societal forces would be evidenced in Rwandan Hutu. Gellner (1983) saw nationalism as a natural result of imposed high culture, believing it would feature anger over rationality, particularly anger over a breeched principle. Gellner refers to Durkheim's observation that religious people worship their own camouflaged images, and then goes further to say nationalistic people will worship themselves and forget any sort of camouflage. Issues of nationalism and religiosity became entangled in Rwanda.

Linden & Linden (1977) note that from the beginning of Christianity's foray into Rwanda there had been a tension between egalitarianism of Christian brotherhood and a hierarchical institution that seemed to allow grace to flow downward. Before the 1920's,

a largely peasant church had grown in isolated mission stations. Also in that time, not a single member of the ruling class had been willing to convert. Rwandan society featured a chain of clientship. With no disembodied, radical Christianity (which would have been impossible in a church which viewed itself as a direct incarnation), no missionary could have an impact in Rwanda and stay outside the feudal system. On the eve of World War One, Rwanda had a Hutu Christian church and a Tutsi state. In a few decades, Rwandan society had moved away from partnership toward domination.

The Church collaborated, particularly with the Belgians after World War One, in an ethnic solidification project in Rwanda that yielded a story of corporate identity. Newbury (1998) notes that a corporate view of ethnicity in late twentieth century Rwandan discourse made the genocide possible. In broad strokes, here is what happened:

The Church initially favored Tutsi, and then in the era of the Hutu Revolution, it favored Hutu.

Describing this Machiavellian role, Longman (2010) sees little difference in how Catholicism and Protestantism related to issues of ethnicity and political collaboration in Rwanda. Longman's analysis supports the idea that from the beginning, Protestant churches envied the stronger Catholic relationship with the Rwandan colonial regime and sought to follow the strategy of using ethnicity for their purposes. Longman states that from the beginning of Christianity in Rwanda the church acted as a piece of the system of dividing and contesting state power. Shifting the narrative by disseminating the *Hamitic Hypothesis* was a key strategy for this. Delhove (1984), daughter of the first Adventist missionary to Rwanda, uses the term, *Hamite*, to describe the leading tribe of Rwanda, the Tutsi, and describes the tribe as being composed of nobility and the government class.

Churches Support Tutsi Privilege

As the largest Christian group in the country, the history of the Catholic Church in Rwanda is salient. Linden (1977) describes the interface of the Catholic Church with political leaders as a sanctioned polarization that was viewed as natural and necessary to create structure between the rulers and the ruled. Carney (2014) details how Archbishop Lavigerie's mid 19th century vision for *White Fathers* set this pattern of cooperation between channels of political power for how the Catholic Church would establish mission outreach in Africa. This featured missionaries using local vernacular and tools to convert Africans.

The first Catholic missionaries to Rwanda met with King Musinga, a Tutsi, and collaborated with him and with the Germans who governed in Rwanda prior to World War One (Longman, 2010). This vision also was used to justify cooperation with political forces, not in a principled deference, but in a calculated effort to bring Africans into Christianity. From the beginning of the mission project in Rwanda, there were some who were reluctant to position the Church as an entity that would be aligned with hegemonic forces, but such reluctance was a minority position. In 1907, Bishop Classe, Vicar General of Rwandan Missions, voiced concern that Tutsi elites were dismissing Christianity because of the Christian emphasis on justice and defense of the rights of the poor. Over all, guided by the *Hamitic Hypothesis*, Classe thought that the Tutsi must be converted, and, in that way, mission outreach would use the "best and brightest." This task would not be fully achieved until Musinga was dethroned almost 30 years later.

According to Classe's belief, the Germans, and later the Belgians after World War One, must support Tutsi dominance or accept anarchy in Rwanda. The Morthan Law of 1926 officially granted privilege to Tutsi, setting the stage for issuance of identity cards that categorized people by ethnicity. During Classe's multi-decade leadership, ethnic stratification grew inside the Catholic Church with a pragmatic strategy that featured prioritization of opportunities for Tutsi education and development. Hutu became Christians, but resentment smoldered, as they did not get the attention and privilege that the Tutsi received (Carney, 2014; Longman, 2010).

Since 1896, King Musinga had a long history of interacting with European colonial powers. In the 1920's Musinga had given attention to Protestant groups in Rwanda, including having some studies with Adventists. Classe opined in 1930 that King Musinga had become a hindrance to Christianity, and laid groundwork for the Catholic Church to be a sort of kingmaker that would participate in dethroning Musinga in 1932, and crown his eldest son, Rudahigwa, instead. King Rudahigwa, more sympathetic specifically to Catholicism, presided over exponential membership growth in the 1930's known as the *Tutsi Tornado* and remained in power until his mysterious death in 1959 (Longman, 2010).

Churches Support Hutu Privilege/Hutu Revolution

The pathway of collaboration between politics and the church continued after Bishop Classe's death until during the tumultuous 1950's, a new class of Hutu elites, educated in Catholic seminary, emerged to focus on grievances and resentments of the nation's dispossessed and to critique Tutsi-dominated elites. For example, in 1955

Anastase Mukuza had been the first Hutu Rwandan with a university degree, and he could only get a job as a typist (Mamdani, 2001). Hutu desired opportunities that had been denied. Escalating tensions between groups in Rwandan can be seen in the framework of *Mimetic Rivalry*. One of the early formative writings for the revolution, *The Bahuto Manifesto*, came from a Catholic seminary in 1957, and was the first written document that displayed the development of Hutu consciousness about their inferior status in Rwanda. The document reflected the ethos of the time and used firm racial categories and was the seed that developed into PARMEHUTU (See Appendix A) which impacted Rwandan society for the rest of the 20th century. Seeking to address societal inequities with somewhat moderate demands, it noted problems with Belgian indirect rule, the ill effects of Belgian destruction of indigenous societal structures, and urged that ethnic designation be maintained on official documents (Safari, 2010).

In 1958, a group of Hutu hard-liners in the royal court responded to the manifesto with language that used little respect for cooperation or collaboration and demanded privilege and material possessions for Hutu. As turmoil increased, a group of 15 elderly Tutsi in court wrote an open letter that did not acknowledge Hutu grievances, but instead focused on how events would affect Tutsi. Newbury (1998) pegs this dismissive response as an intemperate action that fueled the coming crisis that would last for decades. Fears and anxieties escalated. Hutu activists feared reprisals. Tutsi feared what would happen if Hutu took control (Newbury, 1998). Missing the opportunity to strive for partnership, Rwandan society hardened into rivaling factions.

On November 1, 1959, a group of Tutsi beat Dominique Mbonyumutwa who had been one of the few Hutu leaders in the country. Rumors of his death sparked massive

violence against Tutsi who held administrative posts. The Belgian administration declared a state of emergency, and the Rwandan Revolution, or Hutu Revolution began, which would eventually transform the country from a Belgian Colony with a Tutsi Monarchy to a Hutu dominated republic in 1962. As events transpired, corporate ethnic identity hardened. In 1959, this meant that all Tutsi received the label, *monarchists*, and were described as enemies of democracy. With words that left no room for nuance, it became easier to maintain a zero-sum narrative that eventually made way for violent scapegoating as the two factions competed for opportunity and privilege. Absolute labeling still prevailed much later when in 1996 after the Rwandan Genocide, all Hutu would be labeled, *génocidaires* (Des Forges, 1999).

The Church's response to the *Bahutu Manifesto* did not serve to facilitate peace or understanding. Missionaries to Rwanda mid-century brought an energy related to an emphasis on liberation and justice. André Perraudin, a Swiss seminary professor who became Archbishop of Kabgayi in 1959, was the highest Catholic authority to respond to the document, and he used language that combined racial and social grievances. His words helped to harden ethnic identities and give privilege to previously disenfranchised Hutu. Perraudin's response, *Super Omnia Caritas*, used a zero-sum tone for ethnic tensions. Also, the document stated that Christian charity would require the Church to oppose "structural sin," which referred to entrenched preferential treatment for Tutsi. So, in effect, Perraudin named the Church's previous stance that had elevated Tutsi a "structural sin," and advocated for a disruption of what the Church had formerly endorsed (Carney, 2014). Yet in Rwanda, Hutu and Tutsi could not be uniformly described, since some Tutsi were poor peasants and some Hutu were not poor subsistence farmers.

Perraudin's *Super Omnia Caritas* legitimized Hutu grievances with a corporate lens without creating space for a societal transition that would give more equity to all ethnic groups (Carney, 2014).

Perraudin's stance reflected the Christian ethos of mid twentieth century that emphasized liberation theology, such as that advocated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet, in the Rwandan context, people exiting a colonial grip did not have deep resources to move rapidly to a space of equality for all, and so, ethnic politics began to develop into what would become a tragedy.

Perraudin's response to the *Bahuto Manifesto* was challenged by Aloys Bigirumwami, a Tutsi who became the first Vicar Apostolic of Nyundo. Seeing the potential problems that would come by hardening identities on the Hutu/Tutsi axis, Bigirumwami sought to be a bridge between indigenous clergy and polarized missionaries. His letters reveal a nuanced analysis of what was happening and showed willingness for self-critique. His stance seemed to envision creation of a different identity platform, one where Christians would not fall into binary descriptions about grievances (Carney, 2014). He seemed to envision that the Catholic Church would be more neutral, and, likely, would lose some political power.

Perhaps, Bigirumwami was trying to create what Katongole (2005) later described when he imagined churches to be "wild spaces," or places where different sorts of identities could grow than those cemented by the words of powerful people. Perraudin and Bigirumwami differed in opinion as to what degree they thought that the Church could map societal differences on an ethnic axis, and to what extent the Church should collaborate with the state in a pursuit of social justice. Perraudin's words legitimized

Hutu political grievances without regard for exceptional circumstances that differed from the prevailing narrative.

In my view, it appears that the Church stayed on a course, featuring power as a way to make others inhabit a prescribed story of their reality of domination, not partnership. The Church in Rwanda adjusted its sails to appeal to aggrieved Hutu and to nurture a story of the Tutsi as usurpers who had deviously come into the country to take power that should have belonged to the Hutu, as the largest ethnic group.

“If Perraudin was not a revolutionary, was he simply reincarnating Léon Classe’s Constantinian vision in liberal democratic clothing? ...Perraudin therefore stood in a long line of African missionaries looking to strengthen the church by cultivating close relations with the state” (Carney, 2014, p 116).

Missionaries in Rwanda remained concerned with political power.

The story of Hutu grievances became formative in Rwandan discourse. In 1994 as violence unfolded in Rwanda, retired Bishop Perraudin spoke from Switzerland using the same dual/racial vision of Rwandan society that tended to blame Tutsi exiles for violence that was befalling Tutsi in Rwanda at the hands of Hutu militia (Carney, 2014). When Hutu gained power in Rwanda, there was no guarantee of civil rights for the minority Tutsi. Instead, Hutu did what Tutsi had done previously. That is they enacted a government of domination, not partnership

The Kayibanda Years

King Rudahigwa died under mysterious circumstances on July 25, 1959 and left no children. A younger brother of the previous King Musinga briefly came to the throne, but the simmering crisis in the region was too great a challenge for him, and he left in

exile. Grégoire Kayibanda became the first democratically elected president of Rwanda on July 1, 1962 (Carney, 2014).

In 1964, Tutsi guerrillas attempted to overthrow Kayibanda's vulnerable government and failed. As a response, Hutu authorities allowed or encouraged the massacre of thousands of Tutsi in rural areas of Rwanda. In large numbers, Tutsi fled the country in response to spikes of violence that targeted the formerly elite group. Thus exiled, the refugee Tutsi began what would be a decades long process of organizing and reorganizing and considering military maneuvers that would allow them to come home to Rwanda and retake possessions lost in the Hutu Revolution (Longman, 2010).

Also in that year, Kayibanda gave a rousing speech on the heels of the Hutu Revolution that was to become a framing narrative for future decades in Rwanda politics. This narrative stated that the Tutsi were leaving Rwanda on their own accord without malice mainly because they were against Hutu equality. Thus, in the following decades when exiled Tutsi organized to retake land lost in the Hutu Revolution, their actions would be defined as unjustified violence. Kayibanda's speech had been inaccurate, because it did not describe the legislation, discrimination, and violence that had targeted Tutsi as the Hutu Revolution unfolded. In late 20th century Rwandan history, the powerful narrative continued to be formative when the Hutu asserted that Tutsi wanted unearned preferential treatment, and, thus, must be eliminated as they were a continuing threat to democracy (Straus, 2015).

In 1972, Tutsi dominated military in neighboring Burundi massacred about 200,000 Hutu, triggering mass exodus of Hutu northward to Rwanda (Kiernan, 2007). Hutu extremists in Rwanda continued to impose many versions of quotas in the

educational system, resulting in countless highly qualified Tutsi denied the opportunity for advanced education.

“The policy of *Iringaniza* (total exclusion of one ethnic group) in most cases was not different from the colonial discriminatory school system executed at the expense of Rwandan children of the time. And the silence of many Christian missions in the face of such injustices was deafening” (Mbanda, 1997, p. 43).

Commonly, Rwandan Tutsi families with means would send children to Congo or Uganda to pursue studies. Protestant, Catholic, and Adventist schools participated in quotas and ethnic profiling that humiliated Tutsi children (Longman, 2010).

The Habyarimana Years

Juvénal Habyarimana took power in July of 1973 in a bloodless coup against a backdrop of turmoil, political infighting, and numerous bouts of Tutsi persecution that frightened both Tutsi and reasonable Hutu (Prunier, 1995). Carney (2014) asserts Habyarimana had been hand-picked by the Catholic church. Habyarimana’s Second Republic pushed against Kayibanda’s hardline PARMEHUTU party.

Educated Hutu pushed the government to verify a quota of no more than 10% Tutsi in the workplace and in schools. This also affected children of ambiguous ethnicity. Children of Hutu fathers and Tutsi mothers were counted as Tutsi. People who had, for survival purposes, managed to have their identity changed to Hutu became Tutsi again. Teachers would publicly measure noses for width and fingers for length and then label ethnicity (Longman, 2010). Through the coming decades, several churches issued statements and pastoral letters condemning ethnic profiling, but there was no unanimous voice to condemn this breach of human rights (Safari, 2010). Longman (2010) notes that many church leaders profited from the status quo and were not inclined to confront the authoritative assault on certain ethnic groups.

In 1975, Habyarimana created the National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND, see Appendix A) party which became the only political party in Rwanda until the Arusha Accords in the early 1990's urged the formation of a multi-party system. Later, this push to change to a multi-party system would serve to activate and motivate hard line Hutu leaders and set in motion a series of events that laid the groundwork for the large mobilization of peasantry to act violently toward others in their community in the Rwandan Genocide.

Protestant churches expanded rapidly after Rwandan Independence in 1962 and served as important political actors. A spirit of triumphalism related to "success" and "growth" hampered the willingness of Protestant institutions to "protest," or be a prophetic voice that would speak for the powerless. Longman (2010) reports the existence of alternative voices that did speak against ethnic violence, but people who spoke out were ostracized. Habyarimana was generally supported by the churches during the period he was in power (Des Forges, 1999).

While some churches cozied up to power, Longman (1998) reports that some churches did participate in Rwandan society by empowering the weak. For many poor people, church was the only place where they could meet and discuss problems. Longman notes many priests and local church leaders who used their positions to confront corruption and advocate for human rights. Adventist administrators that I spoke with said that the church never considered questioning the quotas that were oppressively enforced during this time.

Civil War to Genocide (1990-1994)

History is still sorting the events in the Rwandan Genocide. Giving a succinct analysis of the complex, competing interests are beyond the scope of this paper. This section includes accounts of events that served to harden story lines that fed into violent genocide.

Exiled Tutsi, also called Tutsi refugees, continued to be a force in Rwandan politics until the Rwandan Genocide. An American Adventist administrator who was in Rwanda in the 1980's, told me that church leaders had no idea that violence would be ahead. The feeling was that the majority (Hutu) would never let the minority (Tutsi) in the country again. Some people whispered that Tutsi were staging in Uganda and that Uganda was providing monetary support to aid a guerilla campaign back to take back Rwanda, but in the view of most, it seemed unlikely. When a small group from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF, see Appendix A) crossed the border on October 1, 1990, most Rwandans were surprised. Early in the attack, the leader of the RPF, Rwigyema, was killed in a bizarre fashion by a quick gunshot of a fleeing soldier, and Major Paul Kagame soon took over the military leadership that sought to bring the exiled Tutsi back to Rwanda (Des Forges, 1999).

On October 4, 1990, the RPF was further in Rwanda, but still 45 miles from Kigali. That morning the city heard heavy firing for several hours, and the Habyarimana government announced that the city had been attacked by RPF infiltrators who had now been driven back. This government-endorsed story served to unify the country. Whatever

the angle, events unfolded that united the Hutu in a “common enemy” story. In this context, over the coming years the *interahamwe* (See Appendix A) was formed.

Some in Rwanda viewed the RPF attack as an Anglo-Saxon plot to destabilize Rwandan self-governance. Others framed it as a new example of “Tutsi feudal threat” and sought to create group cohesion to fight against it (Prunier, 1995). The incursion gave Habyarimana the opportunity to use fear to rebuild his eroding base. The Tutsi exiles were “coming home.” Prunier (1995) notes that for thirty years prior to the Rwandan Genocide the two groups had been somewhat isolated, one in Rwanda and one in the Diaspora. There had been no reality checks on the stories told by Hutu elites or Tutsi elites. The Hutu peasants saw all Tutsi as unreconstructed royalists, and Tutsi who planned to invade Rwanda thought that oppressed peasants would join them in a sort of liberation.

The newspaper, *Kangura*, published Hutu Ten Commandments (See Appendix A) in December 1990. I saw a display about this at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. For example, commandment #9 states:

The Hutu, wherever they are, must have unity and solidarity and be concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers.

- a) The Hutu inside and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their Hutu brothers.
- b) They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda.
- c) The Hutu must be firm and vigilant against their common Tutsi enemy.

So, a tool with biblical overtones was developed to encourage paranoia toward individuals with any social interaction with Tutsi. The biblical notion of kindness or pity was corrupted by a political story featuring a biblical story, “Ten Commandments.”

In the years leading up to the 1994 genocide, many in Protestant churches likened national difficulties as “like it was in the time of Noah,” and, then, claimed that the principle of separation of church and state would not allow Protestant churches to speak about ethnicity, because such ideas would be considered political (Longman, 2010).

After the invasion, radical ideologies flourished in Rwanda, as people tried to cope with war, over population, Habyarimana’s weakening power, and the collapse of coffee markets (Prunier, 1995). Rwandans—Hutu and Tutsi—were frightened by the RPF invasion. Kuperman (2004) points to the RPF invasion as a strong catalyst to turn Rwandan society toward genocide, and based on interviews with top ranking officers, he asserts that the RPF realized the risk and was willing to take it. Hutu remembered the massacres of tens of thousands of Hutu by Tutsi in neighboring Burundi in 1972, 1988, and in 1991, and they feared something similar might happen in Rwanda. Tutsi were afraid of reprisal killings by Hutu, as the RPF made its way through Rwanda. The truth was that the RPF had suffered massive casualties soon after the initial invasion in Rwanda in 1990 and early 1991, and the government was not honest with Rwandans to report the real situation, and instead chose to use the opportunity to magnify hatred.

Léon Mugesera set the tone for the genocide in his “*Do Not Let Yourself Be Invaded*” speech, given in November 1992, a time when Habyarimana was waffling about the terms of the Arusha Accords. Using the phrase, “*Do Not Let Yourself Be Invaded*,” 10 times in a 30-minute speech, this was an appeal to Hutu to stick together and not fall under scorn which would come if they allowed the country to be invaded. The speech said it was a mistake to let the *inyenzi* (See Appendix A) escape in 1959 and included a direct threat to Tutsi: “I am telling you that your home is in Ethiopia, that we

are going to send you back there quickly, by the Nyabarongo River” (Des Forges, 1999, p. 85). Less than two years later, the Nyabarongo River would be filled with bodies floating northward toward Ethiopia. When Mugesara did not use the more respectful term, *inkotanyi* (See Appendix A) and chose instead the similar sounding word, *inyenzi*, he created a pejorative label. The invasion to which the speech referred was considered to consist of two prongs. One referred to the physical invasion of the RPF, led by Kagame, and was weaving through the country. The other part of the threatened invasion referred to *inyenzi*, which came to be accepted as any Tutsi or anyone married to a Tutsi or anyone who befriended a Tutsi.

Rwanda’s government crumbled under the cost of war and by 1993 was practically bankrupt. In July 1993, Habyarimana accepted the idea of peace and a three-way division of power. Details would be negotiated in the Arusha Accords in the coming months. Hardliners in Kigali protested, and many power seekers plotted ways to maintain Hutu power, including the crafting of a narrative that later formed the actions of the *interahamwe* in which machetes and firearms were called “tools,” and killing was called “work” (Des Forges, 1999).

In neighboring Burundi, President Ndadaye was kidnapped and murdered on October 21, 1993. He had been the first Hutu President in Burundi and had been elected in June by 64% of the electorate. In Burundi, 60% were Tutsi and 40% were Hutu. Some estimate that 150,000 Tutsi and 300,000 Hutu fled across the border to Rwandan in late 1993 and early 1994 (Prunier, 1995). The assassination fed into the dominant Rwandan narrative of Hutus fearing Tutsi and labeling Tutsi as a group that did not respect democracy (Des Forges, 1999).

Rwanda had recently defined “freedom of the press” and this action allowed groups not directly involved with the government to create content to reinforce suspicion and hatred (Des Forges, 1999). Radio Rwanda had been the official governmental voice, but as Arusha negotiations unfolded, that station began to give airtime to friends of the RPF. Probably to counteract this, *RTLM* was created by wealthy Hutu hardliners. It featured an informal, conversational format and quickly became popular. Mugesera, the professor-turned-propagandist who had studied in Canada, was involved in crafting the message, using religion and the church to validate the teachings. For example, *RTLM* stated that the RPF, if allowed in the country, would exterminate Rwandans, and it referred to scriptural passages that featured stories of God cursing leaders of the political opposition. *RTLM* repeated mantras that said Habyarimana was chosen by God and that God would lead him.

A threatening civil war combined with raging ethnic hatred has been observed to create a context that will nurture genocidal impulses. Lies, exaggeration, ridicule, and innuendo were added to the Rwandan societal mix. Accusation in a mirror is a method used by propagandists. With this tactic, a party using terror can accuse an enemy of using the same terror. Vulnerable listeners will feel like they are being attacked and will feel justified to use violence against attackers.

Based on interviews of *génocidaires* in Rwandan prisons, Fujii (2009) developed a theory that describes those who participated in genocidal violence to be like actors in a script. “Casting,” or adopting roles, allowed people to do things that they otherwise would avoid. She noted that long term group identity of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa persisted in Rwanda and people became perpetrators in response to micro-sociological forces. Fujii

(2017) looks at the casting of actors in the Rwandan Genocide in comparison to the display of atrocities that occurred in the Bosnian war and in Jim Crow Maryland and asserts that people particularly choose to act on a social identity in violent ways on a public platform. Apportioning of roles gives form to such display, as well as content and meaning. In Fujii's (2009) view, the events in 1994 occurred as unfolding webs of violence that became manifest when an individual chose to "act" for a public spectacle. Some acted in starring roles or in supporting roles, and some took on the roles of audience members. For example, Rwandans showed up at roadblocks daily to search for those with Tutsi identification cards, yet the same people might be hiding Tutsi in their homes.

The task of establishing a reliable count of the number killed in 1994 is difficult. One does not know the number of Tutsi in the country when the Rwandan Genocide began. The 1991 census data states that there were 657,000 Tutsi, which would have been 8.4% of the population. Though Rwanda had the practice of requiring ethnicity to be listed on identification cards since 1930, there still were issues of questionable identity, and some Hutu were killed because they looked like Tutsi. Des Forges (1999) estimates that ½ million people were slaughtered. As the killings began, Roméo Dallaire, the force commander for the ill-fated United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda, asked for a book on international law. As he scanned the book, he realized that "genocide" was the right label for what he saw happening in the moment (Powers, 2003).

Invoices have been discovered for the purchase of 581,000 machetes from China in October 1993 when localized militia were being primed to do what patriotic Rwandans "should" do, that is to root out the spies and infiltrators in their midst. (Des Forges,

1999). “Clear the bush” was a slogan used to describe the task at hand as *umuganda*, or community service. *Interahamwe* would be ready, but they could not know specifically how they would be called into action to protect from invasion.

In April 1994 when returning from a meeting in Arusha, Habyarimana’s jet was shot down in Kigali. Paranoia, fear and righteous indignation permeated Rwandan society (Des Forges, 1999). The new President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was also in the plane. Within a day, moderate Hutu leaders were killed, including Rwandan Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyiana. It is unknown who was the person or group responsible for lighting the fuse that brought down the presidential plane and mobilizing the killing. Displays at Rwandan Parliament museum imply that the president’s wife and her brother, considered to be hardline Hutu, orchestrated the event. Lemarchand (2013), advancing an opposing view, cites Ruzibiza (2005), a former captain in Kagame’s army, to provide evidence that Kagame was directly involved in the assassination that triggered the genocide.

In any case, Des Forges (1999) believes that the Church’s hesitancy to speak against violence immediately and forcefully in 1994 validated the option to participate in genocide. Fein’s (1979) research would support this assumption. She looked at the tepid response of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe prior to World War Two and sees a weak association between early church protest against deportation of Jews and the number of Jews saved in a particular region. For example, in three non-Roman Catholic states where protest occurred, the majority of Jews were saved from death.

Carney’s (2014) analysis about the Roman Catholic Church in Rwanda in the early twentieth century could have also been applied to how all churches related to

conditions in the early 1990's. That is: the issue was not whether or not the Catholic Church should engage in politics; rather the issue was whose side should the Church take?

Though churches failed to function as peacemaking entities in civil society, the fact that during the Rwandan Genocide masses of people sought sanctuary in churches validates the idea that, through the decades, local houses of worship had indeed been places of protection and refuge, at least in times of violent turmoil. One survivor told me, "We went to the churches, because that had been the place to go during previous violent purges aimed at Tutsi." Sadly, this overwhelmingly was not the case in the Rwandan Genocide where mass slaughters occurred in churches. In my interviews, several people said that the Muslims in Rwanda were the only religious group that uniformly provided safe haven for all without regard to ethnicity.

Cultural Transformation Theory

What narratives were told that pulled Rwandans into imitative webs? Why do perpetrators revel in harming others? Part of the answer to this comes from understanding *cultural transformation theory*. Noting a multitude of factors that can influence the fabric of society, Eisler (2002) sees human relationships at all levels as being in a matrix between two opposites: A domination/control model and a partnership/respect model. Eisler advocates leaving the typical binary terminology, such as communist/capitalist or liberal/conservative or Hutu/Tutsi, noting that too often such binaries become "you are dominant" or "you are dominated," instead of focusing on the fluidity of the situation and the ways of moving in the matrix. Eisler advocates using a different vocabulary in an effort to move people toward a common good of caring and actualization and away from

tribalism. The differences between domination and partnership are multi-faceted. The domination model features fear, rigid top down authority, male dominance and a high capacity for accepting violence as a legitimate tool for social control. The partnership model accepts hierarchies created to nurture self-actualization, as well as gives emphasis to gender equality. The partnership model prioritizes trust over fear and values the constraints that transparency would place on systems of authority. The web of domination vs. partnership can be viewed in seven levels: 1) within oneself 2) within a family 3) in the workplace 4) nationally 5) internationally 6) in interaction with nature 7) spiritually. Stories from Rwandan churches could reflect partnership or domination in all 7 of these levels.

Eisler describes the components within a domination model and within a partnership model as being mutually reinforcing. For example, authoritarianism is fed by overarching myths which can lead to fear and violence as humans act on these stories. Or, in a partnership model, mutual trust leads to activities that enrich all and will lead toward gender equality and stories of nurture. Conversely, her theory also provides for the idea that one can effect a shift in the system by targeting one of four areas within the system: 1) childhood relations 2) gender relations 3) economic relations 4) beliefs, myths, and stories (Eisler, 2002).

Asserting that narratives can be forces to move society toward partnership or domination, Eisler maintains that one way to change society is to change the stories that are told. Weisband (2017) cites a Foucauldian perspective as central to the sovereign nation/state that can form a path to genocide. The nation/state, at times, decides what is and what is not truth. Conformity occurs when an individual falls into self-deception and

unconsciously acquiesces to majority opinion about the nature of societal in groups and out groups. In the Rwandan context, this means one must consider the origins of “Hutu Power,” the guiding story that fed the genocide in 1994.

Colonialism in Rwanda minimized Rwandan founding myths that had featured reciprocity and care (Newbury, 1998). A manipulative elite can create narratives and conditions that make genocide possible (Baum, 2008). I sought to investigate to what extent the stories I heard from Rwandans would reflect a participation of churches in this effort. Perpetrator culture finds unity in enmity. Those who participate in violence often come from a fearful, land-locked context. Envy at the individual and group level helped create the scaffold of conditions on which the Rwandan Genocide occurred. Stories permeated the culture describing the duty to extinguish evil Tutsi *inyenzi*. Since this study sought to understand the Christian context, I asked several questions about Bible texts and the use of Bible stories as framing narratives. I also inquired about radio propaganda which enhanced the impact of narratives, by nurturing polarization, a midpoint on the progression to genocide as observed by Stanton (1998).

Moral Foundations Theory

There is no record in the literature of the use of *Moral Foundations Theory* (MFT) in an African context. The theory highlights six modular axes on which moral intuition is based: 1) care/harm 2) justice/injustice 3) ingroup loyalty/betrayal 4) authority respect/subversion 5) purity sanctity/degradation 6) liberty/oppression. Each of these axes can be amplified or diminished by a variety of internal and external factors (Haidt, 2012). The theory sees moral behavior as functioning on a platform that is not driven by rational

thought or individual maturation, instead, it involves a person crafting rationale after the decision has been made. Sometimes MFT is coupled with the name “Social Intuitionism,” and it asserts that emotion, evolutionary psychology, automaticity, and cultural overlay impact morality. Of the six moral intuitions, Haidt’s research shows that the sanctity/disgust component is especially determinative.

Graham and Haidt (2010) divide MFT into categories. First, they name axes in the individualizing categories: care/harm, justice/injustice. The other group of axes is described as reflecting behaviors that affect group cohesion: ingroup loyalty/betrayal, authority respect/subversion, purity sanctity/degradation. Later, Haidt (2012) adds a sixth moral axis liberty/oppression which will not be addressed further in this paper. Until recently, moral psychology had looked mainly at care (Gilligan, 1982) and justice (Kohlberg, 1969), which are reflected in the first two modules in MFT. Haidt explains that the creation of MFT was informed by an assumption that traditional societies have valued concepts that aided group cohesion, and MFT seeks to describe a broader view of morality that includes certain intuitions called “binding” foundations. Critiquing MFT, Fry and Souillac (2013) contend that nomadic forager societies appear to feature only the first two categories, and that the “binding” moral attributes of loyalty and authority could, likely, be viewed to be superimposed by Modern Western political traditions.

MFT and Cultural Transformation Theory. *Moral Foundations Theory* looks at individual morality, whereas *Cultural Transformation Theory* provides a framework to assess society as a whole on the spectrum of partnership to domination. *Cultural Transformation Theory* asserts that changing stories will be one way to move society on the continuum of partnership and domination. *Moral Foundations Theory* would see

stories as an exhibition, or crafted rationale, for what an individual believes, or stories could be seen to be part of the cultural overlay that influences an individual. The first two axes of MFT, care/harm and justice/injustice, can be viewed as elements of the partnership pole in *Cultural Transformation Theory*. What Haidt calls “binding” axes-- ingroup loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and purity sanctity/degradation—can be viewed as concepts that are used in dominator societies in Eisler’s framework. Thus, while MFT assesses morality on the basis of 5 axes, the desirable pole of the three “binding” axes feature concepts that could easily be characterized as being part of a dominator system, the negative pole in *Cultural Transformation Theory*.

In this collection of Rwandan genocide survivors’ oral histories, I looked for strands of ingroup loyalty/betrayal, authority respect/subversion, and purity sanctity/degradation. This was based on Graham and Haidt’s (2010) assertion that these three moral modules served to bind people into social entities, and I suspected these concepts would be reflected in words used by those participating in genocidal violence.

Mimetic Rivalry and Narratives

Differing from Graham and Haidt’s integrative approach to moral choices, René Girard saw imitation as key to how societies moved toward violence. The discovery of mirror neurons, used for positive or negative activities, provides a biological basis for imitation (Rizzolatti, 2004).

Part of civilized society includes people imitating one another when they desire the same thing, and when the desire is great enough, they are enmeshed in an imitative web in which they unknowingly scapegoat individuals and groups that are perceived to

be barriers to attaining what is desired. *Mimetic Rivalry* involves people being guided by latent narratives, filtered reality, and overt lies that develop into a story that creates an identity that necessitates opposing others (Haven, 2018).

For Girard (1972), desire and envy form the root of behavior. In a challenge to Rousseau's view of an authentic self, Girard's analysis minimizes human agency and emphasizes group imitation. People become entrapped in group frenzy on a path that seeks to get approbation from peers. Ironically, *Mimetic Rivalry* can include rivalry about who is the greatest victim. In this view, the greatest victim has the most power to create the greatest justification, in turn, to scapegoat another. In the case of Rwanda, violent actors participated in atrocities in a very visible context (Fujii, 2009). Moreover, the claim of victimhood blinded Hutu as they coalesced into Tutsi hatred as a way to bring stability. Mamdani (2001) saw the Rwandan Genocide as a native's genocide to remove a threatening alien presence. This would be based on the founding myth that Hutu were the native people of Rwanda and the Tutsi were usurpers.

“If it is the struggle for power that explains the motivation of those who crafted the genocide, then it is the combined fear of a return to servitude and of reprisals thereafter that energized the foot soldiers of the genocide. The irony is that—whether in the Church, in hospitals, or in human rights groups, as in fields and homes—the perpetrators of the genocide saw themselves as the true victims of an ongoing political drama, victims of yesterday who may be victims again. That moral certainty explains the easy transition from yesterday's victims to killers the morning after.” (Mamdani, 2001, p.233)

In Girard's view, collective hatred and metaphorical lynching serve to bring respite to a splintered community. *Mimetic Rivalry* would say that the problem group must be eliminated to restore peace. Yet, mimetic desire and imitation can be good or bad. Kindness can escalate, and violence can escalate. In Rwanda, the Church did not move past dichotomized debates that effectively marginalized moderates (Newbury,

1998). Instead of being nuanced when describing societal truths, the historical record of the Rwandan Church reveals that it chose to act and to use language that put people in broad categories that, in my view, nurtured *Mimetic Rivalry*. A functional society deteriorates into “all against all.” “Increasingly, one person or one group appears to be responsible for the whole trouble. Mimetic contagions move from desire to targeting a specific victim.” (Haven, 2018, loc. 3223).

Mimetic Rivalry/Moral Foundations Theory/Cultural Transformation. In the years before the genocide, all Tutsi were categorized as wily vermin and an existential threat, particularly by propaganda radio. This may show some influence of the sanctity/degradation intuition of MFT as society fell into frenzied *Mimetic Rivalry* against a targeted group. Graham, J. & Haidt, J. (in press) note how easily and pervasively evil can come when people act based on a notion of protecting what is pure and sacred. Hutu imitated one another in violence to expunge “undemocratic Tutsi Monarchists.” In addition, genocidal actions may have been carried out on the basis of loyalty and authority, two more of MFT’s “binding” moral axes. The binding axes of MFT created a basis for hardened ethnic identities that could be used as a basis of group rivalry that led to violent scapegoating. *Moral Foundations Theory* can be used to develop understanding and empathy, yet it offers no potential pathway to reconcile differences or to safeguard against or minimize *Mimetic Rivalry*.

The phenomenon of *Mimetic Rivalry* assumes a scarcity narrative or a zero-sum ethos. These concepts reside at the domination end of *Cultural Transformation Theory*. *Mimetic Rivalry* makes no effort to cultivate partnership components of cooperation or protection of vulnerable groups. *Mimetic Rivalry* is not a rational choice, but a

subconscious imitation or response. In this way, it is similar to MFT as it does not assume that an individual uses rationalism to make moral choices. A guiding narrative, or prevailing cultural ethos, can create a deep basis on which *Mimetic Rivalry* can build.

Religion

Durkheim's definition of religion is useful. "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden---beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1965, p. 62). The most striking point in reference to this social functionalist definition is that in Rwanda, despite overwhelming numbers who identified as Christian, there was a failure of religion to unite people into a single moral community. Durkheim saw higher population density as a threat to social cohesion as people compete with one another for existence. Such a condition existed in Rwanda, and this might be one factor that pushed against cohesive ties that might have come from belonging to a common religion, in this case, Christianity.

For Girard (2010), religion cannot be distinguished from culture in archaic societies. In his view, religion is the part of culture that is generative and protective to seek to control *Mimetic Rivalry* that would lead to violence. At the center of this is an age-old way to release violence through non-conscious convergence upon a victim. Actual or potential violence can get out of hand, and group scapegoating results in expulsion or immolation of a victim as a way to create order. This guiding myth cannot be easily acted upon in the modern era, but the phenomenon continues in less blatant actions. Additionally, in an odd twist Girard notices a recent competition about who can

be the biggest victim with the assumption that the one who can adopt the mantra of “most victimized” will become the most powerful and be justified to act in any manner. In Rwanda, Hutu lived under a mantle of victimhood which seemed to empower them to believe that any action could be valid, no matter how violent. Christianity, in Rwanda, did not seek to protect generative, peaceful pieces of society that could prevent violence.

The Research Question

The Question

My question is: What stories might have influenced Adventists’ actions to decide to align with authoritarian forces in Rwanda and become enmeshed in ethnic violence, or not?

Destroying a group as an answer for a political problem was first reported to occur on the African continent when the Germans destroyed the Herero people starting in 1904. Ninety years later, the shocking phenomenon of Rwandan Christians killing other Christians, often in churches, for a political purpose stimulates intrigue about what was said in churches at that time. There has been no paper solely dedicated to collecting stories told in churches prior to the Rwandan Genocide. For my interviews, the sample comes from Rwandan Adventists, a significant, but unstudied, part of the Christian cohort in Rwanda. The study records memories of stories told in Adventist churches and searches for elements that might have promoted or disrupted peace. This was assumed to be, mostly, in the context of sociative peace, which would be concerned with preserving harmony and nurturing reciprocity (Gregor, 1996). Churches can impact sociative peace on a granular level with words and stories that might form the identity of those who

attend. Also by using voice in society, churches might function corporately to contribute to structural peace as envisioned in Verbeek and Peter's (2018) peace ethology.

Scholars have documented the close cooperation of Rwandan churches with political entities. I sought to understand how this phenomenon was experienced in churches prior to the genocide by taking note of what types of phrases and narratives were given to support the alliance.

The Bible

For Christians, the use of scripture can be used for good or for ill. Despite claims to use scripture for instruction, certain texts can be used to justify one's presuppositions or inclinations. This study documents participants' memories in the context of what words were used from the Bible to be authoritative framing narratives.

Loyalty/Authority/Sanctity

As a scholar of the genocide who is outside of the Rwandan context, I expected interviews to reveal stories that did not emphasize individualizing categories of morality---care and justice. I expected to hear stories reflecting themes of group cohesion, or the so called "binding" components of Haidt's MFT. These would be---loyalty, authority, and sanctity. It is these three moral components for which I looked. With this assumption, I expected to hear narratives that reveal that people chose political, or ethnic, group cohesion, and fell into blind dominant group imitation, when they acted violently toward Tutsi who were perceived to be a threat, whether or not the victim was a friend, fellow church goer, neighbor, or, in some cases, a family member.

Many believe that socialization and language can contribute to an individual's choice to respond with heroic resistance or active participation to forces that urge savagery. In a different approach, MFT asserts that words may be evidence of how one uses rationalization for deep moral conviction, more than they act, as Eisler envisions, as tools to persuade and teach. In either case, this study sought to document verbal discourse. Relatively brief encounters with Rwandan participants, of course, does not allow one to fully evaluate the presence of components of MFT, but words can reveal narratives that have impacted or are used to create a basis for "moral" action.

Scapegoating

In my interviews, I expected to hear stories that described the existence of a tightly coalesced fearful group ready to imitate each other as violence escalates and who were primed to participate in Girard's *Mimetic Rivalry* that would serve to relieve societal tension by scapegoating or eliminating a perceived threat. I expected to hear that Hutu felt fear and that long-term victimization justified violence against the RPF and, by extension, any Tutsi or anyone remotely connected to Tutsi or RPF.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

I used snowball sampling based on contacts I made when I visited Rwanda in summer of 2018 with Carl Wilkens. I selected Rwandans who were older than 45 years of age (mean age 60; range 45-79) and were Adventists in 1994 when the genocide began. I interviewed 14 people. Eight were males, and six were females. Four spoke English fluently, and ten used a translator.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Gender	Translator	Interview Location
Female	yes	workplace
Male	no	home
Male	no	home
Male	yes	school
Male	yes	school
Female	no	school
Male	yes	office
Female	yes	office
Female	yes	office
Male	yes	workplace
Male	yes	office
Female	yes	office
Male	yes	office
Female	no	church porch

Interviews

I interviewed 11 people in Kigali, and six of the interviews took place at a designated office space that I sublet from Kigali Adventist Medical Center. Two people invited me to their homes and allowed me to interview them there. Two people suggested I come to their place of work, where I interviewed them in a private location. One person requested the interview to occur at a private porch at a church.

I interviewed 3 people in Mugonero in a private office at a Nursing School. Mugonero is a genocide site where approximately 12,000 people were killed in an Adventist church on April 16, 1994.

Each interview was conducted in a space where the conversation would not be overheard. I informed each participant that the interview would be confidential and anonymous and that I would use her words in my studies at University of Alabama at Birmingham. I asked each participant if I could create an audio recording of the interview, and if she gave consent, I placed the recorder in a visible place during the interview. I used *H5 Handy Zoom Recorder model xyh-5*. I told each participant she could stop the interview at any time, ask me to destroy a recording of the interview, or refuse to answer any question. Twelve out of fourteen agreed to allow an audio recording. Audio recordings were uploaded to a password protected site. I also took notes during the interviews. Each participant was given approximately U.S. \$10.

I had the opportunity to observe the manner in which Carl Wilkens interviewed genocide survivors during a previous trip to Rwanda. I used semi-structured interviews, and was guided by Behar's (1996), *Vulnerable Observer*, which describes respecting silence and using intersubjectivity to develop a deep empathy for people impacted by

ethnographic study. The stance of vulnerable observer allowed me to converse naturally about a painful topic. Behar's idea of ethnography is neither tough minded, nor tender hearted and allows for the interview to proceed to collect facts and note emotions. I practiced this approach several times with Rwandan genocide survivors who did not meet the age parameters for this study.

I did not methodically ask questions but gauged the style and contour of the interview based on how talkative I perceived the participant to be. Many times, the participant shared her story of survival and tragedy. I asked questions based on the ebb and flow of the conversation. Some interviews began with the individual telling a story, and I would choose to ask questions as it fit with the speaker's narrative. Other participants quietly waited until I began the interaction. For the more reticent participants, I sought to create rapport and asked variations of questions 7,8, 9, and 10 early in the interview. I did not ask every question of every participant due to my assessment of each participant's body language and willingness to talk.

I did not seek to discern the ethnicity of the participants, because part of the healing process in Rwanda includes shunning the idea of segmenting identity based on ethnicity (Burnet, 2012). I also sought to be sensitive in matters that might be perceived as inquiring into the current interface between churches and political power.

Questions

1. What slogans or phrases describing societal strife and division do you remember hearing from church leaders?

This inquires about a narrative that may have been expressed in churches prior to the Rwandan Genocide. Such stories may have embedded into Christian's moral fabric and may reflect elements of *Moral Foundations Theory* such as loyalty, authority, or sanctity. In addition, this searched for a dominant narrative that is part of Eisler's view on cultural transformation.

2. What Bible stories seemed to impact how people in your church viewed the unrest?

This seeks to identify particular Bible texts that were said in churches and may have contributed to societal ethos in the church community. This idea stems from Eisler's description of how narratives impact cultural transformation.

3. What sorts of advice or guidance about how one should respond to ethnic tensions do you remember hearing from local church leaders prior to the 1994 genocide?

This asks for memory that could document instruction from "leaders" that may have contributed to how people in churches chose to react to escalating violence. Such memories could be evidence for the presence of loyalty, authority, and sanctity, parts of MFT, in church discourse. Also, this question might reveal the level of willingness for church leaders to speak about "political" issues which can contain strains of loyalty to certain groups. This also provides an opportunity for participant to describe whether or not she was instructed on the concept of "defiance."

4. Perhaps, there were differences of opinion among the congregation? If so, how were these expressed?

This looks for examples when individuals chose to act based on individual agency and dispute prevalent narratives. Also, it seeks to discern the presence of *Mimetic Rivalry* and scapegoating

5. Were there certain Bible stories or Biblical themes that guided how you responded during that time? If so, what?

This discerns if the participant used a particular Biblical narrative to inform actions. This, again, stems from Eisler's belief that narratives impact cultural transformation.

6. What is your recollection about how the local church responded to competing ethnic identities in the time period prior to the 1994 genocide?

This sought to understand how local churches responded to mandatory quotas that had been in place for decades prior to the Rwandan Genocide. Adventists, traditionally, hold a high importance of separating church and state, and this question seeks to understand if, or to what extent, the church made efforts to claim "religious liberty" in the context of ethnic categorization mandated by the government. This question also makes space to discuss how the church responded to propaganda radio and its message that sought to bind Rwandans to the MDR or the Democratic Republican Movement (See Appendix A) using the pull of loyalty, authority and sanctity in a way that pushed for violence toward Tutsi.

7. How do people use their own experiences of suffering in their current lives?

This seeks to establish an empathy between the interviewer and participant.

As an expression of care, it allows the participant to share if there might be a theme that currently helps in coping.

8. In what, if any, ways were you or your family subjected to unfairness prior to 1994?

This serves to build rapport and gives the participant an opportunity to tell her own story to the extent she chooses to do so.

9. How has the Adventist church responded to the idea of the one Rwanda as expressed in the Motto “Unity, Work, Patriotism?” How has it promoted healing?

This seeks to understand the impact of Adventist churches in the last 25 years in the context of peace. It seeks to discern if the Adventist church has established a prevailing narrative that will ensure peace and determine the nature of cooperation or collaboration between the Adventist church and the Rwandan government in peace making endeavors.

10. What is your opinion of the genocide memorials in Rwanda?

This tries to understand how memorials impact the stories people tell about the Rwandan Genocide. This question can also be a way to build rapport or a conversation starter.

I showed these proposed interview questions to researcher, Jennie Burnet, who is an Associate Professor in the Global Studies Institute at Georgia State University and a long-time scholar of Rwanda. Burnet showed special interest in the questions # 3,4, and 9, saying those could be perceived to relate to how the church intersected with politics.

She wanted me to note if people were able to respond to these, based on the understanding that the Adventist church does not like to be involved in politics (Bull and Lockhart, 2006). While in Rwanda in summer of 2018, I met Kirrily Pells, a Lecturer at University College of London, and she, also, reviewed my interview questions, and offered advice. In addition, I showed these questions to a Rwandan with whom I am acquainted, who recommended that when I am in Rwanda that I use the phrase *Genocide of the Tutsi*, as this is how the government officially refers to the events in 1994.

I used three different translators for the interviews. One person, who had worked with Jennie Burnet, translated seven interviews for me. I gave him the questions ahead of time, and he worked out the best *Kinyarwanda* phrasing for the concepts I sought to address. Due the informal snowball sampling method, the other two translators helped extemporaneously when I was introduced to a potential participant. In those cases, the participant demonstrated a level of trust in the interpreter, but I did not review the questions with the interpreter.

Institutional Review Board

For this study, I applied for *Not Human Subjects Research Designation*, and this was approved on November 16, 2018 with a case number of IRB-300002566.

Ethical Guidelines

I was open and honest about purpose. Verbal informed consent was obtained. Anonymity and avoiding questions about ethnicity served to protect Rwandans in their current societal structure. UAB IRB decided that this study did not meet criteria for

human research, therefore, I did not obtain Rwandan governmental consent. Moreover, the Rwandan website of the National Commission of the Fight Against Genocide states that one needs permission to obtain video recordings, but the website does not list audio recordings as an activity that requires permission (“National Commission,” 2019).

I told participants that I could make the results available to them if they would like via email. No one chose this option. Many participants said they wanted the world to know what happened. Twelve of the 14 participants forcefully thanked me for listening and recording their stories. It seemed as though participants felt they were familiar with the stories from the genocide and would not be interested in reading what I might write on the topic.

Participants were informed that they could stop the interview or refuse to answer any question I asked. This was in an effort to minimize traumatic memories.

Assumptions

Moral Foundations Theory proposes that actions come from intuitions formed from a plethora of influences. In this paper, I assume that verbal discourse, based on memories of what happened over 25 years ago, will reveal foundational moral modules that were impactful. Likely, this is an ambitious assumption. Nevertheless, MFT does assume that words or conscious thought, typically, serve to craft rationale to intuitive, unconscious values (Haidt, 2012).

I assumed that people who were adults in 1994 would be more perceptive to the meanings and contexts of stories that they heard.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the participants' memory may be hampered or inaccurate after the passing of time, or memory may be impacted after surviving severe trauma. Burnet (2012) describes "collective amnesia" as a survival strategy which could be an impediment.

Second, the sample is small and non-random due to logistics. Third, communication was impacted by a language barrier. Since I do not speak *Kinyarwanda*, for those interviewees who did not speak English, I used three different interpreters because of logistics. I was not able to control whether or not the interpreter provided an accurate interpretation of what participants said or conveyed my words reliably to the participants. The person that interpreted for 7 interviews in Kigali did have my questions in advance and had collaborated with me to ascertain the most accurate *Kinyarwanda* rendering.

Another limitation is that people may have formed a collective memory that is in alignment with what the current Rwandan government has put forward as the prescribed narrative of what occurred. For example, when I visited Rwanda in July, 2018 I noticed that the story told by the guide at the Parliament Museum differed in some respects from the one that Wilkens told our group. The guide and Wilkens had spirited disagreement about a couple of points during the tour. The politics of memory continues to divide the population (Burnet, 2012). Remembering can be political, yet it can also be an assertion of one's identity. Another limitation comes with studying religious groups. References to

Christianity, Africa, or Rwandan cultural components cannot be assumed to apply to all people in those groups. No group is monolithic.

In addition, my interpretation of stories told by Rwandans will be through the lens of someone outside their culture.

And, last, in conversations about painful and sensitive topics, an interviewer can expect more authentic responses if she has established rapport with participants. The logistics of this study did not allow time for this. While I used an approach of empathy and support that I learned as a nurse in the US, I am sure that my collection of memories from genocide survivors would have more authenticity if I had more time to establish rapport with each person.

RESULTS

Biblical Narratives

God had given the Israelites permission to destroy certain groups, including women and children, whom God had forsaken. (See Table 2). This was the pervasive response that participants gave when asked if perpetrators used a particular biblical text to justify actions. This is explicitly stated in 1 Samuel 15. And Psalm 71. Referring to Tutsi, participants remembered perpetrators using these words:

“God doesn’t love them, and God has forsaken them. So, they can be treated as the Amalekites.”

“Some preachers did say that God had given fallen nations to Israel, so now it was implied that it was ok to kill the fallen people—Tutsi.”

“God has abandoned the Tutsi and instructed them to be killed in the hands of Hutu.”

There was also reference to divine endorsement of governmental order in Romans 13 and Daniel 2. Thus, Christians should obey and cooperate with the government. These statements were heard during the Hutu Revolution when Tutsi were purged from Rwanda and continued to reflect the stance of the Adventist church through the period leading to the Rwandan Genocide in the context of how the church responded to mandates about ethnic quotas.

Table 2

Bible Texts Used by Perpetrators

Message Heard	
Romans 13	Be submissive to governing authorities.
1 Samuel 15: 2,3	The Lord told Israel to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belonged to them.
Daniel 2: 48	Daniel was made Prime Minister, and God places people in political positions
Psalms 71: 11	God has forsaken him, so pursue and seize him. We may do this, too.

The idea of a common lineage leading to the Biblical Adam and Eve, from Genesis 1, was repeatedly cited as a rationale not to commit genocide (See Table 3). Some people said they heard this in small groups or it was something they held in their own hearts.

“God created man and we are one tribe.”

“I think all humanity created by God and ethnicity does not matter.”

“I found all persons were the same and we were all created by God and that is the basis for human rights.”

Several people mentioned two pastors at Nyarimambo Adventist Church in Kigali who were very persistent in visitation of church members as the genocide began. The two pastors, apparently, visited in people’s homes and spoke in small groups on the theme from Genesis 1 that *“God created one man and there is one human nature. There are no ethnic groups.”* This stemmed from John 4 that illustrates Jesus respecting people who had been considered to be in an outgroup in his culture, and from Psalm 1 and Matthew 7 that urge individual agency to avoid evil.

Table 3

Bible Texts Used by Those Who Were Not Perpetrators

Message Heard	
Genesis 1: 26	All made in God's image.
John 4	Jesus spoke with Samaritan woman, so all are valued.
Psalms 1: 1	Blessed is the one who does not walk in ways of wicked.
Matthew 7: 24	Christian foundation on rock, not sand.

Sabbath Stories

For Adventists, keeping a “Sabbath” on the 7th day is foundational to their group identity. Varied stories were given about what Adventists did or did not do on Saturday, Sabbath, during the Rwandan Genocide. Most strikingly, the Mugonero genocide, occurred on Sabbath.

In my interviews, I heard both kinds of examples of churches being safe havens and of churches as holding areas where vulnerable people were lured and held until perpetrators arrived. One story I heard featured an Adventist pastor hiding people in the baptistry under a quilt and then sitting nearby on a chair to prepare a sermon, thus hiding refugees from perpetrators. Another story described a church service being interrupted by church leaders who said it was mandatory to kill any Tutsi refugees in the building as they were a group that God had forsaken.

One person told me that during the genocide fellow Adventists sang the hymn, “*We are Marching to Zion*,” as they swung machetes, claiming to do *umuganda*, a term still used in Rwanda to describe the monthly day of mandatory community service when streets are closed to tidy all of Kigali. Interestingly, Adventists currently get an

exemption from *umuganda* as it is scheduled to occur on the last Saturday of the month.

Instead, the Adventists perform the duty on Sunday.

Other stories mentioned people's expectations for what would happen on that day:

"One Friday night they met in church and at 3 am scattered to bush saying church members won't look in the bushes on Sabbath. At 8 am one Tutsi hid in a room (sort of a storage closet) of the church and was found by a deaconess. (He is still alive) That deaconess was a neighbor. I know her. When she came early to the church she found that man and she went away to find killers. When she returned with killers he was gone. So, they started searching around the church in the bush for all of us. One of us they hurt with machete and they were swinging machetes. That was on a Sabbath morning."

"They came to Mugonero because they thought it was protected since it was an Adventist place."

"On Friday night in Mugonero, my father was there. He was a pastor. They wrote three letters pleading for help. One was to Pastor Elizaphan, asking him to intervene as Esther had done for her people."

"I remember three killed on Sabbath morning in an Adventist church where they had sought sanctuary. Those who did it were believers. We had thought it would be safe. They came and said 'God is not with you. You are no longer in the hands of God. You are now the people to die.'"

"In Sabbath School, when people were in small groups it was called umutwe. That referred to the 'head.' So, they said, 'it must be moved away.' Implying the heads must be cut. This was accompanied by 'bad words' during church services."

"I remember perpetrators coming into church on Sabbath. This man and his brother in church each had Tutsi wives. People came into the churches to get information about the members, but they wanted to get a list of who was and was not a refugee. People were called 'good Christians' but were spying. They went to church to make lists of Tutsi."

"The Union President in charge of mission and listed my mom as a 'refugee.' She was not a refugee. She had lived in Rwanda a long time. She was later killed with all five of my children, who had left the big city to stay with her for safety. The Church did not warn Adventists who were on the 'list.' In Gitwe, that is the case. Instead, they brought them together. They should have said 'guys, disperse.' That would have been a warning. That's the Seventh-day Adventists in Gitwe. They should have warned them and said 'guys, take care of yourselves' and not bring them together. To bring them together means you are part of it." They brought outsiders to do it. People they didn't know."

“I saw pastors mocking dead bodies. They said, ‘Wake up and go to church.’”

“When I go to church, I see the people responsible for killing my family, they have never asked forgiveness.”

Ingroup Loyalty/Betrayal

Being Political. In the Rwandan context, the Adventist churches featured political identity. This occurred within church organization and social groupings, as well as in the intersection between church and broader society. Thirteen out of 14 participants emphasized the concept that perpetrators were loyal to political party. Mostly, the stories participants told about the value of loyalty were in the context of loyalty to ethnic group or political party. I heard no emphasis on loyalty within a religious group, based on familial ties, or on the basis of community ties.

“People joined the Adventist church in Kigali but kept their ethnic identity.”

“We were taught to kill Tutsi before they killed us. Tutsi were said to be killers. That is the heart of the genocide. People thought their pastors would teach the word of God, but really the pastors still had a deeper identity that they had learned earlier.”

“In my church there was a small group who participated in activity to prepare for genocide. In other words, they became political.”

“The church was divided and labeled ministers according to their political biases, such as from the north or from the south.”

“At one point there was a division in the northern and southern parts of the country. There was a revolt in 1991 or 1992 when people from the south came storming to the doors of the Adventist Union office and complained that too many administrators were from the north.”

“I remember Elizaphan Ntakirutimana and Gerard Ntakirutimana at Mugonero. I think they became political and just did what the district leader told them to do.”

“After the presidential assassination, no one went outside or to church initially. Services stopped initially. Later, some hid in church (in Kigali), but a pastor stood in the way and would not let in killers. People who were not political tried to stop the violence.”

“In our church we had leaders who were very involved with political parties. Those in church who refused to be involved with politics were killed first.”

“Church leaders wore clothing and signs of political parties.”

“The story is this. The church became political.”

“I left Mugonero for Kigali the day before the massacre. I had a big problem working there as a nurse. I saw that the Tutsi women did not get the same maternity care as the Hutu. I knew that was not right and could not work there any longer.”

Propaganda radio. I heard no description of people in churches contesting the loyalty that had been advocated by propaganda radio. Asked whether the churches said it was evil or wrong, the answer could be described as:

“No, the churches said nothing about it, that would be political.”

Several remember tunes and slogans from *RTL*M, saying:

“We never thought it would lead to genocide.”

*“One of the main voices in RTL*M *was an Adventist. It was difficult in the years before genocide because, for Adventists, one of our own was a powerful voice.”*

*“We had leaders very involved with political parties---the RTL*M *divided the church into two parties.”*

Authority Respect/Subversion

The lines of authority and practice in the Adventist church, for the most part, flowed from political party. In the context of ethnic inequities, no one reported an instance of an overt, public appeal from church leaders that tried to persuade churchgoers to submit to a “higher” authority from God or to listen to church leaders as an authority greater than government. All fourteen participants reported that perpetrators used a narrative that stated governmental authority subverted religious authority. I looked

for defiance in formative stories told in Rwandan churches before the genocide but did not hear that concept.

“In 1994, it was said openly to kill Tutsi. After worship, Adventists would join the government or political parties that were killing everywhere.”

“I heard in church that it was the correct duty to honor the country and to kill the invaders, which were the Tutsi.”

“The church immediately accepted what the government said to do.”

“If the government gives an order, it is an order.”

“The Catholic church could have protested what the government said to do. The Adventist church was too small to make a difference.”

“I believe if an order came to kill today, that many Adventists in Rwanda would do it.”

Quotas. I asked each person if she thought the church could have protested ethnic quotas on the basis of “religious liberty.” The answer was negative.

“People in churches followed what the government did.”

“The church had the same ethnic distribution for pastors in leadership. The Hutu pastors got the better positions. For Tutsi to get a good position, he would pay a bribe.”

“My father was a Tutsi pastor and he got the worst assignments.”

I asked each participant about school and whether it had been an Adventist school or public school. Both categories of schools had policies that removed opportunities for Tutsi to advance.

“When you were a Tutsi, you could not play with a Hutu.”

“My parents told me not stand when Tutsi were asked to stand.”

“Teachers would ask if students were Hutu or Tutsi and have them stand up. Problem was at national level we could not advance. Many Tutsi were held back, but this helped the scores at the local schools. We took the same level over and over in the local school and it inflated the scores of the local school.”

“If Tutsi wanted to study at Mugonero, they could only take nursing studies.”

Hutu helpers. Several stories feature Hutu choosing to disobey mandates that targeted Tutsi with violence. No one recalled overt admonitions from church authorities that would urge Hutu to do this.

“My father had a Hutu friend who tried to advocate for me and my brother to have opportunities at school. I went to Democratic Republic of Congo for school 10 years before genocide. This friend was a Hutu pastor from the northern province called Ruhengeri. They killed him because they said he was a spy.”

“Some Hutu were quiet helpers. The majority of survivors were helped by Hutu. Some were prominent voices against Tutsi. Once in church early in genocide, a church elder (Hutu) stood and told the neighbors publicly that killing was wrong. He pointed to the ones he knew had killed. I remember he fled the community and I do not know if he lived.”

“Actually, my life was saved by the poorest and simplest family in the village. The widow had four grandchildren and her widowed daughter that had come home to live in a traditional round hut with only one door. The old widow knew my family was in hiding and sent someone to the bush to see if anyone in my family might still be alive and invite us in. I had been on the run for a month and was the only family member alive. I did not trust the invitation, at first. But, I did go to her home. . . while there, her son came to visit and bragged about all the people he had killed. His mother, the old widow, said, ‘ok, that was your job; but I have one person here and you will not touch him. If you do, you must kill me first.’ This old widow had no religion.”

“A Hutu friend tried to help at Kigeme and was killed.”

“People were actually very powerful and could have used that power to save lives, but they did not speak up against their political group, usually.”

“There was an indigenous Hutu near Lake Kivu. He told his children they could not kill anyone in his house because if they did he would curse them. At night he took people across the lake to Congo. That man is well-known. After genocide, he decided he wanted to be baptized. But, he baptized himself, because he said, ‘the pastor’s hands all have blood on them.’”

Purity Sanctity/Disgust

Terms with meanings related to “disgust” were said forcefully and repeatedly.

This particular module of *Moral Foundations Theory* was mentioned with the most intensity in the interviews. Twelve out of 14 people in the study spent a significant part of their interviews referring to the notion that Tutsi were viewed with disgust.

“RTLM was ‘killers radio.’ It spoke of cockroaches and snakes and that was the Tutsi and they should be killed.”

“Tutsi must be pushed out of country. All refugees must go to purify the country.”

“The Protestant pastor in charge of Kigeme Hospital told the killers to not make the walls dirty by blood. We Tutsi were told to arrange ourselves so as not to dirty the tile when we were killed.”

Stories of Imitation/Mimesis

Many stories displayed the coalescing power of a group frenzy and showed that, for most part in those that I interviewed, the Adventist church did little to stimulate the development of human conviction that could translate into a capacity of a person to act based on independent agency and judgement.

“Adventists just followed and did what was said on propaganda radio.”

“The church is all about politics and popularity. They are baptizing crowds without changing anyone’s heart.”

“The problem was people were not converted.”

“I was helped in Kigali by a Hutu pastor. But, I know during the day he was killing others.”

DISCUSSION

The stories I heard revealed that, for the most part, Adventist churches did not function as civil institutions to promote structural peace in Rwanda, and they, generally, did not support environments that would create, or nurture, sociative peace. The participants' oral histories describe a milieu similar to that reported by the World Council of Churches, which claimed churches in Rwanda made errors of commission and omission in the time leading up to genocide (Longman, 2010). Rwandan Adventist churches followed Gramsci's assumptions that postulated that churches, acting in civil society, would gravitate to speak with the same voice as the dominant political narrative. The stories from Rwandan Adventist churches show that the churches did not serve as complex systems of influence that could act for the common good.

It seems that in addition to cooperating with political entities to enforce quotas, which were forms of structural violence, people in Adventist churches told stories and recalled narratives that revealed fellow churchgoers becoming actors, based on a political script, as described by Fujii (2009). The oral histories disclose some framing that provided rationale for acting to promote group cohesion based on ethnicity or political leanings. This shows the denomination's traditional goal to maintain a non-political identity was not achieved. Participants recalled hearing words in churches that supported Mamdani's (2001) analysis that describes Rwandan history on a societal and individual plain that facilitated a coalescence that allowed Hutus to kill with a sense of impunity in 1994.

Hearing genocide survivors' memories about what was said in churches can allow a person in any context to reflect on what is being said in one's own culture. Exiled Russian poet Joseph Brodsky said, "You think evil is going to come into your houses wearing big black boots? It doesn't come like that. Look at the language. It begins in the language." In retrospect, it seems obvious that Rwandan churches should have, at a minimum, challenged the disrespectful labels used in the early 1990s. *Inyenzi* should not have been a part of the discourse.

My discussion will include the concept of propaganda radio which seemed to permeate all issues considered. Next, I will address participants' memories of Bible stories and verses used in church, and then, I will untangle conceptual modules from *Moral Foundations Theory* in the context of Rwandan Christianity. Lastly, I will discuss Girard's *Mimetic Rivalry*, a framework that also can be seen as impacting biblical interpretation. Since this is the case, Girard will also be discussed in the Biblical narrative section.

Propaganda Radio

Propaganda radio heightened *Mimetic Rivalry* and emphasized certain Bible stories and texts to create justification for hatred. Propaganda radio created a story to move Rwandan society further away from partnership toward domination. Words recalled from propaganda radio demonstrate its influence on, or its revelation of, the presence of any of MFT's three modules for which I looked; loyalty, authority, sanctity. For the most part, the Adventist churches did not dispute a propaganda narrative that described centuries of Tutsi acting as usurping enemies within the country and traitors to

Rwandan self-governance in the last half of the twentieth century. This allowed a rationale on which Hutu could form a hardened corporate identity that left no room for exceptions or challenge. Propaganda radio nurtured resentment and stimulated enthusiasm for purifying the region from wily invaders who did not respect democracy.

The oral testimonies reflect the notion that if the Adventist church had challenged propaganda radio, that would have been a political action, and, as such, that would have been impossible. The stories I heard reflected what has been reported in the literature. That is during decades of escalating violence, the Church failed to speak prophetically to call out societal inequities and to provide a common space that would allow a milieu in which people could imagine different identities with more factors than binary ethnic categories. Sen (2006) wrote of the multi-faceted nature of identity. Pathways to violence are influenced by identity and can be thwarted if one emphasizes more than one type of identity marker. Thus with Christian churches' abdication of duty in Rwanda, there was no large institution willing to engage in peacemaking (Des Forges, 1999; Katongole, 2005; Longman, 2010; Newbury, 1998; Prunier, 1995).

In Rwanda, the Church allowed a smoldering mass of resentment to become the deep narrative. In addition to toxic overstatements, slander, and misrepresentations, language, undergirded by triumphalism, hid behind a victim mentality. The allowance of race-based categories skewed and fragmented the identity of all it touched. Holding ethnic based identity put people in limited spaces where there could be no room for ultimate thriving. Berry (1970) describes the same sort of situation in the United States in places where prejudices flourish. Disrespectful language will, in the end, inhibit one's own growth.

One participant said:

“I don’t know what was in their minds. I still ask that question. The only thing I can come up with is love. If it was in their hearts it would not have happened. The problem was no love.”

Most social discourse now is instantaneous in the form of social media or talk-radio. It is unknown whether future scholars will be able to label such platforms, without dispute, to be propaganda. Likely, at some point scholars and historians will look at whether or not churches in the United States fulfilled a role as peace promoting institutions in 2019. That is to say, at some point, people will look back at the function of churches in society today and ask, “did they make space for love?”

Biblical Narratives

Some approach the confluence of violence with religion by looking at how religious people use holy texts. For Christians, scripture forms maps or roadways to guide life, and for Christians, cherry-picking Bible verses is a centuries old habit. Eisler (2002) believes stories from a holy text can be used to move society toward partnership or domination. Lifting words out of context in literature as complex as the Bible, one can expect to craft, or support, many conceptual frameworks. In particular, Old Testament stories have been used as “load-bearing” narratives to inform action. The mission project in Africa did not consider the implications that would come when seeking to imprint a text-based religion amidst people whose culture had been based on oral traditions. With a “holy text,” adherents can choose texts to support inclinations or intuitions.

The stories I heard reflected familiarity with using the Bible and said that the texts that refer to God forsaking certain people provided a “biblical” basis for genocide. This concept was the most emphasized biblical reference. In this framing narrative, God had

forsaken Tutsi, just as he had forsaken the Amalekites, and Hutu would be justified to kill Tutsi, including women and children, just as Israelites killed the Amalekites in the Old Testament.

Interviewees recalled hearing Bible verses that advocated support of political leaders, with the assumption that they were put in powerful positions by divine mandate and must be obeyed no matter what edict was given. I heard stories of massacres in Adventist churches at Gitwe and Mugonero. I met two people who said their fathers, Adventist pastors, were killed at Mugonero. This is the place where a letter was written by Adventist pastors containing words that Gourevitch (1998) used to title his book, *“We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families.”* In a letter to Adventist administrator and local political leader, Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, the Tutsi Adventist pastors in Mugonero Church used the Bible story of Queen Esther’s advocacy for Israel as a basis to their appeal to Ntakirutimana. “Your intervention will be highly appreciated, the same as the Jews were saved by Esther.” This fell on deaf ears. In this case, the Tutsi pastors’ cherry-picked Bible story did not prove to be impactful against the selected guiding framework that said the Tutsi were God-forsaken and deserved to be killed as the Amalekites had been. Thus, one sees the problem of basing an action on a Bible story. One can face the dilemma of competing Bible stories or competing texts.

In testimony from Ntakirutimana’s trial in 2004, survivors outside the Mugonero church report hearing perpetrators on Sabbath morning singing *“I’m in the Lord’s Army,”* an evangelical hymn (International Court Tribunal, 2004). The words that killers sang reflect the political overlay that was in effect when they killed as though in “God’s army.” Other Bible texts could have been selected to emphasize peace, inclusion, or

partnership. For example, “Thou shalt not kill,” or “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Framing narratives are key. This highlights nefarious issues that appear when a book is elevated as “Holy,” but people are ill-equipped to interpret it. People can lift sections from the “Holy” book to craft a rationale to support their own intuitions, a pervasive phenomenon (Kahneman, 2011), or religion can be co-opted by the state in the task of fulfilling a purpose that skews the original nature of the religion itself (Kurlansky, 2006). For example, in Northern Uganda, Nkabala (2017) observed how the Lord’s Resistance Army justified violence by pointing to Old Testament texts that instructed people to kill those who disobey.

Several participants told me of hearing other Christians speak of the story of creation of humanity, without tribe and in a place of equal footing, to be a framing narrative that was used to confront genocidal activity. I was not expecting this use of scripture. Three people in Kigali mentioned a couple of Adventist pastors who went door to door during the time when genocide started in the city, and these pastors used the Bible to emphasize that there was one humanity and one ethnicity in Genesis 1. One participant wanted to ensure that I wrote down the names of these two pastors. I did not hear of massacres in Adventist churches in Kigali.

As in most of Protestantism, hermeneutical interpretation of the Bible continues to be a contentious topic in the Adventist church (Gutierrez, 2019). The issue was recognized in Rwandan Adventism decades before the genocide, but I uncovered no evidence of strategy to address the problem. Long (1972) wrote about biblical hermeneutics in Rwanda, and he contended that the maxim that scripture should be interpreted in context was beyond the general understanding of those in Rwanda. Noting

the difficulty for Rwandan Adventists to create an identity, he says that Rwandans tended to choose words from the Bible at random without considering intent or implications. He saw Rwandan spirituality as more social than spiritual and pointed to the problems that would come when churches supplanted traditional sources of authority. In a sort of forewarning, he cited examples of Adventists in Rwanda using the Bible to justify a particular course of action without consideration of bigger pieces of the religious faith. Apparently, the Adventist context was similar to other Protestant churches in Rwanda, since all denominations in Rwanda featured heroes and perpetrators during the genocide.

Some of the participants that I interviewed report that greed and selfishness seemed to motivate their fellow church goers to participate in violence and looting. Longman's (2010) study looked at a correlation between what part of the Bible was emphasized and how a community responded as the genocide began. He examined sermons and bulletins and collected stories from contacts he had made in Rwanda to compare the response of two Presbyterian Churches in two communities. In the community of one Presbyterian Church, genocidal activity occurred quickly and extensively. That church's sermons and bulletins had emphasized prosperity and wealth, which could be seen as reflections of a scarcity domination ethos as key parts of Christianity. On the other hand, Longman noted muted genocidal activity in the second district where bulletins and sermons had emphasized ideas empowering the poor and challenging hegemony, ideas that could be viewed as part of a partnership narrative.

The impact of Christianity on Africa might be seen to be questionable, and the use of scripture is part of the issue. Ikpe (2009) argued that much social unrest in the

continent can be traced to Christian missionizing disruption of indigenous forms of societal function. Part of the issue as Long (1972) noted relates to biblical hermeneutics. One cannot discern to what extent the nature of a biblical “curriculum” had an impact on how people responded to genocidal activity. Eisler’s (2002) assertion placed framing narratives as impactful in cultural transformation, which would suggest that it is wise for religious people to consider the impact of stories told from holy texts.

Girardian Hermeneutic. Biblical interpretation is a complex endeavor. Leaving biblical interpretation to leaders, many Christians are unable, or choose not, to grapple with the scripture in context and instead lift certain portions to use as guiding narratives in any situation or simply follow what leaders say.

As a document with over 700,000 words, one can ask, “Which part of the Bible is the key to understanding the rest?” In Girard’s (1987) interaction with the Bible, he chose to identify stories that challenged an us/them scapegoating narrative and stories that gave voice to victims. He pointed to the Book of Psalms as the first book written from a victim’s perspective. He contended that the crucifixion was the most powerful subversive narrative to show how powerful forces scapegoat an innocent victim. Jesus was the innocent victim of a group in crisis. This is explicitly noted in the Gospel of Luke in the parable of the tenants in the vineyard who come together to drive out the envoys of the master. Luke says that in this way, the stone that the builders reject becomes the cornerstone. By becoming a human scapegoat, Jesus, according to Girard, becomes the receptacle for all violence. In Girard’s view, by submitting to violence Christ uproots the structural matrix of religion which is based on sacrifice.

Girard (1987) took note of scapegoating throughout the Bible, and he points to Joseph being sold by his brothers and the expulsion of Cain from the Garden of Eden as other stories featuring sacrificial expulsion to bring peace. Girard made the case that the biblical Satan is actually a name for the founding mechanism of *Mimetic Rivalry*. That is why scripture would also call Satan “a murderer from the beginning,” and that is why, during Jesus’ ministry, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightening.” This referred to the way his life would expose, and defang, the scapegoating mechanism. For Girard, Satan (or evil) is not a person, but a process. Satan, a term, is the process of scapegoating (Girard, 2001).

In my view, with a Western lens, Girard’s (1987) hermeneutic might provide an interesting path for interpreting the Bible, because, in his way of reading it, scripture can be used for something different than crafting a rationale, it can be used to expose scapegoating and to promote peace. Yet, Ikpe (2009), lecturer at University of Botswana, analyzed Girard’s *Mimetic Rivalry* in the African context of biblical interpretation and found it wanting. First, he noted that in Africa, where colonialism has created a “melting pot of culture” and a “bastardization of the African mind,” people approach life with a view of inferiority. For Ikpe, the religious conception of a deity that releases agency and chooses self-sacrifice leaves the African, who expects power and discipline, perplexed. Ikpe anticipated that Christianity in an African context would not likely choose peace and self-sacrifice to be guiding myths from the Bible. Instead, he believed it likely that African Christians would gravitate toward overarching biblical narratives that promote unilateralism and group differences.

When Western Protestantism imparts a tendency to use certain biblical texts as all-encompassing-life-instruction in the African context, where many are exiting from indigenous religions, one can see the implications that make it imperative to use biblical texts to frame life in a way that promotes human flourishing. Ikpe (2009) wrote that African Christianity was a hybrid culture. In my view, a failed vision of how one might use the Bible was part of the ethos that allowed Christians to kill Christians in churches in the Rwandan Genocide.

Protestant missionaries approached the task of “converting” Africa from a framework that claimed to impart biblical truth with a rationalistic, modern approach. This asserted that God can be described by propositional claims from a holy book. Such a strategy, surely, must be labeled as a failure against the backdrop of the Rwandan Genocide. A complete discussion of facets of conversion to Christianity is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, in the context of how a holy book is used, one can note recent studies emphasizing the tendency of people to create a rationale to support an intuition (Kahneman, 2011). That is to say: Kahneman contends that all thinking is mere rationalization of an issue that has been decided. *Moral Foundations Theory* also points to this likelihood, stating that people do not use words to decide, but, instead, use words to support a decision already made (Haidt, 2012). With such a realization, Christianity will continue to face challenges in the context of biblical hermeneutics.

Moral Foundations Theory

In Africa, Christian civilizations killing indigenous people for the “greater good,” is one of several atrocities committed while concurrently embarking on “mission”

projects to convert indigenous people. Rwanda is an interesting situation in which to consider *Moral Foundations Theory*, since it is a region where a firm colonial Western imprint has molded what had historically been hunter/gatherer indigenous societies.

Since Constantine, Christians have participated with political entities in ways that undermine the heart of what Jesus advocated (Kurlansky, 2006). Christians have been willing to override the MFT category of care/harm, in instances when powerful forces claim that harm/killing will be for a greater good. Instead, MFT's three binding axes appear to have been cultivated in Rwanda with tragic results of moving society away from elements of partnership and toward violence and domination. Adventists, though claiming to never align with political powers, appeared to do this in Rwanda and the stories report a loyalty to ethnicity and politics, while simultaneously using the phrase "that would be political" to explain why the church did not do certain things.

While my study focused on moral domains that Graham and Haidt (2010) view to be social binding, I will briefly consider the first two moral domains, here. By nature, a Western capitalistic framework changes society, somewhat, away from care toward economic growth. Care/harm and justice/injustice, the first and second moral domains, were not prescriptive in the way that colonial powers interacted with Africa during the slave trade, certainly, but also not used to make decisions during interactions in regions in Rwanda when the goal was to establish European empire. In that framing lens, it is easy to see the immorality of Western influence on the continent, and it is difficult to view African mission work as an endeavor with enough power to redeem such a strategy.

Participants in my interviews report that religion, Christianity, did not bind Rwandans before the genocide, instead, it was politics or ethnicity that functioned to bind

society. This reality challenges Durkheim's (1965) assertion that religion serves to bind people into moral communities, or, perhaps, African Christianity was not a religion. In addition, the "binding" moral foundations of loyalty, authority and sanctity, did not serve to bind together Christian groups in Rwanda, and, instead, acted in the sphere of social action based on political allegiance. This is similar to the situation in the South when religion did not bind Christians in the era of Jim Crow. White Christians were not bound to African American Christians by what Haidt calls a "groupish righteousness" based on religion.

Ingroup Loyalty/Betrayal. Thirteen of the participants emphasized the primacy of political party as a marker for loyalty. Religious teachings and narratives are often seen to create a group that will be loyal to one another. This is not what I heard in Rwanda.

Graham and Haidt (2010) postulated that group-focused "binding" foundations can be used to help explain why religious people are happier or more charitable. Yet, this claim is negated in the Rwandan context of what interviewees told me they heard in churches prior to the genocide. Common ritual and worship activities did not bind people into groups who would care for one another. Graham and Haidt (2010) described a religious group's collective behavior and rituals to be synchronized binding activities to bring many together into one. *E pluribus Unum*. They asserted that the ingroup loyalty module of MFT would direct religious adherents to react to others in the religious group with preferential favor. This was not the case with any religious group in Rwanda, except for Muslims who did look after each other during the genocide.

With the political overlay, words describing Christian spirituality in Rwanda did not emphasize communion with other religious adherents or individual agency.

Williamson (2014) discussed this continuing problem of political influence on religious narratives in Rwanda by showing recent ways that churches are creating a collective false consciousness that legitimizes the RPF even as it moves toward authoritarianism. History shows that when the state coopts religion that it will be religion that is weakened (Kurlansky, 2006).

Byilingiro (2002), a current Rwandan Adventist administrator, questioned whether the problem was an ethnic footprint imposed by the church or if the issue was close ties between political leaders and the church, and, thus, church members would have been confronted with competing loyalties. In my view, both concepts are interrelated. Any political intersection is at cross purposes with an explicit Adventist value of “separation of church and state,” or religious liberty and blurs lines of loyal alliance.

Historically, the denomination has emphasized religious liberty against a backdrop of wanting freedom for itself to choose Saturday worship against the majority Christian Sunday day of worship. Bull and Lockhart (1989) quoted church founder James White saying that the church would be wise not to speak on political issues since this might unnecessarily divide the members on unimportant issues or divide the loyalty of adherents. For example, in the context of the American Civil War, White had claimed that it was not their struggle and that prophecy did not say that slavery would end before the second coming. Thus, group loyalty was seen as more important than justice or other moral values. A repeated theme in my interviews was that the church became “political”

before the genocide. From the context of what participants reported, I interpreted being “political” to mean that a loyalty was developed based on political alignment, instead of on an alignment based on the idea that religious adherents should be loyal to one another. This raises the question about the validity of stating that MFT’s ingroup loyalty module is a social bonding moral intuition that will be seen in religious groups. More research could be done about how one uses loyalty and whether or not, in the end, it is a virtue.

Authority Respect/Subversion. Stories from interview participants describe a church context that attended to the ethnic overlay put in place by hegemonic entities. Authority to political standards overruled authority that might bind a religious group. All participants state that they heard no instance when the institutional Adventist church questioned quotas, and, in fact, many report that the church incorporated quotas in its social context. The stories I heard did not emphasize respect to the authority of a Christian deity. In every case that I heard, the Adventist church did not mount a defense to the government edict that mandated ethnic quotas. So, governmental authority trumped authoritative strands from Christianity that would promote equality.

The stories I heard report that Adventist schools cooperated in the task of enforcing ethnic quotas. In addition, many times, Adventist churches used ethnic profiling when deciding which pastors would get a desirable district. Authority to governmental powers was emphasized. One participant reported a Hutu pastor who advocated for Tutsi to have educational opportunities, and he was killed.

Ndamyumugabe’s (2006) unpublished thesis, written from the perspective of a survivor, sought to review possible causes for Christian involvement in the Rwandan Genocide. One rationale presented is that the authority of traditional religion and kings of

the region had been undermined, and the Rwandans had been forced to part with their traditions without deep conviction in a Christian worldview. Perpetrators defaulted into choices that had been impacted by stories that came from powerful political entities and were not mediated by traditional religion or traditional Christian worldview.

Straus (2015) examined five African countries that did and did not devolve into violence. He found that leaders' framing narratives impact when and where there has been violence in Africa. Looking at macro-level violence shapes threat perception and frames the vigor with which armed groups function. He noted that a hierarchical, nationalist founding narrative is the key commonality for mass violence in African regions. Conflicts become a zero-sum game with existential overtones. Any military confrontation could provide a risk to the story told by the ruling establishment. The stories I heard support the notion of obedience to political leaders, based on their powerful framing narrative.

Berry and Berry (1999) published an account of a symposium held in Kigali in 1995 which included testimonies from people very supportive of the new Rwandan government, but did point to hateful language targeting all Tutsi as a formative narrative that led to violence. The new Rwandan government was speaking with an authoritative voice to craft a story as a basis for authority. Now, twenty years later, it is still unknown to what extent Christians use the moral module of authority through the lens of governmental authority rather than religious authority.

Baum (2008) advocated the teaching of "defiance" as a key way to prevent genocide. Christians, typically, have focused on obedience to God and man. Some strands of Christianity emphasize the development of human agency and discernment. These

notions of Christianity were not revealed to be points of emphasis by any stories I heard. The issue of which authority to obey and the interface with political forces are two concepts that have not been highlighted in moral development of Christian groups in Rwanda. Bhavnani (2006) viewed the ability to resist intra group pressure as key in his models of how individuals could resist the pull social networks. Such topics would be worthy for future consideration by religious people who are concerned with peace.

Purity Sanctity/Degradation. Part of my discussion for this moral module can be found in the discussion earlier in this section under the heading of Propaganda Radio. People that I interviewed report that churches offered no direct challenge to the problem of propaganda radio's toxic labeling. Everyone I spoke with said that there was no sermon, pastoral letter, or discussion in a public setting that condemned the words said on *RTL*M. In addition, no one reported any public use of scripture to challenge toxic labeling of Tutsi.

This component of MFT was mentioned with the most passion by those participating in my interviews. For one explanation of this emotional potency, consider Haidt's (2012) observation about the evolutionary root to this moral module. The original adaptive challenge to avoid parasites and pathogens made purity a powerful moral concept. Groups have been concerned with purification and pollution, and the potential existential impact of allowing even possible impurity can trigger intense response. Haidt's description provides an explanation why propaganda radio was so powerful in Rwanda. Descriptions of Tutsi as vermin and cockroaches triggered primal impulses that resulted in violent executions.

Former UAB Anthropology Department Chairman, Christopher Taylor (1999), used the lens of a medical anthropologist to describe his time in Rwanda as the genocide began. He framed the genocidal violence as consisting of actors in a narrative of flow and blockage. In this view, Hutu, fueled by strong words and labeling, acted to extinguish Tutsi as sacrificial victims for purification. Taylor saw the body politic as analogous to an individual human body, noting similarities between blood flow and the watery currents carrying bloody bodies on Rwandan rivers toward the Nile Basin. Mugesara's speech was prophetic, or instructive. Body mutilations were a political language, and this was overlaid on a primeval fear of body blockages.

Haidt (2012) viewed the purity sanctity/degradation module to be very powerful among the Christian Right in the United States. Further study could be done to understand the impact of an impurity narrative to fan flames of genocidal violence. In the United States MFT has been used in the context of analyzing sermons when Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) created a word dictionary to compare two congregations from different denominations in the United States.

If transcripts were available from *RTLM* propaganda radio, or if *Kangura* newspaper articles were accessible, it would be interesting to perform a computational text analysis to search for moral loading concepts as done by Sagi and Dehghani (2014) in their study comparing rhetoric in the New York Times for certain political issues in the United States. If data were available, such a study in Rwanda would provide information for Christian groups to consider when evaluating the effect of Christianity on peace and well-being.

Musschenga (2013) noted weakness in MFT in that it did not provide a way to reconcile conflicting moral values. For Musschenga, a healthy democratic political system is necessary to minimize conflict, and he did not see space in Haidt's (2012) propositional framework that would acknowledge a pathway for a political solution to moral conflicts. How does a person grapple with duty related conflict vs. value conflicts?

In this paper, based on stories participants told me they heard in churches, I have discussed the apparent impact of loyalty, authority, and sanctity in those who participated in violence in Rwanda. Linden (1977) pointed to Rwanda as the one place on the African continent where Christianity and politics became most closely enmeshed. Reviewing Linden's book, Lemarchand (1978) stated that in no other African country has the church played a more decisive role in the political destinies of the people than in Rwanda. This observation came almost 20 years prior to the Rwandan Genocide when people became entangled in strands of political and moral frameworks that tugged at convictions of loyalty and obedience while casting a net of fear of an "impure" other. Musschenga (2013), saw practical problems with MFT in peacemaking in the United States. The stories I heard also suggest that understanding the moral modules of loyalty, authority, and sanctity did not provide a tool for peace as the Rwandan Genocide.

In my view, MFT can help one understand competing value conflicts, but, I am not sure how MFT can be used as a tool to build peace. Haidt (2012) claimed humans are prone to conflict because they tend to be "self-righteous hypocrites." MFT provides a moral framework to understand how various people make decisions. Yet, the schema lacks the ability to help one see the essential benchmark toward which one should channel duty, and it lacks a metric that would help a person, or group, make decisions in

the face of differing moral values. Apparently, during the Rwandan Genocide, Christians used holy texts to help interpret reality as a justification for violence; this is in an illustration of Haidt's social intuitionist presuppositions. Perpetrators crafted a rational for what they had decided to do.

Mimetic Rivalry

Part of my discussion of *Mimetic Rivalry* can be found earlier in this section under the heading of Girardian Hermeneutic. Mostly, the stories I heard appeared to show a lack of imagination for how churches could be places of peace, impervious to political games. Dehumanizing words, left unchallenged, and narratives that featured resentment changed the milieu in Rwanda. In the context of ethnicity and violence, the stories told by Rwandan Adventists support generalizations about the response of all Christian groups in Rwanda. First, the words made it psychologically possible for people to believe that violent actions were good and could serve the good of society. Second, the words contributed to forces that pushed Rwandans into *Mimetic Rivalry*. The Church in Rwanda failed to be a place where kindness could take root and grow.

There is a blood bonding and group cohesion that occurs when people band together to extinguish those who have been labeled "impure" or "evil." The final result of death alone can be insufficient, so individuals compete among themselves for recognition and status that comes from a public display of violence or of the effect of violence that often ends in death (Weisband, 2017). Unspeakable cruelty occurs on a path to absolute power that is enabled by self-deception. Weisband said the history of the "modern" could be framed as the history of "power's hold over life" and its grip over death. In Rwanda,

power consisted in the ability to make others inhabit a particular story or reality (Mamdani, 2001).

Prior to the Rwandan Genocide, in addition to a refusal to challenge, directly, toxic labels, Adventist churches seemed to continue in the habit of collaborating with political figures that, effectively, allowed adherents to be caught up in *Mimetic Rivalry*. For the most part, the stories I heard appeared to show a lack of imagination for how churches could be places of peace, impervious to political games. Dehumanizing words and resentment-filled narratives changed the milieu in Rwanda.

Girard did not devote significant attention to examining *Mimetic Rivalry* in an African context. He offered a fleeting reference to archaic practices in Africa (Girard, 2001), which Ikbe (2009) validated. With adoption of a narrative put in place by hegemonial entities, Christians had justification for violence. Girard (2001) proposed that a person caught up in the frenzy of scapegoating will be unaware that the phenomenon is occurring. For the most part, churches in Rwanda failed to provide a non-political narrative that could serve as a central point around which people could form an imitative group. In Adventist churches, like other churches, there appeared to be little emphasis on the idea of creating a space for identity that would be separate from political, or ethnic, identities. Negative imitation can trap people in cycles of violence. Nonviolent leadership can provide a fixed point for positive imitation. Imagination is mandatory for this to occur and for people to break free from stories that feature domination and fear (Eisler, 2002).

Parenthetically, I have been intrigued by the possibility that the current state of “peace” in Rwanda is possible because of a political narrative that scapegoats

colonialism. I heard this thread from all with whom I spoke, and I saw it highlighted in Rwandan museums and historical sights. Perhaps, Rwanda can stay at peace when all Rwandans, acting as “One Rwanda,” can unite around a common enemy, colonial powers. Perhaps, the acceptance of such a label would be a small way that colonial entities can atone for past errors.

CONCLUSIONS

While impossible to untangle completely what caused genocide, the stories I heard from Rwandan Adventist churches reveal that moral foundations of loyalty, authority, and purity seemed to give a basis for some church members to act in the context of social binding based on ethnicity, not on religion. Political groupings superseded religion-based identity, and biblical phrases were used to support the endeavor. Propped on framing narratives lifted from scripture, Christians could kill other Christians with a sense that they were doing righteous acts. Twenty-five years after the Rwandan Genocide, this paper gives a glimpse of what was said in churches.

Why did Christians in Rwanda fall into a group identity and then pursue violence to push the agenda of that group? Constantine first put the sword in the hand of Christians and once the boundary had been broken in the 4th century, it would be possible for Christians in subsequent ages to imitate others and adopt an identity that could lead to violence.

“Rwanda, like the other massive failures of the Church in our century, stands for the trivialization of Christianity--no longer a distinctive worldview, polity, or praxis, merely a quaint add-on compatible with capitalism, militarism, and racism. This sort of Christianity--the broad mainstream of the post-Constantinian era--has nothing left with which to resist the bloody imperatives of empire, clan, class, or state. Such a Christianity is nothing more than "twaddle."” (Budde, 2000, p.221)

Instead of using language as a vehicle for truth, labels of ethnic identity seemed to control discourse in Rwanda. Moreover, use of a “holy” book with “holy” language allowed people to embrace the zeal of religious fervor when involved in a flurry of mimetic violence based on ethnicity. In many places, church leaders failed to articulate

or provide a platform where a person could release labels imposed by hegemonic entities and imagine a broader identity that encompassed more than ethnic binaries.

Eugene Petersen introduces the book of Amos in his biblical paraphrase this way: “Religion is the most dangerous energy source known to humankind. The moment a person (or government or religion or organization) is convinced that God is either ordering or sanctioning a course or project, anything goes.” As Longman (2010) said, “Religious groups can help people accept the unacceptable, and this is what ultimately is necessary for genocide to occur” p. 323.

When Rwandan Christians did not challenge language and narratives, churches morphed from sanctuaries to prisons of death.

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APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY/ABBREVIATIONS

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY/ABBREVIATIONS

Cultural Transformation Theory: Eisler sees human relationships at all levels as being in a matrix between two opposites: A domination/control model and a partnership/respect model. The web of domination vs. partnership can be viewed in seven levels: 1) within oneself 2) within a family 3) in the workplace 4) nationally 5) internationally 6) in interaction with nature 7) spiritually. One can effect a shift within the domination/partnership system by targeting one of four areas within the system: 1) childhood relations 2) gender relations 3) economic relations 4) beliefs, myths, and stories.

Hutu Ten Commandments: A document published in December 1990 in the newspaper, *Kangura*, an anti-Tutsi publication. The commandments instructed Rwandans to ostracize Tutsi and anyone interacted in any way with Tutsi.

Inkotanyi: Members of the RPF, a term referring to important armies of 19th century Rwanda.

Interahamwe: Militia attached to the MRND party, featured Rwandan citizens using traditional tools of machetes, hammers, boards with nails as well as guns.

Inyenzi: Literally, cockroaches, a scornful term for member of the RPF implying ties with assailants who came by night in 1960.

Mimetic Rivalry: Mimesis and mimetic desire are other ways to describe the unconscious phenomena of imitating the desires and actions of others. Girard would say that the function of culture is to channel and control the potential conflict that this causes. Scapegoating and sacrifice have been age-old techniques to bring unanimity and relief from violence. The victim is expelled from society and there is a new-found relief from conflict.

MDR: Democratic Republican Movement, rooted in PARMEHUTU, after MRND lost its monopoly in 1991 this became a forceful Hutu movement based in the center of the country.

Moral Foundations Theory: MFT. Graham and Haidt's framework created to explain origin and variations in human moral reasoning. Based on innate moral foundations that are impacted by psychology, sociology, genetics, evolutionary function, and personal experience. 1. Care/harm 2. Justice/injustice 3. Ingroup loyalty/betrayal 4. Authority/Disrespect 5. Sanctity Purity/Degradation. In Haidt's book, *The Righteous Mind*, he describes a 6th moral module of liberty/oppression.

MRND: National Republican Movement for the Development and Democracy. Formerly the single party in Rwanda and centered on Juvénal Habyarimana, its founder.

RTLTM: Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, also known as propaganda radio. It broadcast from July 8, 1993 to July 31, 1994. French for "Thousand Hills Free Radio and Television."

RPF: Rwandan (also Rwandese) Patriotic Front, an armed movement initially composed largely of Rwandans who had lived in exile for a generation.

PARMEHUTU: Party of the Hutu emancipation movement which led the revolution of 1959, unseating Tutsi aristocracy.

Umuganda: Obligatory labor for the public good