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## A Fight over Souls: Documentary Films on the Rwandan Genocide with a Christian Theme

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# A Fight over Souls: Documentary Films on the Rwandan Genocide with a Christian Theme

## Abstract

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda have spawned over 150 feature films and feature-length documentaries, making it into the second most audio-visually recreated genocide after the Holocaust. Within this large body of historical films a subgenre have emerged with a distinctive Christian theme. This article explores these Christian themed documentary films about the Rwandan genocide and positions them within a film historical perspective as well as analyzes and contextualizes them as a subgenre of films about the Rwandan genocide within films about genocide in general. Of note are how memory and historiography are used, and the links between these films' educational, religious, and commercial elements.

## Keywords

Rwanda, genocide, evangelical, Catholic Church, Immaculée Ilibagiza, partisan documentary, education, historical memory

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## Author Notes

Tommy Gustafsson holds a PhD in History and is Professor of Film Studies at Linnaeus University, Sweden. He has previously published *Masculinity in the Golden Age of Swedish Cinema: A Cultural Analysis of 1920s Films* (McFarland, 2014) and the anthology *Nordic Genre Film: Small Nation Film Cultures in the Global Marketplace* (with Pietari Kääpä, Edinburgh University Press, 2015). He is currently working on a book on the transnational historical media memory of the Rwandan genocide. During the spring semester of 2015 he was a guest scholar at University of Rwanda in Kigali.

Rwanda is one of the most religious countries in the world. In fact, 95 percent of Rwandans answered “yes” to the question: “Is religion important in your daily life?” in a global Gallup Poll from 2009 that included 114 countries. As a comparison, in the same poll, in Saudi Arabia 93 percent answered yes, and in the US, 65 percent.<sup>1</sup> Another somewhat gruesome statistic underlining the Rwandans’ religiosity is the fact that it is estimated that 11 percent of all victims of the 1994 genocide were killed inside churches where they had sought refuge.<sup>2</sup> Owing to Belgian colonial influence in Rwanda, the foremost Christian denomination had been Catholicism that approximately 70 percent of the Rwandan population identified with up until the genocide in 1994.<sup>3</sup> Today, however, the favor has shifted towards a collection of diverse denominations of the Evangelical-Protestant faith that make up 37.1 percent of the population while Catholicism has dropped to 56.5 percent (and Islam has 4.6 percent).<sup>4</sup> There has thus been a significant shift in Rwandans’ religious belief in a comparatively short period.

The reasons for this shift are complex and related to the genocide. As one of the most influential organizations, the Rwandan Catholic church became involved in the genocide on a level where a number of individual priests participated in the genocide. It is also true that individual Catholic priests and nuns were killed during the genocide, and some even risked their lives to hide and protect Tutsis.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the Catholic Church has, with its close ties to the Hutu based Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND) regime, been accused of aiding the genocide morally with its official support of the interim government. The Catholic Archbishop was even a member of the central committee of MRND and the Church leadership moved to Kabgayi, near Gitarama where the interim government relocated from Kigali.<sup>6</sup> The National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) and the umbrella of genocide survivors associations, Ibuka, have both demanded that the Catholic Church officially apologize for its involvement.<sup>7</sup> This apology came in

November 2016, but it was not accepted since it is believed that the Catholic Church still resists efforts by the government and groups of survivors to acknowledge the Church complicity in mass murder, saying that those church officials who committed crimes acted individually.<sup>8</sup>

Parallel to this sanctioned “badwill” against the Catholic Church, Pentecostal and independent charismatic churches have mushroomed since the genocide and they now form the prime denominations among Protestants. This is due to two simultaneous developments; the fact that many of the Tutsi returnees brought their evangelical faith back with them to Rwanda combined with an intensification of missionary work performed by mostly American evangelical and fundamentalist denominations.<sup>9</sup>

This could symbolically be perceived as a fight over Christian souls in Rwanda. One of the strategies employed in this religious battle is the use of film and television which is produced in the US and elsewhere with the intent to raise money and to recruit new proselytes to the right faith. This is ironic given that Rwanda is the most Christian country in Africa. And this audiovisual battle started in Goma in the immediate aftermath of the genocide.

In mid-July 1994, The Great Lakes refugee crisis was all over the world news as more than two million Rwandan refugees had fled to the neighboring countries in the aftermath of the civil war and the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. By the end of August, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were 1.5 million refugees just around Goma in Zaire, 270,000 refugees in Burundi, and another 570,000 in Tanzania.<sup>10</sup> This was a refugee crisis of “Biblical proportions” and journalists and NGOs flocked to these camps like seagulls.<sup>11</sup>

Among the chaotic mishmash of tents, NGOs, refugees, and medical personnel, a strange sight could be glimpsed, according to British journalist Chris McGreal. Alongside the stretcher-bearers rushing refugees dying of cholera to medical tents, men were running,

“reciting Bible verses to the withering patients.”<sup>12</sup> These Bible readers belonged to the American televangelist and former presidential candidate, Pat Robertson, and his aid organization, Operation Blessing International (OBI). OBI was one of dozens of NGOs that, according to Joel Boutroue, head of the UNHCR in Goma, “we didn’t want.”<sup>13</sup>

Operation Blessing was a department within the Christian Broadcasting Network and it simply existed as a function of television. On the daily television show, *The 700 Club*, Robertson pleaded for money to send doctors and aid to the refugees and he personally flew to Goma where he declared, among other things, that “Hutus were heroes,” according to Richard Walden, president of Operation USA.<sup>14</sup> *The 700 Club* filmed their work in the camps where Christian teams evangelized as well as treated the refugees. As stated by Boutroue they “tried to cure cholera with the laying on of hands.”<sup>15</sup> The live television coverage generated more volunteers and more funding for a while, but when the news value thinned out, OBI withdrew from Goma.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, there were so many aid agencies in Goma that they were forced to brand themselves. According to journalist Lindsey Hilsum, “[t]he proliferation of NGOs was a direct result of media coverage. Only when media coverage started in earnest could NGOs raise funds. Goma, with its massive media coverage, thus became an opportunity for smaller, less experienced agencies.”<sup>17</sup>

OBI was thus not alone in this scramble for Goma but the American evangelical right stands out for its use of the genocide and the refugee crisis for several reasons. First, the act of trying to save dying people to the right faith is a strong form of exploitation. Second, filming these exposed refugees and the so-called evangelization of them in order to raise more money, that in turn is used to “save” even more proselytes to God according to the evangelical Protestant’s interpretation of the Bible, is morally dubious to say the least. Third, the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda has subsequently spawned a subgenre of Christian themed

documentary films about forgiveness and redemption, produced and/or supported by different American and European Christian denominations of evangelical origin but also by the American Catholic Church.

This article will explore these Christian themed documentary films connected to the Rwandan genocide and position them in a film historical perspective as well as analyze them as a subgenre of films about the Rwandan genocide in particular, and films about genocide in general. I will ask the following questions: In what ways do international productions affect the memory of this “local” genocide? How is memory and the historiography of the genocide used in these documentary films? Is there a distinct line between these films’ educational and religious elements and their commercial ones? First, however, these films have to be placed in their medial and historical context.

### **Promotion of Christianity with Film and Television**

The act of producing films as a way to promote Christianity has a long prehistory that reaches almost all the way back to the beginning of the film medium. Early passion films such as *La vie et la passion de Jésus Christ/The Passion and the Power of Christ* (1903) were highly popular and were often screened in churches. The tradition was then upheld by Hollywood with lavish big budget productions such as *The Ten Commandments* (1923/1956), *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1925/1959), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), and Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* (2003). Biblical motives are making a comeback in the new millennium with big budget films like *Noah* (2014), *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014) and another remake of *Ben-Hur* (2016).

Alongside Hollywood films there have always been independent Christian production companies producing Christian themed films and television programs of various quality.

Many films, usually in the documentary genre, have had upright political issues at their core, such as anti-communism, pro-life, or anti-big government, as a way to influence the domestic political agenda. These include *Choice* (1964), *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979), *Wake Up America! We're All Hostages* (1980), and *The Clinton Chronicles* (1994). Others have used the power of drama to promote evangelical Christianity or to draw attention to central biblical texts, e.g., *Heaven is For Real* (2014), *God's Not Dead* (2014), and *Left Behind* (2014).

A markedly American phenomenon is televangelism with high-profile programs such as *The 700 Club* and *The Old-Time Gospel Hour*. These programs cater to domestic audiences but they are sometimes involved in missionary work abroad, as we saw with OBI's engagement in Goma. The production of films with missionary purposes usually work dually, both to promote Christianity at home with moral stories about missionary work abroad as well as to support the spread of the word of the Bible to the rest of the world. There are numerous examples of this overlap such as *Wings of the Word* (1951) and *No Greater Good* (1960). One of the most successful examples is *Jesus* aka *The Jesus Film* (1979) produced by Campus Crusade for Christ, an American interdenominational evangelical organization. This film turned out to be a box office failure at its American premiere but in 1981 The Jesus Film Project organization was created with the intension to dub *Jesus* into other languages and to screen the film all around the world in order to spread the message of Christ and evangelize the world. According to the organization's own estimation, the film has been translated into more than 1000 languages and has been seen by more than 200 million people over the last 35 years, "[f]rom villages in the rain forest of the Amazon to high-rise apartment buildings in East Asia".<sup>18</sup>

The general notion is that televangelism and the use of audiovisual political propaganda have been exclusive strategies of the Evangelical right in the US, i.e., the diverse

congregations of Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and Charismatics. However, the Catholic Church has an significant output of television programming and film production with, e.g., the global Eternal Word Television Network and film productions such as *Madre Teresa* (2003), *Beloved: The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia* (2009), and *Francis: The Pope from the New World* (2013).<sup>19</sup>

It would be wrong to claim that the film medium is being exploited to any considerable extent in an ongoing war between Protestants and Catholics in America. However, the Evangelical right has been decisively anti-Catholic in the past, as opinions were medialized in different media campaigns, e.g., against Catholic presidential candidates such as Al Smith and John F. Kennedy. Another example of this competition over souls is when the Evangelical right turned militant in the abortion question during the 1980s, literally turning the issue out of the hands of the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup>

### **Cinematic History and Genocide**

Film and history have always had a complicated relationship to each other. Historians and other gatekeepers have constantly criticized the shortcomings of cinematic history but this critique has seldom included a discussion about the fact that audiovisual historiography has, without a doubt, been the most influential form of mediation of historical knowledge and understanding to general audiences in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>21</sup> Cinematic history is thus a competitor to the history produced at universities and as teaching materials, and the cultural hierarchy contributes to a view in which cinematic history often is dismissed without further reflection. However, the assessment of cinematic history as something fabricated and untrue lays close to the fact that professional historians too are bound to dramatize and simplify their



material as they write history. As historian Hayden White points out, even scholarly history constitutes a sort of fiction based on facts.<sup>22</sup>

Scholarly history and cinematic history can thus be said to exist in the same public arena of *historical culture* where the creation of historical memories must be analyzed as an ongoing process—a struggle—in which images and words, and the interpretation of those images and words, bounces between the national and the transnational, and between different media such as the book, the film, television, and the Internet.<sup>23</sup> Historian Robert A. Rosenstone has stated that while scholarly history is based on facts, the end result—the monograph or article—always transgresses these facts when it is thrown into a world full of moral arguments, metaphors and symbolism. Moreover, Rosenstone stresses that cinematic history too is based on facts, although perhaps on a looser basis, but that the end result—the film, documentary, or television series—nevertheless is thrown out into the same arena of historical culture where it is analyzed and interpreted with the same moral arguments, metaphors, and symbolism. It is in this arena of historical culture, where it becomes valuable to study cinematic history as a history of the past that undoubtedly affects people's view of the past and of society.<sup>24</sup>

The genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda has spawned numerous feature films, feature-length documentaries and television programs that in different ways commemorate and historicize the gruesome events that took place as some 800,000 people were killed in 100 days between April and July 1994. To date, more than 150 productions have been released and this, in fact, makes the Rwandan genocide into the most audio-visually recreated genocide, second only to the Holocaust. However, while the Holocaust has been in the public eye at least since NBC's mini-series *Holocaust* (1978) was televised to tremendous ratings in the Western world, the Rwandan genocide did not really enter popular public consciousness until the production of *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), ten years after the genocide ended. This means

that audiovisual representations of the Rwandan genocide have not had as much time to develop as compared to the development of the audiovisual representations of the Holocaust.

Prior to the nominal breakthrough with *Holocaust* in 1978, audiovisual representations of the genocide against the European Jews were all but absent with few exceptions, such as the Polish film *Ostani etap/The Last Stage* (1948) and the French documentary *Nuit et brouillard/Night and Fog* (1955). For a period of 30 years, in the aftermath of World War II and due to the politics of the Cold War, the Holocaust was a subject that for moral reasons was considered impossible to make sense of in the arts, especially so by the commercial film medium that was believed to trivialize the event merely by coming in contact with it.<sup>25</sup> A similar moral “quarantine” of the Rwandan genocide has not taken place but this genocide nevertheless has its own elements that have governed its representations. Foremost among these is the fact that the majority of all films and television programs have been produced in America or Europe. The global (that is, Western) historical memory of the Rwandan genocide has therefore been created from a Eurocentric viewpoint dominated, on the one hand, by a guilty western conscience about the humanitarian failure in Rwanda and, on the other hand, by plain racist beliefs about Africa and Africans in general.<sup>26</sup>

One telling example of this Eurocentric appropriation is the fact that most of the world (including myself in this article) still uses the term “Rwandan genocide” to label this historical event in spite of the fact that Rwanda as a nation has worked hard in order to change this to the more accurate description, “The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.” In 2014 the UN Security Council even passed resolution 2150 that the genocide thereafter would be termed “The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, during which Hutu and others were killed”<sup>27</sup> in official contexts and documents, something which has not yet transpired to any significant extent.

Nonetheless, films about genocide tend to obtain an educational value just for the reason of their grave subject. The great majority of films on genocide explicitly deal with the history of the genocide in question, sometimes with the intention to teach their audiences, which usually is the case with documentaries, but this also occurs in feature films based on historical events. While the historical documentary generally is perceived as a conveyer of historical truth and therefore as more trustworthy, historical fiction films can more easily be dismissed as false and constructed, an evaluation usually based on identified historical inaccuracies, simplifications and anachronisms. Even so, both documentaries and feature films affect the memories of their audiences, perhaps by enhancing an already existing memory taught in school or by introducing a fresh memory where the audience learns something new. In the former case the memory must be in line and not deviate from an already established memory, but in the latter case a new memory can be formed which then either can be dismissed, altered or confirmed, e.g., via repetition in similar films and television programs on the same genocide.

Compared to the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide is still something “new” to be taught in schools or watch on television, and the memory of the Rwandan genocide is therefore still in the midst of development. Roughly, films and television programs on the Rwandan genocide can only be divided into two genres, the solemn drama and the factual documentary whereas Holocaust films have outgrown these genres and now have the ability to be rendered as action films, exploitation films, and even as straightforward comedies, such as Roberto Benigni’s *La Vita è Bella/Life is Beautiful* (1997).

There exist a number of differences between the commercial Hollywood feature film and the historical documentary mainly produced for television relating to style and narration. However, regarding the process of memory the main difference lies in the reception and in the different expectations that these genres raise. Both genres are audiovisual representations of

the past but the expectations on reality, truthfulness and accuracy connected to the historical documentary are nearly as old as the film medium itself. Historian Ulf Zander points out that the requirement of realism was, already from an early stage, associated with the historical film, and that the belief in the proverb, “The camera never lies” was linked to the notion that historians could find the truth with a capital T in documents and other artifacts during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the professionalization of the historical sciences and the subsequent rejection of myths as a source of historical knowledge, films were disqualified as source material with the exception of documentaries. Zander claims that this “documentary prejudice” actively contributed to “instill the differences between the documentary film and commercial feature film” up until today.<sup>28</sup>

The illusion of the documentary’s objectivity is thus built on the dichotomous notion that the documentary is idealistic, and thereby uncompromisingly altruistic and true, while the feature film always has been associated with a commercial purpose that tends to taint whatever serious message it contains. Evidently, there are other reasons in play than just the commercial one when the decision is made to produce a film, a documentary or a television series about genocide. These reasons are often idealistic and/or ideological and they can be educational, moral, religious, political, and even derive out of a guilty conscience, thus seemingly merging these factual and fictitious genres.<sup>29</sup> And although some motivations can border on the exploitative and offensive, the main reason is hardly ever just financial because, as Greg Barker, director of *Ghosts of Rwanda* (2004), frankly puts it: “people don’t particularly want to see films about genocide.”<sup>30</sup> It is precisely this altruistic belief that gives genocide films and documentaries alike credibility and trustworthiness.

## Evangelical Documentaries: Forgiveness and Unspoken Condemnation

When *Hotel Rwanda* was released in connection with the ten-year commemoration of the genocide in 2004, it created a boom of audiovisual historical recollections that spawned feature films, documentaries and television programs. Just in 2004 and 2005, at least 15 films were produced, and two of them can be characterized as Christian themed films. The first one was *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness* (2004), a documentary short directed by Ralf Springhorn and produced by German and Swiss companies, supported by the Swiss Christian charity organization, Agape International. According to Duncan Fisher and Jolyon Mitchell the film had a budget of 80,000 Swiss Franc whereof two-thirds came from a Swiss evangelical businessman.<sup>31</sup>

The 27-minutes *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness* is built around five cases for which the filmmakers located and paired Tutsi victims and Hutu perpetrators. These pairs are briefly allowed to tell their stories, partly about the happenings during the genocide and partly on their decision to forgive each other, which in all cases are connected to their deep-rooted or newly found faith in Christ in an explanatory way. The process of forgiveness therefore has a tendency to become self-evident, and as Fisher and Mitchell have noticed, these acts of forgiveness are not connected to actual worship or to any sacramental discussion of absolution, and only loosely to the Gacaca court system.<sup>32</sup>

Consequently, the explanations for the outbreak of genocidal violence become simplified as they come in the guise of spiritualized accounts and justifications for both victims and perpetrators:

Victims: *“It was not the Hutu who committed this deed, but the devil himself, which is also why I felt that I had to forgive the perpetrators ... We should not judge him, since it’s clear that evil forces were at work within him.”*

Perpetrators: *"I asked God to forgive me, and I have also forgiven myself, and today I feel free ... In prison I heard the word of God. I deeply regretted what I had done. I confessed everything."*

Forgiveness is thus a *fait accompli*. The long and hard process for victims to actually forgive perpetrators who have raped, tortured and killed family members, and for perpetrators to confess and ask for forgiveness, is something that the filmmakers only get in hindsight as it already has happened long before they came to Rwanda. Furthermore, these five cases are intercut with a mere 63 second recap of the history of what actually happened in 1994, illustrated by what early became emblematic images of the genocide: sequences filmed from moving trucks of corpses lying by the side of a road; the Nick Hughes footage (live footage of actual killings); and also a short clip of a perpetrator with a machete and a knife, which is used in the permanent exhibition at the Genocide memorial in Kigali.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the filmmakers recurrently make use of doomsday music, usually with superimposed images of skulls and skeleton remains, supposedly in order to create an atmosphere of the unspeakable horrors that this genocide constituted, or as the American voiceover declares on the DVD version: "This genocide was one of the most gruesome ever recorded in history."

In addition, an official spokesperson for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) is given a few seconds to explain what the government is doing to promote reconciliation and stability. She points out the work of governmental faith groups, especially in prison, and the Gacaca courts, which later is misinterpreted as the voiceover declares that confessions of guilt automatically mean that the perpetrator is not punished. This is to stretch the truth quite a bit since, in a best-case scenario, a confession could lead to a less severe sentence, and often a confession did not change the sentence at all.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly for the film's Christian logic, the spokesperson points out that the conscience of both victims

and perpetrators is the single most important factor for the reconciliation process. Here the voiceover cuts in and claims that different Christian church denominations work hard with the reconciliation process too, thus overshadowing the work of the civil government.

*Rwanda: Living Forgiveness* ends with a sequence that Fisher and Mitchell identify to be “instantly recognizable as a form of evangelistic outreach” as the last pairing of victim and perpetrator travel around the countryside on a motorbike, preaching their story and finishing with an open-air screening of *The Jesus Film*.<sup>35</sup>

The purpose of this documentary film is obviously not to teach its audiences something about the genocide but rather to promote an evangelical version of Christianity through the powerful display of forgiveness under seemingly impossible circumstances, where religion is the rationale for this to take place. The correlation to the parallel process of born again evangelization is evident and this film therefore becomes a form of exploitation of the genocide since the genocide is, somewhat paradoxically, reduced and downplayed. Owing to the stylistic elements of the documentary genre this film nevertheless serves as an intermediary of historical knowledge that has the potential to teach its audiences about this genocide, basically explaining that the death of more than 800,000 people was the work of the Devil and that the actual murderers, ethnic politics, the church, and the West as bystanders are blameless.

A few television channels in Europe aired *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness*, but in 2005 it won an award in the US for best international contribution from the International Christian Visual Media Association (IVCM). ICVM’s awards are designed to “recognize excellence in production and content of films and videos that are created to reflect Christian values in a secular world.”<sup>36</sup> This in turn made it possible for the film to get distribution in the US, where Vision Video, one of the largest producers and distributors of Christian themed films, picked it up. With a catalogue of over 1400 film titles, *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness* is the only one

on Rwanda, thus enabling it to affect the historical consciousness of Vision Video's clientele vis-à-vis the genocide.<sup>37</sup>

Another film promoted within the international Evangelical sphere is *Hunting My Husband's Killers* (2005), made in connection with the ten year commemoration of the genocide.<sup>38</sup> The film, co-produced by UK based Purple Flame Media and Grace Productions, won the Andrew Cross Award for best documentary in 2006, awarded by the Churches' Media Council in the UK.<sup>39</sup>

The film portrays Scottish community nurse Lesley Bilinda as she, ten years after the genocide, sets out on a personal journey to discover how her Rwandan husband died and to seek reconciliation. Together with her sister, she returns to Rwanda where she came as a nurse for the Evangelical charity relief agency Tearfund in 1989.<sup>40</sup> According to the promotional material, the film contains "strong themes of betrayal and forgiveness"<sup>41</sup> and on the back of the DVD cover, the journey is described as a "challenge of her Christian faith to forgive." In the beginning of the film, Lesley Bilinda says: "I have to forgive, for the alternative is to remain bitter and revengeful," thus creating expectations of a guilty conscience familiar for many Christian Evangelical audiences.

The documentary is made in *cinema vérité* style with a skeleton crew with one camera operator and the two directors. The use of archival footage is, consequently, marginal and this is reflected by the fact that merely 25 seconds of the screen time is devoted to historicizing the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. In this brief sequence, the voiceover explains that "The Rwandan genocide left around a million people dead" followed by the ambiguous and highly simplified statement that: "The massacre started when the majority Hutu population rose up against the minority Tutsi tribe. Neighbor slaughtered neighbor in a series of massacres that lasted 100 days" which is illustrated by recurrently exploited footage of bodily remains, skulls, and decaying corpses scattered on a road. The end of the sequence uses



archival footage of corpses collected in mass graves, which most certainly was filmed after the genocide ended in one of the refugee camps in Goma where thousands upon thousands died from cholera and diphtheria.

The theme of forgiveness is thus given precedence over a historical account and this is structured around four encounters with both real and symbolic perpetrators. The first encounter is with Pastor Kabarira, a prisoner that was in charge of the Catholic guesthouse where Lesley's husband was last seen ten years ago. Kabarira has reluctantly been transported from prison in order for Lesley to confront him on the grounds of the guesthouse, probably with the intent to forgive him in front of the camera afterwards. However, the arrangement does not work out as planned since Kabarira neither confesses nor shows any remorse (and thus cannot be forgiven).

Objectively, audiences cannot know for sure of the guilt but we are nevertheless led to believe in Lesley's and the filmmakers' rendering of events. This also ties in with the strong Western notion of the confession. As Michel Foucault claimed: "[N]ext to the testimony of witnesses, and the learned methods of observations and demonstration, the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth. We have since become a singularly confessing society."<sup>42</sup> The lack of a confession therefore equals guilt.

The next encounter is a visit to Murambi Genocide Memorial Centre Site, known for its display of hundreds of mummified bodies from the genocide. The confrontation here is with the gruesome results of the genocide rather than with any particular person. Murambi Technical School was the site for the murder of some 45,000 Tutsis on April 21, 1994 who had been lured to the school as a safe haven by the Catholic Bishop and the mayor of the region. In the segment the camera follows Lesley and her sister closely from room to room full of bodies, documenting how Lesley falls down on her knees and starts to cry, whispering: "O God," and also how she interprets the position of the solidified bodies within a Christian

consideration of the world: “Some have their hands together praying, or pleading.” This segment is, according to the narrator, there for Lesley to “confront for herself the scale of the horror” which also becomes the symbolic scale of horror that Lesley has to forgive.

Likewise, the third encounter becomes symbolic. The film follows Lesley as she is seeking the answer to who killed her husband, in the process meeting with relatives and friends who contribute small pieces of a puzzle that becomes very personal as it turns out that Lesley’s marriage was in fact miserable, and that the husband had been unfaithful with another woman. During this part of the film, Lesley meets and confronts the murderer of a Rwandan female friend at the very same location where they had taught together before the genocide. In an interview made in 2006, Lesley Bilinda commented on this encounter: “I met one of the gang responsible for murdering my close friend Anatolie. He told me what had happened to her, which was shocking to hear. He was sorry for what he had done and saw the stupidity of it, and I offered him forgiveness. It meant a lot to him, and lifted a burden for me.”<sup>43</sup> In the documentary, however, this encounter feels both staged and awkward as this white woman forgives an already convicted perpetrator whom she never met before. Using two cameras and close-ups to capture the moment, this segment becomes both intrusive and exploitative. The former prisoner’s face shows uncertainty, although he says he is glad to be forgiven; at the same time, he crosses his arms over his chest in a gesture that emphasizes reservation.

The fourth and final encounter is with a convict in Butare (now Huye) prison, presented as “the last chance to find out the truth for Lesley” by the voiceover. The questioning starts out as a way to retrieve more information about the husband’s abduction but suddenly Lesley turns to her sister and says, “I think we have found our man.” Then she right out accuses him for the abduction and murder of her husband, pressuring him in front of the camera, something that the convict firmly denies. Lesley then says, in French: “If I have

made a mistake, I must come back and ask your forgiveness,” to which the man’s reply is to maintain his innocence and that she must come back. The accusation then lingers without being resolved. Of course it is highly doubtful that Lesley ever will return to the prison in Butare, at least not in front of the camera for a new documentary.

In some ways *Hunting for My Husband’s Killers* touches upon the same subject of forgiveness as *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness*. However, the twist is that in this instance it is a white European woman who acts as the protagonist in her hunt (which is a telling choice of word) for her husband’s male black killers. The process of forgiveness is therefore intertwined with the drama of an unfolding investigation with colonial overtones that ultimately does not lead up to any conclusion, neither in terms of reconciliation nor whodunit. In this process, information about the genocide *per se* is lost, especially since the historical explanations are reduced to a few seconds of screen time coupled with the Christian explanation that the genocide was caused by the Devil, as Lesley states in the film: “I think it was devilish, that’s all, and the Devil covered the minds of the people. People were not thinking anymore.”

In spite of these shortcomings, this documentary is perceived as a history lesson on the Rwandan genocide, a fact that was stressed by the film’s photographer Phil Knox who, in the light of the political unrest in Burundi during the spring of 2015, remembered his visit to Rwanda in 2004 as well as attributed importance to *Hunting My Husband’s Killers* as a vehicle of enlightenment:

It gives rise to the question about how we view news and ascribe importance – anecdotally a number of people I have spoken to have known about the Rwandan conflict and could probably make a reasonable guess as to where it is on the map, yet when Burundi is mentioned, there is often very little known – some people had not even heard of the country.<sup>44</sup>

Similar uses of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda with Christian-Evangelical connotations can be found in the American documentaries *Rwanda Rising* (2007) and

*Through the Valley* (2013). In the former, previous US ambassador to the United Nations pastor Andrew Young of the United Church of Christ functions as the narrator and producer of a film about Rwanda's "miraculous changes" (Young's words) since the genocide of 1994. The progress and the reconciliation are attributed to Christian values. The film features both Rwandan President Paul Kagame and President Bill Clinton and was aired on nationally syndicated television.

*Through the Valley*, similar to *Hunting My Husband's Killers*, has a strong western perspective on Rwanda and the genocide against the Tutsis. Here a Caucasian Christian American family, whose daughter is believed to have "serious behavioral issues" travel to Rwanda to meet with a Rwandan family that they have sponsored through their evangelical church. The trip is a way to fix the problem with the daughter. That is, by seeing that others have it much worse than herself, the daughter should, in a Christian fashion, be thankful for what she has and not throw it away on her teenage rebellious behavior. The documentary contains an unbalanced and unequal relationship as the daughter's problems are compared to those of the father of the Rwandan family who struggles with horrible decisions he had to make during the genocide. To cite Veritas Production's marketing for the film: "Their journey together reveals the divine tapestry of God's love and guidance, where they learn first-hand the power of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the healing that comes from helping others."<sup>45</sup>

Again, religion and the power of forgiveness are these films' main objective, and the use of the genocide as a backdrop in this "Christian sense" comes with an exploitative flavor, especially since the educational elements are intertwined with and sometimes explained through a dualistic Christian worldview that absolutizes good and evil. On Christian Film Database, *Through the Valley* is promoted as "a film that a lot of parents can relate to. We live in a world where unthinkable things happen, but there is a God of healing and

forgiveness.”<sup>46</sup> Obviously, the genocide against the Tutsis is given a lower profile than in other, more mainstream documentaries on the genocide.

As has been established, these Christian films on the Rwandan genocide were mainly distributed within an Evangelical/Charismatic/Fundamentalist media sphere, both in the US and internationally, with the intention to promote an evangelical version of Christianity. This could be interpreted as an inconspicuous attack on the Catholic Church in general and on the Rwanda Catholic church in particular, especially as the Catholic Church either is ignored in the reconciliation work or simply singled out as a culprit. This was the case in *Hunting My Husband's Killers* where representatives of the Catholic Church, for example Pastor Kabarira and the catholic bishop responsible for the genocidal massacre in Murambi, stand out in stark contrast to the reconciliation work of different evangelical denominations.

### **Catholic Documentaries: Partisan Recollections in the Name of God**

The American Catholic Church has been involved in the distribution of a couple of documentary films on the Rwandan genocide via Ignatius Press, the main Catholic publishing house in the US with global distribution. Ignatius Press' main objective is the ongoing education of Catholics in order “to support the teachings of the Church” according to the founder, Father Joseph D Fessio.<sup>47</sup>

Both films, *The Diary of Immaculée* (2006) and *If Only We Had Listened* (2011), circulate around Immaculée Ilibagiza, a Catholic Tutsi survivor of the genocide who wrote about her experiences in the publicly noticed book, *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (2006). Ilibagiza and her story were subsequently featured on PBS in one of self-help guru Wayne Dyer's programs, and in a segment of CBS's *60 Minutes* in December 2006. Ilibagiza has since then published a second book, *Led by Faith: Rising from*

*the Ashes of the Rwandan Genocide* (2008), on her experiences in the aftermath of the genocide and how her faith in God kept her going. More importantly, she has written three books that can be placed in the (typically Roman Catholic) hagiography genre, overlapping to the inspirational/self-help field of literature.<sup>48</sup>

US-based Hay House Publishing, specializing in New Thought and Self-help books, has published all Ilibagiza's books. Hay House was also behind the first documentary short, *The Diary of Immaculée*, produced by three-time Academy Award-nominee Steve Kalafer. The 38-minute short is based on the autobiographical bestseller *Left to Tell* and it revolves around a return trip to Rwanda that Ilibagiza carries out ten years after the genocide. The film starts with a short written historical recapitulation stating that the shooting down of the President of Rwanda's plane "ignited decades' old tensions between Hutus and Tutsis" and that "[w]ithin minutes the country turned on itself." The audience then hears that we are about to see the miraculous story of how a young woman, together with seven other women, survived the Rwandan genocide by hiding in a tiny bathroom for 91 days. Immaculée Ilibagiza, in close-up, looks straight into the camera and says: "My name is Immaculée and it is time to go back to my country, my village, my home and tell my story." The use of this technique connotes both the testimony of the witness, but also the strong notion of the (Roman Catholic) confession as a way to reach the truth. Here the truth seems to be about the genocide itself as well as about Ilibagiza's journey to reach inner peace.

In comparison with the previously discussed evangelical documentaries, *The Diary of Immaculée* puts more emphases on the history of the genocide, giving it almost eight minutes at the beginning of the film, although the segment is intercut with personal reflections and background from Ilibagiza. Another difference is the use of actual experts and witnesses such as journalist Bill Berkeley<sup>49</sup> and Carl Wilkens. The latter is introduced as a "Development refugee worker," but Wilkens is known for being the only American who stayed in Rwanda

during the genocide as the head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Rwanda, saving hundreds of lives in the process. Indeed, Wilkens could be singled out as the most important reason for the growth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Rwanda to 11.1 percent after the genocide.<sup>50</sup> A third difference, most important for the credibility, is that *The Diary of Immaculée* is a high budget film in comparison with, for example, *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness* and *Hunting My Husband's Killers*, both made with a skeleton crew. This means that the filmmakers have had the opportunity to purchase effective archive material from media companies such as CBS, BBC, Getty Images, and Corbis, which are used throughout the film, and especially in the historical recapitulation at the beginning of the film.

In other words, audiences get a straightforward retelling of events where the explanation, and the responsibility, for the genocide against the Tutsis is firmly placed with the Hutu regime who, according to Bill Berkeley, acted “to the logic of criminal gangs” in order to stay in power. The individual Hutu’s greed is another explanation that is highlighted. Does this mean that the incomprehensible irrationality of the genocide can be put aside and thus not be explained as a manifestation of the Devil’s work? There are actually two answers to that question.

First, this is after all Immaculée Ilibagiza’s story, which means that the film concentrates on her experiences. On the one hand, she spent almost the entire time hidden away in a bathroom, which means that audiences learn of the happenings of the genocide through Ilibagiza’s personal experiences as she narrates the gruesome murders of her family, illustrated by family photographs, and supported by occasional eyewitnesses that are interviewed. In addition, her story is powerfully underlined by the intricate use of archival footage and stills. When, for example, she talks about the murder of her mother: “They dragged her to the side of the road, and chopped her to death,” we are shown an intercut between a close-up on Ilibagiza’s face and nine seconds from the Nick Hughes film, shot in

long distance, where a man is hacking another person with a machete at a roadblock. The effect is, of course, that the audience “sees for itself,” thus becoming eyewitnesses to the gruesomeness of genocide, at the same time as they perhaps get a greater insight into what it is exactly Ilibagiza has to forgive.

Second, the personal perspective of an actual survivor, in comparison with the outside perspective of the evangelical documentaries, acts as a guarantee for a certain amount of plausible historical explanations, if not total accuracy. However, the same personal perspective has a tendency to influence the portrayal of events and, therefore, the historical explanations that the documentary puts forward. In the case of *The Diary of Immaculée*, the purpose is not foremost to reiterate or explain the genocide, but to use the genocide as a true and inspiring story of faith and divine forgiveness. This purpose is established with editing, the choice of locations and footage, and not least using experts or talking heads, including Ilibagiza. Therefore, after the first eight minutes of historical context, the documentary continues with Ilibagiza’s story and, as we saw with the murder of her mother, the genocide is retold through a personal prism. When Ilibagiza, for instance, visits The Nyamata Church Genocide Memorial where 50,000 are buried, she interprets the killing as “completely the Devil’s work.” Commenting on the many bullet holes in the ceiling, she decodes it religiously: “The light coming from the holes from where they shoot; it is so soft; to me it is almost like the cry of God, of what has happened to his house.”

Interestingly enough, this personalization also transcends to the film’s experts who drift (or are edited) into private clarifications, for example Berkeley who states that: “A madness overtook Rwanda that defies any easy explanation.” Carl Wilkens’ expertise and firsthand knowledge of the genocide is not used at all later on. Instead, he is paired with another “expert,” Wayne Dyer, author of the best-selling self-help book, *Your Erroneous Zones* (1976), in order to praise Ilibagiza’s “unimaginable courage” or as Dyer states in the



documentary: “Within her was the power to love, the power to forgive, that connection to God was really connecting to the highest part of herself.”

In summary, *The Diary of Immaculée* is richer in explanations of the genocide, but these explanations are filtered through the personal story of Ilibagiza and, furthermore, the purpose of the film is to use the gruesomeness of the genocide and the hardships of Ilibagiza as inspiration to find faith in God. Or as stated on the back cover of the DVD edition: “With unwavering faith and courage, one young woman faced the threat of unspeakable acts; endured incomprehensible despair; and quietly, graciously, and bravely came through the living *hell* of holocaust searching for safety, peace, and an everlasting *heaven*”<sup>51</sup>—an unmistakable reference to Jesus’ suffering on the cross. This understanding also corresponds with the reception of the film where, for example, an American user reviewer on IMDb wrote:

This short film is a must see for anyone who believes in God’s grace. It was difficult to see and hear the pain in Immaculee’s [sic] eyes and voice. Yet amazing to know that she has forgiven despite all she had to go through. It is certain that when she prayed... God heard her. [---] It is sure to restore faith to anyone who has ever doubted God’s love for us.<sup>52</sup>

There are similarities to the previously discussed documentaries with a Christian theme: the purposes are largely consistent, and the educational value is at times overshadowed by the display of faith and forgiveness. Then again, *The Diary of Immaculée* does not contain any critique of the Catholic Church as the evangelical documentaries did. In fact, one can ask exactly what it is that is “Catholic” about this documentary and come up pretty empty-handed in comparison with the other documentaries. However, two circumstances raise attention. The first is that Wilkens is not properly introduced as a religious person, belonging as he does to a different denomination. The second circumstance is perhaps even more telling. Pastor Simeon Nzabahimana, the man who hid Ilibagiza and seven other women in his bathroom for 91 days, is simply introduced by his ethnicity as a “Hutu” and not as an Episcopalian minister, thus

conceivably leading audiences in the USA and Europe to believe that he is fact is a Catholic Priest.<sup>53</sup>

The Catholic theme is more prominent in the second film. *If Only We Had Listened* is co-written and co-produced by Ilibagiza together with the film's director, Sean Bloomfield. Bloomfield has continued to make documentaries that explore spirituality and religion, including *The Triumph* (2013) and *Apparition Hill* (2016). Even if *The Diary of Immaculée* told the personal story of Ilibagiza's experiences, there is no doubt she had more control over the production of *If Only We Had Listened*, making it into an even more personal and at the same time spiritual venture.

*If Only We Had Listened* tells the story of Our Lady of Kibeho, a Marian apparition concerning three adolescents starting in the early 1980s in Kibeho, a small town in southwestern Rwanda. The apparitions communicated various messages to these schoolchildren, including prophetic visions of the Rwandan genocide and the Kibeho massacre in 1995, where the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) killed an estimated 4000 Hutus, many of which were former member of the Interahamwe.<sup>54</sup> Tellingly, the Kibeho massacre is not mentioned in the documentary.

The film is in other words a hagiographic documentary that, as the previous discussed documentary, overlaps to the inspirational/self-help field with Ilibagiza at its center. This shift of emphasis from the history of the genocide to a hagiography is apparent already from the start as *If Only We Had Listened* begins with a disclaimer about the graphic footage that the documentary contains instead of a historical recapitulation and contextualization of events. What is more, when the emblematic images are used the color scale is turned down to a grainy black and white scale, which is distorted both visually and on the soundtrack, creating a distancing effect for audiences who do not have to really deal with the gruesomeness of the genocide. If this is not enough of a clue, Ilibagiza's first words are, "My name is Immaculée

Ilibagiza and I believe that God saved my life so I could tell these stories.” At first glance, this opening statement could be part of a never again narrative similar to Holocaust survivors’ stories, used as a humanitarian educational element in schools and elsewhere. However, here it works as a confirmation that the story is not about the genocide *per se*. Instead, the genocide is used as an inspirational vehicle for the existence of God’s grace and the power of forgiveness. Finally, the explanations for the genocide have also been altered, from the power hunger of the previous Hutu regime and the greed of the average Hutu to a story where all blame is placed on the Western world, which only stood by and cared more about “600 gorillas.” Furthermore, colonialism created “the idea of different tribes that did not exist until the Europeans colonized Rwanda”—a historical explanation that has been adopted as the official one by the Rwandan Government.<sup>55</sup>

In documentary fashion *If Only We Had Listened* uses archival footage and talking heads to tell its story and to substantiate facts, blended with the strong presence of Ilibagiza and her experiences. However, the primary archival footage comes from the Kibeho Archives, and consists of videotape recordings of apparitions that the three visionaries had during the early 1980s, none of which is actually a recording of the apocalyptic vision of Rwanda descending into violence and hatred. In addition, the talking heads consist of an author, a number of pilgrims and a psychiatrist, who all have the sole purpose to praise the grace and the truthfulness of the visionaries.

Michael H. Brown, the author of a number of documentary prophecy books, among them *The Final Hour* (1992), proclaims that the three original witnesses; Alphonsine Mumureke, Anathalie Mukamazimpaka, and Marie Claire Mukangango, are the only living visionaries that have been approved by the Catholic Church. This is a truth with modification. The visionaries have only been approved locally by the Rwandan Catholic Church, and not centrally by the Roman Catholic Church, even if Rome (to my knowledge) has not opposed

this interpretation but in fact has, at least indirectly, supported it in an address that Pope Francis gave to the bishops of Rwanda in 2014.<sup>56</sup>

The pilgrims are all young Americans, bedazzled by the presence of Anathalie, the only one of the three original visionaries who still lives in Kibeho and thus appears in the documentary.<sup>57</sup> The psychiatrist, Dr Murem Yangango Bonaventure, who tested and confirmed Alphonsine in the 1980s, now appears as an old man in a couple of lovable scenes with violins on the soundtrack where he tells of the process and how he, as a scientist, became a believer. He (and the filmmakers) emphasize that the prophecies contained passages “that people would come from far away” to ask him about the visions of Our Lady of Kibeho in order to spread the message to the world, which *If Only We Had Listened* undeniably does.

This strong emphasis on the phenomenon of Our Lady of Kibeho creates an objectively awkward relation to the history of the genocide. First by the fact that the genre convention of forgiveness has to be fulfilled, and there is an awkward forgiveness scene (parallel to the one in *Hunting My Husband's Killers*) in which Ilibagiza forgives a man, a condemned killer of some of her relatives, who is not named and whose words are not properly translated from Kinyarwanda to English. The scene seems to be there just for the sake of expectation. Second, the historical explanations are altered, as we saw, but this alteration turns into the essence for the entire documentary as Ilibagiza rhetorically asks the question of why God did not stop the genocide, answering: “The truth is that he did, he sent a message but we did not listen.” In the end of the documentary, she firmly places the responsibility on the Devil, since “evil was involved because killings took place in churches and by priests that aided.”

If the educational value was overshadowed by a display of faith and forgiveness in the evangelical documentaries, the catholic view, via Ilibagiza, on the genocide is as complicated. While *The Diary of Immaculée* begins with a detailed historical contextualization of the

genocide, both films nevertheless turn into Christian inspirational films with a Catholic flair, especially *If Only We Had Listened* with its dedicated Marian motive. Hence, the purposes of these films are, firstly, to promote the Catholic Church and, secondly, to promote Ilibagiza as an inspirational worker for God or for the Catholic Church. These two purposes are closely intertwined, shown by the fact that Ilibagiza is an often-hired inspirational speaker at Christian, mainly Catholic, events but also that magazines such as *Catholic Digest* promote her books, not as education on the genocide against the Tutsis, but as inspirational books for faith and how to pray.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the reception of the films and the books are almost solely concerned with the questions of faith and the power of praying, and to a much lesser degree with the genocide.<sup>59</sup> One typical customer on Amazon wrote, for example:

This is definitely a must-see documentary especially for Catholics all over the world and how the Blessed Mary continues to care for us as she makes appearances to visionaries offering the message of hope and offer prayers for the world. Aside from that, we also get to realize that messages similar to that of Kibeho should not be taken for granted as they too can determine what is going to happen in the world around us. Finally, it reminds us to pray to the Blessed Mary so that she would continuously help us to convert from our sins and change for the better.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the educational and religious elements are linked to a clear-cut commercial level through Ilibagiza's involvement. Ilibagiza has, after the release of *Left to Tell*, made a career as an author, motivational speaker, and Catholic celebrity. Besides books and DVDs there are, on Ilibagiza's website, a number of items for sale such as devotional bracelets, Rosaries made in Sterling Silver, keychains, t-shirts, but also Pilgrimages to Kibeho in Rwanda, with Ilibagiza as the spiritual guide, actually making *If Only We Had Listened* into a profitable infomercial rather than a documentary on the Rwandan Genocide.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

The combination of films that promote Christianity with the theme of genocide, especially in the documentary genre, could potentially have great impact on audiences' historical consciences since the truthfulness is to some extent enhanced. That is, the believability of the documentary genre tends to synergize with the strong message of redemption and salvation for believers in Christ. Linked to this is the educational element, specifically the never again narrative common in books, documentaries, films, and textbook material that deals with histories on genocide and that in turn create a predisposition for historical accuracy among its audiences.

The documentary films discussed have been specifically aimed at Evangelical and Catholic audiences in the US and Europe. These films could theoretically reach wider audiences but distribution networks such as Vision Video and Ignatius Press focus on Christian communities, perhaps making these Christian themed documentaries the main source of historical information on the genocide against the Tutsis for their particular audiences. For that reason, it is important to pose the question of what educational or even documentary value these documentaries contain.

In this article, film analysis and contextualization have revealed that the combination of a religious purpose with the will to tell stories about a historical event such as genocide have contributed to a black and white world view, that in fact duplicate the perception of good and evil within Christianity, rather than functioning as factual documentaries on the historical subject. One conspicuous result of this is, as Fisher and Mitchell have pointed out in relation to *Rwanda: Living Forgiveness*, "that it is nearly impossible to judge the killers, led as they were 'by an evil spirit.' This simple idea is not, however, simple-minded: in a context where evil spirits are understood to be real, it is a logical explanation of what drove neighbours to

commit acts of apparent madness.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, when mundane explanations involving politics, ethnicity, and economics clash with a Christian worldview they tend to be downplayed or even neglected.

Of course, all documentaries are in some way biased due to the choice of, or access to, archive material, talking heads, and not least, how the filmmakers decide to confront the subject matter. Douglas Kellner writes that “[t]he partisan documentary tradition necessarily privileges perspective, interpretation, critique and political intervention,” which are often dismissed by critics as involving subjective notions of truth.<sup>63</sup> The majority of the documentaries discussed here could be labelled as partisan documentaries, especially *Hunting My Husband’s Killers* and the two documentaries featuring survivor Immaculée Iliagiza. However, while truly partisan documentary filmmakers such as Michael Moore do not hide their partialities but in fact highlight them, here there is the appearance of objectivity portrayed through documentary film techniques, the grave subject matter and, as previously argued, a search for divine forgiveness and redemption.

These Christian themed documentaries stand out from the large number of feature films, documentaries, and television programs on the Rwandan genocide that have been produced since 1994, mainly because the genocide tends to be used as a backdrop instead of being its expected focal point. Consequently, the memory and the historiography of the genocide are often hastily over with, or reduced to a bare minimum that leave plausible explanations hanging, opening up for a dualistic Christian interpretation. The apparently altruistic motive of these films is in fact the opposite as religious and even commercial motivations are clearly at play, making them both exploitative and offensive. The fight over Christian souls, using the genocide in this way, between different Evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church is conspicuous and a case in point.

The Evangelical documentaries are in this sense more true to their religious core, while the Catholic documentaries are produced more in line with the expository mode, according to Bill Nichols, where the use of expert witnesses (talking heads) and archival footage seemingly confirm the educational aspect as well as the historical accuracy.<sup>64</sup> The truthfulness is further underlined by the presence of a survivor witness in a way that the Evangelical documentaries lack, due to their Eurocentric outlook. Moreover, the bigger budgets for the Catholic documentaries contribute to the fact that these films are closer to the commercial mainstream of documentaries. Although the fight between Evangelical and Catholic churches is symbolic in these documentaries, it is nevertheless a sign of a growing competition between Christian denominations in Rwanda, where many of the discussed films are used as recruitment material in order to attract proselytes to the right faith, thus affecting the memory of this local genocide in ways that mainstream western-produced film and television probably do not.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Crabtree, "Religiosity Highest in World's Poorest Nations," Gallup, August 31, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/142727/religiosity-highest-world-poorest-nations.aspx>. Accessed August 24, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Dooley, "Implicated Geographies: Public Memorials and the Topographies of Genocide," *Sightlines*, 8 June, 2010, 34.

<sup>3</sup> J.J. Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>4</sup> *International Religious Freedom Report, 2013: Rwanda*, United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222297.pdf>. Accessed August 24, 2015, 1. See also, *Best of Rwanda Volume 1/GlobalVillage.World* (Kigali: Ministry of Trade and Industry MINICOM and RDB Rwanda Development Board/Proudly African Communications, 2016), 15. The Evangelical/Lutheran dominations are divided into Protestant 26 percent, and Adventist 11.1 percent.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 189.



<sup>6</sup> See, for example, “Rwandan priest guilty of genocide,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6175717.stm>, *BBC News*, December 13, 2006. Longman 2011, 191. See also Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy To Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London and New York: Verso 2004), 189.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Mugabo, “Genocide: Church to apologise for role ‘soon’,” *The New Times*, May 4, 2015. It should be mentioned that also Protestant Churches and priests, and foremost among them the Anglican Church, had been involved but on a much smaller scale according to the overall religious division. Muslim Hutus had by comparison mostly refused to participate in the genocide. See, for example, Marc Lacey, “Since ‘94 Horror, Rwandans Turn toward Islam,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Mutoni, “Catholic Church Apology Ambiguous: Vatican deafeningly silent,” *Rwanda Dispatch* (Issue 60, January 2017), 12-15.

<sup>9</sup> Philip A. Cantrell, II, “‘We Were a Chosen People’: The East African Revival and Its Return to Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *Church History* 83:3 (June 2014), 422, 437. For missionary work see, for example, United Evangelical Mission, <http://www.ve-mission.org/en/countries/africa.html>. Accessed August 26, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Gérard Prunier, *Africa’s World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-25.

<sup>11</sup> Roméo Dallaire (with Brent Beardsley), *Shake Hands with the Devil. The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2005), 518-519; Lindsay Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda: the Media and the Aid Agencies,” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allan Thompson (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007), 167-168.

<sup>12</sup> Referenced in Terence Wood, “Bad aid, Pat Robertson and the road to hell,” *Devpolicyblog*, September 10, 2013, <http://devpolicy.org/in-brief/bad-aid-pat-robertson-and-the-road-to-hell/>. Accessed May 24, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” 176.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” 176.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” 176.

<sup>16</sup> Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” 176. According to Richard Walden, the Rwanda refugee crisis generated even more funds for Pat Robertson’s political religious campaign in the US. In the documentary *Mission Congo* (2013) there have also been serious accusations aimed at the OBI for exaggerating its efforts in Goma, and that the Rwanda operation partly worked as a front for Robertson’s company African Development Company, which was into diamonds mining in Zaire.

<sup>17</sup> Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” 186.

<sup>18</sup> The Jesus Film Project, “Help Give ‘JESUS’ to Everyone, Everywhere...”, <http://www.jesusfilm.org/>. Accessed May 25, 2015. According the DVD cover of the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, the film has been seen by a billion people and that 200 individuals have been evangelized.

<sup>19</sup> Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2000), 15-19. Leo A. Walsh, “Why do Catholics not have popular televangelists like as other Christian religions do?”, *Busted Halo*, <http://bustedhalo.com/questionbox/why-do-catholics-not-have-popular-televangelists-like-as-other-christian-religions-do>. Accessed August 29, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2010), 12, 50-56, 224-225.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on film/Film on History* (Pearson Education Ltd: Harlow 2006) 3.

<sup>22</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (The Joshua Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 1975).

<sup>23</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture", ed. Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander Zander, *Echos of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe* (Nordic Academic Press: Lund 2003), 30–38.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenstone 2006, 163.

<sup>25</sup> Ulf Zander, "Holocaust at the Limits: Historical Culture and the Nazi Genocide in the Television Era" in *Echos of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, eds. Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 261–263; Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Schindler's List Is Not Shoah: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory", in *Spielberg's Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 80–85.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Tommy Gustafsson, "Swedish Television News Coverage and the Historical Media Memory of the Rwandan Genocide" in *Scandia* Vol. 76, No. 2 (2010), 80–98 and Piotr A Cieplak, "The Rwandan genocide and the bestiality of representation in *100 Days* (2001) and *Shooting Dogs* (2005)" in *Journal of African Cinemas* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2010), 57.

<sup>27</sup> *Resolution 2150, Adopted by the Security Council at its 7155<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 16 April 2014* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2014), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ulf Zander, *Clio på bio: Om amerikansk film, historia och identitet* (Lund: Historiska media, 2006) 16–20.

<sup>29</sup> Gustafsson, "Swedish Television News Coverage," passim.

<sup>30</sup> Richard O'Connell, "Interview with Greg Barker, Director of *Ghost of Rwanda* (2004)", in *Film & Genocide*, eds. Kristi M Wilson & Tomás F Crowder-Taraborrelli (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin, 2012), 210.

<sup>31</sup> Duncan Fisher and Jolyon Mitchell, "Portraying Forgiveness through Documentary Film," *Studies in World Christianity* 18.2 (2012), 155.

<sup>32</sup> Fisher and Mitchell, "Portraying Forgiveness through Documentary Film," 161–162.

<sup>33</sup> Gustafsson, "Swedish Television News Coverage and the Historical Media Memory of the Rwandan Genocide," 96.

<sup>34</sup> Bert Ingelaere, "The Gacaca courts in Rwanda" in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, ed. Luc Huyse and Mark Salter (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), [http://idea.int/publications/traditional\\_justice/](http://idea.int/publications/traditional_justice/). Accessed June 26, 2017, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Fisher and Mitchell, "Portraying Forgiveness through Documentary Film," 161.

<sup>36</sup> "Crown Awards," ICVM, International Christian Visual Media, <http://icvm.com/crown-awards/>. Accessed October 14, 2015. Fisher and Mitchell, "Portraying Forgiveness through Documentary Film", 156.

<sup>37</sup> Vision Video, <https://www.visionvideo.com/about>. Accessed October 14, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Elisa Beynon, "Hunting My Husband's Killers," Review, *Evangelicals Now* (May 2006), <https://www.e-n.org.uk/2006/05/reviews/hunting-my-husbands-killers/>. Accessed October 14, 2015.

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- <sup>42</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 59.
- <sup>43</sup> McIver, “I hunted for my husband's killer.”
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- <sup>45</sup> “Through the Valley documentary,” Veritas Productions, <http://veritashq.com/through-the-valley/> Accessed October 28, 2015.
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- <sup>48</sup> Ilibagiza, Immaculée (with Steve Erwin), *Our Lady of Kibeho: Mary Speaks to the World from the Heart of Africa* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2008), Ilibagiza, Immaculée, *The Boy Who Met Jesus: Segatashya Emmanuel of Kibeho* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2012), and Ilibagiza, Immaculée (with Steve Erwin), *The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2013).
- <sup>49</sup> Berkeley is among other things the author of *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
- <sup>50</sup> *International Religious Freedom Report 2011: Rwanda* (United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2011), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/192958.pdf>, 1. Accessed October 6, 2016.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Diary of Immaculée*, DVD-edition, New Jersey Studios 2006, Back cover. Italics in original.
- <sup>52</sup> Lifslope, “A must see for anyone who believes in God’s grace,” IMDb, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0829142/reviews?ref\\_=tt\\_ql\\_3](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0829142/reviews?ref_=tt_ql_3). Accessed October 12, 2016.
- <sup>53</sup> Bob Simon, “Rwandan Genocide survivor recalls horror,” *The New Times*, August 13, 2007. Another peculiar circumstance is that the other seven women, who Ilibagiza shared a tiny bathroom with for 91 days, is not present in the documentary, either as eyewitnesses or as praises of Ilibagiza, which would have been an expected ingredient in a documentary of this kind. One can only speculate to why they are missing, but probably because their presence would have diminished Ilibagiza’s suffering.
- <sup>54</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Rwanda (UNAMIR), 1993 – 1996,” <https://www.awm.gov.au/unit/U60680/>. Accessed October 17, 2016. This figure has been debated, and the Rwandan Government’s estimate is that 338 were killed, according to President Pasteur Bizimungu.
- <sup>55</sup> This transformation can also be noticed by the estimated death toll of the genocide, which has increased from 800,000 (according to the UN’s estimation) in *The Diary of Immaculée* to one million according to the Rwandan Government’s later estimation.

- <sup>56</sup> Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro, "Judgement of the Apparitions of Kibeho" (2001), <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/OLKIBEHO.HTM>; Pope Francis, "Address of Pope Francis to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Rwanda on Their Limina Visti", [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140403\\_ad-limina-rwanda.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco_20140403_ad-limina-rwanda.html). See also Rwanda Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synods of Bishops, 2-23 October 2005, Holy See Press Office, The Vatican, "H.E. Most. Rev. Frédéric RUBWEJANGA, Bishop of Kibungo (Kibungo, RWANDA)", [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_21\\_xi-ordinaria-2005/02\\_inglese/b17\\_02.html#-H.E.\\_Most.\\_Rev.\\_Frédéric\\_RUBWEJANGA,\\_Bishop\\_of\\_Kibungo\\_\(Kibungo,\\_RWANDA\)](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_21_xi-ordinaria-2005/02_inglese/b17_02.html#-H.E._Most._Rev._Frédéric_RUBWEJANGA,_Bishop_of_Kibungo_(Kibungo,_RWANDA)), All accessed October 19, 2016.
- <sup>57</sup> Alphonsine Mumureke, the original visionary, is, according to the documentary, a nun in Rome, while Marie Claire Mukangango was killed in the genocide.
- <sup>58</sup> "Appearances and retreats," Immaculée Homepage, <https://www.immaculee.com/events/appearances.php>. Accessed October 20, 2016. "The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life", *Catholic Digest*, [http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/food\\_fun/books/2013/11-11/the-rosary-the-prayer-that-saved-my-life](http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/food_fun/books/2013/11-11/the-rosary-the-prayer-that-saved-my-life). Accessed October 20, 2016.
- <sup>59</sup> See for example the customer reviews at Amazon for *Left to Tell: One Woman's Story of Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* and *The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life*, [https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/1781802955/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_14\\_img\\_2?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=XYMK-A5J2ASZPPXM2QP9Y](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/1781802955/ref=pd_bxgy_14_img_2?ie=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=XYMK-A5J2ASZPPXM2QP9Y) and [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rosary-Prayer-That-Saved-Life/dp/1848509804/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1476952087&sr=8-1&keywords=the+rosary+immaculee](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rosary-Prayer-That-Saved-Life/dp/1848509804/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1476952087&sr=8-1&keywords=the+rosary+immaculee), respectively. Accessed October 20, 2016.
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- <sup>62</sup> Fisher and Mitchell, "Portraying Forgiveness through Documentary Film", 155.
- <sup>63</sup> Douglas Kellner, "On Truth, Objectively and Partisanship: The Case of Michael Moore" in *The Documentary Film Book*, ed. Brian Winston (London: BFI, 2013), 60.
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