

# Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family



Prepared by  
Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah  
Rwanda

# **Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda**

Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family

---

## **Section 1. Introduction**

To download a copy of the full report, go to <https://rwanda.jwresearch.org>.



Recommended citation:

Nkurikiyinka, V., & Chu, J. (2025). *Jehovah's Witnesses during and after the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial factors related to faith, forgiveness, and family*. Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah, Rwanda. <https://rwanda.jwresearch.org>

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Need for the Study</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research Aim and Objectives</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework and Key Themes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Religions in Rwanda in the Context of the Genocide</b>	<b>5</b>
Historical Overview	6
Individual Acts of Rescue During the Genocide	10
Religious Organizations in Post-Genocide Rwanda	11
<b>Jehovah’s Witnesses</b>	<b>12</b>
Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Resistance During the Holocaust	12
Organizational Background of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Rwanda	15
Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Organization and Activity in Contemporary Rwanda	17
<b>Inception of a Nationwide Quantitative Study</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>23</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CLS-H	Compassionate Love Scale for Humanity
CRSS	Community Resilience and Support Scale
DFS	Divine Forgiveness Scale
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
DNK	Do not know
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
FISI	Four-Item Social Identification
HHI	Herth Hope Index
ICD-11	International Classification of Diseases, Eleventh Revision
JW	Jehovah's Witness
JWs	Jehovah's Witnesses
JW-RWA	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family</i>
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
<i>M</i>	Mean
MINUBUMWE	Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement
MRND	Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization

NOA	None of the above
<i>ns</i>	Not (statistically) significant
PNA	Prefer not to answer
PTG	Posttraumatic growth
PTSD	Posttraumatic stress disorder
PTSS	Posttraumatic stress symptoms
RCS	Rwanda Correctional Service
RNEC	Rwanda National Ethics Committee
RTL	Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
SCID-I	Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation
SDR	Socially Desirable Responses
SFDPS	Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale
T-CRS	Transcultural Community Resilience Scale

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from the quantitative study *Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family* (JW-RWA). The cross-sectional study is based on data collected in the spring of 2023 from a nationwide online survey, with a sample of 13,590 Jehovah's Witnesses across all 30 districts in Rwanda.

## Need for the Study

The JW-RWA study was needed in order to

- conduct research in line with the official call to religious communities in Rwanda to document their Genocide-era histories (National Dialogue Council, 2015),
- document in a scientific study the historical experience and contemporary characteristics of the Jehovah's Witness community, and
- fill a gap in academic literature about Jehovah's Witnesses and contribute to scholarship about post-conflict societies.

## Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this quantitative, cross-sectional study was to examine aspects of the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda. With the historical context of the Genocide against the Tutsi, the nationwide online survey, administered in the spring of 2023, investigated variables related to demographic, religious, psychosocial, and experiential characteristics of Jehovah's Witnesses across generations. The large data set allowed statistical comparisons of independent

variables such as gender, age, generational cohort, and Genocide situations.<sup>1</sup> Religious, prosocial, Genocide-related, and psychosocial factors are incorporated in the following four main research objectives:

Objective 1. Identify demographic and religious characteristics of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda: growth of Jehovah's Witnesses before and after the Genocide against the Tutsi; their religious beliefs, motivations, orientation, and identity; and experiences during the government ban on the religion prior to the Genocide.

Objective 2. Examine forgiveness and prosocial characteristics of the faith community: three types of forgiveness (of others, of self, and by God), other prosocial attributes (compassionate love, community support, and helping behaviors), and perceived changes in social relationships.

Objective 3. Investigate gender, generational, and other group differences in Genocide situations and trauma events experienced by those who were Jehovah's Witnesses at the time of the Genocide and those who adopted the faith after the Genocide with respect to the following: duration of danger during the Genocide, changes in household composition before and after the Genocide, Genocide role-situations, trauma events, and helping behaviors during the Genocide against the Tutsi.

Objective 4. Investigate factors related to subjective social and psychological wellbeing of those in the faith community, including family satisfaction, attitudes and intergenerational communication about Genocide and traumatic events, posttraumatic stress symptoms, posttraumatic growth, centrality of Genocide, and temporal orientation, hope, and scriptures to cope.

---

<sup>1</sup> This study uses the full name "Genocide against the Tutsi," but for brevity and variation, it will sometimes refer to "the 1994 Genocide." At times, "Genocide" (with a capital "G") is used to refer to the Genocide against the Tutsi, as compared with the general term "genocide" (with a lowercase "g").

Following the Introduction and Methodology in Sections 1 and 2, the research results for the four main objectives are reported in separate sections: Section 3, Faith; Section 4, Forgiveness and Prosocial Behavior; Section 5, Genocide and Trauma; and Section 6, Subjective Social and Psychological Wellbeing. Each section includes a review of relevant empirical and theoretical literature, a description of variables and measures under investigation, and the key findings.

### **Theoretical Framework and Key Themes**

The research builds on the ecological systems model of the interactive influences of microsystems (e.g., family and religious groups) with macrosystems (e.g., time, history, and culture) on individual development and behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Cairns & Cairns, 1995; Walsh, 2016). This theoretical framework provides the rationale that connects the four main research objectives. The investigation of interrelated systems draws attention to the broad topics of faith, forgiveness, and family, and their respective roles in the building, maintenance, and repair of social bonds. Faith reflects the common religious affiliation of the study participants, but also its role in the development of personal and group identity and the lens through which individuals' experiences have been lived, perceived, and processed (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Forgiveness has deep connections to religious values but is also seen as integral to the advancement of healing and reconciliation (Pargament & Rye, 1998). Family, as a primary site of social connection, plays a crucial role in the transmission of Genocide narratives and memories to future generations (Bonumwezi et al., 2024).

**Faith**, as used in this study, is a shared, communal pattern of religious beliefs about meaning, purpose, character, virtue, and morality that affects identity, behavior, and relationships (VanderWeele, 2017). It is a collective experience within communities of faith through which social and emotional support is given to fellow congregants (Krause & Hayward, 2013). Thus,

throughout the study, but particularly in Section 3, the attitudes, beliefs, and practices in the context of faith and the faith community are described. Such background is crucial to understanding the findings in Sections 3 and 5 related to the religiously based position of nonviolence and political neutrality of Jehovah's Witnesses before and during the Genocide against the Tutsi.

**Forgiveness** is featured in this study because (a) it is essential to individual and collective healing in post-genocide societies (Staub et al., 2005) and (b) it is a prosocial motivational phenomenon (McCullough et al., 1997) that promotes other prosocial cognitions, feelings, and behaviors (Karremans et al., 2005), such as love, compassion, and empathy (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Section 4 of this report examines three types of forgiveness: dispositional (trait) forgiveness—the tendency to forgive transgressions that is stable “over time and across situations” (Berry et al., 2005, p. 183); self-forgiveness—“a moral repair strategy” that involves a “reorientation toward positive values” and “restoration of personal esteem” (Griffin et al., 2018, p. 716); and divine forgiveness—the “perceived absolution for a transgression or sin from a Supreme Being” (Fincham, 2022, p. 455). In the post-Genocide context, these types of forgiveness and their related prosocial factors are important to understanding individual and collective recovery.

**Family** is an integral part of human development, faith communities, and post-Genocide national recovery. The study of families requires both objective and subjective definitions (Amato, 2014). Objective definitions focus on family structure, often operationalized in demographic terms of configurations of household units composed of persons who are often, but not always, related by birth, marriage, or adoption (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2023; Sharma, 2013). The terms “household” and “family” are sometimes used interchangeably; however, unlike

“household,” what constitutes a “family” involves emotional and functional characteristics that are individually and culturally defined (Noone, 2015; Olson et al., 1983). Family research on dyadic relationships (e.g., husband-wife, mother-child) can be clearly defined; however, when “family” as a composite is the unit of analysis, researchers must allow for fragmented and overlapping networks (e.g., stepfamilies, blended families, kinship families, foster families, multigenerational families, extended families, informal and formal families), which are individually conceived (Amato, 2014). As in the case of this study, survey research cannot explore the intricacies of family dynamics, but it can contribute to the academic literature by including measures of both objectively defined “household” and subjectively defined “family.” Section 5 examines household types and sizes 1 month before and 1 month after the Genocide, along with the role of children during the Genocide, as recalled by children and by parents. Section 6 examines intergenerational communication and family satisfaction based on demographic, religious, and Genocide-related factors.

### **Religions in Rwanda in the Context of the Genocide**

Genocide represents a rupture of the most fundamental ties of family, religion, community, and moral responsibility. The consequences of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi thus affect individuals and their families in Rwanda, whether because of personal experiences or the experiences of loved ones. In the aftermath of genocide, faith communities can contribute to the process of national recovery by providing a belief system and social network that encourage forgiveness and related prosocial attitudes and promote emotional and relational healing. Such foundational principles also promote respect and communication within families, which serve as stabilizing influences for both older and younger generations that carry the deep scars of mass violence. Analyzing how and the extent to which Jehovah’s Witnesses in Rwanda have processed

their personal and family Genocide experiences individually and in discourse within familial and religious circles provides insight into prospects for healing wounds, cultivating forgiveness, strengthening resilience, and promoting lasting reconciliation.

### **Historical Overview**

A brief overview of the general religious landscape helps to contextualize the historical development and organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda. Prominent across Rwanda's landscape are its large cathedrals and church compounds that attest to the description of Rwanda as "the most Christianized country in Africa" (Katongole & Wilson-Hartgrove, 2009, p. 19). At the start of 1994, the religious composition of Rwanda was approximately 90% Christian, with 62% Catholic, 18% Protestant, 8% Seventh-day Adventist, and 1% Muslim (Bazuin, 2013; Haworth, 2018).

In this religious environment, Rwandans of all faiths have long been familiar with Jesus' teachings to "love your neighbor as yourself" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." However, religious affiliation did not in itself prevent widespread participation in mass murder. Reportedly, more Genocide victims were murdered on church grounds, normally places of sanctuary, than any other location (African Rights, 1995; Longman, 2010). As Benda (2012) expressed it, Rwandan churchgoers faced a choice between retaining their religious "allegiance and identity" or surrendering it "to an authority other than God" (pp. 159–160). Put another way, whether religion makes the world more peaceful and loving depends much "on what Churches actually teach and on what Christians really do" (Roth, 2004, p. 210).

From the standpoint of scholarly research, 'what Churches taught' and 'what Christians did' has yet to be thoroughly explored. Despite the long history of the involvement of major religions in nation-state struggles, social scientists generally focus on political, geographic, ethnic,

and economic factors more than scrutinizing the role of religion in wars and genocides (Appleby, 2000; Longman, 2010; Simonsson, 2019). As political scientist Jonathan Fox (2018) explained, academic discourse about religious interpretations is generally left for theologians to debate; however, an important question is “whether these interpretations are used in the political arena and are successful at influencing political behavior” (p. 61). Aside from matters of religious interpretation, sociologists and psychologists inquire “under what specific circumstances are people likely to engage in various forms of violence, and how might religion contribute to those circumstances” (Powers, 2021, p. 4), a highly relevant question in the Rwandan context (Karegeye, 2015; Simonsson, 2019).

With the human potential for both extreme evil and altruistic goodness, researchers seek to understand what moves people to align with prosocial values or to take a socially destructive path (cf. Bangwanubusa, 2009; Staub, 2003, 2015; Waller, 2007). Historically, ideologues of mass violence have often co-opted or manipulated religious symbols and language as a means to marshal popular support for political and social causes (Juergensmeyer, 2017; Simonsson, 2019, 2021). Appleby (2000) noted that “the ambivalence of the sacred,” such as ambiguity about the express will of God, has enabled the use of religious concepts to legitimize or sanction violence (cf. Girard, 1972/1977; Juergensmeyer, 2017; Karegeye, 2015; Simonsson, 2019, 2021).

The role of church leadership in fostering ethnic division and tension in Rwanda has been the subject of scholarly study and reflection, both during the colonial and postcolonial periods (e.g., African Rights, 1995; Burnet, 2015; Carney, 2013; Court, 2016, 2019; Denis, 2022; Des Forges, 1999; Doughty & Ntambara, 2005; Gatwa, 2005; Karegeye, 2011, 2015; Katongole & Wilson-Hartgrove, 2009; Longman, 2010; Rittner et al., 2004). The churches’ symbiotic relationship with State was visible, for instance, in the power structures of the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National

pour le Développement (MRND), the sole political party under President Juvénal Habyarimana. Roman Catholic Bishop Vincent Nsengiyumva sat on the MRND's Central Committee, and Michel Twagirayesu, who would later preside over the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, served on the Kibuye Prefecture party committee (Gatwa, 2005).

Religious symbolism infused State-sponsored propaganda, an integral part of a “long-term strategy of dehumanization of the Tutsi population” (Moore, 2020, p. 4). Studies have noted the use of religious language in the increasingly virulent rhetoric in speeches and radio broadcasts, as themes of repression and expulsion escalated to the ultimate goal of extermination (Simonsson, 2019; Temoney, 2016). In 1994, broadcasts on Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) summoned killers and informed them where to perform their “work.” The radio station was especially popular with the Interahamwe, civilian militias that perpetrated mass murder together with the army (Li, 2004).

Because of the institutional churches' intimate relationship with State power, the instrumentalization of religion in political speech brought no rebukes or protests from religious authorities. While Carney (2014) cautions against placing wholesale blame on the Catholic Church for the 1994 Genocide, he acknowledges “the general failure of church leaders to maintain distance from state leaders” (Carney 2014, p. 203). Theologian Christine Schliesser (2018) isolated several factors that influenced the positions various religious communities took toward the 1994 Genocide, including their view of ethnic policies, their relationship with the State, and their relative emphasis on obedience to civil authority versus religiously derived prosocial teachings. Mamdani (2001) goes further, asserting that there would have been no genocide without “the two prime movers,”— army and Church. Thus, he concludes that “the church was a direct participant in the genocide” (pp. 223, 226).

Notions of morally inferior “alien” races—especially if framed in religious language—have been potent tools in rationalizing slavery, colonization, and genocide (cf. Eltringham, 2006; Gatwa, 2005; Karegeye, 2011; Mamdani, 2001; Simonsson, 2019). One example in Rwanda is the promotion of the pseudo-scientific Hamitic hypothesis, which civil and religious authorities cooperated in drawing on in codifying ethnic discrimination in official practice (de Lespinay, 2001; Eltringham, 2006; Gatwa, 2005; Jessee, 2017; Mamdani, 2001; Taylor, 2001).<sup>2</sup> Regarding obedience to civil authority in Rwanda, the close collaboration of mainstream churches and government officials continued into the postcolonial era. Before the Genocide, wrote Anglican priest Roger Bowen (2004), churches in Rwanda encouraged unquestioning submission to State authorities—they “failed to teach Christians that situations can be so dire that ‘we must obey God rather than man’ (Acts 5:29)” (p. 44; cf. African Rights, 1995; Denis, 2022; Des Forges, 1999; Longman, 2001; Simonsson, 2021; Taylor, 2001).

Beyond religious institutions, exploring religious responses to the Genocide also involves the religious motivations of individual adherents. Sociologists categorize religious orientations as “intrinsic” and/or “extrinsic.” Intrinsic religious orientation tends to view faith as a core value and motivator to make life decisions in accord with one’s belief system. By contrast, an extrinsic religious orientation tends toward the view that religion is mainly a means to gain personal, social, or economic benefits (cf. Bazuin, 2013; Gorsuch, 1994). During the Genocide, decisions and actions departed drastically from prosocial religious values, as Ndahiro (2004) noted: “It is an unfortunate fact that most of those involved in organising the whole process leading to the genocide were people who were baptised Christians” (p. 229). As for participation among the general population, Locke (2004) further comments: “If one asks . . . what might the Churches

---

<sup>2</sup> In 1977, Jehovah’s Witnesses published an article on the fallacy of the Hamitic hypothesis in their periodical *Awake!* (1977).

have done in Rwanda to stem the slaughter, the question requires a recognition that Christianity, at best, appears to have been a thin veneer of religiosity over basic and deep-seated cultural, economic, and political realities” (p. 262).

To better understand the influence of religious beliefs during the Genocide, journalists and scholars have given attention to the position of Muslims as a minority non-Christian group (e.g., Benda, 2012). Noting that no mosques were used as killing sites, some journalists have suggested this as a factor in a possible post-Genocide influx of Rwandans converting to Islam as an alternative to Christian churches (e.g., Lacey, 2004). However, based on census and poll data, researchers found only a small percentage of two-way religious switching between Muslims and Christians with no net gain (Bazuin, 2013; Longman, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2010).

Selfless acts of individual Muslims have been well documented, as well as collaboration within Muslim settlements to protect those targeted (e.g., Burnet, 2023; Doughty & Ntatambara, 2005). Extant research indicates no group consensus within the religious community before or during the Genocide. While some Muslims actively encouraged others not to be involved in political ideologies that contradicted the Qur’an, others spread extremist propaganda and organized genocide in support of the ruling party (Africa Rights, 1995; Bazuin, 2013; Burnet, 2023; Doughty & Ntatambara, 2005; Longman, 2010, 2018). Evidence of a community-wide stand by the religious group against the Genocide is so far lacking.

### **Individual Acts of Rescue During the Genocide**

As an indicator of the diversity of situations and complexity of roles during the Genocide, a growing number of qualitative studies and oral histories report numerous cases of individuals from different religions who courageously defied orders from government-backed *génocidaires*, risking their own lives to help those targeted to be killed (e.g., Benda, 2012; Burnet, 2012; Conway,

2011; Court, 2019; Denis, 2022; Fox et al., 2021; Nyseth Brehm et al., 2021). Accounts of altruistic behaviors often describe individuals who are motivated by empathy and moral principles, but not typically in the context of being part of a collective group who share beliefs that move them to act in a similar principled manner. Just as the wrongdoings of a few cannot be blamed on religious organizations as a whole, neither can religious organizations take credit for individual members who were the exception in taking a moral stand. Nevertheless, empirical research optimistically and convincingly shows that religious identity can embrace a moral identity with the compassion, motivation, and clarity to practice impartial, nonviolent, altruistic behaviors (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Staub, 2003).

### **Religious Organizations in Post-Genocide Rwanda**

Understandably, following the Genocide, some Rwandans withdrew from former church affiliations in favor of institutions without colonial or genocidal histories (Bazuin, 2013; Kubai, 2007; Longman, 2018). The early years after the Genocide saw an “explosion” of newly established churches (e.g., Evangelicals and Pentecostals) that were not present in Rwanda prior to the Genocide, having been introduced by returnees from neighboring countries (Kubai, 2007; van 't Spijker, 2006). The changing religious landscape was evident by the percentages of those who reportedly switched religions from the faith of their parents. By around 2010, the percent of Catholics declined 12% (the difference between 54% current Catholics and 66% raised Catholic), while the percent of Protestants increased 12% (the difference between 38% current Protestants and 26% raised Protestant) (Bazuin, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2010). The 2022 census revealed a similar shift in religious affiliation post-Genocide, notably a decrease in Catholics and an increase in Pentecostals: 39.9% Catholic, 21.3% Pentecostal, 14.6% Protestant, 12.2% Seventh-day Adventist, 2.0% Muslim (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2023).

Religious organizations in Rwanda have found it necessary to rebuild social ties since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi (Banyanga & Björkqvist, 2017; Miller et al., 2020). In the aftermath of the Genocide when religious institutions faced condemnation, majority Christian churches sought to regain status as moral agents by sponsoring programs with New Testament themes such as confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Kubai, 2016; Schliesser, 2018), thus diverting attention away from claims of complicity in the Genocide (Court, 2019).

### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

One Christian religion in Rwanda—Jehovah's Witnesses—is largely missing in the academic literature on the position of religions during the Genocide against the Tutsi (Chu, 2015; cf. Stark & Iannaccone, 1997).<sup>3</sup> Except for survivor testimony and anecdotal observations within the Witness community (e.g., Seminega, 2019), scholarly documentation of their situation before, during, and after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi is almost nonexistent (Chu, 2019; Chu & Seminega, 2022).

### **Jehovah's Witnesses' Resistance During the Holocaust**

Jehovah's Witnesses' ethic of nonviolence and position of political neutrality are based on their beliefs, such as the sanctity of life, the impartiality of God toward racial and ethnic groups, and their obligation to obey the law unless it requires disobedience to God. Their beliefs were severely tested during the 12 years of Nazi rule, during which racial politics began with discrimination and culminated in genocide.

---

<sup>3</sup> For a general overview of the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses, see Chu & Peltonen (2024). Researchers often do not identify Jehovah's Witnesses in their samples for practical reasons: (1) Jehovah's Witnesses are a relatively small Christian group (i.e., less than 1% of the Rwandan population). (2) Their distinct beliefs cannot be categorized as either Catholic or Protestant, so they are often added to the "other" category.

Examination of the conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Genocide against the Tutsi, as supported by the present study, warrants a comparison with the Witnesses' behavior during the genocidal Nazi regime. The history of Jehovah's Witnesses' nonviolent resistance to the Nazi regime is a topic for in-depth studies (e.g., Garbe, 1993/2008; Hesse, 2001; King, 1982), though several decades elapsed after World War II before scholars delved into their experience. In part, the eventual increase in academic attention to the Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi period was prompted and supported by efforts of Witnesses to "document their own history" (Berenbaum, 2001, p. 11).

In Holocaust-era accounts, Jehovah's Witnesses are "usually singled out for special mention in the categories of non-Jewish or 'other' victims" (Roth, 2001, p. 235) for their politically neutral and nonviolent stance, which resulted in persecution, imprisonment, and death. In his study of the Holocaust, philosophy professor John Roth (2001) wrote:

The reason why the moral example set by the Jehovah's Witnesses ought to be highlighted is not merely because it is worthy of celebration but also because it presents a crucial challenge. Although that challenge may make us uncomfortable, it can be encouraging in vital ways. To be specific, as a Holocaust scholar who is not a Jehovah's Witness, I have come to understand that the moral example of the Jehovah's Witnesses contains elements that are essential to check the arrogance that led to the Holocaust. Consider the following proposition: If more people practiced versions of what the Jehovah's Witnesses preach and practice, the Holocaust could have been prevented and genocide would scourge the world no more. (p. 236)

Some 60 years before the Genocide against the Tutsi, in 1933, Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany refused to participate in political or military acts even at the risk of incarceration and death. One religious scientist identified the beliefs that motivated the small religious group:

Because Jehovah's Witnesses advocate only one government, that of God's Kingdom, some have viewed them as subversive. But nothing could be further from the truth. In imitation of Jesus' apostles, "they are no part of the world" (John 17:16). They are politically neutral. Because of their loyalty to God, they obey the laws of their respective human governments. Indeed, they are exemplary in their "subjection to the superior authorities" (Romans 13:1). . . . There is, however, a line that cannot be crossed under any circumstances. It is the line between the duty of Jehovah's Witnesses to man and their duty to God. They seek to render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar but to God what belongs to God (Matthew 22:21). (Yonan, 1999, p. 319)

Although the political and social contexts of genocide in Rwanda and Nazi-occupied Europe were vastly different, the use of religion to justify genocide was similar (Bergen, 1996; Ericksen & Heschel, 1999; Simonsson, 2019). As the current study confirms, Jehovah's Witnesses in both cases espoused the same nonviolent ethic, which involved extreme risks to their freedom and their lives. (See Section 3 for findings on the core beliefs and degree of agreement of Jehovah's Witnesses. Sections 3 and 5 report on the position of those in the Witness community during the period of government ban.) The historical record and research-based evidence confirm that Witnesses collectively and individually, with rare exception, maintained teachings and practices of nonviolence, political neutrality, and racial and ethnic equality even during pressure of mass violence.

Two reputable sources give indications of the Witnesses' position during the 1994 Genocide. The head of the independent Ethnic Conflict Research Project, Christian Scherrer (2002), suggested that the Witnesses were unique among religious groups: "All the churches active in Rwanda, with the exception of the Jehovah's Witnesses (of whom only a few survived), were involved at least 'passively' in the genocide" (p. 113).

Similarly, the human rights organization, African Rights, documented in exhaustive detail the collusion, cooperation, and capitulation of religious groups in 1994 but reported no such incidences involving Jehovah's Witnesses (African Rights, 1995; see *Reformierte Nachrichten*, 1998, December 8). However, until now the actual circumstances of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda have not been investigated by any systematic empirical study.<sup>4</sup>

### **Organizational Background of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda**

Jehovah's Witnesses are neither a colonially established religion nor a newly established post-Genocide religion in Rwanda. The following historical information is based on the *2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2012).

Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda date back to more than 2 decades before the Genocide. The first evangelizers were a Swahili-speaking couple who came from Tanzania to Kigali in 1970—Oden and Enea Mwaisoba. Then in 1975, a native Rwandan and Kinyarwanda speaker, Gaspard Rwakabubu, with his wife Melanie and their four children, left the Congo for Kigali. It was Rwakabubu who translated the first Kinyarwanda publication of Jehovah's Witnesses, the 32-page booklet *This Good News of the Kingdom* that covered topics about God; Christ Jesus; sin, death, and the Devil; the Kingdom of God; life on earth; and the meaning of Christian dedication.

---

<sup>4</sup> To our knowledge, only two studies related to the Genocide against the Tutsi include Jehovah's Witnesses, three people in total, all of whom were post-Genocide converts (Bazuin, 2013; Brown, 2018).

In 1976, one of the first Kinyarwanda speakers baptized in Rwanda as one of Jehovah's Witnesses was Justin Rwagatore, who lived in Save.<sup>5</sup>

During the early 1970s, the Catholic, Protestant, and Seventh-day Adventist clergy took little note of the small group; however, during the early 1980s, as the number of those who were resigning from their church increased, the government labeled the small group a danger to the country. Referring to Jehovah's Witnesses, the president of the country declared on national radio that he would not tolerate those who denigrated the "Rwandan faith." Interestingly, the arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses coincided with the appointment of the archbishop of the Catholic Church in Rwanda as chairman of the central committee of the ruling political party.<sup>6</sup>

Government suppression during the 1980s ultimately resulted in about one third of Witnesses—140 out of 435, both men and women—being imprisoned for their religious activities, such as preaching and holding meetings in small groups. For example, a schoolteacher was imprisoned for refusal to make contributions to the army and eventually lost her job and house. During the political instability of the early 1990s, the position of nonviolence and political neutrality of Jehovah's Witnesses drew attention for their refusal to participate in patriotic ceremonies or perform military service. Political neutrality also led to Witnesses' nonconformity with discriminatory social norms that developed in line with the ethnopolitics of the day (Seminega, 2019). As a result, Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda suffered economic loss, separation from families, incarceration, and at times physical violence for holding to the same religious principles

---

<sup>5</sup> The first Kinyarwanda publication *This Good News of the Kingdom* is accessible at <https://wol.jw.org/rw/wol/d/r127/lp-yw/1101965001>. For more details about the early history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda reported in the *2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, go to <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/302012004> in English.

<sup>6</sup> With the support of the Rwandan President, Vincent Nsengiyumva was appointed Archbishop of Kigali from 1976 until his death in June 1994 (Simonsson, 2019). Nsengiyumva was chairman of the central committee of the ruling party between 1975 and 1990 (*The Age*, 2004). He was known to wear the Rwandan President's portrait pin during Mass (Des Forges, 1999).

that underpinned Witnesses' later decision to refuse participation in atrocities committed during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.<sup>7</sup> (For more information about Jehovah's Witnesses during the period of government ban between 1982 and 1992, see Sections 3 and 5 of this report.)

The situation improved for the Witnesses in April 1992. With the support of a new and sympathetic Ministry of Justice, the government granted the organization legal recognition in Rwanda, allowing them to freely meet for worship and publicly share their message. By early 1994, there were some 2,500 Witnesses in 45 congregations in Rwanda. Just weeks prior to the outbreak of the Genocide, the Witnesses were planning for regional assemblies and a facility for an enlarged Kinyarwanda translation team (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2012). Although not targeted in the Genocide as a religious group, an estimated 400 Witnesses and their associates (family and Bible students) were killed.<sup>8</sup> Many died because of their presumed ethnicity and others for their nonviolent stance and altruistic actions (Chu, 2019). (Section 5 provides statistics on the Genocide situations of those targeted to be killed—a term in this report applied to Tutsi—who were Jehovah's Witnesses by 1994 and who converted after 1994.)

### **Jehovah's Witnesses' Organization and Activity in Contemporary Rwanda**

The early post-Genocide growth of the Witness community came primarily from first-generation believers who were born to parents affiliated with other religions, but in more recent years, growth included generations who have grown up in Jehovah's Witness households. This combination of external and internal growth over time means that congregations consist of people

---

<sup>7</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda have attracted national and international attention for their consistent political neutrality and resultant refusal to participate in political or military activities (e.g., Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2009, 2011, 2017; Ntirenganya, 2020; Office of International Religious Freedom, 2020; War Resisters' International, 2008). For a historical discussion of the Witnesses' doctrine of "political neutrality" and its roots in early Christian practice, see Chu (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses do not keep record of congregants' age, gender, race, or ethnicity. The number of Witnesses who died during the Genocide would have included those targeted for their Tutsi ethnicity and Hutu Witnesses who provided help to those targeted and refused to participate in the Genocide.

from diverse religious backgrounds and those with both personal and secondhand knowledge of experiences during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Before making the decision to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses, individuals participate in an extensive Bible study program that covers religious doctrines and moral principles.<sup>9</sup> The number of Witnesses increased approximately 100% from 1994 to 1996 and 1,600% from 1994 to 2023, making it one of the fastest growing religions in Rwanda.<sup>10</sup> (See Section 3 for study findings on the attraction to the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses and the community's growth over time.) During the COVID-19 pandemic, between 2020 and 2023, congregation meetings were held remotely in rural and urban areas throughout the country. In 2022, some 590 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses counted over 33,000 active Witnesses, and nearly 106,000 persons attended their annual Memorial commemoration of Jesus' death (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2023).<sup>11</sup> (See Section 2 on Methodology for a comparison of the sample population and Rwanda general population and Section 3 for research findings on the growth of the religious community over time.)

Rwanda is one of 240 lands in which Witnesses carry out their public ministry. Compared with the early years when only one Witness brochure was available in Kinyarwanda, today Rwandans can search [jw.org](http://jw.org) for hundreds of Kinyarwanda publications and audio-visual resources on topics of importance to individual wellbeing, family life, and social cohesion. They offer free

---

<sup>9</sup> The Bible study material used at the time of the survey in Kinyarwanda is accessible at <https://www.jw.org/rw/isomero/ibitabo/ishimire-ubuzima-iteka-ryose-2/>.

<sup>10</sup> Calculations are based on the pre-Genocide 1994 figure of 2,500 minus an estimated 400 Witnesses (and associates) who were killed during the Genocide; the 1996 service year report of 4,223 peak publishers; and the 2023 service year report of 33,664 peak publishers. (Service years run from September 1 to August 31 of the following year.) To see how Jehovah's Witnesses report peak, average, and ratio of publishers by country, see <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/how-many-jw/>. "Publisher" is the term used for a Witness who actively participates in the public ministry, that is, one who publicizes the gospel.

<sup>11</sup> "Active Witnesses" refers to persons who are involved in "witnessing" or telling others about their faith. The count for the annual Memorial attendance includes children and associated individuals who are not active, baptized persons.

biblical literature in printed or electronic form in Kinyarwanda, Rwandan Sign Language, Chiga, Swahili, French, and English, along with over 1,000 other languages.<sup>12</sup>

Meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, held in buildings called Kingdom Halls, are open to the public without tithing or the taking of collections. Two meetings each week include instructional sessions using textual and audio-video materials. Regular participation in these interactive, classroom-style meetings, where study and discussion of important life questions take place, may have contributed to the willingness of survey respondents to complete the long survey with introspective questions. Study materials for weekly meetings are disseminated without cost through the organization's official website, [jw.org](http://jw.org). In Rwanda, local volunteers help congregants to access and use digital files. Having an organized technical support infrastructure already in place facilitated the deployment and implementation of the JW-RWA survey.

In addition to social interaction of congregants at weekly meetings, Jehovah's Witnesses are known for publicly sharing their faith. This regular, shared ministry fosters feelings of familiarity and commonality among congregants by emphasizing group values in a context of prosocial outreach.

Working with Rwanda Correctional Service, volunteer ministers have a well-established Bible education program for those in prisons, providing Bible studies and religious meetings in all 13 prisons in Rwanda. According to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda, the Witnesses began organizing the prison ministry in 1995, shortly after the Genocide; and the government officially granted permission in 2001. On average, 60 prisoners have been baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses each year from 2016 to 2024, totaling more than 500 prisoners in the 13 correctional facilities in Rwanda. The outreach program provides in-depth Bible education that

---

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs in Kinyarwanda, see <https://www.jw.org/rw/abahamya-yehova/> and in English, see <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/>.

helps participants to develop prosocial attitudes and behaviors to help promote improved relationships.

Each congregation is overseen by a body of elders (the number depending on qualifications, need, and availability). Elders are unsalaried, their primary responsibilities involving biblical instruction and pastoral care of congregants. They are not mental health professionals but are trained to provide spiritual guidance and comfort. During fielding of the JW-RWA survey, elders were instructed to be alert to any congregants exhibiting signs of emotional distress. Elders were prepared to suggest seeking professional help, if needed. (See Appendix F, Congregation Announcements to Recruit Survey Participants.)

In times of natural or man-made disaster, organization-wide arrangements are in place to provide various forms of relief by crews of volunteers who are trained and organized by Disaster Relief Committees working under the direction of the national office. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses called a global halt to in-person religious meetings and ministry; and relief committees were formed to deliver sanitizing kits, medications, and food to those in need. National offices coordinated arrangements for virtual meetings so that congregants could maintain social ties and communicate their needs while maintaining physical distancing (Chu, 2023; Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah for the Rwanda Governance Board, 2023). During the JW-RWA fielding period, relief committees were activated when severe flooding occurred in northwestern Rwanda. Survey question sets on congregational support included giving and receiving disaster relief.

### **Inception of a Nationwide Quantitative Study**

With an awareness of the passing of time and the aging of the generation of Genocide survivors, developmental discussions began in 2019 on ways to document the collective and

individual historical experiences of approximately 2,500 Jehovah's Witnesses and their associates in Rwanda in April 1994. No systematic study existed on the impact of the Genocide on the Witness community. In fact, during more than 50 years of their presence in Rwanda, no scientific data had been gathered on the history of their faith community in Rwanda. Likewise, the national office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda did not maintain a list of congregants and held no records that could be used to locate individuals or identify the ethnicity of those who were associated with the Witness community in Rwanda during the Genocide against the Tutsi 3 decades ago.

Thus, the effort to document the community's experience necessitated the conducting of a nationwide survey that could reach Witnesses in all parts of Rwanda. In addition to inquiring about the experiences of those who were affiliated with Jehovah's Witnesses during the 1994 Genocide, the nationwide effort would also enable the collection of such data as demographic profile (gender, age, geographical distribution, vocational and educational status), religious history (religious identity, motivations for affiliation, communal support and helping), psychosocial factors (trauma effects and post-trauma recovery; forgiveness, hope, and prosocial attributes), and familial communication about the Genocide. In addition, data could be collected on those Jehovah's Witnesses who lived during the earlier period of governmental ban (1982–1992). These data would provide retrospective context to the behavior of Rwandan Jehovah's Witnesses during the Genocide.

In the course of devising a method to locate and survey this cohort, it became clear that a nationwide data-collection effort was also an opportunity to learn about the 95% of the present Jehovah's Witness community who were not part of the Witness cohort in Rwanda in 1994. These included a large number of post-Genocide, first-generation adult converts who at birth had parents who were not Witnesses; second-generation Witnesses who were born after 1994 and whose

parents were JWs at the time of their birth; and returnees who were outside Rwanda at the time of the Genocide and returned after 1994. Expanding the sample to include these subgroups created the possibility for cross-group comparisons. For instance, the large data set was used to study post-Genocide relationships within a group of individuals with differing Genocide situations, along with the demographic and religious characteristics of those who now comprise a single faith community.

The wide-ranging exploration of research possibilities led to the development of a survey instrument designed to generate a multilayered data set for scholarly study from a broad spectrum of disciplines and perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

The JW-RWA study offers a cross-sectional portrait of a religious community with distinct characteristics and experiences. Despite the limitations of quantitative research, the large data set yields insights useful to genocide scholars, historians, social scientists, religion specialists, and mental-health professionals. The JW-RWA study investigates religious beliefs and practices that contributed to impartiality, nonviolence, and prosocial behavior before, during, and after the Genocide against the Tutsi. Such insights can strengthen genocide education and prevention programs with the goal of “Never again.”

## References

- African Rights. (1995). *Rwanda: Death, despair, and defiance* (Rev. ed.).
- Amato, P. R. (2014). What is a family? *NCFR Report*, 59(2), 3–4. <https://www.ncfr.org/ncfr-report/past-issues/summer-2014/what-family>
- Appleby, R. S. (2000). *The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Awake!* (1977). What is the Bible's view? Are Blacks cursed by God? October 8, 1977, 28–29. <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101977726>
- Bangwanubusa, T. (2009). Understanding the polarization of responses to genocidal violence in Rwanda [Doctoral dissertation, University of Gothenburg]. <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/21470>
- Banyanga, J., & Björkqvist, K. (2017). The dual role of religion regarding the Rwandan 1994 genocide: Both instigator and healer. *Pyrex Journal of African Studies and Development*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://e-ihuriro.rcsprwanda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-Dual-Role-of-Religion-Regarding-the-Rwandan-1994-Genocide-by-BANYANGA-Jean-dAmour.pdf>
- Bazuin, J. T. (2013). *Religion in the remaking of Rwanda after genocide* [Doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University]. Vanderbilt Heard Libraries. <https://ir.vanderbilt.edu/items/35d089fd-a3d6-483c-9a65-153be7c1c022>
- Benda, R. M. (2012). *The test of faith: Christians and Muslims in the Rwandan genocide* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester]. University of Manchester Research. [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/54531915/FULL\\_TEXT.PDF](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/54531915/FULL_TEXT.PDF)

- Berenbaum, M. (2001). Preface. In H. Hesse (Ed.), *Persecution and resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi regime 1933–1945* (pp. 9–11). Edition Temmen.
- Bergen, D. L. (1996). *Twisted cross: The German Christian movement in the Third Reich*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Berry, J. W., Worthington, E. L., Jr., O'Connor, L. E., Parrott, L., III, & Wade, N. G. (2005). Forgivingness, vengeful rumination and affective traits. *Journal of Personality*, 73(1), 183–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2004.00308.x>
- Bonumwezi, J. L., Grapin, S. L., Uddin, M., Coyle, S., Habintwali, D., & Lowe, S. R. (2024). Intergenerational trauma transmission through family psychosocial factors in adult children of Rwandan survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. *Social Science & Medicine*, 348, Article 116837. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116837>
- Bowen, R. W. (2004). Genocide in Rwanda 1994—An Anglican perspective. In C. Rittner, J. K. Roth, & W. Whitworth (Eds.), *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the churches?* (1st ed., pp. 37–63). Paragon House.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (Ed.). (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Sage Publications.
- Brown, S. E. (2018). *Gender and the genocide in Rwanda: Women as rescuers and perpetrators*. Routledge.
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2009). *International religious freedom report 2009: Rwanda*. U.S. Department of State. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2009/127250.htm>

- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2011). *Country reports on human rights practices for 2011: Rwanda*. U.S. Department of State. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011humanrightsreport/>
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2017). *2017 report on international religious freedom: Rwanda*. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2017-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/>
- Burnet, J. E. (2012). *Genocide lives in us: Women, memory, and silence in Rwanda*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Burnet, J. E. (2015). Genocide, evil and human agency: The concept of evil in Rwandan explanations of the 1994 Genocide. *Anthropology Faculty Publications*, 12. <https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/items/d8ec4c2b-8f2d-4252-9ee2-0ea6c679ed72>
- Burnet, J. E. (2023). *To save heaven and earth: Rescue in the Rwandan genocide*. Cornell University Press.
- Cairns, R. B., & Cairns, B. D. (1995). Social ecology over time and space. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder, Jr., & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 397–421). American Psychological Association. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/10176-011>
- Carney, J. J. (2014). *Rwanda before the genocide: Catholic politics and ethnic discourse in the late colonial era*. Oxford University Press.
- Chu, J. (2004). God's things and Caesar's: Jehovah's Witnesses and political neutrality. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6(3), 319–342.
- Chu, J. (2015). “No creed but the Bible”: The belief system of Jehovah's Witnesses. *Religion – Staat – Gesellschaft*, 16(1/2), 109–179.

- Chu, J. (2019). The practice and consequences of apolitical Christianity by the Rwandan Jehovah's Witness community before and during the genocide. *Religion – Staat – Gesellschaft*, 20(1/2), 223–254.
- Chu, J. (2023). When 'no resident will say: "I am sick"': The global religious response of Jehovah's Witnesses to the Covid-19 pandemic. In G. D. Chryssides & D. Cohn-Sherbok (Eds.), *The Covid pandemic and the world's religions: Challenges and responses* (pp. 85–92). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Chu, J., & Peltonen, O. (2024). *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009375191>
- Chu, J., & Seminega, T. (2022). Jehovah's Witnesses as "citizens of the Kingdom of God." In S. E. Brown & S. D. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of religion, mass atrocity, and genocide* (pp. 269–279). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429317026-30>
- Conway, P. (2011). Righteous Hutus: Can stories of courageous rescuers help in Rwanda's reconciliation process. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(7), 217–223.
- Court, A. (2016). The Christian churches, the state, and genocide in Rwanda. *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology*, 44(1), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.7832/44-1-106>
- Court, A. (2019). Can the Rwandan Catholic Church overcome its history of politicization? A reply to Philippe Denis. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 32(2), 1–37. <http://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2019/v32n2a2>
- de Lespinay, C. (2001). "The churches and the genocide in the East African Great Lakes Region." In O. Bartov & P. Mack (Eds.), *In God's name: Genocide and religion in the twentieth century* (pp. 161–79). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781782381655-008>

- Denis, P. (2022). *The genocide against the Tutsi, and the Rwandan churches: Between grief and denial*. James Currey.
- Des Forges, A. (1999). *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda* (2nd ed.). Human Rights Watch.
- Doughty, K., & Ntambara, D. M. (2005). Resistance and protection: Muslim community actions during the Rwandan Genocide. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.  
<https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/resistance-and-protection-muslim-community-actions-during-the-rwandan-genocide/>
- Eltringham, N. (2006). ‘Invaders who have stolen the country’: The Hamitic hypothesis, race and the Rwandan genocide. *Social Identities*, 12(4), 425–446.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630600823619>
- Ericksen, R. P., & Heschel, S. (Eds.). (1999). *Betrayal: German churches and the Holocaust*. Fortress Press.
- Fincham, F. D. (2022). Towards a psychology of divine forgiveness. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 14(4), 451–461. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000323>
- Fox, J. (2018). *An introduction to religion and politics: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Fox, N., Wise, J. D., & Nyseth Brehm, H. (2021). Following heavenly orders: Heroic deviance and the denial of responsibility in narratives of rescue. *Deviant Behavior*, 43(11), 1385–1405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2021.1983738>
- Garbe, D. (2008). *Between resistance and martyrdom: Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Third Reich* (D. Grimm, Trans.). University of Wisconsin Press. (Original work published 1993)
- Gatwa, T. (2005). *The churches and ethnic ideology in the Rwandan crises 1900–1994*. Wipf & Stock.

- Girard, R. (1977). *Violence and the sacred* (P. Gregory, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press.  
(Original work published 1972)
- Gorsuch, R. L. (1994). Toward motivational theories of intrinsic religious commitment. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33(4), 315–325. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1386491>
- Greenfield, E. A., & Marks, N. F. (2007). Religious social identity as an explanatory factor for associations between more frequent formal religious participation and psychological well-being. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 17(3), 245–259.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10508610701402309>
- Griffin, B. J., Worthington, E. L., Jr., Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., & Maguen, S. (2018). Development of the Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65(6), 715–726. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000293>
- Grøn, A. (2009). The limit of ethics – The ethics of the limit. In T. Brudholm & T. Cushman (Eds.), *The religious in responses to mass atrocity: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 38–59). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511575730.003>
- Haworth, M. T. (2018). Church and state in Rwanda: Catholic missiology and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, 2830.  
[https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/2830](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2830)
- Hesse, H. (Ed.). (2001). *Persecution and resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi regime, 1933–1945*. Edition Temmen.
- Jessee, E. (2017). *Negotiating genocide in Rwanda: The politics of history*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Juergensmeyer, M. (2017). *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*. University of California Press.

- Karegeye, J.-P. (2011). Religion, politics, and genocide in Rwanda. In A. Bieler, C. Bingel, & H.-M. Gutman (Eds.), *After violence, religion, trauma, and reconciliation* (pp. 82–102). Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.
- Karegeye, J.-P. (2015). When genocide becomes moral obligation: On the ambivalence of religious language. In J.-D. Gasanabo, D. J. Simon, & M. M. Ensign (Eds.), *Confronting genocide in Rwanda: Dehumanization, denial, and strategies for prevention* (2nd ed.). Apidama Ediciones.
- Karremans, J. C., Van Lange, P. A. M., & Holland, R. W. (2005). Forgiveness and its associations with prosocial thinking, feeling, and doing beyond the relationship with the offender. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(10), 1315–1326.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205274892>
- Katongole, E., & Wilson-Hartgrove, J. (2009). *Mirror to the church: Resurrecting faith after genocide in Rwanda*. Zondervan.
- King, C. E. (1982). *The Nazi state and the new religions: Five case studies in non-conformity*. Edwin Mellen Press.
- Krause, N., & Hayward, R. D. (2013). Measuring communities of faith: A preliminary investigation. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*, 25(3), 258–276.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2013.767767>
- Kubai, A. (2007). Post-genocide Rwanda: The changing religious landscape. *Exchange*, 36(2), 198–214. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254307X176606>
- Kubai, A. (2016). ‘Confession’ and ‘forgiveness’ as a strategy for development in post-genocide Rwanda. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 72(4), 1–9.  
<http://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3562>

- Lacey, M. (2004, April 7). Since '94 horror, Rwandans turn toward Islam. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/world/since-94-horror-rwandans-turn-toward-islam.html>
- Li, D. (2004). Echoes of violence: Considerations on radio and genocide in Rwanda. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462352042000194683>
- Locke, H. G. (2004). Religion and the Rwandan genocide: Some preliminary considerations. In C. Rittner, J. K. Roth, & W. Whitworth (Eds.), *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the churches?* (1st ed., pp. 27–35). Paragon House.
- Longman, T. (2001). Church politics and the genocide in Rwanda. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 31(2), 163–186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/157006601X00112>
- Longman, T. (2010). *Christianity and genocide in Rwanda*. Cambridge University Press.
- Longman, T. (2018). Christian churches in post-genocide Rwanda: Reconciliation and its limits. In G. Mohammad (Ed.), *The healing of memories: African Christian responses to politically induced trauma* (pp. 55–76). Lexington Books.
- Mamdani, M. (2001). *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press.
- McCullough, M. E., Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Rachal, K. C. (1997). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(2), 321–336.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.73.2.321>
- Miller, D. E., Miller, L. T., & Miller, A. M. (2020). *Becoming human again: An oral history of the Rwanda genocide against the Tutsi*. University of California Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw1d5vv>

- Moore, A. T. (2020). Words and power in conflict: Rwanda under MRND rule. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 27(2), Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2020.1684>
- National Dialogue Council. (2015). *Imyanzuro y'Inama y'Igihugu y'Umushyikirano ya 13 Ukuboza, 2015* [Conclusions of the National Conference of 2015, December 13]. [http://umushyikirano.gov.rw/wpcontent/uploads/2015/12/IMYANZURO-YINAMA-YIGIHUGU-YUMUSHYIKIRANO-YA-13-22\\_12\\_2015.pdf](http://umushyikirano.gov.rw/wpcontent/uploads/2015/12/IMYANZURO-YINAMA-YIGIHUGU-YUMUSHYIKIRANO-YA-13-22_12_2015.pdf)
- National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2023). *RPHC5* [Fifth Rwanda population and housing census] *Thematic report: Social-cultural characteristics*. <http://alpha.statistics.gov.rw/fifth-population-and-housing-census-2022/rphc5-thematic-reports/rphc5-thematic-report-social-cultural-characteristics>
- Ndahiro, T. (2004). The church's blind eye to genocide in Rwanda. In C. Rittner, J. K. Roth, & W. Whitworth (Eds.), *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the churches?* (1st ed., pp. 229–249). Paragon House.
- Noone, R. J. (2015). Multigenerational family emotional process as a source of individual differences in adaptiveness. In R. J. Noone & D. V. Papero (Eds.), *The family emotional system: An integrative concept for theory, science, and practice* (pp. 29–41). Lexington Books.
- Ntirenganya, E. (2020, July 28). Parliament repeals provision compelling public servants to take oath. *The New Times* [Rwanda]. <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/parliament-repeals-provision-compelling-public-servants-take-oath>
- Nyseth Brehm, H., Fox, N., DeRoche, C., & Wise, J. D. (2021). In the aftermath: The post-conflict social and economic consequences of rescue during genocide. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 25(1), 24–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2021.1955445>

- Office of International Religious Freedom. (2020). *2020 Report on international religious freedom: Rwanda*. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/>
- Oliner, S. P., & Oliner, P. M. (1988). *The altruistic personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*. Free Press.
- Olson, D. H., McCubbin, H. I., Barnes, H. L., Larsen, A. S., Muxen, M. J., & Wilson, M. A. (1983). *Families: What makes them work*. Sage Publications.
- Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah. (2023). *2023 Report of Jehovah's Witnesses for the Rwanda Governance Board* [Unpublished report].
- Pargament, K. I., & Rye, M. S. (1998). Forgiveness as a method of religious coping. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspectives* (pp. 59–78). Templeton Foundation Press.
- Pew Research Center. (2010, April 15). Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Powers, P. R. (2021). *Religion and violence: A religious studies approach*. Routledge.
- Reformierte Nachrichten* [Reformed Press]. (1998, December 8). Harare: Völkermord ungesühnt [Harare: Genocide unpunished], 1–2. <https://archive.li/Xxzmu>
- Rittner, C., Roth, J. K., & Whitworth, W. (Eds.). (2004). *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the churches?* (1st ed.). Paragon House.
- Roth, J. K. (2001). *Holocaust politics*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Roth, J. K. (2004). "Nothing guaranteed." In C. Rittner, J. K. Roth, & W. Whitworth (Eds.), *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the churches?* (1st ed., pp. 209–210). Paragon House.

- Scherrer, C. P. (2002). *Genocide and crisis in Central Africa: Conflict roots, mass violence, and regional war*. Praeger.
- Schliesser, C. (2018). From “a theology of genocide” to a “theology of reconciliation”? On the role of Christian churches in the nexus of religion and genocide in Rwanda. *Religions*, 9(2), Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9020034>
- Seminega, T. (2019). *No greater love: How my family survived the genocide in Rwanda*. GM&A Publishing.
- Sharma, R. (2013). The family and family structure classification redefined for the current times. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 2(4), 306–310. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.123774>
- Simonsson, O. (2019). God rests in Rwanda. The role of religion in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda [Doctoral dissertation, Uppsala University, Sweden]. *Studia Historica Upsaliensia* 264. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1305469/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Simonsson, O. (2021). Rwanda 1994: The creation of religious identities in genocide propaganda. In S. E. Brown & S. D. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of religion, mass atrocity, and genocide* (pp. 247–257). Routledge.
- Stark, R., & Iannaccone, L. (1997). Why Jehovah’s Witnesses grow so rapidly: A theoretical application. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 12(2), 133–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537909708580796>
- Staub, E. (2003). *The psychology of good and evil: Children, adults, and groups helping and harming others*. Cambridge University Press.
- Staub, E. (2015). *The roots of goodness and resistance to evil*. Oxford University Press.

- Staub, E., Pearlman, L. A., Gubin, A., & Hagengimana, A. (2005). Healing, reconciliation, forgiving and the prevention of violence after genocide or mass killing: An intervention and its experimental evaluation in Rwanda. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 24*(3), 297–334. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.24.3.297.65617>
- Taylor, C. C. (2001). *Sacrifice as terror: The Rwandan genocide of 1994*. Routledge.
- Temoney, K. E. (2016). The 1994 Rwandan genocide: The religion/genocide nexus, sexual violence, and the future of genocide studies. *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal, 10*(3), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.10.3.1351>
- The Age*. (2004, April 3). Rwanda 10 years on: Not forgiven, not forgotten. <https://www.theage.com.au/world/rwanda-10-years-on-not-forgiven-not-forgotten-20040403-gdxxm31.html>
- VanderWeele, T. J. (2017). Religious communities and human flourishing. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 26*(5), 476–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417721526>
- van 't Spijker, G. (2006). Religion and the Rwandan genocide. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 19*, 339–357. <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67316>
- Waller, J. (2007). *Becoming evil: How ordinary people commit genocide and mass killing* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Walsh, F. (2016). Family resilience: A developmental systems framework. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 13*(3), 313–324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2016.1154035>
- War Resisters' International. (2008, August 18). Conscientious objection to military service: Issues for the country report task forces–Rwanda.

<https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2008/conscientious-objection-military-service-issues-country-report-task-forces-rwanda>

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. (2012). Rwanda. In *2012 yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (pp. 164–255). <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2012-Yearbook-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses/Rwanda/>

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. (2023). 2023 country and territory reports. In *2023 service year report of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide*. <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2023-Service-Year-Report-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Worldwide/2023-Country-and-Territory-Reports/>

Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 18*(4), 385–418. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1999.18.4.385>

Yonan, G. (1999). Spiritual resistance of Christian conviction in Nazi Germany: The case of the Jehovah's Witnesses. *Journal of Church and State, 41*(2), 307–322. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23920283>

