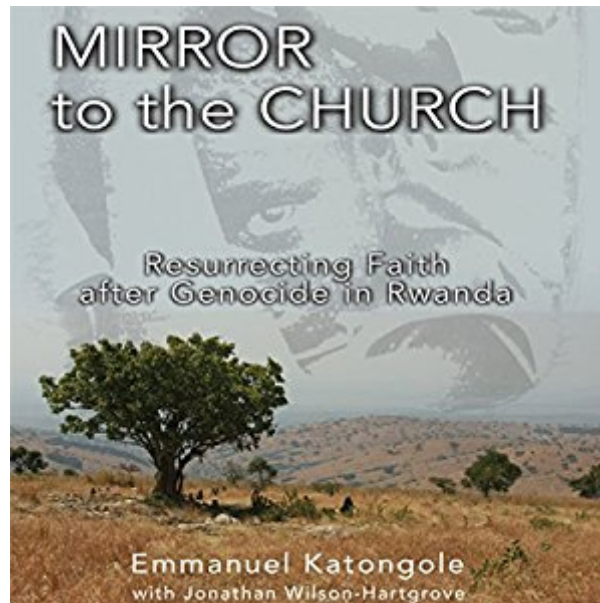




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Mirror To The Church: Resurrecting Faith After Genocide In Rwanda



Synopsis

We learn who we are as we walk together in the way of Jesus. So I want to invite you on a pilgrimage. Rwanda is often held up as a model of evangelization in Africa. Yet in 1994, beginning on the Thursday of Easter week, Christians killed other Christians, often in the same churches where they had worshiped together. The most Christianized country in Africa became the site of its worst genocide. With a mother who was a Hutu and a father who was a Tutsi, author Emmanuel Katongole is uniquely qualified to point out that the tragedy in Rwanda is also a mirror reflecting the deep brokenness of the church in the West. Rwanda brings us to a cry of lament on our knees where together we learn that we must interrupt these patterns of brokenness. But Rwanda also brings us to a place of hope. Indeed, the only hope for our world after Rwanda's genocide is a new kind of Christian identity for the global body of Christ—a people on pilgrimage together, a mixed group, bearing witness to a new identity made possible by the Gospel. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

I believe this book is a must-read for every minister in an ever more polarizing country like America. This is the tragic story of Rwandan Christians who shared communion on Sunday and were butchering or being butchered by Thursday. This happens when the waters of politics run deeper than the waters of baptism. Mr. Katongole helps open our eyes to many potential dangers of commitments to parties and policies. Our allegiance is to the King of an invisible Kingdom. Far too often the Evangelical Church in America has identified itself with only one party. In doing so it has

shown little toleration of anything the opposition party says. I have quoted Katongole many times. By far my favorite and I think most useful quote of his is, "The role of the church is not to make America more Christian but to make American Christians less American." American Pastor, get this book and read it. Then read it again and share it with your congregation. It will go a long way in killing the divisive spirit that is being cultivated, non intentionally, in many churches in this country.

So, I apologize in advance for such a long post, lol. And I promise you I'm not an angry black activist. Just a grad student who was required to read this book before a trip. I think the way this book provides such a rich and sound social, historical, and theological context for the Rwanda genocide makes it eligible to be included as required reading for every undergraduate American History Student. Heck, maybe even the high school level or younger. We take for granted how much they absorb anyhow... I was only in the 4th grade in 1994, and like another reviewer, all we heard about that year (whether I understood it or not), was the OJ Simpson trial. As a 10 year old black girl living in DC at the time, I remember that this trial was such a huge deal for the African American community then. And yet now after reading this book (and marrying this new information & perspective to my having watched Hotel Rwanda in undergrad), I can't help but be challenged to reassess everything I thought I have understood of that time in American history. Not to mention any of our nation's action (and non-action) in such a critical time on the world stage of history. The way that the black American community handled (and still seems to handle) processing the events of the OJ trial seemed to overshadow other frequent headline news of Rwanda's daily murders by the score. At the exact same time at this point of history, both headlines sent images streaming into home televisions every night as people sat to eat dinner with their families and watch the evening news. Both involved incomprehensible murder, both plainly in the public eye for the world to become informed about and form some opinions on. Both involved men of African descent... only one of them mobilized the American black community to connect any action (or sense of solidarity, or even a sense of identity) with their events: the OJ trial. Perhaps there were some who may have genuinely been concerned about the images they saw from the other event's constant killings---maybe even some who were enraged, but just felt helpless to intervene. This is very probable. But the fact is, it was so clear that while it was possible to have these events fresh on everyone's mind, when the African-American community were presented with two cases of potential injustice against another black person (every black adult around me was confident that OJ was innocent), the only case that was discussed at our schools, at our churches, and at our dining room tables was the OJ trial. Not to belabor this issue too much, but these issues bring up some very intriguing and penetrating

questions about our concept of tribalism---and the priorities that are produced in the minds of those who identify with their own unique sub-cultures. The priorities that our own sense of cultural identity being "king" can create in our OWN minds... and the actions that "tribalized" Christians can take (that do not reflect an identifying with the Body of Christ, but rather reflect their own cultural allegiances), to the detriment and exclusion of others. This is an identity issue, as this author beautifully illustrates. One that if properly and intentionally addressed, would revolutionize every arena that the church touches, because she would finally be freed up to be who she was really born to be. But as challenging as the implications of this book's message may seem, the fact that the implications of actually doing the hard work of changing our hearts on these matters just carry so much promising hope... THIS is what makes this book worth reading. Lots of books offer insight on what really took place with the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. This book, however, seems unique in that it offers a clinician's mirror for the sickly Western church to see what needs surgery & healing. But not stopping there, it also proposes a hopeful plan & prognosis for those who would choose to engage in this recovery process for themselves and the body of believers. No matter your current thoughts on these matters, this book is a very important read.

This is a powerful book, full of heart wrenching stories, and strong conclusions about the next step for the Christian church. I was often haunted by the stories as I read the book. It is hard not to be bothered by the stories within the pages, and yet such hope from Katongole that kept the reader looking for more. I agree with his basic principles, expanding imagination, breaking the bonds that are stronger than that of Christ in order to be part of His family. Katongole is showing idolatry in a new way, one that is not talked about much in the west. He does reference political parties in allegiance of many within them. But the more drastic implication is that of anything that could cause a Christian to kill another Christian. The analogy of the World Wars, which many Christians killed each other because of their allegiance to something other than Jesus was illuminating. Two of my favorite parts of this book were of the Hutu boy who was confused and something the MLK once said. The Hutu boy gives us a good perspective about living in tension, not be certain, or at least quick to certainty, about the things or allegiances of this world. He is confused and that is a good place for us to be as well. MLK's quote, "We who play the role of Good Samaritans do not often stop to ask how we might improve conditions on the road to Jericho so that the next person who comes along won't get jumped by a band of robbers" gives good perspective on how to apply this book.

While this book is disturbing on many levels because of the tragedy it records, I believe the author is correct in his understanding of what these events have to teach Christians everywhere.

This is a book you will not want to read but you must read and reflect upon. While Katongole's argument develops out of a consideration of the tragic genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994, his insights are far more reaching globally, historically and practically. His analysis is honest and unnerving. His indictments are unflinching and convicting. His vision of the future is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the economy of the Kingdom of God. Be warned though, this book will make you uncomfortable. It will force you to rethink deeply held suppositions about Christian discipleship, practice and mission. This book will stay with you long after you've finished it--haunting you, nudging you and demanding you to no longer remain silent and complacent with the status quo of Christianity and the Church.

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