Samuel Cyuma, *Picking up the Pieces. The Church and Conflict Resolution in South Africa and Rwanda.* Series: Regnum Studies in Mission, Oxford, Regnum Books, 2012. ISBN 978-1-908355-02-7. xiii + 373 pages.

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In the last few decades, two important conflicts have been seen on the African continent: the race related conflict in South Africa that ended by a peaceful settlement, and the ethnic based conflict of Rwanda that was characterized by a terrible Genocide.

In both countries, Christianity has an enormous impact on society, as the majority of the people belong to one of the numerous Christian churches. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), played an enormous role in the peaceful settlement. In Rwanda, after the genocide, one of the conflicting parties took the leadership and imposed a new rule of law, leaving no room for public discussion, freedom of expression, dialogue or independent truth-finding about the past.

The author of this book has investigated both situations, with particular attention to ‘the role of the national churches in relation to either the cause or the reconciliation of the conflicts in Rwanda and South Africa ‘(p. 9). The author is a Rwandese pastor who had to leave his country in 1994, and who now lives in the United Kingdom, where he is a pastor of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales. The book is based on a thesis written for a Doctorate in Philosophy submitted at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) in 2005. In 2006, the book has been awarded, by the African Studies Association of the UK, with the Audrey Richards Prize for the best thesis submitted during 2004-2006.

The book consists of four parts. The first part offers a theoretical framework dealing with theories conflict, and methodologies of conflict solution, mediation and reconciliation. This part contains extensive paragraphs on Christian approaches to conflict resolution and reconciliation. The author concurs greatly with Roman Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter, but with the remark that as for the author, Schreiter focuses too much on the restoration of victims, in that way neglecting the correction of the sinners (p. 76).

The second part deals with the South African conflict. The third part gives an analysis the Rwandan conflict and the role of the churches. In the final part the author compares the two situations and develops his conclusions.

Through developing the history of South Africa’s Apartheid and its end, and the role of the mainline churches therein, Cyuma shows the way in which the TRC, though being an institution created by the government, has been inspired by Christian thinking and behavior, not at least by the presence of its President, the Anglican Archbishop Tutu. Indicating to what extend the TRC process has catalyzed other activities towards reconciliation, Cyuma does not hide his disappointment that except for some significant laymen initiatives, churches in general have failed to develop their own programs towards reconciliation.

A broad analysis of Rwanda’s case concludes that the conflict was driven by the desire for resource control and wealth, which lead politicians to exploit long lasting differences between ethnic groups in order to seize or to remain in power. Cyuma points out that apart from the differences between Hutu and Tutsi, the invasion of the army of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1990, and the antagonism between the Hutu from the North of the country and the Hutu from Central Rwanda also played a decisive role in the chaotic situation in the country just before the shooting down of the plane of the President Habyarimana in April 1994, the event that triggered the genocide.

In the years before the genocide, particularly from 1991, the mainline churches of Rwanda have impressed politicians by creating a committee that started mediation between the political parties within the country and organized meetings to negotiate between representatives of the rebel invasion army and the legal government. From the analyses, one may understand that the churches before the genocide have played a significant intermediary role, in contrast to the churches later.

In contrast to South Africa, the Rwandan government that was established after the genocide, made the choice not to institute a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, although this had been strongly recommended by influential figures such as Kofi Annan. Rather, Rwanda chose *gacaca*, the popular grassroots option. Cyuma does not deny the qualities of this program, but stresses that it is no solution towards a genuine national reconciliation. Conflicts have been approached only at the local level, whereas the conflict resolutions between political rivals, political leaders of different orientations and histories have not taken place. This means that the basic conflicts are still unresolved and that a national reconciliation is still hindered by the actual political regime (p. ix). The author illustrates painfully that the influence of the churches has diminished, has been avoided , or has been opposed.

It is impossible to summarize all facets of the rich historical survey and interpretation of the Rwandan conflict, but some of the findings are mentioned here at random: there is no way to prove that before the killing of President Hayarimana, his Government or extremists had set up a genocide organization (p. 180) ; the contribution of the broadcasting station Muhabura of the RPF to ethnic tensions in the period 1990-1994 should not be underestimated and merits a in-depth investigation (p. 215); independent truth finding about the shooting down of Habyarimana’s plane is essential for national reconciliation (p. 290) .

One of the remarks in passing by the author is that fear and suspicion between Rwandans inside and outside the country at the time of the research, was experienced as a hindrance to gathering his material (p. 297). This shows how far the Rwandan community is from reconciliation.

All pages of the book give testimony of a sincere desire to build a new future for the church and the people of Rwanda. Written by a participant observer in Rwanda until 1994, who looks back from a distance with emphatic concern, this book may play a significant role in this process, not at least by the way it refuses to take stereotyped positions. Therefore it merits to be discussed, not at least by Rwandans of different orientations and histories, from inside and outside the country.