sis, showing the full impact of the emerging clerical power. And while Testa’s study of 3rd century Northern Italy is a gem, the analysis of the Montanist role in Northern Africa asks for more attention, given later reactions to the Rome - Carthage axis and the transition to Islam. Besides, while the authors offer a rich bibliographic documentation without any pretention of completeness, the reader will wonder why the index is so selective in referring to it. Notwithstanding such lacunae — almost inevitable when dealing with such complex processes and the huge body of literature — this well-edited collection will prove of great value for many both in the ecumenical and missiological debate, where one grows ever more aware of how culture-bound western Christianity has been right from the start. Kreider’s opening article joins Wessels’ final one in raising the question of how conversion relates to inculturation and accommodation. The subordination of power to love seems the only deciding clue, as Augustine never tired to stress.—Wiel Eggen


Any person who tries to give an independent interpretation of the history of Rwanda needs in these days a fair amount of courage. The Rwandan conflict which has lead its people to a civil war from 1990-1994 culminating into a genocide with between 500,000 and 800,000 victims in a few months, is to a great extent a conflict about the historical roots and rights of the main ethnic groups Hutu (85% of the population) and Tutsi (15%). In justification of their position in the civil war the Hutu related parties claim that their group had been through the ages victim of an always more serious oppression by the ruling Tutsi, whereas the Tutsi pretend that the antagonism between the groups has been introduced only by the colonial rulers in the 20th century who disturbed the peaceful harmony of pre-colonial Rwanda. The radical change of political orientation of the government after the genocide in 1994, when a Tutsi-oriented regime succeeded the Hutu government, has as consequence a comparable radical shift of the official interpretation of history. This is strongly felt in the orientation of the teaching of history in primary, secondary and academic education. Whoever in present day Rwanda teaches history according to curriculum of before 1994, is considered to be an enemy of his country, will certainly lose his job, and risks to lose his freedom. This political factor in the interpretation of history may explain the reticence of the Christian Churches, who represent 80% of the population, about their role in the ethnic conflicts. Leaders of the mainline Protestant churches have recently made some statements which mainly echo the official doctrine of the
actual regime. The powerful Roman Catholic Church which represents about 70% of all Christians, heavily attacked by the present political regime as the main cause of the ethnic conflicts, has kept silent. What has been the role of the Christian mission, Protestant and Catholic, and the churches in the conflicts which ended in the genocide?

Tharcisse Gatwa has made this question the subject of his doctoral dissertation which he defended at the University of Edinburgh. A somewhat abridged version was published in French, and an English edition will follow soon. Gatwa, a journalist by education, has been General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, and Secretary of the Rwandan Bible Society. He was for several years a youth delegate to the General Council of the World Council of Churches. In the years 1990-1994 he was active in the Rwandan movements for human rights. He fled the country in 1994, and after his theological studies he has become the Director of the Christian Publishing House CLE in Cameroon.

Gatwa states that the existence of ethnic groups, and the belonging to them, which is a normal reality, becomes problematic when it changes into what he calls 'ethnicism' (ethnisme), which happens when ethnic groups become mutually exclusive for ideological reasons. This was the case when in the middle of the pre-colonial 19th century Rwanda some Tutsi clans considered themselves as the pre-eminent Tutsi, and demonstrated their superiority by creating myths and legends to legitimise their political dominance of the central parts of the actual Rwanda. Since then the meaning of belonging to the Hutu or Tutsi ethnic group has been ideologically biased. This 'ethnicism' was strengthened by the European colonisers who have been present in the country since the beginning of the 20th century. The Europeans applied their racist ethnological theories to the Rwanda population, with its ethnic groups of Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. According to these theories the Hutu belonged to the Bantu people, the original Africans who in the course of centuries were dominated by the groups of the so-called 'Hamitic' origin, to which the Tutsi were supposed to belong. These Hamitic groups originated perhaps in the Middle East, or had anyhow much in common with the perceived superior human race which had brought Europe to such an excellent culture. These Hamites, who sometimes were called Nilotes or Ethiopians, were seen as the 'civilising race of Africa' according to the British anthropologist S.G. Seligman. This theory was based on the sense of superiority of the Europeans who sought an explanation for the fact that in Africa they came across human beings that could match with them. This inspired the Belgian colonial authorities until the 1960s to give all important positions in society and all secondary schooling exclusively into the hands of the Tutsi. The Roman Catholic Church was the important advisor of this colonial policy. After the Second World War the Church changed its