

outlining the broader conversations within his Mennonite denomination and beyond. Readers familiar with Reimer's theology will appreciate the deeper explorations of some of his ideas, while others will find this volume a mostly accessible, helpful introduction to his thought and to Mennonite theology in general.

Susanne Guenther Loewen (BA '07, Canadian Mennonite University)

Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos. *Making Wise the Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Making Wise the Simple calls Christians to "engage the entire Bible" as a "rich source for Christian faith and practice" (xix). This is the appropriate response to the Holocaust and centuries of anti-Semitism among Christians, who have often supported their prejudice by (mis)reading the Bible (xviii-xix).

In the introduction, the author expresses many of her own perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible. Her reclamation of the Torah (the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses) by Christian readers articulates the approach of feminist biblical criticism within a "confessional arena" (xix). In order to provide a context for interpretation, Van Wijk-Bos contends that we contemporary readers must "establish and evaluate the distance between us and the text, between our world and their world," which manifests itself in terms of "cultural, social, and economic aspects as well as [the Bible's] religious practices" (xx). Thus she states her belief that the Bible is not "without error" but that "a redemptive word from God [can] be found here" (xxi). She writes for those who share her conviction and have "[the] courage to ask disturbing questions of the text" (xxi).

The book is divided into five main parts: The Torah in Bible and Tradition, The World of the Torah, The Making of a World (Genesis 1:1-11:32), The Making of a People (Genesis 12:1-Deuteronomy 34:12), and Living with Torah.

Part 1 presents Jewish and Christian understandings of "Torah" and the people of God as articulated by the related texts of Exodus 19:3-6 and

1 Peter 2:9-10. The author concludes this part with an introduction to the treatment of strangers in the Old Testament.

Part 2 discusses the historical and cultural background to the interpretation of the Torah in its ancient context, although it mainly focuses on the final form of the text stemming from the postexilic period. This is both a strength and a weakness; the author attends very well to the concerns of these texts *as they were being read and used* at this later time, but she does not consider many of the implications for her readings if the texts originate from an earlier time. For example, she relegates the violence of many narratives to the postexilic period, which she terms a “time [which manifested] a need for identity, a desire for order, and a perspective on the world as ‘filled with violence’” (118). As a result, she can dismiss them as later additions or inferior reflections. But can these beliefs be found only in the postexilic period? Certainly not; they appear throughout the material preserved in the Old Testament, from the earliest times to the latest.

This dismissal of “inferior” passages or concepts appears at several points. For example, Van Wijk-Bos rejects the relevance of the interpretation of Adam and Eve in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 rather quickly – in less than one paragraph (125). Similarly, in the context of discussing the stipulations for sexual relations in Leviticus, she advocates the validity of same-sex partnerships in a few short sentences without explaining her reasoning (227).

Parts 3 and 4 address the narrative story contained in the Pentateuch and the major themes of the covenant made by God at Sinai. Part 5 discusses the characteristics of God (Who Regrets, Who Appears, Who Accompanies, Who is Prejudiced, Who is Passionate), and finally the move to the New Testament, especially in terms of Jesus and Paul on the interpretation of the Torah.

While the author raises serious questions about the way Christians have used or ignored the Old Testament, she presents an uneven treatment of the issues, narratives, and stipulations of the Pentateuch. Her point that the concern for the stranger in the OT must be brought more fully into conversation with the ethics of the NT is valid and necessary (300-305). However, her presentation often fails to convince as a result of her inconsistencies and lack of arguments.

The book will certainly assist readers in delving into the Pentateuch, but they should view it as a place to begin the process of thinking about these issues and to find additional resources (many listed in the fine bibliography) for further reflection.

Steven J. Schweitzer, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

Donald E. Miller, Scott Holland, Lon Fendall, and Dean Johnson, eds. *Seeking Peace in Africa: Stories from African Peacemakers*. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, co-published with World Council of Churches Publications and Herald Press, 2007.

This book collects presentations made at a gathering of approximately 90 Historic Peace Church (HPC) people – Church of the Brethren, Friends (Quakers), and Mennonites – in Kenya in 2004. The meeting was planned as a follow-up to an HPC conference at Bienenberg, Switzerland held in 2001.¹ Both were organized in order to respond to the invitation to HPCs from the “Decade to Overcome Violence” of the World Council of Churches to contribute to the work of this special WCC emphasis.

These conversations are the latest in a series of interactions between the Peace Churches and WCC dating back to its founding in the late 1940s. While the Church of the Brethren and a number of Friends groups have been members of the WCC, historically most Mennonite churches, with the exception of German and Dutch groups, have not been.

Nevertheless, North American Mennonites have long been engaged with the WCC, especially regarding questions of peace and nonviolence. Mennonites from Europe have been particularly involved with the Decade to Overcome Violence. This WCC initiative owes its existence to the German Mennonite theologian Fernando Enns, and the major staff person for the Decade is Hans Ulrich Gerber, a Swiss Mennonite.

What is most striking about this book in comparison with past Peace Church contributions to WCC conversations is that it speaks to the issues primarily with African voices, rather than Western voices. Its existence is