

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.

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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

evidence of and testimony to the emergence of large numbers of Christians, including Peace Church Christians, in Africa.²

We owe the book's editors and the conference planners a debt of gratitude for making these voices available to us. The desire to give voice to those who have not been adequately heard is reflected in the structure of the book, which has more than 40 short contributions.

Contributors come from each of the three Peace Church groups, from close to a dozen countries in Africa, and from a handful of countries outside the continent. Inclusion of such a broad group of contributors offers the reader an opportunity to touch many of the varied faces of Africa, though at the cost of more sustained analysis.

The book's major sections (into which the essays do not all fit equally well) deal with the heritage of the Peace Churches, the many forms violence takes in the African context, initiatives that HPCs have taken to respond to violence, and HPC efforts at public peacemaking; and a concluding section of meditations that focuses on hope amid violence.

The book's tone is less scholarly than most previous HPC contributions to WCC conversations; most writers are not academics but church leaders or practitioners close to the ground. The subtitle "*Stories from African Peacemakers*" is reflective of most essays in the volume. And the medium of stories is an excellent – even essential – way to communicate convictions about Christian faith, especially about Christian peacemaking. It is perhaps especially apropos in African contexts. It works well. Authors tell stories from their countries and churches, and especially from their personal experiences. The stories are frequently stories of suffering and conflict, but also of courageous and innovative initiatives for peace.

Especially striking to me were accounts of Christian/Muslim conflict in Nigeria and the joint efforts of Christian and Muslim leaders to restore peace. Stories about the need for forgiveness and trauma healing after seasons of catastrophic violence (e.g., Rwanda and Burundi) – and examples of such forgiveness and healing – provide both motivation and models for peacemaking. My impression from this book is that while Peace Church missionaries generally did not bring to Africa a gospel that has peacemaking at its center, African Peace Churches are now both eager to learn more about a theology of peacemaking and in the forefront of discovering how to

embody it. If so, there is much to be grateful for.

Seeking Peace in Africa does not plow new intellectual ground. Rather it brings new voices into an ongoing conversation. It does so in a way that is accessible to readers who would like to know what shape peacemaking questions take in contexts radically different from those we face in North America. And it points to some creative and sometimes dangerous answers.

Notes

¹ Materials from the Bienenberg meeting are contained in *Seeking Cultures of Peace: A Peace Church Conversation* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, co-published with World Council of Churches Publications and Herald Press, 2004).

² By 2006 Mennonite-related Christians in Africa already outnumbered Mennonite-related Christians in North America. Alemu Checole et al., *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, co-published with Pandora Press, Kitchener, ON, 2006), vii.

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