

Peter M. Sensenig, *Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 260. Softcover, \$34.00 USD.

In exploring peacemaking in Somalia, Peter Sensenig's stated intent is to provide an engaged critique "affirming and sharpening the life-giving traditions of the past, and identifying areas where repentance and change are necessary" (2). He wants to answer the question, "What can it possibly mean when someone identifies as a Somali Muslim Mennonite?" (220). This book, which is a published version of his doctoral thesis, opens with two chapters on the history of Mennonite work in Somalia and mostly treats Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM). These chapters make up the first half of the book. Their titles suggest a traditional narrative history, starting with the arrival of the first missionaries in 1953, and ending in 1990 when the mission team left due to intensifying conflict. However, these titles are misleading as Sensenig's opening chapters are an analysis of the Mennonite approach to mission in Somalia and among Somalis in Kenya.

Sensenig also wants to explain the foundations of later, explicit Mennonite peacemaking efforts with Somalis, which are outlined in chapters 5 and 7. These narrative sections draw heavily on interviews with EMM missionaries and American EMM-MCC Somalia workers, a few Somalis connected to them, and some American Mennonite professors who have done peacebuilding with Somalis. Perhaps a result of natural constrictions of resources as a graduate student, these interviews are weighted towards EMM missionaries, meaning the Somali perspective on Mennonites and their work is refracted through a Mennonite lens. Furthermore, the larger institutional voice of the church and its mission and development organizations is largely missing, as is MCC's Somali peace and development work prior to 1990.

The second half of Sensenig's book is organized thematically. His third chapter is an extensive critique of militarized humanitarian intervention in Somalia by the US and UN, together with

principles that pacifist Christians might use to respond to it. While a topic of some interest for theologians and peacemakers, it interrupts his exploration of Mennonite work and thought. His remaining chapters focus on the alternative peacebuilding approach that he champions, the resources for peace within the culture and Islamic faith of Somalis, and on peace work by and with Somali women.

The strength of Sensenig's book is in the window it opens on peacemaking in a part of the world that features negatively, if at all, in minds of most North Americans. It shows what slow, locally driven, bottom-up peacebuilding can (and cannot) accomplish in a seemingly intractable conflict. In doing so he celebrates the work of several Somali peacemakers and the valued role that Mennonites played on the margins of that work by both circumstance and choice (203). Unfortunately, this strength is closely tied to the book's greatest weakness: it is trying to do too much. Sensenig needs to provide background on the complex conflicts in Somalia, on a range of external interventions, as well as on Somali Islam and Somali cultural institutions. All this is needed to understand the intersection of the latter two with the evolving approach of Mennonite missionaries, regional administrators, and university-based peacebuilders. Sensenig uses the concept of "Peace Clan" to describe this intersection (e.g. 142, 176). On top of all this, Sensenig states that he wants to provide a more substantial theological basis for Mennonite peacemaking, by which he means John Paul Lederach's "elicitive" approach (93-94). The Sermon on the Mount is his source for this, with salt, light and yeast the elements in the interfaith communion of peace he envisions (e.g. 136-37, 141). To support this theological work he establishes a framework of situated, post-colonial ethics, reviews Mennonite peace theology, and provides a primer on Lederach's approach, as well as that of a few other Mennonite scholar-practitioners. For general readers there is not enough information on any of these topics; for specialists, too little. Both types of reader are likely to be frustrated by the way Sensenig shifts repeatedly and abruptly between oral history, social analysis, and theology without generating a synthesis. Where Sensenig is both clear and persuasive is in the pleas he makes for locally rooted peacebuilding and theology, for ongoing Mennonite-Muslim engagement and continued work in Somalia, and for Mennonite institutions that blend mission and service.

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