

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: Beating Swords into Ploughshares to Promote Justice and Peace: A Study of Micah 4:1-5 in Tiv Context
AUTHOR: Fr. Ude Oliver Ortese
PUBLISHERS: Snaap Press Nig. Limited
PAGES: 123
PRICE: N400.000
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Of all the things desired and sought for by people of every age, time and place of mutual coexistence and development, peace and justice occupy a pride of place. The absence of peace and justice in any given society paves the way for war, rampage, riot, upheaval, anarchy and general insecurity which in turn breeds underdevelopment, impoverishment, destitution and poverty. The reality of war in our world today and its concomitant destructive effects are mind boggling. Over the years the Tiv People of Benue State have had an over-dose of this global phenomenon. From the time of their migration to their subsequent settlement in the Middle Belt region, the Tiv people have fought a good number of wars. Prominent among these are seemingly interminable Tiv-Jukun and Tiv-Fulani crises that occur intermittently around the Benue-Taraba axis. This war seems like a replica of the seemingly endless crisis situations in the Middle East. Looking at the situation, Rev. Fr. Ude Oliver Ortese with the candour typical of a Catholic clergyman has gallantly taken the bull by the horns to contribute his own quota in the quest for justice and peace in Tivland. With his book ***Beating Swords into Ploughshares to Promote Justice and Peace: A Study of Micah 4:1-5 in Tiv Context***, he has in a unique way delved into the nitty-gritty of the crisis situation in Tivland, employing Micah 4:105 as the paradigm for peaceful co-existence, justice and development in the Tiv enclave.

The book is divided into four chapters. In Chapter one, the author delineates the *sitz in leben* of the Tiv people. He succinctly looks at the socio-cultural and geo-political situation of the Tiv people. Community life, he says is upheld against individualism in the Tiv traditional set up. They claim their ancestry from one man Tiv. The Tiv people are traditionally farmers and to a lesser extent, hunters. With the advent of modern civilization they now engage in white-collar jobs but still produce foodstuffs for consumption and commercial purposes. This has earned the state the title 'Food Basket of the Nation'. Consequently, they look at land as something sacred that should be handled with the utmost care and they are ready to secure their land from invaders with the last drop of their blood.

Violence in Tivland, the author identifies is caused by the unlawful seizure of farmlands from the poor and the weak by the elite and bourgeois who possess both political and economic power; the clash between farmers and herdsmen; the divide and rule system of the British imperialist where the majority were favoured against minorities; the imposition of political leaders on Tiv people against their will.

In Chapter Two, the prowess of the author as a biblical scholar is clearly seen. He makes an exegesis-contextual analysis of Micah 4:1-5, explores the idea of prophecy in Ancient Israel in general alongside an overview of prophet Micah. He expounded its literary structure and style. Besides, he proposes the text in question-Micah 4:1-5 as a way forward for solving the problem of war and conflict in Tivland. He invites the clergy, religious and traditional rulers to rise up to their challenges and ensure the establishment of peace in Tivland.

In Chapter Three, the author categorically states that Justice and Peace are two sides of the same coin, they go hand-in-hand for there can never be peace if justice has not been established. In the face of institutional injustice, peace will always remain a mirage! Since the theme of justice and peace is not an exclusive preserve of Prophet Micah, Fr. Ortese has made a survey of some Old Testament literature like the Pentateuch and the prophets like Isaiah and Amos and the book of Psalms to explore the theme. He further expounds on the church's social teachings. He calls on Tiv sons and daughters to toe the path of justice since through it we can have authentic and lasting peace in Tivland.

In Chapter Four, the author juxtaposes the socio-political and economic situation of Ancient Israel and the Tiv communities, pointing out their similarities. Applying Micah 4:1-4 to the situation of the Tiv people, the author recommends that individuals and leaders in Benue State should give to people their due rights and privileges such as land, salaries, dignity, love and other necessities. Political leaders, he says, should be affirmed and encouraged by the clergy whenever they perform well. All Christ's faithful should be committed to becoming good Samaritans in order to aid the weak and the feeble. He particularly challenges the ruling class in Tivland to pursue the quest for peace and justice in Tivland.

As a way forward, he calls on the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi to give a sound, moral and Christian upbringing to the teeming population of Tiv people embracing the faith and to intensify her work in setting up structures for social justice. The author is very optimistic that if these recommendations are religiously adhered to, they will go a long way towards establishing authentic justice and lasting peace in Tivland.

This work is very apt and timely. It has come at a time the when Tiv people having experienced the ravages of war and hatred, are beginning to see the need to put down arms and give peace a chance. It is obvious that Fr. Ortese aims at employing Micah 4:1-5 to invite the people to embrace justice and peace having seen that 80% of them are Christians. The book is recommended to all and sundry, especially Tiv sons and daughters.