

## Book Review

*Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children*

**Faith J. H. McDonnell and Grace Akallo**

(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007) 240 pages

Reviewed by Johan Mostert (D.Phil., University of Pretoria)

Professor of Community Psychology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

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On April 12, 2008, a report from Kampala, Uganda announced that the peace deal negotiated since 2006 with the rebel group, The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), was finally cancelled after LRA leader, Joseph Kony fired his chief negotiator and failed to arrive at the scheduled signing of the agreement. I remember the BBC report that night which showed the negotiators awaiting Kony's arrival and the cameras taking background shots to be able to report the next day on the news that the twenty-three-year-long nightmare was finally finished. But even today, as this book review went to press, the internal displacement of two million people and the death of tens of thousands more continues; the end of this political conflict is still not in sight! Negotiators are still trying to find a solution. This is the political perspective—a message of frustration.

In 2007, Columbia University Press published the book, *Women as Weapons of War*, in which the feminist philosopher, Professor Kelly Oliver, suggests that women have become the secret weapon of modern warfare. This is the feminist perspective—a message of global exploitation.

But in that same year, Baker Books published, *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children*, by Faith J. H. McDonnell and Grace Akallo. The book traces the history of the atrocities in Northern Uganda under the evil madman, Kony. It relates the story of one of the

co-authors, Akallo, as she was abducted at the age of sixteen and forced to become one of Kony's killers, or be killed herself. The authors tell how Kony's henchmen taught the thousands of child soldiers to "kill as the spirit leads them." They tell of the process Kony used to create killer children in the death camps and the despair Grace experienced as she was repeatedly raped by her warrior "husband." *Girl Soldier* is the real story behind the scenes of today's news headlines.

What makes this book stand out as an exceptional story is that it does not end with the message of despair and hopelessness that has so characterized the decades of strife in Uganda. It relates the story of Grace's escape from the military camp during a battle (after God spoke to her in a dream), follows her into the safety of a World Vision refugee camp, and then later to the United States. The story shares the process of her healing and restoration and provides the gospel perspective—a message of hope.

On the cover of *Girl Soldier* is the phrase, *Why it Matters and What You Can Do*. This book will help restore the moral compass of the Church by focusing attention on the 300,000 young people under the age of eighteen being exploited worldwide as child soldiers. It provides practical steps which Christians can implement to make a difference. May the Holy Spirit allow us to be disturbed by this book.