

## BOOK REVIEWS

**H. VAN DER LAAN, A.H. DE GRAAFF, H.H. VAN  
BRUMMELEN et al.**

***The Ideal of Christian Schools.***

Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformation Studies, 1997 (80 pages).

The book contains five chapters written by different authors. No much background information is provided of the authors except for their addresses.

Chapter one, which is entitled "Out of Concern for the Christian School," calls on the institutions to understand who they are in terms of their worldview and how they relate with the society and its civilization. It is true that a society has a variety of life, worldview, ideologies, religions and philosophies. In addition, there are various institutions in the society, which include marriage, family, church, state, university, school, trade union, club, association, factory, and political party among others. H. Van Der Laan, in this chapter has given different views prevalent to the society forms. He uses the Roman Catholic perspective whereby God has given man a supernatural institution, which is the church where man finds his destination.

Religion is one of the concerns. As humans our reality has a religious dimension, which determines the structure and nature of our cosmos that centers on God, the creator. The author explains aspects of freedom responsibility in the framework of religion, in the sense that we have the freedom from sin with a responsibility to fulfill God's will.

H. Van Der Laan in chapter one has also discussed the characteristics of modern society, mostly on western civilization known as the American-European civilization. He outlines reasons for the choice to discuss this civilization bearing in mind that other civilizations exist. Of interest is the write up on the character of the school education. The author has only given the 19<sup>th</sup> century education preferred by people in power, for political reasons. He goes further to discuss the Christian school movement. His argument is that, all education is rooted in the covenant of God with man, and the work of salvation.

School being one of the institutions used to achieve the purposes of education. There are fundamental questions concerning this that are worth wrestling with.

The second chapter of the book is on, "The Nature and Aim of Christian Education," written by A. H. de Graaff. He begins by giving anthropological presuppositions, which he argues are foundational to the educational principles, teaching techniques and curricula. I do disagree with him in his view of good teaching being "a matter of skillfully manipulating a system of rewards and punishment" (p. 40). Defining education, he goes ahead to caution educators to take seriously the guiding and nurturing of learners, respecting the religious selfhood of man. His objective for Christian education is clearly pointed out that "the religious calling of man is to love God with all his heart and his neighbors as himself" (p. 44). To achieve this, there is need for radical discipleship.

The last three chapters of the book provide information of the Christian schools in the English-speaking nations particularly United States of America, Canada, and in South Africa. H. W. van Brummelen in chapter three discusses briefly types and views concerning Christian schools. The five types are given more in terms of the characteristic of each. First is 'the Christ of culture,' Christ and culture in paradox, Christ against culture, the Christ the transformer of culture. Examples for each are also provided. This is followed by discussion of the five types of the Christian schools, in the English-speaking world mostly in America. A few highlights are given on the challenges facing the Christian schools, the various organizations that have been formed to work towards unity regarding Christian schooling. The challenge of curriculum development is also mentioned.

Looking into the Christian schools in Canada, the author in chapter four points out that the leadership's understanding of the role of Christians in culture characterize the school's program. Despite this, there are two major kinds of Christian schools, firstly, those that see Christ and Christian beliefs as opposed to society and its customs; and secondly, those that work towards the transformation of culture. The author realizes that the kinds of schools fall more on a continuum than the two broad categories.

M.R. Davidson in chapter five gives the context of South Africa, which at the time of writing, was faced with challenges heightened by the continuing development of the South Africa education system. Though the Provisional Constitution valued independent schooling and acknowledged the schools' right

to operate, subsidy cuts was a problem. The implementation of the constitution was to have implications on the independent schools whether Christian or denominational and home schooling. Worth to mention that the Christian schools have to wrestle with diverse issues for the smooth running of their schools.

The book in itself provides a survey into various issues in relation to Christian schooling. Though more of a pamphlet, it is vital that Christian schooling has to be put in its rightful perspective as the authors have done by first raising the need for Christian schools. Christian schooling is best understood when the objectives of Christian education have been brought out, and this is what is given in chapter two. Looking at the foundation of education from a biblical perspective, with its foundation on the word of God, is what every Christian school needs to adhere to.

Though the authors have given anthropological presuppositions from various perspectives, the reader has to be critical in reading such sections. At the same time, it is good to be conversant with different perspectives.

In terms of the book's relevancy for the ministry in Africa, the reader will benefit from the principles since the western understanding of Christian schooling is different from that in the Kenyan context for example. Beside the public schools and colleges, the education system in Kenya has the private schools and colleges, which have to adhere to the rules and regulations of the ministry of education. The first two chapters of the book are most resourceful especially to the Christian educators in the African context. Putting Christian education in its proper perspective and implementation of the same requires an understanding of the societal forms, and the objectives of Christian education as one is faced with different challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship and ministry.

The last pages of the book give a bibliography of compiled materials related to Christian schooling.

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**Johannes Launhardt**  
***Evangelicals in Addis Ababa (1919-1991), with  
Special Reference to the Ethiopian  
Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and  
the Addis Ababa Synod***

Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte. Münster: Lit  
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In this published form of his 2004 University of Hamburg dissertation, Johannes Launhardt traces the growth and development of the Evangelical movement in the capital of Ethiopia between 1919 and 1991. Although the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) remained dominant, early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Addis Ababa was religiously diverse with both Jewish and Muslim communities as well as adherents to traditional religions, particularly in outlying areas. Within this religious diversity, Evangelicals formed a slim minority – only an estimated 100 Ethiopians publicly professed Protestant faith in 1910. Some of these early Evangelicals had been influenced by a small reform group within the EOC, known as the Evangelical Association, which had its roots in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century influence of the German Lutheran doctor Peter Heyling in the royal court at Gondar. As with Heyling, those Protestant missions that worked in Ethiopia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century did not attempt to form Evangelical churches or denominations but sought instead to effect renewal within the Orthodox Church – not least by promoting the study of Scripture through vernacular Bible translation – in the hope of slowing the progress of Islam in the wider region. This situation changed with the formation of the first Evangelical congregation in Addis Ababa in 1921. The change came with the arrival of a number of Evangelical believers from Eritrea. These believers had been forced out of the Orthodox Church in Eritrea and their presence in Eritrea had been made

increasingly untenable by the Italian colonial government there. Prior to their arrival, the Swedish missionary Karl Cederqvist had worked in Addis Ababa beginning in 1904 but had been forbidden by the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) to proselytize among the Orthodox. Nevertheless, after the death of Cederqvist in 1919, the SEM compound in Addis Ababa, where Cederqvist had operated a school, practiced medicine, and conducted weekly preaching services, was the location of the first Evangelical congregation, which later became the Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Church. The membership of this church was made up primarily of Evangelicals who had fled Eritrea, one of whom became the first pastor of the church.

Between 1919 and the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936, the SEM was joined by seven other Protestant missions in Addis Ababa. None of these undertook evangelistic outreach in Addis Ababa. Of the ten missions who were working in Ethiopian prior to the Italian invasion, four continued the predominant 19th Century Protestant practice of attempting to work toward renewal within the Orthodox Church. The others deferred to the Ethiopian government's wishes that the Protestant missions restrict their evangelistic activities to areas, which the government deemed non-Christian, primarily in the South. Nevertheless, the various missions did commence a variety of educational, medical and social programmes in the capital. Outside the capital, the Protestant missions attempted to form Protestant congregations, but met only limited success. By the time of the Italian occupation, there were scarcely more than 1,000 Ethiopians who openly professed Evangelical faith – only 200 in Addis Ababa. Very few of these were the result of evangelistic efforts in the capital.

No attempt was made to form a national Evangelical denomination, but the denominational and national diversity reflected in the various missions did create early fault lines, particularly on the question of baptism: Presbyterian and Lutheran missionaries did not re-baptize those who had been baptized as infants in the Orthodox Church, while Baptist missionaries insisted that all adults be baptized, including those that had been baptized as infants within the Orthodox Church. By far the most successful of the missions in the early period was the Church Mission to

Jews (CMJ) which first entered Ethiopia in 1859. Unlike other missions, the CMJ did not maintain even an administrative presence in Addis Ababa, but focused their work on communities of Ethiopian Falasha Jews in the North. By the time of the Italian occupation, the CMJ claimed 10,000 Falasha converts. However, despite their evangelical convictions, these converts from the Ethiopian Beta Israel were directed into the EOC, a policy which had been agreed between the CMJ and the Ethiopian government as the basis of the permission to work in the North. After expatriate CMJ missionaries were expelled in 1868 by Emperor Tewodros, CMJ work was continued primarily by Ethiopians who as boys had been raised by CMJ missionaries.

This pattern of growth through the outreach initiatives of Ethiopians continued during the Italian occupation. Despite the fact that the work of most Protestant missions was effectively ended by the Italian occupation and Ethiopian Evangelicals were subject to persecution, by the end of the occupation the number of evangelicals had increased from 1,000 to 20,000. After the Italian occupation the growth continued at a rapid pace, reaching 100,000 by the early 1950s. The period immediately following the occupation was marked also by consideration of what role that returning missionaries might play. In 1945 the elders of the Evangelical Congregation which had met for many years on the compound of the SEM wrote a letter to Stockholm expressing their thanks to SEM but indicating also that they could now do the congregational work in Addis Ababa without missionary assistance. They requested also the transfer of the lower part of the SEM compound to the church, a request with which SEM was happy to comply. To this point, no evangelical denomination had formed and the evidence points toward close cooperation between the six different evangelical congregations that existed in Addis during the Italian occupation. Out of this cooperation emerged the Conference of Ethiopian Evangelical Churches (CEEC), which first convened in 1944. The CEEC worked out "Spiritual and Temporal Statutes for the Evangelical Church" which was intended to govern practical matters related to the admission of members, marriage, betrothals, weddings and wedding feasts. One reason for convening the CEEC was to plan the formation of a united

evangelical Church. The CEEC in 1947 was attended not only by representatives of the congregations associated with the SEM and other Reformed missions but also by SIM-background believers from Kambata and members of the Society of the Followers of the Apostles. This latter group was associated with the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society, a British mission group with the stated policy of working within the Ethiopian Orthodox Society. Launhardt suggests that their presence at the 1947 CEEC indicates that at this stage there were persons within the CEEC "who were open to shape the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia as a reformed version of the Orthodox Church."

Neither the vision of a single united evangelical Church nor of a reformed version of the Orthodox Church was to be realized. From Launhardt's perspective, the alienation of believers with evangelical convictions from the Orthodox church was the result of resistance of the established church of the empire to change. Though many evangelicals as well as many Protestant missions indicated a willingness to work for reform from within the Orthodox church, "when reading the Bible in a language other than Ge'ez was called heresy, when the saving role of Jesus Christ, as laid down in the New Testament, was replaced by teaching that the Virgin Mary and Saints mediate for the salvation of humankind, and... the Cult of the Holy Cross and St. Mary were given a central place in the Church, when the children of evangelical believers were no longer baptized in the Orthodox Church, and when local priests refused to officiate at the funerals of Bible Readers, there was no other way but to look for new possibilities and structures to worship God, to receive the sacraments and have the dead buried in a Christian way."

The attempt to form a single united evangelical national Church for Ethiopia collapsed, primarily because proposals which would have taken the Church toward organisational and confessional unity were never implemented. The formulation of a common confessional basis became increasingly difficult as evangelical Christians became increasingly attuned to the doctrinal differences which existed between foreign missionaries. When a CEEC committee made up of ten Ethiopians and five missionaries – notably lacking any representation from SIM or SIM-related churches – proposed a confessional basis, it was the

Lutheran catechism. This was unacceptable to believers from Presbyterian background (though Presbyterian and Lutheran background believers later merged into a single denomination), and the idea of a common doctrinal basis was abandoned. Because the plans of the CEEC to set up joint training programmes were not implemented, missionaries who returned after the end of the Italian occupation quickly moved to fill a clear need for training. Naturally these training programmes inculcated the doctrinal distinctives of the various missions. It must also be stated that some splintering had already taken place, as in Kambata where SIM-background believers split over the permissibility of drinking of *borde*, a traditional alcoholic beverage, and over the question of baptism. All of this may suggest a need to qualify somewhat the assessment of Dr. Emmanuel Gebre Sellassie, a key leader of the CEEC and later of the Mekane Yesus Church, who insisted that "As long as we Ethiopian Evangelicals were among ourselves, we were one. When the different missionaries with their different teachings came back, we were divided." Still it must be said that in the period before and during the Italian occupation, the Evangelical movement within Ethiopia remained remarkably unified. However, apart from those missions who strove to work within the Orthodox Church, it does not appear that other organisations, notably including the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and SIM, shared the Ethiopian vision for a single united evangelical Church.

Much of the rest of Launhardt's book focuses on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), which was formed with a distinctively Lutheran identity in 1958. The LWF had been tracking the development of the Ethiopian Churches through a cooperative council of Lutheran missions working in Ethiopia known as the Lutheran Missions Committee, itself an initiative of the LWF. The LWF wanted Ethiopian representation at the first All-Africa Lutheran Conference in 1955 and a delegation was sent. This was a new experience for the Ethiopians in the delegation: "On the one hand it was new to them that they were supposed to be Lutheran Christians and not Evangelicals, on the other hand, they realized that there were many Lutheran Churches in Africa and that the LWF represented a world-wide family."



Launhardt provides an important treatment of relationship between the EECMY and the various missions to which member congregations were associated. Though it took the better part of a decade, an agreement on full integration was reached in 1969, according to which all property, programmes and institutions of the missions were transferred to and registered in the name of the EECMY. Launhardt himself played a key role in the development of this policy of full church-mission integration, and this involvement doubtless informs his rather critical assessment of the policy of SIM and, for a time, of the American United Presbyterian Mission, according to which church and mission should work together but as parallel and independent organisations. Because the administrative burden of running its various educational, medical and social institutions was regarded as too heavy for the national church, SIM did not prioritize the training of national leadership. Thus, mission-run schools only went up to the fourth grade. In Launhardt's view, the fact that SIM's property and institutions remained its own led directly to the loss of valuable assets to the church when the Communist government which rose forced SIM to cede their institutions to the government. Though Launhardt's criticisms are not without merit, it should be noted that the policy of independent partnership need not rule out an emphasis on leadership training, an emphasis evident in SIM-Ethiopia today for example. Further, the fact that various mission properties and institutions were transferred to EECMY did not keep many of these from being confiscated during the communist period.

The population of Addis Ababa doubled during the 1960s, reaching more than a million people by the time of the Marxist revolution in 1974. The resulting urban problems became a pronounced focus for the EECMY during this period as the Church undertook a multitude of social programmes, including schools, orphanages and literacy programmes. Remarkably, between 1962 and 1975, the EECMY's literacy campaign trained more than one million people. The Addis Ababa synod alone operated eighty-eight literacy schools, more than half in Addis. This focus on integral mission came about in part through the EECMY's broad circulation of the document, "On the Interrelation between the Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development."

The focus on ministering to human need continued through the Marxist period despite repression and persecution. Many EECMY congregations were closed and its four-story central office was confiscated. A particularly tragic incident was the extra-judicial kidnapping and murder of EECMY general secretary and Addis Ababa synod president, Gudina Tumsa, after he had refused to join a tour to Europe which the Ethiopian government had organised as a way of proving to the West that Ethiopians enjoyed religious freedom. His wife was subsequently imprisoned for eight years. As with the Italian occupation, the difficulties experienced by Christians under the Marxist Derg regime proved nevertheless to be a time in which the Church grew and matured.

All who are interested in the remarkable development of the Evangelical community in Ethiopia during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as a particularly notable example of the wider growth of Christianity in Africa will find Launhardt a capable and insightful chronicler. Along the way, readers will also find much to ponder in Launhardt's analysis of the circumstances – rather unique in Africa – in which Evangelicalism developed in a country long dominated by the Orthodox Church. If the impact of Evangelicalism on the Orthodox Church and on the broader society was not one of thoroughgoing renewal in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its impact on Islam during that period minimal at best, one can nevertheless hope that the astounding numerical growth of Evangelicalism in Ethiopia will have a growing impact in the Horn of Africa in the century to come.

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