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Book Reviews

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth

Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

(Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982)

237 pages

The first question to ask is this: What is this book? Is it a 'how to' book, is it a 'guide', or is it a bit of both? A 'how to' book gives principles and rules describing how they are used in order to do something. A 'guide' gives a list of items that are divided into different classes, with descriptions that enable one to classify and identify one of the items. The book's title and sub-title (**A guide to understanding the Bible**) indicate that it is intended to have the nature of both. This is what makes it distinctive.

The primary concern of the authors is that while the whole of the Bible is God's word and must be obeyed, yet it consists of literature of different types ('genres' is the word they prefer to use). Thus there is a 'generic' difference between the different 'genres' which is "vital and should affect both the way one reads them and how one is to understand their message for today". The point is not to isolate the different genres thereby minimising the unity of Scripture; but that, in addition to general rules of interpretation which recognise that all Scripture is the word of God, there are particular rules for each genre. In this it has more the nature of a 'guide'.

A second concern is with the 'how to' of interpretation. The major problem is that of the hermeneutical gap: the difference between the original historical context and that of today. Thus there are two tasks. The first is exegesis, to find out the original meaning. The second is hermeneutics, to hear that same meaning in today's context. It is important to note that although the word 'hermeneutics' usually refers to both tasks, our authors state that they use it in the narrower sense of the second task. The book deals with both tasks, emphasising that exegesis always comes first.

The introductory chapter dealing with the need to interpret covers a number of valuable points which set the framework for the rest of the book. There is an emphasis on the primacy of exegesis; the question all the way through is how do we do this. The answers are not addressed to the scholars, but in a very

practical way they are designed to be helpful and useful to lay people, students and busy pastors. All can do good and correct exegesis without needing to be a specialist. What is needed is careful, accurate reading and guidance as to the right questions to ask of the text. One of the greatest strengths of the book is in giving guidance as to the right questions to ask, first in general, then as regards each different genre.

Critical general questions address the occasion and purpose of each book. Nothing new here, answers are usually in the text or a good Bible dictionary or handbook. The point is they must be asked before going on to the literary questions of the point and meaning. The purpose is to discover the 'plain meaning'. This however is a deceptive term to use, if not at times downright misleading. Often there is no problem because there is general agreement amongst evangelicals as to what the 'plain meaning' is. But in a considerable number of places there is a lack of agreement and in some places there is even strong disagreement over the 'plain meaning'. How can these places have a 'plain meaning'? What is the non-expert reader to do in such places? Little advice is given here other than help in recognising that there are differences, why they exist, and to discern the good and the not-so-good. No help is given in handling the tension between the good and the good, a fairly frequent occurrence where there is disagreement.

One of the emphases is that the text must be read carefully first. This implies that one must use a good translation. What is 'good' in this context? The authors provide a helpful discussion of the differences between literal, free and dynamic equivalence translations, pointing out the weaknesses of the former two categories. They suggest that a dynamic equivalence translation is the best as a standard study Bible (they have a strong preference for the NIV), but that there is value in consulting a literal, and even a free, translation as well. This is useful advice though not all will agree with their choices. The genres that they identify for separate treatment are Epistles, O.T. narrative, Acts, Gospels, Parables, Law, Prophets, Psalms, Wisdom and Revelation. Each of these has a chapter to itself, two for the Epistles. This is where the real value of the book lies, and where its dual nature, of a 'guide' and a 'how to' book, is seen most clearly. There is a description of the nature of the genre, often other relevant background issues are dealt with, guidance is given as to the exegetical and hermeneutical tasks. The whole approach is refreshingly different and very lively. Even if one disagrees with their

conclusions, yet one will be stimulated to much creative re-thinking of scripture.

There is a useful little appendix which gives help in evaluating commentaries. What does one look for in a commentary? How can one decide which to read or buy? They also include their suggested list of best commentaries. Be warned, a number are not written from an evangelical viewpoint. The authors say this but do not indicate which these are. However, many will not be available in Africa; only about a third from the O.T. and about a half from the N.T. are currently available in Nairobi.

This book will not replace the standard books on interpretation which deal with general principles of hermeneutics in its broader sense, nor is this the authors' intent. However every Bible student would profit from its fresh approach and be stimulated to a richer understanding of Scripture. Not the least of its merits is a highly readable style and clearly marked sections which make it easy to follow.

Colin Densham
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Church Growth: God's Plan
By R.E. Harlow
(Everyday Publications Inc., Toronto, Canada, 1980)
80 pages, \$2.50 Cdn

An exposition of biblical principles of growth as concerns the Church, or an analysis of strategies, or factors that promote or hinder church growth is perhaps what comes to mind. Yet **Church Growth: God's Plan** does not address these aspects. Neither does it develop theology of the Church--its purpose, identity, nature and growth. The book does not lay out a pattern for planting and nurturing churches today. Rather, it recounts **the story of the New Testament Church** in its early history. It tells the birth of the Church from the day of Pentecost, and proceeds to describe the churches founded by the apostles. Finally, the author restates Revelation in its characterization of the Church in the last days.

The publisher identifies the author's purpose as being "concerned not so much with doctrine, but rather with church practice and teaching about the church." Doctrinal problems surface in the descriptions of the various churches, as those at Colossae and Corinth. Church practice is touched upon in topics such as leadership, communion and tithing. Church life is addressed in a chapter on gifts. However, concepts as such are not developed. No issues are raised nor dealt with. The New Testament history of the Church is simply retold. What you'll find is a **summarization of Acts through Revelation.**

The book begins with a very short commentary on God's people in the Old Testament. The second chapter shifts to the New Testament by briefly considering Jesus' comments about the Church. For the most part, however, Harlow focuses on a chronological and descriptive account of the New Testament Church as told by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The story of Paul's missionary journeys is interspersed with Paul's letters to the newly founded churches and to his co-workers. An overview of Peter's and John's letters is also given, as is a summary of the letter to the Hebrews. Harlow concludes by describing what today's church should look like in light of New Testament teaching.

The author does not take a theological approach, and thus a particular theological stance is not very evident. Yet on occasion his personal views are reflected in statements such as, "Men should uncover their heads and women should cover theirs, when they pray or prophesy". Or, "Women should not speak in church meetings." (p. 43) Harlow makes no effort to support his interpretations by looking at the biblical context. Neither does he draw on scholarly references. Interaction with the Scriptures and with other views and commentators is not the author's concern. His approach is single (personal) and literal. Even though Harlow's statements are dogmatic, he is not concerned with convincing his readers. His aim seems to be simply to present information.

In communicating much information and varied content, thoughts do not always flow very smoothly. One, or a few, central thoughts do not clearly and strongly emerge. Thus the presentation of the thesis--God's plan for church growth--is weak.

To a student of church growth, the book under review is not sufficiently challenging nor stimulating. It is neither expository, lacking scholarly depth, nor devotional, lacking personal and practical application. I would not recommend it for

pastors, teachers, nor theological students. Interested readers would be laymen at large, and new Christians in particular. Converts who are unfamiliar with the Scriptures and want an overview of the New Testament (excluding the Gospels), would profit from reading **Church Growth: God's Plan**. As already said, the book is informative in the sense that it restates a major part of the New Testament, and so reinforces biblical teaching about the Church in general. The book's style is very concise, with chapters only one to three pages in length, and very simple in structure and expression; and so it is a good study guide for the younger reader as well.

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**An African Call for Life: A Contribution to the
World Council of Churches, Sixth Assembly**

Ed. M. MaMpolo, R. Stober, E. Vappiah
(Uzima Press Ltd, Nairobi, 1983), pp 152, Kshs 35/-

This book consists of a series of African ruminations on the theme of the WCC sixth assembly: 'Jesus Christ - The Life of the World'. An attempt is made to draw out the social, spiritual, economic and political ramifications of this theme.

Unfortunately, the title is a misnomer. Perhaps a more accurate one would be, 'Social and Political Life in Africa', for the main thrust is concerned with the political liberation of the Blacks rather than Christ's more radical and fundamental offer of liberation from sin.

On page 15, Simon S. Maimela writes, "God will not in the long run tolerate all those destructive social forces that continue to deny his people freedom and full life". This is surely true, but does not go far enough. God's punishment will be ultimately directed against man as sinner and rebel against His authority, only a symptom of which may be the oppression of fellow men.

What then is the ultimate authority upon which the book's ideas are based? Not the Protestant Bible. For example, Masamba MaMpolo quotes the Book of Wisdom as authoritative (p. 21). When the Bible is quoted, texts are often misapplied, (e.g. the use of

Matt 24:46 on p. 22). On page 23 we read, "It would be fair to say that the individual life is only fully lived when it is hidden in that of the community" and then texts like Luke 15:24, 32 and Col. 3:3 are illicitly adduced to substantiate this claim.

The book seems more concerned to ferment anti-foreign feeling and political unrest than to proclaim new life in Christ. In fact its message is mischievous. We are told, for example, that Kenya's government has politically failed (pp 78, 79). On page 103, Henry Okullu writes, "I am infinitely suspicious of one party system of government being capable of safeguarding and promoting human rights, because it is there to promote a colonisation of the mind and to assist its leaders in staying in power for life." Again this is evading the heart of man's plight. There are many countries with a plurality of parties whose citizens are still slaves of sin. Real freedom only comes from God through Jesus Christ.

Universalistic tendencies are found in the book. In its context, the statement, "Jesus Christ is not the life of the Church. He is the life of the world" (p. 109) clearly suggests that ultimately salvation will be enjoyed by everyone. Unfortunately this book is re-vamped Liberalism with its one-sided Social Gospel. It is a political tract thinly disguised as theology. The book's subtitle 'Jesus Christ the life of the World' is grossly misleading. It may provide some useful elementary information on Political Science (e.g. p. 101) and a salutary lesson in the excesses of modernist theology, but it is of minimal spiritual value.

Dickson Munyasya,
AIC National TEE Co-ordinator, Kenya

The Idols of Death and the God of Life. A Theology translated from the Spanish by Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepard. Contributors: Pablo Richard and nine other representatives of Latin American Liberation Theology. (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1983) 232 pages.

Some months ago one of the leading Latin American representatives of liberation theology, the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, came to Rome in order to defend his "liberation faith". The day after his arrival a papal decree was published by the pope, John

Paul II (Karol Wojtyla). Part of the decree is a heavy attack upon Marxism and its influence upon the Roman Catholic Church.

The message is clearly directed to the liberationist theologians who are said to turn the Christian faith upside down. The decree argues that these theologians are influenced by Marxism and they draw the poor in society into an ideological class struggle. An analysis of the society that is based upon a theology infiltrated by non-religious ideas will lead to deep contradictions, the decree states.

The ten contributors of the symposium represent various positions within a liberation theology that will be hit by the pope's criticism. Many words and deep commitment are put into these articles in order to convince the reader that a re-interpretation of God, Christ and Christian worship is a "must" if it shall be possible to arrive at a new understanding of the dignity of the human, based upon the situation of the poor and oppressed in society.

In light of Latin American history one easily understands the need for "liberation". The colonization of Latin America was assisted by a forceful "Christianization". It is a matter of fact that large groups of people have been regarded as little more than animals - if that much - compared to the European conquerers and their descendants. It is no less a fact that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America brought in a Christianity that to quite an extent ruled "the masses" by one or another form of superstition: whether this was bound to the mysterious sacrificial ministry and power of the priest, to dead people believed to be saints still alive, or to the worship of Christian symbols. "The pagans" were baptized, but they were to little extent educated. Most of the people remained in one or another form of Christopaganism.

This symposium is marked by a repenting spirit - because of past faults and because of remaining evil in society - in particular as related to the poor and oppressed. The writers give challenging descriptions of the situation of the poor and oppressed in Latin America. Political struggles are pointed out. Social, economical and ecclesiastical structures are intellectually characterized and obvious evil is highlighted. How, then, do these liberationists postulate possible solutions for a new ideal human society? what is the theological task in this situation?

A first glance at the articles gives the impression that the fundamental answers are found in the biblical writings. The Bible seems to be used in a biblicistic way: there is no end to OT and NT references. A closer look nevertheless reveals that the material used and interpreted from the OT and NT is intentionally selected for a methodology and for ideological structures of analysis that are foreign to the natural meaning of Scripture and thus also to classical Christian interpretation. At this point I agree with the pope: the theology is infiltrated by non-religious ideas. This is not to say that all articles directly represent Marxist ideology, if we by Marxist mean what Marx himself said and wrote. However, it is impossible for this reviewer to escape the impression that the selected biblical paragraphs and quotations used by the various authors have been placed into a frame of reference that keeps the door wide open for a humanistic materialistic interpretation of the text, and thus also open for the atheistic Marxist approach. This is more than an attempt to interpret the text in its own salvation-history context.

We not only sense the "crisis of faith" that has penetrated Catholic as well as Protestant theology the last years: we find this erosion of Christian faith strongly spelled out. The liberation theology we find in this book gives common seedbed for political atheistic ideology as well as for sceptical, humanistic and existentialist theologies.

It was certainly expected that Latin American liberation movements one day would begin to question the Christian integrity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, of the pope's divine authority, of the benefit of Mary and other saints. It is to the credit of the Latin American liberation theologians that they today are seriously questioning the rich and powerful denomination in relation to the poor and oppressed.

However, the theologians we meet in this symposium have come into the danger of throwing out the baby with the water. This is stated from the obvious impression that the liberationists regard it a matter of necessity to "de-supernaturalize" the Christian revelation if it at all shall be of help for reaching a true solidarity with the poor and oppressed, if it shall help us see what is genuinely human. We do not escape a re-interpretation of "god" and "worship", as is stated again and again.

The pity is not the true concern for the poor and neglected.

Genuine Christian mission has always been occupied with helping the small and neglected--these were also often the most responsive to the Good News.

The pity of the liberation theology represented in this book is that it interprets "salvation" solely in terms of socio-political and humanistic liberation. Various Roman Catholic theologians recognized that a mystical contemplation upon the church's teaching and an inner struggle for doing good and satisfactory works before God did not lead very far in changing the condition of poor and neglected in the Latin American society. A "conversion" to "good works" in terms of socio-political liberation activity was the only option for many.

But this liberation is not radical enough. It does not take the evil at its root--it is mainly occupied with the results of evil. As Jesus said: from the heart of man comes. . . . evil thoughts, murder etc. The liberation theology in the fashion pointed out fails to deal with the lostness of the individual man. It fails to recognize God's radical liberating act in Jesus Christ who was the atonement for all the sin of the world. The dimension of forgiveness of sins by faith in Jesus Christ is completely missing in this theology. The "de-supernaturalization" has made the true God and his Son Jesus Christ to be little more than posters along a way to a new ideal genuine human society, materialistically interpreted. The Latin American liberation theology is more than we get to see from this book. Various movements exist within Latin American churches that faithfully point out God's love for all people in whatever social and political context they live. Movements that do not discriminate between groups of people on sociological and economical presuppositions. Movements that show concern without losing faith in the supernatural, without losing faith in God, that he really came to save lost man in his Son Jesus Christ.

I urge the humanistic and materialistic liberation theology to intensify its dialogue with these liberation movements in Latin America and other places. Perhaps some of them will find that the Holy Scripture is revealing the truth about God and man and not a textbook for humanistic theology, leading nowhere.

Norvald Yri
Makumira, Tanzania

**Theological Education by Extension - a guide for Workers in
Developing Countries**

By Agustin & Rosario Batlle

(Uzima Press, 1983), 109 pages, Kshs 25/-

Although the book is intended as a guide and introduction to Theological Education by Extension for workers in the developing countries, after reading the book one is not sure whether the reading heightens one's confusion about TEE or clarifies one's understanding. Part of the reason for this sort of feeling is that both Rosario and Agustin know too much and try to cover topics such as the philosophy of TEE or more specifically, theological pedagogy, Curriculum design and development, psychology of adult learners, seminar leadership and the role of a TEE facilitator, text-writing and evaluation, to name just a few of the topics touched on.

If the book is not a manual for those who do not know anything about TEE and are contemplating to start working as TEE workers, the book succeeds very well in giving one a bird's-eye view of the major areas that are covered in TEE. Indeed the writers ask more questions than they answer. The book is therefore suitable for study through discussion groups. For someone studying on his/her own, attempting to answer some of these questions can be frustrating. Words such as, 'summative' and 'formative' evaluation (p. 80) and 'dialogical method' (p. 67) could prove to be unfamiliar to Bible school students or people not acquainted with adult education. Admittedly the writers try to explain the meaning of such words but the terms themselves could have been omitted.

It is to their credit that Agustin and Rosario take principles of adult education seriously. They must be given credit too for including 'development' as an issue within the context of theological education. However Appendix C (p. 88) is more like an 'apologia' for the existence of indigenous church movements - perhaps too one sided at that. Whilst it is true that the writers intend the book to be a guide for workers of TEE in developing countries, the educational concepts that are discussed are not intrinsically Third World and, in fact, the first ten chapters are disappointingly theoretical where a few examples could have helped. Even so, students in Bible Colleges and potential TEE workers would get value for their money. TEE

tutors of the old guard will find some ideas challenging and refreshing when not all too familiar.

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Provincial Theological Co-ordinator
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Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa

Ed. by Brian Hearne
(Nairobi: AACC/AMECEA, 1982)

This book is subtitled: Final Report of the Joint Research Project of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), 1976-1981. This indicates that the contents of the book are a digest of a major research project co-sponsored by the two church groups mentioned. The scope of the project included Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The goal of the project was two-fold: 'to collect information which would be of benefit to Christians and church members in general' and 'to stimulate church members of every level to a greater understanding and co-operation' (p. 1). The ultimate purpose was stated as

to assist in the education in ecumenism of Christians in all areas of the Church's life and concern, and to convince the churches of the urgent need to commit themselves to work for Christian unity (p. 2).

The authors of this report exemplify the stated purpose. Mugambi is Anglican (CPK) and Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi. He has worked with John Mbiti with the World Council of Churches in Switzerland and has worked actively in the development of the joint religious education syllabuses in Eastern Africa and co-authored one of the 'O-level' textbooks. Mutiso-Mbinda is a Roman Catholic priest from the Machakos Diocese in Kenya and has been Director of the AMECEA Research Department since 1977. Vollbrecht is a Roman Catholic sister doing missionary work in Uganda. Previously, she taught in a girls' secondary school in Kenya. They state that

the experience of working together on this book has been itself an important ecumenical experience. . . . The mutual

respect and thinking which has characterised our working relationship has helped to bring our thinking closer together as well (p. 4).

After the joint preface by Cardinal Willebrands (President, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome) and Philip Potter (General Secretary, World Council of Churches), the book is composed of eight chapters and three appendices. The contents of the book indicate a wide variety of research involvement was implemented and that much ecumenical activity is occurring throughout East Africa. The chapters will be briefly reviewed.

The first chapter discusses the historical and theological development of ecumenism in East Africa. This important chapter sets the scenario for the successes and failures of the project. After tracing the beginnings of East African ecumenism to the Kikuyu Conference of 1913, the authors then discuss the basic shortcomings of the early endeavors: 1) they were initiatives to bring about co-operation between societies, not churches; 2) African Christians were not involved in any of the proceedings; 3) Romanist missionary societies did not participate; 4) there was no unanimity/commonness of purpose among the Protestant missionary societies (the Africa Inland Mission, the Quakers, and the Seventh Day Adventists all withdrew very early from the proposed federation) (pp. 6-7). Major problems which still remain unresolved include the translation and use of the Bible, ecumenical dialogue, and ecumenism among students. From an evangelical perspective, there are some interesting observations regarding biblical theology (p. 9), theological training (p. 9), proselytizing (p. 11), and Christian student youth organizations (pp. 20-21) in this section.

Chapter two discusses a series of local study seminars focussing on ecumenism. The aim of these seminars, held in each country of the research, was 'to stimulate African scholars and teachers of theology to respond theologically to the issue of ecumenism in Eastern Africa' (p. 27). Nearly forty papers on many aspects of ecumenism were written for these seminars. While most of the papers indirectly touched on obstacles to ecumenism, only four specifically studied theological and other reasons for division. Two papers dealt with the Church's mission and ecumenism; one paper was about the Independent Churches; but there was nothing on the Bible and ecumenism (p. 29).

Three major factors which were viewed as obstacles to ecumenism were the attitudes regarding the Bible, the Church, and the

Sacraments. For example, the statement that 'Biblical fundamentalism has made ecumenical collaboration impossible the Bible is assumed to be a straight-forwardly truthful and historical narrative' excludes any real dialogue (p. 30). In fact, the rest of the paragraph rightly demonstrates one of the basic reasons for the continuation of the evangelical-ecumenical rift--the biblical doctrines of creation, sin, and salvation. Chapters three and four discuss ecumenism in rural and urban areas respectively. Both of these chapters consider ecumenical activities on a country-by-country basis. In the rural areas of Kenya, for example, the leaders acknowledged the existence of major divisions and differences between the various denominations and that these divisions were based on a variety of causes ranging from doctrine, through customs, to ignorance and prejudice. They agreed that in every place no matter what the degree of tolerance or hostility existed between the churches, they could come together for funerals. Yet even here, the report states, these occasions of co-operation often were 'a thinly-veiled opportunity to express underlying antagonisms through such means as the order in which the churches were called upon and the places their leaders were given to sit' (p. 58). After considering the results of a questionnaire, the authors draw several conclusions on rural ecumenism in Kenya:

In many cases the churches seem to be the primary community of their members; when the traditional mores of the ethnic group begin to disintegrate under the pressure of modern Kenyan life, it seems that the church community provides structures to give direction and security to its members Several churches are . . . associated with one particular ethnic group The 'threat' of church unity then becomes easily identified with threats to ethnic identity. . . . [I]n some sense the church group is providing a new ethnic identity. . . . Fear is the most powerful source of division--especially fear of doing something not approved by the church leaders. . . . [C]hurch leaders hold a place of primary importance in the development of ecumenical relationships (pp. 62-63).

Tanzania's Church Unity Committee of Mbeya Region has chosen to stay on pastoral issues rather than discuss theological problems and this is seen as a positive contribution to rural ecumenical activities. This committee's concentration has been on the pastoral problem of inter-church marriages and the problem of teaching religion together in the primary schools (pp. 64-65). The negative aspects mentioned by the authors include:

- 1) Not all the churches of Mbeya Region belong to the committee;
- 2) The heads of some of the churches do not communicate with their pastors on ecumenical matters;
- 3) There is still little co-operation between pastors;
- 4) The committee reaches mostly the pastors; ordinary Christians know little about ecumenism or the reasons for other churches' practices;
- 5) The major Christian councils of Tanzania do not show any interest in this committee's work in Mbeya (pp. 65-66).

This rural research was planned not only to provide data on the current state of ecumenism, but also to foster its growth and development. It was only partially successful, but the authors claim that 'its success where it was implemented means that it offers a useful model for ecumenical progress anywhere' (p. 78). The authors honestly state that the research itself may have a negative effect of enhancing the barriers of fear which already separate. Also, they suggest the limitation that men and women with little formal education might not be able to evaluate the serious differences between the churches. One implication from the study is the need for education in ecumenism at all levels of church hierarchy, beginning at the top in order to convince the total membership of its importance. One inference is 'that many pay lip-service to the concept, but steer clear of concrete involvement with other churches' (pp. 78-79). Another implication is the need for centralized policies supporting ecumenism. Much of the blame for division is placed on the church leaders with the suggestion that they must initiate the move toward unity.

Regarding the chapter on ecumenism in the cities, one conclusion of the research was the willingness of the vast majority of the people to embrace ecumenism. The second conclusion was that the church leaders should initiate ecumenical sharing (p. 93). The report also indicated that good relationships existed with Muslims (pp. 85-102) and African Traditional Religionists (p. 141).

Chapter five studies the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This week of prayer, begun in 1908, was changed to prayer for unity in 1935 and continues up until 1982 (the year of the

publication of this book). The planning for the week of prayer appears to be haphazard and inconsistent due to the lack of effective communication within and between the churches. Much is left to the priest's/pastor's memory with no reminders from higher offices. Though this activity has a long history, the authors suggest that it would be difficult to find enthusiasm for it, except in isolated places. One insight observed was that

theology (in the narrow sense of doctrine and church teachings) is far from being the only factor in creating divisions among Christians--cultural and social elements can be far more divisive (p. 107).

The sixth chapter, on Christian religious education in the schools (CRE), suggests that this has been the area of greatest ecumenical effort, particularly at the secondary school level. The major example given is the joint efforts of Roman Catholic and Protestant standardized syllabi in Kenya, both for 'O-level' and 'A-level.' Before 1970, the syllabus was Bible-centered, but during the 1970's new syllabi were developed in accordance with national objectives and priorities. Its objective was to make CRE more relevant to the lives of the students in post-colonial East Africa. The new syllabi incorporated studies in the African cultural and religious heritage, trying to make the Christian faith more relevant to it (p. 113). This resulted in the concerns that 1) for the first time, the African cultural and religious heritage was appreciated and taken seriously in CRE, and 2) the Bible is still taken seriously, but it is no longer considered to be the only ingredient of full CRE (p. 124). With the educational system becoming increasingly secularized, ecumenical development in a Bible-centered CRE may need to be encouraged. The report indicates that the pastoral interest from the churches can be the most helpful factor in enhancing the CRE studies, since many of the professionally-qualified teachers are reluctant (or even hostile) about their own involvement. This reviewer's opinion is that this particular chapter presents the most positive ecumenical activity which has occurred in East Africa. Yet the danger is 'that joint religious education initiatives may lead to the reduction of doctrine to "the lowest common denominator", to a point where there is no disagreement' (p. 168).

The last two chapters deal with attitudes towards Christian unity and concluding reflections. Attitudes cover the whole spectrum from open hostility through indifference to positive recommendations. The report encourages inter-church dialogue (p.

162) and suggests that practical issues of inter-faith activities could lead to more ecumenism, especially if both the leadership and membership of the churches are re-educated into ecumenism.

The authors state that in spite of the extensive research done, in many ways the goals of the research were not met. Several factors contributed to this: lack of response to questionnaires, incomplete information, difficulties of communication and traveling, etc. More important factors were lack of interest (especially among church leaders), mutual misunderstandings, and disjunctive organization and communication systems within and between the churches. However, the authors state that the greatest problem/barrier has been

the inheritance of what is at worst prejudice and mistrust, and at best, a lack of interest, among the various churches. The deepest of these is the division between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic traditions. . . . [I]t appears that very little indeed is being done to bridge this gulf on the theological level, despite developments in world ecumenism, and despite a growing number of common development projects involving the two traditions in the area of our research (p. 3).

This reviewer was disappointed by the stance taken by the report. First, the report uncritically promotes organizational, if not organic, unity of all the churches without demonstrating any biblical support for it. Apparently, to the authors, organizational unity is the *summum bonum* (highest good). The authors seem to delight in caricaturing evangelicals as peripheral elements inhibiting the cause and progress of ecumenism (pp. 10, 21, 30, 31, 50, 85, et al). They also seem to be blissfully ignorant of activities of inter-church fellowship and meetings among evangelicals, not only in East Africa, but continent-wide. This reviewer refers to groups such as the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), the evangelical fellowships in each country, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK), various associations of geographically-organized fellowships of evangelical Bible Schools, etc. These evangelical activities in unity have been occurring for some years, even decades, without the need to attempt organizational fusion. The report mentions 'that a large number of Christians in Africa belong to the Evangelical wing' (p. 31), yet the authors mention these church groups basically as withdrawing from or opposing the liberal/conciliar WCC-Roman

Catholic enterprises, e.g., the Assemblies of God, the Baptists, the Africa Inland Church (pp. 87-98).

The book is a strong polemic for the demonstration of joint Anglican-Roman Catholic activities as most of the sections deal with these two bodies. However, there are fair sections indicating that many other groups have been involved with these two main groups. It seems to this reviewer that the authors recognize the WCC (with its AACC) as the only voice for non-Roman Catholics (p. 148). As the writers mentioned 'theological blinkers' (p. 139), it would have been of great service to the book's value and to their own interests if they had removed theirs.

According to our evangelical view, there is only *one* basis upon which genuine unity can be founded--the Person and Work of Jesus as revealed in the inerrant, authoritative Word of God. Far from attempting to form a visible, organizational union, genuine biblical unity already exists among all those who are God's children through faith in Christ (Eph. 4:3-7; Gal. 3:26). Dare we call it an 'evangelical ecumenism'?

The value of *Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa* for the evangelical lies in its displaying the many attempts to develop unity and the variety of means which have been taken by some church groups to achieve it. We can learn many lessons from it for application in our own ministries in our endeavor to uphold and practice biblical truth. But we also need to be watchful that we not surrender our evangelical commitment to bringing people to Christ and helping them grow in Christ.

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