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Review

PETROS S. BERGA, *What Happened to the Original Christian Unity in Ethiopia? Towards the Restoration of Our Original Unity in Christ*

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6. A new, indigenous, polity emerged in central Tigray in Proto-Aksumite times that developed into the Kingdom of Aksum in the late 1st millennium B.C.
7. Finally, the Kingdom of Aksum consolidated and increasingly incorporated more of the Eritrean highlands into its territory in the early 1st millennium A.D.

The collection of papers by de Contenson is thus important as it provides readers with evidence of the relevant and innovative role that the author played in the history of Aksumite archaeology.

Rodolfo Fattovich, Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"

PETROS S. BERGA, *What Happened to the Original Christian Unity in Ethiopia? Towards the Restoration of Our Original Unity in Christ*. St. Ottilien: EOS Klosterverlag St. Ottilien. 2006. 206 Pages. Price: € 24,80. ISBN: 3-8306-7213-6.

The physical form may provide essential clues about its content. This is the case with the book under review. The self explanatory title together with the cover picture, at least for those readers who have some knowledge of church history, gives an indication of what the book is about. The cover shows an Ethiopian icon of the brother Apostles Peter and Andrew representing the church of the west and the east respectively, each lifting the model of a church symbolizing the original unity of the Church. Thus, the broad aims of the book are both to explore why the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Ethiopia has broken down and to set in motion a process whereby the two churches might restore the original unity of the Early Church. To this end, the author assesses and explains both the past history and present situation of the two churches, pinpointing the negative factors that have aggravated the problem, as well as some ways ahead that may help activate the dynamic of unity. He further suggests concrete proposals that could assist and actualize the process of regaining that original unity.

The book is originally an M.A. thesis submitted to the Department of Theology of the Catholic University of Utrecht, the Netherlands in 2002. As a piece of academic research which has therefore passed through scholarly scrutiny both by researcher and supervisors, the work is well-structured comprising a comprehensive thematic introduction, three well written empirical chapters which are further divided respectively into three, two and two subsections with concluding remarks. There is also an informative glossary and an exhaustive bibliography with more than 350 entries.

In the introduction the author, aside from some general remarks, presents a concise outline of the history and present situation of Ethiopia and her principal religious groups: the Ethiopian Orthodox church, the Catholic and Protestant churches in Ethiopia, Islam and Judaism as well as religious groups. The first chapter is titled 'The Genesis of Christianity in Ethiopia – the Development of Orthodox and Catholic Identities' and is devoted to an account of the origins of the two churches as separate identities arising from the common Christian tradition following the initial introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia. In reviewing the history of the two churches in Ethiopia, the author, implementing what he calls a 'functional approach', concentrates on the historical elements which have given each church its specific character and have contributed to its sense of identity.

In the second chapter, which consists of two sections, the Council of Chalcedon and the Christological controversies which resulted, are discussed at length as the key events which marked the first great split in the early history of Christendom in general and the two churches in particular. In addition to the continuous Council which 'constituted a watershed in the history of Christendom', the author presents what he calls 'other issues' which further pushed the two churches towards division. Points such as questions of authority, the papacy and the Petrine ministry, the application (by the Catholic Church) of the uniate model with reference to Ethiopia, similarities and variations in Marian doctrines, the veneration of saints and the view of the after-life in the tradition of the two churches, etc., are mentioned and thoroughly discussed.

Analysing the similarities and differences between the two churches regarding their theological teachings, the author maintains that we find more elements which unite than divide them. He concludes that the origins of the division stem from linguistic, political and cultural differences rather than actual issues of faith. With reference to the current situation, the author states: "The Ethiopian Orthodox and Catholic Churches are coming close to each other on Christology, the veneration of Mary, and the saints. However, Papal primacy, the filioque clause, the concept of the two wills and purgatory remain divisive." (p. 106).

In the third chapter, which is also divided into two sections, the author identifies the negative factors which further contribute to the division of the two churches. This chapter, according to the author, aims to provide an appropriate starting point for initiating the process leading to forgiveness and reconciliation. The existing factors are also recognized, since the author believes these, too, can promote dialogue and resolve differences by moving the churches towards a common horizon. Concluding this chapter, the author emphasises that a concerted effort should be made to create unity of faith (or spiritual unity) before pursuing institutional unity.

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It is possible to give a number of socio-political reasons for the importance of works like this which deal with the relationship between different churches and the rediscovery of the positive potential of religion to contribute to unity and national development in Ethiopia. In contemporary Ethiopia not just the two churches covered in the book, but also the Christianity as a whole is facing a common threat, namely the politization of Islam in the region. Unfortunately the people of Ethiopia are being attacked by an extraordinary number of social problems which override the confines of their various religious camps. The recent political scenario is another factor, emphasizing as it does ethnic diversity and autonomy tending the people towards fragmentation rather than unity. All these and other socio-political evils will be ousted when denominations can secure their unity and contain diversity within.

The book is recommended to those who long for and work towards the unity of Ethiopians for whom Christianity is not only a matter of faith but also an integral *modus vivendi*, to those who want to learn more about Ethiopia and its ancient church, as well as the challenge ecumenism is facing in ancient religious nations of Africa such as Ethiopia.

Mersha Alehegne, Universität Hamburg

BERNARD LEEMAN, *Queen of Sheba and Biblical Scholarship*. Westbrook: Queensland Academic Press, 2005. xii + 253 pp. Preis: US-\$ 19,95 ISBN: 0-9758022-0-8.

Der Verfasser versucht zu beweisen, dass sich das biblische Heilige Land mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit im Westen der arabischen Halbinsel und nicht in Palästina befand. Er stützt sich dabei auf die Theorie von Kamal Salibi,¹ nach der die in dieser Region auftretenden Ortsnamen sowohl aufgrund ihrer lautlichen Form als auch aufgrund ihrer geographischen Lage zueinander die Annahme des Heiligen Landes in dieser Region wahrscheinlich machen. Als ergänzenden Beweis sieht der Vf. den Saba-Mənilək-Zyklus im Kəbrä Nəgəst an.

Die insgesamt sieben Kapitel des Buches lassen sich in zwei Teile gliedern: Kap. 1–3 (S. 1–44) geben einen groben Überblick über die Geschichte Israels, die biblische Archäologie der vorexilischen Zeit und die Entstehung des Alten Testaments (AT). Kap. 4–7 behandeln die Überlieferung um die Königin von Saba, den Text des Kəbrä Nəgəst sowie schließlich die Beziehung des Saba-Mənilək-Zyklus zur Geschichte Israels.

¹ SALIBI, KAMAL: *Die Bibel kam aus dem Lande Asir. Eine neue These über die Ursprünge Israels*. Hamburg 1985. Englische Ausgabe: *The Bible came from Arabia*. London 1985.