

## KERKGESKIEDENIS & EKUMENE / CHURCH HISTORY AND ECUMENICAL STUDIES

Brent A, 2007. *Ignatius of Antioch: A martyr bishop and the origin of episcopacy*. London: T & T Clark/Continuum. 180pp. Price: £55-00. ISBN: 978-0567-03200-3.

Allen Brent was Associate Professor in History in the University of North Queensland (Australia), and is presently a member of the Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University, in the UK. Brent sheds new light on the *Letters* of Ignatius of Antioch, and his research contribution involves many interesting and valuable facts and developments. In the centre of his study he also has to answer to the debate on what form of government a church should have in order to be truly the church. Brent emphasises: “I have frequently pointed out that Ignatius does not have a concept of monarchical episcopacy, nor did later writers understand his theology of church order” (p. 143). Ignatius said:

“So then let everyone respect the deacons as they would Jesus Christ, and also the bishop who is to create an image of the Father; and let them respect the presbyters as the council of God and as the band of the apostles. Without these orders, a church is not called together” (p. 2).

Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 115) was one of the Apostolic Fathers of the Early Church. The *works* of Ignatius, though not in the New Testament, were however close to the Apostolic Age. Eusebius of Caesarea (c.265-c.339), “the Father of Church History”, claimed that Ignatius and Polycarp were direct associates and companions of the apostles, and claimed that Peter himself had consecrated Hero, the direct predecessor of Ignatius, as bishop of Antioch. Ignatius was the second Bishop of Antioch. These were the men that defended the Early Church against heresy.

Since the Middle Ages there were 13 *Letters* that were attributed to Ignatius. However, in his research Allen Brent points out that Eusebius mentions specifically *seven* letters that Ignatius wrote to Ephesus (mentioning Bishop Onesimus), to Magnesia (mentioning Bishop Damas), to Tralles (mentioning Bishop Polybius), to Rome, to Philadelphia, to Smyrna, and to Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna). The original *Letters* appears to have been considerably expanded, and its Christology significantly modified,

during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Brent focuses on the *seven Letters* specifically mentioned by Eusebius. Eusebius, whose church history is the earliest to have survived as a whole, mentions that Ignatius wrote his *Letters* during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (AD 108-117). Eusebius also claims that the putative date of the *Letters* of Ignatius was immediately after the believed dates of the New Testament documents. In his *Letters* to other churches Ignatius re-interpreted *church order*, the *Eucharist* and *martyrdom*. Allen Brent indicates how Ignatius shaped the theology of the office of bishop in the Early Church. Brent offers an account of the circumstances and context from which Ignatius constructed what for many became the historic *church order*.

Brent researched and evaluated the arguments of the debate and controversy around the *Letters* of Ignatius. The original edition is also known today as the “middle recension” (Latin: *recensio* – for revision), because of a short Syrian version that had been discovered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century new arguments, which also involved Presbyterians and Puritans, raged over matters such as the authenticity of the “middle recension”, the question whether Eusebius did not date the correspondence of Ignatius too early, and even the possibility that Ignatius was a fictitious character created to give substance to a later and new church order. During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it seemed that the 300-year dispute had come to an end, largely as a result of the work of two prominent scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop Joseph Lightfoot from England and Theodore Zahn from Germany. Consensus was reached on the basis of their defence of the authenticity of the original edition of Ignatius’ *Letters* as well as their solutions to the problems raised.

During the final quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of scholars once again revived the controversy around the authenticity of the *Letters* of Ignatius and of Eusebius’ dating thereof. In defence of the Lightfoot-Zahn consensus, Brent refutes in this study the arguments of Reinoud Weijenborg (1969), Joseph Rius-Camps (1977), Robert Joly (1979), Thomas Lechner (1999), Reinhard Hübner (1999) and Markus Vinzent (1999). Criticism against the arguments of each of these scholars has been extensive in the literature, and Brent, without concentrating his arguments on the criticism, mainly focused on more detail and some fairly basic critical commentary. He makes use of new evidence for Ignatius’ background, brought to light during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

and not available to Lightfoot and Zahn and their predecessors. (The latest discovery and classification of epigraphic material has led to the creation of a new, non-literary corpus of evidence, which is now larger than the surviving classical literary sources.) In conclusion he states: Recent attacks on the authenticity of the middle recension and the early dating (first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century) fail (p. 143, 150, 151).

The book offers a valuable and important contribution to Early Church and Church Polity studies. It is recommended to theologians, students and ordinary Christians interested in the Early Church and Church Polity.

J P Labuschagne

Nel, R & Du Toit, H (reds.) 2007. *Ons Pelgrimstog na Eenheid. Our Pilgrimage to Unity*. Pretoria: UP Drukkery. Prys: R59-00. [Bestel by NG Kerk Sinode van Suid Transvaal. ABSA Bank Rekeningnommer: 4050306630. Faks depositostrokke met eie posadres en vermelding van “kerkhereniging” na 011-4033050.]

Die begeerte tot sigbare eenheid in die familie van NG Kerke het reeds na vore getree met die vorming van die Federale Raad van NG Kerke in 1964. Die Federale Raad was in die jare sewentig ten gunste van die vorming van ’n oorkoepelende sinode vir al die lede van die familie. Toe die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk in 1978 die voorstel afgewys het, het die strewe na eenheid op ’n dooiepunt beland. Dit was die begin van die einde van die Federale Raad omdat die “jongkerke” hulle vertroue verloor het in die “moederkerk” se wil tot ’n eenheidstruktuur.

Die verskyning van die verslag “Kerk en Samelewing” het die proses weer op dreef gekry. Die Algemene Sinodes van 1986 en 1990 het die ideaal van een kerkverband tussen die lede van die familie duidelik onderskryf. Die nuwe bedeling van 1994 en die verdwyning van apartheid as stelsel het die pad vir gesprekke verder oopgemaak. Verskeie samesprekings het gevolg en in Augustus 2006 het die vier kerke ’n groot mate van konsensus bereik. “’n Groot struikelblok is uit die weg geruim toe besluit is dat Belhar nie meer ’n voorwaarde vir kerkeenheid hoef te wees nie.

Die Algemene Sinode van 2007 het gemeentes versoek om die Achterberg-2 dokumente te bestudeer en kommentaar te lewer.

Gemeentes is aangemoedig om op grondvlak gesprekke met ander lede van die familie te voer.

In hierdie proses van samesprekings en besluitneming is die boek “Ons Pelgrimstog na Eenheid” van groot waarde. Die Bybelse gronde vir eenheid sowel as die historiese standpunte van die vier kerke word duidelik uitgespel. Sleutelkwessies soos Belhar en die kulturele verskeidenheid as uitdaging vir eenheid kry aandag.

Die moderator van die NG Kerk, Piet Strauss, bespreek die pad vorentoe en stel ‘n struktuur vir die nuwe kerkverband voor. Hierop lewer Thias Kgatla, moderator van die VGKSA, repliek.

Die boek sluit af met gevallestudies waar die samewerking of vereniging reeds gevorder het of al in praktyk werk. Ten slotte is daar besprekingsvrae wat in gemeentes gesprekke en denke kan stimuleer.

Die boek is geskryf deur 20 skrywers wat bestaan uit bekende akademici, kerkleiers en lidmate wat op een of ander wyse betrokke is by die eenwordingsproses. Die boek het tydig verskyn en word ten sterkste aanbeveel by kerkrade en ekumeniese kommissies om die weg te help wys op ons baie belangrike pelgrimstog na eenheid wat ons aan God Drie-enig verskuldig is.

D Crafford.

## **PRAKTIESE TEOLOGIE / PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

Els, J 2008. *Ligdans. Depressie-vegters se verhale van hoop*. Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM. Pp. 224. Prys onbekend.

Jeanne Els is ‘n vryskut-joernalis, skrywer en redakteur, wat al onder andere vir die koerant *Die Burger* en die tydskrifte *Huisgenoot* en *Sarie* gewerk het. In hierdie boek vertel sy van haar stryd teen depressie en slaag sy om haar lesers in te lig en insig te ontwikkel omtrent hierdie siekte. Die boek is baie goed geskryf en lees maklik, maar is beslis meer as bloot ligte leesstof. Die inligting wat in die boek weergegee word is akkuraat en relevant en dit word baie sensitief aangebied.

Baie van die mites wat rondom die siekte bestaan word in die boek hokgeslaan en dit behoort ook tot die ontstigmatisering daarvan by te dra. Die verhale van bekende Suid-Afrikaners – wat op ‘n empatiese wyse bygewerk word – sal lesers hiermee help en hulle

ook iets van die vele dimensies van depressie help verstaan. Heelwat lesers sal sekerlik verras wees om te lees dat sprankelende persone soos onder andere David Kramer, Deirdre Barnard-Visser, Amor Bekker en Vuyelva Booï (*Alyce* in die televisiereeks *Sewende Laan*), met depressie saamleef. Hulle vertellings en die naamlys van beroemde depressie-vegters ('n soveel mooier woord as depressielyers!) wat in die boek opgeneem is, sal waarskynlik help dat meer mense heeltemal anders oor depressie begin dink.

Verskillende vorme van depressie, maniere waarop dit beveg kan word en wenke vir mense wat met depressie-vegters saamleef, word op 'n manier beskryf wat hoop bring en hulp verleen. Die boek behoort mense wat moontlik nog nie besef dat hulle alreeds met depressie saamleef nie te help om so te doen en dan iets daaraan te wil doen. Dit behoort ook mense te help om makliker, sonder vooroordeel of stigma en ingelig te begin saampraat oor 'n siekte, wat in ons tyd en omgewing al hoe meer slagoffers opeis.

Die bydraes wat die professionele persone, insluitende 'n mediese dokter, 'n sielkundige en 'n psigiater, ook daarin lewer, verhoog die waarde van die boek. Die beskrywing van terminologie wat in gesprekke oor depressie en die behandeling daarvan opduik, doen dieselfde. Die name van boeke oor depressie en die behandeling, wat deur van die persone wie se verhale vertel word, aanbeveel is en die telefoonnommers en adresse van webruimtes op die internet, waarby daar vir hulp aangeklop en verder gelees kan word, is uiters nuttig. Toe hierdie resensie geskryf is, was hierdie nommers en verwysings almal in werking.

*Ligdans* is 'n boek wat gelees en gebêre behoort te word. Dit word met groot vrymoedigheid aanbeveel vir predikante, studente én ander lesers. Die boek is ook in Engels beskikbaar as *Towards the light*.

G Bothma