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REVIEWS

Pdt. M. Th. Magana. 1984. *Bathera Injil di Halmahera*. GMIH (Protestant Church of Halmahera). Pp. ix + 473. Five appendices, bibliography. Rp. 5000. Available through the Gereja Masehi Injil di Halmahera office, Tobelo.

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Anyone interested in the history, culture, religion, or the development of the church of the peoples of Halmahera will find worthwhile reading in *Bathera Injil di Halmahera* (translated, *The Gospel Ship of Halmahera*). This book was written in conjunction with the commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the Gereja Masehi Injil di Halmahera (GMIH, the Protestant Christian Church of Halmahera) on June 6, 1984.

The author, Thimotheus Magana, was born in the town of Tobelo on the island of Halmahera. He worked as a church leader in Halmahera for a number of years, then served as an associate pastor in Jakarta. This book was actually completed in 1979, but was not printed until 1984 under request from the committee of the Church Council of Indonesia (*Dewan Gereja Indonesia*).

Though the author's main consideration is to give a thorough history of the church, he first discusses the factors which influenced its development. The first three chapters set the stage as he describes what the foreword calls, "the thick wall which had to be battered down by the Gospel," (p. 5), that is, the day-to-day aspects of life and the belief systems of the Halmaheran peoples before the church came upon the scene.

Chapter 2 breaks down the complex of spirits and gods, and differentiates each one. Thirty-two specific gods and spirits are described. This is followed by a brief discussion of the basic beliefs: Animism, Pantheism, Spiritism, and "Law" (the regulations which, when adhered to, safeguarded a follower from the wrath of the gods, ancestors, and fellowmen).

Chapter 3 details many of the traditional beliefs and practices of Halmaherans, guided by native (traditional) law. Childbirth, adoption, proposal of marriage, brideprice, and all activities related to marriage were carried out in accordance with native law. Also described are deathbed practices and many ceremonies connected with placating spirits in order to harvest crops or hunt for daily food.

In Chapter 4, the history proper begins with a brief telling of the initial Portuguese entrance into northern Maluku. They came, not because of zeal for their religion, but because of zeal for the spice trade (A.D. 1522). They became the area's first Western conquerors, and with them came Roman Catholicism. After assisting the Halmaherans to defeat Islamic attackers, they demanded conversion to Catholicism.

Initial evangelistic efforts lasted less than two years. It ended in the martyrdom of one of the priests, an incident which was, in fact, prompted by the cruelty of the Portuguese rulers and their sinful living (p. 74).

Later evangelistic attempts by Franciscus Xaverius and others continued until the Dutch succeeded in ending Portuguese rule in north Maluku in 1613.

Of interest is the mentioned slaughter of Christians in 1560 by order of the Sultan of Ternate. Approximately 60,000 persons were put to death according to figures from King Philip II of Portugal (p. 78).

Chapter 4 describes the transfer of power from the Portuguese to the Dutch. It also tells some of the purpose of the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*). The VOC was primarily a trade company claiming exclusive rights in Indonesian waters, and acting as policemen to enforce their rule. Therefore, very little evangelism occurred under their leadership.

Only after the disbanding of the VOC did the Dutch actively begin seeking to convert Indonesians. The next chapters (5-10) continue with the history of Dutch rule, placing special emphasis on the creation of the Protestant Church in Halmahera under Dutch leadership, and continuing through the time when the church became autonomous.

The majority of the work done by Dutch missionaries occurred from 1866 to 1930. Beginning in the Galela area, and spreading throughout Halmahera, they put forth intensive efforts to Christianize the peoples.

It is interesting to note that as initial converts were received, they were joined by several Muslims wishing also to convert. Upon receiving this news, the Sultan of Ternate, who ruled this whole area, commanded these Muslims enchained and led away to prison (p. 98). This type of interaction between Muslims and Christians was often seen, particularly while the area was ruled by the Muslim sultan.

The author gives insight into the lifestyles of the people groups during this time (late 1800s to 1920), as well as their reception to the gospel; the triumphs and the struggles, whether from opposing religions or fellow Christians.

The Dutch record a total of 164 places in Halmahera reached for Christianity by 1930, after 64 years of evangelistic work (p. 193). Much time is spent describing of the various methods used by the evangelists and churches in their efforts to teach Christianity to those converted, such as the various types of services, catechism, Christian holiday celebrations, and Bible teaching.

Of particular interest is a section which discusses how the traditional beliefs and practices which were pagan, and thus opposed to Christianity, were confronted and dealt with (p. 267 ff.). Much of this concerned marriage customs.

The problems faced because of the many area languages was also addressed by the Dutch, as they tried to decide how best to reach Halmaherans with the gospel and teachings of the church. Some of the men endeavored to learn the area languages where they were working, while others did all of their work in Malay. A few items were translated into the Galela and Tobelo languages.

The remaining chapters (11-19) deal more specifically with church development: organizing an autonomous Halmaheran church, setting up authority systems, organizational structures, and the like. At this point, for the reader with a mere casual interest in church matters, the book bogs down with names and technicalities. These details may, however, be important to those wanting a complete history of the GMIH church.

But in the midst of all this technical detail, Chapter 17 emerges with matters of more interest. The author here deals with the purpose of the church (GMIH), and outlines how it involved itself in the various areas of life; how it interacted with traditional law (*adar*) on such matters as marriage, childbirth, sickness, and death.

There are five appendices: the first two deal with church matters, doctrine and practice; the third gives a concise history line; the fourth is a list of Dutch missionaries and their tenure in Halmahera; while the fifth gives somewhat interesting statistics concerning all areas of church work in Halmahera.

One glaring deficiency in this treatment of the history of the church in Halmahera is the omission of maps. Area maps appropriately placed would help to guide the reader through the many places mentioned, and enable him to better follow the development of the outreach described.

In the first half of the book, the story of evangelization on Halmahera unfolds as more than just a dry history, with the author weaving interesting details and insights into the lives involved as well as the time periods covered. Only in the latter chapters does the reader feel burdened with pure church business, details of which are often hard to skim through and rarely uncover anything of general interest.

Readers interested mainly in one specific aspect of the book's coverage might choose to read just the chapters dealing with that topic. However, as mentioned, in skimming and choosing, one may miss some tidbits which emerge in rather unpredictable spots.