

Foreword

This *Festschrift* in honour of Prof. Dr. Lothar Schreiner on the occasion of his seventy fifth birthday was expected to appear on November 25th 2000 at STT HKBP Pematang Siantar. The political situation in Indonesia and unforeseen technical problems not only held up the publication but also had changed its launching place to Jakarta. It is with respect and gratitude that we offer this *Festschrift* to Prof. Schreiner who has made a significant contribution in reinterpreting the encounter of Gospel and adat or customary law in Indonesia.

Contributions to this *Festschrift* to honour Prof. Schreiner come from friends, colleagues and former students both in Indonesia and other countries. Prof. Schreiner, unfortunately, was not able to come to Pematang Siantar on November 25th 2000 due to his health. He however sent his speech. This speech expresses his greetings and gratitude.

Prof. Schreiner's habilitation-thesis *Adat und Evangelium* (Gütersloh, 1972) was translated into Indonesian (*Telah Kudengar dari Ayahku*, Jakarta: BPK-GM, 1978) and has received positive response from not only the Batak community, but also various ethnic groups and churches in Indonesia and outside. This book, therefore, was republished under the title *Adat dan Injil* (Jakarta: BPK-GM, 1980). In 1994 *Adat dan Injil* reached the 2nd impression, and the 4th impression in 1999.

The essays in this volume fall into two parts: An Indonesian section, and a German-American section.

Introduction to the Indonesian section

(by A.A. Sitompul)

The papers collected in the Indonesia section, which were written by anthropologists, sociologists, theologians and pastors, can be categorised under two major themes i.e. the existence of life-system or *adat* and the Gospel, and the tension between the Gospel and *adat* or customary law. *Payung Bangun*, *Robinson Radjagukguk*, *Armencius Munthe*, *Humala Simanjuntak* and *Jamilin Sirait* discuss the importance of making *adat* relevant to a society. A dynamic life-system, which

encounters the society shaped by the Gospel, has brought about a change in cultural values and forms. *Payung Bangun* analyses the cultural process when the Gospel entered North Sumatra and when the Batak people migrated from Tapanuli. The process which opened their minds resulted in creating demographical, social, economical and political gaps. *Robinson Radjagukguk* emphasises the importance of having and preserving a culture and transforming it, so that the culture will have a new function in serving the Gospel which is universal and global. The community, which is transformed by the Gospel, should be contextual and transcultural, since God became flesh (incarnation principle). *Armencius Munthe* challenges the Christian community to interpret *adat* in the light of the Gospel and to make it relevant. For theological education we have to protect both, to live in good *adat* right and precisely, as well as to live in faith. *Humala Simanjuntak* maintains that *Dalihan Na Tolu* values, such as love, democracy, social concern, principle of equality, could be applied in participating in the global era. *Jamilin Sirait* in particular discusses *adat* and the Gospel in a pluralistic society. He suggests that many of *adat* values could enlighten a pluralist religious society in creating a harmonious people.

It is acknowledged however that the tension between the Gospel and *adat* or life-system is always present, because the dynamic power of the Gospel encompasses all human needs in the world and in a life after death, and also breaks through all ethnic and geographical barriers. *Jan S. Aritonang*, like *Payung Bangun*, recognises that the Gospel has positively transformed Batak people and points out the need to maintain the tension between the Gospel and *adat* so that Christian teaching could be purified. *Bonar H. Situmorang* agrees and takes a critical outlook towards *adat*. He submits that *adat* should be transformed and even modified in the light of the Gospel so that its animistic, magical, speculative and irrational elements and its nature as a source of stress in human life can be eliminated. The Gospel relates human beings with God and with other human beings. According to *Oberlin Siahaan*, *adat* should be sanctified and be judged by God's Word, so that human life can please God and does not provoke his wrath. *Togi Samosir* accurately observes life-system as an ethic which guides human beings to perfection. Christians, however, make Jesus Christ as the core of their life-system. *Adelbert A. Sitompul* discusses God's people as the key issue. God's people is the body of Christ which binds together all members. Their life no longer belongs to ancestor worship, but rather belongs to a new order of life which the risen Christ has given. A reinterpretation is needed, centred around God's act in and through Jesus Christ. *Langsung Sitorus* elaborates on the meaning of

baptism which is once and for all, and rejects rebaptism. *Sountilon Mangasi Siahaan* compares the elders regulation or order in the church with the Scripture. *Hulman Sinaga* describes the paradox in the life of the Batak people, who consume blood which is forbidden in the Priestly document. He finds the solution in the New Testament. *Victor Tinambunan* discusses the Lord's prayer by comparing it with the Jewish tradition. He argues that the phrase 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Matthew 6:11) is deeper than Batak's philosophy on power's-glory, descendants and wealth.

In the following part, we deal with miscellany and praxiws of adapt and the Gospel. The global era requires practical things, a new ethic, and interactive communication. *Payaman Simanjuntak* underlines the need to transform *adat* in the light of the Gospel, and to simplify the ritual of *adat* particularly for the urban people. He also points out the necessity to build a new consensus in dealing with a mixed marriages and *adat's* burden. *Bungaran Simanjuntak - Netty Flora Hutabarat* view *adat* and culture as a problem of life in the society and government. Conflict and division emerge in the Batak society and in the church as a result of striving after wealth and power. If there is no planned strategy for a comprehensive education and for opening new jobs, then the future of *adat* society will collapse and its unity disappear. Conflicts which emerge in the church, certainly will affect the society. *Jansen Sinamo* describes a new ethic for the Batak people in the new millennium. This new business ethic applies not only to the Batak people, but also to other ethnic groups *E.P. Gintings* looks at the change of values in the global era. *Frans Hanaehan Sianipar* comments on the problem of euthanasia. He views it as an alternative which is in line with the Scripture, but at the same time rejects suicide because life is a gift from God. *Riris Toha Sarumpaet* thinks that by promoting Batak's literature in the pastoral ministry a development of a civilised society could be enhanced. *Mauritz Simatupang* suggests that in translating the Gospel one should take into consideration the cultural dimension of the target language. The Gospel's translation and theological concepts could be fit together in a harmonious way if one carefully observes the textual meaning, as well as linguistic and semantic levels.

Introduction to the German and American section

(by K. Federschmidt)

At the gate to the mosque of India's ruined city Fatehpur Sikri, there is an inscription with an apocryphal word of Jesus: "Jesus, peace be upon him, has said: The world is a bridge. Go across, but do not settle on it." Since Lothar Schreiner told me about this inscription (it was during

the time when I was his assistant), I will always connect this sentence with his person. I detect in this metaphor much of what he taught us himself, and what he represented with his whole life. Biographically, Lothar Schreiner has indeed crossed over many bridges. Starting at the time when he was a student and when his ecumenical horizon was opened at Oxford (one of his room-mates and friends there was J. Russel Chandran); of course when he was serving the *Rheinische Mission* in Indonesia and elsewhere; also later in his many activities as a scholar of History of Religion and of Ecumenics; and finally in his involvement in the partnership between the Evangelische Kirche der Union (EKU) in Germany and the United Church of Christ (UCC) in the United States. But not only in such a biographical sense, also in his theological thinking he has always reminded us that faith, in the first place, is not a doctrine (to settle with) but a practice of life (to walk with). Faith is a trusting endeavour to follow a certain "way toward life". For good reason, the earliest name which was given to the Christians in history was: "The people of the new way" (see Acts 9:2 and 19:23).

The title of this *Festschrift* "Evangelium und Lebensordnung" ("Gospel and social order", or: "Gospel and life order") is, therefore, not to be understood in any static or doctrinal manner, but in a mobile and dialectic sense. That means: the articles do not try to define this relationship in an abstract way. Much more (and fully in line with the intentions of Lothar Schreiner) they deal with concrete examples, with historic expressions of faith shaping the life and the history of people - thereby, of course, seeking to find insights and models which may serve as signposts for us, for our own way as Christians today. In manifold and different forms the authors have profited from and are indebted to the discourse with Lothar Schreiner. The wide range of themes and the different languages represented fit with the wide horizon so typical for his theological work.

I confine myself to a short introduction to the contributions written in the English and German languages:

Olaf Schumann and *Friedrich Huber* in their articles directly refer to questions which Lothar Schreiner has touched in his study on Tradition and Gospel (*Adat und Evangelium*, 1972 / *Telah Kudengar dari Ayahku*, 1978). Huber varies the key question of Lothar Schreiner when he examines the dynamic between Christian mission and tribal traditions in the case of the "youth dormitories", a traditional institution in North-eastern Indian tribal societies. Schumann asks what contribution the "Adat" (Indonesia's traditional life order) can offer to solve the critical problems of Indonesia's society today. Thereby he shows the sometimes

ideological use of tradition. *Ulrich Dehn* examines the Japanese new religious movements, mainly from the perspective of a scholar in the science of religion, but pointing also to a Christian theological interpretation.

While these three articles study "life order" mainly in terms of a cultural and religious tradition, *Douglas Meeks* asks how the Gospel can be communicated under the conditions of the global market and post-modern information society. In this approach, the dialectic of Gospel and Life Order is grasped as an eminent ethical problem. It is this perspective which has become more and more important for *Lothar Schreiner* also, in the meeting with "Third-World-Theologies" and in the EKV-UCC partnership work. *Hermann Goekenjan* makes a similar point, when he (reporting the recent Australian debate about the rights of the Aboriginal people in Australia) underlines that the Church's task is to promote justice and reconciliation in a situation of social injustice. When *Susi Hausammann* focuses on the problem of social and religious tolerance, she also seems to touch a rather modern problem. But she tackles this question in a thorough historical study about the loss of tolerance in the Christian Roman State after the Reign of Emperor Constantine the Great.

After these historical and contextual studies, the contributions of *Klappert* and *Trost* turn more to theological systematics: the study of *Bertold Klappert*, based on an exegesis of I Kings 3 (Solomon's wish for a "listening heart"), unfolds the biblical understanding of wisdom and reason: a reason which is open for the wisdom of the world, but oriented to the justice (the Torah) of Israel's God. *Frederick Trost*, finally, describes the missionary task of the church: to be the community of those who witness in words and deeds to the reality of God in Jesus Christ.

On the occasion of his 75th birthday, this *Festschrift* is a sign of gratitude to *Lothar Schreiner* on our common way. Going beyond what the Muslim inscription at the mosque of Fatehpur Sikri states, we firmly believe that Jesus Christ is not only our leader on this way, but that he himself is the way and the bridge which carries us to the source of life.

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It is our hope that this *Festschrift* could inspire the Batak churches and the Indonesian community, as well as the international theological community, including the theological, anthropological and sociological colleges and universities.

Editors,

Adelbert A. Sitompul and Karl H. Federsmidt