

EDITORIAL

It has become customary for printed comment on African Christianity to begin with a flood of statistics and a sigh of concern. The flood informs us of the estimated 200 million Christians in Africa, of the projected 400 million by the year 2000, of evangelical denominations doubling every decade and of 50% of these statistical "people" being under the age of 16. The sigh that accompanies this statistical flood bemoans the theological and pastoral rootlessness of these masses. In some ways the undisciplined masses of African Christians are becoming a new kind of "Hidden" people — Christians, mind you, but hidden from the short arm of Christian leadership and pastoral care. The roar of the flood and the whisper of the sigh can both be deafening.

But for those of us involved in theological education in Africa, whether students or teaching staff, two other images come to mind to oppose the symbols of the flood and the sigh. An encouraging trickle of young African theological students can be observed quietly filling the continent's approximately four hundred theological institutions. God is raising up a new generation of African evangelical leaders. An equally encouraging shout can be heard as the young African evangelical confronts the challenges theological and practical that face the church. The trickle and shout seem to me to describe the current African evangelical scene as accurately as the flood and the sigh.

The East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology seeks to swell the trickle and put substance to the shout. African evangelical theological students and their teachers need stimulation and support as they think through the challenges facing the church. Nor can the challenges be minimised. For the evangelical they come from several directions. There is the challenge of the past. For all the current criticism of Western Christianity, the thinking African evangelical senses the need to deepen his historic roots in the Western stream of creedal and doctrinal development. Twenty centuries of the Holy Spirit's work of illumination is ignored at our peril. A creative development must come from within firm commitment to the traditions of an Orthodox Christianity rooted in the Word of God. Equipped with the resources of the evangelical tradition, the African evangelical faces the challenge of contemporary issues. The litany is familiar but still gravely important: Islam, African Traditional Religion, Black Theology, poverty, marriage and the family, demons, magic, ancestral spirits, urbanization, contextualization, materialism, revolution, social justice, etc. Added to the past and

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present is the challenge of the practical: How do churches grow? How can a young pastor be accepted by elders? What about adequate salaries? What Christian education techniques can improve my communication skills? These questions are not to be neglected. **EAJET'S** intent is to help African theological students substantially understand and successfully meet the challenges of the past, the present and the practical. The articles and book reviews in this inaugural issue attempt to cover that spectrum. We hope God uses this issue in your life. Pray with us for the advance of an African Christianity of powerful trickles and hopeful shouts.