

# CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

## *An AJET Editorial*

Many statements have been uttered about Christianity in Africa. While for some, Christianity is growing at an alarming rate with thousands of professions of faith every day, for others, its growth is very gradual - "it is a mile long and an inch deep." "But, has anyone ever considered to ask why? The following articles will provide reasons as to why the alarming rate of growth is stagnated at some points.

The lead article, *Justin Martyr and Kwame Bediako Reflections on the cultural context of Christianity*, by Wendy Elgersma Helleman discusses Justin Martyr, an early Christian author, as examined by Kwame Bediako in his study of the Cultural context of the Christian faith in Africa.

*Pearls of wisdom: Pastoral counsel for ministers in training* by Richard Gehman is an article based on first-hand information – the research findings of 175 interviewed graduates of Scott Theological College faithfully ministering in seven nations of Africa as pastors, teachers of Bible, church leaders, chaplains, church workers and missionaries. The article offers helpful and significant pastoral counsel in four basic categories of the ministers' life: training, relationship with God, ministry and his private life. These thoughts are a must read by all those preparing for and/or engaged in the ministry of the Word in the African continent, and even the world at large.

*The New Apostolic Church (NAC)* by Victor Kuligin is a relevant topic that theologians, especially in Africa must be aware of. It is said, "Christianity is exploding in the African continent" but Kuligin rightly asks, "How many believers in these Christian churches are being disciplined [let alone being regular adherents of a faithful church] or being bearers of fruit as disciples of Christ?"

After describing the historical synopsis of NAC, Kuligin, based on Scripture, analyses its key doctrinal beliefs: God, office of an apostle, sacraments, the services for departed souls, how one is saved, view of scripture, church organization and other beliefs. He emphatically concludes that NAC is not simply another church or denomination but is in fact a cult . . . to be avoided. Among other reasons given for this conclusion is that "the salvation of mankind

is entrusted to the [NAC's] apostles, for apart from their work, a person cannot be saved (p.78). This statement sounds a warning to many who may easily be trapped into the snare of this cult.

*Launching Church-Strengthening Movements in Africa*, is quite an interesting article. Based on a case study of the Baptist Union of South Africa, the author, Timothy Cantrell, gives good and timely suggestions to the unique challenges that have accompanied the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa. In his exploration, Cantrell states that while the numerical growth and expansion of Christianity in the African continent is a cause to rejoice, there is also cause for caution. The reason for this caution is that alongside the stunning expansion of Christianity, there are unique challenges, which make its future uncertain, for example, nominalism (as a result of weak leadership and shallow discipleship), syncretism and false teaching and lack of reflection among others. These critical issues compel the author to rightly state that we need "to launch church-strengthening movements in Africa that will exalt Christ and bless the nations for generations to come" (p.79).

**An Apology** – In AJET issue 23.1 2004 we published an excellent article by Rev Dr. Timothy Palmer entitled, *Byang Kato: A theological Reappraisal*. We want to extend our apologies to the author and to you, our readers, for an oversight omission of some words of the text on p.6 of the journal. Please insert the enclosed sheet in your copy of the said journal for the sense of the article to be maintained. The article was received by Email and those words were lost during transmission and formatting session. Unfortunately, none of our proof readers captured the error.