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AFRICA, AFRICA!

An AJET Editorial

The African cultural values have greatly been influenced not only since the coming of Christianity but also by technology, secular powers, and social experiences which come alongside these events. While some of these changes, are not always positive, there is need for the African theologians to be alert and relevant as they focus on their own contextual needs with regard to the teaching of the gospel be it in the local church or the theological institution.

In the lead article, *The Legacy of Byang Kato*, Keith Ferdinando discusses Byang Kato's theology, polemic style, and vision. Though Kato died young, his writings continue to raise dust in the African continent. In the seeming controversy of rejecting African worldview, Kato believed that "there had to be a radical break with traditional belief, in favour, not of western theology but of the gospel itself." As a visionary person, Kato promoted theological education from an evangelical perspective without which, institutions of higher theological education like FATEB and NEGST would not exist today.

The second article by a renown African theologian, Joe M. Kapolyo, looks at *The Human Condition through Africa Eyes*, based on his book on the same title. From an anthropological perspective of his Bemba people of Zambia, the author explores what it means to be human, a statement, which "in the African approach does not have any reference to the image of God" (p.18). He rightly states that it is "impossible to reflect on human beings without consideration of their cultural context and identity. The whole of life and attitude for the African is based on the people's culture and community life. However, culture is dynamic and adaptive. Hence, the behaviour patterns, attitudes and values that people hold "reflect truths which reveal an adequate understanding of one's identity" (p.20). The question therefore is, what values are significant? And how will these values help in communicating the timeless truths of the gospel in an ever-changing social world of the African? He uses imagery and biblical metaphors, to present the complex reality of the African cultural values that make up the human being, saying further that these "inner, deeper cultural values determine and direct the outward life, though often the inner core of one's culture is difficult to identify and describe".

In the third article *Sacred and Secular Currents for Theological Education in Africa* the author, Gregg A. Okesson, argues that African theological institutions need to imaginatively integrate ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ powers in order to construct curriculum that is relevant to the contemporary needs of society. This is premised upon the recognition that African cultures, unlike their Western counterparts, have greater integration between spiritual and material realities and an indirect experience with the Western enlightenment. This article develops these ideas through the writings of Harold W. Turner, Aylward Shorter, and Vinoth Ramachandra, and proceeds to relate them through a Pauline conception of Christology arising from within the Church of Colosse. Finally, the author explores various ways for the African educator to translate these concepts into his or her context, entreating theological institutions to not merely capitulate to Western educational forms, but think imaginatively, creatively, and foremost Christocentrically as they develop curriculum to address the contemporary needs within the African Church.

The final article by Benno van den Toren on *The political significance of Jesus* looks at the Christian involvement for the democratization of Africa. He discusses hermeneutical questions that surround the theme of Jesus and politics. In the three areas of difficulty touched, he concludes that the main problems will not be encountered on the level of exegesis but rather on the level of hermeneutics. Because the issue is not how to interpret difficult passages but rather how to interpret the person, work and message of Christ in relationship to the whole biblical revelation and as part of God’s total plan. This author sees the message and work of Christ as encompassing the whole of reality, even political life.