

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: HEALING

An AJET Editorial

Theological education in the African continent is growing despite various political, spiritual, physical, and psychological problems.

In the lead article, Dr. Scott Cunningham gives a preliminary assessment for doctoral-level theological education in Africa for evangelicals. The question as to whether Africa is ready for it can be answered in the affirmative because it is long overdue.

In the second article, Dr. Paul Bowers traces the beginnings of and his involvement in ACTEA since 1975 through the initiative and vision of the late Byang Kato to the present time. He challenges all theological educators to look afresh at their own commitments, dreams and calling with regard to the continent. In his thesis he significantly argues that *theological schools form the backbone of organized evangelicalism in Africa*. This argument is based on over thirty years since the idea of a consolidated theological education first begun in the continent. He rightly states that there is need to learn from and go beyond Kato's vision for theological education that is committed to the vision of African Christianity that is truly African, biblically grounded and effectively a theological engagement for the evangelical community.

Dr Bowers describes notable trends which point to the fact that theological education matters in Africa: the proliferation of theological schools, Africanisation of staffing, and the persisting academic upgrading of programmes. However, despite these trends, there are challenges still facing theological educators but "are our programmes, our schools, providing suitable incubation for individuals to emerge who can truly bring change?"

The third article discusses the New Testament theology on issues of health, sickness and healing which seem to be widely scattered in the descriptions of the NT books. The author, Professor Judith L. Hill, who has worked now for thirty-five years in theological education in Africa where many people suffer from a variety of diseases and illnesses, seeks to provide biblical solutions to the problem. She answers three primary questions: what

does the Bible have to say about health, sickness and healing? Can believers expect health and (if necessary) receive healing? Is it God's plan to eliminate disease and sickness? (p.54)

In answering these questions, Hill provides a brief OT theology of healing, as foundation to the New Testament teaching. First, God is the designer of the human body; second, what humanity experiences in terms of suffering is the result of the fall which culminates at physical death; third, sickness, she writes, is a "a disciplinary measure on the part of God toward an erring member of his family . . . The "wounding" may be part of God's discipline, but the healing also comes from the same almighty God, as further evidence of the caring relationship he maintains with his creation. Fourth, God is sovereign and able to heal and such healing is linked to all aspects of life (p.56). This anticipates the well-being of God's people in the age to come when the curse of Eden is reversed.

Without much focus on the significance of the material body, the author further discusses issues of health, sickness and healing in the NT by looking at the ministry of Jesus the healer in the synoptic gospels (p. 62 – 70), and in the book John where Jesus as healer is not limited by space, time, preconditions or even death (p.74). She concludes her discussion on the book of Acts by affirming the validity of Jesus' ministry of healing which was carried on by the apostles in dependence on God's power.

The rest of the article provides evidence on the theology of health, sickness and healing from Pauline epistles (pp.75-77), General Epistles (pp.80-87) and the book of Revelation (p.87ff.), ending with a brief synthesis on healing in the NT with practical implications which are worthy of note.