EDITOR'S NOTE

This commemorative edition marks the centenary celebration of Pope Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud* (MI, 1918), the foremost missionary document of the Church. MI emphasised the urgency and necessity of the propagation of the Christian faith, given that many lands and peoples had not yet heard of the gospel. One hundred years on, Pope Francis reaffirms that there is no letup in missionary activity in the world today; yet this propagation of faith is still the greatest challenge to World Christianity (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 11). The current volume contains articles from a host of scholars in church history (Iheanacho, Nwosuh), theology (Steffen, Oborji, Moerschbacher, Arowosoge, Igbekele, and Igbaoyinbo), and philosophy (Ekpe).

They all critically engage the famed enduring significance of *missio ad* gentes and *missio inter gentes* in a post-modern world. They interrogate questions around *MI*. For instance, they examine MI's relevance to formation for the missions in Africa today with the growing mission in reverse between Africa and the Northern Hemisphere (Iheanacho, Igbekele). Some demonstrate how MI remains inspirational for the constant renewal of the theology of mission in the Church, from the 1974 Synod of Bishops, themed *Evangelisation in the Modern World,* to Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* (Steffen). Some capture the history of the missions in African territories post-*Maximum Illud*, underscoring the tensions between cultural contacts, conflict, and fruitful encounters with African peoples (Iheanacho, Nwosuh). Two contributions continue the argument for the 'self-theologising' task of a Church truly Christian truly African (Moerschbacher, Oborji). Moerschbacher persuasively argues that MI may rightly be seen as 'a precursor of an era of decolonisation', which certainly led to the inculturation project in Africa. Oborji, on his part, pursues the argument of 'self-theologising' with his rigorous and extensive excursus into the concept of the 'Person' in African Thought and Culture, leading to the question of method in philosophy and theology today.

Arowosoge explores the narrative of the commissioning of the *Seventy (two)* others in Lk. 10:1, in the light of Benedict XV's vision, to extend missionary training to colonised territories. The inquiry has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it highlights the nature of the sender and the sent and who is a model missionary. On the other hand, it explores the extent to which the number Seventy (two) incorporates others into the missionary field, especially with thousands of missionaries today from every part of the world. *"Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi" ('The law of worship is the law of belief and is the law of action'). This Latin maxim captures the equilibrated Christian identity: belief + worship + action*. God-talk celebrated in the liturgy is embodied. Religious belief (doctrine) and celebration (liturgy) without *missio ad gentes* is 'ghetto spirituality'. Igbekele and Igbaoyinbo in their respective contributions show how and why liturgy and mission are inseparable. From the perspective of Catholic Social Teachings, philosophy, and development studies, Ekpe makes a similar case regarding the inseparability of the proclamation of the gospel, especially in Africa, and social transformation.

A century after Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud*, Africa, and Nigeria in particular, has moved from a church dependent on foreign missionaries for pastoral activities to a Church fully administered by her sons and daughters. Indeed, the aspiration of MI 15 has been fulfilled. Nevertheless, this volume's contributions well argue that the Church in Africa must not be complacent. There are pastoral concerns that must be confronted head-on. As articulated by Iheanacho, these are the need to 'build a self-reliant local church and to help Africans to rid themselves of primordial ethnocentricism.' This leads us back to the equilibrated Christian identity referred to earlier. *Missio ad gentes* is a movement beyond-the-self in radical '*diakonia*'. This radical *diakonia* contests a common tendency in religions. The 'autonomous' subject tends to do away "cheaply with the care for the others," and abandoning them to God.[1] On the contrary, radical *diakonia*, through awakening to the proximity of the other, reveals to us that

---

[1]Roger Burggraeve, Each Other's Keeper?: Essays on Ethics and the Biblical Wisdom of Love, trans. Edmund Guzman (Thrissur: Marymatha, 2009), 46.

> [W]e are created 'not for ourselves but for all... Our being is beyond our self-consciousness and before every free decision-making; we are created universal, open and dedicated to others' destiny, not because we like or prefer this or because we have some capacities originating from our character or personality, but because we are – prior to any freedom or commitment – already committed to the other, to everyone else, to the whole world.[2]

Missionaries in and from Africa, by the virtue of their Christian faith, must constantly be inspired by the fraternity implied in radical *diakonia*. This fraternity by persons to wounded and suffering persons, irrespective of where they come from, is what has been referred to as "'extravagant saintliness'" which doubtlessly is "a difficult saintliness". It is because we are used to measuring success by "self-interest and its results."[3] Yet, it is this extravagant but difficult saintliness – which is not necessarily the exclusive domain of religiously expressive people, like missionaries – that can serve as "the unshakeable foundation of the humane as a real possibility, notwithstanding the betrayal that can always beset it once again."[4]

* * *

The final contributions in this volume include Essien's Inaugural lecture for the 2019/2020 academic year, on Pope Francis' post-synodal exhortation *Christus Vivit (2018)* and the Formation of Young People in the Church today. Augustine Oregie Okpomeh's philosophy thesis, titled "An Evaluation of Hubert Dreyfus' Notion of Artificial Intelligence" and Michael Osatofoh Eninlejie's theology thesis, "The Use of Vernacular Names for Baptism in the light of Canon 855" are published as the best philosophy and theology theses respectively for the 2018/2019 session.

---

[2]Roger Burggraeve, "'Fraternity, Equality, Freedom': On the Soul and the Extent of Our Responsibility," in Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue (FS Roger Burggraeve), ed. Johan De Tavernier et al., Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven; Paris; Dudley: Peeters; University Press, 2008), 4-7.

[3]Roger Burggraeve, The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights, trans. Jeffrey Bloechl (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 184.

[4]Ibid.