

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

From the middle of the last century, Africans south of the Sahara have been laying claim to their place in the Academia. They have engaged in rigorous intellectual activities seeking to deconstruct Eurocentric ideology of African genetic and intellectual inferiority.<sup>1</sup> Stripped of their 'humanity', erroneously located in Caucasians, first generation Africans, for good or ill, engaged in apologetic works to question this imposed 'anthropological deficit'. The earliest apologetic works by African scholars centred on the possibility of 'African Philosophy' which ought to be accorded the same prestige and attention as Western philosophy. Beginning with Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* (1959), African scholars from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century persuasively demonstrated that, contrary to Caucasians' notion, Africans have rich cognitive and practical abilities. First and second generation African scholars dared to re-write African (even world) history in order to make Africans feel proud about their past. One surely feels lugubrious about the "lost paradise" they paint of the Africa that the 'Whiteman' took away. But ...

Without critical discourse among new generation African scholars, Africans in the academia especially in the Northern Hemisphere run the risk of romanticising the African world to the point of glossing over the ambiguities in African culture and identity

---

<sup>1</sup>Raymond Olusesan Aina, "Images of Africa and the Resilience of Ignorance," *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 37, no. 4 (2014): 25-30 at 26.

formation. So, APT's editorial board decided to revisit contemporary African contributions to scholarship. How far have they gone? How are Africans and the academia thinking and writing about Africa and its peoples at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How far has the world of scholarship changed about the themes and images of Africans from the colonial and racist past? What indeed have Africans achieved at the middle of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are they breaking new grounds or are they still locked in the romantic apologetics of century-past African thinkers? These are some of the questions driving the theme and contributions in the present edition.

The lead article, contributed by Anthony Akinwale, one of APT's editorial advisors and a foremost Nigerian theologian, gives in broad strokes the movements in Sub-Saharan Africa's theological investigations. There are two basic movements – 'Inculturation' and 'Liberation'. Akinwale's synthesis concludes by briefly presenting two 'emerging' schools of thought in Nigeria. One school is "enormously interested in inculturation theology and the social, political and economic problems of Nigeria." The other emphasises the importance of "history, doctrines and systematics," similar in my opinion to the *ressourcement* movement of which Em. Pope Benedict XVI is an eminent example.

Pius Ekpe's article revisits the questions about African Philosophy. He contends that the issue of the possibility of African philosophy has been settled. The first and second generation African philosophers need to be appreciated and commended for their intellectual tenacity and incisiveness to show that African philosophy is indeed rational, critical and logical. However, there are methodological issues still outstanding issues to make African philosophy original and specific for the twenty-first century.

Adolphus Amaefule revisits the specific contribution and features of African liberation theology. Unlike Engelbert Mveng who located the distinctiveness of African Theology in Africa's

'anthropological pauperisation', Amaefule argues that Africa's social pathologies offer African Liberation Theology its distinctiveness. This contextual liberation theology, according to Amaefule, has at least thirteen characteristics.

Raphael Igbaoyinbo introduces the neologism called 'Liturgico-political Theology', which argues for the inseparable relationship between liturgy, politics and theology as panacea for the deficient leadership in Africa. Christ brought victory, hope, and unbounded life to all by His Paschal Mystery; the liturgy, celebrated to re-enact this redemptive act, challenges the participant to go into the world and do likewise.

\*\*\*\*\*

Regardless of their divergences, current trends in African thoughts, in my estimation, have something in common. They are versions of the postcolonial critical thoughts that are popular among many "third world" thinkers today. Postcolonial thinking is a critical tool which directs our attention to the inequities of the ways the West and non-West have been represented.<sup>2</sup> Post-colonialism persists in and through political and economic, cultural and academic structures and institutions in Africa and among African scholars/elite today – many who had been educated to feel inferior.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it is imperative to emphasise even more at this moment the importance of attending to Africans' 'anthropological poverty' which makes it distinctive from the social pathos of Latin America and the Mediterranean.

---

<sup>2</sup>Wong Wai Ching, "Postcolonialism," in Dictionary of Third World Theologies, ed. Virginia Fabela and R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 169-170 at 169.

<sup>3</sup>Musa Dube, Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 48.

'Anthropological poverty' and its variants like 'anthropological pauperisation' and 'anthropological impoverishment' (seen in 'Assimilation' – French colonial policy of abolition of Africans' identity and their right to be different) are based on the notion of 'anthropological annihilation' coined by foremost African Theology pioneer, the late Cameroonian Jesuit, Engelbert Mveng.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, African Theology's objective and passion is to overcome or liberate Africans from 'anthropological poverty' that informed Western adventure in Africa. This adventure, either by design or philanthropic accident, was to "keep him (the African) in a state of inferiority complex and dependence."<sup>5</sup>

These are not issues that faced just first and second generations of African scholars. The present generation is still confronted with this. As stated in a recent contribution, Africans are still looked at with some 'anthropological deficiency' and paternalism. Africa can only be 'redeemed' if Africans allow westerners to help them become like the exemplars of humanity and development. Without the West, Africa is beyond redemption.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, African thought and advocacies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ought to be driven by the imperative of overcoming "imposed depersonalization or poverty in its anthropological sense."<sup>7</sup>

For African philosophers, it means revisiting methodological issues in African thought and 'Afro-pessimism' among Africanist scholars embedded in Euro-American educational institutions.

---

<sup>4</sup>Mveng, L'Afriquedansl'Eglise. Paroles d'un croyant (1986), 12, cited in Meinrad P. Hebga, "Engelbert Mveng: A Pioneer of African Theology," in African Theology in the 21st Century: The Contributions of the Pioneers, ed. Bénézet Bujo and Juvénal Ilunga (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 39-46 at 45.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>6</sup>Aina, "Images of Africa," 26, 27.

<sup>7</sup>Jozef D. Zalot, The Roman Catholic Church and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Voices yet Unheard in a Listening World (Lanham; New York, NY; Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 95.

Shouldn't present generation investigate why the small circle of indigenous research community in Africa is yet to "constitute the critical mass necessary to challenge received ideas"?<sup>8</sup> Or are African scholars especially in the West still suffering from 'colonial mentality' characterised by "self-deprecatory attitudes" and glorification of the Caucasians? Or are they caught in an ethical morass, where in order to "promote their vision of what Africa ought to be, they place themselves at the service of Euro-American foreign policies on Africa"?<sup>9</sup>

For African theologians, they should intensify the path of 'theological revolution' – understood in the way Mveng used it. African theology that focuses on the liberation of Africa and Africans from their near fatalistic social pathos (ethnic/religion-inspired violence, low human development, strangulating corruption, excruciating effects of neo-liberal economic policies, an ecclesial structure of financial and educational [ideological] dependency<sup>10</sup>) must engage in broad theological investigations, including anthropology, God, culture, and contemporary social pathos. By proceeding thus, African theologians will contribute even better and deeper to *Church Doctrinal Development than what we have experienced in the last fifty years. In the final analysis, African scholars must network among themselves to invigorate African intellectual community. Agreeing with Mkwandire, this is the route by which Africans can effectively think themselves out of the predicament of misrepresentation that Africans constantly face.*<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>A 2010 report, according to Mkwandire, states that research papers published by Africans in African totaled 27,000 – the same as the output of the Netherlands alone during the same year. T. Mkwandire, "Running While Others Walk: Knowledge and the Challenge of Africa's Development," Africa Development 36, no. 2 (2011): 1-36 at 20.

<sup>9</sup>Aina, "Images of Africa," 28.

<sup>10</sup>Zalot, Roman Catholic Church & Economic Development, 67-68.

<sup>11</sup>Mkwandire, "Running," 24. The African Journals Online (AJOL) is a notable and highly recommended project.

\*\*\*\*\*

The second part begins with the 2014/2015 Inaugural Lecture delivered by Sr Dr Josephine Nwaogwugwu, a canon lawyer and a nun of the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy. Her lecture on “The Role of Canon Law in Missionary Formation” argues that the Church's law down the centuries had responded proactively to changed cultural milieus. Accordingly, in the present contexts of multi-religious and multi-cultural plurality, and New Evangelisation, Canon Law has clear role to play in the missionary activity of the Church, and consequently in the formation of those who shall embody that missionary mandate. The 2015 Annual St Paul Lecture was delivered yet again by another lady, Ms Cynthia Mbamalu, a lawyer and of the Youth Initiative Advancement for Growth and Advocacy (YIAGA). This year's lecture was situated within the context of the 2015 General Elections which keen observers and informed citizens looked forward to with grave concerns. Mbamalu's text offers a picture of YIAGA's contribution to the 2015 elections. The second part concludes with the synopsis of the seminary's best theses. Sunday Anyanwu has the best philosophy thesis, while the best theology thesis belongs to the late Christopher Ganga. Since Ganga died in an auto crash in October 2014, his thesis moderator was mandated to write the synopsis in his memory and honour. What an emotional mandate for me!