

Introduction

For the April/May 2021 edition of the African Theological Journal for Church and Society (ATJCS), an overwhelming number of articles, including some from doctoral students, have been received. It underscores the need for and vibrant interest in a theological journal that is accessible and affordable, focussing on scholarship in and on the African context. A wide range of topics are being covered, all making a significant contribution to reflecting on the church's role within African societies. Apart from appraisal of constructive engagement, a prophetic word on the deficiencies in the church's (and generally Christians') obedience to its calling is ever present in the articles: there is a deep sense of concern about the impact of the church on African societies.

Prof Sunday Agang, provost of ECWA Theological Seminary in Nigeria, is setting the table for the discourse on the church's role by asking the question whether the African church has not been reduced to "remnant status". He makes a distinction between the "true" believers and the large bulk of outwardly religious people that do not abide by the basic requirements of being the people of God. Despite the statistical evidence of rapid growth, the church's real impact on the society is questionable.

Dr Josephine Munyao, staff member of Daystar University in Kenya, is elaborating on the two foundational viewpoints regarding all community development practices in Africa. She differentiates between two points of departure: the question "what don't you have?" or "what do you have?" She recommends theological participation, indeed leadership in the conception and approach to development, because development is by nature theological business.

Dr Tshenolo Jennifer Madigela, staff member of the University of Botswana, is examining the provision of assistance among the elderly who are caretakers of children who are made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS – and what role could the church play. The article is based on empirical research. She is making some practical suggestions, especially regarding the church's pastoral role.

Kehinde O. Olusanyo, lecturer of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso is focusing on the perennial challenge of poverty in Africa and the role of the church in providing lasting solutions. The article reflects on the reality of poverty in Africa, biblical understandings of poverty, an ethical analysis of the church's role in the responsibility of the church in combating poverty as well as some homiletical implications.

Anyway Kze Gambo, staff member of ECWA Theological Seminary in Nigeria, is reflecting on the challenges posed by internal migration in Nigeria, especially the focussing on the Fulane herdsmen. What could be the reaction of Christians on the violent insurgent activities associated by these activities? Based on principles derived from a social textual reading of the Epistle to Ephesians, the author suggests a theonomous counterintuitive strategy.

Dr Folashade Oloyede and Dr Akinwale Oloyede, both from the Nigerian Baptist Theological seminary in Ogbomoso, Nigeria, explore the need for and effects of intentional training of faith-leaders for combating developmental and ecological challenges. The article is based on an empirical research project.

Prof Samuel Peni Ango and Rev Gonjing Chorwunna of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Bukuru, are reflecting on the fragmented approach in education (especially theological training) based on the existing dualism that advocates separation of church and state and the resulting inability to apply biblical knowledge to solving life's problems. The research found that integrated learning takes place randomly, but without cognitive recognition among the students. The article recommends more intentional description and application of the principles of integrated learning in teaching and learning in theological institutions.

Catherine Falconer and Dr Robert Falconer, of the South African Theological Seminary, are focusing on foundational questions regarding the millennial reign of Christ and its application for the church's mission, also in the African context. It gives preference for a "amillennialism" perspective (the present reign of Jesus Christ in heaven) as best foundation to proclaim the kingdom of God and for a full-bodied praxis of missions.

Dr Wessel Wessels, member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of the Free State (South Africa) reviews the publication edited by J.A. van den Berg: *Engaging the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Perspectives from theology, philosophy and education*. The so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution has vast implications; it poses opportunities, but also challenges to the church's ministry – also in Africa.

Prof Sunday Agang

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