

FOREWORD

THE ECUMENICAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN THEOLOGIAN (EANT)

The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT) is born out of a need to arouse discussions on a more or less permanent basis among christian scholars deeply committed to the on-going dialogue between the christian living gospel and the evolving Nigerian context.

We live with the scandal of a 'divided people of God' on the popular-pastoral and administrative levels of Nigerian Christianity. And this inherited division (with its weight of 'tradition') is consistently preventing our scholars from fully *hearing the word*. Full reception of the word in Nigeria would necessarily involve *hearing the objections to the word raised by contemporary Nigeria, being concerned by its problems and being partners in a common project of a solution*. In this way a solid theological response can be given to our problems. The members of EANT, for the moment few in numbers but ecumenical in composition are committed searchers of this solid theological response. We believe that we can no longer afford to reflect on our faith in response to the challenges of our context as split/opposing bodies. Our common christian heritage must be foremost in our minds when responding to contextual problems.

On the continental (African) level there exists already the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT). Our nascent Nigerian Association (EANT) derives its inspiration from EAAT. EAAT believes that the theological enterprise in Africa today needs a broadening of areas of mutual contact and encouragement for the promotion of christian unity. In this way it hopes to realise the fullest possible participation of our people in the christian life and vocation, and the achievement of total salvation/liberation for African peoples (cf. Nairobi meeting 17-21 December, 1984).

Membership of EANT is open to all Nigerian christian scholars. An on-going dialogue between our faith (response to the Christian Gospel) and our context does not leave any Christian scholar neutral at any given time. Whatever we say of the Nigerian person, discover,

think and project about him is material for Nigerian Christian theological discourse. Thus, linguists, men and women of letters, philosophers, social scientists are much a part of this christian scholarly conversation as professional theologians. A theological reflection which does not grow out of this multi-disciplinary dialogue will be incompetent to speak to the Nigerian person who is today living in a pluralist, multi-ethnico-religious and evolving society.

The Bulletin of EANT presents papers which helped discussions during EANT meetings. These are edited to reflect feelings during the meetings. The Bulletin creates a forum where views or clarifications of subjects under discussion are heard. But these have to be presented in writing to an EANT meeting before publication.

The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians throws a challenge to all Nigerian christians. We can no longer continue to divorce the prayer of Jesus, "that they may all be one.... so that the world may know that thou has sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (Jn. 17:21-23), from christian practice and reflection. A serious multi-disciplinary theological reflection, which clarifies the problems of the Nigerian context and proposes a courageous ecumenical solution is the only way to mediate the service of Christ to Nigerian peoples and the world through the Christian body.

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