

Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

The Contribution to African Theology of the Faculte de Theologie Catholique in Kinshasa, Zaire

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository.
More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy
of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Molyneux, Gordon
Publisher	Scott Christian University School of Theology
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-07-05 13:26:55
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/235488

The Contribution to African Theology of the *Faculté de Théologie Catholique* in Kinshasa, Zaire

Gordon Molyneux

Though best known for their role in the post-independence debates over African theology in the 1960's, the Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa (FTCK) has enjoyed an unbroken influence on the shaping of Christian theological discussion in Africa. Largely through its outstanding faculty, its theological journals, its conferences and publishing projects, the FTCK continues to be a center of critical and creative thinking about Christianity in the African context.

Through academic interaction and publication, the *Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa* (FTCK) in Zaire has played a central role in the emergence of African theology. For any adequate understanding of theological activity on the continent, an awareness of the historic contribution of the *Faculté de Théologie Catholique* in Kinshasa is therefore indispensable.¹ Fundamental to this contribution has been the consistent academic stature of the Faculty itself, expressed not only internally through the rigorous standards of teaching up through doctoral level, but also externally through the numerous publications of the Faculty. Indeed, among existing models of theological activity in Africa, the Faculty must be considered a singular example of the academic approach.

Early History of the Faculté

The birth of the Faculty in Zaire was inextricably bound up with the University of Louvain in Belgium. Indeed, so consciously was it modelled on its famous Belgian counterpart that the daughter university in Africa was even called Lovanium. The connections that bound the two together extended far beyond the mere name. R. Yaketmchouk can write: "The University of Lovanium and its Faculty of Theology were a creation of the Catholic University of Louvain; they belong to her spiritual heritage and are part of her history."² Set just above foundation level in the wall of the present Faculté des Sciences building on the *Campus Universitaire* in Kinshasa (and almost totally hidden by long grass) is a white stone originating from Louvain in Belgium. It bears two dates, 1425 and 1954, the former the year of Louvain's founding, the latter that of its Zairian counterpart.

Yaketmchouk traces the earliest notions of university-level institutions in Africa back to Father Charles (SJ), the first occupant of the newly endowed Chair of Missiology in Louvain in the early 1920s. His enthusiasm for missions in Africa received impetus from the then Pope, Pius XI, whose missionary vision earned him the name *'pape des missions'*. Bishop Dellepiane, the Holy See's representative in the Congo, brought the project of a Catholic University a step nearer fulfilment by persuasively stressing the inevitability and imminence of university-level education, and by warning that if the challenge were not met by the Catholic Church, then the initiative would fall to lay or even Protestant elements. He argued for the establishing of a Catholic University having the same character and legal standing as the Catholic University of Louvain.

Realization of the project was hindered by indecision and even rivalry between Louvain, the Jesuits and the representatives of the Holy See as to who should be responsible and in what way.³

It was in 1954, in the colonial capital Leopoldville, that the University of Lovanium eventually opened officially, under the jurisdiction of Louvain. It was the ambition of the founder of the new University that it would have an academic level comparable to that of European universities and it was their conviction that it was destined to become a beacon of Christian culture shining out over the whole of Africa.⁴

Three years later the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities in Rome conferred upon the new institution the status of Catholic University and in the same year ordered that a Faculty of Theology be set up in the University. Its admission requirements would, like those of Louvain, be very strict. So, just three years before the Belgian Congo entered independence, the country had a Faculty of Theology, which although small in numbers (there were only seven students in that first year), was of a very high academic level, not only modelled on but also governed from its mother-university in Belgium. At the opening ceremony, the Rector, Mgr. Gillon, spoke with pride of the links with Louvain, but insisted also that the research which the Faculty would promote would include specifically African aspects.⁵ The first seven teachers were all Belgian, some seconded by Louvain University, others already teaching in different institutions in Congo.

The anomaly of a Faculty of Theology in Africa governed by a board in Belgium became increasingly glaring as the country moved rapidly towards independence. The need to adapt the programme more to the African situation was becoming more pressing and African students, exasperated by the conservatism and rigidity of colonial structures, delighted in calling into question the presuppositions of some of their European teachers.⁶ They found some of their support in unlikely places: some 15 years earlier, in the mid-1940s, the Belgian priest Placide Tempels had similarly argued that the African way of understanding needed to be given serious consideration. His book, *La philosophie bantoue* was to have widespread repercussions in Africa and beyond.⁷ The publication of the hard-hitting *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* in 1956 was becoming influential and was further unsettling Western complacency.⁸ One of the leading contributors to the book, Mulagwa Cikala, joined the Faculty of Theology after completing his studies in Rome as the Faculty's first African teacher.⁹ The students' sentiments also received backing closer at hand from the then Abbé J. Malula of Leopoldville, who spoke out against an 'imported Christianity' which fails to distinguish between that which is divine and that which is 'simply Western.'

According to the future Cardinal, missionaries, while making real efforts at adaptation, remain strangers and 'the African soul remains untouched'. He urged the start without delay of an in-depth task of adapting the Gospel message to the Bantu soul, arguing that it is to the substratum of this soul, by means of an indigenous hierarchy, that Christianity must be joined.¹⁰

Most of all, however, it was political events which were to precipitate action which otherwise might have taken many years. The date for Congo's independence from Belgium was set for June 30, 1960. It was barely over a month before that, on May 21st, that Mgr. van Waeyenbergh, the Rector of Louvain and President of the Board of Governors of Lovanium, called a meeting of the Board to discuss what was now seen as the inevitable transfer of the Board from Belgium to the Congo. On June 10th (barely three weeks before independence) the new Statutes were unanimously accepted, with Louvain Board members being replaced by bishops and lay people in the Congo, selected in such a manner as to emphasize the national character of the new Board.¹¹ The first meeting of the new Board on African soil took place, almost literally at the 11th hour, on June 29th, the day before independence.

If the transfer of the Board to Congo was symbolically important as it undoubtedly was, perhaps so too were the tardiness and hesitation (one might almost say reluctance) of that transfer, which seemed to express the uncertainty on the part of many Europeans as to the possibility and place of a specifically African ecclesiastical and theological contribution. Already the year before Tharcisse Tshibangu (at the time a student in the Faculty) had written in a university publication of the need in Africa 'to pass from a Christianity which is merely received to a Christianity come of age, which is understood in all its dimensions and is embraced consciously and freely....'¹²

For his part, the Dean of the Faculty, A. Vanneste, while acknowledging the European coloration of theology after almost two thousand years of history and admitting the need for pastoral adaptation in the Church, warned:

But let us be careful to avoid all misunderstanding. The Christian religion bears within itself a truth which is divine and therefore universal and eternal in a way which is wholly unique. In some ways, therefore, it can never adapt to local and temporal circumstances, but must rather seek to be constantly itself, as completely and as radically as possible We wish to declare frankly, we do not think that the moment has come yet to launch an 'African Theology'. We prefer rather that theology in Africa should seek to be a real theology; as with Christianity, theology must first of all be itself.¹³

His article did not rule out an eventual African theology, but underlining the relative and contingent nature of any culture, African included, he saw it as being no more than 'a particular expression of the eternal truth.'¹⁴

The Debate on African Theology

The Faculty, therefore, was born into a world of political and cultural ferment and turmoil. And the now celebrated debate on 'African theology' between Tshibangu and Vanneste, which was organized by the 'Cercle Théologique' of the Faculty in 1960 (the very year of independence), must have taken place in an atmosphere which was much more than merely academic. The debate was published in the widely-read and influential *Revue de Clergé Africain*¹⁵ and thereby received national and international diffusion. Tshibangu continued to insist on the existence in Africa of a thought-pattern different from the Aristotelian-Thomist systems of the Western Church, a world-view which was global, synthetic, existential, holistic, which, while finding echoes in some Western philosophers and writers, nevertheless was recognizably African. He went on to argue that if this were so, then a theology of 'African colour' should be possible.¹⁶

Vanneste, for his part, questioned gravely the value of insisting upon African specifics. Coming close to contradicting what he himself had said in 1958 about the relative nature of each and every culture, he envisaged a world where universal values were accepted, values which had grown up in Europe through successive centuries turning again and again to Graeco-Roman models for inspiration and which had provided European culture with that 'high degree of perfection which the entire world recognizes.' The future of theology in Africa, if Africans did not want to be merely turned in upon themselves searching for their own distinctives, was to seek to contribute towards the emergence of 'universal catholic theology.'¹⁷

Tshibangu, at the conclusion of his article, agreed that the movement was indeed towards a universalization of thought, but maintained that this universalization would not mean the obliteration of cultural differences but rather their integration.

The debate was to continue for years to come, during which time the voices taking the side of Tshibangu became ever more numerous, while those siding with Vanneste became fewer. In 1964, the FTCK organized its first *Semaine Théologique de Kinshasa*, a week-long open-forum debate on a subject deemed important for the Church in Africa.¹⁸ The influence of these 'Semaines' extends beyond the many who attend its public sessions, since the official reports are published by the Publication Department of the Faculty and find their way to libraries in many different parts of the world. The fourth *Semaine Théologique de Kinshasa* in 1968 was devoted to the subject of African theology and is often referred to in subsequent literature as being of particular importance.

Vanneste once more appealed for the essential unity of Catholic theology towards which all theologians should direct their efforts. Perhaps moving away from his earlier European-centred remarks of 1960, Vanneste acknowledged the existence of theological plurality (which, indeed, could even be considered in a positive light as a '*pluralisme par richesse*'). But his remarks seemed, at least to his African colleagues, to be a rather reluctant concession to expediency, a temporary if inevitable stage in the progress toward a universal 'world theology'. Anything short of that goal was suspect: 'We must struggle against Western theology, Eastern theology, African theology.'¹⁹ His remarks provoked accusations of exaggerated Hegelianism from a Congolese fellow-speaker, Tshiamalenga, as indeed they did from another staff-member, Ngindu, who registered his obvious disagreement with Vanneste in his report of the Conference:

It must be said right away that, for Canon Vanneste, diversity, plurality, multiplicity must all be superseded, in the Hegelian sense of the term, that is, they must be assumed, integrated into a superior synthesis and that it is towards this synthesis that every effort of understanding and of theological investigation should tend.²⁰

While Ngindu in his detailed report on the fourth '*Semaine*' lists only Vanneste as the protagonist of the 'unity-not-plurality' position, he chooses three of many protagonists of the 'plurality-therefore-African' position. Two of the named, Mulago gwa Cikala and Mgr. Tshibangu, as Zairians, would have been expected to endorse the pro-African position. Their cause received

important support from the non-African and internationally recognized figure of theologian-author J. Danielou, Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic Institute of Paris. Danielou understood African theology to mean the seeking of understanding of the Christian revelation by the African. The one Christian truth needed to be assumed by each type of humanity according to its own particular manner. Hence there was incontestably a proper place for African theology. It implied, according to the French theologian, two things: on the one hand it had its starting point in Holy Scripture and Church tradition (the twin sources of traditional Catholic authority), and on the other hand a taking seriously (*une prise de conscience*) by the African of his own values; in other words, not only an experience of these values but a reflection upon them.²¹ The lecture given by Tshibangu was a detailed spelling out of the implications and methods of the sort of African theology that Danielou envisaged--a theology that would need to be scientifically rigorous, not only to search and ponder carefully the sources of Christian belief, but also to seek to understand with the help of human and social sciences the African human reality in which the Christian message is received.²²

The 1968 '*Semaine Théologique*' was something of a landmark in the mounting acceptance of the possibility of African theology. In its struggle for wider recognition of the legitimacy of religious pluralism in which the quest for African theology could be made, the Faculty found a powerful ally in Pope Paul VI and in the Second Vatican Council summoned by Pope John in 1962-65. The Council in Rome assembled for the first time representatives from every continent, and it marked a turning point in the history of the Church in the sense that it expressed a much greater openness towards non-Western cultures and non-Christian religions. Vatican II's *Ad Gentes* on missionary activity taught clearly that orthodoxy and pluralism were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Paul VI, for his part, did not delay in applying what Vatican II had postulated in his *Africae Terrarum* (1967) and in his address to Ugandan bishops in 1969. Only 10 years separates Paul VI's *Africae Terrarum* from Pope Pius XII's encyclic *Fidei Donum* (1957), yet the two discourses represent two different eras in Catholic history. The earlier homily was essentially an appeal for the implantation²³ of the Catholic faith in Africa by having European Bishops release at least temporarily some of their priests for this task. Paul VI on the other hand, addressing himself to African peoples, listed moral and religious values contained within traditional

African cultures, values which were worthy of 'attentive consideration.' He went on:

The teaching and redemption of Jesus Christ constitute, in fact, the fulfilment, the renewal of all the good which exists in human tradition. That is why the African, in becoming a Christian, does not have to deny himself, but rather he affirms the old values in spirit and in truth.²⁴

Here, then, was official recognition at the highest level of a true African identity. Two years later, at the Symposium of African Bishops in Kampala in July 1969, Paul VI was no less outspoken in approving that pluralism which, while remaining faithful to official Catholic teaching, is also faithful to the 'style, temperament, genius and culture' of those who profess that faith. And he concluded: 'In this sense, you can and should have an African Christianity.'²⁵

Remarks such as these were widely reported in Africa, not least in the publications of the Faculty, and theologians like Mulago and Tshibangu did not hesitate to quote them in defense of their advocacy of an African theology.²⁶ The decade of the 1960s (the early years of the Faculty), therefore, saw the issue of African theology push beyond the tentative questionings about the legitimacy of such a theology to a position where the question was no longer 'If?' but 'How?' By 1970 Tshibangu felt able to write:

We have reached a place where the problem of African Theology is no longer one of principle, for that is now settled. The problem now is the elaboration of that theology.²⁷

Even Vanneste, who had long expressed skepticism about such a theology, was coming to admit that 'theological pluralism has become a "doctrina communis"', but insisted (perhaps wistfully?) that the very resistance that had been expressed by himself and others had contributed in its own way, for it had compelled African theologians to justify the legitimacy of their claims and to constantly deepen the theological and epistemological bases of their assertions.²⁸

Perhaps it can even be said that the period of theological controversy in the 1960s were the Faculty's most important years. The FTCK was an arena in which the struggle was actually taking place, with its lecturers and writers not mere spectators but contestants.²⁹ In the important debate, the FTCK played an active role, not only by the international conferences and discussions which it organized, but also, and perhaps especially, by the wider diffusion of the debate by means of its publications. Had it not been for these latter, the influence of the Faculty would have remained local and circumscribed.

Vanneste admits that with time his position has modified, but he also insists that he still prefers to lean towards the universal nature of Christian theology, rather than towards any specific, particularist expression of it.³⁰ His evolving position on the question of 'African theology' is evident in a series of three articles in the journal *Cultures et Développement*. The first was written 14 years after the Kinshasa debate and the other two followed at intervals of three years, so that in all 20 years are represented.

The first article in 1974 acknowledges that, looking back 14 years to the debate, it is obvious that the two 'theses' (his and Tshibangu's) were not so much contradictory as representing different but complementary emphases. Having admitted this much, Vanneste nevertheless maintains that while a certain pluralism is permissible, it cannot be an end in itself, but should serve as a means to enrich the universal.³¹

The second article in 1977 acknowledges the increasingly wide support for the idea of African theology. Vanneste underlines the different *raison d'être* of Western theology and African theology; while the former tends to be speculative, the latter is more pastoral, concerned not so much with the risk of asking radical questions about the Christian faith as with ridding Christianity of its 'foreignness'. While noting the contrast between the two theological paths, Vanneste again emphasizes their possible fruitful complementarity.³²

In the third article in 1980, Vanneste shows how African theology is burgeoning (conferences, bibliographies, etc.) and devotes considerable space to discussing admiringly the doctoral thesis of the young Zairian theologian Bimwenyi Kweshi, *Discours théologique négro-africain; Problème des fondements* (Louvain, 1977), which in Vanneste's opinion 'far surpasses anything yet written on the meaning, the possibility and the necessity of a truly African theology. It marks perhaps the largest step in the move on Vanneste's part from a reluctant skepticism to a cautious affirmation of the

possibility and desirability of theology in Africa which is worthy of the name 'African theology'.³³

Although the important differences of opinion within the Faculty over the question of 'African theology' were most conspicuous during the 1960s, they have not been entirely resolved in the years since. Three different Faculty staff members, representing either side of the 'divide', volunteered separately to the author that the names of the Kinshasa periodicals are significant, reflecting the opposing viewpoints of scholars.³⁴ It was decided³⁵ in 1977 that the name of the periodical published by the Faculty would be called *Revue Africaine de Théologie (RAT)* --it represented a publication produced on African soil reflecting on theology (whose universality was thereby implied). The *Bulletin de Théologie Africaine*, on the other hand, which was created a year or two later by the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (in which several Faculty professors figure prominently) was, by clear inference, a publication which expressed theological reflection of a specifically African dimension. This was spelt out in its first editorial by the Coordinator of the Provisional Committee of the EAAT, Englebert Mveng:

Our Bulletin is a BULLETIN of AFRICAN THEOLOGY We no longer need to wonder whether an African theology is possible. From now on we are in the workshop [*chantier*] of African theology To insist on the birth of African theology is, for us, to liberate the Holy Spirit, who until now has been enchained within categories which are foreign to us, and which prevent us from fully grasping the message which he addresses to us today [capitals his].³⁶

Conversations in Kinshasa revealed a certain impatience felt by more than one Zairian Faculty member about the non-specific nature of the *Revue* and a hope that before much longer it will become more wholeheartedly African in its stance.³⁷

African Theology and *Authenticité*

The controversy of the 1960s was just over when a storm of a different nature gathered. Not for the first time in its history, national political events

were to affect the Faculty profoundly. On October 4, 1971, Zaire's President Mobutu launched his drive for 'authenticité'. It is at first view surprising that the President's veritable crusade for a reassertion of traditional Zairian culture does not find in the publications of the Faculty a more sympathetic echo. The *RAT* does not contain a single article on the subject from its launching in 1977 until 1984. A thesis on '*Christianisme et discours politique au Zaire*', summarized in *CRA* (1979) by its author Nyunda, turns out to concern only the pre-Mobutu years, while an article in the same periodical in 1980 entitled '*Evangélisation et authenticité*' concentrates wholly on steps towards inculturation advocated by the post-Vatican Catholic Church.

If the response by the Faculty was less than enthusiastic, the reason becomes apparent in the only article that directly addresses the 'ideology of recourse to authenticity.'³⁸ The article prints the address given by Faculty Professor Ngindu Mushete at an international conference on traditional religions held at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in July 1974. In it Ngindu gives a blow by blow factual account of the astonishing measures taken by the Mobutu government in its authenticity drive. It is clear that Western Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular were singled out as one great obstacle in Zaire's quest to 'rediscover its soul.'³⁹

In 1972 Catholic (i.e. 'foreign') first names were outlawed, and only genuine African names were permitted. Soon after, Cardinal Malula was banished from his residence, accused of authoring a subversive document. In 1973 thirty-one journals were suppressed, most of them Catholic. The day following the suppressions the political party 'dissolved' the Episcopal Assembly, which it accused of subversion. In 1974 Zaire, as a 'secular state beyond religion', abolished December 25th as a public holiday. Later in the same year the State Commissioner for political affairs ordered the removal of crucifixes, pictures, or photos other than those of the President, from all public buildings (private dwellings and places of worship were exempt). That it was the Catholic Church in particular that Mobutu saw as a threat is clearly spelled out in a newspaper article (*Le Soir*, April 6th, 1973):

The human institution, I say human, which is called the Church, which exists at the Vatican, has nothing to do with Zaire, with Mobutu.... We will no longer accept political, economic, religious, or

spiritual domination imposed from the outside. Before independence, three authorities were acknowledged: Administration, Business firms, and the Church. The first two have given way; there is no reason why the Church should not do the same. I have never had any trouble from the Protestants, nor from the Kimbanguists, because they do not receive their orders from overseas. But the Zairian Bishops do.... They are nothing more than agents working for foreign powers.⁴⁰

The Catholics, for their part, rightly diagnosed the clash as essentially '*un affrontement des pouvoirs*.' A special note on Church-State relations in Zaire in *Pro Mundi Vita* (1975) pointed out that it was not essentially an ideological or religious conflict; it was rather that

the Catholic Church (and to a lesser extent other Christian bodies,) is the only solidly implanted institution in Zaire which still dares to pass judgement or give directives independently from the political party.... The regime feels it is being observed, scrutinized, and even condemned by the international character of the Catholic Church.⁴¹

In time the tension between the Catholics and the State relaxed somewhat, with hostility giving way to a mutual if wary respect. But in view of all that happened and was said, it is not difficult to appreciate why the Faculty has viewed the potential ally of 'authenticité' with such coldness and has given the notion such scant room in its publications.

If the cause of African theology in the Faculty owes little or nothing (at least openly) to nationalistic trends embodied in Mobutu's authenticity drive, it continues to find inspiration in post-Vatican II events, and innumerable articles in FTCK publications refer to the travels and pronouncements of the present Pope, John-Paul II, who is seen as being in continuity rather than rupture with his predecessor Paul VI. Most notable among the events chronicled in FTCK publications are the visits of the Pope to Africa in 1980 and the visit to Rome of Zairian Bishops in 1983. The Pope acknowledges building on the foundation laid by his predecessor Paul VI but goes further, by exploring the implications of 'africanization' into the recesses of liturgy, catechism, art and community life, and by seeking to find the balance between what is constant and what is cultural:

Of course, the Gospel is not to be identified with cultures; it transcends them. But the reign which the Gospel announces is lived out by people profoundly tied to a culture; the construction of the Kingdom cannot do without borrowing elements of human cultures. And from these elements evangelization should cause original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought to surge forth from traditional culture. You wish to be at one and the same time fully Christian and fully African. The Holy Spirit is asking us to believe, in fact, that the leaven of the Gospel, in its authenticity, has the power to raise up Christians within diverse cultures, with all the richness of their heritage purified and transfigured.⁴²

To the Bishops of Kenya the Pope clarified further what 'Africanization' meant:

It is not a question of falsifying the Word of God or of emptying the Cross of its power (cf. I Cor. 1:17), but rather of bearing Christ into the very heart of African life and to raise the whole of African life up to Christ. Thus, not only is Christianity important for Africa, but Christ himself, in the members of His body, is African.⁴³

These remarks, designed to affirm the special contribution that Africa can make, are balanced by the Pope's frequent reminders of Papal and episcopal authority:

Theologians are the formal 'co-adjudicators' of the Magisterium, especially in approaching new questions, ... But it is no less true that only the Pope and the episcopal college are the organs of the Magisterium and the Magisterium is not delegated out to others.... Do not forget that it is up to you, the Bishops, in union with the Successor of Peter, to judge in the final resort the Christian authenticity of ideas and experiences.⁴⁴

In this way the Pope has sought at one and the same time to stress both the extent and the limits of the post-Conciliar flexibility of the Catholic Church.

The years since 1970 have thus seen the expanding Faculty working at elaborating the infrastructure of that African theology whose legitimacy it had fought so hard to establish back in the 1960s. Its four *Départments* have a current total of 370 students, of whom 173 are *séminaristes*, destined to have a career of some sort in the Catholic Church.⁴⁵ A recent inventory established that the Faculty library has over 21,000 books, a total which is brought up to nearly 28,000 if current periodicals and their back-numbers are included.⁴⁶ From the Faculty and its Departments flows a constant stream of published material, which more than anything else emphasizes the research leadership within its field which the Faculty has exercised within the continent of Africa. The Louvain principle '*On ne croira pas à une recherche qui n'aboutit pas à une publication*' ('no one will take seriously a piece of research which is not published') was put into practice from the early years of the Faculty.⁴ One of the Faculty's requirements for the doctoral qualification is that part of the thesis should be published. The two major periodicals relating to African theology (*RAT* and *CRA*)⁴⁸ contain, therefore, much material emanating from the Faculty itself.

The Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines and its Cahiers

A major dimension of the emergent African theological inquiry has been the scientific investigation of that cultural, religious and philosophical world which forms its context. In this investigation the FTCK-related *Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines* (CERA) has played an important part. Back in 1967, Vincent Mulago questioned:

Can we really hope for the blooming of an African theology as long as we lack an explicit and scientifically organized system of noting and interpreting the (African) reality?⁴⁹

The year before, Mulago had been appointed director of the newly created centre, which (as its name implies) is a department for research rather than for teaching. He set about his task with energy and enthusiasm. Sensing the full support of Vatican II (the 10th Anniversary report of the CERA quotes

extensively from *Ad gentes* and refers the reader to *Lumen gentium*), the new Centre had as its task the scientific understanding of African religions, beliefs and customs, both traditional and modern, in order to resolve the problem of the integration of Christianity to the way of life of Africans.⁵⁰ A library centre was set up to facilitate research; it currently houses some 2,500 volumes, of which the large majority relate to the African religious, ethnographic and linguistic context.

According to Mulago, the rigorous scientific research that CERA was committed to was actively encouraged by the then rector of the University, M. Gillon.⁵¹ And the Faculty, characteristically not content merely to discuss and research, decided from the outset that there should be a published review, *Cahiers des Religions Africaines*, through which the discussion could be widened both as to input and as to readership. Its editorial committee was made up of staff of the FTCK and of University specialists (particularly from the Literature and Social Science Faculties) both in Kinshasa and from other African and even European countries. The first edition appeared in 1967, a modest double number in type-style offset form. Publication has continued since then bi-annually, and the quality of printing was established at its present high standard with No. 3 (1968). According to the subscription and dispatch files in the Faculty Library, the *Cahiers* is exchanged with some 66 other journals from around the world. In addition there are 127 subscriptions from within Africa and 184 from elsewhere. Altogether this indicates both the wide circulation of the journal and also the wealth of the Centre as a focal point of documentation. In addition to the *Cahiers*, the Centre also has a published series *Bibliothèque du CERA*, which by 1985 had published eight significant works, ranging in subject matter from African world view to Islam and from African philosophy to the Kitawala sect.⁵²

An analysis of all items (i.e., essays, monographs, reviews, reports, bibliographies, etc.) appearing in the *Cahiers* between 1967 and 1985 reveals a penchant for studies in the realm of traditional Black Africa. Of the 337 items, no less than 211 (over 60%) are of this nature. And the fact that almost half of the items in this category are longer articles and monographs representing some sort of original research (rather than commentaries on what others have said) is further evidence that the journal seeks to provide a serious channel of research. Most of the 108 items which concern specific African tribes (traditions, institutions, language, etc.) are to be found in this category;

some of these are ethnographic bibliographies serving the researcher with valuable resource tools. Several CRA articles explore the African traditional understanding of sin and forgiveness or reconciliation. A large number of other items concern the interrelation of traditional views with Christianity. The remaining contributions address a very wide spectrum of subjects, many of which relate to contemporary (rather than traditional) African concerns and to various international questions. Taken as a whole, the *Cahiers* constitutes an important contribution to African studies, concerned primarily to examine the traditional thinking and society of Black Africa, yet aware that the Continent unavoidably is influenced by and open to the rest of the world. Two entire volumes of CRA (Nos. 21-24) were devoted to full reporting on a conference organized by CERA in Kinshasa in 1978 on 'African Religions and Christianity'. The Conference was international, ecumenical and multi-disciplinary with some 38 participants from nine countries. Almost half of these were theologians, but there were also five philosophers, twelve social science specialists, two historians and a psychologist. The first part was devoted largely to African traditional religion, but including also more modern elements of African experience (messianic movements and Tempels' Jamaa movement). The second part concentrated on the relations between the African world and Christianity. Mulago, summing up the Conference, could speak of the wisdom and originality of traditional African thought and its persistent importance in the individual and communal life of Africans. He stressed the need for open and sensitive dialogue between that thought and the Gospel for an African theology to come into being which would be more than a simple echo of theologies 'elaborated in the home countries of the first heralds of the Gospel.' Such a theology, Mulago insisted, would be one:

resolutely informed by and open to life in all its dimensions, capable of establishing an ethic, a social practice, a specific spirituality and one which would be able to integrate within itself that religious sensibility which is proper to Africans.⁵³

Two entire numbers of the *Cahiers* in 1982 were devoted to African music, art, theatre and literature, serving to illustrate again the African preference to understand 'religion' in its many-faceted dimensions.

The Faculty's *Revue Africaine de Théologie*

While both the name and the objectives of the *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* indicate a well-defined aim, the *Revue Africaine de Théologie* displays a much broader range of interests. It too enjoys a wide international circulation, with 213 subscriptions from within Africa and 229 from outside the continent. In any given issue of the *Revue* might be found articles on New Testament exegesis, essays on European philosophers, reports of international conferences and debates on African Church problems. This is in keeping with the stated aims of the journal:

It seeks to contribute to a new synthesis of Christian life and thought, in conformity with the genius and aspirations of African peoples.⁵⁴

The majority of articles have some direct or indirect bearing upon Africa, but by no means all. Among the more important fields addressed by RAT are: Biblical studies, philosophy, ethics and sacraments. If full-length articles are considered (which probably, more than the other types of items, represent original research), then the largest number of contributions to the RAT, almost one third, are to be found in the field of Biblical studies (exegesis and hermeneutics). Despite a much talked of African predilection for the Old Testament, the overwhelming majority of these studies are in the New Testament (NT, 23; OT, 1). The 'Secrétaire du Département de Théologie' and Professor of New Testament at the Faculty, Atal sa Angang Andziegu, explained this imbalance as due in part to the specialization of the teachers.⁵⁵ But he also insisted that it would be hermeneutically and methodologically incorrect to 'indulge in merely establishing parallels between the Old Testament and African thinking', and quoted Luke 24:27 as establishing that it is through Christ that the Old Testament is truly understood. Accordingly, any hermeneutic which has as its goal a simple correlation of Old Testament and pre-Christian African thought and values is falling short of its true purpose. Most of the studies are detailed textual criticism or exegetical essays which would be just as at home in any European journal, and are apparently not designed to integrate in any direct way with the African scene. Atal would make no apology for the 'non-African' nature of these articles: 'We oppose the idea of an "African selection" of Scripture.

Of course, there must be application [to the African context], but this follows and indeed it presupposes a prior strict exegesis.'⁵⁶

Nevertheless, other studies do seek to point the way beyond textual exegesis for its own sake and to address biblical issues of importance for the Church in Africa. The report of the '*Premier Congrès des Biblistes Africains*', held in Kinshasa in December 1978, is chronicled in RAT 1979. While covering such subjects as continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments and that between the Old Testament and African traditional religions, the report concludes with Mgr Mukeng'a Kalond's insistence that 'the task of biblical exegesis is not so much to make lots of analyses, but rather to reveal a living Christ who meets a given people in order to bring them God's salvation.'⁵⁷ Mgr Monsengwo's address in 1982 to the Pontifical Bible Institute in Rome is published in RAT 1982. In it the Auxiliary Bishop of Kisangani pleads for the 'eminently ecclesiastical and pastoral function of Scripture, too often befogged by a show of erudite wisdom' and urges a constant dialogue between the 'professionals of the Word of God' and its 'users' (preachers and hearers).⁵⁸

Philosophy finds coverage in both of the Faculty's major journals. The RAT has a total of 26 philosophy items, half of them articles, the rest mainly reviews of books published either at the Faculty or elsewhere. The CRA has 11 items, four of which are articles, directly concerned with philosophy (although statistics become less meaningful where such categories as religion/philosophy/cosmology are so interrelated). Several articles point to the difference between traditional Western analytical and scholastic philosophy, with its roots in ancient Greece and Rome, and the practical, synthetic, global categories more familiar to African thought. Certain European authors (theologians and philosophers) are appealed to, however, as making important breaks with the mainstream of Western speculative philosophical thinking and opening new tracks which run closer to African insights. Among these would be Karl Rahner with his notion of 'transcendental anthropology'--a theology which has man at its centre, not in a God-less but in a God-affirming manner, and which Ngimbi-Nseka (RAT, 1979) sees as fitting well with African cosmology.⁵⁹ Gabriel Marcel's emphasis upon 'inter-subjectivity' finds a ready response in the African notion of corporate solidarity, according to the same author in another article (RAT, 1979).⁶⁰ Nkeramihigo favours Paul Ricoeur's rejection of that form of

existentialism which falsely opposes creation and liberty and he approves of insistence that justification is the secret of liberty (RAT, 1981).⁶¹ Perhaps most of all, the French philosopher Bergson is considered (notably by Tshibangu⁶²) to have called radically into question the 'aristotelianism' which is at the base of Western philosophy. It is perhaps for this reason that a large number of the theses and dissertations produced by the students at the Faculty concern 'bergsonisme'.

Turning from Europe to Africa, the publications of the Faculty reflect the differences of opinion as to whether there exists such a thing as 'African Philosophy'.⁶³ On the one hand Professor Smet has produced a large bibliography of philosophy in Africa. There is a flourishing Department of Philosophy and African Religions. Louvain's Professor Ladrière is quite categorical: 'African philosophy is today a well-established reality, as is attested by a constantly growing list of works.'⁶⁴ Others are skeptical. P. J. Hountondji (whose book *Sur la philosophie africaine* is reviewed by Basinsa in RAT 1979) insists that philosophy as a theoretical discipline cannot, by definition, be unconscious. So Tempels was wrong to speak of a 'Bantu philosophy' which existed collectively though inexplicitly. Moreover, true philosophy must be written, for only then is the memory freed to be critical. Oral tradition cannot therefore count as philosophy.⁶⁵ The Zairian reviewer, Basinsa, disagrees with such a narrow definition, claiming that philosophy can be widened to include all 'explication of human experience.'⁶⁶

Faculty member Tshiamalenga directly addresses the question in his article '*La vision Ntu de l'homme*',⁶⁷ listing those who affirm an African philosophy (Tempels, Kagame, Rubbens, Mujynya) and those who reject it, at least in traditional Africa (Crahay, Hountondji and Kagame latterly). Tshiamalenga seeks a position between the two groups. He sides with this second group in proposing that the rising generation of African philosophers be done with the 'tempelsian' notion of a 'it goes without saying' African philosophy, which confuses the African '*vécu*' with the '*réflexif*' which is the proper area of philosophy in the strict sense. But he claims that the rigid definitions prescribed by this group are arbitrary and too narrow. He concludes:

We hold, therefore, that certain stories, accounts and proverbs, etc., are the means deliberately chosen by traditional Bantu to transmit the

fruit of their reflection about the world, man and the Absolute. It is, of course, a philosophy which is incomplete and fragmentary. But then, all philosophy, even the best, is incomplete insofar as it is a human undertaking. There are merely degrees of incompleteness.⁶⁸

Apart from the obvious but important distinction that the debate clarifies between traditional implicit 'philosophy' and modern explicit philosophy, there remains great diversity of philosophical reflection in black Africa. In August 1978 in Dusseldorf, during the 16th World Congress on Philosophy, there took place a symposium on philosophy in Africa, at which nine Africans contributed. The results were presented in a book edited by A. Diemer, *Philosophy in the Present Situation of Africa*. The book is reviewed by FTCK's Laleye, who concludes:

The African philosophers present have illustrated eloquently the great diversity--and therefore the richness--of current African philosophical activity.... They will have given the other participants the impression that they are free thinkers, freely going different ways.⁶⁹

Despite that diversity, it seems clear that increasingly the existence of African philosophy is an accepted fact. Without doubt, the increasing volume of published material helps to establish its validity and assists its development--and the Faculty is in the forefront of such publication. In 1983 the bi-annual *Revue Philosophique de Kinshasa* was launched by the Département de Philosophie et Religions Africaines of the Faculty. Its inaugural issue included 18 articles covering African philosophy, philosophy of language, moral philosophy, esthetic philosophy and the philosophy of development. Evidence of the original reflection contained in the RPK is an article by the present department head, Mudiji, '*La forme et la transforme du masque traditionnel africain*', based on his doctoral thesis at Louvain on Pende masks.⁷⁰ Besides full-length articles, the RPK contains book reviews, reports of conferences and occasional interviews on philosophical subjects.

The journals of the FTCK cover a wide range of subjects and overall it is difficult to discern an official FTCK 'line'. Authors are free to express themselves, and frequently they reveal differing and even opposing positions. While there are articles which have little or nothing to do with Africa directly, such articles are in the minority and the journals incontestably are orientated

towards Africa. The frequency with which articles refer to documents of Vatican II or to papal pronouncements gives the journal (and especially the RAT) an unmistakably Catholic stance, though occasional Protestant contributions are present. The frequent chronicling of international events and conferences is designed to broaden the horizons of the readers to encompass trends beyond the boundaries of Africa and the book reviews (four or five per issue in CRA, twice that number in RAT) inform readers of what others elsewhere are thinking. The RAT also has for many years published a classified 'bibliographie sélective' of African theology, which now comprises well over 6,000 items.⁷¹

Theses

The FTCK stipulates that students must submit a thesis as part of their graduation requirement. The theses initiate the students not only into personal research but also into expressing that research by writing. Since the beginning of the Faculty's history, there have been well over one thousand theses presented.⁷² The largest number of theses (about 58%) is accounted for at *Graduat* level, where the dissertation is usually of about 50 pages long. First degree level (*Licence*) accounts for another 38%; theses in this category are anything from 60 to 180 pages long. The remainder of the theses have been done either at doctoral level (200 to 400 pages) or at the pre-doctoral *Diplôme d'Etudes Spéciales* (DES) level (30 to 40 pages). An analysis of the theses reveals that by far the majority of the theses are in the field of non-African philosophy (e.g. on Sartre, Marx, Marcel, Bergson, etc.) The student choices are influenced both by the 'recognized universal influence' of the philosophers in question or by the preference and competence of the thesis supervisor.⁷³ Most of the theses related to African philosophy explore the writings of Placide Tempels or of the Zairian theologian/philosopher Bimwenyi Kweshi.⁷⁴ Several attempt to develop philosophical terminology in African languages. The high number of theses in the category African traditional religion are, with only three exceptions, specific tribal studies rather than general and theoretical works. Church history, either Western or African, is notable for its absence, although there are several theses (including four doctorates) which research historical

theology (e.g. patristic, medieval or reformation studies). The highest number of doctoral theses relate to Biblical studies, although it must be said that they, and indeed the large majority of all doctoral theses, were written early on in the history of the faculty, perhaps indicating that despite the enviable academic level of the FTCK, the preference is still to do research degrees in the West.

Conferences

The influence of the Faculty has been further extended by conferences which are organized by its different Departments. They permit internationally known participants to visit the Faculty and cater for a cross-fertilization of ideas. The conference lectures and debates are attended by a public of several hundred. The proceedings are reported in detail in the Faculty's periodicals, or in other Kinshasa-based reviews, and thus enjoy a wide readership both within the country and internationally.

The *'Semaines Théologiques de Kinshasa'* were started in 1964 and have taken place almost every year since then.⁷⁵ The full reports were originally published by the Jesuit *Revue du Clergé Africain*, until it was suppressed in 1972; since then the Faculty itself has continued with the series. Formerly each diocese in Zaire used to be encouraged to send one or two delegates, but financial and transport difficulties within the country have made this increasingly impractical. Between 200 and 300 attend the *'Semaines'*, which are usually held in the big Catholic conference and retreat centre at Nganda in Kinshasa (although one year it was held at the Faculty itself).

The *Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines* organized its first *'Colloque International'* in 1978, to mark the tenth anniversary of its existence. Its *'Actes'* [Proceedings] are fully reported in CERA's own *Cahier des Religions Africaines*.⁷⁶ The considerable cost of organizing such a *'Colloque'* (approximately \$40,000 each) is met in large part by interested donors (individuals and groups).

Since 1976 the *Département de Philosophie et des Religions Africaines* has similarly organized its *'Semaine Philosophique'*. The *'Semaines'* have taken place almost yearly and the proceedings have been published by the Faculty as a series entitled *'Recherches Philosophiques Africaines'*.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Exactly how influential the Faculty has been and continues to be in helping to bring about an African theology is probably impossible to determine. While the periodicals, with their nation-wide and international readership, have done much to establish the Kinshasa Faculty in the very forefront of theological debate and research in Africa, it is more difficult to ascertain to what extent the views expressed therein have practical repercussion at the various levels of church life. Even amongst the Faculty members and editorial staff themselves there is disagreement as to the influence or otherwise of the published material. The compiler of the *'Bibliographie Sélective de Théologie Africaine'* expressed doubt as to whether the academic discussions of the periodicals had much importance for people at grass-roots level and felt that the theologians task was merely in the scholarly domain.⁷⁸ In contrast, the Director of CERA, Mulago, is of the opinion that the impact of thinking at the Faculty is indeed felt at non-academic levels. He cited the example of the *'Semaine Théologique'* in 1973 as having had a profound influence upon Cardinal Malula, who was compelled to rethink the role of the local church and its leaders (Lingala: *'bakambi'*), and has sought in consequence to increase the responsibility of the *'communautés de base'* within the traditionally strongly hierarchical Catholic Church in Zaire. He also explained that in an effort to avoid theological elitism, the *'Colloques Internationaux'* have sought to include in their programme an evening assembly of a less specialised nature, open to the public and held in a church building in the city, thereby encouraging public participation. As yet another example of the 'filter-down' effect of academic thinking, Mulago cited the *'Semaine Théologique'* in 1985, entitled *'Charisme de la vie consacrée'*, the subject of which was taken up the following year by the episcopal conference (whose concern is pastoral rather than academic).⁷⁹

Bishop Tshibangu, who from the beginning of the Faculty's history has been a key figure in the on-going debate on African theology, is also insistent that there is and must be a close relationship between the academic and the practical. He explained this conviction as a 'personal intuition', that African theology cannot be truly scientific unless it reflects upon the *'réalités de base'*. When he was a teacher at the Faculty he used to send his students out into the streets of Kinshasa to seek by means of questionnaires to understand

the different concepts of divination and death and the here-after held by ordinary non-academic people. Then his students would come back to the classroom to report. The creation of CERA was partly a result of this concern and methodology. However, Tshibangu admitted that often a great distance separates much of academia from everyday life. When he sought in his preaching in local churches to 'translate' into simpler form the learned homilies that he had had to prepare for academic circles, he found that he simply was not communicating. While the academic debates have their place, Tshibangu observes that it is spiritual renewal which does most to purify and enrich Christian living. Through the working of the Holy Spirit the simple come to an understanding which is more profound than that of the learned, a discernment come from the Holy Spirit. For Tshibangu, therefore, the local church is a most important '*lieu théologique*', and spiritual (charismatic) renewal succeeds in exposing the whole of life to the Gospel.⁸⁰

The view is also expressed by yet others⁸¹ that the influence is not only (or even primarily) downward from the Faculty to the Church grassroots, but rather the reverse: Things are happening at the grassroots level, people are thinking in certain ways, seeing things differently. The theologians in turn are seeking to conceptualize these behavioural trends and tendencies.

If it is true, as M. E. Andrews claims, that no people can ever produce a theology who are not 'first prepared to take themselves seriously, and this means in part seeing the importance of the details that are near and not far',⁸² then the Faculty is helping to provide the essential infrastructure of an African theology. The colonial years, by and large, caused Africans to lose pride in their world and in their past and present values. The last thirty or forty years have seen a gradual and multidimensional recovery of that lost pride. The FTCK has made a distinguished contribution to that recovery in the theological dimension. The particular emphasis upon academic interaction and publication that has characterized the contribution of the Faculty from the outset is one clear indication of Africa taking itself seriously.

NOTES

¹ For a fuller treatment of this subject see the author's *African Christian Theology* (San Francisco: Mellen, 1993).

² R. Yakemtchouk, *L'Université Lovanium et sa Faculté de Théologie* (Chastre, 1983) p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.18-37.

⁴ A. Vanneste, *La Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa. Vingt-cinq ans d'existence*, RAT 6:12 (1982) p. 219.

⁵ Yakemtchouk, p. 67.

⁶ Yakemtchouk, p. 83.

⁷ P. Tempels, *La philosophie bantoue* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1949). The repercussions of Tempels' writings (favorable and hostile) both within Congo and in Europe are indicated in the fascinating exchange of letters between Tempels and Hulstaert in F. Bontinck, *Aux origines de la Philosophie Bantoue; la correspondance Tempels-Hulstaert* (Kinshasa: FTCK, 1985).

⁸ *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (Paris: Rencontres 47, 1956). Although the book caused a stir in some circles immediately, it was only later that the full importance of the book was realized. Nevertheless, 1956 is often spoken of in the world of African francophone theology as something of a watershed date on account of the book.

⁹ In conversation (Kinshasa, 1 Feb 1987), Mulago explained that at the time, African Catholic students in Rome had formed an 'Association' with its own stencilled review of theological reflection. Alioune Diop, the General Secretary of *Présence Africaine* (an African cultural and publishing society in Paris) took the initiative to publish certain of the review's articles (among which were Mulago's outlines of his doctoral thesis, which was eventually published with the title *Un visage africain du christianisme*.) Mulago was at pains to insist that it was not the students who pushed to publish their articles, and that it was Alioune Diop who chose the title *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent*.

¹⁰ J. Malula. "L'âme bantoue face à l'Évangile" *Vivante Afrique* (1958) p. 13.

¹¹ The new Administrative Council included six bishops (some of them national) of different regions of Congo and several lay figures of national

repute, such as the Congolese Governor of the Banque Nationale. Yakemtchouk, p. 99.

¹²T. Tshibangu, *Présence Universitaire* (Kinshasa, 1959) p. 16.

¹³A. Vanneste, *Revue du Clergé Africain*, May, 1958, pp. 225-236.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵The Jesuit *Revue du Clergé Africain*, produced at Mayidi, Congo, continued publication until it was suppressed in 1972. Especially in its earlier years it bore the mark of the magisterial character of Father Denis (SJ).

Telema started publication in 1975 under its Zairian editor Boka di Mpassi (SJ) and represents the continuation of the previous *Revue*, although its first editorial avoids any reference to it.

¹⁶T. Tshibangu, "Débat sur la théologie africaine" *Revue du Clergé Africain* 11:4 (July 1960) p. 346.

¹⁷Vanneste, p. 351.

¹⁸On the 'Semaines', see further below.

¹⁹Quoted by M. Ngindu, "La Quatrième Semaine Théologique de Kinshasa et la problématique d'une théologie africaine", in *CRA* 2:4 (1968) p. 359.

²⁰Ngindu, p. 359.

²¹Reported by Ngindu, p. 361.

²²T. Tshibangu, pp. 363-372.

²³The notion of 'implantation' seemed, at least to many Africans, to represent the mere transplantation of European ecclesiastical teaching and institutions into Africa, and it was roundly rejected by the Declaration of Bishops of Africa and Madagascar (1974), who favoured rather the expression 'incarnation' of the Christian message in Africa.

²⁴Quoted by Vanneste, "Bilan théologique d'un voyage apostolique", *RAT* 4:8 (1980) p. 228.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

²⁶E.g. V. Mulago, "Le problème de la théologie africaine à la lumière de Vatican II" *Renouveau de l'Eglise et Nouvelles Eglises. Colloque sur la théologie africaine*, Kinshasa, 1967, p. 115-152.

²⁷T. Tshibangu, quoted by Vanneste, "La théologie africaine...Note historique", *RAT* 7:14 (1983) p. 273.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

²⁹The debate on African theology continued at the 7th International African Seminar, held at the University of Ghana, April, 1965, the report of which

was published for the International Africa Institute, C. G. Baëta, ed. *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London: OUP, 1968). The discussion reported therein on page 148, concerning Mbiti's paper and involving R. Bureau and V. Mulago, was, according to Prof Richard Gray (one of the participants) very serious and even heated, reflecting that the debate was much more than academic. (Conversation with R. Gray, July 1987).

³⁰Conversation with A. Vanneste, 28 Jan 1987, Kinshasa.

³¹A. Vanneste, "Où en est le problème de la théologie africaine?", *Cultures et Développement* , 6 (1974) pp. 149-167.

³²A. Vanneste, "L'actualité théologique en Afrique", *Cultures et Développement* 9 (1977) pp. 631-650.

³³A. Vanneste, "La théologie africaine en route", *Cultures et Développement* 12 (1980) pp. 325-346.

³⁴The fact that all three expressly wished to remain anonymous on the point indicated that the issue still remains a sensitive one within the Faculty.

³⁵It has been difficult to ascertain how the decision in 1977 was made, but it may be supposed that Vanneste as Dean at the time had a prominent part in it.

³⁶E. Mveng, "Editorial", *Bulletin de Théologie Africaine* 1:1 (1979) p. 6.

³⁷Conversation with Mulago, Kinshasa, 1 Feb 1987.

³⁸M. Ngindu, "Le propos du recours à l'authenticité et le christianisme au Zaïre" , CRA 8:16 (1974) pp. 209-230. A slightly abridged translation of the French article appears as "Authenticity and Christianity in Zaire" , in J. Fasholé-Luke, R. Gray, A. Hastings, G. Tasié (eds), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978) pp. 228-241.

³⁹Ngindu, "Le propos du recours" , p. 210.

⁴⁰Quoted by Ngindu, p. 217.

⁴¹Ngindu, p. 221.

⁴²"Le Pape chez nous, Discours de S.S. le Pape Jean-Paul II, prononcé à l'occasion de son voyage au Zaïre," 2-6 mai, 1980 , RAT 4:4 (1980) p. 232.

⁴³Quoted by Vanneste, "Bilan théologique..." , RAT 4:8 (1980) p. 233.

⁴⁴"Discours du Pape aux Evêques du Zaïre", Kinshasa, May 3, 1980, RAT 4:8 (1980).

⁴⁵Faculty statistics for 1986-87, compiled and supplied by Léon de Saint-Moulin (Academic Secretary). The total number of FTCK graduates since 1957 comes to 3,683.

⁴⁶Figures are from the FTCK *Programme des Cours* 1986-87.

⁴⁷The Louvain 'saying' was quoted to me by F. Bontinck to explain the prominence given to publishing by the Faculty in Kinshasa. (Kinshasa, 1 Feb 1987).

⁴⁸The third Faculty periodical, *Revue Philosophique de Kinshasa*, has not been included for consideration in this thesis. While it is true that theology and philosophy share certain common concerns, and while several articles in CRA and RAT explore the contribution of the one to the other, the RPK sees itself as a specialist organ of current research for Zairian and non-Zairian philosophers (editorial in RPK 1:1 [1983]). Many of the RPK articles relate to specialist and technical aspects of philosophy in Europe and Africa. Its thrust is thus tangential to the focus of this article.

⁴⁹Discussion at the fourth 'Semaine Théologique' in Kinshasa in 1968; CRA 2:4 (1968) p. 367.

⁵⁰CRA 9:17 (1975) p. 9, 18.

⁵¹Conversation with Mulago, Kinshasa, 1 Feb 1987.

⁵²The series *Bibliothèque du CERA* includes: Mulago, *La religion traditionnelle des Bantu et leur vision du monde* (Kinshasa, 1980); Smet, *Philosophie Africaine—textes choisis I & II* (Kinshasa, 1975); Buakasa, *L'impensé du discours. 'Kindoki' et 'Nkisi' en pays Kongo du Zaïre*, (Kinshasa, ?); Ngindu et al, *Combats pour un christianisme africain Mélanges en l'honneur du Prof V. Mulago* (Kinshasa, 1981); Jomier, *L'Islam aux multiples aspects* (Kinshasa, 1982); Mwene-Batende, *Mouvements messianiques et protestation social. Le cas du Kitawala chez les Kumu du Zaïre* (Kinshasa, 1982); Nkiere, *La parenté comme système idéologique. Essai d'interprétation de l'ordre lignagère chez les Basakata* (Kinshasa, 1984); Bontinck, *Aux origines de la 'philosophie bantoue'. La correspondance Tempels-Hulstaert* (Kinshasa, 1985). Two other books in the series are out of print.

⁵³Mulago, "Discours de clôture", CRA 2:21-22, p. 284.

⁵⁴Vanneste, "La Faculté... Vingt-cinq ans", RAT 6:12, p. 223.

⁵⁵Conversation with Atal sa Angang, FTCK, 4 Feb 1987.

⁵⁶The purpose of exegesis, according to Atal, is first to understand the biblical text. Having done everything possible to understand the author's intention, the exegete's task is then to convey faithfully the same message to people of a different time and place. There is danger in seeking a 'pre-existent Christianity' (in African traditional religion) and 'concordisme' must be

avoided. For Christianity is new (*'un nouveauté'*). Some Africans, in their antipathy to colonialism, have ended up reacting against Christianity. (Conversation with Atal sa Angang, FTCK, 4 Feb 1987).

⁵⁷Mukeng'a Kalond, quoted in "*Le premier congrès des biblistes africains*", RAT 3:6 (1979) p. 84.

⁵⁸P. Monsengwo, "*Exégèse biblique et questions africaines*" , RAT 6:12 (1982) p. 165.

⁵⁹Ngimbi-Nseka, "*Théologie et anthropologie transcendentale*" , RAT 3:5 (1979) pp. 5-29.

⁶⁰Ngimbi-Nseka, "*Esquisse d'une éthique d'intersubjectivité*" , RAT 3:6 (1979) pp. 185-203.

⁶¹T. Nkeramihigo, "*La problématique de la transcendance chez Ricoeur*" , RAT 5:9 (1981) pp. 7-18.

⁶²T. Tshibangu, "*Intelligence de la foi et voies non-occidentales de la théologie*" , a lecture given at the *Semaine Théologique de Kinshasa* in July 1968, and discussed by Ngindu Mushete in CRA 2:2 (1968) pp. 353-372. Cf. also Tshibangu's doctoral thesis: *Théologie positive et théologie spéculative. Position traditionnelle et nouvelle problématique* (Louvain, 1965) pp. 384-385.

⁶³Cf. H. Lodewyckx, *Philosophie Africaine, Origines et Perspectives in Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 47 (1986) 141-169. The article helpfully sets out different stages in the 'evolution' of African Philosophy, and is well regarded by Faculty teachers of philosophy.

⁶⁴J. Ladrière, *Perspectives sur la philosophie africaine* , RAT 5:9 (1981) p. 57.

⁶⁵P. J. Hountondji, *Sur la 'philosophie africaine'. Critique de l'éthnophilosophie* (Paris: Maspéro, 1977), p. 11.

⁶⁶Basinsa, RAT 3:5 (1979) pp. 133-138.

⁶⁷N. Tshiamalenga, *La vision Ntu de l'homme* , CRA 7:14 (1973) pp. 175-198.

⁶⁸ *Ibid* ., pp. 176, 179.

⁶⁹I-P. Laleye, RAT 6:12 (1982) p. 266.

⁷⁰M. Mudiji, *Formes et fonctions symboliques des masques 'mbuya' des Phende. Essai d'iconologie et d'herméneutique* (Louvain, 1981). Mudiji stated that he did his 'Licence' thesis on the philosopher Blondel, but that he

derived little benefit from it. For his doctoral thesis he preferred to be open towards the African milieu (conversation with Mudiji, FTCK, 4 Feb 1987).

⁷¹The 'bibliographies sélectives' were started by Prof. Ntedika Konde in RAT 1:2 and have continued ever since, with Mbiye Lumbala taking over from Ntedika. To date the bibliographies list publications up until 1980, but the series is to continue in future issues.

⁷²Each year's theses are listed in RAT the following year. As of the 1984-85 listing, 1,015 theses had been submitted.

⁷³Conversation with Mudiji, director of the *Département de Philosophie et des Religions Africaines*, FTCK, 4 Feb 1987.

⁷⁴Bimwenyi Kweshi's most important work is his doctoral thesis: *Discours théologique négro-africain. Problème des fondements* (Louvain, 1977) (published by *Présence Africaine*, Paris, 1981.) It received Louvain's 'la plus grande distinction'. Ngindu Mushete, reviewing the thesis, concludes: (Bimwenyi) 'vise à faire une théologie africaine compréhensive et explicative, une théologie où la culture africaine n'est pas seulement décrite, mais intégrée à un ensemble conceptuel plus vaste, permettant une reprise critique des données fondamentales de la révélation chrétienne', *Bulletin de Théologie Africaine*, 1:1 (1979) p.135.

⁷⁵*Semaines Théologiques de Kinshasa*: 1. 1964--*La théologie à l'heure du Concile*; 2. 1965--*L'Eglise et le monde*; 3. 1966--*Le Dieu de nos pères*; 4. 1968--*Renouveau de l'Eglise et nouvelles églises (Colloque sur la théologie africaine)*; 5. 1970--*Le mariage chrétien en Afrique*; 6. 1971--*La pertinence du christianisme en Afrique*; 7. 1972--*Foi chrétienne et langage humain*; 8. 1973--*Ministères et services dans l'Eglise*; 9. 1974--*Péché, pénitence, et réconciliation. Tradition chrétienne et culture africaine*; 10. 1975--*L'évangélisation dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui*; 11. 1976--*Pastorale et épanouissement des vocations dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui*; 12. 1977--*Libération en Jésus-Christ*; 13. 1979--*Justice chrétienne et promotion humaine*; 14. 1981--*Les intellectuels africains et l'Eglise*; 15. 1985--*Charisme et la vie consacrée*.

⁷⁶The three *Colloques Internationaux* to date are: 1. 1978--*Religions africaines et christianisme*; 2. 1983--*Afrique et ses formes de vie spirituelles*; 3. 1986--*Médiations du sacré, célébrations créatrices*.

⁷⁷The nine *Actes des Semaines Philosophiques de Kinshasa* (and two other works) are listed in the duplicated document of the Faculty's theological and philosophical publications.

⁷⁸Conversation with Mbiye L., FTCK, 30 Jan 1987.

⁷⁹Conversation with Mulago, Kinshasa, 1 Feb 1987.

⁸⁰Conversation with Tshibangu, 2 Feb 1987. Tshibangu was anxious to insist that lest it should become nothing more than individualistic piety, charismatic renewal should express itself within a local church where it can be guided aright.

⁸¹In a conversation with two Bishops and three priests, at the Scheutist 'Centre d'Accueil' on 31 Jan 1987.

⁸²M. E. Andrews, "The O.T. as Israelite Theology and its Implications for a New Zealand Theology", *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 17, issue 2 (1976) pp. 32-40. I am grateful to Dr. H. W. Turner for drawing my attention to this article.

Appendix

Publications of the *Faculté de Théologie Catholique de Kinshasa*

1. Theological

Journal: *Revue Africaine de Théologie* (1977--), twice yearly. Devoted to scientific study of Christian sources and the confrontation between Christian religious heritage on the one hand and African realities on the other. Seeks to contribute to the elaboration of a new synthesis of Christian life and thought which will be in conformity with the genius and aspirations of African peoples.

Series: *Recherches Africaines de Théologie* (1971--), 8 works. Devoted to scientific work in biblical, historical and systematic theology.

Series: *Eglise Africaine en dialogue* (1975--), 5 works. Intended to promote dialogue between theological and religious science specialists on the one hand and the non-specialist Christian and non-Christian public on the other.

Series: *Semaines Théologiques de Kinshasa* (1964--), almost yearly. Full reports of lectures and discussion of the nearly-annual public conferences organised by the FTCK on matters of theological importance.

2. Philosophical

Series: *Recherches Philosophiques Africaines* (1977--), 11 works.

Concerned to organise Africa's thinking of yesterday and today, in response to its historic existence, liberation and integrated development.

Series: *Cours et Documents* (1979--), 6 works by Faculty professors, designed for use as teaching and research texts.

Series: *FILOZOFI* (1979--), 4 works. Philosophical reflection in African languages in order to promote the scientific use of African languages, translate important Western texts and encourage the formation of a philosophy in African languages, so as to revitalize the African genius and its creative capacity.

Journal: *Revue Philosophique de Kinshasa* (1983--), twice yearly. Will publish any research likely to promote philosophical reflection in Africa.

Journal: *Afrique et Philosophie* (1977--) Student journal, designed for student philosophical 'target practice'.

3. Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines

Journal: *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* (1967--), twice yearly.

Series: *Bibliothèque de CERA* (1973--), 8 works. Designed to permit a systematic and scientific study of African traditional and modern religions and customs.