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The Magic of Money and Ministry

The articles in this issue of AJET come from amongst the papers prepared for the March 1st, 2014 annual meeting of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology (ASET) held at Africa International University. The theme of the meeting was “Ministry and Money”.

Gift Mtukwa, in *A Reconsideration of Self-Support in Light of Paul's "Collection for the Saints" (1 Cor. 16:1)*, concludes that when Venn's self-supporting church ideal results in isolated self-reliance, then it must give way to mutual interdependence because different churches in different parts of the world need one another in different ways at different times in their spiritual and material development.

Rosemary Mbogo tackles *Financial Sustainability in Ministry*, and uses Christian Higher Education Institutions in Kenya as an example of financial non-sustainability. We may ask, “If financial sustainability is defined as *the ability to develop programmes and delivery systems that meet the physical, social and spiritual needs of a given context, with consistent financial resources raised by each constituency, independent of special and/or occasional hoped-for donations from external sponsors and well wishers*, then is it even possible for Christian institutions to achieve financial sustainability, despite their efforts to develop self-reliance through various income-generating schemes? Given the call for mutual interdependence, should they even try?

Rodney Reed's *Giving to Caesar What is Caesar's: The Ethics of Paying Taxes from a Christian Perspective (Part One: The Bible)* focuses on the question, “When is it a moral obligation for a Christian to pay taxes and when is it not?” from a Biblical perspective. When is my money mine, God's, or the government's – and when is it not?

My own article, *The Ideal Life, Jesus, and Prosperity Theology*, engages the new/old enemy, the Health and Wealth Gospel, from a different direction by comparing its version of the ideal life with that of OT Israel, the ancient Canaanites, modern Western secularism, and with Jesus' attitude towards the good things of this life. Guess who wins from a heavenly point of view!

From an earthly point of view money is like magic, making inconvenient truths disappear and solving problems with a wave of the wallet. Of course, it can't buy you real love, but for love's sinful substitute and for everything else – there's Mastercard. Money is like a universal solvent, dissolving marriages, morals, friendships, families, churches and communities and much, much more. Money itself is not evil, but a wise man claimed, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). A little earlier a wiser man said, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13). You can have ministry without the love of money, but you can't have both a love of money and a truly Christian ministry.