

The Contemporary Theological Project

Faith of an Angry People: Mapping a Renewed Prophetic Theology in South Africa

Jakub Urbaniak

ABSTRACT

Christian theology will be poised to play a constructive role in the current social transition in South Africa only insofar as it is capable of patiently listening to and being shaped by people's anger. The article aims at mapping a renewed prophetic theology in South Africa focusing on the significance of anger, and based on the theological framework inherent in the *Kairos Document* (1985). I refer to the three-tier distinction between state, church and prophetic theology to describe the economically-based alliance of politics and ecclesia in today's South Africa. This is followed by a reflection on the significance of anger in the emerging of people's (incipient) theologies which are then *articulated as* prophetic theology.

Introduction

When I arrived in Johannesburg for the first time, in 2010, South Africans struck me as friendly and generally laidback people. In contrast to my fellow Poles, usually tense and overly solemn, my new friends seemed simply *cool*. Today, after seven years spent in South Africa – a country that has accepted me and has become my new home – my diagnosis of us as a nation, as a people, is obviously much more nuanced. The more my status changes from that of an outsider to that of an insider, the more I am allowed, and privileged, to participate in the real struggles of my fellow South Africans, rather than merely comment on them from my cosy suburban office, and the more I learn to decipher and interpret what James Scott famously labelled the “hidden transcripts” of the oppressed and the marginalised, the more I come to appreciate Maluleke's insight on anger which circulates in the blood system of the South African society.

Jakub Urbaniak, Research fellow at the Faculty of Theology, University of the Free State, Associate Professor in Systematic Theology at St Augustine College. <jakub-urbaniak@hotmail.com>.

Counter-modernism, the Primal Imagination and Development Theory – Shifting the Paradigm

Anthony Balcomb

ABSTRACT

There is a growing realization among some scholars that the modern paradigm is proving to be flawed when it comes to development theory. A counter-modernist discourse is developing within a range of disciplines that is characterized by a number of guiding motifs – the recognition of the earth as a living organism; the removal of human beings as the apex agent and the recognition of multiplicities of agencies; a cluster of values frequently described in terms of relationism, holism, and interconnectivity; and the recognition of the intrinsic worth of the non-human world. These motifs are discernible in religion, anthropology, and science theory and can be found in process thinking (both in science and theology), cybernetics and systems theory, the Gaia hypothesis, eco-feminism, the rediscovery of indigenous worldviews and methodologies, the shift from theism to pantheism, and the “greening” of religion. Counter-modernist discourse is an emerging trend in the west where there is renewed interest in traditional or “primal” ways of being in the world. This presents a conundrum for Africa which is under continual pressure to modernize.

Introduction

Modernist discourse around development theory over the past several decades, it would seem, has been dominated by theories of why things have gone wrong in the global South, or, more euphemistically, why things haven’t happened in the South as they have in the North. In the sixties it was believed that “the new and modernizing nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the processes of enlightenment and democratization will have their inevitable way”.¹ This was known as the “developmentalist theory”. When things did not happen as expected, another theory emerged that attempted to explain this – the so-called “dependency theory”. While the first was “inspired” by liberal capitalism, the second was “inspired” by Marxism. Dependency theory attempted to explain the

1 Greg Almond, *Political Development: Essays in Heuristic Theory* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), 232.

Reality and Mystery: Scientific Understanding, Christian Humanism and Defining Moral Imperatives¹

John W. de Gruchy

Only those who are willing to face reality will discern mystery,
and only those who are open to mystery will discover reality.²

Christianity is a humanism, else it is misunderstood. On the other hand, secular humanism is the absolute antithesis of the gospel.³

ABSTRACT

In part one of this essay I critically reflect on Steven Pinker's claim that "a scientific understanding of the world" is "becoming the de facto morality of modern democracies, international organizations, and liberalizing religions, and its unfulfilled promises define the moral imperatives we face today". I do so by revisiting the relationship between science, theology and morality. In part two I consider the theological contribution to the discussion from a Christian humanist faith perspective, and do so largely in dialogue with Bonhoeffer's Christological understanding of reality and mystery. I argue that this challenges the adequacy of a purely scientific understanding in defining moral imperatives, but also provides a basis for a genuinely Christian participation in the humanist project.

In a discussion on "Atheism & Scientism, Evolution & Christian Faith", Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh critically engages Steven Pinker, a Harvard professor of psychology, and Leon Wieseltier, literary editor of *The New Republic*, on the relation between science and the humanities.⁴ In doing so he refers to my

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- 1 Although this essay is my own, I have valued the comments of Professor George Ellis, emeritus professor of applied mathematics; Professor Anwar Mall, of the Department of Surgery; and the late Dr Augustine Shutte, philosopher, of University of Cape Town.
 - 2 John W. de Gruchy, *Led into Mystery: Faith Seeking Answers in Life and Death* (London: SCM, 2013), 44.
 - 3 John Milbank, "Henri de Lubac", in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, edited by David F. Ford with Rachel Muirs (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 80.
 - 4 William T. Cavanaugh, October 14, 2014 Tags: *Atheism & Scientism, Evolution & Christian Faith project, Science & Worldviews*. Cavanaugh is Professor of Catholic Studies and Director of the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University, Chicago.
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John de Gruchy, emeritus professor of Christian Studies Senior Scholar, University of Cape Town. <john@degruchy.co.za>.

Reading Romans 13:1-7 as a 'Hidden Transcript of Postcolonial Theology' in Myanmar

David Thang Moe

ABSTRACT

Paul's exhortation to "be subject to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1; RSV)¹ offers good news to the military rulers and bad news to the ruled in Myanmar. Against this, I will read Romans 13:1-7 as, what James Scott coined, a "hidden transcript".² A hidden transcript, according to Scott, is a condition of postcolonial resistance rather than a blind subjection to a "public transcript" of domination. Using Scott's postcolonial theory of resistance, the aim of this study will be to read Romans 13:1-7 as the hidden transcript of a liberating text. Thus, in the end, this study will address the needs of two sides of liberation, inclusive liberation of the oppressed and the oppressors.

Introduction

A minority of scholars regard Romans 13:1-7 as a non-Pauline intrusion in the text. James Kallas,³ a scholar who advanced the strongest arguments in favor of identifying this pericope as an interpolation, gives three main reasons for regarding it as such. First, the ending of Romans 16 is tightly constructed and without logical connection to the previous passages. Second, Romans 13:1-7 addresses a subject that Paul speaks of nowhere else. Third, Romans 13:1-7 contradicts basic Pauline ideas and forms of expression. Kallas thus concluded that this text not only stands in *isolation* but, also, *interrupts* the flow of Pauline ideas and his entire theology.⁴

A majority of Pauline scholars reject Kallas' reading of Romans 13:1-7 as an interpolation and propose that the section be read as truly from the hand of Paul.⁵

- 1 The RSV will be used throughout unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 14.
- 3 James Kallas, "Romans XIII. 7: An Interpolation", *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964), 365-374.
- 4 Kallas, "Romans XIII", 369.
- 5 Leander E. Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?", in *Pauline Theology III*, edited by David H. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 3-29.

David Thang Moe is a PhD student in Intercultural Theology and World Christianity at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, USA. <davidmoe83@gmail.com>.

The Communal and Personal God of African Christianity: God's Numberedness and Personhood in African Trinitarian Theology

Hans Moscicke

ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore the African trinitarian theologies of Adonijah Ogbonnaya, Charles Nyamiti, and James Kombo, bringing them into conversation with three western theologians: Walter Kasper, Elizabeth Johnson, and Joseph Bracken. I attempt to contribute to the trinitarian conversation by collating African concepts and sources that have hitherto not been brought into constructive dialogue, highlighting some of their similarities, and demonstrating how their insights might profitably supplement and be supplemented by contemporary western theology. Through this investigation, new names for God emerge. I conclude that an African trinitarian perspective compels us to understand God's numberedness as pointing to God as open-ended communality, infinite relationality, and a field of vital force; God's personhood as sacred relations in eternal movement of ancestral ritual communion; and God as *Great Muntu* (Great Person) and ultimate expression of *ubuntu*.

Introduction¹

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is anything but irrelevant for contemporary society. As Walter Kasper remarks, "in the numbering of one and three as well as in the reciprocal relation between them, what is being articulated are age-old problems associated with man's understanding of reality and himself. The issue [of the Trinity] is the ultimate ground and meaning of all reality".² As times change and words take on new meanings, we find ourselves in need of renewed trinitarian

1 I thank Joseph Ogbonnaya and Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator for sharing their experiences, stories, and theological viewpoints so candidly and honestly in their superb doctoral seminar on African Theology. I especially thank Jame Schaefer for her enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and critical engagement with this project, and for her exceptional doctoral seminar on God in Contemporary Theology, whence this article derives. I thank all of my peers in those seminars as well; I learned so much from you. Yet I take sole responsibility for the views expressed herein.

2 Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ: New Edition* (London: T&T Clark, 2012; first published 2008 by Verlag Herder), 234.

Relocating Religion Back to the Hospital: A Focus on Children's Spiritual Care in Healthcare

Annemarie E. Oberholzer

(Paper presented at the 2016 Helsinki European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) conference with the theme: Relocating Religion).

ABSTRACT

In today's modern, technologically advanced hospitals there is seldom room for religion and religious practices, and the spiritual care of children is frequently overlooked. Increasingly, however, evidence from research shows how important spiritual support is for children in healthcare environments. Children are much more in tune with their own spirituality than they are often given credit for. Not only is there evidence of positive effects arising when children's spiritual needs are met, but children themselves tend to place a high priority on their own spiritual support when in hospital. This article explores the link between a child's health and his/her spirituality. It takes into account events from the past that shaped current practices in healthcare, and advocates that religion be relocated back to children who are in hospital.

Introduction

Science can explain illness. Modern medicine can heal most illnesses, and reliance on technology and innovative therapies has largely replaced religion. Agbiji and Agbiji¹ state that "the absence of pastoral care in healthcare in Africa is obvious" and in South Africa in particular, hospital policies often restrict visits from pastoral

1 Emen Agbiji and Obaji Agbiji, "Pastoral Care as a Resource for Development in the Global Healthcare Context: Implications for Africa's Healthcare Delivery System", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016), 1-12.

Annemarie E. Oberholzer (RN; DCur), Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Discipline of Christian Spirituality, University of South Africa. <annemarieo@mweb.co.za>; <oberhae@unisa.ac.za>.

A Review Article on *Laudato Si'*¹

Authors: Sue Rakoczy, Ernst Conradie, Sophia Chirongoma,
Geoff Davies and Peter-John Pearson
Editor: Andrew Warmback

ABSTRACT

Laudato Si', the encyclical issued by Pope Francis, focuses on the environment. Issued nearly two years ago, it continues to be a challenge both to the church and society. This article reviews this important document. In an era of rapid climate change, *Laudato Si'* offers critical perspectives on our current economic systems and the consumerism that accompanies them. It also offers a word of hope. Five theologians write about either a particular theme in the document or about the document as a whole. They then each respond to one other author's contribution. In this process a number of important aspects of the encyclical are highlighted and engaged with. This article forms part of the important on-going discussions around the crucial environmental issues that face us all.

Introduction by Prof Sue Rakoczy, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics – UKZN

Pope Francis' long-awaited encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si'*, was published on 18 June 2015 and has received a generally positive reception within the Catholic

1 On 17 June 2015, the eve of the publication of *Laudato Si'*, a small group of people attending the Theological Society of South Africa Congress being held at Seth Mokitimi Seminary, gathered at the home of Andrew and Alison Warmback in Pietermaritzburg. The idea of this article was conceived over dinner that evening.

Andrew Warmback, an Anglican priest at St Paul's Anglican Church, Durban. <andrewwarmback@gmail.com>. **Susan Rakoczy**, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal. <srakoczy@sjti.ac.za>. **Ernst M. Conradie**, Senior Professor in the Department of Religion and Theology at the University of the Western Cape where he teaches systematic theology and ethics. <econradie@uwc.ac.za>. **Sophia Chirongoma**, lecturer, Theology and Religious Studies Department at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe and Academic Associate/Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR) in the College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa (UNISA). <sochirongoma@yahoo.com> or <sochirongoma@gmail.com>. **Geoff Davies**, Anglican "Green" Bishop and Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI). <geoff.davies@safcei.org.za>. **Peter-John Pearson**, Director, Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Parliamentary Liaison Office. <pearson@iafrica.com>.

‘Sermon Preparation is Dangerous’. Liturgical Formation in African Initiated Churches

Cas Wepener & Mzwandile Nyawuza

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to make a contribution towards the theme of liturgical formation in African Initiated Churches. The focus is specifically on liturgical leadership and questions exploring the requirements for leading worship (priests, bishops, and archbishops), the core tasks of worship leaders and existing programmes in this regard are explored by means of a qualitative empirical investigation augmented by relevant literature. The theoretical lens with which the data is approached is a ritual-liturgical lens which combines a theological- and cultural-anthropological approach. The hope is that this investigation can be of service regarding on-going curriculum development at faculties of theology in countries such as South Africa, taking the insights gained in this study into account in fields such as Practical Theology and Liturgical Studies.

Introduction

During a visit to the Headquarters of the largest church in Southern Africa, the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), which is an African Initiated Church (AIC) situated just outside the city of Polokwane in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, the authors asked the leadership there how a person can become a pastor and thus also a worship leader in the ZCC. In short their answer basically was: “Don’t call us, we’ll call you!” This answer is an excellent example of how AICs handle issues such as the calling, acceptance and training of their pastors, bishops and archbishops who – we might add here right at the outset of the article – are mainly worship leaders and preachers and very often this is not their full-time employment.¹ Further and more systematic field work on our topic, namely liturgical formation of leaders

1 Thomas Oduro, Hennie Pretorius, Stan Nussbaum, Bryan Bom, *Mission in an African way. A Practical Introduction to the African Instituted Churches and their Sense of Mission* (Wellington: CLF Publishers, 2008), list ten tasks of AIC leaders, of which nine relate directly to liturgical rituals performed in worship settings. This is a clear indication of the extremely close link in this context between being a leader and being a liturgist.

Cas Wepener is Professor of Homiletics and Liturgical Studies and HoD of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. <cas.wepener@up.ac.za>. Mzwandile Patrick Nyawuza is a PhD student in Liturgical Studies at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria and a minister in a Presbyterian congregation in Attridgeville. <mzwandilenyawuza@gmail.com>.

The Co-optation of the Bible by ‘Church Theology’ in Post-liberation South Africa: Returning to the Bible as a ‘Site of Struggle’

Gerald O. West

ABSTRACT

A significant theological contribution to the South African struggle against apartheid was the notion of the church and theology as ‘sites of struggle’. South African Contextual Theology is a good example of an analysis of how both the South African church and South African theology could be understood as ‘sites of struggle’. South African Black Theology during the same period pushed this analysis further, identifying another ‘site of struggle’, the Bible. The innovative contribution of Black Theology was that it was not only the interpretation of the Bible that was a site of struggle, but the Bible itself. The article revisits this contribution, arguing that contemporary, post-liberation, South African theology has been co-opted, almost entirely, by forms of what *The Kairos Document* referred to as ‘Church Theology’, precisely because South African theologies have not heeded the warning of Black Theology that the Bible is itself a site of struggle. Yet, the article concludes, the resource that is a contested Bible remains for our post-liberation struggle.

Introduction

‘A luta continua’, we say to each other two decades after political liberation in South Africa, as our struggle for economic liberation now takes centre-stage (as it should have two decades ago). Though we use a Latin American phrase, a luta continua (the struggle continues), South African liberation theologies have never imagined an utopian future, even in the theologically nuanced vision of our sister liberation theologies from Latin America.¹ Both South African Black Theology and South African Contextual Theology, the most prominent forms of liberation theology in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, imagined only struggle. Only enduring struggle could reconstruct a society systematically exploited for centuries.

The focus of this article is a recovery of the notion of ‘struggle’ for our

1 Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 132-153.