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The Contemporary Theological Project

The Authorship and Composition Circumstances of the Kairos Document¹

Philippe Denis

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to offer as thorough as possible a narrative of the history of the Kairos Document as a text on the basis of archival and oral evidence. Having in mind the claim, made at the time and repeated afterwards, that the Kairos Document was a ‘people’s document’, the paper looks with great detail at the composition process of the document from the day, at a meeting of Christian activists in Soweto in late July 1985, when the idea of issuing a theological statement on the crisis in South Africa came up, to September 1986, when, the second edition of the Kairos Document was released. Unlike the Barmen Declaration or the Belham Confession for example, the Kairos Document was not authored by professional theologians. It resulted from the collective work of about fifty ministers of religion and Christian activists who met at regular intervals between late July and early September 1985. The revision of the Kairos Document during the course of 1986 followed a similar process. It was widely distributed: 35,000 copies were printed the first year and a further 35,000 during the following three years.

Who wrote the Kairos Document, this influential theological statement, released in September 1985, which accused, in the same breath, ‘state theology’ and ‘church theology’ of betraying the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of a massive onslaught of the apartheid regime against the black population, while making a plea for ‘prophetic theology’? This text has generated, from the time of its publication to the current day, a considerable amount of comments, positive and negative, especially in the so-called liberal English-speaking churches whose ambiguous stance towards apartheid was publicly denounced for the first time.² At least three authors wrote about its history.³ Many questions remain, however?

- 1 Revised version of a paper read at the 3rd Joint Theological Conference, University of Pretoria, 12 July 2016. I benefited greatly from the comments made on that occasion.
- 2 For a recent example see Clint Le Bruyns, “The Rebirth of Kairos Theology and its Implications for Public Theology and Citizenship in South Africa”, *Missionalia* 43 (2015), 460–477.
- 3 Desmond van der Water, “The Legacy of a Prophetic Moment: A Socio-theological Study of the Reception and Response to the *Kairos Document* amongst Churches, Faith-communities and Individuals

“Speak the speech, I pray you ... trippingly on the tongue” (*Hamlet* III. ii): Speaking and Listening as Theological Practice

Frank England

ABSTRACT

How to speak and listen, and how to listen others and oneself into speech, is at issue in this article. It seeks to probe how ways of Christian speaking and listening may be re-envisioned so as to facilitate conversation that listens at a more profound level to others, and endeavours subsequently to speak from that otherness – from that to which one has listened. Within ecclesial communities – and the Anglican Communion, in particular – serious and, at times, irreparable divisions appear to result from, what one may call, an inability “to speak listeningly”.

Introduction

In the Incarnation, God assumed human form. This act affirmed God’s engagement with the world – not then and not once, but as always contemporary. The now is always the time of God’s presence. The ‘here’ is always today’s world in which God is present. But the Incarnation is not merely an affirmation of God being present in Jesus. It is also an affirmation of God being present in the lives of Christians. *Here* is the *now* in which God is to be incarnate in the lives, acts, and words of Christians. Often, and rightly, the emphasis in this regard refers to lives of action, to the undertaking of charitable works, and of being other Christs in the world, of possessing, to advert to a prayer attributed to Teresa of Avila, “no hands but yours”. But amongst the many challenges and demands that an assent to a God who has become incarnate in the world lays upon Christians, is how they *communicate* with one another in *human language*.

For such a mode of being Christ in the world focuses on the task of being a Christian in *words*, both in the composing of words to phrase thought, and also in the expression of thought in statement, in question, in dialogue, and in

Currents in World Christianity and the Challenges of Border-Crossing and Intercultural Theology

Stan Chu Ilo

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the cultural diversity of World Christianity and new theological voices are opening new maps of the Christian universe, especially in Africa. These new faces in World Christianity challenge traditional canons of orthodoxy, ecclesiology and mainstream theological education and methods. Through biblical, historical and theological analysis, the article lays the groundwork for intercultural theological education through what the article advances as theological border-crossing. This approach proposes a hermeneutics of humility and a hermeneutics of generosity in interpreting, understanding and communicating the message of the Gospel today, especially by paying greater attention to the actual faith of every day Christians.

Introduction

This essay explores in detail the currents in World Christianity and the challenges and opportunities which they pose to theological education, especially in Africa. It proposes intercultural theology as an exercise in border-crossing. It shows how this process could be grounded in history, biblical and cultural foundations in order to meet the challenges of cultural pluralism and diversity in World Christianity. The challenges facing World Christianity today are cultural in nature and is understood here as the task of re-enacting the priorities and practices of the Lord Jesus and his followers in diverse contexts in order to meet the exigencies of present history. This requires reading the signs of the times and paying attention to the inner enrichment of particular and universal contexts of faith. It also calls on theologians to become radically open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit and adopt theological humility before the mysteries of God, especially in the actual faith and everyday experiences of God's people in Africa.

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Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism: Blood Nephews?

Marius Nel

ABSTRACT

Pentecostalism and fundamentalism are viewed by many as closely related, both as expressions of a conservative Christian response to modernism and postmodernism. It is argued in the article that although the Pentecostal tradition since the 1940s linked with a part of Evangelicalism and adopted some of its practices, including their fundamentalist view of the Bible, the movement originally viewed the Bible differently. Since the 1970s Pentecostals had begun to debate their hermeneutics intensively and the original view of the Bible of early Pentecostals gained ground. Today the movement consists of some with a fundamentalist attitude while others maintain a Pentecostalist hermeneutic that views the Bible as a fixed reference point for the encounter with God, which forms the core of Pentecostal identity. Pentecostals reach beyond the levels of creed and ceremony, cognizant of a cerebral religion, into the realm of a spirituality defined in terms of the search for connection with the precognitive core impulse of human life. The contemporary Pentecostal movement functions within the tension created by two opposing views of reading and interpreting the Bible.

Introduction

One of the most commonly offered interpretations of Pentecostalism is that it is a variant of fundamentalism. In this view, held by many mainline theologians as well as some Pentecostals, Pentecostalism represents an expression of conservative Christian protest against modern theological trends that deny inter alia the divinity of Christ and the authority of Scriptures to define doctrine and ethics for contemporary Christians.¹ The success of the Pentecostal movement

1 Philip Kennedy, *A Modern Introduction to Theology: New Questions for Old Beliefs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 11. Some of the most vocal opponents of Pentecostals are the cessationists who claim that the charismatic functioning of the church in terms of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts ended with the death of the last apostle, and liberal theologians who in their skepticism that nothing can happen that is not scientifically explainable destroy believers' faith in regular divine interventions in the lives of contemporary people and their churches. Pentecostalism should in historical terms rather be evaluated as a reaction against the institutional church's perceived formalism, spiritual deadness, slackness and lifeless worship, as a restorationist and primitivistic urge to regain (something of) the enthusiasm and life of the earliest Church (Grant McClung, "Introduction: 'Try to get people saved': Azusa Street missiology", in *Azusa Street & Beyond: Missional Commentary on the Global Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement*, 2nd ed., edited by Grand McClung (Alachua: Bridge-Logos, 2012), 4.

Decolonial Reflection on the Landlessness of the Levites

Hulisani Ramantswana

ABSTRACT

Decoloniality is a perspective through which structures of domination are questioned and challenged. Power structures tend to legitimize the relation of superiority-inferiority between those in the position of dominance and the dominated. The social structure of domination results in the distribution of opportunities and resources to favour those in the position of power. The focus of this paper is on the landlessness of the Levites as projected in the Hexateuch, and its argument is that the landlessness of the Levites was a result of the social construction of tribal ranking among the Israelite tribes in which the Joseph tribes assumed the position of power and privilege and, as a result, became more landed than the rest of Israel's tribes, this at the expense of Levites – the landless.

Introduction

Landlessness, both in history and at present, is not accidental. It is often a result of exclusionary tendencies through which some become landed whereas others are rendered landless. Israel's story in the Hexateuch is intertwined with the concept of land. When God calls Abraham, there is a shift from being landed to a state of being landless, but with the promise that he will be landed again:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ־עֵבֶר וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָרָאךָ

YHWH said to Abram, leave your land, your people, and your father's house to the land which I will show you (Gen 12:1).

Within the broader context of the Hexateuch the promise of land only finds its fulfilment in the book of Joshua; however, within the mini-narratives of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the promise is partially fulfilled in each patriarch. The Moses or exodus story serves as a replay of the Abrahamic promise in that the Hebrews/Israelites, like Abraham, have to leave Egypt and become landless before they become landed again. A significant difference between the patriarchs and the exodus story is that the former did not become landed by conquering the inhabitants of the so-called Promised Land but were peacefully

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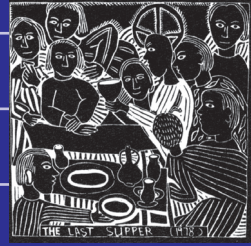
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