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The Contemporary Theological Project

Trauma in the Historiography of Israel and Judah

Mark G. Brett

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the significance of trauma theories for understanding the historiography of Israel and Judah. Highlighting evidence of Western bias in a number of recent studies, the argument suggests that a concept of lateral violence, which has been developed within Australian Indigenous studies of intergenerational trauma, can throw fresh light on the biblical trope of the “emptied land.” Two hermeneutical questions are then raised: how was the imagination of empty land influential in the formation of Australian colonial ideology, and more broadly, what role can trauma-informed biblical studies play in decolonial politics?

It was almost inevitable that theories of trauma would make their way into biblical studies that seek to describe the complex social effects of Jerusalem’s destruction in the sixth century BCE and the subsequent migrations. But the sources of recent trauma theories lie in multiple disciplines, notably psychology and sociology, and perhaps not surprisingly, the applications within studies of biblical historiography have been somewhat contradictory. It will therefore be necessary to reflect here on some recent methodological debates, but not just for the sake of clarity. In this paper, I will also be mindful of the larger contexts within which these scholarly debates have been taking place.

In particular, I want to engage with recent trauma studies in my own Australian context, while also venturing some comparisons with other societies that struggle with the legacies of colonialism. There are specific issues that are peculiar to my context, but in addition, there are some international dialogues concerned with the impacts of intergenerational trauma. In this latter respect, there are opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between Australia and South Africa.¹ Accordingly,

¹ See, e.g., the chapters on South Africa and Australia in Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, ed., *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 2016). The origins of the present paper lie in a presentation to the Old

Research Articles

The Suffering Servants

Fredrik Berge & Robert Lilleaasen

ABSTRACT

This article investigates how a group of pastors from Côte d'Ivoire understand suffering and how suffering shapes their pastoral ministry. The material from the qualitative interviews is interpreted in view of Pastoral Theology and Theology of Suffering. The authors observe that suffering in their own lives and the lives of their congregation is part of the pastoral ministry, gathering and holding together the flock, interpreting, embodying, and empowering the church. The pastors interviewed suggest that salvation is often on the other side of the cross and suffering. In terms of legitimacy, it is not success (e.g. health and wealth) as such, but the success that overcomes suffering and hardship that earns the pastor legitimacy as a leader. The Christus Victor theory of atonement is fundamental, enabling a contextually relevant pastoral praxis of spiritual warfare and liberation from evil forces. At the same time, the complexity of an over-realized eschatology of the cross surfaces in the material and this theme is further elaborated upon in the discussion, highlighting the need for a "responsible implementation of Christ's triumph and, concurrently, a symbol of human suffering. Suffering will not be overcome on this side of the eschaton, indicating that suffering is a constant aspect of human experience, which pastoral praxis in Africa must come to terms with.

Introduction

This article investigates how a group of pastors from Côte d'Ivoire understand suffering and how suffering shapes their pastoral ministry. According to Pamela Cooper-White, suffering "is the starting point for all pastoral and practical theology."¹ Cooper-White draws on Jürgen Moltmann's words on suffering as "the open wound of life in this world." Advocating an inductive approach to practical theology Cooper-White argues that beginning with experiences in the field of research means suffering will be at the centre of pastoral ministry. Roy

1 Pamela Cooper-White, 'Suffering', in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011), 23, <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444345742.ch1>>.

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Theological Concepts of the Kaaps Community, as Evident in their Translation of Selected Psalms

June F. Dickie

ABSTRACT

The Kaaps language is spoken by the Coloured people of the Western Cape, and until very recently, had not been written. For many years, Kaaps has been considered as a (sub-standard) variant of Afrikaans, for political reasons. But recently a team has been translating psalms into Kaaps and performing them in song. This is giving the community a new pride in their unique and distinct language. This paper gives an example of some of these translations, from which some thoughts on their theology are deduced. It is of interest to note how their translations differ significantly from those of Afrikaans.

Introduction

The pilot study

Since 2022, a pilot study research project (known as ‘Psalms that Sing’¹) has been underway developing a new multimodal methodology for translating Psalms. This project is under the auspices of The Seed Company,² a Bible Translation agency based in the USA. A team of five Bible translation consultants,³ each with over thirty years’ experience in the field of Bible translation, came together to develop the project. They are members of various Bible translation agencies.⁴ Since then, a number of younger people have joined them and are being trained

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- 1 See <www.psalms thatsing.org>. Also please note that I am using single quotes when a concept (or a word from the translation) is in focus, double quotes for quotation of secondary sources, and italics for emphasis.
 - 2 The Seed Company (USA) and Wycliffe Global Alliance have funded the six language projects.
 - 3 The author is one of the consultants who has been involved in the pilot study.
 - 4 Translation agencies (such as SIL, The Seed Company, Wycliffe Global Alliance, and others) usually focus on the minority languages of the world, whereas The Bible Society takes responsibility for the major /national languages.

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Wailing on the Mediterranean Sea: The Catholic Church and West African Migration Crisis

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ABSTRACT

On 3 October 2013, a rickety boat with about 500 African migrants (including children) sank off the Italian island of Lampedusa. It was meant to be a “ship of hope” that would have landed many passengers to the elusive “European dream.” More than half of the passengers on board died, turning the Mediterranean into a graveyard. Many such sea mishaps go unreported. The same is true of the dangerous journey via the Sahara Desert that African migrants embark upon to reach Europe. Despite the perilous route through the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert, many African youths are not deterred in their desperation to escape socio-economic hardships. At its 2009 Plenary Assembly in Banjul (The Gambia), the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA) identified poverty, hunger, and political instability as significant drivers of African migration. This research examines the increase of West African migration to Europe and the Catholic Church’s pastoral responsibility towards African migrants. It maintains that verbal appeals and entreaties alone are insufficient to deter desperate young people from embarking on dangerous migratory journeys. Given the economic push factors, many more may still make the same journey by land through the Sahara Desert and by sea aboard rickety “boats of hope” that often deliver their passengers to the insatiable belly of the Mediterranean Sea.

Introduction

Migration is understood as a universal human phenomenon. With significant complexities, it has been on the increase in the 21st century as people from less prosperous continents move to more affluent continents.¹ In West Africa, migration has become an acute challenge. The news reports are consistent, easily

1 Alex Sackey-Ansah, “African Christian Immigrants”, *Transformation* 37, no. 1 (2020), 66; Agenzia Fides, “African Continental Congress in Nairobi June 2-5: Towards a Better Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees in Africa at the Dawn of the Third Millennium”, *Agenzia Fides*, 27 May 2008, <http://www.fides.org/en/news/14699-VATICAN_African_Continental_Congress_in_Nairobi_Kenya_June_2-5:_Towards_a_better_pastoral_care_of_Migrants_and_Refugees_in_Africa_at_the_dawn_of_the_Third_Millennium> (29 October 2023).

African Translation Notes

Desiring Authentic Encounters with Biblical Characters

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A rather poignant matter arises very early on in one's engagement with the important task of revising or translating the Bible into African Mother Tongues. Many South Africans bear evidence of a phenomenon that was known until recently by the tag: Christian names. This entailed names that can be traced directly to the Bible, or to European (read Christian) icons such as happened in the case of Rolihlahla Mandela. This had to do with much more than the mere difficulty of pronouncing African names lamented by the Europeans.

Consequently, my middle name is Samuel because I was named after my maternal grandfather. But one does not have far to go before discovering that my grandfather had had the name given him at the mission station. Another station where such names were regularly imposed was the local government offices when the birth was being registered. It is scarcely surprising then that since apartheid's formal demise a sizeable number of South Africans made the conscious decision to give their children only African names.

Since Samuel remains part of my identity, I often find myself wondering how much I (or my existential circumstances) actually do have in common with that biblical character. I have found over the years that I simply cannot hear or read references to that prophet with indifference. There persists an inescapable desire to emulate that prophet's positive traits as well as to evade his blemishes. (All that, of course, is additional to the felt burden to match my maternal grandfather's exploits; this after all is part of the rationale of my being named after him.) The nobler and very accomplished the namesake, the heavier the burden of expectation.

Coming then to the Northern Sotho Bible, I encounter "Samuele" in both the 1951 and 2000 versions. The vocalic suffix is added in keeping with the language's disinclination to end proper nouns with consonants. From this viewpoint, there is no estrangement between Samuel and Samuele. They are both me.

However, the standard Hebrew text which the mother tongue exegete uses to revise or translate the Bible has "Šemuel" (or Shemuel). The resemblance is indisputable. But the question arises whether the North-Sotho Bible ought to use

Book Reviews

Book Reviews

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Memorializing the Unsung: Slaves of the Church and the Making of Kongo Catholicism*.

University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024. ISBN: 978-0-271-09698-8. Hardback. Includes Table of Contents and Index. 234p.

Jacob Onyumbwe
Université Notre-Dame de Tshumbe
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Ryan Saville, *Dethroning Race: How to Live a Diverse and More Socially Engaged Life*

Stellenbosch: SUN Media, 2024. ISBN 978-1-998951-48-2. eBook. Includes Table of Contents. 268 p.

David Elliott
University of KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

Sipho Mahokoto (ed). *Essays on the Real Church: Collected Essays 8 by Dirk J. Smit*.

Stellenbosch: SUN Media, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-991260-47-5. Paperback. Table of Contents included. 654 p.

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