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**Prophetic Leadership
in the 40th Year of
Kairos**



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What Does it Mean to be Human? Transformative *Kairos* in the South African Context

Wessel Bentley

ABSTRACT

In light of the 40th anniversary of the *Kairos Document*, this article investigates the reconceptualising of Church Theology, State Theology, and Prophetic Theology, considering current South African and global challenges. It highlights that human beings are shaped by their contexts and therefore the definitions of these theologies in the 1980s may not necessarily equate to current understandings thereof. The article challenges the church to resist the temptation to adopt either a Church Theology which exploits, or a State Theology which coopts public apathy, but to promote an ecclesiastical culture of speaking prophetically to matters, contexts, and powers that deprive people of their sense of being created in the image of God.

Introduction

The year 2025 is significant for South African Christian theology. It is the 40th anniversary of the *Kairos Document*. This prophetic declaration posed a momentous marker in the Christian church's discourse on apartheid. Discussing this event with a colleague, the question arose whether there is a need for a new *Kairos Document*; new, not in the sense that it must be rewritten, but that it needs to be reconceptualised, considering shifting global dynamics. So much has happened in the past four decades of South Africa's history that what it meant to be human in the 1980s is substantially different from what it means today. I say this, considering Du Toit's (2019) argument that human beings live in a reciprocal relationship with their environment. Hence, their sense of self and reality are shaped by it. During the 1980s, what it meant to be human in South Africa was a question that was distinctly defined by racial designations. This was the dominant discourse of the time and context – the struggle for Black South Africans to be recognised as being “equally human” to their White counterparts. By no means do I want to suggest that the discourse on race, racial identity, and race-based

Prophetic Leadership as People's Leadership: Leadership Contestation in Mark 5:22-43 and 1 Kings 12:1-6 (in its 3 Reigns 12:24p-t Version)

Gerald O. West

ABSTRACT

This article takes as its starting point the distinction the *Kairos Document*, in its Revised Second Edition (1986), makes between 'people's theology' and 'prophetic theology'. In explaining how the *Kairos Document* developed, the Kairos Theologians invoke the term 'people's theology', referring to the already present, lived, and embodied theology of the organised marginalised. This incipient and inchoate experience-based theology, once articulated in safe sequestered sites through participatory forms of facilitation, becomes the basis for further theological collaborative articulations in conversation with historically extant biblical and theological resources, leading to contemporary contextually useful forms of prophetic theology. This article reflects on how we might use the distinction and relationship between people's theology and prophetic theology to conceptualise church leadership (and perhaps other forms of leadership) differently. The notion that scripture is itself a site of struggle in terms of leadership is central to the argument of this article, and is demonstrated through two biblical texts, Mark 5:22-43 and 1 Kings 12:1-6 (in its 3 Reigns 12:24p-t version). The Contextual Bible Study processes of the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research are referred to as resources for people-centred participatory forms of scriptural contestation.

Introduction

The terms I use in my title are precise, drawing them as I do from the process that gave rise to the *Kairos Document*. While the first edition (Kairos 1985) says too little about the process that generated the document (but see Denis 2015, 2017), the second revised edition (1986) includes an illuminating footnote, which I will cite in full:

Many readers of the first edition suggested that the meaning of prophetic theology should be spelt out more clearly. The characteristics of prophetic theology that have been

Sinner and Spectator Equally Guilty: Invoking the *Kairos* Spirit on the Eve of the Ruby Anniversary of the Kairos Document

McGlory Speckman

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to revive the *kairos* spirit on the eve of the Ruby Anniversary of the Kairos Document, with the aim of motivating Faith-Based Organisations to take South Africa beyond the democracy threshold. With the help of Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of understanding, it goes behind the document, which, in Dilthey's theory, is the expression of a response to an experienced situation, by examining the context that produced the Kairos Document. It then compares and contrasts the current *liminal* state of our democracy with the context that gave birth to the Kairos Document. The article argues further that the failure to transform the situation of the poor and marginalised in the last three decades of democracy is the biggest threat to democracy and an indictment of the church and its theologians. Those who resist strategies and policies aimed at improving the lives of the poor and marginalised, and those who choose to watch from the sidelines rather than condemn, are equally culpable and will suffer the same consequences.

Introduction

This article aims to revive the *kairos* spirit on the eve of the Ruby Anniversary of the Kairos Document (KD), with a view to encouraging Faith-Based Organisations to advance democracy beyond its initial stage. It draws on Wilhelm Dilthey's (1910; 1960) studies on the 'theory of understanding' to analyse the background of the KD in the 1980s. In line with Dilthey, it distinguishes between the background as the socio-historical experience that shaped the document and the document as a response to that experience.

I argue in the article that the failure to transform the situation of the poor and marginalised in the last three decades of democracy is the biggest threat to South African democracy and an indictment of the church and its theologians. This is the result of the *liminal* state of our democracy, which is caused by forces that pull in different directions. It, therefore, is not moving forward while it cannot go

Leaders as Hands and Feet of Christ Jesus

Archford Musodza

ABSTRACT

This article presents a Christian approach to leadership that centres on servanthood grounded in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Celebrating fifty years of ordained ministry of Bishop Luke Pato, it reflects on leadership as the “hands” of Christ (acts of service, healing, teaching, and pastoral care) and the “feet” of Christ (missional advancing mission, advocacy, and social transformation). Building on biblical-theological-historic roots, the article argues that contextual Theological Education is most crucial for forming leaders in the Southern Part of Africa. It requires leadership that is based on integrity, openness, and a prophetic voice that calls the Church to put serving before self-righteousness and justice before protecting the institution.

Introduction

Christian leadership finds its essence in the model of Jesus Christ, who served with humility, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to justice. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer affirms, “the Church is the Church only when it exists for others” (Bonhoeffer 1953), highlighting the intrinsic link between leadership and service. Leaders who embody Christ’s mission must actively engage in servanthood, advocating for justice and ministering to those in need. This article examines the transformative role of Christian leaders as the hands and feet of Christ, particularly in theological formation and ministerial practice in Southern Africa.

The article also honours Bishop Luke Lungile Pato’s fifty years of ordained ministry, a milestone that reflects a lifetime of ecclesial leadership rooted in service, theological depth, and social justice advocacy. Bishop Pato has exemplified the call to be Christ’s hands and feet, extending love, healing, and hope to diverse communities. His leadership within the Anglican Church of Southern Africa has been a beacon of pastoral care, prophetic witness, and theological engagement. As theological institutions and church communities reflect on his legacy, this article explores the theological imperative of leadership as a vocation of servanthood, mission, and justice.

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***Ubuntu* and Christian Ethics in Practice: Rethinking the Moral Duty of Leaders through the Life of Bishop Luke Pato**

Thembelani Jentile

ABSTRACT

This study examines the ethical obligations of leadership through the life and witness of Bishop Luke Lungile Pato, situating his legacy within the frameworks of African Ubuntu philosophy and Christian moral theology. In post-apartheid South Africa, leaders continue to face challenges of corruption, inequality, and moral compromise. The study argues that ethical leadership must embody both prophetic audacity and pastoral empathy, ensuring that leaders remain accountable to God and their communities by integrating theological principles with African ethical traditions. Bishop Pato exemplified this synthesis through his commitment to truth, justice, reconciliation, and stewardship, even while navigating the political and ecclesiastical constraints of his time. His life demonstrates that authentic African Christian leadership is not rooted in power or position, but in service, integrity, and the pursuit of the common good. The paper concludes by re-evaluating the moral responsibilities of contemporary leaders in South Africa, drawing on Pato's legacy as a model for both the Church and wider society.

Introduction

Leadership remains a vital issue in South Africa long after apartheid. Banks and Ledbetter (2004:21-24) identify five key factors that could help explain the present interest in leadership: People are usually concerned about leadership during times of crises; an interest in leadership also tends to appear during periods of widespread uncertainty and rapid change; the failure of particular leaders, especially public figures; certain societies or groups in society appear to have a more ingrained interest in leadership. Such an interest may well have its roots in the historical situation and challenges out of which that society arose, and the appearance of new types of leaders who have gained wide public acknowledgement or notoriety.

Banks and Ledbetter's observation is remarkably pertinent to South Africa. Our society is still dealing with political, economic, and religious problems that naturally make the subject of leadership more important. Periods of uncertainty,

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Do You See This Woman?¹: Women Transforming the Church²

Janet Trisk

ABSTRACT

There was, in some quarters, hope that the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa would result in a church free of patriarchy and clericalism. Although there are now women bishops, priests, and deacons, the structures of patriarchy and clericalism remain. As Audre Lorde memorably noted, the master's tools cannot be used to dismantle the master's house. However, where transformation has happened is through the work of a number of lay Anglican women. Focusing on the work of a poet, a social justice activist, and a champion of safeguarding, I shall consider the transformative contributions of each and suggest what might be learnt from their endeavours to enrich the formation of future leaders.

Introduction

I came to be a teacher of theology after a chance meeting with Luke Pato at an Anglican provincial meeting in 1997. Anticipating his upcoming sabbatical, he invited me to take his classes for three months at the College of the Transfiguration, the residential Anglican seminary. I, too, was due for a long leave, so I took up the invitation. I found I loved teaching, and so when, at the end of my short stint at the College, I was invited to join the academic staff full-time, I gladly accepted and ended up there for the next twelve years. Luke's invitation to teach was a deliberate strategy on his part as he sought to introduce women onto the teaching staff of the College. In the next few years, two more women were invited to join the full-time teaching staff, and various other women joined us on a short-term or

1 Luke 7:44.

2 I acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the contributions of Delene Mark, Rosalie Manning, and Betty Govinden, who graciously gave me time to talk about their lives and work and, in Govinden's case, access to some of her private, unpublished writing. Somewhat unconventionally, I shall sometimes refer to them by their Christian names, rather than surnames. I count all three as friends. But I also seek to emphasise that by their baptismal names they are known in the church and by virtue of their baptisms they are ministers of the gospel.

Inclusive Leadership and the Anglican Church

Andrew Warmback

ABSTRACT

This article records some of the steps that the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) has taken on its journey towards becoming a more inclusive church. Within the focus on inclusive leadership, this contribution describes the qualities and practices of inclusive leaders and argues that inclusive leadership is more reflective of leadership appropriate to our African context. It is recognised that the struggle to overcome Apartheid left the church with still further struggles for justice and inclusion; this contribution considers the following selected areas: gender, disability, and the environment, particularly through the resolutions of ACSA's synods. The question is inevitably raised as to the extent to which the resolutions are implemented in the church. In the concluding comments, the Safe and Inclusive Church is presented as a mechanism that has the potential to provide for greater inclusivity.

Introduction

Inclusive leadership is both about the way in which leadership is exercised as well as the overcoming of barriers to inclusion. Inclusivity is about justice, and it is founded on the belief that everyone is made in the image of God and that diversity is to be valued and indeed celebrated. Inclusivity is also about the integrity of creation, the flourishing of all of life. African theories of leadership emphasise the communal and collaborative elements of leadership, which are most in line with inclusive leadership styles.

Significant progress towards racial justice in South Africa was achieved with the advent of a democratically elected government in 1994. However, the church's struggle against other forms of discrimination and oppression has continued. "From Church Struggle to Church Struggles" is the way in which Steve de Gruchy, in his chapter on the mission of the church in post-apartheid South Africa, described the challenge (De Gruchy & De Gruchy 2004: 223-260).

Established in 1870, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, comprises twenty-six dioceses in four

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