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Kairos documents: Mapping the terrain

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Reflection

- “ What contextual conditions generate a kairos moment?
- “ What theological conditions generate a kairos document?
- “ What is the shape of a kairos process?
- “ What is the shape of the product of a kairos process?
- “ What is the shape of a kairos theology?
- “ What new categories are generated by the kairos moment?
- “ How is the Bible used in a kairos theology?
- “ What are the limits of a kairos theology?
- “ How do the insights gained from the kairos journey help us respond to our continuing struggles?



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South African Kairos

- “ The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa (1985)
- “ %Christian, biblical theological comment ã on the situation of death+in South Africa
- “ Focus is a critique of the %current theological models+of the Church, and an attempt to develop %an alternative biblical and theological model+
- “ Of central importance is the process of producing the Document: contextual, collaborative, and consultative, resulting in an %open-ended document+
- “ A second edition was published in 1986



not only for apartheid but also for
the Church+

- ” Recognition of racially, politically, and theological divided church
- ” Recognition of three theologies: state, church, and prophetic
- ” State theology: the theology of the apartheid state
 - . Claiming obedience to the state
 - . Insisting on law and order
 - . Alleging the threat of communism
 - . Invoking the name of God
 - . Misusing theological concepts and biblical texts;
 - . Heretical and blasphemous+



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ology: the theology of the institutional churches

- . Emphasis on reconciliation, but without justice and repentance, and without taking sides
- . Concern with justice, but merely the %justice of reform+, focusing on individual conversion and morality
- . Condemning violence, but not the systemic violence of apartheid and not recognising the necessary violence of the struggle for liberation
- . %The fundamental problem+is an inadequate social analysis, an inadequate understanding of political power, and most importantly an inadequate %individualistic+and %other-worldly+faith and spirituality

” %this kind of faith and this type of spirituality has no biblical foundation+



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Prophetic theology: a call to a particular response to a particular crisis; requires

- . Systemic social analysis
- . Recognition of systemic liberatory trajectory in the Bible
- . Recognition of systemic tyranny in the state
- . Proclaiming the biblical message of systemic change and hope

“ Document calls for a %challenge to action+, including:

- . Taking sides with God with the oppressed
- . Participating in the struggle for a just society
- . Transforming church activities %to serve the real religious needs of all the people+
- . Collaborating with civil society around special campaigns
- . Becoming involved in civil disobedience
- . Proclaiming the %moral duty+of Christians %to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice+

“ Document concludes by restating

- . That the Document is part of a participatory process
- . That the Document does not prescribe particular actions
- . That the Document is intended for all Christians
- . That the Document calls for a return to the Bible
- . That the %challenge to the Church+reflected in this Document %comes from God+

” And calling for support from %our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world+



tion published a year later, in response to the full State of Emergency and massive repression

“ Main changes are to the section on ~~±~~Prophetic Theologyq

- . Explains what is meant by ~~±~~prophetic theologyq including:
- . Requires a return to and a re-reading of the Bible
- . Requires a reading of signs of the times
- . Calls to action
- . Embraces a confrontational stance
- . Offers a message of hope
- . Is deeply spiritual and pastoral

“ Other significant changes

- . Inclusion of %all other faiths and religions+
- . Inclusive, overtly, of Black Theology, African Theology, and the theology of African Independent Churches
- . Emphasises %nateral oppression+within biblical tradition
- . Emphasises %structural inequality+in South Africa
- . Emphasises %message of hope+in the Bible
- . Has footnotes!



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Black theological witness in South Africa: South African Evangelicals critique their own theology and practice (1986)

- “ Arose from Concerned Evangelical engagement with
%legalized ã violence+
- “ Instead of responding to Kairos Document as
evangelicals, would address the kairos moment from
(black) evangelical perspective
- “ Evangelical churches unable to %provide prophetic light
in the situation+; instead, supporting status quo
- “ %our theology ã was inadequate to address the crisis we
were facing+
- “ Evangelicals, inclusive of charismatics and Pentecostals,
had %a responsibility of cleaning+their own house
- “ Emphasis on collaborative process



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of good news have been swallowed up
the poor and oppressed+

Careful probing of theological problems in
Evangelicalism+

- . Conservatism
- . Dualism
- . Reconciliation
- . Justice and peace
- . Theology of the status quo and law and order

“ Structural conformity to apartheid norms within the church

“ Evangelicals must balance the emphasis on the salvation of individuals with an emphasis on social change+

“ Evangelicals must repent and become as radical about structural sin as about moral sin

“ EWISA document challenges a fundamentalist approach to the Bible, modeling instead a approach that takes social location seriously and that stands within the prophetic tradition of the Bible

Pentecostal witness (1988)

- “ Pentecostals %have not borne a true testimony that apartheid is ungodly and unchristian+
- “ The %good news+must engage with the South African situation of %political oppression and economic exploitation+
- “ The silence of Pentecostals %is a willful support of an ideology that is irreconcilable with the Holy Scriptures and with our Christian Faith+
- “ Pentecostal theology as %a conservative status quo theology+, because it %did not take root locally+, because it was %highly spiritual+, because of its %preoccupation with Heaven+
- “ Calls for %a relevant Pentecostal witness+and commits to working ecumenically

Carta Centroamericano (1988)

- “ Addressed %to all Christians and people of good will in the world who are in solidarity with us+(peoples of Central America)
- “ %especially directed to the Christians in Central America and United States of America because they are more directly involved in the struggles+
- “ Call %for peace with dignity and justice+, %self-determination+, %confronting the neo-colonialism and interventionism of the USA+as well as %national and international unjust economic systems+
- “ The document wants %to stimulate reflection and discernment+



Act structure to document

- “ See: the reality of life in Central America, this reality's historical antecedents, the geo-political context of CA, and the social location of Christians in CA in the struggle
- “ Judge: %viewing this historic moment by the light of faith+, including, %signs of the kingdom+, %counter-signs of the kingdom+, the kairos of systemic violence versus the consciousness of the people, leading to %an opportunity to confess the sins of the past and return to the Living God+
- “ Act: choosing an option for the poor, feeding the hope of the people, radicalising our service to the kingdom of God, and calling on regional Christian collaboration
- “ As part of the Act moment, calls for ecumenical solidarity, makes demands on the US government; speaks to Latin American governments, international institutions; and summons churches of colonial countries %o do penitence for 500 years of oppression+
- “ Draws its inspiration from %Jesus who lived in the age of Roman imperialism and opted for the poor+, and from %the God of Life revealed by Jesus+, and from %the Utopia of the coming Reign of God+

road to Damascus: Kairos and conversion (1989)

- “ Christians from different church traditions in seven different nations: Philippines, South Korea, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala
- “ Common situation of %violent political conflict+and %Christians on both sides of the conflict+
- “ See: analysis of %historical and political roots of the conflict+, including imperialism, colonialism, and low intensity conflict total war
- “ Judge: affirming the faith of poor and oppressed Christians and condemning %the sins of those who oppress, exploit, persecute and kill people of Christian faith and commitment+
- “ Act: call to conversion, %to take a stand and to speak out+
- “ Document introduces range of additional social and theological analytical categories, such as %dolatry+, %the national security state+, %heresy+, %apostasy+, %the idol of Mammon+, %right-wing churches+, etc.



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Violence: The new kairos (1990)

- “ Recognition of %a new kairos+in South Africa, five years after the *Kairos Document*
- “ Analyses %a conditions that make violence [in South African townships] possible+
 - . Colonialism, apartheid, deliberate %a third force+conspiracy %a destabilise the emerging new South Africa+
- “ Challenge %a the false prophecies of a new South Africa+ with their %a counter-revolutionary+refusal to deal with systemic/structural violence
- “ Proclaim a prophetic word from the Church that is %a word of hope+and a %a call to justice+
- “ Mainly social analysis; not as overtly biblical and theological as the preceding ~~kairos~~ documents



os for Kenya (1991)

- “ Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord+ (Isaiah 1:18)
- “ Response of National Christian Council of Kenya to KANU government, in mainly social terms, although their own submission to the KRC concludes with some theological reflection (and the text of Amos 5:24)
- “ Locates its voice alongside the voices of the Kenyan people, speaking the truth in the spirit of love+ (Ephesians 4:15)
- “ Addresses contradictions of one party democratic rule and the Kenyan constitution within the realities of the Kenyan context, including issues such as plurality, corruption, tribalism, unemployment, etc.
- “ Concludes with approving of KANU's recognition of the functional independence+ of the state and religious organisations; but recommends that a forum be created where religious leaders and politicians could meet and interact to exchange ideas on matters of mutual interest in order to avoid confrontation+



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the kairos document (1998)

- “ For a socially, just, life-sustaining and democratic Europe: A call to faith communities, trade unions and all movements and individuals that are working for social, political and economic change, to build coalitions to work for the liberation of society from the stranglehold of the deregulated globalised economy and its competitive culture+
- “ Uses See-Judge-Act process, and addresses civil society, calling for the formation of %coalitions+working for %a fundamental change in our economic, political and value system+
- “ See: social analysis of globalisation context, with its roots in European culture. Also analyses the causes of the globalised context, including European culture’s %violent desire for domination and possession+. The focus is economic analysis.
- “ Judge: reflection on the resources available in civil society with which to critique European culture and overcome its effects, including liberation theology and its base community model
- “ Act: drawing on history of resistance in Europe and internal crisis of global capitalism
- “ Informed by liberation theology, but expressed in secular terms



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Zimbabwean kairos document (1998)

- “ A call to prophetic action! Towards the Jubilee year 2000: For a socially just, democratic and prosperous Zimbabwe ã +
- “ Addressed to Zimbabwean Christians
- “ As prophets have done through the ages to this very time, we must search ourselves honestly and speak courageously of the changes that are needed for justice to prevail for all God's people in this land+
- “ Inspired by the engagement in prophetic action+of Jesus to engage urgent needs of economic justice and land redistribution+, the spread of HIV, corruption, family disintegration and environmental degradation
- “ The document is also a critique of the current theological and ecclesiastical models that determine the type of activities the church engages in when faced with national problems+

Each section in the document (governance and civil society, socio-economic policies, gender and youth) begins with a detailed theological framework and includes clear boxes throughout each section on what the theological frame means for Christians of different sectors in Zimbabwe

“ Concludes that document is not final; invites all committed Christians to take the matters we have raised further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or critique them and return to the Bible, as we have tried to do with the questions raised by the crisis of our times+



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Kairos India 2000

- “ Began a consultative process in 1999, with the subtitle: *%A process of reflection for social activists+*
- “ A draft was drawn up by James Massey for discussion, but we have been unable to find a copy (though there is a copy of the address Massey gave)
- “ The draft addressed the Indian church *%with the intent of recapturing the sense and meaning of Kairos as experienced by those belonging to tribal groupings, Dalits and other disenfranchised members of Indian society+*
- “ Sought to develop *%an alternative biblical and theological model to assist the Indian church and Christian community to not only respond to the perceived crisis in Indian political life, but also aid in restructuring India's socio-cultural and political life, which was seen as being responsible for keeping a vast majority of the population, particularly Dalits, tribal groupings, women and other repressed classes captive+*
- “ Included: analysis of socio-cultural system of India, the phenomenon of globalisation, and the demand of social justice

American kairos document (2007)

- “ An internet site was set up in 2006 as a workspace for the developing and drafting of an American Kairos Document.
- “ Site provided access to other ~~kairos~~ documents and related articles ~~%aimed~~ at assisting in the development of a rational approach to social criticism within the North American context+
- “ Though the website is still online, there has been not activity since 10th April 2007



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Truth: a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering (2009)

- “ Produced by %a group of Christian Palestinians+, and addressed to %members of our Churches in this land+, %o our religious and political leaders, and to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world+
- “ Begins with a biblical reference that connects into an analysis of %the reality on the ground+
- “ This %Seeqis then followed by a %Judgeqmoment, as the document explores %A word of faith+, the theological meaning of %hope+, and %love+
 - . For example, %A word of faith+includes, %We believe in one God, a good and just God+; %How do we understand the Word of God?+; and %Our land has a universal mission+

- “ The next moment is a call to ~~act~~ addressing first ~~our~~ brothers and sisters+, including Christians, Muslims, and Jews (each addressed in turn); then ~~the~~ Churches of the world+; then ~~the~~ international community+; then ~~the~~ Jewish and Muslim religious leaders+
- “ This is followed by a related ~~call~~ to our Palestinian people and to the Israelis+, offering the values of and a vision for a united Palestine
- “ The final word is ~~our~~ cry+for ~~hope~~ and faith in God+





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