

Beyond Wars and Anathemas: Hermeneutics of Conflict Resolution in Different Theological Traditions

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Short Paper Abstracts

Samora Ayivor

Dynamism in the Healing Ministry among Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches

Throughout history, humankind has experienced the phenomenon of healing and miracles. While some individuals doubt their existence, others strongly believe in them. The Church's history and scriptures reveal that various healing approaches have been utilized by different people to work miracles. Even Jesus Christ and the early apostles had unique healing approaches that set their ministries apart. This way of ministry continues in most churches and denominations today, where healing is believed, accepted, encouraged, practised, and emphasized. Since the 20th-century Pentecostal movement, certain individuals have been used by God in the healing ministry, displaying remarkable vigour in this field. Ghanaian Pentecostals and Charismatics are no exception to this narrative. This article will explore the healing practices of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Ghana, focusing on faith healing. It will examine the beliefs and understanding that drive each church's practice of faith healing. This study highlights the role of faith in God's power to heal and perform miracles in faith healing. Additionally, the atoning work of Christ on the cross and the infallibility of God's promises of healing are central to faith healing.

Daniela Brůhová

How to live non-violently in violent times: Practical interfaith experiences based on the activities of the Charles University Centre for the Care of the Soul

This paper will present several interfaith activities organised by the Centre for the Care of the Soul. Specifically, it will focus on an interfaith roundtable dialogue entitled: How to Live Nonviolently in Violent Times, a discussion between Christians, Jews and Muslims and on a workshop entitled "Fasting and Feasting", Christians, Jews and Muslims discussed the topic of fasting and possible ways of experiencing fasting from the perspective of their traditions. The third event described is a meditative pilgrimage on the theme of minorities entitled: "Prague through the eyes of minorities". The stories of people who belonged to the Jewish or Roma minority were presented as they wandered through the city. We will ask what these activities have to say about the ability to engage in interreligious dialogue. What rhetoric is used in interfaith communication? How can we find the ability, at a basic level, to address, through dialogue, borderline and conflict issues? How do prejudices and various barriers between different religious traditions contribute to such communication? Is such cooperation only possible at an academic level, or can it be the inspiration for a broader social communication?

Marion Carson

Bouncing Back: Resilience, Recovery and the Joseph Novella

Resilience has been described “the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma.” (Gill Windles) The Joseph novella has been described as a trauma narrative designed to help the people of Israel withstand and reflect on the calamities of imperialism and exile. In it the main character demonstrates resilience and growth in the face of repeated trauma. Joseph’s experiences of complex family dynamics, abandonment, estrangement, imprisonment and betrayal are analogous, in many respects, to those who are, or have been, caught up in addictions. Indeed, the emotional impact of continual trauma of this sort can be a major obstacle in the journey of recovery. Adopting a literary approach and drawing on trauma and resilience theory as well as reception history, this paper explores how the narrative can help people in recovery from substance abuse disorder develop psychological and spiritual resilience and so lessen the risk of relapse.

Olena Chemodanova

The Evil West, or How We Are Blessed: The Antinomy of Relations to the West by Anthony Bloom

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914–2003) of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain was well-known for his public preaching and for the creation of tolerant multi-cultural Orthodox community in the United Kingdom. Being a descendant of Russian post-revolution migrants, he, however, never lived in Russia. His worldview was complicated though typical for many Orthodox in the West. Thus, in his speech to the Russian service of the BBC in 1981 about the importance of Orthodoxy for the West, he presented a broad variety of clichés about rational and unspiritual Western Christianity, Western individualism and selfishness, clerical snobbism, contraposing them to the imagined Eastern spirituality, solidarity, egalitarianism and altruism, which, he believed were still present in the Orthodox Church and traditionally Orthodox countries. Despite such striking clichés, his real practice, however, was open to the Western spirituality and culture. Thus, in his article “On Stigmata”, he presented a theological foundations for the Western tradition of stigmatization; but even more did he in practice by creating tolerant church community that used English language and payed special attention to English saints, by engaging in open public talks to spread the message of the Gospel to broader society, by maintaining ecumenical contacts. Moreover, it can be claimed that he, though unconsciously, became a typical representative of the Western democratic culture. Thus, metropolitan Anthony is an interesting example of an Orthodox thinker who tended to criticize the West, while in reality he was open to the West and, moreover, was an integral part of it.

Felipe Ditttrich

The Critique of Traditional Religious Practices in Deuteronomic Theology

Although often extremely harsh in its exclusivism, Deuteronomy should not be seen as simply providing ideological justifications for the elimination of the original inhabitants of Canaan. It should not, most especially, be used today to justify any kind of political or religious violence, either in Israel or elsewhere. At the same time, the critical potential of Deuteronomy should not be overlooked or wasted. For, from Sinai until the exile in Babylon, the political history of Israel basically revolves around the issue of loyalty to the Covenant. The legacy of Deuteronomy includes prohibitions that have become a common place, truly basic rules of moral behaviour which have greatly contributed to the development of the humankind.

Jiří Dosoudil

The sacred, religion and its symbolism in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. A look at the Russo-Ukrainian conflict from the perspective of the Books of the Maccabees.

The paper introduces selected images and motifs through which the armed conflict in Ukraine is portrayed in public space and explores the overlap of these motifs with religion. The material is drawn from Ukrainian and Russian media and social networks. In the language of state institutions and their propaganda, the work of artists and amateur anonymous authors, the paper recognizes and analyzes motifs of the sacred, religious beliefs or their traditional forms and symbols. It explores how the symbolism used intersects with the reality of the ongoing armed conflict and how this intersection differs from how the two areas permeate each other in the Bible. In doing so, it focuses primarily on the First and Second Books of Maccabees. It shows in what ways the biblical, Ukrainian and Russian perspectives are similar and in what ways they diverge. Out of this comparison, the paper draws several observations about the changing role of religion in contemporary society, especially in the context of crisis, existential danger, and the search for unifying and stabilizing elements of society.

Gabriela Ďurašková

The Inner Conflict - the Path to Inner Transformation?

Inner conflicts often motivate a person to change their surroundings or to change themselves. The process of internal transformation and growth is woven from emerging conflicts and their processing. What mechanisms can we observe that help this process? Assuming that this is a psychological and spiritual process, the paper will analyze the issue both from the perspective of psychodynamic and Jungian approaches, as well as look for parallels in contemporary spiritual literature.

Eva Vymětalová Hrabáková

The Trauma of Joseph and Possibilities of Resilience

"You intended evil against me, but God intended good; and by what has been done, as we see today, he has kept alive a numerous people." (Gen 50:20). This biblical narrative tells the story of Joseph of Egypt, who serves as an example of steadfastness. This paper will present the biblical story from the perspective of a person, community, and ethnicity stigmatized in family and society. It reflects on whether Joseph's trauma and its subsequent transmission to his entire family enabled him and others to mature and transform negative experiences into resilience. This is in the face of social and political change. In exploring Joseph's story, I will consider themes of resilience, forgiveness, and hope for future generations. The presentation will focus on how this biblical 'story' is experienced by a man who has lived through situations of uprooting, rejection, and condemnation, and how those around him can provide support. In addition, the paper will explore what it is like to encounter people who have been hurt. Can they wait for God's answer? This short presentation aims to offer insight into the significance and ethical implications of the biblical story for people in the modern world.

Fr Milutin Janjić

Orthodox Missiology in Context: A Case Study of Missionary Narrative in Russian Orthodox Alaska

Orthodox missiology stands in stark contrast to missions led by Roman Catholic and mainstream Protestant Churches, purportedly maintaining a steadfast allegiance to historical paradigms rather than embracing a transformative shift away from colonialism towards contextual theology. This narrative, staunchly defended by the Orthodox Church, paints a picture of triumph and affirmation in its missionary endeavors, particularly exemplified by the Russian Orthodox mission in Alaska. Championed as a bastion of tradition and continuity, the Orthodox mission in Alaska, spanning from the late 18th century to 1970, is lauded for its purported adherence to inclusive inculturation and the preservation of indigenous identity. The eventual emergence of an autocephalous Orthodox Church in 1970, purportedly rooted in its unique American character and the canonization of St. Herman, is heralded as the crowning achievement of this mission. However, lurking beneath this narrative of success are unresolved questions regarding the influence of historical contingencies, notably the Russian Revolution and the Cold War, on the trajectory of Orthodox missionary endeavors. This paper adopts a critical lens to reevaluate Orthodox missiology, particularly through an examination of missionary narratives in *The Russian Orthodox American Messenger* (1896-1910), a pivotal periodical in Orthodox America. By scrutinizing the portrayal of Orthodox missionary activities in Alaska within this ecclesiastical newspaper, the paper seeks to interrogate the validity and visibility of Orthodox missionary narratives. Through this critical analysis, the paper endeavors to challenge orthodox interpretations and stimulate discourse on the complex interplay between historical context and the construction of missionary identity in Orthodox Alaska.

Bedřiška Kotmelová

The Mystery of God in Vladimir Lossky and the living presence in David Abram

In my presentation, I will examine two different understandings of the overlap and fulfillment of human life: the Mystery of God in the Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky and the idea of living presence in the work of the ecological philosopher David Abram. I will offer a comparison of both approaches and show how one of them can support the space for supporting the spirituality of those who provide end of life care and who either have very different anchoring in a religious environment or are not anchored in such an environment at all. Based on the results of ongoing research into the spirituality of such people, I will show what they themselves evaluate as significant for them to be able to enter this space within their profession and their teams when they are in constant contact with death. And at the same time I will look at what they enter there with, what questions they have, what fears and what expectations. I will try to show what could reveal the way to the open communication of these questions, concerns and expectations about the concept of God's mystery in Vladimir Lossky and living presence in David Abram.

Elza Kuyk

Church buildings as territory of both conflicts and peacebuilding

In the late 16th century the catholic church buildings in the Netherlands were brutally claimed by the protestants as part of the dynamics of the reformation, intertwined with the Eighty Years' War. The catholic church interior and objects were destroyed. In contemporary society the upkeep of these church buildings is often too costly for the protestant faith communities which continue to worship there. Sharing the space with others has become very common. While Protestant Christians do not have a concept of (sacred) space, the feeling that the church building should be used in accordance with their values and with respect to its history, is certainly there.

The multiple use of church buildings is often facilitated by new governance models and legally new owners. The question of who can define and interpret current transformations and who will decide about the practicalities is a daily issue. The protestant faith communities need to (re)define their role in these processes. Maybe relating to their own former role in history might become part of that reflection, depending on how they see themselves as part of heritage debates, similar to how these debates develop regarding colonial histories and the like. This may include also peacebuilding efforts. The renewed public use of church buildings effects the conditions for worship practices. At the same time, ongoing liturgy affirms the architecture and history of the church building, while the specific character of the congregation further defines how this takes shape.

Andrei Meleshko

Call to Peace: Challenge of Eucharist in the Context of War

The tradition of Free Evangelical Churches in post-Soviet countries sees Holy Communion as the most important and valued sacred ordinance, in which Christians are required to participate. One of the conditions which allow a person to participate in Communion is the requirement to be at peace with God, co-believers and other people. The absence of peace in relationships is seen as an obstacle which prevents participation in the Eucharist and requires searching for the restoration of peace as soon as possible. In the context of this teaching this article tries to explore how Free Evangelical Churches in Russia and Ukraine see the demand for peace for participating in Communion on different levels of communication, taking into consideration that churches are involved in the life of their societies and church members and ministers often have clearly expressed social positions. Also the article will propose an idea of how the challenge of the Communion can be proposed to be a challenge for wider society.

Jozef Murin

New Monastic Communities' Responses to Crises and Growth: The Case of Iona Community and Northumbria Community

This paper explores how new monastic communities, specifically the Iona Community and the Northumbria Community, which draw inspiration from Celtic Christianity, respond to contemporary crises. It examines their theological frameworks, communal practices, and outreach programs to highlight how these communities engage with issues such as social injustice, environmental degradation, and spiritual disconnection. Additionally, the paper investigates the concept of human maturity, both in terms of how these communities facilitate the personal growth of their members and how the communities themselves evolve over time. It also considers their impact on fostering maturity among people in their wider circles. Through a comparative analysis, the paper reveals how the unique Celtic Christian heritage of these communities shapes their responses to crises, fosters personal and communal growth, and promotes resilience, hope, and a commitment to social transformation. The findings suggest that these communities provide valuable models for addressing contemporary challenges, blending ancient spiritual wisdom with modern social activism while nurturing human maturity.

Filip Outrata

Jewish and Palestinian Liberation Theology: Dialogue of Perspectives

On the background of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there have evolved specific theological approaches, rooted in the broader tradition of the liberation theology. The aim of the paper is to make a comparison of Jewish liberation theology and Palestinian theology of liberation, focusing on its main proponents (Marc Ellis, Naim Ateek). In what ways do they address the key questions of justice, guilt, reconciliation, and in what ways do they contribute to better understanding and even potential solving of the unfolding tragic conflict?

Kwanghyun Ryu

Intercultural Mission as Post-Conflict Reconciliation: Missionary implications of the church's intercultural practices of creating space and building bridges between Koreans and Japanese in a diaspora situation.

Recent migration flows have created multi-ethnic and multi-cultural situations around the world, where people with differences and diversity coexist in one region and can meet each other. This situation also creates a context in which people who have emotional-relational discomfort, or even hostility, towards each other, mostly by negative memories of the past relationships between countries or ethnic groups, meet together under the same status of migrants in a foreign country, and this condition may serve as an opportunity to re-establish their perceptions of each other and their relationships with each other. In particular, the church is a community formed as one body, crossing all human dividing lines, and entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation in the gospel of Christ's peace, and thus it can become a place or a bridge where such post-conflict reconciliation occurs. From this perspective, this presentation aims to investigate the potential of an intercultural church, in which people with different backgrounds intentionally form one community with equal status and seek to embody a distinctive social life authentic to the gospel through their mutually enriching and challenging interactions, and which can function as space and bridge for this mission as post-conflict reconciliation. Specifically, this paper focuses on the situation in which Koreans and Japanese, who still have unresolved emotional-relational discomfort due to the history of Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsular, meet through the church in a diaspora situation. What are the missionary implications of the church's intercultural practices of creating space and building bridge in a situation where these invisible barriers exist between people? If such practices have the character of mission as post-conflict reconciliation, in what way is this so?

Filip Sedlák

Voluntary Martyrdom of the Early Christians as a Paradoxical Form of Violent Activism

According to many scholars today (e.g., Candida Moss and Matthew Recla), the tradition of martyrdom is a toxic and dangerous one. We can see the early Christian martyrs, with Mark Juergensmeyer, as a kind of terrorists, especially voluntary martyrdom as we see it in the North African tradition and elsewhere. However, this tradition is too important and essential for Christianity, Jesus himself is a martyr, so it is necessary to make it viable in a positive way. The paper will present a perspective that accepts this criticism but sees it in a different light, using René Girard's mimetic theory and trying to show the martyrs as self-violent activists whose voluntary death in the arena exposes the cruelty of the Roman games and their scapegoating function, which was directed not only against Christians but against all victims and also against the other actors as gladiators or beasts, as Tertullian writes in his work *De spectaculis* - On Games. This new perspective of compassion that they try to evoke in the audience, despite their shocking means, can be something that gives life to the Church, even today, across the abyss of time.

Roman Shvets

Glen H. Stassen's Approach to Conflict Resolution

In this paper I analyze the approach to conflict resolution that is proposed by one of the representatives of Just peacemaking theory, Baptist theologian Glen H. Stassen. In particular I try to see how practical this theory can be to the situation of war in Ukraine, giving the tools on how to stop this conflict. I observe and critically analyze this theory, and show that on the one hand it can be really successful, being quite practical, but on the other hand this theory cannot be absolutized, since achieving peace is a rather complex task, depending on many factors that you sometimes cannot influence.

Tomáš Sixta

Hermeneutics of Conflicts of the Contemporary World in the Context of the Environmental Crisis: The concept of the Anthropocene in the perspective of theological anthropology and spirituality

The concept of the Anthropocene has not only been a buzzword in the humanities and the arts for the past 15 years but has been the subject of interest of leading thinkers (Latour, Morton, Haraway). In this paper, I will attempt to introduce the concept (including alternative concepts such as the Capitalocene) and then offer four possible directions for its reception and development in theology, especially with regard to the theme of conflict in its many dimensions (I) From the perspective of theological anthropology, I will attempt to propose the theological concept of the Hamartiocene as a state of conflict between man and creation. (II) I will also ask how this situation of environmental crisis affects human spirituality and how spirituality in the face of these phenomena can build human resilience. In this context I will also mention the topic of environmental grief and resilience. (III) I will focus on the possible constructive role of this concept in the dialogue between cultures and religions. If Pope Francis speaks of an "ecumenism of blood" it is possible to speak by analogy of an "ecumenism of a dying planet". I will try to find a way to read the situation of the dying planet as a possible emergent situation that can (and must) become a starting point, a consensus overcoming the ideological and other conflicts of our world. (IV) The final concern of the paper will be the person of Christ in the context of the Anthropocene, and whether this concept transforms its interpretation in Christian theology, or whether, on the contrary, some concepts from Christian theology about Christ can be used to develop the idea of the Anthropocene so that it is not just a place of mourning, but a theologically grasped concept leading to the reconciliation of society and the overcoming of conflicts.