

'Bliksem!'/Damn it! A ritual-liturgical appreciation of a deadly sin for an angry nation

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This article addresses the current levels of anger within South African society from a practical theological perspective. Following a description of the current context with regard to the on-going processes of reconciliation and transformation two theories are revisited and critiqued. Normative insights are thereafter gained by making use of several stories from the book of Judges, and in conclusion an outline for a liturgical and homiletical theory for praxis is presented. The aim of this contribution as a whole is to reflect – in a praxis-theory cycle – on the theme of anger in order to formulate practical theological ritual-liturgical route markers for South Africa.

The litany of a strike

In the year 2000 South African journalist Chris Louw wrote a letter to the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* entitled '*Boetman is die bliksem in*' [Boetman is very angry], which elicited a huge public debate in South Africa.¹ The debate originated from Louw's reaction in the form of the mentioned letter, which was a response to a book by Willem de Klerk entitled *Afrikaners: Kroes, kras, kordaat*. Louw's letter was as a reaction a kind of catharsis and the content and the anger in the letter were directed at the generation of Afrikaners who were older than he was and of which De Klerk (FW's brother) was a member who some years earlier referred condescendingly to Louw as '*Boetman*' [Sonny]. I believe that, with regard to my theme today, namely the expression of anger in our South African context, Louw was just an early prophet.

Before Louw wrote his letter, and ever since that time, there has been many people in our country who are angry and remain so. For various reasons people were and are disillusioned about what happened and is happening in our country, and how the situation was and is being handled. Some people were angry a decade or two decades ago, but are no longer. Others again were not angry in the past, but they are today. In our own day many people are, in my view, either still furious or becoming furious because of what happened and what is happening. When blatant injustice, corruption, racism, poverty, poor leadership and service delivery become endemic, then anger is not an unfamiliar presence in the bodies of many South Africans. When confronted by that which threatens what we hold dear, we experience an increase in the rate of our heartbeat, rising blood pressure, a little sweat on the forehead and a slight quivering of our hands. But then, statistically speaking, Christians make up 84.14% of the current population (Jackson 2014:1), and good Christians do not get angry, and if on occasion they do get angry and do show their emotion as we Africans often do, we do so, but not in church. I believe that a quick survey of the current South African social landscape supports my preliminary observations, namely that South Africans are angry.

All over the country workers are striking. It has become an almost daily ritual to see miners, unhappy citizens or farm labourers respond to their leaders making use of megaphones by dancing, shouting and burning tyres. Can we deepen our understanding of this situation if we for a brief moment redefine these strikes as litanies, responsorial outcries in which the people get the opportunity to communicate their anger? There is, however, much more to observe in the symbolic landscape than these strikes.

So, for example, just south of Polokwane in Limpopo Province there is the so-called Boer Genocide Memorial (cf. Barnard, Cilliers & Wepener 2014:34) consisting of thousands of white crosses. A cross is planted there, with accompanying rituals, for every farmer killed in South Africa, and as a memorial it symbolises much more than just grief, but also anger at the prevailing situation. And in the Western Cape the music group *Dookoom*² recently launched a song entitled

1. I also published a popular book on this theme. See Wepener (2015).

2. The name Dookoom derives from the Indonesian 'doekoen' meaning a shaman who heals people and solves problems, and up till the 1960s the doekoens led revolts against hunger and oppression in rural Indonesia (cf. Van der Westhuizen 2014:2).

'Larney jou p**s³ [Boss, you c**t] written by lead singer Isaac Mutant, who says that he wrote the song as a reaction to the farm labourer strikes in De Doorns in the same province. The group denies accusations that they propagate violence and say: 'Daar is 'n verskil tussen jou woede uitdruk en die aanstigting van geweld. Kom ons fokus op waarom mense kwaad is' [There is a difference between expressing your anger and the instigation of violence. Let's focus on why people are angry] – (Blignaut & Koen 2014:3).

Speaking at the funeral of Mido Macia, a 27-year-old Mozambican taxi driver who died after he had been tied to a police van and dragged for 500 metres for arguing about a traffic infringement, Graca Machel, the widow of late former president Nelson Mandela, said, 'South Africa is an angry nation' and added:

the level of anger and aggression is rising. This is an expression of deeper trouble from the past that has not been addressed. We have to be more cautious about how we deal with a society that is bleeding and breathing pain. (Laing 2013:1–3)

Newspaper articles with titles such as, 'Ek is kwaad, baie kwaad na rooftog' [I am angry, very angry after robbery] – (Nel 2014:15) are to be found in newspapers almost daily.

According to Friedman (2014:1), Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy, South Africa's angriest people are the black middle class who still face racism in the workplace and for whom higher income did not mean happiness and contact with white people did not translate into good relations; on the contrary, it meant contact with prevailing racial attitudes, which is translated into anger.⁴ And, of course, I can add my own feelings to these examples and most probably also the emotions of some of my fellow South Africans who are here around the tables. What was the dominant emotion we experienced when we watched the news bulletin describing the death of Anene Booysen on 02 February 2013 in Bredasdorp in the Western Cape? She was the victim of a gang rape during which her intestines were ripped out whilst she was still alive, only to die later in hospital. Or when you read about more corruption, or are asked for a bribe by an officer of the law? What do we feel as we watch the unfolding of the Nkandla debacle? I will not speak on behalf of poor people and their emotions when they realise what salaries some people in our country earn. These examples will suffice, but I will just add to this a poem one of our students⁵ sent me 2 months ago, after I told them that I am writing a popular Afrikaans book entitled *Bliksem!* and what it is about. I read her poem:

#blackface
we are the exhausted generation
fighting a war our fathers chose
our faces the offensive reminder

3. 'Farmer Abraham had many farms, many farms had farmer Abraham/I work on one of them/ and so do you / let's go burn them down' are the first lines of the lyrics.

4. According to Friedman (2014:2) many unemployed black people do not have any contact with white people at all and many of the black blue collar workers' first direct contact is with a black manager.

5. The student is Marileen Steyn and I use her poem here with permission.

of what we didn't do
carrying the cross in silence
to compensate
to move on
to avoid being brand marked
the ultimate sin
And yet
it is unavoidable
it is unrelenting
it is unforgiving
And as much as we are denied the right to say it
it is #unfair

Based on this very preliminary exploration of the South African landscape as an attempt to bring the empirical-descriptive task (Osmer 2008) of Practical Theology into view, I am convinced that large parts of the South African population are angry. In the year 2000 Boetman was '*die bliksem in*'. In the decades before 1994 many South Africans struggling for their freedom were also '*die bliksem in*'. By the year 2014 I think South Africa as a nation is '*die bliksem in*' (cf. also Colpo 2013). This situation, of course, raises the question: Why this is the case? In this regard I will now turn to theories that may provide some insight into the current context. The aim of my contribution as a whole is to reflect – in a praxis-theory cycle – on the theme of anger in order to formulate practical theological ritual-liturgical route markers for South Africa in 2014.

A lament for liminality, a funeral for the grieving process and absolution for brave sinners

Firstly, in this second part I will compose a lament for liminality and concomitantly I will conduct a funeral for the grieving process. I want to press on with the question of why South Africa is angry by trying to indicate that on an academic-theoretical level we are the victims of superimposed phase models (such as those by Van Gennep, Turner and Kübler-Ross described below) and that these thought-out schemes are in some instances preventing us from journeying further on the road towards reconciliation. Here it is important to note that we are all part of an on-going story or journey, which I will call the journey towards reconciliation.⁶ In his book entitled *Reconciliation: Restoring justice* (2002), John de Gruchy aptly remarks: 'But reconciliation as a final achievement is, in a sense, always beyond our grasp.' And there have been many scholars who have attempted to better understand this on-going process of reconciliation in South Africa by means of models and schemes.

One such attempt in Practical Theology was based on the anthropological work of Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1972, 1996) and his understanding of the so-called 'social drama', but also on his work on rites of passage and concepts such as *societas*, *communitas* and liminality. Turner's social drama attempted to explain the anatomy of a transitional time through which

6. To quote one definition of reconciliation that serves the argument: 'Reconciliation is the continuous process through truth and justice aimed at the restoration of broken relationships, so that a new reality which is qualitatively different to any previous relationships comes into being' (Wepener 2009:49).

a group or society moves, for example, from apartheid to democracy; such a time consists of the phases of breach, crisis, recovery, and then either reintegration or schism. Based on the work of Arnold van Gennep (1996) on rites of passage, augmented by his own work among the Ndembu people of Zambia, Turner developed the tripartite structure of rites of passage, namely separation, liminality and reintegration and specifically also the notion of liminality creating a *communitas* time: Turner's work was used by scholars such as Arbuckle (1991) in his *Grieving for change* and in South Africa, by Coenie Burger (1995) in his Congregational Studies book entitled *Gemeentes in transitio*, to mention only two. The point made was that these structures and phases can be of assistance to congregations, communities and even nations to see how they move through a transitional time. Such a time or transition period has the characteristics of a *communitas* time during which those in the *communitas* time are in so-called liminality. And as such liminality is a potentially fruitful and creative time that should be embraced and utilised.

Another important scheme is the well-known five phases of the grieving process described by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the early days after 1994 many observers found much comfort in this scheme and defined people's reaction to the early years of transition as one of denial. In her book *Country of my skull* Antjie Krog (1998; cf. also Wepener 2009:70) makes this point about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and says that denial was the first reaction of some South Africans to the findings of the TRC. Previously advantaged people often denied and cast suspicion on the historical facts that came to light during the sittings of the TRC. Krog quotes the psychiatrist Dr Kaliski, according to whom such a reaction actually is a first step in dealing with the truth. 'Previously people said nothing, now at least they are denying the information.' And of course these observations fitted neatly into Kübler-Ross's five-fold scheme.

Ritual studies expert Ronald Grimes (2000:105) makes the important observation that processes must not be viewed as unchangeable structures. When scientists describe processes they often produce a handy triple beat, for example, the three phases in the rites of passage that comprise separation, transition and incorporation. Grimes rightly points out that such a scheme is based on generalisation and is a reproduction of an invented scheme based on existing rituals rather than the discovery of these patterns within the rituals.⁷ Van Gennep's scheme derives from male initiation rituals, which then served as a prototype for all other rituals in order to indicate the movement from one social space to another. However, Van Gennep's scheme is transferred to rituals and later imposed onto other rituals, and has thus served as a formula that prescribes the performance of actual ritual practice to groups. The result is a 'how-to' manual for rituals. According to Grimes (2000:107), this is a total oversimplification and derives typically from Western

philosophy thought out by men on the basis of the Hegelian dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), which ultimately imposes these logocentric patterns on ritual traditions where they do not fit. 'In short, invented patterns, treated as if they were discovered, came to be prescribed as if they were laws determining how rites should be structured'.

Many theologians are keeping these structures alive, and 20 years after the official demise of apartheid are still singing the praises of liminality as if we have just entered a transitional time. One good example of this, in my view, is the work done on lament, which became prescribed to faith communities via academia. In this regard, for example, the Reformed liturgy, which is in my view a liturgy of grace and gratitude (cf. Gerrish 1993), has become one long liturgy of lament. In 1994, for example, the traditionally predominantly white Reformed churches in South Africa were told that they should grieve for change, in other words grieving was prescribed as a kind of remedy for the felt losses in that time. This was repeated in 2004, and 20 years down the line, in 2014, they are still told to lament because of the impact the changes of 1994 had on their position within the South African society. Lament is important, of course, but is it really the most needed ritual-liturgical expression in 2014 in South Africa, or did some scholars get stuck in a post-apartheid ecclesial context without acknowledging the current context?

Instead of working in an inductive style by means of qualitative fieldwork at a grass roots level and a theory-praxis reciprocity, these schemes and concepts are superimposed on South Africa, keeping us in a sort of liminal fixation. Connor (1994), for example, with reference to Kübler-Ross's work, speaks of the myths of denial and acceptance. In his work he refers to authors who pointed out soon after the first publication of *On death and dying* that dying is surely not such a linear process as she proposes in her book. He also quotes her definition of acceptance, namely:

a patient who does not want visitors anymore, who does not want to talk anymore, who has usually finished his unfinished business, whose hope is no longer associated with cure, treatment and prolongation of life. (Connor 1994:163)

According to Connor, this is certainly not acceptance, but rather depression. The phase models can be useful and insightful, but in my view and with regards to the South African context also dangerous.

These specific models hold us hostages to liminality, as if we must still lament – the changes that occurred after 20 years of democracy. My argument is that we should rid ourselves of these myths, because in the on-going journey towards reconciliation, anger is one important piece of the puzzle, but these schemes are preventing South Africans from fully embracing their deeply felt fury, which is a true gift from God (cf. Lester 2003:3). Another reason for this state of affairs has to do with how the body and also emotions are viewed, and then also specifically anger as an emotion. Thus I now turn to emotion in general and anger specifically.

⁷Grimes, for example, believes that a scholar such as Mircea Eliade was a mythmaker rather than an interpreter or discoverer of myths.

When it comes to the theme of emotion, the problem is not only that of emotion and its role and place in Practical Theology, but also the fact that anger has traditionally been viewed as a so-called negative emotion and in the course of history been elevated to the status of deadly sin (cf. Fouché 1999:56–70; Lester 2003:2 and Chapter 7). Thus, after we have been freed mentally from the shackles of phase schemes, our bodies must also be freed. Dutch theologian Gerardus van der Leeuw wrote as early as 1949: ‘We do not have bodies, we are bodies’ (cf. Van der Leeuw 1949:9). In his book *The Angry Christian* Andrew Lester explains the philosophical and theological biases against emotion, but exclusively from a Western perspective.⁸ Lester shows how, with few exceptions, the Stoic position was preferred in the West, with someone such as Kant viewing emotion as ‘an illness of mind’, which is a good example of the way that emotion was viewed as opposed to the rational. He also explores recent neuroscientific research, which investigates how emotions function as part of an evolutionary process in human beings, noting that they are connected with ‘our earliest ancestors in solving survival problems’ (Lester 2003:30). So, for example, rage or anger can be closely connected to mobilising the body in dangerous situations. He goes on to show how these negative views of emotion as well as the body-mind dualism infiltrated theological thought with the resulting undervaluation of emotion (cf. also Veldsman 2014). Lester (2003:52–53) makes a strong plea for incorporating emotions when thinking about personhood and a theological anthropology. I quote him: ‘Constructing a theological anthropology without attending to the affective life is like trying to understand an automobile without addressing the role of the motor’ (2003:52).

Lester’s argument should be acknowledged; however, I am convinced that it is composed for a Western audience and we should appreciate it as such. Emotion is traditionally not viewed in such negative light in Africa as in the West, and thus I consider a lengthy argument for a positive appreciation of emotion to be redundant in our Sub-Saharan African context; furthermore, in our context such an importation of the Western legacy does not take the existing African context seriously. In this regard Africa has an advantage and concomitantly also the appreciation of the body. The importance of the body will be attended to in the next section as an important category for knowing, especially with regards to rituals and liturgy. What is needed in our context, however, is to revisit anger as such and reflect on its negative appropriation in theology and the church.

The question I am still pondering at this stage is: Why the situation regarding anger in South Africa is what it is? I believe that people are angry and we can see expressions of this all over the country, except in one place, and that is the church. To my mind, churches and faith communities are still trapped in schemes imposed upon them – schemes in which academic theologians play no minor role. And along with the shackles of these schemes, we carry the burden of regarding

8. Like Lester (2003:84), I do not view anger as an instinct that lies dormant and builds up to later burst out or erupt, but rather as an emotional response that is activated as a reaction to a perceived threat.

anger as a sin. Christians should not show when they get angry (especially Christian women), or so it is often assumed.

From an evolutionary perspective we can view anger as part of creation and critical for our survival. In fact, anger is a diagnostic window through which we can gain insight into ourselves that we will get nowhere else (Peterson 1993:1). And from a biblical perspective, Lester concludes his study of the Scripture and anger with the following statement:

... the Bible is not focused on eradicating the internal *experience* of anger, our capacity for anger, but on *why* we get angry and on how to creatively handle the *expression* of anger. (Lester 2003:148–149)

A closer look at anger in the Bible, both the anger of characters and the anger of God and Jesus, shows, according to Lester, that anger arises from love. We get angry and God and Jesus got angry because what they love was threatened. This insight can be linked to why we ourselves and also the people of South Africa get angry. We get angry because we love. From a social-constructionist perspective we get angry because our cherished narratives are being threatened. We get furious for various reasons, but all those reasons can be traced back to narratives. People in South Africa are angry, because there are dreams or narratives which they hold dear that are currently being threatened; or in any case, that is how they perceive it. Some South Africans are angry because the freedom they struggled for is being threatened, whilst other South Africans are angry because their cherished narrative of a Rainbow Nation which they bought into is threatened. And in most cases these narratives converge with each other and with many other narratives that are being threatened.⁹ In short, we are angry because we love. To get angry for the right reasons is not only not a sin; on the contrary, it is a necessary expression of love.¹⁰

Thus now, after the litany of a strike, a lament for liminality, my funeral for the grieving process and the absolution I gave to a deadly sin, I propose a service as witness to the resurrection of the body, but specifically a service that is conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Service as witness to the resurrection of the body

Osmer (2008) calls addressing the question: ‘What ought to be going on?’ the normative task of Practical Theology. Thus, in this section, in an attempt to address this question, I propose that we do not only reconsider the body and emotion in our

9. To further illustrate the point, one can listen to the fury of some South African expats when they hear that South Africa has not yet gone up in flames while they are sitting somewhere else in the world. In this regard their very negative narrative of the downfall of a nation after 1994 is threatened, which ignites their anger. Viewing pictures of me on Facebook with a Castle Lager in my hand on one of South Africa’s beaches in late December, whilst they huddle up for an afternoon of ice-fishing in Northern Alberta, is not good for their blood pressure.

10. In 2004 in an article titled ‘Aggression, anger and violence in South Africa’ Maake Masango (2004:995) related the aggression, anger and violence in the country of a decade ago to a history of oppression. Masango’s observation regarding our unique history should still be kept in mind in our own day; however, I propose that his observations should be augmented with the above reasons of enforced fixed schemes as well as the current contextual challenges of our day.

theologising, but that within the field of Practical Theology in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa we work with a bodily-based epistemology as embodied in ritual action. I begin to address this normative practical theological task with an argument regarding bodies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Our bodies are not stupid. On the contrary. Humans were created as psychosomatic entities, and as such knowing is not only restricted to the cognitive abilities of our brains, but is a function of our bodies too. When I refer here to the body I do not only mean our emotions as additional to thinking, but our physical bodies. When writing about death, the homiletician Tom Long (2008) refers to the way in which he often drives home after work, but as he steps out of the car after a long drive he has no idea how he got there and remarks – of course in his case also with some eschatological undertones – ‘our bodies know the way home’. I will, however, not take my first cue from a homiletician here, but from systematic theologian Theodore Jennings Jr., who has over the past decades published widely on liturgy and ritual, as well as from the liturgist Elochukwu Uzukwu.

In his article entitled ‘On ritual knowledge’ Jennings (1996:325–326) shows how ritual action serves a noetic function as a way of gaining knowledge, transmitting knowledge and also displaying knowledge. Ritual action is usually not just repetition, but in the variations it can be observed how it is a mode of inquiry. This knowledge, Jennings argues, is gained by and through the body, thus by means of embodiment. ‘It is not so much that the mind “embodies” itself in ritual action, but rather that the body “minds” itself or attends to itself in ritual action’ (Jennings 1996:327). The ritual knowledge is furthermore gained through action’ thus, active involvement in the ritual and not detached observation, which means that the ritual knowledge is not prior to the action. And the knowledge gained through ritual action is ‘knowledge gained in action of action’ and aimed at finding out how to act (Jennings 1996:330), or formulated differently, ritual is an ‘ontological or cosmogonic praxis’. Joining in the action is the way of finding out what will be happening, like in a dance or for our purposes today, to join in a strike action, to toyi-toyi, to march, to join with our body in the embodied ritualised angry scream of a nation. Thus, the knowledge of ritual, according to Jennings (1996:331), is praxiological, as it is knowledge ‘gained, transmitted, and received’ in and through action performed by the human body. In short: by utilising the insights of Jennings, I wish to move the by now very popular argument of moving beyond a body-mind dualism further to argue for a bodily-based epistemology when conducting ritual-liturgical research (cf. also Barnard & Wepener 2012). As Don Saliers (2012:297) puts it: ‘The study of worship understands that the body remembers long after the mind may be dimmed’.

We can build on Jennings’s bodily-based epistemology and adhere to Eugene Peterson’s observation that anger can serve as a diagnostic tool or window, stating that: ‘[w]hen anger erupts in us, it is a signal that something isn’t working right.

There is evil, or incompetence, or stupidity lurking about’ (Peterson 1993:1). Anger can assist us in detecting truths via our bodies as they react when treasured narratives are being threatened, and in this regard the action in which humans participate can also serve a noetic function. This is a critical point, namely that our anger surfaces when what we hold dear is threatened, and thus ‘that which makes us angry reveals much about our values’ (Lester 2003:200), or in Peterson’s words (1993:1), ‘when we are angry we know we are on to something that matters, that really counts’. Up to this point I have made use of a selection of sources to further my arguments for a recovery of the importance of the body and even a bodily-based epistemology, since there is currently a flood of sources making similar arguments. But I do also want to turn to the continent of Africa, where this line of thinking is especially necessary and where I believe the ‘translation’ of worship into the vernacular did not occur by means of a verbal translation from Latin to Swahili or Shona or Sotho, but into the vernacular of Africa, which is body language (Wepener 2013).

With regards to the body, I would like to ground my argument in Sub-Saharan Africa. In a paper I had to present to the Societas Liturgica in 2013 on liturgy and language on our continent, I identified five languages or discourses with regards to the liturgy in Sub-Saharan Africa (cf. Wepener 2013). These languages include the language of the body, of the (evil) S/spirit(s), of power, of the Old Testament, and of healing. To some extent all these languages of liturgy in Sub-Saharan Africa are related, to borrow the title of Elochukwu Uzukwu’s book *Worship as Body Language* (1996), in which he refers to humans as embodied spirits with a preference to adopt motion as a response to God in worship (Uzukwu 1996:xi, 6), rather than the more Western preference for verbal responses, as well as the fact that in oral cultures bodily gestures are more highly developed. ‘While it is likely in Africa to have motions of the body unaccompanied by speech, it is less likely to speak without body movement’ (Uzukwu 1996:6). I am convinced that there is already a resource to tap into on our continent, namely the importance of the human body and bodies plural, and the concomitant potential to express anger by means of body language and as such to join in a way of knowing. From a more therapeutic point of view, this is healthy seeing that the suppression of anger can lead to people becoming spiritually and mentally truncated (Lester 2003:87).

The descriptive-empirical part with which I started out should be recalled here, seeing that bodily performances are currently primary expressions of anger in South Africa and connect closely with the language of liturgy in Africa, and in this regard the ‘ethnographic turn’ (Saliers 2012:292) in Liturgical Studies has served us well. If anger is one piece of the puzzle, then I propose that taking a bodily-based epistemology seriously in our context is another piece of the larger puzzle, although such an epistemology will have serious implications for methodology when the enacted bodily performance becomes the primary text for research. With these observations regarding the body in Africa, I now

firstly turn to mutilated bodies in the book of Judges, which will be incorporated as part of the pragmatic task.

Liturgies of anger for South Africa: The healing power of shouting 'bliksem!'

I want to reiterate the fact that I view anger as but one small piece of the puzzle¹¹ in the on-going journey of South Africa towards reconciliation or life in its fullness. Anger could be more than one piece of the puzzle – but then a 1000-piece puzzle in which the different pieces of the puzzle can fit in different places like a mosaic that emerges as we journey on, rather than a fixed scheme. Anger, in my view, thus does not necessarily fit after denial and before depression, or as part of segregation before liminality. Maybe our anger is the Sanctus of acceptance or the Amen of crossing the Jordan and entering a new South African *societas* – a *societas* in which we will live for ever after, albeit not necessarily always happily.

Based on the above-mentioned practical theological tasks (cf. Osmer 2008), I will now in conclusion also present in broad strokes my vision for the pragmatic task that can be phrased as 'what shall we do?' (Osmer 2008). And what I wish to argue here is that churches and other faith communities should acknowledge the anger of people as well as the anger of God and that, based on this, liturgies and rituals should be developed that can express both the anger of God and the worshippers. I thus propose that the anger expressed in the South African landscape be 'invited' into the rituals and liturgies of churches and faith communities as expressions of love in a trying context (cf. Kok 2014:9). This is not easily done, and many misconceptions with regard to anger and Christianity will need to be dealt with before worshippers will participate in such liturgies. As David Blumenthal (2014:1) notes: 'Christians in particular have a hard time bringing anger into their prayer life'. Nevertheless, what I present here I will call a broad outline for ritual-liturgical route markers.

Thus far I have argued exclusively that getting angry is good and even necessary, but getting angry also has a potential dark and dangerous side. Therefore I will propose guidelines here for getting angry that I will incorporate into the ritual-liturgical route markers as a kind of framework to be kept in mind within which liturgies and rituals of anger can function. In my already mentioned book on the theme (*Kookpunt!*) I have spent a whole chapter on these guidelines for getting angry entitled '*Rillers uit Rigters: enkele riglyne oor hoe om jou te "strip"*' [Thrillers from Judges: some guidelines on getting angry] and worked with three texts from the book of Judges, namely chapters 11 (Jephta's Daughter), 19 (the Levite's Concubine) and 4 (Jael and Cicera in the story of Deborah).¹² I here summarise my findings, but before I

do so I want to stress the importance of also, as part of this research, developing a biblical theology of anger in which an angry God and an angry Jesus are embraced along with the human potential for getting angry that is rooted in God's creation and is viewed as part of being created in the image of (an angry) God as a necessary backdrop for my guidelines. What I propose is not a liturgy of lament for the desert time or after the fall of Jerusalem in Babylon, thus not a lament of liminality, but liturgies of anger to be performed whilst finding our feet in the promised land, where it sometimes seems that everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes.

Naming the evil that causes the anger is a necessary first step. At the annual meeting of the South African Practical Theological Society Maake Masango remarked about certain South African politicians: 'I may not throw a stone at them, but I may throw a sermon at them.' This is it, name the demons by throwing liturgies and sermons at them that firstly name what the problem is, although in an interview with another colleague he referred to such an act in our current dispensation as 'a kiss of death'. After the naming, I believe, follows awareness that must be nurtured. The importance of creating awareness is in my own view one of the main reasons why the texts of terror were not deleted from Judges, but indeed kept to create awareness. Thirdly, exorcising is necessary, in other words after naming and creating awareness, the reason or source of the anger is reframed as not having the last say. I believe that is why the young girls of Israel annually remembered the daughter of Jephtha as an on-going act of exorcising saying never and never again. These are the first three guidelines (naming, creating awareness, exorcising).

The second set of guidelines comes from Judges 19 (listen, leadership and love). In short and firstly, the act of listening is critical. When we listen to the text of Judges 19 carefully, we realise that all the women are silent and that only powerful men get the chance to speak. Who are the voices that are heard in South Africa and how can one facilitate the quiet voices to also being included? Along with listening, leadership is critical. We need leaders, specifically also liturgical leaders, who can assist in including the silent voices and who can in general facilitate a good process. Prophets and preachers we have in abundance on our continent, but we do not have priests who can simultaneously listen to the heartbeat of God and the heartbeat of a nation and let the liturgy join in that rhythm are scarce. Judges 19–21 is also framed by the statement that in those days there was not yet a king in Israel. After the horrific event in chapter 19, because of a lack of leadership, the situation escalates further and further into a situation in which human trafficking occurred. We need priests. And lastly it is important that when we speak, we should speak the truth in love (cf. Tisdale 2010).¹³

11.Regarding the image of a piece of the puzzle, see also the book edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio and Erik Doxtader (2004) entitled *Pieces of the puzzle. Keywords on reconciliation and transitional Justice*.

12.Some of the sources consulted for the work on Judges include Brueggemann (2003), Butler (2009), Chaney (2007), Guest (2003), Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley (1998), Theron (2009) and Tribble (1984), to name but a few.

13.Lester (2003:218) remarks: 'If separated from love's guiding light or foundational principles, anger's destructive powers will lead us into unethical behaviour even as we try to confront unethical behaviour.'

The last chapter is chapter 4, which I read as a parody – a story about a mighty general known for his army of chariots fleeing on foot into the mountains only to be killed by a woman with a tent peg – which in my view illustrates the importance of lampooning the powers that be.¹⁴ Recently on a radio interview South African comedian Pieter Dirk Uys remarked: ‘*Lag vir jou vrees; dit maak jou vrees minder vreeslik*’ [laugh at your fears; it makes your fears less frightful]. This is something that South Africa’s gifted cartoonists such as Zapiro help us with on a weekly basis.

Anger expressed can be either good or bad and this means ethical direction is needed (cf. Lester 2003:218). Lester provides four ethical guidelines that are informed strongly by a variety of Scriptural references. Different to Lester, I use only the book of Judges, and specifically also only three of the most horrific stories documented in that book. These guidelines I believe can form a backdrop in the pragmatic task and along with these guidelines I also propose that the following route markers be kept in mind:

- **Praying:** Blumenthal (2014:2–16) utilises three Psalms in order to assist worshippers in what he calls ‘praying our anger’ for ‘rage expressed, not repressed’. What is helpful from Blumenthal’s work (2014:9, 16) is how he utilises Psalm 83 as a prayer of national anger and how he shows that ‘[p]rayer is living in the presence of the divine, in grace and rage’, but that this anger is one aspect of a life of prayer and that worshippers should not remain in that mode for too long. Anger expressed in prayer is thus one important aspect of prayer, worship and liturgy, but one aspect amongst many others. Thus, just like the liturgy of lament must end somewhere, so must the liturgy of anger. In the Bible God is not always lamenting or always angry, but the point here is that anger should also be embraced in the liturgy.
- **Preaching:** Similar to the normative direction that the reflection of some stories from Judges gave to this paper, sermons can be developed and preached in which the afore-mentioned insight from the chosen chapters in Judges regarding Christianity and anger is communicated, but also the potential dangers of expressing our anger. Lester (2003:226–227) proposes a cycle that should be interrupted by means of an eight-step pastoral care approach, including recognising the anger, acknowledging it, demobilising the body, identifying threatened narratives, evaluating the validity of the threat, transforming stories, changing previous patterns of dealing with anger and expressing anger creatively. Sermons can take cognisance of this cycle and assist hearers in this regard.
- **Singing and dancing:** Anger energises people and provides courage to, for example, strike, march, toyi-toyi, circulate petitions, and this energy is a valuable source to be tapped into and utilised in various parts of the liturgy. Here I can imagine a flow between the liturgy of a Sunday and the liturgy of a strike, thus taking the liturgy

14. Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem can, of course, be read in a similar fashion.

to the streets and the streets of South Africa to the liturgy. In South Africa we do not have to beat about the bush with regard to the anger of the average furious citizen and rid our language of all religion in doing this – on the contrary. Religious language – and as such embodied religious language – is the language of Sub-Saharan Africa, and affluent suburbs where this is not the case are the exception and not the rule.¹⁵

- **Ministry:** Expressing our anger through the liturgy and rituals is one aspect within the overarching task of Practical Theology and should be done along with preaching, teaching and caring (cf. Lester 2003:221) and thus not in isolation, whilst acknowledging from the outset the larger ministerial context within which it should be done. So, for example, I believe discussion groups after such liturgies of anger can be most helpful for people to explore the experiences that worshippers had during these liturgies and using them as diagnostic tools to better understand which narratives in their lives are being threatened.

An expression of anger is an expression of hope. In pastoral care and counselling with couples, anger is preferred to apathy (cf. Lester 2003:191), because anger is an indication that a person still cares. I believe that angry liturgies are hopeful liturgies, ritual expressions that we still care and a refusal to accept that the bank of justice is bankrupt. Such liturgies are our hopeful insistence that we can indeed still cash the cheque of reconciliation in this country, in spite of our experiences that sometimes there seem to be insufficient funds. Such ritual-liturgical expressions will be our attempts to heave a stone of hope out of a mountain of despair. Our angry liturgies are and will be cries for wholeness and equilibrium for a bleeding country and continent (cf. Mbiti 1999) and possibly also a wake-up call for those who need it. Adapting the well-known words from Francis of Assisi’s benediction, I wish that: God may continue to bless South Africa with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

Conclusion

God’s anger is an expression of his love and I believe that, in South Africa in 2014, so is ours. *Verdomp!*

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15. See in this regard also Niemandt’s characteristics of a missional liturgy (2014).

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