Book of Job through Central African eyes: theodicy, suffering and hope amongst Fang Protestant Christians in Equatorial Guinea

Abstract
This thesis seeks to close the gap between the growing Christianization of much of sub-Saharan Africa and the relative marginalization of ordinary African voices in the areas of biblical hermeneutics and contextual theology. In spite of the rise of Christianity in Africa, studies offering a descriptive analysis of how grassroots Christians interpret and appropriate the themes and theologies of a particular biblical book are remarkably atypical. A central argument of the thesis is that experiences of the Christian faith and the dominant themes, theologies and trajectories adopted by local believers are uniquely informed by the intersection of biblical hermeneutics, local culture and ecclesial praxis. Referring to this dynamic as the hermeneutics-culture-praxis triad, a contextual reading of the book of Job amongst Fang Christians (mostly Protestants) in Equatorial Guinea seeks to elucidate the interconnections between hermeneutical reflection, local Fang culture and dominant ecclesial practices. Providing the overall structure for the thesis, each “pole” or “source” of the hermeneutics-culture-praxis triad is explored at length in part one (chapters 1-3) of the study. With respect to hermeneutics, chapter one gives a general overview of the hermeneutics-culture-praxis triad in highlighting its significant relationship to African Christianity as well as delineating why the book of Job provides a particularly suitable window into an exploration of issues affecting contemporary African Christianity. Chapter two focuses on the culture of the Fang peoples of Equatorial Guinea and their history, beliefs and practices which inform local readings of the book of Job. Chapter three explores the ecclesial praxis and histories of three significant Protestant denominations in Equatorial Guinea: the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Equatorial Guinea and two Pentecostal churches – “Joy of My Salvation” and Assembly of the Holy Spirit. These provide the interpretive communities in which I observed the appropriation of the book of Job by ordinary Christians through sermons and Bible studies. The second part of the study (chapters 4-6) views the themes, theologies and trajectories currently occupying Fang Protestants through the window of their contextual readings of the book of Job. In chapter four, I argue that the underlying concerns of theodicy amongst Fang Christians shape their particular vision of a “moral etiology” of evil and suffering. I present this moral etiology as the critical lens through which ordinary Christians interpret the book of Job, reconceptualize the cosmology and construct images of God and the Devil. In chapter five, the stigmatizing experiences of Catholic leprosy patients and people living with HIV/AIDS are illustrated through their appropriation of Job’s lament and engagement with a theology of retribution. The chapter analyses the challenge posed by the paradigm of “Job the Innocent Sufferer” to the retributive theologies of blame which continue to characterize Christian rhetoric during the HIV/AIDS crisis. The chapter also explores Job’s lament as an authentic and liberating theological language capable of embodying compassionate solidarity for people living with HIV/AIDS. Chapter six examines the eschatological orientation of Fang Protestant Christians as they respond to Job’s experience in the midst of suffering and his final liberation and restoration. It suggests that the center of Christian hope amongst Fang Protestants is a Deus (rather than Christus) Victor paradigm expressed in the Christian practice of prayer.
In his love for Africa and African theology, he voluntarily opted to found and settle in an African institution owned by the Association of Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) called Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa (CHIEA) which has since grown to become the reputable CUEA, a unique university rightly renowned for African theology. A great scholar is known not only by one’s publications but also through the students one has molded and formed. As a focused scholar, Nyamiti opts more for publishing articles than books thus having just about four monographs and numerous published articles-some of which are “books” by themselves—to his credit. No wonder some internationally renowned scholars like Karl Rahner have the same option. In closed circles, Fang people continue practising witchcraft through the religious sects of mbuti and ngui. The aim of this paper is to review common Fang cultural syndromes in Equatorial Guinea and describe the Fang syndromes, symptom presentation and healthcare-seeking behaviour from diverse perspectives: Fang community leaders, Fang tribal elders, healthcare workers, Fang traditional healers and non-Catholic pastors. We must understand the cultural context of disease to avoid erring in diagnosis or treatment, to improve quality of life, and to facilitate the integration of patients affected by Fang cultural syndromes. The Book of Job through African Eyes. by Jason A. Carter. Pickwick Publications. Fang Christians read Job thoughtfully and critically, but they also understand it through their traditional cosmology. This reading has led to the devil’s becoming what Carter terms “a disturbingly central and indispensable element” in African Pentecostal belief—the process of “diabolization.” Philip Jenkins. Philip Jenkins teaches at Baylor University. Protestant churches are few and far between. by John P. Burgess. September 20, 2013. Suffering is a human universal experienced within distinct historical contexts that poses an especially serious theological challenge to Christians: how does one reconcile suffering with belief in an omniscient, omnipotent, and just God? This article will explore how Korean Christians have developed theodicies, attempts to explain this apparent contradiction, that speak to their particular historical contexts by surveying the thought and actions of six Korean Christians (three Catholics and three Protestants): scholar and catechist Augustine Chong Yak-chong (1760-1801), author of the Silk Lett.