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# THE POLITICS OF LITURGY BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

## ABSTRACT

How can Catherine Pickstock's statement that "Traditional communities governed by liturgical patterns are likely to be the only source of resistance to capitalist and bureaucratic norms today" be interpreted in contemporary South Africa in such a way that justice and recognition are upheld? I propose to answer this question in the following four steps. First, the notion of liturgy with reference to politics will be briefly discussed. Second, modernity as an ongoing liturgical disruption, in general, and more particularly in South Africa will be discussed. Third, South Africa as a country between tradition and modernity will be addressed. In conclusion, some proposals for the facilitation of a liturgical politics in modernity, in general, and in South Africa, in particular, will be made. These proposals will be concerned with a plea for the province, the contemplative church and the contemplative university.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this article,<sup>1</sup> I would like to engage with the Radical Orthodox movement from within the South African post-apartheid context, with specific reference to what I call the politics of liturgy between tradition and modernity. With this title, I hope that it is sufficiently clear from the outset that, when it comes to the question of tradition and modernity, I do

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1 This article was first presented as a paper at the seminar on Radical Orthodoxy in South Africa, 7-8 May 2015, University of the Free State.

not think that a so-called return to a lost pre-modern unity is possible. Moreover, I take South Africa to be a country in which the traditional and the modern are both present in various guises. To be more precise, I am of the view that many, if not most of the burning sociopolitical questions of post-apartheid South Africa can be traced back to the uneasy relationship between tradition and modernity that currently exists in the country. In addressing the nature of South African modernity, I shall attempt to clarify what I mean by these opening remarks.

As a point of reference from the highly creative and challenging movement that Radical Orthodoxy has become, I would like to engage more particularly with a famous statement made by Catherine Pickstock in an article that she published not long after her pioneering book *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (1998a). The statement in question reads: "Traditional communities governed by liturgical patterns are likely to be the only source of resistance to capitalist and bureaucratic norms today." (Pickstock 1998b:24) The statement immediately raises a number of questions: Does it refer to communities that have been able to maintain their liturgical patterns in spite of the disruptive effects of the rise of the modern territorial state and capitalism?<sup>2</sup> Or does it refer to communities that are able to successfully recover disrupted traditional liturgical patterns? To what extent can such recovered patterns be authentic? Why precisely does Pickstock find a source of resistance to capitalism and bureaucracy in traditional liturgical patterns?

To the ears of a South African, this statement inevitably also sounds different to that of, say, someone from post-traditional, secular Britain. In South Africa, for example, the instability that has come to mark the post-apartheid era acutely over the past couple of years also saw the rise of a renewed traditional consciousness. It happens more and more that, when some or other controversial action is publicly questioned, the defensive answer is: This is part of my cultural tradition. A perhaps extreme example from 2015 is that of the Zulu king who apparently wanted to usurp the bureaucratic responsibilities of the Ministry of Home Affairs by insisting that every new immigrant that intends to live on traditional land under his custodianship should appear individually in front of him accompanied by the ambassador of the immigrant's country of origin. Clearly, invoking traditional liturgical patterns in a multicultural country such as South Africa, which is still ill at ease with its past, could be grist

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2 For discussions from a Christian viewpoint of the disruptive effects of the rise of the modern territorial state and capitalism, see Cavanaugh (2009, especially chapter 3); Cavanaugh (2011, especially chapter 1); Pickstock (1998a, especially section 2); Goosen (2015, especially chapters 16 and 17).

to the mill of a reactionary politics attempting to restore some golden past. How then can Catherine Pickstock's statement be interpreted in South Africa nowadays in such a way that justice and recognition are upheld? I propose to answer this question in the following four steps. First, the notion of liturgy with reference to politics will be briefly discussed. Secondly, modernity as an ongoing liturgical disruption, in general, and more particularly in South Africa will be discussed. Thirdly, South Africa as a country between tradition<sup>3</sup> and modernity will be addressed. In conclusion, some proposals for the facilitation of a liturgical politics in modernity, in general, and in South Africa, in particular, will be made. These proposals will be concerned with a plea for the province, the contemplative church and the contemplative university.

## 2. LITURGY WITH REFERENCE TO POLITICS

The root meaning of liturgy in the original Greek is "public acts of citizenship". One can imagine that the Greeks understood liturgy thus, because their world was one in which the gods were never far from their minds. Zizioulas (1985) reminds us that the Greek notion of the cosmos involved a notion of a naturally just order, one in which to act unjust was to skew the balance of things, so that punishment was meted out in order to restore the balance and hence justice.<sup>4</sup> This was captured for time and eternity in Pericles' famous declaration to the ancient Athenians:

[W]e do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all. (Thucydides 1972:147).

The mass funeral for fallen Athenian soldiers, at which Pericles gave his famous speech, is indeed a fine example of the traditional liturgical patterns of the ancient Greeks, that is, those public acts that affirmed the community of human beings below the gods. Liturgy, without labouring too fine a point, consists of all those acts that affirm the community here and now by linking it to a higher ideal in the name of which we can indeed be an us. From a material viewpoint, such acts are without value; from a symbolic viewpoint, they are priceless. Inasmuch as liturgical acts are by

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3 With tradition I refer to the various pre-modern ontologies, world views, ethical and belief systems of South African communities, which I delineate from South African modernity that started to develop from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with industrialisation, urbanisation and the creation of a modern territorial state in 1910.

4 See especially chapter 1.

their nature communal, they are by the same token political, the affirmation of some sort of polity where this community can be. In fact, to take the line of argument a step further: Any kind of politics manifests itself in some or other liturgical acts. The kind of politics we practise is inseparable from the liturgical patterns that accompany it. For example, the sort of politics embodied in standing at attention when a national flag is raised before a deadly battle commences is different from the kind of politics that is embodied by prostrating before a wooden cross in an Orthodox church on the eve of the annual commemoration of the One whose death led to the ultimate victory over death. It is this link between a politics, its ideals and its liturgical patterns that Pickstock, in my opinion, has in mind with her statement cited above. We can, therefore, surmise that the political is always accompanied by the liturgical. Pickstock, of course, famously argued in *After Writing* that modernity is a spatialisation that goes hand in hand with a severe disruption of traditional liturgical patterns. But, if any politics goes hand in hand with liturgy, it means that modernity is not so much unliturgical as an order with its own liturgical patterns, albeit it not traditional liturgical patterns, since the liturgical patterns of modernity are fundamentally anti-communal. Liturgy has something to do with structuring one's experience of space and time. St Augustine famously wrote about the liturgical patterns of traditional Christianity:

And yet we have the liturgical solemnities which we celebrate as during the course of the year we come to the date of particular events. Between the truth of the events and the solemnities of the liturgy there is no contradiction ... The historical truth is what happened once and for all, but the liturgy makes those events always new ... The historical truth shows us the events just as they happened, but the liturgy, while not repeating them, celebrates them and prevents them from being forgotten. Thus on the basis of historical truth we say that Easter happened only once and will not happen again, but on the basis of the liturgy we can say that Easter happens every year. Thanks to the liturgy the human mind reaches the truth and proclaims its faith in the Lord (St Augustine 2011).

St Augustine helps us understand that, through acts carried out in the here and now that completely engage the person physically and mentally, a bridge is laid between the here and now and the then and there. Through these repetitive acts in temporal cycles, the past infuses and renews the present so that the new can manifest in light of the old. From a traditional liturgical viewpoint, though, the problem with modernity is that its liturgical patterns increasingly trap us as solitary individuals in a continuous now where the new is not identified as new in light of the old, but in the ongoing replacement of what has until just now been the new. An example of this

is how product lines of especially consumer goods that have become so important to modern individual identity are constantly renewed, thus condemning consumers to an incessant renewal that can never become stable. This brings us then to section three, modernity as an ongoing liturgical disruption.

### 3. MODERNITY AS AN ONGOING LITURGICAL DISRUPTION

As mentioned briefly earlier, traditional liturgical patterns are characterised by repetitive cycles that link the past with the present. Those cycles all have their moments of intense fervour and their moments of flattening out, much like the sea has its tides of high water and low water. If we use Aristotle's three levels of the soul and his insight that, unlike God, human beings can only intermittently function on the highest level, that is, the noetic level,<sup>5</sup> we can state that traditional liturgical patterns intersperse intense noetic experiences with the more regular experiences on the middle level of the soul, that is, the sensitive level.<sup>6</sup> The problem with modern liturgical patterns is that they attempt to artificially stimulate us into a continuous and ultimately unsustainable noetic state. That is, where traditional liturgical patterns induce intermittent noetic "highs" on a sustainable basis and alternate them with less intense levels of spiritual activity, modern liturgical patterns strive for continuous spiritual "highs" that cannot be sustained. This can be explained with reference to Stiegler's exceptional analysis of what he calls the hyperindustrial economy.

According to Stiegler, where the industrial economy is characterised by the attempts of industrialists to control the means of production, the hyperindustrial economy is characterised by attempts to control both the means of production and the patterns of consumption. The ideal hyperindustrial company is the media conglomerate that manufactures programmes and sells them to consumers through various audiovisual channels. The key to the control of the patterns of consumption is to capture consumers' attention by means of the mass media and advertising, where the goal is to stimulate people's attention by linking consumer products with higher ideals. For example, "live the good life by going to Club Med",

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5 According to Aristotle, the noetic level of the soul is the highest level of the soul where God functions uninterruptedly, but where human beings can only function intermittently. The noetic level of the soul is the level where activities such as prayer, contemplation, artistic creativity and education take place.

6 For an illuminating discussion of Aristotle's three levels of the soul, see Stiegler (2011a:132-137).

or “take control of your destiny with this new mobile phone”, and so on. This constant solicitation of people’s attention is so intense that Stiegler states that what fossil fuels was to the industrial economy, attention is to the hyperindustrial economy.<sup>7</sup>

A particularly important element of the hyperindustrial economy is what Stiegler calls the programme industries. All kinds of media programmes, training programmes, and so on are constantly manufactured and sold to customers with the promise of self-improvement and an ongoing high. A perfect example of this is how every single live sports event is marketed in advance to the media consumer by claiming its singularity on various flimsy grounds, such as a revenge match, a legacy fight, a historical clash, and so on. The artificially stimulated noetic high thus becomes the key feature of modern liturgical patterns. This comes at a high cost. It is no surprise that attention-related mental illnesses such as burn-out, depression, attention deficit disorder, bipolarity and the like are so prominent in the hyperindustrial economy.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this article, I must mention two points of salient irony. One is the way in which so-called charismatic churches have, amidst the modern amnesia of many Christians concerning their traditional liturgical patterns, attempted to address the ensuing liturgical vacuum by embracing the ideal of the ongoing high. The other aspect of salient irony is the havoc wreaked by patterns of artificial attention stimulation upon schools and, in particular, universities.<sup>9</sup> Instead of grasping the full gravity of this problem, some universities perpetuate it by encouraging lecturers to practise so-called edutainment, that is, the use of a variety of gimmicks to capture students’ attention. On a more serious note, the former Yale professor William Deresiewicz (2015) points out, in his disturbing book on the dark underbelly of American Ivy League universities, how these institutions immerse their students in a state of perpetual performativity

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7 Stiegler (2004) gives an accessible summary of these ideas in his article for the French monthly newspaper *Le Monde diplomatique* in June 2004. See also my English translation of this article (Stiegler 2011b).

8 Stiegler (2011c) discusses his concept of the programme industries in the third volume of his *Technics and Time series*, especially in the section *Synchronization of flux and the constituting of a consciousness market*. On “Septicism” in chapter 2 (p.73-75).

9 As far as charismatic churches are concerned, I argue that these churches, as they came from the 1970s, essentially use audiovisual stimulation to strive for an emotional “high” in every service and show scant awareness of the traditional church year with its interspersed “lows” and “highs”, the latter for example around Easter and Christmas. As far as educational institutions are concerned, see, for example, Deresiewicz (2015).

where they can never let their attention slacken, and where depression and various other mental illnesses become the grim reapers of those young lives. That the hallowed global higher education indexes year after year rate these institutions at the very top of university rankings in itself tells a story of how modern liturgical patterns have all but mutilated precious terms such as “world class” or “excellent”, to the extent that, when one hears these terms uncritically invoked to motivate university staff and students, one should instinctively be weary.

It should also be noted that modern liturgical patterns have taken on this decidedly non-human, if not anti-human character, because they are at least partly industrialised in what Stiegler terms a performativity beyond consciousness. What is a performativity beyond consciousness? Stiegler argues that the nature of what is viewed as an event has changed with the rise of industrial audiovisual communication technologies. In the time when the printed word dominated communication, historians in retrospect ultimately decided what counted as an event. In the hyperindustrial economy, a complex network of media outlets, where criteria such as shock and emotional value are employed to decide what will be broadcast and what not, decided what counts as an event, in so-called real time. Stiegler talks about a performativity beyond consciousness, because this ongoing selection of events, in so-called real time, ultimately takes place beyond reflexive agents such as historians, and happens with enormous efficiency at breakneck speed.<sup>10</sup> Hence, where modern liturgical patterns succeed in capturing people’s attention, people are turned into industrially stage-managed passive spectators, to the contrary of engaged participants as in traditional liturgical practices. It is this multiplication of events constantly soliciting people’s attention that is central to the modern experience of a scarcity of time, where one constantly feels that there is not enough time for everything that must be done. In other words, the experience of time, left to us by modern liturgical patterns, is one of ever-increasing speed. Stiegler’s Catholic compatriot, Paul Virilio, has made it his life’s work, in a steady flow of books, to work out the implications of modernity as ever-increasing speed.<sup>11</sup>

If thinkers from Aristotle to Kundera in his beautiful novel, *Slowness* (1996), agree that human beings cannot perpetually function in this overstimulated state of being, and if all human beings have innate limits to the speed with which they can think and act, it stands to reason that modern liturgical patterns are not sustainable. What kind of resistance can be practised against modern liturgical patterns? What kind of politics

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10 See Stiegler (2009) for his analyses of these phenomena, especially chapter 3.

11 See, for example, Virilio (2002; 2006; 2012).

would such a resistance call for? In my view, the answer is to be sought in a politics of traditional liturgical patterns. Before I attempt to elaborate on such a politics, I would now in the fourth section of this article like to focus on the South African front of this struggle against modern liturgical patterns.

#### 4. SOUTH AFRICA BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

If the modernisation of Western European countries such as France, Germany and Britain started and gained momentum as it were from inside their own cultural horizons, the opposite applies to South Africa. Our modernisation was a kind of unintended one that began with the settlement of the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 and gained momentum with the British colonisation of the southern and eastern parts of South Africa, then known as the Cape Colony and Natal. British modernisation efforts were, of course, met with two main sources of indigenous resistance, namely Afrikaners and Africans. The fact that, to this very day, the West and Africa sit uneasily next to each other in the collective consciousnesses of Afrikaners and Africans is indicative of the ambiguous relationship that both groups continue to have with South Africa's originally European-exported modernity. I shall now only briefly discuss three aspects of South Africa between tradition and modernity as it relates to the two most influential indigenous political actors, Afrikaners and Africans.

The first aspect is the different ways in which Afrikaners and Africans find themselves between tradition and modernity. As far as Afrikaners go, Goosen (2015) in his book *Oor gemeenskap en plek: Anderkant die onbehae* ("On community and place: Beyond the discontent") argues that Afrikaners as a community were constituted in the long transition from traditional to modern Europe. The Afrikaners are a community in which both traditional and modern elements can be found. For example, Afrikaners historically had a strong sense of community, appreciation of tradition, good neighbourliness and a strong sense of local place, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the call of modernity from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century proved to be too strong for the Afrikaners, so that they ended up embracing urbanisation, individualism, consumption, as well as the modern territorial state and its conception of geometric space as opposed to a sense of place. In an astounding new thesis in the ongoing debate on the causes and nature of apartheid, Goosen (2015:375-391) argues that it was indeed the Afrikaners' uncritical embrace of modernity and forgetfulness of their older ways that lie at the roots of their boldest



political experiment and ultimately greatest historical failure, that is, apartheid with its centralist planning, instrumentalisation of community, and devastating spatial politics that manifested in, among others, forced removals and the so-called Black homelands.

If Afrikaners are constituted as a community in the transition between tradition and modernity, Africans and their various cultural communities are fatefully marked by, first, the British imposition of modernity and, secondly, the way in which the Afrikaners' embrace of modernity excluded Africans. Where the Afrikaans language, from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became a centrepiece of Afrikaners' resistance to English-led British modernisation as well as a key to the terms on which Afrikaners embraced modernity by setting up their own church schools, universities, media and translating the Bible into Afrikaans by 1933, English, in turn, became the language that Africans associate with modernisation. The roots of this lie in the educational work by liberal British missionaries among Africans in the Cape Colony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This gave rise to a missionary-trained African intelligentsia that ultimately founded the ANC in 1912, and of which leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo were the products. The familiar and tragic story of how modernity drove the colonial project, and how that project disrupted African traditions also played itself out in South Africa. Traditional elements such as a strong communal consciousness, a sense of place, a deep tie to the land and remnants of traditional religion to this day among Black South Africans sit uneasy alongside a choice for urbanisation, the state as main political vehicle, English as preferred public language, modern patterns of consumption, and so on. Judging by the increasing political temperature of the country, the devastating material and symbolic damage of the way in which Afrikaners embraced modernity up to the end of apartheid will be with us for a long time to come in this country.

To complicate matters even more – and this is the second aspect of South Africa between tradition and modernity that I briefly want to mention – the end of apartheid coincided with South Africa's re-entry into the global world. This, in turn, meant that patterns of production, consumption and behaviour of the hyperindustrial economy also became fully manifest in South Africa. These include South Africa's increasing shift from a productive industrial economy to a consumptive economy dependent upon foreign goods and capital, a never-ending stream of live events that certainly do not favour the kind of reflexive debates and practices so central to democratic politics, and a state of passive spectatorship rather than one of engaged participation. The state of passive spectatorship is especially evident among those who, to invoke Jean-Jacques Rousseau, have either

too much or too little bread. Wealthy South Africans, regardless of culture or colour, often though not exclusively tend to become mobile global consumers more interested in capital than politics or justice, whereas poor South Africans are often paralysed in a mindset of state-dependency, a particularly devastating leftover from the country's colonial past.

The third aspect of South Africa between tradition and modernity that is of great import for a politics of traditional liturgy is South Africa's very diverse Christianity – diverse not only in a cultural or linguistic sense, but also in a theological and liturgical sense. Christianity in South Africa is a highly complex phenomenon, of which it seems very easy to say foolish things, but let me nevertheless rush in where angels fear to tread. The first thing to note about South African Christianity is that it came here mostly with the Dutch, French, German and British who settled here, or who kept on sending missionaries here. With the notable exceptions of Catholicism and Anglicanism, the Christianity thus brought to South Africa is of the various Protestant strands with less traditional liturgical patterns. Hence, in spite of the important traditional elements such as a sense of community that were transmitted in the establishment of Christianity in South Africa, it was more modern forms of Christianity with less traditional liturgical patterns that came here. At the risk of a gross oversimplification, it can be argued that the different ways in which Afrikaners and Africans exist between tradition and modernity also manifested in how they adopted Christianity. In the case of Afrikaners, a Christianity with less traditional liturgical patterns was adopted and became stratified in the apartheid period between 1948 and 1994. In the case of Africans, it would seem that the imposition of modernity on tradition led to the fact that African Christians, in general, and especially in rural South Africa developed a Christianity with stronger liturgical patterns, partly manifest in things such as the so-called African Indigenous Churches, far longer church services than those of Afrikaner Christians, and far more expressive and communal participation in services. However, the ways in which Afrikaners and Africans embraced modernity have, especially since the 1980s among initially urban South African Christians, often led to a weakening of traditional liturgical patterns and an embrace of the charismatic movement with its fundamentalist theology, its materialism and its emphasis on that great modern norm of relativism, the individual experience.

We can thus conclude that, in spite of it being exported with modernity to South Africa, Christianity is perhaps that aspect of South Africa where we are the most manifestly between tradition and modernity and, crucially for the sake of my argument, where in principle the strongest source of a traditional liturgical politics is to be found. In taking this position, I argue

from the assumption that it is where traditional liturgical patterns are the strongest that the best possibility of a politics that is not reactionary and nostalgic for a so-called lost golden past can be found, precisely because the past through the liturgy infuses, renews and lives in the present. This brings me now to my concluding section on proposals for a liturgical politics globally and especially in the South African context.

## 5. PROPOSALS FOR A LITURGICAL POLITICS

In the introduction, I mentioned that these proposals will be concerned with a plea for the province, the contemplative church and the contemplative university. I begin with the province.

An important and thoroughly researched aspect of Western European and North American modernity, to which I have also alluded in the South African context, is urbanisation, or the choice for the metropole. Both the Afrikaner nationalists who ruled between 1948 and 1994, and the African nationalists who have ruled since 1994 had and still have a strong preference for the metropole as the centre of political, social and cultural policies and actions. MacIntyre, among many others, pointed out that the modern preference for the metropole comes at a cost:

[T]he condition ... of the late twentieth-century language of internationalized modernity is perhaps best understood as an ideal type, a condition to which the actual languages of the metropolitan centers of modernity approximate in varying and increasing degrees, especially among the more affluent. And the social and cultural condition of those who speak that kind of language, a certain type of rootless cosmopolitanism, the condition of those aspiring to be home anywhere — except that is, of course, in what they regard as the backward, outmoded, undeveloped cultures of traditions — are therefore in an important way citizens of nowhere is also ideal-typical (MacIntyre 1988:388).

I contend that the peculiar post-apartheid South African obsession of our own metropolitan elites with notions such as global citizenship and being so-called world class ultimately serves to legitimate their disregard for the majority of South Africans who will never be, nor even aspire to be included in that select class. By the same token, the elite obsessions with these notions are, in fact, a particularly ironic form of post-apartheid South African self-colonisation, whereby the model for excellence is always external and nearly always metropolitan. In this regard, it is striking that the Universities of

Oxford and Nottingham<sup>12</sup> are not in metropolitan centres. Speaking of which, the fact that these provincial universities are respected globally is, in my view, living proof that there is provincial life beyond glamorous metropolitan death. In similar vein, the celebrated South African novelist, J.M. Coetzee, who subtitled the first instalment of his autobiographical trilogy *Scenes from provincial life*, already in 1983 pleaded for a provincial literature in countries outside Western Europe and North America:

I want to assert that our relation in South Africa to the West European and North American centres of the dominant world civilization remains that of province to metropolis, to be a provincial literature.

If I am right to say that what we are doing is not building a new national literature, but instead building on to an established provincial literature, then it seems to me the most constructive way to behave – certainly a more constructive way than pitying ourselves for our provincial lot, or plotting an escape to the metropolis – is to set about rehabilitating the notion of the provincial so that being a provincial writer becomes a fate one can embrace without ignominy. Provincialism usually carries connotations of the backward, the smug, the philistine. It also carries a stigma of inferiority. I do not see that any of this is necessary. A provincial literature is not necessarily minor. Russian literature of the age of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy is provincial and major. There are quite other values associated with provincialism that one can cultivate, for example, a sense of cultural and historical continuity at the level of the lives ordinary people lead; a respect for localities; craftsmanship; sobriety (cited in Kannemeyer 2012:380-381).

In similar vein, I have a vague memory of John Milbank in an interview singing the praises of his local butcher and Nottingham's traditional regional economy. On a more serious note, Coetzee, in my view, proposes a creative way of loosening the hold of the metropole on the South African mind. The Bengali historian Dipesh Chakrabarty takes it a step further:

European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought — which is now everybody's heritage and which affects us all — may be renewed from and for the margins (Chakrabarty 2000:16).

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12 In this instance, the reference is specifically to these two universities to which John Milbank and Graham Ward were attached at the time when they participated, as international speakers, in the seminar at which this paper was first delivered.

Note that Chakrabarty avoids the all too strong postcolonial temptation of a new indigenous essentialism rejecting the colonial outside wholesale. No, his strategy is more astute, namely to decolonise Europe by thinking of it as a province instead of an imperial continent. In my view, life in the province – as all the authors that have just been mentioned make clear – in one way or another makes for a greater sense of community, greater personal interdependence, a greater awareness of the old seasonal and other liturgical cycles, and a strong sense of place. In a word, as someone who grew up in suburban Verwoerdburg (now Centurion) and eventually exchanged metropolitan Melbourne for provincial Bloemfontein, I argue that the traditional politics of liturgy that is needed globally as well as locally in post-apartheid South Africa arguably has a better likelihood of flourishing in the province than in the metropole.

My second proposal for a liturgical politics is that, although Christianity in South Africa is the strongest possible source of such a politics, it is at the condition of renewing traditional liturgical patterns in South African Christianity. An ecumenical South African Christianity, which in the past gave us important voices of justice such as Beyers Naudé, Desmond Tutu and John de Gruchy, and may strengthen its liturgical practices, may again play this role. There is, after all, eternal wisdom in St Gregory Naziansus' statement that all theology is but a comment on the liturgy, a wisdom that is underscored by the extent to which traditionally liturgical churches do not succumb so easily to fundamentalism and reactionary politics. The inverse example of where such churches do, in fact, succumb to reactionary politics is evident where they yield to the heresy of idolising the nation-state, a tragic phenomenon that has, for example, bedevilled the Orthodox Church in modernity over the past five centuries.

My third and final proposal for a liturgical politics is for a renewed liturgical sense in the university, and especially the provincial university. As the above citation from Coetzee in reference to famous 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian authors made clear, there is no reason why the provincial has to be minor, but we can be sure that if the provincial university strives to reproduce the same mould that has made the Ivy League and other highly ranked metropolitan universities ill, our provincial universities will never reach their potential. Part of reaching this potential seems to me to involve a stronger liturgical and, yes, contemplative element. If provincial universities do not have to keep up with the frenetic pace of the metropole, if we do not have to succumb to the rootless cosmopolitanism that has come to characterise the well-heeled students of post-apartheid South Africa's main metropolitan universities, and that turned out to be

an illusion with the recent statue politics,<sup>13</sup> then our provincial universities should embrace our locality, our internal diversity in a politics of mutual recognition<sup>14</sup> where regional languages and English can complement each other, where we teach staff and students contemplative exercises as part of the curriculum, where religion can be a source of community instead of discord, where believers and non-believers can build alliances around the common ideal of the excellent provincial university, from Bloemfontein to Nottingham to Oxford.

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13 In this instance, I refer to the renewed debates on statues in South Africa that got underway when the Rhodes-Must-Fall movement in early 2015 demanded the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the campus of the University of Cape Town.

14 In this instance, I refer to the notion of intercommunal recognition as it was, for example, developed by Charles Taylor in Gutmann (1992).

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**Trefwoorde**

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