

The Sermon on the Steps: A Theological Examination of the 'Movement of Movements' and its Implication for Christian Practice.

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Abstract

'Occupy,' as a facet of a broad social movement known as the 'movement of movements,' has forced issues of economic inequality and global injustice onto the public agenda. The eviction of Occupy from its temporary home at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, has been well documented. The relationship between social movements such as Occupy and the church; and by extension the relationship between the church and the ethical concerns raised is subject to debate.

Using the tools of practical theology, this thesis explores both the movement of movement's critique of systems of domination, and its methods of resistance, with specific relation to Christian practice. In response to the issues raised, the church has an ethical imperative towards action.

Theological and biblical resources are investigated in regard to just economic relations, direct action and performance, and participative democracy. A theological grammar of domination and resistance is examined that facilitates both an assessment of systemic or structural evil in its present form; and the theological task of naming, unmasking, and transforming said systems.

Concrete examples of conflict, solidarity and dialogue between the church and the movement are discussed. The thesis argues that the church has an opportunity to engage dialectically with the movement of movements for the purposes of social transformation and for the promotion of the Kingdom of God.

The movement of movements is a sermon to which both church and society need to listen. If the church is bold enough to do so, the movement of movements has implications for the missional; structural; and hermeneutical, homiletical, and liturgical life of the church.