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## PURPOSE

*The Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* (CJET) is designed to promote scholarly study and research, to provide a forum for the expression of facts, ideas, and opinions from a Caribbean evangelical theological perspective, and to stimulate the application of this research to the Caribbean region.

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# CJET

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**Women, Social  
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of Michael  
Manley’s “Justice  
as Equality”**

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**INTRODUCTION**

A profound belief in the intrinsic equality of all human beings was a central tenet in the hierarchy of political values of the late Michael Manley, former Prime Minister of Jamaica. His numerous speeches, writings, and policy initiatives revolved around equality to such an extent that Tony Bogue has referred to his political strategy as a “politics of equality.” At the heart of his political values was an affirmation of the fundamental equality of all human beings and a commitment to build social, economic and political institutions that reflected and ensured that equality.

As this author has argued elsewhere, it is possible to surface an underlying “theory” of justice upon which Manley’s political articulations and actions are built: “justice as equality”. Manley’s “justice as equality” is a deeply relational theory of justice that roots fundamental human equality in the relationship to divine transcendence. It calls for the dismantling of all relationships of oppression and domination which

result when the fundamental equality of all human beings is disregarded. In so doing, it takes account of the multiple dimensions of the human person (social, spiritual, material) and calls a society just when it allows for the flourishing of every member, specifically through full participation in the life of the society. A key group which Manley identified as being enmeshed in such relations of domination and oppression are women: "No discussion of an egalitarian society would be complete without consideration of the special position of women . . . [I]n many societies women are not equal. Jamaica is no exception."<sup>1</sup>

This analysis presupposes that Manley "correctly understood the link between equity for women and true liberation for all...[as he] defined the struggle for justice as the 'the process by which half of the population achieves its freedom and exercises it for a new creative and mutually-enriching partnership'."<sup>2</sup> To this end, it is possible to identify his attempts at instituting more egalitarian social legislation, particularly legislation affecting women and families, as part of his key commitments to building a society based on equality. The Jamaican woman has come far since the 1970s, but it is evident that the demands of Manley's justice as equality are even more imperative in the present Post-Socialist context. His vision calls for a serious re-examination of equality and its place in contemporary social and political ethics. His efforts lend support to the main contention of this discussion that, properly understood, equality can serve as a lodestar for coherent and effective public policy. The discussion will therefore: 1) draw out some implications of Manley's understanding of "justice as equality" for contemporary social and political ethics, and 2) assess and identify the continued relevance of his ideas, particularly his central concern with ending relationships of domination and oppression, in a post-socialist age. The hope is to highlight several aspects of Manley's thought on equality that have continuing relevance today.

### **Manley's Legacy to the Jamaican People**

It can be demonstrated that many of Manley's most important legacies to the Jamaican people flow from this belief in the centrality of equality, particularly his emphasis on the democratic participation of all members in the political and economic life of the nation (economic and political democracy) and his often-times unsuccessful attempt to find a strategy that would not further entrench class and gender differences and

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<sup>1</sup>*Politics of Change*, 195. See n16 below on this and other notes.

<sup>2</sup> Simpson-Miller, quoted in Sherina Russell, "Manley."

privilege. Beginning in his first year of office (1972) it seemed that Manley was racing against time to correct the injustices of the past.

Almost every month a new programme or project was launched. The aims of these programmes included: lessening income disparity through the provision of Special Employment for the chronically unemployed (the much maligned “Crash Programme”); adding to Jamaica’s reservoir of skills through the National Youth Service; and agricultural productivity and access to land through “Operation Grow” and “Land Lease” (idle lands were made available to landless peasant farmers). Other new initiatives included “free” secondary and tertiary education, the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL), which instructed 200,000 people in the first 8 years, community health aides, “Put Work into Labour Day,” a lowering of the voting age to 18, The National Housing Trust, The Family Court—just to name a few.

An important piece of labour legislation promulgated was the Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act, which enshrined workers’ right to be represented by the union of their choice. Another was the Redundancy and Remuneration Payments Act, a measure which at that time could be found in few countries around the globe. The Redundancy Act required workers to be compensated for their time invested in the company to which they are employed at the time of their severance from their jobs.

### **Legislation for Women**

Among the significant pieces of legislation which directly affected the lives of women was the setting up of the Family Court which empowered unmarried mothers in the struggle to have their children financially supported by biological fathers. The importance of this in a nation where the average child is born to parents who are unmarried and is, therefore, primarily under the care of the mother was significant. The Equal Pay Act removed gender bias and allowed women and men to be paid equally while performing similar jobs. To this end, Manley committed his government to support for women and to ensure that they were given equal wages on all government projects. Maternity leave with pay protected the jobs of women, especially household helpers who often lost their jobs when they and their newborn were at their most vulnerable. Similarly, the Status of Children’s Act removed the legal and social barriers faced by illegitimate children. Under the Manley administration the first woman ambassador and the first female puisine judge of the Supreme Court were appointed. Women were allowed into the Armed

Forces and a Bureau for Women's Affairs was established and located under the Office of the Prime Minister.

### **"Justice as Equality" and Social Ethics**

Clearly, in Manley's "politics of equality," equality served as a means of evaluating social practices, institutions and systems. More importantly, equality was a guide for social policy, and such policy was the means of more fully embodying equality in society. His cry for a politics based on principles, or a moral politics, reiterated that there is a need for a firmer ethical foundation for politics, and this in turn will provide a firmer foundation for ethical reflection. Further, his articulation of "justice as equality" is a summons to restore the connections between foundational principles like equality and the overall structure of the just society, and this has implications for social ethics. Undoubtedly, his ideas continue to have currency in an age of political pragmatism where too often principles and practices appear to bear no direct relation to each other. It is refreshing to find a political leader who affirmed that fundamental principles mattered, in particular that religious convictions had a relevance beyond the private domestic sphere. Justice is about equality, but care must be taken not to misunderstand equality; it should not be simply dismissed as a spent force or viewed as an ideal whose time has passed. More exactly, equality is a highly complex and fruitful notion that requires re-interpretation and reclamation to truly contribute to the transformation of contemporary society for the benefit and flourishing of all citizens.

Manley's portrayal of "justice as equality" has implications for a renewed social ethic that centres on a deeper understanding of the human person as undeniably valuable and possessing a dignity that transcends human-defined roles, possessions, or status. Christian Ethics further clarifies the nature of human value by grounding that dignity in direct relationship with divine transcendence. Human beings are not simply the source of their own intrinsic value, but are valuable by virtue of their relationship with the divine. Refusing to appreciate that value (and its source in divine transcendence) has a direct impact on the kinds of societies that human beings create and inhabit, the kinds of relationships that they engage in, and this was thrown into stark relief by Manley's description of the experiences of a postcolonial society like Jamaica. It can be argued cogently that unjust inequalities and relationships of domination and oppression result when there is a refusal to recognise the intrinsic equal worth of all human beings.

Yet, in today's post-socialist context that is so deeply marked by the failure of the so-called grand schemes of Socialism it would be easy to dismiss Manley's ideas and contribution because of the importance he gave to a democratic socialist strategy. Without the democratic socialist label and ideological trimmings acting as distracters, however, Manley's ideas on "justice as equality" continue to be of relevance, especially his concern to end relationships of dominance and oppression that disregard foundational human equality and restrict human flourishing and well-being. Indeed, the concern to remedy relationships of domination and oppression has gained increasing urgency in a globalised world where too many people lack the resources to effectively participate in local and international society.

### **Contributing Religious and Moral Insights**

While not himself a "religious" man, Manley incorporated religious insights about the nature of the person in a foundational way in his "justice as equality": human beings are created equal by a divine creator. Unlike Manley's "justice as equality," many influential contemporary theories of justice and equality neglect religious and theological factors; religiously-informed insights and narratives are systematically excluded as a matter of principle.<sup>3</sup> Others shy away from making statements about ultimate truth and either remain silent about deep theory or only hint at it. Amartya Sen, for example, disavowed any ability to speak of a deeper metaphysics grounding his call for equality of basic capability for all human beings. But where theories of justice and equality eschew moral and theological insights they tend to be thin and narrow and may be less able to contribute to a full vision of the just society.

All theories of justice, and the public policy which they underwrite, in fact, contain a complex interaction of several components that have moral and metaphysical dimensions that we ignore at our peril. These components may include: an articulation of a set of social values, a view of human nature, groundings of the view of human nature, and ways of mediating between social values and concrete social phenomenon. So, it is simply not sufficient to stipulate as William Galston does that "in spite of profound differences among individuals, the full development of each individual—however great or limited his or her natural capacities—is equal in moral weight to that of every other."<sup>4</sup> That begs the question from Vlastos's Martian, "Why are they of equal moral weight?" The equal

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<sup>3</sup>Forrester, *Christian Justice*, 2

<sup>4</sup>Galston, "A Liberal Equality," 171.



moral value of all human beings cannot simply be assumed, but must be argued for.

Catholic social teaching shows that communities of faith can and do provide distinctive visions of human flourishing that take into account human equality, dignity, social relatedness and well-being that can make an important contribution to public arguments about justice. The substantive approaches of religious communities contribute in at least three ways to public discourse: they provide a moral vision and justification for how (in)equality matters and why a public response is necessary; they give credence to that moral vision by the moral example of people of faith and communities actively engaged in actions of preferential solidarity; and they provide a moral call to action for others to respond in personal and institutional ways to pressing inequalities.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise, “where religion becomes a private preference alone, public life lacks the depth of meaning that can generate loyalty and commitment among citizens.”<sup>6</sup> In affirming that fundamental principles mattered and that religious convictions have relevance beyond the private and domestic spheres, Manley’s works call for openness to the voice of communities of faith in the human project in which they also have an important stake. At the same time, this attention to the contribution of religious communities highlights the inter-relatedness of the various spheres of human life and rejects any attempt to reduce talk about equality and justice simply to the market or to the spiritual or social realms. Rather, “justice as equality” demands an integration of all aspects of human life including the religious; human life needs to be viewed as a complex whole.

### **Contributing an Integral Vision of the Human Person**

The human person is the focal concern of the Catholic social teaching tradition. All social practices, institutions and systems are judged in terms of their implications for the full human person and for all human persons. The key question is: How do social practices, institutions and systems contribute to the flourishing of persons? Of all persons? Human flourishing is grounded in relationship to God, but in actual reality this relationship is deeply distorted as is evident in the relationships of domination and oppression, which Manley opposed.<sup>7</sup> This is a truer understanding of human beings and the institutions which they create that takes into account both the heights and depths of which human

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<sup>5</sup> Hicks, *Inequality*, 200.

<sup>6</sup> Hollenbach, “Faith in Public,” 5.

<sup>7</sup>Lacey, “Social Thought,” 139.

beings are capable, while resolutely affirming that human equality is the only basis for true human fellowship. Human beings have multiple dimensions, all of which are essential and in interaction one with the other.<sup>8</sup> In the first place, persons, in virtue of their (potential) relationship with God, have a transcendent dimension.

This transcendent dimension informs and transforms all other dimensions of the person: bodily, rational, social, and cultural. A clearly theological articulation of human nature and flourishing differs from purely philosophical or social scientific articulations; it involves a proper relationship with God, with material things, and with other human beings—in relationships of constant interaction. However, it recognises that the fullness of human possibilities will not be experienced in this life, and therefore cannot be identified with any social, economic or political structures. This distinctly Christian perspective challenges articulations of human flourishing in which the individual self is made the centre of moral concern to the exclusion of concern for the well-being of others, where the self is conceived as the source of all meaning, and where the self tends to deal with others in the fashion that is appropriate for dealing with material things.<sup>9</sup> Similar tendencies were identified by Manley as being at work in the elitist structuring of postcolonial Jamaican society where certain individuals and groups made their own flourishing and that of their families the main concern to the detriment of the majority who were socially disadvantaged. This resulted in relationships of domination and oppression that have no place in human relationships since these ought to be based on “the brotherhood of man which is implicit in the fatherhood of God.”

Similarly, where the community is overemphasised at the expense of the individual, the person becomes simply a being at the disposal of the forces and the groups in control of the social structures of society. Such subordination of the individual in the face of a powerful bureaucratic state, for example, was critiqued by Manley as a new form of oppression in which individual workers have become the bonded servants of a powerful master. In such circumstances the individual’s freedom and participation is subordinated to larger collective goals. The fulfilment open to human beings is therefore vastly diminished without a proper attention to human beings as equally valuable selves-in-community, and becomes important when concrete social systems are examined.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 142.

### **The Central Significance of “Justice as Equality”**

The central significance of Manley’s “justice as equality” remains practically relevant today in the way it demands the dismantling and resisting of all relationships of domination and oppression in which the fundamental worth of all members of society is not given due regard. The significance of this can be seen by contrasting Manley’s “justice as equality” further with other theoretical considerations of justice and equality. The approaches that will serve as a contrast to Manley’s “justice as equality” are those that Elizabeth Anderson identifies as having missed the point of equality because of their focus on mostly distributive ends. Anderson groups these approaches under synonymous terms like “equality of fortune” and “academic egalitarianism.”<sup>10</sup> These terms will be employed in a general way in drawing a contrast with Manley’s “justice as equality.”

“Justice as equality” seeks to abolish and redress socially created oppression while equality of fortune aims to correct what it considers to be injustices generated by brute bad luck within the natural order. Approaches to justice that fall under the latter perspective aim at identifying and compensating for inequalities or undeserved misfortunes over which persons have little or no control such as poor internal endowments, talents which do not command much market value, involuntarily expensive tastes and so on. Essentially, they focus on the individual and her defective internal assets while they “blame” those individuals that are socially disadvantaged for their state of being. Such approaches do not express regard for persons while assuming that individuals have unlimited power to control the outcomes of their lives outside of and in spite of the social situations in which they find themselves.

At the same time, equality of fortune is a distributive theory which conceives of equality as a pattern of distribution of goods. As such, equality of fortune regards two people as equal when they hold equal amounts of some distributable good—income, welfare, opportunities. Social relationships are viewed as largely instrumental for generating such patterns of distribution<sup>11</sup> and are rarely questioned.

By contrast, “justice as equality” regards people as intrinsically equal and truly equal when they engage in relationships of mutuality which allow

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson 313.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson 313.

full participation by all for the development of their talents and the building up society. Of course, as Sen's description of freedom to achieve makes evident, certain patterns of distribution of goods are instrumental for securing relationships of mutuality, follow from them or are even constituted by them. Manley's portrayal of "justice as equality," being a deeply relational theory of justice, views (in)equality as a social relationship. Manley is fundamentally concerned with the relationships within which the goods are distributed, rather than simply the distribution of the goods themselves. Goods must be distributed according to principles and processes that express respect for all people; such principles are embodied in the norms of justice that the Catholic social teaching tradition has espoused in recent years and which form a part of the underlying structure of Manley's "justice as equality." The basis for distributing goods is not the inferiority or superiority of people, but their recognised equal worth. As such need is the primary norm for distribution of the goods of the earth.

The attention that "justice as equality" pays to relationships calls us to ask, "What kind of person will having certain goods allow us to become?" The possession of the goods is not an end in itself, but rather a means towards becoming a certain kind of person: a full and equal participant in society. The flaws in notions of justice that are so focussed on divisible resources like wealth and income become accentuated in light of this. When the focus is moved from acquiring certain quantities of material goods and placed on the kinds of relationships that people engage in, it then becomes clearer that those goods become meaningful within the context of relationship.

Similarly, there is often an overwhelming focus in many contemporary theories of justice and equality on what is due to the individual without attending to how what is due is worked out in the context of human relationships or what obligations the individual has within the wider social context. This is evident where the notion of justice is often limited to its distributive and commutative aspects. The aspect of contribution is neglected to the detriment of the full participation of many persons in their society. However, human beings are embedded in relationships and are selves-in-community rather than simply self-sufficient beings engaging in contractual exchanges. Manley's emphasis on individual responsibility towards the national community moves the discourse forward and somewhat beyond such "self-centred" individual claims on the society. At the same time, he did not neglect to aim for balance through a similar attention to the responsibilities which the society has towards every person born within it.

Manley effectively broadened the agenda of equality and justice beyond the distribution of divisible, privately appropriated goods, such as income and resources, or privately enjoyed goods such as welfare, to include wider more political concerns. His concerns cannot be accused of being detached from those of existing egalitarian movements. In aiming for the creation of a just community defined by relationships in which citizens stand in relations of equality to each other, “justice as equality” effectively integrates principles of distribution and responsibility with demands for equal respect. The demands that citizens make on each other are justified by virtue of their equal humanity, not out of their inferiority to each other. Therefore the remedies offered by theories of justice should match the kind of injustice being corrected, so attention to the quantity of goods held does not address the injustice in the relationships between people.

### *Reclaiming Equality*

Equality is not about correcting unfairness and inequality in every aspect of human life, only certain kinds of inequality. In this regard, the kinds of inequalities that matter are those resulting from social relations in which there are significant differences in opportunities and power, which limit the participation of many people in society – the absence of a minimum of justice. “Justice as equality” refuses to abstract from the background constraints and circumstances that make it easier for some people to access a larger share of the resources of society because of the privileges gained from these positions of dominance. The fact that one person’s choice is often enabled by another’s lack of choice, or that one person’s success may be dependent on another’s failure is key. Giving people equality of opportunity therefore involves taking into account their life conditions, which affect their abilities to grasp the opportunities presented to them – in essence, what Sen refers to as real freedom to achieve.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, “justice as equality” is confident that social disadvantage can be removed through social planning and action.

Nonetheless, “justice as equality” is cautious about simply increasing the formal opportunity that people have to participate in society without altering institutional arrangements and organizational hierarchy. Developing inclusionary strategies should change elitist social and institutional structures built on accepted notions of superior and inferior human worth. Inclusion does not mean simply adding those who are presently excluded to existing standards, but reformulating standards

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Hicks, *Inequality*, 234, maintains that the language of opportunity and capability capture the same spirit of possibility.

with the poor and disadvantaged as active participants in the process. Consequently, mere assimilation to prevailing norms is to be rejected as a goal. What is demanded is not that everyone be allowed a place at the table once the meal has started, but rather that they be allowed to participate in setting the table before the meal begins.<sup>13</sup>

### **Social Policy**

For Manley a central dimension of egalitarian justice was therefore creating the conditions for forms of economic democracy within the workplace that accompanied and made efficacious political democracy. A noteworthy aspect of Manley's concern for economic democracy is the linkage which he saw between economic and political democracy—one led naturally to the other; neither was fully possible without the other. It was to this end that he experimented with various modalities of workplace democracy, from workers owning the sugar plantations to employee share-owning schemes as means of shifting the balance of power in the workplace. When greater economic democracy happens, social priorities can be decided by the whole society, not by those who own the productivity of the nation. This requires a new social alliance among the members of society, which would provide ordinary working people with a much greater involvement in national development; greater economic democracy enhances labour productivity and this in turn leads to greater welfare for all. In all of this the state has an important role to play in cooperation with the other sectors of society.

Manley was concerned that a society could not be based on competitive acquisitive individualism of the market-place or on relationships of superiority and inferiority; indeed such a society would be a contradiction in terms. Allowing such individualism free rein would make the market-place the primary mediating point of social relationships and further break down bonds of trust. Rather, a society based on recognition of the equality of all would promote the well-being or welfare of all its citizens and so put the market in its proper place. This is another point of convergence with Sen's rejection of simply possessing certain goods per se. Rather, goods are important for what they do for people; goods allow people to live and be full members of their society.

Further, Manley's approach to equality forces us to reconsider conceptions of the role of government in policy-making. In a nation like Jamaica,

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<sup>13</sup> See Rupert Lewis's comment in the introduction about the Manley legacy of giving everyone a place at the table.

where there are severe and increasing inequalities, the state is called upon to have a role that goes beyond formally removing impediments to opportunities and participation; rather, it involves providing substantial resources to allow a minimum of participation and thus the ability to truly capitalize on opportunities. The path towards social change should therefore be defined by the experiences of those who are excluded, particularly women, women with children, unemployed youth and low-skilled workers. This emphasis on the needs of the economically and politically oppressed/marginalised as being defining of “justice as equality” challenges further some contemporary arguments for exemplary attention to be given to persons who are lazy, and irresponsible, have expensive tastes or are religious fanatics. Indeed, the welfare of the working class, or those who are called the “working poor” in the North American context, was central to Manley’s formulation of “justice as equality.” The continued severity of their plight was made clear in the conclusions of a recent assessment of the living conditions of low-wage workers in Jamaica:

The qualitative data also demonstrated the impact of the cycle of poverty. The majority of these minimum wage earners came from very poor economic backgrounds and had not been able to improve their own standard of living to any great extent. Similarly, their children were being nurtured in poverty, with limited opportunity for educational advancement. The cycle of poverty remains unbroken. These workers are members of a working vulnerable group in the Jamaican society. From this analysis, we can see that these workers are not entirely to blame for their condition. They are working, yet find it extremely difficult to make ends meet.<sup>14</sup>

### **Women and Vulnerable Groups**

Jamaican women in particular, in spite of the strides that have been made over the years, continue to be significantly worse off economically and socially than men. Many low-wage earning women express the view that their very motherhood was under threat, as they fear losing their jobs because of pregnancy.<sup>15</sup> This fear exists despite the fact that there are labour laws relating to maternity leave. Such vulnerable groups had very little access to social welfare programmes like food stamps; they make no contribution to the National Housing Trust or the National Insurance

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<sup>14</sup> Henry-Lee, “Assessment.”

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 139.

Schemes.<sup>16</sup> A further consequence of this lack of participation will be that such low-wage earners will be heavily represented among the elderly poor in the future and their dependents will not be able to benefit from the opportunities made available through education.

Clearly, the government needs to cultivate “justice as equality” through stressing institutions and procedures which meet common needs, but especially the needs of those who are less able to participate in society. These institutional arrangements need to enable the diversity of talents that people possess, their various aspirations, and roles, in a fashion that benefits everyone and is recognised as mutually beneficial. There is a need to broaden and directly target the coverage of social welfare programmes. Attention to comprehensive policy-measures will further address what areas are of concern in order for people to stand as equals within the society. Comprehensive policies are necessary to enable all citizens to participate in the society. Policy measures need to be directed at multiple spheres of life – not just the money-related sphere of income or wealth – without being intrusive in the lives of citizens. This is justified by understanding the integral nature of the person. Full and equal personhood is achieved not solely in the economic sphere, but also in all other dimensions of life that are integrally and significantly related. The provision of basic needs is fundamental, however, and the government must look towards providing for the most basic socio-economic needs, like food, shelter, health and education. Policy should therefore include the continuation and improvement of current nutrition schemes like the Food Stamp Programme, compulsory primary education, increased community health care, day care facilities for the children of minimum wage earners. The criteria for participation in such welfare programmes should not be such that participants are stigmatised or pitied. Manley, for example, gives special attention to the needs of all children and students in his arguments for equality of opportunity for education in a way that emphasises the importance of providing them with the resources necessary to fully develop themselves. He recognised that institutional arrangements generate people’s opportunities overtime and he made these the prime focus of justice.

The preceding policy-recommendations attend to questions of distributional inequality, but that cannot be the entire picture. It is

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<sup>16</sup> See chapters 11 and 12 of *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, ed. G. Lincoln Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), for a discussion of some of these programmes, as well as a fulsome documentation of the notes in this paper.



important to emphasise, alongside distribution, the importance of production, and the growth of production, of those goods which contribute to the well-being of society and its citizens.<sup>17</sup> The results of the inability of the Manley experiment in the 1970s to substantially increase the productivity of the nation stand as testimony to this need. Productivity is the means by which citizens contribute to their society, an important means of participation and a means of escaping from oppressive entanglements. The precise balance between productivity and distribution can only be arrived at through careful empirical analysis and public discourse, but both must be attended to. Production and distribution serve the normative ends of society of allowing all its citizens to fully develop their talents while contributing to the well-being of themselves, of their family and of their society.

### **The International Dimension**

Finally, there is an international dimension that needs to be considered in working out the balance between productivity and distribution in a bid to improve the participation of all citizens in the society. Jamaica is a part of the global economy and the policies of external funding organisations like the International Monetary Fund and the agreements made in light of membership in the World Trade Organisation have a direct impact on national policies. Many of the policies of these organisations have been seen to be incompatible with popular democracy, attention to the basic needs of all people, especially the poor, and bring untold suffering on millions across the world, including Jamaicans, who are not able to participate in their societies. Their policies permit little democratic participation in matters that affect the content and quality of people's lives, such as the production and distribution of goods and services, the goals and processes of the workplace and the kinds of social arrangements that might exist.<sup>18</sup> A vast number of people continue to be either left out (treated as non-persons) or become instruments of the economic system, and so have no part in shaping the future for themselves or their offspring. Given the current social realities, what is in the realm of possibilities open to Caribbean states guided by the foundational principle of equality? Jamaica and her Caribbean neighbours need to revisit Manley's call for solidarity among nations in a similarly disadvantaged position in the global market to secure a stronger voice and attention to their dilemma. They need to resist the efforts to limit the scope of the state and reduce all transactions to the market. In so doing, they will take a

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<sup>17</sup> Hicks, "Christian Ethics," 207.

<sup>18</sup> Lacey, 159-60.

first step in reclaiming a truly complex and multi-faceted equality for the new millennium.

**CONTEXTUALIZING THEOLOGY  
IN THE CARIBBEAN<sup>1</sup>**

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adjunct professor  
CGST

**Introduction**

Regardless of his theological persuasion, denomination affiliation, geographical location, or area of expertise, the Bible College administrator or instructor in the Caribbean could hardly have failed to have encountered the term “contextualization.” Having come in vogue merely seven years ago, this topic is certainly foremost in recent missiological as well as theological discussions. A study of this issue is not merely an instructive exercise because of its contemporaneity, but a vital necessity since it addresses itself not only to methodology but to the very heart of the Gospel itself. (Without wishing to be presumptuous or facetious, the persons most equipped to deal with this issue are committed, capable, trained, Spirit-filled national church leaders, pastors, and theologians, some of whom are present at this conference).<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is fourfold. Firstly, it is intended to orient those who are unfamiliar with the concept and the main issues involved in this discussion. Thus, such factors as the importance, difficulties, emphases, critical issues, risks, criteria, guidelines, categories, and Biblical examples of contextualization will be highlighted. Secondly, this paper attempts to begin to lay a basis for further work in this area by Caribbean Evangelicals. The present dearth of literature on this subject produced by Caribbean Evangelicals is unfortunate but understandable, since this issue is not only a relatively new concept but there are relatively few Evangelicals with the commitments, capability, training and/or time to carefully address themselves to this issue. The vital question may not be “Is it necessary?” but more pragmatically “Is it contextualization a top priority issue in the Caribbean Church?” And if so “Who is qualified to undertake this responsibility?”

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<sup>1</sup>See excerpt of a personal letter from Aharon Sapsezian to F. Ross Kinsler in: F. Ross Kinsler, “Mission and Context: The Current Debate about Contextualization,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 14 (January 1978):24.

Thirdly, this paper attempts to suggest beginning strategy for dealing with this issue in the Caribbean. Finally, to concretize the discussion several theological and practical issues which relate to the concept of contextualization will be suggested for further exploration. Thus, because of its orientational and foundational nature the emphasis of this paper will be on breadth rather than depth, a survey of the lay of the land rather than intense prospecting at a particular site.

The limitations and adverse conditions under which this paper labours are many, but hopefully not sever enough to make it completely worthless. As already mentioned, the dearth (or absence) of literature written on this subject by Evangelicals, together with inadequate library holdings (which characterize the majority of Bible College libraries in the Caribbean) make careful, thorough research somewhat frustrating. The significant works, if available, are either written from a liberal perspective or from a North American missionary standpoint. In the latter case, even though articles have been written by Third World theologians, the orientation is primarily North American since the majority of these nationals have received their theological education there.

Practically, because of pastoral responsibilities in a local church as well as teaching obligations in a Bible College the writer has not found sufficient time to do full justice to this profound subject. In addition the author's youth, relative inexperience, and lack of exposure also pose a credibility question. Finally, because of the author's lack of first hand knowledge of the rest of the Caribbean the paper may more appropriately be entitled: "Contextualizing Theology in Jamaica," although there will be several points of contact because of our similar social, cultural, economic, political, and religious heritage. Before embarking on this study it must be made clear that this paper is not intended for the average Caribbean lay person but for the theologian, Bible College administrator and/or instructor, church leader, pastor, and/or the thinking layperson.

### History of the Word

The historical origin of the word "contextualization" as it is currently used in theological and missiological circles, may be traced to the publication in October 1972 of *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund 1970-1977*<sup>2</sup> which centred around this concept. In some ways the focus on "contextualization" as a way towards reform in theological education is understandable, for even in the call for "advance" in the First Mandate (1958-1964) a supplementary statement that the Theological Education Fund should seek "to develop and strengthen indigenous theological education" revealed a growing skepticism as to whether the use of Western standards as the frame of reference would necessarily strengthen indigenous theological education.<sup>3</sup> The call for "Rethink" in the Second Mandate (1965-1969) revealed a more explicit concern reflected in their definition of excellence to be sought in theological education, the aim being defined in terms of using

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<sup>2</sup> Theological Education Fund, *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund 1970-1977* (Bromley, Kent: Theological Education Fund, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Shoki Coe, "In Search of Renewal in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 9 (Summer 1973):235.

“resources so as to help teachers and students to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, non-evangelicals have been advocates of contextualization earlier and more prominently than Evangelicals. On a whole, Evangelicals have been either reluctant, tardy, or superficial in addressing themselves to the contextualization discussion. The International Congress on World Evangelization held at Lausanne in July 1974 was one of the first places where this subject received some attention.<sup>5</sup> However, these treatments tended to reflect Evangelical shallowness as Harvie Conn astutely observes. His critique on Kato’s presentation is that “Abstracting the message of the Gospel from its form Kato’s argument concentrates largely on the expressions of the culture in worship – liturgy, dress, ecclesiastical services. It seems to take little cognizance of the shift from indigenization to contextualization, and especially to the heart of the contextualization debate – the Gospel in interaction with the culture.”<sup>6</sup> The relative immaturity exhibited by Evangelicals in this area may be due to such factors as the isolation of missions from theology and theological reflection, North American cultural pragmatism, and the fear of liberal constructions. However, committed Evangelicals from the Third World have recognized not only the weakness in this area but also the necessity for engaging in the task of contextualization. For example, Emilio Antonio Nunez of Guatemala admits that “a serious effort in contextualization is only beginning among us.... We are far behind in the training of leaders capable of carrying out contextualization: leaders rooted deeply in the Word of God and fully identified with their own culture, leaders who know well the *text* and the *context*...”<sup>7</sup> As far as this writer knows there has not yet been a definitive Evangelical response from the Caribbean addressing itself to this issue.

### Definition

What really does the word “contextualization” mean and imply? Depending on the circles in which one moves, this term may mean different things to different people. For example, the Theological Education Fund Report describes contextualization as including all that is implied in indigenization but also takes into account the processes of secularity, technology, and struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical movement of nations in the Third World.”<sup>8</sup> While agreeing that this term expresses a deeper concept than indigenization, Kato understands the term to mean “making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance.”<sup>9</sup> In a study group on contextualization at Lausanne in 1974 (the discussion framed in the missiological context of the evangelization of the world), the following four definitions emerged:

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<sup>4</sup> Theological Education Fund, *Ministry in Context*, pp.12-13.

<sup>5</sup> See Byang H. Kato, “The Gospel, Cultural Context and Religious Syncretism,” and M. Bradshaw and P. Savage, “The Gospel, Contextualization and Syncretism Report,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp 1216-28.

<sup>6</sup> Harvie M. Conn, “Contextualization: Where Do We Begin?” in *Evangelicals and Liberation*, ed. Carl E. Amerding (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), p.97.

<sup>7</sup> Emilio Antonio Nunez, “Contextualization – Latin American Theology,” *Latin American Pulse* 40 (February 1976):6.

<sup>8</sup>Theological Education Fund, *Ministry in Context*, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Kato, “The Gospel,” p. 1217.

- (1) The identification of the Gospel form, its cultural clothing
- (2) The communication of the Gospel in pertinent, meaningful cultural forms both external (e.g., Liturgical garments) and thought forms (eg., Time-space dimensions)
- (3) The communication that spoke to the issues and needs of the person and his society.
- (4) The meaningful and honest response made by that person in cultural and societal context under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

In the opinion of the author, apart from being vague and incomprehensible to the average reader, the first definition (in theory as well as practice) represents a capitulation to humanistic patterns of ethnology-sociology heavily overlaid on a smattering of Scripture. On the other hand, contextualization cannot merely be reduced to “a simple category of the effective communication of the content of the Gospel to the cultural context.”<sup>11</sup> Knapp’s definition of the word is perhaps the most satisfactory one encountered thus far. He defines contextualization as follows: “Contextualization in the dynamic process through which the church continually challenges and/or incorporates – transforms elements of the cultural and social milieu of which it is an integral part in its daily struggle to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ in its life and mission in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

### Relationship to Indigenization

In defending the use of the word “contextualization” Shoki Coe, general director of the Theological Education Fund and probably the first to give it its original meaning claims that “We try to convey all that is implied in the familiar term *indigenization*, yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept which is open to change and which is also future – oriented.”<sup>13</sup> In essence, the liberal spokesmen for contextualization are saying that there is need to explore not only the anthropological and religious dimensions of culture (which indigenization emphasizes) but also the social and economic dimensions of each situation in order to discover the full, significance of the Gospel in that situation. Norman Ericson’s explanation of the distinction between indigenization and contextualization is somewhat simplistic but helpful. He claims that: “The difference seems to be a matter of chronology and degree. Indigenization was an early effort in (newly?) evangelized nations to utilize the nationals and to incorporate certain native cultural forms which were virtually consistent with Western Christianity. But contextualization is a later breakthrough aiming to adopt the

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<sup>10</sup> Bradshaw and Savage, “The Gospel”, p. 1226.

<sup>11</sup> Conn, “Where do We Begin?” p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Knapp, “Contextualizing and its Implications for U. S. Evangelical Churches and Missions,” (Abington, Pa.: Partnership in Mission, 1976) p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Shoki Coe, “Contextualizing Theology,” in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, eds. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press, 1976; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 21.

new culture *in toto*.”<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, other Evangelicals such as James Oliver Buswell III see the distinction between the two terms as merely semantical.<sup>15</sup> It seems most appropriate at this point to stress the fact that the word “contextualization” has different connotations to different people.

### Aspects of Contextualization

Practically and simplistically, as a general rule of thumb, when the non-evangelical theologian uses the term “contextualization” he is primarily dealing with the content of the Gospel, whereas when the Evangelical theologian uses this term he is probably applying it to the methodology of presenting the Gospel. Thus, the non-evangelical’s use of the word, “indigenization is virtually synonymous to the Evangelical’s use of the word “contextualization”. For example, Kato speaks of contextualization in terms of such things as liturgy, dress, language, church service, and any other form of expression of the Gospel truth<sup>16</sup> while the non-evangelical would identify this as indigenization. It is quite understandable that the Evangelical should place the emphasis on methodology, for it is inherently assumed that the content of the Gospel message remains unchanged. This issue will be dealt with later in the paper when the essence of the Gospel is considered.

### The Foci of Contextualization

In the contextualization discussion at least three emphases are evident.

- (1) Focus on the indigenous theologian. This emphasis is illustrated by Von Allmen who claims that “no true” indigenization of contextualization’ can take place (merely) because foreigners, the ‘missionaries,’ suggest it; on the contrary, true indigenization takes place only because the ‘indigenous’ church has itself become truly missionary, with or without the blessing of the missionaries.”<sup>17</sup> This tends to be the focus of Caribbean theologians in the established churches.
- (2) Focus on the missionary communicator. This emphasis highlights the problems of cross-cultural communication which face the missionary. This approach is illustrated by Nicholls who explains contextualization as “the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the Kingdom into verbal form meaningful to peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situations.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Norman R. Ericson, “Reply” in *Theology and Mission*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> James O. Buswell III, “Contextualization: Theory, Tradition and Method,” in *Theology and Mission*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> Kato, “The Gospel,” p. 1217-18.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel von Allmen, “The Birth of Theology,” *International Review of Mission* 64 (January 1975):39.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce Nicholls, “Theological Education and Evangelization Report,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 647.

- (3) Focus on the target population. This perspective is the obverse side of the previous focus, emphasizing not the missionary communicator but the target population which is receiving the Gospel dressed in unfamiliar cultural context. A careful examination will indicate that since communication involves both the communication and the recipients, the latter two foci are inseparable. These two foci would probably be in the minds of Caribbean Evangelical theologians who are well acquainted with the term “contextualization”.

### **The Necessity of Contextualization**

Regardless of one’s understanding of this term, the overwhelming majority of theologians and missiologists see contextualization as a vital necessity.<sup>19</sup> As noted by Ericson, “Contextualization has been at all points a concomitant of the divine communication to man... singularly expressed in the incarnation.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Objections to Contextualization**

Although the majority of informed Evangelicals see contextualization (as they understand it) as an imperative, some are bound to raise either theological or practical objections. In the first category of objections some may claim that since the Gospel is timeless, universal, and unchanging, there is absolutely no need for this exercise. However, it may be argued that although the essence of the Gospel remains the same the modes of expression are not inspired or sacrosanct. In a similar vein, the objection that “what was good for Paul and Silas is good enough for me” betrays not only an elevation of tradition to the level of Scripture (a charge which Protestants often level against Roman Catholics), but also an irrational, insecure desire to preserve the comfortable status quo at all costs even if this cannot be defended on Scriptural grounds. Some so-called practical objections would be that this exercise is either a complete waste of valuable time and resources or that it does not edify the church. However, if we are guilty of presenting an emasculated, distorted, or tradition-bound Gospel which is heavily laden with alien superficial trappings and/or presented in an archaic, anachronistic manner it is incumbent on us to be engaged in the processes of decontextualization and recontextualization.

### **Explanations for Failure to Contextualize**

Reasons for failure to contextualize are legion. Ericson suggests the following six reasons why Evangelicals have often failed to contextualize:

- (1) The characteristic emphasis on the unity of Scripture
- (2) The single-minded way in which Evangelicals view and use the canonical literature

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<sup>19</sup> E. G. See Theological Education Funds, *Ministry in Context*, p. 19 and Kato, “The Gospel,” p. 1217.

<sup>20</sup> Norman R. Ericson, “Implications from the New Testament for Contextualization,” in *Theology and Mission*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 197), p. 85.



- (3) Contextual studies of the New Testament have been minimal
- (4) The effort to abstract and absolutize the teachings of the Bible
- (5) Simplistic implementation of Evangelism
- (6) Lack of emphasis upon Hermeneutic<sup>21</sup>

Principalizing E. W. Fashold-Luke's<sup>22</sup> reasons for the failure of West African Churches to produce relevant and meaningful theologies for their peoples, the additional reasons may be appended:

- (7) third World Churches are churches without theologies and theological concern
- (8) Little or no attempt has been made to train theologians
- (9) The few trained theologians have received their training in Western cultural situations
- (10) Western missionaries came from theological backgrounds where aspects of discontinuity between Christianity and every culture were stressed to the exclusion of the aspects of continuity with local cultures.

Finally, Buswell suggests that one reason for the failure to relinquish the church to indigenous cultural forms and leadership is

- (11) Strong feelings of insecurity which assail the missionary in an unfamiliar cultural context which leads him to structure things in familiar cultural forms.<sup>23</sup>
- (12)

#### **Difficulties in Contextualization**

It would be foolhardy o enthusiastically plunge into the process of contextualization without first noting the obstacles which stand in the way. The following six are suggested by the author:

- (1) The missionary himself is/was too involved in the process
- (2) The underestimation of the ability of the nationals by the missionaries or the nationals themselves
- (3) The people for whom it is intended are no longer there
- (4) The non-homogenous and diverse nature of the native population
- (5) The native theologians have received a Western oriented education which leave them open to the danger of being either unable to principalize or unprepared to cope
- (6) The delicate and difficult task of identifying the negotiables from the non-negotiables, the valid from the invalid.

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<sup>21</sup>Norman R. Ericson, "Implications from the New Testament for Contextualization," in *Theology and Mission*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 197), p. 71-73.

<sup>22</sup> E. W. Fashole-Luke, "The Quest for African Christian Theologies," in *Mission Trends* No. 3, eds. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas f. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press, 1976; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 137-38.

<sup>23</sup>Buswell, "Contextualization," pp. 101-2.

### The Essence of the Gospel

In the process of contextualization the question arises as to whether there is an unchanging, unalterable frame of reference. For the Evangelical, there is an essential core which is independent of any culture. This core of truth which cannot be tampered with, is that the transcendent, immanent God has spoken definitely through Jesus Christ who has effected eternal salvation through His life, death and resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 3-11). This body of truth called the Gospel must be declared with a view to appropriation, if one is to be faithful in communicating the Gospel. How then is the content of the Gospel related to theology and contextualization?

### Theology and Contextualization

On careful reflection, it is apparent that the scope of contextualization is bounded by the parameters of one's theology. The writer has identified at least four different approaches to theology.

- (1) The 'Accommodational Approach' considers prevailing customs and religious practices in the country and attempts to adopt or adapt those which are appropriate and consistent with the Gospel. This is by no means an easy task for the process of evaluation is indeed a delicate one requiring people who are committed to their God and His Word, willing to investigate carefully the religious, sociological, anthropological and ethnological factors. This approach could lead to valid or invalid accommodations. For example, Don Richardson's principle of redemptive analogy described in *Peace Child*<sup>24</sup> appears to be a valid one, but an attempt to teach the doctrine of the Trinity using the Korean mythology of creation<sup>25</sup> appears invalid.
- (2) The 'Situational Approach' exemplified by liberation theologians as well as a good number of Caribbean theologians in the established churches attempts to formulate theology after reflecting on one's experience in life. Although the attempt to make one's faith relevant is commendable, this approach is fraught with at least two major dangers - (1) the danger of starting from the sinful human situation rather than the Word of God and (2) the danger of political analyses taking precedence over Biblical theology.
- (3) The 'Perpendicular Approach' exemplified by many Evangelicals and perhaps by the majority of Evangelicals in the Caribbean emphasizes the priority of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the vital necessity of proclaiming the Gospel message. While this emphasis is commendable, it often leads to rejection, disparagement, disregard, or insensitivity of certain cultures (whether they be one's own or not). Furthermore, this betrays a lack of awareness of the cultural aspects of Christianity. In this approach, contextualization is either unknown, ignored, minimized, or even resisted.

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<sup>24</sup> Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Glendale, California: Gospel Light Publications, 1974), passim.

<sup>25</sup> See Sung Bum Yun, "Tang-Gun Mythology in Vestigium Trinitatis," *Christian Thought* (October 1963): 16.

- (4) The fourth approach which the writer would like to term the Biblical Approach attempts to incorporate all the positive aspects of the other three approaches.

From somewhat of a difference perspective Robert Moore identifies and explains three different types of theologies which have evolved over the course of history – (1) The Theology of Absorption (2) The Theology of Imposition and (3) The Theology of Imitation and suggests that the task of Caribbean theology is in one sense a Theology of Exploration.<sup>26</sup>

As noted by Charles H. Kraft, “theologizing is meant to be relevant,” and it is most unfortunate when an unsuitable theological system is adopted by or imposed upon those of another culture or subculture. This misfortune often takes place when (1) a given approach to theology is regarded as highly prestigious and/or (2) proponents of that theological system claim that their system is not only correct but also supracultural and/of (3) the proponents have the power to impose their system on others.<sup>27</sup>

As logical and ideal as it may sound, the task of identifying the supracultural content of Christianity from its forms and expressions in a culture (whether it be ours or not) is by no means an easy one. Furthermore, identification is only the first step, the next step being the attempt to disengage the supra cultural from the cultural. In explaining the present state of affairs, Buswell, a North American admits that

Political power and technological progress were fused with Christian piety into an inevitably ethnocentric, if benevolent, ethos. All ‘uncivilized’ societies were appraised by the power – progress – piety ethos as inferior *on all counts*.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, this missionary mentality, which showed flagrant disregard for the receiving culture which was not theirs, is still with us today, yea even among nationals.

As to North America’s role in the contextualization discussion it is ironical that although it has been the most prolific in producing literature on contextualization it is perhaps culturally the least suited for this task because of its specialization, isolationism, superiority complex, and ignorance of other peoples.

### The Nature of the Quest

Although there is only one Gospel the nature of the quest for contextualizing theology is to translate the one faith of Jesus Christ to suit the tongue, style, genius, character and culture of the particular society.

Several critical issues emerge in this quest for contextualization. The first, which concerns its scope recognizes that contextualization is not merely concerned with the communication of the Gospel (i.e. Methodology), but with the nature of the Gospel itself. This fact is recognized

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<sup>26</sup>Robert Moore, “The Historical Basis of Theological Reflection,” in *Troubling of the Waters*, ed. Idris Hamid (San Fernando, Trinidad: Rahaman Printery, 1973), pp. 39-42.

<sup>27</sup>Charles M. Kraft, “The Contextualization of Theology,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 14 (January 1978): 35.

<sup>28</sup>Buswell, “Contextualization”, p. 104.

not only by non-evangelicals but by a growing number of Evangelicals. For example, F. Ross Kinsler notes the record number of missionaries being sent by the United States to Third World countries and finds this difficult to reconcile with their over consumption of material wealth.<sup>29</sup>

A second major issue concerns the procedure in contextualization. As already mentioned the 'Situational Approach' looks at the Biblical text from the standpoint of its *Sitz Im Leben*. However, the dangers inherent in this approach are that human experiences may become normative rather than the Word of God and the message may become relativistic, existential, and situational. A much safer approach is to look at one's situation from the standpoint of the text realizing that any theology which is truly Biblical must take shape within the cultures and problems of the people of God in every place. Because the term 'Biblical Theology' may be nebulous, confusing, ambiguous, and/or abused, the writer suggests the term 'Contextualizing Theology' as an alternative in this situation.

A third crucial issue focuses upon the question of syncretism. The following are some of the definitions used or given at the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974:

- (1) A fruit cocktail of religions (John Scott)<sup>30</sup>
- (2) Any form of religion in which elements from more than one original religious tradition are combined (Eric Sharpe)<sup>31</sup>
- (3) The sort of accommodation to the cultural values of a people that results in a mixture of Biblical truth and ethnic religion (Bruce Nicholls)<sup>32</sup>
- (4) Occurs when critical and basic elements of the Gospel are lost in the process of contextualization and are replaced by religious elements from the receiving culture (M. Bradshaw and P. Savage)<sup>33</sup>

From these definitions, it is quite clear that this term carries pejorative implications with Evangelicals. Kato's reasons for growing syncretistic tendencies in Africa are instructive in showing its sources and causes. They are as follows: (1) the prevailing wind of religious relativism in the older churches (2) the crying need for universal solidarity in the world (3) political awareness which carries with it a search for ideological identity (4) emotional concerns for ancestors who died before the advent of Christianity (5) cultural revolution which calls for a return to socio-religio-cultural way of life (6) inadequate Biblical teaching (7) the African's love to get along well with everybody (8) liberal Christianity (9) the study of comparative religions without the effort to assert the uniqueness of Christianity and (10) the genuine desire to make Christianity truly African has not been matched with the power of discernment not to tamper with the Word of God.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ross Kinsler, "Mission and Context," p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Kato, "The Gospel," p. 1218.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Nicholls, "Theological Education," p. 647

<sup>33</sup> Bradshaw and Savage, "The Gospel," p. 1227.

<sup>34</sup> Kato, "The Gospel," pp. 1218-18.

Thus there is always the risk of syncretism when experimentation is done (on words, concepts, and customs) to express Christian meaning. However, Kraft asserts that the greatest risk of syncretism comes “from those who try like the Pharisees and Judaizers to preserve the foreign expressions of God’s message.”<sup>35</sup>

Finally, a fourth important issue (which may be classified as a risk) involves the overly-zealous Evangelical enamoured by the concept of contextualizing theology. This may lead to a superficial analysis of Biblical data, religious systems, sociology, anthropology and ethnology which may in turn lead to “a capitulation to humanistic patterns overlaid on the Scriptures.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Criteria for Contextualization**

The following five criteria, put in question form are suggested by the writer in evaluating contextualization, the first three criteria dealing with the theological aspect and the last two dealing with the methodological aspect. [NL 1-5]

- (1) Has the Biblical message penetrated and adopted the cultural forms and stood in judgment upon them?
- (2) Have the insights from Scripture as well as religion, sociology, anthropology, and ethnology been carefully applied?
- (3) Has the core of the Gospel been retained?
- (4) Has the meaning been accurately conveyed?
- (5) Has the communication (whether verbal or behavioural) been effective?

### **Controls for Contextualization**

What guarantee does one have that an attempt at contextualization will be valid? While this “validity guarantee” is not totally assured, the following three controls have been suggested by Ericson:

- (1) The commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:10; cf. 7:25)
- (2) The counsel of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful, mature Christian (1 Cor 7:25; cf. 7:40)
- (3) The corrective force of the divine Word.<sup>37</sup>

### **Categories of Contextualization**

At this point it may be obvious to some that the concept of contextualization may be broken down into different kinds, and as Buswell notes, many of them have already had a respectable history, both in missiology and in field applications.<sup>38</sup> In addition to Buswell’s three categories: Contextualization of (1) The Witness (2) The Church and its Leadership and

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<sup>35</sup> Kraft, “Contextualization,” p. 36.

<sup>36</sup> Conn, “Where Do We Begin?” pp. 100-1.

<sup>37</sup> Ericson, “Implications,” pp. 84-85.

<sup>38</sup> Buswell, “Contextualization”, p. 89.

(3) the Word<sup>39</sup>, the writer would suggest a fourth category: The Contextualization of Theology.

(1) Contextualization of Theology. While it is vigorously held that there is an essential core in the Gospel and that some present formulations such as the doctrines of the Person and Work of Christ, and sin illustrate the supracultural nature of the Christian faith, other present formulations in the Caribbean (which may be explicit or implicit) such as inspiration, divine sovereignty, salvation history, salvation, eschatology, and political systems need to be carefully examined. Admittedly we are at a considerable disadvantage, for the nationals most qualified for this task – pastors and theologians – have been indoctrinated into Western thought patterns. Added to this, is the extreme theological conservatism characteristic of Evangelicals throughout the worlds as well as the great diversity within Evangelicalism in the Caribbean which is a reflection of the diversity within Western Evangelicalism.

On the questions of inspiration, do we need to indiscriminately adopt the position of the extreme rightist John R. Rice, the right winger Harold Lindsell, the middle-of-the-roader Kenneth Kantzer, or the left winger Paul Jewett? Now one is not showing disrespect, discounting the usefulness of this type of research or questioning the commitment, scholarship, and contribution of these men, but do we have to be “mimic-men” merely parroting the beliefs of our Western big brother? This must certainly not be taken as a rejection of tradition or our rich Evangelical heritage but a call to know why we believe what we believe.

With respect to divine sovereignty, it must not be tacitly assumed that political power and economic wealth is automatically or necessarily an indication of divine approbation, or that these peoples are the exclusive agents through whom salvation history is being accomplished. On the salvation issue, the exclusively pietistic and vertical understanding of salvation which creates a sharp dichotomy between the vertical and horizontal dimensions must be identified as unbiblical. It is most encouraging to see that North American Evangelicals are again awakening to the social implications of the Gospel, but what better place is there to experience this reality than in a Third World setting such as the Caribbean?

Vitally related to salvation in its totality is the predominantly other-worldly and futuristic emphasis. While it is true that the blessed hope is something to be anticipated with great excitement, it does not absolve Christians of their present domestic, ecclesiastical and civil responsibilities during their sojourn here on earth.

Finally, in the area of politics (which interests most, if not all West Indians) it must not be assumed that God sanctions either the capitalistic or socialistic form of government.

#### **[Contextualization of the Word.**

This category of contextualization deals with translation and ethnotheology, an area in which the Wycliffe Bible translators have been outstanding. The question arises as to the need for a translation of the Bible into the local dialect of the country. One decided advantage is that

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-99.

Creole patois is used by the majority of nationals “to convey emotive experience, to hand down local customs, for proverbs and wise sayings on intimate occasions and even in religious ceremonies.”<sup>40</sup> Thus the verbal patois may be most effective in communicating Biblical truth. However, the disadvantages of the written patois outweigh the advantages. Not only is this a massive undertaking for able, available national linguists but the fact that the local dialect is not standardized and the primary people for whom it is intended either cannot read it or have passed away, militates against such an undertaking. Besides not only is English (or French) well understood by the majority of the populace, but the local dialect is very close to it.

### Contextualization of the Witness

In Buswell’s scheme this deals with making the Gospel message intelligible in the idiom of the language and culture of the receivers. The writer sees this kind of contextualization as inextricably bound up with the next category, one emphasizing the presentation of the Gospel in terms of a traditional culture, the other emphasizing the response. Hence, a discussion on both these categories will follow.

**[B] Contextualization of the Church and its Leadership.** As already mentioned, this deals with the issue of indigenization. As this runs the whole gamut of church life, only a few areas which are relevant to the Caribbean church setting will be mentioned. For example, in the areas of both evangelistic and expository preaching are we indiscriminately and unthinkingly adopting the methodology and style of the North American evangelist or British expositor without any regard for any possible difference in contexts? Do we always need to proclaim the Gospel or edify the saints only in the King’s English regardless of the audience? Is there any place for using local customs, practices, and folklore to illustrate spiritual truth?<sup>40</sup>

On the question of church liturgy are we guilty of perpetuating irrelevant and anachronistic forms of worship totally uncharacteristic of our people? Are we in need of a radically new theology of worship as Knolly Clarke suggests?<sup>41</sup> With respect of music, do we consciously or unconsciously believe that our music is inferior to the North American or British brand? Is there any place for Calypso or Reggae music in the church? In a related area is there room for expression of worship in art form of dance (cf. II Samuel 6:16)? In our celebration of the Eucharist have we lost the joyfulness and spontaneity of this occasion because of unemotional (and well-meaning) missionaries have squelched our emotions, telling us how unreliable and unspiritual it is to openly display our emotions?

On the subject of dress, is the jacket and tie the only acceptable mode of dress that God approves of in the church? Or is the cooler, more comfortable, and less expensive bush jacket

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<sup>40</sup> Knolly Clarke, “Liturgy and Culture in the Caribbean,” in *Troubling of the Waters*, ed. Idris Hamid (San Fernando, Trinidad: Rahaman Printery, 1973) p. 154.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

just as acceptable to God? Is the wearing of pants suits to church by women really unbiblical?

In relation to theological education, is our Bible College curriculum and system of training men for the ministry relevant and appropriate to the Caribbean? Finally, on practical issues such as Sunday cricket and common-law relationships is our position based on mere traditional formulations or on a sound Biblical and theological base?

A word of advice. While the method is important for the effective communication of God's truth it must be borne in mind that the message and method are inseparable and that the message takes precedence. Therefore we need to be careful about majoring on the minors.

#### **[A] The New Testament and Contextualization**

It is most important to note that the dynamic of the New Testament literature "rather than being an abstraction of principles, ideas or dogmatics . . . is a treasury of the experiences of the early church."<sup>42</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that examples of contextualization may be found within the New Testament itself. For example, when the theological question arose as to the place of circumcision in the salvation of the Gentiles, the decision of the Jerusalem Council did not forbid Jewish Christians from continuing to practice circumcision or compel Gentile Christians to observe this custom.<sup>43</sup> Hence the principle of contextualization, used by the New Testament is a valid one.

#### **Strategy for Contextualization**

Now that the necessity for contextualization has been established, the nature of the quest stated; the criteria outlined, and the controls suggested, what ought to be the course of action. The writer suggest that a vigorous but not overly-enthusiastic pursuit be made of the interpretation of the Bible in context by competent, well-equipped, Spirit-filled Biblical scholars, preferably nationals. This pursuit is by no means an easy task for anyone as the basic hermeneutical issue of determining the descriptive (what the Bible reports) from the prescriptive (what the Bible teaches) is continually at stake.

In addition to expertise and commitment to the Bible, a knowledge of other religions (in the context), sociology, anthropology, and ethnology will prove most beneficial in the contextualization process. In pursuing this process of contextualization the two extremes ought to be avoided. Undue conservatism leads to inertia and hence to a faith encumbered with strange cultural trappings, local or foreign. Undue ardor leads to carelessness and hence to mistakes such as adulteration of the Gospel by syncretism of secularism. However, the writer sees no option but to begin or continue the pursuit both in the major areas of theology as well as methodology.

The process of contextualization is twofold, for "authentic contextualization must be open constantly to the painful, process of de-contextualization, for the sake of de-contextualization,

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<sup>42</sup> Ericson, "Implications," p. 71.

<sup>43</sup>Ericson's examples of contextualization from I Corinthians 5: 1-8; Colossians 3: 18-4:1 and Matthew 18: 15-17; Corinthians 5: 3-5; Philippians 4: 2-3 are somewhat questionable.



for the sake of re-contextualization.”<sup>44</sup> Although obvious to some it must be stated that “theology” as abstracted statement is not theology, for the purpose of theology is not merely a right conceptual understanding but right praxis.

### **Problems of Contextualization in the Caribbean**

Although many of the general problems of contextualization were encountered implicitly or explicitly in the sections: Objections to Contextualization, Explanation for Failure to Contextualize and Difficulties in Contextualization, the writer has identified eight major problems facing the Caribbean churches with respect to contextualization. They are as follows: (1) Gross ignorance regarding the concept of contextualization (2) Sheer apathy (3) A simplistic brand of Christianity which disregards culture (4) An other-worldly, futuristic oriented Christianity which renounces everything in the world (5) Heavy financial support from North America and hence the operation of the inverse Golden Rule (i.e. He who has the gold makes the rules) (6) Lack of qualified, committed, Spirit-filled men familiar with the context (7) The tendency toward ‘A Theology of Imitation’ as a result of the copy-cat mentality among the Christians of the Caribbean (8) The non-homogeneity or diversity of peoples even on the same island due to religious, racial, educational, social or economic factors.

However, despite these major obstacles, if contextualization is seen as an imperative inherent in the Gospel, there is no alternative but to go on. In conclusion, it must be remembered that the purpose of contextualization is not the producing of new theologies but theologizing in such a way that reflection leads to praxis.

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<sup>44</sup> Coe, “Contextualizing Theology,” p. 24.

**A THEODICY CONCERNING CARIBBEAN  
SLAVERY**

***TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF BLACK  
IDENTITY***

(Part 2)

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**INTRODUCTION**

In Part 1(*CJET* 16 [2017] 105-131), we examined the experiences of chattel slavery in the Caribbean and some of their pronounced socio-religious effects on Black people in the region. We also evaluated two major perspectives in theodicy, free will and the goodness of God, and put them in discussion with the arguments of Caribbean theology. The objective of this chapter is to analyse the discussion on theodicy and make recommendations for Caribbean theology, especially Black identity. The recommendations appear under the two themes, free will and the goodness of God. 'Responsibility' and 'Self-Assurance' are the two recommendations this paper propose, following analyses of 'free will' and 'Divine goodness' respectively. Each of these two recommendations will be broken down into more detailed proposals, following a presentation of their related reasoning.

**Free Will, Responsibility, and Disenchantment from 'The Pie in The Sky' Perspective**

It is not difficult to see how the prolonged misery in oppression intensifies the appetite of human beings for an otherworldly hope. The evasion tranquilizes the mental pain and provides a sort of individualistic coping, waiting for the proverbial 'pie in the sky'. The fault in this extraterrestrial hope is that it immobilizes the victims from pursuing freedom for themselves. If liberation is even to occur in this life, it is through the activity and efforts of others. This work has made it clear that evil done by evil persons are the fruit of their bad motivations, put into action. It is in the same way that triumph, victory, and liberation will be the consequences of measures taken towards such goals. Blacks of the Caribbean must, therefore, assume the responsibility.

Robert E. Baird, a philosophy scholar and lecturer criticises providentialism as follows: this sort of passive hoping for change is to “wait ridiculously with arms folded for what God will do, in accordance with the sophism the Ancients called (logon aegon) *lazy reason*.”<sup>1</sup> 'Lazy reason' attributes the cause for all events to divine purpose. Here, the sovereignty of the Divine becomes all excusing such that moral and social responsibilities face inertia. The logic of the inertia is that if evil happens and God is sovereign, then it must be an act of God and thus should be accepted. J. Richard Middleton, a professor of Biblical world view and exegesis, identifies the protraction of this attitude in the Caribbean as a fault of the Caribbean church and asserts that the church must acknowledge its guilt in the perpetuation of this immobilizing worldview, in the text *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology*.<sup>2</sup> Middleton points out that those responsible for teaching the word in the Caribbean have a responsibility to lead the church into sound theology. To put all the blame on the Caribbean's colonial missionary history is to let today's Caribbean perpetrators off too easily, he argues. Teachers have a responsibility to explore and inspect with scrutiny the teaching they provide to the church. The effect of the unchecked theology has resulted in the adherents being stuck, “still further in despair and paralysis, as they pine for a heavenly home distant from the everyday realities of Caribbean life.”<sup>3</sup>

#### *Recommendation*

This work recommends active disillusionment from pacifying 'pie in the sky' idea. Caribbean people have a responsibility towards action. Individuals neglect social duty due to an idea that our freedom defers to the afterlife. Liberation is the right of all people, in this life. This idea of deferred emancipation is a lie that has been purported as a part of agenda to immobilize the enslaved people of the Caribbean. There is much work to be done that requires the vision and passion of the people to bring deliverance. Blacks must pursue and celebrate liberation; that is available in this terrestrial life.

#### **Re-reading the Bible as Caribbean People**

The free will perspective of theodicy highlights the role that humans play in determining their fate. In theodicy, the reality of autonomy demystifies the subject of suffering in slavery. People were acting within their free will to do evil, and it has been our right and duty to work in our free wills to achieve the reversal of slavery's disenfranchising effects. One starting point of that mission is to interpret Scripture accurately, for a relevant and authentic reading concerning the Caribbean context.

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1 Forrest E. Baird, *Philosophic Classics*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, ©2011-), 254.

2 Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 94.

3 Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 94.

Europe has had their reading which they had bent to the point of breaking to try and justify their divisive and duplicitous motivations towards exploitation. Their reading of Scripture, as Oral Thomas argues in *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context*, is directed towards maintenance of the status quo. This status quo being the enrichment and prosperity of the European ruling class with no concern for the social liberation and self-actualization of the poor and oppressed Blacks of the Caribbean. As such, their hermeneutic, accepted by the oppressed people of the Caribbean, could never produce fervor for revolution.<sup>4</sup>

For this realisation of Thomas to take effect in the minds of Black people of the Caribbean there must be disenchantment. Our preaching must unmask the agenda that contributed to the missionary reading. There must be a well-needed mistrust of the crafty miseducation that deflects hope of liberation towards anticipation of the afterlife, with only superficial considerations of the Biblical declarations of freedom for the oppressed and the equality of all peoples in Jesus Christ. Thomas reveals how Sam Sharpe found a message of liberation in the same Bible that colonial missionaries misused as an instrument for subjugation. It must become clear to the Caribbean people that earthly ambition is not necessarily a stumbling block but an entitlement to all human beings to whom Jesus proclaims freedom - freedom indeed. Caribbean theology must highlight the fact that the carriers of the missionary gospel that so demonised secular aspiration, never seemed to have a problem with it for themselves or their people at home, in the empire of Europe. This disillusionment of Caribbean hearers is a starting point. Following this is the intellectual task of rereading, having deconstructed to then reconstruct our interpretation of God; and consequently our understanding of our Black selves. Just as Sam Sharpe found affirmation of God's legitimisation and authentication of the Black struggle for freedom, even so must our reading find the existing entitlement to experiencing 'the goodness of God in the land of the living'.<sup>5</sup> Sam Sharpe understood that the colonial hermeneutic that the enslaved Blacks were being fed is not the Bible itself but rather, an interpretation of the Bible; a hateful interpretation that must be unmasked and cast off.

Instead, the oppressed Blacks must search the Scriptures from the genuine heart of the oppressed seeking his/her God; and in so doing, realise the call to self-determination and self-actualization in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The re-reading of Scripture for a Caribbean context provides validation for social action; moreover, it provides validation for Black empowerment and enrichment. The social development of Caribbean States is a God-given entitlement. The actualization of this right is the responsibility of the

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4 Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 32-33.

5 Psalm 27:13

Caribbean people to pursue. This responsibility is placed upon us as an extension of the fact that individuals have free will.

### *Recommendation*

This work recommends that as a part of the praxis of Caribbean theology, the rereading of the Bible, as Caribbean people, is necessary. The colonial preachers interpreted the Bible in a way suitable to the institution of slavery. That reading of the Bible is not helpful to Caribbean people. The doctrine of liberation, found in Scripture, must be elucidated and practiced.

### **Social Engagement**

Having equipped ourselves with a renewed reading of the Bible, we continue in our God-given free will to unite towards our own development. This intellectual matter of free will, when juxtaposed with the sovereignty of God, finds its connecting bridge to Caribbean theology's praxis by way of responsibility in social engagement. Among the arguments, from chapter two of this work, Lewin Williams and Garnet Roper have asserted an emphasis on the responsibility of the Caribbean church in social engagement and action in issues of governance.

I here advance Garnett Roper's argument of Caribbean Theology as Public theology. The Bible's demand concerning the oppressed will require that justice and equity are reflected in public policy and legislation. This reform is the responsibility, not of a mere elected few but the entire citizenship of the Region. Roper indicates that the government must be answerable to the church because of our challenging them towards just governance, that reflects respect for the rights all citizens whom the governing ministers are elected to serve. Roper calls the church to "*accept the public square and the public domain not merely as a domain of witness, but as a sphere of the life of influence of the church*"<sup>6</sup> He examines the declaration of Jesus Christ that believers are the salt and light of the world, and as such our call to be Christ's disciples takes the church beyond its individual and formal operation. Roper makes his advance of Caribbean theology as Public theology very clear in positing the following:

As salt and light the church seeks to exemplify, embody and express the beatitudes within the context in which it finds itself, to be characterized by the following: (a) Christian disciples are called upon to provide an identifiable presence, (b) to make an invaluable difference and (c) to be a dependable influence. These are the things that are being called for by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and when I say that Caribbean theology is Public theology these are the things that are in view.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Garnett L. Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Garnett Roper, ©2012), 174.

7 Garnett L. Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Garnett Roper, ©2012), 175.

Roper also takes into account the global church and clarifies that his argument for the Public theology is not an idea he sees as exclusively relevant to the church in the Caribbean. Wherever in the world the church is located, it must bear responsibility in a way relevant to its context. The global perspective is also captured by Lewin Williams, in his book entitled *Caribbean Theology*, where he discusses the centrality of the universally relevant Christ to contextually relevant Caribbean theology. Lewin Williams argues that despite the universality of Christ's gospel, Christology must be examined as paramount to Caribbean contextual thinking. He highlights that once Caribbean theology is Christian theology, it must necessarily have Christ at its core. In centering our Caribbean theology on Christ, we are to examine how Christ, as the incarnation of God, speaks and acts concerning liberation within the Caribbean context.<sup>8</sup>

*Recommendation:*

This work recommends that the viewpoint of the church's praxis embraces nationalistic and regional vision. The church must significantly influence any society within which it is present. The Caribbean church must be actively concerned about the governance of the people and hold the Regions leaders accountable to just and productive management that accounts for the rights of all citizens. This duty is the current responsibility of the Caribbean church given the free will and resources that God gives us.

### **The Goodness of God, Self-Assurance and Confidence**

Despite the horrors of slavery, the enslaved Africans did, evidently, believe that God is good to them. It was most unreasonable or illogical for the enslaved African people to have accepted Christianity and to have also seen Jehovah as good. It is strange for a few obvious reasons. Christianity was the religion of their oppressors. These were oppressors who insisted upon subservience and submission, as a demand of Divine duty, but were themselves in no display of such humility. What makes the acceptance of a good, Christian God even stranger is that Africans had already had their traditional religions. Why then would they accept Christianity? Moreover, why then would they believe it?

The answer to these questions lies primarily in the way the Bible was read by the enslaved. Baptist missionaries taught the slaves to pursue social advancement and aided materially in this impetus. Jamaica's Sam Sharpe is one example of the many oppressed that believed in the Christian God and found the goodness and justice of God through the contextual reading of the Scriptures. Sharpe read the Bible from the slave's perspective of the struggle between the powerful and the poor and hence his different interpretation and course of action. It is possible for both the oppressed and

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<sup>8</sup> Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, ©2002), 151.

the oppressor to read the same Scriptures but come to different conclusions, as each begins from a different “place” or epistemology.<sup>9</sup>

Sam Sharpe was very confident in his faith, and it strengthened his conviction of Black entitlement to freedom. He was not alone in this belief as enslaved persons across the island of Jamaica arose in the historical Rebellion in Christmas of 1832. Oral Thomas describes Sam Sharpe as a 'Black Baptist'. He states the adjective 'Black' is not concerning his skin colour but Sharpe's social experience from which he would be reading the Bible. Sam Sharpe saw the goodness of God as in solidarity with the cause of liberation, through the same Bible as the Europeans. Oral Thomas accounts:

Sharpe contrasted what he was hearing from the missionaries and what he and they were reading from the Bible – *if the son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36); you are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men (1 Cor. 7:23); there is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither bond nor free (Gal. 3:28), no man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24)* – with the social life of material ease and the privilege of the plantocracy and the lives of degradation, alienation, inauthenticity which he and his fellow slaves were forced to live in.<sup>10</sup>

Thomas points out that Sam Sharpe's interpretation of God was critical apparatus for social change. His experience was not one of feeling forsaken; there was neither any interpretation that God was on the side of his oppressors nor that the enslaved Africans and African descendants were inferior to the European powers. The goodness of God to Sam Sharpe and his followers did not suggest their awaiting compensation for their experiences of injustice in the afterlife. The goodness of God meant to them that they must have their entitlement to abundant life in this immediate life, here on earth. To Sam Sharpe, God's justice means that God was empowering the enslaved to overthrow and cast off the domination of their oppressors. God in His goodness is a God of equity, whereby no human is inferior to another.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, though God did not prevent slavery, God's justice is understood to be unthwarted. The free wills of wicked humans drove them along a destructive path of heinous greed and exploitation. The free will of the oppressed, on the other hand, was motivated by a confident awareness of identity and entitlement to justice, equity and self-actualization. God is good. The European colonial perpetrators acted in evil. This conviction of God's justice inundated the hearts and minds of the oppressed such that they did not relent, even unto death for freedom.

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<sup>9</sup> Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 29.

This hermeneutic self-disclosure of God to the Caribbean people is salient in the reflection of Caribbean identity. Caribbean theology, as the Caribbean's own narrative, requires an identification of God's direct relation to the enslaved, themselves. The fact that the enslaved Blacks of the Caribbean could have come to identify God as a Father, a Protector, and a Provider to themselves, makes it clear that God had been actively and evidently working for the Africans, in harmony with and confirmation of their interpretation of the Bible. Beyond the chains and the oppressor's whip, there was a convincing Spirit among the Africans. The point to be made here, towards Black identity of The Caribbean people, is that slavery is no evidence of God's rejection of the enslaved. The interpretation that the experience of slavery suggests inferiority of, or the refusal of, the enslaved by God is untrue. The Caribbean person that rereads the Bible without the biases of missionary interpretation will be confidently affirmed that the poor are blessed of God and like Sam Sharpe, emerge with a theology of liberation.

*Recommendation:*

This work recommends that the Caribbean embraces confidence as a fruit of having understood the goodness of God towards the Blacks of the Caribbean. Our forefathers have identified God's unanimity with the oppressed and have emerged with confidence about their entitlement to freedom and abundant life. Confidence in God strengthens the awareness legitimacy as people of God. We have been oppressed but never cast aside. Even in suffering the people of the Caribbean have been precious to God. God is our Liberator.

**Redefining and Re-expressing Worship in the Caribbean**

Following on the theme of confidence is redefinition of worship in the Caribbean. In the first chapter of this work, the effect of slavery on family was examined. It was highlighted that culture was suppressed using separation of Africans from other Africans with whom they shared tribal and cultural ties. On this note, Oral Thomas has drawn attention to the fact that this divide and conquer method stifled the authentic African experiences and original practices. It was evident to the colonial powers that there is strength in shared identity. That identity would produce strong social relationships and greatly enhance the sense of self among the enslaved. Thomas accounts,

The policy was not to keep too large a number of any single ethnic group together on a single plantation who spoke the same language and were from the same family, kinship, folklore, religious, economic and political systems. The logic was that if ethnic groups were left to form economic and social power bases they would have been a direct challenge to the strength, effectiveness and viability of the Plantocracy and a security danger. In reality, this was a policy to divide to rule. Through this schema however, slaves lost touch with aspect of their identity through language



and cultural practices.<sup>12</sup> In analysis of this reality of our history as Blacks in the Caribbean, that it becomes unmistakably clear that self-definition and self-assurance are fundamentally critical tasks.

Lewin Williams looks at this strain of culture out of the oppressed people of the Caribbean and realises that this has influenced the framework of our worship. Williams reckons that the Caribbean must give importance to our pre-European, African heritage. Of the Caribbean, he frankly says “*Specifically it needs to incorporate into its system some tenets of folk religion. It is a part of the people's roots and to get to real roots that count for “grass roots” experience this is the practical and honest route.*”<sup>13</sup> Any return to grass roots with a baseless disdain to African cultural practices is superficial.

As Williams also pointed out, it is the missionaries who demonised African folk tradition. The European missionaries did not understand the practices and customs of the Africans and whoever demonstrated a belief in them were regarded as simple. As a result, folk tradition had been omitted from Caribbean church liturgy, except for a few rare cases which are still regarded as heathenistic by the mainstream church community in the Region. Lewin Williams uses a personal example from his life as an illustration. He recounts his experience of seeing his mother prepare a beverage for communal sharing but before anyone consumed it some of the beverage was sprinkled around the yard. He explains that the ritual was handed to his mother across generations and that it had symbolised the recognition of the relation of the struggle of the ancestors with those who are seeing the end of the same struggle today. Lewin Williams makes an excellent connection between this ritual and Article I of Chapter XXV of the Westminster Confession of Faith that recognises the universality of the church as including not just believers who are alive in the global church today but also those who have passed and those who shall be.<sup>14</sup> This juxtaposition shows that the ideas were not so disconnected such that one idea could fairly be regarded as demonic while the other is regarded as sacred.

The issue is realising that the barring of folk tradition was not the result of any objective moral judgement but rather divisively repressive miseducation. Therefore in a determined step of self-assurance, the Caribbean church ought to explore our heritage, our roots, our traditional practices and forms of worship and re-define and re-express worship for ourselves. This both requires and produces boldness in overthrowing any

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12 Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 23.

13 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, ©2002), 203.

14 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, ©2002), 204-205.

demeaning and deprecating notion of our African heritage. As are African descendants, our folk traditions are a part of our roots. Again, disillusionment is the starting point of revolution.

*Recommendation:*

This work recommends that Blacks embrace our African ancestry in worship, as a part of embracing the self-assurance that emerges from understanding the goodness and justice of God. Our ancestral culture is just as legitimate that of any other people. African tradition and practices were demonised as a part of the process of subjugation of Black identity and the quenching of the Black spirit. Our African roots are authentic as means of self-expressions in worship and have always been. The embrace of African ancestry in worship is necessary part of praxis for our theology of Black identity.

**Forgiveness**

Also significant in the advance of Caribbean theology is the matter of forgiveness. Forgiveness is significant so as not to perpetuate a cycle of hatred that sets the oppressed in a reversed dehumanisation of their oppressors. Ashley Smith points out that a refusal against forgiveness keeps the victims stuck in an onerous state of mind of having been wronged or having been defrauded.<sup>15</sup> This is not asking the Caribbean people to forget about slavery or its perpetuating impacts on us that we continue to experience, even today. It is inviting the people of the Region to a self-liberalisation that forgiveness brings.

Ashley Smith presents a focused discourse on the significance of forgiveness. He highlights the importance of forgiving and welcoming reconciliation in Caribbean thinking. Smith points out that ill will and hostility are factors that are familiar realities in international relations. He identifies that this is due to feelings of distrust and resentment. With these sentiments, Smith points out there is the sense that there is need to subdue forces that are considered lesser or risky. This subduing takes various forms including subjugation and missionary miseducation, as has been experienced in the Caribbean, through European colonisation of Africans. Among the oppressed, there are usually those who have hope in social revolution, while the dominant minority perpetrates wanton waste of resources on systems of surveillance and suppression at the expense of the social development of the majority of the population.<sup>16</sup>

In presenting the relevance of forgiveness Ashley Smith gives focus to the fact that forgiveness is not a duty particular to the religious of society. Instead, he presents that

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<sup>15</sup>Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 43.

<sup>16</sup>Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 40-41.

forgiveness is healthy for relation on all levels not just individual but across communities and nation states. Smith illustrates forgiveness as a process of 'remembering' or re-unification of parties to a single objective as opposed to being divided, in competition. Caribbean self-definition is contextual but not estranging, local but not detached from the realities of the global community. As Ashley Smith explains, subjugative conflict 'dis-members' the exploited party. This dismemberment suggests that there is a whole, of which the Caribbean is a part.

Caribbean theology must, therefore, understand slavery as a manifestation of evil in the human heart, which is not related to race. History in its vastness shows that evil is a universal problem of the human heart, regardless of race or class. This reality must be captured in Caribbean theology and aid in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Though our history as a Region is themed by oppression, we are not merely victims. As we advance to an increasingly wholesome and healthy definition of ourselves, we are also assured of our entitlement to legitimacy and authenticity as the people of God, as a people that are contended for by God. As such, we embrace our God given right to freedom in the release we are privileged to experience through forgiveness. Having forgiven, we the Caribbean people advance to reintegration and contribution to the whole global community; and this time, of our own volition.

#### *Recommendation*

This work recommends that the Caribbean embraces forgiveness. Individually and collectively forgiveness is profitable. Humans must forgive as we seek God's forgiveness for our own infractions. We need not try to forget our history and social location, nor seek to sanitize or justify the evil that chattel slavery in the Caribbean was. However, we must journey pass subjugation with a preparedness to welcome restoration of relations and reconciliation with offenders, within the global community of the world.

#### **Conclusion**

Examining theodicy in Caribbean slavery is an ever continuing work. However, there are clear points of reason that contribute to demystifying the justice of God in human enslavement. This paper has focused on two essential realities of the subject which are crucial to useful interpretation and application, free will and the goodness of God. The work has sought to expose two salient points; one is that human beings are responsible for the actions they choose, and those actions have a famous (or in some cases infamous) tendency of affecting others. This affecting is true for miserable repression of a people or the liberation or triumph of a people. The other prominent point of this paper is that the goodness of God must be pondered towards a realisation that it means more than mere pain prevention; if God can be interpreted as still being good to a people despite their experience of pain, then this will most fundamentally aid in that people's self-definition.

I have presented a reflection on the socio-religious experience of the enslaved in the Caribbean's history. The experiences of the Triangular Trade were given discussion with emphasis on the anguish suffered by the Africans, especially from the middle passage journey from West Africa to the Western World, particularly the Caribbean. Additional attention was given, in this paper, to the attack that the transplanted Africans faced on their identity as Black people. It was noted that the attempts to crush Black identity were borne out of fear within the instigators of colonisation. The development of corrupted hermeneutics to achieve this goal of subjugation was also discussed. Critical in the exposition of slavery's effects was the sabotage of the family institution and the perpetuating effects this has had on family life in the Caribbean. The perception of skin colour as a result of social stratification in the slave society was also explored. Additionally, the discussion has been concerning how the experience of slavery has impacted the task of interpreting God, in the Caribbean.

Following this examination of the history of slavery in the Caribbean attention was given to two perspectives in theodicy being focused on in this paper, free will and the goodness of God. The arguments of various Caribbean theologians have been brought into discussion on this matter of human suffering in slavery. I have argued that God's sovereignty juxtaposed with human free will makes wishing that slavery was prevented or reversed a rationally inconsistent issue. In discussing the goodness of God, it was made clear that painlessness or the absence of suffering is not a prerequisite condition for God to be as good. This productive interpretation of God is highlighted in the experience of the enslaved, who find God to be a loving and good God who was on the side of the oppressed. God was identified as just and therefore, the uprising of the enslaved towards liberation is thoroughly justified.

I have made an analysis regarding free will and the goodness of God. I have advanced recommendations towards a theology of Black identity. I have established that it is necessary for Black people of the Caribbean to be disenchanted from the passive evasiveness of the 'pie in the sky' ideology. The origin of this debilitating framework has been exposed as being a premeditated instrument for preventing disturbance, from its victims. It has been suggested, that the Caribbean ought to take responsibility to cast out this thinking which is a developmental hindrance. Emphasis has been given to the necessity of re-reading the Bible as Caribbean people to interpret the Scriptures in a way that is relevant to our context. It has been exposed that the traditional, individualistic view of the gospel is a part of the colonial agenda and it must be understood as being such and therefore urgently rejected. Following the focus on disenchantment and re-reading of Scripture was the directive towards social engagement. Social engagement is presented as the necessary application of Caribbean theology. The free will of the Caribbean people demands our responsibility in our own self-development and self-definition. It is the opposite of missionary preaching of individualism and deferral of liberation until the hereafter.

Concerning the goodness of God, as is examined in the work, self-assurance is advanced. The idea here is that God's evident goodness to, and solidarity with, the oppressed Blacks of the Caribbean is the basis for accurate and thoroughly wholesome self-definition. This has been the central concern that formed the impetus of the work - where is God in the suffering of the enslaved? This is examined and analysed and the argument put forward that the Black people of the Caribbean have full assurance of trust in God's unanimity with us. It is highlighted that this confidence is not a new realisation but it is the same consciousness that has been held by our forefathers throughout oppression that produced barefaced revolts wherein not even their lives did the enslaved spare. I have also argued that the self-assurance in God's solidarity with the Caribbean must lead our Caribbean people towards embracing our African roots in our worship. The demonising rejection that our African tradition has received from the fearful Europeans is by no means reliable or true. Finally, under the theme of self-assurance, I have forwarded forgiveness as necessary for the Caribbean progress in liberation.

The issue of theodicy is that Christianity affirms that God is good, almighty, and all-knowing. However, given that there is considerable human suffering in the world, theodicy is a contested issue. The poor are defencelessly exploited by the powerful. A good God is expected to end injustice. Systematic exploitation of the poor is left unhindered. Nevertheless, this work holds that God is all good, all knowing, and all powerful despite human suffering.

This work aims to do the following: One, to examine the socio-religious experience of the enslaved in the Caribbean throughout the colonial era, in light of the identity that emerged from the history of slavery. Two, explore two instrumental perspectives in theodicy, namely Human Free Will and Divine Goodness. Three, advance a theology of Black identity for the Caribbean people and analyses the findings of the work with its recommendations for the Caribbean, especially towards Black identity. There is no single, absolute theology for the Caribbean. Historically, contributions have been made towards the development of Caribbean theology. Caribbean theology unifies by the socio-historical context of the Region. At the same time, it remains fluid because of the vastness of our experienced reality.

**Lukan Literary Strategy  
and  
Soteriology  
as  
Public Theology  
(Part 1)**

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INTRODUCTION

Public theology may be defined as that which “invites the Christian faith and theological reflection to the cross roads of human existence in the public square and the public domain.”<sup>1</sup> The discipline takes as its chief concerns the well being of the populace (i.e., putting people first) as well as the political dimensions of culture and society (issues of governance). In other words, the business of the public theologian, like Dr Luke’s, is about human flourishing physiologically (and otherwise)—through sustainable good governance. If we define psychology as the study of human behaviour, then theology—broadly speaking—is the quest to understand God’s behaviour relative to his sentient creatures in particular. For the writer of the Third Gospel, the quintessential public theologian is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ whose manifesto Luke artistically published<sup>2</sup> in chapter 4 of his Gospel:

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<sup>1</sup> Garnett Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston: GLR, 2019), 25.

<sup>2</sup>“Luke exhibits careful attention to structure at several levels. . . . Structural organization is apparent also in units of different sizes, such as the cycles of persecution in chap. 3-7, and individual units such as 19:1-7. Ring composition (chiasmus) and inclusion are means of presenting rounded sections. Chapters 13-14, for example, are framed by a complex inclusion. When travel is involved, the pattern follows the time honoured “there and back” formula, as in Jerusalem-Samaria-Jerusalem (8:14-28). This pattern continues with Paul, who repeatedly returns to Jerusalem, but is decisively broken off in chaps. 27-28”. Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The artwork follows:

A. synagogue (16a)

B. Jesus standing (16b)

C. Jesus given the scroll (17a)

D. Jesus' reading from Isaiah (18-19)

C'. Jesus giving back the scroll (20a)

B'. Jesus sitting (20b)

A'. synagogue (20c)<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry we get an inkling of what his public theological engagement looks like; it is:

- Pneumatic (*The Spirit of the Lord is on me*)
- Messianic (*because he has anointed me*)
- Evangelistic (*to proclaim good news to the poor*)
- Philanthropic (*He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners*)
- Therapeutic (*. . . recovery of sight for the blind*)
- Salvific (*to set the oppressed free*)

<sup>3</sup> David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 71-72.

- Prophetic (*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*)<sup>4</sup>

In the selfsame chapter we see how energetic Jesus became when he faced temptation (vv 1-2), and even after that (v 14a). After the time of the Judges, the three classes of leaders (messengers, mediators, and monarchs) were anointed for the tasks. One of them in particular was an evangelist (Isaiah), and all the genuine shepherds of old were indeed philanthropic, therapeutic, salvific, and prophetic (defined in modern times as speaking truth to power!). The training of the apostles was to equip them to be the kind of public figures who would be less and less of the problem and more and more of the solution and to face the endemic societal challenges and structures of corruption, along the aforementioned lines of engagement (Luke 10). Therefore, we are not surprised that Luke's second volume is replete with echoes of the programmatic declaration of Luke 4 cited above.<sup>5</sup>

So this paper pursues the thesis that the Lukan concept of Bio-Narratives<sup>6</sup> as a way of attempting to write a piece of history could serve as a useful tool to aid in the repositioning and rebranding of the project of Caribbean Public Theology. The Gospel of Luke, the longest book in the New Testament, has been long since recognised as the Gospel of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the marginalised--themes which resonate with the theological objectives of Majority World theologians, particularly those from the Caribbean whose forebears were numbered amongst the enslaved.

Although the precise nature of Luke's two-volume work is still being debated, few can question his purpose in producing a Gospel and its sequel as his contribution to the thrust of social re-engineering at a time when slavery was an accepted norm. If as Gordon points out that Luke and "quite a number of biblical texts are autobiographical while ironically pointing beyond the authors through the uniqueness of biblical textual intent . . . [and] read as moments of divine intervention,"<sup>7</sup> the writer of the Third Gospel must have composed his work with the intention and anticipation of the kind of divine intervention that was familiar to him in his reading of the Hebrew Bible (*e.g.* Exodus 1-12).

And if the stories of liberators such as Moses and the Messiah were familiar to him, Luke drew his greatest inspiration from the latter whose exploits he researched

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<sup>4</sup> There are also notable instances of apologetic moments in both volumes (*e.g.*, Acts 2; 14; 17; 22, 26); I suspect that some of the adjectives (ministries) overlap, and not a few in parentheses are double entendre.

<sup>5</sup> With even a similar ring structure, as we will see below.

<sup>6</sup> The literary genre of both Lukan volumes. See Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospel and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2000), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Judith Soares and Oral Thomas, *Contending Voices in Caribbean Theology* (Kingston: Jugaro, 1998), 49.



diligently and whose manifesto and mission he published confidently. Perhaps if the practitioners of Caribbean Theology follow the Lukan paradigm as one way to express their concern over the ills of the region, further progress may come about. The type of reflection envisaged will also allow said practitioners to highlight the contribution of seminal thinkers like Hyacinth Boothe, Idris Hamid *et. al.* The proposal is not entirely new. What is being attempted here is an effort to ground the proposal in the putative writing strategy of the Third Evangelist. But before we do that we take a look at the writer's language and artistry, as well as his creative historiography or way of writing a 'published theology'.

### Sketch of Luke's Language and Literary Strategy

The Greek language has enriched English in many ways. The former Greek scholar and principal of Jamaica Bible College (now Regent College of the Caribbean), Ted Edwards, for instance, has sought to show how heavily indebted the lexicon of the Queen's English is to koine Greek, the language of the marginalized, which, in some cases, supplanted, the official tongue (Latin) of the ancient Romans. The following examples of Greek words that have made their way into the English vocabulary<sup>8</sup> are given by Edwards: *catharsis, asthma, dysentery, dogma, drama, echo, idea, criterion, horizon, basis, character, panacea, angel, paralysis, thorax, rheumatism, autonomy, biology, orthodoxy, energy, therapeutic, mathematics*, just to name a few! My two favourite are names of the greatest man who ever lived: *Alpha and Omega*.

If the language of Jesus was primarily Semitic,<sup>9</sup> Luke's was definitely Greek.<sup>10</sup> His works have come down to us in this language, and that of the best koine variety. At the time of Luke it was the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world, legacy of the great Alexander of Macedonia; and while Jesus must have been fluent in Hebrew and especially Aramaic, Greek must have been known to him as well.<sup>11</sup> Once thought to be a combination of the Classical and Hebrew by some scholars, we have come to realize that the language of Luke (et al.) was

<sup>8</sup> Ted Edwards, *Greek without Tears*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Eugene, OR: Resource Publication, 2014), 4-5. See also D A Black, *Linguistics for Students of NT Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 144-169; D Thomas et al., ed. *Prison Epistles: Exegetical Questions/Devotional Expositions* (Kingston: DVP, 2001), 50-52.

<sup>9</sup> According to Hughson Ong ("Language Choice in Ancient Palestine: A Sociolinguistic Study of Jesus' Language Use Based on Four 'I have come' Sayings," [BAGL 1: {2012}, 63-101], Jesus used both Aramaic and Greek.

<sup>10</sup> Like he did for the Third Gospel, Luke's "effort to adapt the story of Jesus stylistically to the narrative style of the Holy Scriptures of Israel is guided by an interest in signalling to the reader that the narrated events are nothing other than a continuation of the history of Israel": Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke: (Vol. 1 [Luke 1–9:50 Waco, TX: Baylor, 2016], 5).*

<sup>11</sup> Richard A Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbi* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 154-71.

indeed the language of the common wo/man. This knowledge has been vouchsafed through the discoveries of the various papyri in Africa.<sup>12</sup>

The Greek language in general has over 3000 years of history, from the sixteenth century BCE to the present. The Koine, the language of the NT, flourished between BCE 300-300 CE. In comparison to the forms which preceded it, the Koine was characterized by simplicity of syntax, form, and vocabulary amenable and useful for merchants, travellers, soldiers and statesmen alike. This is well attested by the thousands of Papyri found in North Africa, preserving “for us the actual life of the day and includ[ing] letters of all sorts . . . contracts, receipts, proclamations, anything, everything.”<sup>13</sup>

Accepting the overall contribution of the mass of Greek papyri on our understanding of the NT, Nigel Turner<sup>14</sup> feels however that their value has been overstated to the neglect of other important features, such as the influence of the LXX (strong in Acts) and, what the REB calls, the Jewish languages. In other words, not all important terms in the Greek New Testament can be elucidated by invoking the papyri. There are many words that are best understood against a Semitic background, and even where the papyri shed light on some terms, a more complete colouring can be seen from the perspective of the Aramaic or Hebrew. So, with this caveat in mind, there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained by carefully weighing the vocabulary of Luke in the light emanating from the ancient Orient. Writing on “the more or less *popular*” appeal of the NT writers, particularly that of Luke’s companion, Deissmann remarks: “St. Paul too can command the terse pithiness of the homely gospel speech, especially in his ethical exhortations as pastor. These take shape naturally in clear-cut *maxims* such as the people themselves use and treasure up.”

But even where St. Paul is arguing to himself and takes more to the language of the middle class, even where he is carried away by priestly fervour of the liturgist [cf. Rom 15] and the enthusiasm of the psalmist, his Greek never becomes literary. . . . thickly studded with the rugged, forceful words taken from the popular idiom [like that of Jamaican], it is perhaps the most brilliant example of the artless though not inartistic colloquial prose of a travelled city resident of the Roman Empire, its wonderful flexibility making it just the Greek for use in a mission to all the world.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The conclusion is that “Biblical Greek, except where it is translation Greek [like the LXX], was simply the vernacular of daily life.” James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, volume 1: Prolegomena* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 5.

<sup>13</sup>A. T. Robertson and W.H. Davis, *New Short Grammar of the Greek NT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 12-13.

<sup>14</sup>Nigel Turner, *Christian Words* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), vii-xiv. “It is important, therefore, to guard against two opposing errors: not everything which conforms to Semitic idiom is a Semitism, nor is everything which appears somewhere or sometime in Greek genuine Greek” (*BDF*, 4).

<sup>15</sup>Deissmann, *Light*, 63-64.

Since Deissmann wrote, not a few studies have demonstrated that both Luke and Paul are much better literary artists than was first imagined.<sup>16</sup>

Bruce adds,

Whatever truth there may be . . . that Luke was [also] a painter, he certainly was an artist in words. Many will endorse the verdict ... that his Gospel 'is the most beautiful book there is.' How immensely poorer we should be without his description of the herald angels with their *Gloria in excelsis*, the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, the story of the Emmaus Road!

Bruce continues:

It is the same artist who in his second book depicts for us in vivid, unforgettable words the scene where Peter stands and knocks at Mary's door, the earthquake at Philippi, the uproar in the Ephesian theatre, the riot in Jerusalem when Paul was arrested, the appearance of Paul before Agrippa, the storm and shipwreck on the voyage to Rome, the fire of sticks and the viper of Malta. Renan also said of Lk. that it was 'the most literary of the Gospels'. We may extend this judgement to [Acts] and call the combined work the most literary part of the NT. We [consequently] find more really Classical Greek in Luke's writing than anywhere else in the NT....<sup>17</sup>

And if we are to believe the proposals of recent scholarship, we find more than a fair share of ring compositions in Luke's second volume as well.<sup>18</sup> Take, for instance, the following structure, which purports to cover the major literary matters arising from a general discourse analysis of Luke's sequel:

#### **A. Dominion Matters 1:1-7:59**

- Here Luke records crucial matters regarding the *Dominium Dei* (divine lordship) relative to Jesus' perspective on the kingdom, his promise of power from the Spirit, his precept for world evangelization, and the prayerful waiting on the Lord<sup>19</sup> on the part of the apostolate for the day of Pentecost. Chapters 2-7 catalogue some of the successes and setbacks of the church.

#### **B. Dispersion Matters 8:1-14:28**

<sup>16</sup>See for example, Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style*, 10, and Keener, *Acts*,

<sup>17</sup> F F Bruce, *Acts*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson (*The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, Revised Edition [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 220) adds the following: "[E]vents in Acts clearly parallel those of the Gospel. . . . The cyclical patterns in Luke-Acts are placed within a story that is essentially and intentionally linear."

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix.

- These chapters show how the gospel reached Samaria, Ethiopia, and Asia Minor (Turkey).

### C. Deliberation Matters 15:1-41

- This crucial chapter, like the church councils it anticipates in the following centuries, points to the profound importance of theological reflection under the Spirit's guidance.

### B.' Dispersion Matters 16:1 -28:16

- The closing chapters constitute a history (*His-story!*) of recapitulation and subsequent advancement of the gospel through precept, prayer and persecution.

### A' Dominion Matters 28:17:31

- This completes the *inclusio* concerning the *Dominium Dei* (or kingdom of God motif) with which the book begins.

Above Luke employs ring composition (chiasmus)<sup>20</sup> to delineate the way in which the gospel reached Rome from Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> The structure highlights certain divine initiatives<sup>22</sup> that engaged the Messianic community in a christologically motivated mission. A fifth initiative, the centrepiece of the macrostructure, focuses attention on the importance of theological discussion for the enterprise of gospel contextualization.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup>In commenting on Luke 9:6, Darrell Bock (Luke 1:1-9:50, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 817-818) comments: "By way of conclusion, Luke summarizes the mission briefly by referring to two primary tasks of the twelve: preaching the good news and healing (so also Acts 13:3 with 14:1-18). These are the same two categories with which Luke introduced the passage (Luke 9:1-2), except that he now gives them in reverse order (9:2 also spoke about the kingdom). The summary thus forms an *inclusio* with the introduction (Bovon 1989: 460). Some have pointed out the *inclusio* of Acts 1:6 ("kingdom") and 28:31 ("kingdom"); and the "reverse order" relative to the relevant Lukan mission mentioned by Bock that appears to parallel the purported macro-structure of Luke's second volume.

<sup>21</sup>For the chiasmus, see [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjet/17\\_094.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjet/17_094.pdf); and for one that includes the Lukan Gospel, see Kenneth R. Wolfe, "The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 30 (Spring, 1980): 62-63.

<sup>22</sup>See also Beverly Gaventa, "Initiatives Divine and Human in the Story World of Acts," in G.N. Stanton et al. eds., *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 79-89. According to J.B. Green (*The Gospel of Luke* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 830), "[T]he story of Luke-Acts is, in large part, the tale of two competing purposes--that of God and that which opposes God."

<sup>23</sup> In these four panels, there are four momentous movements, which sandwich another panel that is of no less missiological moment. The A-B structure straddles the eight Lukan summaries, dividing them in three parts (2:47; 5:14; 6:7/11:21, 24; 12:24/16:5; 19:20). Also each "of the key editorial markers (6:7; 12:24; 19:20) climaxes a section of the narrative recording the resolution of some conflict or the cessation of opposition and persecution"

Also, Luke's two volumes end the way they began, with both the prologue (Luke 1:1-4) and the epilogue (Acts 28:30-31) marked by a certain weightiness of literary style that forms an unmistakable *inclusio* (notice also the *inclusio* in the structure above, pointing to the kingdom of God).<sup>24</sup> A comparison between Luke 3:38 and Acts 3:21 shows that Luke was not unaware of the cosmic character of his public and published engagement, as depicted below;

### CREATION OLD AND NEW

A-Material Universe (Gen 1:1-25)

**B**-Image Bearers (Gen 1:26-31)

**B'**- Image Bearers (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17)

A'- Material Universe (2 Pet 3; Rev 21-22)<sup>25</sup>

If the vision<sup>26</sup> presented by the above macro-structure is true, theology as praxis in any shape or form (BB' as *imago Dei* and *imago Christi*, respectively) is well worth it in the end, notwithstanding the present struggle. That struggle will begin after Acts chapter 2—a chapter with its own ring compositions. Keener suggests the following chiasmic structure for Peter's speech:

**A** This one . . . you *crucified* and killed (Acts 2:23)

**B** But God *raised* him up . . . (2:24)

**C** David says + Psalm 16 quote involving right hand (2:25-28)

**D** The patriarch *David died* . . . (2:29)

**E** Being therefore a *prophet*, and knowing (2:30)

**F** that God has sworn and *oath* to him (2:30)

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(D.G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 33). "Another significant point of progression," says Peterson (p.70), "is the offering of salvation to the Gentiles (1:8; 8:-40; 9:15; 10:34-43; 13:46-48; 22:21; 28:25-29)

<sup>24</sup> J. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (Waco, Texas, 1989), 4.

<sup>25</sup> This structure is commentary on Luke 4: 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, it is clearer in 2020!

- G that he would set one of his descendants *on his throne* (2:30)
- H he foresaw and spoke (2:31)
- I of the *resurrection* (2:31)
- J that he was not abandoned to *Hades* (2:31)
- J' nor did his flesh see *corruption* (2:31)
- I' This Jesus God *raised up* (2:32)
- H' of that we are all *witnesses* (2:32)
- G' Being therefore exalted *at the right hand of God* (2:33)
- F' having received from the father the *promise* of the Holy Spirit (2:33)
- E' He has poured this [*phenomenon*] which you see and hear (2:33)
- D' For *David* did not ascend into the heavens (2:34)
- C' For *he himself* says + Psalm 110 quote involving right hand (2:33-35)
- B' that God has made him *Lord and Christ* (2:36)
- A' this Jesus whom you *crucified* (2:36)<sup>27</sup>

The centre of the structure is the unit **JJ'**, but it is artistry gone awry if the body of Jesus was never buried, as suggested by Martin.<sup>28</sup> What follows is an adaptation of a schema on 2:38 mentioned by Blomberg:<sup>29</sup>

- A** Invitation to Incorporation (*Repent*)
- B** Identification (*and be baptized/identified, every one of you*)
- B'** Identification (*within the name of Jesus Christ*)
- A'** Initiation and Incorporation<sup>30</sup> (*forgiveness ... the gift of the Holy Spirit*)

Keener also offers the following proposal that encompasses the final verses of the chapter.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1:864; italics and ellipses are original. Bold type added.

<sup>28</sup> D B Martin, *Biblical Truths* (New Haven/London: Yale, 2017), 211; contra Paul et al.; 1 Cor 15:1-4.

<sup>29</sup> Craig Blomberg, *New Testament Theology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor, 2018), 446.

<sup>30</sup> i.e., becoming a permanent member of the *Corpus Christi* (cf. John 14:15-16).

**A** People turning to Christ (through proclamation, 2:41)

**B** Shared worship meals (2:42)

**C** Shared possessions (2:44-45)

**B'** Shared worship meals (2:46)

**A'** People turning to Christ (through believers' behaviour, 2:47).

The B-C-B sections are quite stunning, considering the fact that neither the noun nor the verb for love appears in the book.<sup>32</sup> Luke prefers to show love in action throughout his second volume (e.g., 2:44-47; 5:33-37). Interestingly, the ring composition which includes Acts 2:41 above dovetails nicely with other succeeding chapters.

[A] Temple-house Frame (2.46)

[B] Public-Temple Tour (3.1-4.22)

[C] Private House Interlude (4.23-5.11)

[B'] Public-Temple Tour (5.12-41)

[A'] Temple-house Frame (5.42)<sup>33</sup>

When we come to chapter 15, the centre of Luke's second volume and putative middle of his macro-structure, we are invited to ponder yet another ring composition:

**A** Antioch (v. 1)

**B** Revelation of the problem by the delegation, apostles and elders (vv2-7a)

**C** Peter's speech (7b-11)

**D** Missionary report featuring the acts of God (v.12)

**C'** James' speech (13-21)

**B'** Resolution of the problem by the delegation, the apostles and the elders (vv 22-29)

**A'** Antioch (30-35)

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<sup>31</sup> C Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2014), 325.

<sup>32</sup> So Dunn, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), xxii.

<sup>33</sup>

For Luke, then, even when the missionaries are not carrying out their substantive responsibility, the acts of God among the Gentiles take centre-stage. Tannehill<sup>34</sup> also notes a neat design in v.16, built around four first-person singular future verbs; the construction (with some embellishments) looks something like this:

A I will return after these things

and

B I shall rebuild the fallen tent of David

and

B' I shall build again it ruins

and

A' I will restore it

These I-statements justify Stauffer's insightful observation that "divine I-declarations in the NT are extremely rare, being limited for the most part to quotations from the OT." In his summary of the OT data, Stauffer (TDNT 2: 343ff) informs us that the "'I-style' became characteristic of the self-revealing God of Israel'. This is perhaps best exemplified by ' . . . . Ex. 3:14 (I am what I am) and the introductory . . . I am YHWH of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2ff; cf. Dt. 32:39ff)". According to Stauffer, God is presented as the 'ultimate Subject' in Isaiah 40-45—the first and final Word, the omnipotent Will and exclusive Source of 'revealing and reconciling grace [on which] we are totally dependent'. Therefore, similar predications of kings or gods are considered arrogant and blasphemous (Ezek. 28)." Stauffer continues: "The NT maintains the belief that God is absolute Subject, but offers few I-declarations on God's part except in quotations, e.g., Is. 45:23 in Rom. 14:11, Deut. 32:35 in Rom. 12:19, Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5, and Ex. 3:14 in expanded form in Rev. 1:8. . . . The rabbis avoid this style, fighting against the real or apparent pretension of I-sayings in the name of monotheism (cf. Gamaliel's caution in Acts 5:36-37)."

It is against this background—the reticence of the Rabbis to use first person pronouns in the singular, the infrequency of the divine 'I' in the NT, and the shared conviction of the NT writers that God is the ultimate Subject—that the I-locution above stands out in bold. Talbert's contribution is worth citing as well, since it includes the central section (Acts 15) of Luke's second volume.

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<sup>34</sup> Cited in D.G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*. PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 431.



- A 15:1-29 (“Paul and others go to Jerusalem ....”)  
 B 15:30-16:15 (“.... The Holy Spirit forbids ....”)  
 C 16:16-40 (“We hear of an [exorcism accomplished]”  
 D 17:1-15 (“Synagogue debates”)  
 E 17:16-34 (“Pagans are taught accurately”)  
 F 18:1-11 (“Paul argues in the Synagogue”)  
 F’ 18:12-23 (“Paul argues in the Synagogue”)  
 E’ 18:24-19:7 (“Christians are taught accurately”)  
 D’ 19: 8-10 (“Synagogue debates”)  
 C’ 19:11-20:12 (“We hear of an [attempted exorcism]”  
 B’ 20:21:14 (“.... The Holy Spirit warns ....”)  
 A’ 21:15-26 (“Paul and others go to Jerusalem ....”)

The final ring composition we will display comes from ACTS 20:

- [A] 18-19: “You know . . . , serving the Lord with all humility”  
 [B] 18b-20: “the whole time . . . tears . . . in public and from house to house”  
 [C] 20: “I did not shrink from announcing”  
 [D] 21: “bearing witness”  
 [D’] 24: “to bear witness”  
 [C’] 27: “I did not shrink from announcing”  
 [B’] 31: “three years night and day . . . with tears”  
 [A’] 34: “You know that these hands served”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> R.C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A literary Interpretation*, v.2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 253.

Like the structure in chapter 15, the one immediately above is also connected to significant I-statement.

- *The 'I' of Pastoral Commitment* (31)
- *The 'I' of Prayerful<sup>36</sup> Commendation* (32)
- *The 'I' of Personal Conviction* (33-34)
- *The 'I': The Paradigmatic Christ* (35)

This final declaration is climactic, precisely because it is Christocentric. It echoes in a very definite way the programmatic declaration of Luke 4. A comparison of the two discourses, that is, of Acts 20:35 and the one in the Gospel, helps the reader to appreciate better what Luke means by the 'weak' and the 'poor' – all the marginalized, disenfranchised, imprisoned – in a word – the enslaved. The whole discourse of Acts is dedicated to fleshing out these themes first enunciated in the Third Gospel, and all the artistry displayed above is in the service of the writer's soteriology.

But there is a question we need to ask at this juncture: Why did Luke not include the dominical saying of verse 28 in his first volume? It seems that the narrator strategically positioned this messianic gem here (v 28) to tighten the connection between the Messiah and the apostle to the Gentiles, similar to what is done elsewhere. For example, in 13:47 there is also an important echo of Luke 2:32, where similar language is used of Jesus. The Mission of the Servant is undertaken both by Jesus (cf. 26:23) and, to a far lesser extent, Paul, who with much difficulty managed to tear himself away from his beloved brethren (36).

More recent studies of Luke's language and literary devices have returned to an emphasis which was that of early Greek grammarians, that is, on the verb.<sup>37</sup> In fact the modern study is enriched by the study of linguistics, particularly the investigation into the nature of the verbal system. A work that is useful in this regard is that of Timothy Brookins, who summarizes the findings of the growing consensus by positing the following:

According to this new perspective, Greek verbs grammaticalized not time but rather the semantic values of "aspect" and "space." . . . I accept the emphasis of recent studies that Greek verbs grammaticalize aspect (and in some sense also space). On the basis of the cognitive-linguistic theories of "viewpoint," "mental space," and "conceptual blending," however, I argue

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 2 on the Lord's Prayer.

<sup>37</sup>Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 20.

that time also remained a grammaticalized, or semantic, feature of indicative verb forms . . . , I [also] demonstrate that particular tense forms correspond invariably with particular times, relative to projected mental space: the imperfect, aorist, perfect, and pluperfect with anterior time; the present with contemporaneous time; and the future with posterior time. In short, Greek indicative verbs grammaticalize aspect as well as time and (in the cases of the perfect and pluperfect) distinctive configurations of mental spaces.<sup>38</sup>

The character of the Greek of Luke (which reminds us so much of the JNT) and the other NT writers may best be summarized in the words of a twentieth-century translator:

I must, in common justice, confess here that for many years I had viewed the Greek of the New Testament with a rather snobbish disdain. I had read the best of Classical Greek both at school and Cambridge for over ten years. To come down to the *Koine* of the first century A.D. seemed, I have sometimes remarked rather uncharitably, like reading Shakespeare for some years and turning to the Vicar's letter in the Parish Magazine! But I think now that I was wrong: I can see that the expression of the Word of God in ordinary workaday language is all a piece with God's incredible humility in becoming Man in Jesus Christ. And, further, the language itself is not as pedestrian as I had at first supposed.<sup>39</sup> We now turn our attention to outstanding West Indian Bible students who have followed in Luke's footsteps.

### Caribbean Public Theologians

Over the years Caribbean theologians have shown more than a passing interest in the Bible.<sup>40</sup> If, Like Dr Luke, they insist that their starting point for doing theology is their lived-reality in the shadow of Empire, this must never be understood to mean they have devalued the OT<sup>41</sup>/NT as a source and point of departure for theological reflection. If the writer of the Third Gospel made good use of Koine Greek, perhaps the first to employ the Jamaican Language in a scholarly work is Dr Carlton Dennis, former Academic Dean at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST). His monograph, *Proverbs and People: A Comparative Study of Afro-Caribbean and Biblical Proverbs* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1995) is replete with what is commonly called Patwa/Patois. Concerning this work, Dr Neville Callam has this to say: "Dennis examine[s] the folk wisdom tradition of Caribbean people

<sup>38</sup> "A Tense Discussion: Rethinking the Grammaticalization of Time in Greek Indicative Verbs," *JBL* 137, no. 1 (2018): 147. I'm yet to digest the vocabulary drawn from cognitive linguistics and the like, but his examples appear quite convincing. A third reading may help my cause.

<sup>39</sup>Phillips, *Ring of Truth*, 18.

<sup>40</sup>Theresa Lowe-Ching, "Method in Caribbean Theology," In *Caribbean Theology*, ed. H. Gregory. Kingston: UWI, 1995; John Holder, "Is This the Word of the Lord? In Search of a Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics." In *Religion, Culture and Tradition in the Caribbean*. Edited by Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

<sup>41</sup> It is now common knowledge that Luke's soteriology is rooted in the Hebrew Bible.

to discern ways in which God was at work among [them] . . . [He] offer[s] a theological analysis of Proverbs in use in the region and probe[s] the meaning of this reality.”<sup>42</sup>

As dean, Dr Dennis supervised the following works: Kathy Earle, “An Exegetical Analysis of Psalm 1 in Light of the Contemporary Trends toward Humanism in the Development of Self Identity,” M. A. Thesis. CGST, 1996; Patrick Harrison, “The Song of Songs and Human Sexuality, with a Focus on 8:4-14 and Application to the Jamaican Context. M.A. Thesis. CGST 1998, and Anthony Oliver. *Salvation as Justice in Amos 5: J 8-27: Implications for Jamaica*. Ann Arbor: UML 1991. Dr Oliver, a Trinidadian, would go on to succeed Dr Dennis<sup>43</sup> as academic dean at the CGST, but not before completing his doctorate at Trinity International University, with a dissertation entitled *Creation and Redemption<sup>44</sup> in Amos: A Multi-faceted Approach, with Emphasis on the Hymns*.<sup>45</sup> (Ann Arbor: UMI. 1998), and making a contribution<sup>46</sup> to the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

Another scholar from the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is Steed Vernyl Davidson. Hailing from Tobago proper, Dr Davidson is associate professor of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. He earned a PhD in Hebrew Bible from Union Theological Seminary in New York, an STM from Boston University and both an MA and BA from the University of the West Indies. His work centres on deploying postcolonial theory as a means of interrogating aspects of power in the Bible, biblical interpretation, and use of Scriptures in contemporary cultures. He is the author of *Empire and Exile: Postcolonial Readings of the Book of Jeremiah* (2011) and the co-editor of *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible:<sup>47</sup> RumiNations* (2015). Dr Davidson’s current research focuses on the oracles against the nations in the Prophetic Books in light of contemporary challenges of the nation-state. Dr. Davidson was an ordained minister in the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas before becoming an elder in the United Methodist Church (USA). He served churches in St. Vincent, his native Tobago, as well as in the New York Annual Conference of the UMC in Manhattan and Long Island.

Former lecturer in Hebrew at CGST and now president of the JTS, Dr Garnett Roper, commemorated Jamaica’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a publication bearing the title, *Jubilee*,

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<sup>42</sup> Callam, *From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2017), 94.

<sup>43</sup> He is also the author of *Jonah: A Picture of the Modern Christian*. Kingston, JA: SRI, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Two Lucan themes.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Luke’s similar emphasis in chapters 1-2 of his Gospel.

<sup>46</sup> An article on mourning (*abl*).

<sup>47</sup> The Barnabas of Acts, a native of Cyprus, would love to read this!

*Jubilee: This Is the Year of Jubilee*. Essentially The book, we are told, is “a profound theological statement on our progress as Jamaicans” as well as a call to reflect on the love of God for the marginalized in our society.<sup>48</sup> A later and more substantial publication along similar lines is *Thus Says the Lord* (Kingston: Jugaro, 2018).

J Richard Middleton, professor of Biblical Worldview and Exegesis at Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY, and adjunct professor of Old Testament at the CGST, believes that Roper’s latest OT contribution “has done the church and the wider society in opening up the . . . radical message of the Minor Prophets. These mediations not only challenge the conscience; they model an approach of listening to Scripture for its ancient message, which continues to speak with great relevance to our context.” The same thing could be said of Dr Middleton’s revised doctoral dissertation (*The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), because:

Middleton exhibits a powerful capacity for big issues, a patience with detail, and a sure theological sensibility. His study ranges all the way from comparative historical analysis to contemporary issues of ideology critique. The result is a study of a crucial biblical-theological phrase that is sure to become a benchmark in exegetical-hermeneutical work. Middleton's unwavering theological focus keeps the detail in the service of big issues, and culminates with a wondrous affirmation of a generous God. Such a God stands over against ancient modes of parsimonious violence and, by implication, over against contemporary practitioners of the same parsimonious violence. A most important read! (Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary)

It is Cristina Garcia-Alfanzo who interrogated the Hebrew Bible concerning its stories of womanhood (a Lucan emphasis) in order to unmask and seek vistas of liberation vis-à-vis patriarchal hegemony.<sup>49</sup> UTCWI graduate Dr Raphael Thomas has a popular-level piece (*Biblical Dynamics for Revival Today: Lessons from the Life of King Hezekiah*. Annotto Bay, St Mary: RTP, 2011) that elicits the following comment from a Denver Seminary professor:

Through the combination of a marvellous gift of exposition, profound knowledge of the Scripture, and a heart that thirsts after God, Dr. Raphael Thomas makes this ancient text speak with power and poignancy to contemporary believers. All those consumed with

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<sup>48</sup> “BOOK REVIEW,” *Groundings* (July 2013): 81-83.

<sup>49</sup>*Resolviendo: Narratives of Survival in the Hebrew Bible and in Cuba Today*. Peter Lang. 2010. Cited in Roper *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston: Xpress, 2012), 204.

the desire to see revival in our time and more importantly to experience revival in their lives, will find a great resource here. (Dieumeme Noelliste)

Dr Burchell Taylor, in many ways Roper's scholarly and pastoral mentor, has a trilogy<sup>50</sup> that makes a serious contribution to the project of Caribbean Theology, namely, *Psalms 23, Daniel, and Living Wisely: Reflections on the Wisdom Books*. This latest book "deals with lessons to be learnt from the wisdom books i.e., Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes with special focus on the Caribbean context. For Taylor, the wisdom tradition focuses on the day-to-day struggles, which assist in making sense of life."<sup>51</sup>

As we have come to expect from William Watty, a challenge is presented in his latest publication to "the valuable insights that have accrued from Martin Noth's hypothesis of a 'Deuteronomistic History [i.e.] the hypothesis itself and analyses deriving from it.'" Watty senses some failure here "to account satisfactorily for the place of 2 Samuel 7:1-17 in the Joshua-Kings composition. That failure is due to a methodological flaw of taking a non-canonical configuration--namely the Deuteronomy-Kings corpus--as the point of departure and the interpretative key. His work (*The Nathan Narrative in 2 Samuel 7:1-17: A Traditio-historical Study*. [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016] ) attempts "to remedy that flaw".<sup>52</sup>

Hemchand Gossai, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at Northern Virginia Community College, USA, has published a flurry of OT works which includes the following: *Barrenness and Blessing: Abraham, Sarah and the Journey of Faith*. Havertown: Lutterworth, 2010; *Power and Marginality in the Abraham Narrative*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2005; *Social Critique by Israel's Eighth-Century Prophets: Justice and Righteousness in Context*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006; and *The Hebrew Prophets after the Shoah: A Mandate for Change*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. Recently he edited *Postcolonial Commentary and the Old Testament*. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 2018. Dr Stephen Russell's pieces, "Abraham's Purchase of Ephron's Land in Anthropological Perspective," *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013): 153-170 and *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009) are also worthwhile studies.<sup>53</sup> Finally, sometime ago the editor of Scripture Union JA,

<sup>50</sup> He has also written *Reflections on the Book of Micah*, which I have not seen.

<sup>51</sup> [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjet/18\\_065.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjet/18_065.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/Nathan-Narrative-Samuel-Traditio-historical-Study-ebook/dp/B01K0ARTU8/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547334903&sr=8-1&keywords=william+watty%2C+old+testament](https://www.amazon.com/Nathan-Narrative-Samuel-Traditio-historical-Study-ebook/dp/B01K0ARTU8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547334903&sr=8-1&keywords=william+watty%2C+old+testament).

<sup>53</sup> For a review of this, see [http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/8240\\_9011.pdf](http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/8240_9011.pdf)

Margaret McLaughlin, brought together a number of writers to help produce a devotional for teens. The resulting project ( *Time Out fi know God*. Kingston: SU: n.d.) covers a number of articles ranging from Genesis to Malachi.

Part 2 will explore an update of the NT engagement of Caribbean scholars as well as further examples of Luke's soteriology.

## APPENDIX

### THE LORD'S PRAYER, THE POPE, AND SOME SLICED-BREAD PROPOSALS

*So right after this Jamaican mother taught her twins the Lord's Prayer, her son queried: "Mom, why ask for daily bread; why not ask for a whole year's supply of sliced bread?" Before his mother opened her mouth, his sister Dotty chimed in: "So that it might be fresh, Delly!"*

The Lord's Prayer, which some of us learnt when we were very young (do parents still teach their children this gem?), is no stranger to proposals for change. One of the first such proposals concerns its name: should it still be called 'the Lord's Prayer' or 'the Disciples' Prayer'? The Lord's Prayer, some point out, is found in John 17 not Matthew 6 or Luke 11. I believe that the traditional name can stand because the Lord's Prayer is the prayer given by the Lord to his disciples to pray (at their request, according to Luke!), similar to the Lord's Supper is the sacrament given to said disciples to partake of. No one as far as I know has suggested a name change for the Eucharist!

So what is the Pope's proposal all about? It is not about the label as discussed above. In fact, the circles in which he moves and in the translation well known to him (the Latin Vulgate), the Prayer is simply known as the Pater noster (Latin for "Our Father")—a very good 'candidate' for a name change. The Pope's concern is more substantial. According to the *Christian Post* <sup>54</sup> 'Despite opposition from traditionalists, Pope Francis has officially approved a change to the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:13 that replaces "lead us not into temptation" with "do not let us fall into temptation."'

The proposal is not new. A previous pontiff (Pope Benedict XVI), for example, introduces verse 13 with these words: '[t]he way this petition is phrased is shocking for many people: God certainly does lead us into temptation' (*Jesus of Nazareth* [NY:

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-francis-approves-change-to-the-lords-prayer>

Doubleday, 2007], 160). He then cites texts like James 1:13 and 1 Corinthians 10:13, to help elucidate his point. Even prof. Grant Osborne of blessed memory (formerly of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) in his magnum opus on Matthew's Gospel has a similar rendering to what the present Pope is proposing; translation work is challenging.<sup>55</sup>

### THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION

The Gospel of Mark does not carry the Lord's Prayer; Luke does, but in a shortened form as below.

Πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου ·

*(Father, let your be set apart)*

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου ·

*(Let your reign be fully manifested)*

τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ·

*(Provide food for us regularly)*

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,

*(Forgive our sins)*

καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν ·

*(for we ourselves forgive our debtors)*

*καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.*<sup>56</sup>

*(And do not allow us to be severely tested)*<sup>57</sup>

In the Third Gospel, it is the disciples who are the ones who make the request for a "template" on prayer. After the Pater-noster, they are given a parable, a set of precepts, and a promise that was fulfilled at Pentecost (11:1-13).

<sup>55</sup> Here we need to note as well that the other Synoptic Gospels (Mark and Luke) employ relatively strong terms (including 'driven') to describe the beginning of Jesus' trials.

<sup>56</sup> Italics added.

<sup>57</sup> A plea of mitigation?



Another proposal, this time from a layman, is, ‘Do not *leave* us into temptation’. Some Bible scholars point to a possible Semitic (Jewish) turn of phrase behind the term for ‘lead’ which, they say, is employed with permissive force (‘do not allow us’). This comes very close to the intuitive layman-rendering above. Probably, then, the objections to the Pope are premature. Hopefully soon somebody will share with the Pope and his detractors the best translation of verse 13 since sliced bread: *An no mek wi fies notn we wi kaaz wi fi sin, bot protek wi fram di wikid wan.* (JNT; Emphases added).

Interestingly, *wikid wan* is a translation of *poneros* (evil) in the original – a word that is an ambiguous (deliberately?) masculine or neuter. If the latter is intended by the writer, it means (by way of application) *hurricane* or *drought* or *obeah* or *bike accident* or *stray bullet*, et cetera. If the former the JNT is right on target and the main reference in context is to the devil or any person he may choose to manipulate in order to harm those who have an intimate relationship with *Pater noster* (our Father). There’s even a story which brings out the point: ‘Pilot to tower, pilot to tower, I am low on fuel and I’m 300 miles away from the airport, what must I do?’ After a seven-second period of silence, a response came, ‘Control to pilot! Control to pilot! Say after me: Our Father ...’

The prayer is about our provision (vv 11-12) and protection (13). But let us not forget it is pre-eminently about our Father (Paternoster) – His honour, His kingdom, His will (vv 9-10). Its seven petitions (in Matthew 6) begin with these values that are also enshrined in Jamaica’s National Anthem – the same set of values that should shape our lives!

<p>Eternal Father bless our land Guard us with Thy mighty hand Keep us free from evil powers Be our light through countless hours To our leaders, Great Defender, Grant true wisdom from above Justice, truth be ours forever Jamaica, land we love Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love.</p>	<p><i>hltornal Faada, bles wi lan, Giaad wi wid Dai maiti an, Kip wi frii frahn hiivl powa, Bi wi lait chruu kountles howa. Tu wi Liidaz, Griet Difenda, Grant chuu wizdam fram abov. Jostis, Chuut fi wi fieba, Jumieka, lan wi lob. Jumieka, Jumieka, Jumieka, lan wi lob.</i></p>
<p>Teach us true respect for all Stir response to duty's call Strengthen us the weak to cherish Give us vision lest we perish Knowledge send us, Heavenly Father, Grant true wisdom from above Justice, truth be ours forever Jamaica, land we love</p>	<p><i>Laan wi chuu rispek fi haal, Tor rispans tu juuti kaal, Chrentn wi di wiik fi cherish, Gi wi vijan les wi perish. Nalij sen wi Ebnli Faada, Grant chuu wizdam fram abov. Jostis, Chuut fi wi fieba, Jumieka, lan wi lob.</i></p>

Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love. <sup>58</sup>	<i>Jumieka, Jumieka, Jumieka, lan wi lob.</i>
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The anthem also reminds us that while we bask in the sunshine of God's blessings, there is darkness to overcome and evil forces within and without—a point that is made so well in the Lord's Prayer. Quite poignantly, the lyrics of our anthem do not allow us the luxury of forgetting that we are our brothers' keeper, and that we need divine strength to carry out this responsibility to God's image bearers. The quest for truth is a stark reminder that Christ is the true and living way to the eternal Father, to whom we pray. Our need for vision, as in Proverbs 29:18, is more than just foresight; it is nothing less than the divine counsel rightly understood and diligently obeyed. This is the knowledge and wisdom needed; this is the light through countless hours for which we have pleaded, lest we perish. Lest we perish. One more thing:<sup>59</sup>

*He hath shown thee, O man, what is good: and what  
doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to  
love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?  
(Micah 6:8)*

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<sup>58</sup> <https://jamaicans.com/anth/>

<sup>59</sup> From *New Testament Theology* (Kingston: EMI, 2019), 372.

***'SO WHAT WENT INTO  
THE PIGS?'***

**Part 1**

**(Mark 5:1-20)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The above question began a theological journey that has found embodiment in the paper that now has your attention. It is based on the longest account of demonization anywhere in the New Testament. This passage tells the story of a man who was said to be demonized by a large number of demons until Jesus set him free. As a result of Jesus' actions, the demons who had made this poor, miserable fellow their home were cast into a herd of pigs who rushed to their deaths. The man was free, but the pig farmers' source of livelihood now lay drowned in the sea. This is the literal, and, somewhat traditional understanding of the passage.

**Background**

This writer had never heard this understanding challenged prior to mid-2012 when, during an exposition of his PhD. dissertation, an erudite scholar proffered an alternate understanding of the term 'Legion'. He made the point that 'Legion' was Mark's metaphorical reference to the occupying Roman forces of Palestine who was oppressing this "demoniac". What Jesus did was bring social reform. Social reform! Could this be so? Could Jesus' "setting the man free" be simply challenging the natural oppressive elements of His day? While pondering these questions in the meeting, another equally learned intellectual said: 'So, what went into the pigs?' This was a fair question since a major part of the story was the subsequent, resulting demise of the pigs after the man was set free.

The pericope under study is the longest account of the same incident of all the Synoptics, and brings into sharp focus various issues relating to the existence, nature and substance of demons. Is the demon to be understood as disembodied

spirits or fallen angels, the antithesis of good or simply metaphorical representations of conditions that fall below the ideal? Any understanding of the term has its attendant difficulties. The modern school of interpretation with its anti-supernaturalist motivation rubbishes the claim that sinister spirits can inhabit the human being or that they even exist. It takes a more allegorical approach to understanding the concept. What could be called the protestant, supernaturalist hermeneutic is one that generally takes the term at face value and understands it as spiritual beings who are antagonistic to God and His plans.

The parallel accounts which exist in Matthew and Luke all have the pigs as an important feature of the story. What of the pigs? What resulted in their demise? This writer believes that it is the answer to this last question on which hinges the veracity of either position. But, which of the two views is true?

The modern antisupernaturalist and the protestant supernaturalist understandings of 'Legion' in Mark 5:1-20 cannot both be correct in the same sense and at the same time. Since both understandings are the result of the methodologies and their attendant presuppositions, which hermeneutical approach is more valid? In other words, which hermeneutical approach is more trustworthy to lead the correct interpretation?

This paper aims to apprehend the truth concerning the nature of 'Legion' and the fate of the pigs in Mark 5:1-20. It:

1. Exegetes the text containing the 'Legion' reference in Mark 5.
2. Examines the methodology used and conclusions reached by the grammatico-historical school.
3. Examines the methodology used and conclusions reached by the socio-literary school.
4. Compares the two methodologies and conclusions.
5. And finally, makes a decision as to whether the liberal/social-justice interpretation of 'Legion' to mean the "Roman occupation" is to be preferred to the traditional interpretation of the term to mean "many demons".

### **Significance**

For some time, the discipline of hermeneutics has been concerned with looking at a text in its original context and deriving its meaning to both its original audience and its writer and, thereafter, making applications to the life of the contemporary reader. In later times, a different understanding of interpretation has emerged,

that of examining the meaning that a text has for its readers in the contemporary setting. There is therefore an emphasis on personal experience and cultural relevance when interpreting texts. This emphasis, some may argue, allows the interpreter to disregard elements of Scripture that do not necessarily resonate with personal experience and to even introduce foreign ideas to the Scriptures in order to achieve cultural relevance. It can be said that the emergence of various theologies such as Black Theology is proof positive that there is an undue reliance on the contemporary audience in interpreting Scripture. This reliance allows one to disregard what the texts actually say. Against this backdrop, one can now expound on the significance of this work.

Firstly, some believe that hermeneutical approaches that have their genesis in the lived experience of people, rather than in the texts and in the God who inspired them, will result in undue accommodation to the culture of the contemporary reader while sacrificing the true, intended meaning of the texts. On the other hand, some may argue that the traditional method ignores the experiences of people and relegates the Bible to the position of a fabulous book with no bearing on life today. Undertaking this project will therefore allow for the two hermeneutical approaches to be honestly compared and the average Christian provided with information to make a judgment regarding which one is the more feasible.

Another equally important reason for this study is its potential of shedding light on the definition of 'demons' as discussed in Mark's Gospel. As a direct consequence of studying the pericope chosen, the true identity of 'Legion' will be ascertained. It will therefore seek to answer the question: "What does Mark mean by the term 'Legion'?"

Finally, the post modern world with its espousal of pluralistic ideals such as moral relativism is in a crisis of morality. There is no feasible, objective standard. For centuries, the Bible has served as this standard and as such the nature and authority of the Bible has come under much scrutiny. It is quite clear that hermeneutical approaches are influenced by worldviews which dictate the presuppositions one brings to the reading of the text. This study will therefore challenge some worldviews which have led to both the antisupernaturalist and supernaturalist interpretations of the text.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

While it is true that the matter of demons is discussed, this paper is not a treatise on demonology, exploring the various facets of this discipline. It deals with those areas that are pertinent to the matters being discussed from Mark 5: 1-20. A second point that needs to be made here is the difficulty in naming the different schools of interpretation in order to accurately capture the idea of just which

methodologies are being studied. For the purposes of this paper, the two methodologies to be examined are:

1. The socio-literarist methodology characterised by an anti-supernaturalist world view and a strict reader-response approach.
2. /The grammatico-historical (or syntactical-theological) methodology characterised by a supernaturalist world view and an author-centred approach.

### Definition of Terms

**Antisupernaturalist** – the philosophical view that miracles and other interventions of the supernatural into the natural world do not exist. This includes the intervention of angels and demons.

**Author-centred interpretation** – the view that the meaning of the text lies in what the author intended to convey to his/her readers. This method, however does not preclude divine intervention in determining meaning.

**Demon** – a fallen angel; a spirit that opposes the will and work of God and works with ill-will towards humanity.

**Exegesis** – derived from the Greek word transliterated ‘exegeisthai’, which can mean “‘to lead’ or ‘to explain’. In biblical literature it is always used in the sense ‘to explain, interpret, or describe’”<sup>1</sup>.

**Grammatico-Historical Approach** – The hermeneutical method that uses the grammatical construction of the original languages of a text as well as background historical data to ascertain the meaning of text.

**Meaning (of a text)** – “that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intentions of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers”<sup>2</sup>.

**Metanarrative** – “An overarching account or interpretation of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for people’s beliefs and gives meaning to their experiences.”<sup>3</sup> The metanarrative provides a guide for how people view their world.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, ed. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 2005), 203.

<sup>2</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg and Robert Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 189.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “metanarrative”.

**Presupposition** – “a thing tacitly assumed beforehand at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action.”<sup>4</sup>

**Preunderstanding** – “a body of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to the perception and interpretation of reality or any aspect of it”<sup>5</sup>.

**Reader-centred interpretation** – an approach in which the meaning of a text is created by the contemporary reader.

**Socio-literary Approach** – the hermeneutical methodology that presupposes that the meaning of a text is determined by the social/cultural position of the reader. It also incorporates the literary background of the text.

**Supernaturalist** – the philosophical view that interventions of the supernatural into the natural world are both possible and probable.

### Methodology

Most of this essay analyses the guiding philosophies and methodologies of the grammatico-historical and socio-literary interpretations with the aim of comparing them. Firstly, a review of the literature pertaining to the metamorphosis in hermeneutical approaches is done, followed by the examination of material related to the understanding of the term ‘Legion’. A thorough exegesis of Mark 5: 9-18 follows as well as conclusions drawn from the word studies pursuant to that process. The socio-literary method is also examined, inclusive of its presuppositions and methodology. The passage is interpreted using the grammatico-historical method and the outcome of that process compared with the outcome of the socio-literary method. The concluding portions of this paper examine the implications of the interpretation of the Legion narrative for the Caribbean church as well as conclusions and recommendations to guide proper hermeneutics.

### The Gospel of Mark

#### Authorship

Scholars seem to agree that evidence indicates that Mark, an acquaintance of both Peter and Paul wrote the Gospel that bears his name. He has been referred to as Peter’s interpreter<sup>6</sup>, obtaining much of the information for his book from the lips of that disciple. In a remark said to have been made at the end of the first century, Papias is reported to have said of the book’s author:

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “presupposition.”

<sup>5</sup> D. S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Darrell Bock, *Matthew, Mark: Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*. (Illinois: Tyndale, 2005), 394.

Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter<sup>7</sup>.

So Mark obtained second-hand information about the works and teachings of Christ from the Apostle Peter.

#### Date

Scholars disagree regarding the date for the writing of the book with four different decades – the forties, fifties, sixties and seventies – being proposed. For the purposes of this paper, the views that it was written in the late fifties and seventies will be examined. Carson, Moo and Morris<sup>8</sup> posit that the late fifties is the most plausible time for it to have been written. They argue this on the premise that Mark's writing was done based on Peter's teaching and there is evidence that Peter had been in Rome (where Mark heard him preach) circa mid-fifties. Perhaps the most compelling argument for this dating of Mark comes from a relationship between the writings of Mark and those of Luke. Carson, Moo and Morris puts it succinctly:

The strongest case for this dating comes not from Mark directly but from the relationship of Mark to Luke-Acts. The argument assumes that Acts ends where it does, with Paul languishing in a Roman prison, because Luke published the work at that time – that is, in about A.D. 62. This would require that the gospel of Luke, the first volume of Luke's literary effort, be dated sometime before 62. If we then accept the prevailing scholarly opinion that Luke used the canonical Mark as one of his key sources, Mark must have been written by 60, at the latest<sup>9</sup>.

Gundry concedes that “data is lacking to answer firmly the question of date<sup>10</sup>”, but he concurs with Carson, Moo and Morris and says:

If Luke ended Acts without describing the outcome of Paul's trial in Rome because the trial had not yet taken place, then Acts must be dated about A.D. 63, its preceding companion volume, the gospel of Luke, somewhat earlier, and – if Luke's gospel reflects Mark – Mark still earlier in the fifties or late forties<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. (Apollos: Leicester, 1992), 99.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 97-98.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*. (Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), 79.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



Modern scholars, for reasons that will be examined presently, hold to a much later date for the penning of the Marcan account. Griffith-Jones<sup>12</sup> places the time of writing at a later date than traditionally held – after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This later dating is usually motivated by the presupposition that predictive prophecies do not exist. Dating Mark's Gospel after the fall of Jerusalem would then explain why an apparent allusion was made to it – “the abomination of desolation” – in Mark 13:14. Gundry<sup>13</sup> argues against such a position and makes the point that “there is nothing in Mark 13 that points to an “after-the-fact” prophecy. Rather, the chapter reflects the language of covenantal judgment for God for unfaithfulness”. Carson, Moo and Morris concur and argue that Mark 13 shows very little evidence of being influenced by the events of A.D. 70, but rather gives general descriptions that are not unique to that passage but that “reflect stock Old Testament and Jewish imagery having to do with the besieging of cities.”<sup>14</sup> The presence of these “stock imagery”, which are also elsewhere in Scriptures, seems to point not to a retelling of the happenings of the event, but to a description of what is possible during the subsequent Fall of Jerusalem. It seems that the single most compelling argument for the later dating of Mark's Gospel is the argument that predictive prophecies do not exist, but if one grants Jesus the ability to make such prophecies, this argument appears to lose validity.

### **Mark's audience and general purpose for the book**

Although the decision regarding the authorship of the book seems to be unanimous, and while the dating of Mark has some controversy as we have seen, the author's purpose seems much more controversial. His purpose for writing is central to understanding the book. While this is so, one should be careful in the attempt to ascertain such a purpose. Trying to find an author's purpose for writing often times causes the interpreter to try to squeeze the words of the author into neat categories. The result of this is often that the reader ignores the elements of the book that do not fit into these imposed designations, thus rendering the search for a true purpose futile. Also linked to the quest for determining his purpose is finding out who his audience was. The clues provided in the Account itself make for compelling evidence.

This Gospel, France argues<sup>15</sup>, was intended to be read to an audience as seen by Mark's expansive story-telling style, inclusive of numerous instances of

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<sup>12</sup> Robin Griffith-Jones, *The Four Witnesses: The Rebel, the Rabbi, the Chronicler, and the Mystic*. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000), 45.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on the Apology for the Cross* (Michigan: Wm Eerdmans, 1993), 1042.

<sup>14</sup> Carson, Moo and Morris, *An Introduction*, 98.

<sup>15</sup> R.T. France, *The New International Greek New Testament Commentary – The Gospel of Mark* (Michigan: Wm Eerdmans, ), 9.

repetitions and recapitulations. This audience, scholars believe, was Roman<sup>16</sup>. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that he translated Aramaic expressions so that his readers could understand them, and he uses Latin equivalents to explain Greek expressions, as in Mark 12:42 and 15:16<sup>17</sup>. Griffith-Jones asserts that Mark is writing to a Christian community in Rome after the great fire that razed the city under Emperor Nero in 64 AD. This community of believers was embattled, facing tremendous persecution and as such, “Mark is driven to disclose his enigmatic Jesus not to the comfortable and gracious, but those who will suffer as Jesus himself had at the hands of the world’s elite”<sup>18</sup>. Diehl seems to concur and writes that Mark’s is a story that touched a subjected people in their lowly position, “over and against the Roman emperor and the Roman system of authority”. She goes on to stridently assert that, “more than objective history, Mark’s ancient biography was intended to be an encouragement to the readers, reminding them of the solid foundations of their faith<sup>19</sup>”. Therefore, it is argued that Mark sought to encourage his readers in the midst of persistent oppression and did not necessarily intend to write from a historical and objective standpoint.

In addition to his supposed motive of encouraging the readers, one has to examine Mark’s emphasis on the miracle working power of Jesus. Any investigation into the purpose of Mark, says Carson, Moo and Morris, has to take into account Mark’s emphasis on Jesus’ miracles, His suffering and the cost of discipleship<sup>20</sup>. Notwithstanding, Carson, Moo and Morris warn against attempting to fit Mark’s purpose into well-ordered categories, since he may also be writing for more general reasons as well. They highlight that Mark sought to provide the readers with a written account of Jesus’ deeds and this may have had an evangelistic and apologetic thrust<sup>21</sup>.

### **Mark’s specific purpose in 5:1-20**

Regarding the specific passage under review, Stein declares that Mark’s primary purpose for conveying the account in Mark 5:1-20 is not “missiological but christological”<sup>22</sup>. Mark shows this, Stein argues, by relating the demoniac’s confession of who Jesus is, which when taken together with other confessions by fellow sinister spirits, made elsewhere in the book, serve as compelling evidence of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. He continues that “Mark’s

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<sup>16</sup> Carson, Moo and Morris, *An Introduction*, 99; Gundry, *A Survey*, 79; Griffith-Jones, *Four Witnesses*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Gundry, *A Survey*, 79.

<sup>18</sup> Griffith-Jones, *Four Witnesses*, 45.

<sup>19</sup> Judith Diehl “Anti-Imperialism in the New Testament”. in *Jesus is Lord Caesar is not*. Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica eds. (Illinois: Intervarsity. 2003), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Carson, Moo and Morris, *An Introduction*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Stein, *Mark: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 261.

understanding of Jesus in this account goes far beyond such descriptions as 'prophet' or even 'Messiah'"<sup>23</sup>. In exorcisms, as well as in other miraculous interventions, Mark shows the supernatural, divine nature of Jesus.

It seems difficult to miss the emphasis on the miracle working power of Jesus since Mark devotes a great deal of attention to them (1:16-8:26). When one examines the book, the observation made by Bock appears to be uncontested. He points out that: "of thirteen miracles in Mark, four are exorcisms, more than any other type of miracle narrated by Mark"<sup>24</sup>. So, then, one can argue not only that the writer wanted to show Jesus' power, but also to highlight his power over 'demons', whatever those are. Bock takes this further by saying that "the function of Jesus' exorcisms was to underscore Jesus' authority and the cosmic scope of his work"<sup>25</sup>. It can be reasoned, then, that Jesus' performance of exorcisms was integral to His purpose on earth and Mark's recording of them contributed a large part to his overall aim for writing.

### **The setting of Mark 5:1-20**

Having begun to examine Mark's specific purpose for writing 5:1-20, attention will now be turned to the setting of the account. Mark 5:1-20 evidently took place in Gentile territory. The precise setting of it has been one that has proven quite difficult to ascertain. Throughout the history of interpretation of the text, three separate possible locations of the supposed exorcism have been proffered.

Firstly, the reading 'Gerasenes' has been used in various English translations of the Bible including the popular New International and New American Standard Versions. According to Collins, this reading has strong external support and refers to modern day Jerash<sup>26</sup>. The major difficulty with accepting this reading is that this town is more than thirty miles from the Sea of Galilee posing obvious difficulties with explaining how the demoniac could have met Jesus *as* he exited the boat, as well as how the pigs could have rushed to their deaths in a sea that seemed, based on the language of the account, to be nearby.

The reading, 'Gergasenes', modern day El Kursi, as the site of the miracle is reputed to have been put forward by no less a stalwart than Origen, whom, Collins points out, did so without any mention of manuscript support<sup>27</sup>. But Origen's reason for defending it as the correct reading can possibly be found in

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Darrell Bock, "Mark", in *The Gospel of Mark: Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, ed. Philip Comfort (Illinois: Tyndale, 2005), 413.

<sup>25</sup> Bock, *Mark*, 413.

<sup>26</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *Hermeneia: A critical and historical commentary on the Bible – Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 263.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 264.

the fact that Gergasenes was near a lake and it had “a steep place abutting the lake<sup>28</sup>.” This evidence seems compelling, especially when taken with the fact that the local people held in their tradition that swine had been cast down from that place by demons<sup>29</sup>. There is also present an impressive church dating back to the fifth century which, France declares, may suggest that it had a traditional association with the story of Jesus<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, Stein outlines the problems pursuant to choosing, for its geographical similarities, Gergasenes as the setting of the account by inquiring:

How do we explain its weak textual attestation? Did someone change its relatively unknown name for the name of the better-known Gerasa? Was “Gerasenes” added by an early copyist unfamiliar with the geographical area, or by an “ignorant” Mark, to a text that originally had no city designation? Was “Gerasenes” part of the early form of the tradition, and an ignorant redactor later added the references to the sea and the drowning of the pigs? All such suggestions are highly speculative and not without their own problems<sup>31</sup>.

So, the issues with simply choosing that area because it seems to have all the geographical features lead, possibly, to many more unanswerable questions.

Stein solves the problem of the actual setting of the account by saying that: “it is probably best to interpret the present form of the story using the designation “Gerasa” for the city and territory”<sup>32</sup>. France<sup>33</sup> agrees, noting that Mark probably used ‘Gerasa’ as a loose term referring to the whole Decapolis region of which Gerasa was a leading city. He also conceded that Mark may have simply confused it with a similar name.

Stein does not believe that the controversy surrounding the actual site bears any great weight on the interpretation of the account and sums it up in this way: “Apart from the geographical problem, the meaning of the Marcan text is clear, but the historical evaluation of the actual site, which is dependent on the original textual designation of Mark is best held in abeyance due to the textual confusion<sup>34</sup>”. Cole agrees with Stein but seems to ignore the controversy surrounding the name when he asserts “Gerasa, or Gadara as some translations have it, is a region, not a specific village.<sup>35</sup>” The apparent conclusion then is that the term “Gerasa” is the name of an entire region rather than a particular village.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> France, *Greek New Testament*, 227.

<sup>31</sup> Stein, *Baker Exegetical*, 250.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> France, *Greek New Testament*, 227.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Victor Babajide Cole, ‘Mark’, *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed, Tokunboh Adeyemo, (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers. 2006), 1180.

Having surveyed the literature related to the book of Mark itself, it is obvious that different authors have contrasting views on almost every aspect such as the date of writing and the purpose of the book. The place name of the setting of the story at the heart of this paper also seems quite difficult to determine. An equally, if not more, labyrinthine subject now gets the attention of this paper. It is the discipline of hermeneutics.

### Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the discipline that deals with the principles of interpretation<sup>36</sup>, is a somewhat diverse one. Various scholars use different approaches and usually defend the suitability of theirs versus another. The interpretation of any text is affected greatly by the method used. For the purposes of this paper, the reader-response and author-centred approaches will be examined presently.

#### Reader Response

The reader-response method emphasizes the world “in front of the text”, that is, the world of the reader and this one takes pre-eminence over that of the author. While paying much attention to the historical features important to the text, the reader-response method does not deem the hermeneutical task as complete without establishing what it means for the contemporary reader. The result appears to be that one does not arrive at an objective meaning for the particular text hence, there does not seem to be any premise on which to judge the feasibility of the outcome of this method.

#### Author-Centred

The aim of author centred interpretation is to find “that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers<sup>37</sup>”. For this method of interpretation, the world “behind the text”, that of the author, is primal in determining meaning. What the author intended to say is much more important than what the modern reader believes that the text is saying. They believe that authorial intention is the objective voice of the text that should not be ignored.

Grammatico-historical advocates do in fact argue for retelling the Gospel narratives in such a way as to meet the needs of its hearers and they contend that the Gospel writers, as evidenced by the differences in emphases amongst the writings, have different purposes. They go on to boldly assert that “the Gospels

<sup>36</sup> Walter Kaiser and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 15.

<sup>37</sup> Klein et al, *Biblical Interpretation*, 186.

are already functioning as hermeneutical models for us, insisting by their very nature that we too, retell the same story in our twentieth century [*sic*] contexts<sup>38</sup>. It seems here that Fee and Stuart's methodology finds some resonance with the reader-response method in its insistence that the reader has to be able to apply the Word to his/her particular contexts<sup>39</sup>.

### A Comparison

The point of departure between the two methodologies seems to be the emphasis each places on objectivity, as well as the fundamental presuppositions of each model. The differences in the hermeneutical outcomes are not simply due to differences in how the passages are applied, but also the fundamental understanding of the words and terms used in the account. So, "demon" means two totally distinct things to the two different readers. These differences in meanings can be accounted for by the differences in the presuppositions and worldviews brought to the text by the reader himself. Just how fundamental presuppositions are to the outcome of the task of hermeneutics will be examined presently.

### The role of Presuppositions

Osborne believes that "preunderstandings" are beliefs and ideas inherited from one's background and paradigm community. He goes on to assert, quite stridently, that "we rarely read the Bible to discover truth; more often, we wish to harmonize it with our belief system and see its meaning in light of our preconceived theological system<sup>40</sup>". Klein et al.<sup>41</sup> concurs, pointing out that many interpreters simply find in the text the meaning they expected and wanted to find. It would seem then that the path to the interpretation that one makes is already well laid out before the reader before he even opens the text. Nash puts it succinctly when he argues that once a person commits himself to a certain set of presuppositions, his direction and destination are determined<sup>42</sup>. How then can one get to correct interpretation? One sure way is to completely extricate himself from all things presuppositional and leave himself a vacuum ready to be filled with correct theology. But, nature abhors a vacuum and it seems as if the physical realm bears a startling resemblance to the metaphysical in this regard.

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<sup>38</sup> Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to read the Bible for all its worth* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1993), 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Illinois: Intervarsity, 2006), 29.

<sup>41</sup> Klein et al, 143.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a world of ideas*. (Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 23.

Geisler and Feinberg point out the fallacious nature of approaching thought devoid of presuppositions. They point out “one objection to the phenomenological method<sup>43</sup> is that it is doubtful any purely presuppositionless ways of approaching the world exist. *Indeed, is not the claim that one should approach the world without presuppositions in itself a presupposition?*”<sup>44</sup> (emphasis mine). Such is the quandary in which one finds himself as a human being as he seeks to decipher the truths handed down to us in the Bible – he is unable to completely extricate himself from presuppositions.

So, a presuppositionless approach does not seem feasible, but, another option is to make one’s presuppositions as free of error as he can. This, Nash contends, is possible by putting them to reasonable tests<sup>45</sup>. Interpreters should therefore take an active approach to Biblical interpretation. It would seem fair to argue that passivity concerning one’s core beliefs and values does not make for good, fair Biblical interpretation. One, it appears, must consciously examine his beliefs continuously. Klein et al. put it well when they propose that interpreters should “discover, state, and consciously adopt only those assumptions they agree with and can defend<sup>46</sup>”.

#### Changes in hermeneutics over the years

Hermeneutics as a discipline has undergone many changes. This can be seen as due to the evolution of ideas concerning the Scriptures themselves, and more specifically, their inspiration. The change in hermeneutical approaches, therefore, cannot be examined properly without adequately reviewing the changes in the ideas concerning the doctrine of inspiration.

#### Regarding the doctrine of inspiration

For centuries, the idea known as the orthodox view of Scriptures existed unchallenged. Burtchaell<sup>47</sup> puts it succinctly when he says:

Christians early had inherited from the Jews the belief that the biblical writers were somehow possessed by God, who was thus reckoned as the Bible’s proper author. Since God could not conceivably be the agent of falsehood, the Bible

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<sup>43</sup> The Phenomenological method purports to advocate for looking at material from a presuppositionless standpoint.

<sup>44</sup> Norman Geisler and Paul Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 49.

<sup>45</sup> Nash, *Worldviews*, 55.

<sup>46</sup> Klein et al, *Biblical Interpretation*, 143.

<sup>47</sup> J.T. Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Inspiration since 1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1960), 1-2, quoted in Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*. (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 114.

must be guaranteed free from error. For centuries the doctrine lay dormant, as doctrine: accepted by all, pondered by few.

Things were soon to change as Geisler and Nix argue that between the posting of Luther's 95 Theses (1517) and Karl Barth's Commentary on Romans in 1919, there was a cataclysmic shift in the relationship between the fields of theology and intellectualism which allowed for "the emerging scientific method to be used to challenge the authority of the Word of God in the church itself<sup>48</sup>". What this meant is that a dialectical approach was adopted by some in order to formulate doctrines on the inspiration and authority of Scripture<sup>49</sup>. In other words, a middle ground was sought between scientific exploration and the claims of Scripture. Proponents therefore aimed at a non-contradictory relationship between Scripture and the emerging scientific methodology. This was to later have far reaching implications for Biblical interpretation since the long held view that the Bible was inerrant came under sustained scrutiny, beginning in the sixteenth century.

The scrutiny to which the Scriptures were subject was only in its embryotic stage in the sixteenth century as the view that the Bible was the inspired word of God held sway until prior to the First World War in the early twentieth century. What began as questions about the authority of Scripture gradually evolved into bold confrontations precipitated by Darwin's landmark work entitled *On the Origin of the Species*, as well as the historical method of interpretation.

### Regarding presuppositions

Just as how the idea of the infallibility of Scriptures held sway for centuries as the 'true' idea, the grammatico-historical method of interpretation was previously agreed by the vast majority as the 'true' method of interpretation. Bleicher notes that it was hailed as the only objective, reliable method of interpretation<sup>50</sup>. Then came the nineteenth century when Schleiermacher sought to make hermeneutics less about a collection of rules to follow and more about engaging human thought and understanding<sup>51</sup>. This meant that the shift away from hard bound, objective rules to a more scientific approach that more involved the human faculties as authority to a greater degree. This move would influence Rudolf Bultmann, who is credited as changing the course of hermeneutics forever with

<sup>48</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 113.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 51, quoted in N. Sam Murrell. "Hermeneutics as Interpretation and the Caribbean Student: Part 1," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*: 7-28, 17.

<sup>51</sup> F.D.E Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The handwritten MSS.* ed Heinz Kimmerle. Translated by J. Duke and J. Frotsman. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 15-16. Quoted in N. Sam Murrell. 'Hermeneutics as Interpretation and the Caribbean Student'. *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*: 7-28, 17.



such works as: *New Testament and Mythology* (1951) and *Is Exegesis without Presupposition Possible?* (1957)<sup>52</sup>.

For Bultmann, exegesis cannot be done free of preunderstanding. He argues that it is impossible for one to look at the Scriptures objectively, that is, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. He further posits that “every interpretation incorporates a particular prior understanding<sup>53</sup>”. Indeed, Bultman’s position seems quite tenable as presuppositions seem to greatly affect the outcome of the interpretation. The rise of views including materialism, naturalism, rationalism and liberalism from the 1650s onwards deeply affected human thought in general and his thoughts about the Scriptures. These have impacted significantly the core of how persons view the sacred text. They have done so because they are allowed to influence the presuppositions persons have when coming to the task of interpreting the Scriptures. These presuppositions form a framework that can be quite rigid. They can be compared to a pair of glasses with coloured lenses – dictating how one perceives everything that is viewed through them.

Changes in hermeneutical approaches are certainly due to emergent and subsequently prevailing ideologies. The hermeneut is not immune to imbibing, whether consciously or subconsciously, these ideologies which he brings to the task of interpretation. A few of those ideologies that have so influenced hermeneutics will be examined presently.

Naturalism, for example is the assumption that “all reality is located within space and can be understood exclusively by scientific method<sup>54</sup>”. Benedict Spinoza, a foremost proponent, was a staunch antismiraculist and believed that miracles were impossible because they were violations of inviolable natural laws<sup>55</sup>. An offshoot of naturalism is materialism. A major proponent of materialism, Thomas Hobbes made a very bold remark which has significant repercussions for how passages such as Mark 5:1-20 ought to be interpreted. He says: “I see nothing at all in the Scripture, that requireth a belief, that Demoniacs were any other thing but Mad-men<sup>56</sup>” and views the healing of the demoniac as simply parabolic. Since materialism denies the existence of any entity apart from those existing in the material realm, one can see how such a view can impact

<sup>52</sup>N. Sam Murrell, ‘Hermeneutics and the Caribbean’. *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*. 7-28, 17.

<sup>53</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “The problem of hermeneutics”, in *Essays philosophical and theological*, trans. James Greig, (London: SCM, 1955), quoted in N. Sam Murrell, ‘Hermeneutics as Interpretation and the Caribbean Student’, *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology*: 7-28, 18.

<sup>54</sup> L. Russ Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* (Zondervan: Michigan, 1991), 77.

<sup>55</sup> Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction*, 138.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, vol 23, *Great Books of the Western World*, 54. quoted in Norman Geisler and William Nix. 1986. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Moody: Chicago, 137.

Biblical interpretation since those seemingly supernatural elements of Scripture must be looked at in light of this. 'Demons' then, simply cannot mean anything that is not a feature of the natural world, therefore the term has to refer metaphorically to something for which there is a materialist counterpart.

Adding to the melee of viewpoints that influenced the interpretation of Scripture was Schleiermacher's romanticism. He emphasized that Christianity was not simply an assent to the tenets of Scripture, arguing that "no external authority, whether it be Scripture, church or historical creedal statement, takes precedence over the immediate experience of believers"<sup>57</sup>. The result of this was that subjective experience gained greater prominence and received much affirmation. The authority of the Bible was greatly criticized and Schleiermacher's work for some time removed the emphasis of biblical criticism from historical to literary analysis<sup>58</sup>. This rise of affirmation being given to subjective experience, rather than leaving the locus of authority with the Bible, meant that there was much more room for varying interpretations than was previously possible. The emphasis on literary rather than historical analysis limited the ability of the texts to speak for themselves and seemed to have placed much more power over what the text teaches in the hands of the interpreter.

Liberalism, a very inclusive viewpoint, has also influenced human thought, and by extension, Biblical interpretation. It is basically "the attempt to harmonize the Christian faith with all aspects of human culture"<sup>59</sup> and is sometimes used to refer to "any Protestant religious movement that questions the basic doctrines of conservative Christianity"<sup>60</sup>. Geisler and Nix credit Albrecht Ritschl as the founder of theological liberalism who used a dialectical method to harmonize what they call the "two focal points of the Christian faith": the concerns of society and civilization and those pertaining to personal salvation<sup>61</sup>. The repercussion for biblical interpretation was that it was forced to not only speak to what may be considered purely 'religious' themes, but also those of the lived experience of the readers of Scripture. Furthermore, liberalism "accepted the notion that the Bible contains errors and its advocates sought means whereby the newly discovered truths of modern thought could be harmonized with Scripture"<sup>62</sup>.

### Regarding hermeneutical approaches

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>58</sup> Harold O.J. Brown, "Romanticism and the Bible", in *Challenges to Inerrancy: A theological response*, eds. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, eds. (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 49-65, quoted in Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Moody: Chicago, 1986), 143.

<sup>59</sup> Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction*, 145.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

These emerging viewpoints seem to have provided the framework for shifts in the methodology used in Biblical interpretation. There was a departure from the traditional historical-grammatical methodology towards one that takes into consideration modern literary criticism and social scientific analysis, since many modern Biblical scholars found the old methods “sterile, limiting and misleading<sup>63</sup>”.

Bultmann can be seen as the pioneer in expounding these views. He belongs to the neo-orthodox school, believing that the Bible becomes the word of God when one encounters God through it personally. It does not therefore contain propositional truths, but one can meet God through it in a subjective way<sup>64</sup>. He has made a significant contribution to the field of hermeneutics and his methodology represents a great shift and metamorphosis in the field of interpretation. He took the field of Biblical interpretation in a totally different direction when he presented his view that the Synoptic Gospels were filled with mythical stories. Murrell summarises Bultmann’s views thus:

The NT, especially the Synoptics, is filled with mythological (fanciful or unscientific) ideas like miracle stories, resurrections, Peter walking on water, Lazarus rising from the dead, etc. which reflects the wishful and pre-scientific thinking of the first century writers. In order for the twentieth century reader to get to the real truth of the life of Jesus, one must demythologize these “unscientific ideas” which were built around the sayings of Jesus<sup>65</sup>.

This account of the demoniac would be one such account that would fit into this category. The reader’s task would then be to demythologise (that is interpret the myths, not remove them as liberal theology proposes) in order to realise the kerygma, the real message<sup>66</sup>. Geisler and Nix add that Bultmann believes that “once the Bible is divested of these religious myths, one arrives at the real message of God’s self-giving love in Christ<sup>67</sup>”. This has enormous implications for hermeneutics, as we shall see, since it is against this background that such scholars as Roper, Belo and Myers did their interpretation of the passage under review.

### **Demons**

Having examined presuppositions, worldviews and hermeneutical approaches that affect biblical interpretation, the attention of this paper will now be turned to

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<sup>63</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg and Robert Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to biblical interpretation*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 63.

<sup>64</sup> Norman Geisler and William Nix, *From God to us*, (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 20.

<sup>65</sup> Murrell, *Hermeneutics*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Stanley Grenz and Roger Olsen, *20<sup>th</sup> Century theology: God and the world in a transitional age* (Illinois: Intervarsity, 1992), 89.

<sup>67</sup> Geisler and Nix, *From God*, 20.

the specific passage of Mark 5:1-20. At present, attention will be turned to the matter of demons, a major part of this exorcism account. Ideas abound concerning what exactly a 'demon' is. This can be attributed to the fact that the idea of 'demon' has existed throughout world history and across many civilizations – primitive cultures not excluded. While this paper is not a treatise on the multiplicity of viewpoints, it is worth examining some of the ideas that surround this concept, especially since this is integral to understanding what took place at the Gerasenes.

The ideas on demons have two extremes, with shades in between, creating a continuum in views. On one end of the spectrum, is the view that demons are extremely pervasive and can be found behind every single indiscretion or negative action. This pervasiveness of demons can be found in both old and new cultures around the world. Lewis<sup>68</sup> suggests that the Israel of biblical times had neighbours who viewed the world as such – open to the caprice of demons. On the other end of the spectrum is the idea that evil is non-existent and decisions and actions result in acts to be viewed as evil. Presently, the views deemed orthodox by the church will be examined, followed by alternate ideas on the nature of demons.

#### The traditional view

The view that held sway for much of church history is that expounded by Stanley Grenz who deems them as fallen angels. He adds that demons are those spiritual beings “not fulfilling God’s intent for them<sup>69</sup>”. He therefore uses God’s will as the benchmark or determining factor for what can be considered good or evil. It is therefore the fact that they miss God’s intent for them that makes them sinister. This sheds considerable light on the concept of what exactly causes these beings to earn the designation ‘evil’.

The orthodox view of God hinges on the idea that He is free to act in the affairs of the world, and that He is a personal being, concerned with the affairs of humanity. Packer demonstrates the link between our ideas about God and our ideas about demons. He says: “Our demonology cannot be any more true or adequate than our doctrine of God is. We can see the truth about the devil only in the light of truth about God<sup>70</sup>”. So, then, orthodoxy seems to link the doctrine of God inextricably to the doctrine of Satan and demons, highlighting that when one understands God’s personal, good and perfect character, it allows him to

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<sup>68</sup> Gordon Lewis in John Warwick Montgomery, ed. 1976. *Demon Possession*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Michigan :Wm Eerdmans, 1994), 224.

<sup>70</sup> J.I. Packer, “The Devil”, *Eternity* (April 1964): 8. Quoted in Gordon Lewis in John Warwick Montgomery, ed. 1976. *Demon Possession*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 38.

understand God's antithesis – evil. It is on this foundation that scholars build their demonology with Packer stridently arguing that:

Demonology concerns one aspect – the basic aspect – of the mystery of evil; evil has to be understood as a lack, a perversion of good; and we know what good is only when we know what God is. Only through appreciating God's goodness can we form any idea of the devil's badness<sup>71</sup>.

Demons, then, belong to the designation, evil. Interestingly, some systematic theologians place the study of demons in the category of the study of Angels. Orthodox theologians cite 2 Peter 2:4 when explaining the origin of demons. This passage reads: "God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept unto the judgment". These angels, it is believed, are the ones whom we refer to as demons, with Lucifer, who led them in their rebellion, being the chief demon. Erickson sums up the idea of the nature of demons by saying that demons "are angels created by God and thus were originally good; but they sinned and thus became evil<sup>72</sup>."

#### The middle ground

David Garland adds another facet when he designates them as "the dark side of reality, which enslaves and dehumanizes human beings"<sup>73</sup>. For him then, demons are evil spirits whose intentions towards mankind are maleficent. Grenz concurs that demons seek to harm humans. He argues that they "always exercise a detrimental influence, seeking to harm the well-being of God's creation and to destroy community<sup>74</sup>". In adding that last phrase about community, he not only broadens the definition by adding an extra dimension – that of the ultimate aim of their misdeeds – but he seems to straddle the proverbial middle ground between the decidedly fundamentalist position and the liberal/social justice tradition since the latter lays much stress on the idea of "community" and the social identity of man.

Grenz, in his book, emphasizes that the overarching goal of anything maleficent is to disrupt community – the enjoyment of "fellowship with God, with each other, and with the creation around us<sup>75</sup>". Demons, he argues, achieve this disruption of community by manipulating "structures of existence"<sup>76</sup>. In an attempt to describe what he means by "structures of existence", he says that they

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2001), 158.

<sup>73</sup> David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*. (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 209.

<sup>74</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 224.

<sup>75</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 187.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 234.

are “those larger, suprahuman aspects or dimensions of reality” in which we operate<sup>77</sup>. To make it clearer, he paraphrases H. Berkhof by saying that the structures “undergird human life and society so as to preserve them from chaos<sup>78</sup>”. Berkhof helpfully gives examples of this hazy term thus:

We may think of the place of the clan or tribe among primitive peoples, or of the respect for ancestors and the family which for centuries gave form and content to Chinese life. We may point to Shintoism in Japan, to the Hindu social order in India, to the astrological unity of ancient Babel, to the deep significance of the *polis* or city-state for the Greeks, or to the Roman state.<sup>79</sup>

The work of demons, then, is to infiltrate these structures, which are not evil in and of themselves, and manipulate them for their own sinister ends.

#### The Antisupernaturalist view

Some thoughts on ‘demons’ lack the supernatural element expounded above. Kinlaw, for instance, argues that the conception of evil, and hence demons is simply an outflow of the human fascination with evil. He therefore declares that the Bible (the Old Testament in particular) is replete with evidence that God is the ultimate and every created thing exists to do His bidding. He builds his argument by first presenting word studies, indicating that the word ‘*shedim*’, meaning “black ones” only occurs twice and another word “*secirim*”, believed by some to be translatable as “satyr demon”, could simply refer to “wild goat in its Isaiah references. The idea, then, is that even the words used for “demon” is dubiously translated as such. He goes quite a bit further to sum up his argument, thus:

Before Yahweh became their God these words were loaded with mythological and supernatural significance. The impact of Yahweh was to strip them of all but their natural meaning. The Old Testament acknowledges the spirit world but seems bent upon minimizing, demythologizing, or marginalizing it.

Wherever it does occur, it always has its origin in Yahweh and its role and domain determined by His sovereignty. No autonomous domain, independent of Yahweh, or outside His immediate control, exists to threaten man<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>78</sup> Grenz, 228. Quoting Hendrikus Berkhof. *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania:Herald, 1962), 30,33.

<sup>79</sup>Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania:Herald, 1962),34. Quoted in Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Wm Eerdmans: Michigan, 1994), 229.

<sup>80</sup> Dennis Kinlaw in John Warwick Montgomery, ed. 1976. *Demon Possession*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 33.

Evil then only has human origin and the many references to a rival world is simply the human being's "affinity for evil and his tendency to dramatize it"<sup>81</sup>. Human beings, then, give their attention to the concept of evil and so construct various avenues, such as demons and exorcisms, through which they can imaginatively display the concept of evil. For Kinlaw, though, evil is not metaphysical, but moral<sup>82</sup>.

Kinlaw's views, however, seem to also incorporate a certain supernaturalist element making it a little unclear as to what his position on the matter really is. In discussing demons in the New Testament, he makes this assertion, demonstrating astute scholarship:

It is to be noted that hell, Satan and the demonic are most fully treated in the Gospels and the Apocalypse of John. Could it be that God is content to let us see that negative world in the presence of the incarnate Christ? The veil is never parted to show us Moses and Satan, Elijah and Satan, or Paul and Satan. Satan and the demonic appear with clarity and definition only when Jesus is present. And at his point fallen imagination finds their susceptibility to be enchanted by the demonic broken and an ability to see things as they are<sup>83</sup>.

What is unclear is whether the demons were dealt with by the incarnate Christ, or were the ideas, conjured by man's "fallen imagination" defeated. If it is the latter, how was man able to "see things as they are"?

Wink is a bit clearer in his attempt to define the demonic. He calls it: "a will to power asserted against the created order". He continues that, it is the psychic or spiritual power emanating from organizations or individuals or subspects of individuals whose energies are bent in overpowering others<sup>84</sup>". So then, Wink's definition of what is to be considered demonic is inextricably linked to the idea of oppression and the maleficent use of power. This use of power is in opposition to God's created order and it causes the belittling of other persons. So, by this definition, a demon cannot be a being (like a fallen angel), but is organizational or it emanates from the actions of humans.

Rudolf Bultmann is seen as the father of demythologization, arguing that such ideas as demons were mythical since "reality was exhausted in a closed continuum of cause and effect which leaves no room for divine or demonic

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Kinlaw, "The Demythologization", 35.

<sup>84</sup> Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 59.

activity<sup>85</sup>". He, therefore believes that it is, in Lewis' words, "impossible to use electric light and modern medical and surgical discoveries and at the same time believe in the biblical world of spirits and miracles". It is therefore 'anti-contemporary' to believe in demons and any other divine insertions. Bultmann's pronouncements betray a tone of rationalistic thought which Koch believes guides much of the ideology on demons. He clearly articulates the understanding of some modern thinkers:

on the theological front, liberal and neorationalistic theologians continue to deny the existence of not only Satan, but of demons as well. As they see it the demonic is merely the reflection of either the sub or superconscious within man. It is therefore, rather an immanent problem than a transcendental or metaphysical one. To such people the stories in the New Testament concerning those who are demon possessed, simply mean that Jesus was a child of his own times, holding the primitive concepts of those around him<sup>86</sup>.

Belo<sup>87</sup> who divides Mark's writing into specific codes, places such elements as demonic possession, as belonging to the mythological code of first century Palestine. In other words, myth is interspersed throughout the Gospel narrative, and these myths are simply those held in Palestine during the first century. Mark's Gospel, Belo would argue, is replete with myths, reminiscent of those held by the writer (Mark) and those in the original setting of the book. This writer therefore concludes with Koch that:

Reports of possession are uncomfortable for our modern liberal scholars. They do not quite fit into their rationalistic scheme of the world. Bultmann, for example, could do no more than describe the story of the possessed Gadarene as 'a terrible account'<sup>88</sup>.

So, the conclusion, then, is that the rationalistic mindset of some scholars seem to preclude the supernaturalistic interpretations of the passage.

### **Exorcisms and Demonic Possession**

As we conclude the review of literature pertinent to the matters being discussed, we turn to the examination of the whole matter of exorcism and demon possession. As mentioned previously, this topic will not be examined extensively, but a cursory look is warranted. Exorcism in the New Testament, in Wink's words, is "the act of deliverance of a person or institution or society from

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<sup>85</sup>Rudolf K. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 65. Quoted in Gordon Lewis in John Warwick Montgomery, ed. *Demon Possession* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976), 36.

<sup>86</sup> Kurt Koch, *Demonology past and present* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1973), 31-32.

<sup>87</sup> Belo, *Materialist*, 94.

<sup>88</sup> Koch, *Demonology*, 31-32.



its bondage to evil, and its restoration to the wholeness intrinsic to its creation"<sup>89</sup>. In defining the term as such, Wink precludes any understanding that exorcism is confined to the personal sphere, resulting only in deliverance of individuals. He presents an interesting explanation for why demoniacs "manifested" in Jesus' presence. He believes that it was in reaction to seeing a fully human being, much unlike the morbid existence that they had come to know as normative. He asserts:

In the Gospels it is the presence of Jesus that precipitates demonic seizures. This is because the demonic is not merely a cluster of pathological symptoms, but a radical rejection of God and a state of estrangement from God, from one's own higher self (the *imago Dei*), and from full social being. Because this atrophied form of existence has become normative in human societies, most people are unaware of what they have surrendered until they see it resplendent in a fully human being<sup>90</sup>.

So, the characteristic convulsions and features of the typical demoniac are due, not to the movement and contortions caused by beings foreign to the individual, but to human responses when confronted with the personhood of Jesus.

Michaels calls the book of Mark the "primary source of descriptions of actual exorcisms"<sup>91</sup>. He goes on to argue that driving out demons was one of Jesus' "characteristic acts"<sup>92</sup>. For some, exorcism refers to the extrication of the demonic spirit from the spirit of a human being. This is usually done by the power of God working against the powers of darkness.

### Summary

Much research has been done regarding the historicity of the Marcan document.

The Gospel of Mark was written by Mark, a follower of Peter. Conservative scholars date it in the late fifties while liberals prefer a later dating to account for the presence of the prophecy regarding the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Mark's purpose for writing was to tell of Jesus to his audience who were undergoing persecution in Rome.

Regarding the setting of Mark 5:1-20, there is some disagreement regarding the correct name of the place or its location. Some scholars do not necessarily think that Mark was attempting to give a specific location, but rather to convey the

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<sup>89</sup> Wink, *Unmasking*, 59.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> J. Michaels Ramsay in John Warwick Montgomery, ed. 1976. *Demon Possession*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 41.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

idea that he was in Gentile territory. Others believe that he did want to give a specific place name, not necessarily of a particular town, but of a region.

Hermeneutics is heavily influenced by presuppositions and has been constantly changing over the years. Traditionally held ideas regarding the doctrine of inspiration, nature of the Bible as well as hermeneutical approaches have continued to increase in number and old ones have been replaced thereby. Finally, writing concerning the nature of demons reveals that there are varying viewpoints regarding the nature of demons, with one school proclaiming that humans are solely responsible for all the negative in the world. Others believe that demons have substance and work against the plans of God