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**New Testament
Theology: A
Postcolonial
Prolegomenon**

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Some of the most important choices facing anyone who plans a synthesis of the religious contents of the New Testament are the questions: Whom is the synthesis supposed to serve? Who are its hoped-for consumers?’¹

New Testament Theology (NTT) may be defined as a descriptive, constructive and normative enterprise which seeks to highlight the Messianic guidance²

¹ Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Theology* (London: SCM, 2000), 151. Räisänen believes that the enterprise should not be undertaken solely for the church but for the wider community as well. Here he appears to advocate the kind of vision fleshed out in Garnett Roper’s “Caribbean Theology as Public Theology,” PhD thesis, Exeter University, 2011.

² I.e., NT ethical guidelines, e.g., John 14:15; 1 Cor. 14:37; etc. And the subtitle of this book? “Essentially, postcolonial biblical criticism is about exploring who is entitled to tell stories and who has the authority to interpret them” (R. S. Sugritharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). We, however, do not share the pessimism of Sugritharajah that our world will never become “post-imperial” (179). The Messianic rule has arrived and awaits its consummation, like the zygote/embryo/foetus (already a human being but not yet); the wedding (already married but not yet); a *decree nisi* (already divorced but not yet); union with Christ (already ‘married’ but not yet); glorification (already but not yet); and salvation in general (“*A Gad imself staat op da gud wok ya iina unu [already], an im naa go tap nou. Im a go gwaan du we im a du iina unu laif, til Jiizas Krais kom bak a ort [not yet]*”—Philippians 1:6; and Jamaica independence. Observe the ‘already/not’ title of Kortright Davis: *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990). Our postcolonial endeavour draws upon a freedom movement of the First Century that has a lot to contribute to an English-speaking

and glory in the New Covenant documents.³ The documents themselves date back to the First Century and are set against the backdrop of the political, religious, and cultural realities of the day. “Biblical Theology (of which NT Theology is a subset), we are made to understand, is a relatively recent literary genre. In fact . . . the first tome with such a ‘title was *Teutsche biblische Theologie* (German Biblical Theology)’ by W.J. Christmann, published in the seventeenth century. The *Teutsche* (German) in the title points in a particular direction, that every theology, whether qualified or not, is contextual, that is, written from a certain perspective and reflective of the writer’s place in history.”⁴

So how does one go about writing a NTT?⁵ The following are some of the approaches to the discipline.⁶ The Thematic Approach,⁷ for

Caribbean whose people/s can somewhat boast of their emancipation and independence. Although the movement operated under the yoke of Rome, it was able to offer long and lasting freedom to slaves and Roman citizens alike.

³It is also the exploration of “the New Testament writers’ developing understanding of God and the world . . . and their relationship to one another.” (I. H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004], 23).

⁴D.V. Palmer, *Romans in Context* (Eugene, OR: RP, 2011) xiii. For useful synopses of the history of the discipline, see G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1-28; Frank Theilman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 19-44; and T. Schriener, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 867-887.

⁵ Stephen Neil (*Jesus Through Many Eyes: Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 1) defines NTT as “a systematic and ordered presentation” of the teaching of the NT; for him “The whole of the New Testament is theology—that is its reason for being. . . . [E]very attempt to separate the theology of the New Testament from the New Testament itself has been found to involve the futile enterprise of trying to separate soul from spirit.”

example, treats the material by focusing on certain motifs selected by the theologian. A problem with this approach is the danger of imposition on the text, but if the themes chosen emerge from the text itself, then that problem is not as great. The Experiential Approach focuses on the religious experiences of the biblical authors. Here, in dealing with the text, the biblical theologian directs the spotlight on the religious consciousness of the biblical writers in an attempt to bring out their experiences. The Existential Approach⁸ seeks the retrieval of the existential significance of the New Testament message for modern man.

Bultmann accepts the premise that the New Testament text needs to be explained according to the canons of modern historical-critical research and the history of religions approach. However, we should not stop there. The New Testament theologian should take a further step, namely, the interpretation of the message in order to bring out its significance and relevance for modern man. This reinterpretation is achieved through the method of demythologization, that is, the rescuing of the text from the prescientific language and mindset in which it is couched to a formulation that is line with modern and scientific mind.

The Historical Approach⁹ of Jeremias rejects the view of Bultmann that it is impossible to recover the historical Jesus from the NT. All

⁶ The following is taken from the CGST's NTT course taught by prof. Dieumeme Noelliste.

⁷ E.g., Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981); Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament* (translated by M.E. Boring, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

⁸ E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1968).

⁹E.g., J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's, 1971).

we can do is to access the kerygmatic Christ, the portrait given to us by the early church. Using the same tools employed by Bultmann (Form Criticism, Tradition Criticism), Jeremias believes it is possible for us to hear the very voice (*ipsissima vox Jesu*) and the very words of Jesus (*ipsissima verba Jesu*) behind the text. Jeremias is of the view that NTT must focus on the Gospels, because they are the depository of divine revelation.

The History of Religions School¹⁰ advocates an approach to NTT that focuses on formulating the expression of the religious experience of the early Christian in light of the prevailing religious environment or the broader setting in life (*sitz im Leben*). This approach lays stress on the comparative study of Christianity with the other religions of the day to discover ways in which they reflect one another.

The Promise-Fulfilment Approach, championed by W. Kaiser, favours a diachronic method which respects the unified, canonical shape of the Testaments having a common centre in the divine promise.¹¹ The Salvation History Approach,¹² according to

¹⁰E.g., W. Wrede, "The Task and Methods of 'New Testament Theology'" in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolph Schlatter*, ed. R. Morgan (London: SCM, 1973) 68-116.

¹¹W.C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). Both B. S. Childs (*Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), and G.K. Beale (*A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011) have written similar works, but they have not followed Kaiser's approach. Beale has drawn upon a Caribbean (inter)national scholar (J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005]) to flesh out his understanding of the *imago Dei*.

Osborne, “may be the best of the positions, for it recognizes God’s/Christ’s redemptive activity on behalf of mankind, in terms of both present and future communion. More than the others above, it subsumes each of the categories in itself.”¹³

Significance of a Postcolonial Theological Engagement

It is the conviction of the writer that a robust NTT is vital to the life of the younger theological expression emanating from the post-colonial Caribbean.¹⁴ Many post-colonial church leaders¹⁵ are disenchanted with several aspects of North-Atlantic theology, and strong criticisms have also been voiced especially from Latin American quarters. Some of the weaknesses expressed in regards to western theology include a perceived dogmatic nature of its approach and straight-jacket methodology. This is deemed too humanistic in that human ingenuity to formulate and articulate the mind of God tends to come to the fore.

Another major weakness of “First world” theology, it is said, is the excessive specialization and “ivory tower” reflection that obtain

¹² E.g., L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

¹³ G. Osborne, “New Testament Theology,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, ed. Walter A. Elwell), 768-773; apart from methodology, the article also covers the history, tensions, and major themes of the discipline.

¹⁴ F. Segovia and R. Boer (*The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key* [Atlanta: SBL, 2012]) feature the Caribbean.

¹⁵E.g., Lewin Williams, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

among its scholars and students alike.¹⁶ Added to the forgoing misgivings it has also been pointed out that theology from the North-Atlantic is too particularistic, too abstract, and too otherworldly to be of much practical value to Majority-World Christians. What has been proposed, then, is that the Caribbean should be looking at the way theology is done in Central and South America. But all is not necessarily well with Latin American Liberation Theology either, for when an outsider can say, “we hear severe criticism of Western theology . . . and then we are told something about Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as if they were Latin American discoveries”¹⁷ one ought to be wary of any undue enthusiasm which would fully embrace this not-so-new theological endeavour. Nevertheless, what Liberation Theology may lack in methodological precision, however, is certainly compensated for in its empathy toward the poor and oppressed. Not all is lost.

Much as Liberation Theology seems to be forging ahead and holds promise of a brighter future (notwithstanding its problems), there are others who feel strongly that if the movement’s starting point is correct (the Latin American context) then that opens up the possibility of doing theology in the Caribbean using the same valid approach. So, although “there are those who would grant the possibility of a Caribbean Theology, but . . . raise questions of our readiness for it,” it should be underscored that “it will be in the process of doing theology in the Caribbean for the Caribbean that

¹⁶ But see Tim Glasser, *F.F. Bruce: A Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 32-184; Ben Witherington, *Is There a Doctor in the House?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 113-122. For Bruce (*The Canon of Scripture* [Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1988], 316-334), the original meaning of Scripture is the *primary sense*; the *plenary sense* is the primary sense in its significance and application for the people of God in their own context and time.

¹⁷J. Moltmann, “An Open Letter to José Miguez Bonino,” *Christianity and Crisis* 36 (1976): 57-63.

theological maturity will be fully achieved.”¹⁸ There is, then, a definite need for this enterprise to continue with the construction of a theology that will meaningfully address our own unique challenges while avoiding the pitfalls.¹⁹

The roots of a Caribbean Theology may be traced to the formulation of theological objections against slavery by enslaved Africans.²⁰ This represents the first stage. The second stage emerged with people like Sam Sharpe who saw in the words of Jesus (“No man can serve two masters”)²¹ a powerful broadside against the colonizers who sought to prolong that which was inevitably doomed to fail. But it was not until the middle of the twentieth century when “a representational gathering . . . of the churches throughout the region” met in Trinidad “to analyze the Caribbean’s theological inheritance” that things began to take shape.

¹⁸Burchell Taylor, “*Engendering Theological Relevance*,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 20 (1999): 24-30.

¹⁹ For “A Gospel entrapped in Third World prejudiced interpretations is no better than one entrapped in Western inconsistencies, betrayals, and speculations” (Hyacinth Boothe, “A Theological Journey for an Emancipatory Theology” *Caribbean Journal Religious Studies* 17 [1996], 21).

²⁰ Lewin Williams, *The Indigenization of Theology in the Caribbean* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1989): 1-2. See also G. L. Roper, “The History and Imperatives of Caribbean Theology,” *Caribbean Journal Evangelical Theological* (2012): 121-164.

²¹ On Sharpe, see Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete: Native Baptists in Jamaica: Identity, Ministry and Legacy* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2010); cf. Stephen C. A Jennings, “Ordinary” Reading in “Extraordinary” Times: A Jamaican Love Story. In *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, edited by Gerald O. West. (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 2.

One of the discoveries made at that conference was that serious “deficits in terms of relevance”²² attend the brand of theology that was inherited from the North-Atlantic region, especially in light of the fact that “the Christian church came to the Caribbean as the religious tradition of the oppressors [raising serious doubts] as to the legitimacy of its claim to be God’s agent of salvation/liberation.”²³ It was therefore decided from that point onwards that any theological enterprise in the region should purposefully engage not only academics and clergy, but *am ha arets*, (“everyday people”²⁴) the so-called laity as well, for only a “theology of, for, by and with the “people” is a priority for the Caribbean theologian. . . Theological reflection then becomes part of Christian responsibility to participate in the transformation of the world order to fulfil the requirements of the Kingdom of God. It will eschew theological reflection on ‘the supernatural for its own sake [and include] reflection on how sacred reality acts upon the world, human affairs and history.”²⁵

In tandem with Sitahal’s vision are the words of another Caribbean luminary who affirms that “The question of authenticity, situatedness, meaningfulness and effectiveness of . . . [this] theology becomes the question of relevance. Therefore a relevant theological project should bear such characteristics. This is what a Caribbean Theological Project must be.”²⁶ As Taylor sees it, such a project, in

²² Lewin Williams, “Editorial,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 20 (1999): 2.

²³ Harold Sitahal, “Caribbean Theology: Of the People/For the People,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1999): 41-48.

²⁴ Cornel West, “Nelson Mandela: Great Exemplar of the Grand Democratic Tradition,” in *The Meaning of Mandela: A Literary and Intellectual Celebration*, edited by Xolela Mangcu (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006) 15.

²⁵ Sitahal, “*Caribbean Theology*,” 3-4.

²⁶ Burchell Taylor, “Engendering Theological Relevance,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious* 55

terms of methodology, is very much “open to the use of multi-disciplinary tools of analysis along with Caribbean-oriented studies for understanding the Caribbean Reality.”²⁷

With these tools to hand the Caribbean theologian must address *inter alia*, as a matter of urgency, the pressing need for a Caribbean social ethic.²⁸ This social ethic, we suggest, should be grounded in the Messianic ‘I’²⁹ despite the call elsewhere to abandon such an agenda. In an earlier piece Taylor set himself to do just that: lay a foundation for a regional ethical praxis in the Messianic pronouncements found in the Apocalypse, particularly chapters 2 and 3. One of the impressive features of the Apocalypse noted by Taylor: “is the manner in which contextual relevance and universal significance are held together creatively and effectively . . . in the letters. . . . The message [they] convey is not one that is interested

Studies 14 (1999): 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25. Our perspective is postcolonial in two senses: 1) along with standard translations, we at different points make use of the Jamaican language, and 2) we employ Rasta hermeneutic (I-dealogy) to help narrow our focus on some key theological elements in the text; on this see, “I-n-I in the NT and the Hermeneutics of Caribbean Theology,” *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* 29 (January 2013): 37-59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ Only this Messianic ‘I’ can bestow fully the “freedom to be free” (Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* [Boston: Bay Back], 1995), 624; cf. John 8)—the same One who “might well have learned to walk and talk in Africa. Further . . . [This ‘I’] and his Jewish family, being Afro-Asiatic in color and culture, would have appeared more chocolate-brown than Caucasian in complexion” (Gosnell Yorke, ‘Biblical Hermeneutics: An Afrocentric Perspective,’ *Journal of Religious Thought* 52[1995]: 12).

in exploring religious themes and ideas without concrete practical reference.”³⁰

Accordingly, the Messianic presence is keenly felt throughout the first three chapters of the Apocalypse. The selfsame Messianic personage exerts himself in word and deed in the canonical Gospels, and the inimitable Sam Sharpe employed a dominical saying as part of his arsenal against colonial tyranny. Sitahal,³¹ citing passages like Matthew 5:3, Mark 6:34, and Luke 6: 22, has sought as well to construct a paradigmatic and foundational theological edifice to serve the needs of the region, even if its application in the first place is limited to those who speak English.³²

In light of the above, this paper seeks to highlight the following distinctives: a focus on NT ethics, an attempt at clear exegesis, an ecumenical-evangelical conviction, and a sensitivity to the linguistic needs of a postcolonial people.³³

³⁰ Burchell Taylor, *The Church Taking Sides* (Kingston: Bethel, 1995), 3, 10.

³¹ Sitahal, “*Caribbean Theology*,” 4-5.

³² Here Lewin Williams’ (*The Indigenization of Theology in the Caribbean* [Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1989], 245) counsel is apropos: although “Contextualization to some extent runs the risk of the ‘cultural captivity’ of Christ, Caribbean Theology is willing to admit that in Christology the universal as well as the contextual significance exist.” This significance was keenly grasped by Selassie (Karl Philpotts Naphtali, *The Testimony of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, Defender of the Faith* [Washington: Zewd Publishers, 1999], 11-12), who confessed that the “New Testament in which our Lord Himself gave the command to go into all the world and preach is of high value. . . . Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the four gospels in which the sayings of our Lord are recorded—are pillars for all men on the earth,” contra D. Martin, *New Testament History and Literature* (New Haven: Yale, 2012), 195.

³³ The focus will be on Jamaica, one of the few countries in the region without a full Bible in the heart language of the majority of the people.

New Testament Theology as Ethically Imperative

Ethics is generally regarded as the moral principles that undergird the way we live. Therefore,

One must . . . come to grips with ethical concepts like the fallenness of humankind, the role of commandments in the Christian life, the imitation of Christ, the ways in which we are created and renewed in God's image, and what the Bible says about a whole host of moral topics (sexual ethics, money, justice, work, etc.). It is impossible to understand, teach, or write about the Bible meaningfully if you do not have a basic grasp of its theological and ethical content.³⁴

Some works which fall under the rubric of NTT are strong in their claim that the discipline should only be descriptive and never prescriptive. This to my mind is against the literary and theological grain of the New Testament itself. Right through the canon one senses a strong ethical imperative and the discipline New Testament Theology must reflect this reality. Both in the Old and New Testaments we see that all of humanity is subject to a ubiquitous ethical imperative, a strong sense of divine ought. Though not explicitly stated, this must have been the basis of the global-flood judgment; the human race at the time was said to be violent and evil. Time was given to them to repent but there was no behaviour modification. There were murder and bigamy before the flood, and

³⁴ Ben Witherington, *Is There a Doctor in the House?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 68. In an earlier work (*The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the NT*, vol. 1 [Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2009], 816-817), Witherington rightly points out that biblical emancipation "involves both belief and behaviour, both cognitive content and character. . . . [and] a Christian is a person who says 'I have been saved, I am being saved, I shall be saved, and the process is not perfect or complete until it has reached its terminus.'"

all these sinful acts assume an ethical frame of reference that was divinely sanctioned. Sin in every era then is the transgression of an ethical standard. What we are positing here is that this ethical standard is part and parcel of the *imago Dei*. It is not surprising therefore to find in Genesis an individual called Melchizedek whose commitment to authentic ethical behaviour pattern qualified him, among other things, to function as priest of the Most High God. It is no surprise either to hear God's word to Isaac that his father "obeyed me and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5). And given the non-Israelite background and chronology (twentieth-century BCE) of the protagonist, our understanding of Job 23:12 takes on new significance.

Outside of Scripture, we hear a voice like Epictetus echoing Holy Writ with these wise words: "If a man could only subscribe heart and soul, as he ought, to this doctrine,³⁵ that we are all primarily begotten of God, and that God is the father of all men . . . I think that he will entertain no ignoble or mean thought about himself."³⁶ Such laws we further submit belong to an ethical system or code that we may call the 'Mesographic Law'.³⁷ This Law is given to everyone

³⁵ Gk. *Dogma*.

³⁶ *Epictetus I-II* (Cambridge, MA: LCB, 1925), 25. Of course, one has to admit that the echo is faint, since the writer has in mind Zeus and not YHWH. He also writes about what we have called above the mesographic law: "I cannot transgress any of His commands [*entolōn*]. . . . These are the laws [*nomoi*] that have been sent to you from God, these are His ordinances; it is of these you ought to become an interpreter [*exēgētēn*], to these you ought to subject yourself . . ." Idem II: 313.

³⁷ What Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis (*Integrative Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 1: 95) call 'the implanted law.' Cf. Alan F. Segal ("Paul's Jewish Presuppositions," in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* [ed. James Dunn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 166), who mentions the "seven commandments which the rabbis assumed were given to all humanity before Moses." This universal variety is

and is therefore international in scope (cf. Amos 4:13: “He reveals his will to every person . . .”). Thus an observant atheist can write regarding the Decalogue: “Admonishments of this kind are found in virtually every culture throughout recorded history. . . . It is a scientific fact that moral emotions—like a sense of fair play or an abhorrence to cruelty—precede any exposure to scripture.”³⁸ We agree. It is the basis, for example, of the ethical imperative of thanksgiving³⁹ which in part provides us with a better understanding of humanity’s culpability in Romans 1: 21(*dem no gi im tangk* /they were guilty of ingratitude).⁴⁰ It was this Mesographic revelation that enabled the Greco-Roman philosopher/priest and contemporary of the apostle Paul to have penned the following treatise on deity: “God is unmoved and timeless, in whom there is neither “earlier nor later, no future nor past, no older nor younger; but He, being One . . . has with only one ‘Now’ completely filled ‘Forever’. . . . Under these conditions, therefore, we ought, as we pay him reverence, to greet him and to address him with these

dubbed ‘mesographic’, i.e., written inside (cf. Rom. 2:14). We are therefore not surprised at the solemn declaration of Micah 5:15.

³⁸ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 21. See also Simeon McIntosh (*Reading Text & Polity: Hermeneutics and Constitutional Theory* [Kingston: Caribbean Law, 2012], 1): Every “judicial opinion uttered by the judge in the name of the law carries implicitly a claim to moral truth.”

³⁹ Cf. Epictetus , 39, 319 : ‘From everything that happens in the universe it is easy for a man to find occasion to praise providence, if he has within himself these two qualities: the faculty of taking a comprehensive view of what has happened in each case individual instance, and the *sense of gratitude* [Italics added; Gk. *euchariston*] . . . we should be giving thanks to God for those things for which we ought to give Him thanks.’

⁴⁰ May be also ‘the law of God’ in Rom 7: 22, according to Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 71.

words, ‘Thou art’; or even, I vow, as did some of the men of old.”⁴¹ Similarly, we have the following testimony from Hellenistic Jewry: “[T]hose who dwell on earth shall be tormented, because though they had understanding they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received.”⁴²

But before the Hellenistic age another Law was given, the famous Mosaic variety. This Law was limited in scope (Psa 147:19-20) but was of much more significance than that which preceded it, since its stipulations (613 of them) marked out all who had a special covenant with Yahweh. So how does this Mosaic variety relate to its Mesographic counterpart? “The moral law in its written [Mosaic/Messianic?] form does not contradict or change the will of God. Rather, it makes it explicit and amplifies that will as originally expressed in natural law [Mesographic]. Since the will of God does not change, the law remains virtually the same throughout redemptive history.”⁴³

⁴¹ Plutarch, *E Delph.* 20, cited in Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. E. Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 218. According to Schnelle, “There were two sources of the knowledge of God: (1) the idea of deity implanted in the human consciousness in view of the majesty of the cosmos [Mesographic revelation?], and (2) the traditional images of God conveyed in the old myths and customs.” This second ‘source’ is condemned in Rom. 1:18-32; it is nothing but an imaginative corruption of the first. The point is conceded even by a First Century pagan (Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 2.26-27) who excoriates those “worshiping ghosts and making a god of one who has already ceased to be even a man.” Idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, 226.

⁴² Esdras 7:72 (RSV) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/r/rsv/rsv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=3652195>.

⁴³ W. A. VanGemeren, “The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective,” in *The Law, The Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Greg L. Bahnsen et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 61

The Old Testament which implicitly and explicitly informs us about the Mesographic and Mosaic codes of ethics also points to another system in Jeremiah 31: 31-37. Like its predecessor, this new system, far superior to the others, is also tied to a covenant (Matt 26: 26-29). Based on Galatians 6:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-21 we are justified in classifying this variety the Messianic Law (MeL). MeL is promulgated, circulated, and has come to be understood as “my commands” (John 14:15), “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1: 25),⁴⁴ “that pattern of teaching to [which] you were entrusted” (Rom 6:17 NET), “dominical directive” (1 Cor 14: 37, our translation), “the commands of God” (Rev 14:12),⁴⁵ as well as the “but I [*egō*] say on to you” refinements of the Sermon on the Mount. In all of these NT genres the ethical imperative is evident. MeL was first announced by Jeremiah 31:31-37 (cf. Isa 55:3; Eze 16:60), and even a fragment from the Qumran community (4Q521) appears to anticipate it, “. . . [the hea]vens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, and none therein will stray from *the commandments* of the holy ones[*q^edōsîm*].”⁴⁶ In sum, the three codes of ethics that govern the world look like this:

2007), 21. We agree with VanGemenen, although we express some reservation about the virtual immutability of the law.

⁴⁴ C. L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James: Exegetical Commentary on New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 91-92.

⁴⁵ I.e., “the Faith of Jesus”?

⁴⁶ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1997), 391-392. Italics added; cf. also the following with its NT fulfilment: “He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent] For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor.” The “holy ones” in Hebrew could also be construed as singular (the Holy One) as in Prov. 9:10; taken this way the reference is to *YHWH* and not primarily to the saints.

Mesographic Code
Romans 2:12-15

For every Gentile

Mosaic Code
Psalm 147:19-20

For every Jew

Messianic Code
1 Corinthians 9:19-23

For every Christian⁴⁸

New Testament Theology as Exegetically Necessary

It may be observed with HoSang and Ringenberg⁴⁹ that theological dependence of the Caribbean region has been anything but healthy,

⁴⁷Borrowed from *mesographos* “drawn [or written] in the middle [heart?]” (H. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon 1997], 500).

⁴⁸ Believers today, then, like Paul, should see themselves as under law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21b; D.A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfilment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. Mark A. Seifrid et al. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 402); their directives (1 Cor. 9:19b) are to be found here, minus the command to be circumcised (1 Cor. 9:19a)—and a whole lot more. It would appear that Paul mentions all three ethical codes in Romans (the Mesographic for the Gentiles in Rom. 1:32—“They know God’s *decree*”; The Mosaic for the Jews—Rom. 2:12—“[A]ll who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law,” cf. 3:1-2; and the Messianic for Christians in Rom. 6:17—“But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to *the form of teaching* to which you were entrusted” (NRSV; italics mine. See also Isa 42:4b).

⁴⁹ “Towards an Evangelical Caribbean Theology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7: (1983), 125-147.

perhaps none more so than among evangelicals. It may be added also that theology is not merely a thematic articulation of biblical data. It is also a response to particular situations, which differ widely in their variegated hues. If the need for a Caribbean Theology be granted, it remains then for those who share this burden to construct such. Given the guidelines of Garnett Roper⁵⁰ and Dieumeme Noelliste (who highlights the four crucial elements of faith, reason, revelation, and obedience).⁵¹ I would venture to isolate two other vital components: the first is the exegetical. This word is chosen rather than “biblical” because it serves to bring to focus the need to really study the Bible in our context, and to do so in a new and fresh way if we are going to influence our generation and region in any lasting way. Today the Bible student has a wealth of approaches from which to draw in addressing questions like those outlined above. In light of this it may not be prudent to rule out any tool that might be deemed legitimate. So HoSang and Ringenberg⁵² are correct in our judgment in pointing out the need to retain certain “western methodologies because of their intrinsic value,” solid exegesis of which is by no means least. Of course, such a theology should not only be solidly exegetical but rigorously contextual as well: “Contextualisation is the process by which Christian truth is embodied and translated in a concrete historical situation.”⁵³ This

⁵⁰ *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston: Xpress, 2012).

⁵¹ “The Church and Human Emancipation,” PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1987.

⁵² “Toward an Evangelical Caribbean Theology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7: (1983), 135.

⁵³ R.D. Tano, “Towards an Evangelical Caribbean Theology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7: (1983), 155. See also David HoSang, “Contextualisation,” in *Romans in Context*, 225-244.

means for us an appropriate cultural adaptation after serious reflection on both the scriptural and situational horizons.

New Testament Theology as Evangelically and Ecumenically Relevant

Over the past seventy years the movement widely known as evangelicalism has assumed global significance. But what in the world is evangelicalism? And what is the movement doing in the world—particularly Jamaica?⁵⁴ The purpose of this section is to address especially the second question. However, before doing so some attention must be given to the first. Evangelicalism, a sociological phenomenon, is not a religion or a denomination.⁵⁵ It is a movement within the ranks of Christianity that ecumenically encompasses all the major denominations, and it is the branch that appears to have derived the greatest benefit from NTT, especially in the area of missions.⁵⁶ In other words, there are evangelical

⁵⁴ For the employment of the hermeneutic of ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ on this larger-than-life nation, see John C. Keane, *Inspiration from Jamaica’s National Pledge* (Kingston: Pear Tree, 2012); for the influence of a time-honoured movement on Jamaica, see “Evangelicalism as Sociological Phenomenon?” in *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue*, ed. G. Lincoln Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 141-164.

⁵⁵ It is becoming increasingly difficult nowadays to define the term. With some confidence Alister McGrath (*Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* [Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP., 1995], 54-87) identifies six characterizing features: 1) belief in the supreme authority of Scripture; 2) the deity, humanity, and salvific ministry of Jesus Christ; 3) the lordship of the Holy Spirit; 4) the need for personal conversion; 5) the priority of evangelism, individually and corporately; and 6) the importance of the local church for spiritual maturity.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Horace Russell, *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church: Jamaican Baptist Missions to West Africa in the 19th Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); Las Newman, “Mission from the Margin: A Critical Analysis of the Participation of West Indians as Agents of Christian Mission in the Western Missionary Enterprise in

Christians to be found in both Catholicism and Protestantism (the two major dimensions of the Reformation divide), though the majority stands outside the Catholic enclave and the traditional Protestant denominations. The roots of evangelicalism may be traced to European soil. The Evangelical Revival which took place in the United Kingdom back in the eighteenth century is thought by some to be the fountainhead of the modern evangelical movement. “What happened then was a rediscovery of the Gospel and its power” to address the human condition of alienation. “[Thus] it spread across denominations.”⁵⁷

The first avowedly evangelical group to arrive in the Caribbean was the Moravians. Like the Anglicans, Baptists, and Catholics before them, they sought to preach the gospel to the new “native” population; they also addressed the stark social inequality with which they were confronted, particularly amongst the black population. However, some, like the late Byang Kato, would trace the roots of evangelicalism even further back, to the first couple of centuries of the Christian era. Although in modern times missionaries from Europe and North America took the gospel to Africa, they were not the first representatives of Christianity on that continent. As a matter of fact, history shows that Christianity’s ties are closer to Africa than with Europe or North America. Kato makes the amazing claim that “we can, therefore, rightly call Christianity an African religion.”⁵⁸ According to Allan,⁵⁹ at the end

Africa in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to their Conception of Christian Mission,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 2007; and especially Lloyd A. Cooke, *The Story of Jamaican Missions* (Kingston: Arawak, 2013).

⁵⁷I. H. Marshall, “Methodism and the Evangelical Tradition,” in *The Evangelicals*, J.D Allan (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1989), 11.

⁵⁸J.D. Allan, *The Evangelicals*, 54; cf. Byang Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Lagos: ACP, 1985), 32-39.

of the last decade of the nineteenth century nearly fifty percent of the African population had some affiliation to Christianity. That number has since grown. But while evangelicalism is not entirely responsible for that figure, recent reports have attributed a great deal of it to the movement.⁶⁰ So, although Kato's claim may be considered exaggerated, the continent today is experiencing a Christian presence which is unprecedented. Turning to Latin America, a predominantly Roman Catholic domain, we also see a significant growth of evangelical Christians, particularly among the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.⁶¹ However, in contrast to the strong social concern exhibited in other latitudes, Latin American evangelicals have had the effect of insulating believers from the world, filling up their time with church activities and imposing strict social regulations upon them so that their contribution to society was limited. [Interestingly] some South American dictators with an

⁵⁹*Evangelicals*, 54.

⁶⁰ Of course, Islam is also on the rise in many parts of Africa; for the challenge this poses, see, e.g., Ida Glaser, 'Authority, Identity and the Establishment of the Kingdom of God: Understanding the Political Challenge of Islam.' *BINAH* 2 (1997): 77-91. One of the most famous evangelical ministers in America, Rick Warren, prayed at the inauguration of the 44th president whose father is Kenyan.

⁶¹ For the Pentecostal influence in Jamaica, see Dianne Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis* (Kingston: IRP, 1997), and Ashley Smith, *Pentecostalism in Jamaica* (Mandeville: Eureka, 1993). Says W.D. Persaud ("Caribbean Response," *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, edited by H. Gregory [Mona: UWI, 1995], 49), 'As it looks to the twenty-first century, the church in the Caribbean cannot avoid serious wrestling with the current phenomenal growth of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a phenomenon that especially, though not exclusively, touches the masses of the suffering, poor, powerless, exploited, marginalized and dislocated. It is a phenomenon of liberation, of new found 'free space', new found spiritual and socio-psychic healing in the midst of fragmentation and chaos. It is a phenomenon of division, a spiritual and social separation.'

extremely dubious civil rights record were friendly to the growth of Pentecostalism, because it distracted the attention of the masses from the inequality in society. Not all Pentecostalism was like this, however; and other evangelical denominations have also taken seriously the need for agents of peace and justice in a hopelessly unfair society (in Latin America close to 20% of the population receive 66% of the total income).⁶²

A relatively recent development in evangelicalism worldwide is the formation of regional bodies to consolidate and promote its concerns. In Asia, the leading evangelical witness is found in South Korea. For example, the famous “Full Gospel Central Church . . . which claims no less than 250,000 members and Presbyterian congregations with over 50, 000 in one city” are considered sure signs of revival in a country that in a previous century was said to be impervious to Christian influence.⁶³ One of the positives of South Korean evangelicalism, directed by the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia, is the self-reliant basis on which it was formed. Another positive is the fact that the movement is credited with an overall beneficent influence on the society, with believers strategically placed in parliament and the sports arena. The Korean paradigm appears to be catching on in other Asian countries and has certainly become a model of social engagement to Christian worldwide.

In Central and South America, we have the *Confraternidad Evangelica Latino America*. Several factors such as the need to create an authentic African theology and the desire to pool resources led some African evangelicals to organize themselves into a unified force. In Kenya and Uganda, the motivation was different. Their

⁶² Allan, *Evangelicals*, 113-14.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 94.

unity gave a sense of solidarity and security in the face of grave danger. Out of this came in 1966 the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). “Today AEAM is recognized as a major voice speaking for evangelicals throughout Africa.”⁶⁴

The kind of evangelicalism that preceded AEAM, though lacking in organizational structure, nevertheless contributed significantly to the demise of the African slave trade as well as giving itself “to a myriad of philanthropies.”⁶⁵ Organizations similar to AEAM are found in Oceania, North America, Europe and the Caribbean as well.

Arguably the religious phenomenon with the greatest impact on the Jamaican society, and to a lesser extent the wider Caribbean, is the Rastafarian movement.⁶⁶ Many in recent times have sought to chart the course of this movement. Notwithstanding the Rastafarian influence in the culture, the church continues to make its mark, though it seems to some that it is not keeping pace with other institutions of social change.

Rastafari is not as old as the evangelical movement in the Caribbean. If it were, there is little doubt that it would certainly be in the forefront of the fight for “the African-Jamaican on his remote plantation, [helping to] destroy slavery and the West Indian sugar monopoly in England” along with the evangelicals. What is doubtful, though, is that Rastafarians would be establishing white-black alliances based on religious convictions.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Allan, op. cit., 67-8.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1995), 81.

⁶⁶ Chisholm, *Revelations on Ras Tafari* (Miami: Xlibris, 2008).

⁶⁷ Kevin O’ Brien Chang, *Jamaica fi real! Beauty, Vibes and Culture* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2010), 134-35; Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaica People* (Kingston: IRP, 1998),

Early evangelical Reformists working out of England for the abolition of slavery include William Wilberforce and Granville Sharp. It is Sharp himself who was instrumental in getting a positive ruling through the courts in the year 1772. On July 22 the chief Justice of England ruled: "The state of slavery is of such a mixture that it is incapable of being instructed on any reasons, moral or political . . . it is so obvious that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law. Whatever inconvenience, therefore, may follow from a decision . . . the black man [i.e. James Somersett, the slave represented by Sharp] must be set free."⁶⁸

The decision had devastating consequences for the English slave trade. "As a result of this ruling all 10,000 of the slaves held in England . . . gained their freedom. Encouraged by this ruling, the abolitionists intensified their efforts," an anti-slavery society was formed by an evangelical group, the Quakers, and Wilberforce, an associate of Sharp, convinced the English parliament to abolish the slave trade. This was "the first time in their history African-Jamaican discovered that they had allies and friends in the world of white power."⁶⁹

Other white allies were some of the Moravian missionaries who began working in Jamaica in the middle of the 18th century. But it is to two black Baptist preachers that the evangelical movement owes its indigenous character.⁷⁰ Today that indigenous character is manifest in most if not all denominations and is now partially

177.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 179.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Sherlock and Bennett, *Story*, 80-81.

institutionalized in the structure known as the Jamaica Association of Evangelicals. This organization came into being one hundred years after a major turning point in Jamaica's history--the so-called Morant Bay rebellion. Unlike the Morant Bay experience, the founding of the Jamaican Association of Evangelical Churches (as it was then called) was far less auspicious. Framers of the organization trace their roots to the revival of the 1860's, which, ironically, took Jamaica by storm just around the time when the island was experiencing one of its most testing periods, the one which eventually led to the aforementioned rebellion. Whereas the political directorate of the time was quite insensitive to the plight of the peasantry,⁷¹ the missionaries, few as they were, "laboured tirelessly for fair wages, land settlement, and the establishment of villages. . . . [They] were also instrumental in establishing schools for the teaching of the three 'Rs'." ⁷² Partly out of this social concern and the great spiritual hunger felt at the time, the Moravians in the extreme West of the island were the first to experience the new wave of the Spirit. The rest of the island was soon to come under the new spiritual awakening.⁷³

Very early in its history the JAE expressed a deep burden for the social milieu in which it was nurtured. Cited for special mention at the time were "the loose family patterns, coupled with a high percentage of illegitimacy, the growing situation of West Kingston and the high rate of illiteracy. . . ." to mention only a few. "These ills," declared Gerig, "require the individual and united strength and

⁷¹ Ibid., 187-9.

⁷²Zenas Gerig, 'Why the Association of Evangelical Churches?' (Paper prepared for discussion at the July 2 meeting of pastors at the Emmanuel Missionary Church, Mandeville, 1969), 2.

⁷³Ibid., 3.

efforts of the church . . . [which] should aim toward a programme for the total man.”⁷⁴ Despite its unabashed interest in the proclamation of the gospel, the JAE is still today interested in these ideals. This is not to say that the movement (and the constituency that it serves) has been entirely consistent with its own aspirations and goals. Therefore, certain questions raised along these lines by its friends looking on ought to be pondered seriously.⁷⁵

In many respects, the standard of living in Jamaica has risen much higher since the decade of independence.⁷⁶ However, this is by no means the total picture. In other areas, things have markedly deteriorated. For example, in the year prior to Gerig’s speech to the evangelical clergy gathered in Mandeville, the nation recorded just over a hundred cases of homicide. Today there is a nine hundred percent increase.

In connection with the high level of crime and violence is the widening gap between the poor and the well to do, not to mention the growing number of the unemployed. When seen against the backdrop of global economic trends, the immediate future for Jamaica, though not hopeless, appears quite bleak. According reports of the United Nations Development Programme, the global picture of consumption expenditures reveals stark inequities between developed and developing nations. This results in scores of countries in the latter category finding themselves experiencing acute economic decline. Since Jamaica gained independence in 1962, many of these Majority World countries have little or “No

⁷⁴Ibid., 7.

⁷⁵ E.g., Ashley Smith, *Real Roots and Potted Plants* (Mandeville: Eureka, 1984).

⁷⁶ Jamaica celebrated its Independence Jubilee in 2012, 174 years after Emancipation.

access to safe water and are living below the poverty level. One billion are without adequate shelter; 841 billion are malnourished; 880 million are without access to health care; 2.6 billion have no access to basic sanitation; two billion are deprived of electricity; and 104 million are illiterate.”⁷⁷ These are indeed staggering figures. Jamaica is part of this developing world that is increasingly marginalized economically.

While our political directorate appears preoccupied with economic growth (sometimes, it appears, to the detriment of the development of human capital), “\$8 billion is spent on cosmetics in the United States alone . . . \$11 billion [is] spent on ice cream in Europe . . . with an additional \$12 billion on perfumes and \$17 billion on pet foods.” In Japan \$35 billion is spent on business entertainment, \$50 billion on cigarettes, \$400 billion on narcotic drugs and “most vulgar and gruesome of all, \$780 billion on military spending in this post Cold War world.” This is to be compared, respectively, with only \$156 billion spent on education, \$9 billion on basic sanitation, \$12 billion for reproductive health and \$3 billion on basic health, globally.⁷⁸ Reflect as well on the fact that “the ratio of salaries paid to top-tier CEOs and those paid to the same firm’s average employees: in Britain it is 24:1; in France, 15:1; in Sweden, 13:1; in the United States where 80 percent of the population expects to be called before God on judgement Day, it is 475:1. Many a camel, it would seem, expects to pass through the eye of a needle.”⁷⁹

This is the global context in which conditions in the Caribbean are to be assessed. This is the climate in which the church in the region finds itself. Ironically, some of these countries that are responsible

⁷⁷ Ian Boyne, ‘Gross Inequities Worldwide’ (*The Daily Gleaner*, September 13, 1998), 8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, 46.

for the kind of consumption patterns that result in the aforementioned inequities are rated highly by Transparency International (TI), a global watchdog on how nationals conduct their business. The organization attempts to measure the degree of corruption perceived especially amongst business people and the general public. About a decade ago TI's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) placed countries like the U.S.A. (18th place), Japan (25th) and many other countries of Western Europe above Jamaica (49th). Today Transparency International continues to downgrade the region.⁸⁰

When the CPI report is compared with the Human Development Report of the United Nations, is it fair to see a correlation between the levels of poverty/wealth on the one hand and corruption on the other? Of course, there is no necessary connection between the two factors. However, it would be interesting to have some study done to determine how one impacts the other in the region in general and Jamaica in particular. But to go back to the "objective" analysis of the levels of corruption in Jamaica, such an "allegation" cannot be successfully deflected. Who can deny, for instance, that the collapse of some of our financial institutions (including the high-profile investment schemes) and the like are due in no small measure to corrupt business practices--the kind of which, sad to say, not even the church (evangelical and otherwise) is immune?

All this raises the intriguing question concerning the church's role in culture and society, in a word, nation building. What exactly is the church doing? Is it really relevant to the culture? Is the church a part of the problem of social decay or what? I think that clerics of all denominational stripes will agree that the church can do more. However, the church's failure or success in these matters should not be judged merely by individual expectations. Let us remind

⁸⁰ <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20091118/lead/lead1.html>.

ourselves that though the church today still struggles with its own identity and mission, it does in fact have its particular *modus operandi* to which, in varying degrees it is committed, although not all church leaders grasp the Messianic mandate in the same way.⁸¹

For example, evangelicals in the Caribbean basin understand the church's mandate in basically two ways. One group underscores the need to proclaim the gospel as top priority. For instance, one of the aims of the JAE is to promote the proclamation of the Gospel. Another group of evangelicals believes that this proclamation of the gospel should not be the exclusive responsibility of the people of God. One of the chief spokespersons for this position was British theologian, John Stott. For Stott evangelism *and* social responsibility are grounded in the very character of God, because the God of biblical revelation is concerned with the total wellbeing of all humanity. The second ground for keeping evangelism and social intervention together is the teaching and ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus' ministry, then, as the Gospels testify, certainly did not preclude social action and community service. A third argument is to be found in the very demands of effective contextualization.⁸²

It seems that (at least in its embryonic stage) the JAE would not have endorsed Stott's position, which, it appears, has been adopted

⁸¹ According to Ashley Smith, (*Real Roots and Potted Plants: Reflection on the Caribbean Church* [Mandeville: Eureka, 2002], 13-14) "The Christian Church, as it is manifested in the Caribbean region, must be credited with laying the foundation for the development of most of the institutions of which modern Caribbean nations depend for sustenance of their corporate being. With evangelisation has gone the work of literacy and the establishment of most of the primary and secondary schools of the region—schools in which even radical politicians learned the three R's and proceeded to build the intellectual superstructure for which some of them give credit to no one but themselves."

⁸² John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 334–349.

by the majority of evangelicals worldwide. However, later developments have revealed a shift in policy.⁸³ Many observers have missed this. Already we have pointed out ways in which this kind of involvement has taken shape and there was one evangelical clergyman who was to emerge with flying colours in this regard. Father Hugh Sherlock, who eventually penned the words of the Jamaican National Anthem, was that man. While not forty years old, Father Sherlock established one of the most effective inner-city institutions, the now famous Boys' Town. Observing the plight of the under-privileged youths, Father Sherlock requested time from the Methodist church to address their needs. Boys' Town was first located in a churchyard in Jones Town Jamaica but later removed to Central Road, which was subsequently renamed Collie Smith Drive, in Trench Town.

The late Robert Nesta Marley and Collie Smith, who represented Jamaica and the West Indies at cricket, were undoubtedly the brightest stars to have been associated with the institution. Boys' Town was more than a school. It also became a major sports club participating in various Corporate Area competitions, especially cricket and football. For many years, Father Sherlock himself represented Boys' Town at cricket, and the present national Technical Director of Cayman, Carl Brown, at football. Brown, like Collie Smith and a host of others, went on to represent his country in the field of his endeavour. For his contribution to football, Brown,

⁸³ It seems that earlier JAE members were heavily influenced by Donald McGavran's, *Church Growth in Jamaica* (Lucknow, India: LP, 1962, 111), who once wrote: "The church does not need to trouble itself about agricultural production . . . and the like. . . . These are done by the state better than the churches. . . . All [they] need to do is to use the structure . . . inherited . . . to multiply Christians." Today the JAE's Mission Statement is: "To provide leadership for Evangelical Christians in empowering them for evangelism, discipleship and *social responsibility* in the nation [my emphasis]."

who attends an evangelical church, was honoured by his country with the Order of Distinction. Later he became the first recipient of the Father Hugh Sherlock Award for Excellence. Father Sherlock died in 1998.⁸⁴ But before his passing, he was able to participate in the fifty-fifth Anniversary Thanksgiving ceremony held at the school on November 19, 1995. In his speech on that occasion Father Sherlock noted with pride that, despite setbacks, the institution that was on his mind when he penned the words *Strengthen Us the Weak to Cherish*, is still continuing “to build the mind, body and spirit [of the] underprivileged to gain an opportunity to become good citizens.”⁸⁵

The number of clergymen following in the noble tradition of Father Sherlock is growing. Many have worked hard in and for the nation’s schools, particularly at the secondary level. I think it safe to say that some of the best high schools in the island are connected to churches. Apart from those already mentioned, others that readily come to mind are St. George’s College, Mt. Alvernia, Immaculate Conception, Holy Childhood and Campion (Roman Catholic), Kingston College and Westwood (Anglican), Meadowbrook (Methodist), Calabar (Baptist), Ardenne (Church of God) and Merle Grove (Associated Gospel Assemblies).⁸⁶

Although the latter two schools may be classed as evangelical, secondary education has not been the strongpoint of the movement. Traditionally, this has been the forte of the older and more

⁸⁴ Yvonne Coke, *Eternal Father Bless our Land* (Kingston: LMH, 2001), 6.

⁸⁵ *Sunday Observer*, December 10 1995, 3.

⁸⁶ The AGA, an indigenous denomination, has provided a “Home Away from Home” for its diasporan members (Delroy Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home: The Caribbean Diasporan Church in the Black Atlantic Tradition* [London: Equinox, 2008], 142).

established churches. Over the last twenty years or so, the evangelicals have concentrated their efforts in the setting up of a plethora of basic and preparatory schools island-wide. Four of these, Portmore Missionary, Vaz, Covenant Christian Community Academy and Mavisville,⁸⁷ have done quite well in recent times, while Priory is poised to make its mark as an educational complex which includes a secondary school. However, while evangelicals have sought to create a niche for themselves in the area of the nation's educational system, they had for the better part of the last century neglected their own intellectual needs in terms of making serious provision for an educated clergy. In fact some prided themselves in not having been to "college but to Calvary." The need to provide leaders who could impart intellectual rigour⁸⁸ to the movement did not go unnoticed by all, and so in the forties at least two Bible schools were started: the non-denominational Jamaica Bible College in Mandeville and Bethel Bible College associated with the New Testament Church of God. Both institutions offered certificates and diplomas, but it was not until 1960 that the first degree granting evangelical institution was established.

While it is perceived that the evangelical social engagement is growing in the broad area of education, its concern for social

⁸⁷ Sponsored by "Missa Wildish Maranatha" (Charles Hyatt, *When I Was a Boy* [Kingston: Institute of Jamaica 1984] , 21). Maranatha is the original home of the Christian Ambassadors Footballers United (A. Diedrick, *The Alternative*, [1997], 5; D. Palmer, "CAFU: Men Reaching Men," *The Testimony* [2007], 7-10).

⁸⁸ David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) has already canvassed the intellectual deficit of American evangelicalism in particular. In recent times a few evangelicals have been attempting to create a body of literature to fill the lacuna in the region; see, for example, C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case for Mixed-Audience* (NY: Peter Lang, 2008).

justice⁸⁹ and the poor has not kept pace. This tendency appears to be a blot against the movement in several parts of the globe. In an essay entitled, "The Caribbean's Response to the Great Commission," Dr. Las Newman, president of the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology,⁹⁰ delineates three models of Christian involvement deemed pertinent to our survey. The first one he calls the ethnic model "whereby missionary endeavours were focused upon people groups of particular ethnicities." Several missionaries from the Caribbean went to sub-Sahara Africa under this model. The second model, which emerged in the post World War II era, concentrated its efforts on the youth of the region as potential church leaders. The Inter-School/Inter-Varsity, Youth for Christ and Bible school movements all fall under this umbrella. "A third model of Caribbean mission . . . is the contemporary model . . . to the urban poor. . . . Within the first three decades of post-Independence the Caribbean church, in response to the new social and economic order, has been engaged in developing [a] new . . . ministry to the poor."⁹¹

But what about politics? I think it is safe to say that when it comes on to Jamaican politics the actual engagement on the part of evangelical/non-evangelical clergy is very negligible, though their ideological postures may differ quite sharply. Here we have a sharp contrast to our neighbours to the North whose head of state can, with Christian conviction, write: "[W]hat is more remarkable is the

⁸⁹ Cf. Oliver, *Salvation as Justice in Amos 5:18-27: Implications for Jamaica* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991).

⁹⁰B. Metzger, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 200.

⁹¹ Las Newman, "The Caribbean Response to the Great Commission: History and Models," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* 1:16-32.

ability of evangelical Christianity not only to survive but to thrive in modern, high-tech America. . . . Evangelical churches are . . . eliciting levels of commitment and participation from their membership that no other American institution can match. Their fervour has gone mainstream.”⁹²

If evangelicals are still ambivalent about politics, they seem to have changed their attitude towards sports and entertainment. Over the last ten years or so Jamaica has experienced its first taste of having Christians at the helm of a national sporting endeavour in the persons of Brazilian Rene Simoes and his former assistant, Carl Brown. Another evangelical who has gained prominence is recently retired test cricket umpire and former FIFA referee Steve Bucknor, who hails from Montego Bay. Other sports luminaries wider a field include Kaka, who early on this year turned down a half million pound a week salary to move from AC Milan to Manchester City, Lucio, Bebeto, Ian Bishop, Ridley Jacobs and, in the entertainment field in Jamaica, Judy Mowatt, Carlene Davis, Papa Son, Stichie, Chevelle Franklin, Winston Bell, Junior Tucker and Chrissie D, adding to what McGrath⁹³ calls “The Evangelical Attraction.” But McGrath is well aware of the movement’s other side as well, such as its leadership crisis, failure to instil in its constituents a proper sense of belonging based on the *imago Dei*⁹⁴ and, we might add, its

⁹² B. Obama, *Audacity of Hope* (New York: Vantage, 2006), 239. The most honourable Portia Simpson-Miller was the first Jamaican head of state to openly profess Christianity. Her political party also boasts a prominent Roman Catholic deacon who serves as Minister of Education.

⁹³ Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP., 1995), 150.

⁹⁴ Cf. Faith Linton, *What the Preacher Forgot to Tell Me: Identity and Gospel in Jamaica* (Kingston: Bayridge, 2009), as well as Richard J. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

corruption, as was recently alleged by the Reverend Dr. Roderick Hewitt at the National Prayer Breakfast in January 2009.

Despite these serious setbacks, there are those who are still optimistic that the evangelical movement can become a spiritual and sociological force to be reckoned with, provided that radical corrective measures are put in place and an openness to *change* exhibited.⁹⁵

New Testament Theology as Culturally Sensitive

Language is near the heart of every culture and recently the Bible Society of the West Indies once again made its intention clear to translate the entire Bible into the Jamaican language commonly called Patwa, Jamaican Creole, or simply, Jamaican. The announcement has sparked a heated discussion in the form of a flurry of letters to the editors of our leading print media. Most of the responses express the view that the project is ill-conceived, and, if carried through, it will be a colossal waste of time and money. A few writers, mostly academicians, have come out in support of the idea, pointing out that a possible reason for the poor performance of many of our young people in their English examinations is the failure of the education system to recognize Jamaican Creole as the mother tongue of the majority. They also point out that in other countries like Haiti and the ABC islands, where the languages of the majority are duly recognized, the learning of French and Dutch, colonial languages like English, is made far easier. One seemingly strong argument for the continued marginalization of the Jamaican

⁹⁵ If we are to believe a recent report, the change apparently is already underway: "As for social justice, evangelicals have for some time now outperformed both Liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics in terms of worldwide responses to natural disasters and ongoing movements to improve the lot of the poorest in the world." http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/8205_8969.pdf.

language is the ubiquitous character of English and the contrasting narrow confines of Patwa.

Some prominent individuals who have spoken or written on what is now becoming the Patwa-English impasse include former Prime Minister the honorable Mr. Bruce Golding. He is a representative of those who strongly feel that the promotion of the Jamaican language at this time may be counter-productive to the proper grasp of English, the official language since independence. But perhaps the most worthwhile contribution to the debate so far is that of the Honorary Consul for the Federation of St. Kitts-Nevis to the Republic of South Africa and lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Gosnell L. Yorke. Dr Yorke spent over fifteen years in Africa and was for ten year a Bible translation consultant with the United Bible Societies. In a recent Gleaner article, Dr Yorke informs us that our region is witnessing what he calls a linguistic phenomenon in that the four European languages that were imperially imposed on our African ancestors are now undergoing a process of "creolisation." What he means by this is that the early slave settlers of Jamaica, for example, 'were forced to creatively adapt' the language of their European overlords and their adaptation blended with the various west African languages to produce before long a new authentic language we now call Jamaican Creole . Professor York goes on to say that:

Since the various Bible translation agencies in the Caribbean are driven by the defensible conviction that all 6,000 or so languages currently spoken in the world at large are equal, that English is only one of them, and that God does speak most compellingly to each of us in our mother tongue or heart language . . . it is not at all surprising that the Haitian Bible Society, the Bible Society of The Netherlands Antilles, and the Bible Society in the Eastern Caribbean have already

translated and published . . . the complete Bible or at least the New Testament in some of the Caribbean creoles.⁹⁶

We are informed as well that ongoing translation work is also going on in Belize and the French Antilles—and, further afield, in many parts of Africa.

A few contributors to the debate, some as far as Canada and the USA, who are largely in disagreement with the likes of Dr Yorke, appear to say that Jamaica Creole only has entertainment value. For instance, where else in the world do they go to a shop and order *wan drinks and two patti!* Or where on earth do competent speakers of their mother tongue drop their aches at *ARBA* Street and pick it up at *HEAST* Street? However, all this does not do away with the notion that Patwa is indeed a language in its own right. The present attitude toward the Jamaican language is strikingly similar to that toward English in the Middle Ages. Thus Alister McGrath could write:

It is not generally realized that the languages of the elite in English society in the early fourteenth century were French and Latin. English was seen as the language of the peasants, incapable of expressing anything other than the crudest and most basic of matters. . . . How could such a barbaric language do justice to such sophisticated matters as philosophy or religion? To translate the Bible from its noble and ancient languages into English was seen as a pointless act of debasement.⁹⁷

In this regard, a Jamaican proverb comes readily to mind: *ol' time sinting cum bac hagain!* Or in the language of King Solomon,

⁹⁶'Patois Bible in Pan-African and Pan-Caribbean Context.' <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080629/lead/lead8.html>.

⁹⁷*The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 24.

“There is nothing new under the sun.” Again we cite professor Yorke’s insightful comments on the matter:

After all, Jesus himself is known to have spoken Aramaic, his own mother tongue, and not only Hebrew, the language of the Jewish Scriptures but (and if He did at all) also the two dominant languages of his day, namely, the commonly-spoken Greek which was made possible by the colonial exploits and exploitation of Alexander, the Great, who lived and died before His time or Latin, the official language of the conquering Romans—those who ruled the world when He both lived and died; when He uttered His life-changing words and performed His life-changing works. And if Jesus showed no hesitation in embracing Aramaic, His mother tongue, in His conduct and conversation with others around Him, including when dying on the cross, then why should one hesitate to do so in Jamaican—if that just happens to be one’s mother tongue?

In John 3:7 this same Jesus is reported to have said to Nicodemus: Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. This, of course, is the King James translation of a fairly well known text. What apparently is not fairly well known is that modern English has not really improved on this rendition due to the fact that its pronominal system is sometimes quite vague, especially in the second person. Therefore, one finds the same verse translated in the New International Version (NIV) as: ‘You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again.’ In the King James language of 400 years ago the distinction between ‘you’ singular and ‘you’ plural is clearly marked by the pronouns ‘thee’ and ‘ye’ respectively; but in the NIV there is no such clarity, except for a footnote to the effect that the second occurrence of the pronoun in question is plural. This is not the fault of the NIV translators; it is the weakness of the Queen’s English in modern dress. Other

Europeans languages such as German, French and Spanish, can make the distinction and so bring a better understanding to the verse. There is still another language that says it better than modern English: *So no fraitn wen yu ier mi tel yu se, 'Unu afi baan wan neks taim!*⁹⁸ The same insight can be gained from passages like Genesis 3:1 and Luke 22:31 where the word 'you' is also plural and where the Jamaican *unu* would make better sense than its official counterpart. We therefore can't wait to see what other insights the full Patwa Bible will bring. In the mean time, we will make much use of this delicate language. We will also employ a subset of the language which, like Hellenistic Greek, makes full use of its pronominal system (particularly the first-person singular) to register a variety of emphases.

Caribbean Theology and the NT: An Overview

Over the years Caribbean theologians have shown more than a passing interest in the NT.⁹⁹ If they insist that their starting point for doing theology is their lived-experience in the shadow of Empire, this must never be understood to mean they have devalued the NT as a source and point of departure for theological reflection. For example, Chisholm has done much research on Matthew chapters 5 and 19 on the question of divorce and remarriage. He has also done detailed exegesis on Matthew 24 regarding the coming of Christ.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testament* (Kingston: Bible Society of the West Indies, 2012); *wan neks taim*, i.e., 'from above.'

⁹⁹Theresa 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.

¹⁰⁰Clinton Chisholm, "*Signs of the End: Rereading Matthew 24*," <http://thechisholmsource.com>, 2011.

Roper has an intriguing piece on Mark 5 that compares the biblical account of Legion with certain regional realities. “Caribbean Theology,” he insists, “must therefore pursue the triple task of exorcism, iconoclasm and holism through the congregational life and the prophetic witness of the church in the public square.”¹⁰¹ Vassel, González, and Pearson have sought to provide interesting readings of the Third Gospel by exploring socio-political concerns.¹⁰²

A worthwhile contribution has also come from former UTCWI president William Watty on the Fourth Gospel along the lines of a creative biographical sketch; John, he observes:

makes use of anonymity as a response to a pastoral situation which seems to have necessitated a corrective to a developing Petrine tradition. ‘Peter’ stands for a negative strain in the gospel. The name focuses and highlights precisely what the evangelist wishes to correct. He goes out of his way to present a ‘Peter of history’ with warts and all, because, presumably, the name bestowed by Jesus was assuming an inordinate importance. Between the ‘Peters’ and the ‘not Peters’ an invidious distinction was being encouraged which augured ill. Names given by Jesus were becoming a stumbling-block, for ‘Peter’ identified not

¹⁰¹Garnett Roper, “Caribbean Theology as Public Theology,” PhD thesis, Exeter University, 2011, 139-178.

¹⁰²Samuel Vassel “Socio-Political Concerns of the Gospel of Luke,” MA thesis, Wheaton Graduate School, 1982; Justo L. González, *Luke* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010); David Pearson, “Luke 5:17-26 and the Jamaican Church,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, ed. G. Lincoln Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

merely a person but a category of discipleship, a tradition and a generation. Included in that name were the first disciples who were the companions of Jesus and saw the Word made flesh. Their 'names' therefore created an unhealthy distinction between them and the 'others' who laboured but who were never disciples and therefore could never be 'named'. To correct this unhealthy situation which the mere fact of proximity to Jesus precipitated, names are withheld, even the disciple whom Jesus loved is unnamed and 'Peter' gradually but steadily peters out.

Also making a contribution to the study of John's Gospel is professor Denise Riley who seeks to demonstrate that the Johannine commission is not only theocentric but christocentric to the core, "and is equivalent to the Old Testament Semitic law of delegation." Her work also seeks to show the relevance of the great commission to "the present contemporary age with its emphasis on religious pluralism."¹⁰³ Segovia's commentary on the Fourth Gospel fits squarely in the postcolonial tradition.¹⁰⁴

Regarding Luke's second volume, Roper examined the spread of the Messianic Community in light of the seditious charges brought against it, while Murrell skilfully applies subversive hermeneutical elements to preaching in the region. Jacobs on the other hand did a careful study on the issue of tongues-speaking in the first thirty years of the church. Padilla breaks new ground in his analysis of the speeches of Gamaliel, Gallio, Demetrius, Lysias, Tertullus, and

¹⁰³ *The Apostolic 'Send'—A Contemporary Issue: John 20: 19-23* (Ann Arbor, UMI: ProQuest, 2001), v.

¹⁰⁴ William Watty, "The Significance of Anonymity in the Fourth Gospel," *Expository Times* 90 (1979), 209-212; Fernando F. Segovia, "John," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the NT Writings* (London: T & T Clarke, 2007), 156-193.

Fetus. He concludes that these discourses from 'outsiders' reinforce the special status of the people of God in the First Century through the divine authority exercised over the religio-political milieu.¹⁰⁵ Recently Linton challenges the traditional reading of the book of Romans which presents humanity as sinners first and foremost instead of focusing attention on the value of the human person. Dennis's contribution begins with an exposition of Romans 12:5, the first one-another passage in the letter. Later he treats verse 10 of the same chapter before looking at several other passages of similar character. He is probably the first Caribbean theologian to incorporate an indigenous translation in his work.¹⁰⁶

In her reading of the famous NT love chapter Spencer-Miller¹⁰⁷ set herself the following objectives: "to indicate a hermeneutic and methodology for doing Caribbean biblical exegesis and Caribbean theology . . . [and] to arrive at an understanding of 'LOVE' that is both biblical and Caribbean." Her approach which is both descriptive and investigative yields the following chiasmic structure:

¹⁰⁵ R. Jacobs, "A Hermeneutical Study of Speaking in Tongues in the Book of Acts," MA thesis, CGST, 2000; Garnett Roper, "The Charge of Sedition and the Spread of the Church in Acts," MA thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986; N. Samuel Murrell, "Hermeneutics as Interpretation: Contextual Truths in Subversion Preaching CJET 3(1999): 48-67; Osvaldo Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts: Poetics, Theology and Historiography* (NY: Cambridge, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Faith Linton, *What the Preacher Forgot to Tell Me* (Ontario: Bay Ridge, 2009); Carlton A. Dennis, *Mi an Yu as di Choch* (Kingston: SRI, 2008).

¹⁰⁷ Althea Spencer-Miller, "Agape: A Two-edged Sword, At Least?" *CJRS* 20 (1999): 57-59.

- A Exhortation (1 Cor. 12: 31b)
- B Comparison (1 Cor. 13: 1-3)
- C Characteristics (1 Cor. 13: 4-7)
- B Comparison (1 Cor. 13: 8-13)
- A Exhortation (1 Cor. 14: 1a)

A few Caribbean nationals have treated the letter to the Ephesians in one way or the other. We have, for example, Fritzner Dunois's Pauline theology of marriage and Gosnell Yorke's post-colonial exposition, Dameon Black's church growth assessment in light of the ascension and subsequent distribution of gifts, Napoleon Black's similar study from a significantly different angle, Garnett Roper's exposition of chapter 4, and Yorke's post-colonial treatment. Last but by no means least, Winedt published an insightful piece on certain implications regarding the translation of Eph 6:2 in a Caribbean setting.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Fritzner Dunois, "The Ephesian *Haustafel*." MA Thesis, CGST, 1998; Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, "Hearing the Politics of Peace in Ephesians: A Proposal from an African Postcolonial Perspective," *Journal for the Study of the NT* 30: (2007), 113-127; Dameon Black, "Pastoral Ministry and Church Growth in Light of the Ephesian Paradigm for Growth: A Study of Ephesians 4:11-16 with Application to the Associated Gospel Assemblies," M. A. thesis, CGST, 2002; N. Black, *When He Ascended* (Kingston: Yanique, 2006); Garnett Roper, "Equipping the Saints for Ministry," in The David Jellyman Lectures (Kingston: JBU, 1999), *Marlon Winedt*, "'Honour Your Father and Mother' or 'Honour Your Mother and Father'?: A Case Study in Creole Bible Translation," *The Bible Translator* 58 (2004): 57-64.

Dr Donovan Thomas's series on Philippians in the *Daily Gleaner*¹⁰⁹ has become a model of biblical and public engagement, and Silva has left his mark on the same book¹¹⁰ which elicits the following comments from the *Expository Times*: "An attractive exegesis of the letter with the minimum of distractions." Earlmont Williams highlights the *missio Dei* (the divine mission) in First Thessalonians,¹¹¹ and Thompson, in his massive study of Second Thessalonians, focused his attention on the apocalyptic vision of chapter one.¹¹² Both Noelliste¹¹³ and Thompson make full use of the Pastoral and Johannine epistles in their concern to highlight the imperative of sound theology. It is Taylor and Thomas¹¹⁴ who have shed much light upon the situation of Onesimus, especially against the background of Roman imperialism. Arguably, C. Adrian Thomas has written the best treatise on the warning passages in the book of Hebrews and Maynard-Reid's classic is enjoying a new

¹⁰⁹ E.g. <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20000729/relig/relig5.html>.

¹¹⁰ Moises Silva, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

¹¹¹ Earlmont Williams, "The Missionary Message of First Thessalonians" *CJET* 7: (2003) 22-40.

¹¹² Glen Thompson, "The Eschatological significance of 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12." MA thesis, CGST.

¹¹³ Idem, *The Roots of Deception* (Kingston: SRI, 2003); Dieumeme Noelliste, "The Importance of Sound Doctrine," *Binah* 1(1996), 1-7.

¹¹⁴ B. Taylor, "Onesimus: The Voiceless Initiator of the Liberating Process," In *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, ed. H. Gregory (Kingston: Canoe, 1995), 17-24; Oral Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context* (London: Equinox, 2010).

lease on life.¹¹⁵ HoSang has championed the cause of Peter's primitive Christian perspective on the inauguration and termination of the New Age as the primary key to interpreting his first epistle, and Joseph its literary structure.¹¹⁶ In more recent times Baldwin¹¹⁷ published his dissertation on the textual criticism of the Catholic Epistles. Taylor's work,¹¹⁸ part of his doctoral thesis, explores the significance of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2-3 in a pastorally sensitive manner. Williams on the other hand focuses his attention on the "seven heavenly spirits" mentioned in the book,¹¹⁹ while Dr Garnett Roper grounds his argument for public justice in relation to the Jamaican work-force by citing a most unfortunate characteristic of Empire:

The New Testament book of Revelation, the 18th chapter, discusses the fall of Babylon. It depicts the collapse of the Roman metropolitan centre which was then the *locus imperium*. It disguises it by appearing to speak about the

¹¹⁵*A Case for Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008; P. U. Maynard-Reid, *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

¹¹⁶David HoSang, "The New Age and the Interpretation of First Peter," D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1988; Abson Predestin Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter* (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

¹¹⁷Clinton Baldwin, *The So-Called Mixed Text: An Examination of the Non-Alexandrian and Non-Byzantine Text-Type in the Catholic Epistles* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011). See also his useful *Methods of Biblical Interpretation* (Mandeville: Lithomedia, 2010).

¹¹⁸Burchell Taylor, *The Church Taking Sides* (Kingston: Bethel, 1995); *idem*, "An Examination of the Book of Revelation from a Liberation Theology Perspective," PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1990.

¹¹⁹Patrick Williams, *The Seven Spirits of God* (Kingston: Jodami Press, 2006).

ancient city of Babylon. In a telling paragraph, it betrays the reason for the collapse of Babylon that it says 'sank like a millstone to the bottom of the sea'. It puts a lament on the lips of merchants and traders who weep for the loss of markets and trading opportunity and in so doing, lists the products they traded in descending order of importance. They said: "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargo anymore - 12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves." In the view of the biblical writer, Babylon sank because people/workers became the least of its priorities. The future of the economy without the worker at its centre and without the improvement of people's quality of life as its ultimate goal is to hit rock bottom. However spectacular its physical infrastructure and its service efficiency, it will be like an empty lot if people are not the central beneficiary.¹²⁰

Other works provide significant background material for a NTT of the Caribbean.¹²¹

¹²⁰"No Future without Workers," <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130407/focus/focus7.html>.

¹²¹E.g., Stephen Russell, "Abraham's Purchase of Ephron's Land in Anthropological Perspective," *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013): 153-170; idem. *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009). For a review of this, see http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/8240_9011.pdf.

Conclusion

Can a Caribbean theology of the New Testament be written? Should we bother to write one? Would such a project be beneficial to at least the Anglophone Caribbean? Given the fact that the region's theological practitioners are already making their mark in the field, we believe that a NTT with the following concerns of ethical precision, exegetical rigour, and an ecumenical-evangelical conviction which seeks to be sensitive to the lived experience and needs of its postcolonial peoples would be a step in the right direction.