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THE
EMANCIPATOR
AND HIS
EMANCIPATION: A
VIEW FROM THE
CARIBBEAN

By
D V Palmer

Introduction

Contextualization has both strengths and weaknesses. The strength lies in making ideas relevant to a particular cultural context. The weakness lies in precisely that fact: the more it speaks to a particular culture, the less it speaks to others—Colin Brown¹

The history of the Caribbean includes some of the most horrendous types of slavery imaginable. This along with its aftermath of neocolonialism has been well documented,² and has even resulted in many Majority-World pastors coming to realize how crucial the doctrine of Messianic emancipation actually is. Some have come to this recognition through the study of the progress of western civilization, a civilization that for centuries endorsed the aforementioned slavery in the new world. Accordingly we read:

One of the greatest scholars of slavery . . . , Harvard-based Orlando Patterson, has written *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*. Patterson writes, "No one would deny that today freedom stands unchallenged as the supreme value of the Western world." Freedom, he says, "is also the central value of Christianity." But "for most of human history, and for nearly all of the non-Western world prior to Western contact, freedom was, and for many still remains, anything but an obvious or desirable goal. Indeed, non-

¹ Colin Brown, "Christology and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," in *Doing Theology for the People of God*, edited D. Lewis and A. McGrath (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP, 1996), 68.

² Garnett Lincoln Roper, "Caribbean Theology as Public Theology," PhD thesis, Exeter University, 2011.

Western peoples have thought so little about freedom that most human languages did not even possess a word for the concept before contact with the West."³

Of course, the paucity of words for freedom in non-Western languages is really no proof that the speakers of these languages thought less about the concept; and what must be borne in mind as well is that the languages of the Western world were for the most part enriched with such emancipatory terms precisely because they came in contact with the gospel of emancipation first promulgated in a non-Western context.

Notwithstanding, the aforementioned churchmen are also disenchanted with some of the salvific solutions of the West.⁴ For example, criticisms from the Global South have been leveled at various aspects of the concept of salvation that is perceived to be prevalent in the North-Atlantic such as the doctrine of supralapsarianism⁵ and the like. Consequently, a significant

³ Martin Henry, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20130210/focus/focus5.html>; see also D V Palmer, "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. For a recent assessment of biblical/theological engagement in the region touching on the question of emancipation, we now have Gosnell Yorke's "Biblical Studies in the Anglo-Caribbean" in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*, F. Segovia and R. Boer, ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 179-192.

⁴ See, e.g., Lewin Williams, *The Indigenization of Theology in the Caribbean* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1989). "Methodological fragmentation, in fact, characterizes much of the North American academic guild," notes Craig L. Blomberg ("New Testament Studies in North America" in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century*, edited by A. J. Köstenberger and R. W. Yarbrough [Wheaton: Crossway, 2011], 298). See similar evaluations concerning Africa, Asia, and Europe in this tome.

⁵ An attempt to work out the order of the divine decree relative to the enterprise of salvation. It would appear that "The Majority of evangelical theologians look askance at" movements and matters like these, with some sharing their "unhappiness with . . . classical categories of timelessness, impassibility, and so on , but believe that many streams of evangelical orthodoxy provide the resources

number of Caribbean theologians have shown keen interest in the kind of theologizing emanating from Latin America in particular only to discover that all is not necessarily well with Majority-World theology either.⁶ So Majority-World thinkers themselves have pointed out weaknesses in the Christological and the soteriological reflection that their colleagues in the Global South have produced.⁷ So whereas these thinkers share the disenchantment of those who are highly critical of the imported brand of soteriology which is deemed too other-worldly, they are equally unhappy with the type of theologizing on the part of some Caribbean theologians that defines emancipation mostly in political and socioeconomic categories. Despite such criticism, we register our agreement with those who feel that, whatever the challenges, Caribbean theology will have to chart its own unique course in dialogue with the past while learning from others in the present. As Burchell Taylor states: “it will be in the process of doing theology in the Caribbean for the Caribbean that theological maturity will be fully achieved.”⁸ The need of the hour is for this

to differ with those categories without adopting what seems dangerously close [postures] to the categories of process thought . . .”; John G. Stackhouse, “Evangelicals and the Bible Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” in *New Paradigms for Bible Study: The Bible in the Third Millennium*, edited by Fernando F. Segovia et al. (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 161.

⁶Faith Linton, *What the Preacher Forgot to Tell Me: Identity and Gospel in Jamaica* (Ontario: Bay Ridge, 2009); Garnett Roper, “Racism and Christianity in the Caribbean” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, edited by Daniel Patte, pp. 1044-45 (Cambridge: CUP, 2010); Oral Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context* (London: Equinox, 2010); Gosnell Yorke, “Bible Translation in Anglophone Africa and Her Diaspora: A Postcolonialist Agenda” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 2 (2004):153-166.

⁷ See, e.g., Dieumeme Noelliste, “The Church and Human Emancipation: A Critical Comparison of Emancipation Theology and the Latin American Theological Fraternity,” PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1987.

⁸B. Taylor, “Engendering Theological Relevance,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 20 (1999): 24-30.

enterprise to get underway in earnest. Of course, the “theological maturity” of which Taylor speaks should no doubt be grounded in the Messianic Liberator whose career we will sketch below, and under whose lordship the writers of the New Testament located themselves as slaves. It will also seek to eschew a false disjunctive theology that embraces a doctrine of emancipation which is so future oriented that the mandated social engagement of the NT (e.g., Gal 6:10; Matt 5: 13-16) is rendered meaningless. It will further distance itself from the type of theology that is so personal and individualistic that it misses by a mile the robust and corporate dimension of the brand of salvific experience encouraged by the NT. In light of above, this essay will give a brief overview of the biblical teaching on the Messiah (Liberator) before exploring briefly his work of holistic emancipation against the backdrop of theological development in the Caribbean region. Our focus will be on the Lucan and Pauline complementary theology which in our view is broadly representative of that of the NT as a whole.⁹

The major theme of the Jesus tradition portrays the Son of God as the Messianic Liberator. A perusal of any of the Gospels illustrates the point; for example, Mark, considered the first of the bio-narratives, declares, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10: 45 NIV; cf. Matt 20:28). While Mark lays emphasis on the basis of the Messiah’s liberative work with his mention of the theologically pregnant term “ransom,” the Fourth Gospel on the other hand (in one sense) draws attention to the finality and universality of the process with the words, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). In the said tradition is to be found as well the resurrection accounts (Mark 16:1-8; Matt 28:1-20; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10), which, in light of Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:1-3, are paradigmatic of the holistic emancipation previously mentioned.

⁹More narrowly we will survey the soteriology of Luke-Acts and Romans. For the rest of the NT corpora, see T. Schriener, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), and Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). See as well William Watty, “The Significance of Anonymity in the Fourth Gospel,” *Expository Times* 90 (1979), 209-212.

It is our conviction that this Jesus tradition influenced Paul and the other New Testament writers considerably, perhaps even more than the Hebrew Bible and the LXX combined. This is hinted at, for example, in Acts 20 where Luke quotes Paul as saying:¹⁰ “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive””(Acts 20:34–35). Based on the above citation and the fact that Luke who was Paul’s missionary companion wrote the Third Gospel, it is inconceivable that the apostle to the Gentiles could have been ignorant of the Jesus tradition which stands behind our canonical Gospels. Both Luke and Paul show keen interest in Gentile conversions and congregations, and both were companions in gospel ministry (2 Tim 4; Acts 9–28). If the Third Gospel is Lucan, then there is a sense in which the canonical letter to the Romans is the gospel according to Paul. The fact that Paul’s Gospel takes the form of a letter demonstrates the conviction of the writer that contextualization is an imperative of the Christian faith. In other words, Paul’s gospel takes the form of a letter, and his companion Luke writes a bio-narrative similar to Mark, Matthew, and John--all with their varying Christological emphases. For example:

Matthew	<i>Incarnate Royalty</i> (perfect King; cf. Rom1:1-4)
Mark	<i>Incarnate Ministry</i> (perfect Servant; cf. Rom 15:8)
Luke	<i>Ideal Humanity</i> (perfect Man; Rom 5:12–19)
John	<i>Incarnate Deity</i> (perfect <i>Imago Dei</i> ; Rom 10:13) ¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. also Luke’s (chapters 1–3 and passim) comprehensive incarnation record with Paul’s brevity in Gal 4:4–6.

¹¹ The ‘Word’ that became flesh (John 1:14) was a theological and redemptive necessity; the Son of God had to become human in order to die as the spotless

If we take Luke's gospel as our point of departure, we may provide a sketch of the Messianic tradition and its background in the Hebrew Bible that must have been in the historical and theological purview of the apostle to the Gentiles as well.

The Emancipator's Gospel according to Luke

The first perfect man had no human or natural parents (Gen.2:7; Luke 3:38); the second Man only one natural parent—Mary was her name (Luke 3:23). Only Matthew and Luke record for us the circumstances under which the Best of men came into the world through a woman. And only Luke informs us that that which was formed in Mary's womb was holy. Both Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of the perfect man, and both trace his line through David (Matt 1:1; Luke 3:31).

Jesus, the ideal human, is David's greater son. But David himself was conceived in sin (Ps 51:5). This means David was a sinner from conception; his greatest descendant, Jesus, however, was holy and perfect from day one. Luke also shows interest in his ideal human development when he writes: "and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). There was nothing lacking in our Lord's intellectual, physical, spiritual or social maturation. He was and is the ideal man. And it was as the ideal man that he began his ministry, a ministry which still remains a model for all Christians today. Let us examine this a little more deeply.

Luke portrays the ideal man as one who is interested in the plight of widows in particular (Luke 7:11–17, 18:1–5) and women in general (Luke

Lamb of God (John 1:29). And he had to retain his divinity (John 1:1c), in order to give global and eternal value to his sacrifice. If Jesus were a sinner, he could only have died for his own sins (Rom 6:23a); if he were only a perfect human, he could only have died for one other person—most likely for someone in the Caribbean (conventional substitution)! But being the unique (*monogenēs*) member of the God-head, the only one to have taken on permanent human status, his death has value for all humanity, and his resurrection by the Spirit (Rom 1:1-4), the Father (Rom 6:4), and the Son of Man (John 2:19) makes available a right relationship with God (Rom 4:25).

7:36–50, 8:1–3, 10:38–42, 13:10–17, 21:1–4). But the ideal man is no less interested in the plight of men. In fact, so great was his concern for the depraved men of his day that he ministered for the most part in the worst section of Palestine---Galilee. From that locale he chose eleven of his twelve disciples (Luke 5:1-11; John 1:43-46). Only one came from the residential section of the greater Jerusalem-Judea metropolitan area. Judas was his name.

In the Third Gospel also one finds quite a number of references to prayer. What is very revealing about these references is that a significant number of them is about the prayer life of the ideal man. I always thought that only imperfect people like you and me need to pray regularly and earnestly. But lo and behold! We find the perfect man praying earnestly in the New Testament (Heb. 5:6–7, Rom 8:34, John 17), especially in Luke’s Gospel (3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 11:1, 22:32–40, 22:44–45, 23:44).¹²

The perfect man not only prayed regularly; he always allowed the Spirit of God to control and guide him. Again, this is a bit surprising. I can understand ordinary mortals with all their weaknesses seeking the supernatural help of the divine Spirit. But the ideal man? Yes indeed! And this is precisely how he becomes our ideal role model. In other words, real men (from God’s point of view) are those who meet temptations head on with the Spirit’s help (Luke 4:1), endure them with the Spirit’s help, and at the end of the day, come out victorious (and continue to live) with the Spirit’s help (Luke 4:14). Real men, like the Messiah, are Spirit-anointed men. In fact, it is Luke 4:16–18 that brings out tellingly the connection of the divine unction and the quest to liberate in the life and ministry of Jesus; thus we read:

*The Lord’s Spirit is on me,
because He has appointed me Messiah
To proclaim the gospel to poor.
He has sent me on a mission to announce
liberty to the incarcerated, heal the blind, take care*

¹²Where Jesus must have said repeatedly: “*Father forgive them. . .*”

*of the oppressed, and to proclaim the time of
the Lord's welcome intervention.*¹³

In a word, the Messiah came to ameliorate human suffering and oppression as well as promote human flourishing and emancipation from sinful self, structures, and satanic bondage through the Spirit's power.

And of course, Luke makes it plain in his second volume that no man today has an excuse not to receive the liberating Spirit, since we are living in the last days (Acts 2:15–17). One of the ways in which the Lucan plot is advanced in Acts is by the provision of a variety of progress reports as the trajectory of his narrative moved inexorably from the religious capital (Jerusalem) to the imperial capital that was no less religious but much more pluralistic in orientation. A central part of the narrative juxtaposes the conversions of three prominent individuals who appear to be descendants of Ham, Shem and Japheth, the three men given the primary responsibility of re-populating the earth, according to the Genesis record. After citing a few instances of 'mass' conversions, Luke begins his triadic show-piece by telling the story of a Gentile treasurer, who may well have been regarded as among the first-fruits of the promise found in Psalm 68:31 (Acts 8). The third example of an individual coming under the influence of the Messiah (chapter 10) appears to be an adumbration of the final episode of Acts which is located in Rome.

The centre-piece within the triad indicates Luke's main interest in the former Semitic zealot who became the chief agent in carrying the evangel beyond the borders of Palestine into the very centre of the evil Empire. Saul of Tarsus, then, becomes for Luke the best example of a person who has fully committed herself or himself to the redemptive and imposing Messianic Presence whose power is mediated through the Pentecostal Spirit. This fact can be easily borne out by the amount of space (an estimated two-thirds of his material) dedicated to the apostle.

According to Acts 9:1-9, Saul requested and received visa from the authorities in Judea to go to Damascus to carry out his mission against the

¹³ Author's paraphrase.

early disciples of Jesus. While he was near his destination he was confronted with a light from heaven out of which came a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (v. 4). Saul immediately responded, “Who are you, Lord?” (v. 5a); then came the surprising rejoinder (*I am Jesus whom you persecute*; v. 5b). Barrett sums up the significance of verse 5 in this way:

The question corresponds to the *egō eimi* that follows. Saul is aware that he is confronted by a superhuman being; . . . The question leads to identification: the superhuman stranger is Jesus The discovery that the crucified Jesus was in fact alive agrees with Paul’s own account of the origin of his Christian life (Gal. 1:15, 16; Cor 9:1; 15: 8; cf. Phil. 3:7-11), and was the root of the new understanding of the OT and the reinterpretation of Judaism that were the foundation of his theology.¹⁴

So in the sequel of Luke which has come down to us as the book of Acts, the writer appears eager to show that the early followers of the Messiah not only sought to understand their world but engaged it in an effort to introduce other-worldly life transforming values. In other words, the theological relevance in terms of a radical social transformation that has become a part of God-talk in the Caribbean region was already a Lucan burden shared with Theophilus and company. The conviction here is that the Lucan plot is no mere narrative but a story which invites us to share its world, the commitment of its leading characters, and its enthusiasm for life.¹⁵ To go a step further, what we find in Luke-Acts are bio-narratives. In the first volume (and in the first chapter of Acts) the dominant figure is the Messianic himself, with others in the background. In the second, Peter takes centre stage in chapters 2-11, while Paul makes his salvific entrance in chapter 9, and maintains his prominence until the end. Of course for

¹⁴ C. K Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles I – XIV*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 450.

¹⁵ Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 445.

Luke, though the Messianic presence is in the background in Acts, He is still large and in charge of Empire.

In chapter 22, Paul witnesses before Jewish authorities; in chapter 26, civil authorities. After receiving permission to speak (in Greek? v.1), Paul proceeds to share his revolutionary experience; and for the first time we are explicitly told that the resurrected Messiah spoke in the “Hebrew language” (v.14; RSV). Again we have a contrastive *egō . . . egō* (I . . . I) as in 22:8. The fact that *egō* is placed on the lips of Jesus in all three Lucan passages may be significant and shows the writer’s interest in the Messianic ‘I’. This no doubt left an indelible impression on Saul, and his own employment of ‘I’ would never approach anything like that which he encountered on the Damascus road. From now on there is only one supreme ‘I’ clothed in humanity—the One who spoke from heaven.

We have seen that Paul’s previous self-concept portrayed the features of someone who was highly satisfied with his religious achievements. This self-appraisal was totally shattered by the Damascus event. . . . He realized that, because of human sin, man not only has no ground for any self-boasting before God (Rom. 3: 27; 4:2; [7: 1-25] 2 Cor. 12:5); he is totally and irrevocably dependent on grace. [Therefore] Paul’s new self-understanding also becomes clear in the radical way in which he understands himself as transformed by God.¹⁶

The Emancipator’s Gospel according to Paul

What doctor Luke has recorded in respect of rabbi Saul’s initial transformation and emancipation is corroborated by the apostle Paul himself in Galatians 1: 11-17 as is made clear below:

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, *I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ*. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how

¹⁶ A.B. du Toit, “Encountering Grace: Towards Understanding the Essence of Paul’s Damascus experience” (*Neotestamentica* 30 [1996], 84), 71 – 87.

intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.¹⁷ (NIV)

With the above in mind, it is no wonder that the apostle Paul refers to the Lord Jesus as the Messiah---the second man! (1Cor.15:47). Historically, of course, we know that Cain came after Adam. But Paul is not merely referring to history. By calling the Messiah the second man he is making a very important theological point: after Adam, the Messiah is the only second king who is a hundred-percent human! All others in between have fallen far short of the ideal. However, the Pauline good news is this: the more Messiah-like we become, the more human-like we will be, until we all attain perfection (Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18). And, of course, the more Christ-like we are the godlier we become, since the Messiah is God in all his ways.¹⁸ This is part and parcel of the Pauline proclamation. The Pauline gospel is more than Christlikeness of course; but it is nothing less.¹⁹ In what follows we will turn our attention to this Messianic salvation.

¹⁷ Italics mine.

¹⁸ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993),104–133. In the mean time we strive to be like this ideal man, who lived sinlessly, died for our sins, was vivified for our sanctification.

¹⁹ E.g., the cosmic character of the emancipation is seen especially in Rom 8:18-23 and from a comparison between the old and the new creation: in the former, the Creator-turned-Liberator started with the material universe before the creation of humanity (Gen 1); in the latter, humanity takes precedence. The comparison reveals the following chiasmic macro-structure: A-Material Universe (Gen 1:1-25), B-Image-bearers (Gen 1:26-31), B'- Image-bearers (2 Cor 5:17), A'- Material Universe (Rev 21-22; cf. 2 Pet 3).

Emancipation as Justification, Celebration, and Glorification

Paul's perspective of holistic salvation may be gleaned from the structure of his *magnum opus*.²⁰

A: 1–5 Gospel for Sinners: *Emancipation in terms of Justification*²¹
(International Dimension)

B: 6–8 Gospel for Saints: *Emancipation from Sin's Power and Presence*
(Doctrinal Dimension)²²

A': 9–11 Gospel for Sinners: *Emancipation from Sins' Penalty*
(National Dimension)

B': 12–16 Gospel for Saints: *Emancipation in terms of Sanctification*
(Practical Dimension)

Justification

In the first four chapters of the epistle, Paul demonstrates that human beings viewed both ethically and ethnically have no ground of boasting

²⁰ For a recent outline, see Frank Matera, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), vii–viii.

²¹ On this see D. Pearson, “Justification by Click,” in *Romans in Context: A Theological Appreciation of Paul's Magnum Opus* (Eugene, Oregon: RP, 2011), 55–57.

²² A. J. Hultgren (*Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 294–309) labels 8:1–11 “Emancipation from Sin and Life in the Spirit;” verses 12–13 should probably have been included here, especially v. 13. R. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 347, proposes that chapters 5–8 set “out the essence of what [Paul] proclaims in his Gentile mission” This can hardly be doubted, but we do not have any letter from him to a purely Jewish church to fully support this contention.

before God, because they are rebels. However, through God's gracious hand, these rebels may be justified.²³ The case for justification (i.e., declaring repentant and believing sinners right in God's sight) is advanced and strengthened by invoking two prominent Old Testament witnesses—Abraham (an 'Iraqi') and David (an 'Israeli')—in Chapter 4. Chapter 5, the end of the A-section, then goes on to itemize some of the advantages and benefits of justification. The justification motif is again treated in chapters 9-11(A'-section), with a special focus on unbelieving Israelites. But let us return to and examine the first A-section dealing with the matter of justification for the gentiles in Romans 4. Keener,²⁴ we believe, has shed some light on this section by providing the following contrastive piece, which we have adapted:

<u>Paganism (Rom 1:20-27)</u>	<u>Patriarch (Rom 4:17-21)</u>
Paganism's failure (1:20, 25)	Patriarch's faith (4:17)
Paganism's culpability (1:20, using <i>dynamis</i>)	Patriarch's confidence (4:21, using <i>dynatos</i>)
Paganism's disregard of glory (1:21)	Patriarch's regard (4:20)
Paganism's dishonoured bodies (1:24)	Patriarch's body (4:19)
Paganism's negative sexuality (1:26-27)	Patriarch's sexuality (4:19)

The schema is useful in drawing attention to the necessity for emancipation (Paganism) as well as the possibility of global salvation

²³Even those who believe that the God of Abraham and David is "jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully" (Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006], 31).

²⁴ Craig Keener, *Romans* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 67.

(Patriarch), since Abraham himself was once an idolater (Josh 24: 1-4;14-15).²⁵

The opening verse of chapter 4 inquires of the discovery of Abraham with reference to the issue of righteousness. The question is to be understood against the background of Jewish opinion which believed that the merits of this forefather commended him entirely before God. The apostle follows up the argument in verse 2 by reasoning something like this: “Let us for argument sake assume that Abraham was justified by works, wouldn’t he have had grounds on which to glory? Yes, but certainly not before God!” A keyword in this verse is the term “boast” (*kauchēma*).

It is not only important in the development of Paul’s argument, it also “exemplifies both literary and emotional ‘color’.”²⁶ Paul already uses a cognate term (*kauchēsis*) to demonstrate that the principle of faith precludes human boasting (Rom 3:27). Here he links the word to probably the greatest religious role model before the Christian era. “But,” a Jew might ask, “can you prove that Abraham was not indeed justified by works?” “Well, let us turn to the Scriptures,” says the apostle.²⁷ To

²⁵ “When Abraham was still a young child, he realized that idol worship was nothing but foolishness. To make his point, one day, when Abraham was asked to watch the store, he took a hammer and smashed all the idols - except for the largest. His father came home aghast. ‘What happened?!’ he shouted. ‘It was amazing, Dad,’ replied Abraham. ‘The idols all got into a fight and the biggest idol won!’ The idea, of course, was to show his father how ridiculous it is to ascribe power to such idols! There was no way for his father to respond; deep down he knew that Abraham had tuned into a deeper truth.” http://judaism.about.com/library/3_askrabbi_o/bl_simmons_abrahamidols.htm. Although this does not carry the same weight as the canonical text, it may help to explain why Terah et al. accompanied Abraham on his way to the Promised Land.

²⁶Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 87.

²⁷At this juncture (v. 3) the Old Testament scripture is personified. “Indeed, so habitual was the identification of the Divine Author with the words of Scripture that occasionally personality is attributed to the passage itself” (Bruce M. Metzger, “The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the New Testament and the Mishnah,”

support his claims, Paul invokes Genesis 15:6, which declares that it was Abraham's faith that brought him a right standing before God. It would seem that the apostle not only attempts to substantiate his point from Genesis 15:6 but also to correct a misunderstanding of the verse based in part on the following: "Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?" (1 Macc 2:52; NRSV).

Having turned to Old Testament revelation for support of his claims that faith, not works, is the basis on which a person is justified, the apostle Paul now draws on the experience of daily life (v. 4). The analogy states that which was common knowledge in the first century: remuneration is commensurate with output ("Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation"—NIV). There is nothing gratuitous here. Two word-pairs are set in stark contrast; each pair marking out a fundamental approach to God. Taking verses 3 and 4 together, the couplets are summed up as follows:²⁸ "works" and "obligation" on one hand versus "faith" and "gift" on the other. "The contrast is instructive. 'Works' and ['obligation'] belong together as correlatives; 'faith' and 'grace' similarly correspond, and, and it is to this pair that ['credited'] belongs."²⁹

In contrast, then, to the natural affairs of verse 4, verse 5 declares the heart of the gospel proclamation. In order to grasp fully the import of this declaration, four key terms need to be looked at. The first key word to be examined is the verb "believe." In its active form Paul used it twice before: in chapters 1:16 and 3:22. Like these occurrences, it is also employed in a soteriological sense and setting in chapter 4. Its meaning in

Journal of Biblical Literature 70 [1951], 306).

²⁸ Verse 3 reads in the NIV: "What does the Scripture say?" Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

²⁹C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 88.

4:3, 5 is wholehearted trust and confidence. It is the only kind of faith that brings justification. This happens when the believer (*pisteuonti*) comes face to face with the Justifier (*ton dikaiounta*, most likely a New Testament metonym for God).³⁰

This brings us to another key term of verse 5: righteousness. “Justifier” and “righteousness” are cognate terms and both relate to the concept of justification (“*righteoustification*”?). It is the verb form (“was justified,”) that occurs in verse 2 and elsewhere, which Bible students find problematic. The difficulty does not seem to be merely with the lexical idea which has to do with righteousness but with the theological import of the term. The question is: Should we view justification as forensic (i.e., imputed righteousness) or intrinsic (imparted righteousness)?

While exegetes like Sandy and Headlam³¹ have serious reservations about the concept of forensic righteousness in Romans, the idea seems to fit Paul’s intention better than any other. First, because the suffix of the verb (*dikaioō*) appears to carry the declarative/causative idea, and second, the Septuagint (LXX), which Paul had already quoted, seems to have influenced the Apostle along forensic lines. So to be justified is to be “pronounced and treated as righteous.”

The meaning of “counted” (KJV) or “credited” (NET) in verse 5 also bears out the forensic view of justification. Faith is credited or put to the “account” of the believing sinner. This brings us to the other key-term in the verse: “ungodly.” As an adjective it is found one other time in Romans where we are informed that Christ died for the “ungodly” (5:6). The term is a strong one denoting gross impiety; it is a deep-seated lack of reverence for God. Although God’s wrath is unleashed against every form of impiety (1:18), in the *Eschaton*, God is going to remove it altogether (11:26). It is by sheer grace that God justifies such a person,

³⁰ Others include “The Name . . . The Glory” (S. V. McCasland, “Some New Testament Metonyms for God” *JBL* 68 [June 1949] 99-113).

³¹ W. Sanday, and A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), 36.

based, of course, on the loving release of his Son (5:6). The context demands that even the patriarch Abraham falls under the category of the “ungodly;” after all, how else could he have been an example of justification, *sola fide*?

Celebration

A new witness to the phenomenon of justification is now called to the stand. The apostle will now show that the testimony of David is in harmony with that of the patriarch Abraham, thus proving his case from the Law and the Prophets (cf. 3:21). The phrase “Even as David” (KJV) shows the closest possible connection between verses 5 and 6, and is followed by the key referents discussed above, and the correspondence between the two verses seems to underscore Paul’s point of righteousness being credited to a person who believes in God. The stem for “trusts/faith” is used twice in verse 5 (*pistis, pisteuonti*) and the idea it conveys is further defined by the phrase “without works.” A quotation now follows in which we have an exact reproduction of the Psalm 32:1-2 (LXX). Psalm 32 is traditionally understood to be one of seven penitential poems. However, it should be observed that there are strong elements of thanksgiving and celebratory expression found in the song; for example:

*Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!* (Psa 32:1-2 NLT)³²

The stanza which pertains to our discussion describes the happy estate of the person forgiven. But what has forgiveness to do with justification, and how do these verses from Psalm 32 serve Paul’s purpose at this point? In connection with the quotation from Genesis 15:6, it has already been

³² Several Caribbean peoples are now learning to celebrate their salvation in their heart language; see for example, Jo-Ann Faith Richards, “Creole Songs and Scripture!” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. J. R. Krabill (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 326-329.

pointed out that the Apostle is in all likelihood employing a Rabbinic form of exegesis to substantiate his claim (see verse 3 above). The catchword of the two passages is “reckoned” (*logizetai*). On the one hand righteousness is credited (v. 3=Gen 15:6) and on the other sin is not taken into account (v. 8=Ps 31:2 LXX). Since Paul’s use of the two Old Testament passages is not just formal but substantial, maybe the Apostle is highlighting two dimensions of justification: (1) the receiving of righteousness (positive side) and (2) the removal of retribution (negative side).³³

Glorification

It is the B-section (6–8 Good news for Saints: *Emancipation from Sin’s Power and Presence*) that takes up the various strands of salvation and weaves them into the beautiful tapestry of glorification. It is this segment as well that emphasizes the already/not character of divine emancipation, which, if not understood, has the potential for so much confusion and misapplication in the lived-experience of people of faith everywhere. If we invoke the theological construct of the already-but-not-yet character of divine emancipation, the problem will not be solved completely but some light, we believe, would be shed on the tension we observe in the B-section (6-8) which declares on the one hand that the believer is free from sin (6:7—the ‘already’ dimension of emancipation), and on the other hand, s/he is not fully free (7:14?) but anticipates with certainty (8:21) a final act of emancipation which can be existentially and proleptically celebrated (7:25a; 8:31-39), even in the midst of agonizing struggle against the internal foe (8:12-14). The B’-section (12–16) hints at the same thought when it promises a bruising of Satan (16:20) that has effectively taken place (cf. Col 2:25; Gen 3:15) in anticipation of final vindication and glorification.

³³ Verse 8 seems to summarize the concept of this removal (i.e., forgiveness), while gathering up the parallel lines of the previous couplets. The plural terms for evil within the couplets may serve to emphasize both the gravity of sin and the graciousness of the pardon that removes it.

Realized Eschatology and Caribbean Reality?

The theological construct referred to above (the already-not-yet nature of Messianic emancipation) goes by the official nomenclature of Realized Eschatology, a term first employed by Englishman Charles Harold Dodd.³⁴ In his seminal work on the Synoptic Gospels, Dodd advanced the thesis that the Eschaton (relative to the Messiah) “has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into . . . realized experience. . . . It represents the ministry of Jesus . . . as the impact upon this world of the ‘powers of the world to come’ in a series of events, unprecedented and unrepeatable, now in actual progress.”³⁵ Although Dodd used this concept to deny, for example, a future millennial reign on the part of the Messiah, his essential point of the already/not yet Messianic hegemony can still stand up to scrutiny (cf. Luke 11:20; 17:20-21; 1 Cor 15:25; John 5:25). In fact, Dodd himself saw far more ‘already’ than ‘not yet’ in the NT documents, but later conceded that the latter category (the ‘not yet’) is just as much an integral part of NT eschatology as the former. This is seen, for example, in his comments on Romans 13:11-13, “The early Church lived in an atmosphere of crisis: a New Age was dawning; the Present Age was passing away; any day might turn out to be ‘The Day of The Lord.’”³⁶

³⁴The same gentleman who “inspired” the following limerick:

*I think it extremely odd
that a little professor named Dodd
should spell, if you please,
his name with three D's
when one is sufficient for God.*

³⁵*The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961), 50-51.

³⁶*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1932), 209. In *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936, 231), Dodd appears to grudgingly affirm the futuristic pole of the eschatological tension when he writes: “there remains a residue of eschatology which is not exhausted in the ‘realized eschatology’ . . . the element of sheer finality,” after earlier stating that “To conceive any further event on the plane of history would be like drawing a cheque on a closed account.” (206).

There may an application here to the nations of the Caribbean that have already experienced emancipation/independence from colonial powers.³⁷ Already they are free, but in the words of the late Nelson Mandela, “The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free.”³⁸

This tension may be further elucidated by a contextual study of the final verb in Rom 8:30 (“glorified”)—a proleptic aorist akin to the “prophetic perfect” in the OT.³⁹ Stanley Porter construes the “glorified” aorist in Rom 8:30b as timeless and translates the verse in question thus: “whom he sets apart, these indeed he calls; and whom he calls, these indeed he justifies; and whom he justifies, these indeed he glorifies.”⁴⁰ The timelessness of the aorist, then, would underscore the nature and salvific purpose of the One who knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10), without doing violence to the realized eschatological point we have stressed above.⁴¹ In fact, Keener picks up the thought of Isaiah 46:10 in his comment on the verse in question: “Paul presents all the elements in 8:30 as a *fait accompli*, since

³⁷ See especially, Kortright Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990).

³⁸ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston: Bay Back, 1995), 624.

³⁹Cf. Eph 2:6 (“seated in the heavenlies with Messiah . . .”) and Isa 9:6; 53:5; although passive participles are used in the latter, the thought is similar. On the prophetic perfect or “perfective of confidence,” see Bruce Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 490, and Buist Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 269-274; for the proleptic aorist, D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 330. For other perspectives, see C. G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 357-58.

⁴⁰*Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 237.

⁴¹One is not sure what to make of Tom Hollond’s comments on 8:30 (*Romans: The Divine Marriage* [Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2011], 284) to the effect that “The language Paul uses is taken directly from the OT. He is saying that the privileges of Israel are now the possession of the Church.” This begs the question: When was Israel justified or glorified?

from the standpoint of God's foreknowledge it is already done . . ."⁴² So from the perspective of the holistic Messianic provision, the people of God in the Majority-world (and wherever they are to be found) impoverish themselves if they fail to employ or appropriate the "everything we need for a godly life" (2 Pet 1:3), and the "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph 1:3), in spite of the fact that not all the blessings promised will be experienced in this life (Heb 11:13). And since the Messianic emancipation is multi-dimensional, the pursuit of a purely socioeconomic solution or a privatized personal salvation to our world's ills is surely misguided. What must be underscored is that the Messianic solution for a world gone awry definitely includes both spiritual redemption (the Lamb) and political action (the Lion) to complete the total emancipation of planet earth (cf. Isa 2, 11, 53; Rev 5). In the OT times, for instance, there were three categories of leadership (monarch [the prince], messenger [the prophet], mediator [the priest]) that not only provided proper governance for the people of God but also effected their emancipation in times of oppression. No one individual occupied all three offices. Melchizedek and David occupied two of these portfolios. Only the Lord's Messiah occupies all three, pointing to his comprehensive capability to meet all the needs of humanity—politically and otherwise. The NT gospel points to this all-embracing vision (cf. John 10:10; Luke 4).

Caribbean theologians, though quite attuned to the need for this fulsome emancipation, seldom mention this already/not perspective of divine deliverance that is perhaps best summarized in the words of Philippians 1:6 ("*So mi nuo dis fi shuor se a Gad imself staat op da gud wok ya iina unu, an im naa go tap nou. Im a-go gwaan du we im a du iina unu laif, til Jiizas Kraiz kom baka or?*").⁴³ Having said all this, we still have to reckon with the fact that "we know in part." The already/not perspective may be further illustrated from the OT in 1) the death of Adam and Eve in Gen 3.

⁴² Craig Keener, *Romans* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 110; he also refers to Isa 53:5.

⁴³ *Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testiment* (Kingston: Bible Society of the West Indies, 2012). I think the point is also made in Bob Marley's Redemption-Song lyrics: "*Emancipate Yourself From Mental Slavery!*"; the song in which in "four minutes Marley tells of a history that spans 400 years." (Kwame Dawes, *Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius* [London: Sanctuary Publishing], 2002), 308.

The moment they ate the forbidden fruit, they died spiritually, long before their physical demise; 2) when Sarah died, her widower bought a plot to bury her, though the land was theirs. 3) In the NT, the Messiah announced the presence of kingdom, yet taught his community to pray, “Your kingdom come!” 4) And when He experienced His unique death He cried, “finished,” because He (during the three hour of darkness?) had already borne our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Isa 53:5-6, 10), before uttering “into your hands I commit my spirit,” signalling His physical death. 5) Also, in the first century the two stages of marriage (betrothal before the wedding) correspond to the church being the Messianic ‘bride.’ 6) Today in the Caribbean the *decree nisi* preceding the *decree absolute* may serve the same illustrative purpose.⁴⁴ We all need to bear in mind, then, that the liberated-in-Messiah “live a life of . . . [victorious freedom], but it is qualified victory. We are not yet what we shall be.

We are not yet totally like the Messiah (1 John 3:2). We live in the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet.’ We are genuinely new persons but not totally new.”⁴⁵ From whatever vantage point we view God’s enterprise of emancipation, then, the prospects and present application are staggering in their reach and richness, and renders any effort to reduce this

⁴⁴ With this legal analogy, I rest my case.

⁴⁵ A. A. Hoekema, “A Reformed View,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, edited by Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 190. See also the Appendix below. The analogy between the already-not-yet perspective and Caribbean experience of postcolonialism may be extended to include what needs to take place in the interim; in both cases serious work must be carried out to ensure that lack of productivity (e.g., Gal 5:22-23; 2 Pet 1:3-10) does not jeopardize or call into question the initial stage of spiritual emancipation/or political independence. Perseverance to the end will therefore serve as evidence of the genuineness of commitment. On this, see especially C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case for Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

emancipation to a strictly personal matter or to an exclusively socio-political frame of reference meaningless.

Summary and Conclusion

Using the twin testimony of the Jew-Gentile fraternity (that of Paul and Luke) which functioned powerfully under Empire, we have sought to forge a perspective of emancipation that is suited particularly for peoples operating in a postcolonial milieu. For an emancipatory theology in the Majority-world to approach anything like maximum beneficence, its practitioners can ill afford to ignore the total witness of the New Testament, particularly the Pauline and Lucan corpora. Here the fundamental frame of reference must always remain the Messianic Liberator, the One who exemplified the dictum, “All that is not eternal is eternally out of date.”⁴⁶ The NT witnesses in one way or the other all point to a way of doing theology that manifests itself “only in concrete action.”⁴⁷ This alone is authentic soteriology—a liberating Messianic theology which interprets faith,⁴⁸ like James, as philanthropic engagement with especially the poor “to whom the good news is addressed as a way of understanding the hoped-for horizon of God’s new creation,”⁴⁹ and as “The diligent

⁴⁶ Skip Heitzig, *When God Prays: Discovering the Heart of Jesus in His Prayer* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2003), 187.

⁴⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Emancipation* (New York: Orbis, 1973), 199.

⁴⁸ This faith (142 times in the NT), rightly understood, is the vital link between God (548x) and the Messiah (379x) on the one hand, and humanity (126x) on the other (Gosnell L. O. Yorke, *The Church as the Body of Christ in the Pauline Corpus* [Washington: University Press of America, 1991], 24). Without this kind of faith, it is impossible to please the One who makes the call to be engaged in authentic theology and praxis in and on behalf of the Messianic community (cf. Heb. 11:6).

⁴⁹ Cited in N. Samuel Murrell (*James Barr’s Critique of Biblical Theology: A Critical Analysis* [Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988], 343) as part of his critique of what he perceives to be Barr’s truncated hermeneutical agenda and theology.

pursuit of piety [which] is the surest method of attaining sure learning.”⁵⁰ Only this way of theologizing transforms a person into a real *Mensch*—where, at the end of the day, s/he can say, “*bin ich mir ein wertes Ich*”⁵¹—I am myself a worthwhile ‘I’. Only self-consciously worthwhile persons, filled with the Messianic Spirit, can liberate a society from sinful and oppressive structures; only these persons remind themselves from time to time that mediocrity is never sign of good citizenship or spirituality.

The second column is where the struggle for excellence is to be located; whereas the other two sections represent crisis (i.e., a momentary experience) events, the antithetical experience of “transition” and “transformation” demands constant vigilance along with “all kinds of prayers and requests” (Eph 6:18a), including the following Hebraic exemplar:

*From the conscience that shrinks from new truth,
From the laziness that is content with half-truth,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
Oh, God of truth, deliver us.*⁵²

⁵⁰Johann A. Bengel, cited in Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 109; cf. Samuel Vassel “Socio-political Concern of the Gospel of Luke,” MA thesis, Wheaton Graduate School, 1982.

⁵¹Jürgen Moltmann, *Weiter Raum: Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 363.

⁵² Cited in David Lim, “Beyond Success,” in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. W. A. Dyrness (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 179.