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CAUGHT BETWEEN
A ROCK AND A
HARD PLACE: The
Plight of Low
Income Students in
Socio-Economically
Deprived Contexts

By

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It is common knowledge that higher education is going through a process of profound metamorphosis. In very recent times this heretofore tranquil field of human endeavour seems to have been hit by a land mine, which profoundly altered its overall configuration and reshaped its various contours. Thanks to the mighty shakeup, the epistemic enterprise has witnessed the broadening of its scope, the rethinking of its purpose, the diversification of its stakeholders, the modification of its structure, the shifting of its traditional support base, etc.

Although far-reaching in its implications, few players in the higher education industry seemed prepared for the dropping of the earth-shattering bombshell. As Francis Steiner has

shown, in several countries--(developed and developing)- -the formulation of a vision for the tertiary education sector that attempts to take into full account the new realities is a very recent development. In the examples supplied by Steiner the earliest study goes back to 1997.¹ Neither were things different at the institutional level. Analysts in the field have pointed out that often institutional response has been more like a reaction prompted by external exigencies than intentional reform resulting from self-critical reflection and analysis.²

Closely linked to the question of readiness is the issue of attitude. Responses to the new development vary, with receptivity ranging from

enthusiastic embrace to reluctant acceptance. While some view the current state of affairs as a welcomed corrective to a system considered lethargic, non-responsive and complacent, others seemed more concerned about the non-salutary, impact it is exerting on the educational enterprise than the possibilities that it holds. Amongst other things they worry about what they regard as anarchic expansion, the erosion of institutional autonomy occasioned by increasing deference to business interests and the dictates of the state, the uncertain future of a venture whose fortune is deemed too closely tied to the interplay of market forces.³

That such a dramatic change in a sphere so essential to human advancement, national development and the progress of civilization evokes so divergent a response should come as no surprise. At stake are deeply held values and cherished commitments, which are considered worthy of vigorous debate and stout defense. But while the intellectual war is being waged on the merit of the new phenomenon, it should be borne in mind that there may be valuable insights to be gained both from the adulations of the cheerleaders and the laments of the critics. It is very possible that when the duel is over the victor will stand on neither extremity of the spectrum but somewhere between its opposite poles, reading a declaration that is likely to blend elements of the outgoing paradigm with those of the encroaching one.

But while the pendulum swings erratically from left to right seeking rest at that happy median point, there is a sub-sector in the higher education enterprise, which will continue to experience discomfort. I refer to that group of students who belong to the lower socio-economic stratum of the societies where economic deprivation IS the dominant feature of the landscape. For them the occurrence of the grand metamorphosis is like the proverbial two-edged sword whose blade cuts on either side. Its non-occurrence would be problematic~ but its occurrence is also fraught with challenges. A summary examination of select features of the educational

paradigm which is rapidly gaining ground will illustrate the unhappy situation faced by the students belonging to the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

Bias Toward Lower Educational Levels

Of the four basic levels of the educational experience, policy-makers in the majority world have, for some time, turned the spotlight on primary education. Accepting the premise that “universal literacy is the heart of development”,⁴ countries in the developing world challenged themselves to expand access at that level with the aim that universal enrollment and completion would result. Universality is achieved when more than 50% of the age cohort is enrolled in, *and* successfully complete primary education”.⁵ Lately, taking seriously the scientific evidence which shows the critical importance of the early years life for the intellectual development of the human person, educators in some developing countries have been calling for the extension of the focus beyond primary to early childhood education.

No one would contest that the vision of universal provision of education at the lower level is a laudable one. Socially, the thrust is more progressive than an elitist approach that caters only to the few chosen ones. Problems arise, however, when one moves from desirability to affordability. For countries already lagging behind in the provision of education and which continue to experience rapid population growth, opening up the lower sectors along the lines suggested was no small task. The fulfillment of the ambitions mandate necessitated far greater levels of resources than most developing countries were able to commit. The 2004 World Development Report candidly acknowledges this reality when it stated that: “Even with adequate fiscal effort . . . many countries do not generate enough resources to achieve universal completion”⁶. Indeed far from increasing, resource allocations for education remain stagnant for the past 15 years — a mere 4% of GDP for the poor countries.⁷ Although such limitations have not resulted in total lack of progress toward the set goal, they did cause serious setbacks to its fulfillment. The report quoted goes on to assert that notwithstanding commendable strides, if countries continue only at their present pace of progress “universal primary completion would come only after 2030 in South Asia, and not in the foreseeable future in sub-Saharan Africa”.⁸

In the face of a woefully inadequate funding for education in general efforts to expand access at the primary level could not but compound the inability of the public sector to satisfy the fiscal demands of quality higher education. In some countries budgetary allocations for the tertiary sector remained unchanged or even declined.⁹ The fiscal dearth, in turn, created enormous material constraints, which force many an institution to resort to coping mechanisms often inimical to the interests of poor students. Of the

several tough measures which have been adopted (programme cutbacks, limits on enrollment to name but a few), cost-sharing has been the most keenly felt by the students of low socio-economic status.¹⁰

Cost-sharing requires students to pay a percentage of the cost of their education. In many developing countries, this feature was a novelty. Its introduction created no small stir among students in general and the poor in particular. Whether on ideological grounds or on the basis of national development, many third world countries, including such economically-challenged nations as Haiti and Bangladesh, provided higher education free of cost.¹¹ The practice became so ingrained that over time it gave rise to a culture of privilege and a mentality of entitlement which became difficult to change. It is not surprising therefore that resistance to the measure would be mounted on a purely historical ground. But for the student belonging to a family who lives below the poverty line, the resistance could not be merely ideological or historical. Objection to the measure was an effort to salvage what fee impositions however modest, threatened to banish into the realm of the unreachable. As the 2003 Human Development Report has shown, when fees become part of an educational system the marginalized face formidable access difficulty.¹²

Even when access is achieved, continuation is often a struggle for many students. This can be seen from the ongoing problem of outstanding fees owed by students and the high attrition that occurs when economic conditions worsen. There is here a dilemma that stares us in the face. While the expansion of access at the lower educational levels tends to benefit the "have nots",¹³ it contributes to the problem they later encounter at the tertiary level. Thanks to the progressive policy, an enlarged cohort of tertiary candidates is produced. But when they seek to advance to tertiary level of education, they find a sector unable to satisfy their aspirations due to the weakening it has suffered - a weakening in which the generous policy itself has a share. So then, to students who are kept from pursuing their higher education dreams, the benefits made possible by the expansion of access at the primary level may be seen as a "cash advance" given *against* their higher education experience. They would have suffered if it had not been introduced. But they suffer too, (though perhaps to a lesser extent) because it was introduced.

If we are asked by someone, annoyed by our apparent lack of gratitude for small blessings to consider the alternative of no education at all, we answer the rebuke at two levels. Firstly, on a personal level we invite the indignant party to consider the plight of a hungry person who is served the appetizer but denied the main course. The current high demand for tertiary education would seem to support this point. Secondly, if the push for universal primary coverage was a strategic step taken to foster economic development, the policy would seem to be outdated. In an increasingly

knowledge driven economy, progress toward the fulfillment of that objective requires greater intellectual sophistication and professional competence than can be provided at educational level. Indeed, recently the sheer force of this reality has led policymakers in several developing countries to call for increased access to tertiary education!"¹⁴

The point of this analysis is not to criticize the effort to expand enrollment at the lower levels, but to argue that if this is done to the neglect of the tertiary level, it is a lopsided approach which is fraught with difficulty. The way forward lies neither in educational elitism nor educational populism. Francis Steier seems to hit the nail on the head when he argues that what is needed is a "comprehensive approach to resource allocation" which ensures a "balanced distribution of resources and a sequencing of investment across the sub-sectors of the educational system" based on a 'country's level of educational development pattern of economic growth and fiscal situation".¹⁵

The Privatization of higher Education

As indicated above, although the goal of universal coverage is far from being reached, the project has not been a failure. While coverage remains incomplete, access has been expanded considerably. For example, in the thirty year period which began in 1965 the primary gross enrollment in the low income countries has doubled with literacy moving from less than 50 percent in 1965 to 20 percent in 1995. Simultaneously, this expansion was translated into the expansion of the secondary sub-sector. In countries such as Brazil, Nigeria and Pakistan gross secondary enrollment at least doubled during the same period.¹⁶

The strains under which the tertiary subsector reels and which, in many ways, have contributed to its weakened condition, have not fortunately prevented its continuing growth. The growing recognition of the importance of advanced knowledge and the need for ever sharper skills for both national development and personal advancement has aroused such an interest in, and a demand for, higher learning that the field of higher education has become, "the new frontier of educational development" ¹⁷ Despite its birth pangs and travails, the sector has extended itself beyond capacity in its attempt to respond to the growing demand.

According to the UNESCO Task Force on Higher Education and Society, tertiary education took a giant leap forward during the fifteen year period that extends from 1980 to 1995; During that short time-span tertiary enrollment grew by 51 per cent, ~ovingfr0m 28 million to 47 million.¹⁸ To accommodate this sudden and phenomenal influx of students, countries in the developing world moved quickly to establish huge tertiary education systems for which there was often no commensurate infrastructural and monetary support. This has caused great

discomfort for school administrators who rightfully complained of having to do more with less.”¹⁹

But while the public segment of the tertiary education subsector was groaning under this increasingly unbearable weight, the private segment whose role has heretofore been, for the most part, stepped into the fray with renewed vigour and energy to help meet the challenge. It increased its involvement considerably and, as a result, in a relatively short time-span, institutions of higher learning operated by private providers began to spring up throughout the world- ~particularly in the developing countries. They number several thousands and represent various types of institutions. ”²⁰ With varying degree of numerical strength, they penetrated every region of the world, including the Arab world and mainland China.²¹ Enjoying in some cases the support of government and the recognition (though sometime reluctant) of their public counterparts, the private institutions have contributed significantly both to the diversification and renewal of the subsector by adopting alternative approaches to programme delivery, flexible schedules, and innovative partnerships.²²

Compared to the public institutions which are normally large and super-size, the private institutions tend to be small and medium-Sized establishments with enrollment ranging from under one hundred to several thousands. However, despite their size, the input of these newly emerging institutions has not been meagre. They claim a sizeable share of the student population of the developing world.²³ In Latin America and the Caribbean for instance, the percentage of students attending private institutions has reached over 40 per cent, superseded only by the South East Asian region where the percentage exceeds 50 percent. In individual countries such as Brazil, Indonesia, India, the Philippines and South Korea, private institutions claim the lion’s share of the student population with enrollment ranging from a low of 50 per cent to a high of 80 per cent! ”²⁴ Small wonder, the UNESCO Report characterizes the growth of the private institutions as “the most striking manifestation”²⁵ of the expansion being experienced by the tertiary subsector. But when considered from the perspective of the poor what may be said of this increased role of the private sector in the provision of higher education? Here one must begin by acknowledging the role of the private institution in the transformation of higher education, particularly in the developing world, from an elitist undertaking reserved to a privileged few to a more open enterprise accessible to a wider cross-section of the populace. Access has been particularly enhanced in the instances where the new institutions are established in areas removed from the traditional centers of higher learning and/or in places with a high concentration of the poor and the marginalized. Moreover, some of these institutions have been able to bring to the educational enterprise an element of creativity and flexibility which has tended to be more considerate of the condition of the poor.²⁶

But these considerations notwithstanding, privatization, in and of itself, does not seem to alter substantially the plight of many a current tertiary student or aspiring tertiary student hailing from the “have not” stratum of society. The reason is not difficult to detect. With notable exceptions, private institutions tend to be more dependent on fees for their viability than the public ones. Because of this, their fees are normally higher than those charged by institutions, which receive subventions from the public purse. Unless students from poor households find a way to afford private tuition, the availability of private institutions, however enticing cannot be translated into access. Many an aspiring student who is among the 2 billion souls of our socioeconomically lopsided world forced to live on \$2 per day will smell the sweet savor of a private institution, salivate as a result, but yet unable to darken its door.

This scenario is not ill-founded speculation. A demographic analysis of the tertiary education population in the developing world has revealed “major imbalances between urban and rural areas, rich and poor households, men and women, and among ethnic groups”.²⁷ This is telling. Despite the phenomenal growth of the tertiary subsector, and socioeconomically the expansion at the lower levels should send a substantially higher number of students from the lower socio-economic stratum to the tertiary level, high income groups continue to be “heavily over-represented in tertiary enrolments”.²⁸ While the inability to pay is by no means the only reason for this, it is a major factor for the persistence of this situation of inequality.

Beside the undesirable reality of uneven representation linked in part to the inability to pay, there is an anomalous situation which confronts many students from the lower classes who do manage to enter the tertiary system through the private door. The anomaly is this: though socioeconomically deprived, these students, normally, end up paying more for their education than students from well to do households who access the system through public institutions. The point is not academic. In several countries students from the lower rungs of the economic ladder are in the private institutions while those from the upper echelons are over-represented in the public institutions where fees are lower or in some cases non-existent. The anomaly would be tolerable if it were the result of a choice. But it is a problem when it is thrust upon students by the forces of unfavorable circumstances. Such is the case when all public institutions are clustered in one area (usually the capital city) or when the student’s work schedule conflicts with that of the public institution, or when the institution does not offer the course of study desired by the student.²⁸

Increasingly, the harsh economic realities are pushing students to work while studying. Schools have responded to this trend by adjusting their schedules, typically offering courses in the evenings or weekends. While

the combination of work and study somewhat helps alleviate the economic problem, it puts serious pressure on the working student's ability to perform to his or her best. Even the most gifted find it difficult to respond to the competing claims placed on their time by work, family and study.

Clearly, if privatization is to bring optimal benefits to students from the lower classes, measures designed to make it work for them must be adopted. One such measure would be for government to extend to the private institution the same concessions given to the public ones: tax exemptions, waiver of custom duties, land grants or leases for educational purposes, et cetera. These concessions reduce the cost of operation and consequently impact favourably on fees. Additionally, government could extend to needy students attending the private institutions the same financial assistance accorded those in public establishments. Scholarships, grants and soft loans should be available to needy students regardless where they are in the tertiary system. This makes perfect social and economic sense. It reduces inequity in the tertiary system; it also allows the expansion of the system at minimal cost to the public purse and relieves the pressure on the public institutions.

The Commercialization of Tertiary Education

In the previous section, I spoke of the private tertiary institutions in a manner that could convey the impression that these institutions constitute a homogeneous group. The truth is they are not. In reality, the private education sector is quite heterogeneous, embracing institutions different in nature, scope, focus and level of offering. Perhaps for the purpose of this paper the most significant distinction pertains to the motive that drives participation in the sector. Within the private group there are institutions which dispense education on a purely philanthropic and non-profit basis, and those which are avowedly profit-seeking in intent.²⁹ In the expansion and the buoyancy the sector has experienced in recent times, the latter category features very prominently. Indeed, their impact has been so keenly felt that analysts have not been hesitant to see 'n their emergence the advent of a new paradigm in the provision of higher education. Labeled the "commercial" model,³⁰ the new approach is credited for dislodging the "social transformation model" which was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s and which was known for its populist orientation.

There is here a significant shift in understanding that must not be missed. Whereas in the past, tertiary education was seen, in the main, as a public service provided by the state for the satisfaction of a multiplicity of needs, the new perspectives essentially, views it as a commercial product or commodity to be purchased primarily for the economic value it represents to the purchaser--be it the student, the business sector or the state. Thus understood, education becomes closely tied to the market. It becomes

market sensitive, market responsive and market driven. It takes on only what the market will bear and goes only where the market leads.

Although not a total novelty, the approach took on a universal dimension and rose to prominence in the aftermath of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). Introduced in 1994 and signed by several countries, the OATS had the boldness to include education among the services to be liberalized. It obligates its signatories not only to deregulate the sector but also to open it up to foreign providers, and remove high subsidization of local institutions so that the playing field may be leveled. According to Harry Patrinos of the World Bank, the advent of the OATS has transformed the field of education into a gigantic global market estimated at over two trillion dollars and employing 2-5 percent of the world's labour force.³¹ A sizeable portion of that mega market is represented by developing countries.³²

An examination of the impact of the commodification or commercialization of higher education on tertiary education in general and the poor in particular brings to light both encouragements and concerns. In the first instance the opening up of the sector would seem to create the possibility of increased interchange among nations--an interaction with the potential of generating economic dividends and cultural enrichment for all involved. However, given the current configuration of our global village, the mutuality that is latent in the commercial model is yet to become manifest. Ten years into the experiment the educational currents are flowing one direction: southward. The beneficiaries of the lucrative market and those poised to enjoy cultural dominance as a result of their advantageous positions are the developed countries. At the moment, as in many other commercial ventures, the United States leads the way in the provision of cross border educational services, with France running a close second.³³

Secondly, in the eyes of the political directorate the commercialization of tertiary education has provided a way out of the acute funding problem faced by many developing countries. To governments unable to satisfy the growing demand for higher education (though persuaded of its critical importance for national development) the idea of the private injection of capital into the sector could not be resisted. This enticement plus the pressure to comply with the prescriptions of the new global economy explains the easy acceptance received by the GAT.

But wisdom and care must be exercised here lest the solution of today contribute to the problem of tomorrow. It is well known that commercial ventures are driven by the bottom line. What is likely to happen if the profit motive becomes the dominant concern in the provision of higher education? Is it far-fetched to surmise that in such a scenario, areas of knowledge deemed unprofitable by the providers, but considered vital to

national development will be neglected? What if in response to the market the sector were to concentrate on the impartation of skills and technical know-how and shy away from painstaking and time consuming training in research and the hard core disciplines? Isn't it justifiable to fear that this would widen the knowledge gap that already exists between the rich and poor countries to the further detriment of the latter? Indeed, the UNESCO Task Force is categorical that countries which miss out in the knowledge game may not be in the economic development race at all:

The winner-take-all character of investment of knowledge demands a high level of existing knowledge and skills even to enter the fray. Few developing countries possess this knowledge. In this way, the knowledge gap will effectively preclude many upper-middle-income developing countries from participating in, and enjoying the benefits of, a growing and highly profitable set of economic activities. This issue is less relevant to low and lower-middle-income countries, whose focus will be on developing the capacity to access and assimilate new knowledge."³⁴

Thirdly, focusing directly on the impact of commercialization .on the student from the lower stratum of society two observations seem appropriate. The first is that—increasingly--commercially oriented institutions seek to address the affordability question raised above by offering loan financing to students. This makes it possible for those who cannot come up with their tuition upfront to study. While this may be attractive to some, its dark side must not be overlooked. Unless loans are very soft, ongoing financing is a very expensive way to cover the cost of education. Indeed, even when concessionary rates are secured, debt repayment becomes an issue. In contexts of high unemployment, where academic credentials do not easily lead to lucrative jobs, such commitment can be a real problem. Jamaica, for instance, has instituted a loan scheme in its effort to facilitate access to tertiary education. But securing loan repayment has been a real challenge. In an effort to alleviate the burden, some suggest that the mortgage approach to debt repayment be replaced by the less stringent "income contingent loan system"³⁵ approach which ties repayment to actual employment. This is certainly student friendly. But this is viable only in contexts where there is a reasonable chance of securing meaningful employment within a reasonable time frame following graduation. of too many graduates remain unemployed for too long, the scheme will collapse.³⁶

The second area needing exploration is quality. It is conceded that commercialization has made higher education more available and more accessible to the poor. For instance, thanks to the GATS it is possible for the student living in remote areas of many a developing country to earn credentials from institutions in the developed world. In the past, such an opportunity would be open to the precious few who were privileged to travel and able to pay the high cost of study abroad. But this very accommodating feature can be a problem for tertiary education in the majority world. As a rule, the market goes to the customer with what he/she desires and can afford. Often the quality of what is offered depends on the status of the demand. Applied to education, where the market is the driving force, it is not far-fetched to conceive the coming into being of “graded” institutions well-equipped and well-staffed high grade establishments designed for the well to do, and lower grade or “garage” establishments designed for the poor. The institutions in the latter category could not but offer a sub-standard educational product whose cash value to those unwise enough to acquire it is nil. “To the extent that competition is driven by cost alone, it is likely to abet the provision of low-quality education”.³⁶ The field of higher education is changing at a rapid pace. The meaning and significance of the shake-up which has overtaken the sector is yet to be fully sorted out. Vital questions are yet to be answered. What role should government play in the new dispensation? How should the various types of institutions that constitute the tertiary system be treated? What quality assurance control needs to be put in place to avoid the deterioration of the system? While attempts are being made to address these and many other issues which are rocking the system, the position of students belonging to the lower rung of the socio-economic continues to be precarious and unenviable. For many the benefits reaped at the lower educational levels due to the expansion of access seems to be canceled out by the inability to graduate to the tertiary level. Privatization provides an open door into the system for some but at a much greater cost to them than to their better off colleagues. How can this inequity be rectified? If commercialization counters by offering a product that suits the small purse of the poor it is likely to be of so poor (no pun intended) quality that its

value is questionable. Surely the poor is caught between a rock and a hard place.

END NOTES

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5. See Errol Miller, "Access to Tertiary Education in the 1990s." In *Higher Education in the Caribbean*, Glenford D Howe, ed., (Kingston, UWI Press 2000), p 125.
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7. Nico Hirtt, "Will Education Go To Market?" *The UNESCO Courier* (Feb 2000), p. 14.
8. World Development Report 2004, p 112.

9. Schugurensky, p 293.
10. Steier, p 162.
11. Ibid. p 161.
12. UNDP Human Development Report 2003 (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p 114.
13. Ibid. p115.
14. In the Caribbean, for instance, CARICOM governments have decided that 15% of school graduates should be enrolled in tertiary education by 2007. This represents a doubling of the percentage that existed in 1997 when the decision was taken.
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17. UNDP Task Force on Higher Education and Society. *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (Oxford New York; Oxford University Press, 2001). P. 29.
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21. Task Force, p 30; Steier, p 160.
22. Steier, p 161; Carpenter p. 7.
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THE JAMAICA
CHURCH AND THE
THIRD GOSPEL

By

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The Gospel of Luke is a favourite for liberation minded interpreters because of the Evangelist's focus on the blessings of God on the outcast. A favourite statement often highlighted from the Gospel is drawn from Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-56. Two verses of significance to our discussion are recorded below:

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty (vv. 52-53)

Along with Mary's statement is Jesus' overview of his mission, seen in the context of his preaching in his home town of Nazareth, towards the very beginning of his public ministry. Having been handed the scroll of Isaiah, he quotes from the Prophet, and then indicates the significance and nature of his ministry (Luke 4:16-21) as possessing a focus on the outcast as a fulfilment of God's messianic plan. The passage reads:

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

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom 5*

for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (vv 16-21)

When the rest of Luke's Gospel is read in light of these two passages, its content does seem to betray Luke's interest in portraying Jesus as the deliverer of people on the fringes. Indeed, Luke, more than any other of the Evangelists, has a great emphasis on Jesus as the deliverer of women, the poor, the indigent and the foreigner. The Evangelist is fond of showing Jesus' concern for those whom would have been considered to be undeserving of God's love and attention, in a culture obsessed with health and prosperity as indicators of God's rewards for his people's righteousness. And often, the concern is revealed by standing side by side in comparison, those deemed to be righteous and others who are outcasts; there are at least twelve such throughout the book. These comparative sketches often occur in confrontational encounters between Jesus and the righteous. And in every case, those deemed to be more righteous and deserving of God's love by the culture, are shown to lack the basics for truly receiving from the blessings of God. The confrontations finally end with the religious leaders turning Jesus over to the Roman authorities to be crucified on a charge of blasphemy (22:66-70).¹

¹ This statement might be mistakenly understood to suggest that those considered "righteous" in the time of Jesus are always portrayed negatively in Luke. There are three occasions when the religiously righteous come in for commendation (implicitly or explicitly by the evangelist). The book begins with the classification of Zacharias as "righteous before God, blameless according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord (1:6), though in the passage he is chided for not believing the Angel of God about the fact that his wife would

It is the purpose of this paper to examine one passage (5:17-26) where the “reversal” of Mary’s Magnificat and Jesus’ focus on the outcast is clearly demonstrated. Our desire is to show that in reading the text (and others like it) as traditional Christian scholarship does, we downplay the importance of Jesus’ ministry to the outcast, often in light of other foci considered more important, but which might be peripheral to the passages intent. The paper also suggests that the continued haranguing of the Jamaican church’s lack of relevance to the community is born out of this mistaken way of reading the Gospel by the church, which stresses a need for right doctrine (orthodoxy) and downplays the importance of right action in society (orthopraxy). The work will not attempt to pit one against the other, but will insist that this is exactly what the church in large measure does in our context, nullifying or minimizing its impact on society.

Translation (Luke 5:17-26)

And so it was that on one of the days he was teaching and sitting there were Pharisees and teachers of the Law, having come from out of all the towns of Galilee, and Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was on him for healing. And behold, men bearing upon a bed a man who was a cripple were seeking to carry him in and to lay him in front of Jesus. And not finding a way that they might carry him through the crowd they went upon the roof and let him down with the bed through the tiles, into the midst of the crowd and in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith Jesus said to

conceive. At the end of the Gospel, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council, is described as “good and righteous” and did not agree with the “plan and action” of the religious to have Jesus crucified. In between these is Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, who receives back his daughter from the dead because he chose to believe Jesus rather than obey the strictures of the Law of Moses, which forbade them being in the presence of the dead until the time of purification (8:49-56).

him, “Man, your sins have been forgiven.” And the Scribes and the Pharisees began to reason saying, “Who is this that is speaking blasphemies? Who is able to forgive sins except God only?” But Jesus, having known their reasoning, answered, saying to them. “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier to say – ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Get up and walk?’ But in order that you might know that the son of man has authority on the earth to forgive sins,” he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, get up and take your bed and walk to your house.” And instantly, having stood up in front of them and having taken up the bed he was lying upon, he went away to his house glorifying God. And ecstasy took hold of them all and they glorified God, and they were filled with fear saying, “We have seen a paradoxical thing today.”

Exposition

The spreading fame of Jesus is the backdrop to our passage, along with a growing measure of opposition to Jesus. In the previous chapter he is angrily rejected in the synagogue in his hometown, despite the fact that elsewhere his popularity was growing. But, as his popularity spread, so did the idea that Jesus performed miracles without consideration for the Laws of Moses. Luke 4:31-40 shows Jesus involved in a number of healing encounters on the Sabbath, first of a man with an unclean spirit, then Peter’s mother in law, and then many. Luke 6:6-11, shows the fury of the religious leaders when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Additionally, in 5:12-16, Jesus heals a leper by touching him and making himself ceremonially unclean. The Leper then fails to fulfil the obligations of Moses by presenting his offering to the Priest as prescribed by Leviticus 14. At this early stage of his ministry, Jesus’ reputation is developing as a healer, but

one who has little concern for the Law, and the religious leaders are concerned. This may explain a peculiar phrase in the first line of our passage: it was just another day, yet coming to hear Jesus were “Pharisees and teachers of the Law from out of all the towns of Galilee, and Judea and Jerusalem (17).”

The make-up of this “party” demonstrates that this was not a regular meeting in which Jesus taught. Gooding² indicates that the term Doctors (teachers) of the Law *nomodidaskalo*”, used only thrice in the New testament, is a specialist term which shows that Luke here wants his readers to see that Judaism’s top experts of the Old Testament were present. Additionally, they had come with Pharisees from all over, including as far away as from Jerusalem, the religious headquarters so to speak. It seems obvious that they had come to test the veracity of any idea or action of Jesus, in terms of how it stood up against the Law of Moses. This apparently was an expedition for a first hand encounter with the unorthodox teachings of Jesus, a growing concern for men committed to guarding the truth. That they were sitting as Jesus taught has been variously understood, on the one hand that they had taken the posture of those being taught at the feet of a Rabbi, or on the other that they were sitting in judgement, more akin to people listening to test the authenticity of what was being said.³ The happenings in the rest of the account lead one to believe the latter view.

As Jesus taught them, a peculiar incident happened; some men brought a paralytic friend on a small bed to place him before Jesus to be healed. But they could not get him through because of the crowd. Of interest is the identification of the crowd that blocked the way for the men to get to Jesus. A few indications in the passage

² David Gooding, *According to Luke*, Leicester: IVP, 1987, p. 107

³ Joel b. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997; p. 240

highlight the crowd's composition as the religious leaders identified at the beginning of the passage. For one, the plural article οἱ in verse 17 shows that these were the ones coming out from the entire countryside of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem. Metzger⁴ indicates that this difficult but correct reading has led copyists to alter the text to make it more acceptable:

“The difficulty of the reading supported by the overwhelming mass of witnesses (according to which the enemies of Jesus had come from every village of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem) prompted some copyists to omit οἱ/ altogether (κ* 33) and others to replace it with δε (D it^{d. e} syr⁸), so that it is the sick who have come from all parts to be healed.”

These were the men who crowded inside the building, and verse 19 states that they blocked the men with their paralyzed friend from getting in. It was the same crowd in whose midst the man was lowered in front of Jesus. That the crowd was on the inside, or perhaps more so on the inside than the outside, is also seen in the man's friends being able to reach the building to get to the roof. Thus, the religious in the story are blocking the path of the true seekers. But is this truly what Luke has in mind, or is such merely a “reading into” the passage? What comes next through the miracle of Jesus is revealing.

The passage indicates that when Jesus saw the faith of the men who took extreme measures to get their friend to him, he pronounced the man's sins forgiven. This created grave concerns among the religious men; they grumbled in their thoughts about Jesus' claim of authority to forgive sins, which to them was a clear sign of

⁴ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (2nd. Ed.), UBS, Stuttgart, 1994; p 114

blasphemy. “*Who is this that is speaking blasphemies? Who is able to forgive sins except God only?*” But Jesus sends them into a tail spin by identifying their thoughts, and demonstrating his authority to forgive sins on earth by healing the man, which apparently led to praise and glorification of God’s name among the religious. And this is where traditional scholarship usually locates the emphasis of the passage on the divine identity of Jesus. Miller⁵ devotes much space of his brief discussion of this passage to explaining the significance of Jesus’ act to his self-identification, a stance supported by Gooding,⁶ Green⁷, and Morris⁸ (who also emphasizes the passage’s highlighting of the friends’ faith). Ellis⁹ has a similar emphasis, though he also devotes significant space to the discussion on Jesus’ self identification as “the Son of man” (v. 24).

The scholars identified above are not incorrect in their interpretations, as much as they are incomplete in understanding the passage’s intent. Surely the account should have shown to Jesus’ audience the divine credentials of his ministry, and the importance of faith. But in light of Luke’s emphasis described earlier, his original readers would have seen his insistence on the danger of defending orthodoxy while neglecting orthopraxy: religiosity is an enemy to what God wants to do with people, especially those on the outside. And it is by comparing the religious with these “outsiders”

⁵ Donald G. Miller, *The Layman’s Bible Commentary*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1959; 71.

⁶ David Gooding, *According to Luke*, Leicester: IVP, 1987, pp.108-109

⁷ Joel b. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997; pp. 239-243

⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974; pp. 116-117

⁹ E. Earl Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974; pp 104-106

(who perhaps do not belong in this religious gathering) that Luke makes his point. This is revealed in two points of comparison in the passage.

καὶ δύναμις κυρίου ἦν εἰς τὸ ἰᾶσθαι αὐτόν. “And the power of the Lord was on him to heal (17).” Luke indicates that as Jesus was teaching God’s power was present for him to heal.¹⁰ The Textus Receptus has the variant reading αὐτούς which changes the reading slightly to say that “...the power of the Lord was present for healing them”, making the healing of the paralytic man full of irony. The Lord wanted to heal the sick among the religious men, but they would not receive from him, and so an outsider comes and benefits from the power of God. As tempting as it is to accept this reading, it is to be rejected on the weight of the textual evidence that αὐτόν is to be understood as the subject of τὸ ἰᾶσθαι¹¹, making the earlier identified translation more correct. But, the desired sentiment of the variant reading is not lost on the correct translation, though now it is a bit more distantly implied. The fact is that the passage clearly shows that Jesus’ healing desire was present before the paralytic showed up, and the paralytic’s arrival and benefit from the same power was an indication that what was necessary to put the power in action was faith. Thus, in contrasting the religious men and the paralytic Luke is showing that receiving from the hand of Jesus requires a commitment of faith. It is interesting to note that without this commitment two negative indicators naturally follow – the men not only miss out on benefiting from Jesus’ presence, but their apparent insistence on being there to “grill” Jesus makes them so oblivious to human need that they block the path of those who would come to receive from Jesus.

¹⁰ It is very interesting that Luke describes the power as being other than Jesus.’ The healing power is presented as the divine prerogative of God, and Jesus apparently uses it only at God’s prescribed times.

¹¹ Metzger, p 145

The second point of comparison appears at the very end of the passage in verses 25-26.

καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀναστὰς ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἄρας ἐφ’ ᾧ κατέκειτο ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ δοξάζων τὸν θεόν. καὶ ἔκστασις ἔλαβεν ἅπαντας καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεόν, καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν φόβου λέγοντες ὅτι εἶδομεν παράδοξα σήμερον.

“And instantly, having stood up in front of them and having taken up the bed he was lying upon, he went away to his house glorifying God. And ecstasy took hold of them all and they glorified God, and they were filled with fear saying, “We have seen a paradoxical thing today.”

The NIV translates v. 26 as follows: “Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said. ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’” This seems a rather odd way of presenting the passage, as it makes positive what is not shown that way in the original. The miraculous healing of the man stunned the religious men to the point of spontaneous praise - καὶ ἔκστασις ἔλαβεν ἅπαντας – “And ecstasy laid hold of them all.” They were not in control of their emotions when they saw the miracle unfold literally in front of them; they burst out in praise. But the last two phrases of the sentence show that this praise was of a different sort than that of the paralytic. Whereas he had responded to Jesus’ commanded instantly and left glorifying God (25), their response is characterized by φόβου¹² -“fear” (not the more positive

¹² Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 863. It is interesting to note that though the semantic range of this word does

“amazement” of the NIV), because they had seen παράδοξα¹³- “paradoxical things” (again not the “remarkable” things as suggested by the NIV). Unfortunately, the NIV gives the impression that it is the miracle that is uppermost in the mind of the religious guardians. The passage however makes it clear that it is the miracle’s impact on a hallowed belief that has them “perplexed.” The fact is that Jesus has just defied one of the central tenets of their belief system – “Only God can forgive so anyone who claims to forgive (other than God) must be blaspheming.” But Jesus had just publicly forgiven and healed the paralyzed man, right in their midst. Did this mean that Jesus had come with divine authority? If indeed this was so, then just maybe their opposition to him was also an opposition to God. But to admit such would be an admission that their religious heritage and what they were thinking about Jesus was at least in part incorrect. An extended quote from Barclay¹⁴ explains the dilemma that the religious leaders found themselves in:

“The Scribes were the experts in the law who knew all these rules and regulations, and who deduced them from the law.

include the idea of “reverence” or “respect” as seen in Philippians 2:12, BAG identifies the meaning in the Luke passage as more akin to “alarm, fright.” This no doubt comes from the context of the passage as Luke describes it.

¹³ Ibid, p. 615. A similar point has to be made with the semantic range of παράδοξα, which includes the diverse understandings of “contrary to opinion, or expectation, strange, wonderful and remarkable.” This time, however, we have to disagree with BAG that the meaning in our passage is “wonderful things” given the behaviour of the religious leaders throughout the rest of the book. That they were thrown into confusion over their cherished understanding being overturned seems more akin that they would view the incident as “contrary to opinion or expectation” or indeed “strange.” And again, the rest of the Gospel seems to bear this out.

¹⁴ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, Edingburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1975; pp 60-61

The name Pharisee means “the Separated One”; and the Pharisees were those who had separated themselves from the ordinary people and ordinary life in order to keep the rules and regulations. Note two things. First, for the scribes and Pharisees these rules were a matter of life and death; to break one of them was deadly sin. Second, only people desperately in earnest would ever have tried to keep them, for they must have made life supremely uncomfortable. It was only the best people who would even make the attempt.

“Jesus had no use for rules and regulations like this. For him, the cry of human need superseded all such things. But to the scribes and Pharisees he was a law breaker, a bad man who broke the law and taught others to do the same.”

The rest of the book of Luke reveals several instances where the religious authorities clash with Jesus over his teachings.¹⁵ The fact that there were so many religious leaders present from such a widespread region at this early stage of Jesus’ ministry, and that Luke shows their ongoing confrontations with Jesus throughout the gospel indicates that in this first incident the religious leaders neither received from him in faith nor responded to his healing of the paralytic with true praise. Luke used the crippled man and his friends for two points of comparison with the religious leaders, and in both the latter are found wanting. Again, this is not strange for

¹⁵ Donald Miller, p. 72, is one interpreter who understands the perplexing nature of the miracle on the religious leaders. He too asserts that their spontaneous praise should not be misunderstood, as their later attitude of rejecting Jesus message and ministry reveals.

Luke who has deliberately set out to show Jesus' preferential option, so to speak, for the outcast.¹⁶

The Passage and the Jamaican Church

There are various indications that the Jamaican church has read and understood this passage without grasping its impact on her religiosity. If one were to take a mere cursory glance on the ideas which dominate many of our churches, we would see some of the attitudes/teachings consistent with that of the religious leaders in Luke 5:17-26. In the discussion that follows, three trends consistent with a vast number of Jamaican churches will be examined.

1. The Message of Prosperity

Though there exist the voices of local Christian thinkers warning against the dangers of flirting with prosperity theology, the phenomenon remains in many of our churches, especially the

¹⁶ And maybe we should add here that such a preferential option resides in Luke's mind, as a function of a human stance in the presence of God and not so much with some romantic notion of the "godliness of being poor and outcast." Elsewhere (cf. 18:1-29), Luke makes it clear that it is the dangers that come with being rich and respected, in terms of how this makes one think too highly of himself that is the real enemy of dependence on God. Apparently, in Luke's opinion at least, the poor and outcast have little to fall back on and so find faith easier.

Charismatic and Pentecostal, but also with a growing number of Evangelical churches. Rev. Roderick Reid¹⁷ has scolded many pastors and churches for their continued insistence in preaching this “false gospel.” His position is that the obedience the Gospel requires is costly, demanding and involving submissive living, often in the midst of severe economic hardships. There is no promise from the Gospel that faithful adherents will suddenly find their financial realities much improved, merely because of their faith in Christ. But where has this message come from to dominate masses of Jamaican churches?

Canon Ernle Gordon¹⁸ has shown that much of the message of the Jamaican church is an imposed and unbiblical spirituality. He argues that it is a form of cultural imperialism by the Government of the United States to quell the rise of the liberation movements within the Caribbean and Central America, since the early 1970’s. Through satellite broadcast, a kind of “feel good” Christianity is propounded that dulls people’s concern with present realities as they imbibe a puerile individualistic faith. The Canon shows that the number of U.S. brand fundamentalist churches have actually increased in Jamaica since the 1980’s; the same cannot be said of the mainline, traditional denominations, who by the suggestion of Gordon, preach a more Biblical message.

One cannot deny that these churches have grown in Jamaica in the period highlighted by Gordon. The access to cable television has also increased over this time, with many of the Gospel channels beaming preachers committed to the message of prosperity. Its main

¹⁷ Rev. Roderick Reid in a Sermon commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Hope United Church, on Sunday February 9, 2010 and reported in the Daily Gleaner the following day.

¹⁸ Ernle Gordon, The Church and Religious Imperialism, in the Daily Observer, Wednesday, January 15, 2003. Cited from <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/>, February 21, 2010

tenet suggests that Christians ought to inherit the blessings of Abraham, spiritual and material, because of their status as sons of Abraham¹⁹. This status by itself, however, will not gain the believer the prosperity that ought to be his, since he needs to activate such in his life by the “positive confession of faith”²⁰ and by “giving to the Lord.” The former actually “permits” God to work in the life of the believer, since he had first translated authority to the believer himself. God will not overstep the authority he has deferred. And it is when we “give to the Lord” that he activates the “multiplication” or “reciprocity”²¹ principle, where he gives from ten to a hundred times what the believer gave to him in the first place.

The emphasis of this message is what we could get from God if we only had faith. Ill health and poor finances are sure signs of the enemies attack, and demons are often on the prowl to possess and block the blessings of God in our lives. This has often led to a great emphasis on fasting and prayer, and the manifestation of spiritual

¹⁹ David Jones, “The Bankruptcy of Prosperity Theology,” accessed from <http://bible.org/article/bankruptcy-prosperity-gospel-exercise-biblical-and-theological-ethics> states, February 21, 2010. In the footnotes of this article Jones states, regarding the use of the Abrahamic Covenant by Prosperity theologians, “This important covenant is mentioned numerous times in the writings of the prosperity teachers, i.e., Gloria Copeland, *God’s Willis Prosperity* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1973), 4-6; Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1974), 51; idem, *Our Covenant with God* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1987), 10; Edward Pousson, *Spreading the Flame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 158; and Kenneth Copeland, *The Troublemaker* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, n.d.), 6.”

²⁰ <http://www.watchman.org/rektop/posconf.htm>

²¹ Pat Robertson, *The Secret of Financial Prosperity*, accessed from the 700 Club website, at http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/cbnteachingSheets/Pat_Perspective_financial_prosperity.aspx, accessed February 21, 2010

gifts to show who we deem to be a new class of super-Christians. Powerful preachers are rewarded with large churches as a sign of their having arrived, and there is the growing practice of credentialing these faithful men with honorary doctorates and exalted titles (Bishop [instead of Pastor], Prophet, Apostle, and Super-Apostle). These men (usually but not exclusively) are waited upon by “Armour Bearers,” a growing second but elite class of believers who are next in line for the blessings. Yet, with all of this our ministry to those on the “outside” is still lacking. Again, the misplaced emphasis on reading a passage Luke 5:17-26 is seen. Like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day we have embraced an understanding of prosperity as the sign of God’s blessing. Inevitably then, our emphasis is on matters of our own holiness and rightness as defined by a flawed gospel, instead of that which is truly important to our Lord, the wellbeing of the outcast.

It is interesting to note that the prosperity message has a double indicator of the believers special status wrapped up in it. Not only is the prosperous believer a “believer,” but he is a “more faithful believer” since he has both believed and activated his faith through positive confessions and obedient giving. Indeed, such a Christian is among the elite as evinced by God’s reputed abundance in his life. But, like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, the message of prosperity blinds the church to what God is doing with “outsiders.” By “outsiders” in this instance we speak of anyone who does not share a commitment to the prosperity ideal, be they Christian or not. But since faithfulness is often also viewed through church attendance, the bulk of outsiders will be truly “outsiders to the church”, or those not affiliated with it. As the faithful congregate around the proliferation of this flawed message, they breed a “spiritual elite” among themselves, who like the Pharisees naturally expect greater blessings from God. Perhaps it is the converse, however, that is more dastardly as we examine the flawed theology’s impact on the church in society. The vast majority of our

people are seen as “spiritual dwarfs” at best, and deserving of their poverty or failures because of their lack of faith.

2. Emphasis on Praise and Worship

There is a second idea from the passage that we must examine in relation to the Jamaican church. It is the idea of the spontaneous praise offered by the religious leaders in light of Jesus revelation of his authority, but a praise that was not followed by true faith. As the “feel good” message of our churches increase, so has the greater emphasis on “Praise and Worship”. Though song singing has always been a part of the Jamaican church experience, the traditional “Chorus Leader” has given way to the “Praise Team.” The former was responsible for warming up believers at the start of meetings, or for filling the time until enough of the faithful came to worship. After the choruses the moderator was often heard to say “Let us begin our service with the singing of Hymn...” The point is that the chorus leader was but an appendage (at the beginning) for the more meaty part of the meeting, where more theologically sound hymns were sung in preparation for the delivery of the message. The Praise Team, however, has a different function. It leads the faithful in an uplifting, emotional experience of worship, a very integral part of the church’s ministry offering. And whereas the chorus time might have taken ten minutes, praise and worship in some churches last from anywhere between fifteen minutes and an hour. For many believers it has become the most important part of the church’s ministry. And perhaps we could say that many Pastors and church Boards do believe in its greater importance, seen in their commitment to spend more on instruments for worship than on ministry to the physical needs of people. The reality of this in many

of our churches has led Gordon to propound that, “(t)he music ministry has replaced the mission of Jesus.”²²

This music ministry itself is often proof of the Jamaican church’s imbibing of a false and foreign spirituality that is seen in a flawed praise – it insists that praising God requires the words and music of the more spiritually elite foreigners. The average Evangelical church today trumpets its praise through the strains and strings of a North America. That which is local is often ridiculed as being at least inferior and at best demonic. The local believer is then expected to arrive at the idea that s/he only truly worships when this “correct” form of praise is the medium. But, is it not evident that this mentality leads to us blocking who we really are on the outside? In fact, like the paralytic, those who are struck with the malady that makes them insist on their culture as appropriate for praise are blocked by the religious from gaining entry. And we miss out on so much possibilities of influencing our people to true praise. We would do good to heed the advice of Smith²³ that we have to “devise ways of capturing the mood of people as it is expressed in their poetry, dance, music and drama.”

But let us take heed lest we miss perhaps the most important point about praise in our passage. Spontaneous praise means very little to the Lord if indeed it is not followed by a commitment to the demands of the gospel, especially as it reaches out to those in need. The paralytic’s praise is followed by immediate and heartfelt obedience, while that of the religious leaders, though spontaneous, does not lead to obedience. And it is not enough for our leaders to leave such involvement up to the goodwill of the people. The

²² Gordon, The Church and Religious Imperialism, in the Daily Observer, Wednesday, January 15, 2003. Cited from <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/>, February 21, 2010

²³ Ashley Smith, Real Roots and Potted Plants, Williamsfield: Mandeville Publishers, 1984; p.47

church must demonstrate throughout its ministry that authentic praise for the things that God is doing, must be celebrated and replicated in the life of people, especially those on the outside. And therein lays the third concern from our passage, one that has repeatedly shown itself throughout our discussion: the church's lack of concern for the people on the outside.

3. Lack of Concern for Outsiders

The very practical import of the passage under consideration, suggests that rightness with God is seen in how we treat those on the outside. But this very often goes unmentioned in our churches. Perhaps you will forgive a personal reflection here – in 2006 twelve students from a class I taught at the Jamaica Theological Seminary, “Teaching in the Church,” carried out a twelve week survey in their churches (no two students were from the same local church and there were about eight denominations represented in the class) to assess the teaching emphases in their “Divine Service” or “Family Bible Hour.” The assumption was that in these services preachers would emphasize what is most important to their churches’ understanding of their ministry responsibility. Of the one hundred (100) surveys returned only two (2) made mention of the churches’ responsibility to outsiders, other than to share the Gospel message with them. Instead the emphases were on such things as “faith”, “tithing”, “overcoming the enemy”, “the importance of praise,” and so on. The typical sermon did not even link these themes with caring for others.

Other indications show that the churches’ pet emphases betray a lack of fidelity to the teaching of the passage under examination. For example, there is an importance placed on church planting, seen

in the sheer number of churches existing in our island nation. Dick²⁴ has listed 2674 registered churches in 2004²⁵, yet, our common experience is that with the exception of evangelistic crusades and occasional pulpit swaps, our churches have very little in a unified ministry, whether to believers or to the “outsiders” of our communities. Most of these churches refuse the call to ecumenism, insisting instead on their particular understanding of the details of the Gospel as making them in some way better representatives of the truth than others (in some cases “the only representatives of truth”). It is not uncommon to hear of pastors who “guard their pulpits” to ensure that whatever is preached there is in line with their churches’ official positions. How churches existing in this reality read Luke 5:17-26 without seeing the danger on its insistence on orthodoxy at the expense of orthopraxy defies understanding.

Of course, our churches respond to the criticism of their lack of significant involvement in the lives of the people of our community, by showing their growing commitment to social ministry. Over the last twenty years our churches’ involvement in community has grown much²⁶. Church based clinics, basic schools, skills training centres and homework centres have basically continued and expanded the trend that shows that no other institution has done more for the social wellbeing of our people. Thus, it is the common response by church officials and thinkers that the continued attack

²⁴ Devon Dick, “Rebellion to Riot: The Jamaican Church in Nation Building,” Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002; pp. 137-199.

²⁵ Our common experience also suggests that our unregistered churches are of a greater number. If we conservatively assume that there are 5000 churches in Jamaica there would be an average of 357 per parish, often two or three existing on the same street. Yet, there is little felt impact of the ministry of these churches on our communities.

²⁶ *Daily Gleaner*, November 20 1991, 17.

on the church for its irrelevancy in society is as unfounded as it has always been. How then do they explain why so many of our people who benefit from our churches' ministries stay away and choose lifestyle options detrimental to themselves and community? Is it sufficient to merely explain it by people's selfishness? Or is another possible explanation for the churches' lack of impact?

The Jamaican church has unfortunately had a history that demonstrates its support more for middle class issues and values than for the poor of our community. Williams²⁷ shows that from the very beginning of the church in Caribbean freed society, the idea that the missionary was of a superior social class was prominent in the thinking of many. Dick²⁸ suggests that the support of that which ought to have benefited the poorest among us was never paramount in much of the church's thinking. The Moravian church distanced itself from the rebellious behaviour of people like Sam Sharpe and Paul Bogle. And our churches' insistence on preaching "to win souls" while ignoring the deplorable conditions in which they live is an indicator that their social wellbeing is not a priority. More important for many of our churches is that people dress and behave which still dominates much of our thinking. Very formal wear is still expected in many churches and the music of our culture is often excluded. In short, our churches communicate to our average citizen that s/he is not "good enough" to be a part of us.

²⁷ Lewin Williams, *Caribbean Theology*, pp. 5-6

²⁸ Dick, p. 92

Errol Miller²⁹ calls into question the added value claim of the Jamaican church's contribution to secondary education between 1912 and 1943. He states:

“The structure of the educational provision which offered elementary education to the blacks and Indians and secondary education to the other ethnic groups was consistent with the power structure of the Crown Colony. The fact that during this period government subsidized the public education system and that the church schools were included to expand the system made no difference to the structure of the educational provision and its relationship to social stratification in the society.

The point is more aptly demonstrated when we speak of the churches' contribution to primary education, as very few of the people from our communities can afford the fees for their children to access church preparatory schools and the primary education deemed by many to be the most crucial plank on the rise up the educational ladder. At the tertiary level, outside of Teachers' Colleges and Theological Schools, our churches have not made a contribution, and even in these we offer very little in the way of scholarships and/or financial backing for the average student. Of course we offer invaluable ministry opportunities in clinics, and skills training centres, etc., but more often than not in ways that promote the wellbeing of people only so far no more. Our lack of significant funds is often a big hurdle here, but it is not the main one. We still pour millions of dollars in building mega church

²⁹ Errol Miller, Contemporary issues in Jamaican education. In C Brock and

Donald (Eds), Education in Central America and the Caribbean, New York:

Routledge, 1990, p. 109

structures that often have very little practical use for community development. Additionally, they are more often than not built in a manner that promotes the congregation's responsibility to listen to the truths we have to offer, and where no differences, discussion or feedback is expected or welcome. And as an indication of our great resemblance to the religious leaders of Luke 5: 17-26, we make no way for the disabled to enter our sanctuaries or even to have a place catering to their unique needs. We very infrequently have facilities for the deaf, or ramps for the crippled. We make no provision for the blind as was demonstrated in one church that had been very happy in its newly installed multi-media projection system that beamed all the announcements on the screen, but without sound. The blind and the illiterate are left on the outside. Of course we are involved, but often in a way that suggests to the "little man," that he is of less value to us. The greater emphasis is left on the individual to make himself of such that he can better benefit from the ministry of the church, not that the church like Christ will reach out to him.

Yet, in a culture not dissimilar to ours, people flocked to Jesus. The paralytic's friends went through great pains to get him to Jesus. The rest of the Gospel of Luke shows all sorts of people of "despicable" character flocking to him. But they are not flocking to the Jamaican church. It is either that Jesus and/or his message is absent from our gathering, or we are doing a better job than the religious leaders of Jesus' day in keeping them out. Or perhaps it is a little bit of both.

Conclusion

As we read the Gospel of Luke we must recapture the essence of Jesus' message that a demonstration of Godly ministry must be seen in our focus on the wellbeing of others, especially the outcast, than on our own sense of privilege and importance. Like the religious leaders of Luke's day the Church reads and theologizes in such a manner that protects self interest, inevitably blocking access to God's ministry, especially for those who most it. Our involvement

in things religious is a greater indicator of our flawed Biblical reading than it is of our purity of doctrine. In fact, the doctrine we often defend demonstrates a misunderstanding of the very heart of God for people, who we inevitably exclude from the ministry of the church. Perhaps it is of little wonder then why few “outsiders” flock to our churches as they did to Jesus. Our reading of the Gospel seems to have locked Jesus on the outside of our churches, perhaps with those whom he has the greatest desire for.

BAPTIST LIFE IN
THE JAMAICA
CHURCH AND
RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM

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Two hundred years ago, Baptists in this parish of St. Ann and country of Jamaica would be meeting in secret and underground and under the threat of persecution and not in the public and not at a luxurious hotel. Not far from here Christopher Columbus, the explorer, landed in 1494 and said, "The most beautiful place I have ever set eyes". Columbus ushered Christianity into Jamaica and the dominance of State Church for centuries. This is parish

where the Spanish were indifferent to the religious beliefs of Tainos and Africans and suppressed these beliefs, an example to be followed by the English after they arrived in 1655. In this era, religious freedom meant freedom for State Church of Rome, England and Scotland only.

It is in this parish our forebears were planted and bloomed through the three Baptist Free Villages namely Wilberforce, Buxton and Stephney. Free Villages allowed the freed to have a church to freely worship. Not far from here, Seville, the first capital of Jamaica, is where four civilizations met and formed a melting pot for Tainos, Spanish, Africans and English persons. These four are a microcosm of Jamaica as a Creole society of African, Asian, European and Tainos. Acknowledgement to this fact was made in 1962, date of Jamaica's political Independence from Britain, when the majority populace of African descent took as its motto, "Out of Many One People" indicative of our multi-racial roots and a commitment to tolerance of various races, beliefs and practices, albeit having the

potential to keeping the status quo in place of the economic dominance of minorities and entrenched colonial mentality. The motto is represented on the Coat of Arms. The crest shows a Jamaican crocodile mounted on the Royal Helmet of the British Monarchy! In addition, though the disestablishment of the Church of England took place in 1870, allowing theoretically for all denominations to be treated equally and experience religious freedom, the reality meant that the colonial legacy of dominance of the Anglican Church was maintained until Jamaica's political independence when practical steps were taken toward freedom of religion such as prayer at the Opening of Parliament was not automatically said by the Anglican bishop but was assigned to an ecumenical representative.

Fast forward from 1962 to 2013, and recognize that in meeting here in this ballroom in public is a demonstration of the progress in religious freedom for Baptists in particular and Non-conformists in general. This paper posits that Jamaica has come a long way in religious freedom from the days of persecution of non-conformists up to the nineteenth century and the integral role played by Baptists and others in achieving this level of religious freedom. This lecture will also outline the strengths and weaknesses of religious freedom and what are the threats to this religious freedom and this paper will close with the opportunities to worship God and engage in God's ministry that are available under this religious freedom.

What is Religious freedom?

Religious Freedom allows an individual or community, in public, personally or privately, to declare religious belief, teaching, practice, worship, and observance without hindrance or persecution. It also includes the freedom to seek to convert others to one's belief and also includes the freedom to change religion or not to follow any

religion. While many countries have accepted religious freedom, this has also often been limited in practice through punitive taxation, political discrimination and State preference for a dominant expression. Religious freedom does not mean a free for all where anyone or group can engage in illegal practices or have so called religious observances that harm people. Under freedom of speech a person is not free to enter a crowded room and make a false alarm about fire because it could cause a stampede and injury to people. Similarly, religious freedom demands responsibility to act in a manner for the common good.

In Jamaica, Christians are able to preach, pray and worship freely and to provide instructions to their members and provide religious education to schools they operate and regularly host evangelistic efforts to convert others to their religious beliefs and practices. They also engage in prison, police and army chaplaincies.

It has been argued by Daniel Thwaites, Rhodes Scholar and **Gleaner** columnist that the religious freedom that Jamaicans have dates to events in England in the 17th century.¹ And he could be correct. The Toleration Act of 1689 was an Act of the Parliament in England, which allowed freedom of worship to Nonconformists such as Baptists and Congregationalists but not to Roman Catholics, non-trinitarians and atheists.² This Act extended religious freedom only to a select few but excluded some Believers and Non-Believers.

Religious freedom for the Christian Faith in general can be traced to an earlier period under Constantine. In 313 the Edict of Milan announced "that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of

¹ 'Path to Enlightenment on Old Hope Road' *Sunday Gleaner*, Mar. 31, 2013 A9.

² Wikipedia.

them appeared best", thereby granting tolerance to all religions, including Christianity.³ Furthermore, the genesis of Anabaptists in 1525 had as one of the distinctives religious liberty to heretics and atheists alike.⁴ Cawley Bolt, Baptist historian, commenting on one of the early Baptist confessions (1612?), stated, that a Magistrate should not meddle in religion but 'leave the Christian free.'⁵ Baptists have agitated for religious freedom believing that religious freedom is an inalienable right given to every human being by God. God is totally free and truly free being independent of all and self-sufficient. God can be what he wants to be and free to do as he pleases. God wants humans to be fully free to fulfil his or her potential.

³ Peter Espeut, '1,700 years of freedom' *Gleaner* May 17, 2013, A9.

⁴ Devon Dick, 'Baptists at 400: Where Have We Been and Where Should We Go.' 2010, BWA, Hawaii.

⁵ Bolt 'Issues of Religious Freedom in the Anglophone Caribbean,' 110.

Role of Baptists

Baptists perceived the implications of making freedom including religious freedom a reality. Therefore, they got involved in nation building in education, housing, identity formation and political activism.

African-American Baptist missionary, George Liele arrived in Jamaica in 1783 and established Baptist witness on the island. His was the first successful ministry among the enslaved, baptizing 500 and establishing schools for their education. As the work grew, Liele and another pioneer Moses Baker sought help and the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) responded by sending John Rowe in 1814 followed by William Knibb, James Phillippo etc. These missionaries facilitated the development of the Baptist work among the enslaved, albeit with a narrow focus of saving the soul, while initially ignoring the conditions of slavery. However, the enslaved read the Bible and had a different interpretation. One such enslaved person was Baptist deacon Sam Sharpe who claimed that slavery was inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. Hence in 1831, he organized enslaved persons and agitated for them to be treated and paid as workers. Because the leaders were Baptists it was called 'the Baptist War.' This resistance was believed to be the catalyst that led to the Act of Emancipation.

Under the Emancipation Act, the enslaved were to serve a period of six years apprenticeship effective in 1834. The apprentices believed that the houses they lived in and plots of land they cultivated were theirs. However, when Apprenticeship ended in 1838, the emancipated Africans were required by the planters to pay rent or move from houses they had built and plots they had cultivated. It was, therefore, left to the missionaries and the Africans to seek alternative economic solutions. The Baptists missionaries built

twenty two Free Villages,⁶ [the first of one in 1838 by Phillippo], consisting of houses, churches and schools. These facilitated a reasonable standard of living, stable family life and a place to worship.⁷ The early Baptists played a significant role in facilitating full freedom.

Native Baptists broke away from the English Baptist- dominated church around 1837 when congregations were formed which became the nucleus of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society (JNBMS) founded around 1839/40. By 1841, they had 13,687 members.⁸ One reason for the establishment of JNBMS was to redress the sidelining of persons of African descent who wanted to become pastors and who experienced the prejudice by English Baptist missionaries. They challenged the colonizers' interpretation of the Bible. They were engaging in what would now be called a hermeneutic of suspicion.⁹ They advocated that they were free to have their own interpretation. Native Baptists were incorporated into the English Baptist- dominated JBU by 1883¹⁰ and are no longer in existence as most of the leaders were killed.

Native Baptist leaders Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, now National Heroes, were in the forefront in agitating on behalf of persons who were experiencing economic woes and an oppressive justice system. In October 1865, Bogle and his followers marched to the Morant Bay Court-house to protest continued injustices. They were fired upon and the ensuing melee and subsequent actions led to

⁶ Dick, *Cross and Machete* (Kingston: IRP, 2010), 84.

⁷ Devon Dick, *Rebellion to Riot* (Kingston: IRP, 2002), 12, 15.

⁸ Devon Dick, *Cross and Machete*, 48-52

⁹ Dick, *Cross and Machete*, 58-63

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89

the deaths of 18 persons of the ruling class and thousands of peasants. This watershed event known as ‘the 1865 Native Baptist War’ was followed by better governance and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church.

Nonconformists were compelled, by taxation, to pay heavily for the support of the Anglican Church.¹¹ Gordon argued, as a member of the Assembly, that the Church of England in Jamaica should be disestablished as was done in Australia and Canada.¹² Phillippo, on conscientious convictions, also petitioned for the separation of Church and State and in 1870 the Church of England was disestablished as the State Church. This meant the discontinuance of the annual subvention from general revenue to the Anglicans for church expenses include paying organists.¹³ Disestablishment was a victory for Baptists as it upheld the principle of freedom of religion, and rejected the notion offering financial incentives to a preferred group.

Baptist life in Jamaica has other significant accomplishments for example in education. By 2013, Baptists owned schools or leased schools numbered 154 or 10% of schools in Jamaica. They have

¹¹ Edward Bean Underhill, *Dr. Underhill's Letter: A Letter addressed to the Rt. Honourable E. Cardwell, with illustrative documents on the condition of Jamaica and an explanatory statement* (London: Yates and Alexander [1865]), 85.

¹² “Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, And Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864. Compiled by Augustus Constantine Sinclair, (Spanish Town, 1865), 94, in Jamaica Assembly Parliamentary Debates 9 Oct. 1863-Feb. 1864.

¹³ JB Ellis, *Diocese of Jamaica: A Short Account of Its History, Growth and Organization* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1913), Chapter X

three High Schools, 85 Early Childhood institutions and 66 All Age (6-15 years old) and Primary (6-12 year olds) schools. In 1843, Baptists were the first to establish theological education which also had a teacher training component.¹⁴ Baptists made the educational system of a better standard, used more indigenous material and allowed greater access to the disadvantaged.

In 1999, the JBU had dental clinics and medical clinics operated by seventeen churches in nine of the fourteen parishes.¹⁵ There are 300 hundred Baptist Churches and many of them are used as shelters during natural disasters. They also offer counseling to persons who are troubled and those are starting a new life in Jesus.

Jamaican Baptists played a role in religious freedom through its advocacy for full freedom and the right for all denominations to be treated fairly and equally. Because of the role of Baptists in the struggle against slavery and for the development of Jamaica, post-emancipation, the Christian faith gained acceptance. According to census figures even as late as 1943, 90% of the population was affiliated to the Church.¹⁶ The Baptists, local and foreign, played a significant role in the acceptance of Christianity as the religion of choice.

¹⁴ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 41, 46.

¹⁵ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 202.

¹⁶ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 6.

Persecution

In the nineteenth century, Dissenters in Jamaica were persecuted for praying. Dissenters would include Independents, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quakers, Methodists, Moravians and Baptists.¹⁷ According to a letter written January 5, 1830 by John Dyer of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) to Sir George Murray, Secretary of State to Colonies, he claimed “one of my people is now in jail, for praying after 8 o’clock.”¹⁸ In the early 1830s, for a Sectarian preacher to be granted a preaching license, he would have to register a certificate with the Bishop’s Court.¹⁹

After the Sam Sharpe protest of 1831, there was a religious clash between the Dissenters and the Colonial Church Union whose aim was to “give triumph to true religion” through the destruction of worship places of dissenting missionaries²⁰ and with the backing of Custodes, the ultimate aim was to “Leave not a Place of Worship except the Established Churches of England and Scotland standing.”²¹ Dissenters in general and Baptist missionaries in particular were harassed.

¹⁷ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963) 26, 47.

¹⁸ Stewart, *Account*, 253.

¹⁹ Thomas F Abbot [sic] “Missionary Persecution,” *Jamaica Watchman*, 30 (June 1832), 4.

²⁰ Fair Play, “To the Editor of the Watchman” *Watchman* (May 5, 1832), 8.

²¹ A Sectarian, “To the Editor of the Watchman” *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 28 March 1832, 3. According to “A Sectarian,” The President of the Colonial Church Union was the Hon. John Lunan who was also Custos of the parish, Member of Assembly and Assistant Judge of the Grand Court. The Colonial Church Union had religious, political and judicial backing.

Furthermore, enslaved persons were persecuted for praying. There was the incident involving Old Virgil, a Baptist leader of Windsor Lodge [where] who was executed without trial in 1832. Clarke related the event:

He inquired of Captain Hylton if he was to be hanged for praying to God? The savage man, full of enmity to religion, answered “Yes.” Then said the old Christian, “hang me up at once, that I may go to my Father.”²²

Prayer was an integral aspect of the religious life of persons of African origin but they engaged in prayer at their peril. The slave owners could enslave the body but could not quench or stop prayer from flowing freely to God. Public Praying was also used as an act of defiance against the laws designed to prevent religious freedom.

These acts of denying religious freedom to the enslaved were not random acts of social deviants but were legal stipulations. Liele experienced imprisonment on a charge of sedition for a sermon he preached from Romans 10: 1.²³ Romans 10: 1 states, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” This Biblical reference seemed innocuous but not to the authorities. Obstacles were placed in the way of the enslaved receiving the gospel when in 1802, a Bill was passed to prevent persons, who were not qualified by law, from preaching.²⁴ Son of a Baptist missionary, George Henderson said, “The Slave Law passed

²² Clarke, *Memorials*, 161.

²³ Clark, Dendy and Phillippo, *Voice*, 32 and Underhill, *West Indies*, 199-200.

²⁴ “Jubilee of the Jamaican Mission,” *Baptist Magazine for 1865* Vol. LVII, 57, and Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, 260.

in 1810 had prohibited any further teaching or preaching by men of the African race.”²⁵ Furthermore, the Consolidated Slave Law of 1816 meant that “for the crime of worshipping God without their masters’ permission they were ever liable for punishment.”²⁶

The dominant missionary Christian expression not only despised Dissenters but there was persecution of minority religious in the late 19th century.²⁷ Jews were perceived as “descended from the crucifiers of the blessed Jesus.”²⁸ Indian indentured workers commenced arriving in Jamaica in 1845 and the majority brought with them their religious faith of Hinduism. The Chinese migrated to Jamaica in 1854.²⁹ They brought with them their Buddhist and Confucian beliefs.³⁰ Non-Christian religions were outlawed and Hindus and Muslims had to congregate in secret.³¹

The State Church was largely intolerant of other denominations and other religions in the 18th and 19th century.

²⁵ Henderson, *Goodness and Mercy*, 12.

²⁶ Phillippo, *Jamaica*, 161.

²⁷ Dick, *Rebellion Riot*, 102.

²⁸ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*. Vol. II: 293, and Gardner, op. cit., 197.

²⁹ Ray Chen, Comp. and ed., *The Shopkeepers: Commemorating 150 Years of The Chinese in Jamaica 1854-2004. A Historical Record of Their Arrival And Personal Stories of Their Endeavours And Experiences* (Kingston: Periwinkle, 2005), 283.

³⁰ Chen, *Shopkeepers*, 302-03.

³¹ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 102.

WEAKNESSES

Powerful interests whether pre-emancipation or post emancipation tended to try and influence the content of preaching as a subtle way to control the thoughts and actions of citizens. In addition, Christians in general and Baptists in particular have been often timid and mild.

In 1968, preachers were warned to be careful about what they said in their sermons in the aftermath of the Walter Rodney Riots started on October 16, 1968.³² Guyanese-born, Rodney (1942-80) was a Black Power advocate and Marxist lecturer at UWI Mona who was later declared persona non grata by Jamaica. The decision to ban him from Jamaica because of his advocacy for the working poor caused riots, which claimed the lives of several people. Following a meeting with Hugh Shearer, then Prime Minister, the John Swaby of the Anglican Church communion, and Atherton Didier, Chairman of the Methodist District sent out a circular which stated: ‘in the present state of security on the country, clergymen should not say anything against the government which would tend to inflame’.³³ This is a clear restriction of religious freedom under the guise of protecting national security. This is a throwback to the 1830s when in 1832, Moravians asked rhetorically, “Do we, indeed, preach that a slave cannot serve his earthly and his heavenly master at the same time?” and then they added, “Far be this from us.”³⁴ These ideas are reinforced faithfully by inculcating the apostolic precept from 1 Pet. xi. 8 which states, “servants be obedient to your masters . . .”³⁵ The Moravians preached what the slave owners wanted the enslaved to be- submissive, hardworking and honest. This would be an

³² Dick, *Rebellion to Riot* 95.

³³ *The Daily Gleaner*, December 5, 1968, 1.

³⁴ “West Indies. Jamaica,” *Periodical Accounts* Vol. XII August 1832, 205.

³⁵ “West Indies. Jamaica,” *Periodical Accounts*_Vol. XII August 1832, 206.

approach of missionaries in general at that time and this was a weakness of the traditional churches.

The Church as the collective Christian presence has been largely silent in the last couple decades if one was to judge the prophetic voice of the Church by the statements issued by the Jamaica Council of Churches (JCC). The JCC was established in 1941 with ten denominations of which the Baptists was a leading member. The JCC is comprised of mainly traditional churches, known for the prophetic witness and concern for the whole person. Neville Callam, Baptist scholar, in *Voicing Concern* made a selection of statements from 1941-2003. The issues that received the most public statements were 1) governance (mainly Electoral matters); 2) crime and violence and 3) gambling. It is understandable that crime and violence would receive such attention because Jamaica has a very high murder rate. However, Jamaica has one of the highest income disparity in the world coupled with high unemployment rates and low minimum wage that you would have expected some pronouncements on these economic matters. But there was nothing on minimum wage, number of persons below the poverty line etc. We also have a problem with corruption and a bureaucracy which inhibits business. Apparently the JCC has muzzled itself, based on the policy shift in 1999 enunciated by a former General Secretary of the JCC, Norman Mills, who said ‘The JCC took a decision that, instead of making frequent public statements on developments of public interest, it would, from time to time, seek opportunity for direct dialogue with the parties concerned.’³⁶ This statement appears to assume that public statements and dialogue are mutually exclusive. Perhaps, the reason for the pull back from frequent public statements is due to the harsh criticisms leveled at the JCC of being politically biased.

³⁶ Neville Callam, *Voicing Concern*, ix-x.

Thus religious freedom has often been an expedient political policy because the powers-that-be have not been seriously threatened within recent times by the majority Christian presence. The mild and isolated instances of challenges have probably revealed that religious freedom might not be a fully and rightly held conviction as it would appear generally.

There are times when Christians have used their privileged and dominant status to propagate the gospel. There is the potential for Christians to abuse their influential position.

There are examples of societal and legal discrimination against African religious expressions, with no agitation from the institutional church. It has been illegal from the nineteenth century to practice Obeah, to consult with practitioners of Obeah and the publication and distribution of any material calculated to promote Obeah.³⁷ It is a threat to religious freedom to criminalize those who believe, practice or promote Obeah.³⁸ The Church Councils failure agitate against Obeah law shows a weak commitment to religious freedom. There needs to be a greater appreciation that religious freedom extends beyond Christianity and ought to be extended to persons who believe and practice Obeah, Voodoo etc once no one is harmed by these practices.

Other African religious expressions such as Pocomania, Zion Revival and Kumina are not seen as genuine religious expressions but are tolerated for cultural and entertainment value. Even with the advent in the 1970s of Religious Education in schools as a subject rather than Bible Knowledge these African religious expressions are not taught in an objective manner and would not be received in the

³⁷ Dick, *Cross and Machete*, 127-28.

³⁸ Devon Dick, 'Decriminalise Obeah in Jamaica' *Gleaner*, May 24, 2005

schools and public functions as part of an ecumenical religious group. Up until 1998, Mormonism had a rough passage getting acceptance in Parliament. These are examples of lack of full religious freedom.

THREATS

The most high profile worship experience for Church and State is the Annual National Prayer Breakfast which started subsequent to the most violent General Elections of 1980 which saw approximately 800 Jamaicans killed in a year of political campaigning. The first preacher was Burchell Taylor, one of the Vice Presidents of the Baptist World Alliance. At the 1986 National Prayer Breakfast Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church Right Reverend Samuel Carter made his most famous national statement: "No more snap elections, no more boycotts." This was in response to then Prime Minister Edward Seaga calling a snap elections in 1983 and Michael Manley, then Opposition Leader boycotting the General Elections. Furthermore, at the 1997 National Prayer Breakfast, Dr. Sam Vassell passionately bemoaned the economic inequities reflected in him being unable to own a home. In 2007, Karl Johnson, General Secretary of the JBU, in an intellectual stimulating sermon highlighted the high crime rate in the country. These and other sermons have caused some powerful persons to be perturbed. There has always been pressure to preach what the powerful want to hear rather than speaking truth to Power. Coaching of preachers could become a threat to religious freedom and since the National Prayer Breakfast is fully sponsored by a Private sector company it might intimidate organizers to select preachers who are safe and preachers might be scared to tackle the improper economic practices of the business community. It would be in poor taste to bite the hand that feeds the preacher.

Believe it or not in 1987, on the 25th anniversary of a cigarette company, Carreras Ltd., there was a thanksgiving church service at the St. James Cathedral, Spanish Town at which the then Anglican Bishop, Neville DeSouza was the preacher and said 'Cigarette smoking is not the fault of those who make cigarettes, for people smoke to reduce certain anxieties in themselves'.³⁹ It appears that the Bishop was preaching to the gallery in lauding a cigarette company and this could be perceived as an abuse of religious freedom. Religious freedom cannot mean absolving the supplier and blaming those creating the demand for cigarettes. DeSouza also ignored the damage smoking does to the non-smoking population. Religious freedom ought to be handled responsibly.

Some churches behave with a sense of entitlement which is a legacy of the State Church. Some religious groups revel in the preference shown by the State without any consciousness of the lurking threats and those who are excluded. Sometimes governments disburse benefits to a church group that is considered the flavour of the month with the governing party. It is possible that the request for tax waivers and the granting of these by government could compromise the church from speaking without fear and favour. These are real and imminent threats to religious freedom.

³⁹ 'Bishop Lauds Cigarette Company in its 25th Year,' *Gleaner*, September 11, 1987.

STRENGTHS

There is a Charter of Rights which legally offers every Jamaican religious freedom. There are many provisions in Jamaica's Charter of Fundamental Rights 2011 which guarantee religious freedom such as any person who is arrested or detained shall have a right to communicate with and visited by a religious counselor of his or her choice; 'Everybody shall have the right to freedom of religion and to manifest and propagate his religion in teaching, practice, worship and observance'; 'Every religious body or denomination has the right to provide religious instruction for persons of that body or denomination, in the course of any education provided by that body or denomination'; 'No person shall be forced in an educational institution to receive religious instruction other than his or her own or to take part or attend religious ceremony'; Persons are entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, belief, and observance of religious doctrines and freedom from discrimination based on the ground of religion (www.moj.gov.jm).

In the 21st century, Jamaica has no documentation of religious detainees or prisoners and no reports of forced conversion from one religion to another. Myth has it that Jamaica has more churches per square mile than any other country and as of 1999, had 547 denominations listed with the Registrar of Companies and 68 denominations incorporated by an Act of Parliament.⁴⁰ There is freedom to start churches and denominations and Jamaicans freely use this opportunity.

Praying in the public space is a feature of Jamaican life such as at start of Cabinet and Government meetings, political gatherings and campaigns, before school and examinations starts, and in the middle of the day, since 1970s, Midday Meditations on RJR, Jamaica's

⁴⁰ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 119-136.

largest radio station. Thwaites relates this story, "I have more than once attempted to begin a meeting in Jamaica by slapping the desk and saying, "OK, everybody's here. Let's go!" when a more experienced colleague or comrade will sternly remind me that "we ALWAYS begin wid prыз!"⁴¹ Prayer permeates the air of Jamaica with uninhibited frequency. [On Saturday, Otnel from Romania spoke about how he prayed for a safe flight as they were going through turbulence from New York and Charlotte. He said prayer cannot hurt. It is possible that is the attitude of Jamaicans towards prayer. Otnel would fit well into the Jamaica prayer prevalence condition]. In addition, every significant celebration opens the week with a Church service such as Education Week, Maritime Week, and almost every business organization starts with a church service.

The beginning of various gatherings with prayer is a legacy of Christendom that has gone hand in hand with colonial expansionism and the role of the Church played in the missionary enterprise. The blessing of every activity is reminiscent of every colonial expansion seeking the blessing of God and the Pope dividing the world among European nations in the fifteenth century and present day army chaplains praying for victory for an army. At times prayer to the Christian God is said in public space without regard to other persons of differing religious faith. But there are Christians who do not use prayer to monopolize gatherings for its own end but to facilitate a relationship and dependence upon God and as a manifestation of religious freedom.

At a forum with then Police Commissioner, Rear Admiral Hardley Lewin a policeman pointed out that a detectives' examination originally scheduled to be held on a Saturday had been rescheduled to facilitate Saturday worshippers. Lewin added that it would not be fair to anyone whose sub officer was habitually assigning him or her

⁴¹ 'Path to Enlightenment on Old Hope Road' *Sunday Gleaner*, Mar. 31, 2013 A9.

to duties on their day of worship.⁴² The Court has also made it clear that there is a place for religious observance in the conduct of work and some educational institutions have made concessions for classes and examinations based on religious preferences. In 2009, Patrick Allen became the first Seventh Day Adventist pastor to be offered the position as a Head of State and he does not perform duties on his day of worship. There is respect for persons' religious peculiarities.

Then there were allegations against the Church of restricting religious expression. The *Gleaner* extracts from the US International Religious Freedom Report for 2012 issued in 2013 states 'In Jamaica, the State Department says there were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, stating that Rastafarians alleged the overwhelmingly Christian population discriminated against them, "although there were signs of increasing acceptance". "Rastafarians said that elements of their religion, such as wearing dreadlocks and smoking marijuana, presented barriers to their ability to find employment and achieve professional status in the official economy," the report states.'⁴³ There is growing acceptance of Rastafarianism especially with the popularity of reggae icon Bob Marley, the most famous Rastafarian. Furthermore, students can wear dreadlocks to school on the grounds of religion. Indeed there is growing acceptance of Rastafarianism which is a strength of religious freedom.

As Dale Bisnauth, Church historian, observed that all major religions of the world are found in the Caribbean, and there exists a remarkable degree of mutual tolerance. This tolerance is discernable and applicable to Jamaica.

⁴² 'Crusade against Commish's Statement-Adventists Say Statements infringes on Religious Freedom' *Gleaner*, May 31 2009.

⁴³ 'Jamaica Persecuting Rastas-report' *Gleaner*, May 23, 2013 10.

Secularism is a belief which rejects religion and religious considerations and religious explanations. The goal is a separation of State and Church, not in the classic sense of not favouring one belief system over another but, that there would be no religious activity in public schools or any state institutions. The rise of secularism has made some atheists and agnostics bold in declaring their beliefs and freely expressing themselves. The push for acceptance of homosexuality is lead mainly by secularists. However, there are some Church leaders who perceive the promoters of homosexuality as a threat to religious freedom. Clergyman, Bruce Fletcher believes that the homosexual agenda wants criticism of the lifestyle as a hate crime and punishable thereby reducing 'religious freedom and freedom of speech'.⁴⁴ However, as of now there is no restriction on criticism of homosexuality.

Christianity has a historic privileged position in society and has no legal fetters to restrict her ministry.

⁴⁴ Bruce Fletcher 'Sexual Tolerance not a different society' *Gleaner* Dec 13, 2012

CONCLUSION

There was greater overt risk being a Christian in the time before the nineteenth century than now. Baptists in particular and Christians in general should be in the forefront of fighting for the maintenance of religious freedom for all based on being persecuted in the past.

In April 1998, the TBC FM 88.5 radio station was formed under the leadership of pastor of Tarrant/Balmagie Circuit of Baptist churches Neville Callam. This was Jamaica's first Christian radio station and it was owned and operated by a Baptist church. In February 1993 there was the formation of LOVE FM, a religious radio station, which included in the ownership structure Baptists. LOVE FM garnered a significant 14% of the Jamaican audience at its peak.⁴⁵

These and other radio stations promoted the spreading of the gospel through the media. LOVE FM is legally a religious station and not a Christian station however minority religious expressions are not heard on LOVE FM. Apparently public media exposure of minority religious offerings would not be well received. However, private sector media outlets continue to provide a forum for coverage and debate on religious matters. Normally on a Sunday, unlike many other Caribbean nations, Jamaica would have gospel music played as a matter of course. With the advent of Christian and religious radio stations, more airtime has been afforded gospel music during the week and gospel artistes have been given more exposure to proclaim the gospel. These various media outlets offers an opportunity to tell the truths about the gospel to the unchurched. The new media landscape offers an opportunity to reach more people and more quickly with the good news of salvation. Therefore, the Church must use the media, including social media, to provide information about its policies, programmes and principles in order to educate all and witness to all. Christian Media ought to play a greater role in the dissemination of Bible knowledge,

⁴⁵ Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 72-73.

religious education, allow religious offerings by other religions, Christian values and perspectives and counter any unflattering view of church by the public. Additionally, the church ought to use the media to promote and protect religious freedom in Jamaica and not just for Christians.

Calabar, an all Boys high school founded in 1912 by Baptists, hosts an annual evangelistic meeting at which all students are expected to attend since it is held during school time. Stephen Smith, a guidance counselor and former Baptist minister, initiated this venture in 2009. The Education Act provides guidelines for religious instructions. Section 18:4 states that 'Subject to the provisions of this section, the school day in every public educational institution shall include time for collective worship on the part of all students in attendance at the institution . . .' In addition, Section 3 of the Education Act [General Powers of the Ministry] grants the Minister of Education the power 'to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the student population.' It is not unusual for schools to be platforms from which Christian values are espoused for the spiritual formation of students. Whereas in the USA prayer in public schools is banned based on the understanding of separation of Church and State, and whereas in France it is disallowed based on France's principle of being religiously neutral, Christian education is not just permitted but it is rather promoted as part of the overall development of students. This can be a wonderful opportunity to offer moral education to these and other children. According to Burchell Taylor, vice president of BWA, moral education is 'not education for conformity, for uncritical acceptance of dogmas and cultural absolutes. It is rather, a preparation for understanding and reflection, for participation in decision making on a wide scale, the pursuit of moral responsibility and meaningful sharing in the critical and creative endeavour of

shaping society”⁴⁶ Moral education will enable students to engage in critical thinking of deciphering right from wrong and making decisions on complex issues from an informed basis. This is also a glorious opportunity for young children to form action groups in order to express opinions and mobilize action on issues of governance, poverty, gender inequalities, injustices and sexual abuse.

Last year, there was a hue and cry when preaching was disallowed on State owned buses. According to Rear Admiral Hardley Lewin, then Managing Director of the Jamaica Urban Transport Corporation (JUTC) the position since 2012 is that ‘No Preaching allowed’. Eating, drinking, smoking and music are also not allowed. Rev. Dr. Garnett Roper, Chairman of JUTC, has a nuanced position on the matter claiming that ‘as far as the board is concerned there is a role for a formal public transportation chaplaincy’.⁴⁷ Whereas Lewin’s position appears to restrict religious preaching on public buses, Roper’s position allows for the regularization of the preaching in order to prevent abuse and for a respectful and organized presentation of the gospel. There needs to be organized public chaplaincy on buses and at business places similarly to police chaplaincy and the level of religious freedom could facilitate that.

As guardians of religious freedom and being committed to religious freedom it means engaging in a prophetic witness of agitating for the equality of all and justice for all.

⁴⁶ Burchell Taylor, *Free For All?* 24.

⁴⁷ E-mail March 11, 2013.

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 dikaionta*, 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 Krai kom baka ori*").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 Testament* (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.

THE CHURCH'S
IMPACT ON
WESTERN
CIVILIZATION

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Many Christians, including Church leaders, may not be aware of it, but the Church of Jesus Christ is under attack, from many quarters and more and more we hear lectures, speeches or read books that highlight certain negative episodes in the Church's history like the Spanish inquisition and torture of people, the witch hunting saga and as well complicity with the chattel slavery experience. There is also a popular query about the Church's relevance in the modern world and some even sustain and try to promote the view

that the Church's role in societies even in the past has been largely negative.

I get the distinct impression, when talking with Christians, especially those exposed to tertiary level training that they register a tinge of embarrassment about the Church and possibly about being a Christian because of the regularity with which they hear about the spots on the Church's history. Part of this embarrassment, in my view, has to do with ignorance or forgetfulness of what the Church, despite its faults, has done for societies in what is called the Western world and the ongoing debt that Western civilization owes to the Church. It should be known too that the spots on the Church's record happened when the Church moved away from its wellspring, the Bible.

My aim in this paper is to provide a historical sweep of the past two thousand years with special emphasis on the positive role that the Church has played in the transformation of Western civilization.

The hope is that all of us may be encouraged to continue the transforming legacy of the Church.

Odd though it may be, I wish to begin with a definition of the Church. The need for this is something of a puzzle, because we are all in a church (Fellowship Tabernacle), all or most of us are members of, or associated somehow with a local church or a denomination called let's say, the Baptist Church or Anglican Church and we also refer to the members of a church as the church. And yet that is the problem, the fluidity attached to the English word 'church'.

The situation is no easier if we go behind the English word 'church' to probe the 'meaning-in-usage' of the central Greek word, *ekklēsia*, that has given rise to the English word 'church'.¹ This is so for two reasons.

Firstly, *ekklēsia* itself has fluidity in meaning in the New Testament documents, so *ekklēsia* describes, in Acts 19.32, 39 and 41, a gathering of tradesmen², in Rom. 16.4 and 5, a local group or groups of Christians, in 1 Cor. 10. 32, all Christians on earth and in Eph. 2.6 and 3.10, possibly a trans-earthly or cosmic body of Christians. The

¹ *Ekklēsia* appears 114 times in the New Testament.

² This reflects the traditional usage of the term, in Greek cultures, for a group gathered for a purpose, in which case the term *ekklēsia*, had reference to the gathering, not the people themselves. When dispersed the *ekklēsia* ceases to exist. See T.D. Alexander, et al (eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 408; Walter Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 95; Lawrence O. Richards, *New International Encyclopaedia of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 164-167.

central prevailing idea in the 114 references to *ekklēsia* is that of *people constituting a kind of community*.³

Secondly, the New Testament documents use a multiplicity of terms to describe the same entity called ‘church’, terms such as ‘those who believe’⁴, ‘the brethren’⁵, ‘body’⁶, ‘family’⁷, ‘temple’⁸, ‘flock’⁹, etc. Even that popular expression on the lips of our Lord, ‘kingdom of God/heaven’ is suggestive of a term for the entity called church as Kevin Giles argues. He says,

It has been pointed out that the term, the Kingdom of God, primarily speaks of the dynamic rule of God, but as the thought of God ruling implies a people he rules over, the expression also can involve, in a secondary sense, the idea of ‘realm’. Thus Jesus not only proclaims the Kingdom of God – that is, God’s dynamic reign – but also invites people to

³ Using the King James Version at 1 Corinthians 11.18, 14.19, 28, 34, 35, one may be tempted to think, incorrectly, that the idea of ‘church’ as a structure is evident in the expression ‘in church’. This really means ‘in assembly’ and it must be remembered that the 1st century Christians met in homes until they were able to acquire property for worship structures in later centuries. For an insightful and readable summary of the use of *ekklēsia* in the Old Testament and the Intertestamental literature plus the challenge of translating *ekklēsia* see Kevin Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 230-243.

⁴ Acts 2.44, 4.32.

⁵ Acts 15.1,32.

⁶ Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4.

⁷ Ephesians 3.14, 17-18; 1 John 3.11-15, 4.7-21; 1 Peter 1.22; 1 Thessalonians 4.9.

⁸ Ephesians 2.21-22, 1 Peter 2.5.

⁹ John 10.1-18.

‘enter’ the Kingdom of God (Matt. 18.3; Mark 9.47; Luke 16.16, etc.), which must mean deciding to recognize God’s rule over one’s life. Those who do this constitute a new community where the rule of God is of utmost importance, and life transforming. Yet the reign of God is not limited to this sphere.¹⁰

It may be instructive too that in one of the only two places where Jesus uses the term *ekklēsia*, Matt. 16.18-19¹¹, it may, arguably, be used as a synonym for ‘kingdom of heaven’ which is also used in the text.

Nonetheless, one has to agree that “...all the early Christian writers use *ekklēsia* only for those fellowships which came into being after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.”¹²

May I suggest then that for purposes of this presentation we regard the Church, minimally, as *a plurality of persons, forming a community, who express faith in and allegiance to Jesus Christ.*¹³

It is to such a community that the multifaceted mission of Jesus Christ is committed.¹⁴ If we seek justification for seeing such a

¹⁰ Giles, op. cit., 30-31.

¹¹ The other is Matthew 18. 17 (twice).

¹² L. Coenen in Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 298.

¹³ I have reworked ideas from Richards, op. cit.,164-167 and Elwell, op. cit., 95.

¹⁴ We would include para-church agencies as part of the Church insofar as their staffs express faith in and allegiance to Jesus Christ and their mission is some aspect of the Church’s mission. See a discussion of para-Church agencies in

community as God's means of transforming society then such emerges from several passages.

I wish now to explore these in brief compass then spend the rest of the time on selected aspects of the legacy of societal transformation and challenge toward transformation left by the church over the past 2000 years.

Perhaps the fundamental text in this regard would be Matt. 28.16-20 especially the central command to 'make disciples *of all nations*' (v. 19). The suggestions are quite strong concerning societal transformation in both the central command 'make disciples' and its stated extent 'of all nations'.¹⁵

A disciple is one who mirrors in her life and ideas the life and ideas of her master. Put differently the disciple mirrors in his *character, concepts* and *conduct* whose he is. The ministry of *genuine* discipling is then transformational of the individual in terms of mind and life and when a nation can be said to be disciplined, meaning the majority of people have experienced this transformation, such a nation can hardly escape being transformed or at least being challenged toward transformation.

The revolutionary metaphors 'salt of *the earth*' and 'light of *the world*' used by Jesus of his disciples (Mt. 5.13-16), are definitely transformational in societal terms.

Bruce J. Nicholls (ed.), *The Church: God's Agent of Change*, The Paternoster Press, 1986, 199-229.

¹⁵ This is so whether we take *ta ethnē* as bespeaking Gentiles (non-Jews) or what we call today nations or countries.

There are also hints of the transformational presence of God's community in parables such as the Sower (Mk. 4.1-20), the Mustard Seed (Mk. 4.30-32), the Seed growing secretly (Mk. 4.26-29).

A Legacy of Societal Transformation and Challenge toward Transformation

Christians in the period from Pentecost to the fall of Rome challenged and at times progressively transformed the societal mores of the Roman Empire with reference to the value of human life and the virtue of sexual purity.

Value on Human Life

That Roman culture placed very little value on human life is well known. Romans were not only accustomed to emperors (like Nero,¹⁶ Domitian,¹⁷ Decius,¹⁸ and Diocletian,¹⁹) and other societal leaders who were murderous of rivals, Christians and even of family members²⁰ but the horrible gladiatorial games were as popular then as football is in many nations today.

¹⁶ Ruled AD 54-68.

¹⁷ Ruled AD 81-96.

¹⁸ Ruled AD 249-251.

¹⁹ Ruled AD 284-305.

²⁰ Nero killed two wives, one of whom he kicked to death while she was pregnant. Domitian, who insisted upon being called 'lord and god' ruled like a despot and lived with a fear of being assassinated. See William Klingaman, *The First Century: Emperors, Gods and Everyman*, Guild Publishing, 1990, 360-362. and Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under The Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*, Zondervan, 2001, 22-32.

Each contest required men to fight men, commonly with the aim of killing the opponents with a sword (*gladius*). It was the crowd that largely decided the fate of a weakened, gasping gladiator. A turned-thumb signal, usually given by women spectators, instructed the victor to go for the final blow. Often it was the women who praised gladiators...The barbaric cruelty, the agonizing screams of the victims, and the flow of human blood stirred no conscience in the crowds of the gladiatorial events...To see a gladiator stab and slice his opponent to death was top-ranked amusement.²¹

Christians boycotted and denounced the games and attracted criticism. One critic of the Christians said, “You do not go to our shows; you take no part in our processions...you shrink in horror from our sacred [gladiatorial] games.”²² Peter’s call, to live uprightly amidst slander and to suffer with pride for doing good and *for being a Christian* (1 Pet. 2.12, 3.9-17 and 4.12-19) may reflect the emerging trend of verbal attacks on Christians for being counter-cultural in lifestyle.

The gladiatorial games were eventually banned owing to the influence of the Church. As W.E.H. Lecky concludes, “There is scarcely any single reform so important in the moral history of mankind as the suppression of the gladiatorial shows, a feat that must be almost exclusively ascribed to the Christian church.”²³

²¹ Schmidt, op. cit., 62.

²² Cited in *ibid.*, 63.

²³ Cited in *ibid.*

Roman culture too (like several others in the ancient world) was completely at ease with infanticide and child abandonment, which the Church opposed on biblical principles.

Plutarch (ca. AD 46-120) says of the Carthaginians that they “offered up their own children, and those who had no children would buy little ones from poor people and cut their throats as if they were so many lambs or young birds; meanwhile the mother stood by without a tear or moan.”²⁴

Even the philosopher Seneca (ca. 4 BC – AD 65), chief advisor to Nero, said, “We drown children who at birth are weakly and abnormal.”²⁵

Christians did not only denounce the entrenched Greek and Roman cultural practice of child abandonment but they also provided refuge for abandoned children.²⁶

Infanticide and child abandonment were made capital offences in 374 under the Christian emperor Valentinian who was influenced by Bishop Basil of Caesarea.²⁷ Though infanticide was not completely wiped out—recurring in later centuries—the consistent opposition of

²⁴ *Moralia* 2.171D, cited in *ibid.*, 49. See also William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, Baker Book House, 1959, 263-266.

²⁵ *De Ira* 1.15, cited in Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 49.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁷ Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1957, 300; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 51.

the Church is what has influenced anti-infanticide laws up to the present.

Crucifixion²⁸ in the hands of the Romans approximated an art form, albeit a despicable one²⁹ and was outlawed by Constantine owing to his high regard for the Christian cross.³⁰

Sexual Morality

Christianity's elevation of sexual morality based on the Bible³¹ has exerted a tremendous transforming influence on societies ancient and modern. Whereas the Christian sexual ethic outlawed all sex acts except heterosexual monogamous acts the conventions of the Roman Empire (and not a few modern societies) countenanced a 'no holds barred' approach as people, in general, did sexually, whatever, however, wherever with whomever or whatever. Not only is the evidence in literature but also archaeology has turned up sexual graphics covering a wide spectrum of sexual acts on household items in the Roman Empire.³²

²⁸ "...the *crux* [cross] is put at the head of the three *summa supplicia*. It is followed, in descending order, by *crematio* (burning) and *decollatio* (decapitation)...Of course because of its harshness, crucifixion was almost always inflicted only on the lower class...", Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, Fortress Press, 1977, 33, 34.

²⁹ Seneca, "I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with the head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet," cited in Hengel, op. cit., 25.

³⁰ Schmidt, op. cit., 65.

³¹ Romans 1.24-27; 1 Corinthians 6.18-20, etc.

³² See, John Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: The Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 BC – AD 250*, University of California Press, 1998.

Charity & Compassion

From the 1st century of this era to the present the impact of the Church's commitment to voluntary charity and compassion has been transforming in many societies. The rise of orphanages, homes for the aged, the Salvation Army, the various Catholic groups like Sisters of Charity and Missionaries of the Poor, United Way, YMCA, YWCA, Teen Challenge, hospitals, mental institutions, the Red Cross/Crescent and, numerous other agencies for the care of needy human beings can be traced back to the Church of Jesus Christ.³³

“The whole approach to [governmental] social welfare that has developed in the West, and more recently in the East as well, is debtor to the Christian contribution and has been profoundly influenced by it.”³⁴

Education

Living in post-slavery societies in the Caribbean we all know of the Church's novel contribution of education for the slaves³⁵ matching an earlier novel Christian practice of education for both sexes.³⁶ The idea of tax-supported public schools and compulsory education seem to go back to Martin Luther (1483-1546) while graded

³³ Schmidt, op. cit., 125-169.

³⁴ Cited in *ibid*, 144.

³⁵ Shirley Gordon, *A Century of West Indian Education*, Longman Group Ltd., 1963.

³⁶ Schmidt, op. cit., 172.

education owes a debt to the Lutheran layman Johann Sturm (1507-1589).³⁷

Education for the deaf began in the late 18th century with three French Christians and education for the blind got its most significant forward fillip, though not its origin, from another French Christian Louis Braille in the 19th century.

The origin of the university is debatable³⁸ but it is beyond controversy that the oldest and most prestigious universities, recognized as such, had Christian roots; the University of Bologna (1158, regarded by some as the first), the University of Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Heidelberg and Columbia, etc.³⁹

Modern Science

Despite misconceptions that plague the public in general as well as some in the scientific community, modern science not only had its experimental tap roots in the Judaeo-Christian worldview of a purposive, orderly, created world⁴⁰ but "...virtually all scientists from the Middle Ages to the mid-eighteenth century—many of whom were seminal thinkers—not only were sincere Christians but were often inspired by biblical postulates and premises in their theories that sought to explain and predict natural phenomena."⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid, 177-180.

³⁸ See Charles Habib Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University*, IVP, 1982, 15-16, for a Greek origin; George G.M. James, *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy*, Africa World Press, 1954, 49, for an Egyptian origin; Schmidt, op. cit., 186-187, for monasteries as embryonic universities.

³⁹ Schmidt, op. cit., 186-193 and Malik, op. cit., 30.

⁴⁰ Pearcey and Thaxton, op. cit., 21-26.

⁴¹ Schmidt, op. cit., 244.

The names include Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) in human physiology; Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) in genetics; Nicolaus Copernicus (1475-1543), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) in astronomy. In physics: Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Georg Simon Ohm (1787-1854), André Ampere (1775-1836) and Michael Faraday (1791-1867). In chemistry, Robert Boyle (1627-1691), Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), George Washington Carver (c.1864-1943) and in medicine, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) and Joseph Lister (1827-1912).⁴²

It should be noted as well that the 19th to 21st century anti-God arrogance of some scientists continues to be deflated by certain God-pointing discoveries in the fields of biology/microbiology and astronomy.

In the field of biology/microbiology the most significant mouth-stopper and God-pointer is the intricate design and information-rich nature of all life forms, even so-called 'primitive' life-forms and at the basic level of a cell. There is no more rational explanation for the origin of such intricate design and information than, at least, an Intelligent Designer.

The alternative is to argue that both the design and the information evolved over time and by chance via mutations. There is a fatal flaw here though. Mutations may lead to benefits for an organism but always or almost always involve a loss or a diffusion of information, never a gain of information.

⁴² Ibid., 218-247.

Watch this clip which includes Richard Dawkins, Oxford's vitriolic atheistic scientist and author of *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*.⁴³

For those of you in the scientific world, get a copy of Lee Spetner's 1997 book *Not By Chance: Shattering the Modern Theory of Evolution* which thoroughly demolishes the central arguments in Dawkins' book.

But that's only the God-pointing evidence from biology. Astronomy's God-pointing evidence is also fascinating. The most abiding alternative to the biblical doctrine of a universe created in time by God has been the scientific notion that the universe is eternal, has no beginning and therefore needs no beginner.

In 1913, astronomer Vesto Slipher discovered that a dozen galaxies in the vicinity of earth were moving away from the earth at very high speeds, ranging up to 2 million miles per hour. This discovery led to the realization that the Universe was expanding which also meant that ***the universe had a beginning***.

The reaction to Slipher's discovery and the implications of that discovery for the origin of the universe provoked some odd reactions from scientists.

Albert Einstein in a letter to one of his colleagues said, "This circumstance [of an expanding Universe] irritates me."⁴⁴

⁴³ Video clip from *Biological Evidence of Creation* (American Portrait Films, 1998), shows Dawkins stumped by a question asking for one example of a mutation that has added information to the gene pool.

⁴⁴ Cited in Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2nd edition, 1992, 21.

Arthur Eddington, in 1931 said, "...the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me...the expanding Universe is preposterous...incredible...it leaves me cold."⁴⁵

Allan Sandage, another astronomer, said concerning the evidence that the Universe had a beginning, "It is such a strange conclusion...it cannot really be true."⁴⁶

The Cosmic Background Explorer satellite, in 1992, provided additional confirming information on the nature of the origin of the Universe. The findings of the satellite attracted the attention of major newspapers and TV programmes across the world.

George Smoot, project leader for the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite declared, "What we have found is evidence for the birth of the Universe...It's like looking at God."⁴⁷

Why don't we listen to the Bible? "In the beginning God created the heavens..." "Thou, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands." "The heavens declare the glory of God."

Astronomer George Greenstein in his book *The Symbiotic Universe* made this insightful comment, "As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the

⁴⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cited in Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 1993,19.

existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?”⁴⁸

The cutest comment from an astronomer though is from the book *God and the Astronomers* written by the agnostic Robert Jastrow. He says,

A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation...For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.⁴⁹

Law

In the realm of law it is hardly known that “[i]ndividual freedom and rights are most prevalent where Christianity has had the greatest impact”,⁵⁰ nor are human rights advocates often aware of the philosophical dilemma of defining and justifying *inalienable* human rights minus a transcendent and reliable/credible revelational source such as the Bible with its foundational doctrine of human beings *uniquely* created by *and in the image of God*.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cited in Ross, op. cit., 114-115.

⁴⁹ W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2nd edition, 1992, 106-107.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 259.

⁵¹ See the arguments for this view by John Warwick Montgomery, *Human Rights & Human Dignity*, Zondervan, 1986. 105-188.

On what other basis, but the concept of creation by and in the image of God could we, non-arbitrarily, elevate the interests of humans over the interests of other animals or plants or even inanimate objects?⁵²

If one operates with an evolutionary philosophical and scientific framework it will be difficult to assign essential or superior dignity to the evolutionary accident called ‘human being’—the result of chance, natural selection, mutations and time—and it would be impossible to escape the racism inherent in, and argued from, the evolutionary view that the earlier species of ‘humans’ were inferior to later species. Note carefully that the full title of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* is *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.

Elaine Pagels summarizes the issues.

Where, then, do we get the idea on which contemporary human rights theory rests: that ultimate value resides in the individual, independent from and even prior to participation in any social or political collective? The earliest suggestion of this idea occurs in the Hebrew account which describes Adam, whose name means “humanity,” as being created in the “image of God.”...This account implies the essential equality of all human beings, and supports the idea of rights that all enjoy by virtue of their common humanity.⁵³

The legally entrenched idea that no one is above the law had its genesis in an encounter between an emperor and a bishop in the 4th

⁵² Ibid, 208.

⁵³ Cited in *ibid*, 206.

century and got two other shots in the arm by the British Magna Carta in the 13th century and a bombshell of a book written by a clergyman in the 17th century.

In A.D. 390 some people in Thessalonica rioted, arousing the anger of the Christian emperor, Theodosius the Great. He overreacted, slaughtering some seven thousand people, most of whom were innocent. Bishop Ambrose, who was located in Milan—which was also where the emperor lived—did not turn a blind eye to the emperor’s vindictive and unjust behavior. He asked him to repent of his massacre. When the emperor refused, the bishop excommunicated him. After a month of stubborn hesitation, Theodosius prostrated himself and repented in Ambrose’s cathedral, bringing tears of joy to fellow believers.⁵⁴

The emperor too was under the law and Ambrose would not allow the emperor or others to forget that.

Nor can we forget the significant influence of the Church, through the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton and his Christian colleagues, on the British Magna Carta (the Large Charter) of 1215, which gave new rights to barons and the people in general and which also challenged the notion of the king being above the law.

The Rev’d Samuel Rutherford, a Presbyterian, wrote his *Lex, Rex: Or the Law and the Prince* in 1644. The main thesis, as implied in the title, is that the law is king, and so the king is *under* the law and

⁵⁴ Schmidt, op. cit., 250, and Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum, 1980, 105.

not above it, a notion that was regarded as treasonously contrary to the tradition of the 'divine right of kings'.⁵⁵

The Arts

Another area of the Church's transforming influence on societies is in the realm of the Arts, especially with reference to music and art. Though a somewhat subjective issue, if the average knowledgeable person is quizzed about 'the international greats' in music and art, in all likelihood the names of Christians would emerge: such as artists, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)⁵⁶, Michelangelo (1475-1564)⁵⁷, Rembrandt (1606-1669)⁵⁸, and musicians, J.S. Bach (1685-1750), Friedrich Handel (1685-1759), Franz Schubert (1797-1828) and Wolfgang Mozart (1756-1791).⁵⁹

There are other areas of societal life that have been transformed or challenged by the Church. In some of the areas we have explored, the Church now stands guilty of deliberate abandonment and must now reclaim or re-engage turf while in others she needs to redouble her efforts against a growing tide of secularism.

⁵⁵ See Francis Schaeffer's comments in his *A Christian Manifesto*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, Volume 5, Crossway Books, 1982, 473-476.

⁵⁶ Multimedia projection shows his 'Mona Lisa'.

⁵⁷ Multimedia projection shows his 'Madonna and Child'.

⁵⁸ Multimedia projection shows his 'The Prodigal Son Returns' and 'The Storm on the Sea of Galilee'.

⁵⁹ See Leland Ryken, 'Literature in Christian Perspective' and Edmund P. Clowney, 'Living Art: Christian Experience and the Arts', in D.A. Carson et al (eds.), *God and Culture*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993, 215-253; Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe*, Crossway Books, 1991; William D. Spencer et al (eds.), *God Through the Looking Glass: Glimpses From the Arts*, Baker Books, 1998; H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, InterVarsity Press, 1973.

The Church in the 21st century will need vision—the ability to detect and discern *what is* beneath *what appears*—as it intentionally engages modern societies in order to effect transformation within them.

The Church, in this information age, will need as well a much healthier appreciation of the cruciality of apologetics for our witness to the nations. What is apologetics? Let philosopher J.P. Moreland answer.

Apologetics is a New Testament ministry of helping people overcome intellectual obstacles that block them from coming to or growing in the faith by giving reasons for why one should believe Christianity is true and by responding to objections raised against it.⁶⁰

J. Gresham Machen makes a point worth pondering time and again, when he says,

False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervour of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here or there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas, which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.⁶¹

Transforming society will involve, among other things, obedience to the call to spiritual warfare in 2 Cor. 10.4-5, a call which is essentially one of using God-surrendered minds to effect the goal of tearing down strongholds or entrenched systems of thought that control minds and lives. How do we do that in a society according

⁶⁰ In *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, NavPress, 1997, 26.

⁶¹ Cited in *ibid.*, 76.

to the text? By demolishing arguments and anti-God arrogance and capturing every thought, every mind for Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

Book Review:

***THE STORY OF
JAMAICAN MISSIONS
How the Gospel Went
from Jamaica to the
World***

By Lloyd A. Cooke
Arawak Publications
(2013) Kingston, Jamaica

***Review by Dr Billy
Hall***

From Columbus to Cooke

Usain Bolt has immortalized in sports Jamaica's unique greatness. The nation's unique greatness in religion is there but is yet to be well known, much more immortalized. Certainly this is so in regard to Christianity from the perspective of the cross-cultural aspect of the church's witness.

However, this month a giant step forward toward Jamaica's greatness

in religion immortalized has been taken with a new book highlighting Jamaica's greatness in the spreading of the Christian message worldwide from Jamaica, by Jamaicans, beginning from shortly after Emancipation until today.

The author of this impressive documentation is a true 'son of the soil'. He is Lloyd Aloysius Cooke, whose father was an Anglican priest. Cooke did not become an Anglican Church Army Captain as he had seriously contemplated but providentially he became instead a cross-cultural missionary and today he has written in his mature years the most significant book on Jamaican involvement in cross-cultural missions.

He describes his book as "a labor of love" (page 632) and it would be difficult to deny that as a fact considering the nearly seven years it took him from conceptualizing to completing the challenge.

In this book his focus is defined clearly and argued persuasively. The book is about the work of the church when engaged in "the

pioneering task of planting the church in other cultures” (page 633). He sticks to that strongly stated steering position tenaciously and by so doing thereby his book ought to be regarded in the same category as that of Jamaica’s most eminent church historian, Baptist Pastor Horace Russell.

To refresh memories, Russell is the former Pastor of East Queen Street Baptist Church who in 1972 produced his trailblazing doctoral dissertation for Oxford University entitled: *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church: Jamaica Baptist Missions to West Africa in the nineteenth century*.

Surprising but true, no other Jamaican or any writer of any nationality worldwide seems to have since published any substantive work on the same subject. In this review, sticking to Russell’s purposeful direction, the only Jamaican academic writing on matters relevant to the church that bears any reasonable comparison is that of Dr. Las Newman, President of the *Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST)*, in Jamaica.

Dr. Newman’s highly significant doctoral dissertation was successfully submitted to the University of Wales Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in 2007. Incidentally, this dissertation is currently being edited for publishing. The title is, “*A Critical Analysis of West Indian Participation in the Western Missionary Enterprise in Western Africa in the 19th century, with special reference to their conception of mission*’.

So what is Cooke’s book about? The blurb on the back cover says that well. Cooke’s book is about “...how Jamaicans just out of slavery and their descendants, supplemented by others of immigrant stock from China, India and Europe, aided by their missionaries in Jamaica and their British Mission Societies, blazed a trail in a number of African countries”.

Cooke's swathe is wide for he includes in that blurb how enterprising Jamaicans "later also went to other Caribbean nations, to South and Central America, to the Panama Canal Zone, even to India, China and other parts of Asia and into Europe itself, preaching, teaching, healing, translating the Scriptures and printing books, all because of the love of Christ".

"For the love of Christ" indeed for Cooke's book is an enormous undertaking. It is about three times greater in length than what would be required normatively to produce a doctoral dissertation of say 100-thousand words. Cooke's book is 710 pages (including the introductory pages in Roman numerals). In regard to words, it is by rough estimate more than a quarter million words.

In addition the book has about 250 photographs (appropriately placed) a list of 95 abbreviations explained, and as well about a dozen Charts and Tables. The work is further enhanced by an apt and noteworthy scholarly feature and that is 'Time-lines' that frame concisely and cogently significant historical events and turning points in missions developmental history.

In regard to relevance historically, this book fills a tremendous historical hiatus or gap. The engaging story Cooke unfolds with distinctive focus creates for him a unique niche in historical writing on cross-cultural missions universally. Further, by the parameters described, of time period surveyed, and research depth explored, and research extent pursued, the work of Cooke exceeds in scope and span and substance the excellent pioneering dissertation of Russell; building on Russell's work while exceeding it by extending it.

Of course, much more work needs to be done regarding Jamaica's involvement in cross-cultural missions in the last two centuries. For example, Cooke indicates the need for more study and analysis of

Jamaica's foreign-field or cross-cultural missions neglect by churches today on the closing page of his Postscript (634).

He states further in his Postscript that while therefore he is impressed that "so much was done with so little for so long" he regrets current low involvement in cross cultural missions. He relates the weakness to far too many members in churches being "not aware of the present advance in world evangelization and thus are still uninvolved" (page 634).

Cooke's book certainly is a strong corrective measure to that declining reality in the 21st century and ought to be accorded due attention for among other things the diligence that went into the seven years of compilation. Cooke brings to this genre of missions history writing the rare contribution of an author having cross-cultural missions experience, as well as his wife in partnership professionally prepared and cross-culturally involved in Africa.

And apart from all factors already mentioned Cooke has brought to his writing an unmatched qualification beyond all other Jamaican writers of this kind of production and that is a lifetime of dedication to his missions vision, sparked initially by the late Dave Ho, perhaps the Caribbean region's most dynamic and accomplished missions organizer and motivator.

Not surprisingly then, Cooke dedicates this book to Dave Ho, who is described as his missions 'mentor'. He names Ho for this honor, along with his own family members who evidently would be integral to his sacrificial labors in serving on the field, and in the researching and writing of this book for decades until his 71st birthday last month.

However, the book while excellent is not perfect for there are some relatively minor matters. For example, the photos are on the whole

of poor quality, spelling errors occur, noticeably in the headline pages of 'Moravian missions' (Moravian), David Ho is in a caption Donald Ho (p.583). The reference to the bookstore ministry on page 576 should be 'Christian Literature Crusade' (CLC), the reference to Swallowfield Chapel ought to have been a Sunday morning attendance of 1500 and not 5-thousand persons, and Arminian theology ought not to be 'Armenian'.

But all such aside, this book is a monumental work that accounts for the impressive surge of Jamaican missionaries from shortly after Emancipation (1834-38), even though that initial surge in cross-cultural missions has had significant 'cooling off' in contemporary times.

What impresses much about Cook's book is the research. His research work as he describes such in the book is impressively extensive, intensive as well as investigative. He brings into focus a wide array of documents of vintage historical value that embellish his research with the many contacts he made with both living and literary sources as well as electronic. Not to mention his searching for artifactuals such as graves, signposts and building remnants, not found on any map.

Clearly this book is one of preeminence in the field of cross-cultural missions from Jamaica to the rest of the world; a monumental work of Jamaicans reaching out in cross-cultural missions during the last 160 years particularly, within the broad time span from Columbus to Cooke, and within the narrow academic perspective aspect and strategy necessary for cross-cultural missions.

Dr Billy Hall is a veteran Jamaican Journalist, Evangelist and Social analyst.

CJET-FM is a Canadian radio station. Licensed to Smiths Falls, Ontario, the station serves the Ottawa market broadcasting at 92.3 FM, with an adult hits format branded as Jack 92.3. CJET has studios located in Smiths Falls (as part of its license agreement), with auxiliary studios located with the Rogers Ottawa cluster at Thurston Drive and Conroy Road in Ottawa, while its transmitter is located near Carleton Place.

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