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

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**CORINTHIANS  
 6: 9-11 AS A  
 CARIBBEAN  
 RESPONSE TO  
 THE  
 HOMOSEXUAL  
 AGENDA**  
 by  
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### Cultural Background of the Recipients

As a centre of economic opportunity, the new Corinth was not only resettled by Greeks, but also attracted persons from other parts of the Roman Empire, including retired soldiers, freedmen from Rome, traders, entrepreneurs, and sailors. It was characterised by the typical moral decadence of a port city amidst which sexual immorality was rife. The realities of this can be seen in Paul's lengthy discussions regarding incest (5:1-13), prostitution (6:12-19), marriage (7:1-2, 5, 8-9), and his references to adultery and homosexuality in 6:9.

Although Corinth was governed under Roman law, culture, and religion, like much of the Empire, the Hellenistic influence was strong: Greek was the common language, and Greek religion, philosophy and culture pervaded the Empire. Hellenistic elevation of wisdom and a corresponding emphasis on rhetoric and philosophical argumentation prevailed, and gifted rhetors/orators were 'both admired and followed' like heroes. In the church at Corinth, misguided pagan views on wisdom (1:18-2:15) and the rallying of persons around different leaders so as to create factions (1:10-17, 3:1-4:21), demonstrate the manner in which this culture played out. In such an atmosphere of corporate disunity and dissension, the door was opened for competing and immature perspectives on many issues, including sexuality (5:1-12; 6:12-20). Greek culture and philosophy, adopted by the Romans, also endorsed homosexuality of various kinds. Paederasty, the most common form, had been an entrenched facet of Greek society. Outstanding Greek philosophers, orators and poets such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Plutarch and others – greatly admired by Roman society – had not only extolled the praises and virtues of paederasty in their writings but also engaged in paederastic unions themselves.<sup>1</sup> The practice was carried over into the multi-ethnic and pluralistic Roman Empire. Biting criticisms of paederasty are provided by Philo, Josephus and others roughly contemporaneous with Paul.<sup>2</sup>

Arguments that suggest paederasty was the only known form of homosexuality during the time of Paul, however, are erroneous. As early as circa 385-380 B.C., Plato's celebrated *Symposium* provided a striking appreciation of adult-adult mutuality in relationships, long-term commitments in which age was irrelevant, and concepts

<sup>1</sup> Boswell, 50-51, 345-56. De Young, 253.

<sup>2</sup> Fee, 243. Also De Young, 247-48.

which can only today be described as homosexual ‘orientation’ or ‘inversion.’<sup>3</sup> While some scholars over-emphasise the cultural unacceptability of an adult male engaging in the passive homosexual role as grounds to exclude any form but paederasty, there is nevertheless evidence of homosexual unions in which both the active and passive partners were far beyond boyhood and adolescence.<sup>4</sup> This was due to a departure from traditional sexual roles (passive vs. active) to more reciprocal erotic relations by the time of the early Empire; and “[m]any homosexual relationships were permanent and exclusive.”<sup>5</sup> The emperors Caligula and Nero (who both reigned during the time of Paul), were known not only for their homosexual unions, but for enjoying the passive homosexual role.<sup>6</sup>

Greek religious concepts were active and alive in the Roman Empire. The promiscuity of the Greek gods cannot be overlooked when analysing the Corinthian perspective on sexual morality, and the participation of the chief god Zeus in homosexual acts was significant to the cultural acceptability of homosexuality, as noted by Aristide in his *Apology*.<sup>7</sup> Greek religion also featured a dualism/disjunction between body (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*)—later widely perpetuated through Neo-Platonism.<sup>8</sup> This created a mindset where the body was free to engage in any kind of activity, since the spirit was all that mattered. Thus, sexual prudence was not considered relevant to spirituality, as can be seen in 6:12-19. Amidst this pagan background, the Corinthian congregation had been exposed to Old Testament teachings and the Law. These would have been introduced by Paul as constituting the word of God during his evangelistic outreach and pastoral ministry, and would have continued to be used in their gatherings, as in the other churches. This fact is evidenced by a number of direct quotes, paraphrases, and allusions, and the inclusion of the Law as a basis for Christian teaching (9:8-9).

### **Occasion and Purposes: Historical Reconstruction**

The Corinthian church had been birthed under the preaching of Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 18).<sup>9</sup> He remained with the new congregation for one-and-a-half years, and had left the church well established in the spring of A.D. 51 or 52.<sup>10</sup> Following

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<sup>3</sup> De Young, 189-91.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell, 81-82.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Boswell, 75 incl. n. 66; 81-82 incl. n. 98; 130 n. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, “Homosexuals or prostitutes?” 132-33.

<sup>8</sup> Carson and Moo, 445.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 421.

his departure, other leaders and apostles carried on the role of ministering to the church, with Peter and Apollos obviously contributing at one or more points in time (1:12, 3:22).

Some time thereafter, Paul was made aware of problems that had arisen in the church, in response to which he penned a first letter (the “previous letter” of 5:9, referred to as Corinthians A) that has not been preserved, but warned against associating with immoral people.<sup>11</sup> The content of the letter was evidently misunderstood and did not achieve its desired effect (5:9-12).<sup>12</sup> As he neared the end of his mission in Ephesus (c. AD 52 to c. AD 55),<sup>13</sup> Paul received further disturbing reports from Chloe’s household (1:11) and Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17), along with a letter from the church requesting his advice on certain matters (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). This information provided the framework for First Corinthians, which constitutes his second letter (Corinthians B) in attempting to resolve the issues plaguing the church. Among these problems are cases of immorality involving grave sexual misconduct, and an improper understanding of celibacy, marriage, and divorce.

First Corinthians is thus an occasional letter, written to address specific issues and persons (as opposed to a general, or ‘tractate’ letter).<sup>14</sup> It is not a circular correspondence providing general theological information. Paul’s statements and arguments are targeting specific and troubling issues at hand, and warnings such as that of 6:9-11 are absolutely not rhetorical as scholars such as Scroggs have charged. The so-called ‘vice list’ of 6:9-10 speaks to real people in terms of lifestyles they practiced before their conversion (6:11) with a warning to not revert to such behavior, or refrain from it if they already had reverted. Such behaviours – incest, litigation between believers, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality *et al* – are characteristic of the unredeemed and are unacceptable among those saved by Christ for the Kingdom of God (5:1, 9-11; 6:1-8).

Paul’s objectives were: (1) to provide clarity and godly correction to the Corinthians in areas where they were spiritually immature and lacking in understanding – one of which was sexual morality; and (2) to answer questions pertaining to the various matters on which they were seeking his guidance (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). The apostle aims to do so without compromise to the gospel and irrespective of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 415.

strong opposing opinion, all while trying to restore harmony in what had become a very divided congregation – a segment of which had also become disdainful of (or perhaps even hostile to) his leadership/authority as 1 Cor.4 suggests. Despite these problems, Paul evidently expected a favourable response from the Corinthians (his spiritual children, 4:15), and did not think it necessary to personally go to them (although it becomes apparent in Second Corinthians that further intervention, including a visit by Paul, eventually proved necessary).

### **Cultural Background of the Author**

The relative weight of Paul's Jewish, Hellenistic and Christian influences must be borne in mind in order to have a proper understanding of his thoughts.<sup>15</sup> Although born as a Roman citizen in the Hellenistic city of Tarsus, the apostle Paul's background is decidedly Jewish, not Greco-Roman, and is foundational to his views on all issues of life. An appreciation of this fact is crucial in understanding Paul's perspective on sexual matters in First Corinthians. Unlike the Greeks with their pantheon of gods who engaged in flagrant sexual promiscuity, homosexuality and general immorality, Paul knows of the one true God, through whom one clear standard for life – including morality – is revealed (Dover, 203).<sup>16</sup> His understandings of God and morality were first shaped by an upbringing in accordance with strict Jewish customs (Phil 3:5), and he lived as a proud and devout Pharisee prior to his Damascus experience (Phil. 3:6).

Aspects of this Jewish background carried over to Paul's Christian life and understanding. He continued to reject pagan immorality (Rom. 1:26ff.), and to regard the Old Testament as the Holy Scripture (Rom. 1:2; 4:3) – inspired of God, and thus still useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).<sup>17</sup> Any deviations from traditional Jewish perspectives concern Paul's more complete understanding of God and the Old Testament Scriptures in light of the revelation of Christ as both Jewish Messiah and Saviour of all mankind. The Law is incapable of providing righteousness or justification as per Judaism's perspective; justification is by faith in Christ, 'entirely apart from and in contrast to the works of the Law.'<sup>18</sup> As such, the finished cleansing, sanctifying and justifying work of Christ, which the Corinthians had appropriated by faith, declares them "saints" (1:2) and different from what they formerly "were" (6:11) – even as some

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<sup>15</sup>Ladd, 398.

<sup>16</sup> Dover, 203, in Wold, 193.

<sup>17</sup> Ladd, 401.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 404.

continued to struggle in the proper outworking of this faith in terms of sexuality and other conduct.

However, for those who wish to read into the principle of ‘justification by faith’ a complete abrogation or nullification of the Law, a proper understanding of the results of Paul’s encounter with the exalted Christ is necessary. ‘Saul was not converted ... from irreligion to religion, nor even from one religion to another, since he considered Christianity to be the true Judaism. He was converted from one understanding of righteousness to another – from his own righteousness of works to God’s righteousness by faith.’<sup>19</sup> Within the parameters of this revelation, his basic views on sexual morality, as shaped by the Old Testament, remain essentially unchanged.

In the debate surrounding the New Testament (Pauline) condemnation of homosexuality (1 Cor. 6:9-11; also Rom. 1:26ff., and 1 Tim. 1:10), those who claim that Paul would not have appealed to the Law (Lev. 18:23 and 20:13) and to the old (the Creation accounts, the Sodom account) in order to justify the new,<sup>20</sup> have entirely misunderstood the mind and theology of Paul. He is easily able to distinguish between the permanent, ethical aspect of the Law and its temporary ceremonial aspect<sup>21</sup> – the latter having functioned as divinely-based ethnic distinctions and/or as foreshadows of Christ (with homosexuality satisfying neither criteria). Thus, in 1 Cor. 7:19, circumcision is of no relevance, yet believers are exhorted to keep the law. ‘[Paul] never thinks of the Law as being abolished. It remains the expression of the will of God.’<sup>22</sup> This is evident from his frequent assertion that redemption in Christ enables believers in some real sense to fulfill/uphold the Law (Rom. 3:31, Rom. 8:3-4) and from his reference to specific commandments as ‘the norm for Christian conduct’ (Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 6:2).<sup>23</sup> In 1 Cor. 6:9-10, those who by their actions indicate that they have failed to recognise the perpetuity of the laws against homosexuality (or incest, adultery, and other forms of sexual immorality) have essentially rejected the rule (Kingdom) of God and, as a result, exclude themselves from the eternal community (Kingdom) of God.

### **Paul, the Letter to the Corinthians, and the Levitical Proscriptions**

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>20</sup> Boswell, 105.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 554.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 553.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 553-54.

Numerous linkages support the argument that Paul had the Holiness Code in mind as he responded to issues in the Corinthian church in chapters 5-6.<sup>24</sup> There is a common theme of “moral separation to God,” which includes issues of “distinction from the Gentiles (5:1; see also 6:1-6; Levit. 18:3, 24-30; 20:23) and future inheritance (*klēronomeō*, 6:9, 10; Levit. 20:23-24).”<sup>25</sup> The idea of moral separation in Leviticus 19-20 centres on the holiness of God and a resulting expectation of holiness on the part of His people – hence, the term “Holiness Code.” This is expressed as a call to “be holy” (Greek *hagioi*/Hebrew *qadōsh*) and in the declaration of the people as being sanctified/made holy by the LORD (Greek *hagiazō*/Hebrew *qadash*):

19:2 Be holy(*hagioi/qadōsh*) because I the LORD am holy (*hagios/qadōsh*).

20:7 Consecrate yourselves and be holy(*esesthe hagioi hoti hagos/qadash*<sup>26</sup>), because I am the LORD your God.

20:8 Keep my decrees and follow them: I am the LORD, who makes you holy/sanctifies (*qadash*) you.

20:26 You are to be holy(*hagioi/qadōsh*) to me because I, the LORD, am holy(*hagios/qadōsh*), and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

Paul’s references to believers in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and elsewhere in the epistle are reminiscent of these concepts (1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16-17; 6:1-2, and 19-20; see pp. 89-90 above), echoing the levitical call to live in a manner conducive to having been set apart (made holy/sanctified) by God. Holiness – the levitical term for the highest moral virtue – is established as the ground of even sexual conduct,<sup>27</sup> a principle that is reiterated in 1 Corinthians.

Other parallels to the Holiness Code in First Corinthians include:<sup>28</sup>

- (1) 1 Cor. 6:8, which reflects the law of loving your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18);
- (2) The ten vices of 1 Cor. 6:9-10, of which only drunkenness is not found in Leviticus 18-20
- (3) The literary pattern of incest (1 Cor. 5:1-13) followed by homosexuality (6:9-11) and prostitution (6:12-20), which

<sup>24</sup>De Young, 195-96.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>26</sup>*Hithpael waw consecutive Perfect 2nd person Masculine plural.*

<sup>27</sup>Wold, 99.

<sup>28</sup>De Young, 196.

parallels the pattern of incest and homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20.

- (4) Paul's disciplinary approach regarding the person engaged in incest, which is reflective of the *kārat* concept. According to the *kārat* penalty of Lev. 18:29, persons guilty of the sins listed, such as incest and homosexuality, were to be "cut-off" from the community of God (through banishment, execution, or direct divine judgment). In 1 Cor. 5:1-11, Paul similarly calls upon the church to enforce discipline by removing the guilty (defiled) individual from fellowship and handing him over to Satan so that his spirit might be saved (5:2, 5). Paul's discussion of incest in a context of sexually immorality (5:9-11), and the inclusion of the sexual immoral with the other categories of vices/immoral persons (6:9-10), allows for the disciplinary instructions regarding incest to function as a paradigm for dealing with persons engaging in other immoral acts, including homosexuals.<sup>29</sup>

'Paul's method of interpreting the Old Testament places him in the tradition of rabbinic Judaism.'<sup>30</sup>While we cannot be certain whether Paul became an ordained rabbi, he received rabbinical training in Jerusalem under the outstanding Jewish teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), and his letters betray thinking and argument like that of a Jewish rabbi. His exposition on incest in Chapter 5 and the stance to be adopted by the church uses rabbinic principles. This is significant, as the application of these principles therefore carries over to any other forms of sexual immorality mentioned in the immediate context, including adultery, homosexuality, and prostitution. The source of his views on sexuality would be based on the creation account and the regulations of the Torah which, as demonstrated above, would have included the proscriptions against homosexuality in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. Any suggestions that these would not have been in Paul's mind as he formulated his response to the Corinthians would be to ignore his fundamental moral compass. As Ladd states: 'Since Paul regards the Old Testament so highly as the word of God, we will not be surprised to find that his theological thought is grounded in Old Testament theology.'<sup>31</sup>This would include his understanding of anthropology,<sup>32</sup> inclusive of taxonomy and other issues that modernity would place under the social and biological sciences.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ladd, 401.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Although Paul's writings feature elements that can only have come from exposure to Greek thought and culture, including a style frequently reminiscent of stoic diatribe, and words that are particular to Greek religion and philosophy, his treatment of these terms does not carry the Greek religious ideas with which they were associated.<sup>33</sup> Pauline thought on the use of the body, the relationship of body to soul, his views of what is according to or against 'nature' (Romans 1), and the relation of these to sexuality and the unacceptability of homosexuality, are best interpreted against a distinctly Jewish – not Greek – background.

It is not likely that Paul would have received formal education in Greek philosophy and literature in light of his conservative Jewish family background.<sup>34</sup> His familiarity with Greek ideas and language is more likely to have come from informal exposure to the Hellenistic environment of Tarsus,<sup>35</sup> and from his missionary travels, which included lengthy sojourns in which he would have become familiar with each place and its people, and engaged in conversation over religious matters. Paul's Hellenized Gentile companions and friends (example, Luke, Titus, Gaius *et al*) would likely have added to his knowledge of the culture and philosophy by the time he wrote many of the epistles. Therefore, Paul was not necessarily influenced by Greek thought and philosophy as some scholars have claimed (example, Frederickson's uses Aristotle's discussion on lacking self control as the basis for interpreting Paul's use of *malakoi*, see pp. 27-28 above). Although he uses Greek terms, such use does not reveal a parallel adoption or approval of Greek religious ideas or philosophical perspectives. He instead uses the terms as *familiar grounds for discussion and reasoning* with his Gentile congregations; his objective is to steer their understanding towards the truth of God, which finds its ultimate revelation in the gospel of Christ.

Thus, with his Christian views on morality – including sexuality – being informed by the God of Judaism, we find that Paul explicitly rejects conventional worldly (Hellenistic) wisdom as having any part in the gospel of Christ he had imparted to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16, 3:18-20, 4:10; also "knowledge" in 8:1-3, 11; 13:2, 8). Such wisdom included [[a cosmological dualism and an anthropological dualism<sup>36</sup> – a disassociation of body (of the earthly realm) and spirit (of the heavenly or divine realm), which in turn allowed indulgence in lustful appetites. The outworking of such

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 435.

dualism is revealed in the homosexuality and other problems (sexual and non-sexual) that Paul has to address in his letter. No such disassociation exists in Hebrew thought, which understands the entire person as having been created by God. Thus, in Paul's writings, the body, soul, spirit, mind, and heart are not 'different separable faculties...but different ways of viewing the whole person.'<sup>37</sup> Most importantly, believers have been purchased by Christ; they entirely – body and spirit – belong to Him (6:19f. - temple). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to not be deceived, reminding them of the destiny that awaits homosexuals and all other wrongdoers. They had based their views on sexuality on 'the wisdom of this age [which] is incapable of bringing people to God (1 Cor. 2:6; 1:20) and must be abandoned as a way of salvation (1 Cor. 3:18).'<sup>38</sup>

Also coming from the Old Testament is the prophetic theme concerning the hope of the *Kingdom of God* (1 Cor. 6:9-10), which remains the basic structure of Paul's thought as a Christian,<sup>39</sup> and is a key motivating factor in his exhortations to proper conduct (6:11). 'The centre of Pauline thought is the realisation of the coming new age of redemption by the work of Christ..... Therefore, Paul's message is one of both realised and futuristic eschatology.'<sup>40</sup> He now understands that Old Testament prophecies of the messianic salvation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which were an eschatological hope associated with the Day of the Lord, have already begun in the old age.<sup>41</sup> There has been a partial fulfillment in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, which will reach its final fulfillment with the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8) when the parousia will occur, and every power hostile to God will be destroyed and creation will be fully freed from the consequences of evil and sin (1 Cor. 15:23-26). Then the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Until then, there is a tension between the already and the not yet; the indicative and the imperative. 'The life of the Spirit is both [present] experience and [future] hope; the Kingdom of God is both present and future.'<sup>42</sup>

For Paul, this means something to the believer in real and practical ways. While the present age continues, those "in...Christ" (6:11), upon whom the "ends of the ages" have arrived (*ta telē tōn aiōnōn*, 1 Cor. 10:11) must endeavour to no longer practise immorality as

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 499ff.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 412.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 402, 410, 412.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 409, 413.

the ungodly/the people of the world do (5:10; 6:9). ‘Their standards and motivations are different’<sup>43</sup> – they have been changed by the Holy Spirit (6:11) and are now the temple of God (6:19); and although complete victory over sexual and other sin has not yet been realised, the persevering believer in Christ is never defeated; victory has been assured in the age to come. In the interval between the two ages, the world and humankind at large remains in the grip of the old age with its burden of sin, evil and death; however, the blessings of the new age, which include the coming of the Spirit, have reached back to those in Christ.<sup>44</sup> As Ladd reminds, ‘Reception of the Spirit does not mean that the problem of the flesh is disposed of. There is a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in which the believer must learn how to let the Spirit have dominance.’<sup>45</sup>

### **Nature of Relationship between Author and Recipients**

Paul would have felt an especially close connection with the Corinthian church since it was formed and nurtured as a young congregation under his preaching and pastoral care. Given the length of time he spent with them (Acts 18:11), it is likely that he knew a good number of the congregants personally, some of whom are mentioned in his letter (1:11, 14, 16; 16:17). The expression of this apostolic, pastoral and personal relationship is seen in the terms he uses to address them – “my dear children” (4:14), “dear friends” (10:14), and “brethren/brothers and sisters” (used seventeen times).

The Corinthians are Paul’s spiritual children (4:15), a reality of which he is proud (15:31), and he carries a deep affection for them (16:24). They are “the result of his work in the Lord (9:1)” and “the seal of his apostleship (9:2). Paul understands that, in this capacity, he is a servant of Christ “entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed” (4:1). As such, he “must prove faithful” in carrying out his responsibility before God regardless of how unfavourably he may be judged (4:2-3), and this includes ensuring that their understanding of the gospel is not compromised in any way, and that they grow to maturity in Christ. It is this ominous task that accounts for Paul’s often harsh and cutting tone in the letter to the Corinthians. Quite apart from any personal disappointment he must have experienced as a leader who had invested much of his time, knowledge and self, the reports and questions that he received evinced a gross misapprehension of the gospel message in critical areas such as morality (holiness/sanctification) and therefore concerned/impacted the eternal welfare of many congregants.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 512.

Paul appeals to the Corinthians – some of whom were flouting his leadership – in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:10), sometimes emphasising his role as their apostle (9:2) and spiritual father (4:15). This is surely intended to evoke a response of obedience, that of a child to its father, and moreso, of disciples who need to rely on the apostolic authority and wise counsel of their leader in order to grow in spiritual maturity and truth. In other places, he warns against thinking or behaviour that arises from being deceived (3:18, 6:9). Paul's blunt and unapologetic warning of exclusion of unrepentant homosexuals and other ungodly persons from the Kingdom of God matches the tone of much of the letter. The spiritual immaturity of those who were taking pride in wrongdoing had to be confronted directly so as to prevent the sinful yeast of some members from leavening the whole batch of dough (5:6). The alarming eternal consequences of such behaviour had to be drummed home (6:9-10).

At the same time, the harshness of Paul's tone is not the real character of his letter. It is ultimately one of exhortation to holiness, encouraged by the assurance of the sustaining power of God (6:11, 10:13b), and the hope of final victory. He struggles to communicate his points to the Corinthians firmly, yet assure them that the motivation behind his firmness is the purest love. His letter closes with the conveyance of warm greetings (16:19-20), an indication of his plans to spend time with them (16:6-7) and, lastly, the declaration of his love for them (16:24). 1 Cor. 6:9-11 should not be read through a lens of harsh condemnation motivated by self-righteousness or judgmentalism, but through the lens of difficult-to-hear truth motivated by deep concern.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Following the salutation (1:1-3) and thanksgiving (1:4-9) is the first main structural division in the letter (1:10-4:21), in which Paul addresses reports received from Chloe's household concerning major factions in the church (1:11).<sup>46</sup> The next structural division (5:1-6:20) contains the pericope under examination, and likewise focusses on distressing reports to which Paul is compelled to respond, this time pertaining to instances of severe moral laxness in the church – a subject on which Paul had already written but was clearly misunderstood, 5:9-13).<sup>47</sup> The matters currently at hand concern a case of incest and failure to exercise proper discipline (5:1-18); lawsuits between believers before pagan courts (6:1-11); and sexual immorality stemming from a misunderstanding of spirituality in relation to the physical body by some members (6:12-

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<sup>46</sup>Carson and. Moo, 415.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 416.

20).<sup>48</sup>Structurally, Chapter 7 initiates a third division, wherein Paul’s attention shifts from these verbal reports to addressing a series of issues on which the Church itself wrote to solicit his guidance<sup>49</sup> (“now for the matters you wrote about,” 7:1 –see 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 11:17, 12:1, 15:1; 16:1). However, despite this distinction in how Paul organises his responses to the various issues impacting the Corinthian congregation, there is a noticeable theme throughout Chapters 5, 6, and 7 pertaining to the matter of sexual immorality/the sexually immoral, as indicated by the repeated occurrences of *porneia* and  *pornos*(see Table 1 below). Chapter 7 further provides the correct parametres for sexual relations, in contrast to the multiple expressions of of sexual immorality raised in Chapters 5 and 6.This clear line of thought defines Chapters 5-7 as the proper exegetical and hermeneutical context for the interpretation of 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

**Table 1: Occurrences of *Porneia* (Sexual Immorality) and *Pornos* (the Sexually Immoral) in 1 Corinthians 5-7**

5:1	<i>porneia</i>
5:9	<i>pornois</i>
5:10	<i>pornois</i>
5:11	<i> pornos</i>
6:9	<i> pornoi</i>
6:13	<i> porneia</i>
6:18	<i> porneian ... porneuōn</i>
7:2	<i> porneias</i>

***Contextual Issues: Lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:1-8) vs. Sexual Immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-13)***

The disjunctive coordinating conjunction  $\eta$  (“or”) in the opening words of 6:9 (“or do you not know...?”) places *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* (homosexuals) directly in the line of discussion regarding litigation between believers before pagan courts (6:1-8),<sup>50</sup> although this is not the pericope’s interpretive framework, as already indicated above and further demonstrated shortly. An important pattern is however established in 6:1-11 with four references by Paul to wrongdoers, wrongdoing or being wronged, using the adjective *adikos* (substantively meaning “the wicked, the ungodly, wrongdoers”) along with the associated verb *adikeo* (“to wrong, do wrong;” passive = to be wronged).<sup>51</sup> The linkage of the litigating parties in 6:1-8 to the wrongdoers listed in 6:9-10 should not be misconstrued as solely an attempt by Paul to expose the corresponding moral failure of the former individuals by way of

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Fee, 240, 242.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

comparison with a list of readily identifiable sinners. Although such a point is achieved, Paul's greater intention is to make an important distinction for the wider congregation between wrongdoers and the godly (the saints of 6:1-2) with respect to present behaviour and future judgment.

The description of the *malakoi*, *arsenokoitai* and other persons listed in 6:9-10 as *adikoi* ("wrongdoers") connects them directly with the ungodly/wrongdoers (*adikōn*) of 6:1; such wrongdoers constitute the people of the world (*kosmon...kosmos*) in 6:2 who will be judged by the saints (*hagiōn*), and who will not inherit the Kingdom of God at its eschatological consummation according to 6:9-10.<sup>52</sup> That Paul is addressing these warnings to the entire congregation, and not merely to the litigants, is supported by the consistent use of the second person plural "you" throughout 6:1-11, and by connections between the wrongdoers (*adikoi*) listed in 6:9-10 and problems discussed in preceding and subsequent portions of the letter (5:1-13, 6:1-8, and 6:12-20; also see 7:2ff). In fact, it is Chapter 5 that opens up the interpretive context for all the ensuing discussions of chapter 6 (vv. 1-8, 9-11, and 12-20).

Five of the ten categories of wrongdoers (*adikoi*) in 6:9-10 were previously used to define the unredeemed of the world (*kosmou*) in 5:9-10. The same five categories are repeated in 5:11, along with a sixth (drunkards), as behaviours unbefitting for believers (accompanied by a warning to not associate with believers who practise them). In all three lists, the sexually immoral (*pornos*) are included, thus tying the warning of exclusion from the Kingdom of God in 6:9-10 with the issues of 5:1-13 (sexual immorality, including incest); prefacing the discussion of 6:12-20 regarding prostitution and sexual immorality generally; and seamlessly leading into Paul's positive discussion on sexual relations within the context of marriage (in contrast to, and, as the alternative to, engaging in sexual immorality, 7:2). With respect to the four new categories in 6:9-10, three of are of a sexual nature (*moichoi* ["adulterers"], *malakoi*, *arsenokoitai*), and therefore tie back to the issues of chapter 5. The remaining category, *kleptai* ("thieves"), corresponds to the discussion in 6:1-8.

Throughout chapters 5 and 6, Paul is highlighting the behaviour of the ungodly (wrongdoers) as that which can no longer be practised or accommodated by the *hagiōi* (the "saints" who themselves shall judge the world (6:1-2). To maintain or approve such behaviour is to be defeated already (6:7), or to have been deceived (6:9). This warning applies to the passive and active homosexual partners, and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 242.

all the other sexually immoral. There is an exhortation to those who are erring in these ways (including those who fail to discipline the ones in error, 5:2-8, 6:5) to be “as you really are” (5:7), rather than what “you were” (6:11). The basis for such exhortation and the transformed life to which it refers is that “Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed” (5:7), and believers have been “washed...sanctified (*hegiasthete*, from *hagiazō*)... justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (6:11). As such, the believers now individually and corporately constitute the temple of God’s Holy Spirit (6:19 and 3:16-17 respectively), having been bought at a price, and must honour God with their bodies, which includes their sexuality (6:20).

The inclusion of “the sexually immoral” (*pornoī*) among the wrongdoers (*adikoi*), and the recurring emphasis on matters of sexual morality (5:1-13; 6:9-10, 6:12-18; 7:2; 10:8), extends the warning and exhortation of 6:9-11 even beyond chapters 5 to 6 to impact on discussions in Chapters 7 and 10 regarding marriage and food sacrificed to idols, respectively. In chapter 7, persons are encouraged to marry if they are so able “since sexual immorality is occurring” (7:2) and, in discussing idolatry in chapter 10, Paul encourages the believers to “not commit sexual immorality” as some of the people of Israel did (10:8).

The repetition of this subject matter indicates, clearly, the significance of sexuality in relation to sanctification and the sanctified people of God. It is certain that homosexuals, adulterers and other sexually immoral persons have been identified as wrongdoers in 6:9. The pericope of 6:9-11 is clear in its admonition that persons who persist in a homosexual lifestyle or pattern of behaviour will be excluded from God’s eschatological Kingdom – such practises are “pagan” and worldly (5:1-2, 9) and contrary to the behaviour of believers (5:9-11) sanctified and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (6:11, 19). The link between the wrongdoers/ungodly of 6:9-11 and 5:9-11, with the latter occurring in a wider discussion on incest, confirms the gravity and unacceptability of sexual immorality for those who are sanctified, along with its consequences: persons who are unrepentant of their sexual immorality are to be excluded from the present fellowship of believers (5:2, 5, 11). Judgment has already begun in effect in the present (within the community), but with a view towards the ultimate salvation of the erring believer at the final judgment (“the Day of the Lord,” 5:5). The attitude and disciplinary measures indicated in the case of incest provide a framework that can be applied by rabbinic interpretation or hermeneutical principles in

dealing with sexually immoral persons of all kinds, including the *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* of 6:9.

Therefore, while the pericope of 6:9-11 immediately follows a discussion on litigation between believers, it comes in the wider context of a discussion on flagrant immorality, which includes a long discourse on sexual matters that extends from Chapters 5 to 7, and even touches on Chapter 10. Issues raised are incest, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, the ability to master one's sexual desire, engagement, marriage, abstinence in marriage, divorce, and widowhood. It is worth noting that Chapter 7, rather than being just a discussion about marriage per se, is properly one about sexual relations (7:1). The only appropriate context for such is prescribed (marriage) if one finds that one's sexual desire is becoming problematic (7:2).

Chapter 7 is thus crucial to the interpretive context for 6:9-11, as it brings Paul's treatment of the subject matter to proper completion by providing the positive/correct perspective on sexual relations, in contrast to the sexual immorality dealt with in Chapters 5 and 6. Within marriage, sexual relations are indicated as normative and are encouraged (7:3-5), and restricted to the married partners who are indicated as male and female (7:2, 4 – echoing the unchanged divine prescriptive of Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:16). The options available to the unmarried regarding their sexual desires are also addressed (7:8, 36-37). Within this literary context, and given the historical reality of the prevalence of homosexuality at the time of writing, there would have been a perfect opportunity for Paul to discuss any possible merits of homosexuality as an acceptable option under particular circumstances, especially if the Old Testament principles had been nullified by the new covenant in Christ as some claim. (Contrast with how he highlights subtle distinctions and allowances when discussing meats sacrificed to idols; see also distinctions regarding the exercise of prophecy and tongues in corporate gatherings, abstinence from sex within and outside of marriage, and so forth). The fact that Paul makes no such allowance for homosexuality is especially significant in 7:9, where the only option offered to the unmarried in lieu of “burning with passion” is marriage. There is no mention of homosexual relations as a possible option for married or unmarried believers. On the contrary, it is qualification for exclusion from the Kingdom of God (6:9-10).

### **The Wider Context**

First Corinthians is structured topically around problems occurring in the church, and its overall purpose is to correct errors in thinking and conduct playing out as factions, immorality, poor fellowship

and the like. There is a definite tension between that which reflects the appropriate or ideal conduct of persons who are in Christ and that being actually demonstrated by the congregation. The letter thus addresses the issue of positional versus progressive sanctification, which is directly tied to an eschatological focus frequently found in Paul's letters.

Paul repeatedly emphasises the Corinthians' identity in terms of their positional relationship to Christ. This identity is stated in 1:2 – they are “those sanctified in Christ Jesus (*hegiasmenois en Christōi Iesou*) and called to be saints/His holy people (*kletois hagiois*).” The same terms are used in reference to the Corinthian congregation as being among the saints/the Lord's people (*hagiōn...hagioi*) who will judge the world in 6:1-2, and at the end of the pericope of 6:9-11 where Paul stresses the fact of their sanctification effected in Christ by the Spirit of God (*hegiasthete...en tōi onomati tou Kuriou Iesou Christou kai en tōi pneumatic tou Theou hemōn*). It is on the basis of this divine Trinitarian partnership and proclamation that God's Spirit can dwell among the Corinthian congregation (3:16) so that, corporately, it constitutes the holy (*hagios*) temple of God (*ho gar naos tou Theou hagios estin, oitives este humeis*, 3:17). However, each individual member is himself or herself a temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19), and thus even one's body and sexuality must be treated with holiness (honour, 6:20).

The Corinthians, who consisted of homosexuals, adulterers, and other kinds of sexually or otherwise immoral people indicated throughout the letter, have received positional sanctification as a gift (Christ Jesus, through God, has become their sanctification/holiness – *hagiasmos*, 1:30; see also 5:7 – Christ as the Passover Lamb has been sacrificed). This positional sanctification (6:11) is a component of realised eschatology (the “already”) which has ensued with the coming of the Kingdom of God with power into the present age (4:20). Accompanying it evidentially are the “first fruits” resurrection of Christ (15:20) and the anticipated outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:12).<sup>53</sup> “Already,” a moral separation ultimately reserved for “the Day of the Lord” is unfolding in the world (1:18) and a sifting is occurring even among those within the church (“divisions... show which of you have God's approval,” 11:19).<sup>54</sup> Judgment has begun in the present (16:22) and is in fact required from believers in relation to their own conduct individually and corporately (5:2-4, 12, 13b; 6:1, 2b, 5; 11:30-31).

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<sup>53</sup>Ladd, 408-9.

<sup>54</sup>See also Fee, 242.

The reality of sifting and judgment among believers provides evidence that perfect sanctification has not been attained. It belongs to the realm of future or unrealised eschatology (the “not yet”), which includes the general resurrection of the dead (15:22-23), and the final judgment of wrongdoers and angels (5:13; 6:2a, 3), and of the works, motives and conduct of believers (3:12-15, 4:3-5, 11:32). The Kingdom of God will have reached its full consummation when Jesus defeats death as the last of His enemies and hands over the Kingdom to God (15:24).<sup>55</sup> In this respect, the Kingdom is a future blessing yet to be inherited, as Paul states in 6:9-10 and 15:50. However, the wrongdoers of the world and those who claim to be believers but live as wrongdoers will have no part in the Kingdom (6:9-10).

The Corinthian church demonstrates the outworking of the tension between realised and future eschatology caused by the overlapping (or culmination) of the ages (10:11).<sup>56</sup> Paul states that their giftedness is proof that they are in Christ (1:5-6) and declares them sanctified and holy in spite of their present conduct (1:2). However, they are not maturing in character (progressive sanctification) because they fail to “live by the Spirit” as they should (3:1-3).<sup>57</sup> Their thinking and conduct are instead reflective of the unredeemed (“mere humans,” 3:3-4) rather than of their true identity/life in Christ.<sup>58</sup> Therein lies the reason for Paul’s frequent admonitions to the Corinthians saints: “be...as you really are” (5:7), “do not be deceived” (6:9), “do not be misled...Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning” (15:33-34).<sup>59</sup>

The grammatical tension between the indicative and the imperative in the warning-exhortation pairings of 5:6-8 and 6:9-11 (already shown to be closely linked) reflect the eschatological tension of the letter as it relates to sanctification.<sup>60</sup> As indicated above, both pericopae refer directly to the Corinthians’ positional sanctification (5:7; 6:11) in Christ, with statements expressed in the indicative tense. Forceful instructions for progressive sanctification are stated in metaphoric terms in the imperative tense of 5:7-8: “Get rid of the old yeast [old ways/conduct], so that you may be a new and unleavened batch – as you really are. Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed ... Let us keep the Festival...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”<sup>61</sup> Though no direct instruction is given

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<sup>55</sup>Ladd, 450.

<sup>56</sup>Ladd, 409-10; Fee, 242, see also 238.

<sup>57</sup>See also Ladd, 516.

<sup>58</sup>Fee, 245.

<sup>59</sup>See also Fee, 242.

<sup>60</sup>Ladd, 565; Fee, 247-48.

<sup>61</sup>Fee, 245.

in 6:9-11, the allusion to progressive sanctification and its implications for conduct are evident in the contrast between the ungodly listed in vv. 9-10 and Paul's assertion in v. 11, "And that is what some of you were. But...!" In both cases, the warnings issued (5:6; 6:9-10) must be viewed in light of the positive exhortations attached (5:7; 6:11), so that the focus rests on the promise and hope they contain.<sup>62</sup>

It has already been shown that sexuality is tied to sanctification. The body has become a vessel for the presence of the Holy Spirit and, as such, believers are to honour God with their bodies (6:20). So significant is the body as the temple, that it is impacted negatively by sexual immorality (6:16-20).<sup>63</sup> It also explains why an unbelieving spouse and the children produced through the sexual relations of such marriage covenants are sanctified in some manner by God because of the partner who has become a believer (7:14).<sup>64</sup> (Incidentally, homosexual unions, which are in defiance of the biblical marriage covenant, provide no such covering for children or the complicit partner.) Believers' sexuality must conform to their identity as people sanctified in Christ, and those who struggle with homosexuality must maintain an eschatological focus of perfect sanctification as a motivation.

The reality of the present struggle is not scoffed at by Paul. In chapter 10, following a warning not to engage in sexual immorality as Israel had done, he makes the statement that "no temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind" (10:13), which encompasses issues such as the intensity of desire and the seeming "naturalness" that often accompanies temptation. There is an implication of the overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable weight of temptation that one has to bear, and a clear reference that endurance may be the only option available; however, he also affirms the faithfulness of God in assisting the believer to endure it and even providing some form of relief ("God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it").

Chapter 10 shows that redemption (10:1-4) is not equated with transformation (10:5-10): a real gap exists between the already and the not yet, between the assurance of positional sanctification of 6:11 and the reality of what progressive sanctification may really look like (10:12).<sup>65</sup> The reality and intensity of temptation depicted

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<sup>62</sup>Fee, 239, 245.

<sup>63</sup>See also Ladd, 508-9.

<sup>64</sup>See also Ladd, 564.

<sup>65</sup>See also Ladd, 563-65.

in the present life must be respected by both the individual believer and the rest of the congregation. The overarching principle for dealing with those struggling with homosexuality is empathy and perseverance, with hope, borne of love which is personified in chapter 13.

The thread of realised versus future eschatology links the earlier portions of the letter to chapter 13's discussion regarding the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit received in 1:7, which chapter 12 explains are for the nurturing of the church as the body of Christ (12:7ff.). Spiritual gifts themselves are limited/have limitations because they operate "in part" (13:9, 12) within the sphere of realised eschatology which is incomplete, partial, imperfect (13:10).<sup>66</sup> Their use must therefore be exercised in love (13:1-3), for love exposes our motives and thus best governs our conduct (10:4-7). As such, love never fails and (along with faith and hope) will remain when the fullness of things have come to pass ("completion, perfection," 13:10).<sup>67</sup> If this is true in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, then all things related to the body of Christ in the present time must be executed within the context of love, such as conflict resolution (6:8), the decisions we make in exercising our rights and how this may negatively affect others (8:9-13; 10:23-33), the manner in which we treat and fellowship with others (11:4-10, 17:22), and the discipline of persons caught in sexual immorality (5:5-6).<sup>68</sup> The rule is love and even judgment is centred on it in the form of concern for the ultimate welfare of the sinning believer. Even the harsh directive to exclude the guilty and unrepentant party from fellowship ("hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh") is done from a motivation of love with the faith and hope that "his spirit will be saved" at the final judgment (5:5).

### HERMENEUTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As the church seeks to minister in the Jamaican environment, especially in light of the growing pressures for "gay rights," a number of applications arising from the grammatical, historical and literary analyses of 1 Cor. 6:9-11 should be borne in mind.

1. The ethical pluralism of Graeco-Roman society makes the message of the pericope directly applicable to the modern situation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>See also Ladd, 409-10.

<sup>67</sup>See also Ladd, 581.

<sup>68</sup>See also Ladd, 567, 581; see also Fee, 238 ref.

<sup>69</sup>Thiselton, 452.

2. The prohibition against homosexuality in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is trans-temporal and trans-cultural. It therefore cannot be compromised or tailored due to changing worldviews and scientific theories (or realities) about natural orientation. The warning “Do not be deceived” is more applicable than ever before.
3. Exclusion from the Kingdom of God is primarily concerned with habituated actions or a practised attitude. A homosexual orientation would not in itself be grounds for exclusion from the Kingdom. However, *practising* homosexual behaviour based upon that orientation is condemned as unrighteous. The church will need to know how to accept and deal lovingly with those who seem to be so oriented but are celibate or committed to upholding the Biblical perspective, versus dealing firmly with those who arrogantly parade their sin (as per case of incest in 1 Cor. 5).
4. The prohibition of homosexuality is listed with eight other dispositions, all with an equal penalty. It receives no greater emphasis than the other eight.<sup>70</sup> Thus: ‘[A]ny persistent activity cited here should be regarded on an equal footing when issues of church membership, ordination, or related question are discussed. Constraints are laid upon heterosexual desire, and upon desire for ever increasing power and possessions, as much as upon same-sex relations.’<sup>71</sup>  
The Jamaican church must address its hypocrisy about the way it treats homosexuality as against other sins.
5. The theological high point of the pericope is the redemptive possibilities available through Jesus Christ (v. 11). The Jamaican church has failed to focus on this at more than a superficial level and has instead focused primarily on the admonition of vv. 9-10.
6. Even if there are issues of orientation, it must be communicated that there is room and responsibility for change (v. 11). The opportunity available to “heterosexual” sinners and all the other sinners of 9-10 is equally available to “homosexuals”: ‘The claims often made that “the issue of ‘homosexuality’ – psychosexual orientation – simply was not a biblical issue” are confused. Paul addresses every form of “desire,” whether heterosexual or materialistic, and distinguishes between passionate longing and action (cf. 7:9). It is true that

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 451-452.

“homosexual orientation” does not feature as a phenomenon for explicit comment, but to dismiss the parallel, e.g., between heterosexual desire and an illicit habituated heterosexual relationship is itself to isolate same-sex relations from other ethical issues in a way which such writers as Furnish, Scroggs, Boswell, and Nelson rightly deplore.<sup>72</sup>

7. The link between 1 Cor 6:9-11 and the Levitical passages and the matter of holiness reveal a large part of the transformation that a person struggling with issues of homosexuality will have to face concern: (a) submission to the decrees of the Lord; (b) that this is a matter of choice; (c) that they have already been consecrated as ‘holy’ and therefore what they are dealing with is the outworking of that new identity (progressive sanctification).
8. The doctrine of future eschatology provides a basis for sustained hope for those persons who face greater difficulties with their homosexuality, as it focuses on the ultimate victory over sin that is guaranteed to believers. The intensity of the conflict between their natural desires and the desire for holiness/purity is an outworking of the tension between ‘the already’ and the ‘not yet,’ caused by the overlapping ages. Viewed in this light, the internal struggle they experience should serve as a motivation to persevere rather than as cause for despair.
9. Since the thread of realised versus future eschatology links 6:11 and earlier portions of the letter to chapter 13’s discussion regarding the temporal use of the gifts of the Spirit received in 1:7, which chapter 12 explains are for the nurturing of the church as the body of Christ (12:7ff.), the principle of love may be upheld in dealing with persons struggling with homosexuality. (Love however does not equal compromise.)
10. Part of love involves patience in allowing time for transformation. Richards explains:

Immorality was accepted as a part of the Corinthian life-style. These patterns of thought, these old passions and desires, were sure to appear again and again. .... In a world like theirs and ours, in which the “rights” of the individual are stressed while old distinctions between

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

right and wrong are blurred, there are sure to be times when immorality and other kinds of sin affect even the church of God. The old ways of thinking die hard. Transformation, while real, is a gradual and progressive process of change. On the way to Christian maturity, both individuals and a local church family can falter.<sup>73</sup>

11. Stott, who also recognises the link with Chapter 13, elaborates on how the triad of faith, hope and love are indispensable to both the person struggling with homosexuality and the church that is trying to walk with him/her. 'FAITH is our human response to divine revelation; it is believing God's Word.'<sup>74</sup> "[F]aith accepts God's standards which declare that "the only alternative to heterosexual marriage is singleness and sexual abstinence...."<sup>75</sup> Although the secular world considers sex as essential to human fulfillment and therefore charges it as cruelty "to expect homosexual people to abstain from homosexual practice" (resulting in "frustration...neurosis, despair and even suicide"), the Bible declares that this is not so<sup>76</sup>(see discussion in 1 Cor 7 re: marriage and celibacy). As Stott points out, "Jesus Christ was single, yet perfect in his humanity."<sup>77</sup>Therefore, if the Christian by definition is a follower of Christ and becoming more like Him, then it is clearly "possible to be single and human at the same time!"<sup>78</sup>

It is this truth/reality, Stott elaborates, that causes Paul to warn in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 that "homosexual offenders will not inherit God's Kingdom" and to go further to declare "And that's what some of you were," indicating the source/mode of the transformation in v. 11. Stott reminds that the same warning and encouragement applies "to the millions of heterosexual people who are single."<sup>79</sup> However, we cannot "call ourselves Christians and declare that chastity is impossible."<sup>80</sup>(Paul himself, as indicated in 1 Cor. 7:7, was unmarried and celibate.)Although "[i]t is made harder by the sexual obsession of contemporary society," to deny the

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<sup>73</sup>Larry Richards, *The Early Church in Mission, Studies in Acts, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Corinthians*. Bible Alive Series (Eglin, Illinois: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1977), 76.

<sup>74</sup>Stott, 38.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

power of God's grace "is to portray Christians as the helpless victims of the world, the flesh and the devil, to demean them into being less than human, and to contradict the gospel of God's grace."<sup>81</sup>

'HOPE' relates to more than "self-mastery," and concerns expectations of the possibility for a "reversal of ... sexual bias," which in turn is dependent upon what we believe is the cause ("aetiology") of the homosexual condition.<sup>82</sup> On the basis of what is perceived to be the cause(s), the expectation of a "cure" typically falls into "three categories – those who consider healing unnecessary, and those who consider it possible [e.g., Dr Elizabeth Moberly] or impossible"<sup>83</sup> – e.g. D.J. West, in whose view existing treatments and programmes have insubstantial success in reducing homosexuality, and who "pleads for 'tolerance', though not for 'encouragement', of homosexual behaviour."<sup>84</sup> Stott challenges that such views are "the despairing opinions of the secular mind," and that as Christians, we must "believe that at least some degree of change is possible," since we "know that the homosexual condition, being a deviation from God's norm, is not a sign of created order but of fallen disorder." We therefore cannot "acquiesce in it or declare it incurable."

Stott also outlines certain issues to bear in mind regarding the healing of homosexuals (based on first-hand testimonies from True Freedom Trust, Exodus International, and other ex-gay ministries in the United States):

- (i) Deliverance from a homosexual inclination/change towards heterosexual orientation is not necessarily an overnight experience.

Tim Stafford in the 18 August 1989 edition of *Christianity Today* describes his investigation into several [[ex-gay ministries]]. His conclusion was one of 'cautious optimism'. What ex-gays were claiming was 'not a quick 180-degree reversal of their sexual desires' but rather 'a gradual reversal in their spiritual understanding of themselves as men and women in relationship to God'. And this new self-understanding was 'helping them to relearn distorted

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 42.

patterns of thinking and relating. They presented themselves as people in process...<sup>85</sup>

- (ii) '[C]omplete healing of body, mind and spirit will not take place in this life. Some degree of deficit or disorder remains in each of us.'<sup>86</sup> (This is clearly demonstrated in the letter to the Corinthians, including the "wrongdoers" of 6:9-10.) However, the 'confident hope' of complete regeneration 'sustains us.'<sup>87</sup> Citing Romans 8:22f, Stott explains that at the second coming of Christ 'our bodies are going to be redeemed; sin... [is] going to be abolished;.... we shall be finally liberated from everything which defiles or distorts our personality. And this Christian assurance helps us to bear whatever our present pain may be. For pain there is, in the midst of peace.'<sup>88</sup>

Finally, Stott discusses how the LOVE that is essential to reorientation of the homosexual "is just what the church has generally failed to show to homosexual people."<sup>89</sup>

"Jim Cotter complains bitterly about being treated as 'objects of scorn and insult, of fear, prejudice and oppression'. Norman Pittenger describes the 'vituperative' correspondence he has received, in which homosexuals are dismissed even by professing Christians as 'filthy creatures', 'disgusting perverts', 'damnable sinners' and the like. Pierre Berton, a social commentator, writes that 'a very good case can be made out that the homosexual is the modern equivalent of the leper'. Rictor Norton is yet more shrill: 'The church's record regarding homosexuals is an atrocity from beginning to end: it is not for us to seek forgiveness, but for the church to make atonement.'<sup>90</sup>

Stott emphasises that the "the majority of homosexual people are probably not responsible for their condition (though they are, of course, for their conduct)" and as such "deserve our understanding and compassion (though many find this patronizing), not our rejection"<sup>91</sup>. He cites Richard

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 46.

Lovelace – who “calls for ‘a double repentance’, namely ‘that gay Christians renounce the active lifestyle’ and that ‘straight Christians renounce homophobia,’ ” and Dr. David Arkinson – who chides that “We are not at liberty to urge the Christian homosexual to celibacy and to a spreading of his relationships, unless support for the former and opportunities for the latter are available in genuine love.”<sup>92</sup> Stott elaborates:

“At the heart of the homosexual condition is a deep loneliness, the natural human hunger for mutual love, a search for identity, and a longing for completeness. If homosexual people cannot find these things in the local ‘church family’, we have no business to go on using that expression<sup>93</sup>.... I do not think there is any need to encourage homosexual people to disclose their sexual inclinations to everybody; this is neither necessary nor helpful. But they do need at least one confidante to whom they can unburden themselves, who will not despise or reject them, but will support them with friendship and prayer; probably some professional, private and confidential pastoral counsel; possibly in addition the support of a professionally supervised therapy group; and (like all single people) many warm and affectionate friendships with people of both sexes.”<sup>94</sup>

As Michael Vasey – *Strangers and Friends*, points out: ‘Friendship is not a minor theme of the Christian faith’ he writes, ‘but is integral to its vision of life.’<sup>95</sup>

Stott clarifies his position about the local church being “a warm, accepting and supportive community” to avoid any misunderstanding:

“By ‘accepting’ I do not mean ‘acquiescing’; similarly, by a rejection of ‘homophobia’ I do not mean a rejection of proper Christian disapproval of homosexual behaviour. No, true love is not incompatible with the maintenance of moral standards. On the contrary, it insists on them, for the good of everybody. There is, therefore, a place for church discipline in the case of members who refuse to repent and willfully persist in homosexual relationships. But it must be exercised in a spirit of humility and gentleness (Galatians 6:1f); we must be careful not to discriminate between men and women, or between homosexual and heterosexual offences; and necessary

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

discipline in the case of a public scandal is not to be confused with a witch-hunt.”<sup>96</sup>

He summarises:

“Perplexing and painful as the homosexual Christian’s dilemma is, Jesus Christ offers him or her (indeed, all of us) faith, hope and love – the faith to accept both his standards and his grace to maintain them, the hope to look beyond present suffering to future glory, and the love to care for and support one another. ‘But the greatest of these is love’ (1 Corinthians 13:13).”<sup>97</sup>

### CONCLUSION AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This article has demonstrated that, despite revisionist scholars’ best efforts to prove otherwise, the Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitaias* used in the context of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 are accurately translated by the modern English word “homosexuals,” or by clearly related phrases and terms over the centuries. Attempts to offer alternative interpretations or to suggest a level of ambiguity that would render the passage useless to discussions about homosexuality are easily overturned upon proper historical, literary, exegetical and linguistic examination. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 is seen to uphold the traditional view of homosexuality as sin and its prohibition is shown to be trans-temporal, trans-cultural, and without exception, regardless of mutuality of age, affection, consent/willingness, or commitment. As such, the accompanying warning that homosexuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God is to be taken seriously. Further exegetical analysis indicates that this warning pertains to those who engage in a willful/unrepentant, persistent homosexual lifestyle, or embrace and defend their homosexual desire/behaviour as normative, in contradiction of the word of God.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

**THE  
RECEPTION OF  
THE SERMON  
ON THE  
MOUNT IN A  
CARIBBEAN  
CONTEXT:  
MATTHEW 5:4**

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**Introduction**

The Caribbean consists of a diverse grouping of countries made up primarily of islands and includes a few mainland territories, which together may be categorized linguistically as Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic and Dutch-speaking. Its history is closely connected to the transatlantic slave trade and our rich and diverse cultures are reflective of the territories from which our peoples originated. Furthermore, our identity and self-understanding have been greatly impacted by these origins. The Caribbean shares a unique horizon in the history of influence of the Sermon on the Mount. A full study would be required to explore the reception and actualization of this portion of the Scriptures in the history of the Caribbean from the coming of Christianity to the Caribbean through the European colonizers up to the present time. This period covers over five centuries of history including colonization of Caribbean territories, slavery, indentured labour, postcolonization and neo-colonization.

Bob Marley's song "Zion Train" in which he wrote, "Don't gain the world and lose your soul, wisdom is better than silver or gold" stands within the history of reception of Matthew's Gospel (cf. Mt. 16:25-26). Marcus Garvey's typological reading of Matthew 3: 1 in the face of social injustice is insightful:

If the enemy could only know that Marcus Garvey is but a John the Baptist in the wilderness, that a greater and more dangerous Marcus Garvey is yet to appear, the Garvey with whom you will have to reckon for the injustice of the present generation.<sup>1</sup>

The writer of the 1968 reggae song "The Beatitude" sung by The Uniques, reflecting on the hurt of fellow Jamaican brothers, who he judges to act wickedly, and what he perceives as the strength of the wicked brother, recounts the beatitudes on the meek, poor, and merciful, appealing to God not to forsake him. He reworks the beatitudes on the poor and meek so that the kingdom is promise to the meek and the poor shall see God. The writer's selection may be a reflection that he sees himself as meek, poor and merciful and his desire to know mercy, see God, and possess the promise of the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert A Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 313.

kingdom in the face of social injustice. For the writer, it is the poor rather than the poor in spirit who shall see God, providing hope and significance to the poor of his community.

Gregory Isaacs in his struggle with poverty sang a song entitled “Blessed are the Poor” and Bob Marley sang the number “Judge Not” stemming from the prohibition in Matthew 7:1. In Messiah Dread’s song “wolfes” the wolf in sheep’s clothing perform “dirty works,” while the sheep of the good shepherd “see reality.” In the song a connection is made between the saying on the wolf in sheep’s clothing and the good shepherd of John 10:11. Moreover, the wolves are not merely teachers or speakers but they are also doers. The boastful speech of the wolves and their actions are the fruit. For the songwriter the sheep must be careful who they trust in the world. In modern scholarship there have been suggestions of a literal reference for the sheep’s clothing in the background of the text. The song “wolfes” provides one such literal connection; the dreadlocks. The wearing of dreadlocks is an outward sign of identifying with the ‘sheep’ and so serves as the outward mark of deception. The parable of the two builders features in the song Love is the Light done by Horace Andy and Big Youth where it serves to reinforce the exhortation to do what is right guided by the light of love.

The Scriptures have provided Caribbean music and reggae in particular with a landmine of content in its expression. The Sermon on the Mount has featured in this trend and continues to exert an influence in its own right on the self-understanding, moral outlook and actions of Caribbean people struggling with the existential realities of life within the Caribbean context. The reception of the Scriptures remains, in the main, unexplored territory in Caribbean scholarship and therefore remains a wide open field for major contributions to theological and biblical studies and Caribbean theology in particular. This paper seeks to make an entrance into a very complex field of study by illustrating how a single verse of Scripture in the Sermon on the Mount has influenced readers in a particular Caribbean context. Much space has been given to analyzing the history of effects of the Sermon on the Mount on the early church. It is, therefore, appropriate that a case study of how this works in a modern Caribbean context also be engaged. This allows for our unique horizon in the history of influence of the Scriptures to be explored and also serves as a demonstration of how contemporary readers of Scripture in the Caribbean can do so with a historical consciousness of the interpretation and actualization of the same text in the ancient church. That is to read with an understanding of our own place in the history of influence of the text and how that history has impacted on our encounter

with the text. Moreover, it validates both the ancient reader and the contemporary Caribbean reader as it brings both parties together at the same table, from different contexts, to enter into a conversation on the canonical text. That is to read, think, and experience with the ancient writers but with a full acknowledgement of the realities that make up the Caribbean.

Another important justification for the study of the influence of Scripture on modern Caribbean society is that it allows us to reflect on the impact of the Scriptures. One can examine both positive and negative impact that provides important insights beneficial towards facilitating more a constructive employment of the Scriptures in building more equitable and just Caribbean societies. The paper explores the reception of the second beatitude in Matthew's series, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt. 5:4) in the Evangelical Church of the West-Indies in St. Lucia. This verse has been selected primarily for two reasons. First, the beatitude is very open and allows for an inclusion of all sorrows in the world. In that sense it allows much scope for a reflection on the oppressive realities that have faced and continue to confront Caribbean people. Secondly, the history of the Caribbean people up to the present has been marked with persistent mourning situations. Such mourning includes the displacement of individuals from the African continent through the transatlantic slave trade, the subjugation of the indigenous Caribbean people, and the oppressive conditions faced by indentured labourers from Asia. These mourning situations have had a profound impact on Caribbean realities and in a sense gave way to new mourning situations. One can, with good reason, say that as a Caribbean people we have experienced great sorrow and yet continue to demonstrate remarkable resistance and resilience. In light of this, the verse captures much of the emphasis of Caribbean theology and serves as an ideal platform on which to engage in reflection of Caribbean reality in light of the Scriptures. The verse speaks with a great degree of relevance and potency to Caribbean realities and struggles and provides much hope for those who mourn. Important for us here is examining how the key words 'blessed', 'mourn' and 'comforted' are interpreted. Furthermore, we will also look at the understanding of timing of the promised comfort and assess the usage of the text within the church in focus. A reading of the text, which takes into consideration the unique circumstances of the Caribbean region, will be presented also. This is done with the understanding that Caribbean people from a position of our unique location and self-understanding form part of the rich history of influence of the Sermon on the Mount but also that we have been influenced by that history as our horizon has been shaped within a wider web of a history of influence that goes way back into the

early church's reception and actualization of the texts found in the Sermon. A major factor in this web that we speak of is the influence of the North Atlantic missionary on the interpretation and actualization or non-actualization of the text. It is also with the understanding that one is dealing with a complex web of the history of the influence of the Bible as texts influence how other texts are interpreted and realized in the thoughts and actions of any people.

The analysis is based on responses obtained from church leaders of the Evangelical Church of the West-Indies, St. Lucia. These leaders are pastors, elders, and members of church boards of the various local churches. The reception and actualization of the text by the leadership of the church serves as a robust indicator of the influence of the text in the wider church organization and also reflects how the text will continue to exert influence in the church.

Table:		Demographic				data
Variable		Frequency		Percentage		(%)
Sex	Female	4	15.4	Male	22	84.6
Age	30 and below	0	0	31-49	14	53.8
				50 and above	12	46.2
Ministry Experience	1-5	1	3.8	6-10	5	19.2
	16-20	5	19.2	20+	11	42.3
Total		26	100			

The church in keeping with trends within the wider Caribbean has a largely male leadership responsible for providing oversight and decision-making. This is further reflected in our church's General Council meetings, which are largely attended by men with very little participation by women at the highest level of decision making for the church organization. The underlying influence is the general belief that God has chosen men to lead and, further, to preach. The table above provides the demographic data collected from the participants in the survey.

### Reading and Preparation

All the participants in the study indicated that they had read the second beatitude, Matthew 5:4. This is not surprising for persons who fall within the evangelical tradition, which places a great emphasis on the Scriptures as the Word of God essential for faith and practice. The Bible continues to play a central role in Christian ministry and believers are regularly encouraged to read the text therein as part of their Christian devotion and the maintenance of a healthy spiritual life.

The reformation thrust initiated by Martin Luther to make the Scriptures more accessible to the common person had taken root in St. Lucia and the Caribbean among protestant churches. By the time the work was started in October 1949 to establish the Evangelical Church of the West-Indies in St. Lucia the first believers were given access to Bibles for discipleship and spiritual formation. In contrast to this, the Roman Catholic Church established in 1719 as a result of the French influence and which in 2010 constituted 72.5% of the country's population<sup>2</sup> continued to deliver the mass in Latin. It was not until the approval of the Constitution of Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) in 1963 paved the way for the epistle and Gospel for the mass to be read in the vernacular.<sup>3</sup> Even with such allowances and the eventual delivery of the mass in English, large proportions of the population spoke largely in St. Lucia Creole. This would have been and continues to be an influential factor in the ministry of the Evangelical Church of the West-Indies in St. Lucia, but for those who were able to read there was already greater access to the Scriptures in comparison to followers of the Roman Catholic Church.

With the general accessibility to the Scriptures from the early beginning, there has been the underlying assumption that all believers can read and understand the text of the Bible. The result is a high level of self-confidence among the leadership about its ability to interpret and appropriately apply the text of Scripture. This confidence is also reflected in relation to the reading and actualization of the second beatitude. Close to seventy percent (69.2%) reported that they would need little to no help in preparing

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<sup>2</sup> J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann, ed., *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, 2nd ed. (California: ABC—CIIO, LLC, 2010), 2504.

<sup>3</sup> "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy-Sacrosanctum Concilium," Vatican, 21 November 1964, accessed 24 March, 2016, <http://www.vatic.va>.

to use this text, the majority (61.5%) indicating that they would need little help. There is a tendency of oversimplifying the tasks of reading, understanding and application of Scriptures in general. The level of expertise may not always be consistent with this level of confidence.

### **Prior Influence**

A small percentage (7.7%) of the respondents indicated that they had not read material on the text or heard something about it. The greater majority reported that their understanding of the text had been influenced by something they had read or heard, with 65.4% indicating a moderate to great level of influence: moderate (38.5%), great influence (26.9%). A much smaller percentage (26.9%) admits to little influence on their understanding from prior exposure to commentary or exposition on the text. In the case where there is no prior outside exposure to the text, the literary context of the Bible is expected to play a greater level of influence on a reader's interpretation. The reader's interpretation of other text using similar words becomes one of the major lens through which understanding is formed. For those with little prior exposure to prior interpretations this will work to a lesser extent.

The main factor impacting on the understanding of Scripture within the ECWI at the early beginning and for much of its history was the North American missionary as pastor and scholar. These missionaries trained at North American seminaries and bible colleges, under the influence of European and North American scholarship, interpreted the Scripture for the people and instructed them how to live out the implications of the text in the Caribbean context from a North-American perspective. Ashley Smith notes:

Caribbean historians, political scientist, sociologist and economist are all agreed that what they refer to as “missionary” Christianity has been a major factor in the reinforcement and perpetuation of the domination of the non-European Caribbean man by his brother from the European continent, Great Britain and North America.<sup>4</sup>

A close companion of the missionary scholar was the bible commentary. Instead of empowering leaders in reading strategies to meaningfully engage the Scriptures, commentaries were provided as the easy tool to gain understanding. Despite the great benefits that those commentaries written by European and North-

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<sup>4</sup>Ashley Smith, *Real Roots and Potted Plants*, rev. ed. (Mandeville, Jamaica: Eureka Press, 2002), 10.

American authors provide, a major drawback was the disempowerment of the Caribbean readers to interpret the text for themselves and to arrive at meaning for today from a Caribbean perspective. Today, this trend continues largely unabated as Caribbean leaders, speakers and writers continue to depend in large part on these same commentaries for understanding rather than coming into a dialogue with them. The results are that the voices heard in our pews continue to be the voices of foreign interpreters and the lack of engagement of the Scriptures with the situation and circumstances of the Caribbean region.

### The Meaning of Blessed

The most frequent response among the leadership (69.2%) reflects an understanding of the word ‘blessed’<sup>5</sup> to mean that one is in a state of joy, happiness and/or favour from God. However, the remaining respondents provided responses that describe being blessed in terms of eternal life and covenant obedience, an attitude of heart (hope, peace, and assurance), reward for doing good, spiritual ability to prosper and even in terms of one’s character, being compassionate. The word  $\beta\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is used 158 times in 32 different forms in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the LXX (*Septuaginta*) and carries the sense of being blessed, fortunate, or happy usually in the sense of being a privileged recipient of divine favour. The word is typically used in relation to individuals in a particular state or circumstance except in the Pastoral Epistles where there are two references to the divine person (1 Tim. 1:11, 6:15). The Scriptures also make reference to a “blessed nation” or “blessed people” or “blessed children.” It is sometimes used in the sense of being held in honour or to speak well of or praise. In that sense it is also connected to the more commonly used word  $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\varsigma$  (verb,  $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\varsigma$  sÉ) translated as blessed in many instances and used often in relation to God. The word  $\beta\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is related to one’s state of existence or living condition and covers every aspect of one’s life including the sociological, psychological, political and economic dimensions. The blessed have a favoured existence in favourable circumstances. However, the mourning situation in the second beatitude is far from favourable. The disciples are not blessed because of their situation but because of what they will receive precisely because of the situation they find themselves in,

<sup>5</sup> See now the insightful piece by G. Lincoln Roper, *Who God Bless No Man Curse: The Blessings of the Blessed Life*. Kingston: Jugaro, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Bibleworks 9 search 6 (Ps. 33:12, 88:16, 144:15; Pr. 20:7; Malachi 3:12) 7 Used in 804 times in 84 different related forms in the Greek New Testament and Septuagint database of Bibleworks 9.

comfort for mourning. The blessed in the text are those marked out to be recipients of divine comfort in lieu of their suffering. They stand to be fortunate recipients of God's comfort in the midst of mourning and ultimately can expect a total reversal with the realization of eschatological hope in the full establishment of the kingdom of God.

If we allow for the word to be used in the sense of being happy then the beatitude in essence would declare a people happy who are experiencing sadness. The blessed ones are happy despite being in mourning because of their experience and hope of divine comfort. Though this is not impossible, the greater emphasis seems to be on being blessed because of the comfort they have already been earmarked to receive. Even with the usage of fortunate or favoured the paradoxical nature of the protasis of the beatitude is not lost; those who face misfortune are declared fortunate and those in unfavourable circumstances are declared favoured.

The makarism takes seriously the mourning situation and promises an appropriate and favourable response of divine comfort and in so doing serves as a word of grace and encouragement for a dispossessed people facing oppression and suffering. Their situation is not to be ignored, but rather it invites a liberating and empowering response. Those who mourn need to be comforted! They are blessed in spite of the situation because they stand to be beneficiaries of the comfort of the kingdom of God. The beatitude calls for a reordering of one's outlook by shifting one's focus from the situation to the promise and in so doing nurtures resilience through hope. It also acts to empower its hearers by changing their perception of themselves: they are the blessed ones, the truly favoured and fortunate ones with whom the Lord stands.

### **The Meaning of Mourning**

Among the St. Lucian leaders studied, mourning is most frequently (52%) interpreted as being in a state of sorrow, grief or suffering loss. However, some (16%) read mourning as the experience of remorse for sin demonstrated through repentance. This understanding in the history of interpretation can be traced back all the way to Clement of Alexandria and Origen and is likely to have been introduced within our sphere of interpretation by North-American pastors and exposure to biblical commentaries.

An interesting statistic in the data is that 12% of respondents understand mourning in terms of the experience of persecution,

suffering and even torment for the sake of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Believers are understood to be in mourning because they endure suffering and hardships because of one's belief and decision to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. What is even more interesting is that the leaders who hold to this view are from three different local churches in different geographical zones of the country. It is not immediately clear what the commonality is with these interpreters but it is highly probable that these readers fall within a common history of interpretation rather than independently understanding the text in this way without any influence in their historical horizon. The readers share in a common history of interpretation, commentary tradition or common biblical instructor. The rest of the respondent (16%) are willing to see mourning in the general sense of sadness, the feeling stemming from experiences of difficulty and great challenge. The experience of mourning is even linked to agonizing over oppression and feelings of enslavement.

Luz proposes that mourning should be interpreted in view of Isaiah 61:2-3 in the sense of all the sorrows in the world.<sup>8</sup> Carter<sup>9</sup> takes a similar stance and sees the mourners as the poor who lament under the oppressive rule of imperial powers such as Babylon and Rome and suffer the pain of injustice. Carter describes the world of Matthew's hearers/readers succinctly as one marked by:

(1) vast societal inequalities, economic exploitation, and political oppression, (2) a status system [that] generally honoured wealthy, powerful, Roman and provincial males, and despised those of little power, wealth and status, (3) pervasive displays of Roman power and control, including military presence (and deterrence), and taxation, (4) no separation of religious institutions and personnel from socioeconomic and political commitments, (5) imperial theology or propaganda, and (6) obvious signs, sounds and smells of the destructive impact of the imperial sociopolitical order structured for the elite's benefit:

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<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Academics, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 193-194.

<sup>9</sup> Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

poverty, poor sanitation, disease, malnutrition, overwork, natural disasters (fire and flooding) and social instability.<sup>10</sup>

In such circumstances, one can easily see how a word on mourning finds great relevance, meaning and applicability. A people who are least likely to be called blessed are declared such in a grave situation of oppression, suffering and sadness. Far from grieving over their sins, these people grieve as a people who long for a day of deliverance and change of fortune. If we allow that they grieve over sin, it would be the sins of injustice, oppression and religious abuse that they are learning to resist as survivors of a system of domination.

### **The Comfort**

Comfort for some (10.5%) means no more sorrow in reference to the realization of the eschatological vision of the writer of the Apocalypse of John: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4, NIV). A total reversal is anticipated with the coming of the kingdom. For others (31.6%), comfort means experiencing the peace of God. When believers in the Caribbean church speak of peace it is usually communicated in terms of the emotional tranquillity that one experiences in their inner life, but what is more important is that it is grounded in one’s understanding of God and a deep appreciation of His work in the lives of believers and an intimate experience of the Divine Presence in reconciled relationship. The idea here is one of God in the midst of the mourning situation and which has a profound impact on one’s mental and emotional state of being. This understanding of peace allows persons in difficult and trying situations to maintain a sense of victory and wellbeing. Ladd puts it this way:

In the same way peace is not primarily emotional tranquillity but a term encompassing the salvation of the whole person. The “gospel of peace” (Eph.6:15) is the good news that God has made peace with humankind so that we may now have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Peace is practically synonymous with salvation (Rom. 2:10) and is a

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<sup>10</sup> Warren Carter, “Matthaeian Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1.1,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, eds. J. Riches and D. C. Sim (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 150-151.

power that protects people in the inner beings (Phil. 4:7) and that rules in their hearts (Col. 3:15).<sup>11</sup>

Some leaders (26.4%) expressed that the comfort spoken of in the text alludes to a change for better. The idea here is that one is comforted through improvement in the situation that causes mourning. A significant percentage of leaders (31.6%) understands comfort as receiving encouragement. This encouragement is understood as being provided through the presence and working of the Holy Spirit or through one's encounter with the person of Jesus Christ through faith.

The idea of comfort is largely influenced and shaped by the wider literature of the New Testament. What we see is a reading of the text within the literary milieu of other Scriptures and not exclusively within the context of the Gospel of Matthew or the Sermon on the Mount. As a Caribbean people in the church setting, the reading of Scriptures in isolation from other Scriptures or as literary units is a foreign concept relegated to the academic guild. It is just not part of our experience. Our hermeneutic remains one primarily of using Scripture to interpret Scripture as the Bible is typically viewed as one homogeneous text that uses words with the same meaning across the various books of the Bible. Although this is not in keeping with modern scholarly exegesis, it does have a rich heritage in early church hermeneutics.

### **The realization of the Promised Comfort**

In keeping with a general understanding of comfort in the here and now, almost half of the church's leadership (46.2%) interpret the comfort will be actualized on earth without any mention of comfort in the heavenly reign. Among these some simply stated 'On earth' (7.7%), while others (7.7%) envision comfort after the mourning situation during one's earthly existence. The larger proportion of those who understand the comfort as realized in one's earthly experience (30.8%) indicated that one receives the comfort spoken of in the beatitude at the moment of trusting in Jesus.

The position that the text promises comfort in the here and now receives further support among those who understand the comfort to be realized both on earth and in heaven (30.8%). This means that 3 in 4 persons in the church interpret the comfort as having an earthly fulfilment. Yet still there are those (23.1%), in keeping

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<sup>11</sup> G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed; ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 534.

with contemporary scholarship, who view the comfort as eschatological in scope and in so doing indicated that it will be realized in heaven without any reference to comfort on earth. They read that the promise of comfort will be realized when Jesus returns and the kingdom of God is fully established (Luz, Gundry, Carter). Along with those who indicate both an earthly and eschatological fulfilment, a total of 53.9% of the church's leadership understand the promise as having a dimension of fulfilment in the eschatological kingdom.

### **The Second Beatitude in Caribbean Ministry**

Most of the respondents (80.8%) indicated that they had witness the beatitude on mourning being used in the context of church ministry, hence, only a small percentage of the leadership (19.2%) have not had such an experience. When asked about the way the text had been used, a significant percentage (42.1%) simply stated an agency of Christian education in the church such as bible study, preaching, and Sunday school. However, others provided specific objectives for the text being used that reflect a pastoral emphasis including (1) fostering trust in God and encouragement (21.1%) and (2) providing comfort and restoring believers (36.8%).

Although the majority of the leaders reported witnessing the text being used in church, only forty percent (40%) indicated that they had used the makarism on mourning in their ministry of the Gospel (60% said no). This may very well be an indication that the greater proportion of leaders in the church is struggling to find significance for the text within the context of Caribbean life.

Again, of the number who reported having used the text, one in two (50%) simply stated an area of ministry, for example, preaching to indicate how they had used the text. The main reasons given were: (1) comfort (12.5%), (2) encouragement (25%) and (3) restoration (12.5%). The text for the most part has found application as a text of comfort and encouragement, used to alleviate feelings of grief and distress and inspire believers to press on in the face of mourning situations. Not only is the makarism used as a text of comfort and encouragement, it has been used essentially as a preaching and teaching text. The number of leaders (28%) who indicated that they had heard the text used apart from preaching and teaching is small in comparison with the staggering percentage (72%) who reported that they had not. This is a reflection of the scope of the church's ministry. The ministry of the Gospel for the church in this study is actualized primarily through the preaching and teaching of the church.

Pastoral care in grief situations featured (71.4%) as the main way the text has been used apart from the activity of preaching and teaching. On a smaller scale, social justice (14.3%) and giving of testimony (14.3%) were others means through which the text found application. The thesis that the text is primarily understood as a preaching and teaching text is further substantiated by the fact that when asked about likely applications in ministry, preaching (72%) featured as the number one response followed by evangelizing (24%), song (24%), and drama (32%). Among those who indicated that they were likely to use other methods (16%) teaching, unsurprisingly, also featured. Other avenues indicated for likely application included counselling, community outreach (care centres and advocacy groups), and support groups for persons who are victims of domestic violence and single mothers.

### **Blessed are those who Mourn in the Caribbean**

How one reads and interprets a text is influenced by a complex web of factors including our social location, literacy skills, culture and exposure to the literature of the Bible. For the most part, the average reader in the church has not come to terms with the reading of the text from our social location as Caribbean people. We have largely been shaped by a universalist method of approaching the text that ignores our contemporary Caribbean context as if God is primarily interested in saving us from sin and not so much in the social, economic, gender, ethnic, cultural, physical and political factors that impact on our lives as Caribbean people. Oral Thomas posits that, “Interpreting the reader’s context is as critical as interpreting the biblical text in its context. The latter without the former leads to escapism, docility, and passivity.”<sup>12</sup> Our embrace of Christianity as a private and individualistic faith and our failure to see the Scriptures as actively confronting systems, structures and circumstances in which we live as Caribbean people has only served to maintain the status quo. Ashley laments that:

We have hardly seen mission in terms of the realization of the Kingdom of God or the transformation of society. An excessive individualism, denominationalism and insularity are characteristic of the Caribbean region and truly

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<sup>12</sup> Oral Thomas, “Ashley Smith, Carnival, and Hermeneutics: Reflections on Caribbean Biblical Interpretation” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue*, eds. Garnett Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2013), 78.

representative of our traditional approach to the mission of the Church.<sup>13</sup>

This state of affairs is further reinforced by the kind of preaching that emanates from our pulpits. Moreover, the tendency to gravitate to preaching on television further exacerbates the individualistic form of Christianity that pervades Caribbean society. Garnett Roper echoes this sentiment of the lack of engagement with the realities of the Caribbean regions when he

contends:

Although substantial parts of the membership of the churches in the Caribbean are led by nationals, and though preaching and testifying and thinking about God have been taking place among them that does not necessarily constitute a theology that is Caribbean or a Caribbean Theology. The preaching and thinking about God in these churches do not take into account, except anecdotally, the matters that are part of the lived experiences within the Caribbean context.<sup>14</sup>

Eric Flett provides an important caution in arguing that an emphasis on uniqueness of the Caribbean is not enough and must be balanced with an equal emphasis on what the Scriptures affirm about the uniqueness of the divine nature and will, and that care must be taken to ensure appropriate dialogue between the two. He cogently asserts:

However, just as important as emphasizing the need to give proper attention to both particularities of context and particularities of divine identity and purpose, is the need to make sure that both are related in a healthy and mutually modifying dynamic. Without a dynamic of mutual modification, where gospel transforms context and context informs gospel, a truly Caribbean theology that enables human flourishing will not emerge, nor will there be a universal witness and reference for any context-specific embodiment of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

What are the persecutory and oppressive situations that we face as Caribbean people? What are the experiences that constitute

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Real Roots and Potted Plants*, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Garnett Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston: Xpress Litho, 2012), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Flett, "Dingolayin": Theological Notes for a Caribbean Theology, " in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue*, eds. Garnett Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2013), 55.

mourning for us as a Caribbean people? Who are the ‘mourners’ who are in need of divine comfort and the comfort of the church as the incarnational presence of Jesus Christ in the world? How can the Caribbean church, grounded in the New Testament theology of the Kingdom of God, provide comfort for such mourners in the here and now even as we await the full manifestation of the kingdom of God? To what extent are we willing to allow the text to speak to us in our existential struggles for peace, righteousness and justice?

The approach taken here reflects a willingness to reflect on the text in a way that it is not relegated to the sphere of the church but extends itself to the experiences of Caribbean people in our villages, towns and cities; this ensures that the church remains fully engaged in the public domain and permits the prophetic voice and pastoral heart of Jesus to reach and touch those in our market places and public squares. On the other hand, the approach here takes seriously the witness of the Gospels to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. It is grounded on the presupposition that the beatitude originates with Jesus, ministered to hearers during his ministry in the first century and was appropriated by Matthew as a word for his community and that this word, which transcends cultural borders, remains a liberating, empowering and transforming influence in the lives of its hearers in their unique social location. The approach also draws on the contributions of postcolonial biblical criticism with its focus on: (1) the politics, culture and economics of the colonial milieu in which the text was occasioned and used, (2) unveiling the biblical and modern empires and their impact, and (3) the freedom of subjected territories, for example the Caribbean in a globalized context.<sup>16</sup>

While not abandoning what Jesus and eventually Matthew sought to communicate through the beatitude, we must be willing to explore various aspects of meaning for us in the context of Caribbean life. Jesus did speak a word to his hearers in the unique *sitz im leben* and so to Matthew who used the sayings of Jesus in his church context. We can allow the text to speak to us in our context as Caribbean people even as it did to the Jews and those after in the history of influence of the text. By maintaining dialogue between our horizon and the horizon of the first readers we ensure that a measure of continuity is maintained in the history of interpretation while allowing the logion to speak to us in fresh, contextually relevant and empowering manner.

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<sup>16</sup> R. S Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1-2.

Being immersed in the horizon of the earliest readers for ourselves allows us to come into conversation with them and through this engagement we can have an empowering interaction.

One notices how the early church leaders engaged the Scriptures from their own social location and the plurality of ways in which the Scriptures were put to meaningful use to address their contextual concerns and feel empowered to do the same from our Caribbean context. Such an empowerment provides the Caribbean reader, leader, and scholar a voice and a sense of belonging in the enterprise of interpretation. The text works to empower the Caribbean reader in a manner similar to its first hearers but with both commonalities and dissimilarities in our experiences, while maintaining its potency as a word of God to all humanity and particularly to us as Caribbean people in our common state of sin but with contextually diverse struggles for righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The beatitude reveals a God whose will it is to bring comfort to those who mourn by bringing about a change in the situations and circumstances that cause mourning. Though the future passive suggest deliverance at the time of the eschatological establishing of the kingdom of God with a complete end to oppression and suffering, it should not preclude deliverance from situations of oppression and suffering in the here and now.

Jesus' proclamation through the apostolic witness reveals that the kingdom is already breaking in to encounter, engage and transform situations of mourning in the here and now even as we await the full actualization of the kingdom in the eschaton. This should not be understood as a passive waiting but one of resistive and engaging waiting. The experience of the power of God to bring about deliverance from oppressive influences in the here and now testifies to the final and complete destruction of oppression and suffering that the people of the kingdom presently await in resilient hope.

In fact the stories of healing and deliverance that follow immediately in Matthew's outline: the cleansing of the leper, the healing of the centurion's servant, the healings at Peter's house, the stilling of the storm, and the healing of the demoniacs and the paralytic, all point to the messianic kingdom bringing comfort to those experiencing physical, mental and spiritual suffering. The stilling of the storm, both in its literal and symbolic understandings, provides comfort, hope, and encouragement for a people facing 'the storms' of life. The record of Jesus' testimony in Matthew 11:4-5 also serves as an apt summary of Jesus' ministry of bringing comfort to a people who were oppressed: "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight,

the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (NIV).

These acts of healing, deliverance, and proclamation represent activities to free from all forms of oppression and suffering. The poor who mourn lack the currency of belongingness, honour, protection, self-governance, justice, and equitable access to resources needed for a meaningful existence. Burchell Taylor observes that:

The Caribbean reality is characteristically one of systemic poverty—marginalization, dispossession, deprivation, humiliation, discrimination, oppression, domination, and religious indoctrination—meted out to the majority. In all of this, economic poverty is the most powerful prototypical expression of the phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>

This is not unlike the context of hearers in the first century. Though there are important differences in the details of our circumstances in the Caribbean region, we share much in common in terms of our situation with those who first heard this beatitude. Both worlds betray structures and systems that give rise to marginalization, inequality, economic exploitation, political oppression, poverty, class distinction, and pervasive displays of imperialism. Bruce Rogers-Vaughn makes the insightful observation that:

Today’s imperial power no longer looks like Rome (or Bonhoeffer’s Nazi Germany). It is not constrained by borders, nor does it overtly annex lands as in the colonialisms of the past. It is not monolithic but transforms itself to adapt to local cultures. It prefers to control through persuasion and “common sense” rather than direct police or military coercion, though it often resorts to such action of “free markets” or the power of economic elites are threatened. It works not primarily through the direct imposition of one nation on other nations, but through the routine activities of international corporations and financial institutions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Burchell Taylor, “The Continuing Relevance of a Caribbean Theology,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue*, eds. Garnett Roper and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2013), 206.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce Roger’s Vaughn, “Blessed Are Those Who Mourn: Depression as Political Resistance.” *Pastoral Psychology* 63 (2014):506.

The factors and experiences that constitute mourning for us as a Caribbean people include rising crime and violence, domestic violence and abuse in its various forms, the impact of natural disasters, rising rates of suicide, high rates of youth unemployment, father absenteeism, the impact of tourism on family life, political victimization, the negative impact of globalization and neo-colonial influences. The ‘mourners’ are for the most part women and children who survive the ravages of domestic abuse, our young people who face the paralysis of despair due to unemployment, the farmers who struggle to make a profit as a result of praedial larceny and the unfair ‘free market’ systems of the world, people who are left to pick up the pieces in the aftermath of major earthquakes, tropical storms, landslides and floods without the means to secure insurance coverage, the young boy and girl who must grow up without the love and presence of a parent, the family that hardly gets to spend time together with significant others having to work six night and day work shifts per week in order to provide for their family, those who are left to grieve the loss of family due to crime and violence, and our people who live in the claws of continued imperial forces.

The scope of this chapter does not permit nor require a detailed analysis of the realities that contribute to mourning in the Caribbean but a brief sketch is presented here on a few matters of great concern.<sup>19</sup>

#### (1) High Youth Unemployment

Research conducted within the region shows that the region continues to experience levels of youth unemployment that are among the highest rates reported in the world.<sup>20</sup> In the past two decades, all Caribbean countries have realized youth unemployment rates above world averages with an average youth employment rate for the region approaching 25% and in some territories like Jamaica, Suriname and Guyana exceeding 30% youth unemployment rates. The experience of youth unemployment affects everyone: the individual, the family and the wider society with its potentially dehumanizing impact and increased risk on the individual to engage in socially destructive behaviours and criminal activity, the economic, social and

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<sup>19</sup> See Roper *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* for a sketch on the challenges facing the Caribbean, 53-69.

<sup>20</sup> “Youth are the Future: The Imperative of Youth Employment for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean,” Caribbean Development Bank, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.caribank.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/Youth-Study-Imperative-of-Employment-CDB-2015.pdf>.

psychological strain on the family that provides support for such individuals and the negative economic and social outcomes on the wider societies of the Caribbean.

The church can play a dual role both in terms of helping individuals and their families cope with the challenges of youth unemployment and providing complementary and alternative solutions to the problem. Prayer and counselling support are useful strategies to enhance coping skills among youth and their families and have the potential to mitigate some of the negative outcomes usually associated with youth unemployment. Furthermore, there is room for greater participation in empowering persons through knowledge sharing, skills development and creating opportunities for entrepreneurship.

## (2) Father Absenteeism

The issue of the absence of fathers in Caribbean family is a persistent challenge with far reaching negative consequences on children and lasting consequence on Caribbean societies. Godfrey St. Bernard points out:

In St. Lucia and in Haiti respectively, proportions of 42.8 per cent and 42.7 per cent of all households were estimated to be female-headed in the early 2000s. Given observed patterns in the early 1990s, the prevalence of female headship in the smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean is likely to continue to exceed 40 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

This is confirmed by the more recent Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2012 in which it is reported that, Female-headed households were 45.6 per cent of all households and more than half (26.1 per cent) had an adult male resident. They were comprised of a larger proportion of children (30.4 per cent) and, among female-headed households, those with children and no man present took the largest share (53.4 per cent).<sup>22</sup> Early Childhood development trends reported in the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2012 indicates:

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<sup>21</sup> Godfrey St. Bernard, *Major Trends Affecting Families in Central America and the Caribbean* (St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: UWI, 2003), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) 2012, Planning Institute of Jamaica, accessed April 4, 2016, [http://www.pioj.gov.jm/Portals/0/Social\\_Sector/Executive%20SummaryFinal.pdf](http://www.pioj.gov.jm/Portals/0/Social_Sector/Executive%20SummaryFinal.pdf), xiii.

Although the presence of birth mothers in the home was high (83.0 per cent) for children in the Early Childhood (EC) cohort, less than two in every five children (39.8 per cent) had their birth fathers present. More than a third (37.4 per cent) had no father figure in the home.<sup>23</sup>

These findings are typical of the wider Caribbean region where the majority of children are growing up without their birth father present in the home. The figure is a bit lower when a father figure is considered, but having a foster father is not without challenges of its own. Research has shown that living without a biological father has been associated with negative outcomes for mental health, educational attainment, family relationships, and labour force outcomes in adulthood.<sup>24</sup> The need remains urgent to engage fathers to provide more meaningful presence for their children and preparing young males for fatherhood.

### (3) Globalization

The phenomenon referred to as globalization has had a profound impact on Caribbean life especially as it relates to the agricultural sector. Under the Lome Convention and subsequent Cotonou Partnership Agreement sugar and bananas from Caribbean countries were traded under preferential trade protocols until 2008. However, due to litigation by the United States and allied countries with the World Trade Organization special consideration given to small island developing states were rolled back and these countries were left to feel the full brunt of the economic implications of globalization. This leads to a major decline in banana production and exports as farmers could not keep pace with large US corporations and Latin American countries. The Windward Islands banana industry has experienced a sharp decline in banana production and export. The industry saw a decline from about 27,000 farmers cultivating 17,000 hectares, less than 700 growers cultivating a total of about 1,500 hectares. This represents a 97% reduction in the number of banana growers in the Windward Islands and a 91% decline in cultivated lands. This dramatic decline meant that banana exports to the UK declined from 274,000 tonnes in 1992, or 45% share of the UK market, to 15,100 tonnes in 2012, or just 2% of the UK market.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> JSLC 2012, xviii.

<sup>24</sup> Sara McLanahan, Laura Tach, and Daniel Schneider, "The Causal Effects of Father Absence," accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3904543>.

<sup>25</sup> Winfresh, "History of Windward Island Bananas," accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.winfresh.net/home/historyof-windward-bananas>.

Thousands of farmers who had been able to support their families and maintain an agribusiness found themselves struggling to stay afloat with many eventually abandoning their fields under less favourable conditions of production and trade. This marked a significant situation of loss in the Caribbean and many have suffered because of the challenges faced in diversifying their business. These farmers are in need of comfort and support to create new opportunities for income in order to support their families. There is a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness to resist the policy impositions of Europe and North-America on local politics. Though independent, we are increasingly losing our right to self-governance as we continue to sign agreements with multilateral agencies. While our brothers from the United Kingdom can resist the impositions of the European Union on their politics and feel empowered to renegotiate terms of the membership in the EU, Caribbean countries like St. Lucia feel consigned to simply comply with terms dictated to us for our continued participation in the global village.

The mourners are not just those in our Caribbean churches but also those in our villages, towns and cities. The concern of public theology, with its push for theology to interact with issues in the public domain of contemporary society, is important if the revelatory and transforming potential of the beatitude will be realized in the realities of the Caribbean context. This stands against the privatization of Christian faith and the emphasis on personal salvation, which are dominant features of Christianity in the Caribbean. Sebastian Kim posits:

There is an urgent need for Christian theology to be actively engaged in conversation on public issues with the understanding that it can offer complimentary or supplementary approaches, and even alternative solutions to very complex issues facing society today.<sup>26</sup>

God is not just concerned about the issues of the church but is equally interested in engaging our world through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Besides, the church in the Caribbean experiences life within the wider context of Caribbean realities and not separate from it. The issues facing the common woman or man in the Caribbean also affect our churches and are issues we cannot ignore.

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<sup>26</sup> Sebastian C.H. Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 3.

Moreover, we cannot seek to speak just for those in our congregations but rather for all in our Caribbean societies. Our 'preaching' can no longer be geared to the church but meaningfully engage Caribbean reality. It must have in mind as its audience both the congregation and the marketplace even if it is done in the church, but we must also take seriously conversation in the public sphere. Only such an approach will ensure relevance, meaningfulness, practicality and the release of the transforming potential of the Scriptures on Caribbean societies. We cannot be content in just preaching to but preaching with the people of the Caribbean and in so doing engage the average person in reflection on their own reality in light of Scripture with the hope that they may experience its liberating and empowering potential in their lives and situations.

Ashley Smith is right in asserting that "The church needs to address itself to the task of helping the downtrodden people of the region to affirm their human value, develop a feeling of identification and social, national, and regional solidarity."<sup>27</sup> Such a project takes seriously all people living in the realities of Caribbean society and therefore necessitates engagement in both the church and city. We must develop a willingness to reflect on the text in a way that it is not relegated to the sphere of the church but extends itself to the experiences of Caribbean people in our villages, towns and cities and ensures that the church remains fully engaged in the public domain and permits the prophetic voice and pastoral heart of Jesus to reach and touch those in our market places and public squares.

Kim identifies the main stakeholders in the public sphere as: "the state, the market, the media, the academy, civil society, and religious communities."<sup>28</sup> Public life in the Caribbean is dominated by the state, economic concerns and the media. The state is marked by divisive politics, the markets driven by the selfish agendas of the merchant class and our media driven by the agenda of the film industry and Caribbean music, which to a significant extent perpetuates the very maladies plaguing Caribbean society. There is an urgent need for partnerships between the church, centres of theological education in the Caribbean, and civil society using the forum of media to influence the personal decisions as well as the outlook and actions of people in community. The goal is to provide voices for the oppressed, underprivileged and disadvantaged

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Real Roots and Potted Plants*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 11.

people of the region to bring them comfort in the midst of the mourning circumstances. The comfort envisioned is the liberation and empowerment of the mourners and the transformation of their lives.

There is a need for ‘voices of comfort’ to provide hope for the distraught farmers, those grieving loss through crime and violence, the unemployed and others who suffer the results of injustice in our society. To do so is to follow in the ministry of Jesus Christ in ushering in the kingdom of God in the midst of a broken humanity. Far from taking away from the eschatological hope of the Gospel, present action by the church is energized by this very hope and gives witness to it in the here and now as the church actively rather than passively awaits the full actualization of the kingdom of God.

**A CARIBBEAN  
THEOLOGY OF  
THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
(Part 2)**

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Introduction

**Gullies: From The Ridge To  
The Reef**

Roper (2013) believes that there is a strong link between poverty and environmental destruction. He argues that:

*Poverty is the greatest threat to the environment. The case in point of the gullies . . . is similarly indicative of poverty, a poverty of economic and mental proportions. I speak specifically of the squatter settlements along the banks of the gullies in Jamaica. The persons who dwell there have no land ownership, typically have illegal water and power connections and in many instances either have no sanitary bathroom facilities or where those are constructed the effluent is released directly into the gully. Solid waste from these settlers are [sic] predominantly dumped into the gullies.*

There is a view among the residents in such places that the garbage trucks do not come into their communities often enough to collect the solid waste. I can personally attest to this in one such community in particular. On the other hand though it needs to be

said that even when the garbage collection occurs more frequently many residents along the gully banks simply find it more convenient to throw their garbage into the gully. We need to ask ourselves whether there are any vested interests in keeping such squatter settlements operational. Likewise, we need to ask ourselves what factors determine the inequitable distribution of garbage trucks across the city. The solid waste from the gullies makes its way to the Kingston harbor and outer waters.

Information gathered from the Mananuca Environmental Society indicates, “Plastic bags breakdown in 50 years, plastic bottles in 150 years, and cigarette butts in 75 years, paper in 1 year and batteries in 200 years. These all take so much time to breakdown to the detriment of creatures that live around us. If a turtle encounters a plastic bag, which looks similar to jellyfish, he may swallow the plastic bag and choke on it. Batteries leak poisons as they breakdown and can contaminate the fish we eat, as well as kill corals and other marine life.” There are further threats associated with plastics in the oceans.

According to a report in The Guardian Newspaper by Milman (2015), “Pieces are ingested by fish and then travel up the food chain, all the way to humans. It is expected this problem will worsen due to the rise of throwaway plastic, such as drinks containers and food packaging, with only 5% of the world’s plastic recycled at present.” Milman (2015) quotes Dr. Hoogenboom, “In my opinion we need a general focus on cleaning up plastic pollution, to clean up beaches and reduce the amount of plastics in the waterways and into the oceans. It’s a significant problem globally.””

The phrase ‘from the ridge to the reef’ was used by Roper (2015) to describe the interconnection between what happens inland and what happens to the corals. In this paper it is what happens in the gullies that is in view. At the local level, Martin Henry, Communications Specialist with the Scientific Research Council of Jamaica speaks to the importance of our coral reefs. “The highly productive coral reefs provide significant benefits to the human population. The reefs are sources of food. They are a major source of sand as they erode. As buffers, they provide protection to coastlines from waves and currents. The reefs are important to the Jamaican tourism product as a source of sand in the sun, sand-and-sea formula. There is increasing interest in reef species as sources of biologically active compounds for medical drugs. Henry describes the role that algae play in destroying corals, “The growth of large algae, if not kept in check, smother existing coral and prevent coral larvae from settling to form new colonies. The algae are kept under control by herbivorous organisms which graze on them. The parrot fish, a Jamaican dinner delicacy, is one of the most important grazers, and over-fishing of parrot and other reef species allows the algae to flourish.”

The raw sewage from gully bank residents makes its way to the sea, creating a nutrient rich environment for algae to grow. Martin (Ibid.) sheds more light on the inherent danger of this reality. “Peter Edwards and Tatum Fisher identify sewage and agricultural fertilizers as the major sources of nutrient-supplying pollution affecting coral reefs. Additional nutrients mean additional growth. According to the S&T Conference paper, “a striking ... shift has taken place from a coral-dominated system to one dominated by algae. Algal cover has grown from 4 per cent to 92 per cent.” This gloomy picture is supported by a report from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) in 2008. The report indicates that “The influence of natural and man-induced stressors on coastal ecosystems has in most cases resulted in a switch from

coral to algal dominated reefs. These stressors have resulted in a decline in coral cover from a high of 50% in the 1970s to less than 5% by the early 1990s.

### **A Caribbean Theology of the Environment**

Dr. Rolf Hille, chairman in 2004, of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance expressed the view that “Environmental questions have become real-life questions for humanity.” This opinion was expressed in his foreword for Gnanakan’s book “Responsible Stewardship of God’s Creation.” (Gnanakan, 2004, 5). Hille continues his foreword making salient observations, “ God created this world with great love and perfection and commanded man ‘to work the garden and preserve it (take care of it)’... It does therefore, matter to God, how we handle His creation, water, air, raw materials, soil, animals and plants. When a theologian takes a careful look at the ideas behind ecology and when Christian churches become concerned about the environment, then this is not simply a favorite hobby... Rather how we deal with the creation is also essentially a matter of being a faithful disciple of Jesus and obedient faith.” According to Weaver and Hodson, “When the concerns about the environment began to emerge two people related it to the Church. Dr Lynn White attacked the Judaeo/Christian tradition for having taken the notion of ‘dominion’ to mean liberty to take from nature whatever and whenever we please. Francis Schaeffer, on the other hand, expounded the theory that the local church should be the ‘pilot plant’ setting before human society a picture of the way life was meant to be.”

Taylor (2014), argues with conviction that the Wisdom Literature call us to the sustainability of the creation. He writes “there is a growing note of urgency presently, about the subject, to the extent that it is not unusual for the language of crisis to be associated with

it. There is often reference to the pending or actual environmental or ecological crisis faced by the world in general and more so in some places in particular for varying reasons.” (Taylor 2014, 140). Further, negligence towards these matters and basking in the bliss of ignorance are luxuries that the Jamaican church can no longer afford.

I am an ardent advocate for Caribbean Theology. In this section we will make a case for the inclusion of a theology of the environment in the discourse of Caribbean Theology as a necessity. The words of Francis Schaeffer offer some opening pointers in this regard, “If God treats the tree like a tree, the machine like a machine, the man like a man, shouldn't I, as a fellow-creature, do the same -- treating each thing in integrity in its own order? And for the highest reason: because I love God -- I love the One who has made it! Loving the Lover who has made it, I have respect for the thing He has made. (Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Ch. 4: <http://www.rationalpi.com/theshelter/ecology.html>).

Along a similar vein he makes a compelling case for respect for the environment to be an intrinsic part of the life of a Christian:

The tree in the field is to be treated with respect. It is not to be romanticized as the old lady romanticizes her cat (that is, she reads human reactions into it). But while we should not romanticize the tree, we must realize that God made it and it deserves respect because he made it *as a tree*. Christians who do not believe in the complete evolutionary scale have reason to respect nature as the total evolutionist never can, because we believe that God made these things specifically in their own areas. So if we are going to argue against evolutionists intellectually, we should show the results of our beliefs in our attitudes. The Christian is a man who has a reason for dealing with each created thing

on a high level of respect.  
<http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/44398>  
O-pollution-and- the-death-of-man

In stating his case for a Caribbean creation theology, J. Richard Middleton firstly identifies what I think is the fundamental cause of the absence of this kind of “think and talk” on environmental concerns in our churches. He argues that:

the indelible human footprint on the natural beauty of the Caribbean (our impact on the earth), combined with horrendous natural disasters (the earth’s impact on us), gives the lie to any romantic vision of what we moderns have come to know as “nature” (the realm of the non-human); but it also calls into question the sort of popular piety we find in the Caribbean church that imagines a separation between human “salvation” (narrowly conceived) and our earthly environment. Paradoxically, among many Christians, in the Caribbean and elsewhere, we find a decidedly otherworldly, and often individualistic view of “salvation” as the saving of souls from a fiery judgment to an eternity with God in the ethereal heaven, combined with a romantic view of nature as a special place to encounter God... Yet little if no thought is typically given to the possible connection – or better, to the disconnect- between an otherworldly salvation and a romanticized nature ( Ibid, 79 – 80).

Middleton pushes further with this when he recognizes that there seems to be an inherent lack of interest on the part of Caribbean theologians in what he refers to as creation theology. He states that “Caribbean theologians are right to express suspicions about any points of view that is [sic] blind to the reality of social inequalities,

especially if this blindness is combined with a romantic view of nature...Given the pressing human needs that face Caribbean people every day it might seem that a theology of creation would take away our focus off what is undeniably of prime importance.” There is also, argues Middleton a “historical reason for the suspicion of creation as a theological topic.” That is the fact that theologies, Caribbean theology included have been “decisively shaped by a western, Eurocentric habit of mind that distinguishes radically between history (people) and nature (the non-human). Given that predisposition he argues that theologians may be constrained “either to prioritize a concern for human flourishing over a concern for the earth, or to view creation theology with outright suspicion.” (Ibid., 81).

Having set out the status quo here in Jamaica it is my hope that the eyes of the church would be open to see the obvious, that if we continue to only sing a “Sankey” there may be no land left for us to stand on to do our singing. It is further hoped that Caribbean theologians would recognize that, as Middleton says, “this anthropocentric focus, which separates human well-being from concern about the earth, is an artificial polarization, since people only exist, live and work somewhere; that is, any socio-cultural analysis would show that people both impact and are impacted by their environment.” (Ibid., 82). Such a view is supported by Scripture, as the writer has shown. Middleton supports this position by pointing out that: “It is an artificial polarization from a biblical point of view as well, since humans are consistently understood in the Scriptures as part of the wider cosmos, which is not only created by God, but is the object of God’s saving activity.” (Ibid., 83).

Weaver and Hodson provide a list of factors that help to further understand this lack of interest of the church in the care of creation. They suggest that: “There are several possible reasons for the neglect and indifference to the biblical challenges for us to engage in Creation Care.” These include:

- the emphasis on personal salvation and the neglect of collective redemption
- Western theological tradition, which has had a singular view of the nature of being
- the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of “dominion” and its perceived conflict with the idea of stewardship.
- the dualism that separates Body and Soul, the material and the spiritual.
- the perception of matter as evil, despite Christ’s interaction with the physical world.
- the failure to understand the nature and significance of incarnation.

Middleton argues further that “the Scriptures consistently interpret the connection between humans and the earth in a manner that positively contributes to a vision of human flourishing – at both individual and societal levels. The Bible is a powerful , and often untapped resource on this topic. This suggests that the time is ripe for a biblical Caribbean theology that grounds human liberation in God’s intent for creation and envisions a role for the earth within God’s purposes.” His call is particularly relevant to this paper because he goes on to indicate that he is not calling for a mere theologizing at the realm

of public theologians but one that is:

serviceable, not just for an elite cadre of Caribbean intellectuals, but for ordinary Caribbean Christians...These points are integrally connected, since the major mode of access to theology for most Caribbean laypeople is precisely the Bible. We therefore need to develop a robust creation theology through a careful engagement with Scripture that would address the pressing need of ordinary Christians to internalize a vision of being humans in God's world. Such a vision would integrally connect people and their social needs to their bodies and their physical environment- and would connect salvation with God's creational intentions for this world." (Ibid., 83).

The way Taylor (2014) sees it is that "the adverse impact that human life-style and action are having on the natural environment brings into sharp focus biblical teaching with special reference to the doctrine of creation. The conclusion here is that properly understood, the Old Testament doctrine of creation, with special contribution from the Wisdom Tradition, can do much to put into proper perspective the human response and responsibility in relation to the related issues." (Ibid., 140). Quite intuitively he makes a very poignant observation that there are some strong dissenting voices on this matter. The argument made is that it is in fact the Old Testament which has helped to contribute to people's exploitation of the creation. He states, "The story of the creation recorded in Genesis 1: 1-2:4a, is regarded as the chief source and foundation of the wrongdoing. This story is said to have granted human kind the right to rule over the creation for their own good pleasure and fulfillment, and so this has been exploited to the full.... It is

said that human beings are seen to be given absolute freedom to dominate the rest of creation, particularly non-human creatures. At least that is how some have interpreted it, much to the detriment of the natural environment and other life forms.” (Ibid.). Douglas (2009) discloses the views expressed by Gary Harriot on this matter, “Our faith requires us to pay attention in how to take care of the environment. Creation theology states that God has created this earth and has placed man in charge to manage and not to abuse.”

Of course, this is a gross injustice to the proper understanding of the text, which Taylor exposes as such. It does show itself up though in the current climate of entitlement and materialistic dominance that permeate the word of faith/prosperity narrative that has taken root in the region. Taylor rebuts this interpretation by indicating that “the understanding of the words and the related practice that have resulted in the exploitation and oppression of creation are neither necessary nor inevitable and are in fact, a misappropriation and misuse of the words themselves.” (Ibid.).

To drive home the point, he quotes John C. L. Gibson’s comment on the argument that man has been given a special case in creation:

It is a delegated status, not something inherent in his nature. ‘Man’ is God’s representative on earth, his ambassador and possesses no intrinsic rights or privileges beyond those conferred by his divine master, to whom therefore he has to render account. It is not Genesis’ fault if Christian theology has torn these verses from their context and read into them what is not there ... (Ibid., 142-143)

In view of this, what Taylor proposes is a balanced perspective.

He argues that the Wisdom Tradition's emphases and insights enable a "more balanced perspective as well as a more explicit exposition, on creation in its totality." The starting point, he argues is that there is in the Wisdom Tradition a centeredness on God in relation to creation, while there is no "over-centralized" focus on human-kind. This diminishes the risk of human subjugation of the rest of creation. (Ibid., 144). Tracing his way through the book of Job as a case in point, Taylor (2015) examines God's response to Job after Job's scathing and searching questions. He lifts from the book important elements for consideration of a theology of human-kind's relationship to the environment. Taylor states "To be a human being is to be a creature who is God-addressed and whom God confronts with the rest of creation vocationally. This really sets the stage for a right and proper attitude to be displayed by human-kind toward the rest of creation and the created order. Humility, restraint, respect and responsibility are some of the virtues that are implied." (Ibid., 149).

Roper's (2013) seminal work on Jubilee adds to the sentiments here. As he sings the praises of the Jubilee principle, he writes, "Life, increasingly, is challenging us to give a value to mother earth; and it is calling us to remember that when God made humankind, He placed the human being in a garden, not a grocery shop. Some things are with us for their own sake not just for our consumption. It is being made clear that the future of mother earth and future of the human family are bound up together." (Ibid., 11).

In underscoring the celebration of the awesome and the delight of the creation that the Wisdom Tradition, such as Job reveals, Taylor (2015) makes a very profound point for our consideration here. He surmises that the grandeur of the creation, which points to the worthiness of creator places a serious challenge upon those who behold the creation, a challenge which ought to rule out the

propensity to abuse the creation. He writes:

[W]ith the evidence presented in relation to the delightfulness of creation...there is a great challenge involved... With the great pleasure and delight expressed in creation as the marvelous and significant handiwork of God, reflective of the Creator's own creative delight, it must be a matter of gross delinquency and arrogant presumptuousness for scant regard to be paid to the integrity and God-given intrinsic worth and value of creation... That which is the focus of divine delight and in turn reflected in human response, calls for care and responsible treatment, being the kind of divine handiwork it is." (Ibid., 155- 156).

The care of the creation is in and of itself a form of reverence for and worship of God, the maker of all. This is certainly a case that needs to be made increasingly from the pulpits of our churches if we are going to facilitate the change that this situation demands of us.

Taylor (2014) provides what I believe is the clearest charge to Caribbean Theology on the matter at hand. He is reflecting upon the tension between the push for economic growth in a developing state as ours and the preserving of the integrity and sustainability of the environment. He puts it bluntly, "A Caribbean Theology project must have a part to play in this in a not insignificant manner. Earlier, theological projects in dealing with the matter of justice and economic issues did not give any attention or gave just little attention to the environmental realities that were involved. A Caribbean Theology Project will have to give a more central place to this subject...This is so not the least because of the entire

orientation of the theology project itself, that is, its commitment to address the lived experience of the people in their social as well as the created order.” (Ibid., 160 – 161).

It is quite evident that there is an undeniable link between the false dichotomy that prevails and our abject lack of concern with environmental affairs in Jamaica. Cope (2006) hits the nail on the head, “The Christian church today is a huge church and a weak church because we have lost most of the gospel message. We can say that the social, economic, and judicial issues of our communities are not our concern because we have a split view of the world. We are ‘spiritual leaders’ and do not need to concern ourselves with secular matters. We do not need to stop bringing the message of salvation, but we desperately need to regain the essential truths of the rest of the gospel message of God’s Kingdom.” Middleton speaks to this as well in what he describes as ‘The Human Calling to Image God on Earth.’ He presents a startling perspective in worship: “[T]he distinctive way humans worship or render service to the Creator is by the development of culture through interaction with our earthly environment in a manner that glorifies God. That is our fundamental human calling.” (Ibid., 87). The words of Ashley Smith, hailed by many as the Father of Caribbean Theology, are fitting to close this section. He is quoted here by Middleton in reflecting on what the key question before the Caribbean church is: “[W]hat kind of ministry it might exercise, in the name of him who continually makes all things new, in order that the purpose of his creation might be fulfilled?”(Ibid., 83).

### **The Way Forward**

We have established the undeniable reality of climate change in the Caribbean and the continuing threats that human action both at the

community and commercial levels pose to the destruction of land and sea. We have also stated categorically that the Caribbean Theology project would be woefully incomplete if it does not lead the church in a right and proper view of the creation and its care. What then is the way forward? What shall we do? We should embrace Taylor's (2015) counsel, "change or perish". "In the face of the region's inherent sensitivity to climate, its growing vulnerability, and the threat posed to its future sustainability, *climate clearly demands change. But what kind of change is being demanded?* First, there is a demand for a change in how we perceive the issue of climate and in the importance we place on the issue."

This kind of robust seizing of the moment, as Dr. Martin Luther King famously put it, the fierce urgency of now, is necessary in all quarters. Of particular concern is that the church community gets on board. It may be a hard sell though, for the church has shown over time that it is a space where persons love to avoid the facts. The extent to which the church seems largely unmoved by the vexed social issues, such as climate change, would suggest that it is a space where the fact resistant strain of humans that Borowitz (2015) described abounds. In a stunning satirical piece he posits,

Scientists have discovered a powerful new strain of fact-resistant humans who are threatening the ability of Earth to sustain life, "These humans appear to have all the faculties necessary to receive and process information," Davis Logsdon, one of the scientists who contributed to the study, said. "And yet, somehow, they have developed defenses that, for all intents and purposes, have rendered those faculties totally inactive. Our research is very preliminary, but it's possible that they will become more receptive to facts once they are in an environment without food, water, or oxygen," he

said.”

The point is brilliantly made. We cannot continue to resist the fact. Continued actions of the present will only lead to an earth that is unable to sustain life. Let us hope that it will not take that to cause the church to wake up. We should not think that we can move slowly or try to change slowly. According to Taylor (2015) The creeping nature of sea level rise and ocean acidification, or the gradual warming of temperatures or the slow onset of overall drier conditions will make some of the resulting impacts discernible only after a time, especially when the affected system is making gradual adaptive adjustments to accommodate the changes as they are being experienced. This is particularly true of the impact on biodiversity: for example, the alteration in timing of growing seasons or changes in mating and reproductive cycles and the appearance of new invasive species or the decline in abundance or disappearance of species due to unfavourable conditions.

The projections of future climate make the clear case, then, for action which is – among other things – anticipatory and responsive, urgent and timely, and targeted and transformative. In light of this, climate change must be afforded more than passing attention and must be more than just a consideration in regional planning. Instead, there must be deliberate and sustained efforts aimed at the incorporation of climate change into the development plans of all the countries of the region “A change in approach is necessary if the change in climate is established as true for the region.” (Taylor 2015). This is supported by the argument made by Taylor (2015) that we humans are most to be blamed for climate change. He opines, “there is a case to be made that even if there were no climate change, climate is still deserving of more than passing attention in the Caribbean simply because of the inherent climate sensitivity of the region.”

In the epilogue of his paper, Taylor (2015) lays down the gauntlet: “If the kind of consideration needed is not given and action not taken the Caribbean region’s future sustainability is threatened in light of the future projections of climate. The accompanying demand is for sustained action which will build climate resilience through the mainstreaming of climate considerations into planning for development and the daily routines of Caribbean life. Action is required on the part of all. Achieving climate resilience will, however, require changes in both our attitudes and approaches to climate.”

Let us therefore consider some proposed changes that will help to begin the transition from ignorance and complacency towards intentional stewardship of the environment. These proposals span both the individual level and the corporate level with a heavy emphasis on the role of the church.

***A Change in the Attitude of Fisher Folk:*** A change is needed in the attitude of our people towards over fishing. Temporary economic gain cannot be traded for long term damage to the reefs. Delayed gratification needs to be encouraged. According to the NEPA (2008) report,

The dominance of algae on Jamaican reefs is directly related to the paucity of herbivores present on the reefs. The unsustainable harvesting of the herbivorous fish population is one of the main factors that has resulted in this reduction. As can be extrapolated from the data, the fishing population in the near-shore fishery has been on the decline for several years. This bleak outlook will continue unless the practices currently being employed are

changed. This is going to require a series of public education campaigns coupled with continued monitoring and effective management.

This call came as early as 1994, when Broad wrote in the New York Times, “The only way of avoiding greater losses or repairing widespread damage, is if Jamaica adopts a policy that seeks to stop overfishing.” The return of mature herbivorous fish around Jamaica is seen as helping to fight the growth of fleshy algae that otherwise come to dominate the reef ecosystem and crowd out coral polyps. It must be noted that reefs take a far longer time to go than it takes for them to be destroyed. Broad mentions this: “Rebuilding the reefs will take far longer than the two to three decades it has taken to destroy them,” (Broad 1994).

***Reduce the Household use of Plastic:*** Schaeffer (1970) was quite correct in identifying the rise of the plastic culture and “...the hippies of the 1960s did understand something. They were right in fighting the plastic culture, and the church should have been fighting it too.” The writer suggests here that there be a church led initiative to lobby for a ban on plastic bags. These are highly popular in Jamaica, commonly referred to as ‘scandal bags’. In McCatty’s (2005) report on the speech from Pastor Gregory she indicates that he states, “an increase in consumption was putting the environment at risk, noting that plastics, which are being increasingly used in Jamaica, take at least 100 years to decompose.” It will take a widespread intentional approach to utilize less plastic, such as carrying our own bags to the supermarket to carry our goods.

***Climate Change Education for All:*** Taylor (2015) makes the following proposals on the need for mass education campaigns:

There should be dedicated effort aimed at finding all entry points to educate about climate change. Since the impact is on all, education must be for all and by all and not just left to governments. Advantage should be taken of opportunities for sustained education, for example, writing climate change into the curricula of the formal educational process (basic school through to university), into professional training courses, into continuing education credits and into Sunday and Sabbath schools. Advantage should also be taken of the occasional opportunities – community meetings, service and youth clubs, camps and company retreats. Multiple modes, media and messages should be employed. Contextually relevant material should be commissioned and made easily accessible and a special effort made to target the most vulnerable groupings.

The idea here is that there needs to be a pedagogic plan that involves mass education of the people along with practical actions that can be taken e.g., a church leading a waste recycling plant. It is not difficult to imagine the kind of witness churches will have as they begin to lead the way in projects such as this. At the school level there needs to be competitions that are age appropriate to motivate the students to implement activities that show their awareness of and appreciation for this education. Some further advice from Taylor (2015) are salient here:

Education is critical to ensuring buy-in. Since adaptation inevitably demands a change in behaviour and/or thought, response strategies must factor in public education and awareness. Awareness engenders change and it is a change

in attitude and approach that is being demanded. Since response strategies will target multiple levels of society, public education and awareness must similarly target all levels (such as government, community and individual) and all ages, and must utilize traditional (such as newspapers, radio, television and workshops) and newer communication methodologies (for example, cell phones and social media groups). Educating those most likely to be affected by a response strategy about why the strategy is necessary engenders buy-in and helps facilitate commitment to the effort and its eventual success.

Churches need to be leading the way on this as well as part of their Christian Education activities, in the mass gatherings such as conventions, conferences, convocations. Inter-denominational groups like the Keswick Committees should recognize the prime audience they have and seek to utilize that week of meetings to share information on the change that climate change requires of us. The narrative that needs to be carried at such gatherings must include themes such as fighting the pull of materialism, consumerism and individualism. An exploration of the Jubilee such as presented by Roper (2012) could be very useful in this regard. Roper states, for example,

The second thing that the Jubilee teaches is the interconnectedness of life. In the Jubilee year, the land was to rest, the worker was to rest, the animals were to rest, the trees were to be untrimmed and un-pruned and the stranger and alien were also to enjoy the Jubilee. This is a lesson to be rediscovered- the interconnectedness of life. God made us all, and each has its place, each must be preserved and protected, each

must be cared for. Do you see how this principle that gives a value to plant and animal is the basis for the preservation of human life? We have to learn once again, by taking the time by breaking the cycle that other things are important and our importance and significance are bound up with the importance and significance we to give to the simple things of life.” (Ibid. p. 12).

***The Strengthening of Community Groupings and Community Governance:*** Taylor (2015) is of the view that community groups are often the first responders to extreme situations and, outside of disasters, represent sustained capacity building resilience. This resonates well with me having seen this is at work first hand in the course of ministry over the last thirteen years. When these groups are guided and provided with the right kind of organizational support from stake holders they wield tremendous influence over the residents towards positive behavior. Let us harness this towards the better care of the environment. This may just be the way around the harmful uses of the gullies.

***Promoting Values and Attitudes:*** These two have been twinned together and even politicized but they hold great prospects for sustained change. Taylor (2015) proposes a stewardship that is an “equitable and fair use of resources . . . [that constitute] important principles in sustainable development. These principles also provide, in the face of climate change . . . a justification for individual through to national response. An ongoing values and attitudes campaign can contribute to the resilience-building effort. There is the potential for faith-based communities to take the lead in this effort.” I would add to the list of values to be inculcated: simplicity, and contentment. In terms of our attitudes we should definitely be promoting an anti-consumerist attitude. The question of sustainability of energy for example boils down to a

matter of attitude. We all need to adopt a zero tolerance for wastage of electricity, and a demonstrable will power to embrace renewable forms of energy. It is here that the church may have her biggest battle, the battle against herself. It is the task of the Caribbean Theologian to repudiate the consumerist agenda inherent in the pervasive prosperity gospel.

*Always Considering the Environment:* This is another idea that Taylor (2015) proposes as the way forward. “The environment and the natural world are currently exploited for economic development, yet they are often secondary considerations in decisions related to economic development. A degraded environment only exacerbates the impact of climate change threats, and the environment is already among the most vulnerable groupings. Even when compromise on the environment is required it must not be such that it is unfairly placed at a disadvantage.” Thompson (2015) reports that Sterling shares a similar view: “It is time we stop making excuses that in order to have a strong economy we have to accept the devastation of God's creation. As human beings we were chosen by the Creator to tend his creation and we have failed miserably. Our consumption of the world's resources is nothing short of abusive. As privileged people we have become blind, deaf and dumb and we are experiencing a poverty of spirit unparalleled in history through our own doing.”

Weaver and Hodson propose that we can all “*Save Energy and Resources* – for example, by turning off electrical equipment when it is not in use and only using as much water as is necessary for making hot drinks or cleaning teeth.” I particularly like the idea proposed by the principals of the website “Carbon Fast Jamaica”. They indicate that “A carbon fast is a challenge to us all to look at our daily actions, to reflect on how they impact on the

environment and our fellow Jamaicans. It challenges us to take some small steps – some of which will reduce our carbon dioxide output while others will help the environment – for a more sustainable world. In the process we may come to rediscover a different relationship with God, with His Creation and with one another.” I think this is an excellent methodology to help the church be a part of the process of change that is demanded by climate. Some other very practical suggestions were preferred by Weaver and Hodson in their “Green Code”: *Cut Down on Waste* – by adopting a programme that secures a reduction in waste (particularly packaging), the re-use of materials (such as bottles), and recycling (finding ways of using materials in a new way such as PET, Polyethylene terephthalate, from beverage bottles for outdoor clothing).

***Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship.*** Here is a bit of advice from Taylor (2015) that is applicable to all sectors and not just the matter of responding appropriately to climate change. He suggests that “By having a vibrant and enabling environment for the development and quick deployment of new and creative solutions, the opportunity would already exist for responding to new challenges such as those that will be thrown up by climate change. New solutions also represent new opportunities for entrepreneurship. Fostering an enabling environment for entrepreneurship is, in effect, a resilience-building activity. The private sector has a critical role in creating such opportunities.” The way I see it, the door is wide open for young college graduates to get into the production and distribution of solar power, wind energy, recycling projects as income generating activities.

Taylor (2015) rightly points out the need to “Integrate adaptation with development, for example, policy options will have to be

considered for tourism infrastructure in a variety of areas such as: (i) designs may have to be encouraged to deal with alternative methods of cooling buildings in increasingly hot climates to counteract rising energy costs, and (ii) physical planning issues will require building lines to be moved back from eroding coasts.” Churches can also harness this by pooling investments from their members to fund such startups and sharing the earnings through benevolent societies. The time has long since come when the ministry of the church to the community needs to be accompanied by practical approaches to income generation for the unemployed. Here is another option to proverbially shoot two birds with one stone.

***Demonstrate and Teach Biblical Farming Principles.*** As much as modern agricultural practices yield mass crops there is also mass destruction to the soil. There needs to be a space for the church to lead the way in the demonstration and teaching of Biblical farming principles. Some of these have been mentioned earlier in the Jubilee. The proposal here is that we encourage the use of agricultural practices that allow the soil to renew itself and contribute to the water cycle. Crop rotation, mulching, along with no ploughing are foundational practices employed with great success in Africa, as popularized by a ministry called Farming God’s Way.<sup>1</sup> My own exposure to this in practice is South Africa tells me that there is much benefit to be gained from this in the regions of St. Elizabeth and Manchester that are plagued by droughts each year. I am sure that with the will to do so, churches can use their expansive land holdings to demonstrate these things incorporating jubilee principles and also generate income to improve communities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.farming-gods-way.org/overview.htm>.

### **Redeeming Biblical Salvation**

In addition to the weight of evidence that Taylor presents, making a strong appeal for change on our part as climate changes, there is a powerful appeal for change that leaps at us from the pages of the Bible itself which is woefully missed by the church, inclusive of her leaders. Middleton advances this when he describes salvation as the restoration of God's purposes for creation. He argues that "The biblical affirmation of earthly life is further articulated in the central and paradigmatic act of God's salvation, the exodus from Egyptian bondage ... The Old Testament does not spiritualize salvation but understands it as God's deliverance of people and land from all that destroys life and the consequent restoration of people and land to flourishing." Middleton takes a similar trend into the New Testament treatment of salvation and its related benefits. He therefore argues that the:

eschatological restoration taught by Jesus and envisaged in Revelation has begun in the church...So when Paul describes Jesus' own resurrection from the dead as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep..., he claims that the harvest of new creation has already begun... Then in the words of Revelation 11, 'the Kingdom of this world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah' (Rev. 11:15). At that time, explains Paul, creation itself, which has been groaning in its bondage to decay will be liberated from this bondage into the same glory God's children will experience – that is the glory of resurrection. The inner logic of this vision of holistic salvation is that the creator has not given up on creation, but is working to salvage and restore the world (human and no-human) to the fullness of shalom and flourishing intended from the beginning.

And redeemed human beings, renewed in God's image, are to work towards and embody this vision in their daily lives." (Ibid., 88 – 90)

If we are to side with Middleton in our understanding of salvation as being not just personal and spiritual but intrinsically wrapped up with the cosmos, it means we are duty bound to fight against climate change by changing our thinking and our actions. It means the church should be the vanguard of lobbying for the care of the environment. Sadly the opposite is found to be true, as is reflected in 'The Otherworldly Hymnody of The Church,' according to Middleton. He laments that "the tragedy is that this kind of holistic vision of salvation is found only rarely in popular Christian piety or even in the liturgy of the church. Indeed it is blatantly contradicted by many traditional hymns (and contemporary praise songs) sung in the context of communal worship. This is an important point since it is from what they sing that those in the pew (or auditorium) typically learn their theology, especially their eschatology." (Ibid., 90 – 91).

I am in full agreement with Middleton that the preachers are to be held largely culpable for the pervasiveness of this otherworldly brand of Christianity. In the same way that they are culpable it is in the same way that I am suggesting they need to lead the charge for the change that both the canon and the climate demand. Middleton does concede that there is an extent to which the root of this otherworldly focus of popular Caribbean Theology is to be found in our plantation history but insists that "to shift the burden of responsibility to others would be to let ourselves off too lightly. The Caribbean church must engage in serious self-examination and come to terms with the fact that its own leaders have perpetuated an escapist theology that entrenches ordinary Christians still

further in despair and paralysis, as they pine for a heavenly home distant from the everyday realities of Caribbean life.” When we get it right, when Caribbean Theology embraces creation theology in its rightful sense, Middleton argues, there will be no space to “simply baptize the present as God’s will”; we be active in helping to make all things new. Our vision will also be fixed. This is supported by Weaver and Hodson in their Green Code proposition, “*Care for Surroundings* - good environmental practice is not a catalogue of ‘don’ts’ but involves improving surroundings with trees and landscaping. The adoption of a Sustainable Lifestyle provides us with the capacity to ask others to do so and the consequence is good news for the planet.”

Middleton proposes that “A Biblical creation theology provides an empowering vision of God’s purposes for shalom that can energize church members- both as individuals and in community- to utilize their gifts and opportunities to make a difference in the world by how they live. A church that has its eyes firmly fixed on the coming of God’s kingdom from heaven to earth, rather than on leaving earth for heaven, will seize the moment (the *kairos*) and seek to contribute to healing, justice, and earthly flourishing in the whole range of human life and activities. In this way the church in the Caribbean may grow into a living foretaste of the coming of God’s kingdom to this our beautiful-yet broken and needy- earthly home.” (Ibid., 95). It is to such a place that the writer hopes the church can arrive if it is to lead the change that climate demands.

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**THE RELEVANCE  
OF SYSTEMATIC  
THEOLOGY FOR  
MINISTRY IN THE  
CARIBBEAN**

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**Introduction**

*No one book of scripture can be understood by itself, any more than any one part of a tree or member of the body can be understood without reference to the whole of which it is a part.*

Charles Hodge

The debate associated with and the issues pregnant within Systematic Theology have been central to Christianity for the past millennium and a half. It is an area that preoccupies the minds of theologians but has significant impact on the lives of Christians and indeed all of humankind. Within the ambit of this study, the purpose of Systematic theology will be expounded and a more comprehensive understanding of it pursued. The truth is, theology permeates every part of our lives and cannot be separated from the whole person. It is a separation that cannot be clinically done because any attempt to divorce theology from our lives would be an attempt to sever and destroy the completeness of the total person. This is why it is important to understand and reflect on the usefulness of systematic theology.

The questions asked may be: To what extent is this true, does this pervasiveness and connection really exist? What part does Systematic theology play in answering the universal questions of life - the questions we all ask and the questions we may be specifically asking as a Caribbean people? Does Systematic theology answer them comprehensively enough or is it deficient in its rhetoric? As the paper examines Systematic Theology's history, it will also explore some of these concerns and the reader will be left to weigh it in the balance, using this as a guide to draw her/his own conclusions. As we try to explore this important subject and its relevance, it is only fitting to define our main term. What then is Systematic Theology?

## What is Systematic Theology?

### *Theology Defined*

“A good preliminary or basic definition of theology is the study or science of God” (Erickson 1998, 22). The word theology is a combination of two Greek words, *theos* meaning God and *logos* which can be translated ‘idea’ or ‘study’. Combined, we have the idea that theology is the study of God. Some have referred to theology as any talk about God. There are questions and experiences that people have had about God and once they begin talking about Him they are ‘doing’ theology. Theology then is an everyday activity, done consciously and/ or subconsciously. It is those who consciously or deliberately spend time to organize or espouse these thoughts that are called theologians.

Paul Enns puts it this way: theology is a “discourse about God” (Enns 1989, 147). To this idea of discourse, Thomas Oden adds that it is a “reasoned [one]...gained either by rational reflection or by response to God’s self-disclosure in history” (Oden 1987, 5). Public Theologian, Dr. Garnet Roper, whilst agreeing that theology is a reflection upon God, goes further with the definition by saying that it is not only done broadly historically but that it is done [particularly] in a given context and a given culture” (Roper 2012, 25).

The common thread however that runs in these definitions is that they are general definitions of theology to which theologians of other faiths would generally agree. More specifically however, when we talk about a Theology that is Christian we are referring to “that discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life” (Erickson 1998, 23).

If one is not careful, theology can be about “thought” and “talk” as opposed to the practical action that many in the past and today have argued for. Protestant Theologian Paul Tillich’s definition moves it a bit further from idea to life. “Theology”, he says, “must serve the needs of the church”. He continues, “Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received” (Tillich 1951, 1:3). Theology for him must be eternal and at the same time temporal; theology has a context. But is that context limited to just the church? Am I to understand Tillich to be saying theology is for the called out ones only? One can agree with this only if, according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “the Church [is] her true self...when she exists for

humanity” (Bonhoeffer 1953, 166). In this sense Paul Tillich is right and makes himself clear a few years after in another of his works when he says “the situation to which theology responds is scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which they express their interpretation of existence, the totality of man’s creative self-interpretation in a special period” (Tillich 1967, 3). That inter-connection with reality is the benchmark of true theology.

In summation, a definition of Theology, then, must bear a few things in mind, five of which Millard Erickson outlines about what theology is or ought to be. When one theologizes one must be:

1. Biblical, drawing on the Old and New Testament as primary sources along with the tools and methods of biblical research.
2. Systematic, relating the various portions of the entire bible in a coherent whole.
3. Scientific . . . pulling from other disciplines since all truth is God’s truth.
4. Contemporary, using language, concepts and thought forms to communicate those past eternal and timeless truths clearly today.
5. Practical, that is theology must relate to living rather than merely to belief. (Erickson 1998, 23-24)

### **Functions of Theology**

There are many ways that theologians have tried to do theology over the years. Systematic Theology is one of those many ways postulated. It is a narrower sense that endeavors to treat the specifically the *doctrinal* character of the Christian faith. There are other disciplines which have in view other specific tasks. Biblical theology deals with matters which “give special attention to the teachings of individual authors and sections of scripture and to the place of each teaching in the historical development of scripture” (Grudem 1994, 22).

Historical Theology pertains to historical studies of the church or how Christians in different periods have understood the doctrine of the church (Grudem 1994, 21). Philosophical Theology can be that aspect of theology that, according to Grudem, analyses “theological topics largely without the bible but using philosophical reasoning through observation of the universe” (Ibid, 22). Erickson has a different, or might I say, additional, understanding of this discipline. He defines philosophical Theology as having to do with practical studies, that is, the theory and practice of ministry (Erickson 1998, 25). Don Thorsen makes a

distinction between Philosophical Theology and Practical Theology (Thorsen 2008, 9) while Erickson does not.

Contextual Theology is another division of how theology is done. Erickson does not mention this discipline since it might be assumed in his area of Philosophical theology. According to Dr. Garnet Roper “Contextual Theology is theology that is articulated in response to the lived experience of the people. It is an attempt to engage with...the context in light of the word of God” (Roper 2012, 26). These are all the different functions of theology and one should appreciate each since they all help us to understand the multifaceted way in which theology can be done. No one way of doing theology is complete and one would be wise to recognize this and value the contribution of each. Each is either a response to, or makes up for deficits found in another.

#### *A Systematic Way*

Our area of focus for this paper is Systematic Theology: a discipline used extensively by many scholars and taught in many seminaries. Christians have found great advantage in the systematization of Theology as it helps to understand the teachings of scripture. Systematic Theology “arranges Christian beliefs, values and practices in an orderly and comprehensive manner” (Thorsen 2008, 9). The word ‘Systematic’ comes from the Greek verb *synistano* which means to stand together or to organize. Therefore, the business of Systematic Theology is to put theology in a system of categories (Enns 1989, 147). One can easily see why this over the years seems to be the preferred way of doing theology. Generally speaking, people think in a logical and systematic way. It helps them to grasp concepts when they are so ordered. This is one of the benefits of Systematic Theology. We will be mentioning this point again when we look at the need for a systematic Theology.

According one Theologian, Systematic Theology is the “collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and his works” (Chafer 1947, 1:6). It must be pointed out that Systematic theology is concerned with not just the Bible as source but wherever truth about God can be obtained and therefore organized consistently with scripture. These sources of knowledge about God can be obtained from nature as declared by the psalmist David in Psalm 19, from Christian history, from tradition, especially as seen in the creeds, and also from reason as guided by the Holy Spirit. This reason must however be submitted to the supernatural (Enns 1989, 150-151).

Systematic Theology is, as we saw from Millard Erickson, one way of treating with the doctrinal character of the Christian faith. Grudem says “It treats biblical topics in a carefully organized way to guarantee that all important topics will receive thorough consideration” (Grudem 1994, 24). Doctrine and doctrinal rectitude are the focii of this discipline. Doctrine is the resulting feature of the systematic process and these doctrines are those that feature commonly in scripture (Ibid, 25). These doctrines are as follows:

- a. Bibliology- doctrine or teaching of the word of God
- b. Paterology (Theology Proper)- doctrine of God
- c. Anthropology- doctrine of Humanity
- d. Christology- doctrine of Christ
- e. Pneumatology- doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- f. Soteriology- doctrine of Salvation
- g. Harmiatology- doctrine of Sin
- h. Ecclesiology- doctrine of the Church
- i. Eschatology- doctrine of the Last days

So we see that Systematic theology, unlike the other ways of doing theology,<sup>1</sup> takes into consideration the whole of scripture and carefully orders the teachings found within into various categories. It certainly has a place not just in academia but in life and ministry.

### **The Need for Systematic Theology**

#### *A Brief History*

An understanding as to the historical value of systematizing theology will give us an appreciation for its need today. Information to find the history of Systematic Theology was strangely hard to come by since none of my major sources had a section that focused on its genesis. However Theopedia, a website which focuses on theological matters, states that

The systematic presentation of the Christian faith is not a new concept. Wolfhart Pannenberg writes that "systematic theology ... emerged long before the term came into common use. Materially the systematic presentation of Christian teaching is very much older. It was already the object of Gnostic systems in the 2nd century, and although it remained merely implicit in the works of the early Apologists, and anti-Gnostic fathers like Irenaeus, Origen presented his work on origins (*peri-archon*)

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, Biblical Theology being the one exception.

in the form of a systematic presentation of the Christian doctrine of God." (Theopedia)

Origen has been credited to be the first inventor of theology as science. He, because of his vocation, did not make his work academic but instead pastoral. As Hans Kung writes "he invented the appropriate praxis for this kind of theology, and a methodological theory which it needed" (Kung 1995, 49). Origen's purpose for setting out his theology was seemingly polemic. His innovation of steeping the biblical message in systematic theology was "presumably in response to criticism which had been expressed ... [by the Greeks and Gnostics of his day]" Kung 1995, 49). This work of systematizing theology was called *On the Principles* (Greek *Peri archon*, Latin *De Principiis*) which deals with the basic principles of being, knowledge and Christian Doctrine (Ibid. 49).

### **The Relevance of Theology in a System**

Christians need to know the whole counsel of the word of God. Jesus instructed his disciples not just to go into all the world but to teach disciples to observe all things. I want to believe he meant all of Scripture (cf. Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4). In short, he meant evangelize all the world and edify with all the Word. Systematic Theology aids in the effecting of this mandate. "The basic reason," says Wayne Grudem, "for studying systematic Theology, then, is that it enables us to teach ourselves and others what the whole bible says, thus fulfilling the second part of the Great Commission" (Grudem 1994, 27-28).

There are various reasons why a systematic theology is necessary today. Paul Enns in Moody's *Handbook of Theology* presents three reasons. First, Systematic Theology is a way of explaining Christianity. As a religion and world view Christianity has to be explained or made explainable in a logical and orderly way. The discipline of Systematic theology gives a researched and studied explanation as well as a systematic organization of the doctrines that are foundational and necessary to Christianity. The scriptures were not written or outlined propositionally but instead through narratives, poetry, parables and other forms of literary devices. This is why Systematic Theology is needful, that is, to give a clear understanding about the beliefs of the entire Bible and therefore the Christian faith (Enns 1998, 149). It aids in making the whole of scripture plain.

Second, systematized theology acts as an apologetic for the Christian faith, though in and of itself it is not apologetics. It however draws on the discipline of apologetics to present and

defend the doctrines of the Bible. In the early Christian church Systematic theology was used to address opponents and unbelievers (Enns 1998, 149). Today there are many alternatives and competitors of Christianity. The systemization of doctrines helps in refuting claims of other worldviews, religions and cults since it is not enough nor is it easy to determine which view is false without a knowledge of Christianity's teachings. Just like a banker being able to decipher between a counterfeit note and a genuine one by first studying the real currency, so one must make his knowledge of Christian doctrine paramount (Erickson 1998, 31).

Third, systematic theology helps in the maturation of the Christian. Correct doctrine is important in Christian maturity. Put another way, right belief will help in right behavior. Enns articulates it biblically when he says “[the apostle] Paul normally builds a doctrinal foundation in his epistles before he exhorts believers to live correctly” (Enns 1994, 149). Indeed orthodoxy will impact on orthopraxy.

There is a fourth reason why doing theology systematically is necessary. Erickson makes the point that truth and experience are related. If one is not living according to scriptures now, it does not mean that that person is living righteously because “the truth will come with crushing effect on our experience...[eventually] the truth of the Christian Faith will have ultimate bearing on our experiences; we must [therefore] come to grips with them”(Erickson 1998, 31). Systematic Theology helps us to know this truth.

I find Grudem's second benefit to life quite instructive as another reason why Systematic Theology is important. “It helps us to be able to make better decisions on new questions of doctrine that may arise” (Grudem 1994, 28). Sam Sharpe would have used a systematic approach to formulate a Christology that helped him to conclude that “no man can serve two masters at the same time” and in so doing broadsided the colonizers. This point refutes, though partially, the argument of Caribbean theologians who call for almost a doing away of “North Atlantic Theology” - a designation that makes reference to Systematic Theology and other theologies (Palmer 2013, 156).

While one would agree that Systematic Theology has some shortfalls (a matter to be dealt with next), it certainly has aided in the past, even for those oppressed. Sam Sharpe would have done his own systematization of what his oppressors taught him and what he read, and therefore come to an all important decision about

slavery. This was due to a systematic theology (even if on his own) that told him that Jesus was Lord and his only master.

Finally, it is in systematizing that the rigorous work is done by scholars for the benefit of all. A systematic theology acts as a handy tool summarizing the whole of scripture into propositions that can be helpful to the common man.

Though as a teaching facility Systematic Theology is quite useful as we have seen, it has deficiencies in many areas. Garnett Roper, at a Baptist World Alliance forum in Ocho Rios, makes the point that "There is a need for Bible study to be used as an instrument of catechism to the church, but, more importantly, as a tool of consciousness-raising. Bible study must awaken and sharpen God's people in relation to things as they are" (Ethics Daily July 5, 2013). So as an instrument of teaching dogma, systematized theology is effective; however, it is in the area of 'consciousness-raising' and reality check that Systematic Theology seems to many to be weighed in the balance and found wanting.

### **The Deficiencies of Systematic Theology**

A good place to commence in looking at the weaknesses of Systematic Theology is with one of its own proponent's critique or should I say observed critique of this mode of theologizing. Wayne Grudem in his book, *Systematic Theology* (ST), raises two objections to studying ST which he ably refutes. The first objection he cites is that others have said that the conclusions drawn in Systematic Theology are too neat to be true. The charge continues "[it] must be squeezing the Bible's teachings into an artificial mold, distorting the true meaning of scripture to get an orderly set of beliefs.

The second objection made by opponents of this neatly arranged theology is that the choice of topic dictates the conclusion, that is, if we decide to start with divine authorship of Scripture then we will believe in the inerrancy of scripture. However, if we start with human authorship then we will end up believing that there are errors in the Bible and so on. One's belief, then, will determine the outcome of one's searching of scripture. Systematized theology has then a bias in this view. But Grudem is able to delineate the biblical findings that lead to the doctrine of scripture as outlined in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 29-108!).

One finds it interesting that Grudem was only able to cite just two objections when so many other arguments have been made by scholars against Systematic Theology. We will now look at a few of these other refutations.

1. Systematic Theology starts with the idea/text rather than the experience and where people are. Stephen Hebert, in an online article, asserts that for him Systematic Theology “smacks of proof-texting, ignorance of context and genre and other literary concerns”. He further goes on to criticize in particular Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology text but cites no basis for his charge.
2. It misses the metanarrative, that overarching and ‘big’ storyline. John Hobbins in answering the question ‘What’s wrong with Systematic Theology’ says “the problem with systematic theologies, is that they are systematic. God’s revelation to us in the Bible is not systematic. It’s messy, it’s complicated, it tells the story of people who mess up, of God who gets involved in the life of his creation and redeems it. The Bible narrative is compelling; sometimes exciting, sometimes complicated but it is not systematic. God did not give us a system, he gave us a story” (Kouyanet February 5, 2008).
3. Cultural bias- the systematic theologian is charged with being biased. Says John Hobbins, “they draw threads together to make into a system but some bits do not fit in their system... the system they choose is determined by their own background” (Ibid February 5, 2008). Now, you might take a weighty systematic theology book and read through and think that it contains everything that you might ever want to know about God and the Bible. But as a challenge, look up the section on the theology of ancestors. You probably won’t find one. Yet, the Bible has tons to say about ancestors; think about the chapter upon chapter of *begetting* in the Old Testament. A systematic theology written by an African or an Asian might well have pages and pages on ancestors – but it doesn’t fit the system here in the West. So then context affects our theologizing and therefore the questions both asked and answered. We cannot then mistake the system for the message of the Bible. Important things like ancestors are left out because they are a misfit for a particular system and other things get systematized extensively and lose the relational aspect that breathes life into the Scriptures. The big question is who tells theologians what questions to ask? The

interests will vary from context to context and culture to culture.

4. Too polemical- When systematic theology becomes normative, in the sense seen in Dr. Henry's quotes above, the result will be that *theology becomes polemics*. We are always setting theology over against errors. Please do not misunderstand me. The church has always had to correct errors and good theology is vital in doing this. But a constant polemic is not healthy nor does it produce godliness in the church. This approach to theology will spiral out of hand in no time. It will perpetually ask: "What does the whole Bible say about this topic (fill in the blank)?" It then turns to *philosophical reflections* upon all the texts that are assembled and the truths that are stated as *God's absolute truth in perfect humanly devised propositions*. The danger is that once we know the truth about everything the Bible teaches about a given subject, say the doctrine of election as one illustration, then we can make war against all those who oppose this truth. We do not kill each other, as we once did, but we will kill the reputations and good name of each other. We are always sowing the seeds of our own destruction by becoming "heresy-hunters" par excellence.
5. Two deficits of Systematic Theology which falls into his designation 'Western Theology' has been cited by a Caribbean author. First, he believes that it is too dogmatic in its approach and it is perceived as a straightjacket methodology (Palmer 2013, 156). This for him is too humanistic and as he explains "human ingenuity to formulate and articulate the mind of God tends to come to the fore" (Ibid. 156). This is what Wayne Grudem might have responded to- A too-neat-to be true process. It misses the metanarrative.
6. Secondly, Palmer cites the sentiments of some Majority world theologians that many of their North Atlantic counterparts are too much engaged in "excessive specialization and ivory tower reflection" (Palmer 2013, 156). This theology seems to be better suited for academia. In keeping with this thought ST becomes too abstract and otherworldly to be of any value to Majority world Christians. In this sense then, Palmer believes it is particularistic (Ibid. 156).

7. Because of its otherworldly nature, it fails to connect with the *Am ha arets* an (Hebrew expression for everyday people) or laity in their natural environment (*sitz em leben*). Palmer quotes Harold Sitahal who says that this kind of theologizing is not a theology of, for, by, nor with the people since its “reflection [does not appear to] ... eschew theological reflection on the supernatural for its own sake (Ibid. 156). It is not about transformation and practicality. The charge then of many is that Systematic Theology is very highfaluting in nature and needs to be grounded.

### **How Does Systematic Theology Facilitate Life and Ministry?**

#### *Questions of Life*

In his book *Worldviews in Conflict*, Ronald Nash gives five components of a worldview and questions we ask pertaining to these five areas. The five areas are God, Reality, Knowledge, Morality, and Humankind. He outlines under each component questions that people seek answers for, even the atheists.

1. A view of God- Does God even exists? What is the nature of God? Is there only one true God? Is God a personal being who can know love and act? Or is God an impersonal force or power?
2. A view of Reality- What is the relationship between God and the universe? Is the existence of the universe a brute fact? Is the universe eternal? Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world? Are God and the world eternal and interdependent? Is the world best understood in a non-purposeful way? Or is there a purpose? Is the universe closed? Or can a supernatural reality act causally within nature?
3. A view of Knowledge - Is knowledge of our world possible? Can we trust our senses? What are the proper roles of senses and experiences in knowledge? Is truth relative or must truth be the same for all rational beings? Is knowledge about God possible? Can God reveal himself to human beings?
4. A view of Ethics - Are there moral laws that govern human conduct? What are they? Are these moral laws the same for all human beings? Is morality totally subjective or objective? Are moral laws discovered or constructed by human beings? Is morality relative to individuals or to cultures or to historical periods? Does it make sense to say that the same action may be right for people in one culture

or historical epoch and wrong for others? Or does morality transcend cultural, historical and individual boundaries?

5. A view of Humankind- Are human beings free or are they pawns of deterministic forces? Were all the religious and philosophical thinkers correct who talked about the human soul or who distinguished the mind from the body? What is the human soul and how is it related to the body? Is there conscious, personal survival after death? Are there rewards and punishment after death? Are Christian teachings about heaven and hell correct? (Nash 1992, 26-30).

Charles Colson formulates these questions into three areas and believes that a person's worldview will seek to address and must answer questions of Creation or Where did we come from and who we are. Fall... meaning what has gone wrong with the world?, and Redemption... What can we do to fix it? (Colson 1999, xiii). These are questions, whether as summarized by Nash or Colson, that universally concern people and questions that Systematic theology helps to answer in its categories of Bibliology, Theology Proper, Anthropology, Christology and Pneumatology. But are these the questions that the Caribbean man is asking? Are there completely different realities that Caribbean people are experiencing that is so foreign to a theology that is systematized?

### **Concerns of the Caribbean Person**

Already we have seen what some theologians from the Caribbean believe about Systematic Theology or "North Atlantic Theology"- that it is far removed from reality and mainly designed for academia. In my section on the history of Systematic Theology (found above) Origen's attention to praxis and theory refutes this claim. Origen, Kung writes, "was not primarily interested in a method or a system, but in basic human attitudes before God and in life in the Christian spirit" (Kung 1995, 48). However he saw where the one- theory-facilitated the other- praxis.

One of the questions the Caribbean man is said to have is one of identity. Dr. Garnet Roper in his book *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* asserts this and proceeds to say "Caribbean Theology therefore seeks to respond to this interiorization of oppression which has led to the distortion of identity" (Roper 2012, 18). In a telephone interview with Dr. Roper he was asked what in his view are the questions or concerns of the Caribbean man. His prompt response consisted of five questions, one of which has to do with identity. The questions are as follows:

1. What kind of God exists?
2. What is God's response to matters of justice?
3. What is the identity of the Caribbean man?
4. Is Jesus different from the cane cutter?
5. Is salvation for soul only or body as well?

He outlines these thoughts in his book in a more extensive way, stating them not as questions but themes of Caribbean Theology. The themes, including the problem of identity, are as follows;

- Resistance against injustice, idolatry and seductive snares in faithfulness to God.
- God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Lord of History.
- Caribbean Christology- Jesus incarnate in the poor, embodying the love of God, vanquishing the powers through His cross and saving by His blood and His resurrection.
- The Caribbean Church as the basic ecclesial community, a servant and a prophetic community (Roper 2012, 18)

The themes above, and the questions before, find themselves in at least one area of Dogmatics (i.e., Systematic Theology 1: Bibliology, Theology Proper, Anthropology, Christology and Pneumatology).

#### *Bibliology- The Word of God*

In Roper's theme of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Lord of History, dealt extensively in chapter 6 of his text, he has a high view of the scriptures saying "that the Bible is, becomes and contains the word of God" (Ibid. 169). This is a comprehensive view of the different schools on inspiration of scripture. However, he says that "Caribbean Theology is a narrative theology that reads scripture in the light of the lived experience of the people". "Scripture", he continues "is normative; it is the bread for the journey of life. It is to be studied, believed and obeyed" (Ibid. 169).

Many Systematic theologians will agree generally with Roper because they too treat the Bible as God's word which should be believed and obeyed. It is a standard for life and godliness and "we are to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured" (Grudem 1994, 83). Systematic Theology, like Caribbean Theology, holds up the scriptures as a standard, therefore, for life and ministry in the Caribbean where the Bible

plays a significant role. Says Roper, “the bible has remained central to the life of the community [even] after emancipation” when the enslaved received 50,000 bibles from their enslavers (Roper 2012, 169). What the systematic theologian can do and learn from the Caribbean theologian in the context of our region is to not just exegete the *Word* of God but exegete the *World* of Caribbean people so that he or she might be able to read scripture in the light of the lived experience of the people.

#### *Theology Proper*

Another of Caribbean Theology’s key tenet is God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Lord of History. He is the God who is in touch with and involved in human affairs. It is he who has brought the Caribbean into being. He made human beings in his own image and likeness. A God of justice on whom we depend in our lived experience, where justice is either denied or delayed. All persons are equal before this God. According to Roper, these are the “dominant and most discussed ideas about God that emerge in prayers and testimonies within the communities of faith” (Roper 2012, 169).

Systematic theologians see this matter of justice of God as one of his communicable attributes. But this justice that the Systematic theologian concerns herself with relates mainly to God. It is God who is the victim and the one whom we sin against. Grudem writes, “it is necessary that God punish sin, for it does not deserve reward” (Grudem 1994, 204). The man to man justice is overlooked. This seems to be the concern of the Caribbean man who wants his due recompense.

Whilst God is the one who ultimately is sinned against when we wrong our fellow man, God acts or will act on man’s behalf. Roper, who cites Devon Dick in his book, *The Cross and the Machete*, quotes a verse that Bogle and Gordon were preoccupied with from Isaiah 30:18 - ‘the Lord is the God of justice: blessed are those who wait for Him’ (Roper 2012, 169) . God looks out not just for himself but for men. The context of the Caribbean is taken up with what is just, since from the time of slavery inequality and inequity have been the reality.

#### *Anthropology*

The understanding of self has been a haunting issue that the Caribbean man grapples with. Who is he really? Is he second class to the other ethnic races – the Caucasian, for example? Where does he come from? In whose image was he created? Is Jesus different from who he is? Does salvation in Jesus equate to acting like the

white man? Is it a white man's salvation only? Is God concerned about the Caribbean man?

These are questions that preoccupy the mind of the Caribbean theologian as s/he understands his/her people. Caribbean theology therefore seeks to respond to questions about self-identity and self-determination. It is believed by some theologians that this identity has suffered distortion because the Caribbean person has been subjected to a system of oppression, seen in slavery for example. "Caribbean theology also seeks to be part of the process of self-determination by taking responsibility for itself theologically" (Roper 2012, 18). The theologian therefore takes upon himself the responsibility of helping the Caribbean man to see himself for who he is - to view himself as being equal to all human beings and not in any way inferior. The Caribbean person must accept that all human beings are equal in the sight of God as a theological truth.

Man created in the image of God is also a tenet proposed in Systematic theology. It is clearly taught in scriptures that all human beings are created in the likeness of God. The *Imago Dei* means the human is like God and in many ways represents God (Grudem 1994, 443). This places a high value on humans regardless of the ethnicity or race to which they belong. Wo/man is like God and different from the rest of creation because of their moral, spiritual, mental, relational and physical aspects. (Ibid. 446-448).

This doctrine is important for life, ministry to communities and the Caribbean person for it is in this teaching that we get our sense of great dignity as bearers of God's image. (Ibid. 449). As it pertains to our fallen nature, all humanity is fallen. However, "sinful man has the status of being in God's image. This has profound implications for our conduct towards others. It means that people of every race deserve equal dignity and rights" (Grudem 1994, 449-450). The systematic theologian and Caribbean theologian agree in totality on this. However the latter makes this his/her focus.

### *Christology*

It is long believed that our Caribbean region has suffered tremendously and have failed to progress, like other regions such as North America--socially, economically and politically. This inadequacy in the social and economic climate has been difficult to overcome because of the legacy of persistent poverty bequeathed by the plantation system and plantation economy. Political

independence has taken an incremental approach to changing the social and political realities of the newly independent nations. It is with this in mind that Dr. Roper's third tenet finds credence. In it, he portrays Jesus incarnate in the poor, embodying the love of God, vanquishing the powers through his cross and saving by his blood and his resurrection. The Caribbean man, a poor man, finds comfort in the incarnation of Jesus who identifies himself as a "cane cutter, the enslaved, the indentured labourer and a martyr who is killed taking a stand for justice" (Ibid. 169 – 170). In Roper's view Caribbean Christology touches the reality of the Caribbean people.

Jesus is liberator, and accomplishes a salvation for his people which is here and not yet here, another common theme prevalent in Caribbean and Systematic Theology. Systematic theology, though recognizing Jesus as man emphasizes his Deity whilst Caribbean theology shows greater appreciation for his humanity. Grudem accepts that Jesus could be hungry, tired, or lonely- all common features of humanity. However, he is quick to point out that Jesus could not have sinned because he was God (Grudem 1994, 538). Systematic theologians have attempted to reduce his humanity, choosing instead to deify him almost presenting a docetic Christ.

### **Conclusion**

There is great relevance in taking a Systematic approach to theology and therefore much that can be appreciated. Paramount in its contribution is the way things can be structured and organized as a way to enhance understanding of sometimes complex topics or themes in the bible. Other advantages are the apologetic and heuristic nature of this approach. These reasons were what sparked the idea of systematizing the common belief of the church at that time.

Systematic theology, like all other theologies, has its weaknesses and biases but the value it has given to the church over the centuries should not be discounted. Although it is different from a Caribbean theology it has been used as a platform and can be used as a spring board to further the cause of life and ministry even in the Caribbean context. One must admit that it has come short of focusing on specific areas but this is not a fault of the theology itself but rather the users thereof. Theologians may therefore need to view this approach in a complementary way to the other forms practiced than to think that it need to stand alone or be the only way suitable to go forward.

The writer wishes to make the following recommendations:

- ❖ Theologians should value and appreciate what systematic theology (ST) has historically set out to do
- ❖ The theologian/pastor must understand the catechistic use of a systematic theology for the maturation of the congregant.
- ❖ The theologian must realize ST's deficiencies and therefore pull from other theologies.
- ❖ Theologians must ground the doctrines in everyday living, thereby making it more personal and practical
- ❖ Those theologians opposed to a systematic theology must realize that even in other ways of doing theology systematization is unavoidable.
- ❖ Systematic theology must be open to other areas of discipline.
- ❖ Theologians should not only exegete scriptures but exegete society- that is, world and word.

If these recommendations are understood and adopted by theologians, I believe we would have a more comprehensive theology and therefore this would result in a muting of a sense of arrogance and exclusiveness sometimes associated with closely held beliefs.

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Richard N.  
Longenecker's  
*Biblical  
Exegesis in the  
Apostolic  
Period*

(Vancouver,  
B.C.: Regent  
College).

A Review

by

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In this influential tome, first published in 1975 and revised in 1999, the author notes that it is a common mistake to confuse hypotheses for evidence and to accept historical formulations on the basis of their coherence and widespread acceptance. The pages of theological history provides for us, he points out, the devastating effect that this perversion has had and is still having. Longenecker laments that even in view of such empirical evidence, the tendency to emulate these interpretive forms persists. He admonishes that we must guard against our own

inclinations and refuse to yield to various pressures to adopt these erroneous interpretive approaches to the New Testament writers' use of Scripture. His view is that a careful historical exegetical investigation can and should be done in order to garner proper understanding of the Scripture. The necessity of applying due diligence in this respect cannot be substituted with pietism, speculation or emulation neither should it be sacrificed on the altar of the perpetuation of some traditionally erroneous views, says Longenecker.

He, calls for an abandonment of assumptions that the New Testament writers' treatment of the Old Testament were either mechanical collation of proof texting to show exact fulfilment or an illegitimate twisting and distortion of the ancient texts. While he admits to be understandable criticisms that the exegetical treatment by NT writers, 1. Could give rise to the assumption that the writings were 'doctored' in order to prove literal fulfilment, (although in his view it only proved continuity with Scriptures of the old covenant); and 2. Makes the exegesis of the early Christians appears forced and artificial (albeit when judged by modern criteria), the author believes that the critics ignore the obvious, namely, that New Testament hermeneutics vis a vis the

Christian faith, came to birth in the Jewish milieu characterized by certain basic pattern of thought and common exegetical methods.

The author espoused that though it may be difficult to prove that the New Testament writers were consciously employing varieties of exegetical genres or following particular modes of interpretation, an analysis of their work reveals that they did in fact engaged in historico-grammatical exegesis, illustration by way of analogy, midrash exegesis, peshet interpretation, and allegorical treatment and interpretation based on the concepts of 'corporate solidarity' in their presentations. He observed no difficulty, however, in identifying that they were consciously interpreting Old Testament Scripture along three major lines; (1) a Christocentric perspective; (2) in conformity with a Christian tradition and (3) along Christological lines.

Longenecker identified as the undergirding premises for the interpretive approach of the New Testament writers (1) the use of exegetical conventions that were common within various branches of Judaism that is- the New Testament is heavily dependent on Jewish procedural precedents. Christianity speaks of divine redemption, worked out in a particular history and expresses itself in the various concepts and methods of that particular people and day. (2) Jesus' use of Scripture as the source and paradigm for their own use. When Jesus identifies certain messianically relevant passages and explicitly transformed the pre-messianic Torah into the Messianic Torah, His identifications and interpretations were preserved. (3) They believed that they were guided by the exalted Christ through the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit in their continued understanding and application of the Old Testament. This means that Christians continued to explicate Scripture along the lines laid out by Jesus and under the direction of the Spirit.

The Christocentric perspective of the earliest Christians caused them to take Jesus' own use of Scripture as normative, to look to Him for guidance in their ongoing exegetical tasks and gave them a new understanding of the course of redemptive history and their place in it. The Jews believed that redemptive history was building to a climax under God's direction. For them the focal point of history was yet to come and only from that point in the redemptive program would all previous history and all future time fit into place. Christians, however, persuaded by the resurrection of their Lord from the dead, are prepared to stake their lives on the fact that in Jesus of Nazareth the focal point of God's redemption had been reached. In view of the foregoing, using concepts of corporate solidarity, and correspondences in history, all the Old Testament became for them God's preparation for the Messiah. It was viewed

as ‘messianic prophecy’ and ‘messianic doctrine.’ From this perspective, the mission and future of God’s new people – a combination of both believing Jews and Gentiles- were determined. To summarize, the whole history of Israel in the past was converged upon Jesus and from Him the whole future of God’s people was deployed.

From all of this, Longenecker identified the following exegetical patterns among NT writers; common, diverse and developed. The common ones identified were 1. All shared in the Jewish presuppositions of corporate solidarity and redemptive correspondences in history. 2. All used a Hillelian exegetical principle *qal wahomer* (light to heavy) and *gezerah shawah* (analogies). 3. They exercised freedom in the use of Scripture based on an assumption that they knew the conclusion to which biblical testimony was pointing. 4. They utilized quotations from Scripture as well as extra-biblical sources (Jewish, pagan or uncertain). 5. They worked from two fixed points a) the messiahship and lordship of Jesus, as validated by His resurrection and witnessed by the Spirit and b) the revelation of God in the Old Testament as pointing forward to Jesus.

The diverse exegetical patterns and procedures were highlighted as follows; 1. Literature intended for a Jewish audience or audience that was strongly influenced by Jewish culture contained more numerous quotations than those intended for audiences unaffected by such. The rationale behind this practice is that only among Jews and Jewish Christians would a direct appeal to the Old Testament be appreciated and could be understood. 2. Peshet type exegesis – this approach was distinctive of only Jesus and His immediate disciples and not those who merely associated with them or who followed after them. The early apostolic band were not so much concerned in applying biblical texts to the issues and principles of the day as they were in demonstrating redemptive fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. They believed that the teaching and person of Jesus expressed the fullness of divine revelation. As such, their exegetical task was to explicate more fully previously ignored significance in the nation’s history and the prophet’s message. This being said, note must be made that the earliest apostolic treatment of Scripture also included a literalist midrashic approach. 3. Persons and writers outside of the twelve seemed to have no compulsion to adhere to peshet type exegesis. The apostle Paul for example differed from the twelve in his historical relation to Jesus, his revelational understanding of the course of the redemptive program and his closer affinity to rabbinic exegetical norms.

Longenecker noted that the developed exegetical patterns that emerged during the apostolic period constitute a blending of commonalities and differences. Such are reflected in the preaching of Stephen, the teaching of James, the exhortations of the writer of Hebrews and the editorial comments of Mark and Luke.

He concludes that in our approach to biblical exegesis we must be cognizant of what he coined descriptive exegesis and normative exegesis. Descriptive addresses the issue as to what actually took place and Normative investigates how relevant or obligatory are such exegetical procedures today. The implied question really is, Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament? Are we able to? Ought we to try? The answers are numerous and are listed in the category of negative and positive by Longenecker. Chief among the proponents of the negative views is Bultman who asserts that 1. Much of the exegesis of the New Testament is an arbitrary and ingenious twisting of the biblical texts that goes beyond the limits of any proper hermeneutics. And 2. The self-understanding of contemporary people and the critico-historical thought of modern study separate us from the methods of the New Testament. In his view, the Old Testament represents a religion that stands outside of and apart from the New Testament. As such, it cannot be treated as prolegomena to the gospel but as a witness to the gospel. Bultman concludes that the New Testament writers, not realizing the abovementioned truths engaged in exegetical procedures which demonstrate continuity and fulfilment. From his supposedly enlightened and more knowledgeable perspective, Bultman deemed such overtures impossible and stringently recommends their discontinuance.

Those who positively supports a perspective of a continuance from the Old Testament to the New usually fall in the following categories and give the following responses; 1. **Conservative interpreters** believe that the paradigm for interpretation of Scripture today must follow from to the exegesis of the New Testament in order that those same procedures may be reemployed today. Their belief is that the descriptive then must be the normative now. 2. **Roman Catholic scholars** recognized that the New Testament frequently uses the Old Testament in a way that gives to biblical texts a fuller meaning thus the term *sensus plenior*. 3. **Existential exegetes** argue that New Testament exegesis is open to go beyond the NT types and other correspondences. They, like Bultman, disavows any continuity of detail between the testaments but unlike him, recognize a continuity in the faith that exists between prophets, apostles and ourselves each in his own way and using categories of thoughts to one's own time- must engage in similar exegetical tasks.

Longenecker proposed three considerations that he deemed important in resolving the relationship of the Testaments and to arrive at a proper exegetical hermeneutic for today. The first is to have a proper *historical* understanding of the NT exegetical procedures. These include an understanding of not only the literalist modes but also the pesher, midrash and allegorical treatments. The second is *theological* that is to have an appreciation for the purpose of biblical revelation. The third is to develop *sensitivity* as to what is normative and what is descriptive in biblical revelation.

### **Conclusion and Personal Reflection**

It is clear from Longenecker's treatise that he desires for those who expound Scripture to develop a sound approach to biblical exegesis. He believes that we cannot reproduce the pesher exegesis of the New Testament writers. In the use of pesher mode of exegesis, however, I believe that we too can assert like the New Testament writers that 'this is that' to the extent that we are representing the revelation that was given to them at the time. Also, with the fluid nature of prophecy – the already not yet understanding derived from biblical prophecy- I believe that today's prophets can use the pesher type interpretation of Scripture as long as it falls within the ambit of the canon (not attempting to claim new revelation and seeking to equate it to Scripture). Today we see an attempt to engage in the pesher type interpretation by modern day preachers who are alluding to current activities and events as being directly related to biblical prophecies. What is essential is that we bear in mind the instructions from the apostle Paul that we should not, "... treat prophecies with contempt. (but rather to), "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1Th 5: 20-22 NIV).

Longenecker also believes that no attempt should be made to reproduce the midrashic handling of the text, the allegorical explications or much of the Jewish manner of argumentation employed by NT writers. I agree to this position to the extent that their usage can be clearly identified as strictly a part of the cultural context through which the transcultural and eternal gospel was expressed. But in terms of the Scripture being the standard for Christian morals, ethics and how we relate to each other in community, a midrashic approach is quite in order. Longenecker, however, maintained that where the exegesis is based on revelatory stance, evidences itself to be cultural or shows itself to be circumstantial we should not seek a reproduction of it. That I absolutely agree to. This stance, however, should not be interpreted to mean that a midrashic interpretive approach is to be avoided in a

wholesale way. I believe that in order to uphold with the concept of the gospel being eternal it must also be interpreted today to have relevance to the way we live.

The thoughts expressed by Longenecker were certainly enlightening. Without such studies and information being made available, who among us could claim that as we seek to present a gospel which we believed to be eternally relevant, that we had given due consideration to all the other relevant issues such as its historical context, theological import and developing a sensitivity to what is normative and descriptive? I agree with Longenecker, that preparing to preach, warrants the herald having an awareness of the historical and theological context of the text. Having an understanding of what is descriptive and what is normative in biblical revelation is also essential for proper hermeneutics to take place. These exegetical standards shared by Longenecker, will in some way restrain those who tend to be 'super creative' in their interpretation and application of Scriptures (though from experience they are claimants to special revelation somewhat of a Gnostic strain). It goes without saying that an awareness of the exegetical approaches of the New Testament writers will inform our approach and better equip us to handle the word in a more meaningful and contemporarily relevant way.

Additionally, it is my opinion that such awareness, while useful in providing a measure of restraint to the subjective use of Scripture, does not in any way restrict the creativity of the exegete. There is a measure of freedom within these boundaries. It is impossible to separate the preacher from his sermon. In other words, the training, individual spiritual experience and the context in which one serves will inevitably inform the interpretation of the text. This is not to say that the word of God is subject to arbitrariness and twisting and contortion which if were not so perverted and demonic would be comical to the extreme. What is being suggested here is that context and personality will determine the exegetical genre and language of the preacher or teacher. So in a similar fashion that Jesus and the band of Twelve utilized the pesher approach, that Matthew and John utilized numerous quotes from the OT, that Mark and Luke showed preference for editorial comments and that the apostle Paul showed a unique pesher approach, such peculiarities will also characterize the contemporary preacher.

I recommend the text as good reading material that will furnish you with valuable insights for your exegetical enterprises.

**A THEODICY  
CONCERNING  
CARIBBEAN SLAVERY:  
TOWARDS A  
THEOLOGY OF BLACK  
IDENTITY**

(Part 1)

by

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**Introduction**

Experiences of the author, in 'one on one' evangelism within the Caribbean, motivate this research. In personal evangelism, the author has, several times, been asked why Black people: Should we serve "the White man's God" in whose name slavery was justified? These Caribbean

persons, being encouraged to believe in Jesus, want to know why God did not prevent slavery. Whereas the author has faith in the goodness and love of God, there has been a challenge in developing a justification for God, a theodicy. There has been a difficulty in suggesting to enquirers that as descendants of the enslaved, the people of the Caribbean should freely interpret God as being loving, all powerful, and all knowing, despite the fact that chattel slavery had occurred. The interpretation of God as being good and just towards the Black people of the Caribbean is critical for many reasons, not least of which is the sound assurance of Black identity.

Chattel slavery in the Caribbean was a dehumanizing system. Plantation owners treated the enslaved Africans as property. They could be sold or traded, and they had no entitlements to property or family. Their slave masters legally owned everything they had. Slave masters freely abused Africans they held as slaves. Chattel slavery, for each of the enslaved, normally lasted a whole lifetime. The slavery was hereditary, by reason of the fact that the children of those held in chattel slavery became the legal property of the slave master, just as would be the case of cattle with a farmer.

The word theodicy comes from the Greek words  $\mu\hat{\iota}$  and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$ , which mean 'God' and 'justice' respectively.<sup>1</sup> "The term

<sup>1</sup>David Birnbaum, *God and Evil: A Unified Theodicy: Theology and Philosophy* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Pub. House, 1989), 3.

'theodicy' was coined by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who published his classic *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* in 1710".<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was a man of faith in Jesus Christ from Leipzig, Germany; he was born in 1646 and died in 1716. He was a pioneering mathematician and philosopher.

Theodicy finds relevance in any seat of discussion where God is believed to be good, all knowing, and all powerful amidst evil. For instance, Jacob H. Friesenhahn, lecturer in systematic theology, advances:

Theodicy is not our evaluation of God as if we stood in the superior position. The point is rather that we are giving a plausible account for God's justice, even though God's creation is full of injustice. We are giving reasons for regarding God as just in response to challenges against God's justice based on the presence of great evil in creation.<sup>3</sup>

This culturally held belief of God in the Caribbean arose from the 'Christianising' of the Region throughout the colonisation era. In the missionary work that accompanied the domination, God was communicated to the oppressed to be a truly good God, though in a way that interpreted the gospel as an individualistic life, to the neglect of social issues. This good God, however, did not prevent the events of chattel slavery from occurring. It is now, therefore, the task of the Caribbean descendants of the enslaved to interpret who this God is and how His goodness ought to be elucidated by the oppressed.

This work seeks to offer intellectual tools for interpreting God, given His non-prevention of slavery. Perspectives are provided through which one may understand slavery, to see how God's goodness, omnipotence and, omniscience are unshaken by the reality of the immense and prolonged human suffering that has occurred in chattel slavery in the Caribbean.

The perspectives presented, to examine the experiences of the colonised Africans in the Caribbean, are on 'free will' and 'Divine goodness'. These will be two crucial tools for interpreting this particular matter of God's justice concerning slavery in the Caribbean. The free will framework captures the responsibility on the part of oppressors in instigating enslavement, despite the fact that God is sovereign. This understanding of responsibility can be

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<sup>2</sup> Jacob H. Friesenhahn, *The Trinity and Theodicy: The Trinitarian Theology of von Balthasar and the Problem of Evil*. (UK: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2013), 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 13.

relevantly juxtaposed with Jesus' declaration, recorded in Matthew 18:7, "*Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*" The offenders are responsible for their misdeed, despite the fact that infractions will occur.

The second perspective of theodicy in this paper emphasises God's goodness. The goodness of God is one primary issue brought into contention by Caribbean persons that have a difficulty accepting salvation in Jesus Christ. The argument is that the Caribbean church preaches the message of Jesus Christ to Caribbean people, which is from and for the White European, who afflicted our ancestors with notable success as they did so under the banner of Christianity. Whereas it is clear that Scripture does not advocate human captivity but rather the setting free of human captives, it is often less clear what the reason is for God not preventing slavery from occurring. The concern by the Caribbean enquirers is whether or not God is good to Black people of the Caribbean. The work affirms that God is for, and not against, the African descendants of the Caribbean and has indeed always been just and equal.

### *Background*

The investigation is to determine who God is to the victims of chattel slavery that occurred the Caribbean. What is the reason why one people suffer enormously, before God's eyes; what does God think of the victims? One people has suffered at the hands of other peoples, and not only so but the oppressors enjoy continuous enrichment in material benefit. This material advancement has been a seemingly uninterrupted reality, whether one argues that their provision came from God or the hands of the oppressors themselves.

European beneficiaries of colonisation purported that God was punishing the Black people, and that slavery was herein justified. Lewin Williams, a theologian and former president of the United Theological College, regards this claim as false; he does not hold that God was punishing Blacks. He recounts in his book, *Caribbean Theology*, that:

Zinzendorf, the father of Moravianism, in his doctrine prepared for the Caribbean suggested to the slaves that slavery was divine punishment upon the earth's first negroes and Christianity had come to the Caribbean to set negroes free.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 19.

Certainly, this false justification was not unique. In fact, it can be said that this lie under-girded European colonial ideology. There was the permeation of the idea of racial stratification which leaned either towards the thinking of Whites being the supreme race or towards Blacks being an inferior race. It was not uncommon to find both. Shaun Best, a lecturer and author, gives an account of one peculiar variation of this counter-scriptural thinking in a book entitled *Understanding Social Divisions*,

blackness was associated with evil, whereas whiteness was associated with purity and goodness. Scriptural explanations for the emergence of race, such as the theory of blackness advanced by George Best in 1578, argued that blackness was God's curse upon Noah's son Ham for having sexual intercourse whilst the Ark was afloat, against God's expressed wishes.<sup>5</sup>

We dismiss these erroneous notions as Black people of the Caribbean, and have been renouncing them since the days of slavery. The Africans always held that they are equal with all humans and entitled to freedom. The enslaved Blacks of the Caribbean were so convinced of their equality with all of mankind that they revolted, even at the cost of their lives, towards seeing this conviction realised; for example, Sam Sharpe, Tacky, Duty Boukman, and the Maroons. However, the question is still being asked, "Why did God not stop the great suffering and death caused by European enslavement in the Caribbean?" Lewin Williams posits,

[A] God who keeps silent on issues concerning justice has to be prepared to be seen as one who does not care that there is injustice. In fact such a God may even be seen as dictating the injustices since those who are most closely related to their perpetration are not only their beneficiaries but also are the bearers of the brand of gospel that embraces them.

#### *Aim*

Arguing that God has neither been silent nor passive regarding Caribbean slavery is the task of this work. In arguing for this position, the form of slavery experienced by the Africans in the Caribbean will be further discussed. This study prepares the context for the intellectual examination of defending God's justice. The discourse of the experiences of slavery gives readers a framework from which one may consider the justice of God. The intention is to offer a lens through which readers may thoroughly and honestly look at slavery and yet still identify God as being

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<sup>5</sup> Shaun Best, *Understanding Social Divisions* (London: SAGE, 2005), 151.

fully able in His power, total in His awareness and at the same time loving towards the enslaved people of the Caribbean.

### *Methodology*

The method used is a qualitative study, whereby written sources/works are examined. The material is read to examine what the experience of chattel slavery in the Region had consisted of as well as some of the effects it has produced in the Caribbean. The subject of theodicy is explored, and the salient perspectives of free will and God's goodness are juxtaposed with Caribbean arguments regarding the suffering that Caribbean people have experienced because of slavery. The exchanges of writers in the discipline of Caribbean theology are also brought into the discussion of theodicy and are advanced into an analysis of the socio-religious experience vis-a-vis a theology of Black identity.

### *Structure*

Four sections delineate the work. The first will serve as an examination of the socio-religious experiences of the enslaved throughout the colonial era in the Caribbean. In the second section, two essential themes in theodicy will be explored, as a C.S. Lewis Christian apologetic expresses them.<sup>6</sup> Lewis' intellectual perspectives in theodicy will converse with Caribbean thinkers, who understand suffering from the angle of the exploited, such as Oral Thomas, Garnett Roper, Lewin Williams, and Ashley Smith. The third section will analyse the findings from the exploration of theodicy, in discussion with Caribbean scholars. From this analysis, a theology of Black identity will be advanced, with recommendations for the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup>

## **A Reflection on Slavery in the Caribbean**

This section explores the history of Black persons' suffering in the Caribbean. The aim is to provide readers with a perspective on both slavery and its consequent impact, throughout the colonial period. A function of this section of the work is also to highlight challenges in the Region's development of Black identity; those challenges which the history of chattel slavery in the Region has cultivated.

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<sup>6</sup> C.S. Lewis was a European in the seat of empire who would not have had any contact with the suffering experienced under the institutionalised oppression of slavery. However, he does offer useful intellectual perspective on the subject of theodicy.

<sup>7</sup> The third and fourth sections will conclude the work with a summary.

The history of European exploitative agenda in the Caribbean has its origin dating as far back as 1492. It was in 1492 that Christopher Columbus and his ill-willed crew stumbled upon the Region. The unsuspecting community of the native people of the Caribbean island welcomed the opportunistic band. The lands were found to be rich in resources of gold, silver, and tropical crop. Soon the Spanish foreigners were set on conquest and exploitation to take loot back to Spain. This encampment includes a mission to Christianize the so-called 'uncivilized' peoples of the non-European world. The missionary framework was faulty to begin with, but then its association with economic impetus made the work a more destructive one.

[T]he European evangelization process tended to venture only into areas where there was material reward. It is by no means accidental then, that the Caribbean territories first settled by the Spanish expeditions were those that had mineral resources. In fact the deposits of gold and silver found in the Caribbean and on the Mainland promptly inspired colonialism for the sole benefit of the colonial expansion of Europe while it brought death and destruction to the "natives".<sup>8</sup>

Following that early period of Caribbean colonisation, the inhabitants suffered a genocide that left no island exempt from its horror. The Tainos, Kalinagos and Ciboneys were consequently dwindled out of existence, as a result of the severe cruelty they experienced. The Region was no more the home of its original inhabitants. After their genocide, new immigrants arrived chained, to serve as their replacement. "the Caribbean is an immigrant society. The indigenous Taino, Ciboney, and Carib populations were decimated by the early encounters with the Europeans."<sup>9</sup> It is this decimation that led to an interest in the forced importation of Africans to the Region, in a cruel system called the Triangular Trade. A detailed discussion about the Triangular Trade is presented later in this chapter. Black men, women, and children were carried off the coast of Africa, for forced labour in the Caribbean. The demography of the Caribbean Region had rapidly changed to a population made up of a Black majority of enslaved Africans, under the minority rule of White Europeans. This case applies to all Caribbean states, as all have had European, colonial slavery as a part of their history. "In consequence of its history the Caribbean territories share a common social identity. Each has

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<sup>8</sup>Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, ©2002), 10.

<sup>9</sup>Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, ©2013), 6.

been a colonized people.”<sup>10</sup> This chapter will discuss the following themes of slavery in the Caribbean:

### *The Triangular Trade*

As mentioned earlier, the slavery in the Caribbean had already been started through the enslavement of the Tainos, Kalinagos, and Ciboneys, who were the people indigenous to the Region. However, their numbers had declined through the abuses they faced at the hands of the European colonisers.<sup>11</sup> The Triangular Trade was developed to replace the extinct natives. Africans were taken as captives from the shores of West Africa and forcefully transported to the Caribbean to work as slaves, primarily on sugar plantations.

The triangular trade was an extremely lucrative line of business and enabled England to become a prosperous country ... the capital accumulated, thanks to the slave trade, enabled England to finance her industrial revolution and turned Bristol and Liverpool into prosperous cities.<sup>12</sup>

Sugar and rum were processed in the Caribbean and taken to Europe for commercial distribution. From Europe to the coast of Africa, to the Caribbean and back to Europe again; this was the pattern of this lucrative industry that very significantly boosted the economy of European countries such as France, Spain, Portugal, England, and the Netherlands. Labour cost was significantly lower, with no wages to consider for the enslaved.

The most infamous part of the Triangular Trade was the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage was the portion of the journey between West Africa and the Americas (including the Caribbean). The sale of Africans to Europeans was the primary means by which the Europeans acquired slaves directly from Africa. African merchants would have obtained slaves under a variety of conditions. Africans were made slaves as spoils of war or were made slaves due to a legal penalty, for example. Some Africans were made slaves as a tribute of a smaller kingdom to be given to a more powerful dominion, all within mainland Africa. There were Africans who were captured by kidnapping, but this was relatively infrequent. Once held by the African slave merchants, the enslaved were usually imprisoned in baraccos

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10 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 67.

11 Lynn Marie Houston, *Food Culture in the Caribbean*, *Food Culture Around the World* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), 5.

12 Lennox Honychurch, *The Caribbean People*, [rev. ed. (Surrey: Nelson Caribbean, 1995), 24.

(barrack-like huts) until they were traded or sold to the European, colonial ships. The European crew of sailors on these ships was cautious regarding docking right up against the beaches of the African coasts, for fear of being attacked. As such, they would only dock if they were confident of what they considered a 'good trade.'<sup>13</sup>

The journey from the barracoons to the ships was usually a long and arduous journey that resulted in sickness and death, for some of the enslaved. The experience did not become easier once the Europeans acquired the enslaved and they boarded the ships en route to the Caribbean and Americas. The conditions on the ships were abhorrent, because of severe overcrowding and the associated problem of ventilation below the deck. Medical aid was minimal, and sickness proliferated readily, as excretion waste was not separate from the very congested holding area. Attempts were made to keep slaves alive as slave merchants still regarded the Africans as profitable cargo for sale or trade. Therefore, they were at points allowed to come up on deck for air and were forced to dance to maintain circulation. The conditions were harsh and included sexual assaults on females and frequent whippings. The psychological stress was immense as these were men, women, and children who had been captured and sold. They would not be permitted to see home again, and trade often resulted in the separation of Africans from their families. Suicide was common during the Middle Passage transit.<sup>14</sup>

Although colonies provided food, clothing and shelter, the conditions under which the enslaved persons experienced captivity were such low standards, that the financial profits to Europe were affected somewhat, though still very significant. What was lost, by plantation owners, in the sustenance of the enslaved (through the provision of food and other basic necessities), was more than regained through the rigor and duration of labour that the enslaved were forced to undergo. Once on the plantations, the African people were valued with a likeness to livestock; this is the nature of chattel slavery, as was the type of slavery practiced for almost four hundred years in the Caribbean. Slave owners traded Africans for goods or money.

The Triangular Trade was a greedy instrument of colonialism. Europeans treated Blacks in the manner of cattle.

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<sup>13</sup>Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*, The American Mosaic (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007), 54.

<sup>14</sup>Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 436.

Denial of the humanity of Blacks hushed the conscience of the European instigators of colonialism. Avarice was a primary motivation.

*Insistent Attack on Black Legitimacy and Black Fervor*

The enslaved Africans in the Caribbean apparently maintained a strong sense of self, right throughout the duration of slavery. It is this sense of identity that the European plantation owners sought vigorously, though never quite successfully, to subdue. Revolts and uprisings reveal the rich sense of self that was held by the oppressed. The enslaved Africans maintained that their oppressors are wicked men and that freedom from their hold of power was their God-given right. Gelien Matthews, a historian and lecturer at the University of West Indies, accounts,

Abolitionists maximized the extent to which they could convert the rebellion of the slaves into useful antislavery materials. They were convinced now more than ever that slave rebellion was the just retribution exacted on a nation guilty of the sin of upholding slavery. They reconciled the humanitarian struggle with the idea of justice in slave violence by reflecting that God is a just God and that his justice would not sleep forever.<sup>15</sup>

The oppressors feared the enslaved and actively sought ways to suppress them. This work was directed not only towards the Africans but their fellow Europeans as well. Research Fellow and Consultant in Black Theological Studies Anthony Reddie, in making this point, highlights that the suffering of Black people in slavery had, at its root, the erroneous view that Blacks were intrinsically inferior. “Inherent within that Black transatlantic movement of forced migration and labour was a form of biased, racialized teaching that asserted the inferiority and subhuman nature of the Black self.”<sup>16</sup> Even in the presentation of the gospel by the European missionaries, there was a glaring inconsistency. Lewin Williams, in his book entitled *Caribbean Theology*, points out that the missionary gospel was a gospel that contradicted the doctrine they taught at home. Lewin Williams argues that the Europeans did embrace the gospel message for self-determination but only preached it in the gospel taught at home in Europe; the missionary gospel to the Caribbean, however, had no such declaration. Williams goes on to highlight the miseducation advanced by the European missionaries:

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<sup>15</sup>Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>16</sup>Anthony Reddie, *Black Theology*, SCM Core Text (London: SCM Press, 2012), 4.

If a missionary believes in freedom for the home people under God but not the same freedom for the colonized under God, then missionary theology has to be a misrepresentation of Christian theology to accommodate the contradiction.<sup>17</sup>

This misrepresentation, too, has contributed to the colonial attack on Black identity, resulting in an added difficulty in interpreting God, as Caribbean people.

A Biblical interpretation of the Genesis 9:19-26 narrative, commonly called Ham's curse has been a favorite tool in this colonial miseducation. R S. Sugirtharajah, a professor of Biblical Hermeneutics, points out in his text entitled *Vernacular Hermeneutics* this agenda-driven corruption of Biblical interpretation:

It used to be the suggestion that the only reference to Black people was that of Ham and his descendants who were a cursed race. Some have interpreted this reference as God giving an okay for Blacks to be treated as slaves.<sup>18</sup>

Genesis records Noah cursing his son Ham for dishonouring his father as he was drunk and uncovered. Noah states that his grandson Canaan, the son of Ham, would be a servant to his brothers. As the text reads on in Genesis, Ham is seen to settle in African lands. Anthony Agbo, Christian and career politician in Nigeria, outlines this in his book. He writes,

...migrations took children of Ham to settle in the geographical locations of ancient Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, and the Canaanite kingdoms, which were later destroyed and annexed by the Israelites to become Judea on the direction of God after they were freed from Egyptian captivity.<sup>19</sup>

This interpretation of the Bible, as a justification of Black enslavement, stands in direct opposition to the gospel. The gospel reaffirms the oneness of all people and erases stratification between bond and free.<sup>20</sup> The intrinsic inferiority suggested by this interpretation disregards the message of unity in Christ and the

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17 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, Caribbean Theology (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 33.

18R S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Bible and Postcolonialism*, vol. 2, *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, ©1999), 127.

19Anthony Agbo, *Africa: The Glory, the Curse, the Remedy* (Abbott Pr: A, 2014), 14.

20There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:28-29, KJV).

related fact that Jesus died for the liberation of the oppressed - the setting free of captives.<sup>21</sup>

The identity of the transplanted Africans was attacked in other ways as well. Language and culture were also suppressed, on the plantations. Slave masters feared that unified communication among the enslaved, in a language foreign to them, posed a dangerous threat. As such, the displaced Africans were beaten for speaking in their home languages and forced to learn English as the tongue of communication. Also, the use of drums and the traditional, communal singing and dancing were also prohibited. Plantation owners realised that these practices were a source of unifying strength and reaffirmation of an identity that is free from chains and shackles. In fear of rebellion every attempt was made to rid the Africans of their identity.

To add to this was the institutionally enforced repression by the Europeans against insurrection from the Africans. White domination met opposition from the Blacks, with harsh and brutal penalties. Defiance provoked torture of various forms that were not only excruciatingly painful but also lengthy in duration. These included burning, amputation, and being forced to wear a triangular iron around the neck so as to prevent the victim from lying down for rest.<sup>22</sup> Some who could not bear the foresight of suffering for their children euthanized them in the womb or at birth. In the refusal to live under the sub-human conditions of chattel slavery, they resisted even to the point of death.

Slaves, under the colonial law, could be mortgaged and rented out, and given in repayment of debts. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Dean of Law at the University of the West Indies, writes, "Yet, slaves, being human beings with intelligent minds, independent will and depth of feeling, were not property in a real sense. Consequently, they rebelled both in spirit and in action."<sup>23</sup> The Caribbean folk had always been a passionate people and would fight back. Great leaders arose in the midst of the ongoing suffering and fought for freedom even with the knowledge that this could cost them their lives. Masses of desperately resilient individuals who were determined to fight for freedom often accompanied the unrelenting instigators of rebellion; they were not

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21 Luke 4:18.

22 John Andrew, *The Hanging of Arthur Hodge: A Caribbean Anti-Slavery Milestone* (Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2000), 61.

23 Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, *Commonwealth Caribbean Law and Legal Systems*, rev. ed.2 (Routledge 2008),19.

alone. This action had taken various forms, from the subtle poisoning of slave masters (by house slaves) and the burning of large plantations to bloody political confrontations, in the colonial era that lingered following the abolition of slavery.

Haiti was the first Caribbean island to emerge from colonization and earned its independence, in 1804. It was fought for in a bloody conflict which resulted in large scale destruction of colonial homes and farms. Haiti was the first Caribbean state to receive independence, with many to follow. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago declared independence from Britain, both in 1962 and four years later Barbados did the same. Gradually, Europe lost nearly all Caribbean islands as colonies, as the islands became independent nations themselves; Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Montserrat have, however, have remained as British Territories.

There were doubtless many attempts to break the spirit of the enslaved. The Bible was dishonestly interpreted to imply that slavery is justified and that Blacks ought to yield. Cruel attacks on liberation uprisings were also used to suppress the passion of Blacks, but they were never successfully quenched as time eventually showed Blacks emerging from slavery and many Caribbean states coming into being.

*Slavery and the Breaking of the Family Institution among the Enslaved*

The enslavement of Black people in the Caribbean had existed as far back as in the early 16th century and continued until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though slavery ended, unsurprisingly, conditions did not change significantly for Black persons living in the Caribbean. Oral Thomas, Caribbean theologian and president of United Theological College of the West Indies accounts,

The abolition of slavery was essentially a change in the basis of exploiting labour. The race-based ideology of slavery days functioned to ensure the large supply of a domesticated and unskilled labour force. Moreover, freedom was hollow, as those “freed” had no economic (land ownership) and political (say in the decision-making process) power.<sup>24</sup>

The same governing power that oversaw slavery was in leadership, throughout the Caribbean, in the immediate period following slavery. It is evident, therefore, why the oppression continued but merely took less blatant forms. Even under new ways of dominion,

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24 Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context* (London: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010), 35.

the social and cultural wounds of slavery were deep. The cruelty of chattel slavery culture went beyond flogging and physical torture of human beings to the psychological, social, and religious repression of the Caribbean people. Slaves of the same tribe were also intently separated, to ensure disunity. Susan Dwyer Amussen, a social and cultural historian, accounts in her book entitled *Caribbean Exchanges*, “planters prevented rebellion by mixing together slaves from different regions of Africa, so that in addition to speaking different languages, they “hate one another.”<sup>25</sup> This division was to reduce the likelihood of unified bonds of Africans strengthening themselves against the colonisers. There was also the intentional tearing apart of families. Amussen also emphasises the social breakdown that occurred among the victims of slavery in the Caribbean. She observes that:

Slavery severs the ties that bind people into society, effectively leaving isolate individuals to fend for themselves. Slavery denies the enslaved the right to establish and reinforce social identities, including family identities, and also minimizes their possibilities...of doing so.<sup>26</sup>

As slavery continued in time, across generations, Black persons were having newborn babies entering the slave society. These would be individuals who do not know how the freedom of their ancestors looked. They would have no nostalgic experience of formerly being out of chains and free to choose one’s life goals and work towards them. As these plantation babies grew up to have babies of their own, the deepening of the slave culture worsened as the whole existent family of a Black person was soon comprised, exclusively, of persons who would have never observed Black independence, as seen in African communities. Entire families themselves were a rarity, as relatives were often forcefully relocated upon being sold. Betty Ann Rohler, author of *Social Studies for the Caribbean*, writes:

No family structure had any guarantee of lasting; at any moment a man, woman or child could be sold. The role of father as provider and protector did not exist. Children belonged to the owner of the plantation, although women were still able to have some authority over their children.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges (Easyread Edition): Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (UK: ReadHowYouWant, 2009), 84 .

<sup>26</sup> Brian L. Moore, ed., *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 263.

<sup>27</sup> , B.A Rohlehr. *Social Studies for the Caribbean: CXC Core Units and Options*, new ed., Heinemann for CXC (Oxford: Heinemann, 2002), 16.

One critical problem with this is the impact this system has on identity; identity as father or mother to protect, provide for and nurture. Chattel slavery ripped away from a man the expectation and opportunity to be able to protect and feed his family. A son grew to understand the volatile nature of the plantation family and so would not grow up expecting to bear responsibility for children he may have. Women had some measure of nurturing and contacting to expect, but the insecurity of the expectation would have heightened the psychological and emotional difficulty. Slave owners could auction children at any time, and there was a high and ever present risk of a mother or her children suffering abuse. These disturbing realities resulted in broken and dysfunctional family settings, not only in the observed structure but one's expectation.

Edith Clarke, author of *My Mother Who Fathered Me*, highlights that family life in the Caribbean is predominantly marked by fatherlessness, as a result of the slave system.<sup>28</sup> Paternal abandonment has prolifically become desensitized as each subsequent generation has had to come to terms with the absence of fathers. The repulsion of neglecting one's child or children loses its sting with the prevalence of the occurrence. Blacks frequently experienced this destruction of families. Where there is fatherlessness, there tends to be a scarcity of critical nurturing to prepare a boy for manhood and parental responsibility. Even in Caribbean homes where the father is physically present there is often an emotional detachment, as the emotionally absent father was, in many cases, emotionally or physically neglected himself. A woman may not easily realise the consequent, sociocultural problem and become a victim as well. It is not uncommon in the Caribbean for women to be mentally prepared for absentee fathers. It is unfortunate that there are Caribbean women who find a disheartening sense of pride in the father of her child contributing financially to their child's life, yet not present for the critical social and emotional nurturing.

Whereas these consequential influences on Caribbean family life are a reality, they are clearly not a necessary response or necessary by-product. Caribbean people were never a group to concede and yieldingly accept social currents of negative perception. We may fall but never yield. Plantation owners

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28 Edith Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me: A Study of the Families in Three Selected Communities of Jamaica*, rev. ed. (Kingston, Jamaica: Press University of the West Indies, 1999), 1-2,

suffered because of the defiant determination with which the unchained souls, of the physically enslaved people, resisted. There are vast numbers of men who are commendable fathers to their children, as it regards to nurture, protection and support of their families. Very many women have also determined for themselves a standard of expectation for stable and functional family lives.

Family life among the enslaved was broken and dysfunctional. White plantation owners feared unity among the Blacks. This systematic breaking up of families had resulted in lingering dysfunction in the Caribbean today, as broken families had become the usual case.

### *Slavery and Its Influence on the Perception of Skin Colour*

This section reviews the world view which slavery shaped among the Black Caribbean people, particularly concerning being Black skinned. The Blacks would have to deal with the problem of self-esteem and self-definition as a result of cunningly deviant purporting. It is evident that there were still the ideological problems of defining Black identity, among the Caribbean people, even after slavery's abolition. Caribbean pastor and author, Devon Dick identifies the issue of skin colour perception extending well beyond the duration of slavery and colonisation. He writes of this challenge in the Caribbean island of Jamaica even after its Independence in 1962.

In post-independent Jamaica, black and white denoted not skin colour, objectively speaking, but skin colour as a symbol of attitudes and status, with black being a negative term. This negative connotation was not confined to Jamaica but, as the renowned sociologist Orlando Patterson demonstrates, there was a pattern in both the Latin and non-Latin West Indies of marrying lighter skin color for upward social mobility.<sup>29</sup>

This illustration is salient in exemplifying the great social difficulties which have emerged and made understanding Black identity a challenge in the Caribbean. Social systems had, historically, reinforced the stratum divide between those of darker, more visibly African descendant skin complexion and those who were of lighter skin colour. As such, persons had concluded that if their children and children's children could be born of lighter complexion, then things would be easier for the new generation as Devon Dick alluded to in the citation above. What followed was a bias for a partner of a lighter complexion than one's self so as to bring forth lighter skin coloured offspring. Increased association

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29 Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 196.

with lighter pigmentation was preferred. Light skin colour identified with progress.

The colour of one's skin was not the only dividing feature. The creole languages across the Caribbean, which were born out of a mixture of African languages and the language of the colonizers, were also despised. Fluency in the standard language of the colonizers, whether French, Spanish, Dutch, English, or Portuguese, based on the colonial history of the nation, had been deemed as commendable and evidence of having been 'well brought up'. In fact, fluency in the standard colonial tongue and a difficulty in the creole languages have been seen as commendable. The reverse, however, has been seen perceived as shameful. While it is true that these cases of ability in language fluency tend to be indicative of one's level of education, it is still at core a fruit of identity suppression. Moving away from Africanness had become progressive.

It is useful, however, to end this section on a positively updated note, because today in the Caribbean, Africanness is proudly celebrated and embraced. Blacks in the Caribbean proclaim Blackness with honour as our identity. Being African descendants is revered as our heritage. Slavery is in many ways a sobering past, but a sobriety of proud reflections. The reflective narrative of Black history in the Caribbean is a chronicle of triumph. One can reflect on the soulful incidents of fearless and unrelenting uprisings. The Black forefathers of the Caribbean were undaunted by the threat of punishment or death. They have indeed laid a deeply important foundation. We have emerged in building upon that foundation as we push forward in permeating this proud awareness and resisting suppressive notions within, or without, our Caribbean communities. Our academics, our entertainers, and our athletes continue to inspire us, should we ever grow weary in the realisation of our vigorously independent identity.

#### *The Black Caribbean and Post-Slavery Problems in Interpreting God*

Doubtless, there are significant influences that the church has had on the goal of liberation for the enslaved. Christianity has been instrumental as a source of vision and strength to resist the powers of institutionalized oppression that the Caribbean people have faced. Through the church, Black people have indeed reinforced an already extant worldview that stubbornly affirms that all human beings are equal and are entitled to freedom. Indeed, theology has been hugely relevant and beneficial to the Caribbean's impetus for liberation. However, this subsection of the work will discuss several significant themes in religious perspectives that

have negatively affected the Region as a part of the wicked events of colonialism. As a work on theodicy, attention is being given to the suffering experienced, here ideologically. That is, Caribbean thinking has been affected by colonial teachings; this section highlights some prominent effects.

The Caribbean church has inherited some erroneous hermeneutics about God's relationship with the oppressed from the colonial period. The evil agenda of the colonial, missionary church read the Bible in a way that suggested that the excellent response from the oppressed is submission. Black people were taught to await their glorious freedom in the resurrection, instead of demanding freedom in this life. Old Testament scholar and author, Professor J. Richard Middleton identifies this that the Caribbean church has attenuated under a narrow theology that is marked by inertia towards material, self-empowerment and a neglect of the very evident repression.

Historically, the otherworldly vision that has been inculcated into the consciousness of the Caribbean church allows for little or no explicitly Christian norms to guide life in contemporary society (with the prominent exception of sexual mores). In particular, an otherworldly focus on heaven hereafter prevents the biblical gospel from addressing the economic and societal realities of our time.<sup>30</sup>

Individuals who had been significantly influenced by colonial teachings of the church were especially harmed by the hermeneutic of repression of Blacks. Incidentally, very many Caribbean individuals have grown up having been influenced by the church as children. Attending church has become a regular part of the weekend's activities for children. As such, church culture has formative influence. In addition to worldview influences through the church directly, a vast majority of schools in the Region have been fundamentally attached to the church and school devotions. They have been a regular part of the educational activity from infancy up to the secondary school level. In the post-slavery Caribbean, involvement in political opposition or representation has widely been frowned upon and criticized in many churches. In the Region, the statement "We vote for Jesus" has not been uncommon.

The Bible speaks of a God that empathized with the poor and marginalized such that God incarnated as a poor man who had "nowhere to lay His head". Interpreting this, in view of social

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

inequality, God's unanimity with and defense of the poor is understandably confusing for some; because while the poor seek and do find comfort in Scripture, there had been the reality of the prosperity of the wicked. The oppressors would meet for Sunday worship and pray for increases, and the oppressors did increase. The legitimate concern is as the Psalmist records in Psalm 73:3-8,

For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

### Summary

This section of the work covered several points in reflecting on the socio-religious experiences of slavery in the Caribbean. We looked at the forms of oppression in Caribbean slavery, the discourse on the Triangular Trade, Black legitimacy, slave families, skin colour perception and the challenges that all of this poses for understanding God in the socio-religious experience of chattel slavery in the Caribbean.

### Perspectives in Theodicy

This section will examine theodicy (an attempt to defend the claim that God is omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient, despite the existence of evil<sup>31</sup>) in light of the lived realities of the oppressed people of the Caribbean. Suffering raises several intellectual problems in interpreting who God is. Fundamentally, it will be important to understand what the sovereignty of God means for Caribbean people, given the autonomous will of oppressors and what the 'goodness of God' means. Sovereignty implies that God is in control of our future, but God was sovereign over the future of each that subsequently became enslaved. It is important then for the Caribbean thinker to examine what the experience of slavery might mean in the face of God's rule. For the Caribbean community, our theology is not asking questions of whether or not God exists; it is about who God is. Garnett Roper, a theologian and president of Jamaica Theological Seminary, writes, concerning

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<sup>31</sup>Linda Edwards, *A Brief Guide to Beliefs: Ideas, Theologies, Mysteries, and Movements* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 62.

Caribbean theology: “It wants to know what kind of God is the God that exists.”<sup>32</sup>Roper further posits,

The interlocutors are the poor and marginalized, along with the pastors and intellectuals who share an organic connection with the marginalized or a commitment to and solidarity with them. They want to know, therefore, if the God who exists is a just God, or is on the side of justice for those who have been denied justice.<sup>33</sup>

This examination to find out who God is will discuss two perspectives in theodicy concerning the experience of Caribbean slavery: Free will and Divine Goodness.

### *Free Will*

There is a passive majority in the Caribbean church which neglects thought about injustices altogether and excuses their passivity from God being sovereign. Lewin Williams calls this type of thinking 'providentialism'. He defines providentialism as follows: “Providentialism is the kind of theological perspective which encourages people “to leave it all in the hand of God”<sup>34</sup>. He points out that the idea does have some merit, but it does prove problematic in the fact that it leaves the responsibility of work and effort to someone else, in the strife for liberation. Consequently, the oppressed Blacks of the Region who hold to this belief become opposed to Christian political involvement. Williams points out that this leaves Christianity without praxis, towards social change. Not only so, but this pious passivity is a tool of the colonial powers to neutralise any urgent determination or spirited fervor that may arise among the disenfranchised of the Caribbean. Thomas makes it clear that this neutralisation was premeditated and calculated to deflect their victims' concern away from the social injustice that was around them. He writes the following in view of the instructions given to missionaries regarding their assignment in the Caribbean:

[T]he missionaries arrived in the Caribbean, not primarily on a mission, but decidedly with a mission: to ensure that moral education and their religious work neither challenged nor disaffected the institution of

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

33 Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 3-4.

34 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 138.

slavery. The missionaries were willing accomplices, genuflecting to economic power as they chose not to see anything conflicting between Christianity and slavery.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly this was a dirty work, but Black people of the Caribbean must take responsibility in our emergence from such injustices, in our self-development.

So far in this section, we have looked at the more passive and negligent type of response to free will. This segment seeks to address the enquiring Caribbean thinker that is suspicious concerning the goodness of God. Indeed, as a part of thinking about the problem of human pain and suffering, God's willingness and ability to prevent painful events are brought into question. Ashley Smith, Caribbean theologian and ordained minister, identifies this type of inquiry in the Caribbean. In *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology*, he points out that the oppressed in the Caribbean feel a mixture of anger and hopefulness in waiting for a reversal of social conditions. He states that on the other hand, however, those who hold the power in society feel an uneasiness that their power will be taken by those who feel disallowed by them, the presently powerful. Ashley Smith further articulates that:

More than anything else, many feel that God is ultimately responsible for the entrenchment of systems of injustice, hence the deep-seated resentment of God by those who have ceased to be fatalistic about the structure of the cosmos.<sup>36</sup>

Not to believe in fatalism suggests that things could have gone differently than the way they did. This identification results in disgruntled persons seeing God as having not stopped the evil which He could have stopped. This disgruntlement is the feeling of many in the Caribbean and as such preaching about God's love becomes a challenge for them to receive. It is this type of thinker and thinking that has motivated the production of this work: those troubled by a difficulty in interpreting God's love and justice towards the oppressed Black people throughout history.

This resentment is, in one sense, a reasonable position. However, when juxtaposed with human free will, there are some logical problems with this judgment of God's sovereignty. The reality of human free will and its implications make pain

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<sup>35</sup>Oral A W. Thomas, *Biblical Resistance Hermeneutics Within a Caribbean Context* (London: Equinox, 2010), 25.

<sup>36</sup>Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 46.

prevention contradictory to the allowance of free will. If one should wish that an evil event was stopped or prevented by God, then he/she must necessarily also want all bad occurrences stopped or prevented, if that person is to think reasonably. As the logical consequence of this desire is examined, one may realise that they are asking for a world that is inconsistent with reality. For one to experience free will, as we experience it now, is to be able to make decisions, including those that are extremely good or extremely evil. Human decisions have a ripple effect on those that share time and space with us. The wish for God to have prevented any particular wrongdoing committed while accepting free will may indeed be an unreasonable request. On this C.S. Lewis, writes,

If you choose to say, 'God can give a creature free will and at the same time withhold free will from it,' you have not succeeded in saying anything about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words, 'God can.'<sup>37</sup>

Thus, reflecting on the atrocities of slavery and arguing that if God loves Black people, then He would have prevented slavery is faulty logic, when free will is a part of the equation. The abuse of free will by the Europeans of the colonial period encroached upon the freedom of our ancestors. Conversely, the emboldened free will of our forefathers resisted and fought for their freedom. In Garnett Roper's *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology*, he accounts that slavery was marked by continuous armed resistance throughout generations among the enslaved.<sup>38</sup> This resilience is evident because of the uprisings and revolts that occurred. In harmony with this identification of resistance regarding the embrace of responsibility by the oppressed in the Caribbean, Lewin Williams writes:

Caribbean theology has looked at the old way, the missionary way of defining sin and salvation in their most privatized significance, and it has reconstructed those definitions. It has redefined sin to include a systematic responsibility, and salvation to include rescue from those forces that leave persons hungry and immobilized in desire for self-actualization. The Caribbean liberation process has examined the missionary church's view of the Kingdom and has reinterpreted it through Scripture to mean much more than pie in the sky by and by.<sup>39</sup>

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37 C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Fount, 1998, 1940), 18.

38 Garnett L. Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Garnett Roper, 2012), 37-38.

39 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 162.

Lewin Williams here captures the point that our interpretation of God, as Caribbean people, must call the rest to be responsible for our destiny as a people. In so doing, he criticises a deferral of the hope of Blacks to when we get to heaven, though he does not deny the reality of eternal life.

Pitifully wishing that Caribbean slavery did not occur is an “intrinsically impossible” request. It is not that God is unable to prevent suffering (He most certainly is); but God cannot because of the illogical nature of the wish. God has permitted humans to utilize free will, despite the fact that God is sovereign. Human autonomy is an important factor to bear in mind when examining God's justice in oppression. C.S Lewis argues,

Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask - half our great theological and metaphysical problems - are like that.<sup>40</sup>

Based on what are commonly understood to be yellow, circle and square the answer cannot be provided for the situation in question is intrinsically impossible. The point is the total prevention of pain and suffering at the hands of other humans is logically unrealistic if free will is allowed to persons. One may accept that evil is a by-product of free will. However, the magnitude to which colonialism impacted the Caribbean still casts doubt on the universal justice of God. Evils on a small scale are more bearable to perceive, but when its consequence is so far reaching God is expected to end the injustice.

The examination continues and here takes into account the enhancement of human power by use of fixed matter, tools. One can choose to run and achieve covering a particular distance quickly. But one can choose to travel by airplane and cover an even greater distance, even more quickly. This reality of free will and human dominion over tools allows for increased effectiveness, whether for good or evil. Lewis writes,

Hostility can use fixed nature to hurt others. The fixed nature of wood that makes it useful as a beam also enables us to use it to hit our neighbor over the head. Thus when humans fight, the victory usually goes to those with superior weapons, skill, and numbers even if their cause is unjust.<sup>41</sup>

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40 C S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001), 81.

41C S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Fount, 1998, 1940), 30.

Matter allows for the production and use of tools, such as chains, guns, and ships. Free will impacts other human beings because we all share the same space and time, with fixed matter. In effect, “Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself.”<sup>42</sup>This reality contributes to the account of why colonisation's harmful impact was so severe and extensive - human free will exercised through tools. For the Caribbean thinker who has difficulty identifying God in the colonial suffering of Blacks, this discourse should help in at least one aspect of his/her work to define God. It should become clear that the sovereignty of God does not imply 'injustice of God' when evil is carried out as a result of human choices. This intellectual consideration also implies responsibility.

One often neglected duty in the Caribbean is the responsibility of rereading the Bible towards an interpretation relevant to the Caribbean context. Oral Thomas, in his book entitled *Biblical Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context*, argues that the missionary interpretation of the Bible is an interpretation that suits the Europeans in the colonial context. Thomas demystifies this missionary reading of the Bible and explains that a Caribbean person, through the lens of his/her Caribbean experience may read the same Scriptures as the European missionaries and interpret entitlement to freedom in this life versus retention of institutionalised repression.

Indeed, the oppressed people of the Caribbean ought to take an active interest in matters of social justice for themselves. Garnett Roper postulates that the gospel calls persons to effect social change. He posits that Caribbean theology is a Public theology, such that the church is responsible for actively engaging national leaders and governance. The church, he argues, ought to “pastor the powers, confront the powers, and unmask the powers”<sup>43</sup>. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a powerful message of liberation – the responsibility and empowerment to set captives free and open blind eyes and prison doors.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>43</sup> Garnett L. Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Garnett Roper, 2012), 174

## Summary

This section explored free will as a tool for giving account for the justice of and goodness of God. Free will of human beings demands human responsibility in misdeeds, despite God's sovereignty. Human free will accounts for the evil in its various forms that were perpetrated in chattel slavery in the Caribbean. In the same way, that free will brings the oppressors to account it. It also brings the victims into account for their response to the infractions. Liberation is the active responsibility of the Caribbean people.

### *Divine Goodness*

This portion of the work examines what is understood by the goodness of God. It will look at the fact that the Almighty God did not prevent slavery and what God's nonprevention of human suffering discloses about God's goodness. Also, we will look at slavery of Africans in the Caribbean in juxtaposition with slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt, to see what interpretation we may draw from the parallel.

C.S. Lewis usefully points out that humans have come to commonly reduce goodness to mean hardly anything more than kindness. Kindness, as Lewis presents it, is weak by itself. Kindness, by itself, may carry with it a narrow interest in seeing the happiness of its object without regard for the morally destructive nature of its means. He writes, "I do not think I should value much the love of a friend who cared only for my happiness and did not object to my becoming dishonest."<sup>44</sup> By extension, when considering the goodness of God, one must take into account what is ultimately profitable for anyone or any people. Now this is not so easily evaluated. In fact, we cannot conclusively decide what is that ultimate good for humans or even ourselves as individuals. This is an impossibility that stands presently as a result of our human ignorance. It is clear, however, that one's understanding of God cannot be wholesome if it is merely accounting for immediate happiness in the earthly sense. Lewis expresses this idea thus:

What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, 'What does it matter so long as they are contented?' We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven- a senile benevolence who, as they say, liked to see young people enjoying themselves', and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, 'a

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44C S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Fount, 1998, 1940), 37.

good time was had by all'. . . . I should very much like to live in a universe which was governed on such lines. But since it is abundantly clear that I don't, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is Love, I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.<sup>45</sup>

This interpretation of God, being criticised by Lewis, may never be put in quite those terms by any reasonably thinking preacher. However, in the Caribbean we do see a related idea expressed in 'prosperity preaching'. Among other things, prosperity preaching declares that material wealth is evidently proportional to one's faithfulness to God, especially in giving in faith. This doctrine is not an authentic Caribbean interpretation, but it has entered the Region through a North American materialistic brand of the gospel, exported to the Caribbean. David Pearson, theologian and acting academic dean at Jamaica Theological Seminary, uncovers this error that has infected the area. Pearson asserts that the Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ holds no promises of material prosperity being proportionate to one's faithfulness, as prosperity preachers suggest. He identifies that the proliferation of this erroneous purporting is related to the colonial impetus for directing the disenfranchised away from the Biblical call to social justice and towards an individualistic interpretation of the gospel. Pearson posits that the increasing access to cable television in the Caribbean adds to the permeation of this prosperity centred understanding of the gospel being advanced by televised North American preachers.<sup>46</sup> Within the Caribbean, where poverty is so prevalent, prosperity preaching paints an inaccurately poor picture of the faithfulness of the Caribbean people to God. In contrast to the rhetoric of prosperity preaching, Jesus stands in solidarity with the poor and declares their blessedness.<sup>47</sup> The goodness of God cannot be measured by how much the beloved of God prosper or suffer. This goodness, despite suffering, is seen clearly in God's relationship with Israel throughout the Bible. While still under bondage in Egypt they were called "my people", by God.

And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>46</sup>Garnett L. Roper and J Richard Middleton, eds., *A Kairos Moment for Caribbean Theology: Ecumenical Voices in Dialogue* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 104-105.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 6:20

unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites<sup>48</sup>

In this understanding of the goodness of God, it is useful to here examine the interesting parallel between the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt and Caribbean slavery. One noteworthy similarity is that both periods of enslavement lasted for about four hundred years. In both cases, the enslaved were feared by their task masters for their large numbers, in the land of their oppression. The real purposefulness in bringing this parallel to light is to offer peace to the heart of the Caribbean thinker that may struggle with seeing the goodness of the sovereign God, in view of the experiences of slavery. For the Hebrews, their history of slavery in Egypt ironically was made the primary reference point for hope. Lewin Williams identifies this parallel and retrospective source of hope, and writes,

History as hope broadens the scope of history to create frontal and progressive perspectives. The very concept of history as reality is by nature one that looks back. The Hebrews looked back at their slavery experience in Egypt, the Jews look back at the Holocaust, and the New World Africans look back at slavery.<sup>49</sup>

It is no doubt that the Hebrews were, even during slavery, the people of God and that they were precious to God. This point was highlighted in the aforementioned reference of Exodus 3:7-8. Nevertheless, God never delivered the children of Israel until four hundred years had elapsed. God miraculously called and empowered Moses with signs and wonders four hundred years after the commencement of the Hebrew enslavement. Looking at this juxtaposition, one can draw some contextually relevant conclusions. The enslavement of a people clearly does not imply that they are inherently subordinate to those who enslave them. Also, the enslavement of a people does not suggest that they are not the people of God. In fact, Israel was more the people of God than any other people group on earth, in one sense.

Lewin Williams takes it a step further by arguing that God, to the Hebrews, was not passive about the four hundred years they spent in slavery. Williams examines the Hebrew use of the word *Qodesh* (meaning 'Holy') and asserts that God to the Hebrews was a moral God, and as such He actively fought for the oppressed. He comments on the Hebrew reference to God as *Qodesh* and writes,

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48 Exodus 3:7-8 KJV

49 Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 66.

It described also the inner nature of God which is that God is righteous. This is not so descriptive of a God who takes pleasure in peeping through key holes, as it is of a God who takes sides against oppression and powerlessness. Furthermore it must be understood here that the Jewish God does not merely object with cool passivity to the exploitation of the poor. The wrath of this God is kindled against those powerful who exploit the powerless, to upset radically the structures of oppression.<sup>50</sup>

Williams is identifying that active wrath of God against oppression in the midst of enslavement. This is interesting because the justice of God is here being accounted for even though God did not prevent the enslavement of the Hebrews. C.S.Lewis and the Caribbean theologian, Lewin Williams, both insinuate that human suffering does not contradict claims of God's justice nor God's ability and awareness. This must be understood in the Caribbean context as it is essential to our self-definition, and any advance of a theology of Black identity.

Additionally, as the children of Israel emerged out of slavery, in all the spectacle of the miraculous series of events, they were now to identify themselves independent of Egypt. Any Egyptian longing that was in their hearts was rightly diagnosed as a fault and a defect. Wishing to go back to have Egyptian food and Egyptian forms of worship, grieved God. The Caribbean likewise ought to be, with its independence, free from colonial identity and colonial definition. God called the Hebrews to worship Him and to conduct their existence in a way that was a direct relationship between themselves and God. The Caribbean too must realise its place in the embrace of God, in His goodness and justice. Our theology ought to be a narrative of our own context concerning God.

### Conclusion

This section explored the goodness of God. God is good to people even if the oppression of the people is not prevented. Goodness does not narrowly mean preventing pain or suffering. The enslaved Blacks affirmed that God is good in the midst of their enormous suffering. They saw God as being in solidarity with their desire for liberation. The enslaved realised that God was just and it motivated them. This identification of the goodness of God towards Black people is critical for Black identity.

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<sup>50</sup>Lewin Lascelles Williams, *Research in Religion and Family*, vol. 2, *Caribbean Theology* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 35-36.

Romans 7 Once  
Again:  
Intertextual  
Setting,  
Structure, and  
Rhetorical  
Strategy  
D V Palmer

**Romans as Story<sup>1</sup>**

It is becoming increasingly clear that though Paul's letters are occasional pieces they are not devoid of theological content. This content, however minimal it may be, carries with it a strong narrative feature, which serves as the very foundation of the theological framework. As a result, Paul's letters are not to be read as 'only independent snippets of "truth" or isolated gems of logic' but as 'discursive exercises that explicate a narrative about God's saving involvement in the world' (B. Longenecker 2002, 4). If this observation is correct, then one should expect to find in Paul's longest discursive exercise evidence of a narrative substratum. Both J.M.G. Barclay and N. T. Wright have recently set themselves the task of laying bare Paul's narrative strategy in his letter to the Romans.

Wright's proposal in this regard is that chapters 3-8 contain the basic story line of Israel's redemption from Africa northeast. This narrative substructure, drawn from the Exodus, also holds the key to our understanding of how the two allegedly disparate 'juristic' (1-4) and 'participationist' (5-8) sections of the letter cohere. Wright begins his exploration of the 'New Exodus' motif in Romans by suggesting that Paul's exposition of baptism has in mind the Red Sea crossing—a connection Paul makes in 1 Cor 10:2. The connection in Romans is seen particularly in 6:17-18, where the metaphor of slavery and its radical reversal thereof (New Exodus liberation) is invoked. Wright then poses the question, 'what effect does this reading of chapter 6 have on 6-8 as a whole?' His own answer follows immediately: 'If 6 tells the story of the Exodus, or at least the crossing of the Red Sea, the next thing we should expect is the arrival at Sinai and the giving of the Torah. This, of course, is exactly the topic of Romans 7:1-8:11 (Wright 1999, 24). The narrative sequence, therefore, moves from 'Egyptian' slavery to sin (that was exacerbated by the law) by way of the 'Red Sea event of baptism' to a new leading through the 'wilderness' (Rom 8:12-17). The new journey will eventually see the eschatological people of God entering into their inheritance.

J.M.G. Barclay, recognizing that Paul may be viewed as a storyteller in his own right, explores 'the theological uses to which Paul puts his first-person narrative' (2002, 147 n. 34). Barclay makes the observation that Romans offers 'a striking "I" text in 7:7-25 which begins with some quasinarrative elements (7:7-13).' However, he expresses serious doubts concerning the pericope's autobiographical value 'except in the most attenuated sense' (147). What Paul's rhetorical 'I' does is to dramatize the discourse of the 'paradoxical relationship of law and sin' by probing its personal dimensions. Barclay is more interested in 1:7-15 and 15:14-33 as revealers of Paul's personal story. Moreover, Paul also 'presents himself as an example of the "remnant saved by grace" (11:1-6)' and finds even in his apostleship to the Gentiles, some positive role in Israel's future (11:13-16). Thus Paul's story is presented in Romans as *entangled* with the story of the church and the story of Israel. Foundational to all of this, in Barclay's view, is the molding of Paul's story in the form of a 'christomorphic historiography'. I believe that the desire to find narrative features in the Pauline corpus is essentially correct, and both Barclay's and Wright's contributions have the potential of advancing our understanding of Romans through their respective proposals.

<sup>1</sup>Petersen 1985, 43: 'Letters have stories, and it is from stories that we construct the narrative worlds of both letters and their stories.'

One suggestion however that I think is a bit far-fetched is Wright's linking of the Red Sea crossing with baptism in Romans 6. Paul undoubtedly makes a similar connection in 1 Cor 10:2, as Wright pointed out, but in Romans 6 the writer is probably drawing upon traditional material. Maybe a better connection between the books of Exodus and Romans is the phrase 'signs and wonders' (Rom 15: 18-19a; cf. Ex. 7:3), which sets 'the miraculous demonstrations of the power of the Spirit in the preaching of the gospel and the founding of the Christian communities in the context of the Exodus tradition' (Grieb 2002, 138).

Barclay's proposal is not fundamentally different from Wright's in its insistence to draw inter-textual links with the OT. He is correct in drawing our attention to how Paul positions himself implicitly in the stories he tells, or preferable (so Barclay), how the testimonies he gives press home his point. More important than Paul's self-presentations in Romans is his manifest desire to root his understanding of the gospel in Scriptures (Hays 1989, 34). This is done in several ways: as explicit 'authoritative warrants', and as indirect markers of thematic and theological concerns which provide significant clues to his lines of argumentation (Hays 1989, 34-35). In this regards Hays finds within Paul's programmatic statement in Rom 1:16-17 several Septuagintal echoes. For example, Hays observes that the Pauline declaration 'I am not ashamed' has been badly handled by expositors, on account of their failure to identify its intertextual links with certain lament Psalms, such as 43:10 and 24:2, as well as Isa 50:7-8 (cf. Eissfeldt 1965, 115). I would add to Hays's list of 'shame' texts Genesis 2:24, where we find the first man standing in God's presence unashamed. Paul's point then is this: it is the gospel that powerfully removes the shame of humankind, allowing women and men once again to stand in the divine presence with confidence. Elsewhere Paul refers to the work of the gospel in people's lives as a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). Both the old creation (Gen 2:24) and the new stand unashamed as a result of divine mercy. Interestingly, both 'shame' texts seem quite out of place in their respective context. As we have seen above, Wright traces Paul's central section (3-8) in Romans to the pentateuchal account of the Exodus. If my proposal is on target, the Pauline allusions to the Pentateuch go beyond that.<sup>2</sup> We also see possible echoes of Gen 3 in Romans 7, for example, the first appearance of *egM'I* in the LXX is a picture of wretchedness and weakness. There is no hint in the passage that Cain the character is aware of any wickedness or wretchedness, but it does seem that the narrator wants his auditors to see Cain as such. There is then an echo of Cain in Romans 7 (cf. Wright 1993, 226-230).<sup>3</sup>

A comparison of Gen 3-4 and Romans 1-3 is highly suggestive. Both Genesis chapters 3 and 4 appear to be couched in the form of a courtroom drama with their incisive questions (3:9, 11, 13; 4:9-10; Sailhamer 1992, 106). In Romans 1-3 as well, one senses a certain kind of forensic setting that depicts nothing but guilt, shame and weakness (cf. Rom 5:6) on the part of the defenseless defendants (Rom 1:20c). What is interesting is that only the alienated experience forensic embarrassment. Those who are found in God's will stand unashamed (Gen 2:25; cf. Rom 1:1, 16; 5:1; 8:1).<sup>4</sup> Hays (1989, 39) has already shown that what was for Isaiah (50:7-8) a hope of future vindication was for Paul a present realization. 'Thus, Isaiah's future rebounds through Paul's voice into a new temporal framework defined by God's already efficacious act of eschatological deliverance in Christ.' If then Gen 2:25 is admitted as one of the faint but compelling echoes of the LXX in Paul, we have yet another testimony of how the law and the prophets prefigure the gospel, for the good news Paul proclaims, at the very least, restores wo/man to paradise where s/he stands in God's presence with confidence (Rom. 5:1-2). For Paul, this astounding reversal of fortunes should never qualify as the world's best-kept secret. Accordingly, in Romans 'I am not ashamed' becomes the ground of 'I am a debtor' (v.14; cf. Rom 10:11), which is later embellished by Isaiah's *â Á±Û¹ ç 1À ÿµÄ Äö ½ µP±³³ µ»¹¶; ¼ ½É½ Äp •³±, ¬* (How beautiful are the feet of those heralding good things; Rom 10:15; citing Isa 52:7 LXX). Earlier reference was made to the forensic flavour of Rom 1-3. This is in agreement with Hays' proposal. However, for him these crucial

<sup>2</sup>Stowers (1994, 159ff.) is adamant that nothing of the sort is found in Rom 1-3.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. also 'I' on the lips of Cain, presented as the first user of the 'I' of weakness (Gen 4:9); cf. this with his Mother's exuberant language at his birth, 'now I, a woman, have in turn produced a man'. 'Man' is the only occurrence of *z'w* to refer 'to a newborn babe' (Lieber 2004, 24).

<sup>4</sup>The 'shame' words in the LXX and the NT passages belong to the same semantic domain. See Hays (1989) for another echo in Rom 1:16.

chapters are a recapitulation of the narrative structure of 2 Samuel 11-12 (Hays 1989, 49). In fact, the route to 2 Samuel is an indirect one via a penitential piece (Psalm 50: 3-6 LXX), with its manifest language of weakness:

*Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight --That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.*

Undoubtedly, as slender as this connection is, it provides a stronger case for a Septuagintal echo than Gen 3-4. What Hays however would concede, I believe, is that some echoes in Paul in particular, and the NT more generally, are louder than others. One section of Romans that could be likened to the so-called silent years between Malachi and Matthew, as far as direct quotations are concerned, is 5:1-8:39. This is in contrast to 1:16-4:25; 9:1-11:36 and the paraenetic sections of 12:1-15:13. In these passages we have ‘extensive use of Scripture in Paul’s argumentation’ (R. Longenecker 1999, xviii). But the very presence and plethora (over half of the explicit foundation is the Pauline Corpus) of these citations underscore in no uncertain terms how much the writer of Romans was immersed in his sacred literature and how its essential story and worldview shaped his literary activity. It is not surprising, then, that one can trace in Paul’s letters an almost equal amount of OT allusions whose echo (the overall story line) or echoes (sub-plots) cry out for attention. For example, very few would doubt that Paul has in mind Gen 3 in Romans 5 (cf. Enoch 14:22). And we will hear other echoes in chapters 7 that contribute to the portrait of Paul as a skilful storyteller, who utilized the literary and rhetorical conventions of his day to make his case for ‘His-story’.

Perhaps a prime example of Paul’s narrative sophistry is the way in which he handles Hab 2:4b as the bedrock on which his introductory thematic statement is erected. This prompts Watts (1999, 18) to suggest that one can analyze the distribution of language of 1:6-17 (already coloured by the Habakkuk text) throughout the major sections of 1:1-3:20, 3:21-5:21, 6:1-8:39, 9:1-11:36 and 12:1-15:1. In these portions forming the backbone of the epistle, one also finds key terms such as ‘salvation’, ‘power’, ‘gospel’, ‘believe’, ‘righteousness’, ‘Jew’, ‘Greek’, ‘life’ and their cognates (Watts 1999, 18 n.74), tying them closely to the introductory paragraph. So pervasive is the influence of Habakkuk on Romans, according to Watt (1999, 24), that he also finds a plausible explanation for the unique presence of a doxology at 16:25-27, which, in his view, echoes Hab 3:2-17. Although Watts does not mention 15:14ff as one of the passages influenced by Habakkuk, it can be argued, I believe, that this missionary paragraph is linked to Rom 1, forming an epistolary frame along with it. And within this context some see a clear prophetic consciousness reflected in Paul’s language. Evans (1999, 115-118), for example, uses 1 Cor 14:37 (‘If any thinks, he is a prophet’) as his point of departure to discuss propheticism in Romans (cf. Baaij 1993). Evan’s case is mainly built on Paul’s citation of Isaiah 52:7 and its probable allusion to Isaiah 61:1. Crucial to Evan’s proposal is the key word *evangelize* that appears in the two Isaiah verses. Evans also points out the recognition of recent research that the concept of *apostellō* (‘send’, and its OT equivalent) is quite close.

When one adds to this the observation that ‘the very nature of Paul’s conversion invites comparison with the prophets (cf. Isa 1:1, 6:1-13; Jer 1:5; Ezek 1:1; 8:4; Obadiah 1; Nah 1: 1; Hab. 2:2)’, and that visionary or revelatory communication (cf. 1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1:15-16; 1 Cor 12: 4-7) with the above references (Evans 1999, 118) is common to both the prophetic and apostolic traditions, the case for seeing a nexus between the two traditions appears stronger. Add to this the fact that the only quotation in 15:14-33, with its strong missionary thrust, is Isaiah 52:15 (cf. Isa 52:5, 7 and in Rom 11:15), the prophetic echo in Romans becomes even more distinct. Although our main focus is verses 14-25, we will first consider verses 1-13 contextually. Our purpose is to investigate the relation of ‘I’ to the law.

## Romans as a Structured Story

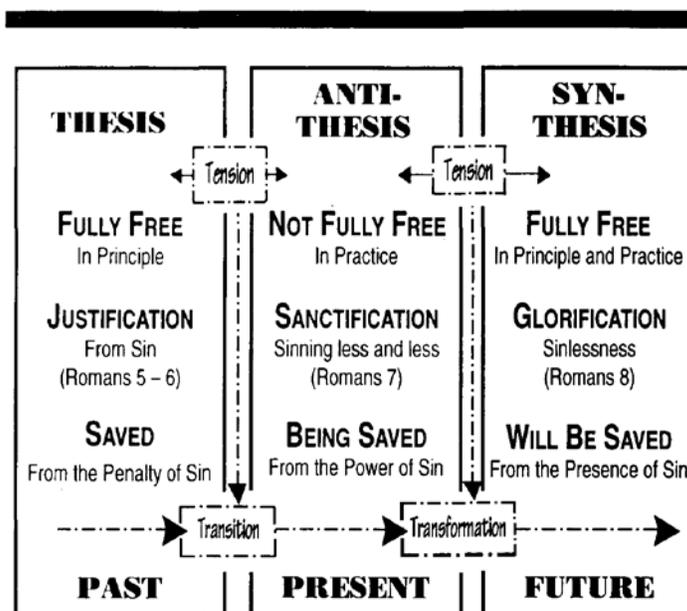


Fig. 1. Wo/Man in Transition –& Tension: *Dialectic of Christian Experience*

The structure of the entire letter may be delineated as follows:<sup>5</sup>

*Introduction 1:1-17*

*A. Justification: Gospel for Sinful Humanity (1:18-5:21)*

*B. Sanctification: Gospel for Saints in Principle (6:1-8:1-17)*

*C. Glorification: Gospel for a Suffering<sup>6</sup> Entity (8:18-39)*

*A<sup>1</sup>. Justification: Gospel for a Sinful Nationality (9:1-11:36)*

*B<sup>1</sup>. Sanctification: Gospel for Saved Humanity in Praxis  
(12:1-16:1-23)*

*Conclusion 16:24-27*

<sup>5</sup>Adapted from Noelliste (2015, 93-94). The focus (C) of the structure is anticipated by the frustrated and wretched cry of 7:24. The cosmic character of the emancipation from wretchedness 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 further reveals the following chiasmic macro-structure: A-Material Universe (Gen 1:1-25), B-Image-bearers (Gen 1:26-31), Bt- Image-bearers (2 Cor 5:17), At-Material Universe (Rev 21-22; cf. 2 Pet 3).

<sup>6</sup> On this theme, see especially Wu (2015).

There is a sense in which chapters 6, 7, and 8 go together theologically (putting to rest the rumour that six was afraid of seven, because seven ate nine.), since the author's discourse on 'law', a crucial term in this section, begins to take centre stage in chapter 6 (see fig. 1 above). In the first four chapters the topic of justification is high on the agenda. There the apostle worked out the relation between that issue and 'law.' Another important aspect of righteousness, sanctification, is the burden of 6, 7 and 8. If justification is righteousness imputed, sanctification is the process whereby the believer increasingly experiences and grows into that righteousness. At the heart of chapters 6-8 is how this righteousness relates to *nomos* (law).

Paul's use of *nomos* has been the centre of controversy over the last twenty years or so. E. P. Sanders (1985), for example, posited contradictions in Paul's view of the law. Earlier Sanders (1977, 518-524) expressed the view that Paul was indeed coherent in his expression concerning the concepts of *nomos*. Sanders thinks that Romans 1:18-29; 5:12-21 and 7:7-25 are internally inconsistent and contradictory. Martin (1989, 39), however, disputes this claim by pointing out that what is considered a contradiction in Paul (and the rest of the NT) may turn out to be something else on closer examination. To better appreciate the usage of *nomos* in Romans it may be useful to see how it was employed in previous epistles. The term may be found thirty three times in Galatians. The Galatian believers were under siege from nomistic interests who were responsible for 'disturbing' (1:7), 'bewitching' (3:1) and 'unsettling' (5:12) them.<sup>7</sup>

All of this was in an attempt to get the Galatian Christians to bow to the Mosaic Law. In response, Paul points to the freedom (5:1) and law of Christ (6:2) that should govern their lives. But what is this law of Christ to which the apostle alludes? In the context of the entire letter it has to be something different from the Mosaic Law against which he appears to skillfully inveigh. But though we can say what it is not with some measure of certainty, its positive identification is not to be found in this epistle. When we come to 1 Corinthians we do not fare much better. But it becomes much clearer that the 'law of Christ' is not the same thing as the Mosaic Law. I have in mind particularly chapter 9:19-21 that distinguishes 'those under the law' (v. 20), that is, the Jews, from the apostle himself who is 'not under the law.' So where does that leave the apostle? If he is not under the Mosaic Law in any real sense (though he finds himself under it conveniently, 'that he might gain those under the law'), is he now lawless or antinomian? 'Not so!' says the apostle Paul; he is not lawless, but under Messianic government (v.21). Out of this discourse, then, in which we learn something of Paul's philosophy of mission, we also gain some knowledge of his ethical posturing. From the foregoing we learn that Paul's framework in terms of a moral code was not essentially Mosaic but Messianic in orientation.<sup>8</sup>Romans 2 adds another interesting dimension to the Pauline concept of 'law'. Whereas 1 Corinthians manifests nomistic distinctions in terms of Mosaic and Messianic codifications, Romans 2:13-14 seems to reveal the presence of another 'law'—one that is universal in scope. This law evidently predates both the foregoing varieties (contra Jewett 2007).<sup>9</sup>

Apart from these significant theological uses, *nomos* also appears to carry the following senses in Romans: (1) principle (3:24); (2) precept; and (3) all or part of the Tanak (3:31). What is in dispute is whether or not it is used to designate Roman law, law in general, (Bultmann, 259-60), or Mosaic law (Fitzmyer 1993, 456) in Romans 7:1. The immediate context does seem to favour the Mosaic Law, since part of the language of verse three which continues Paul's illustrative argument, is Hebraic (Black 1989, 93). The point of the illustration is that the Roman Christians had 'died' to the law. This is made plain in verse 4, though from Paul's 'what appears to be awkwardly constructed analogy' (Yorke 1991, 66), we expect to see a corresponding 'husband' dying instead of a 'bride'. Despite the difficulty that some (e.g., Black 1989, 93) have seen in the illustration

<sup>7</sup>See Palmer and Dennis, *Galatians* (2016). A. J. Hultgren (2011, 294–309) labels 8:1–11 "Liberation from Sin and Life in the Spirit;" verses 12–13 should probably have been included here, especially v. 13. R. Longenecker (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.

<sup>8</sup>That is, it was more marked by discontinuity with the OT law than continuity.

<sup>9</sup>This universal variety may be dubbed 'mesographic' (Palmer and Dennis, 38-56), i.e., written inside (Rom 2:14; cf. Epictetus 1926, 312).

and its subsequent application, what seems clear is that Paul believed that a radical shift has taken place: believers are no longer under the Mosaic code, thanks to *corpus Christi* (v. 4) through which they were put to death (•, ±/±Ä, Ä— a divine passive?). A new marriage is now contracted (Holland 2011). The results of all this are far reaching—believers are now able to become ‘faithful and fruitful’ to the glory of God (v. 4b; Yorke 1991, 67). What a stark contrast to the negative sentiments of 6:21<sup>10</sup> and 7:5. Verse 6 reiterates the point of verse 4: Christians are severed from the law.

Having written so ‘harshly’ about the law, the apostle now seeks to demonstrate that there is nothing wrong per se with the law. The real problem lies elsewhere, with the failure of the ‘I’ to submit to God and the expression of his will within the law. The law played an important role in the experience of the ‘I’ in revealing sin, though the law itself is in no way sinful. The age old question is whether or not Paul is strictly referring to himself. The consensus before the twentieth century was that ‘I’, whether expressed by *egMor* not, should be taken at face value. A sampling of older authorities demonstrates the point (Baaij 1993, 21-46; Bray 1998). To illustrate the beneficial nature of the law the ‘I’ testifies: *But I did not come to recognize sin except through the law; for example, the matter of lust would have been difficult to grasp but for the prohibition that says, You must not entertain any evil desire* (v.7b; personal translation). What does the ‘I’ mean by ‘sin’ at this point? And why was this particular prohibition singled out? The context definitely favours defining sin as an infraction of divine command, since the prohibition of Exod 20:17/Deut 5:21 is cited. This quotation also supports the idea that the Mosaic Law is really in view (cf. Chrysostom 1862, col. 502).

The answer to the question as to why the tenth commandment was singled out is somewhat bound up with the quest to identify the ‘I’ in this chapter, so both problems will be looked at together. B.L. Martin (1989, 76-77; see also 1981, 39-47) has posited that the immediate context (8b-10) points to the first man, Adam, as the referent of the ‘I’, since Paul’s argument is that ‘law’ is the stimulant and instrument of desire leading to sin and death. One also observes that the passage seems to depict a sort of historical sequence with the use of the aorist tense with past tense significance (vv.7-13), in contrast to the consistent use of the present in the following verses. In addition, the explicit reference to Adam in the wider context of chapter 5 may suggest that Paul is indeed alluding to the prototypical man under, and confronted by, law. Romans 7:13 should then be understood in the light of its parallels to the story of the fall of Adam in Genesis 3. This would explain why *You shall not lust* is used in verse 7 as a possible echo of Genesis, 2:17 (cf. Genesis 3:6 LXX).

But as far as Busch (2004, 13) is concerned the ‘clearest allusion to the Genesis narrative appears in [Rom] 7:11, where Paul writes . . . “sin deceived me” . . . clearly echoing Eve’s “confession” of Gen 3:13 . . . “the serpent deceived me”’. Earlier in the chapter Paul also talks about the ‘fruit’ of death (v. 5), as he begins discussion of the law. Busch (2004, 13) then explains the Pauline ‘I’ in this context as the ‘common Graeco-Roman rhetorical device of *prosopopoiia* . . . (speech-in-character) . . . [i.e., Paul] speaking as Eve in the primeval transgression.’<sup>11</sup> Keck (2005, 180) also finds echoes of Genesis 3 in Romans 7, where the ‘Adamic self (not simply Adam himself)’ is reflected in light of the revelation of the Last Adam. D. Moo (1986, 128-130),<sup>12</sup> on the other hand, has recently defended a position put forward earlier by Stauffer (1964, 343-362) that both the ‘I’ and the command in verse 7 have close links with Israel. While Moo does not deny that there are reminiscences of Adam in the pericope, he insists that this is only secondary. Moo points out that ‘desire’ and its cognates do not appear anywhere in the first three chapters of Genesis. Coupled with the fact that they occur in reference to the wilderness sojourn in Psalm 106:14 all seem to give credence to Moo’s position. The clear reference to Ex. 20:17 should remove all doubt. In a later work Moo (1996, 431) writes, ‘a . . . factor favouring reference to Israel as a whole is the similarity between the sequence of vv.9-10a and Paul’s persistent teaching about how the giving of the Mosaic Law made the situation of Israel worse, not better. The Law, Paul has

<sup>10</sup>Neither here nor in 7:4 is the nature of the fruit bearing specified.

<sup>11</sup> Busch (2004, 15) is also convinced that Paul invariably attributes the primeval deception to Eve and never to Adam (cf. 2 Cor 11: 1-21; Rom 5:12). See also Keener (2009, 91-92, n.17) and Witherington (2004, 179) on *prosopopoiia*.

<sup>12</sup> Two British scholars (Cotterell and Turner 1989, 81) have come out in support of Moo’s thesis. Also Turner (1996, 129).

affirmed, “brings wrath” (4:15), turns sin into transgression (5:14; cf. Gal. 3:19), and “increases the trespass” (5:28)’.

Other interpreters believe that limiting the ‘I’ in this way is unnecessary. Fitzmyer is representative of those who see the passage as having a more universal scope. Closely tied to the Adamic view is the novel reading of Wright (1991, 227-229) who sees echoes of Cain in Romans 7. Wright believes that the Adamic reference is correct, but it does not fully explain the passage. He therefore seeks to demonstrate that seeing Cain in the whole scenario gives depth to the analysis of 7:7-25, and to rule out this allusive reference for an exclusive Adamic one is, in Wright’s opinion, a false disjunction. But how does Cain really fit here? First, Cain is viewed as ‘the archetypal possessor’ of the evil impulse. This is seen by some as part of Paul’s background in Roman 7. Second, Cain is counseled to do good while he can, lest he be overcome by sin. ‘In Roman 7:18, Paul summarizes the description of 7:13-20 as follows: When I want to do what is right, evil lies close at hand to me.’ Third, Cain is viewed in some circles as a spiritual schizophrenic, a description closely paralleling 7:13-25. Fourth, Cain is presented as being ignorant (Gen 4:9: *And he said, ‘I do not know’*). This is echoed in Romans 7:15a: *What I am doing I really don’t know*). ‘The result of the whole episode,’ Wright further observes, ‘is that Cain is cursed, and laments his plight . . . (Gen 4:14) . . . even so, Romans 7 ends in the well-known lament: [v. 24]. ‘All these considerations suggest to me that we are right to see the same kind of allusion to Cain in Romans 7:13-25 as to Adam in 7:7-12, and with the same kind of intent.’ Despite this conviction, Wright sees the ‘Cain connection’ as only tangential to his understanding of Romans 7,<sup>13</sup> which is summarized in the following analysis: <sup>14</sup>

- 7:1-6: two marriages
- 7:7-12: the Law is not sin but its arrival, in Sinai as in Eden, was sin’s opportunity to kill its recipients
- 7:13-20: the Law was not the ultimate cause of ‘my’ death: it was sin working through the Law and in ‘me,’ unwilling though ‘I’ was, and thus swelling to its size.
- 7:21-25: the results in terms of Torah; Torah bifurcates –and so do ‘I’
- 8:1ff: in Christ and Spirit, the life that the Torah could not give (Wright 1991, 218-219).

Recognizing the rhetorical character of the passage, Fitzmyer (1993, 464) believes that the ‘I’ is a literary device used ‘to dramatize in a personal way the experience common to all unregenerate human beings faced with law and relying on their own resources to meet its obligations.’ Here the apostle is viewing humanity through Jewish eyes, trying to achieve right standing before God by observing the Mosaic Law. Black (1973, 94) also believes that it is ‘clear [Paul] intends us to understand them [i.e., vv. 7-25] as a description of a typical human experience; it is for everyone he is speaking in this famous passage.’<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most attractive way to understand the ‘I’ in Rom 7 is to believe that Paul was speaking autobiographically. This understanding has a long history and is defended today, with different levels of sophistication, by scholars such as Banks (1978) and Gundry (1980, 232). Gundry argues that the best way to understand the presence of the tenth commandment in the passage and the ‘I’ is to see some reference to Paul’s own *bar mitzvah*. Paul, he believes, slipped into the ‘I’ style ‘*precisely because becoming bar mitzvah applied to him but not to most of his readers, who were Gentiles*’ (his italics).<sup>16</sup> He further points out that *epithumia* in Paul’s vocabulary quite often connotes sexual lust (cf. ‘*venditus in servitutem concupiscentiae*’; Zerwick 1984, 347). He cites Rom 1:24 and I Thess 4:5 as examples. ‘Any sensitive *bar mitzvah*,’ Gundry theorizes,

<sup>13</sup>Anticipating the criticism that the Cain-connection is an exegetical *tour de force* (‘how submerged does a reference have to be before it drowns altogether?’), Wright (1991, 226) delineates three criteria of assessment: 1) verbal echoes which would be meaningful to hearer and reader alike; 2) thematic echoes; and 3) ‘*the greater coherence* that results in the text under scrutiny when the “echo” is allowed to be heard in this way.’ (Italics his).

<sup>14</sup>Only the main headings are given. His detailed outline spreads over three pages (217-219) and covers 7:1-8:11.

<sup>15</sup> The ‘I,’ according to him, is unredeemed.

<sup>16</sup> Because, in his view, the passage refers to a ‘timeless age to which all men belong’ Barth (1959, 75) considers the passage as a description of a situation ‘from which we have been called away in faith.’

‘would be worried by the tenth commandment, especially because he is catapulted into adulthood to keep the law at the very time his sexual urges become so active he is unable to avoid defiling sexual emissions (cf. Lev 15).’ But what about the fact that the *bar mitzvah* was not ceremonialized until medieval times? Anticipating this criticism, Gundry points out that the legal shift from boyhood to adulthood has early attestation and so the objection is not fatal to his thesis. The final proposal we will look at, before returning to verse 7, is that of Seifrid (1992, 313-322). After surveying the various options proffered since Kümmel’s (1929, 1974) groundbreaking work, Seifrid suggests that Paul is deliberately portraying himself according to a particular pattern reflected in Jewish penitential prayers, ‘from the limited perspective of his intrinsic soteriological resources’ (333). Two significant features of the passage are said to substantiate this claim: first, the shift from first person plural to singular. When this is done elsewhere in Paul, according to Seifrid, a paradigmatic element associated with the apostle’s desire to explain or exhibit his theology is usually present (e.g., Rom 8:38; 14:14; 1 Cor 8:13, 13:11; Gal 2:18, 21; Phil 3:4-14).

The second feature is the change of tenses (from augmented to non-augmented). Drawing upon the work of Stanley Porter (1989) on Greek aspect, Seifrid concludes that the augmented tense was used for narrating (a remote) event whereas the present was employed to describe a condition present at the time of writing. Therefore, Paul does not demarcate 7:14-25 as belonging solely to his present, contrary to what those who read the text as belonging to Paul’s Christian experience suppose. But he does indicate that the condition of *egM* extends into his present, contrary to what those who read the passage as a depiction of Paul’s past argue. ‘The change to the present tense in 7:14-25 signals a change of description’ (333). This change, according to Seifrid, establishes continuity between the apostle’s past and present, both having a striking similarity to the collective experience expressed in the Qumran *Hodayoth*. ‘They [i.e., the confessions] share with Rom 7:14-25 a concentration on the condition of the individual not found elsewhere. And it is possible for such confessions to appear outside the context of prayer, like Paul’s statements in Rom 7:14-25. An important parallel that interpreters have missed is that the penitential prayers represent the guilt of a group from a limited perspective, “while acknowledging that a broader framework exists.”’ Perhaps the strongest link with Romans 7 is the rehearsal of past transgressions and the ‘description of the resultant state<sup>17</sup> of the penitent in imperfective aspect and present time.’ (Seifrid, 322). A major difference between the two corpora, Seifrid points out, is that Paul’s language is explicitly argumentative. This should not be surprising, given the disparate literary genres. This fact by itself raises questions about how much the penitential discourses have really influenced Paul, especially at the time of writing Romans. If the founder of the Qumran community, the so-called Teacher of Righteousness, is responsible for the *Hodayoth*, then the ‘I’ statements found therein may be attributed to him. Some feel, however, that it ‘is more probable that the “I” reflects the personal experiences of [him] in some hymns but in the other passages it represents the collective consciousness of the Qumran community . . . The language is heavily influenced by Biblical Hebrew’ (Charlesworth 1986, 413).

As to which of these positions best explains the passage will be determined only after we have closely examined verses 8-25. In the meantime some of the other details of verse 7 will occupy our attention. The verse begins with two rhetorical questions which continue the diatribe style<sup>18</sup> seen earlier in the epistle (e.g., Rom 6:1) and which are employed in later portions (9:19; 11:19). Their function is to focus the reader’s attention on the point of importance being discussed, namely, the real nature of the law. To the second

<sup>17</sup>He cites 1QH 1:21-27, 3:19-29; 1QH 11:9, 10. Interestingly Vermes (1997, 244) expresses the view that the two fundamental themes of 1QH etc. are ‘salvation’ and ‘knowledge’. One also sees these motifs in Rom 7 in terms of the Pauline expressions of self-knowledge (e.g., vv. 7, 18) and the salvation of the *ego* (vv. 24, 25). Another possible influence may be that of Plato (1994, xxxvi passim) ‘who thought he detected three main sources of motivation in people. . . . The desire to satisfy one’s instincts . . . the desire . . . for preservation of one’s sense of “I”; and there is the desire for understanding and truth.’ Lesses (1987) has an interesting exploration of these Platonic ‘desires’.

<sup>18</sup>As a literary device it is characterized among other things by 1) stereotyped address (e.g., Rom 2:1); rhetorical objections (11:19); catechetical exchanges (Rom 6:1); personified abstractions (Rom 10:6-8); parataxis (Rom 2:21-22; 13:7); parallelism (Rom 12:4-15); vice lists (Rom 1:24-31); imperatives (Rom 12:14-15) and exclamation (7:7; 9:14); Soulen (1981, 55).

question the apostle gives a strong and categorical NO!<sup>19</sup> The collocation of ‘law’ and ‘sin’ in the question is itself scandalous, but Paul’s quick response negates any outrage that a nomistically informed Christian in Rome (whether ethnically Jew or Gentile) may have had. On the contrary, declares Paul, the ‘law’ (Torah) was very much instrumental in his spiritual education,<sup>20</sup> with reference to sin. Is the Apostle Paul’s reference to ‘sin’ in this context a concrete act or that which underlies it? The citing of the tenth commandment seems to tilt the balance in favour of a specific act. Dunn opts for the view that here ‘sin’ is presented as ‘a personified power.’ The succeeding verses, he says, use the term in this way. The way ‘sin’ is used in the previous two chapters seems to favour Dunn’s conclusion, but even he (1988, 378) has to admit a degree of ambiguity of the term in verse 7.

In any case, Paul’s knowledge of ‘sin’ came by way of the final injunction in the Decalogue. The knowledge, Dunn<sup>21</sup> believes, has to be experiential in the context, bearing testimony to the tyrannical nature of sin. It also provides some rationale for the provocative declaration of verse 5. The specific sin that the tenth commandment prohibits and that which the ‘I’ became acutely aware is lust. Here in verse 7b the apostle uses a synonym of *ginMkM*(know) employed in the first part of the verse. The juxtaposition of the two terms strongly suggests, in my view, nothing more than a stylistic shift. But what is the significance of the tenses?

Dunn (1988, 378), taking the pluperfect  $\text{’}\mu\text{’}$  as an ‘inceptive’ imperfect, offers the following translation: ‘I would not *have come* (my emphasis) to that experience of covetousness which I still have.’ However, Porter (1989, 286 n. 27) judges this understanding of  $\text{’}\mu\text{’}$  as a ‘misconstrual’ of the verb’s aspectual features within its context, without himself adding much to the sense of the verse. He may be correct, though, in pointing out that ‘the two verbs . . . are not synonymous here or the parallelism would break down’ (286). In verse 8 Paul now explains how the ‘I’ came to learn about the sinister nature of sin. Sin, he says, took the opportunity through the commandment ‘and produced all kinds of wrong desires’<sup>22</sup> (REB) in ‘him’. Here ‘sin’ is personified. A different imagery is used from the ones in the previous chapter in which sin is presented as monarch (v. 12)<sup>23</sup> and slave master (v. 16). ‘Desire,’ that which ‘sin’ produces, appears many times in the Pauline literature. The word group covers a semantic range that includes desire for food (Luke 15:16), or as the context of Romans 7:7 denotes, for something illicit (cf. Matt 5:28; Mark 4:14; Rom 1:24; 6:12; Eph 2:3; 1 John 2:16; 1 Pet 2:11; Titus 2:12 etc).<sup>24</sup> Of course there are numerous examples of what we might call ‘negative desire’ in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the inter-testamental literature. The passage 2 Esdras (3:20-22), for example, traces this kind of desire to the first ‘I’: ‘Yet you did not take away their evil heart from them, so that your law might produce fruit in them. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the hearts of the people along with the evil root; but what was good departed, and the evil remained’ (NRSV).<sup>25</sup> What this passage shares with Romans 7 is a concern about Torah and man’s inability, on account of wrong desire, to follow it. Despite the parallels and the mention of the first man, one should not merely assume the Adamic postulate mentioned above.

Now judging from the military language, it would appear sin is playing the role of a soldier seizing someone or taking an enemy captive (Ryken 1998, 736). Whatever the precise understanding Paul intended to convey, what seems clear is that a ‘vicious’ triangle is now in place involving the law, sin, and the ‘I’. If for a

<sup>19</sup>This appears in 3:4; 6:2,15. It can be rendered ‘No way!’ in English, and in JT, ‘yu mad?’ [Are you crazy]; cf ‘*Das kannocht sein!*’ (DGNDB).

<sup>20</sup>Something approaching ‘experiential knowledge,’ according to Dunn.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Cranfield (1975, 348) and Fanning (1990, 308-309). Fanning points out that  $\text{’}\mu\text{’}$  occurs only here in the NT epistles. But it occurs in the Gospels and Acts (John 31,33; 11:42; Acts 23:5). The clause  $\mu\theta\text{’}\mu\text{’}$  is positively identified as a second-class condition in Blass 1961, 182, but with some reserve by Boyer (1982, 86).

<sup>22</sup>‘Desire’ is not qualified but the REB’s rendition appears correct at this point.

<sup>23</sup>Also in 5:21.

<sup>24</sup>Buschel, *TDNT* 3:167-72.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. this to Pascal’s (1958, 98), ‘Man’s nature is not always to advance; it has its advances and retreats.’

moment we treat the last mentioned as neutral, we have a scenario where the law is good (v.12) but powerless to energize the 'I', and on the other hand, sin is powerful, antinomian and manipulative. The result of sin's maneuvering is the outworking of all manner of covetousness (NRSV). Two terms are used to underscore sin's maneuver and manipulation of the 'I':  $\bullet \text{ἡ ἀνάγκη}$  and  $\circ \text{ἡ ἀνομιμία}$ . The former is employed approximately six times in the NT, all of which is to be found in the Pauline corpus.<sup>26</sup> Previous references include Gal 5:13, where Christian liberty is both affirmed and qualified ('do not use your freedom as an occasion [ $\bullet \text{ἡ ἀνάγκη}$ ] for the flesh),<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:12, where Paul is once again giving the church an *opportunity* ('cause'; NRSV) to express some pride in its founder, and chapter 11:12 (*bis*) of the same book. This last reference, in my view, features a Pauline pun ('But I will continue to do what I do, to cut off the pretext ( $\bullet \text{ἡ ἀνάγκη}$ ) of those wishing such ( $\bullet \text{ἡ ἀνάγκη}$ )' In Romans 7:8, sin, as it were, uses the tenth commandment as a pretext to wreak havoc with the 'I'. The second term ( $\circ \text{ἡ ἀνομιμία}$ ) that highlights the evil intent and machinations of 'guerilla *hamartia*' is the one rendered 'wrought' by the NRSV. In Greek it is a compound word appearing approximately 24 times in the NT, and is variously employed by Paul. In fact, apart from the apostle to the Gentiles, only James (1:3) and Peter (4:3) employ the term. Paul uses the verb to denote various productions of virtues and vices, for example, in 1:27; 2:9, the latter, and in 5:3 and 7:18, the former. What is produced here? The subject of  $\circ \text{ἡ ἀνομιμία}$  is the personified inward perversity—'sin,' found in chapter 7 no less than six times, the first of which is in verse 8. It therefore should come as no surprise that its object is 'all manner of lust/every kind of desire', precisely that which is proscribed by the Decalogue.

On 'every kind of desire', Fitzmyer (1993, 467) may be correct, that 'all sorts of possibilities of doing evil' is the meaning intended by Paul, but this seems too broad. In other words, though 'lusts' lead to other sins, in a cause and effect connection, the emphasis falls on the former and not the latter, thus narrowing the purview of evil's expression in the context. Several Bible students have related this verse to the rabbinic belief of the time of a bipolar force within humanity, one aspect of which is evil oriented and the other good. In this fundamental understanding of the human condition there is only one panacea: obedience to Torah (Edwards 1992, 188). Paul will later appear to contradict this notion (e.g., 8:2; cf. 7:6) by replacing Torah (v. 12a) with Spirit (8: 14). Edwards' (1992, 187) illustration is apt: 'Until now the law has been depicted rather like a watch dog which keeps trespassers out of private property. But that is only the half of it. The same law can become a hound dog nipping at the heels of a trespasser and chasing him further *into* forbidden territory.' Edwards also raises the question of the psychological significance of the verse in light of the tendency to gravitate toward that which is forbidden-- the so-called 'reverse psychology' syndrome.<sup>28</sup> He then downplays the idea by rightly pointing out that the pericope itself is obviously theological and not psychological. Cranfield (1975, 350) summarily dismissed this idea as well.<sup>29</sup>

That the passage is highly theological is beyond dispute. But if psychology is essentially about the study of human behaviour, should it come as a surprise that the two disciplines, rightly interpreted and applied, might in fact shed some light on these verses? For instance, in Edwards' example above, one may wonder: why would a person want to trespass on the forbidden territory in the first place? The observation of behavioural patterns across cultures may suggest some kind of a dynamic (psychological/sociological) that is not at variance with any established canonical or theological norm, if one can speak like this in a postmodern context.<sup>30</sup> The final clause in verse 8 is debated. In what sense is/was sin dead without law? At this point the various proposals for the identity of the 'I' jostle for attention. For Dunn (1988, 383), the sentence clearly

<sup>26</sup> Assuming here 1 Tim 5:14 is genuinely Pauline.

<sup>27</sup> The thought is that believers are free from the Mosaic Law. It is the Messianic law (Gal 6:2) that provides the qualification.

<sup>28</sup> The homonymic '*sindrome*' easily suggests itself.

<sup>29</sup> 'We shall not do justice to Paul's thought here, if we settle for a merely psychological explanation . . . .' Looking at the text from both perspectives (i.e., from psychology and theology), should not be seen as a *mere* explanation, provided the task is carried out with care. For attempts in this direction, see Beck (2002) and Theissen (1987).

<sup>30</sup> A strength of the postmodern agenda is its openness to look at texts through various spectacles.

alludes to the period prior to the issuing of the first ever commandment recorded in Genesis 2.<sup>31</sup> Moo (1996, 437), however, expresses doubt that the Genesis narrative in question allows sufficient time for such a development. What Paul had in mind, according to Moo, is the pre-Sinaitic period of Israel's existence. When the sequence of clauses is correlated with the time after the Exodus, Moo does appear to have a point. In addition the 'chiastic pattern' (Moo 1996, 437) below also seems to buttress his case, when viewed in the light of the giving of the law:

'Apart from law'	'When the commandment came'
'sin is <i>dead</i> ' (v.8c) 'I was <i>alive</i> ' (v.9a)	'sin sprang to <i>life</i> again' (v.9b) 'I <i>died</i> ' (v.10a)

Moo (1996, 437) then cautiously concludes, 'while what is narrated in vv. 7-8a may, therefore, have been experienced by Paul personally, what is narrated in these clauses was experienced by him only through his involvement with the history of his people.' Although verse 8c appears incongruous with the autobiographical view, Moo's concession to that position demonstrates once again the difficulty of the passage, and, possibly, his own unease with the Israel view. However, the declaration 'sin is dead apart from the law' best fits a pre-Sinaitic scenario, if only because the tenth commandment is quoted. In this sense *nekra* (dead) will mean something like 'lacking in power', lacking in power, that is, to carry out its evil intention against and through the human personality, whether corporately or individually construed. For the first time in the pericope Paul explicitly mentions *egM* as the battleground of sin (v.9). What is difficult to miss is the strong allusion to the Adamic experience in Eden (Witherington 2004, 184). According to Edwards (1995, 188), 'Adam's fate anticipates the human race to follow . . . and the entire human race . . . is implicated in Adam's fall.' This may fit verse 9a comfortably<sup>32</sup> (*at one time I was alive without the law*).

But while Adam in the account of Genesis was once without law, how does this relate to his descendants? The reference can possibly be to the experience of Israel, as we have seen above, but that is certainly not the 'entire human race,' unless of course we take the 'Israel' position (Moo's suggestion) in some representative way. However one resolves this difficulty (i.e., whether or not the 'I' alludes to Adam or Israel, etc) the growing consensus that *egM* is used in some typical fashion appears more and more attractive. For this awareness most give credit to Kümmel (1974), who is the first in modern times to seriously challenge the autobiographical view. Kümmel's contribution to the debate allowed interpreters to explore other possibilities of understanding verse 9 especially, which Theissen labels 'non-biographical'. However, Kümmel, it would appear, swung the pendulum too far in the opposite direction in failing to see *any* reference at all to Paul in the chapter. Responding to this Theissen (1987, 201) declares, 'anyone who denies to Paul the *ego* in Romans 7 has to bear the burden of proof for this claim. What suggests itself most readily is to think of an "I" that combines *personal* and *typical traits*.' (My emphasis)<sup>33</sup>

But Kümmel (1974a, 214) seems to have softened his position from the hard line fictive 'I' to the more nuanced posture taken by Theissen, for in another place he writes (commenting on Gal 2:19-20): 'Here it is said of the Christians—the "I" does not describe *Paul alone* [my emphasis]—that they are crucified with Christ and are thereby dead to the law.' One can see why 7:9 is seen as fictive, but cannot the other personal references be both typical and experiential at once? Granting the difficulty of

<sup>31</sup> Dunn (1988, 383); the allusion is also recognized by Gundry (1980, 231).

<sup>32</sup>Notwithstanding Moo's disavowal.

<sup>33</sup>Theissen further observes that were it not for 'the [alleged?] contradiction to Philippians 3 . . . and . . . Rom 7:9, probably no one would ever have come up with the idea of considering the "I" fictive' or 'representational' (cf. Russell 1994, 511-527). Kümmel (1974, 121) 'responds,' '*Und zwar findet sich dieser Gebrauch* Röm. 3, 5, 7; 1. Kor. 6, 12, 15, 10, 29f., 11, 31f., 13, 1-3. 11f., 14, 11. 14. 15; [*und*] Gal. 2, 18.'

interpreting verse 9 as autobiographical, we still need to ask if the ‘either/or’ approach to the passage in general and verse 9 in particular is not bankrupt. Only a fresh and complete assessment of the Pauline ‘I’ can, I believe, satisfactorily answer such a question. Our tentative conclusion at this juncture, then, is that the ‘I’ of verse 9a is both typical and personal--not just fictive, but inclusive. But to what extent? Wright (1991, 226-230) has already mentioned Cain as a candidate for inclusion. That suggestion may find support in the language of 9b, particularly *τη ἐρεβ τρανσλατεδ Πσπραυγ το λιεΠ, ἀν ἐζησεν*. since ‘The image suggests that sin is like a beast of prey poised to leap upon its victim’ (Schreiner 1998, 367). Schreiner does not mention Cain at this point, but his reading of *•½¶. Å¼½* as ‘sprang to life’ is definitely reminiscent of Genesis 4:6ff where ‘sin’ like ‘a beast of prey’ (Gesenius 1949, 755), ‘a lion crouching at the door—lethal’ (Walke 2001, 103), or demon (Walton 2001, 264), is ready to overpower Cain (cf. Rom 6:14).

Käsemann (1980, 192) seems to speak for everyone who wrestles with the passage when he says that much insight may be lost ‘if the general “I” style of confessional speech is allowed to remain so formal that a vague reference to every man is seen’. But he appears to have taken himself too seriously by unnecessarily restricting the ‘I’ to Adam.<sup>34</sup> I believe it is better, like Dunn (1988, 381), to see Adam in the ‘I’ but only in an allusive sense. However, Käsemann may be correct, I think, in inveighing against the ‘I’ = every man position.<sup>35</sup> The only plausible options, then, would be those which attempt to correlate the events (?) implied in ‘and I was once alive apart from the law, but with the coming of the law sin sprang to life and I died; vv.9-10a’, with some historical reference in which ‘law/command’ figures prominently.<sup>36</sup> But if the ‘I’ in the passage is typical, with possible allusions to Adam and/or Israel, in what sense is it personal? To the many interpreters before Kümmel (1929) this question would have been quite strange. But it is the ‘strangeness’ of verse 9, among other things, that caused Kümmel to doubt any authorial self-reference. The difficulty is felt by all.

We now explore some suggestions as to how verse 9 may fit Paul’s profile. Alford (1861, 380) identifies the period when Paul was ‘alive without the law’ as ‘*all that time, be it mere childhood or much more, before the law began its work within him--before the deeper energies of his moral nature were aroused*’ (his italics). Denny’s (1912, 640) position is this: ‘There is not really a period in life to which one can look back as the happy time when he had no conscience.’ Bruce (1985, 139) and his former student, Gundry (1980, 228-245), speculate that Paul is referring to his ‘ante-pubertal’ years, especially those prior to his *bar mitzvah*.<sup>37</sup> Though Murray (1968, 250) refuses to identify a period with any pinpoint accuracy, he nevertheless shares his own brand of speculation: ‘[Paul] is speaking of the unperturbed, self-complacent, self-righteous life which he once lived before the turbulent motions and conviction of sin, described in the two preceding verses, overtook him . . . the coming of the commandment is *undoubtedly* the coming home to his consciousness and the registration in consciousness by which sin took occasion to work in him.’<sup>38</sup> This quotation not only seeks to explain verse 9a, but 9b as well (but with the coming of the commandment sin sprang to life). The compound *•½¶. Å¼½* (sprang to life/rise) seems to support Murray’s argument once we do not exclude Paul from the purview of possibilities. But how does one account for the fact that elsewhere *anastasis* (rising) is a synonym of *anastazM* (rise; Louw and Nida 1988, 2:262)? Could the verse somehow be a reference to another ‘stage’

<sup>34</sup> Says he (1980, 196): ‘We do not have an autobiographical reminiscence [here]. . . . In the full sense only Adam lived before the commandment was given. Only for him was the coming of the divine will in the commandment an occasion for sin as he yielded covetously to sin and therefore “died”. . . . There is nothing in the passage which does not fit Adam, and everything fits Adam alone.’ But since the *ἐντολή* is positively identified as part of the Decalogue, how can ‘everything’ fit Adam alone?

<sup>35</sup> This was articulated this way by Armstrong (1983, 49): ‘When Paul uses the pronoun “I” in this instance, he is not referring to himself personally. . . but . . . unredeemed mankind.’

<sup>36</sup> Stott (1994, 203) speaks of four distinct stages.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce believes that 7:14-25 refers to Paul’s post-conversion experience; for Das (2007, 232), the section (including 7-13) deals with the experience of a God-fearing Gentile.

<sup>38</sup> Emphasis mine.

in the writer's experience? If so, what is this stage? To ask these questions is, perhaps, to assume too much concerning the force of the prefix *ana-*. If it has any significance at all, it perhaps conveys the perfective idea of 'springs to life' (Bauer *et al.*, 53; Cranfield 1975, 351-352) or 'begins operation' (Louw and Nida 1988, 2:511).<sup>39</sup>

Like Murray, Harrison (1976, 80) argues that the thought of verse 9 must be taken in a relative sense, since there was no period in Paul's pre-conversion life that was 'unrelated to the law,' (having being a Pharisee's son [Acts 23:6] and a Pharisee himself [Acts 26:5]). So what does he mean by 'once I was alive apart from law' (NIV)? According to Harrison (1976, 80): 'He seems to mean . . . that there was a time he was living in a state of blissful indifference to the intensely searching demands that the law made on the inner man. He was careless and self-deceived as to his own righteousness. This state is reflected in Philippians 3:6 where he speaks of his pre-conversion days when he was "faultless" with respect to legalistic righteousness.' In this reckoning, 'and I died' (v.10a) is to be understood subjectively in the sense of a coming to an end of Paul's intellectual struggle, particularly with reference to Jesus of Nazareth and the Messianic claims his followers made about him. The dying, then, was more like 'the sentence of death' (so Harrison) representing the 'hopelessness and despair' which is to be contrasted with the almost smug complacency that characterized the young Pharisee (Harrison 1976, 80).<sup>40</sup> This is yet another attempt at making sense of an abbreviated account of a crucial stage (or possible stages) in Paul's life, a stage that also serves to dramatize<sup>41</sup> that which is typical of humanity (Adam/Israel/Every man?) when faced with the true character of the law's demands. To press to find a definitive answer to the question of what exactly is the writer's experience behind his deliberately terse language is to ignore his overall purpose (the 'forest') to concentrate, so to speak, on a forbidden tree. Whatever we make of verse 9-10a, the contrastive I . . . I is of some significance in that it serves to highlight even further a popular biblical merism (life/death).<sup>42</sup>

Verse 10b seems to complicate matters even more by its mention of 'the command' that is in one sense associated with 'life' and in another, 'death'. What is this commandment? And in what sense(s) is it related to these diametrically opposite experiences? Questions like these have engaged the minds of some of the best interpreters for nearly two millennia, and like many other items in the passage, no altogether satisfactory answers have been given. There is, however, some agreement that Paul is alluding to Leviticus 18:5.<sup>43</sup> He will quote the verse in 10:5. It also appears in an earlier epistle, (Gal 3:12), which has a lot in common with Romans. According to Theissen (1987, 209), verse 10 is possibly referring to, 'the nomist expectation that the law can confer life.' But what might this mean? Life in the sense of salvation, or longevity of life with a qualitative dimension? Moo (1993, 311; 1996, 439) defends the former view. To him the law was intended to give eternal life once it was obeyed perfectly. Here he might want us to distinguish between purpose and result. The fact that no one has ever met this theoretical possibility should not let us lose sight of the fact that the original purpose of Lev 18:5 is salvific in its fullest sense.

Moo's position is difficult to disprove, precisely because authorial intention is not always easy to determine with any confidence.<sup>44</sup> But there is nothing in either the context of Leviticus or Romans 7:10 that demands such an understanding. It is better, in my view, to limit the meaning of 'life' to something

<sup>39</sup>It is located here under a special semantic domain. Either domain may be supportive of Murray's historical reconstruction, though, in the opinion of some, such autobiographical reconstruction is implausible and unnecessary.

<sup>40</sup>Witmer (1983, 446) also locates 'I was alive' during Paul's youth (his childhood even) and the coming of the commandment at the stage where the full impact of God's law was felt resulting in 'the dawning of the significance of the commandment ("Do not covet") on Paul's mind and heart before his conversion.'

<sup>41</sup>*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (1994, 216).

<sup>42</sup>E.g., 6: 23; 8:13. Cf. the Deuteronomy's (chapt. 28) blessings and curses.

<sup>43</sup>So, representatively, the apparatus of Aland *et al.* (1994, 546).

<sup>44</sup>Notwithstanding Hirsch (1967, especially 164-244).

other than salvation, since Paul's strenuous argument elsewhere is that righteousness, and the saving act of God of which it is a part, is 'apart from law'; 3:21a). And if the gospel that Paul expounds and defends in this epistle is to be found in the Hebrew Bible (3:21b), then one could not expect any commandment to be given for eternal life.<sup>45</sup> This kind of life is *always* a divine gift (6:23).<sup>46</sup> In essential disagreement with this perspective is Feinberg (1969, 110) who writes: 'The promise of life which accompanied the law ("If a man do, he shall live by them") was genuine, but there was no enablement provided to keep the law (Rom 8:3).' But even with this qualification, Feinberg still goes on to declare, 'obedience would have brought life physically and *spiritually*, temporally and *eternally*.' However, as was pointed out above, 'life' in verse 10 should not be given its pregnant sense. I think an examination of its antonym supports this interpretation. In this regard, Black's study (1984, 418-419) is quite useful. After having surveyed the Jewish and Hellenistic thought world with reference to 'death', Black comes up with the following taxonomy:

*Death as Completion*

- a. Part of the natural order
- b. The payment of an account owed to God or payment made through atoning sacrifice (principally Semitic)
- c. Release from suffering
- d. An occasion for hope or witness (Semitic) or heroism and glory (Hellenic)
- e. The incentive for ethical behaviour and the fulfillment of a righteous life

*Death as Depletion*

- f. A terrible thing to be feared
- g. The loss of the richness of life
- h. An intrusion into the creator's design . . . .
- i. A tyrannous, cosmological power
- j. Something associated with sin: either<sup>47</sup> derived from, or finishing transgression.

The above 'conceptual laws,' suggests Black, provides a useful framework within which to come to grips with 'death' and its cognates in chapter 7. In verse 10, I believe that Paul is viewing 'death as depletion' in the specific sense of loss of the 'richness of life' (g.).<sup>48</sup> Therefore, what Paul is saying in verse 10b is that the commandment (or better, his failure to live up to it) resulted in a miserable existence. This is possibly what Paul means by 'death' in this context. The opposite thought, then, has to do with the kind of life which is akin to that mentioned in John 10:10b, without, of course, the overtones of the eschatological dimension.<sup>49</sup> Verse 11 continues to reveal the destructive effect sin had in the life of Paul. Again the parallel between Genesis 3 and the author's experience is drawn out. This is confirmed by the construction  $\bullet\frac{3}{4} \text{ } \grave{\text{A}} \text{ } \grave{\text{A}} \text{ } \acute{\text{A}} \text{ } \frac{1}{2} \text{ } \mu$  (it deceived me), which first appears in Genesis 3:13 (LXX).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Note the attributive article in 'the one (meant) for life' (Robertson and Davis 1977, 200); Robertson (1934, 539) plausibly suggests that *moi* (v. 10a) should be taken as a dative of disadvantage.

<sup>46</sup> See also the apostle's illustration of this truth in chapter 4 of the epistle. But if *z* $\mathcal{M}$ , according to Turner (1980, 487), is invariably salvation in the NT, then my understanding of 7:10 is definitely wrongheaded. However, *z* $\mathcal{M}$  can mean ordinary life (Acts 17:5; Phil. 1:20; Moulton 1977, 43).

<sup>47</sup> The above schema, according to Black, can also be expressed biologically, mythologically, and metaphorically.

<sup>48</sup> This applies to both the verb (10a) and the noun (10b). Black's ii.c appears to contradict his earlier affirmation: 'For the ancient Israelites death was not viewed as an absurd, inimical intruder but was accepted as a constituent of an orderly, supervised creation' (414). He does, however, point out that in 'no historical stage or community of ancient Judaism was there a single, uniform definition of death or attitude towards it' (416).

<sup>49</sup> *z* $\mathcal{M}$  in this sense can hardly be so divided. But if that were possible, it is the 'already' dimension (minus spirit?) to which the 'commandment unto life' pointed.

<sup>50</sup> Actually the LXX lacks the prefix.

In an earlier epistle, this compound verb is also used (2 Cor 11:3), and in a later one it appears in a passive form (was deceived; I Tim 2:14). The term does appear, then, to be a crucial one for Paul. Like Adam and Eve<sup>51</sup> in the Genesis narrative, the apostle was both deceived and slain by sin. Again the concept of death in this verse should be understood in terms of ‘depletion’ as above. In contrast to the demonic-like character of sin (Black 1973, 98), described especially in verses 8 and 11, the law is holy. If sin has taken on diabolical qualities in this passage, then the law is divine. We must never forget that Paul’s primary purpose here is the vindication of the law. So far he has said some things about *nomos* (law) that appear to place it in a bad light. For example, in 5:20 law ‘increases’ sin, in 7:4 it is that to which the Roman believers died, and, as a result, were freed (7:6; cf. 6:14). Statements like these beg for clarification and in 7:7 Paul set about this task. In calling the law holy in verse 12 is clearly the climax of his *apologia*. But in what sense is the law holy? So far Paul has used this adjective in relation to the OT writings (1:2), the believers at Rome (1:7) and with the divine Spirit (5:5). Within the aforementioned Scriptures (1:2), particularly in the book of Isaiah, ‘holy’ is a term that applies to God in his special relationship to his people (e.g., Isa 6:1ff). This is its benchmark employment. All other uses take their cue from this. The law, then, is holy because it is the expression of the holy divine will (cf. 2:18). It is righteous and good and spiritual for the same reason (cf. v.14; 3:26).

Again we draw attention to the strange triangle Paul is discussing in this passage: the law that is holy, sin which is not, and the ‘I’ which, as we shall see, is pulled in both directions. But if the law is holy, righteous and good and was not responsible for Paul’s moral failure, what is it then that is responsible for his ‘death’? And is not there a certain relation between law and death in Paul (e.g., ‘The soul who sins shall die’)? Paul’s own question is much sharper and to the point: ‘Did that which is wholesome become in my experience the basis on which quality life was forfeited? (v.13).<sup>52</sup> Paul’s stereotypical ‘outburst’ is even stronger: ‘No way!’ Following this, Paul cogently explains that the real culprit is ‘sin’, the utterly unwholesome member of the aforementioned triad. It is sin that wrought death in him, and in so doing demonstrated its true colours, in a manner of speaking. Brunner’s (1959, 61) summary is apt: ‘That [the bringing of death] is not the fault of the law itself, but of its connection with sin. And in this way, too, the Law fulfils a divine mission: it makes sin manifest, it makes it break out, it brings it to terrible maturity and thus makes the cure possible. For it creates the knowledge of sin; without the knowledge of sin there is also no justifying faith. In that the Law is able to do just this in its deadly effect, it shows once again that in origin it is God’s law and therefore holy, just and good. ‘This now sets the stage for our reading of the next major pericope.

### **Romans 7:14-25. Whose Story?**

The apostle will add one final adjective to his eulogy and apology of the law: spiritual. This appears in verse 14,<sup>53</sup> the verse in which Paul switches to the present tense. P. Althaus (1996; cited in Käsemann 1980, 198) views the previous adjectives used in verse 12 as part of Paul’s rhetorical strategy. This observation, I believe, is correct. I also think that the descriptive lexeme ‘spiritual’ should be added to this pleonastic presentation, but it was skillfully delayed to set up the new contrast between the law, the object of Paul’s defense, and the ‘I’, the captive of sin.<sup>54</sup> The identity of the ‘I’ is once again called into question, precisely because of the strong statement of verse 14b regarding its status in relation to sin. We have already accepted the position of people like Theissen that *egō* in some way refers to Paul, despite its rhetorical and allusive function in the passage. But does the passage refer to the unregenerate or regenerate Paul? The question is regarded as crucial, not only to an understanding of Paul’s anthropology,

<sup>51</sup>While Paul’s ‘deception’ was similar to that of Eve (cf. 2 Cor 11:3), it does not follow that Paul’s ‘I’ includes Eve, as Dunn (1988a, 385) suggests. He is, however, right in stressing the paradoxical role of the law in this connection. Elsewhere ‘the “I” is an existential self-identification with Adam . . . humankind (cf. 2 *Baruch* 54. 19)’ (Dunn 1998, 99).

<sup>52</sup>This is my periphrastic rendition.

<sup>53</sup>Moo (1996, 452), following Morris (1988), does not take the verse as the beginning of a new section, but as part of vv. 14-25, since, like v.7, it contains a question.

<sup>54</sup>‘The antithesis is formulated with ἐγώ (“I”) in the emphatic position, contrasting with the “we”’ (Jewett 2007, 461).

but his perspective of the nature of spiritual formation (Martin 1981). In addition, answering the question may provide meaningful insight into Paul's perception of the addressees, as well as his own perception of self (Vorster 1990, 107).<sup>55</sup> According to Moo (1996, 446-447), those favouring the regenerate position more or less argue that:

1. *EgM* must refer to Paul himself, and the shift from the past tenses of vv. 7-13 to the present tenses of vv. 14-15 can be explained only if Paul is describing in these latter verses his present experience as a Christian.
2. Only the regenerate truly "delight in God's law" (v.22), seeks to obey it (vv. 15-20), and "serve" it (v.25); the unregenerate do not "seek after God" (3:11), and cannot "submit to the law of God" (8:7).
3. Whereas the mind of people outside Christ is universally presented by Paul as opposed to God and his will (cf. Rom. 1:28; Eph. 4:17; Col. 2:28; I Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 2:15), the mind of *egM* "serves the law of God" (vv. 22, 25).
4. *EgM* must be a Christian because only a Christian possesses the "inner person" (cf. Paul's only other two uses of the phrase in 2 Cor4:16; Eph. 3:16).
5. The passage concludes, after Paul's mention of the deliverance wrought by God in Christ, with a reiteration of the divided state of the *egM* (vv. 24-25).
6. This shows that the division and struggle of the *egM* that Paul depicts in these verses is that of the person already saved by God in Christ.

Moo in fact argues for the contrary position and his detailed exposition of verses 14-25 seeks to put that position on a firm exegetical footing. But before he does so, he also provides the 'most important reasons' why he and others embrace the view that the verses under scrutiny depict an unregenerate person. The reasons are as follows:

1. The strong connection of *egM* with "the flesh" (vv. 14, 18, and 25) suggests that Paul is elaborating on the unregenerate condition mentioned in 7:5: being "in the flesh."
2. *EgM* throughout this passage struggles "on his/her own" (cf. "I myself" in v.25), without the aid of the Holy Spirit.
3. *EgM* is "under the power of sin" (v. 14b), a state from which every believer is released (6:2, 6, 11, 18-22).
4. As the unsuccessful struggle of vv. 15-20 shows, *egM* is a "prisoner of the law of sin" (v.23). Yet Rom. 8:2 proclaims that believers have been set free from this same "law of sin and death."
5. While Paul makes clear that believers will continue to struggle with sin (cf. e.g., 6; 12-13; 13:12-14; Gal 5:17), what is depicted in 7:14-25 is not just a struggle with sin but a defeat by sin. This is a more negative view of the Christian life than can be accommodated within Paul's theology.

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<sup>55</sup>For Vorster such insight can best be had through application of certain 'conversational' and rhetorical tools to the letter.

6. The *egM* in these verses struggles with the need to obey the Mosaic Law; yet Paul has already proclaimed the release of the believer from the dictates of the law (6:17; 7-4-6).<sup>56</sup>

This last point in particular has led some to take a mediating position. Stott (1994, 208-209), for example, draws attention to the fact that mention of the Spirit is virtually absent from the chapter, with only one reference in verse 6. This leads Stott to approach the chapter from the perspective of *Heilsgeschichte* ('salvation history'), enabling him to posit that Paul's use of the 'I' is likely the depiction of an Old Testament believer. A representative of such a believer could be any Israelite living under the law up until the time of Jesus' death. This would take in a John the Baptist, for instance, or any of the disciples.<sup>57</sup> A third way to understand the 'I' in these verses is to posit that Paul has in mind human beings in general (Christian or not). This is how Kümmel (1974a, 178) and others understand the entire chapter. Verse 14, for instance, is key to Kümmel's understanding of the universal character of sin.<sup>58</sup> The difficulty of identifying the 'I' in this passage has elicited the following confession from a grammarian (Wallace 1996, 532 n. 52): 'I have struggled with this text for many years (in more ways than one!), and have held to three different views. My *present* view is that the apostle is speaking as universal man and is describing the experience of anyone who attempts to please God by submitting the flesh to the law. By application, this could be true of an unbeliever or a believer.'

But what about the shift from past to present tenses? Wallace suggests (in keeping with his 'present' understanding) that the tenses in 14-25 are gnomic. Harrison (1976, 84-85) defends a similar position. Paul, according to him, deliberately writes in such a way as to 'demonstrate what would indeed be the situation if one is faced with the demands of the law and the power of sin in his life were to attempt to solve his problem independently of Christ and the enablement of the Spirit.' Harrison sees in the book of Ecclesiastes an apt parallel to his position, in that 'the writer knows God . . . but purposely and deliberately views life from the standpoint of the natural man in order to expose it as vanity, empty of lasting value.' In Ecclesiastes 3:17-4:8, we read:

I said in my heart God will judge the righteous and the wicked. . . . I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beast. . . . Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. . . . And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. . . . Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbour. . . . Again, I saw vanity under the sun: a person who has no one, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself pleasure?" (RSV).

Dodd (1999, 226), on the other hand, expresses the view that the quasi-generic identification of the letter itself goes a far way in explicating Paul's 'I' in chapter 7, particularly verses 14-25. As early as 3:6-7, according to Dodd, one discovers a 'revealing clue' to the apostle's rhetoric. Immediately after 'may it never be!' a diatribal ejaculatory phrase, we have the conjunction of a stylistic 'I' piece. A similar combination is to be found in Gal 2:17-18. This raises the possibility that both these texts owe their origin to the dialogical/diatribal form of argumentation, which is usually characterized by short statements, conversational tone, personification and rhetorical interrogatives, et cetera. Both Galatians 2:18 and Romans 3:7 are responses to rhetorical

<sup>56</sup>This is the view of Manson (1962, 946) and, more recently, Schreiner (1998, 385), who presents the following structure in defense: [A] Life under the Law: Unregenerate . . . (7:5); [B] Life in the Spirit: Regenerate . . . (7:6); [A'] Life under the Law . . . (7:7-25); [B'] Life in the Spirit . . . (8:1-17). Stuhlmacher (1994, 116) has a similar scheme.

<sup>57</sup>This is really a variant of the 'regenerate' position. Stott also cites a variant of the opposite view, which states that the 'I' in question is a person under the Spirit's conviction who struggles to keep the law in his/her own strength.

<sup>58</sup>Kümmel (1974a, 181) is so certain that the 'I' represents every man that his problem with the passage lies elsewhere. Thus he probes, 'obviously it can be asked . . . how Paul can speak of man's responsibility before God when man yet as flesh is sold under sin and cannot go further than the cry' of 7:24'

questions. Assuming that ‘Paul creates a composite character whom he labels [*egM*],’<sup>59</sup> the aspectual shift in 7:14 becomes a crucial clue for Dodd (1999, 226) that we have in this pericope an adaptation of the diatribe begun in 7:7. Another important element of the diatribal style found in the passage is the personification of the abstract, so that Fitzmyer (1993, 465) could write: ‘In this passage Paul once again personifies sin and the law and treats them as actors on the stage of human history’. All this enables Paul to express theologically the ‘impersonal’ struggle among the law, sin and ‘I’, with the ‘I’ as a virtual third literary character (Dodd 1999, 229).

Nevertheless, these three ‘protagonists’ in Paul’s script do not only serve as ‘rhetorical devices since they have literal referents’ as well. The law can refer concretely to the tenth commandment, sin, the experience of a Jewish and/or Christian believer and the ‘I,’ according to Dodd (1999, 230), ‘a composite of various elements which defy a single identification.’<sup>60</sup> For Dodd (1999, 230-231), this composite ‘I’ functions in two ways: (1) as part of Paul’s defense strategy of the law (7:7-13; cf. Adeyemi 2006a; and especially Adeyemi 2007, 55-57), and (2) as ‘a showcase for the liberating power of Christ’. These two sections are clearly marked by the tenses, along with the stylistic indicator, ‘For we know that.’

As we examine verse 14 more closely, what becomes readily apparent is the stark contrast between the law and ‘I’ with the ‘spirituality’ of the former dwarfing the latter in its ‘carnality’. The truth concerning the law was evidently common knowledge among writer and addressees. But the carnal character of the ‘I’ was, it appears, a revelation. It is the ‘I’ in this light that is the main stumbling block of the ‘regenerate’ view. The problem is compounded by the perfect tense participle ‘sold’ and its complement (cf. 1 Kings 21: 25; Schlatter 1995, 164). Unless Paul is contradicting himself, says Achtemeier (1985, 121) ‘still a slave of sin’ cannot be a meaningful reference to him, especially in light of 6:6, 7, 11, 17, 18, 22 and 7:6. Here Achtemeier agrees with Räisänen<sup>61</sup> (1986, 109: ‘it is hardly necessary to argue once more . . . that the famous . . . Rom 7:14-25 is not intended by Paul as a description of the Christian.’) and Wright (2002, 551-555). But as we have seen above, a few interpreters are returning to the view of Luther (1972, 328-329; cf. Martin 1989, 84) that 7:14b contains the words of a believer, ‘for it is characteristic of a spiritual and wise man to know that he is carnal and displeasing to himself.’ (Cf. Luther’s [1954]: ‘No one regards himself as a miserable man who is not spiritual.’)

But what is the nature of the ‘carnality’ predicated of the ‘I’? An exploration of this question may shed some light on the identification of the ‘I’ as well. Answering the question concerning the carnality of the ‘I’ means in part determining the semantic value of ‘flesh’ (σάρκινός) within the sentence. The problem is slightly compounded by the fact that the majority of manuscripts have σαρκικός (fleshly?) instead of its above synonym. However, the external evidence and other factors seem overwhelmingly in favour of σάρκινός. But if we were to adopt the inferior reading, would it make any material difference to the meaning in context? In a brief examination of the two terms, M.C. Parsons (1988, 151-152) points out that older grammarians preferred the meaning ‘made of flesh’ for σάρκινός. σαρκικός on the other hand bore the sense ‘characteristic of, or determined by.’ While there are some lexicographers who would prefer to maintain this distinction (e.g., Trench 1880, 270), Parsons says that the trend nowadays is towards seeing the words as interchangeable terms within the Pauline corpus.<sup>62</sup> This is also how Thiselton (2000, 288) treats the terms in the context of I Cor 3:1. He translates σάρκινός as ‘people moved entirely by human drives.’ So what Paul is asserting concerning ‘I’ is its antithetical character to the law. The succeeding verses will elaborate on the thought of verse 14b further.

<sup>59</sup>While this “I” does not refer straightforwardly to Paul, it incorporates his experience’ (Dodd, 1999, 226).

<sup>60</sup>This composite ‘I’ incorporates elements of the Adam story, as well as the Jewish/Christian experience.

<sup>61</sup>He believes that Paul’s statement about the law (v.14) ‘stands indeed in an irreconcilable contradiction’ (45) to his assessment elsewhere, notably in 2 Cor 3.

<sup>62</sup>The burden of Parson’s article is to dispute the claim of BAGD that the aforementioned distinctions are not observed in the manuscript tradition, a claim, he believes, that is contradicted by a study of F and G.

In verses 15-25 the reader senses a measure of the confusion predicated of the 'I' throughout. For example, verse 15 is almost certainly the confession of one who becomes disoriented by virtue of the intense and continual inward struggle. Thus 'I do not approve<sup>63</sup> what I am doing'. Again we come across another pair of verbs that pose a challenge to the interpreter as to the precise semantic value, if ever such was intended.  $\xi\pm\ddot{A}\mu\acute{A}\beta-\mu\iota\gamma\acute{\iota}\pm^1$ , the first of the two, has already appeared in the chapter with the sense of 'produce' (v. 8). Does it have the same meaning in verse 15? This is tentatively suggested by Moo (1996, 455), while Dunn (1988a, 389), with the same tentativeness, says it 'probably has the vaguer sense "do", rather than the more specific "produce, create."' Paul continues, 'for not that I will, this I do [ $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$ ]; but what I hate, this I practice [ $\pi\omega\iota\bar{\omega}$ ].' Here we are confronted with two other verbs denoting the action of 'I' in the face of the struggle with sin, 'do' and 'practice' (Darby 1929). If  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  is vague, then its synonyms,  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$  and  $\pi\omega\iota\bar{\omega}$ , are perhaps even more so, within the context. There may be some subtle stylistic distinctions that are intended, but so far efforts to recover them have largely been unsuccessful (Louw and Nida 1988, 2: 512 n. 2).

Although Moo (1996, 455) recognizes this fact, he nevertheless translates  $\pi\omega\iota\bar{\omega}$  as 'do,'  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$  as 'practise,' and  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  as 'produce.' Citing other scholars, he points out that  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  is sometimes understood to lay stress on the outcome of an action as against the more 'colorless'  $\pi\omega\iota\bar{\omega}$ . When it comes on to  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$  and  $\pi\omega\iota\bar{\omega}$  it is thought that the former underlines the 'habitual nature of what is done.' Moo (1996, 455 n. 40) further points out that in passages like 1 Thess 4: 10-11; 1 Cor 5:2-3; Phil 2: 22, 13; and Rom 1: 27-28, 32; 2:3; 13:4, it is virtually impossible to distinguish their senses, because of the considerable overlap among them. Perhaps it is best to take the three terms 'in an all-embracing sense to cover all action of the "I",' as Dunn (1988, 389) suggests. It is precisely at this point that Black (1973, 99), Dunn (1988, 389), Fitzmyer (1993, 474) and Moo (1996, 457 n. 46) introduce a few important parallels, namely, those from Ovid and Epictetus. The relevant lines from Ovid read, '[S]ome strange power holds me down against my will. Desire persuades me one way, reason another. I see the better and approve it, but I follow the worst' (LCL 1916, 343; cited by Theissen 1987, 217), and that from Epictetus are translated, 'Every error involves a contradiction. For since he who is in error does not wish to err, but to be right, it is clear that he is not doing what he wishes' (LCL 1928, 423).

But none of the above quotations constitutes a genuine parallel as far as Huggins (1992, 153-161) is concerned. Why is this so? Because they all raise the issue of tension in man 'from a markedly *anthropocentric* perspective. . . . Paul, in contrast, addresses the entire problem from a markedly *theocentric* [his italics] and covenantal perspective'. This perspective is closely tied to the conviction that the divine will expressed in the law denotes strict obedience on the part of the 'I' it addresses (Huggins 1992, 160). Huggins' main contribution, in my opinion, is his careful examination of the various contexts in which the parallels have appeared. This enables him to make a sharper comparison than would otherwise have been possible. Following this he concludes that the above parallels are virtually meaningless in understanding Paul in Romans 7. That may be so. However, I believe there is a sense in which one could still accept the lines from Ovid as parallels to 7:15, without compromising the meaning of the canonical text. For instance, one could accept the correspondence in form though not in function, notwithstanding the criticism that such acceptance would be lacking in significance where the hermeneutical process is concerned. What the parallels reveal is the fundamental human struggle against the backdrop of some agreed upon standard. In the case of the 'I' in Romans, the unyielding standard is the Torah. The difference, then, is not of kind but degree.

Understood in this way we can somewhat agree with Huggins, while at the same time register our disagreement with his false disjunction. It appears then that Ovid and all those who have uttered a semblance

<sup>63</sup> Burdick (1974, 161; cf. Silva 1980, 184-207) concludes that the meaning of *gimMkMs* inconclusive here.

of what is expressed in Romans 7:15, would, if given the chance, say like Paul: *For I do not know what I am doing; what I mean is this: what I desire I do not practise, but what I detest I do* (cf. Black 1973, 100). Huggins, I believe, has correctly observed that the parallels do not reflect the depth of moral conflict expressed in the verse. However, I think he overstated his case by trivializing the conflicts of the non-canonical writers in not recognizing theirs to have any theological orientation and significance. This, in my view, tacitly denies them an important component of their humanity—the *imago divinitas*. In fact, without this vital link they would have no moral struggle, and there would be no verbal expressions of such struggle, however superficial. That is why I think it is important to extrapolate from Romans 2 the presence of a universal ‘Mesographic law,’<sup>64</sup> against which backdrop the aforementioned parallels and others can be properly gauged.

If I am correct, it should follow that a better approach to evaluating parallels would be to determine their proximity to this or that proposition. Another service that Huggins has rendered in this regard is to demonstrate how far the respective extra-canonical parallels are from the biblical ones; so wide is the gap between them that one *cannot* meaningfully speak of parallels. Others have been content only to speak of points of contact, leaving it up to the reader to draw his/her conclusion as to the degree to which a desired parallel is illuminated. Perhaps another contribution of Huggins is his boldness in joining the chorus of ‘watchmen’ who seek to warn of the dangers of what Sandmel (1962) dubbed ‘Parallelomania’ (cf. Sanders 1977, 42-44; Boring *et al.*, 1995, 16-17). Perhaps bolder still is Boring, who, fully cognizant of the pitfalls of ‘parallelomania’ and the impressionistic value of citations *qua* citations (i.e. without the benefit of their respective contexts and individual *Sitz im Leben*), still provides a highly suggestive assembly of non-Jewish pieces like the following: ‘[T]he eyes love the enjoyment that can be seen outside [of wives]. . . men too are always lusting after what they are not permitted to see [Euripides] . . . We are rebels against restriction—in love with the illicit (Ovid)’.

We have already noted some of the differences that caused Huggins to reject these parallels out of hand. Before we move on, a couple more must be mentioned. Dunn (1988, 1: 389) further points out that Epictetus’ (LCL 1928, 422) ‘he is not doing what he wishes, and what he does not want that he does’, while having formal correspondence with Romans, differs in the resolution of the problem. For example, Epictetus (1928, 423) says: ‘Now every rational soul is by nature offended by contradiction . . . . He, then, who can show to each man the contradiction which causes him to err . . . is strong in argument. . . . For as soon as anyone shows a man this, he will of his own abandon what he is doing.’ What is lacking here, according to Dunn (1988, 1: 389), is the ‘sharpness of the existential frustration which comes to increasingly anguished expression as the passage continues.’ As we shall see later, there is at least one common thread running through all these extra-canonical Jewish and Hellenistic parallels: what may be called the common clay of humanity and its weakness in the face of the divine demand. This is accented in a much greater way in the rest of the pericope (vv. 17-18).

Moving on to verse 17a it appears that Paul has lost his focus with the phrase ‘But now it is no longer I doing it’, in making an excuse for the poor performance of the ‘I’. But this is not the case. What the apostle is doing is to identify precisely the centre of weakness from which springs the I’s miserable failure.<sup>65</sup> Instead of evading responsibility, Paul hastily informs that ‘the sin inside of me’ (v.17b) is the source of the problem; thus the further clarification and confession in verse 18a, ‘I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature’<sup>66</sup> (NIV). This appears to be at the very heart of the problem. If we recall and adapt the bold language of 5:21a of sin’s despotic career, then the ‘sin living in me’ (v. 17a; NIV) depicts a place in which and from

<sup>64</sup>What Lewis and Demarest (1996, 1: 95) call ‘the implanted law.’ Cf. Segal (2003, 166), who mentions the ‘seven commandments which the rabbis assumed were given to all humanity before Moses.’

<sup>65</sup> ‘Now the split that is portrayed in vss. 15-20 should also be made clear: the object of “willing” is “life” . . . the result of “doing” is “death”’ (Bultmann 1960, 183).

<sup>66</sup>This term is often used as the epitome of ‘weakness, the distinctive mark of the mortal, [which] arises only according to nature’ (Philo LCL, 5: 237; cf. Davis 1994, 3). The NIV (and others like it) is ‘translated incorrectly’, according to Grieb (2002, 75). Following Keck (1999, 66-75), she prefers, ‘For I know that *the good* does not dwell within me’; the ‘good’ being a possible reference to the law (7:12). Either translation supports Paul’s weakness language at this point.

which the tyrannical monarch engages and crushes everything that opposes him.<sup>67</sup> Paul had previously identified 'sin' as the real culprit as he sought to exonerate the law. What appears new here is his locating sin within the 'I' (cf. 'The evil impulse is at first like a passer-by, then a lodger, and finally like the master of the house' [Beier 1968, 6]). The Apostle then summarizes the point he just made<sup>68</sup> by observing an operative principle that was no doubt applicable, at least, to his original auditors: 'I discover, therefore, this principle that in my resolve to do good, evil is at hand' (v.21).

I have rendered *nomos* in this verse as 'principle' instead of 'law' (i.e. the Mosaic code) as Dunn has argued. Crucial for Dunn is the thought that the main burden of 7:7-25 is the defense of the Torah, which, according to him, is synthesized in verse 21. Support for this is seen in the correspondence between two critical verses: 10 and 21. What is expressed in verse 10, according to Dunn (1988, 392), is 'the frustrated goal of the law.' Verse 21 goes a step further in adding the relative impotence of the 'I'. 'But in both cases what is in view is the harsh discovery through personal experience of how the law, which should be for life and should promote the good, actually helps bring about the opposite' (Dunn 1988, 392).

Dunn (1988, 392-393) goes on to make the astounding claim that all occurrences of *nomos* in the previous sections refer only to the Torah. He even goes as far as to argue that in chapter 8:2 the meaning of 'law' is related to the Torah in both instances. There he draws attention to the strong link between the Torah, the Spirit and life established in chapters 7. For example, 7:14 (the law and the Spirit) and 7:10 (the law and life). Against this background, Dunn (1988, 416) understands the phrase 'the principle of the Spirit of life' as 'little more than a compact summary of earlier verses'. Perhaps Dunn should be commended for his consistent line of interpretation in regard to 'law' in the book of Romans. However, I feel that what he has managed to do is to sacrifice Pauline subtlety for his own neatness and consistency. Admittedly, chapters 5-8 have a difficult set of 'law' occurrences in an already challenging epistle. But I believe that Dunn's reductionist understanding of 'law' in these chapters obscures rather than sheds light on them. Dunn (1988, 393) does admit, however, that if Paul meant something like 'principle' or 'pattern' it would be difficult for him to find a suitable term apart from *nomos*.

A better approach, we believe, is taken by Katoppo (1991, 420-426), who surveys the way *nomos* is used throughout the book. The following is a summary of his investigation. The first two occurrences of *nomos* in Romans (2:12, 13a) are definite references to the Mosaic Law, according to Katoppo.<sup>69</sup> The third at 2:13b is a possible reference to the divine will in a general sense (Katoppo 1991, 422-423). 'Of the four occurrences of *nomos* in [v. 14], the first and fourth refer to the Law of Moses, and the second occurrence refers to God's will. . . . The third occurrence refers to a general set of rules' (Katoppo 1991, 423). The 'work of the law' in Romans 2:15 is taken as a collective singular by Katoppo. He points out that the phrase could be rendered 'the effect of the law' ('what the Law commands', GNB; Katoppo 1991, 423), but says nothing about its referent. I believe that the following phrase 'written in their hearts' points to what may be termed the 'mesographic law'.<sup>70</sup> Romans 2:26, 27, says Katoppo (1991, 423) is a reference to God's will, but in 3:19 we have the first occurrence of *nomos* to designate Scripture (also 3: 31). However, in 3:27; 7:21 and 8:2 'principle' or 'power' seems to be the best translation (Katoppo 1991, 424-25; also Adeyemi 2006, 440; *contra* Das 2001, 228-233). The point of citing the above is to show that Dunn's suggestions that 'law' in Romans must invariably be taken as a reference to the Mosaic code is questionable. So although Katoppo's study is not exhaustive, it at least opens the way to explore other possibilities of meaning that may shed light on the dilemma of the 'I' that is partly the focus of our investigation.

<sup>67</sup> 'Sin appears as a demonic person and exercises a rule of terror over humanity' (Laato 2004, 359; cf. Burrowes 2006, 314; Jewett 2007, 467).

<sup>68</sup> Following Moo (1996, 460), we see verses 19 and 20 as recapitulation of 15b and 16b/17b respectively.

<sup>69</sup> Also 2:25; 3:20; chapters 4-5; 6:14-15; 7:4 (?); 9:31 (?); 10: 4; 13:10 (Katoppo 1991, 423-426).

<sup>70</sup> Borrowed from *mesographos*, 'drawn [or written] in the middle [heart?]' (Liddell and Scott 1997, 500); cf. Kasali (2006,

Verse 22 introduces a contrast that concerns the ambivalence of the 'I' toward the two 'laws' in opposition to each other. On the one hand the 'I' agrees with the expression of God's will, here referred to as the *nomos tou theou*. This could be a reference to the Mosaic code or the precepts and principles of the Messianic covenant orally transmitted among early Christian believers. But on the other hand the 'I' is aware of a more sinister law (*another law*; v. 23), which Calvin ([1539], 171) calls *une loi tyrannique de Satan*.<sup>71</sup> What is this? Before addressing this question, something ought to be said about the 'inner man' that is at the heart of the 'I's full approval with God's will (v. 22). Betz (2000, 315-341) traces the concept of this, what he calls 'inner human being', in Paul's earlier letters and makes the following observations. Because these earlier letters demonstrate very little interest in anthropological dualities, the absence of *esManthrMpos* (inner being) is understandable. Not that Paul showed no interest in anthropology during this period of his ministry, for we have, for example, in I Thessalonians 5:23 a terse description of total humanity.

Unlike I Thessalonians, Galatians appears to be the first letter of Paul to show some appearance of 'problems for the anthropological concepts', though *esManthrMpos* is also absent. Here we find a dualism not between the 'inner' and the 'outer' man but between the 'flesh' and the 'spirit' (cf. 5:17, 19). Important for Betz's investigation is the co-crucifixion of Christ along with the 'I', mentioned in 2:20. This being the case, the co-crucifixion of the believers is presumably the ground from which the antagonism between 'flesh' and 'spirit' is instigated. Betz then moves to Philippians. 'As far as this anthropology is concerned, this letter is close to I Thessalonians and Galatians.' Human beings in Philippians are constituted of body (1:20; 3:21) 'and/or flesh' (1:22, 24; 3:3, 4), and 'soul' (1:27; 2:30). The mention of these entities, according to Betz, does not provide any precise definition of humanity. It is in the Corinthians correspondence that a 'new level of intense reflection about anthropological problems is reached,' beginning with the first letter. I Corinthians brings together both protology and eschatology to sharpen the focus of essential humanity in 11:7, 15:22, 45-46, 49, and theologically modified by Paul's Christological vision (e.g., Rom 5:12-21). Betz also raises the crucial question as to whether verses like 2:13, 15; 3:1; and 14:37 betray 'a radically dualistic anthropology or merely a conceptual inconsistency.' No direct response is forthcoming from Betz, but the general tenor of his article is away from the notion of any dualism in Paul.

It is in 2 Corinthians 4: 16, Betz observes, that the anthropological phrase, *esManthrMpos* (along with its antonym), first makes its appearance. There it is clearly identified with the facet of Christian humanity that is under spiritual reconstruction. Betz (2000, 337) then concludes his discussion of *esManthrMpos* by posing a question about its relation to the 'I', which, to him, is a symbol of the human self: 'Is the *egM* divided?<sup>72</sup> Paul's answer is that it is the same *egM* but there are two important aspects to it. . . . [O]ne aspect . . . rejoices being associated with the law of God. This aspect is identical with the *esManthrMpos* . . . [T]he other aspect of the *egM* . . . could be called the *exManthrMpos* [outer being], but Paul does not use this term in Rom 7. . . . Therefore, the self-experience of the *egM* is that of one and the same *anthrMpos*, including the antagonisms and frustrations.'

We may now return to the question posed earlier concerning the identification of the 'other law', first mentioned in verse 23. Is it some antagonistic principle working in conjunction with indwelling sin, sin itself, or the Mosaic Law in its 'sinister role' of sin's pawn? For Schreiner (1998, 377), the 'other law' 'is used to denote the alliance of sin with the law so that the "I" does not obey the Mosaic Law'. However, I think it is better, with Haacker (2004, 68) and others<sup>73</sup> to see it as a 'governing principle' or 'power'. This is in keeping with the analysis of *nomos as* outlined above. This sinister 'law' operates in and through the 'organs' of the 'I'. The operation is militaristic (*fighting against the law of my mind*) and inimical to personal freedom (*taking me captive*), resulting in the kind of frustration vividly expressed in verse 24.

<sup>71</sup>As a result, 'S. Paul ditquesa chair le tient captif/[Saint Paul] says he is held captive by the flesh' (Calvin [1539], 171; 1960, 153).

<sup>72</sup>C. H. Dodd (1932, 114) speaks of 'a very intense experience of divided personality', but Betz's treatment is much better nuanced. For a competent handling of the question from the standpoint of psychology, see Beck (2002, 119-120).

<sup>73</sup>For example, Vine 1948, 108; Moo 1996, 464; Kroll 2002, 117; Osborne 2004, 187.

The employment of *egMin* verse 24 is the most dramatic in the NT and possibly in the entire Greek Bible. There is also very little to compare with it elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> It is difficult not to agree with Dunn (1988, 410; contra Chang 2007) that here (v. 24) ‘certainly Paul speaks for himself and not merely as a spokesperson for humanity at large.’ This is, perhaps, a strong reason why the debate over the identification of the ‘I’ has returned with a vengeance. Is this Paul the believer in verse 24, or is it the pre-Christian Saul? Or is *egMat* at this point a highly dramatized picture expressive of humanity in general? Kümmel (1974, 171, 181, 185, 140, 230, 253), despite some equivocation, maintains this last position, while Moo (1996, 465) remains the champion of the pre-Christian position. On the agonizing cry of verse 24 Moo writes: ‘Certainly the Christian who is sensitive to his or her failure to meet God’s demands experiences a sense of frustration and misery at that failure (cf. 8: 23); but Paul’s language here is stronger than would be appropriate for that sense of failure.’ Moo was responding in part to Cranfield’s (1985, 158) strong statement to the effect that ‘the more the Christian is set free from legalistic ways of thinking about God’s law and so sees more clearly the full splendor of the perfection towards which he is being summoned, the more conscious he becomes of his own continuing sinfulness, his stubborn all-pervasive egotism.’

But ‘What interest could Paul possibly have in telling us at this point in the argument how tough he finds life as a *Christian*?’ (Campbell 2004, 206). As the pre-/Christian debate rages on, what is virtually certain is that Paul includes himself in the crucial concluding verses of the chapter (Robinson 1979, 91). Thus ‘I am a wretched person!’ (*Miser ego homo* [Augustine 2002, 132]) is the apostle’s cry of frustration, even if it is at the same time the cry of everyman. The phrase is emphatic both in its structure and semantic expression, and is painfully descriptive of the human condition of suffering and weakness in the extreme, in a culture at that where ‘infirmity and weakness . . . are inconsistent with a virtuous character’ (Philo *Viture* 1: 167).

The following interrogative clause (*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*) is equally emphatic; it complements the idea in the first part of the verse. But what is this ‘body of death’<sup>75</sup> from which Paul earnestly desires freedom? And what is the nature of this freedom? Although answering these questions does not seem as difficult as those surrounding the identity of the ‘I’ in the chapter, the difficulty must not be underestimated. One response to these questions comes from Phillips (1969, 119-120) who posits that Paul was possibly drawing an analogy based on a first-century custom. He writes: ‘Certain types of criminals were executed by the Romans with special brutality. Sometimes if a man had committed a murder, he was bound hand to hand, face to face with the corpse of his victim and then thrown out into the heat of the Mediterranean sun.

As the corpse decayed, it ate death into the living man and became to him, in the strictest literal sense, “a body of death.”’ To Phillips the situation in verse 24 is that of the carnal Christian ‘bound to the old nature and truly a wretched man.’ While this perspective on the ‘carnal’ man finds plausibility in some circles, the custom on which the analogy is based is unattested during Paul’s time.<sup>76</sup> What the apostle is affirming by his use of ‘body of death’<sup>77</sup> seems much broader than the frustrated experience of the ‘carnal Christian’. The phrase is best thought of as a description of humanity in its enslavement to sin and its inevitable judgment of death. This, no doubt, includes the Christian at any stage of the journey (Gundry 1976, 36, 40). And it is from

<sup>74</sup>Cf. Epictetus (1: 26, 32); and the more recent statement from Rahner (cited in Moltmann 2006, 192): ‘Ich bin von vornherein in diese Grässlichkeit [‘wretchedness’?] hineinzementiert’, in parallel with 7: 14 and 7: 24.

<sup>75</sup> Or ‘body of this death. . . . It was . . . only after his conversion that Paul was able to discern his body as a body of death, imposing death on others and doomed to a divine sentence of death as punishment for murder’ (Jewett 1997, 106). For the textual issues surrounding the phrase, see Swanson (2001, 108).

<sup>76</sup>Bruce (1985, 147), however, writes of ‘Virgil’s account of the Etruscan king . . . who tormented his living captives by tying them to decomposing corpses’. Cf. the 1250 BC statements of equal abhorrence: ‘What I doubly detest, I will not eat . . . I will not consume excrement, I will not approach it . . . I will not tread on it with my sandals’ (Faulker 1998, plate 24).

<sup>77</sup>John Wycliffe (1850) has ‘bodi of this synne,’ which appears to be influenced by Rom 6: 6, where he has the identical phrase with the exception of the demonstrative. This does not appear to be the reading of the Vulgate, from which Wycliffe and/or his followers translated.

this enslavement (and consequent 'entombment') that Paul laments<sup>78</sup> to gain deliverance. In regard to the nature of the freedom, Paul's answer is explained both in chapters 6 (1-14) and 8 (1-14) in particular. At this point (v. 25a) he joyfully gives thanks to God 'through Jesus Christ our Lord' for the prospect of full deliverance. It could hardly have come any other way. In other words, one is not surprised at the mention of the Lord Jesus Christ in close connection with the concept of liberation. So far in the epistle (and at various points) the reader is informed and reminded of the salvific significance of Jesus' coming. Passages like 1:1-17; 3:21-25; 5:1; 6:23, readily come to mind. But the thanksgiving (BAGD, 878) is not directed to Jesus but through him, as is customary (cf. 1 Cor15:57; 2 Cor1:20; 3:4; Rom 5:11; 16:27).

Dunn (1988, 397) suggests that the preposition in 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' may have a double thrust in underlining Jesus' mediatorial role in prayer, as well as his agency in the enterprise of divine liberation. Some seem to understand the desired deliverance expressed in verse 24 to be entirely futuristic. It is surprising that Dunn (1988, 397) in particular has taken this position in light of his clear understanding of chapters 6, 7 and 8 as being Paul's centerpiece of the 'already but not yet' eschatological scheme. That is why, as Schriener (1998, 391) remarks, 'it would be a mistake to conclude' that since the apostle contemplates a future deliverance that deliverance is exclusively and entirely futuristic. Why? Because the 'genius of Paul's eschatology is that the future has invaded the present'. Equally mistaken, perhaps, is Denney's (1912, 2: 643) perspective: 'The exclamation of thanksgiving shows that the longed-for deliverance has actually been achieved.' Denney's assumption is that verses 14-25 are reminiscent of Paul's unregenerate days and verse 25a his regenerate cry.<sup>79</sup> The cry itself may be an echo of and 'response' to the words of deliverance found in Exodus 3: 6-8 (LXX; so Edwards 1992, 194).

More of the nature of the deliverance is delineated in 8:1-3 (a part of Paul's conclusion); but for the time being we have to contend with Paul's summary to 7:14-24 in v. 25b. It is in this summary that we encounter Paul's most emphatic 'I' locution: *Therefore, then, I myself serve the law of God mentally, but with the flesh the law of sin.* Moo (1996, 467) appears to find this conclusion quite troubling, since he unnecessarily restricts the referent of *egM* to the writer's pre-conversion experience. For him the dividedness in verse 25b and in previous verses can only characterize the wo/man that has not yet come into contact with the liberating Christ. But as we have indicated above, such a conclusion is reductionistic, especially in light of Paul's rhetorical skill (Longenecker 2005, 88-93), soteriology, and eschatology.<sup>80</sup> That 'I myself' is emphatic can hardly be doubted. But how do we translate it? For some reason *Die Gute Nachricht Die Bibel* does not translate this phrase at all. Its English counterpart (GNB) renders the phrase 'on my own'. *Autos* is the most frequently employed pronoun in the NT (Wallace 348-349). Its force is normally intensive, particularly when it occupies the predicate position. There is simply no hint by recent grammarians (e.g., Porter 1992, 120) that the translation 'by myself', or the like, is any improvement over the more traditional 'I myself' ('Left to myself'; REB).

The construction *autos egM* occurs five times in the NT and they are all accounted for by Paul. Three of those occurrences are in Romans (Baaij 1993, 456 n. 101), with the others in a previous epistle (Denney 1912, 2: 644). Interestingly, it is rendered 'I myself' in that epistle (2 Cor 10:1; 12:13) by the NRSV, as well as in Rom 9:3 and 15:14. But in 7:25 the NRSV (not following its predecessor by translating 'I of myself') opted not to translate *autos*. The RSV's rendering is consistent with other uses and is not necessarily out of line with the passage. In fact it seems to fit quite well, both in the wider context and in the contrastive and antithetical construction which forms the summary of verse 25b (*men . . . de*).

Taken this way the writer may be saying 'I of myself, i.e., without divine enabling, attempt to serve the divine (messianic) law, but this being the case, I end up serving the law of sin.' This might be reading too much into

<sup>78</sup>This lament is 'a prayer in the form of a question,' according to O' Brien (1977, 217).

<sup>79</sup>As Tennyson, in *Morted' Arthur*, cried, "O for a new man to arise within me and subdue the man that I am" (Johnson 1974, 115). Cf. the mild 'I am quite upset'; Moulton and Milligan 1930, 153).

<sup>80</sup>*Mutatis Mutandis* 'The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free' (Mandela 1995, 624).

the translation. But is such a paraphrase consistent with Paul's Greek? Grammatically it does appear to stand (cf. Blass *et al.*, 1961, 67). And culturally, there are at least two interesting parallels that place Paul's summary statement in context. The first is from a Jewish perspective: 'Man, while he lives, is the slave of two masters: the slave of his Creator and the slave of his inclination. When he does the will of his Creator he angers his inclination, and when he does the will of his inclination, he angers his Creator. When he dies, he is freed, a slave free from his master' [cf. Rom 6: 6, 7] (cited in Davies and Allison 1988, 1:642). The other, from a more Hellenistic provenance (Seneca), is cited by Witherington (2004, 200): 'It is an error to think that slavery penetrates to the whole person. The better part is excluded: the body is subject to and at the disposition of its master; the mind, however, is its own master.'<sup>81</sup>

However, the intended meaning of Romans 25b cannot be derived just from close parallels and the grammar of its terse statements. One has to bear in mind the entire semantic contribution of 7:14-24. And here one's ignorance appears to come full circle. But there is no need to despair at this point, for much has been learnt along the way. For example, the emphatic phrase we just examined (*autos egM*) plus the present verbs of verse 25b hardly allow one room to exclude the writer from the 'experience' described in verses 14-24, though it has to be conceded that the pericope may have a wider application as well. Another lesson coming out of the passage is the thought that the writer may not have intended the strictures with which we have been working (is the 'I' biographical? Christian? general? fictive?). In fact it does appear that we have been ignoring a crucial element in the discourse: the writer is employing the marked personal pronoun (*egM*) as part of his weakness language literary device/genre (contra Jewett 1997, 2007). This device is not limited to the Pauline corpus but it is quite prominent there. In the Gospels, for example, the image of weakness is used to describe 'the general human condition' (cf., Matt 26:41b; Mark 14:38b). The 'weak' are also seen to be the special objects of divine concern and care as seen for instance in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and Zechariah's prophecy (Luke 1:68-79). Also we see: 'Throng of the weak gather around Jesus. . . . The blind, the deaf, the sick, the leprous, the demon possessed, all present us with concrete images of weakness. And although the Beatitudes do not mention the weak per se, the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek and the persecuted all share in a weakness that qualifies them for the blessing of the Kingdom of God' (Ryken 1998, 933-934).<sup>82</sup>

In the Pauline literature the image sometimes reflects the crippling effect of sin even on the Christian community (1Cor 11:30; cf. 2 Tim. 3:6) and in a bold literary move Paul attributes 'weakness' even to God (1 Cor1:25). But 'what the world regards as weakness is for Paul a *subversive symbol* of divine power, an encrypted image of God's triumph,' (Ryken 1998, 934. Cf. Socrates' 'I am in infinite poverty for the service of God'; cited in Davies and Allison 1988, 1:644). All this is against a Graeco-Roman world in which weakness is invariably associated with shame instead of triumph.

In some of Paul's letters the theme of weakness is also evident.<sup>83</sup> For example, in the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's 'I', though on the surface appears 'powerful', is in actuality impotent by virtue of the fact that it fails to embrace love, 'the power of the new age' breaking into the present-- 'the only vital force which has a future' (Thiselton 2000, 1035). The same thing can be said of Philippians 3:4 where Paul admits that what he previously thought was of inestimable value (his Jewish pedigree, etc) turned out to be somewhat of the same piece as 'the weak and beggarly elements' of human experience. For example, (following Silva 2005, 6) Philippians 3:7-8 may be schematized to make the point as follows:

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<sup>81</sup>Cf. also Epictetus' 'For where one say "I" and "mine," to that side must the creature perforce incline . . . I am where my moral purpose is.' (1: 389).

<sup>82</sup>The article goes on to say that what the 'Gospels embedded in narrative Paul formulates in life and letters. Perhaps no biblical writer uses the imagery of weakness more effectively than Paul.' He felt 'happy and secure because of the complete adequacy of God's grace in Christ to meet and make good his own inadequacy' (Xavier 1983, 294).

<sup>83</sup> And, of course, Paul glories in his own 'weakness' (2 Cor12:10). There was indeed some method to his madness, for even from the standpoint of psychology it may be said that 'the basis of educatability lies in the striving of the child to compensate for his weakness. A thousand talents and capabilities arise from the stimulus of inadequacy' (Adler 1927, 35).

<u>The Old Life</u>	<u>The New Life</u>
<i>These I have counted loss</i>	<i>for Christ</i>
<i>I also count all things loss knowledge of Christ</i>	<i>for the excellence of the</i>
<i>I have suffered the loss of all things</i>	<i>for whom</i>
<i>I count them as rubbish</i>	<i>that I may gain Christ</i>

‘If we focus on the items under the left column, we notice a significant progression of thought; clearly, Paul expresses with increasing intensity his sense of dissatisfaction with those things that had previously been most important to him’ (Silva 2005, 156). And the unadorned ‘I’ statements (i.e., without *egM*, each with overtones of weakness, serve to strengthen the personal testimony. Therefore, we see that Paul’s penchant for using ‘weakness’ language is by no means limited to the use of *astheneia* and its cognates.<sup>84</sup> Whenever such language appears, it is part and parcel of a deliberate literary strategy, not just in polemical or apologetical contexts such as Philippians 3 and 2 Cor 11-13, but in paraenetic ones as well. Henceforth, when we come to the book of Romans we are not surprised to find the employment of weakness language strategically located in crucial sections of the epistle. For instance, Rom 5:6 describes what he and the recipients of his letter were spiritually before Christ died in order to empower them through the gospel. Rom 6:19 justifies his use of slavery language in regard to the Christian life by employing the phrase ‘the weakness of the flesh’ (cf. Keener 2009, 96), which in turn is expounded in the latter part of chapter 7 in relation to the law and with reference to the self (the ‘I’).

### Summary

The foregoing discourse has sought to locate the epistle of Romans within the wider frame of the Hebrew Bible, noting and interacting with the proposals of various New Testament scholars in this regard. It has been plausibly suggested that there is a narrative substructure that underlies chapters 1-8 and that this substructure betrays some connection to certain pentateuchal patterns. In this way of reading the letter some have seen echoes of the prototypical Adam and Eve and even their first son, Cain. Other scholars are more convinced that select episodes from the books of Exodus and Psalms provide the best backdrop for a proper understanding of the early chapters of Romans. In our exegesis of chapter 7 some of these intertextual concerns were factored in as we examined the major theories that are proffered relative to the identification of the ubiquitous ‘I’. All of the theories have been found wanting, though for the time being we lean toward seeing this emphatic first person pronoun as some kind of composite expression (cf. Osborne 2004, 166-191; Porter 2015, 144-154; Longenecker 2016, 627-646; Keener 1994, 258-284; Kruse 2012, 288-320).

What appears certain is that the writer is at pains to defend the very law that forms the backbone of the corpus from which he has drawn in composing what is arguably his most mature literary output. We also noticed that in chapter 7 (as well as parts of Chap. 8), Paul highlights his own weakness even as he writes in defense of the law. This weakness (and the anticipated deliverance from it), we believe, is inextricably tied to the central

<sup>84</sup>‘The root . . . appears in the NT 83 times and in the Pauline epistles 44 times or 53% of the total. . . . The motif is most extensively developed in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians’ (Black 1983, 15). For the concept in Revelation, see Blount (2004).

section of the epistle (8:18-39).<sup>85</sup>After affirming the fact that believers are dead to the law (vv. 1-6), and after launching a spirited defense in its behalf (vv. 7-11), Paul then employs a form of weakness language to further exculpate the law by pointing out its inability to effect change in the 'I' (vv.14-17), enable the 'I' to do good (vv. 18-20),<sup>86</sup> and to emancipate the 'I' (vv. 21-24). Paul at one time may have agreed with the sentiments expressed in Ben Zoma's (Danby 1933, 453) midrash on Proverbs 16:32 ('Who is mighty? He that subdues his [evil] nature.');

but at the time of writing 7:14-24, his utter weakness was the route to divine power (Rom 8). That is why the pericope at the same time illustrates the human condition (Caragounis 2004, 562, n. 279), and his soteriological scheme outlined in the previous chapters. Finally,

*I, who am I, and no man shall deny it,  
I, who am I, and none shall bid me nay;  
I, who am I, lo! from the hills I shall cry it . . .  
I have forgotten what [else] I meant to say! (Anonymous)*

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<sup>85</sup>Glorification: Gospel for a Suffering Entity (8:18-39); see above (p. 108) on **Romans as a Structured Story**.

<sup>86</sup>'The pursuit of the good is accompanied with tension, conflict, anxiety, and doubt' (Kappen 1977, 139), with the result that 'we live a life of victory, but it is qualified victory. We are not yet what we shall be. . . . We live in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet". We are genuinely new persons but not yet totally new' (Hoekema 1987, 190).

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