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

(Part 2)

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**INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

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

#### *Recommendation*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 Psalm 27:13

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

### *Recommendation*

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

### **Social Engagement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Recommendation:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Recommendation:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Recommendation:*

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

**Forgiveness**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Recommendation*

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

#### **Conclusion**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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