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FORTIFYING THE
FOUNDATIONS,
FORGING INTO
NEW FRONTIERS
BECAUSE I AM A
CHRISTIAN

LECTURE GIVEN BY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL
OF JAMAICA HIS
EXCELLENCY THE
MOST HONOURABLE
SIR PATRICK ALLEN TO
THE JAMAICA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY ON APRIL 10,
2013

INTRODUCTION

This is the first time that I am presenting a lecture at the Jamaica Theological Seminary, so I am definitely "forging into new frontiers" today. I am in two minds as to whether to thank the Rev. Dr. Roper for inviting me to speak to you on this very challenging topic: "**Because I am a Christian**" within the broad theme "**Fortifying the Foundations- Forging Into New Frontiers**". I can either thank him, or I can seek your commiseration for what is in effect, the gauntlet which has been thrown down to me.

It seems to me that the basis on which I was invited to give this lecture is much more than the fact that I am a Christian. The central reason for that invitation is that I am the first ordained Minister of Religion who has been called to serve as Governor-General in Jamaica. With that comes the curiosity as to whether service in that Office is impacted by my Christian principles or whether the foundation is being weakened either by compromise or the truism of the corruption which power often wreaks.

It is clear to me that the question is not whether a Christian should occupy the position of Governor-General, as you students of the Bible would know very well how and why God placed Joseph, Esther and Daniel in positions of leadership in even foreign kingdoms where they were captives and whose rulers did not know

God. I believe that in your minds is the echo of Mordecai's words to Esther: "And who knows why you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

I am sensing that for many of you a prior question is how this Adventist Pastor came to be selected to serve as Governor-General. The answer is very simple: I do not know, but let me disabuse you of the notion that it had anything to do with politics. When I was called to meet with the Prime Minister, nothing was furthest from my mind. Never in my wildest imaginings could I have contemplated being asked to be Governor-General. Surely, there were many others much more qualified than I to serve! I got no explanation, from the P.M. but the discussion was suspended on my commitment to pray about the matter, and that I did, even before consulting my wife! I also sought the wise counsel of several other individuals and even as the concern about "Why me?" resurfaced, the sagacious words of Mordecai to Esther kept echoing in my mind. Like a repeated chorus I was also listening to the words of Ellen G. White:

The greatest want of the world is the want of men and women who will not be bought or sold, who in their inmost souls are true and honest, who do not fear to call sin by its right name, whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

Acceptance of that call to serve was for me more than a positive response to the Prime Minister; it was an act of submission to God. I prayed for the grace to be always the kind of person to call sin by its right name; the person who cannot be bought or sold. God was clearly leading me into "new frontiers" and I knew that I could depend on Him to guide me through the challenges and hurdles of the odyssey of Head of State.

THE EXERCISE OF PRIVATE FAITH IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

An 18th Century English Jurist, Sir William Blackstone, published in 1765 the *Commentaries on the Law of England* in which he declared that law has two foundations: the law of nature and the revelation through the Scriptures. For Blackstone, God was the source of all laws. His *Commentaries* became the foundation of English common law which influenced the jurisprudence and justice system in most of the western world. Blackstone recognized that God ordained civil government and that wisdom in government could only come from God. He reminded his students that as stated in Romans 13: 1, "there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God". Thus, all human authority is delegated by God. This requires reverence and respect for the public positions in which one serves, because the authority is from God!

Today, moral absolutes derived from God's word no longer form the automatic foundation of legislation. In this post-modern world, traditional Christian values are being eroded and the Church itself is losing its place as the moral compass. There are many who question the relevance of the Church in these times.

In several industrialized countries of the Western world which have a strong history of missionary zeal for the Lord, Christians are now a dwindling minority. Blackstone's *Commentaries* have lost their relevance in this context. Laws which conflict with God's commands and principles are being adopted in many countries defined as "Christian". A Christian leader can be severely tested between the push of public opinion and/or external pressure and the pull of his own convictions. A Christian leader can fall prey to political expediency if he or she yields to the temptation of popular acclaim.

As Governor-General, I respond first to God, to whom I am accountable, as are all persons. Indeed, under the Constitution of Jamaica, the Governor-General represents the Head of State of Jamaica, Her Majesty (HM), Queen Elizabeth II. And therefore Her Majesty's authority in Jamaica is delegated to me. However, I am keenly aware that The Queen serves at God's pleasure and recognizes her own accountability to Him.

HM was proclaimed Queen in 1952, "By the Grace of God" and her pledge to serve with devotion ended with the following words: "*I pray that God will help me to discharge worthily this heavy task which has been laid upon me so early in my life*". As titular Head of the Church of England, Her Majesty's private faith is not alienated from her action in public affairs.

One of my predecessors, the Most Hon. Sir Howard Cooke, while not an ordained Minister, was an active lay preacher during his tenure as Governor-General. He was never ashamed to proclaim his Christian beliefs. His biography which was launched at King's House last year is entitled "God is Good", a favourite saying of Sir Howard.

A conversation with Sir Howard immediately elucidates the reasons for his strong conviction of God's goodness. Not only did God lead him from the cane fields to King's House, but God also guided him through challenges as he confronted the role of the Governor-General, for which no manual exists. Sir Howard knew that his accountability to God would be what determined the conduct of his stewardship as Governor-General.

Similarly, my approach to my stewardship is guided by my assurance that the God who mandated that we occupy till He come, is the God who grants wisdom, knowledge and understanding to those whom He calls to serve. I accept that 'because I am a

Christian', there is never a time that I should not function with the consciousness that I am a disciple. My Christian principles should never be sacrificed on the altar of expedience or convenience. This comes easily, because of the values which have been honed in me throughout my Christian journey.

'Because I am a Christian', I know that my actions must reflect the love of which Paul wrote in Romans 13, when he stated that "*love is the fulfillment of the law*". I also know that I come under the scrutiny of even non-Christians, who recognize when there is dualism which weakens one's Christian witness. The Bible provides rich guidance on how a Christian leader should discharge his or her stewardship.

(1) Daniel could be described as the first Governor-General in recorded history. This man of God, an exile in Babylon, not only served four different Kings, but Kings from different nations: Babylon and Medo-Persia. And I have to contemplate my role only under different administrations in the same nation! Daniel remained true to his faith in God, not only fearlessly declaring the word of God as he interpreted the visions, but also as he faced the penalty of being thrown into a den of hungry lions.

(2) In the case of Joseph, Pharaoh recognized his wisdom and discernment and made him Prime Minister. Joseph acknowledged the protecting hand of God throughout all his suffering which led him to that point; also the wisdom and knowledge from God which gave him the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. But what strikes me most are the godly love, mercy and forgiveness which Joseph demonstrated to his brothers who had so wickedly treated him. From that experience Joseph proved to them how God can transform the worst situation into something which brings glory to His name the preservation.

(3) I think also of David, the humble shepherd boy whom God chose to be King of Israel. Though he knew he was God's anointed, he did not flaunt it, but served Saul faithfully, until he was forced to flee for his life. David mirrors so much of what we are as fallible humans, yet he was a man after God's own heart. David's mistakes and sins remind me of how easily I can slip, but for God's grace. But David's penitent heart also reminds me of how much God loves to show mercy and forgiveness. I am assured that though I stumble, I will not fall, for the Lord upholds me with His hand. When I am confronted by difficult decisions or situations, David's prayers take on added significance. One which is always relevant is: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips".

(4) The lessons from Moses are many, but I shall identify only three of those which impact on my stewardship as Governor-General:

I. Moses knew how to take good advice, as he did from his father-in-law Jethro. He did not consider himself too important to listen and be guided by Jethro. He did not fly on the defensive when Jethro told him bluntly: "What you are doing is not good...The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone". He selected capable persons to support him, in response to Jethro's advice.

II. Moses interceded before God for the people and, "The Lord relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened".

III. Moses, the man whose face had shone with the radiance of God's physical presence, did not reach the Promised Land, because in a moment of anger and frustration with the rebellious people, he became arrogant. God saw this as a dishonour to Him in the presence of the Israelites. That is a strong lesson also.

I have learned much from these and other great leaders in the Bible. Because I am a Christian, I seek to apply those lessons to my life and my stewardship. I do not always get it right, but I learn daily to lean on God and not on my own understanding.

There is also the other type of scrutiny which I know that I undergo: How will this Seventh Day Adventist comply with requirements of the job? Because there is awareness of the passionate practice of their faith commitment, it begs the question: will the requirements of his faith community take precedence over those of his role as Governor-General? In the perception of many people, what set Adventists apart from other Christians are the Sabbath and health laws and practices.

With regard to the Sabbath, my constitutional and ceremonial duties are discharged during the work week and so only my community roles might extend to the weekend. If a matter of national concern requires my intervention or attention on the Sabbath, then it becomes an essential service. The duty and response are therefore the same as with all professionals in the essential services. The discernment with which God blesses a Christian is key to the ability to understand the times and respond to situations which at face value would seem to run counter to my belief system as an Adventist.

THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

God has used and continues to use Christians in the growth and development of Jamaica, as He has in many other countries. We think of our National Heroes who were professed Christians and the contribution they made to Jamaica. Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defence of the rights of the oppressed majority, were strong Baptist leaders. Marcus Garvey recognized the indispensable action of God in public affairs as affirmed by his statement that "*It is only the belief and*

confidence we have in God why man is able to understand his own social institutions and move and live like a rational human being."

We constantly need to recognize the role that Christians often played in our nation; for example, our National Anthem was written by a Methodist Pastor. We think, too, of the role that the Church has played from the days of slavery through to emancipation and independence up till now.

- It was the Church which gave the organizational preparation and opportunity for Sam Sharpe's Christmas Rebellion.
- It was the Church which began the settlement of the newly freed black population in the Free Villages.
- It was the Church which introduced cooperatives and building societies.
- It was the Church which laid the foundation of what would become our public education system.

Today, the Church in Jamaica continues to invest in the education, health, housing and the social welfare of our country as important vehicles for its Christian service. This demonstrates the love which Jesus commands that we have for God and for our neighbour. The Church acknowledges the value of these ministries and strives to maintain them in the face of financial constraints, since the Church is comprised of members who are themselves subject to the economic vicissitudes of our country.

Yet from time to time one hears the criticism that the Church is not doing enough to ameliorate conditions in Jamaica. There is enough evidence to prove the Church's impact. Without blowing its trumpet, the Church needs to highlight its ministries not only to the world, but also to glorify God and to encourage those who faithfully support or serve in those ministries. Let me also say I firmly believe that but for the intercession of the Church, Jamaica could not have

survived the many serious problems, natural disasters and setbacks which we continue to face.

In the field of politics and parliamentary representation, Jamaica has benefitted from the service of many Christians, among them Ministers of religion. The present Parliament includes several active Christians of whom the Minister of Education and the Speaker of the Senate are ordained Ministers. Christians in Parliament and most specifically, Christians in the Cabinet, have a duty to seek God's guidance not only for their respective portfolio responsibilities, but also for the adoption of policies and legislation which are in accordance with the will of God.

They also must understand the times. There is a heavy weight of responsibility on the shoulders of the Christian Public Leaders who must recognize the first Authority to whom they are accountable. Their voice might very well be in the minority on a range of policies which have negative moral implications. The pressure to submit to the majority must cause tension and much soul searching. Here Asaph uncompromisingly declares God's imperative to the nations and their leaders:

How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82).

This is a conscience call to all leaders. Further, it is a call to qualified Christians, especially in the Public Service, to seize the opportunities available for the defence and rescue of the poor and the vulnerable in our land. This requires that Christians be in positions of influence, forging into new frontiers where necessary. Guided by the Holy Spirit, their involvement in the affairs of State or in the pinnacles of industry can be the catalyst for Jamaica's

advancement. We cannot participate in the progress of our country when we are locked into the enclaves of the churches, in the belief that this is the *summum bonum* of our duty. We must be active participants in its development.

As Christians, we are commanded to pray for those in leadership. I know that many Jamaicans are praying for me and that is a strong source of encouragement and blessing. I do pray regularly for the Most Honourable Prime Minister, her Cabinet and members of Parliament, as well as for leaders of the Church, business, the public sector and of the society in general. There are times, though, when we are called to do more than pray. God has given gifts and talents to His servants and He calls on us to use them in defence of truth and justice in our nation.

Christians must let their voice be heard on matters which affect the nation. The "Vox Populi" must also express the position of those who are in the faith, not as the peculiarity of a denomination, but as the united voice of Christians all across Jamaica. This strengthens the support which Christian parliamentarians will receive in the decision-making process. It is much wiser to seek to influence that process than to protest after its completion.

Christians have a duty to properly research and present their views on public policy. A knee-jerk reaction will not convince anyone and could well be used to ridicule the Church and accuse Christians of wanting to slow progress. In this post-modern world, it is no longer enough to say "Thus saith the Lord!" Our Master commends that we be as wise as serpents yet harmless as doves. Christians must seek to understand the arguments and issues of the day and propose the response which either brings peace and reconciliation, or leads to resolution by influencing policy direction.

Christians must be visibly involved in the process. Our churches' umbrella groups should charge specially designated teams with the responsibility of monitoring various issues in our Parliament, researching all angles--including the international aspects--where necessary. Their timely report, with recommendations, would then form the basis for well-grounded proposals or responses from the Church.

For example, in the current economic crisis, where is the voice of the Christian business persons? I know there are many. Have they come together to pray for guidance and then to come up with workable proposals for consideration by the Government or have they left it solely to the PSOJ? Or are they worried only about their bottom line? Fragmented in their respective denominational groups they will not achieve much.

I believe that the time is ripe for Christian business persons and professionals to come together to seek God's leadership for the resolution of our economic woes. They are well-placed to understand and act on the word of God through Isaiah: "Should not a people enquire of their God?" Their combined God-given wisdom and experience can be used to forge and implement strategies which could help to transform this country into a productive hub. God will bless Jamaica through their faithful stewardship, in the same way that God blessed Laban's business, because of Jacob; Pharaoh's kingdom, because of Joseph; and Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, because of Daniel.

God has placed many Christians in our law enforcement and justice systems, including in their upper echelons. I have met many lawyers who are devout Christians serving in the public sector. I know many judges who are committed Christians. Outside of the courtroom these Judges have the possibility of using their well-honed skills to help restore peace, love and respect in the way we respond to each

other within our communities. I also know police persons from the rank and file as well as within the leadership of the Constabulary Forces who faithfully serve God and country.

I believe that Christians in the law enforcement and justice systems seek to influence positive changes where they serve, some at personal and professional cost. Among them there are active prayer groups and other forms of Christian support and encouragement. Members of the Constabulary serve as mentors to youth in various volatile communities. Lawyers give voluntary services in their church or community outreach programmes.

Why then are we having so many challenges in both national security and justice systems? I agree that inadequate resources are a part of the problem, but that is not the major concern. It begins with the erosion of traditional Christian values. As Marcus Garvey said, *"Take away the highest ideal -- FAITH and CONFIDENCE IN GOD --and mankind at large is reduced to savagery and the race is destroyed"*.

Despite the recognition of Jamaica as the country with the largest number of churches per square kilometre, many of our people are either nominal Christians or unbelievers. There is also anecdotal evidence that criminals strategically seek membership in a church to disguise their motives and actions. Within the Church too are members who benefit, some knowingly, from the proceeds of crime committed by family members or friends. This undermines the very witness of the Church and violates the laws of the land. Church Leaders and the faithful congregants must have the wisdom to deal effectively with such situations.

In our National and other Prayer Breakfasts, we always seek God's intervention to break the back of crime and deliver Jamaica from its poisonous tentacles. We must remember that we are the hands and

feet, the hearts and minds that God uses for His purpose. As Christians, individually and corporately through our church and community groups, we need to find ways to do more to rescue our people from the grip of crime. We all know that no Government can resolve this problem on their own. We all know that laws will never change the heart of mankind, otherwise there would have been no need for the Cross. Rehabilitation and restorative justice cannot succeed unless there is an internal conviction of truth.

Prayer must propel Christians to love *in* action, through sustained mentoring programmes as well as through assistance as far as is possible with training and other tangible forms of support. We must act to restore hope, self-esteem and confidence in our people, particularly the youth. Consequently, Lady Allen and I gladly mentor or support individuals and organizations which provide services to our youth.

Christians are to serve as salt and light in the world. Unlike the hermits of old who sought to reach higher levels of communion with God by isolating themselves from the corrupting influences of the world, our role is to reach people, whatever their social standing or moral status. Our lives must preach the sermon which will convince and convict even more effectively than our words!

This is the soft but essential side of Christian involvement in public affairs. It results in work in the trenches which often proceeds without fanfare and public recognition, but it is work in which Jamaica urgently needs more committed men and women. This is not to say that non-Christians are not working to bring about social change, or that they cannot become successful agents for change. However, I am convinced that the only lasting change is that which comes when Christ enters the equation. Non-Christian mentorship rehabilitates. Christian mentorship transforms mentees into new persons. I am convinced that we cannot successfully solve the crime

problem without the full involvement of the Church as God's agent for the transformation we seek.

FAITH IN PRACTICE

Earlier I spoke about Biblical leaders whose examples have formed my perspective on the conduct of my mandate as Governor-General. I shall now give some examples of how the lessons I have learned from their experiences have helped me. Those lessons are equally relevant to each believer in every walk of life.

Moses' constant communion with God has imbued me with a conscious awareness of God's presence. Even though I begin and end my days with prayer and meditation on the Word, throughout the day I remain aware of my dependence on Him. Before I take a decision, swear-in Leaders of Government and other high officials of State, address an audience or undertake any other function, be it constitutional, ceremonial or otherwise, I seek God's leadership and enabling. This practice began in my first days in Office especially as I recognized how little I knew of the role and functions of the Governor-General.

As I have stated before, there is no manual for this Office. The incumbent is guided by the Constitution which he is sworn to uphold and by the good advice and traditions of his predecessors. The position of Governor-General removes the incumbent from the possibility of activism, but it does not constrain him from being truthful and direct in privately stating his views to those in authority. The Governor-General, however, must remain alert to how changes at the national and external levels can impact on his role and how he performs that role. Even Protocol which was once considered sacrosanct is changing to become more relevant to these times. It steadies me on my feet to know that God does not change and that underneath are His everlasting arms.

There have been times when I am specially led to pray with persons who come to me at King's House. Whenever that happens, I follow the Spirit's urging regardless of the status or function of those persons. Meetings with King's House Staff or with various bodies and groups often begin with prayer. It is not a routine. Prayer not only affirms my belief that "*dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations*" (Ps. 22:28), but it is a witness that "*as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*".

When bills are brought before me for signature into law, I seek to understand them from God's perspective. I reflect before I sign. Often this reflection leads me to consultation about the principle and intent of certain laws. Section 32 of the Constitution is clear on the mandate which I have in this regard. I have no authority to make, amend or repeal laws. On such matters I respond to the recommendation of the Head of Government. My only authority, apart from affixing my signature, is to discuss with the Prime Minister any concern I might have.

In my view, though, bills which might not accord with Christian principles should not be allowed to reach the level of even adoption of the policy which would instruct the legal drafting. Bills are never adopted overnight. Christians should be aware and lobby consistently and in a unified manner to prevent decisions in Parliament which could violate God's laws. It should not come to the point where a Governor-General becomes the last possible impediment to the passage of any law which goes against Christian morals.

The fact is, should there be such a situation, the Governor-General has no way to change that bill and discussion with the Prime Minister of the day might not engender more than a cosmetic change. Any Governor-General, who is a Christian and will not forget his accountability to God, has one option, and I am sure you

realize what that is. I do not dwell on such hypotheses; as for me, my faith in God has always been my armour in conflicts of conscience, and He always works things out.

Have you ever wondered how David, the shepherd boy, who became a mighty and victorious warrior King managed that enormous transition? As I think of my humble beginnings in Fruitful Vale, Portland, I can also enter into the experience of Sir Howard, who also had very humble beginnings. David knew that he could not lead the people without God's gracious enabling. The Psalms are replete with his prayers, thanksgiving and praise to God. David suffered criticism and opposition. He poured out his heart to the Lord and allowed Him to deal with those situations. My own response to such situations is guided by David. Like him as with all human beings, I do feel the hurt which can come from such opposition. Like David, I always seek to anchor my response in the word of the Lord. I know that, as the Scripture says, "*anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame*".

While I was a Pastor, I immersed myself in discipleship and in other aspects of Christian ministry. The Office of Governor-General is not focused on evangelization. I have had to make that distinction and remind myself that while I must effusively practise my faith, there is a line which must be drawn. I should tell you that people who know of my pastoral vocation have invited me to preach both locally and overseas. I have been requested to conduct weddings, which I easily decline. The invitations to preach are a bit more difficult and I am careful to seek the Lord's guidance before responding. At times, the Lord helps me to discern that it is not the message they are after, but it is the messenger who will add some prestige to the programme. The crucifixion of the ego is necessary in such situations.

I recognize, though, that the Office opens to me an invaluable opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to my country. As a Christian who lives by the "I Can" of Philippians 4 verse 13, I am impelled to share with our people this recipe for a satisfying, productive life. I believe that Christians ought to be peddlers of hope in this nation which is on the brink of being overcome by anxiety, despair and fear. The Office has facilitated my introduction to a network of fine Christians in the public and private sectors, in the media, academia and civil society who share my concern for the renewal of hope in our country.

We are concerned that:

1. the negative messages which are being poured into the hearts and minds of our people,
2. the impact of crime and violence and the
3. insidious effect of corruption on the national psyche will jettison every plan for Jamaica's development.

We know that the large majority of Jamaicans are hard-working, law-abiding citizens and some means must be found to make them the visible, vocal majority whose profile is what defines Jamaica.

During my inauguration speech in February, 2009, I stated a series of beliefs in Jamaica and Jamaicans and declared my conviction that "there is nothing wrong with Jamaica that cannot be fixed by what is right with Jamaica." That speech moved a group of private sector leaders to urge me to validate my speech with action. In their view Jamaica needed a non-partisan leader who could attract and motivate Jamaicans from all walks of life. This led me into wide-ranging consultations across the country as I sought to probe our citizens' interests in the matter. From that extended period of consultations, the "I Believe" Initiative was born and then launched in May 2011.

This Initiative is charting new frontiers for the interaction of the Office of the Governor-General with the people of Jamaica. It responds to my own passion to use the opportunities which God gives to me to help to address the problems in our country. The programmes pursued under the IBI require care and discretion to ensure that no policy lines are crossed and that relevant officials are aware of the synergies between programmes in their portfolio and action we pursue under the IBI. Our activities are often pursued without fanfare. The fact is that the IBI does not grab media attention and that is perhaps one of our challenges, since media attention also helps to fuel sponsorship.

The IBI is intended to inspire citizens to use their God given potential to realize their goal; it targets people between the ages of fifteen and thirty five and is tri-focal, with Youth, Education and the Family being the pillars for its programme of action. We want to see youth believing in themselves and in Jamaica. Our young people must accept that there is no field of endeavour in which Jamaicans cannot excel. The "I Can" principle in the "I Believe" Initiative underlines that fact.

In this Initiative we have enjoyed the support of young business persons and professionals who began as conference presenters and facilitators for the IBI. They are now totally committed to doing their part to diffuse the positive, transformative messages through mentorship and other outreach activities to youth. They are our first batch of "I Believe Ambassadors".

Parenting skills are what the IBI is focusing on as we seek to impact on the institution of the family. In the consultations with young people which preceded the launch, we heard their concern that many youth are adrift because of poor parenting and the lack of role models. The IBI now partners with Family Life Ministries and the Jamaica Parenting School in an effort to address the concerns

identified. As this programme develops, we want to link with Church and community groups which are already involved in imparting parenting skills and also to foster the formation of such groups in regions of need.

Our work with schools under the IBI has moved beyond the traditional visit and motivational talks. The I Believe Ambassadors have already met with staff of a High School in a volatile community in preparation for a mentorship programme in that school.

For further information, I encourage you to visit the "I Believe" Initiative website; like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Keep in touch with what we are doing and lend your support, by becoming more than a fan--an IBI Ambassador.

CONCLUSION

In this discourse, I have sought to share with you how my values were shaped by the Holy Scriptures and how they influence the way I discharge my duties as Governor-General. I have also shown how similar values have guided the role and actions of individuals and the Church as a whole in the building of our nation. The fact is that they are the same values which influenced my service as an educator, as a pastor and as an Administrator in the leadership of the then West Indies Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. The different scenarios and audiences in which they were exercised do not cause me to compromise. In fact, with greater faith and maturity, it is easier for me to discern the voice of God in all the cacophony of human words whether they be of advice, affirmation, encouragement, opposition, or negative criticism.

When I reflect on how the Lord has brought me to this point in my life and contemplate His goodness to me and the mercy and grace I

have received, I can assuredly acknowledge, in the words of Ellen G. White: "*We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.*" We can move forward with confidence and humility. With the assurance of God's faithfulness, I am not unnerved by complex and difficult matters of state. I can meet Royalty and world leaders and can act appropriately in any given situation only because God grants me the necessary wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Because I am a Christian, being Governor-General is a faith walk, in the same way that it was for me previously. This is something I share with all Christians: utter dependence on God and joyful acceptance of His divine leadership, knowing that He upholds me with His hand. I also share with Christians the understanding of that which the Lord requires of me: "to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God."

Thank you!

**MARK 5 AND
CARIBBEAN
THEOLOGY**

Rev Garnett Roper

PhD

President, Jamaica
Theological Seminary**Introduction**

Mark 5 which contains the account of three miracles of Jesus, the exorcism of Legion, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood and the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter, is central to the Gospel Mark. The chapter brings

together key elements of the Gospel of Jesus the Son of God as they are seen through these miracles stories of Jesus who through the grace and power of the Kingdom of God confronts the realities of alienation and oppression, distortion and marginalization, death and despair which were a part of the lived experience of empire. The narratives are woven together in ways that unmask the powers with their life-diminishing, life distorting and life destroying propensity. The narratives also betray the recalcitrance of such powers and their residual capacity for resistance in their rejection of Jesus and his mission of transformation.

This chapter in Mark's Gospel has been chosen as a part of this project on Caribbean Theology to give concreteness to Caribbean Liberation hermeneutics which is centrally a part of the theological method. Significantly, as will be demonstrated below, the passage chosen provides ample opportunity to grapple with pressing issues of identity and marginality as well as, importantly, with the resilience of the forces of oppression, distortion and dehumanization. The assertion that Caribbean Theology is public theology requires a demonstrable commitment to the historical project of creating a just and responsible society in the Caribbean.

The motivation and measure of such project for the community of faith is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God inaugurated in Jesus Christ.

The articulation of the nature of the envisioned just and responsible society in the Caribbean risks becoming a “wish list”. It is easy to make well-intentioned pronouncements about just and responsible society without such pronouncements being grounded in a sense of the ideal or rooted in realism. The development of notions of a just and responsible society is most meaningful when those notions arise out of an exegetical understanding of the eschatological ideal and when the exegesis is done in the light of the lived experience of the people. Caribbean Liberation hermeneutics provides the opportunity to come to terms with things as they are but also and compellingly so, grapples with an exalted sense of what is possible in the light of the Kingdom of God which has broken into human history in Jesus Christ.

The choice of Mark 5 as the focus of this exercise is based on certain assertions about Mark’s gospel in general and Mark 5 in particular. Mark 5 does not suggest itself for any obvious reasons. It is being asserted and will be demonstrated below that the following features that are peculiar about Mark 5 make it particularly useful to a Caribbean Theology project of this nature: a) Mark 5 is central to the anti-establishment and anti-imperial character of the Mark’s Gospel. Mark is a basic document. It is accepted generally that Matthew and Luke used Mark’s Gospel in the compilation of their Gospels. There is also agreement that to a lesser extent this may also have been the case with the Fourth Gospel. Its centrality lies in the fact that it brings together a focus both on imperial power and the power of the religious establishment in the way they bear upon the lives of the common people in both Jew and Gentile territory. b) In the way it is written, the Gospel of Mark calls attention to the lived experience of a people under Roman occupation in a way that is not dissimilar to the experiences of post-colonial societies. The stories of Mark 5 parallel the lived experience in the

Caribbean; the man, woman and child triad in the chapter provides a point of departure to reflect upon troublesome aspects of the circumstances of life in the Caribbean. c) The stories in Mark 5 reflect the ways in which power distorts, diminishes and dehumanizes human life in the service of empire and domination. d) Fascination with spirits (spirit/demon/duppy) is a part of the African cultural retention in the Caribbean and a part of the coping mechanism of the people of the Caribbean. Demons and demon possession are also a neglected part of the story of the New Testament as far as scholarly output is concerned. Mark 5.1-20 is among the longest passage and the most detailed account of demon-possession in the New Testament. It therefore provides an opportunity to engage the subject theologically with the utmost sobriety. e) The chapter includes accounts of rejection and ridicule of Jesus and provides a point of departure to reflect upon the resilience of and resistance by forces opposed to the project of renewal, wholeness and liberation inaugurated in Jesus. f) Legion who answers the question what is your name by saying “my name is legion for we are many” provides an opportunity to grapple with the issue of the distortion of identity and the interiorization of anger and oppression which is central to this project.

This paper will elaborate the above assertions. It will then develop the central message of the paper in terms of the mission of Jesus. It will indicate that by bringing the grace and power of the kingdom of God to bear upon the lives of these marginal figures, dehumanized man, exploited woman and child at risk, Jesus has set the pattern of humanization, transformation and liberation. Attention will also be paid to the resilience of forces opposed to the mission of Jesus. Questions will be raised about the nature of the project of transformation and liberation in light of what is revealed in the story about the recalcitrance of forces of oppression and their collaborators. Finally, the paper will explore options for ministry and public policy which arise from the mission of transformation and liberation carried on by Jesus in Mark’s story of Jesus.

a) *The Gospel of Mark as an Anti-establishment Document*

In the history of interpretation, the Gospel of Mark was first neglected because it did not meet the liturgical and catechetical needs of the church in the way that it was thought that its synoptic successors, Matthew and Luke did.¹ However, since the twentieth century Mark has been the most popular of the Synoptics for scholars. This has been largely due to conclusions drawn by many in respect of Marcan priority.² The interest in Marcan studies which began in the twentieth century has been intensified since it has become the site of new interpretative strategies. Fernando Belo's Materialist Reading of Mark has been succeeded by Ched Myers' Political Reading of Mark. The use of Mark as the site to illustrate a Caribbean liberation hermeneutic is attempting to build on this emerging pattern.

Brian Incigneri locates the provenance of Mark in 71 C.E. and contends that Mark is a 'pathetic' Gospel, seeking to engage with and meet the needs of Christians who were struggling with recent persecution.³ Ched Myers sees Mark's Gospel as a manifesto. He contends that it is written to those committed to God's work of justice, compassion and liberation in the world and willing to raise the wrath of the empire.⁴ For Myers, Mark has been fundamental to the genesis of the radical discipleship movement. He cites as support Eduard Schweizer's synopsis of Mark's thesis that "discipleship is

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, (1999), 159.

² Ibid.

³Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: the Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*, Leiden, Boston (2003) 426.

⁴ Ched Myers, *Binding The Strong Man: A Political Reading of the Mark's Stories of Jesus*, Orbis, MaryKnoll, (1988) 11.

the only form in which faith in Jesus can exist.”⁵ Myers locates the provenance of Mark in the *locus imperium* between 66-70 C.E and indicates that Mark is an anti-establishment document.⁶

Suggestions that Mark is an anti-establishment document find rich textual support in Mark’s stories of Jesus in the following ways:

(i) *The theme of conflict in Mark’s narrative:*

By referring to Mark as an anti-establishment document it is being suggested that Mark presents to the story of Jesus not as one seeking to lend plausibility to social reality or giving normative dignity to its practical imperatives. Rather the stories of Jesus are presented in ways that unmask and uncover the workings of the inner structure, under-pinning and network of things as they are with the intention of challenging, subverting and overturning them. It is being further suggested that the stories do not present reformist but revolutionary strategies. The aim of these strategies is to delegitimize and disestablish by a pressure from below with new ideas, new norms and creating a new ethos.

Mark presents Jesus as a figure with whom the established Jewish religious leadership had occasion to be in conflict from the outset of his ministry. The plot to kill Jesus was not one hatched in the week of his passion, after

⁵ Myers (11) cites Eduard Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship*, Studies in Biblical Theology (SCM, London).

⁶ Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark: An Early Christian to Roman Imperial Propaganda*, Mohr Siebeck, (2008), 76, is unconvincing in his determination that the prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple is post-factum and has tipped the arguments in favor of a composition and date no earlier than 70 C. E. His offer of two internal factors, eschatological expectation and the presence of world-wide mission as support for the lower limit of 65 C.E. is more convincing.

his entrance into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the temple. It was hatched from very early stages of his ministry.⁷

- (a) Jesus is presented in Mark as one whose authority and teachings exceed that of the members of the establishment described as teachers of the law. (1.22)
- (b) The words put on the lips of the demonized men in chapters one and five are open to the interpretation that Jesus was regarded as a threat to the establishment: “what do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? (1.24) “What you want with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God don’t torture me.” (5.7)
- (c) Jesus appeared to treat with the customs and laws to which the members of the religious establishment attached a great deal of importance in a manner that could be seen provocation. This includes the fact that he healed on the Sabbath. Put differently, the Sabbath did not inhibit his miracle working activities. (1.29-34; 3.1-6).⁸ He provided justification for his disciples of doing “what is unlawful on the Sabbath,” by citing an example from David in the OT. (2.24ff) He introduced the revolutionary and anti-establishment idea that the Sabbath was made for man and

⁷ Mark 3.6; this is the climax of the story of the healing of the man with the paralyzed hand. It is presented at the early stages of Jesus’ public ministry. The Fourth Gospel places the cleansing of the temple after the first miracle, the turning of water into wine in John 2 and like Mark develops the plot of conflict and misunderstanding with the Jewish establishment. Mark also places the cleansing of the Temple towards the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry rather than at the outset, but he develops the idea of a plot from the time of his ministry in Galilee.

⁸ The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, who had a fever is deemed to have taken place on the Sabbath because it suggests that a miracle took place as soon as he left the synagogue, (1.29) while other miracles took place “that evening after sunset.” 1.32

not man for the Sabbath. (2.27) He downplayed the importance of activities of personal piety like fasting by suggesting that such activities had merely a cosmetic impact in the face of the need for more fundamental changes. (2.18-22)

- (d) The offer of forgiveness of sins was intended to establish beyond doubt the nature of Jesus' authority (2.10) and therefore to throw down the gauntlet to the religious establishment.
- (e) The use by Jesus of the not too subtle parable of the wicked tenants (12.1-12) infuriated the religious establishment and cemented their intention to arrest Jesus. (12.12)
- (f) The discourse given by Jesus on the tradition of the Elders criticized the religious establishment for superficiality and hypocrisy and exposed the shallowness of rituals and regulations insisted upon by the religious leaders and which were burdensome to the people. (7.1-23)

Throughout the Gospel of Mark both the actions and the teachings of Jesus placed him in direct conflict and confrontation with the Jewish religious establishment. From very early in his public ministry there was evidence of the intention to engineer the demise of Jesus. Each new encounter between Jewish authorities and Jesus was used by them to seek the arrest or trap him. The confrontation between Jesus and the political authorities that is the officials and representatives of the Roman Empire was far more subtle. It will be a working hypothesis of this project that the references to demons and evil spirits through Mark's Gospel is a part of the hidden transcript which were ways of speaking about empire and a way of betraying the oppression by evil forces upon the lives of the people in the far flung places of empire. It will be argued below that this is the way Mark uses to speak about the resistance and challenge by Jesus in response to oppression

marginalization and distortion over the lives of people by the powers that be.

(ii) *The Use of Crowd in Mark*

Mark's stories of Jesus have managed skillfully to integrate two apparently opposite themes at one and the same time. On the one hand Mark presents Jesus as a reticent and reluctant Messianic figure and on the other hand there are all the appearances of a mass popular movement surrounding Jesus public ministry. In Mark stories of exorcism, of which the story of Legion is an exception (5.19), Mark silences the 'demons' in order to prevent them from making him known.⁹ Some miracle stories end with strict instructions to keep the account private: the leper is told "see that you don't tell this to anyone;" (1.43) the parents of the dead little girl restored to life are strictly instructed "not to let anyone know about this." (5.43). It can be argued that the instruction to keep the account private is in the service of refusal of Jesus to allow his ministries (the miraculous events) to be treated as light entertainment or the occasions for Jesus' own self-indulgence or self aggrandizement. In the case of the twelve year old girl, keeping the story private could have been meant to facilitate her getting on with her life without becoming the object of intrusive speculation into the past details of her life. However when it is put alongside the other stories in Mark in which Jesus appears to seek to evade the attention and adulation of the crowd (1.37,38) and particularly using the shorter reading (16.8) as the intended end of Mark's Gospel, it seems justifiable to deduce that the

⁹ Mark 1.25; 34; 2.11, 12; In both the account of the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenecian woman's daughter and the child with the epilepsy which Mark's describes as demonization there is no reference to the silencing of the demons. This is perhaps due to the flow of the narrative. In the account of Legion Jesus instructs the man, clothed and in his right mind to return to his home and people (from which Jesus is deported) and to declare "how much the Lord has done for you, and how much he has had mercy on you." (5.19) This is because Mark is using the intentional declarations in as subversive a manner as the withholding of Jesus identity.

reticence and reluctance of Jesus were strategic.¹⁰ The suggestion is being made therefore that Mark's stories of Jesus portrayed Jesus in a manner that would have been regarded as a threat to the establishment. Jesus therefore sought to avoid premature disclosure of his identity and that also prevented his ministry from suffering from association with popular distortions of messiahship. Jesus was arrested, tried and crucified in a manner consistent with the view that he was an insurgent and a threat to the establishment.

There is little doubt that Mark portrays Jesus in a way that suggests that he had mass following. Throughout the Gospel of Mark there is a great pull towards Jesus on the part of the crowd. The rigidity of ethnic cleavages does not appear in Mark: Jews and Gentiles appear to mingle in thronging Jesus. The crowd came from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon as well as from Galilee.¹¹ The crowd is comprised of artisans and peasants, women and children. At points Jesus takes steps to avoid the crowd and indicates that he has to guard the nature of his ministry from descending into rank populism and at other points he appears to deliberately limit their access to him.¹² The Marcan Jesus privileges the masses and responds to their plight, he shows compassion on them, feeds their hunger, heals their diseases and casts out their demons. In response the people are impressed with his authority and

¹⁰ Mark 16.8 "trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." Text critical conclusion that most reliable manuscripts end Mark's Gospel at this point would mean that the messianic secret remained in tact even after his resurrection.

¹¹ Mark 3.7-12.

¹² Mark does not develop the theme of Jesus' deliberate avoidance of becoming a bread and fish or a political messiah the way the Matthew and Luke positions it in the account of Jesus' temptation or the way the Fourth Gospel develops this idea in terms of the response of the crowd to his provision of food after feeding of the five thousand. See Matthew 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13 and John 6.25-27.

compare the teachers of the law unfavourably with him.¹³ Jesus selects and appoints his followers from among the common people and gives them authority to extend his reach and influence in response to the plight of the masses.¹⁴

Mark does provide a disclaimer to distance the ministry of Jesus from overt political challenge. He places that disclaimer on the lips of Jesus at the time of his arrest: Jesus insisted: “Am I leading a rebellion ... that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scripture must be fulfilled.”¹⁵ Despite this disclaimer a picture emerges of a Jesus whose crowd support would have placed him over against the religious establishment and no doubt in their eyes in a manner that would make him a threat to them. Nothing that he did in the way Mark presents Jesus would have caught the eye of the Roman imperial establishment, but in the role that was played by the members of the Roman imperial establishment in Jesus trial and crucifixion they were at best unwitting collaborators. The Marcan Jesus is therefore an anti-establishment figure.

b) Mark 5 and the Lived Experience in the Caribbean

Mark 5 reads like a page out of newspaper in the Caribbean setting out Caribbean reality. The three miracle stories are found in exactly the same sequence in Luke and Mark.¹⁶ Matthew interrupts the sequence by putting the healing of a paralytic, the call of Matthew and questions about fasting (Matt. 9.2-17) between the exorcism and the healing of the woman and the

¹³ Mk 1.22; 8.1,2.

¹⁴ Mk 3.13-19; 6.7-13.

¹⁵ Mk 14.48,9.

¹⁶ Matt 8.28-9.26; Lk.8.26-56

raising of the child. David Bruce Taylor contends that the three miracles should be read along with the miracle of the stilling of storm which immediately precedes them in Mark's account and that together they make an irrefutably persuasive statement about Jesus as Messiah.¹⁷

These stories are accounts of the human situation that Jesus confronted in Palestine. They are a dissection and a cross-section of life in the far flung places of empire. This is what one sees when one surveys empire, violent men, exploited women and diseased children (children whose future is at risk). In a day in the life of Jesus going from place to place, randomly he encounters men stripped of their dignity, women bereft of their self-confidence and children robbed of their future. The three stories not only present distressing situations but also paint a picture of a society on the edge of despair; one that has ran out of options. Each of the stories tells its own version of hopelessness. About the Legion it says "no one could restrain him anymore, even with chains; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces, and no one had the strength to subdue him" (5.4). Of the woman it said, "she had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better but rather grew worse" (26). When Jairus came to Jesus he said, "my daughter is at the point of death." (23) While Jesus stopped to heal the woman, people came from his house to say "your daughter is dead, why trouble the teacher any further." (35) And when Jesus seeks to challenge their despair with a word of hope, "she is not dead but sleeping; they laughed" (40) uproariously, derisively and dismissively.

Throughout the Gospel, there is a mainstreaming of the lot and experience of the working poor and the artisans. Mark privileges their struggles by his portrayal of Jesus as responding to the demonized, calling fishermen,

¹⁷ David Bruce Taylor (1992), 144.

helping older women overcome fever and dealing with the ordinary struggles of the poor in an evening of miracles. He ends the opening sequence of miracles in the first chapter with the cleansing of the leper. Mark 5 is the centre page of Marcan representation of Jesus as a challenge to systems of domination which have resulted in the marginalization of the mass of the people and the distortion of their lives. Mark's story of Jesus is the people's story how he met them and showed compassion on them and brought the grace and power of the Kingdom of God to bear upon their lives.

c) Mark's Critique of Power and Domination

The use of the language of power and domination takes into account the complex of issues involved in discussions of certain words used in the NT that seem to speak to the surplus capacity of evil in its superhuman or supernatural dimensions. Such words include principalities, powers, rulers, dominions, authorities, evil angels and demons. Marva Dawn¹⁸ who critiques Walter Wink's trilogy on "the Powers" offers three types of interpretation of these "evil powers" or "principalities and powers": She suggests that there is a demythological approach led by Rudolf Bultmann, the personal demon approach led by John Stott and a structural approach led by Cullman and others.¹⁹ A fourth option however is possible which has not been offered by Dawn but may yield some fruit is the contextual approach. This is the approach that seeks to identify the principalities and powers as they manifest themselves in a given context.

¹⁸ Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*, (2000 Schaff Lectures Pittsburg Theological Seminary, Eerdmans Publishing House, Grand Rapids, (2001) 10,11.

¹⁹ Dawn, also Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, (1951) 257-58; John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, (1979) 263-67; See also Visser't Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ*; Cullman's *Christ and Time*: Albert H. van Del Huevel *These Rebellious Powers* Friendship Press, New York, (1965).

Mark's Gospel presents Jesus in an intentionally political manner that seeks to challenge the imperial domination over the lives of the people including Jews and Gentiles. He does so in a way that avoids the popular distortions of Messiahship that were abroad in the society. What has been described therefore as reticence on the part of Jesus in respect of his messiahship was to avoid any direct associations with other rebellions, uprisings and anti-Roman movements that were taking place in especially places like Galilee. The Galilean and Judean people were prominent among peoples subjected by Rome for their persistent resistance and rebellion. They were the most adamant in reasserting their independence and defending their traditional way of life, persisting in their resistance for nearly two centuries.²⁰

Therefore the tradition of which Mark makes use and the stories of Jesus are presented in manner that shows Jesus as unmasking, confronting, disemboweling the powers and their collaborators (the Jewish religious establishment). The stories are clad with the hidden transcript or a sub-text which carries the message of the challenge and victory over the powers. William Stringfellow offers the following description of the principalities and powers:

Legion in species, number, variety, and name; creatures that are fallen (meaning that they thrive in chaos, confusion and competition); an inverse dominion (one that works backward—not to foster life but to dehumanize); not benign, but aggressive; causing all to be victims (with or without their knowledge); capturing leaders as acolytes enthralled by their own enslavement; engaged in rivalry with

²⁰ Horsely, 35.

each other since their very survival is always at stake;
and creating a new morality of survival.²¹

The use of references to demons in Mark fits easily into the categories that Stringfellow has suggested. The notion of hidden transcript is being nuanced for the purposes of this discussion. It is being suggested that it was Mark's purpose to present Jesus as a challenge and response to Roman domination and in so doing to unmask the real nature of the principalities and powers of which it was a part and its most self-evident representation.²² It was also Mark's purpose at one and the same time to avoid popular distortions of messiahship. It is for this reason that Mark uses the language of demons. The use of the language of demons contemplates evil and its impact on human life, and by the using the reference to demon also obscures anything else that may have been in view by the intention of the writer. The Legion narrative in Mark 5 is the most developed expression of Mark's intention. Without seeking to make the same point, Louise Lawrence has offered the insight that 'the Legion narrative presents a multiple personality that is fragmented and self-destructive: indeed many have read the name as a 'double-voiced,' referring to Rome's military occupation of land.²³

²¹ Dawn, 5, 6 cites William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*, Word Books, Waco, (1973) 77-94.

²² Principalities and powers is Pauline language not Marcan. In Eph 6.10ff Paul speaks of the triad of evil in its surplus capacity and superhuman and supernatural dimensions in terms of principalities and powers, rulers of this dark world and spiritual wickedness in the heavenly realm. In the Apocalypse the triad is represented as the dragon the beast, and the false prophet, Rev 12, 13. In Mark 3 the triad is spoken of as Satan, Beelzebul and demons.

²³ Louise J. Lawrence, *The Word in Place: Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts*, SPCK, (2009), 35.

Mark chapter five presents Jesus as crossing boundaries and moving interchangeably between Gentile and Jewish territories. Boundary Crossing is the observation made by Brain K Blount and Bas MF Van Iersel²⁴ to capture how Jesus confronts the human situation in *locus imperium*. Mark's narrative not only tells a human story, but it offers a critique on the existing power structure, both religious and political. The scene in Chapter five portrays Jesus moving betwixt and between gentile and Jewish territory, between Decapolis and Capernaum, and between a place under direct rule by Rome and a place in Galilee in which the local religious leadership elite were either witting or unwitting collaborators with Roman rule. Galilee was also a hotbed of opposition to Roman rule from which many uprisings and rebellion emerged. Blount suggests that Mark was interacting with his own context in this particular section. He says:

However, the context of culture suggests that for the community to which Mark wrote, the times were anything but good. Threatened by false messianisms of nationalism, the colonial domination of Rome, the economic subjugation of the subsistence living, and the institutional controls of a holiness/cultic ideology, the proclamation of a good news to the people of the land suggests some form of outside intervention.²⁵

The boundary crossing of Jesus goes beyond the physical movement and the crossing of territorial boundaries decided among political forces however, formidable. Jesus also crosses boundaries which are psychological and social and reinforced by religious and social conventions. To make this

²⁴ Blount considers the message of the Gospel of Mark is about boundary crossing of particular relevance to the African American Church. Van Iersel considers this to be the theme of Mark 4.35 -8.21.

²⁵ Blount 90,1.

clear however, one must pay careful attention to what may be called to subtext in the story.

Most commentators discuss the fact that in the Synoptics, the stories of the healing of the woman with flow of blood and the raising of Jairus' are kept together. Dibelius and Bultmann conjectured that originally the two stories may have existed separately. Vincent Taylor points out that Schmidt holds that the interweaving of the stories is due to historical recollections.²⁶ There are some obvious allusions that connect the two stories: Jairus' daughter is twelve years old, the length of the time of the woman's illness. Jesus is touched by the woman (an act of ritual defilement according to Leviticus 15.25-30) and touches the dead little girl, which also risked ritual defilement. As Jerry Camery-Hoggatt has pointed out, the true foil for the woman is not the little girl, but her father Jairus. He says:

It is the woman's faith that "makes her well" in v 34, just as it is Jairus who must "merely believe" (v. 36). Both Jairus and the woman fall at Jesus' feet, although the effect of that gesture is somewhat different in each case.... Yet the reader senses that Jairus—the ruler of the synagogue—must learn from the woman, must be prepared by the healing of the woman, for the raising of his daughter which follows.²⁷

However there is something of more profound significance that is taking place in the interweaving of the two miracle stories. Two important textual details deserved to be noticed. The first is the fact that even though Mark introduces Jairus by name, a rare enough occurrence by Mark's standard,

²⁶ Vincent Taylor.

²⁷ Jerry Camery-Hoggatt 1992, 138.

three times in the short narrative he identifies him as ruler of the synagogue. (22, 35, 36). It is Mark's purpose that in this miracle story who Jairus was, the ruler of the synagogue, must always be kept in mind.

The second textual note is that in describing the woman's condition Mark uses precisely the language of Leviticus (*en rusei aimaton*).²⁸ If a woman with a similar condition were to have to been discovered in Jerusalem, Levitical rules might have been enforced by the priest. However, this is in the region of Galilee where the local people are under the watch of the synagogue. The Synagogue rulers would have been required so far away from the temple in Jerusalem to remember to enforce the Levitical regulations against the woman, for her mandatory exclusion from the community during her period of uncleanness, in her case twelve years.

What we have here in Mark 5 is a challenge and response to power by the saving action of Jesus Christ. Legion has identified Jesus as the Son of the Most High God. The scene of the first miracle is in Gentile territory which is under direct Roman rule. The narrative about the exorcism is suffused with military imagery. "Legion" was a reference to the occupy force in Palestine. Myers has pointed out that pigs do not travel in herd, *agele* may be used as a reference to a military platoon; *epetrepesen* is a military command and *ormesen* in 5.13 connotes soldiers rushing into battle. The narrative is therefore suffused with Roman military vocabulary. There might also be an allusion to the drowning of Pharaoh's army as if enemy soldiers were being swallowed by hostile waters.²⁹ So that on one level Mark portrays Jesus as dealing with demons and on another level it is visible presence of empire, the Roman army, that is being routed. Jesus is therefore a challenge to the distortion and oppression of empire, but not in the ways that false messiahs promote, instead, in a way that sets the captive

²⁸ This is different from Matthew 9.20; *gune aimorroousa*.

²⁹ Myers, 191; al a Derrett (1979), 5.

free and set people on course for the rest of their lives, he breaks the bonds of oppression. The language used calls attention the true nature of the evil that was being challenged by the irruption of the Kingdom of God in their midst made manifest in Jesus Christ. It was evil represented but not exhausted by political domination.

In the region of Galilee where the second and third miracles take place, there is Roman oppression. But the real source of pressure on the daily lives of people is what their religion does to them. It proscribes their lives in ways that hem them in on every side. Mark has made this point earlier through his argument with the leaders about the healing or eating on the Sabbath (2.23-3.6). The noose around the necks of their people put on by legalistic religion which strains at a gnat and swallows the camel is demeaning and life-distorting, preventing people from being active subjects over their own lives. By bringing the synagogue ruler together with the woman who on his say so would have been prevented from enjoying social intercourse with others and fellowship in the synagogue, because of her condition, and whose touch was a defilement, was Mark's way of showing Jesus challenging things as they were. A comment was being made on the type of faith community spawned by the synagogue movement. Jairus approaches Jesus first but when the woman presents herself Jairus is made to wait until the grace and power of God is brought to bear upon her life in the way of her healing and salvation. By forcing Jairus to wait in line while Jesus tends to this woman, who was socially excluded, a profound challenge was being made on Jairus' way of seeing people like her and on his understanding the grace of God.

d. Spirits as a Part of Caribbean Cosmology

The language of demon possession or "having unclean spirits" which Mark uses is seeking to give expression to two things about the evil in the world: the first is that evil has an extra-dimension to it. There is a surplus capacity which is super-human if not supernatural. The second is to talk about domination or oppression including

domination by imperial forces in the context of principalities and powers or demons, is not meant to be an abstract political discussion. Rather it is to give expression to or to come to terms with such realities where it gets to the rub. It is to give concreteness to this reality. It matters most in terms of its impact on people to diminish the quality of their lives and distort life itself. The narratives are therefore intended to portray the impact on individual human lives in ways that show that evil distorts, diminishes and destroys human life. When power has its way it is unimaginably vicious with its tyranny and cruelty. The grim picture of imperial power conveyed in the stories of demon possession is what power does, “unrestrained, unregulated, unaccountable, totally self-possessed, arrogant, sacrilegious and idolatrous”³⁰ What it does and what it means is, “it has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.” (Mark 9.22). It also means, “night and day among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones.” Mark attributes to the work of evil spirits Mark attributes to the work of evil spirits both scenes the father with the epileptic son and the man among the tombs in Gerasa.

Caribbean people have this fascination with spirits for understandable reasons: The majority of the people of the Caribbean are people of African descent. As a part of the African cultural retention no one would be surprised to discover the African cosmology of the interface and interaction between spirits and human experience survives in the Caribbean. It must also be taken into account the fact that the legacy of the trauma of the Middle Passage and three hundred years of enslavement have never been atoned for or cleansed. Caribbean psyche is undeniably shaped by these experiences. Death has been a dominant power in the Caribbean from origin to self-government. Death has been reality of the indigenous people, the Tainos and Ciboneys that have been decimated. The Caribs especially the Black Caribs, Garifuna that resisted European colonization on the last island to be colonized St Vincent, those that were not killed were exiled to the

³⁰Burchell Taylor, *Saying No to Babylon*, Xpress Litho Ltd, Kingston (2006), 86.

Central American mainland.³¹ The Middle Passage was the passage of death; a full third of those who were expropriated from the continent of Africa perished at sea. The rate of homicide in the Caribbean as has been noted above is three times the world average and in Jamaica it is six times average homicide rates around the world. Death is a dominant feature of Caribbean reality. The resort of language of spirits or demons or duppies is an attempt to come to terms with and account for such realities as living in the midst of death. It has also been used from time to time as a way of fighting back or responding to such realities. This was certainly the case with Tacky's rebellion and his band of Obeah men, with legend of Nanny of the Maroons and with Voodoo in Haiti. In all of these instances a facility (real or imagined) to make use of superhuman if ancestral or nether worldly powers to counteract the forces which confronted them was called upon.

The image of legion if not the name legion, has been used by the powerful and vested interest throughout the history of the Caribbean to account for anti-establishment figures that have emerged on the scene from time to time and in one place or another. This was the case with Alexander Bedward who was confined to a lunatic asylum with the effect of killing his anti-establishment movement and scattering his followers. The image of legion was also part of the characterization of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, in the 1920s and 1930s Jamaica, who died in Britain at age forty, broke and with a broken heart. Rastafarainism in the heady days of the 1960s was treated as a movement of madmen, miscreants and misfits. Spirits, spiritualists and spiritists are prevalent in the Caribbean. Pentecostalism, Myalism and Pocomania (little madness) are the religion of the masses. It is the case that disempowered people find that the only place in which they have any power, is power over spirits. It is important to note therefore that "legion" is a double entendre. On the one hand it is a signifier of oppression and on the other hand it is the alienation of one who opposes oppression and is broken in the fight against oppression. Language about spirits becomes language about reality and in response to their reality.

³¹ I E Kirby, and C I Martin, *The Rise and Fall of the Black Caribs* (Garifuna), Cybercon Publications, Toronto (2004) 1-56.

One of the ways to account for Mark's use of demons or unclean spirits in the Gospel is to speak about power by way of a hidden transcript. An example of a hidden transcript may be given by referring to the recent production by Multi-Phonics LX, a British all white, all male group from Reading University of a Jamaican folk song, "this long time gal mi neva see you." The lyrics of the song which was well rendered go as follows:

Dis long time gal mi neva see you
Come mek mi hol' your hand
Dis long time Gal mi neva see you
Come mek mi hol' your hand.
Peel head John Crow sit up inna tree top
Eat out the blossom;
Come mek mi hol' you hand gal, mek mi hol' you hand.

The words are taken on face value but they are about something else. The song was written to welcome the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Jamaica in 1966 after Jamaica gained political independence in 1962. Her previous visit, the inaugural visit of her reign was thirteen years earlier in 1953. The Jamaican folklorist Miss Lou wrote the song to welcome the queen's visit and in the song she provides the Queen Elizabeth II with her assessment of things as they are: "Peel head John Crow sit up inna tree top, eat out the blossom..." the folklorist complains that social situation of the country since its independence is the same as it was before; the planter and merchant class (which she characterizes as scavengers with receding hair lines) are creaming off the fruits of the economy leaving nothing to the mass of the people to enjoy. The background and context in which the song was written give poignancy and potency to its message, a message that is often lost on those who sing the song.

It is being contended that in Mark's Gospel the use of demons, especially in the case of the Legion narrative has a hidden transcript. Legion that is presented has

interiorized oppression, (“my name is Legion for we are many”) he is tormented (“crying out among the tombs”) and a source of torment (“night and day”) he is out of control and uncontrollable (“no one could bind him anymore not even with a chain. [For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.”) he was dangerous and endangered (“he lived among the tomb”) more at home among the dead than among the living.³²

Herman C. Waetjen makes the following remark about the significance of the name Legion. He says:

As a signifier the name “Legion” seems to bear several layers or levels of meaning. First, it is a Latin military term and links the demoniac to the institution of the Roman army. But what is the nature of the relationship between the two? Most likely it is colonialism! By its economic exploitation and political suppression, its social disruption and systematic denial of all attributes of humanity to its subjugated people, colonialism creates an atmosphere of living death which fosters a systematic breakdown of the human personality.³³

All of the victims and objects of Jesus’ miracle working power in Mark’s Gospel are anonymous.³⁴ Their stories are narrated not for their sakes but they are

³² Matt 8.28 “they were so violent that no one could pass that way.”

³³ Herman C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark’s Gospel*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, (1975), 115.

³⁴ The exception is Jairus. Jairus was not himself a victim though his daughter was in need of a miracle. The story is the only miracle event in Mark in which a name is offered.

presented as typical of what is found in the context and times in which Jesus' ministered in the far flung places of empire. Their reality of oppression, marginalization and distortion is the other side of the story of *Pax Romana*, they are the price of *Pax Romana*.³⁵ "The Pax Romana enabled the Romans to extract goods from the peoples they had subjected, in the form of tributes, in order both to support their military forces and to pacify the Roman masses with 'bread and circus'."³⁶

Mark's Legion narrative is the longest account in the three synoptic gospels and is the longest account of demon possession in the New Testament. The details are to be read as Myers and others have correctly interpreted them to be about more than merely stories of demons or disembodied spirits. The details are to be read in the light of the parable of the binding of the strong man in Mark 3. The discussion of the binding of the strong man in response to the accusation from the teachers of the law that the source of Jesus' powers of exorcism was Beelzebul prepares the reader for the encounter with Legion. Mark describes Legion as one whom no one was strong enough to bind or control. In the narrative encounter with Jesus Legion meekly surrenders and the hosted demons plead for clemency, not to be sent out of the region but rather to be sent to occupy the pigs (5.12). Mark's story of Jesus is of one who can face the unmitigated power of evil and is able to vanquish evil, its agents and collaborators with dispatch.

However it is to be noted that his name is of secondary importance in the narrative; it is more important to identify him as synagogue ruler.

³⁵ Richard Horsely, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Order*, Fortress Press Minneapolis, (2003), see discussion on Roman imperialism 20-34

³⁶ Horsely 34

d) Legion and Disorientation and Distortion of Identity among Subject Peoples

The use of the word “legion” at the time when Mark wrote his gospel towards the end of the seventh decade of the first century (66-70) inevitably invoked dread and terror; as well as evoking and deepening the sense of trauma among the peoples of Galilee. Legion was the strike force of the Roman imperialism that occupied frontier territories such as Judea and Galilee. The relationship between imperial Rome and subject people in places like Galilee was simple. Taxation and tribute extracted from the people maintained and fed the legion occupying the land as the most visible face of Roman oppression. The revenue taken on the backs of the people sponsored the elaborate games in the centre of empire. Failure to comply with their obligations to pay over tributes, revenues, duties and taxes was met firm, resolute and extreme measures. Even more severe measures were reserved to stamp out any form of rebellion and uprising. This is how Josephus describes it:

They were accordingly beaten and subjected to torture of every description ... and then crucified opposite the walls. Some five hundred or more were captured daily. ... [Titus] hoped that the spectacle might induce the Judean to surrender for fear that continued resistance would involve them in a similar fate. The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their number that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies.³⁷

Horsely offers his own useful terse assessment of the terror and vengeance exacted on subject people by Roman imperialism. He says:

³⁷ Horsely, 29; see Josephus, “War” 5.449-51.

There is no way we can understand such practices as crucifixion, mass slaughter and enslavement, massacres of whole towns and annihilation of whole peoples other than as purposeful attempts to terrorize subjected peoples.³⁸

He goes on to talk about such forms of viciousness as crucifixion including unburied bodies as carrion for wild beasts and birds of prey.³⁹ The social arrangement included a pyramid of patronage with a rigid social stratification. Some lived in extravagant opulence and others in dire poverty and want. The general populace was treated like props never taken into consideration as the centre of anything that was worthwhile. They were subjected to the arbitrary and unregulated use of power, unaccountable and unrestrained. The name legion therefore necessarily invoked this sense of terror and trauma.

Generally “legion” is treated among New Testament scholars as derangement and schizophrenia. Waetjen describes him as “a violent schizophrenic devastated by a fragmented psyche and deeply estranged from himself and his society. Abandoning his fellow human beings, he has taken residence with the dead, but his despair has not been alleviated. In his desolation he continues to be tormented by self-hatred and impelled to self-destruction.”⁴⁰

Franz Fanon is quoted to give credence to the view that this type of deranged behavior is consistent underdevelopment. Fanon says:

³⁸ Horsley, 27.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Waetjen, 115.

The native will strengthen the inhibitions which contain his aggressiveness by drawing on the terrifying myths that are so frequently found in underdeveloped communities. These are maleficent spirits which intervene every time a step is taken in the wrong direction, leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs, zombies ... which create around the native a world of prohibitions, of barriers and of inhibitions far more terrifying than the world of the settler.⁴¹

Waetjen furthers his point by arguing that “the demoniac is possessed by many unclean spirits. As such he is *the representation* of a gentile ‘(dis)order’ and (dis)integration, and there are many more like him who are afflicted with the same derangement.”⁴² The issue is not what the man was but how the narrative is being used by the Gospel writer. The details provided by the narrative are useless if all the writer wishes to convey is the fact of the “legion’s” derangement. Furthermore demon possession in the Gospel of Mark seems to have a wider reference than simply to schizophrenia or madness. Rather as has been asserted above the encounter with Legion is being used to speak at least in part about the encounter of the people of the land with the occupying force. This is why the narrative is suffused with military language. However while the occupying force is the representative of the evil that has brought disorientation, disorder, life-

⁴¹ Waetjen 116, cites Hollenbach, “Jesus Demoniacs and Public Authorities,” 547; see Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York Grove Press, 1968), 55-61, and 249-310.

⁴²Ibid., 117.

diminution and destruction, the occupying force does not exhaust the evil on the land.

Significance is to be given to the fact that there is an interiorization of this oppression so that the people have lost a sense of themselves. Legion, (“my name is legion for we are many”) is at one and the same to the signifier of the disorientation and self-distortion and a parody of those collaborators who are more Roman than the Romans. The problem is therefore two-fold: on the one hand there is the problem of occupation and expropriation of the assets and resources of the people by a dreadful and terrifying force; and on the other hand there is the fact that the mores and ethos of this alien force have been interiorized so that the people have lost the sense of what they have and who they are. This is something with which those who live in the shadow of empire are entirely familiar. Legion is an account of the loss of identity, the eroding of the sense of self and the sense of place. This is the reasons in the shadow of empire subjects become clients and consumers and mimic men. Legion confronts the reader with the fact of disorientation and distortion brought by the forces of oppression. However, it also confronts the reader with the fact that oppression distorts the consciousness of the oppressed foisting upon the oppressed self-doubt and the destruction of self-belief and ultimately with a distortion of the sense of self. This is what was understood by philosophers and prophets in the Caribbean that spoke about “emancipate yourself from mental slavery for none but ourselves can free our minds.”

The image of legion in Caribbean experience is a double entendre. It may be used to describe figures that have been demonized by the powerful as well as those who have appeared as an outcome of oppression and alienation to be entirely possessed by demons. In this “legion” means both to be demonized and to be demon possessed. Movements like Rastafarianism, and Revivalism (Pocomania) and to a lesser extent, Myal and Obeah represented at in their earliest incarnation such profound departures from

the status quo ante and existed as counter points of the dominant cultural ethos as to be characterized as movements of madness. However, they were often people interacting with and rejecting domination by the assertion of movements of survival and self-liberation from below. Such movements have not been monolithic or pure but have also included elements of self-rejection and superstition.

Figures like Tacky, Alexander Bedward, and Marcus Garvey in Jamaica, Busso in Barbados, Toussaint L'Overture and Bookman in Haiti, Joseph Cheotyer in St Vincent whom later history was to accord with the status of heroes and freedom fighter were demonized by the ruling elite in their time. On the other hand, the image of Legion depicts individual historical figures that were completely alienated but are no less the product of the life-diminishing and life-distorting realities of the Caribbean: The crime bosses (dons) and gunmen from Jamaica's killing fields are the most self-evident examples of this. On May 23rd 2010, there was a brazen and organized assault upon the Jamaica state by gunmen, they assassinated law enforcement personnel, razed police stations to the ground and they barricaded themselves in communities from which to launch attack upon the police. Eventually the police gained the upper hand, met their objectives and crushed some of these criminal gangs. One of those killed was Cedric "Doggie" Murray whose diary and his gun was recovered from his body. Murray is one a long list of criminal gunmen who have met their demise, but his diary included comments and statement that made him an unwitting parallel with the Garasene demoniac, or Legion.⁴³

⁴³ The Sunday Gleaner and The Sunday Observer newspapers of September both carried excerpts from the Diary of Cedric "Doggie" Murray a man who had been on the police "Most Wanted" list for more than seven years. He was shot and killed by the police and his journal which he kept was taken from his body along with a firearm after he was killed. The diary which had sporadic entries over a period of all most three years chronicled his journey and his emotions in a life of crime which began at about age 11 in primary school but came into real focus after he was deported from

Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner corroborate this view of demon possession when they make the following observation:

We are not talking about disembodied spirits free from the affairs of men and women. The powers are an indication of a supra-individual dimension to the problems of life. It is not just the case that there are individuals who need dealing, for what confront Jesus are not merely disturbed individuals but persons who are taken over by a power whose characteristics are manifest in disruptive behavior and social dislocation. They are, as it were indicators of the distortion of the world, whose distance from 'normal' people is itself a sign that the latter allow those designated abnormal or possessed by unclean

USA in 2001 and joined the "Stone Crusher Gang". It told of his loneliness and that his gun was his best friend. It told of his failed love life, his frustration at not being able to see his son, and his frequent narrow escape from the police that he called "Babylon". He confessed to loving "the Lord with passion" and acknowledged that he did the things he did because of "Sin". He spoke of his loyalty to the notorious crime family of Lester Coke and his son Christopher Dudus Coke, and chronicled his efforts to defend Dudus against capture by the police on May 24th 2010. Christopher Dudus Coke has since been extradited to the USA to answer drug and firearm charges. Police allegations against Murray were that he was an itinerant assassin and had killed more than one hundred persons since 2001. See below: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20100905/news/news1.html>;
<http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20100905/lead/lead1.html>;
<http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20100905/news/news21.html>;
http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Gangster-says-he-started-life-of-crime-from-primary-school-days_7933895.

spirits to carry the burden or wider social dislocation.⁴⁴

This way of reading the story is corroborated by the fact that Jesus disallows Legion clothed and in his right mind from leaving Gerasa and Decapolis. The demons can be exorcised and swallowed by hostile waters but the rejection of one's home and people will do little to remove the self-negation, self-rejection and self-doubt occasioned by oppression and marginalization. Accepting one's location and space is part of one's self-acceptance.

The Message of Mark 5: A Stranger in the Midst

A Caribbean reading is struck by the fact that Mark positions Jesus as a stranger in the far flung places of empire. He is always coming and going, never domiciled in the area. The image of Jesus entering the region of the Gerasene in the Decapolis and then being deported from that place has rather striking parallels in the Caribbean. The parallels include the deportation of the five hundred Trelawny Town maroons from Flagstaff in St James to Halifax in Nova Scotia. From there some of the maroons eventually made their way to Sierra Leone in West Africa. The maroons had been fighting for the right of place and their sense of self. In the eyes of the planters and colonizers they were a threat to the peace of empire and the prosperity of the colony, they were mutinous and rebellious and deportation was chosen for them. The deportation of the Black Caribs from St Vincent to Honduras is also a striking parallel. They had wanted good for themselves. They fought the British and the French to keep possession of their land, the island chain of St Vincent and the Grenadines. After a long war of attrition they were finally defeated by a superior military force, the British military under the command of General Abercombe. However

⁴⁴ Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*, Biblical Foundations in Theology, General Editors, James D G Dunn, and James P Mackey, SPCK, (1990), 103,4.

Kirby and Martin describe their deportation after a long struggle for a more just and equal option in the following way:

At last in early October most of the Black Caribs, some 5080 of them, including... women and children gave themselves up. They consoled themselves that they were not the first, nor would they be the last people to be defeated in war. They had fought a god fight and been beaten by a great nation. The Caribs set sail for Roatan on March 11, 1797. It is alleged that by the time of their embarkation their numbers had been decimated by almost 50% by a malignant fever in Balliceaux.⁴⁵

Other parallels include Alexander Bedward whom they confined to a lunatic asylum, Marcus Garvey whom they exiled, Walter Rodney⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kirby and Martin 49, 50.

⁴⁶ Rupert Lewis, "Jamaican Black Power and Walter Rodney in 1968, A Private Archive", in Jamaica Journal, Institute of Jamaica 130 Anniversary Issue Vol. 32 Nos 1-2 43ff details the story of the October 1968 protest at the University of the West Indies Mona Campus to protest the banning of Walter Rodney a Guyanese National and Professor at the University who had travelled to Montreal to attend a black writers conference. Rodney was deemed by the Government of Jamaica to have been the leader of the Black Power movement and was declared *persona non grata*. The student protest moved the following resolution in the wake of Government banning black literature: "The Government of Jamaica has banned all publications by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Message to the Black Man* by Elijah Mohammed, and the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. These are books by conscious blacks following the footsteps of the Hon. Marcus Garvey and speaking against the oppression at the hands of whites. Every black man should read these books. We, a section of the black population meeting at Marcus Garvey's shrine on Sunday August 4th demand that the Government withdraw its ban on black people's literature. We also call upon all our black brothers and sisters to get hold of any of these books by Stokeley Carmichael,

whom they excluded, declared *persona non grata* and Claudius Henry who was imprisoned and whose son was hanged. Each of these insisted on a better life, a more just and equitable society especially to benefit the African majority in the population. The black majority were landless and poor and for generations were made a curse and a by-word. These who sought to empower them and challenge the status quo ante were variously persecuted and rejected.

The Caribbean reader accepts the contextual parallels with the situation in Galilee and Judea to which Jesus went. Like those regions the people of the Caribbean have experience of disfranchisement, dispossession and disorientation.

This Stranger who comes by boat has turned out to have welcomed parallels with those who have fought for the liberation and selfhood of the people of the Caribbean. However, what the Caribbean must first determine is whether this Stranger in the midst, this new arrival by boat, can be trusted. Caribbean existence has been defined by the boat. It is the boat that has effectively brought the Caribbean into being. The present composition of the population all have forebears who were brought by boat. The overwhelming majority were brought against their will and initially in circumstances that have proven disadvantageous to them. The food (mono-crop agriculture) produced in the Caribbean is exported to advantage of the North Atlantic. The food consumed (as well as textiles and equipment) consumed by the Caribbean is imported. The experts, consultants and policy paradigm as well as in the institutional framework of governance in the Caribbean are imported. It has been demonstrably

Elijah Mohammed and Malcolm X no matter what the government says." This is our fundamental right as black people. In response to this protest the army and police surrounded the University campus for two weeks.

the case that the outcomes of the trading relationships with the centres of which the Caribbean is periphery have resulted in the systematic self-impoverishment and under-development of the Caribbean.

Those who provided a sacred canopy for colonization, and defenders of things as they are who have sought to give legitimacy and render the population more docile and gullible originated elsewhere and came to the Caribbean by boat. Both Missionary theology and the its more modern counterpart, Gospel culture have demonstrated superficial commitment to challenging and change the status quo ante in the Caribbean. Missionary theology appeared to offer legitimacy to the plunder of the region by the emissaries from the North Atlantic as the will of God. Gospel culture appears to promote consumerism which inevitably results in a spike in importation of the goods and services from the North, as the sign of divine blessings. In a word then the boat has changed the world to the advantage of the North Atlantic and to the disadvantage of places like the Caribbean. The Caribbean is within its rights to be suspicious of this new arrival by boat: it wants to know whether he is different from other arrivals in the region. What will he do with what he has found in the region that is different from what other arrivals by boat have done to and with the region?

Mark anticipates this question and provides the response in the opening narrative in chapter 5. He uses the inclusio, vv 2 and 18. V 2 “and coming out of the boat,” and v 18, “and going into the boat”, frame the beginning and the end of the narrative. It there indicates that between leaving and re-entering the boat Jesus had made a contribution of enormous proportion and significance to the region of Decapolis.

TAMAR:
FULFILLING
PURPOSE

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The Christian Bible, like many other religious books, has its own worldview. It presents to readers a world of its own within a culture where the role of women was reduced to a mere child bearing, pleasure providing being. It consists of historical narratives, myths, moral codes, prayers, visions, prophetic writings and revelatory discourses. To be able to understand what is

written in the Bible one must have a clear understanding of its historical context and be open to the occasionally shocking truths. The world within the Bible is not one which provides the kind of comfort critics seek and so many have misused and mishandled its contents to complement their own worldviews. How we interpret the Bible is dependent on many things. There is the world within the text and the world in front of the text. We are often led to believe that our interpretation of the Bible must only derive from the world within the text or the opinions of those in charge of our Wednesday night Bible study sessions. Anything contrary to their opinion is considered an abomination. Nevertheless, the usefulness of the Bible is second to none!

This paper seeks to provide an analysis and background of Genesis 38 and the social context in which Biblical and Theological Studies are necessary, as well as the relevance of the text to these disciplines. In helping to discuss and develop my points I will be citing work done by various writers as well as attempting to bring to life the story of Tamar based on the world in front of the text; my world.

Interruptions are often perturbing, but they are sometimes vital.

Some years ago a couple that my wife and I had come to know told us of one such occasion. The wife knew how upset it made her husband to be interrupted in the middle of a project. Consequently, she walked up to him and stood quietly as he worked happily on a project in the garage. In due time he finished what he was doing and looked up, signalling his wife that it was now permissible to engage him in conversation. Her words took him totally by surprise. Calmly she reported, ‘The house is on fire.’ And it really was!”¹

Genesis 38: 1-30 presents a narrative within a narrative. It interrupts the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife in chapter 37 and 39 of the book of Genesis. I suppose the writer’s intention may have been to encourage readers to ignore Tamar’s story and the church’s lack of attention to that passage has proved such. However, the apparent intention of the writer is what has caused many biblical scholars to focus their attention on what had initially seemed like yet another historical account. Genesis 37 was focused on Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers. In chapter 39 we see Joseph again as the main character but this time he is being forced by Potiphar’s wife to have sexual relations with her. Genesis 38 is obviously quite an abrupt interruption of the Joseph cycle. Like some interruptions,

¹ Bob Deffinbaugh, “The Skeleton in Judah’s Closet: Genesis 38: 1-30,” <https://bible.org/book/export/html/116>.

Genesis 38 is, without a doubt, very important to the development of the argument in the book of Genesis. The word ‘Genesis’ means beginning or origin. The book of Genesis seeks to explain how things got to where they are ‘in the beginning’.² Joseph’s unfortunate sale into slavery juxtaposes the idea of how the Israelites ended up in Israel. Chapter 39 explains why the Egyptian sojourn was so important. Chapter 38 provides the setting against which the innocence of Joseph in chapter 39 stands out the more plainly. Genesis 39 and following describe the price which Joseph had to pay for the sins of his brothers. Chapter 38 suggests some of the consequences of the sin of Joseph’s sale which Judah suffered.

The story in Genesis 38:1-30 highlights the plight of a widow whose determination, resilience and bravery is of no comparison to any other woman in the Bible. Tamar became a member of Judah’s family when she was chosen by Judah as his first son Er’s wife. For reasons unknown to the reader, Er was considered wicked in the Lord’s sight and so the Lord put him to death. Tamar was then given to Onan, Er’s younger brother, to produce offspring for him. However, Onan refused to have children with Tamar so he practiced *coitus interruptus*. Onan’s action was seen as wicked in the Lord’s sight and so he was killed. Judah’s youngest and only living son Shelah was too young to marry Tamar and so Judah decided to send her back to her father’s house to live as a widow until Shelah became a man. Oblivious to Judah’s intentions, Tamar did as she was told believing all that Judah had said. Judah, it would appear, had no such intention!

Tamar’s story as is told in Genesis 38: 1-30 cannot be left to mere opinion when attempting to interpret it. The actions of all the

²Heb, *berishith*.

characters and the roles they each play in the story would be misinterpreted if the historical context of the time is not put into play. The world in front of the text would suggest that Tamar was being passed from bed to bed while the world within the text suggests that this was quite normal. The culture of the society then made 'special' provisions for the widows. They were to be taken care of. In Genesis 38:8 Judah says to his son Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother." According to the levirate law on marriage, a man is required to marry the childless widow of his brother to produce a child who will carry on his deceased brother's name so that the deceased brother's name will not be forgotten. Deuteronomy 25:7-10 states that if the brother of the deceased refuses to marry the widow, the widow must go to the city gate and inform the elders that her brother-in-law refuses to marry her. If the brother still refuses to marry the widow after the elders have spoken to him, the widow is required to loosen or remove the brother-in-law's shoes, spit in front of his face and say, "So shall be done to a man who refuses to build up his brother's house." In Tamar's case, none of this was done according to the law.

The story of Judah and Tamar is a uniquely complex narrative. It is laced with aspects of modern day drama that include issues such as morality, sex, justice and the like. On the first reading of the text, one may conclude Judah's treatment of Tamar as wise and Tamar's actions as unreasonably deceptive for the most part. From the world in front of the text I see nothing but selfless determination. In Genesis 38, Tamar is presented as a woman scorned. To have been the wife of two men who died while married to her is quite an unfortunate situation. It was so unfortunate that Judah was determined to rid his family of such a 'disease.' Judah was the law. He acted in accordance to his own rules rather than principle. The

levirate law on marriage demanded that Tamar be given to Judah's only remaining son. Like the society then, the law in many societies does nothing but provide comfort for victims. Tamar was tricked into resting safely in the comfort of the law. When the comfortable no longer provided comfort, she acted.

It may have been very easy for Tamar and any other woman in that society to muster up enough courage to take revenge but only Tamar could have played both victim and victor. Tamar's actions should not be reduced to the mere taking of revenge. She should not be placed in the category of mean spirited women whose lives provide entertainment for the devil. She was no devil's advocate. Her actions were not selfish but rather selfless. Selfish motives would have meant revenge. Selfish motives would have meant giving up. Selfish motives would have meant dishonouring her family by living the life of a prostitute. Selfish motives would have meant taking the easy way out. Nothing about Tamar's actions proved to be an easy way out. I see a selfless woman who was determined to fulfill her duty as a woman and as a wife in Judah's family. I can almost hear her thoughts as she waited for Judah to pass by. She calculated the cost and with sweating palms she affirmed, "If I perish, I perish!"

Vocation

I am a graduate of the Jamaica Theological Seminary programme, the BA in General Studies with an emphasis in Biblical and Theological Studies. Students pursuing a degree in General Studies would have already completed at least three (3) years of tertiary education. Among these persons would be teachers and nurses. At the end of the course, students with a BA General Studies would be equipped to play an active part in various ministries of the church as well as integrate previous studies to contribute to the development

of self, community and society. As the name suggests, General Studies does not focus on a specific area but also incorporates studies in Psychology, Philosophy and Ethical Thinking. These courses enable students to advance the kingdom of God in a more practical manner.

When enough is not enough

Biblical and Theological studies are disciplines that are very useful in the Jamaican society. They provide an avenue for understanding the nature of individuals and what is it that motivates them to behave as they do. Theology refers to the study of the nature of God and religious belief. An in-depth study of the Bible and of God will enable individuals the privilege of helping to be fruitful labourers in God's Kingdom. The kingdom of God is not a place above the clouds and it neither should be viewed as a home for the righteous. It is a place where the oppressed are favoured. It is a place wherein the poor are made to feel rich. It is here, among us. Below are some examples of the social contexts in which both disciplines are necessary.

Tamar's story highlights many of the social issues that currently plague the Jamaican society. The 'scales' of the justice system are apparently never balanced. The poor are almost always left to suffer as victims while the wealthy and their money continue to exert power over all. They are the law, just as Judah was the law. The law was only the law as Judah saw fit. Like Tamar, the oppressed in our society are continuously being told to roll over and die, especially when attempts are made toward changing the status quo. We must

never be content with what currently exists but rather strive to be the change. Tamar took the “If I perish, I perish” stance. We should too!

We may not live in a patriarchal society as Tamar did but the women of Jamaica do a fairly good job of marginalizing themselves. The very thing that Tamar and women like her stood against is the very thing Jamaican women, by virtue of how they treat themselves, beg to have. They subject themselves to all sorts of emotional abuse in the name of love. They adorn themselves as ‘temple prostitutes’ and position themselves at ‘city gates’ with no real sense of purpose but self gratification. They want to be treated fairly but live lives in total contradiction.

Identity and prominence is an issue that has been on the society’s agenda quite a lot in recent times. There is an ideological war raging among young people on who should wear crowns and who should be cleaning the crowns. Everybody wants to be top. Advertisements on the television and in print encourage the masking of worthlessness with fame and ‘bling’. No real emphasis is placed on hard work. Everybody wants to fit perfectly into lifestyles that continue to elude. We want to belong. We want to be different. We want to be trendsetters. Religious groups, television companies and celebrities are capitalizing on the opportunity. Our newspapers are flooded with discussions and debates on the usefulness or lack of usefulness of the church and/or Christianity. Programs such as Religious Hardtalk highlight the various religious groups in our society. People want answers. They want to belong. They want to rebel. What better way to assert my uniqueness than to go against the grain? The content of Biblical and Theological Studies will equip students to deal with such issues. It provides answers for the many questions for which Jamaica’s youth seek.

Pregnant with purpose

Whether we believe it or not, we were all given enough to sustain us and more than enough to fulfill our God-given purposes. All Tamar had was her femininity. The odds were against her. Her society was against her species. The law was against her. Genesis 38 provides the sort of encouragement ministry students need. While we may not be always aware of God's plans, we are still very much a part of the cast. God will use us to achieve His purpose by any means necessary. It is on us to fulfill our duty to our families and to society. Our determination to do that is confirmation that we are fit for even bigger feats. In David Runcorn's book *Choice, Desire and the Will of God: What More Do You Want*, we are compelled to view God not as a strict ruler but rather as a Creative Being who may very well require us to complete His will by unconventional means. We need more individuals who must take the stance Tamar took. If we perish, we perish. The responsibility was placed on Tamar to be the change and that she did! Simply assessing societal challenges is not enough. We must be the change. We too are pregnant with purpose. Whether the pregnancy came about as a result of an unfortunate situation or by choice, we are to use that for the betterment of our society.

Conclusion

Tamar's unfortunate situation brought about hope for all. She represents the oppressed, the disenfranchised and the hopeless. Her pregnancy gave birth to promise. Her bravery, determination and selflessness have earned her a place among the few women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1). Tamar was left to 'disappear' but instead she fought to be heard. Like Tamar, we too

must fight. We are to use all that we have been given to advance the kingdom of God.

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Love as Jesus Loves:
2014 Commencement
Address
Jamaica Theological
Seminary

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INTRODUCTION

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God. He that loves not knows not God, for God is love (1 John 4:7).

My little children let us love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

There are three words every human being needs to hear: “I love you”. The truth is you cannot be whole, you cannot be fulfilled as a human being, you cannot be authentic, unless you receive and return love. It has been proven that when a child is born if you give that child everything without touch and embrace, that child will wither and die. To be human is to love and be loved. To love is to be willing to take a risk with someone, other than yourself.

Love is a Feeling of Being Accepted

So how may we think about love? How may we talk about love? It has often been suggested that love is a feeling and there is much truth to that claim. Of course some people will say that the problem with love as a feeling, is today you feel loved, and tomorrow you don't and it is too precarious to associate love with a feeling. For example, today you graduates are excited about your love for Christ and Christ's love for you, a love made real through family, friends and great professors; and today love takes the form of ecstasy, because the circumstances are ideal. Today you graduates are

sustained and supported by family, congregants, friends and school. The community's love for you is palpable. We hold your hands, we hug you, we embrace you - we are here for you. But the time will come when you will stand alone. The time will come when we will not agree with you, sometimes we will be your critics. Today, it is all smiles and congratulations. But the time will come when you will not always receive our approbation, the time will come when the laughter will cease and you will bump up against fierce disagreements from congregants, your ecclesial denomination, family and friends.

The time will come when some of us here will seem to deny and disappoint you, the time will come when those you love and trust, those from whom you received love and to whom you returned love, will be quiet when you expected them to speak in your behalf. In those times you will discover the limits of love as feeling. Today, on graduation day love is a feeling, a feeling of being accepted; a feeling of having come through the fires of academic rigor and made it to the other side, a feeling that today you do not have to prove yourself to your professors. It's a good feeling, a feeling of acceptance by peers and elders, and today we say to you, "accept your acceptance."

It is very true that quite often people in your churches will not remember what you said but long after your sermon or lecture has been forgotten they will remember how you made them feel. I recall when I started out as a young pastor some 50 years ago. As I began ministry I at a cross roads unsure which way to go. I went to see a pastor here in Kingston, Rev. Leo Rhynie. When I arrived at the parsonage I was greeted by his wife Mrs. Rhynie who explained that he would be with me shortly. After about ten minutes he joined me in conversation about my anxieties. I do not remember what he said,

but I remember how he made me feel. I felt welcomed, I was encouraged, I felt loved, special, when I left him that day I was ready to go on my journey into ministry. Today we accept you in the academic guild as fellow pilgrims who have made it through the long night of academic discipline and I can hear the Holy Spirit whisper in your ears, “You are accepted, accept your acceptance.”

I begin then by saying that love is a feeling of being accepted and this feeling of acceptance should happen in the church. The church must become that “beloved community” in which all who enter through her doors, all who enter into community feel accepted. In that sense the church is not only community but the space- the sacred space, in which the name of Christ is honored and all who enter experience love as acceptance.

This is what St. Paul expresses when in 2 Cor. 5:17 he says, “If anyone is in Christ [*en Christō*], she is new...” To be *en Christō*, is to be in community; it is to be in community in which the love of Christ is palpable. To be in Christ is to belong to a community in which persons are not judged by their degrees, as important as those are; it is to belong to a community in which persons are not judged by their social standing or their religious preferences, to be in Christ is to belong to a community in which the grace of Christ, the love of Christ overarches all our ways. Persons on the outside who meet us and come in touch with us cannot help exclaiming, see how they love each other; see how they accept each other.

Love is Commitment and Responsibility

But love is more than a feeling, it is a commitment, to the community or the one who is loved. Love is a force that engenders a feeling of commitment and responsibility to each other. If someone tells you he loves Jesus but not the church he is not speaking the

truth. You cannot say Yes to Jesus and No to the church. This is indeed a part of the redemptive mystery of the church that as frail and human as the church is, its identity is intertwined with the identity of Jesus.

Commitment is not merely nodding to an ideal or viewing the Christian life as an ideal, it is participation in the life of the community. Love is sharing in the life of the one who is loved. Commitment is love being responsible. Commitment is a willingness to go the extra mile, it is learning to love those who are opposed to us and who will even seek our harm. Love going the extra mile reminds us that often God spreads a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Love as commitment reminds us of our Lord at the last; in the face of evil, when the persons closest to him purposed in their hearts to deny, betray and desert him, Jesus ties a towel around his waist and washes their feet. Jesus teaches us that even when the forces of evil are arrayed against us, love serves. Jesus seems to say, “never bring yourself so low as to hate another person.” Every now and then you will need to tie that towel around your waist and wash the feet of those whose love for Christ and the church seems to waiver.

I had the pleasure some years ago of team teaching a class at Emory University with Coretta Scott-King the wife of the slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was in the context of that class I invited Martin Luther King, Sr. the father of Dr. King to come and share with us as a class what it was like to be the father of Dr. King during the eventful years when the civil rights movement was at its peak. Rev. King Sr. pointed out to us that during those years it was not unusual for him to receive about 20 telephone calls each day threatening the life of his son. To paraphrase Daddy King, as we called him, referring to his son he said, “the boy was on a collision

course with death, there were too many people who wanted him dead, there was not a question if he would be assassinated, it was a question of when". When he received word on the fateful night of April 4, 1968 that his son, the Apostle of love was murdered, it was in many ways a relief.

But what he was not prepared for was the last Sunday in June 1974 as he stood in the pulpit of his church Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, a man sitting on a front pew aimed what seemed like a camera at his wife at the organ who had just played the "Lord's Prayer" and killed her. "My wife he said had not spoken an unkind word to anyone, she was doing the Lord's work as organist and choir director." Daddy King said he came perilously close to hating all people, but he said, "I could not bring myself so low as to hate another human being." In the face of unprecedented evil he like his Lord tied a towel around his waist and taught us that love forgives. Love serves even when it is ridiculed. Love forgives even when it is crucified. "Father, forgive them they know not what they do," said Jesus as his enemies did their worst to him.

Agape in the Apostle John's Church

The claim that God's love is unconditional would not have posed a problem to the members of John's Church. Everybody in that church said, God was not the problem. There would be no debate in that church if I said the three words every human being needs to hear is God loves you. Members in that church said they knew God and had a special relationship with God. The problem was although many of these members said they accepted God's unqualified love and had a special knowledge of God they were not translating this love into deeds of kindness and forgiveness for each other. They said they loved God but had no love for each other. The dilemma was they said they loved God and God loved them but this love did not

translate into serving each other; this love did not provide a motivation for social change, this love did not spell solidarity with others.

The Apostle John said that they loved in word and in tongue but not in deed and in truth. Talk about love in word and tongue but not in deed and in truth reminds me of the woman who died and went to heaven. In heaven she met ST. Peter at heaven's gate. Peter was glad to see her and said to her, for you to get into heaven there is a word you will have to spell. "What is the word," she asked; "Love" says Peter. "Heaven is about Love." She spells Love and Saint Peter asks her to work at the gate while he runs an errand. While at the gate her estranged husband arrives. "Well" she said to him, "I did not expect to see you so soon; What happened?" "Well" he said, "I was in a motor vehicle accident and here I am. I know I did not treat you right on earth." "Do not worry about that" she said, "but in order for you to get in through this gate there is a word you have to spell" "What is the word?" he asked. "Czechoslovakia" she said. "To get in you have to spell *Czechoslovakia!*"

Facing Our World

Let me say to the graduates, we your elders owe you an apology because you are going to a world in which there is unprecedented lovelessness. You are going into a world which is much worse than the world our elders gave us. We are passing on to you a world in which there is a culture of violence. A culture of disrespect especially to our women and our young girls.

We also owe you an apology concerning the church we hand over to you. There is too much lovelessness in the church, we fight and quarrel and hurt each other just like the world does. The idols the world worships are often the ones we worship in the church;

materiality, prestige, power and greed. So often people come to church to receive love and instead they leave disappointed.

The analogy that comes to mind as I think of the situation in the church is that of two men in the ring boxing and at the end of each round they go to their corners for encouragement, love and support in order to deal with another round. The church is like that corner that members come to on Sundays for love and encouragement after being worn out from fighting evil all week, sometimes at home, often at work and in the culture at large. And what happens when they come to church; many times there is no support, no encouragement, no love, the people in their corner turn on them. There is no love in deed and in truth. I say to you graduates, "it must not be so among you."

My little children let us love in, deed and in truth. Love as Jesus Loves. Jesus appears in the gospels as a man who loves others. He has nothing but love, no titles like doctor, no tricks, no privileges. The only asset he comes into the world with is love, he has nothing but love to win our hearts.

Today the Apostle John instructs us. If you say you love God whom you have not seen but have no love for God's children you are not speaking the truth. For many persons their love is like a big bush fire that burned and blazed brightly for a while but that was some time ago.

Leaders in the church have to stand in for Christ. Because they stand in for Christ they often forget to point beyond themselves to Christ. You may recall in the Gospel of John chapter 1 John the Baptist is walking along with a number of his disciples and seeing Jesus in the distance he points to Jesus, "Behold the lamb of God". The Baptist says to his disciples you have been looking to me as your teacher but

now I want you to look past me, fix your gaze on Jesus. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The temptation is for the people's gaze to stop with you, as you stand in for Jesus. It is easy to get carried away and believe that you are the source of their love. It does not matter how much you love the people or how extraordinary your love is, the truth says John is that your love is not the answer, your love is not the source. It is not love in your heart that will make the difference; because what is your little love, today you love and tomorrow you are unsure if you still love. It is God in your heart that provides a source for your ministries of love and mercy. It is God in your heart that makes the difference.

The Apostle John throws us a paradox, he says God is love, but love is not God. The relationship between our love and God is like the relationship between the moon and the sun. The moon has no light of its own, the moon is a reflection of the light of the sun. Our love is made possible because of the divine light within us. God is the source, it is God in your life that is the source of love. I am so glad I am not the source of love because every now and then when I feel like I am running out of Love I know that I must appeal to the source.

Many of us know we are running out of love. I am reminded of a friend whose gas gage is always on E, Always running out. Some leaders in the church are in that situation, some teachers are in that situation, some ministers of government are in that situation, they are burnt out, we remember when their love for people burned brightly like a big bon fire but now the flame flickers in the wind.

You graduates need to start right. Let me say love is the key, the universe responds to love. The challenge is to love as Jesus loves. In

Jesus we meet a love that holds nothing back. In Jesus God made a sacrifice beyond which no sacrifice can go. A problem with Jamaica today is too many persons are holding back. Too many pastors are holding back, too many public servants are holding back. Folks are holding back because somehow they feel that if they give all they will run out of love. But if God is your source, if God is in your heart, if your love is responsive love, love in response to the one who first loved you, your cup will overflow, because the source is eternal. You can give a 100 percent. Do not go through life cruising at 50.

God in Your Heart is the Source of Love and Joy

I like to remember the story of Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. It was his first wedding and his mother was there. Mary noticed that they had run out of wine and there was embarrassment and confusion. Someone had not planned carefully; someone had not done the home work; but is it not true that even when you have done all the homework and done all the planning, things happen. Mary the mother of Jesus told the servants, do whatever Jesus tells you to do. Jesus seeing the water pots were empty gives the order, fill the water pots.

Today as you begin your ministry, as you begin your journey, Christ gives the order, fill the water pots. The Holy Spirit is ready to pour God's love in your hearts. With the song writer each of us can say: "Like the woman at the well I was seeking for things that could not satisfy and then I heard my savior speaking, Draw from my well that never runs dry; Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord, Come and quench this thirsting of my soul. Bread of heaven feed me till I want no more – Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole. In the name of our creator, our redeemer and our sustainer." Amen, Amen, Amen!

Servant Song,
Messianic
Social Justice,
and Human
Flourishing in
the
Commonwealth
Caribbean

D V Palmer

INTRODUCTION

“The use of the Old Testament . . . in the New Testament has captured the interests of a wide spectrum of biblical scholars since the time of Jerome.” To judge from the literature, Evangelicals have, within the last twenty years, made a somewhat significant contribution to the ongoing discussion.¹ This to my mind is a step in the right direction, since careful exegesis of this sort will no doubt help us to understand much

better the nature (and weight!) of God’s inscripturated revelation than any amount of rhetoric on the subject. Thus in this paper I will seek to investigate the particular way in which Matthew employs the first Servant Song in his gospel and conclude with a few remarks from two other songs concerning issues of justice in the Caribbean vis-à-vis Matthew’s vision. Before doing so however an exegetical sketch of the Old Testament passage will be attempted.

Isaiah 42:1-4

*¹Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;*

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 1. See especially, G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) and its extensive bibliographies.

*I have put my Spirit upon him,
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.
²He will not cry or lift up his voice,
 or make it heard in the street;
³a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.
⁴He will not fail or be discouraged
 till he has established justice in the earth;
 and the coastlands wait for his law. (RSV)*

In this brief strophe we are introduced to the first “Servant Song” in Isaiah.² The Song is made up of three four-line stanzas:

- A¹ The servant’s ministry of truth . . .
 B The servant’s ministry to people . . .
 A² The servant’s ministry of truth . . .

² The German scholar Bernhard Duhm (*Das Buch Jesaia*. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2014 [1892]) is credited with being the first to specify four passages as “Servant Songs,” according to F. Duane Lindsay, *The Servant Songs* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 3. Though the term is somewhat of a misnomer, scholars still retain it for convenience. Cf. C. Westermann *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 92. I believe this particular Song extends to v. 9 (see Lindsay, op. cit., 36). But in keeping with the purpose of the paper, only the designated verses will be treated. Chapters 40-48 anticipate some of the questions the exiles would pose and provide cogent, theological responses that include a divinely ordained conquerer (Isa 42:2-4); J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 8-9; Walter Brueggemann (*Isaiah 40-66* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 42) also sees the servant as a warrior. According to N.K. Gottwald (*The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 497), “The claim that the work reads more smoothly and continuously without these ‘Servant Songs’ is dubious”

The first and third stanzas are verbally linked by ‘bring forth justice’ (1d, 3c) and by the universality of *nations* (1d) and *islands* (4c). The second and third stanzas have an interesting association in the gentleness of the servant to the *bruised reed* and *smouldering wick* (3ab) and his own imperviousness to smouldering and bruising (he does not *falter* or become *discouraged*) (4a).³

Westermann believes that when answers are given to three crucial questions relating to this passage, our reading of it will be significantly advanced. The questions are in reference to the identification of the servant, the character of the task assigned to him, and the context in which the designation is made.⁴

The importance of the first two queries should be seen in light of the first word of the text, “Behold” (*henEÜ*). With this notice “we are again upon the threshold of a great message.”⁵ Lindsay assumes throughout that the servant is the Messiah.⁶ But it seems better to identify the servant with Israel. This is the view taken by Knight⁷

³ J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 319.

⁴ Westermann, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁵ E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:108.

⁶ Lindsay, *op. cit.*, 4-7. The echo is heard in Matt 3:1 (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken et al. [Leicester, England: IVP, 1998], 443, 446).

⁷ G. Knight, *Servant Theology* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), 43-43. Note LXX’s interpretative *Iakāb pais mou* (Jacob, my servant).

and Story.⁸ Should *abidi* be translated “my slave” or “my servant”? The larger Old Testament context would suggest our retaining the common designation “servant,” since the “servant of the Lord” certainly came to be a title of honour after the time of Moses (of whom the term was used many times).

The servant is further designated as “my chosen one in whom I delight” (42:1 NIV).⁹ This phrase should no doubt be related to verse 3 as underscoring the servant’s faithfulness.

The next line, “I placed my Spirit upon him,”¹⁰ is felt by Young to provide some evidence in identifying the servant: “The combination of *spirit* and *upon him* . . . 11:2-4 . . . is clearly a Messianic characteristic.”¹¹ But the immediate context seems to militate against this (41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4).

The purpose of this endowment is to bring “justice” (*misphat*; LXX *krisis*) to the nations. This evidently is a key term in the passage,

⁸ C.I.K. Story, *Isaiah* (mimeographed notes, CGST, 1987), 3. He summarizes the passage as emphasizing the servant’s ministry to the nations, and self-understanding; cf. B. Childs’ (*Isaiah* [Leiden: Westminister John Knox, 2001], 324), “designation . . . task . . . approach . . . success.”

⁹ *Nepshesh* (soul) is seldom used in reference to deity (Bruce Waltke, *Theological Word Book of the OT* ed. R. Laird Harris et al. [Chicago: Moody, 1980] 591. “My soul” (*napsi*) is identified by E.W. Bullinger, as an Anthropopatheia/condescension (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) , 872. RSV and AV preserve it. NIV establishes the connection (faithfulness) between vv. 1 and 3.

¹⁰ My translation; “placed”(*nathanti*) should be construed as a *perfectum propheticum*; GKC, 312n.

¹¹ Young, op. cit. 110 n. 5.

occurring three times in short compass (vv 1, 3, 4). It should probably be understood generally as the *will* of YAHWEH. It “represents the conception of a rule . . . for life . . . it points to the idea that God has revealed the right way for men to live together.”¹² In this regard, Hertrich’s comment is illuminating: “In judging the point is not to reach a decision, but *to restore a relationship*.”¹³

Verses 2 and 3 seem to be descriptive of the servant’s meek and gentle character. The description employs four negative clauses (there is a fifth in v. 4), the effect of which is to underline the point made. Lindsay has suggested a figurative use of the negatives to emphasize the servant’s humility.¹⁴ Westermann, however, posits an oriental background where a new king re-enacts the laws and then sees that they are heralded. The servant, according to verses 2 and 3, must be seen in a different way.¹⁵ The two metaphors in verse 3, emphatic of the Servant’s compassion, are tender in themselves. The servant, though he promotes justice, will never be guilty of callousness or arrogance, especially to the weak (“bruised reed and smoldering wick”).¹⁶ The adverbial (“faithfully”) stresses the commitment of the servant to his assignment.¹⁷

¹² Knight op. cit., 44. F. Delitzch (*Isaiah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 175) expresses a similar thought; cf. N.H. Smith “Judgement,” in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. A Richardson (New York: McMillan, 1950), 117.

¹³ V. Hertrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster 1964-1974) 3:923 (my emphasis).

¹⁴ Lindsay, op. cit., 46; use of Litotes.

¹⁵ Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁶ The hiphil verb in “lift up his voice” may express a context of disputation, according to U. Rüterwörden, *Theological Dictionary of the OT*, ed. J. Botterweck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 15: 277; see further David

The final verse in this strophe advances the thought of the servant's ministry to establish the will of God far and wide. Westermann seems to understand the last verb of the sentence quite correctly: "it implies . . . expectancy of deliverance or help."¹⁸ To fulfill this great task, the servant will exercise un-flagging zeal (v. 4a). This strophe is remarkable not only for its powerful sentiments, but also its literary arrangement.¹⁹

Lindsay indicates that the occurrence of *mishpat* in verses 1 and 4 "is stylistically an inclusio that helps to mark off verses 1-4 as the first strophe of this servant song."²⁰ He continues: "The strophe designates YAHWEH's servant who will establish His reign through His Spirit (v. 1) describes the servant's successful mission (v. 3b); and declares his endurance to the end (v. 4)."²¹ We will

Clines, *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2010), s.v. *Shema*.

¹⁷ cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 516. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A.E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 348, also suggests that, "like the infinitive absolute [the Hebrew behind "faithfully"] may be used adverbially." NIV reflects this exegetical decision. Contra. Delitzsch op. cit., 175, who virtually accepts the LXX's rendition; Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁸ Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁹ See n. 3 above.

²⁰ Lindsay, op. cit., 49.

²¹ Ibid.

now examine the strophe as it makes its appearance in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 12:18-21 and Its Use of Isaiah 42:1-4

According to Frederic Gardiner, there are four general ways in which the New Testament employs the Old:

1. For purposes of argument
2. As expressions of general truth belonging alike to all ages
3. As illustrations, and
4. Simply as sacred and familiar words, expressing without regard to their original use, that which the writers wished to say.²²

Weir adds a further classification that is designed to delineate the hermeneutical method employed by the New Testament writers. They are listed and described by Kaiser thus:

1. The literal historical method . . . O.T. quotations have the same meaning in the New . . . as in their original contexts:

²² F. Gardiner, *The Old and New Testaments in their Mutual Relations* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1887), 312. cited in Kaiser, op. cit., 6. For recent discussions concerning methodology, see K. Berding and J. Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the NT Use of the OT*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008; G.K. Beale, *Handbook of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

2. The Peshier method applied Old Testament texts directly to the contemporary events of the New Testament apart from any consideration of their original setting...;
3. The typological method focuses on . . . divinely ordained . . . similarities between the Old Testament . . . and New Testament . . .
4. The allegorical method focuses on theological content” while disregarding the historical context; and
5. The theological method [which] sets New Testament theological motifs . . . within broad general traditions.²³

Kaiser raises serious doubts concerning categories 2, 4 and 5, whereas Longenecker²⁴ is charged with finding an undue amount of category 2 in the New Testament.²⁵ While the problem of methodology is by no means an unimportant one, we will now turn our attention to the New Testament pericope under scrutiny, bearing in mind some of the above hermeneutical framework.

THE CONTEXT

Matthew 12:15-21 appears in a narrative which presents Jesus as preaching and teaching about the kingdom of Heaven and the

²³Kaiser, op. cit., 7.

²⁴ Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²⁵ D.J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in D.A. Carson and J. Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 193. In my judgement, S. Lewis Johnson’s “fallacy” in this area is seeing too much typology. See his *Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

religious antagonism with which He was faced (11:2-12:50). No sooner had He cured the man with the withered hand (a bruised reed?), the Pharisees began to plot His death (12:9-14). “Aware of this,” says Matthew, He “withdrew from that place,” and “many followed Him, and he healed their sick (smoldering wicks?) warning them not to tell who He was” (12:15 NIV). This, Matthew claims, was a “fulfillment” of the first Servant Song.

THE TEXT²⁶

15 Bot Jiizas did nuo se dem a plan fi kil im an lef de-so. Wan bag a piipl fala im, an im get di uol a dem beta. *16* Bot im waan dem se dem mosn tel nobadi bout im. *17* Da wie ya, wa Aizaiya, di prafit, did se wuda kom chuu: *18* “Si mi sorvant ya we mi pik, di wan we mi lov, di wan we mek mi api so til. Mi ago gi'im mi Spirit, an im ago mek evribadi, aal di piipl dem we a no Juu, nuo se Gad ago joj dem fier. *19* Fi mi sorvant naa go a kos kos ar a ala, an nobadi naa go ier im mout outa chriit. *20* Jos laik ou im wuda neva pap out piis a graas we evribadi kom tep tep op pan, ar out wan lamp we bieli a flika, im naa go rof op piipl we wiik an ort di wan dem we no chrang. An im ago gwaan til im mek piipl si se mi kyan siev dem. *21* An piipl we a no Juu wi chos iina im fi siev dem. (JNT)²⁷

²⁶ According to G.L. Archer and G. Chrichigno (*Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 113), “Isa 42:1-4 . . . is a classic case of the independence of the LXX on Matthew’s part.”

²⁷ The translation of the NT into Jamaican may be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of independent Jamaica; there were roadblocks along the way and one major hurdle was to convince many that it is indeed a significant accomplishment that will in the long run benefit the nation (On this see E. Christine Campbell, “Language and Identity in Caribbean Theology,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013], 20-39, and

¹⁵ Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. ¹⁶ He warned them not to tell others about him. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.

²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.” (NIV)

The citation is the longest²⁸ in this Gospel and is curious if for no other reason. Scholars have also observed a more important phenomenon: the variations between the Old and New Testament texts. Were the changes arbitrary or deliberate? If the latter question be answered in the affirmative, what exactly is the purpose(s) for the changes? Is the methodology of the Evangelist normative for us today, hermeneutically and homiletically? These are some of the questions with which Bible students have been

D V Palmer and Samantha Mosha, *New Testament Theology: A Postcolonial Perspective* ([Saarbrücken: OmniScriptum], 2014), 40-44).

²⁸ D.L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* v.11, ed. P.H. Comfort (Carol Stream, ILL: Tyndale, 2005), 171.

wrestling and in the growing literature on the subject some interesting and useful answers are being proffered.

Matthew's quotation seems to be, for the most part, a translation of a Hebrew text. However, Gundry shows where he follows the Septuagint (LXX) at times and offers reasons for such.²⁹ For example, he posits that Matthew used *pais* (following the LXX) instead of *doulos* to render *ebed*, because the former's semantic range includes both "boy" and "servant" and forms a nice parallel with "beloved" (v. 18b).³⁰ Allen, on the other hand, expresses surprise that Matthew did not use *doulos* instead of *pais*, because it is more applicable to the Messiah.³¹ He further conjectures that Matthew substitutes the latter for the former. Allen's view, however, seems to be based upon the assumption that Isaiah 42:1-4 is messianic in its original context. Gundry's suggestion above is more plausible, in my view. Gundry also points out the appropriateness of *pais* as a translation of *ebed*, especially in the light of the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus (3:17 and 17:5 respectively).³²

²⁹ R.H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 229ff.

³⁰ Gundry, *Matthew*, 229.

³¹ W.C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907) 131.

³² Matthew's *thēsō* (I shall place) agrees with the Targum against MT and LXX, according to Gundry (*Matthew*, 229), and brings out the predictive character of the passage.

Another significant term in the second clause is “beloved.” *Agapētos* (beloved) is found in five other New Testament passages.³³ Grindel suggests that “*agapētos* is probably . . . an exegetical rendering of *behiri* [chosen] prompted by early Christian vocabulary.”³⁴ This suggestion seems plausible on account of the fact that ideas of “election” and “affection” (*agapētos*) sustain a close relation in the New Testament (cf. Ephesians 1:4; Rom. 8:28ff). For Matthew, then, the fact that Jesus was the chosen Servant assumes that He is the beloved Son.³⁵

A comparison of the OT and NT texts shows that Matthew omitted certain lines. Grindel addresses this problem as well. He observes that Matthew “leaves out a whole line that is in the MT. (It is disputed whether the omission is 3c and 4a or 4b). It is especially this last point that we wish to concern ourselves with.”³⁶ Later he again states the problem, “It is clear that Matthew omits 4a, but it is not clear whether he translates 3c or 4b.³⁷” His answer, after some technical discussion, emerges in his final paragraph: “Why he omitted 4ab is not clear, but the most *obvious answer* is that his eye skipped from *misphat* at the end of verse 3 to the *misphat* at the end

³³ Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; and 2 Pet. 1:17, all allusions to Isa. 42:1-4.

³⁴ John Grindel “Matthew 12:18-21,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (1967): 110.

³⁵ A.B. Bruce, *Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) I:185. A.B. Bruce observes that “The quotation is a very free reproduction from the Hebrew, with occasional side glances at the” LXX.

³⁶ Grindel, Matthew 12, 110.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

of 4b, a homoioteleuton.”³⁸If earlier Grindel expressed doubt as to what is really left out and translated by Matthew, how is it that he states his solution in categorical terms? The fact that Matthew cites such a fairly lengthy on this occasion seems significant. This to my mind indicates some familiarity with the Isaianic passage on the part of the author prompting a fresh translation for First Century application. It is not likely then (though the possibility is not ruled out) that he committed the error of haplography (in this case, according to Grindel, a homoioteleuton).³⁹ It has been suggested that Matthew compared his translation with that of the LXX. Grindel also admits that in Isaiah 42:1, “The *apaggelie* [will announce] of Matthew is a translation of *yosi* [promote] according to the sense.”⁴⁰ Thus it does seem that the Evangelist looked intently at the text before him after all. Therefore, although Grindel’s solution is plausible, his “most obvious answer” above seems too strong. If it be granted that the question remains open, another solution may be sought.

The context of Matthew 12:18-21 may be the clue. In 11:20-30, Jesus had just been rejected by the Pharisees. This seems to be the pivotal point of the book. So Matthew is showing why (by his

³⁸ Ibid., 115 (emphasis mine); “homoioteleuton,” identical ending. R. T. France (*The Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 470) identifies the omitted section by way of a citation similar to the following (42:4a-b): “He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth.”

³⁹For a thorough explanation of this and other textual matters, consult Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994, and C. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 17-37.

⁴⁰Grindel, op. cit., 110.

omission) the establishment of justice on the earth has not taken place (Is. 42:4b).⁴¹ The fulfillment was connected with events surrounding Christ's first advent.⁴²

Another significant change⁴³ in Matthew's citation is his reading *onoma* (name) presumably for *torah* (Is. 42:4b). The reason for this change is by no means clear and I am not certain that "this is probably an inner-Greek corruption" ⁴⁴ Grindel goes on to assert that whatever the reading of the LXX, which Matthew evidently follows here, Matthew could have easily accepted it "even if he knew it was wrong, because the use of *onoma* referring to Christ is more widespread in Matthew than in any of the other Gospels."⁴⁵

Perhaps more convincing is Carson's suggestion: "If, as we have maintained the law in this Gospel serves primarily to point to Jesus, then it is not surprising that Matthew prefers the LXX term."⁴⁶ It is also conceivable that Matthew sees in *onoma* an apt metonymy for "law" (*torah*), since "name" (*onoma*) often stands for the character of God. After all, is not the law an expression of God's character

⁴¹ Witness his cousin's unjust incarceration and decapitation in 11: 2-17.

⁴² Cf. the Lord's use of Is. 61:1-2a in Lk. 4.

⁴³ The words *eis nikos* ("unto victory" v. 20b) are also added; for an insightful discussion on this, see Blomberg (in Beale and Carson, op. cit., 43).

⁴⁴ Grindel, op. cit., 112. He notes that LXX "A" has *onoma* .

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:287.

(name)? Although Grindel's suggestion (inner-Greek corruption) is questionable, his observation of the widespread use of *onoma* in Matthew is well taken.

THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

It has been hinted at already that the changes found in 12:18-21 are deliberate on the part of Matthew. What purpose might these serve? Having established that the servant of Isaiah 42:1-4 is Israel, how did Matthew come to connect the passage with Jesus?

In dealing with the way the Old Testament is cited in the New, E.E. Ellis has a fine discussion on the presuppositions that guided the apostles. He points out that the perspective from which the New Testament writers understand the Old is sometimes stated explicitly, and at other times it has to be inferred from their usage. This perspective, he explains, was derived in part from Jewish views and partly from the teaching of Jesus. "Apart from its christological forms, it appears to be governed primarily by four factors: a particular understanding of history, of man, of Israel and of Scripture." After elaborating on these, he adds another presupposition: "In agreement with the Old Testament conception, the New . . . views *man as both individual and corporate existence*. It presents the corporate dimension, the aspect most difficult for modern Western man to appreciate."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ E.E. Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 209. Blomberg (in Beale and Carson, op. cit., 43), invokes the hermeneutic of double fulfillment, an improvement on Ellis' position. See also the excellent synthesis of the pericope in W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997), 2:324.

This, I think, holds the key to Matthew's identification of the servant with Jesus.⁴⁸ In this regard, Longenecker's observation is pertinent: "The first evangelist seems to be following a thematic arrangement of his material in the structuring of his Gospel . . . in the first half . . . modern commentators believe they can detect echoes and reminiscences of Israel's earlier experiences. Thus in his portrayal of the life and ministry of Christ, there have been found particularly suggestive parallels between Jesus and the nation."⁴⁹

He goes on to point out that "what can be claimed with confidence . . . is (1) that behind the evangelist's presentation stands the Jewish concepts of corporate solidarity and typological correspondences in history, (2) that the phenomenon of historical parallelism seen in the First Gospel is a reflection of such conceptualization, and (3) that this background is important in understanding Matthew's treatment of specific Old Testament statements and events. By the employment of such concepts, Jesus is portrayed in Matthew's Gospel as the embodiment of ancient Israel and antitype of earlier redemption."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ So E.K. Nsiku, Congolese missionary to Brazil ("Isaiah," in *African Bible Commentary* ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 838). Nsiku is wrong, I believe, in identifying the Isaianic servant with Cyrus, but correct in citing a Yombe proverb ("kimfumu bieka kibiekuana . . . no serious person makes himself a leader of others") in relation to the election.

⁴⁹ Longenecker, *op. cit.*, p. 141. Cf. Matt. 2:15 and Hosea 11:1, and see also J. Oswalt, "Theology of Isaiah," in *Dictionary of OT Theology & Exegesis*, ed W.A. vanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4: 725-732.

⁵⁰ Longenecker, *op. cit.*, 142. Allen (*op. cit.*, 131) comes close to this: "The passage had probably been adapted in Christian writings in order to bring out the conception that the Messiah . . . accomplished the career that had been foretold of the idealized nation."

A summary of the passage is now in order. Matthew has shown elsewhere that Jesus often withdrew when His enemies became hostile (cf. 14:13; 15:21; 16:5). The warnings to those that were healed should be understood in the light of the growing antagonism against Him as well. In the Lord's conduct under these pressures, the evangelist perceived nothing less than the fulfillment⁵¹ of the Scriptures. The Pharisees may plot to kill Jesus (v. 14), but He would not quarrel or cry out (v. 19). As God's beloved Servant-Son in whom He delights, He would display gentleness and humility (v. 19), while breathing an air of compassion on the weak (v. 20). He would also promote vigorously the concerns of the Kingdom (v. 21).⁵²

In so far as the theological significance of the text is concerned, Matthew may have changed *ebed* (servant) in Isaiah 42:1 to *pais* (servant/child; 12:18), because the former presupposes the latter. Second, he evidently saw within *torah* (law; Isa 42:4) not only an apt metonymy for *onoma* (name) but, probably, an opportunity to bring out forcefully the idea that the real hope of the gentiles is not a precept but a Person. . Finally, he evidently saw in the career of the Lord a kind of recapitulation of the history of Israel, if indeed he shared the presupposition of corporate personality that scholars say was in vogue at that time.

⁵¹ Cf. Metzger ("Formulas introducing quotations of Scripture," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 [1951], 306): "All varieties of the formulas . . . indicate . . . the very highest view of the inspiration of Scriptures which they quote."

⁵² "As for *eis nikos*, that is impossible for *b'rt* which the LXX well renders *epi tēs gēs*. . . . Conceivably the establishment of God's perfect justice on earth is to be understood as involving a conquest or subduing of mankind in order to render them obedient to the Lord's judgement." G.L. Archer and G. Chrichigno (*Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 115.

Final Reflection

There are so many serious issues of injustice within our world that one does not know where to begin in addressing the problem. A longstanding majority-world issue that has caught the attention of Bible scholars is the plight of the Dalits living in the world's largest democratic nation. Though it bears some similarity to the Black-white impasse of the North Atlantic region, the Dalit situation is not related to post-slavery/post-emancipation vicissitudes. It is firmly entrenched in the history of Hindu culture.⁵³ Then there is the seemingly intractable Palestinian question amidst the more recent Syrian civil unrest—all of which threaten to undo the best efforts of international jurisprudence and exhaust the resources of the United Nations. Turning to South America, the pre-world cup build up provided a fitting stage for some to draw our attention to deplorable conditions in Brazil, and the oil rich Venezuelans (the majority?) want the world to know as well that the post-Chavez era is not a bed of roses. As Priscilla the author of Hebrews would say, time would fail me to mention the challenges of the peoples of the Ukraine, South Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, et al., but we must hurry on to the region that one theologian dubs the neo-exilic nation.⁵⁴ Our main focus here will be on a few issues within the Anglophone

⁵³ See George Koonthanam, "Yahweh, the Defender of the Dalits: A Reflection on Isaiah 3:12-15," in *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third-World*, ed. R.S. Surgirharajah . London: SPCK, 1995, and Monica J. Melancton, "Unleashing the Power Within: The Bible and the Dalits," in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*. eds. Ronald Boer and F.F. Segovia (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 47-66.

⁵⁴ G. Lincoln Roper,

community.⁵⁵ In recent times both Jamaica and the twin-island republic—Trinidad and Tobago—have passed anti-gang legislation to (presumably) strengthen the arm of justice within their borders. Will it work? It is certainly too early to tell, but already there are voices of dissent. For example, Father Cyde Harvey believes that such a bill does not go far enough “Anti-gang cultures, whether it leads to legislation or not” says he, must begin in various places.” He continues:

Those of us who have worked with youth at risk have been struck by the high percentage of them who have very poor reading skills. Many of our teenage boys are reading at levels half their age. Many of our gang leaders have reading disabilities which were not recognized at school, [which] left them at the back of the class and then saw them compensating through their other natural abilities of leadership, etc.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The special problem of Haiti, for instance, is an interesting case study both regionally (with the Dominion Republic) and internationally (with the USA on one hand and France on the other); and what about the Cuban embargo? http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/Ending-the-Cuba-embargo--How-Caricom-can-help_16365436.

⁵⁶ “ ‘Getting to the Roots’: A Reflection on the Trinidad and Tobago Anti-Gang Bill” *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* 29 (January 2013), 24. The problem in Jamaica is probably worse.

⁵⁶Witness the Myrie case that both Barbados and Jamaica will not forget, for different reasons.

One way, some say, to tackle challenges like these is to increase the support and full implementation of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), especially in light of the fact that our:

Independence Constitutions were never the constituent acts of us as a sovereign people. Rather, they were all orders in council of the Westminster Imperial Parliament. . . . Our Independence Constitutions were not products of any communal act of constitution-making in the Commonwealth Caribbean. . . . The PROCESS Of constitution reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean therefore offers an auspicious occasion as any for critical reflection on the fundamental terms of our political and rethinking of the conventional understandings of West Indian constitutional law and practice, in order to rationally diagnose the more critical problems attending our political order, and to attempt resolve these problems by a discursive engagement of the West INDIAN citizenry on some of the larger questions of constitutional democratic governance.⁵⁷

This worthwhile proposal raises at least two significant questions: can Caribbean leaders muster the political will to hasten such reforms? If and when they do, how far will these reforms go to effectively address the social ills plaguing the region?

Before returning to the Isaiah-Matthew inter-textual study attempted above, we highlight one more justice-concern: the Black presence in the Caribbean and the issue of reparation. This matter has caught the attention of the CARICOM secretariat as well as some of the most prominent academics in the regions. For all the stakeholders, except

⁵⁷Simeon C.R. McIntosh, *Reading Text & Polity: Hermeneutics and Constitutional Theory* (Kingston: The Caribbean Law Publishing Co., 2012), 6-7.

the former colonizers, the main point here is one of natural justice.⁵⁸ One Caribbean scholar argues that:

There is no doubt that reparation is a just cause; and clear precedence exists. . . . [P]erhaps the most famous case of reparation was that paid by the German state to the Jews in territories controlled by Hitler's Germany to indemnify them for persecution. In the initial phase, payments included US\$2 billion to make amends to victims of Nazi persecution; US\$952 million in personal indemnities; US\$35.70 per month per inmate of concentration camps; pensions for the survivors of victims; and US\$820 million to Israel to resettle fifty thousand Jewish emigrants from lands formerly controlled by Hitler. Later, other, and largely undisclosed, payments followed; and even in 1992, the World Jewish Congress in New York announced that the newly unified Germany would pay compensation, totaling \$63 million for 1993, to fifty thousand Jews who had suffered Nazi persecution but had not been paid reparations because they lived in East Germany. Reparation has also been paid to First Nation People in the USA and Canada, as well as to Japanese-Americans, Koreans and Japanese-Canadians.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Or 'compensatory justice,' as Cain Hope Felder (*Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 73-74) sees it.

⁵⁹Verene Sheperd https://www.google.com/jm/search?hl=en-JM&source=hp&q=verene+shepard+and+reparation&gbv=2&oq=verene+shepard+and+reparation&gs_l=heirloom-hp.12...336944.363074.0.365726.31.8.1.22.23.0.328.1295.2-4j1.5.0....0...1ac.1.34.heirloom-hp..23.8.1373.Zx8HPmuDoBk. For arguments

We will wait and see what is the outcome of this latest call.

In more recent times as well and in tandem with African-Americans in particular, the Anglophone Caribbean has been in the habit of celebrating the achievements of peoples of African descent, against the backdrop of five-hundred years of slavery and colonialism.⁶⁰ Here in Jamaica, February is earmarked as the month to carry that celebration, along with a focus on Reggae, the most enduring musical genre coming out of the Caribbean. The appropriateness of February to highlight such events has not been lost on the majority of Jamaicans, since it is the month of Bob Marley, who is undoubtedly the greatest Reggae icon of the last century. There are especially two songs that are indelibly etched in my mind with respect to the Caribbean and its fractured history.⁶¹ The First is the soul stirring ode by Los Pop Tops, a vocal band of Spaniards with a Trinidadian as lead singer. Like the Jamaica National Anthem it is prayer full of soul-food for thought. It tells of the lead singer's astronomical quest to ascertain why his beautiful skin is not recognized as such; why indeed it was thought to be an awful thing. The song is full of deep pathos, and is surpassed in this regard only

against, see Dingwall, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140424/cleisure/cleisure5.html>.

⁶⁰ In this regard, see Noel Leo Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery*. New York: Oxford, 2014.

⁶¹ For a song of a different order, in which "One searches . . . in vain for any reference to the historical fact of colonialism or the history of European chattel slavery and later indentured labour" (80), see J. R. Middleton, "Islands in the Sun: Overtures to a Caribbean Creation Theology," in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited by J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 79-95.

by Sam Cooke's magnum opus; *I was Born by the River*, posthumously released. The strong lyrical content of Los Pop Tops' tune is regularly punctuated by the title- refrain 'Oh Lord, why Lord' reminiscent of the lament of the martyrs in Revelation chapter 6. Those who lived through the 60s and 70s cannot forget these words:

*I've searched the open sky
To find the reason why
Oh Lord, why Lord
The color of my skin
Is said to be an awful sin
Oh Lord, why Lord
No, I cannot understand
No, I can never, never understand
Oh Lord, why Lord
I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Oh why, why why, why why
Why why, why why, why Lord
In this world it is no secret
All the problems and hatred
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I just can't seem to find why
My every move is so unseen
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Why this lonely man must try
And can have no peace of mind
Oh Lord, why Lord*

*I just can't help but cry
The tears won't stay inside
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I feel the weight of everlasting hate
But my strength will not grow faint
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I'll wear the chains
So every man must see the change
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I ask no special kindness
I ask no special deed
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Only peace and justice
Forever more
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Is it so much to ask
Even of you
To be the same as the
Majority
Why is it that I must suffer
Without even a cause
And no one cares
Oh Lord, why God*

*I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord.*⁶²

This beautiful piece of poetic-petition was written at a time when a man was judged not by the content of his character but by the colour of his skin, to use words attributed to the late great Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. The other song of merit appears less painful but is no less removed from the reality of the day. It is what some may regard as a triumphal recital, and just like Sam Cooke's lyrical master piece, it was released after the writer's home going.

⁶²https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4ADFA_enJM491JM491&q=oh+lord+why+lord+lyrics. See also <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140417/lead/lead92.html>. There are some who believe that the following allegory vividly typifies the injustice back in the day. A domestic flight over Birmingham, Alabama, soon found itself in serious problems. In a desperate effort to preserve the lives of the crew and passengers, the pilot jettisoned some fuel to lighten the aircraft. Later, some pieces of luggage were released. Finally, when the pilot noticed that there was very little improvement, he sent his co-pilot outside the cabin to address the flight attendants and their charges. "We need to make the plane much lighter," he says, "are there any volunteers, to jump?" there was no response. "OK," the co-pilot continued, "I guess I'd just have to volunteer some of you. We will proceed alphabetically." He then shouts, "A". "Are there any Afro-American on board?" No response. "B." "Are there any Blacks on board?" still no response. "C." "any coloureds?" "D." "Any dark skinned passengers?" continued the now frantic officer. On hearing all this a little girl said, "but Mommy, don't we fall under all a those categories?" "Hush your mouth!", came the sharp response, "Today we are Zulus."

*Old Pirates, Yes, They Rob I/Sold I To the Merchant
Ships/Minutes Later Took I From The Bottomless Pit/But My
Hand Was Made Strong/By' The Hand of The Almighty/We
Forward In This Generation Triumphantly/Won't You Help
To Sing These Songs of Freedom?/ 'Cause All I Ever Had,
Redemption Songs . . . Emancipate Yourself From Mental
Slavery/None But Ourselves Can Free Our Minds/Have No
Fear For Atomic Energy/'Cause None Of Them Can Stop
The Time/How Shall They Kill Our Prophets/While We Stand
Aside And Look?/ Yes, Some Say It's Just A Part Of It/We
Got To Fulfill The Book.*

Unlike 'O Lord, Why Lord,' the theme of liberation dominates this other piece written by an outstanding Jamaican.⁶³ In the opening lines the individuality of the enslaved figures quite prominently to underscore the degradation of his bondage on the one hand and liberation on the other. What is of interest too is the skillful admixture of pronouns 'I', 'my', and 'we', which at the same time expresses personal interest as well as subtle inclusiveness.

The other pronouns in the song point ostensibly to the 'fatalists' who insist 'We got to fulfill the book', and also to those who murder genuine prophets. The Song also points to vestiges of slavery and the urgent need of Black people in particular to emancipate themselves from cognitive and spiritual bondage,⁶⁴ words echoing a

⁶³Robert Nesta Marley; see also Jo-Ann Richards, "In What Language Do You Think? A Case for the Development of Bilingual Corporate Worship in Jamaica," *Groundings: Reflections on Justice and Equality—Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People* (January 2012): 30-38.

⁶⁴ Delroy Reid-Salmon, *Burning for Freedom: A Theology for the Black Atlantic Struggle for Freedom* Kingston: Ian Randle, 2012.

famous speech by a Christian statesman.⁶⁵ This task must be carried out courageously even in the face of the threat of ‘atomic energy’. Some analysts find the second stanza intriguing in that it urges liberation of the self by the self, yet in the opening lines redemption was effected by the ‘Hand of the Almighty’. On closer examination, however, the song writer declares that his hand was indeed strengthened by the selfsame Almighty himself.

The Ghanaian-Jamaican Kwame Dawes best sums up Marley's Redemption Song: “In four minutes Marley tells of a history that spans 400 years.” This begs the question: Why is it that after 400 years ‘man to man’ is still so unjust? To put the question differently, how is it that in the 21st century human trafficking seems to be such big business for whites, for blacks, and those in between? I am glad that as it was in the beginning, it will not be so in the end!⁶⁶ The Good Book declares that slavery has its source in the human heart (sin, not skin).

⁶⁵ “Although Bob Marley made the phrase famous . . . he was quoting from a speech that Marcus Garvey gave in Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada, in early October 1937. Garvey said: ‘We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind.’ E. Christine Campbell, “Language and Identity in Caribbean Theology,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited by J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 21.

⁶⁶ Here I have in mind what some call eschatological justice, “the strict reckoning by God at the . . . Judgement, which is the decisive time for divine rewards or punishing in accordance with the deeds of a person’s life.” (Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 72). For a case of ‘existential’ justice (or the lack there of) in the Caribbean church, see “*Prima Inter Partes?* Prisca as Pastor and the People of God,” *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* (July 2014):

This is seen, for example, in Jacob's family when his older sons sold their brother into slavery and in the response of an African monarch to the rapid growth of Jacob's great grandchildren in their first Diasporan experience: "Then," the Bible says, "a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour" (Exodus 1: 9-11).⁶⁷

The Bible also teaches that deliverance from every form of oppression and slavery is the work of God, even when human agency⁶⁸ is evident (Jonah 2:9). The Bible further teaches that the greatest and best experience from the agony of enslavement comes only through Jesus the Son of God who gave his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This is essentially what the people of God celebrate, commemorate, and communicate yearly, monthly, and weekly in the Eucharist—and this is just the beginning. In the end, the best is yet to come! This vision of fulsome human flourishing in the Eschaton is just what Matthew and Isaiah have laid before us. In their day they were no doubt those who hungered and thirsted

⁶⁷ Imagine, these are Africans enslaving others; this underscores the point that skin colour is not the fundamental problem. See also Delroy Reid-Salmon, "A Sin of Black Theology," *Black Theology* 6.2 (2008): 154-173 and Wainte E Wariboko, *Ruined by "Race": Afro-Caribbean Missionaries and the Evangelization of Southern Nigeria 1895-1925*. 2007; Peter Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the 20th Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

⁶⁸ See, e.g., the intriguing but all too short chapter on how one Public Defender secured justice for a minor group in the region; Howard Randolph Hamilton (Hylton W. Dennis), *Born to Defend* (Kingston: Selectco, 2012), 203-207.

after societal and personal justice, while awaiting the fulfillment of the pertinent promises.⁶⁹ Twenty-first century members of the Messianic community⁷⁰ cannot do anything less, especially in light of the fact that:

The holy books of no other religion depict their followers so negatively as the Bible does the Jews and the Christians. Scripture describes very graphically the doctrine that Jews and Christians are also . . . [**unjust**] and capable of the most dreadful sins, and denounces not only the atrocities carried out by the Gentiles, but also those of the supposed (or true) people of God. This pitiless self-criticism is integral to Judaism and Christianity, in contrast to other religions. No other faith criticizes itself so severely as Old Testament Judaism or New Testament Christianity. Scripture exposes the errors of the leaders very clearly, and God often employs outsiders to recall His people to obedience.⁷¹

Conspicuous by his absence, in relation to this ‘canonical criticism’—both in the Hebrew Bible and the NT—is the One whom Isaiah identifies as the Servant of the Lord:

In Isa. 41, Yahweh’s sovereignty is demonstrated in the calling of Cyrus . . . from the east subduing kings before him

⁶⁹On this , see “Justice,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. L. Ryken et al. (Leicester: IVP, 1998), 474-475.

⁷⁰See for instance, K.D. Rathbun, “Shortcomings of the Reformation: Unity versus Purity in the Ecclesiology and Praxis of Martin Bucer,” PhD thesis, UWI, 2006.

⁷¹Thomas Schirmacker, *Towards a Theology of Martyrdom* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008), 43.

(41:2). In Isa. 42 the true servant of God is introduced and is contrasted by juxtaposition with Cyrus, whose violent ways . . . he will not follow (42:2-3). Both Cyrus and God's Servant are called in righteousness (41:2; 42:6), called by name (45:4; 49:1), grasped by the hand (45:1; 42:6), and will accomplish Yahweh will.⁷²

This Servant of the Lord⁷³ is also to be contrasted with some of the leaders of the region at various levels (Pastors, Politicians, Police).⁷⁴ Although they bear the name servants (of the people), few, it would appear, are committed to the concept of servant leadership. Certainly none can be truly compared with the Isaianic Suffering-Servant in his pursuit of justice on behalf of the poor; too many, like Cyrus of old, serve the Almighty in what may be described as a 'mono-dimensional experience' ("you do not acknowledge me"). This notwithstanding, we are still optimistic concerning human flourishing in the region, for, "*A Fresh Wind is blowing over . . . [the Caribbean] I hear it on the airwaves, the aspirations of our people in the cries of transparency For justice brotherhood and peace. Blow wind blow*".⁷⁵

⁷² R. Schultz, "Isaiah," *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. K. J. Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2005), 340-341. Schultz also contrasts the Servant with sinful Israel.

⁷³ Seen as a royal figure by some; see G.P. Hungenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of OT Messianic Texts*, eds. P.E. Satterwaite et. al. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 114-115.

⁷⁴ See, for example, "Parliamentarian Admits Driving Unlicensed Vehicle for Five Years," *Daily Observer*, January 2, 2015.

⁷⁵ J C Keane, *iPromise: Inspiration from Jamaica's National Pledge* (Kingston: Peartree Press, 2012), ix.

[And] As Christians, we are commanded to pray for those in leadership. . . . I do pray regularly for the Most Honourable Prime Minister, her Cabinet and members of Parliament, as well as for leaders of the Church, business, the public sector and of the society in general. There are times, though, when we are called to do more than pray. God has given gifts and talents to His servants and He calls on us to use them in defence of truth and justice in our nation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Dr Patrick Allen, “Fortifying the Foundations,” *CJET* 14 (2015), 10.

VALEDICTORIAN
2014
Angelique Gardener

Reverend Rennard White, Chairman of today's proceedings and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Jamaica Theological Seminary, other members of the Board of Governors, Rev. Dr. Noel Erskine, distinguished guest speaker, Reverend Dr. Garnett Roper, President, Jamaica Theological Seminary, Mr. David Pearson, Academic Dean of the Seminary, members of Faculty and Staff of the Seminary, other distinguished persons in the audience, graduands and their family members, well-wishers and friends, good evening.

Aesthetically cursed, unpalatable, visually reprehensible, the cactus is an abnormality among its more delicate and eye-catching counterparts. Yet it strives, it strives with a tenacity that allows it to forge an existence in the most arid and inhospitable conditions. Though we do not reflect all what may be deemed negative features of the cactus, there is, encoded in the genetic construct of every human being, a desire to achieve, to actualize, to excel beyond the limitations of personal expectations. It is this desire which infuses man with the energy and fortitude to embark on voyages for self-growth and optimization.

Among the most prominent of these journeys is the scholastic expedition—an expedition fraught with challenges and frustrations, but one that yields immense gratification upon completion. It is therefore with an indescribable sense of elation and euphoria that we the members of the graduating class of 2014 stand in this most privileged position. We have successfully executed our agenda for conquering the academic challenges posed by the Jamaica Theological Seminary and achieving a Bachelors Degree.

The Jamaica Theological Seminary emerges out of the tertiary landscape with little flourish and flamboyance, a seemingly small edifice among the skyscrapers of renowned and distinguished universities. Hence, it would not be implausible to assume that the acquisition of degree qualification would require miniscule effort. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the Jamaica Theological Seminary has constrained us with challenging research papers and projects that have resulted in weeks of intense agony before emerging triumphantly from the fiery ordeal.

Not foreseeing such affliction, we entered through the gates of the Jamaica Theological Seminary with breathless anticipation, particularly those of us who knew that our attendance here was providentially orchestrated. Preconceived notions of what the tertiary experience was supposed to yield peppered the minds of those of us attending a tertiary institution for the first time. For others who were on a mission to augment their academic qualifications, the thought: “A weh mi get myself inna” has reverberated through their minds and spirits like a well rehearsed song.

Those who opted for the dorm experience did so with an appreciation for the independence it granted. Residents who had not yet been emancipated from their cradles were jolted to reality with their first pot of burnt rice and accidental inventions such as rice and peas porridge. The adage that practice makes perfect rang true for many residents, however, as cooking skills became exceptionally good as time progressed. I can personally attest to my culinary dexterity in the preparation of stew peas, with pig’s tail, absolutely delectable, if I must say so myself. I am available for consultation after the graduation exercise, for a small fee, of course.

A succinct description of the dorm experience could not be completed without giving honourable mention to our peals of

laughter which have pierced and disturbed the serene ambience of the JTS campus due to rigorous wrestling matches.

Another feature of being at the Jamaica Theological Seminary was mandatory attendance at chapel sessions and though many of us have been converted and washed by the blood of Jesus, for some of us this was particularly burdensome. Our perception of these chapel sessions changed, however, as we grew to recognize and appreciate the vital messages delivered in these gatherings, their applicability to our lives, and their capacity to transform our outlook and perception. The invitation to attend was made ever the more enticing with the injection of more Jamaican songs into the praise and worship sessions which led to some proficient dropping of the foot. These sessions also provided a platform for social networking as we had the opportunity to interface with those from more prominent circles within the Jamaican society, such as, The Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Security, and the Governor General, among others. Chapel also provided an avenue for exploration of the various social issues plaguing our society and appropriate responses that could be employed to remedy such ills.

To our delight, JTS not only catered to spiritual development but provided a creative outlet for its students through the ALL4Him Ministry which allowed for an extraordinary blend of talents. This included musical compositions or melodious vocal performances from the Music and Media Department, riveting dances and inspiring and theatrically adept performances executed in the annual drama production put on by this creative arm of the institution.

Worthy of note is the 2013 Moses drama production which catapulted the ALL4Him Ministry into the public arena and led to repeat performances as per the request of visitors. The creative leverage and emancipation granted through this avenue were embraced by all participants.

Sporting activities such as cricket, football, and volleyball were also injected into the life of JTS to liberate us from the shackles of boredom and lethargy. It was delightful to see the vibrancy with which cricket in particular was played, and the never ending shouts of “How is That?” when a player had just struck out a wicket.

No sporting activity provided as fertile an opportunity for laughter, however, as when a lecturer or student, who was not prodigiously talented in the sporting department, strutted on to the field to play football. Some were rather skilled, actually, while for others their skill lay mostly in their display of polished legs, a distinctly lighter hue than those body parts mercilessly afflicted by the sun.

These extracurricular activities took on a more competitive twist with the approach of Sports Day as the members of Mills, Spencer, Ringenberg, and Afflick competed with much vigour and gusto on behalf of their houses.

The numerous social activities arranged by the Student Council to enhance life on the campus and support our spiritual formation also provided a reprieve from the rigours of academic life. Lifetime bonds and friendships were also formed as we found in each other a tower of support and strength.

I must pause to recognize the Jamaica Theological Seminary for many a luscious and succulent mango which we have eaten from its trees, mangoes which we have picked at our leisure, especially when the maddening heat in this concretized Kingston landscape threatens to dehydrate us of the very essence with which the good Lord has made us. I say this out of a wealth of personal experience, having been prematurely exposed to the Sahara Desert right here in Town. Notwithstanding all this, we survived.

Not enough can be said of the quality of the academic material provided by JTS. The rich amalgamation of lectures with

informative and creative presentations made by classmates enlivened class sessions, stimulated critical thinking, evoked robust debates and expanded and reformed some of our myopic and erroneous views. Courses such as Abnormal Psychology left us riddled with laughter and turned many of us into diagnosticians.

The standard of academic excellence upheld by the institution mandated thorough research and scholarly papers which reflected an analytical and critical approach to topical and relevant issues. The integrity of academic work was invariably enforced with an absolute zero tolerance for plagiarism. Noteworthy is the practicability of this material. Lecture content did more than furnish us with understanding but placed significant emphasis on the practical application of such knowledge.

A fringe benefit of being at the Jamaica Theological Seminary was learning how to multi-task. Those of our colleagues who worked part time proved to be stallions of the highest breed as they traversed between work, school, and their families. To them I would raise my hat but I do not intend to struggle to readjust it, so a bow will have to suffice.

The latter days of our scholastic journey as graduates were marked by stomachs boisterously growling for hunger when we forsook eating to finish an assignment, and dishevelled hair which, at some point, began to resemble the roost of two hens fighting for territory. It was certainly on this last leg of our journey that words of encouragement and a prayer were like adrenaline shots to weary bodies. The library became our chill spot and sleep became an ever elusive friend. Many a tear of frustration and exhaustion was cried, some openly, some secretly, yet by the grace of a good God, here we are, degree almost in hand.

What would we change? Nothing, because the sweet nectar of victory is only tasted when one has come to the end of a challenging journey.

As a result, it is with great humility that I stand on behalf of these graduands and say thank you to the President, lecturers, and family of the Jamaica Theological Seminary, for the way in which you have facilitated our growth and development. There is not a graduand here who came by chance (because unnu cost nuff money). It was by divine ordination that we came through these gates and it is by divine ordination that we walk through these gates.

The wide spectrum of knowledge we have received through diverse and invigorating courses has made us acutely aware of the deficits within us, our communities, and country, and of the need for divinely inspired leaders equipped with the requisite tools and skills to operate efficiently within our respective fields.

You have broadened our narrow vision and demolished our self-aggrandizing ambitions, replacing them with a desire to help, heal, and restore those who are broken. Not only so, but you have sought to mould us into optimally rounded individuals who are acutely cognizant of our mission as revolutionaries within an ailing society. You have challenged our complacency both spiritually and socially and have communicated across all facets of the institution the need for our holistic development as Christians.

To every family member and friend who has been a stalwart of support, we say thank you. Your perpetual love, financial support, altruism, prayers, and commitment are why we are here. You, along with us, have earned a degree and we recognize and salute you.

Above all, we thank God for His guidance and the love with which He has provided for and cradled us. We thank Him for starting and finishing not just a good, but an excellent work, for defeating our doubts, trampling our concerns, and destroying our worries. We

thank Him for defying our limitations and for proving Himself to be faithful even to the end. It is therefore our resolve as graduates to wear the JTS brand proudly and to be anointed assets wherever we go, as we seek in the words of our motto to know Him, that is, Christ, that we might make him known.