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context is becoming so preponderant that in some cases it is arrogantly imposed on the text of Scripture.

If in existential hermeneutics the personal feelings of the interpreter prevail, so to speak, in the hermeneutics of certain liberationist theologies in Latin America can be seen the preponderance of an economic, social and political thesis. The Latin American evangelical theologians necessarily desire to avoid such extremes, but at the same time they feel the responsibility to "make theology" in response to their own ecclesiastical and social context. We are not able to discuss here in any depth the hermeneutical problem. But at the risk of being too simplistic we need to say something about the task of interpreting the Scriptures in relation to a Latin American *evangelical* theology.

Primacy of the Biblical Text

Before anything else we must reaffirm our confidence in the Scriptures as the written Word of God, and as the supreme authority for our Christian faith. We cannot abandon the principle of *Sola Scriptura* and continue being evangelicals, in the sense that we have always used the term. We know that should we put aside the authority of the Bible, what awaits us is theological relativism.

On the other hand, we recognize that we inevitably come to the Biblical text with certain presuppositions. We are children of our culture, we find ourselves within a specific social context, and we have an ecclesiastical, denominational formation, besides our own interests or personal preferences. We also find it easy to let ourselves become obsessed with a doctrinal peculiarity, or with some religious practice which is of tremendous importance to us. It is natural that we should tend to impose on the Biblical text all of this cultural society, social, psychological and religious burden.

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Towards an Evangelical Caribbean Theology

David Ho Sang and Roger Ringenberg

In the second half of this abridged article the authors outline the thinking of ecumenical Caribbean theologians in the relation of context and praxis under the categories of The Bible, God, Christ, Man, Sin and Salvation, The Church, Eschatology. They suggest in general terms possible lines of an evangelical alternative but without reference to the writing of contemporary evangelical Caribbean theologians. They appeal for a theology that is faithful to Scripture and relevant to the needs of the Caribbean.
(Editor)

THE CONTEXT OF CARIBBEAN THEOLOGY

Locale

The geographical designation "Caribbean" generally refers to the area composed of islands situated around the perimeter of the Caribbean Sea, with the possible inclusion of the mainland territories of Guyana, Surinam, and French Guyana. The physical barriers of water and the relatively long distances between countries, coupled with their diverse historical backgrounds have served to make the Caribbean a very non-homogenous region, aptly described as "a microcosm in its representation of the nations, races and political systems of the world."[1] Thus, there exists significant political, social, economic, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, class, and religious differences between (as well as within) some of these countries. However, in spite of this plurality, there also exists an identity that reaches out in "ever-widening circles of kinship."[2] The nature of this common identity will become evident during the course of this historical survey.

It may be noted at this point that although certain historical similarities p. 133 exist between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, they seem to be far outweighed by their significant differences. For example, the religious political dominance of the Roman Catholic church in Latin America from the sixteenth century onward is unparalleled in the majority of Caribbean countries (especially the English, French, and Dutch speaking ones). The mere fact that certain Caribbean theologians have adopted a Marxist analysis of the history of their region does not automatically make Caribbean Theology an identical twin or genuine blood brother of Latin American Liberation Theology. Thus, it would seem to be a poor error of judgment to group the Caribbean countries with the Latin American ones, when considering indigenous theologies; for there seems to be more than adequate justification for placing the Caribbean region into a different category.

Historical Periods

For the purposes of analysis, the history of the Caribbean may be conveniently divided into the two following periods: (1) Colonialism and Slavery, and (2) Emancipation and Independence.

Colonialism and Slavery. All the countries in the Caribbean Sea share the common heritage of having been "discovered" by Christopher Columbus on one of his four voyages in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The Spanish colonizers were followed by the French, Dutch, English, and Danish colonizers, who established rival colonies throughout the course of the seventeenth century. The Spanish, in order to supplement the indigenous Amerindian Indian labour force which was being rapidly depleted by the cruelty of the Spanish themselves, imported Africans (primarily from the West Coast of Africa) as slaves. This practice was continued by the other colonizers over the following

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[1] Carmen McFarlane, "Economic Development and the Caribbean Woman," in *The Role of Women in Caribbean Development*, ed. Marlene Cuthbert (Bridgetown, Barbados: CADEC, 1971), p.11.

[2] S. S. Ramphal, "The Search for Caribbean Identity," in *Called to Be*, Report of the Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation for Development, 2nd ed. (Bridgetown, Barbados: CADEC, 1973), p.25. Ramphal sees in separate innermost circles the Dutch, French, and British, or former British, territories. Wider than these is the circle which includes all three. "Wider still, is the circle that includes beside them the islands of the older Caribbean—islands that had shared the early experience of colonization but had wrested freedom from the colonial power at a much earlier stage in their history the larger island States of Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic…. Within this wider circle let us for completeness, and without putting too fine an edge on our concept of colonialism, include also the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico." (Ramphal, "Caribbean Identity," p.25).

three centuries. Thus, the virtual elimination of the indigenous population, and the massive importation of West Africans during the slavery years radically altered the face of the Caribbean which, for the greater part, became artificially created societies created by Europeans to satisfy Europe's economic appetite.

During this period, the European colonizers viewed themselves as members of a superior race and even used the Bible to support the theory of divine sanction for the enslavement of the people of colour.[3] The African slaves were considered less than human, so that even when they came to outnumber the Europeans overwhelmingly, a "West Indian" was still considered as someone who was obviously p. 134 European. During this period, every effort was made to eradicate the social structures and culture of the slaves.

The Church's attitude towards slavery was somewhat ambivalent. Clergymen, sent by the colonizing countries, viewed their ministry primarily or exclusively in terms of their responsibility to the colonists. Some regarded the preaching of the gospel to the slaves as a means of preserving the colonial status quo, while others viewed it as opening the door to further rebellion. On the other hand, the missionaries who came of their own accord, demonstrated genuine concern for the spiritual welfare of the slaves, but this did not lead them to speak out against the institution of slavery itself[4] In general, it may be said that: "Christianity, as it reached the Caribbean, was itself part of colonial dominance … Far from questioning the assumptions of colonial dominance or the justice of the system, missionary policies, preaching and practices were themselves shaped by the system."[5]

In addition, it may be said that for all their laurels, missionary opinion of black people was never very high.[6].

Emancipation and Independence. It was not until 1770 that the institution of salvery began to be seriously called into question and condemned by such men as John Wesley and Adam Smith. Using publicity regarding the cruelty of the slave trade and the declining economic benefit derived from it, Englishmen such as Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, and Thomas Clarkson, most of whom were devout Christians, were instrumental in moving Britain towards the abolution of the slave trade (1807),[7] and the emancipation of the slaves (1833) in her colonies. The other colonial powers followed suit during the course of the nineteenth century.

Although slavery was abolished and slaves were legally emancipated, the islands and territories were retained as colonies by the Dutch, French and British. In order to ensure continued economic p. 135 productivity for the colonial powers, indentured labourers from Asia (primarily from India) were imported. Although legally emancipated, the ex-slaves continued to be indoctrinated (explicitly or implicitly) in the myth of their

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[3] E.g. Gen. 9:20–28; Joshua 9; Acts 17:24–26.

[4] For example, see the address of Count Zinzendorf given to converted slaves in St. Thomas, Jamaica in Francis Osborne and Geoffrey Johnston, *Coastlands and Islands: First Thoughts on Caribbean Church History* (Kingston, Jamaica: UTCWI, 1972), p.67.

[5] William Watty, "The De-Colonization of Theology," in *Troubling of the Waters*, ed. by Idris Hamid (San Fernando, Trinidad: St. Andrew's Theological College, 1977), pp.62–63.

[6] For example, see Father Ignatius Scoles and Rev. J. Pearson's comments in Geoffrey B. Williams, "Classicism and the Caribbean Church," in *Out of the Depths*, ed. by Idris Hamid (San Fernando, Trinidad: St. Andrew's Theological College, 1977), pp.57, 53 respectively.

[7] Actually, Denmark holds the distinction of being the first European power to abolish the slave trade—a royal order being issued on 16 May 1792 to prohibit slave traffic from the end of 1802.

inferiority. It is of interest to note that during the slavery period, membership in the church of the missionary was considered an advantage as it afforded a means and measure of social recognition which was jealously guarded by the slaves. However, in the aftermath of emancipation, many left the orthodox churches for various types of folk religon.[8]

The emergence of independent states in the Caribbean began with the success of the Haitian Revolution in 1804, and continued after an interval with the independence of the Dominican Republic (1844), and of Cuba (1898). More recently, the Commonwealth countries of Jamaica (1962), Trinidad and Tobago (1962), Guyana (1966), Barbados (1966), Grenada (1974), the Bahamas (1974), Belize (1981), and Antigua (1981) have gained their independence. The other Commonwealth units have moved either towards independent statehood or associated statehood with Britain.

Without offering any reasons at this point, it is of significance to note that the general response of the Caribbean churches to the movement for political independence in the sixties, tended to be more negative than positive.[9] This overall negative response may be compared with the response of the Evangelical Caribbean churches to the movement for ecclesiastical and theological independence.

Despite their official independence, the Caribbean countries are still characterized by a strong political, economic, social and cultural dependence on one or more of the major world powers. It is therefore not surprising that the churches within these independent countries, are characterized by a similar dependence on outside ecclesiastical powers whose geographical power base generally coincides with the power base of the secular benefactor(s). This dependence generally implies theological dependence, especially among Evangelical churches.

Challenge

From an historical perspective, it is abundantly clear that "the Caribbean reality can no more be explained if we leave Europe out of the p. 136 account, than if we leave out Africa."[10] Thus, in developing an authentic Caribbean Theology, both Europe and Africa need to be taken into account. In addition, this process must studiously avoid the danger of wholesale adoption of other theologies such as Latin American Liberation Theology or North American Evangelical Theology. On the issue of colonialism, its past evils and present adverse effects must be identified with a view towards decolonization and indigenization of theology, which means both the affirmation and rejection of things Caribbean as well as European. At the same time it must be borne in mind that colonialism in the past (or capitalism in the present) is not the sole villain of all evils present in the Caribbean society, and that the church's adoption of contemporary analyses, methods, and jargon in the name of anti-colonialization and the search for national identity could compromise the Church's faithfulness to God and His revealed Word.

Similarly, the dehumanizing and stunting effects of slavery must be acknowledged, while the freedom, equality, and oneness of God's new humanity in Christ must be vigorously proclaimed and demonstrated to society by the Church. The Church's

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[8] These varieties exist today under such names as Pocomania, Kumina (Jamaica), Vodum or Voodoo (Haiti), Santeria (Cuba), Shango (Trinidad), and Jordinites (Guyana).

[9] Patrick Gomes, "Religion and Social Change," in *Out of the Depths*, pp.153–57 points out that an area of greatest conflict concerned the control of the schools and educational system.

[10] Clifford F. Payne, "What Will a Caribbean Christ Look Like? A Preface to Caribbean Christology," in *Out of the Depths*, p.3.

proclamation and practice of spiritual emancipation and independence from sin, to a legally emancipated and independent people must also be accompanied by a secondary (but important), proclamation and practice of other types of emancipation and independence from other former oppressors (e.g. social, cultural, intellectual, psychological).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CARIBBEAN THEOLOGY

Before tracing its historical development and giving an overall critique of Caribbean Theology, a few introductory comments are in order. At present, the theology being espoused is in its early stages of growth. It is still being expressed more in oral than written form, which explains the relative dearth of literature on this subject. Furthermore, the theology being presently propounded does not seem to reflect the majority view of the church in the Caribbean as it is being articulated by a small, vocal, educated cadre of theologians belonging primarily to the Caribbean Conference of Churches. The majority of these theologians would not fall into the category of "Evangelical" either on the exclusive single issue model (e.g. inerrancy) or even on broader P. 137 inclusive models[11] suggested by some Evangelicals. Furthermore, they would probably not identify themselves as "Evangelicals".

Thus, the number of people who have begun to address themselves to the issue of Caribbean Theology, and who would identify themselves as Evangelical Caribbean theologians is extremely small. In fact, the mere number of "Evangelical Caribbean theologians" is quite small. This quantitative as well as qualitative deficiency, together with sheer ignorance regarding the concept, has contributed much to such responses as opposition, suspicion, or apathy to Caribbean Theology from the Evangelical Church in the Caribbean. In addition, some theological factors which militate against the Evangelical Caribbean church addressing itself intelligently to this issue include the following: (1) Its emphasis on the unity of Scripture (2) Its emphasis on the universality of theology (3) Its sometimes simplistic understanding of the Christian Faith (4) The predominantly North American Evangelical orientation of its theologians (5) Its heavy dependence on North American Evangelical theology and (6) Its characteristic conservatism. Furthermore, pragmatic factors such as the comfort and security of the status quo, and the overworking of the few theologians, also conspire against any meaningful reflection on theology.

The emerging Caribbean Theology ought not to be ignored by Evangelical Caribbean theologians for at least three reasons. Firstly, it presents an overall challenge to re-examine their own theology in order to determine what elements are to be retained or jettisoned. Secondly, it highlights certain neglected aspects of Evangelical Theology which ought to be not merely added to it, but proclaimed and practised if the Caribbean church is to be faithful to God and His revealed Word. Thirdly, it may either be making certain declarations which are clearly inconsistent with God's revealed Word and thus ought to be condemned, or failing to make certain declarations which are vital to the Christian Faith, and thus ought to be affirmed.

The Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation for Development held in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, in November of 1971, may be seen as the beginning of the formal emergence of

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[11] For example, Editorials, "Which Magnet Draws Evangelicals Together?" *Christianity Today*, 16 July 1982, pp.12–13 suggests the model of "a confederation of independent nations" bound together by a "common commitment to Jesus Christ and the instructions he has given to his church in the written Word of inspired Scripture."

what is termed "Caribbean Theology".[12] In a pre-consultation publication entitled *In Search of New Perspectives*, Idris Hamid described the theology of the church in p. 138 the Caribbean as "the last bastion of colonialism."[13] He contended that even with its local archbishops, bishops and calypso hymns, the theology of the church remains "a colonializating, enslaving theology," which does not bear the marks of the history or destiny of Caribbean man, and distorts "the true Biblical or Christian tradition."[14] Later, he described the churches in the Caribbean as being by and large, extensions of the churches from overseas, having theologies which reflect the experiences of Europe and North America, and whose "governance, organizations, liturgies, and theologies yield little to the ecology of the faith of the Caribbean people."[15] He concludes that:

> The real offence of all this is not simply that these things are foreign, but it is far more serious. It means that our understanding of the faith, the expression of it in creeds, beliefs, and particularly worship suffer from the terrifying unreality to the every-day-ness of our life. The formal God of the major religous groups, is not one whom we have come to see as related to our every-day-ness. That God is not seen as one who enters our everyday experiences. What it boils down to, is that we were trained to worship God through somebody else's experience.[16]

In support of this, William Watty describes Caribbean man, oriented to Western values, as a caricature, having a copy-cat mentality which is nowhere "so depressingly evident than among the Christians of the Caribbean."[17] Thus, there is an appeal to "de-colonize" as well as create Caribbean Theology.

In evaluating the above claims, it is undeniable that in some aspects, the theology of the church in the Caribbean has been and still is, "colonial". Consciously or unconsciously, well-meaning missionaries and nationals have tended, and still tend, to equate Western culture with Christianity. Thus, the Christian way of life became/becomes synonymous with the European or North American way of life. The problem is magnified in the Caribbean by the fact that there were and are colour in addition to cultural differences between the missionaries and the "natives". Black was/is associated with bad and white with good, thus creating/perpetuating subtle inferiority and superiority complexes. p. 139

Thus, while it may be argued that some Caribbean theologians have tended to overstate their case, it is undeniable that the "foreign" nature of the Church in the Caribbean is not only present, but desired by those within the church in such areas as personnel, evangelistic methodology, homiletical styles, ecclesiastical models, codes of conduct, church architecture, liturgical forms, music, and dress, not to mention theological education models. Mirroring the society as a whole, the Caribbean copy-cat mentality has led the Evangelical churches in the Caribbean to quick adoptions of Evangelical, theological trends and fashions in the North American Evangelical churches. This is not to imply that everything "made in North America" is harmful for Caribbean consumption, but to highlight the dependence of the Caribbean churches on foreign

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[12] Burchell K. Taylor, "Caribbean Theology," *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 3 (September 1980):13.

[13] Idris Hamid, *In Search of New Perspectives* (Bridgetown, Barbados: CADEC, 1971), p.12.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Hamid, "Introduction," in *Troubling of the Waters*, p.7. He cites the timing of Harvest Thanksgiving as a "scandalous example."

[16] *Ibid.* pp.7–8

[17] Watty, "*De-Colonization*," p.68.

imports and to warn against the grave danger of the wholesale adoption of North American Evangelicalism say, without giving a careful consideration to both the North American and Caribbean contexts.

Thus, the challenge of "de-colonizing" or "de-imperializing" theology in the Caribbean is a real and valid one. However, this task is not synonymous with a complete jettison of the theology of the colonizers (imperialists), for although certain elements are merely cultural, and in fact, contrary to God's revealed Word, other elements are supra-cultural and therefore in harmony with it. On the other hand, the task of constructing a Caribbean theology consists not only in the affirmation of "things Caribbean" which are consistent with God's revealed Word, but also the condemnation of "things Caribbean" which are inconsistent with it. The de-colonizing process must therefore not only include a de-colonizing of the colonial gospel which has been distorted by accommodation to Western culture, Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy and capitalist ideology, but also a "de-colonization" of what has been distorted by accommodation to humanistic enlightenment influences, existential and process philosophy, and Marxist ideology. It must include not only the removal of Western accretions, but also a prophetic denunciation of indigenous concepts which are contrary to the Word of God.

The task of creating a Caribbean Theology is not an optional luxury, but a theological and practical necessity.[18] Theologically, as Gomes has argued, there is a need to express the tenets of *the* faith in a creative way that will be meaningful in the Caribbean context. Practically, the antipathy towards authority today calls for a clear distinction between a theology which is merely American or European, and p. 140 one which has Divine authority behind it. A rejection of human, colonial authority by the Church in the Caribbean ought to lead, not to a rejection but, to a re-affirmation of God—the sole and ultimate source of authority.

Robert Moore's call for a "theology of exploration" that arises out of a creative and dynamic interplay between the "eternal verity" of Christianity and the collective consciousness of Caribbean peoples[19] is valid to the degree that the former takes precedence over the latter; for if both are made autonomous, the latter will attempt to subjugate the former, especially when disagreement arises between the two. If God's eternal verities, contained in the Biblical revelation, are not used as the ultimate frame of reference in this "creative and dynamic interplay", the end result will invariably be in a very relevant but relative theology. This, however, is not to deny or ignore the importance of the collective consciousness of Caribbean peoples; for as Taylor argues, "The historical experience, the socio-political realities, the Caribbean context must become the point of departure for our theological reflection."[20] Thus, Caribbean Theology "will be a theology arising out of the Caribbean experience, done in the Caribbean for the Caribbean … dealing with the issues that are directly related to the people's life and experience in the light of the Word of God."[21]

Thus, the designation "Caribbean Theology" implies that it will be overtly, self-consciously, and unashamedly contextual. However, for the Evangelical theologian, it must be borne in mind that thought emanating from particular people to particular people

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[18] Patrick I. Gomes, "Religion and Social Change: Problems of Prophetic Radicalism and the Institutional Churches," in *Out of the Depths*, p.158.

[19] See Robert Moore, "The Historical Basis of Theological Reflection," in *Troubling of the Waters*, p.42 and Everard Johnson, "Response," p.46.

[20] Taylor, "*Caribbean Theology*" p.18.

[21] *Ibid.* pp.17–18.

in a particular place at a particular time under particular circumstances for particular reasons and purposes, the basic message contained in Scripture, God's unique revelation, takes precedence over oral or written contemporary reflection on life experiences when they come into conflict with each other. That is, Scripture determines the Evangelicals' perception of their experiences in life rather than the latter determining the former, or even both determining each other. Admittedly, one's particular historical experiences and cultural perspectives influence one's understanding of the Scripture message. However, taking into account such things as the laws of grammar, etymology of words, facts of history, conclusions of Biblical Introduction, insights of p. 141 sociology, and dogmas of Biblical Theology helps to keep one's biased pre-understanding to a minimum.

Since the majority of Caribbean theologians advocating Caribbean Theology are non-Evangelical, it is not surprising that they have essentially adopted the "dynamic interplay" model which leads them to emphasize the varieties of theology,[22] and to deny the possibility of a Universal Theology.[23] A mere reflection on the New Testament books will reveal differences in content, emphases and perspective, due to such things as the background and temperament of the author and addresses, the time and place of writing, the situation addressed, and the reason and purpose of the work. Thus, there is considerable diversity within Scripture. However, the Evangelical theologian sees this diversity in terms of complementation rather than contradiction. On the other hand, an impressive case may be presented for the essential unity (as well as continuity and development) of Scripture. For example, "despite all the rich diversity of theological formulation in the New Testament, there was only one basic apostolic tradition of the gospel."[24]

If, by the term "Universal Theology", one means that there exists either the reality or possibility of a unique, comprehensive, perfect, and final theology whose content, emphases, perspectives, methodology, and praxis will manifest themselves to all peoples for/of all times in all places, in identical or similar ways if they are obedient to God, the Caribbean theologians are right in claiming that this is humanly impossible[25] and unnecessary. (This claim to a Universal Theology is made invariably by Western theologians who have Western theology in mind, despite its own differences.) However, this is not to deny the existence of universal truths and principles in Scripture which may be expressed either in very similar or radically different ways and forms in different contexts. In brief response to Watty,[26] it may be noted that universal availability does not guarantee a "natural" universal appropriation, and that there is a difference between God's general p. 142 revelation which is universal in the sense that it has been revealed to all men, and God's special revelation which is "universal" only in the sense that it is applicable to all men.

It should be noted that the content, emphases, and perspectives of Caribbean Theology will not necessarily be the same as those of traditional theology. For example, the main

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[22] E.g. Idris Hamid, "Theology and Caribbean Development," in *With Eyes Wide Open*, ed. David I. Mitchell (Bridgetown, Barbados: CADEC, 1973), p.121; and S. E. Carter, Foreword to *Troubling of the Waters*, p.4.

[23] E.g. William Watty, *From Shore to Shore: Soundings in Caribbean Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Golding Printing Service, 1981); p.2; Wally "De-Colonization," p.52; Moore, "Historical Basis," p.37; and Horace Russell, cited in Ian Boyne, Seaga's No Threat to Blacks," *Sunday Sun*, 2 August 1981, p.6.

[24] John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p.41.

[25] Moore, "Historical Basis," p.37; Watty, *Shore to Shore*, p.2.

[26] Watty, "De-Colonization," p.52.

point of discussion on the incident of the feeding of the five thousand recorded in the Gospels will probably not be the parallel Synoptic accounts, the relationship to the feeding of the four thousand, the law of the indestructibility of matter, the possibility of miracles, or rationalistic explanations, but the loving care and compassion which Jesus showed for the vital, human needs of the people. Hence, the emphasis may be on orthopraxy, with orthodoxy assumed or unquestioned—an emphasis, incidentally, which is heavily supported in both the Old and New Testaments.

THE QUEST FOR EVANGELICAL CARIBBEAN THEOLOGY

It is in this context of the Caribbean and early Caribbean Theology that we turn to our present quest.

The Task

As already mentioned, the theological task of creating a Caribbean Theology is that of expressing the Christian Faith in a creative way that will be meaningful in the contemporary, Caribbean context.[27] This will involve the two-fold process of decolonizing and constructing. This task is a theological as well as practical necessity. It is of interest to note that while there is probably essential agreement on the stated task, there is probably considerable disagreement between many Evangelical and non-Evangelical theologians regarding their understanding of its meaning and implications, based on some radically different presuppositions which invariably, will lead to radically different results.

The Personnel

Though fairly obvious, Evangelical Caribbean theologians who are actively involved in the life of the Caribbean Church ought to be spearheading p. 143 this effort, although the degree and extent of its success depends largely on the degree and extent of involvement of the Caribbean Church. While the role of North American (and European) missionaries, missiologists, and theologians ought not to be entirely excluded, it ought to be studiously kept to an absolute minimum, being relegated to such things as objective third-party critic.

The Methodology

The reaction of some Caribbean theologians to the dominant European methodology which is described as being characterized by "scholastic isolation" rather than "vital communication and intensive participation in the life of people"[28] has some validity. Caribbean Theology will undoubtedly tend to be more practical and less theoretical than European theology.

However, to view theology merely as "reflection on praxis"[29] is a most inadequate view of theology which has both subjective and objective aspects. Despite its shortcomings, Western methodology does have its place. For example, Western theology produced the

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[27] Edmund Davis, *Roots and Blossoms* (Bridgetown, Barbados: The CEDAR Press, 1977), p.116, sees this as the primary theological task in the Caribbean today. W. E. Thompson, "In 'Doing Theology' in the Caribbean," in *Moving into Freedom*, ed. Kortright Davis (Bridgetown, Barbados: The CEDAR Press, 1977), p.59, sees the goal of theological reconstruction as discovering and refining "the best means by which the Good News, that 'God-in-Christ' is 'self-giving love,' may be proclaimed in word and deed in the contemporary situation."

[28] Watty, *From Shore to Shore* p.9.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.8.

basic tools and methodology necessary for the important task of Biblical exegesis. Thus, apart from the fact that Caribbean Theology will continue to have a strong Western European flavour because of the strong historical links,[30] it will continue to employ some Western methodologies because of their intrinsic value, and therefore provide a needed corrective to over-zealous, decolonization efforts. In graphic terms, Payne aptly describes the task of evaluating European theological methods as more resembling "the tedious occupation of sifting the wheat from the chaff than the heady pastime of putting a match to the whole pile."[31]

The Sources

For the Evangelical Caribbean theologian, the primary and paramount source in the construction of Caribbean Theology is the Biblical Witness which serves as the frame of reference against which all other sources are measured. This "canon" is a safeguard against the dangers of the Christian Faith "losing itself in the concrete situation or emerging out of it amalgamated with other non-Christian ideas."[32] A helpful source in giving the theologian a greater familiarity p. 144 and appreciation of the rich heritage and continuity of the church as well as insights into its various theologies and approaches to theology, is the tradition of the Church. On the other hand, a mere fleeting, retrospective glance into the pages of Church history will reveal the human fallibility of the theologies of the Church throughout the ages. Similarly, models, analyses, and explanations of sociology may help in giving a better understanding and perspective of both the Biblical as well as contemporary context. However, it must be borne in mind that the sociological method per se, poses several fundamental problems for the Christian Faith. For example, it gives little or no consideration of the possibility of Divine involvement in human affairs, and tends to study the Christian Faith on the same level as any other Faith.

The shared colonial and slave experience, the call to do theology and not merely discuss it, the serious consideration given to man's concrete situation, the condemnation of unjust oppressive power structures, the call to accept "blackness" and to condemn racism are some factors or emphases of liberation and/or Black Theology which are of relevance to the construction of Caribbean Theology. The "sifting task"of the Caribbean theologian in this exercise is that of recognizing the points at which liberating and/or Black Theology do or do not address themselves to the Caribbean context, with a view to (1) a vigorous affirmation (after appropriate modification) of certain emphases of these theologies where similarities exist and emphases are Biblical (2) a prophetic denouncement of certain emphases of these theologies where, though similarities exist the emphases are unbiblical and (3) an appropriate silence where differences between the Caribbean context and these other contexts are radically different. In addition, the Caribbean theologian is also obligated to affirm certain vital emphases (especially ones which are complementary to (1) above) which these theologies have minimized or failed to make. For example, emphasis must be given to the Divine as well as human nature of Scripture, the transcendence as well as immanence of God, the divinity as well as humanity of Christ, the depravity as well as dignity of man, the personal as well as corporate nature of sin, the vertical as well as horizontal dimensions of salvation, the

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[30] Payne, "*Caribbean Christ*," pp.4–5; Johnson, "Response," p.47.

[31] Payne, "*Caribbean Christ*," p.4.

[32] Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974), p.252.

spiritual as well as the social concerns of the Church, and the future as well as present hope of the Church.

Undoubtedly, the Marxist analysis of history as a class struggle does have some relevance to the Caribbean context where the gap between rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed is tragically evident. In addition, some of its theoretical principles on such things p. 145 as the equality of man, the stewardship of resources, the work ethic, and the concept of community are sometimes in basic agreement with Christian principles which have oftentimes been neglected by the Caribbean Church, both in theory as well as in practice. However, the Marxist analysis is only a partial and inadequate one. For example, apart from failing to deal adequately with such things as racism, its concept of religion as merely "an opiate of the people" fails to take into consideration the transforming power of authentic Christianity. Its goal of a new man fails to take into account the perversity of man apart from Divine transformation, and thus it has no place for God and His power to change human nature. Its optimistic vision of the establishment of a classless society on earth during this age is not shared by Christians who, although diligently working for a more humane and just society, do not anticipate this utopia until Jesus returns to establish His kingdom.

Having said all this, it should be noted that the Marxist criticisms of the Caribbean Church is not without justification; for even Evangelicals have realized that

> … the church has too often shared individualistic bourgeoise attitudes and life styles. It has tacitly supported the vested interests of the rich, instead of being an influential force on the side of the oppressed.[33]

Although ultimately, Rastafarianism[34] stands judged as "another gospel", its distinction in the Caribbean as "the earliest precursor of a radical break with Western theological patterns as well as a theology which has grown out of the living experience of an oppressed but defiant people"[35] merits it some consideration. Its widespread appeal in the Caribbean (especially to the young) as well as the mere fact that widely accepted heresies contain an element of truth in them, adds to the justification for considering this movement when possible sources of Caribbean theology are being discussed. Although having a radically different theology, Rastafrianism stresses at least the four following aspects of the Christian message that have often been neglected by the Church: (1) the humanity of God (i.e. the identification p. 146 of God with the suffering and oppression of man) (2) the dignity of man (particularly the black man) (3) the present aspect of eternal life and (4) the resident-alien status of the believer in this world. On the other hand, the alternative theology, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology proposed by Rastafarianism must be repudiated, and are *not* "objectively … as about as convincing and as weak as that which has cherished and taught by orthodox Christianity."[36] Thus, like Marxism, Rastafarianism presents a challenge to the Caribbean Church to emphasize, in word and deed, neglected aspects of the Christian Faith. The Evangelical Caribbean theologians' concern is that the theology which emerges in the Caribbean is faithful to the

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[33] "Evangelization of Materialistic Atheists Report," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelizaton*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), p.869.

[34] Rastafarianism is an indigenous Jamaican cult which stresses the dignity of the black man and his African culture, and the divinity of Heile Selassie, former emperor of Ethiopia. The Bible is used as the source of their authority and is interpreted using unorthodox hermeneutical principles.

[35] William Watty, Editorial in *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 3 (September 1980):iv.

[36] Watty, "De-Colonization," p.69.

Biblical revelation to the contemporary situation. If this takes place, then Caribbean Theology will be "both an evangelical and ethical theology, a proclamatory and practical theology, a theology expressed in both the indicative and imperative moods and a theology that would be both authentic and relevant."[37]

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Towards an Evangelical African Theology

Tokunboh Adeyemo

In this essay our attention is focused not so much on the questions of how, where, what and who should do theology for the Church in Africa as on the discipline itself. Because of this, we have given more space to part two of the paper than to its first part. Nevertheless part one is necessary since it serves as compass in the task before us.
(Editor)

PART ONE: PROLEGOMENA

As evangelicals we define ourselves as Bible-believing Christians and identify ourselves with those who have come to a personal dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Doing theology for us therefore is not a matter of cold academic speculation nor of unprofitable sterile debate nor of curious tourist adventure. Rather, it is an obedient spirit-led reflection upon God's revelatory words and acts, culminating in Jesus Christ, an honest application of the same to our lives, and consequent sincere communication of it for perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry (see Ezra 7:10; Eph. 4:12).

Equally, as Africans, we share the historical past of our people, cherish our cultural heritage, identify with our present struggles and aspirations and, under God, are determined to bring God's righteousness and justice to bear on all forms of life as our future is shaped. In this discipline we are, without any apology, strongly committed to the following:

The Holy Scriptures

That the Scriptures are given by God's inspiration and are therefore not only profitable but basic for theologising is assumed. God's eternal and unchanging message is both relevant and true to our ever-changing situations. It cannot be over-emphasized that as God is absolute, so is His message. This God's self-disclosure of Himself—the Scriptures—forms our primary source for theology.

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[37] Taylor, "Caribbean Theology," p.19.