

POWER TO RESIST AND COURAGE TO HOPE

Caribbean Churches Living out the Accra Confession

A Christian Education Resource Book on Economic and Ecological Justice



Edited by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth

World Alliance of Reformed Churches
and Caribbean and North America Area Council



The Caribbean

The Caribbean is a region situated mainly in the Caribbean Sea – from southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and Northern America, east of Central America, and to the north of South America. The region takes its name from that of the Caribs an ethnic group from the Lesser Antilles and Guyana.

The Caribbean consists of more than 7,000 islands and islets and also mainland countries on the northern shore of South American and Central America. Caribbean people have a common history of colonialism, slavery and indentureship. The region is said to be a “melting pot” of people – Indigenous Amerindian tribes, Africans, East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, Europeans, Lebanese and a significant population of people of mixed race.

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PREFACE

Rev. Dr. Collin I. Cowan

The Accra Confession is an acknowledgement that has come of age, an acceptance that we have distorted human relationships and deprived each other of life-giving energy and hope because of our selfishness and greed. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) claims this confession as a call to speak out against the evil of the neoliberal, unregulated free market and economic paradigm that has worked only to advance the privileged and aggravate the poor. In this model of economic arrangement power is defined in economic terms and those without material wealth, generated by the unjust economic system, are regarded as powerless; and as such, barred from the negotiating table and from the social forum in which decisions are made for cultural integration and global connectivity.

At the international level, we the people of the Caribbean may be known more for our inadequacies than for our industry, initiative and ambitious strivings; and we are more readily labelled aggressive and confrontational than assertive and socially conscious. We are tarnished by the rate of crime and violence and our public corruption or fiscal mismanagement is highlighted as if there were never another corrupt spot on earth. And yet the Caribbean has consistently demonstrated its capacity for contributing meaningfully to the enrichment of cultures through social consciousness, music, sports and drama, and to building bridges of understanding and reconciliation. We have critiqued systems of injustice and championed our way through the corridors of colonial power. Our experiences of injustice and oppression have taught us to be courageous and tenacious; and our struggles to claim our place and state our claim have strengthened our resolve and our capacity for “tough minds and tender hearts”. Not even the atrocities of Elmina’s “room of no return”, the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic trade in Africans, nor the deception of the plantation masters, to gain cheap labour from among the Indians, could set us back or silence us. We believe in justice because our history has taught us that there is nothing more destructive to human dignity than the curse of injustice.

Caribbean people occupy a small mass of the world’s land space where our fore parents, descendants of the slave trade and the indentured labour force, were robbed, raped and caused to settle. We are within the geographical space of the Americas, very close to influences and significantly affected by decisions of the United States government. We are best defined by our diversity, a diversity brought about by our common history in which the strategy of our oppressors was to “divide and conquer”. Caribbean identity and integration have eluded us consistently; but we are a dynamic people, persistent in our commitment to pursue our highest ideal and passionate about that which constitutes just and life-giving relationships. In this regard, we remain a people of prayer and of buoyant hope.

The articles contained in this book represent the honest reflections and hopeful wrestling of a people battered, brutalized and berated; but a people who could never be destroyed and would never allow ourselves to be derailed from our vision, articulated by the prophet Isaiah centuries before – *“Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill brought low, the crooked paths shall be made straight*

and the rough places smooth". For the skeptic this may be viewed as mere utopia but for us it is the accumulative response to our discontent with the world as it is presently organized and our unwillingness to accept this as the best arrangement. We believe that "there is an alternative" and this alternative way of living and being ought to be pursued with all the spiritual energy that God will supply.

We encourage our readers to approach this document not just as another manuscript. Instead we urge you to read with the Caribbean in mind. Consider our pain, our shame and the scars we endure. We are not just joining the theorist in positing a thesis on economic and ecological justice. Rather, we are expressing our narratives of hurt and hope, establishing our presence as active partners in the ordering of the world's affairs and ensuring that we are not overlooked in the arenas where issues of life and death are being debated and decided.

I commend this reading to you and trust that it will serve to inspire, encourage and challenge us to active engagement with Christ's mission to topple the Empire of greed, oppression and exclusiveness and to promote and pursue the cause for life in fullness, the life for which Christ lived and died.

Shalom!



EDITORIAL

Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth

The year 2009 was observed as Calvin jubilee year and churches world-wide celebrated the legacy of John Calvin as they reflected on the history of the Reformation, its theology and principles which undergird the Reformed family and the ecumenical movement, and a rediscovery of Calvin's social and economic thoughts. The idea of this book was first discussed as a contribution of Caribbean churches to make the Calvin jubilee year. It was proposed that the Caribbean focus would be on how the Accra Confession speaks to the Caribbean economic and ecological situation today.

Calvin's jubilee reminds us that we are called to be a church that is always reforming and renewing. Key to our mission imperative is the call to participate in God's transformation of the world and to become positive influences in our communities, enabling change. We need to be present in the midst of people's joys and sorrows, despairs and hopes. We are challenged to be salt and light in our congregations and communities. To do this we need a discerning mind, a prophetic spirit and capacity to address crucial life issues affecting our people. To remain silent and oblivious to injustices, hunger, violence and corruption or to hide behind walls of self-protection may seem safe and less risky but it makes the church complicit in injustices and denies opportunities for reform, renewal and growth.

This book, *Power to Resist and Courage to Hope* is a Christian Education Resource Book, which aims to contribute to the revival of the prophetic spirit of resilience and resistance within and among Caribbean churches, to sharpen critical reflection on the economic and ecological realities and to participate in God's transforming mission. It presents the opportunity for Caribbean churches to make a substantial contribution to the covenanting for justice process in the region as well as the global Reformed family. Ecumenical and interfaith approaches are highly encouraged as the issues, which are addressed affect the community as a whole.

Power to Resist and Courage to Hope was developed by pastors, theologians and lay persons from the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tanzania. It provides an opportunity to contextualise the Accra Confession, with an invitation to churches to renew their ministry, witness and mission as they reflect on what it means to be Reformed today in the Caribbean. The publication consists of a variety of resources written by Caribbean persons. It has a brief history of the Reformed in the Caribbean, and analysis on the global economic and ecological crisis, Reformed perspectives on the economy and ecology, Bible studies, sermon notes, liturgical resources and a children's story. The book also contains a glossary of key words and terms and a list of Reformed churches in the Caribbean.

In April 2009 some of the authors of this book and other resource persons met in Ocho Rios, Jamaica to present their papers and to discuss ways in which Caribbean churches can witness for justice and to rethink their Reformed heritage in light of the Accra Confession. (See the Message from Delegates on page 91)

We hope that you would include this resource in your study and training material and that it will be introduced to churches, including Sunday Schools, youth, women's and men's groups and other organizations. We invite you to use this resource for organizing studies, discussions, workshops and worship. We suggest that you add your stories of resistance and signs of hope.

I would like to thank all the writers for their contribution and to Rev. Dr Collin Cowan, WARC executive committee member for the Caribbean and to the Caribbean and North America Area Council (CANAAC) for supporting this project. I would also like to thank my assistant, Ms Ayari Felix for assisting with the proofreading.

We would be very happy if you would share with us your feedback and comments. Please write to us at the following address: Church Renewal Justice and Partnership, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Email: crjp@warc.ch or warc@warc.ch



THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE CARIBBEAN: A BRIEF HISTORY

Rev. Dr Dale A. Bisnauth

The Legacy of John Calvin and the 16th Century Reformation

It is a well established fact that the Church that came to be designated the Reformed Protestant Church or the Presbyterian Church was “founded” by John Calvin. But who was John Calvin? He was born in Noyon, France on July 10, 1509, that is 500 years ago. This year (2009) Reformed Churches all over the world celebrate the 500th anniversary of his birth, and seek to ponder his legacy as it relates to today’s world, and the Reformed Churches witness and mission to that world.

Calvin went to Geneva in 1536. By that time, the Reformation in Switzerland which was led by Huldreich Zwingli and which had begun in Zurich was finding a new centre in Geneva. On his arrival in Geneva, Calvin was commandeered

by William Farel to assist in the task of organising Geneva along Reformed lines. By 1536, Calvin, who was trained in law and theology and who had been influenced by humanism, had already published his Institutes of the Christian Religion – a work that has been described as the finest of Reformation literature. The Reformer’s attempt to impose outward conformity to the beliefs and ethical teachings of the Gospel (as he understood them) on all the citizens of Geneva, met with opposition. As a consequence, Calvin and Farel were exiled in 1538.

He was however, recalled to Geneva and in September, 1541, he was once more in charge of the Church there. By the time his work was finished in Geneva, John Calvin had given the Geneva Church “a trained and tested ministry, its homes and educated people who could give a reason for their faith, and to the whole city an heroic soul which enabled the little town to stand forth as the Citadel and City of Refuge for the oppressed Protestants of Europe”¹. What was even more, in the Institutes, Protestantism had received a strong theological statement, which was based on “a breadth of scriptural and patristic learning”².

The Reformer’s influence extended way beyond Geneva. Through the Institutes, his pattern of church government in Geneva, his academy, his

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many commentaries, and his voluminous correspondence, Calvin moulded and inspired the ideals of Protestantism of France, the Netherlands, Scotland and the English Puritans. Calvinism produced strong individuals, confident of their election to be God’s fellow workers in the accomplishment of his will in this world, courageous to do battle for God’s Holy Commonwealth against Empire and Catholicism, insistent on character, and

convinced that God has given the Scriptures to all right human conduct and proper worship.

1 T.M. Lindsay, A History of the Reformation (2 vols. Edinburgh, 1908), p.131

2 G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe, 1517 – 1559 (Great Britain, 1965) p.214



By the time of his death on May 27, 1564, John Calvin richly deserved the title of “the only international Reformer.”

Before the Reformation broke out in Germany in October 1517, and spread elsewhere in Europe, the New World had been discovered by Christopher Columbus for Spain and Catholicism. Spanish monopoly of the New World, however, though sanctioned by papal bulls and recognized by the Treaty of Tordesillas, did not go unchallenged by Spain’s European rivals. Begun early in the sixteenth century, that challenge, took the form of privateering raids, trade, settlement and, later, conquest. Wars in Europe between Spain and her rivals provided the pretext for French, Dutch and English traders, privateers and settlers to encroach on Spain’s possessions in the New World.

The Dutch had an additional motive for fighting Spain. This was related to the struggle of the Netherlands for their political independence from Spain. Religious factors were very significant in this challenge to Spain’s supremacy.

The Dutch Reformed Church in the West Indies

Actually, Spain had little interest in occupying the Lesser Antilles and the Guiana coastlands, and less capability of discouraging settlers from her European rivals from doing so. The first half of the seventeenth century saw settlers from the

Netherlands, England and France settling in these parts: St. Christopher in 1622/3 by the English and in 1625 by the French under d’Esnambuc; around 1642, Curacao, Bon Aire, Aruba, St. Maarten’s and St. Eustatus by the Dutch. By that time, too, the French had settled in Martinique and Guadeloupe. All in all, some one hundred thousand Europeans of predominantly Dutch Reformed, Huguenot (Protestant) and Puritan stock.

The Dutch who settled in Guiana at Nova Zeelandia (Pomeroon), Kyk-over-al (Essequibo River) and on the Weironie River (Berbice) were from the Northern provinces of the Netherlands where Calvinism was dominant. They were members of the Netherlands Protestant church, De Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerke, which subscribed to the Confessio Belgica and the Heidelberg Catechism.

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The Dutch Reformed Church was established around 1668, in Guiana. But very little is known of the religious activities of the Dutch Reformed community during the seventeenth century. It could be that the Dutchmen were too busy establishing their settlements to bother with the niceties of religion. And, understandably so. Those men had crossed the seas to establish trading centres and to engage in activities that would improve their economic welfare and,

in the process, that of their homeland and the Dutch West India Company which sponsored them.

Later, the Dutch West India Company would provide Reformed chaplains (predi-cants) to minister to the needs of the settlers in a somewhat erratic manner, but the notion of evangelising the indigenous people of Guiana did not even enter their minds. In this regard, the Dutch Reformed Church in Guiana was very much like other Protestant churches in Europe; they did not engage in missionary activity in other parts of the world until two, or even

three centuries after their founding. It could have been that the churches founded by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the founders of the national churches in the Netherlands and Scotland, were so busily engaged in defending themselves in the confessional conflicts consequent on the Reformation, and in defining themselves that they had neither energy nor interest for other enterprises.

Additionally, the Reformation Churches were essentially national churches that saw themselves as having onerous responsibilities, but those responsibilities were not believed to extend beyond national borders, let alone to overseas countries with indigenous and non-Christian peoples with whom they had no contact. Martin Luther has been said to dismiss with scorn the suggestion that the church should send spokesmen to non-Christian peoples, and John Calvin would have wondered, initially at least, whether these peoples could possibly be among God's elect. After all, it was not until the discoveries of Captain James Cook (1728-1779) that European Protestantism was forced to re-examine its belief that the *Corpus Christianus* (i.e. Christianised Europe and Christian Europeans settled in America and Australia), was identical with the world that concerned God. The belief that autochthonous peoples or aborigines were within the saving purposes of God did not come readily or easily to Protestant churches.

Calvinists have been reputed for their sombre and austere personal ethics. But, there was something tragic (or absurd) about the ethics of the Dutch of the Reformed tradition in Guiana. In the frontier days of the early settlement of the Wild Coast, when very few European women came to these parts, sexual promiscuity involving Arawak women was prevalent among the Dutch. Having raped their land, the Dutch proceeded to rape their women and enslave the men of the indigenous people. Later, when the plantation society developed and African slaves were imported to supply labour on the plantation, Dutch planters, overseers and merchants, sexually

The institution of slavery, whether of Indians or of Africans, was never questioned by the Dutch Reformed churchmen in the region who might not have owned, used or traded in (African) slaves, but who did not question that abominable system

exploited female African slaves. Marriage to them was considered improper. And, the institution of slavery, whether of Indians or of Africans, was never questioned by the Dutch Reformed churchmen in the region who might not have owned, used or traded in (African) slaves, but who did not question that abominable system.

It was the Dutch who established the sugar industry in Guiana and laid the basis for the plantation society in much of the Caribbean. It continued under the British and, to this day, remains one of the bases of Guyana's economy. It is this industry that has been responsible for determining the demography of Guiana (and, indeed, of much of the Caribbean) as well as its social structure. The sugar plantation demanded a large, easily manipulable, relatively docile, labour force. In the thinking of the Dutch this spelt African slavery. The Dutch became leaders in slave-trafficking and, in Guiana itself, in 1727, the house of McInroy and Sandbach was established to specialize in importing "prime Gold Coast negroes" into Guiana.

Too much cannot be said about the cruelty and barbarism of the institution of slavery. No protest against the system was raised by the administration, or by the Church, which was, but the administration at prayer. Protest was left to the slaves themselves whose protestation came in the form of revolt. The most notable of these took place in Berbice in 1763 under the leadership of Kofi and Akara. The revolt was perceived by the Africans as much as a revolt against Christians as it was against their Dutch masters.

The Era of the British Empire and the Scottish Presbyterian community in the Caribbean

Dutch colonisation ended in Guiana in 1803 when the colonies passed into the hands of the British. That marked the beginning of the decline of the Dutch Reformed Church in Guiana. Before the British came, the government of

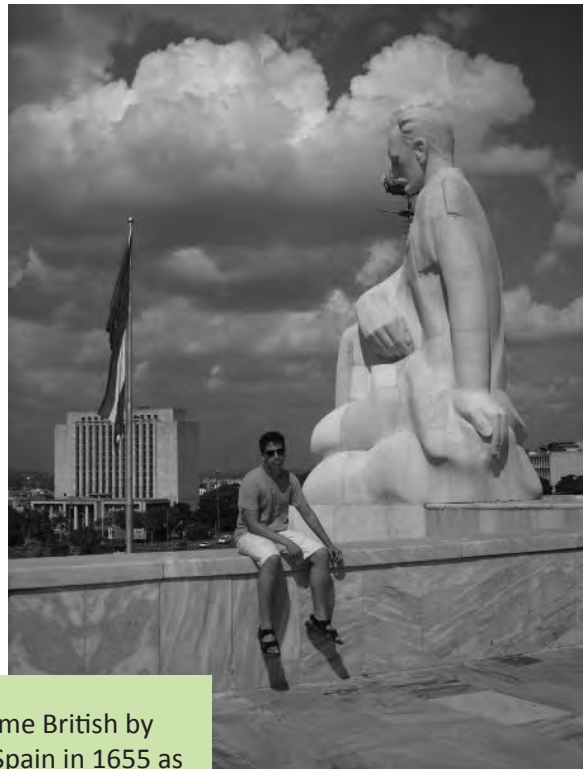
Demerara had donated a site at Stabroek on which a Dutch Reformed Kerk was to be built. Eventually, the half-finished building was bought by a representative of the Scottish Presbyterian community in the colony. On September 27, 1818, the completed building was declared open for public worship; but, effectively, to serve as a chaplaincy for Scotsmen. Appropriately, the “Scots” Kirk was named St. Andrew’s Kirk.

Jamaica became British by conquest from Spain in 1655 as part of Oliver Cromwell’s grand “Western design”. Trinidad was finally conquered by Britain in 1797, during the Napoleonic Wars. Both countries (as indeed, other British colonies in the Caribbean) would develop the sugar plantation as the main economic enterprise in which slavery would provide the needed labour. The whole system was administered by a white

plantocracy. Government was in the hands of members or representatives of that plantocracy. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, Caribbean plantocracies faced the crisis of possible labour shortage because of the movement in England, both for economic and humanitarian reasons, for the abolition of the slave trade. Planters, however reluctantly, accepted the proposals for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves, as a possible appeasement of the demand for the emancipation of slaves. The promotion of the Christian religion among the Africans was one such proposal. Even before that, however, it came to be felt that there was some virtue in Christianizing slaves. A Christianized slave tended to be more industrious and better behaved.

Initially, however, Reformed churchmen had to solve that problem of the theological significance of non-European peoples before they could venture to evangelize them. Another problem was that of evangelizing slaves. While the Reformed Church was pondering these problems, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf and

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the Herrenhut community known for their pietism, undertook missions to these parts. Moravians were first in the field, followed by Methodists.

What about the Presbyterians? A bit tardily they took to the field, but, then, primarily as chaplaincies. Around 1814, a Scottish Presbyterian church, the St. Andrew Scot’s Kirk was established in Jamaica.

It was regarded as an offshoot of the Church of Scotland founded by the Scots and their friends. As we have seen, in 1818, a Scots Kirk was opened in Stabroek, Guiana, for Scotsmen and their families living in the colony. Its ministers were recruited from Scotland, but the Kirk was supported by public funds. The story of Scottish Presbyterianism in Grenada dates from February 4, 1830. Scottish Presbyterianism was planted on Trinidadian soil in 1836 with the arrival of the Rev. Alexander Kennedy.

Things began to change in Reformed thinking in relation to mission. The Scottish Missionary

Society was revived in 1824. When it went out of service its work in Jamaica was assumed by the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was this body that would supply most of the leadership for nineteenth century Jamaican Presbyterians. The desire of the Reformed churchmen was now the conversion of the Blacks by preaching Jesus Christ to them. The Rev. William Jameson, for example, was determined to bring before the minds of the 'Negroes' the fact that they were "children of wrath", that through the love of God every believer in Jesus Christ the Redeemer, was saved. Holiness in life was proof of salvation. Hitherto, the difficulty, which 'Negroes' had, in believing and obeying Jesus Christ arose from the wickedness of their hearts – a condition which the Spirit of God alone could rectify. This was a theology bereft of the notion of "the elect"; it was probably a mixture of Calvinism and Arminianism.

We may safely assume that the doctrines taught by the Scottish missionaries were basically Presbyterian in nature. But the congregations, which developed in Jamaica as a result of the Presbyterian missionary outreach, were not organised along Presbyterian lines until after 1836. That year, ruling elders were elected and ordained for the first time in Jamaica. And, on February 10, 1836, the first local Presbytery was constituted in Montego Bay. At that time, the membership of the Church stood at 1,200. Interestingly, it was one year later that a Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Guiana was established under the authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. But although the Jamaican Presbyterian Church was to evolve through significant changes to become the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, that of Guyana remains structurally at least, very much the same, except, perhaps, without a reporting responsibility to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

While Presbyterianism was becoming very much a part of the religious landscape of the Caribbean, Congregationalism was becoming established in Guiana. Congregationalism or Independency was born in England around 1581 when some extreme Puritans broke from the Church of England and set up independent or separated congregations. In their doctrine, Independents were Calvinists. It was in the manner of church order or organisation that they differed from Presbyterians. They repudiated the idea of an established church. Equally, they repudiated the hierarchical system of church government and emphasized the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It arrived in Guiana in 1808, a year after the abolition of the slave trade, when John Wray arrived in the colony in response to an invitation from Hermanus Hilbertus Post, the planter-owner of Le Resouvenir who had written the London Missionary Society

requesting that a missionary be sent to instruct his slaves in the Christian faith. Wray was to be followed by other missionaries to Guiana, the most notable among whom was the Rev. John Smith. These Congregationalists came to the colony for a single purpose: to save the heathen "from sinking into everlasting burnings", in the fires of hell to which unbelief consigned them. In this regard the Congregationalists were not unlike the Presbyterians in Jamaica and Guiana.

The period 1800 to 1838 was an important one for the region and for the Reformed

Church in the region. The British colonies were involved in such important issues as the abolition of the slave trade, amelioration and the emancipation of slaves. These issues agitated public interest in Britain as much as in the Caribbean. One would expect that missionaries, who recognized the humanity of Blacks enough to work for the salvation of their souls and whose work was primarily among slaves, would support the movements for abolition, amelioration and

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emancipation which so crucially affected the welfare of their converts. But one looks in vain for a positive, uncompromising declaration on the part of the Reformed missionaries in the Caribbean against the institution of slavery. Whatever their personal views on the subject, missionaries of every stripe were hesitant to make those views public. Zinzendorf had advised the slave converts in St. Thomas in February 1739:

The Lord has made all ranks – kings, masters, servants and slaves. God has punished the first Negroes by making them slaves, and your conversion will make you free, not from the control of your masters, but simply from your wicked habits and thoughts, and all that makes you dissatisfied with your lot.

And, Reformed missionaries to a man observed the instructions given to them on their arrival in the colonies. Their sole business was to promote the religious and moral improvement of the slaves without interfering with the institution of slavery. Missionaries were not to pursue their activities without the permission of the planters or their representatives; nor were the times of service to infringe on the time the Blacks were supposed to be at work. Missionaries were not to engage in dispute over civil matters or matters related to local politics either orally or by correspondence with persons in England or in the colonies.

The Presbyterian Hope Waddell warned against attempts to resist the authorities. He told a group of disgruntled slaves who declared that Heaven had made them free and they would never be slaves again that they were taking the wrong way in redressing their grievances, that the burning of sugar estates was a crime which would do them no good and which would not have God's blessing. The Reformed preachers felt that slavery was compatible with Christianity. A slave uprising in Guiana in 1823, led to the imprisonment of the Congregational minister of Demerara, the Rev. John Smith. He died in gaol and because of this has been dubbed the Demerara Martyr. It was alleged that Smith had incited the slaves to revolt. In fact, he did

no such thing. He did the opposite. He told the slaves that if there was anything for them in the recent legislation passed in Britain they would soon hear of it. But if they behaved insolently to their managers they would lose their religious character and provoke the government both in Guiana and in England. Actually, the only real connection between Smith and the revolt was the fact that it was his deacon, Quamina, who had led the insurrection. Smith's colleague, the Rev. John Wray declared that neither Smith nor the London Missionary Society was in any way implicated in the revolt. The event led the Rev. A. Browne of the St. Andrew's 'Scot' Kirk, to publish three sermons on the duties of subjects to their sovereign and of slaves to their masters, for which he was warmly commended by the plantocracy.

In 1838, Emancipation came in the British colonies. The Reformed Church could claim no credit for that momentous event in the history of the Caribbean.

Post Emancipation Developments

The termination of apprenticeship in 1838 meant that the slaves could now bargain for the wages for which they were prepared to work. In this regard, clergymen were in a position to help in the bargaining process. George Blyth has told us that he joined forces with the Baptist, William Knibb, to recommend a shilling a day with house and cultivation grounds rent free, or one and six if rent was charged. It would seem that these terms became standard.

In Jamaica, J.M. Phillip, a Baptist, purchased twenty-five acres of land and initiated a land settlement scheme at Sligoville. Other such



schemes were to follow. The efforts of the Presbyterians were more modest. They were responsible for Goodwill and Cargen (Blyth), Mount Horeb (Hope Waddell) and Brownsville (Watson). Hope Waddell was concerned for small farming for its own sake; but he also undertook the scheme in order to keep track of his people who were already moving into the area.

Although the Reformed Churchmen would, by facilitating the development of these settlements, aid the development of a peasant culture, it cannot be said that they wittingly participated in a shift away from sugar as the basis of the Jamaican economy and from the plantation as the foundation of the country's social organisation. George Blyth considered the scheme "unfavourable to the cultivation of the estates, and injurious to themselves, as their sole dependence would be provisions, viz, cocoa, yams, plantains etc., which they might raise".

Emancipation was followed by the movement of ex-slaves from the plantations and a general reluctance of the Blacks to work on estates except on conditions that were favourable to them. Ex-slaves were not wholly independent of estate employment; where land was available either for purchase or squatting, their independence was greater. Such land was in abundance in Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, Suriname, Guadeloupe and Martinique. Planters felt the need to augment their labour force by importing workers from wherever they could find them. After several experiments, they settled on Indian indentured labourers from the subcontinent. By the time Indentureship came to an end in 1917, Guiana had imported (in round figures) 239,000; Trinidad 134,000; and Jamaica 33,000. Some would repatriate when their Indentureship ended, but the greater majority chose to remain in their new homeland.

This created the opportunity for those churches engaged in evangelism to Christianize the Indians. This proved to be difficult. The Indians could not see any virtue in converting to Christianity, at least

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not initially. And many held their own faiths, Hinduism, and to a lesser extent, Islam, in high regard. The attitude of some Christians to Indians was not particularly helpful.

It was missionaries from the Presbyterian Church in Canada who conducted successful missions to the Indian immigrants of Trinidad and Guiana. In Suriname, the

Moravian church conducted such a mission. It is true that the Scots Presbyterian in Trinidad contemplated a mission to the East Indians, but while they were awaiting word from their 'home' base, the Foreign Mission Board of the Church of Scotland, the Rev. John Morton of the Presbyterian Church in Canada fortuitously arrived in Trinidad in 1864. Four years later, he and his wife were to return to Trinidad to evangelise the East Indians in whom Morton developed a strong interest when he first visited the island. From a small beginning at Lere Village in South Trinidad the Presbyterian Mission was to spread to Couva, Tunapuna, Princes Town and other parts of Trinidad.

The 'Canadian' Presbyterian Church in Trinidad gave valuable assistance to the founding of a mission of East Indians in Jamaica. In about 1892, the Scots Presbyterians in Jamaica undertook a mission to the twelve thousand 'coolie' immigrants in the island. Two years later, assistance was sought from Trinidad for this mission. In response to this request, J. Rajkumar Lal and S. Siboo, two East Indian Presbyterians, were sent; others were to follow. By 1895, various East Indian mission stations were established from Savanna-la-mar in the southwest of the island to Port Antonio in the northeast.

In 1880, the Scots Presbyterians in Guiana invited the Rev. John Morton to the colony for the purpose of investigating the possibility of beginning a mission to the Indian immigrants. Nothing came out of that visit. In 1885, when the Scots Presbyterian Missionary Society decided to seek for someone to spearhead its work at Better Hope on the East Coast, Demerara, Morton advised the Society to apply to the Presbyterian

Church in Canada. As a result, in 1855, John Gibson arrived in Guiana. He was followed by men such as J.B. Cropper, James Scrimgeour and Gibson Fisher. These missionaries, together with the East Indian catechists managed to lay the foundation of the Canadian Mission Presbyterian Church.

The Canadian Presbyterians were responsible for the establishment of primary schools in Trinidad and Guiana. In 1892, a secondary school, Naparima College, was opened in San Fernando, Trinidad, by the Presbyterians; in 1917, the Berbice High School was established in New Amsterdam, Guiana. The success of the Presbyterians among the East Indians in Guiana and Trinidad was due to the fact that, unlike the other religious bodies, they concentrated almost exclusively on the immigrants. This gave the Mission the appearance of an Indian church – a factor that no doubt added to the attraction of this particular denomination as far as the immigrants were concerned.

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In March 1898, the United States intervened in the Cuban war of independence. And by the Treaty of Paris (December 10, 1898) Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States. Cuba for all practical purposes became an American protectorate and America a colonising power. No sooner had American expansionism come to the Greater Antilles than American Protestant missionaries began to converge on Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, Reformed Church bodies among them.

Meanwhile, other developments were taking place elsewhere. For example, the Disciples of Christ Church was established in Jamaica by James Oliver Beardslee in 1858. For a brief while, he ministered at the Freeman Chapel, which later came to be called the North Street Congregational Church. Disciples accept the Bible as the sole authority of faith as all Reformed Church people do, but unlike main-line Reformed Church practise Adult Baptism.

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Lack of space does not permit us to deal with the Reformed Churches involvement in the provision of public education across the Anglo-phone Caribbean. Although Trinidad and Guiana had set up theological colleges for the training of catechists and ministers, they were to participate in the St. Colme's College (1955) in Jamaica where Presbyterian and Congregation candidates for ministry were trained. That college was part of the Union Theological Seminary that later metamorphosed into the United Theological College of the West Indies (1966).

Nearer our time, ecumenism came to characterize, in part at least, Church life in the Caribbean. Reformed Churchmen and women were actively involved in the formation of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (1973). This body engaged in the discussion and promotion of issues and programmes related to justice, peace,

development, the economy, and the integrity of creation. Reformed Churches in the region, in an effort to promote co-operation among themselves set up the Caribbean Assembly of Reformed Churches, the precursor body to the Caribbean and North American Area Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Jamaica has been in the forefront of the movement for church union. The formation of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands in 1992 has brought together Presbyterian, Congregational and Disciples of Christ, all Calvinists in some sense, from Scottish, English and American backgrounds, into a dynamic Reformed Church and an excellent example of what it is to be "reformed and always reforming".



ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL CRISES: ALTERNATIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Dr Rogate R. Mshana

I. INTRODUCTION

This presentation has two main objectives. First, it critically examines the current global economic and ecological crisis and secondly, it outlines possible alternatives and challenges for the ecumenical movement. Because of the magnitude of the problem, this paper will only

briefly point to the major issues that will require the attention of the ecumenical movement.

Some of the terms used in this presentation are defined because they are understood differently by different people depending on different schools of thought and social locations. Understanding each other's positions will mark the beginning of a powerful ecumenical force which could challenge "free market capitalism" which is the main global problem today.

At the outset, it is important to restate that a majority of the ecumenical movement has been always against "free market capitalism" which has in recent times created its own new crisis. The economy today justifies inequality based on wealth, gender disparities and exclusion of disempowered communities, creates new forms of oppression, stifles people's dissent and destroys mother earth. The churches and social movements have stated this over and over again in many different ways. (Refer René Krüger, *Life in All Fullness. Latin American Protestant Churches Facing Neoliberal Globalization*, LWF, WARC, ISEDET publication, 2007)

However, we should state clearly, that the ecumenical movement *does not demonize the market*. The market is a gift from God based on a just sharing of resources and on just exchange of goods. It will remain a useful mechanism in humanity as long as it enables people to exchange goods and services for a better life for all as it was originally practiced. Some elements of such just market relationships, without romanticising them, are found among Indigenous Peoples till today. This form of exchange is based on just relationships that respects profits for all people, cherishes human dignity and enhances justice for mother earth. As churches we are faced with a major challenge and that is how to realize this practical utopia? The current capitalist paradigm claims that, "free market" will bring happiness to all people. Recent events have proved this claim to be wrong.

If the whole world wished to consume resources, for instance at the level the United States has done (a consumption pattern which was fuelled, incidentally, by a credit binge which led to the current economic crisis), we would need by

conservative estimates over five planets like the earth to support this pattern of life, if we use ecological footprints as the measure. Under the current pattern of unequally distributed benefits of growth, to lift everyone in the world onto a modest \$3 per day would require the resources of around 15 planets like ours.³ To give some more realistic statistics: it now takes around \$166 worth of global growth to fuel the energy hungry flat screen TVs and sports utility vehicles. It is this amount that is required to generate a single dollar of poverty reduction for people in absolute poverty compared with just \$45 in 1980s. Production of goods for consumption produces more wants and hence extends people desires. This is an area that needs reflection as well. Tackling poverty in a carbon constrained world requires a new economic model, better measures to assess progress and a shift from relying on unequal global growth towards serious redistribution. If we think the planet as a cake, we can slice it differently but we do not have it in our power to bake (to create) a new one.

Where do we go from here then? How do we go beyond strong statements to actions as churches? These are challenging questions that we should address.

Sadly, our national economies and now global economy are not based on a just and sustainable economic model. Our economies are rather based on greed today even excessive greed. It is this that has led to the current, financial, food and ecological crises. The most disturbing thing is that most of church statements that critique “free market capitalism” have not penetrated



the discussion as they depend on the pundits of this paradigm in their analysis. Some churches have also benefitted and have been flourishing within the frame of free market capitalism and therefore are cynical to any suggestion of possible alternatives. In other words the free-

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market economy is shaping religion and replacing it with the god of money and possessions. This is another ecumenical challenge. So, we have two challenges: how can we realize the utopia of a really just and equitable market? And, how can we create synergy among ourselves as churches and with ecumenical partners so as to ensure that this ecumenical concept of the free- market is taken up by other movements as well as decision makers. How do we address these challenges at both the national and global levels?

II. SOME EFFECTS OF FREE MARKET CAPITALISM

The world economic crisis

Free market capitalism measures progress by growth of products and not from the human

3 Sustainable Development Issues Network, May 6, 2008

development index criteria. When this is applied, the world economy is in a huge crisis. Ironically today, even by the measurement criteria of free market capitalism pundits, the world economy is in crisis.

The world economy is mired in the severest financial crisis since the Great Depression of 1930. Growth in world gross product (WGP) is expected to slow down to 1.0 per cent in 2009, a sharp deceleration from the rate of 2.5 per cent estimated for 2008 and well below the more robust pace in previous years - 3.4 percent.

While most developed economies are expected to be in a deep recession, a vast majority of developing countries are experiencing a sharp reversal in the robust growth registered in the period of 2002-2007, indicating a significant setback in the so called progress made in poverty reduction for many developing countries over the past few years. The prospects for the Least Developed Countries (LDC's), which were doing so well on average over the past years, are now facing serious setbacks and are deteriorating rapidly. Income per capita for the world as a whole is expected to decline even further in 2009.

Refusal to abandon the so called "free market paradigm"

Unfortunately we still have not learnt! Pundits of free market capitalism recommend more forceful fiscal policy stimuli to be taken in an internationally concerted manner in order to prevent the world economy from falling into a much deeper and more prolonged recession. The group of 20 mainly industrialized countries proposed the need for some reforms to the international financial system but did not go deep enough to suggest a radical shift from the free market paradigm to stop similar crises from happening in the future. It is capitalism in crisis.

But the G20 solution is insufficient. The US has continued to insist on free markets as the answer – this is a dangerous and outmoded ideology with regard to financial regulation.

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Unfortunately, the G20 Communiqué was based on these outmoded and discredited ideas. The Europeans called for a new financial architecture that starts with, and gives primacy to, new cross-border global financial regulatory authorities which are not now in place and must be constructed in the near future. It is evident, moreover, that the existing financial regulatory institutions, like the Basel Committee on banking Supervision and Financial Stability Forum have very limited membership, and cannot issue binding standards and rules. They

are heavily influenced by the financial lobby and have proven to be totally inadequate both in predicting financial crises and in acting to stem them. The group is met again in April 2009 and defended free market capitalism but under government protection.

Financial crisis

The crises that accentuate the current global financial system (debt crisis, sub-prime mortgage crisis, currency crisis, banking crisis and capital market crashes and poverty) have been particularly severe in industrialized countries, while its effect is spreading rapidly to developing countries. The US economy contracted by 0.3 percent between July and September 2008, the biggest drop in GDP since 2001. For the first time in 16 years, the UK's GDP sank by 0.5 percent during the same period. The 15 euro-zone countries and Japan are thought to already be in recession. China's phenomenal growth rate declined for the first time in two and a half years. India has also experienced a slowdown, although both countries continue to grow at a healthy pace of 9 and 7.5 percent respectively. However, some of their export sectors are expected to suffer as the main markets contract. India's call centers and its business service providers are preparing to cut a quarter of their workforce, and half of China's toy exporters have gone out of business.

Consumer spending in major economies is down sharply, while unemployment is up. The US shed 760,000 jobs in the first nine months of 2008,

and in the UK 164,000 people lost their jobs between June and August 2008. These figures are expected to rise, and many other OECD countries are also bracing up for significant job losses.

This problem has resulted in a variety of inconclusive debates on how to bring about international financial reform. The industrialized countries continue to define austerity measures as a panacea for poor countries instead of addressing the failure of the whole system. Austerity measures for the developing world may have made sense to them when the industrial countries were stable and prosperous. Time has come now to seriously address this and see it as a temporary measure that neither helped the developed world nor did it redeem already struggling developing economies.

Economists differ regarding the causes of the present crisis, but it is a fact that history is punctuated by financial crises from time to time, while the evolution of the international regulatory framework has not kept pace with the globalization of financial markets. In other words, the fact that the industrial countries were secure should neither deter efforts for drawing up a global regulatory framework nor give the impression that industrial countries will regain their prosperity and be secure if mere cosmetic short term reforms are made, while global financial inequality is ignored and left to be solved by markets alone.

There are inadequate actions by financial institutions in dealing with the financial volatility or in reframing and designing guidelines for a just and stable system for all countries and peoples. The WCC has called for the need for a new financial architecture which will qualitatively regulate huge and uneven growth. To achieve this change, a solid process that takes on board all global actors and civil society is imperative in this

time. Civil society groups and many governments have called for a process that is much more inclusive of all nations and the peoples of those nations. Could the United Nations be the forum which ought to design a just global financial and economic system?

The need for a new International Financial Architecture under the auspices of the UN

The global financial meltdown - with the U.S economy at its epicenter - has effectively debunked the neo-liberal economic myth that deregulated financial markets are "efficient". The WCC background document on Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth prepared in 2005 had observed that:

"No international financial institution...is able or willing to control the USD 1.9 trillion worth of currencies that are traded everyday. Financial speculation dominates trade in goods and services, diverting resources from long-term productive investments and areas of greatest need. Financial markets are also increasingly unstable, with speculative bubbles and financial crises."

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Could the United Nations be the forum which ought to design a just global financial and economic system?

The problems of external debt and capital flight as well as the recent bail out of troubled banks and insurance institutions in the US and Europe (which incidentally is an amount exceeding 40 times that which is needed to eradicate poverty around the world), make clear that the international financial system we have today is one that is based on injustice: it is a system wherein the global poor are essentially subsidizing the rich. According to the UN secretary general,

this crisis is threatening the achievement of the millennium development goals that calls for USD 16 billion to be set aside for its success. Efforts to avert climate change and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in poor countries and financing for development are now

in danger with reduced financial flows into these sectors. It also imperils previous international pledges of financial support for addressing the food crisis. It is therefore patent that nothing less than a paradigm shift is needed. This paradigm shift must be done within the framework of the UN that will include all countries, civil society and faith based communities.

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Challenges

- How can the civil society and religious society work out a new system in which justice can be central in all global financial transactions?
- How can such a system contain ethical principles to deter the abuse of financial systems at the cost of the world's poor?
- How can the churches play a more active role in calling governments and financial institutions to account for the present debacle?

Alternatives

Some of the alternatives that will need to be considered:

- To regulate excessive, destabilizing currency speculation,
- strengthening national and regional central banks to gain control over monetary policy,
- developing a multilateral approach on common standards to define the tax base so as to minimize tax avoidance opportunities for both TNCs and international investors,
- developing a multilateral agreement to allow states to tax TNCs on a global unitary basis, with appropriate mechanisms to allocate tax revenues internationally,
- resolving problems of debt within the auspices of the UN providing an arbitration mechanism,
- revisiting the application of a Currency Transaction Tax to curb short-term volatility of capital movements and exchange rates,
- setting up proposals for democratizing all global finance and trade institutions which will link finance to real economy and avoid greed that leads to financial bubbles, and
- Ensuring that the development of a new financial architecture includes representatives of all developing countries and members from the civil society including religious communities.

The search for international solutions for the unjust financial system could be complemented by national efforts to control financial markets. It is necessary to take seriously the danger of foreign financial dependence. During the earlier period of dramatic financial volatility, when banking crashes, Foreign World Debt defaults and stock market collapses were common, John Maynard Keynes responded:

"I sympathize with those who would minimize, rather than those who would maximize economic entanglement among nations. Ideas, knowledge,



science, hospitality, travel-these are things which should of their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonably and conveniently possible and above all, let finance be primarily national.”

Keynes, the leading economist of the 20th century, was not merely advocating nation-state control of finance because of concerns over volatility. At stake was nothing less than sovereignty over economic policy. Implied in his statement is that the management of the domestic economy depends upon being free to have the appropriate interest rate without reference to the rate prevailing in the rest of the world. Capital controls is a corollary to this. These insights apply equally as well to low-and middle income countries today, as to Britain during the 1930s. De-globalization of finance therefore represents a serious and laudable goal, instead of the chaotic, destructive and self-contradictory international financial flows which can be achieved, in part, by restoring national sovereignty via capital controls. Realistically, there must be a dramatic change in how domestic finances are raised, lent and spent which requires ensuring that international financial power relations can be radically and feasibly overhauled - simply so as to open the space for the reclamation of national financial sovereignty.

Ecological Crisis

First, Ecological issues have moral and ethical dimensions. Often they involve the depletion or degradation of the basic conditions for survival of all living beings on Earth, including the human race: air, water, food, and so on. Moreover, while major ecological problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss pose threats in the long-run to all people, it is the economically-weak who are disproportionately affected, especially in the short - and medium term. People living in the economic margins are highly dependent



on pastures, fishing grounds and forests for their livelihoods, food, medicine, and fuel, making them acutely vulnerable to the degradation, depletion and appropriation of natural resources. In other words, ecological destruction, when super-imposed on existing structural (i.e. class-, gender- and race-based) disparities, tends to aggravate these inequalities and deepen poverty.

At core, therefore, struggles for ecological justice are essentially struggles for life and human dignity.

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Second, analyses of ecological problems cannot be de-linked from the economic and political systems of our times. There are dynamic linkages between the present-day dominance of neo-liberal economic ideologies (free market capitalism) and ongoing processes of economic globalisation on the one hand, and worsening ecological degradation on the other. Free market policies have increasingly eroded and transferred government decision-making power to

unaccountable, profit-oriented corporations at the expense of environmental protection. In the relentless pursuit of economic growth, international financial institutions have financed massive development projects (e.g. megadams) and imposed structural adjustment programmes on indebted countries with tremendous ecological and social consequences. Moreover,

the globalising of economic models based on ever-expanding production and consumption has further undermined ecological sustainability. Thus, it becomes ever more apparent that efforts to protect the environment must be situated in the broader context of transforming the economy.

Third, building the ecumenical vision of sustainable communities requires deep-seated changes not only in our economic and political systems, institutions and policies, but also, and just as crucially, in people's values and lifestyles. Models of human domination of the Earth – whether for economic growth, profit or material consumption – have been deeply entrenched in economic theory and practice for many centuries, and have further intensified and proliferated in the current era of economic globalization. Yet there are continuing pockets of resistance and sources of hope.

Ecological debt

Rooted in a justice-oriented framework, ecological debt refers to the debt owed by rich, industrialized nations and wealthy elites (i.e. the global North) to poor countries and the economically-weak (i.e. the global South) on account of historical and current resource plundering, environmental degradation and the disproportionate appropriation of environmental space to dump greenhouse gases and toxic wastes. The definition of ecological debt has evolved to include social aspects related to the disintegration of indigenous communities, deterioration in people's living conditions and loss of cultural heritage and values, among others.

Ecological debt serves as a counterbalance to the financial debt (currently estimated at USD 1.3 trillion) being claimed from many nations of the South, often at great cost to their citizens. It reveals how international trade and financial systems (in colonial and present times) have not necessarily been mutually beneficial in monetary and especially in ecological terms, highlighting the need for alternative trade and financial policies that place people and earth at the centre. It calls attention to the collective responsibility of the global North for past and current violations of the right to a clean and safe environment of other countries and peoples, especially in the South.

Finally, it exposes the unsustainable nature of energy-intensive and consumerist lifestyles in the North and the dilemma of replicating these lifestyles in the South in the name of development. The global average ecological footprint – an approximate measurement of human impacts on the environment calculated by estimating the land and marine area required to sustain a population – is presently at 2.2 hectares, which is already 20 percent more than the Earth's bio-capacity⁴ of 1.8 hectares. Some countries use vastly more hectares to meet their consumption demands: the United State's average is 12.8 hectares per capita.

Deforestation is another huge problem in the world. Deforestation and forest degradation releases about 1.7 billion tons of carbon annually, about 20 percent of global carbon emissions. Total emissions from deforestation in 2008-2012 are expected to equal 40 billion tonnes of CO₂. It is estimated that to half emissions from the forest sector by 2030 through carbon markets

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4 Bio-capacity refers to the capacity of a given biologically productive area to generate an on-going supply of renewable resources and to absorb its spillover wastes.



would cost between 17 and 33 billion dollars a year.⁵ According to WWF nearly 30% of EU's timber imports could be from illegal logging.

It should be pointed out that an "economic South" can also exist in the geographical North; and ecological debt may be claimed between groups of people within countries. For instance, the dominance of large corporations in agricultural production in North America has promoted unsustainable farming practices that damage the environment as well as hurt the incomes and livelihoods of small farmers and landholders in this region.

The ecumenical movement should aim to create awareness, stimulate discussion and strengthen processes towards the recognition of ecological debt, including in the international arena. This should be done mainly through the conduct and dissemination of research analyses on how ecological debt is generated and how it can be recompensed; as well as through building networks between churches, communities affected by ecological debt and movements working on the issue.

Climate change

Human-induced climate change is one of the most critical examples of ecological debt. Rich, industrialized countries are mainly to blame for greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. In particular, the United States generates more greenhouse gases per head than any other country in the world, accounting for 37 percent of global emissions. Yet it is the only major emitter that has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. The most recent data shows that China may have already overtaken the United States as the foremost greenhouse gas emitter in absolute (but not in

per capita) terms. Even though poor countries are less responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, scientific research (including the 2007 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) indicates that they will bear a bigger burden of the adverse environmental effects of climate change, namely: increased frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, storms and heat waves. The environmental changes brought about by rising temperatures result, in turn, in disruptive and life-threatening socio-economic impacts including: the massive displacement of people living in low-lying coastal areas, the loss of sources of livelihood (especially among already marginalized groups such as farmers and fishermen), food insecurity, and reduced access to water. Poor countries in the South are particularly vulnerable to climate change for several reasons. They still have large proportions of their economies in climate-sensitive agriculture; and they lack the capital and technology to cope with disasters, as well as to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

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Challenges

The major challenge is on addressing those powers that continue to promote free market capitalism despite the ecological disaster it has caused. It is also an era in which the neo-liberal economic ideology stifles militant utopia for another model that will save human kind. It is threatening to read what the next President of EU from the Czech Republic is going to do. "Do not tie the markets-Free them"⁶. This is the motto of the new EU president, who is out to fight those who are working against ecological destruction." He contends, "The global climate is basically not changing, but global warming alarmists have succeeded in persuading politicians (and

5 http://knowledge.allianz.com/en/globalissues/climate_change/climate_solutions/forest

6 See Financial times, Wednesday, January 7, 2009, p.9

some ordinary people as well) that a doomsday is coming and on this false assumption, they have tried to restrain our freedom and curtail our prosperity. The temporary thing to do now would be to weaken, if not repeal, various labor, environmental, social, health and other 'standards' because they block rational human activity more than anything else. The Czech government will hopefully not be the Champion of global warming alarmists. The Czech government will hopefully not push the world and Europe into more regulation, nationalization, de-liberalization and professionalism." Moves to mitigate climate change by fighting CO2 emissions according to him are useless and, what is most important, human beings have proved themselves to be sufficiently adaptable to an incrementally changing climate. "The EU presidency might give us a chance to make use of some of our views to the benefit of the citizens of EU member states." He concluded. What this President does not realize is that even the citizens of Europe free market capitalism as damaging to their interests, they worry about rising inequalities, they are unimpressed by those running their largest companies and want politicians to make the world more equal. Those are the stark results of the FT/Harris opinion poll, which apply in every country surveyed, whether US or UK with their more liberal economic cultures or in the more dirigiste continental European economies.⁷ Here one can see a real pundit of free market capitalism. He is a representative of many pro-free market capitalist institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, WTO and its related TNCs, Banks and thinkers. The World Bank for instance approaches the ecological challenge from a commercial perspective not critically looking at changes in production and consumption patterns.



Our main challenge is to confront what Russel Jacoby calls convenient cynicism, a belief that human suffering, hardships, and massive inequalities in all areas of life are simply inherent in human nature and an irreversible part of social condition. Within this discourse, hope is foreclosed, politics becomes dull, and resistance is privatized, aestheticised, or degenerated into all forms of hyper commercialized escapism. Neo-liberalism offers up an artificially conditioned optimism-operating at full capacity in the pages of Fast Company, Wired Magazine, and Forbes, the Nike and Microsoft revolutionaries- in which it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine a life beyond the existing parameters of market pleasures, mail-order catalogues and shopping malls.⁸ As churches we have to address this blindness by not only working with suffering people but also addressing power.

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7 See financial Times; Monday , July23, 2007 p.1

8 Henry A.Giroux, Public Spaces, Private Lives : Democracy beyond 9/11, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Maryland 2003 p.119



Considering a new Ecumenical Approach in transforming “free market Capitalism”

1. Ecumenical approaches used so far to critique the “free market capitalism” have to a great extent been confined to churches and the ecumenical family to such an extent that pundits of this capitalist empire do not notice or hear a strong voice from churches. This message must penetrate the centers of neo-liberal economic power. We should think of how to do this in the coming years.
2. While the churches of the North are in the belly of this neo-liberal economic empire they have not done much beyond the work of charitable diaconia (supporting projects to reduce poverty in the South) to strongly advocate for a paradigm shift which could be demonstrated by implementing a political diaconia suggested by Gustavo Driau.⁹ The church of Norway responding to the AGAPE document made it clear how it is comfortable to address poverty (diaconia approach) than addressing the neo-liberal economic empire when it said,¹⁰ even though the empire discussion has caused much debate, it remains a fact that many feel we have an unjust system that generates poverty. As a church in the North, we believe it is important to recognize this sense and these voices from the South. It is, however also the opinion of the majority of the KISP-Commission that the term “empire” and the way AGAPE describe the present global economic system is not very fortunate for the common fight for justice and against poverty of the ecumenical movement. The majority are of the opinion that there is a need for broader notions

I think there are ideological differences due to different social locations and hence the need for Churches in the North and those in the South to dialogue. We must have concrete church encounters on this issue.

that unite the churches in the North and in the south in this fight. In the continued process, it will be important to clarify to what degree it is the language and words being (cf. “empire”) used that separate us and to what degree there is genuine political discrepancy.¹⁰ I think there are ideological differences due to different social locations and hence the need for Churches in the North and those in the South to dialogue.

We must have concrete church encounters on this issue. This empire is not promoting Pax Christ but Pax Romana as can be deduced from Perkins book, “... the main reason we establish embassies around the world is to serve our own interests, which during the last half of the twentieth century meant turning the American

republic into global empire.”¹¹ The global empire is however, not the US as such but it is rather a collection of corporations, banks and governments (collectively the corporatocracy) who use their financial, political and military muscle to ensure that schools, businesses, and media support economic globalization.

3. The bilateral initiatives between countries which involved churches in Latin America to resolve illegitimate debt such as that of Ecuador and Norway could serve as a model to discuss a new utopia in terms of establishing just trade and financial relations.
4. To continue confronting liberal cynicism- which is dystopian belief that ideas can only serve power and that little, can be done to imagine or challenge dominant ideological, economic and political forces. We have been told not to be ideological but rather work on result based projects like

9 René Krüger, *Life in All Fullness*, ibid. pp.187-203

10 *The Church and Economic Globalization*, The commission on International Affairs, Church Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, October 2007, p.66

11 John Perkins : *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, Plume, New York 2006 p.19

poverty alleviation. I think the churches' prophetic ministry should be without hesitation or utopian advocacy for another world where life can be experienced in fullness.

5. Although much has been mentioned to transform out theologies by changing curriculum in our theological colleges to take up issues on economic justice, observation indicate that much still has to be done.

It is imperative to go beyond issuing statements without concrete ways of how to ensure that they are followed up in implementation.

6. It is imperative to go beyond issuing statements without concrete ways of how to ensure that they are followed up in implementation. We need for instance to concretely question how we invest our pension funds and whether we can boycott

products of companies such as, Starbucks, Monsanto, Nestlé etc. actions that will move the churches from only pronouncements

7. We should talk to power by engaging those who are pundits of the neo-liberal economic paradigm by also facilitating participation of struggling people (confronting World Bank, IMF, WTO, TNCs etc.) In this way the alternatives proposed by churches will be heard.

8. Finally, we should mobilize our people, avail information about the tactics of the neo-liberal economic empire and exchange information about the new forms it takes.



COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE IN THE ECONOMY AND THE EARTH

Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth

Introduction

When life is threatened and the ways of the world work against the will of God, people of faith are compelled to speak out and take a prophetic stance, even with impending risks involved. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has long been concerned about the injustices in the world. There have been crucial moments in history where the Alliance has spoken out against wrong doings, when earthly powers claim dominion over life and trample upon God's creation. The Alliance has seen its mission to include social and political concerns and has sought to make a difference in times of injustices and social decay.

In the 1920s the Alliance addressed social issues, such as the adverse consequences of

industrialization, unjust social systems were criticized and a cooperative society was urged as a model for equity in sharing of resources. The Alliance led protest actions against the injustices perpetrated against Native Americans. In the time of Nazism WARC called upon member churches to confess against crimes committed against the Jews during the Holocaust. The Barmen Declaration (1934) was a response to this gross disregard for human dignity. Following the WARC 1982 status confessionis on Apartheid, the Reformed family adopted the Belhar Confession (1986) to confess their faith in times of racism and blatant disregard for human rights. Theology that supported Apartheid was condemned as heresy.

From status confessionis to processus confessionis

In 1995 a Consultation on Reformed Faith and Economic Justice organized by the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches and held in Kitwe, Zambia called upon member churches of WARC to take up economic injustice as a confessional matter. They issued a challenge to churches to recognise their complicity with forces which hold allegiance to mammon; to recognise this, and turn around, making a choice to be faithful to the God of life. They called upon churches to confess their sins of failing to act in resistance to this death dealing power. In a Statement from Kitwe, delegates said:

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"Today the global economy has been sacralized, and elevated to an imperial throne. It has changed the places with the human beings that created it. By redefining what it means to be human, it has become the creator of human beings. Thereby it usurps the sovereignty of God, claiming a freedom that belongs to God. For us as Christians this raises the question of idolatry and of loyalty to God or mammon..."

“It is our painful conclusion that the African reality of poverty caused by an unjust Economic World Order has gone beyond an ethical problem and become a theological one. It now constitutes a *status confessionis*. The gospel to the poor is at stake in the very mechanism of the global economy today.”¹²

It was deemed that such a confession needed solid and strong global solidarity. The Kitwe gathering urged the 1997 General Council to consider the calling for a confessing movement of the churches of the South and others who are in solidarity with them.

This led the Debrecen General Council (1997) to issue a global call for *processus confessionis* on economic injustice and destruction of the earth - a process of recognition, confession and action in the context of globalisation. Reformed church leaders in Debrecen when issuing the call for this process said,

“When we meet together to share and pray about our experiences. We are appalled to discover that our suffering, socio-economic exclusion, our dying and destruction of life is not exceptional or accidental, but is a normal state for most of us...

We are dehumanised, and we respond in inhumane ways. We cry out, for the spirit of life is being squeezed from us and we seek answers to our experience of the homicidal character of our suffering. We remember the mechanized destruction by Nazism and the crime against humanity by Apartheid. And we realize that now a new type of systemic death creation is being globalized.”¹³

In Accra, delegates heard the groaning of the people - rising from the slave dungeons on the Cape Coast of Ghana - to Kitwe - to Debrecen - to Buenos Aires - to Accra - from all places where people live on a daily basis with the reality of threats to life.

Following the Debrecen declaration, WARC implemented a programme of Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, which encouraged and supported member churches to be engaged in critical analysis and reflection on economic processes, their consequences for people’s lives, and the threats to creation. In 2003 at a South/South Covenanting for Justice Forum in Buenos Aires, a Faith Stance was declared on the neoliberal economic globalisation as a death dealing system. Delegates said, “We believe that neoliberal ideology violates the will of God, the creator of the garden of life.”¹⁴

The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth

In 2004 Reformed Christians gathered in Accra, Ghana for the WARC 24th General Council. This was taking place at a time when the world was gripped by terror, war and increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. WARC was coming into this gathering with more than nine years of studies, consultations and declarations, which led to resistance against the world economic order - built on greed, bullyism, competitiveness and systemic exclusion of the poor. In Accra, delegates heard the groaning of the people - rising from the slave dungeons on the Cape Coast of Ghana - to Kitwe - to Debrecen - to Buenos Aires - to Accra - from all places where people live on a daily basis with the reality of threats to life.

The Council named and rejected systems and structures that fester and perpetuate economic injustice and ecological degradation. The Accra Confession was a key outcome of the General Council. Delegates saw the question of life as a confessional subject. Usually dogmatic

12 Reformed Faith and Economic Justice, WARC-SAARC Consultation, 12-17 October 1995, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kitwe, Zambia

13 Reformed Faith and Economic Justice, WARC-SAARC Consultation, 12-17 October 1995, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kitwe, Zambia

14 Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life: WARC South-South Member Churches’ Forum on Confessing/ Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth (*processus confessionis*), 23 – 26 April 2003, Buenos Aires, Argentina http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=1165&navi=45

or ecclesiological issues are taken as the main themes for confessions but in the Accra Confession - justice for life was taken as the confessional subject. This resulted from critical reflection where delegates concluded, “economic systems are a matter of life and death” and “the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization...”¹⁵

Delegates spoke out against the deception of neoliberalism, which makes false promises of being able to save the world - through the creation of wealth - demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from creation. They stated their rejection of the “current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God’s covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God’s sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God’s just rule.”¹⁶

The Accra Confession was received by many churches as a prophetic voice that is timely – raising critical questions about the world economic order and the global power construction. WARC developed a process for churches to live out the Accra Confession (systematically - region by region, and church by church). This has provided a good connection with the global and regional processes and also with the broader ecumenical family and civil society. Regional covenanting for justice working groups have been set up with the key tasks of mobilizing churches to be engaged with the Accra Confession and

to discern God’s mission in today’s world. The Alliance has also included race and feminist analyses and perspectives on three core issues - economy, ecology and empire.

Building a Covenanting for Justice Movement

Together with the Council for World Mission (CWM) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), WARC is working to build a covenanting for justice movement as a global witness for justice and peace. It is envisaged that this movement will provide a platform for critical reflection and dialogue. The movement, called *Oikotree* was launched in Manila (December 2008). It brings together a diversity of discerning

lenses and understandings within the ecumenical family and social movements and has as its core foundation, putting justice at the heart of faith. It is aimed at building solidarity and resistance as well as lifting up life-giving alternatives for a better world.

In February 2008 the Caribbean and North American Area Council assembled in Guyana under the theme, “Breaking the Chains”. The Assembly included a two-day workshop on the Accra Confession. Delegates were engaged in critical analysis, reflection and discussion on critical issues regarding economic justice and ecological concerns -

as they discerned the signs of today, through listening, interrogating and working towards a process of covenanting for life. It was decided that a Covenanting for Justice Caribbean Working Group would be instrumental in moving forward with the Accra Confession in the Caribbean. This book project together with the April 2009

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15 The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice and the earth, Accra, Ghana, 2004

16 Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, Accra, Ghana, 2004

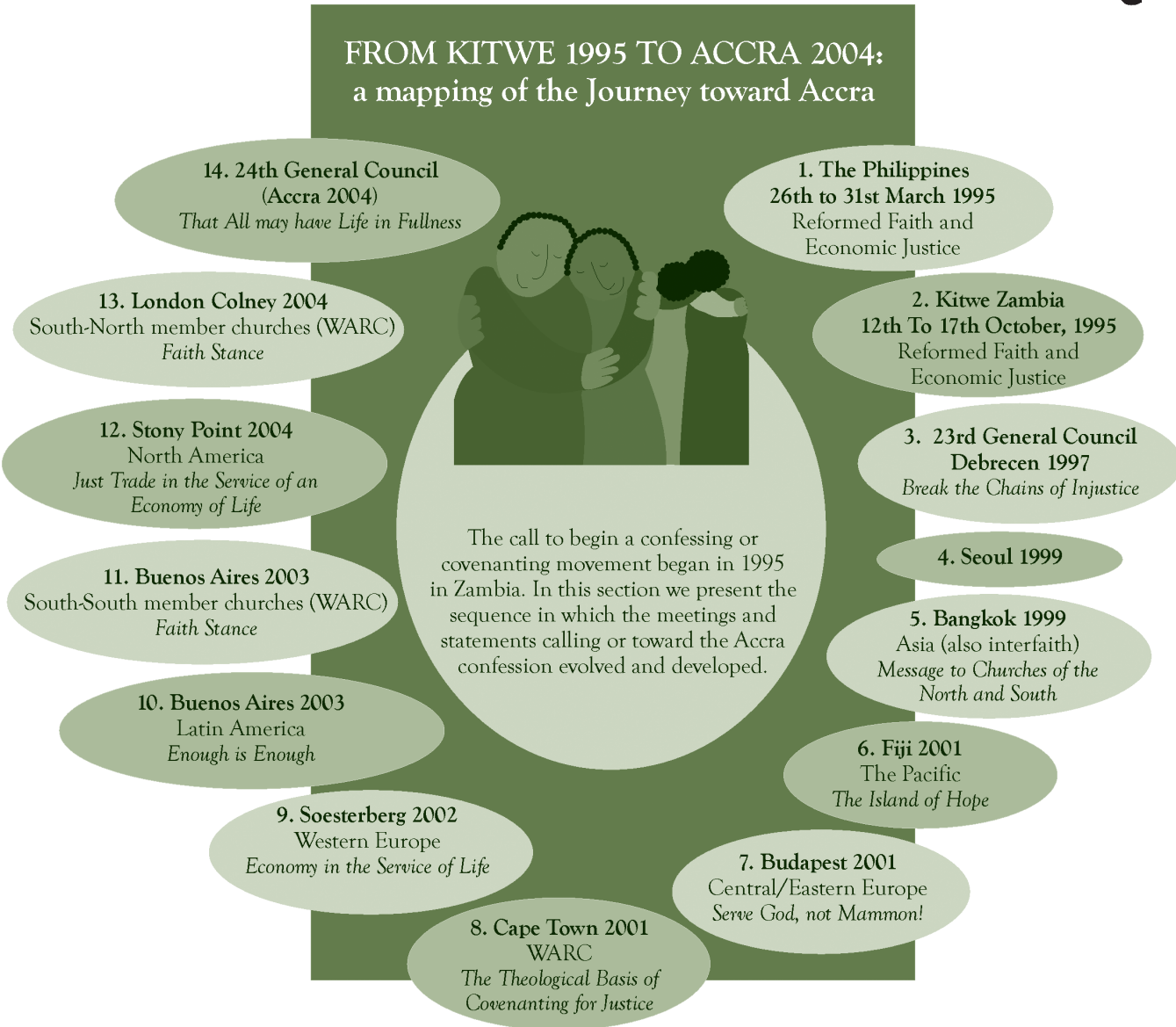
Caribbean Consultation on “Living out the Accra Confession” were organised by this group and are aimed at supporting churches and mobilising them for more reflection, dialogue/conversation and action.

The next steps are seen as crucial - to build a movement and a theological and social forum for justice, focussing on the economy and the earth. Churches are encouraged to connect with their neighbours of other faiths and with social movements in a common struggle and hope for life for all people and for the earth.

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FROM KITWE 1995 TO ACCRA 2004: a mapping of the Journey toward Accra



SPIRITUALITY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Rev. Dr Roderick R. Hewitt

Everyone is after the dishonest dollar, little people and big people alike. Prophets and priests and everyone in between twist the word and doctor the truth. My people are broken-shattered! – And they put on band aids, Saying, “It’s not so bad. You’ll be just fine, but things are not “just fine”! Do you suppose that they are embarrassed over this outrage? No, they have no shame. They don’t even know how to blush. (Jeremiah 6:13-15)

Introduction

Our postmodern world with its deification of the individual and consumerist ethics has resulted in societies with foundations built on fragmentation. It is this phenomenon that has given rise to the increasing emphasis on the need for spirituality. Every religion has its own understanding and practice of spirituality and the church must now compete to communicate the qualitative difference that Christian spirituality offers in seeking to give people fullness of life.

Caribbean Cultural Ambivalence

The addiction of our contemporary culture to the pursuit of happiness and pleasure has also resulted in Christian spirituality being used to

give directions to people who are seeking instant solution to the challenges of life and a deeper and fuller meaning to their purpose for living. Caribbean culture being a sub-set of the greater western consumerist culture has nurtured people to seek instant satisfaction in those things that gratify their desires. People become committed to what they can get out of anything! Authentic Spirituality must be rooted in the everyday realities of life.

Spirituality: The Nexus between Wealth, Poverty and Ecology

The unbridled temptation in our age to worship mammon, instead of God has resulted in consequential lifestyles that thrive by destroying creation. The Caribbean in general and Jamaica in particular is full of people who are not respected as subjects and partners in the

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sharing of the nation’s scarce resources. The real issue for many is not whether there is life after death but whether there will be life after birth. Our embracement of a warped human centred perspective on creation is usurping the sovereignty of God for the sake of progress. The awesome challenge that confronts Christian spirituality is to empower people to restore the interconnectedness of their life of faith with the earth in a sustainable way.

Spirituality for Justice

One must therefore embrace spirituality for justice that allows resistance to those forces that deny people fullness of life. There are those who claim that economic justice should not be a subject matter for the ecclesiological and missiological exploration. I beg to differ. Any in-depth reading of the gospels confirms that Jesus took economic issues to be central to the integrity of faith. The term economic justice is a concept that advocate for equitable sharing of resources and economic power as essential conditions for human development and ecological sustainability.

Wealth generated at the expense of poor people

Modern Caribbean societies were originally formed to meet economic goals of European nations. The indigenous peoples were wiped out in less than two hundred years after the arrival of the Europeans in 1492 as they engaged in systematic genocidal practices. For the sake of ill-gotten wealth Africans were later enslaved to meet economic targets because their labour cost was cheap. This was also true of the East Indians who came as indentured servants to work on the sugar estates. Colonialism and slavery was therefore a system of social and economic injustice that was used to develop Caribbean societies.

The Church as legitimizer of the status quo

The arrival of European missionary Christianity in the mid eighteenth century resulted in contradiction in loyalties. For whom was the church? The church tried to serve the enslavers and the enslaved by refusing to take sides. The Caribbean Church became a part of that European process and instrument of domination that provided rationale for conquest. Its theology undergirded the system of oppression. Caribbean theologian Lewin Williams refers to as 'defective Missionary Christianity'¹⁷. However, Caribbean history also bears witness to the emergence of liberative Christianity that gave people an alternative

vision of hope. It was this alternative vision that gave rise to the Jamaican Baptist Deacons Sam Sharpe (1831) and Paul Bogle (1865) who led the African Jamaicans in revolt against the oppressive colonial system.¹⁸ The baton was handed on to Marcus Garvey who anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist philosophy led him to advocate an economic paradigm that called on African-Jamaicans and Africans globally to take full responsibility for their economic advancement by creating opportunities for wealth creation that are independent of the Euro/American hegemony.

Rastafarai Hermeneutics

Garvey saw an entrenched and multifaceted evil that was present in the nation that was both subtle and outrageous. It left African-Jamaicans with a deeply infested wound that required surgery! It was Garvey's ideology that gave birth to the theology of liberation advocated by Rastafarians. The contemporary Afro-centric apocalyptic movement of Rastafarians in Jamaica describe Babylon as "the oppressive social, political, economic and cultural realities of Jamaica and the Western world".¹⁹ Babylon represents the experience of suffering and alienation in the African Diaspora that is rooted in the experience of forced deportation and servitude. In the contemporary global socio-political context Babylon is that state of affairs in which the struggle for power and possessions take precedence over the cultivation of human

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The contemporary Afro-centric apocalyptic movement of Rastafarians in Jamaica describe Babylon as "the oppressive social, political, economic and cultural realities of Jamaica and the Western world". Babylon represents the experience of suffering and alienation in the African Diaspora that is rooted in the experience of forced deportation and servitude.

17 Lewin Williams, Caribbean Theology, New York, Peter Lang, 1994, p. 39
 18 Patrick Bryan, Inside Out & Outside In, Factors in the Creation of Contemporary Jamaica, p.p. 30 & 39
 19 Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, Adrian Anthony McFarlane, Chanting Down Babylon, the Rastafari Reader, Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, 1998, p.443





freedom and concern for human dignity.²⁰ In their counter-cultural ideological reconstruction they invite those living within the Babylonian empire / system to get themselves ready to chant down Babylon! To chant constitutes a revolutionary posture of “beating down Babylon”.²¹ This requires reconscientising of those who are being oppressed to embrace a psychological, spiritual and cultural rejection of the values and institutions of Babylon.

Converting the churches

Converting of churches from their reluctance to address and take tangible action on structural issues that create and maintain poverty has proven to be more difficult. The Caribbean church has not yet taken steps to work out a broad based ecumenical theology of poverty, wealth and justice.²² Being a beneficiary of the unjust economic order the church seems impotent to speak truth to the system that is making her wealthy.

Truth telling to overcome threats to life

Truth telling involves naming and exposing the powers that are promoting threats to life, controlling people’s lives and denying them fullness of life. It involves seeking to hear God at work in the different and unsuspecting voices that are resisting the threats to life and providing different perspectives and giving clearer glimpses of how God’s reign is breaking into the world and offering new possibilities and challenges for mission that were not previously recognized. This requires using the forces of life to undermine the Babylonian system and make it impotent to wheel its influence.

Chanting down Babylon

Chanting involves using the philosophical forces of words, sound and power to weaken the system. Rastafari speech, rituals and ceremonies rest upon the principle of word, sound and power.²³ The use of reggae music becomes the most potent articulation of resistance against the Babylonian system in which overt and covert messages of resistance and revolt are communicated for those who choose to enlist in the global movement of resistance.

The spirituality of this movement teaches us that in the struggle against any

world system of oppression that one cannot fight using the system’s weapons. Rather Babylon is most vulnerable words and sounds embodied in the oral tradition of the people.

Widening gap between the rich and poor

How can the Caribbean church contribute to changing the structures that maintain the exploitation and unequal distribution in which the

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20 Ibid, p.24

21 Ibid, p.23

22 Michael Taylor, Christianity, Poverty and Wealth, SPCK, London, 2003, p.76

23 Sw. Anand Prahlad, Reggae Wisdom, Proverbs in Jamaica Music, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2001, pp. 19-21

wealth and riches are linked to current exploitation of the poor communities and the earth's resources? Caribbean societies apart from Haiti have grown wealthier but not through increased production and export earnings. Rather, the wealth was achieved at an awesome price of become a debt driven, addicted to avarice, crime infested, importing more and exporting less, investing little in growing or consuming locally grown foods and becoming over dependent on a fragile service industry. The end result is that we have become a region spiritually bereft because our moral foundations are fundamentally compromised.

Living Life in the fast lane

A deadly virus that thrives on rampant individualism and the corrosive and selfish value system has infected the core of the nation. Everyone wants to live life in the fast lane! Our insatiable appetite for quick wealth is willing to accommodate collateral damage of loss of lives if that is what it takes to achieve our financial goals. It was bereft of probity, thrift, personal responsibility and good stewardship of family life. The moral assumptions and behavioural codes that informed how our people behave in a neo-liberal economic environment have disappeared and replaced by an "anything goes" culture.

The blind is leading the blind!

Our current crop of political and business leaders behaves like "blind leading the blind" in these dangerous and uncharted waters. They always do well in our kleptocratic financial culture where there are no rules for people with money. They will buy or pay their way through any

Our insatiable appetite for quick wealth is willing to accommodate collateral damage of loss of lives if that is what it takes to achieve our financial goals.

Jeremiah was convinced that for his nation to be renewed it must begin with leadership that is profoundly counter cultural (4:22) and willing to embrace tensions and contradictions rather than opting for maintenance and equilibrium. Jeremiah's message was delivered at a time (587 BCE) when destruction, devastation, warfare, deportation and other human tragedies gave shape to his context. He was convinced that the social, economic, political and religious establishment of his nation had fallen under divine judgment. He called upon his nation to recognize its awesome predicament and to repent. However beneficiaries of the mal-functioning state preferred maintenance of the status quo to the risk of transformation.

entrenched bureaucracy to make more money. However for the ordinary person who obeys the rules of this nation their progress will always be blocked.

Hope in the midst of Structural failure

The message of the prophet Jeremiah serves as the signpost for our reflections. He spoke to a people that found themselves in exile, a context of despair where many hoped for nothing. Jeremiah was convinced that for his nation to be renewed it must begin with leadership that is profoundly counter cultural (4:22) and willing to embrace tensions and contradictions rather than opting for maintenance and equilibrium. Jeremiah's message was delivered at a time (587 BCE) when destruction, devastation, warfare, deportation and other human tragedies gave shape to his context. He was convinced that the social, economic, political and religious establishment of his nation had fallen under divine judgment. He called upon his

nation to recognize its awesome predicament and to repent. However beneficiaries of the mal-functioning state preferred maintenance of the status quo to the risk of transformation.

Wounded Healers

We who represent the Church in this region must confess that we are wounded healers. According to ethicist H.V.O Gwin, "Those who set themselves up as moral experts are those of whom we need be most suspect." The church must also accept some responsibility for contributing to the division and fragmentation. A significant and growing sub-culture remains un-touched by



the current dominant crusading model of evangelization practiced by the church. Many persons are increasingly becoming disenchanted with the kind of Christianity that has become domesticated and therefore trivialized. The foundations of our lifestyles are falling apart because the pillars on which they stand are insecure and therefore compromised.

Our hands are not clean

A deep shadow of numbness, guilt and ache has enveloped our region. The crash in the alternate investment schemes in Jamaica demonstrated how compromised parts of the church became in fusing their designer prosperity gospel with a corrupt financial system that was built on greed and deception. Instead of preaching fidelity to good stewardship of money that eschews greed, some of our church leaders in their addiction to the love of money led many Christians astray. Jeremiah puts it well: *Everyone is after the dishonest dollar, little people and big people alike. Prophets and priests and everyone in between twist the word and doctor the truth.*

Building communities of hope

Our society is saturated with human-induced tragedies that destroy hope through enmity. In many communities conflicts fester over:

1. Unequal and unjust distribution of scarce benefits to people with core needs
2. Unfair distribution of power and privileges
3. Competition of interest according to perceived rights and privileges



4. Conflict of values base upon social class differences
5. Distorted information over governance policies

The rich and politically powerful must not be allowed to buy their way out of accountability! Secondly we need to treat the drive against corruption as a major campaign, on the same scale as if we were fighting a deadly infectious disease. Thirdly we need an intense campaign to educate the general population to recognize corruption as a destructive force aimed at the moral foundations of our nation.

6. Breakdown of relationship because of strong emotions over perceived unjust policies

Economic justice: indispensable for hope-building

Two powerful infectious forces that breed corruption have been unleashed: selfishness and greed. Money has become the currency for morality in our nation. People are willing to do anything if the price is right. Bribe-taking has become part

of the fabric of modern living. Scarce resources intended for betterment of the poor are being siphoned off by corrupt officials in the public and private sectors. Bribery undermines good governance and damages the development of an efficient economy. Tough and enforceable laws are needed as a first step. Ordinary people must begin to see more corrupt officials being held accountable and fully punished by the judiciary. No exception must be accommodated. The rich and politically powerful must not be

allowed to buy their way out of accountability! Secondly we need to treat the drive against corruption as a major campaign, on the same scale as if we were fighting a deadly infectious disease. Thirdly we need an intense campaign to educate the general population to recognize corruption as a destructive force aimed at the moral foundations of our nation. King Solomon states: *“By justice a king gives country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down”* (Proverbs 29:4, NIV).

No easy road to economic justice

I wish to conclude by returning to the message of the prophet Jeremiah. “They dress the wounds of my people as though it were not serious, ‘Peace, peace’ they say, when there is no peace... they have no shame at all (6:14-15).

We need leadership that will tell this nation the truth about what is going on. Tell the people that there is no quick fix to our present crisis. Tell the people that all of us are part of the problem and must therefore become part of the solution. There will be no external rescue from this current crisis because the septic social wounds have been treated lightly with “sticking plasters” for many years. Jamaica and the Caribbean region must embrace a practice of power that is accountable and enabling and eschews coercive, manipulating and domineering models.



LIVING FAITHFULLY IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth

I was on a visit to the USA and Guyana in January 2009 and took the opportunity to visit family and friends in both countries. The conversation on a daily basis was on the economic situation - foreclosures, jobs and debates on how to “stimulate” the economy. At one level people are focusing on how to shore-up the banks and Wall Street firms while people’s reality of losing their jobs, no income, can’t meet mortgage payments and a variety of devastating family situations requires support to get people through these tough times.

Caribbean people have been living in economic crisis for a long time. But now that

the rich are feeling the crunch of the financial crisis, the news is amplified that the world is in the greatest crisis ever. There has been much attention in the media on how the USA, Britain, Germany, France and Japan are hit by the blows of the financial crisis. A crisis of this magnitude also has severe implications for poor people in both the rich and poor countries. In fact, when crisis strikes, whether it is an economic meltdown or a natural disaster it is the poor and the disempowered whose lives are most negatively affected. Caribbean countries are already experiencing the negative impact on tourism, exports, remittances and development aid.

The economic system needs to be interrogated at a fundamental level. This is not only a matter for economist and politicians. It is a matter of faith as it affects God’s gift of life. Churches need to ask questions about what kind of economic order prevails, what are the fundamental issues, who are the beneficiaries of the system and

who suffer the adversities? They also need to gather information and knowledge on alternatives to this system. How do people survive and where are the signs of hope? Theological analyses require that the assumptions of the neoliberal paradigm be examined and evaluated from biblical perspectives. How do these assumptions shape our world? Who are the major players? This needs to be done from various realities, in which people live and experience life and death. The economy should serve people and benefit the whole community. It needs to be organized to strengthen the human community and develop a sustainable relationship with the earth.

Churches need to be alert to the urgency of an even graver crisis, that of global warming

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and unsustainability of the earth. Caribbean countries are already experiencing the effects of this problem. Global warming and unsustainability of the earth are inextricably linked with the neoliberal capitalist economy, which has a major problem of greed at a very basic level. Psychologist, Erich Fromm warned “Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction.” What we are experiencing today are consequences of an economy that has been blown bigger and bigger until it has reached bursting point – economically and ecologically.

James had a warning for people who possessed more than they needed - whose material possessions were an abomination to God. “Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because

“Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction.”

remains in good shape. Christians see this vocation expressed in the biblical claim that God is the “helper of the helpless”, the “parent of the orphaned” and the “God of the widow”. Thus the church is called to affirm the sovereignty of God and to denounce that which robs and hurt the poor.

Calvin’s concern for the economy was not based only on an engagement with financial concerns, but moreso about the sovereignty of God in all spheres of life, a commitment to faithful living and an affirmation of the regulation of life

of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.” (James 5: 1- 5)

John Calvin is known for his outstanding work on the economy. According to Calvin, “God wills that there be proportion and equality among us, that is, each one is to provide for the needy according to the extent of one’s means, so that no one has too much and no one has too little”. Calvin affirmed the vocation of Christians to struggle so that the “crying difference between rich and poor” ceases and the Body of Christ (the community)

according to God's will. Our faith and the world are not separate domains. Material goods, whether traded in the market or provided by creation, are instruments of God's providence and need to be shared among all people. God's blessings of family, community, material goods, natural resources are intended to sustain life, not threaten life. They are signs of grace, to be used in the service of life. Selfish accumulation, hoarding and over-reaping are signs of a world rebelling against God's sovereignty and will.

The goal of the globalised neo-liberal capitalism is contrary to God's plan. It sees everything as "marketable" and profit-making. The poor has little or no access to basic needs like water, electricity, health and education. Many Caribbean countries have privatised these basic services without the necessary regulation, which takes into account those who cannot afford to pay. There is need to also regulate the market to protect people's livelihood, especially in agriculture and services. Without such regulations, the body of Christ is withering, the economy is collapsing and God's creation is being destroyed. For this reason Calvin calls the rich "ministers of the poor" and the poor "vicars of Christ" or "proxies of God".

These times are critical for the church to gather responses from its community-based constituencies about their pain and struggles and how they are finding ways to survive and to overcome the oppressive system. Churches need to reflect critically on what is necessary for life and

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our shared responsibilities, guided by the vision of God's life-giving economy and respect for the earth. We need to read the signs of these times as we discern the Gospel message within the Caribbean context.

Caribbean churches need to draw strength from their history of resistance, when their fore parents used their power of resistance and courage to bring hope and restore life. Farmers' groups, cooperatives, social justice and women's movements

can gain also strength from each other's stories and examples. They can build solidarity and rally together to defy death dealing economic systems and the pillaging of the earth's gifts.

Caribbean churches can no longer afford to remain comfortably in their pews while people are struggling for survival against heavy odds. They need to find their way to a greater connection with people and communities, as they search for meaning in life. The churches' witness and mission need to attend to the breaking down barriers of gender, race, religion and class, and challenging principalities and powers. A holistic approach is necessary to bring about a society where peace with justice prevails and where people all people can enjoy life in fullness.

Questions for discussion:

1. How are faith communities and people's movements resisting the current logic of exploitation and its destructive influence on peace, justice and the integrity of creation?
2. What can you draw from the resilience of your fore-parents?
3. What is the key Biblical message of economy and honouring of the earth?
4. How are your congregations, women and youth groups and Sunday school playing a leading role in promoting ethical ways in living?
5. Add your own questions...



BIBLICAL VISION OF AN ECONOMY OF ENOUGH

Rev. Dr Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

The economic fragmentation that currently obtains in too many quarters of the world is more than cause for socio-political concern. It begs the theological and biblical questions of the nature of economic management and the position of the faith community in attempting to offer analysis and solution based on the well honed biblical principle of a just and equitable society where the stewardship of creation is the responsibility of all those who share in it. Critical to the process is a rigorous dialogue with Biblical text to formulate the theological framework for the underpinning of the importance of proper economic justice and stewardship. *Oikonomia* is the faith understanding and response to economic realities and in the classic literal sense provides a radical understanding of household law or management that is often times diametrically opposed to the world's view and praxis. The emphasis is on the manufacture, allocation and consumption of the goods in ways that enable and enhance human life as intended by God. This notion of

household provision and care is all embracing and holistic and leaves little or no room for any to be in want, much less to dwell in poverty. This is precisely the intention of the biblical vision of an economy of enough, as in this economy, driven by God; there is more than enough for all. This paper posits that the over-arching vision to be derived from a careful reading of Biblical text is that God's creative genius has made provision for all and that with adequate stewardship none should be in want. Is this wishful thinking? When this question is asked against the background of what exists in economic reality, one has to struggle theologically to remain faithful to the concept that the Creator has already provided for all. The cattle on the thousand hill in Psalm 50:10, the known birds on the mountain (verse 11) and the creatures in the field (verse 12) owned and placed by God for the use and benefit of all seem to be disappearing fast, in today's world into the exclusive domain of a few. The

injunction that one cannot serve God and mammon, often times is inapplicable as the choice seems to be that of serving only mammon and in so doing seek to turn the economics of enough into one of the survival of the financially fittest and those who are able to twist systems to their advantage.

Current trends would therefore suggest that the market place is devoid of God and this God like the notion of *Oikonomia* is far removed from the decision-making tables and places. Unfortunately there are some economists who are most comfortable with this perception that God does not belong in the dialogue and that the economic theories, be they capitalist, Keynesian or quasi socialist can adequately address the present situation. The ironic twist is that the market economy needs God and more so in

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order to defuse the ostentatious accumulation of wealth by the few to the detriment and demise of the poor, the many. Further the apparent collapse of the global marketplace in recent times has invited the urgency of the theological reflection especially as the lives of the Caribbean people will no doubt be greatly devalued. In a world that is today cradled in debt, which by extension invites death, the hope must lie within the original economic order God intended for humanity. The faith community must announce hope in our push against the forces that would seek to alienate who we are as the people of God and as stewards of God's creation.

This conversation must also address the concept of individual and collective greed and the notion of the insatiable appetite of the consumer. The constant pursuit of materialism and the powerful bombardment of the advertisers coupled with the decline in morals and values help to establish the domination of the marketplace over the notion of self-control and the ability to be satisfied. Our relationship with material goods, fed by mass production, and the ease with which goods are available is no longer one of enough, with a genuine concern for the needs of other. Instead the reality speaks to impulsive behaviour and instant gratification. As consumerism emerged as the dominant worldview, the individual became lost in a world of continuous acquisition with its luring powers. The desire for bigger, better and brighter, albeit straining at the gnat and to the detriment of the family and social structure, is the order of the day. That less is more is no longer a credible adage for too many who seek to be the stakeholders in a parochial economy of plenty, where avarice is king. As a result, debt management counselling, constant warnings against schemes and scams, elaborate

fraud investigations and a myriad of issues now occupy who we are as a society. Personal and corporate bankruptcy is no longer an anomaly but the order of the day and the headlines scream at us for change before there is further decay.

In light of the existing realities and the looming decline in market place's ability to sustain life, in its fullness or with equal abundance for all, Biblical text must be applied to the context. As a Jamaican living and working in the Cayman Islands, the contrast is stark economically. With a dollar value in Cayman that is above that of the USD, the economy is buoyant and vibrant in comparison to many other Caribbean islands. The tax haven status has augured well for the Cayman Islands but in these later days there

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is now an apparent echo across the world for sterner financial regulations. With this consciousness there has been partial compliance with the required tax regulations and as a result the Cayman Islands have been placed on the Gray List by the OECD following the G20 Summit held in April 2009. This reality has caused some stir in the society as the political directorate announces with intensity the desire to be placed on the White List albeit with somewhat vague promises to improve the adherence to the expected banking regulations. Cayman will be required to do more than sign TIEA's (Tax Information Exchange Agreements).

There can be no obscurity or delay if the desire is to be a credible player in the current market economy. Whether or not this requirement by the larger market players is fair to Cayman and other tax havens is debatable.

In the interrogation of Biblical text, one of necessity must linger around the doctrine of the Trinity. The images of God/Creator, Son/

Redeemer and Holy Spirit/ Comforter/Provider that appear explicitly or implicitly in the Bible offer enough credence to support a communal concept. If one properly understands the doctrine of the Trinity, in its very notion one can observe the economy of God. This economy of God is located in the concept of the oikos nomos, the established management of the household, where in the Trinity we observe the righteous dynamics between the production/creative, sustaining/redemptive and distribution/consumption work of each member of the Trinity. This theological household cannot be contained within the framework of human economic theories as it is superior: it lends itself to a better understanding of what true economic justice would be like if a sense of righteousness were to be infused into

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and become commonplace in our economic thinking.

Proper work ethic and the respect for and honouring of the work done by the other are crucial in an economy of enough. Labour will be justly rewarded and the benefits commonly shared. In the Pauline concept of the Kenosis, Jesus willingly gave up the glory of pure divinity, humbling Himself in the flesh for the work of salvation to be wrought. Yet we also see a non-discriminatory God who applauds this work with the glory of the Resurrection. In the economy of enough, the provider actively participates and invites co-creators who engage the process with integrity. No work is of lesser

importance and all benefit from the gain in common.

The Biblical context, which is the energy of this paper, looks to the engagement of God whose creative power and care not only brought the world into being, but allows for its existence and sustainability. Land is finite and has been provided and given by God and as such, seems well intended by God to be divided and subdivided, shared and respected as land does not increase. Like the proverbial pie that cannot be augmented a larger piece for anyone means a smaller piece for everyone else and it is this very mathematics that has become the



source of the world's problem. Not only is land a gift of God, but the owner of all of creation, including wealth and capital is God. As human beings it is from God that we get the power to get / create wealth.

(Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV)
"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."

By extension the neighbour, the stranger and the poor, even those who are not so disposed to make their mark in any significant way on the productive means of an economy, become the responsibility of the wealthy for engagement and dissemination of the wealth. There is a sufficiency that accompanies this thought that does not cause the negation of the freedom

those who are marginalized because of poverty. This freedom is that of being able to choose and to participate as viable entities in the market place. There is also a preservation of dignity and well being, the most powerful example being that of

Boaz, as he participated in his social structure, instructed his workers not to glean the entire field but to leave some on the edges for the needed and the stranger. He not only feeds Ruth but eventually fulfils the desire of Naomi who the women proclaim received a son when Ruth gave birth to Obed. The child is referred to as "the restorer of her life and the nourisher of her old age", but beyond Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, the child participates in divine theology as an ancestor of the Messiah.

Ruth and her Kinsman Boaz. Boaz, as he participated in his social structure, instructed his workers not to glean the entire field but to leave some on the edges for the needed and the stranger. He not only feeds Ruth but eventually fulfils the desire of Naomi who the women proclaim received a son when Ruth gave birth to Obed. The child is referred to as "the restorer of her life and the nourisher of her old age", but beyond Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, the child participates in divine theology as an ancestor of the Messiah.

God has created and secured enough for all of humanity.

How we enable all to share and be blessed in this process has been the perpetual question. Undoubtedly, the faith community is required to lead in this process so that the least among us can be a worthy beneficiary coming away not only with enough but with dignity and being deemed worthy not only as recipient but co-distributor and decision maker in the market place. In both the feeding of the Five Thousand and Four Thousand recorded in the Gospels with the collection of the baskets of leftover the indication is that when the supplier and multiplier is God then there is enough in the economy for all.



REFORMED PERSPECTIVES ON JUSTICE IN THE ECONOMY AND THE EARTH

Rev. Dr Dale A. Bisnauth

In April 2003, a South-South Forum of representatives of member churches of the World Alliance of Churches (WARC) met in Buenos Aires. Their agenda was to consider the consequences of economic globalisation and ecological degradation on the quality of life of the poor people of the world in the poorest regions of the globe; Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, the gathering was to develop a faith stance in the face of economic injustice and ecological destruction perpetrated against the peoples of the South.

The Reformed Churches of the South in sharing their experiences discovered the dramatic convergence of the sufferings and cries of both people and nature in the countries of the South. The gathering declared that the world is living in a new stage of capitalism, which combines all forms of power and affects all dimensions of life. This stage of capitalism has as its focus finance

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rather than production. The global financial market acts as empire and god. Bolstered as it is by political, ideological and military power, this neo-liberal globalisation determines the levels of survival of the countries and peoples at the periphery.

The Reformed Church folk came away from Buenos Aires convinced that the neo-liberal model of economic globalisation cannot work. What is worse is that it cannot be transformed or adjusted; because of its inherent contradictions it has failed repeatedly in lifting up the countries, nature and peoples of the South to life in fullness. Neo-liberalism cannot produce justice in the economy.

Reformed theology has consistently understood “justice” (*mispat*) as the chief attribute of God, with biblical justice inextricably tied to Yahweh’s mercy and compassion and grounded in the God-humankind relationship. The practice of justice is enjoined on all those who follow Yahweh, to their fellows particularly the poor, widows, orphans and strangers. In situations of oppression and injustice, God’s people in biblical times were charged by the prophets to “Let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness (*sedaqa*) like a stream that never goes dry” (Amos 6:24). Micah summarizes the prophetic message: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

In biblical (and Reformed) thinking justice was never a matter of legal jurisprudence and court-of-law debate and decision. When the property-interest-money economy penetrated Jewish society, it led to a concentration of land in the hands of large landowners and drove small holders into debt. While the large landowners, in Isaiah’s words, joined “house to house... field to field” (Isa 5:8) and lived in luxury mainly in their



town-houses, because of indebtedness, the poor languished in poverty, lost their property, and their families were deprived of their freedom and self-reliance, and were reduced to day-labourers or debt slaves. The newly-rich achieved their property accumulation quite **legally** by means of creditor-debtor contracts. They became part of the power élite. What with economic and political power in their hands the rich could (and did) manipulate the very law, which was supposed to protect the vulnerable, and the poor. The prophet Micah railed against the property-interest-seizure-debt slavery economy.

Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! when the morning dawns, they perform it, **because it is in their power.** (Emphasis mine) they covet fields, and seize them, houses, and take them away, they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance (Micah 2:17).

And the prophetic warning was: if you do not turn away from the idols of wealth and power to Yahweh and to justice, you would run into trouble like the northern kingdom of Israel.

Like ancient prophets, John Calvin, the “father” of the Reformed Church argued that worship and justice, piety and righteousness belong together. The proper fear of God manifests itself in the practice of justice (mispat) and mercy. In Calvin’s words: “...we are not our own. Our whole life should be spent in the cultivation of righteousness; purity and holiness” (II/8:2).

One of John Calvin’s sayings is: “Where God is known, there humanity is also cared for”. He insisted that Christians

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should always be a disturbing element in society by resisting all forms of injustice. For Christian edification he wrote profusely about poverty and riches, interest and wages. For example, on usury he declared: “With respect to usurers it is scarcely possible to find in the world a usurer who is not at the same time an extortioner and looter, in other words addicted to unlawful and dishonourable again”. And, as André Biéler tells us, Calvin’s “fundamental argument supportive of all biblical and Reformed teaching on lending at interest, is that money must not be a source of profit when payment for it is made at the expense of the poor. Money in society is properly intended to come to their assistance and not **to oppress them**”.

The South-South Forum that assembled in Buenos Aires pondered the crisis of the moment: the rapid disintegration of the social order and the increase of poverty with its consequences in alienation, violence, homelessness and landlessness. At the same time, the Forum considered as equally important the ecological problem of the near breakdown of the natural world resulting in global climate change, ozone depletion, massive species loss,



intolerable levels of air, soil and water pollution, and the intensification of “natural” disasters like hurricanes and desertification. In countries with small and fragile economies and ecologies, like those of the Caribbean and the Pacific, these ecological disasters may even assume apocalyptic dimensions.

The question is therefore relevant and urgent: What is the Reformed Church’s perspective on justice as it relates to the earth?

“Ecology” as a science appeared in the late 1800’s. Its Greek root is identical with that from which “economy” is derived: *oikos*. *Oikos* means house, indicating the entire environment, the creation, the dwelling place, and the household of God. The God of Christian belief is the creator of both human beings and the natural habitat of *homo-sapiens*. As the psalmist puts it: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps.

24:1). We are called to live in a relationship, which is based on a three-fold interaction between God, humankind and nature. John Calvin wrote that because God uses all the elements to serve his glory, “the earth and stones could bear the character of ‘sacraments’” (Institutes iv, xiv, 18).

Reformed Church members share with other Christians the belief that, “In the beginning... God created the universe (Genesis 1:1). Whatever the debate between the evolutionists and the creationists, the insistence is that ultimately; creation is the work of God. And, the Patristic Fathers asserted quite vociferously against the Gnostics that in Jesus Christ, God entered humanity in its earthly abode. As the Apostles Creed puts it: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth”. One of the six themes stated in *The Book of Order* as characteristic of the Reformed tradition is: a faithful stewardship of God’s creation. And, the promise of redemption in Christ is not only for human beings, but as Paul wrote in Romans 8:19-23.

“All of creation awaits with eager longing for God to reveal his children. For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pains of childbirth. But it is not just creation alone which groans, we who have the Spirit as the first of God’s gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free.”

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Revelation 21:5 tells us that finally God will make all things new. Reformed Church folk regard the Lord’s Supper or the sacrament of Holy Communion as a symbol that God works through the elements of nature to bring about

redemption and renewal. If the Word tells that between the beginning and the end, humans have been entrusted with the responsibility of being stewards or caretakers of God’s originally good creation, participation in the Lord’s Supper challenges us to become active in defence of the world, which God created. This is what it is to seek justice for the earth.

John Calvin said some profound things about the world. His point of departure is in the first lines of his Geneva Catechism, which ask, and answer the question of the “chief” end of human life. It is to know God “because God created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us”. The world remains the free gift of God. Even though God gave the earth to humankind to live all over it and to “bring it under their control” (Gen 1:28) the earth remains “God’s foot and hand”. It is the theatre of God’s glory, the space in which the drama between God and humanity unfolds. Just as the goods of the earth with which we came in contact are *desposita Dei*, goods placed at our disposal in the form of administrative



trust, so also is the earth itself. Humankind has responsibility for the earth.

Commenting on Genesis 3:19, Calvin remarked: "The inclemency of the air, frost, thunders, unseasonable rains, drought, hail, and whatever is disorderly in the world, are the fruits of sin". His was the far-reaching (and modern) conclusion that if nature is subordinate to humankind, its fate is dependent on people's action and inaction. Long before the word ecology entered the human vocabulary, Calvin, commenting on Jeremiah 5:25, said: "We throw heaven and earth into confusion by our sins. For were we in right order as to our obedience to God, doubtless all the elements would be conformable, and we should thus observe in the world an angelic harmony".

These words of the Reformer should impress upon the Reformed Church our responsibility to become engaged in order to reverse current disastrous ecological trends, to seek a proper balance in nature. In short, to do justice to the earth in a world in which economic injustice and injustice to creation stem from the same source: disobedience to God that results in human greed, crisis in the world economy, and the violent rape of the world.

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BIBLE STUDY



ZACCHAEAN REFORMED ECONOMIC ETHICS

Rev. Harold Sitahal

The conversion of Zacchaeus in St. Luke 19:1-10 can lead us to adopt what can be termed a Zacchaeus form of economic behaviour to rectify the evils of the present global capitalist system. Zacchaeus is at the centre of an economic system based on the imperialist exploitation of weaker or subjugated peoples or nations. Yet he can be used as the paradigm of the rectification of the injustices, which create the wealth of the rich and powerful and the destitution of the poor. Though he is on the mere periphery of the global system of the exploitation, which enriched Ancient Rome at the expense of other Mediterranean nations, yet he is part of the system and benefits as a member of the comprador/sycophantic class, at the expense of his fellow Jews.



Zacchaeus was a sycophant—the verb form of the word in the Greek actually appears in Luke 19:8: “Look Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation (*esucophantesa*), I restore fourfold.” The sycophant receives rewards for offering information about breach of revenue laws. Zacchaeus was in a position to benefit by falsely accusing or assessing the tax requirements of Jews in Palestine under Roman imperialism. The position held by Zacchaeus in the strategically situated town of Jericho can speak much about trade and economic justice or injustice. Jericho represented the economic system of trade and the extraction of revenue by the Romans from traders in occupied territories like Palestine. He was a superintendent of customs, a position of great wealth and power because the lucrative production and export of balsam was located at Jericho. Zacchaeus represented the imperialist system of draining the economy of occupied territories and the consequent prosperity of the powerful nations by this system of unjust, forceful, oppressive extraction of resources.

Zacchaeus recognized the nature of the sin in which he was engaged and supported the impoverishment of those on whom he squealed and whom he defrauded through intimidation and the threat of violent military suppression. This is no different from the way in which powerful nations and their sycophantic, comprador supporters in poor countries carry on unjust trade today as they hover over the less-developed countries with their display of military force and technical know-how. This advantageous position occupied by the rich nations was attained in the same way as ancient Rome did by force of arms and threat of punishment to would be detractors and resistance to Roman authority. The European Christian nations including those influenced by the reformation and its contribution to the enlightenment, individualism, capitalism and slavery, and forceful occupation of lands belonging to so-called savages and pagans gained

Luke 19:8: “Look Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation (*esucophantesa*), I restore fourfold.”

superior economic standing in the contemporary world. By unjust trade, which is really the extension of invasion and expropriation of foreign lands, the rich, powerful nations retain their power and control over poorer nations today. One must note that even in the independent third world, former colonial states are using the taxes of their people in a way that enhances the prosperity of rich nations. Many of the developmental projects of developing nations are in the effort to imitate first world nations and so import their technology and manufactured products at the expense of taxpayers. The leaders also enjoy first world life-styles at the expense of taxpayers.

The founder of the Reformed tradition, John Calvin, noted that Zacchaeus demonstrated his conversion to Christ by the way in which he shared his goods with the poor and returned what was obtained by force and deceit. Calvin was concerned that individual faith be turned into social responsibility in all human activities, including the economic. Thus in the Reformed tradition faith and individual transformation by grace is manifested in social action that is just and equitable. The person made whole - or saved - by the grace of God in Jesus Christ is pointed to just and equitable involvement in the whole world. Unfortunately, this collaboration of piety and commerce did not accompany the subsequent evolution of capitalism. Today capitalism as the driving force of modern economic activities is responsible for the enrichment of a few and the wage slavery and impoverishment of the many, without remorse.

The unfortunate fact is that many of the laudable European movements and institutions have also promoted violence, genocide and exploitation of weaker nations. These same traditions including the Reformed tradition and culture contributed to the colonization of non-Europeans, which has brought us to the neo-colonialism of globalization with its capitalist economic systems creative of poverty and the degradation of our natural environment. The same European movements of the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and the age of Science, all contributed to the racism and other horrors of modernism with its emphasis on the individual as free subject and at the same time free to exploit the resources of earth and unsuspecting inhabitants of lands belonging to non-Europeans. As part of the propaganda of modernism or modernity, these movements resulted in the development of the acquisitiveness of modern capitalism as the agent of human progress. This modern culture inclusive of laissez faire economics developed during the years of European expansion by force and violence into the lands peopled by the "others." Now in the era of post-colonialism, the new face of colonialism in the presence of globalization perpetuates the

The European Christian nations including those influenced by the reformation and its contribution to the enlightenment, individualism, capitalism and slavery, and forceful occupation of lands belonging to so-called savages and pagans gained superior economic standing in the contemporary world. By unjust trade, which is really the extension of invasion and expropriation of foreign lands, the rich, powerful nations retain their power and control over poorer nations today.

In Trinidad the denial of the threat to the natural environment, including wetlands and fishing grounds in Claxton Bay in the plans for the development of port and industries is a case in point. Claxton Bay is a village populated by the descendants of slaves and indentured labourers in Trinidad. Their present plight and alienation in the pursuit of modern industrialisation by the invited foreign multinationals is an extension of the plantation economy of colonialism. The villagers and fishermen who are dependent on their livelihood from the fishing in Claxton Bay are protesting the plan to provide infrastructure and other facilities for a steel mill in their immediate neighbourhood. In their plight, the churches are silent as others join the victims in their protest. The lack of solidarity from the church is a sad commentary on the irrelevance of our religiosity.



same injustice so blatantly exercised through earlier imperialist and colonizing efforts. The Jesus, who defined his mission in terms of liberation from oppressive first century Roman imperialism, cannot support the capitalism through globalization to which the upholders and heirs of the Reformation contributed.

The point to be made is that modernization as the agenda of Caribbean governments is based on the style of economics, which is blind to the consequences it creates. These consequences include the alienation of thousands of poor citizens and the threat to our natural environment. In Trinidad the denial of the threat to the natural environment, including wetlands and fishing grounds in Claxton Bay in the plans for the development of port and industries is a case in point. Claxton Bay is a village populated by the descendants of slaves and indentured labourers in Trinidad. Their present plight and alienation in the pursuit of modern



industrialisation by the invited foreign multinationals is an extension of the plantation economy of colonialism. The villagers and fishermen who are dependent on their livelihood from the fishing in Claxton Bay are protesting the plan to provide infrastructure and other facilities for a steel mill in their immediate neighbourhood. In their plight, the churches are silent as others join the victims in their protest. The lack of solidarity from the church is a sad commentary on the irrelevance of our religiosity. The point is that past experience has shown that the people in the vicinity of most industries do not benefit in proportion to what is “made” by the investors and executives including government officials. The poor villagers will lose their fishing grounds, wetlands and be exposed to the inconvenience and threat to their health, which a steel industry in their “backyard” will create.

We cannot avoid the connection between crime and violence in our region and the blind commitment to the economics of capitalist exploitation of earth and its people in our island homes.

Mary King an economist of the plantation syndrome school, has noted that countries with small internal markets, and which depend on the export of locally produced goods

This modern culture inclusive of laissez faire economics developed during the years of European expansion by force and violence into the lands peopled by the “others.” Now in the era of post-colonialism, the new face of colonialism in the presence of globalization perpetuates the same injustice so blatantly exercised through earlier imperialist and colonizing efforts.

for economic survival, are at a disadvantage in the light of proposed restructuring in the United States of America where the plan is to supply local needs and markets with internal production to avoid high import expenditure. This is the picture confronting the Caribbean economies.

We are all caught on the roller-coaster of modern global capitalism and wanting and consuming more. The snare of global capitalism benefits the few and enslaves and impoverishes millions. Of course entire nations are infected with consumerism and covetousness under the sway of the all-pervasive market economy. Thus “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23), as we glorify the place of marketable goods and having more and bigger articles of consumption.

The way Zacchaeus responded to the conviction of the consequences of his sycophantic and extortionate action on the impoverishment of his fellow oppressed Jews, by returning his stolen wealth to his victims—this reparation—is required from the beneficiaries of colonialism, slavery, indenture, the violent seizure of lands from innocent victims during the centuries of European military expansion and the continuing unjust trade from which they benefit, backed by force of arms. The same is anticipated in Las Casas when he set free his enslaved “Indians” in his *encomienda* in Cuba, and took up the cause of their liberation in Spain. The Lascasian and Zacchaeus models of reparations for unjust gains and unequal trade arrangements must be promoted in this unjust world in which we live. Only then can so-called “Christian” nations be worthy of the name of Christ, which they so proudly bear. Then will personal faith be justly complemented with righteous deeds.

The Lascasian and Zacchaeus models of reparations for unjust gains and unequal trade arrangements must be promoted in this unjust world in which we live



CLIMATE CHANGE - HUMAN DESIGN AND DEMISE

Rev. Khereen Wilson

Key Texts: Genesis 1: 28 and 2: 15

The environment has been the recipient of unpleasant gifts from humanity. The reluctance of some to engage the environment in a way that would be beneficial to all of creation has given birth to a crisis of immeasurable proportions. Massive deforestation activities, tremendous damage to our coral reefs, air pollution to the point of considerable damage to the ozone layer, rapid climate change and frequent natural disasters are all features of today's environment. The startling reality is that in spite of our increasing awareness of how our actions have negatively affected the environment, we are still way behind in our understanding of our responsibility toward the environment.

Executive Director of the Caribbean Agriculture and Research Development Institute (CARDI), Dr. Wendel Parham in calling for an action plan to protect Caribbean Food Systems noted in 2005 that:

"With three months left till the end of the hurricane season, the region (Caribbean) had already been impacted by Dennis and Emily, which caused an estimated \$200 million in agricultural loss and damage in Jamaica alone. Coffee and bananas were among the industries that suffered the most damage...[aside from the damage to the agricultural sector] one must take into consideration the damage that hurricanes may cause to hotel infrastructure, tourists might elect to skip the Caribbean if they are likely to experience a hurricane. With the hurricane season getting longer and storms getting more frequent, many tourists may elect to go somewhere perceived to be safer. As for the effects of warmer seas, this will have negative effects on food harvested from the sea, as fish may not adapt to the new conditions leading to migration or population reduction. Coral reefs, which are attractive to tourists, are already under severe pressure as a result of rising sea temperatures.

The challenge with the human situation is that we are a people of immediate gratification and we think very little about long-term consequences. Climate change is the environment's response to the unchecked abuses that have been meted out to it – most in the name of 'development' and 'progress'. But Scripture development has been used as an excuse for the exploitation of people and the resources of the earth. The seriousness of climate change makes it one of those issues of 'casting blame'. In 1967 Lein White, in a lecture entitled "The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis" stated that Christianity and its roots is responsible for the ecological crisis. If this statement is indeed true, it would be a serious indictment on Christendom, but the more important issue and question is: How does the Scripture speak to the relationship that ought to exist between humanity and the

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environment? Does Scripture endorse the destruction of the environment for human purposes or does it decry such. Did God by God's design create environment and humanity to be opposed to one another or to be mutually beneficial to each other?

Key texts in the Christian understanding of our responsibility to the environment are Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15.

These texts are part of the wider story of God's creation of the earth. The creation story speaks loudly to God's original intent as God embarked upon this creative initiative. As we understand creation's intent we immediately get the sense of the created in harmonious relationship with the other and ultimately with God. God brought order out of chaos and a "coming together" where there was a "going against" the other. There are two things in the general creation story that should be part of the individual consideration as one makes the case for the preservation of the environment from a theological perspective.

Firstly, before God created humankind, he formed the earth and made the plants and creatures therein. This suggests that part of God's intention was to provide all that was necessary for the sustenance of humankind and that both nature and humanity were to coexist in a mutual and harmonious relationship. It would be foolish, even nonsensical for one to believe that God spent five days creating that which God intended to be destroyed by God's sixth day creation.

Secondly, the author's continued affirmation of God seeing that which was created as good, depicts God's sense of satisfaction and delight in God's creation - even before humankind came on the scene. So we recognize that even before God's desire to make man and woman in God's own image there was the feeling of absolute pleasure by what had already come to life by God's Word. Why then create anything (or any one - humanity) that could only survive by the total destruction of that which satisfied and delighted God.

Let us examine the specific texts, which can further aid us in our understanding. These two texts must be held in tension as we look at caring for the environment. The first text, Genesis 1: 28 states:

"And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (RSV)

The troublesome words in this text are "subdue and "have dominion". These are very strong terms in the Hebrew language. When translated into English they can be rendered as rule, conquer, and reign over. As we engage these words honestly, we must admit that their English translations do not initially appear to be positive in relation to the environment and it is possible for anyone with a selfish agenda to put a negative connotation to the words. However, in their original contexts, and when one takes into consideration the spirit of the text we can see that the author's intention was positive. According to Kenneth Cauthen, "Israel faced a natural world that was mysterious, powerful, and threatening and when one purviews the text within this setting, we find that it was profoundly liberating. It sees nature as good, as part of a divinely ordered world not to be feared but to be engaged and used for human purposes." Another way of looking at it is to recognize that even as subjects are necessary for one to call him or herself a king; so too is the environment necessary for the sustenance and continuity of humanity. In our present context the word rule has been subject to and associated with acts of tyranny and abuse that it may be possible for one without an understanding

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of God and God's intentions to make a case for the uncaring exploitation of the environment for his or her own benefit. That is why this text must be held in tension with the other found in Genesis 2: 15 which states:

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it." (RSV)

This text builds on the former with regard to the harmonious relationship that ought to exist between humanity and the earth. There is the spirit of engaging the land whilst seeking to preserve it. So here we have two motifs. The first says subdue nature and dominate it. The second urges us to till the garden

and to maintain it. At the least, the message of the two together is this: use the resources of earth for human purposes, but in so doing, take good care of the garden.

In spite of this, we find ourselves at a place where humanity has operated in a way that has caused great distress and destruction of the environment and by extension other persons. Not only have we failed to hold the above-mentioned motifs in tension, but we have replaced them with the motif of greed, which becomes the means by which we seek to selfishly gain wealth and power. Greed provides the nurturing ground for all acts of injustice and selfishness. It therefore means that even as we speak about restoring the environment we must also see this as directly relating to the restoration of humankind as sin is decried and righteousness and justice uplifted.

In John 10 Jesus demonstrates his opposition to persons, whose intent is solely to steal, kill and destroy. He invites persons to join him in a community, where He waits to be a 'Good Shepherd' and presents Himself as a 'gate' for the sheep. Unlike the thieves and robbers, Jesus states clearly that His reason for coming is that all "may have life and have it more abundantly" (verse 10 – KJV). This alternative community is one where all human beings recognize their worth and value in the

eyes of God as well as their stewardship responsibility toward the earth and its creatures. Even though our Godlikeness has been distorted because of the fall, it has not been destroyed. Even so, John 3:16 reminds us that ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only Son for our redemption. The cross is the chief public evidence of the value that God places on us. Christian teaching on the dignity and worth of human beings is of the utmost importance today, not only for the sake of our own self-image and self-respect, but even more for the welfare of society.

Theologian and author John Stott says it profoundly: “When human beings are devalued, everything in society turns sour. Women are humiliated and children despised. The sick are regarded as a nuisance, and the elderly as a burden. Ethnic minorities are discriminated against. The poor are oppressed and denied social justice. Capitalism displays its ugly face. Labour is exploited in the mines and factories. Criminals are brutalized in prison. Opposition opinions are stifled. Unbelievers are left to live and die in their state of being lost. There is no freedom, no dignity, and no carefree joy. Human life seems not worth living, because it is scarcely human any longer.”

A great part of our concern must therefore be the quality of the church’s fellowship. We proclaim that God is love and that Jesus Christ offers true community. And that God’s purpose is not merely to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate their loneliness; but to build a church, to create a new society, even a new humanity, in which racial, national, social and sexual barriers have been abolished. Our response for example to those who may become environmental refugees will be a crucial test for Christians who claim to be partners with Christ in pointing persons to ‘the abundant life’.

Injustices are perpetuated all over the world under the “TINA” (There Is No Alternative) slogan. This is part of the lie on which the church must shine the light of truth. The Accra Confession draws upon the Biblical motif to declare that there is always an alternative. The new community of Jesus dares to present itself as the true alternative society, which eclipses the values and standards of the world – where we stand as caretakers of the environment and of each other. The unwillingness of many to consider how their actions will impact on those around them as well as the environment is part of a mindset, which seeks to exalt itself, even above God. The Scriptures invite us to tear down and cast out such with the help of the Holy Spirit and recognize ourselves as part of a community who has as its core a mandate to preach the Good News to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoner, recovery of sight for the blind and to release the oppressed.

May God help us so to do!

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CREATION: AFRO CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE

TEXT: PSALM 24: 1-2

Rev. Tara Tyme



The Caribbean is a multi-racial and multicultural region that is highly influenced by African practices and rituals. Caribbean people are very aware that Creation is the ingenious work of God and that human beings and creation are one. The creator and the created cannot exist without each other. The Caribbean like many African countries is blest with an abundance of and beauty of flora and fauna that no doubt leaves its inhabitants in revere and honour for “Creator”. Even with such recognition the factors that contribute to our survival as Caribbean people whether intentionally or not causes us to destroy what God has created for our existence and survival.

One of the common names for God all over Africa is “Creator.” This is the most fundamental African concept of God. This is also true in the English speaking Caribbean, especially amongst the Rastafarians. But to be “Creator” is not without a certain family relationship. Indeed, God among some ethnic

The Caribbean like many African countries is blest with an abundance of and beauty of flora and fauna that no doubt leaves its inhabitants in revere and honour for “Creator”.

God among some ethnic groups is both “Creator” and “Great Ancestor”. It is God who empowers mother earth to produce and whatever is produced by mother earth is empowered to reproduce themselves in a continuous process of renewal, for the sake of the earth and human beings. Any human activity that negatively interferes with the natural process of earth’s renewal goes against the Creator’s intention and intervention.

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‘Everything the earth contains belongs to God: its fullness and all its rich resources. This is the jubilant proclamation of Psalm 24’ - **The earth is the Lord’s**. With this statement much more is implied here than legal-juridical titles and rights. It is worth noting that the Psalmist is acknowledging and proclaiming God’s worship and worth-ship through the lens of Creation. A profound statement that underscores the fact that worship has everything to do with Creation: one cannot engage in ‘true’ worship without honouring and revering creation. For to honour and revere Creation is honouring and revering God: it cannot be one or the other.

Humanities quest for ‘power’ and ‘domination’ has led to the demise and destruction of the earth’s natural resources and humanities dignity, integrity and life. Rather than seeing Creation as a whole (an understanding that everything created is dependent upon each other for existence, survival and reproduction). Creation has been compartmentalized in terms of ‘greater’ value, thus human beings are being treated as commodity, along with the natural resources of the earth. In other words there is a cash value on all of creation, even

more now in the 21st century in this neo-liberal economic culture that is plaguing the world. Countries that are more affluent in its natural resources are preyed upon, by those who are more affluent 'financially.'

Psalms 24, particularly verses 1 and 2 dispels that ideology and invites us to consider Creation in its entirety as God's initiative and grace for the 'fullness of life on earth' – the Creator and the created dwelling in harmony. Samuel Rayan a Roman Catholic Priest has sought to raise some insights that may be helpful as we explore Psalm 24: 1-2 in light of an Afro-Caribbean Spirituality towards Creation. He highlights:

1. An understanding that the 'earth is something, somebody that God overwhelms with gifts and that the earth is central to God's purpose for the harmonious co-habitation of all of creation.
2. God has covenanted the earth to God, making all of creation accountable to God.
3. The earth is the Lord's, for it is the Lord's self-manifestation, through the creativity of peoples and creation.
4. The earth is the Lord's, in that it is an articulation and embodiment of God's freedom and joy, which allows for us to enjoy the gift of creation.
5. The earth is the Lord's, is God's self-expression. The earth is where God abides and comes to meet us. The earth is sacred.

These five insights could be some possible starting points as we open our spirits and hearts to being re-conscientized and re-oriented to God being the author and finisher of Creation and humanities existence in light of this.

Suffice it to say that in the Caribbean, particularly the deep rural areas God's people are very aware of the relationship between the Creation and God. It is in those communities that the people endeavour to co-exist with recreation by their simple lifestyle. They are not quick to destroy any of creation, because their existence and survival is dependent on all of Creation. In most rural areas many persons prefer and practice the drinking of rainwater as oppose to water that is piped by the government that is 'tainted' with chlorine (an preservative agent against harmful bacteria). Many persons in the deep rural areas continue to do organic farming and the use of the various fauna are used for medicinal purposes. A lot of Caribbean people are averse to consuming synthetic drugs for they fear the negative effects they do have upon their bodies from time to time. In the urban areas sad to say these practices are either very 'rare' or non-existent, because the advancement of science and technology tend to thrive in these areas, thus the demolition of what is natural over and against that which is 'man-made.'

Psalms 24 v. 1-2 brings us face to face with the one who is in control – Creator God. Once we are able to face that fact then we are ready to be 'good stewards' of what God has blessed us with. For the proclamation is also a timely reminder that we own nothing and by virtue of being human beings to take care of and enjoy what Creator God has blessed us with. This principle has governed the people of Africa for all their existence and for those of us in Caribbean who are from African descent. The psalm is admonishing us to resist the temptation and the practice of destroying that which we cannot create or be prepared to deal with the consequences.

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CREATION: INDO CARIBBEAN SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Rev. Elvis Elahie

Sometimes earth is referred to as 'Mother Earth', honouring the spiritual interconnectedness of life of our planet. Thus the witness of many religious traditions declare that there is One who created and sustains life on earth and is the mediating force which acts as a beneficent caretaker of the systems of this biosphere.

Some, who measure spirituality in terms of how we relate to all that is around us, suggest that "to know the sacred is to care for the earth, to care for the earth is to be touched by the sacred". And by extension, a connectedness with the Creator necessarily results in a symbiotic relationship with all of nature. And the earth itself and all that is therein, could very well be an unending revelation of the Supreme.

Thus the writer in Job chapter 9: 7-9 said "But ask the animals and they will teach you; the birds of the air and they will tell you, ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know, that the hand of the Lord has done this"?

So creation itself is a gift to which we should meaningfully respond (engage oneself). Thus in 1994, a group of scholars and religious leaders in their presentation to the United Nations World Summit of Social Development, called upon all religions "to articulate a vision of development that includes prayer, contemplation, meditation, compassionate selfless service, a recognition of the interdependence of creation and the pursuit of human perfection in the areas of consciousness, purity, qualities and morality".

Like much of the world, many parts of the Caribbean with its heavy technological industrial culture, have the potential for self-destruction. In many instances, oil pollution has completely destroyed some forms of aquatic life, especially in many of the rivers and marine areas of our islands.

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A relationship between people and nature needs to be re-established. Thus, the theologian Hans Kung who shares with other thinkers, concerns for the environment, has quoted Theologian Jergen Moltmann as having said, "The man-nature relationship must not, as has become usual in modern science, technology and industrialization, be seen and put into practice as a master-slave relationship. Rather human history is to be synchronized with the history of nature in order to arrive at a new viable symbiosis between human society and the natural environment".

There is need therefore, for greater ecological sensitivity if God's created world were to remain alive. And if religious tradition in any given place were to put the issue of ecology on their agenda, the earth may live.

Thus, we need to pursue a common religious story. In her book, “Models Of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age”, Sallie McFague has suggested that,

“This common story is available to be demythologized by any and every religious tradition and hence is a place of meeting for the religious whose conflicts in the past and present have often been the cause of immense suffering and bloodshed as belief is pitted against belief. What this common story suggests is that our primary loyalty should be not to nation or religion but to the Earth and its Creator [albeit that Creator may be understood in different ways].”

Undoubtedly, this suggests that we are moving beyond any religious expressions known to us, based on our particular religious persuasion, into a meta-religious age, which would perhaps create a new awareness of the universe and, a deeper sense of ecological kinship with the earth.



It is imperative therefore, that we engage a re-orientation process and move from the notion of dominion, to a different level of spiritual principles. And as McFague insists, the earth being an interdependent community of life and as previously mentioned, is really an interconnected system that will only function as a whole.

There is need therefore, that we make the Christian promise come true, that is, to allow “the dawn from heaven to break upon us and shine upon those who live in darkness, under the shadow of death, and guide our feet into the way of peace”. (St. Luke 78-79)

Brother Wayne Teasdale in his prayer for the scared community causes us to engage deep thought when he prayed:

O Blessed Source, eternal Lord of creation, sustainer of all worlds;
you embrace the whole cosmos within yourself, for everything exists in you.
Let your winds come and breathe your everlasting Spirit in us.
Let us inhale your divine Spirit and be inspired. Enlighten us in your truth. Pour your grace into our hearts.
Wipe away our sin and all negativity.
Transform us into your Love, and let us radiate that Love to all others.
Inflame us with your unending life.
Dissolve our limited way of being. Elevate us into your divine Life.
Give us your capacity to share that Life with everyone.
Shape us in your wisdom.
Grant us your joy and laughter.
Let us become that divine wisdom, sensitivity, laughter and joy for all beings.
Let us realize fully that we are members of that Sacred Community with all humankind, with other species, with nature and the entire cosmos.
Grant us a heart that can embrace them all in you.
Let us be in communion with you forever in the bliss of that Love:
The Love that sustains all and transforms all into your Divine Radiance



IN THE NAME OF JESUS RISE UP AND WALK

ACTS 3:1-10

Rev. Dr Dora Arce-Valentín

Introduction: to the text in general

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts of the Apostles were undoubtedly written by the same author. Although their author is anonymous, we know that both books were addressed to the same fundamental person by the name of Theophilus.

One of the rules of ancient historians was organizing the materials according to the order of events, but always maintaining their continuity. It seems that the end of the Gospel and the beginning of Acts follow that rule. However Acts has a difference in relation to the end of the Gospel: the first image of the primitive church is that of a group of apostles gathered in prayer surrounded by some women, in which Peter appears as the spokesman and leader.

The first five chapters of the book give us an account of this group and of their work, especially in Jerusalem.

This passage narrates the events taking place after the so-called Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost whose results are also made evident in the description of this community that is consolidated after that first experience. We could infer that the account of this miracle is a sort of illustration to remind us that the announcement of the Word is always an experience ending up in God's liberating action towards any subject or object, any product of His creation that is being submitted or excluded.

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What is the author describing? What is the background of this miracle?

At first sight there is a contrast between what is said about the practices of that primitive social community and the social and economic reality in Jerusalem. On the one hand, a group of people get together under the Pentecost experience not only for praying but also for sharing whatever they have and for providing for the member's needs.

On the other hand, the background social reality of this community is telling us that a crippled man is carried to the gate of a temple daily to beg for charity to cover his needs. If we compare this scene and Psalm 122 for example, which portrays the Temple of Jerusalem, as the setting of full justice, there is a contrast in having victims of injustice at its very gate.

Additionally, although not much information is given us in this regard, there is an implicit solidarity among the crippled man's friends, probably beggars like him that took the trouble of carrying him every day to the gate called The Beautiful (this name is an irony). The passage also tells us that Peter and John used to go to that temple to observe the rituals of Judaism.

The next scene has a great impact. Let us read from verse 3 on to try to visualize that image in our minds. The man was a crippled and malformed beggar, probably seated in the same position he had

been laid early that morning. He was asking for the compassion of two men who were poor like him but that were standing straight and that were attending the alleged temple of justice to pray to Jehovah.

A personal experience

As an adult, the first time I went abroad was on a visit to Nicaragua, back in the 1980's. And I must confess that this was the first time in my life I saw a beggar. I grew up in a country where, thanks to God and to a deep process of social transformation, there was no

need for the people to roam in the street as homeless, jobless or without means to earn their living. Although in the last few years the reality in my country has been so difficult, even today, you cannot easily find the kind of persons called "homeless" in other countries. Definitely, I will never forget how impotent I felt by thinking that while God has created human beings to give them a full and abundant life, the world looks with indifference and conformism at these large numbers of excluded people that have been pushed to the social periphery by the economic structures.

Currently, more than 1.3 billion people live below the poverty line with 70 % being women. Over 14 million boys and girls die every year before reaching their fifth year of age. This is the world where we have been called to proclaim the Good News of the Reign of God!

But the reason I am making reference to my personal experience here is whenever I have met beggars or homeless people in the street; that is, people that are totally helpless, I have been protectively suggested by those around me: "Do not look at them, ignore them!"

What is the miracle?

This story was written in such a way that it is impossible for us to get lost in unimportant details. Even the gestures of the protagonists can be imagined. We can picture the beggar with his face down, bent by his malformation and also deeply depressed by the heavy burden of society on his back. A

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man who was forced to look up at Peter and John and this enabled them to fix their eyes on him and according to the text Peter said: "Look at us", and the text plays again with that verb before the words that make the miracle are uttered "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (Verse 6)

According to the text, Peter's gesture of holding the man's hand, made the man's feet and ankles get stronger so that he could stand up and "he entered the temple with them -- walking, leaping, and praising God." (Verse 8)



Uttered "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Motivating questions for small group work

1. Describe your community of faith and compare it to the description of the first Christian communities in the Book of Acts? Is solidarity a reality among the people of your congregation? And out of the church, is there solidarity among the people?
2. Describe your social milieu. What is today's world like in terms of social and economic inequalities? How would you describe the natural milieu? Are there just social and economic relations? And the relations with the environment?
3. The Book of Acts describes the Christian primitive society as a group of people in search of a human beings' way of living and relating, as an alternative to the unjust social reality of their epoch. That was the church of the First Century. What has happened to that church? Are we still faithful to that community of men and women coming from the Pentecost experience?
4. The passage describes Peter and John were on the way to the Temple "for the afternoon prayer at 15:00 hours" when they came across the crippled man. It makes us think that praying and social justice actions are not separate; they are not excluding one another. How can we combine our traditions with our social action? Are we acting out of charity or are we committing ourselves with the transformations demanded by an unjust social reality?
5. Observing, seeing, and staring. These are words that have great importance in this passage. They appear as important actions of Jesus' followers. What happens in our communities with that look demanded by the surrounding reality? Do we stare when we are out of the sanctuary or do we go straight past indifferently like Levites and Pharisees without stopping at the needs around us?
6. "Silver and gold I do not have", said Peter. How many things do we fail to do with the justifying excuse of a lack of budget? What do we need of that primitive faith for stating that in the name of Jesus we can raise the dignity of any human being, by looking for justice as a mobilizing and transforming force?

I would like to end by quoting an updated reflection by Juan Damien, a Uruguayan colleague and collaborator of the Liturgy Network of the Latin American Council of Churches:

"Peter was afraid. In a second, a thousand images flashed in his mind. But the fear was in his heart. It was tying together his hands, his eyes, his words like the bills and checks are tied together in a bank. Like signatures and decisions are tied together by the transnational corporations. Like the riches contained in a free market economy, which is the only winner when we do not see, do not feel or do not touch; when we are excluded. Peter was afraid; "What if nothing happens? What if the crippled man continues being crippled? What if I fail? Am I insane? Miracles like God, love, and everything have their price. They can be sold and bought, because everything is for sale...So Peter... what can you do without money?"

Suddenly, a lightning cleared the shadows. It is not I. It is Jesus. It is not for me. It is for others. "I am like a servant" "I came to bring life, life in abundance" So without realizing it Peter broke out the Reign... "I have neither dollars nor credit cards. But in the name of Jesus stand up and walk."

In that very moment the neo-liberal model shattered and hit the ground. Bravery was stronger than fear. Love overcame power. Life overcame death.

The lame went insane. He stood up and walked! He walked alone! Abya-Yala ceased to be dependent. He no longer owed anyone. He does not even beg any more!

He went through "The Beautiful" gate and reached the First World "caracu". Just there in the middle

of its knee “where all the bones and joints move” He went past the transnational corporations. He walked along Wall Street. He reached the Stock Market. And he began to leap without one cent, not a real, nor an “escudo”; without a pay check or a credit card. He was insane! He went straight past the moneychangers, the merchants, the International Bank for Development and the IMF.

He was coming from the streets; from the territory of waste and spare materials. He was coming from the periphery of the excluded. Like the Pentecost wind he was collecting everything that looked like garbage.



WHERE EMPIRE LIES IN MY EXPERIENCE

Rev. Harold Sitahal

Empire dominated the lives of the Caribbean people for the past five hundred years. The interesting fact is that the imperialists who controlled and manipulated the lives of the majority of non-Europeans for the past five hundred years have been avowedly followers of Jesus Christ—Christians.

One can observe a historical progression of imperialism from the time of the New Testament, and this involves a movement of imperialism against Christians in the early centuries of Christianity to the time of Christianity in consort with imperialism from the time of the Roman emperor Constantine. When we note that throughout history imperialists have used violence to achieve their objectives of control over weaker peoples and nations, then it is rather contradictory for Christians to be on the side of imperialism. For Jesus made it quite incontrovertible that the kingdom he is commissioned to establish is not patterned after worldly styles of rule.

The fact that Christianity has come to the non-Europeans as the religion of invaders and conquerors who used genocide, torture, slavery, coercive labour of all kinds to enhance their economic and political superiority over weaker nations is the saddest conflict of interest between the Eurocentric Church and the true movement of Jesus, the Christ. That the missionary movement of the past five hundred years coincided and collaborated with European military, political, economic, cultural and colonial expansion into Asia, Africa and the Americas is a fact to be concerned about. We in the Caribbean have been the recipients of the message of Jesus Christ through the medium of this Eurocentric missionary movement. We, therefore, have an obligation to rethink, deconstruct and reconstruct our Christian understanding in the light of the above-mentioned contradiction.

The message of the New Testament has to be seen as a message shaped in the ethos of colonial oppression and imperial persecution of all who appeared to resist Roman imperialism. In such a situation of imperial control and oppression, the New Testament stood for the message of God's liberation of the victims of imperialist oppression. The contemporary message of Jesus Christ cannot justly be the adjunct or ally of any such form of violent oppressive control of super powers over weaker nations and races.

In the transfer of the Christian culture to non-European nations by Eurocentric Christians the racist self-understanding of the Europeans has penetrated the understanding and interpretation of the Christian scriptures. Evangelization by Europeans was conversion of non-Europeans into a sub-class of European being. Non-European Christians were meant to occupy a racial sub-class. No wonder then, that during the first three or four centuries of Euro-Christian entry into the lives of non-Europeans the Christian Church did little to remove the racist relationships which existed in this encounter. One has to deal with the fact that the renaissance, reformation, enlightenment and modernity were all infused with the understanding that Europeans were superior to other races. It is therefore incumbent upon Caribbean Christians to reshape Christian understanding and practice to reverse the unfortunate stamp of Eurocentricity and imperialism/colonialism.

We in the Caribbean have been the recipients of the message of Jesus Christ through the medium of this Eurocentric missionary movement. We, therefore, have an obligation to rethink, deconstruct and reconstruct our Christian understanding in the light of the above-mentioned contradiction.





SERMON NOTES



ECONOMIC FREEDOM

Rev. Osbert James, Grenada

Text: Romans 7: 9-11

"I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me" (Romans 7:9-11- NRSV)

Introduction

Olav Olavson was a free citizen of Sweden but he found himself hard-pressed for money. In desperation he sold his body for medical research to the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm in 1910. A year later, he inherited a fortune and tried to buy himself back. The Institute refused to sell him his rights to his own body and in a lawsuit retained possession of it. The Institute even collected damages from him because he had two teeth extracted without permission.²⁴

In the Romans text above, Paul speaks about the struggle he has attempting to extricate himself from the murderous paws of the bear of sin. Despite his best intentions, he seems invariably to run afoul of the law; his is an untenable and impossible situation. This is not much unlike the condition of the countries of the Caribbean Basin. We are subject to the whims and fancies of our big neighbour to the north. Former prime minister of Grenada, Maurice Bishop, once said, "when the US sneezes, we in the Caribbean catch the cold."

Although independent, are our countries free? Today, many Caribbean countries are saddled with burgeoning foreign debt and Multinational Corporations and International finance organizations like the World Bank and IMF are directing our fiscal policies. We cannot call ourselves "free" as market forces and geopolitical considerations are rendering us pawns in the hands of bigger and wealthier nations.

We Struggle to Stave off Death through Economic Strangulation

"Man is created individually by God; the corporation is an individual created by man. Like man, the corporation has a body. It has arms and legs; it has not four, but thousands of members. It has a mind and purpose. It has eyes and ears and a kind of brain; it thinks and plans and remembers. And it can grow to be huge and strong. But it has no conscience!"²⁵

Small Island nations like ours are being forced into a form of modern slavery. The Developed nations are methodically stripping away our freedom by making it increasingly difficult for us to compete and ultimately to survive. They demonstrate they have no conscience when they speak of reciprocity fully aware that we cannot compete; the playing field is not truly level.

In verse 9, Paul said, "I was alive" meaning, "when I really lived and flourished." In "dying" he ceased to live and flourish. His death resulted from the commandment, which was supposed to give him life.

²⁴ Vernon c. Grounds, "Are you Free," Our daily Bread, July 4th 2002.

²⁵ Karl Menninger, MD, Whatever Became of Sin? (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973), 114

Today, many Caribbean countries are saddled with burgeoning foreign debt and Multinational Corporations and International finance organizations like the World Bank and IMF are directing our fiscal policies. We cannot call ourselves "free" as market forces and geopolitical considerations are rendering us pawns in the hands of bigger and wealthier nations.

The law, in this case, free trade that was supposed to usher in a glorious age of cross border trade, is the source of death for many of our countries. The argument that “with open borders and open trade, one of the main benefits of size will disappear, which will make economies of scale easier to achieve and make trade between countries as inexpensive as trade within one country”²⁶ has proven fallacious in our case.

Illustration

The banana industry in the Windward Islands is a case in point. In the conclusion of an article entitled “EU Banana Regime Caribbean Island Economies” Dr. Dearden of Manchester Metropolitan University painted a gloomy picture for the Banana Industry of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries:

The changes to the EU banana market have been profound for a number of small and economically vulnerable ACP Island economies. These changes have been driven by the demands of the establishment of the single European market but have also been influenced by the long drawn out negotiations of the Uruguay round of GATT. The problems of meeting competition from Latin American bananas is going to be severe for most of the Windward islands and yet the difficulties of attempting to diversify away from dependence upon this crop are equally problematic.²⁷

The changes to the EU banana market have been profound for a number of small and economically vulnerable ACP Island economies.

Because alternatives to banana are difficult to come by, one crop given much consideration by farmers is marijuana. It is ironic that a country which claims to be the leader of the free world through its action and indifference is forcing honest, hard working farmers into the drug trade.

We can live if given the special considerations we require.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of a time when consideration for the *other* will be exercised by all of God’s creatures:

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. They will not hurt or destroy on my entire holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9 NRSV)

Economic Globalization is becoming the bane of our existence. The concept of globalization, itself, is not a bad one especially when looked at from the perspective of stewardship. Globalization should teach us that we are all inextricably linked and the fortune of one is of concern to all. Scriptures teach that to whom much is given, much is required. Justice is more important than profit. In negotiation of economic treaties, good stewardship will insist that those who are small and vulnerable are given special consideration to survive in the changing world environment.

26 Raymond Zhou and Liu Li, “Economists Call for Removal of Trade Barriers”, China Daily, June 1, 2005, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-06/01/content_447376.htm, accessed April 16, 2009

27 Dr. Stephen J.H. Dearden, “The EU Banana Regime and the Caribbean Island Economies,” DSA European Development Policy Study Group Discussion Paper No. 1, December 1996. <http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:1SLLoUccYVcJ:e-space.openrepository.com/e-space/bitstream/2173/1868/2/dearden%25201.pdf+united+states+seeks+removal+of+preferential+access+to+windward+Island+bananna&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk>. Accessed April 13, 2009.

Should economic might dictate the terms of engagement?

The arrogance with which some nations brandish their wealth in the face of poor nations and the carrot and stick policies used to keep small nations forever in the economic “bread line” is obscene, unjust and evil. Neo-colonialization comes now in the form of economic blackmail.

Illustration:

In March 2003, CARICOM (Caribbean Community) expressed dismay that the United States and its allies, in relation to Iraq, chose a military rather than negotiated settlement. In reaction, Otto Reich, presidential envoy to the Western Hemisphere sought to intimidate Caribbean leaders by intimating that there could be repercussions: “I would urge CARICOM to study very carefully not only what it says, but the consequences of what it says....”²⁸

What kind of freedom or sovereignty do we have when we are unable to speak our consciences? Paul asked “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16)

Economic oppression will ultimately lead us back to political oppression.

Of what good will be our “independence” when our people are without jobs and our children starving? Of what merit will be our “independence” when our economic woes spawn a generation dedicated to crime and mayhem?

With limited natural resources and our economic base of tourism and agriculture at the mercy of the vagaries of nature we find ourselves in this impossible situation. Paul called himself a wretched man. Our islands are in an impossible situation. Ralph Erskine writes:

“A rigid matter was the law,
Demanding brick, denying straw;
But when with gospel-tongue it sings,
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.”²⁹

Oh wretched Islands are we when the developed nations ask us to fly, but give us no wings. Like Paul, however, we must rely on God for our deliverance. God often, however, works through individuals and institutions. The church like the abolitionist for human slavery must continue to agitate for economic justice and an end to economic slavery.



28 Rickey Singh, “Three Cases of US ‘Big Stick’ politics in CARICOM” Caribbean Voice, Barbados, April 17, 2005 <http://www.caribvoice.org/Opinions/threecases.html>, accessed April 17, 2009

29 Ralph Erskine, “The Sermons and Practical Works of Ralph Erskine” (Glasgow: W. Smith and J. Bryce Booksellers, 1778) vol. 10, pp. 257-283.

BUILDING A JUST AND CARING SOCIETY

Rev. Joy Abdul-Mohan

TEXT: Amos 5: 24: *“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream”*

“Five Bullets for Six year old girl...Teen gunned down in the city...Woman raped in Savannah...Woman kills husband after twelve years of abuse”.

These very headlines reflected in some of our daily newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago show clearly that the times in which we are living are tough and difficult.

Analysts of societal trends have observed that we are living in a time of social, moral, political and economic chaos. Values are up for grabs and there seems to be no stability. It is said that we are living in a society that is plagued with all forms of injustice and corruption; divisiveness and class distinction; that persons lack genuine love, care and concern for others and as a result malice and hatred have become features of their thoughts and actions.

We have witnessed in recent times in our nation and in the world at large a total disregard for human life and an outrageous attack against innocent citizens. Many have been demoralized and stripped of their dignity and many have become disgusted by the different modes of kidnapping scenarios and domestic violence. Our people are divided, confused, embittered, frustrated, enraged and anxious.

Thus, there must be a clarion call to obliterate all forms of selfishness, divisiveness, and injustice from our society. Such elements only seek to oppress and marginalize others, thus we must seek to **build a just and caring society**. The church and its members can play an invaluable and significant role in making this a reality. How can we achieve this? Does it sound too idealistic?

Our text taken from **Amos 5:24**, challenges us: *“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream”*

It would be important for us to note, that one of the reasons why the Bible is so hard to read is that large parts of it are composed of codes or laws. No legal code makes easy reading. But easy to read or not, law is the expression of the Biblical belief that God is a God of righteousness and justice, that is, God is ultimately concerned that the basic principle by which the social and political order rests, shall be the principle of fairness. The moral standards of the Laws of the Bible are the Ten Commandments. Indeed the call to justice is the heart of the message of not only the prophet Amos but other prophets in the Old Testament. For example, the prophets Isaiah and Micah say,

It is said that we are living in a society that is plagued with all forms of injustice and corruption; divisiveness and class distinction; that persons lack genuine love, care and concern for others and as a result malice and hatred have become features of their thoughts and actions.

God is ultimately concerned that the basic principle by which the social and political order rests, shall be the principle of fairness.

Isaiah 28:17 – *“I will use justice as a plumb line and righteousness as a plummet.”*

Micah 6:8 – *“What does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.”*

However, as we take a closer look at our Biblical text taken from Amos 5:24, we must put the text in context to fully understand its relevance and meaning for our time.

The very first verse of this book introduces us to the prophet Amos, where he came from, the time he prophesied, and his occupation. Amos lived in the eighth century BC. He was called to be a preacher against the corrupt religious, political and social injustices of his day.

His words were those given to him from God for a specific time in the history of Israel, that is, a time when the people were so blinded by their luxury that they did not know they were on the brink of disaster.

God called Amos to minister to the people of the northern kingdom Israel, and with courage and devotion he faithfully preached his unpopular messages to a spiritually decaying nation.

Under the reign of King Jeroboam II, the northern kingdom of Israel was at its peak, a flourishing nation. They were experiencing great external prosperity. In his preaching, Amos mentioned the rich: their great wealth and luxury, their pride and self-security, and the oppression and exploitation of the poor. Underneath all this was the fruit of false worship in immoral corruption. In this prosperous and high state of living, who would ever dream of calamity coming to destroy them? Feeling strong and secure, Israel was far from expecting ruin and destruction.

Persons may call their sins by whatever name or euphemism they choose, but the end of sin against God is disaster. Israel thought they could take things into their own hands; that they could make and worship what and how they pleased. They thought with wealth and power they really didn't need God. The prophet closed this message to Israel with pleas and warnings. God would bring a nation against them that would destroy them. In other words, to reject God is to invite inevitable destruction.

And so we hear the famous words of Amos once again. *“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream”*. To understand this text clearly we need to biblically and otherwise define the terms justice and righteousness.

JUSTICE is said to be the order God seeks to re-establish in God's creation where all people receive the benefits of life with him. As love is for the New Testament, so justice is the central ethical idea of the Old Testament. Justice is truth in action.

I am often impressed with how Justice is symbolized on courthouses and elsewhere by the figure of a blindfolded woman with scales in her hand, the implication being that the essence of justice is the weighing of the facts in hand with impartiality.

RIGHTEOUSNESS on the other hand is said to be the actions and positive results of a sound relationship within a local community or between God and a person or God's people. We understand righteousness to mean “uprightness” in the sense of “adherence or conformity to an established norm.” In biblical usage righteousness is rooted in covenants and relationships. For biblical authors,

“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream”.

In biblical usage righteousness is rooted in covenants and relationships. For biblical authors, righteousness is the fulfilment of the terms of a covenant between God and humanity or between humans in the full range of human relationships.

righteousness is the fulfilment of the terms of a covenant between God and humanity or between humans in the full range of human relationships.

Nevertheless, what these challenging words of Amos seem to be saying to us is, let there be a general reformation of manners among you; let God's justice and righteousness have their due influence upon you; let your land be watered with it, and let it bear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness; let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as a mighty stream.

In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course; let it be pure as running waters, not muddied with corruption or whatever may pervert justice; let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded, by the fear of humanity; let all have free access to it as a common stream, and have benefit by it as trees planted by the rivers of waters.

In other words, our sense of justice and righteousness should be within us like a conscience. They go together. There is no true justice without right thinking and living. As one writer Daniel Webster puts it: *"Justice and righteousness are the ligaments which hold civilized beings and civilized nations together."*

Therefore, we should cry endlessly over the injustice of what people do to each other. Our homes, schools, and offices and even our places of worship are often scenes of the kind of injustice that we think is terrible in the crimes we read and hear of. The source of injustice is in the loss of love and respect for people and for human life. Thus we need to build a just and caring society by solidly identifying some practical steps that the churches and societies to which we belong can ensure that justice is served fairly and righteousness is the motivation.

We need to build a just and caring society by solidly identifying some practical steps that the churches and societies to which we belong can ensure that justice is served fairly and righteousness is the motivation.

The churches in the Caribbean cannot deny its prophetic responsibility in speaking out against issues, which play havoc in the society. The churches must condemn unequivocally the overwhelming violence against the human race. The churches need as our Reformer, John Calvin reminds us, 'to become the conscious of the state'. Those in authority in our church and society must speak out on all issues, regardless of whom the comments may offend or in whosever garden they may fall.

No one, including those who perform the acts of violence and the so-called powerful, must ever be allowed to believe that life has become cheap and that we no longer cherish it. In fact, it is by constantly upholding and treasuring the value of every life that we will make it clear to the depraved that we will not stand for their deviation from a civilized society.

The church is called to be prophetic. With a strong voice, it is charged with the responsibility to challenge violence, in all its forms, which seeks to overpower the powerless and the weak. This prophetic voice must be based upon solid theological and ethical considerations and grounded in the liberating truths of the Gospels. Only then could the Christian church speak with enlightened authority on the Word of God, not only in the church but also to the wider community. Further, the church cannot be afraid to interpret the laws of our respective countries in the face of political and criminal pressure otherwise the system will not be able to deter crime.

The famous Bertrand Russell puts it this way: "There is hope that law, rather than private force, may come to govern the relations of nations within the present century. If this hope is not realized we face utter disaster; if it is realized, the world will be far better than at any previous period in the history of humankind."

We cannot turn a blind eye to crime and the injustice meted out to humankind. This attitude would be in direct conflict with our very democracy. One Judge Learned Hand says: "If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: "Thou shalt not ration justice or righteousness."

In conclusion, as we reflect on the Accra Confession, the clarion call is to pursue a sense of justice and righteousness in ways that would restore our dignity and humanity in the face of excessive violence and crime of every kind. To build a just and caring society without compromising integrity and the church in its mission is called to name and shame this violence against all of creation; to walk with those who seek justice, peace and reconciliation, and to ensure human dignity and fullness of life for all. The church must not and dare not surrender to violence or else it shall be contributing to the view that life is as cheap as it is expendable. The church must constantly remind itself and the world that human life is priceless and must continue to uphold this, even in the face of the most obscene assaults on our sense of values.

To build a just and caring society without compromising integrity and the church in its mission is called to name and shame this violence against all of creation; to walk with those who seek justice, peace and reconciliation, and to ensure human dignity and fullness of life for all.



UNITED IN SEARCH FOR A FAIR PEACE

(Ephesians 4:1-6)

Rev. Dr Ofelia Ortega

Introduction

This passage belongs to the section of the Epistle “How to have a Christian existence in the Church and in the World (4:1-6.20) and this text, to the section “The unity of the church as an urgent yearning”, as an unavoidable must (4.1-6). This together with John 17 is one of the most important biblical references about unity.

The communion with Jesus Christ is not only achieved in the communion of faith but also in the search of full unity. Though the word “church” is not used in Ephesians 4:1-16 the whole passage deals with life, order and purpose of the church. Ecclesiology and ethics are so completely identified that they can neither be separated or distinguished.

Christians are called to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). This verse is inspired in Colossians 3:14-15. The formula “one body-one Spirit” has its antecedents in I Corinthians 12:12-13. And it was already present in the hymn of Ephesians 2:16-18.

The Church is one through Christ and through the Spirit. Side by side with the unity that comes from Christ, we find the unity that comes from the Spirit.

I. The context of the letter

The First Century was running military legions were everywhere; the world lived under the protection of the Empire that has risen upon the Tiber banks. In the bowels of the city of Rome the Apostle Paul was confined. He was under house arrest. The condition helps him to know better all the consequences to live under the rules of the Empire, but helps him to appreciate the situation and needs of Christian Communities, located along the lands bathed by the Mediterranean Sea. Paul was living the ethics of Risk.

The Church is presented as a unique body conformed by Jews and Gentiles, a body that fully integrate these two groups. For that reason unity is mentioned as the medullar topic of the epistle. The Church needs this unity because was immersed in a world modeled according to the Roman domain interests.

José Comblin, a Latin American theologian, says - “The fight against the Empire is not a fight against persecution, but a fight against the permanent pressure from a decadent world.” The Christian message or paradigm contravenes the way the Empire irradiates its purposes. This situation brings about difficulties because the Christian proposal does not follow either the same path or the logic of the Empire.

From the Church was necessary a resistance attitude in the face of a hegemonic behavior that does not pursue common well being (Spirituality of Resistance). The Church presented a new life style in contrast with the growing ambitions of the Empire.

II. The Pauline Legacy in Action

1. The message in the letter of Ephesians is important for our ecumenical and ecclesiological concerns today. We live in a Church which, just as our world, has to find the ways to unity out of diversity.

In this world where differences have been misunderstood and misused, bringing about, prejudice, discrimination, divisions, injustice, war and death, it bears extraordinary importance to revise and re-create our approach to diversity and unity within and without the church following the best of our theological-biblical traditions.

2. Christian vocation is the call to a higher dignity. This vocation contrasts with that of the Empire. The Christian ethics is a community ethics. It originates a communion spirit that becomes present when showing solidarity to each other.

The Empire guarantees the way to some and it is a barrier that prevents the wishes of others from emerging.

The Christian ideal is guided towards a communion keeping in mind the desires and needs of all, showing itself capable of giving answers to the crisis presented. This can guarantee a common route design, a route guiding towards a full life, where every one can be taken into consideration, with its aspirations, dreams and desires.

3. Virtues required for unity

To tread the path leading to unity it is necessary to refrain from pride, aggressiveness and impatience.

First, Humility – The use of this word is closely associated with the spirituality of “the poor of Yahweh” - (Luke 1:48, 52, Matthew 5:3, 5, I Peter 5:5). Matthew applies the term to Jesus (11:29).

Gentleness

Is related to Jesus in the same context of Matthew (11:29). It is also part of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3, 5). Paul mentions it frequently (I Cor. 4:21, II Cor. 10:1, Gl. 6:1).

It corresponds to the concept to which we refer today as No-Violence.

Patience

The third virtue appears frequently in connection with the other two and it is also typically Pauline (Rm. 2:4, 9:22, II Cor. 6:6, Gal. 5:22, Col. 3:12). However it is not passive but an active virtue.

To integrate the diversity of the communities is only possible based on the virtues mentioned before. These virtues have a deep sense for the community.

Christians are moved to offer a new reality of relations in the community, which would be above ethnic, intellectual, economic and gender breathes.

It is an attempt to carry out a more horizontal world, far from the class society that operates in the whole wide Empire.

These virtues born from faith and Christian practice needs to be materialized in ordinary life, they are not exclusive of the religious space, they need to be evident in the wide world where Christians live.

There is no Christian virtue without social and community dimension.

III. Humility, Gentleness and Patience for unity today

How is humility to be interpreted in this globalizing and excluding world?

A possible answer is that we are to set ourselves free from pride and arrogance, which create distances and divisions. Humility means the end of discriminatory attitudes of different forms. It contributes to bridge the gap not only between the poor and the rich, but also between North and South, women and men, Black and White.

How is gentleness to be interpreted in connection with the reality of the world today?

Within and without the Church we deal with diversity, and diversity is made up of differences. These differences could guide us to organize powerful forms of co-operation, but they may also enter into conflict due to wrong decisions or polarized situations in the past or in the present. In such cases, forgiveness and the search for no-violent, peaceful resolution of conflicts are the only way to guarantee unity while preserving diversity.

How is patience to be interpreted in connection with the reality of the world today?

It is to be understood as our capacity to resist firmly and bear all provocations without yielding. It is not simply a matter of being patient in suffering. It is mainly a question of not being overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good.

IV. Discerning Peace and Unity

Peace is the fundamental pillar of unity. Pax Romana was the peace for the Romans. Something that can help us characterize this stage is what a Caledonian Chief says to Tacitus.

“Romans steal, murder, plunder, and they call the result – Empire, and when they bring about desolation, they name it peace”.

Pax Romana was the duality of coexisting realities: domain and servitude, wealth accumulation and excessive tax payment, exaltation and degradation. Peace can also be verified through the living conditions the peoples enjoy, through the dignity and decency they show, through the freedom to act in favor of projects aimed to common well being.

True peace presupposes justice.

Both are completely inherent.

Beginning peace is only possible when we exercise justice, because peace is a fair order. There can be no peace if there are remarkable differences.

The purpose of unity based on peace goes beyond times and becomes a challenge for our current world, as Nestor Míguez points out:

“In a world...where we are warned that competition is the solution for all evils, where arms production is the most lucrative industry in the world, to proclaim the end of all prejudice, proclaim solidarity, fraternity, and proclaim that is the time for peace, is to show that this world is the new Creation of God. This is a creation that was not conquered by armed Roman legions. This came from a crucified Jew, whose side was pierced with a spear by a Roman soldier. With this new creation, he was giving reason for the fall of the walls between Gentiles and Jews”.

Indeed, an alternative peace demands to think not only of our own benefit, but also of common benefit. Peace is a commitment of all and for all.

Lukas Vischer mentions the words Calvin bequeathed us: “If we want to prove obedience to our Lord and Teacher Jesus Christ, then we need to join a holy conspiracy and cultivate peace among us.”

When we are able to accept this commitment, the unity mentioned in Ephesians 4:1-6 becomes a communion that looks for building and preserving justice, as well as examining and implementing decisions aimed at the reign of common good.

We need to ask the following questions in the light of the Word:

- What are the marks of a communion of churches?
- How to take practical steps to live as a communion of churches?
- In which ways are we committed to justice as part of our communion?
- How could we continue to develop a “covenant for justice” following the committed of our churches to live the Accra Confession in our contextual situations?



LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Order of Celebration

(Prepared by Rev. Dr Ralph Hoyte for the International Ecumenical Conference in Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Runaway Bay, Jamaica, December 2007)

Prologue:

When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God:

“My ancestor was an African who was abducted and sold into slavery, and was transported in crowded slave-ships across the Middle Passage and was transported all over the islands of the Caribbean, where we became part of the African Diaspora. And in spite of the cruelty of the slave-masters and the dehumanization of slavery, we survived; and in spite of the oppression of colonialism, we maintained our identity and self respect. And ‘The Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppressions’ and the Lord emancipated us from slavery and engineered the Abolition of a cruel economic system. Therefore on Emancipation Day, and Independence Day and Heroes Day, and Harvest Day, and other days, we bring the first-fruits of who we are and what we do to commemorate our past and celebrate our Present.”

A contextual paraphrase of Deuteronomy 26: 4-10 by Ralph A. Hoyte: “Towards A Liturgy of Celebration and Renewal.”

Processional Hymn: “Life Every Voice and Sing”.

(Words: James Weldon Johnson, Music: J. Rosamond Johnson)

1. Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies;
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us March on, till victory is won.
2. Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died
Yet, with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our Fathers sighed? (People)
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.
3. God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light’

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee;
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, True to our native land.

Proclamation:

“Consecrate the two hundredth year (The Bicentennial) and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you! This is the year of jubilee, and it must be holy for you. Do not take advantage of each other; fear God and obey his commands.” (From: Leviticus 25).

The Praise of the People: “Free Our Hearts To Faith and Praise”

Choruses of Celebration:

How great is our God! How great is His name!
He's the greatest one, forever the same
He rolled back the waters from the mighty Red Sea
And said, “I'll lead you, put your trust in me.”

(Author unknown)

Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy,
Thou art worthy, O Lord –
Glory and honour and power
For Thou has created, hast all things created;
Thou hast created all things,
And for thy pleasure they are created;
Thou art worthy, O Lord.

(Words & Music: Paline M. Mius)

A Psalm of Praise: (Psalm 124)

If the Lord had not been on our side – when men attacked us,
When their anger flared against us, They would have swallowed us alive;
The Lord would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, and the Raging waters
would have swept us away.

Praise be to the Lord, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. We have escaped like a bird out of
the fowler's snare; The snare has been broken, and we have escaped.
Our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Praise Refrain: Songs of Praises, Song of Praises,
I will ever give to Thee
I will ever give to Thee (Words: William Williams)

Exploring the Power of Prayer: “Pray and Praise Thee Without Ceasing”

**Hymn Petition: Guide me, or Thou Great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak but Thou art might;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand
Bread of heaven! Bread of Heaven,
Feed me till I want no more (Repeat)**

(Words: William Williams)

Prayers of Approach:

Advent God, we come to this conference with hearts of anticipation and expectation. As pilgrims from all over the world, we come from the bareness of despair and doubt, to await your words of hope and promise.

Some of us are impatient with the pace and progress of salvation and deliverance, and we come searching for new signs of the reign of your Kingdom; may your will be fulfilled during these December days. Some of us are there to confess the weakness of our efforts and the tentativeness of our Ministry in responding to the demands of your will and purpose.

Others of us have come, admitting our tiredness and disappointment and frustration, while at the same time, seeking for renewal and restoration.

We have come and now we await your coming and your blessing in the name of Him whom you sent, our Saviour and Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

Petition Continues: Open now the crystal fountain
 Whence the Healing stream shall flow;
 Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
 Lead me all my journey through
 Strong Deliverer, Strong Deliverer
 Be Thou still by strength and shield (Repeat)

(Words: William Williams; Music 'Cum Rhonda' Johns Hughes)

AMEN!

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Exodus 3; 7-12

Second Reading: Ephesians 6: 10-18

Bless Thou the truth, Dear Lord, Now unto me;

As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;

Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;

And I shall find by peace, my all in all.

(Words: Mary Lathbury)

Introduction of the Preacher

Sermon

LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE & COMMEMORATION

Liturgist: Eternal God, our Creator, the descendants of earth; first born ancestors come to you in remembrance of tragic death.

Congregation: We have often spoken and acted in ignorance of our history, but today we remember the sufferings of the past. We grieve for those who made the long Transatlantic crossing on slave ships.

Liturgist: We remember those park-hued kings and queens, chiefs and warriors who were stolen, shackled, and sold from African soil and kindred.

Congregation: In the middle passage from Africa to the "New World", they travelled cramped in spaces too small for them to turn.

Liturgist: We remember those who died from exhaustion and cruel conditions. We remember those who were killed for their resistance.

Congregation: We remember our brothers and sisters whose bodies were beaten, broken and violated. We remember our sisters who bore their young, only to be torn from them. We remember the ones who found freedom's final rest hanging from a tree. May we never see this sort of atrocity again.

Liturgist: We remember the cries of children whose tears were never comforted, and whose hearts were never warmed by the embrace of their mothers and fathers; and who were afflicted with the diseases of their oppressors.

Congregation: Africa, our Africa, we may never have known you, but our faces are full of your blood. We, your children, cry "God Have mercy!". May the world never see this atrocity again.

Liturgist: May faith in Christ sustain us as we forgive the trespassers of our past.

Congregation: We vow to remember and to honour the resistance and endurance of our ancestors – we thank you, God, for bringing us to freedom and for showing us the pathway to hope.

(Source: African American Heritage Hymnal – Litany #91)

Anthem of Freedom

Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom	Oh Jesus, Oh Jesus
Oh Freedom, Freedom is coming	Oh Jesus, Jesus is Coming
Oh Yes, I know!	Oh Yes, I know!
Oh Yes I know!	

(South African Freedom Song).

Welcome and Greetings

Declaration of the Conference

Offertory Hymn: Great God of Earth and Heaven

1. Great God of earth and Heaven
Whose Spirit is our breath
At Christmas time born human
At Easter shared our Death
All generous, all loving
In whom all beauty thrives –
Forgive your sons and daughters
The Comfort of our lives.
2. While refugees go homeless
And die before they live,
While children have a no future –
Our apathy forgive!
Where hope fades to depression,
Despair erodes the soul,
Restore in us a passion
To make the broken whole.

3. Where hunger kills our people
Injustice cries aloud
While weapons grow more lethal
Any only power stands proud –
Whose mercy does not cease,
Implant your mind within us,
Create a world for Peace!

(Words: Shirley Erena Murray: Music “Aurelia” - Samuel S. Wesley)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Passing the Peace “Peace and Love – Peace and Love I give to you”

The Blessing

May the blessing of the God of Peace and Justice be with us;
May the blessing of the Son who weeps the tears of the world’s suffering be with us.
And may the blessing of the Spirit who inspires us to Reconciliation and Hope be with us from now
into eternity. **AMEN**

Recessional Hymn: The Right Hand of God

1. The right hand of God is writing in our land
Writing with power and with love;
Our conflicts and our fears, our triumphs and our tears,
Are recorded by the right hand of God.
2. The right hand of God is pointing in our land
Pointing the way we must go;
So clouded is the way, so easily we stray
But we’re guided by the right hand of God
3. The right hand of God is striking in our land
Striking out at envy , hate and greed’
Our selfishness and lust, our pride and deeds untrust
Are destroyed by the right hand of God.
4. The right hand of God is lifting in our land,
Lifting the fallen one by one;
Each one is known by name, and rescued now from shame
By the lifting of the right hand of God.
5. The right hand of God is healing in our land,
Healing broken bodies, minds and souls;
So wondrous is its touch with love that means so much,
When we’re healed by the right hand of God.
6. The right hand of God is planting in our land
Planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;
In these Caribbean lands, let his people all join hands,
And be one with the right hand of God.

(Words: Patrick Prescod; Music; Noel G. Dexter)

Musical Postlude

WORSHIP RESOURCES

(Taken from the "Celebrate Life", WARC 24th General Council Worship Book, Accra Ghana, July 2004)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray with our Lord

Our Father who art in heaven,

Beloved God, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all the peoples of the earth, bring peace and righteousness to all the peoples.

In your grace, may equity grow.

Turn our hearts to you in healing and transformation.

hallowed be thy name.

Be present to all peoples, that we may open our eyes and recognize you in our history, in our cultures, in our struggles.

Deliver us from enchantment by the false gods of money, markets and status.

Help us to praise you in our faith and actions that, seeing our loving service in your name, others, too, may bless that name

Thy kingdom come;

Where people resist injustice, live in solidarity, and seek a more human social order, help us to recognize the ferment of your kingdom already at work.

Bless those who are poor, those who suffer for the sake of justice, those who promote and defend human rights.

Bless the children of our countries, and protect them from terror and oppression.

Thy will be done,

Yes! That your wisdom would be our wisdom!

Deliver us from adjusting to unjust systems,

Move our hearts, and the hearts of women and men everywhere to act in love, that we may resist the seductions of power and greed and may live in right relationships with all.

on earth as it is in heaven.

God, present in every movement of creation,

let us be responsible stewards of your garden of life, striving for sustainability.

And as the firmament in all its mystery and glory displays your cosmic will, so may our lives display the mystery and glory of love, your will for life on earth.

Give us this day our daily bread,

That no one may be threatened by hunger, malnutrition, scarcity,

give bread to those who have none, and hunger for justice to those who have bread.

Teach us what is enough for today, and to share with those who have less than enough, for in this, it is Jesus whom we serve.

and forgive us our debts

Don't let us lose our lives, as persons and as peoples, because of our debts.

Let not the poorest pay for the benefit of the richest, in unfair demands, punitive interest rates and

excessive charges.

But forgive us, and let justice prevail.

as we forgive our debtors.

As we live by your grace and sharing of your very self, deliver us from systems of aggressive and divisive individualism. Break our chains of selfishness, open our hearts to those who need our solidarity, and deliver us from illusion, that we might practise what we preach.

And lead us not into temptation,

Deliver us from being bewitched by power, and keep us faithful to you;
for you are our help, where else can we appeal.

Money will not save us, or the market, or our powerful friends.

Strengthen us to resist the false attraction of easy answers, magic fixes,
abuses of power, and the delusion that there is any way apart from justice
in which God's justice can be done.

but deliver us from evil.

From every evil that objectifies the earth, all living beings, and our neighbours;
from every evil that degrades creation and destroys societies; from every evil that encourages us to
think that we are God.

So may we learn from you to refrain from judgement, to accord respect to all God's creation, and so
be privileged to hear the witness of those the world treats with indignity.

Because yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We trust in Creator God, giver and source life.

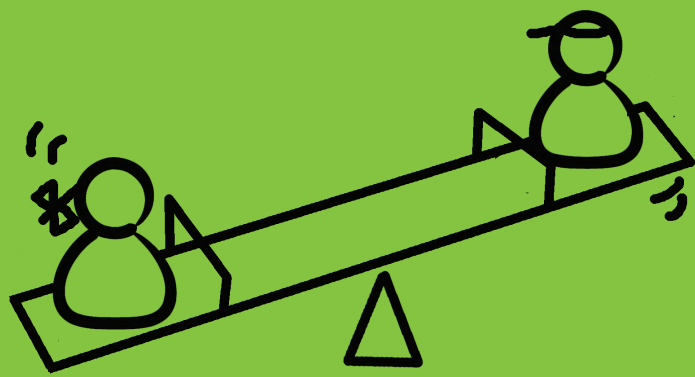
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbour, and binds us together with all believers in one body of Christ, the church.

The Spirit, which inspired resistance through leadership of the prophets, apostles women and men,
guides our faith and life in Christ as we read the signs of these times and discern God's word today.

In a broken and fearful world, the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to unmask idolatries within church and society, to leave all protocol unobserved, to hear the voices of people long silenced and to work with others for peace with justice, freedom from hunger and for healing between and among nations and communities.

In gratitude to God, empowered by spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to love justice, to mend broken relationships and to care for creation, as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth.





CHILDREN'S STORY

ZIBA AT SCHOOL

Rev. Nicole Ashwood

Afternoon recess at Ole Town Primary School was almost over. Hephzibah and her friends had finished playing Bend Down Stucky, so she stood and went to join the girls who were playing skipping.

The rope scarcely moved as the children slowly chanted,

*“Christopher Columbus sailed across the ocean,
the wind blew higher
and higher and over!”*

The girls who held the rope upped the speed and two girls jumped in the middle as the song continued

*“1-2-3 Caribbean,
4-5-6 Independence,
7-8-9 from Europe,*

The pace quickened, the rope was up in the air!

10 in the 60s! 10 in the 60s! 10 in the -

The bell rang, and the children ran inside for their last class. It was Integrated Studies and Miss Long began. “Students, does anyone want to share anything that you watched on the news recently?”

Hands raced up in the air as many children shouted, “Me, Miss! Me, Miss!”

“No shouting, calm down!” said Miss Long. “Please calm down! Let us repeat the rule?” The children replied in singsong voices.

*“Raise your hands as if to the sky;
when you are acknowledged,
then it’s your time!”*

Raffia Brown’s hand went up, “The world’s richest countries are meeting to plan for the eco-economic recess . . . Miss, if recess is break-time, why are countries having an economic break time, and it’s not a holiday?”

Miss Long tried hard not to laugh. “It’s ECO-NO-MIC, Raffia, not ECOMOMIC. Does anyone know what the word means?”

As usual, John’s hand went up. Miss pointed to him he said; “My mommy says that it is about money and how we spend it - at home, at school, at work and in our country. But Miss, I saw the news about the recess too, and I don’t understand it either.”

Miss Long replied, “Children, the word is not recess; it’s recession – R-E-C-E-S-S-I-O-N. Repeat after me, RE-CES-SION! When a country is in economic recession, there is not enough money to trade with other countries, or to feed itself. Many people will lose their jobs and some will work only part-time. It is a very hard time, and many businesses close down.

The G-20 meeting and the Summit of the Americas are some of the efforts of richer countries to solve the global economic recession.”

Gina said, “But Miss, how are they helping US when we have to buy THEIR products and not what WE produce? That’s not fair.”

Ziba asked, “Miss . . . we are not leaders of our country, but, what can WE do to help OUR people? OUR country has had money problems for a long, long time.”

Miss Long nodded. "That is a very good question Hephzibah. In our Religious Education class this morning, we spoke about Israel being threatened by stronger, bigger nations but when the people prayed, God helped them. So we can pray as well as promoting local products and local businesses."

"We also have to think of other ideas so that we will not always be in recession. Remember what we said about being a team in Physical Education session yesterday? Working together build a team and we can achieve much more than working individually. We need to help each other and share our resources. That will enable all of us to benefit.

So here is our activity for today – Let us write some ideas, which can help all the countries in the world during this economic recession. Before you write, let us sing our theme song."

*Every mikkle mek a mukkule, mek we join in the struggle
For we all mus come togetha, Even in the stormy weatha*

*Every boy, girl, woman an man
All o we can gi a helpin han'
Today fi you, tomorrow fi me
Come mek we build we community*

*The granny down the lane;
can't walk without her cane
If she going to make it through,
she need some help from mi an you*

*Little children on the street
need a little food to eat
Planting crops more than enough,
will help your neighbour when things get rough
Doing good, I know this is true,
means that good will follow you!
Come now, Every mikkle . . .*

The children were dancing in their seats as they sang. Then they began to write . . .

"TO HELP OUR COUNTRY WE CAN . . ."

Grow our own food! Use only organic manure and control! Recycle as much as possible!

Raffia Brown

Campaign for forgiveness of national debt! Encourage alternative ways of trade and investment!

Gina Khan

Help old people

Jeremy Tate

Build bridges not walls

Grow what we eat and leave a little for others

Grace Chancellor

Live peacefully

Erin Frankson

Make compost heaps and biodigraders

Miss Long was proud of her class and said to the principal, “We will have to do something with the children for their hard work and creativity. We must invite family, former students and friends of Ole Town Primary to partner with us for Ole Town and our country’s sake.”

The principal smiled and said, “That is great! Let’s invite our mayor and some business persons to help us. Ms. Long, the entire school will join your class and we’ll take the 12 best ideas for presentation in two months.”

The whole school got busy and when the community arrived at Ole Town School and they were amazed to see the development. Former students were working in the library, some as storytellers. They were given free breakfast and lunch. The playfield had new ‘recycled’ equipment made from community ‘junk’! There were signs everywhere about a healthy environment and lifestyle. The garden was bursting with cash crops tended by the students and old cane farmers and was watered by recycled water. The compost heap was up and working – It was a new school!

Miss Long thanked everyone for coming, praised the children and invited everyone to do their part in helping the community to grow. The Mayor said he would ask every school to do the same and they all began to sing, “Every mikkle . . .”

Everyone can be agents of change! You can start now!



CARIBBEAN CONSULTATION ON "LIVING OUT THE ACCRA CONFESSION"

OCHO RIOS, JAMAICA, 22 – 25 APRIL 2009

MESSAGE FROM DELEGATES

Preamble

The delegates of Caribbean churches of the Caribbean and North American Area Council, (CANAAC), gathered in Ocho Rios from April 22 to 25 to consider the issue of "Living out the Accra Confession in the Caribbean" and to develop a regional strategy. Participating countries included Cayman Islands, Cuba, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Participants also included partner network representatives from Tanzania and the USA.

Hosted by the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman islands (UCJCI) offered a good opportunity for participants to celebrate the UCJCI, having regard for their being at the forefront of the movement for church union in the Caribbean. The formation of the UCJCI has brought together Presbyterian, Congregational and Disciples of Christ, all Calvinists in some sense; from Scottish, English and American backgrounds, into a dynamic Reformed Church and an excellent example of what it is to be "reformed and always reforming".

The Consultation was the first formal gathering of Reformed churches in this region to share stories and experiences on the topical and urgent issue of Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth. Participants shared updates on the reception and processing of the Accra Confession in their churches. They also discussed how the current economic and ecological crises are affecting their communities and countries. The process included critical analyses and reflection on economy, ecology and empire, through historical, biblical, theological and gender lenses.

Key Points

The economic and financial crisis has spread its tentacles of death across the globe affecting every institution in society and threatening life. In the Caribbean there is exacerbation of the foreign debt problem, capital flight, failing financial institutions, unjust multi-lateral and bi-lateral trade policies, increased crime and violence, unemployment, and the systemic and systematic destruction of social safety nets for the poor and vulnerable, particularly women. These economic and financial crises have the potential to set our countries back several decades to set the stage for social and political upheavals of unprecedented proportions.

1. The unsustainable use of resources to feed the unmitigated greed of the neo-liberal economy has left devastation in its wake and spawned a host of other crises, which threaten not only our lifestyle, but our very existence. The destruction of trees and the burning of fossil fuel have given rise to the greenhouse effect which in turn results in rising sea levels, floods, and hurricanes of greater intensity and frequency, among other natural disasters to which small

Caribbean islands are particularly vulnerable. Economies like ours that are dependent on agriculture and tourism are increasingly being devastated.

2. As Caribbean people we are endowed with the spiritualities of resilience and resistance, which enable us to claim possibilities and pursue viable alternatives for life in fullness for all people. Such alternatives must be underpinned by theologies of life rooted in the Biblical motif of enough. We know that at the heart of this crisis is the sin of greed and the insatiable desire to accumulate wealth at the expense of relationships and the integrity of the environment. We embrace and commend the African concept of sokoni, a 'market' place where people and relationships, rather than profit, are paramount.
3. We need a new economic paradigm forged out of the experiences of our people. We are inspired by the resilience and creativity of the Cuban people against great imperial odds. For this reason we applaud the attention and the recognition given to Cuba at the Fifth Summit of the Americas held from 17 to 19 April 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago. We continue to pray and advocate for the full lifting of the blockade against Cuba. We undergird the principle of Caribbean integration and reaffirm our commitment to playing our part in making it happen. We are open to learning from best practices within the region and committed to living and working together to build community.
4. We acknowledge that we have been complicit in empire by providing fodder for its consumption and offering up our best and brightest sons and daughters on the altar self aggrandizement. We are hypnotised by its siren call, pursuing the "golden fleece" of opportunity it offers at the expense of our own development. In the church too, we see images of empire. We think and model empire in much of what we do. Empire exists wherever the voices, needs and participation of people are excluded from the decision making process. Empire exists where systems are designed to feed greed and drive competition to the detriment of life in community.
5. We believe the church must lead in this process of transformation, mobilising resources to effect sustainable change. The church must resist evil in all its guises and foster critical thinking of its people to recognise and resist the forces of evil. Accordingly, the churches gathered at this Consultation pledged to continue the process confessing our faith in the face of economic injustice and ecological destruction at the local, regional and international levels.
6. A Covenanting for Justice Working Group for the Caribbean was established to further develop and implement regional and local strategies for churches' engagement with the Accra Confession and to strengthen the network of Reformed churches with ecumenical partners, various faith communities and social movements.
7. A Christian education resource book on Covenanting for Justice is being developed as a first step in education and conscientisation. Participants also proposed the following to the Caribbean working group:
 - That a Covenanting for Justice Curriculum be developed with methodologies that integrate theological thinking with praxis – linking theology with people's struggles and hope.
 - That a consultation of principals/presidents/deans/theologians of the theological schools and seminaries be organized to integrate studies on economy, ecology and empire in theological education and ministerial formation.

Participants (delegates and network partners)

1. Rev. Dr Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Cayman Islands
2. Rev. Dr Dora Arce, Cuba
3. Rev. Dr Ofelia Ortega, Cuba (WARC Vice President for the Caribbean region)
4. Rev. Raphael Osbert James, Grenada
5. Rev. Paulette Hannibal, Guyana
6. Mrs Judy Lall, Guyana
7. Rev. Dr Dale Bisnauth, Guyana
8. Rev. Dr Collin Cowan, Jamaica (WARC executive committee member for the Caribbean)
9. Rev. Nicole Ashwood, Jamaica (Education in Mission Secretary, Caribbean and North America Council for Mission)
10. Rev. Tara Tyme, Jamaica (Deputy Convenor, CANAAC)
11. Rev. Dr Gordon Cowans, Jamaica (Coordinator, Ecumenical Disabilities Network)
12. Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt, Jamaica (Moderator, Council for World Mission)
13. Mr Orville Johnson, Jamaican economist
14. Rev. Khereen Wilson, Jamaica
15. Rev. Brenda Bullock, Trinidad & Tobago
16. Dr Rogate Mshana, Tanzania (World Council of Churches staff)
17. Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, Guyana (WARC staff)
18. Rev. Neal Presa, USA (CANAAC Convenor) - Network partner observer
19. Mr Peter Vander Meulen, USA (representing the North America Covenanting for Justice Working Group) - Network partner observer



ACCRA CONFESSION: COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE IN THE ECONOMY AND THE EARTH

WARC 24TH GENERAL COUNCIL, ACCRA, GHANA, JULY 2004

Introduction

1. In response to the urgent call of the Southern African constituency which met in Kitwe in 1995 and in recognition of the increasing urgency of global economic injustice and ecological destruction, the 23rd General Council (Debrecen, Hungary, 1997) invited the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of “recognition, education, and confession (processus confessionis)”. The churches reflected on the text of Isaiah 58.6 “... break the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free,” as they heard the cries of brothers and sisters around the world and witnessed God’s gift of creation under threat.
2. Since then, nine member churches have committed themselves to a faith stance; some are in the process of covenanting; and others have studied the issues and come to a recognition of the depth of the crisis. Further, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and regional ecumenical organizations, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has engaged in consultations in all regions of the world, from Seoul/Bangkok (1999) to Stony Point (2004). Additional consultations took place with churches from the South in Buenos Aires (2003) and with churches from South and North in London Colney (2004).
3. Gathered in Accra, Ghana, for the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we visited the slave dungeons of Elmina and Cape Coast where millions of Africans were commodified, sold and subjected to the horrors of repression and death. The cries of “never again” are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system.
4. Today we come to take a decision of faith commitment.

Reading the Signs of the Times

5. We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Romans 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation.
6. The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death.

7. We live in a scandalous world that denies God's call to life for all. The annual income of the richest 1% is equal to that of the poorest 57%, and 24,000 people die each day from poverty and malnutrition. The debt of poor countries continues to increase despite paying back their original borrowing many times over. Resource-driven wars claim the lives of millions, while millions more die of preventable diseases. The HIV and AIDS global pandemic afflicts life in all parts of the world, affecting the poorest where generic drugs are not available. The majority of those in poverty are women and children and the number of people living in absolute poverty on less than one US dollar per day continues to increase.
8. The policy of unlimited growth among industrialized countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment. In 1989, one species disappeared each day, and by 2000 it was one every hour. Climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water are among the devastating consequences. Communities are disrupted, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation, and storms increase. High levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented for financial gain.
9. This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:
 - unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;
 - the ownership of private property has no social obligation;
 - capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;
 - social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation.
10. This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.
11. We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term "empire" we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.
12. In classical liberal economics, the state exists to protect private property and contracts in the competitive market. Through the struggles of the labour movement, states began to regulate markets and provide for the welfare of people. Since the 1980s, through the transnationalization of capital, neoliberalism has set out to dismantle the welfare functions of the state. Under neoliberalism the purpose of the economy is to increase profits and return for the owners of production and financial capital, while excluding the majority of the people and treating nature as a commodity.

13. As markets have become global, so have the political and legal institutions which protect them. The government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization) use political, economic, or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners.
14. We see the dramatic convergence of the economic crisis with the integration of economic globalization and geopolitics backed by neoliberal ideology. This is a global system that defends and protects the interests of the powerful. It affects and captivates us all. Further, in biblical terms such a system of wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Lk 16.13).

Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction

15. Faith commitment may be expressed in various ways according to regional and theological traditions: as confession, as confessing together, as faith stance, as being faithful to the covenant of God. We choose confession, not meaning a classical doctrinal confession, because the World Alliance of Reformed Churches cannot make such a confession, but to show the necessity and urgency of an active response to the challenges of our time and the call of Debrecen. We invite member churches to receive and respond to our common witness.
16. Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore we confess before God and one another.
17. **We believe** in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.
18. **We believe** that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24.1).
19. **Therefore, we reject** the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.
20. **We believe** that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos2.18ff).
21. **Therefore we reject** the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative.

22. **We believe** that any economy of the household of life, given to us by God's covenant to sustain life, is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and well being of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.
23. **Therefore we reject** the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God's creation.
24. **We believe** that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation, and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.
25. **Therefore we reject** any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation, and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. We reject any teaching which justifies those who support, or fail to resist, such an ideology in the name of the gospel.
26. **We believe** that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).
27. **Therefore we reject** any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.
28. **We believe** that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10.10). Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Lk 4.18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.
29. **Therefore we reject** any church practice or teaching which excludes the poor and care for creation, in its mission; giving comfort to those who come to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn 10.10) rather than following the "Good Shepherd" who has come for life for all (Jn 10.11).
30. **We believe** that God calls men, women and children from every place together, rich and poor, to uphold the unity of the church and its mission, so that the reconciliation to which Christ calls can become visible.
31. **Therefore we reject** any attempt in the life of the church to separate justice and unity.
32. **We believe** that we are called in the Spirit to account for the hope that is within us though Jesus Christ, and believe that justice shall prevail and peace shall reign.
33. **We commit ourselves** to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.
34. **We humbly confess** this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgement of God's justice.
 - We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neoliberal economic global system; we recognize that this

includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.

- We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism, and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.
 - We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature.
 - We confess our sin that our disunity within the Reformed family has impaired our ability to serve God's mission in fullness.
35. **We believe**, in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.
36. **We join in praise** to God, Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, who has "brought down the mighty from their thrones, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands" (Lk 1.52f).

Covenanting for Justice

37. By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God's will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings.
38. On this common journey, some churches have already expressed their commitment in a confession of faith. We urge them to continue to translate this confession into concrete actions both regionally and locally. Other churches have already begun to engage in this process, including taking actions and we urge them to engage further, through education, confession and action. To those other churches, which are still in the process of recognition, we urge them on the basis of our mutual covenanting accountability, to deepen their education and move forward towards confession.
39. The General Council calls upon member churches, on the basis of this covenanting relationship, to undertake the difficult and prophetic task of interpreting this confession to their local congregations.
40. The General Council urges member churches to implement this confession by following up the Public Issues Committee's recommendations on economic justice and ecological issues
41. The General Council commits the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to work together with other communions, the ecumenical community, the community of other faiths, civil movements and people's movements for a just economy and the integrity of creation and calls upon our member churches to do the same.
42. Now we proclaim with passion that we will commit ourselves, our time and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants might live (Deuteronomy 30.19).



A GLOSSARY OF WORDS AND TERMS

ACCRA CONFESSION is a faith statement of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which was agreed upon by the 24th general council meeting held in Accra, Ghana, Africa. It states that the current system of economic globalisation is not life-giving and is destructive of lives and creation. The Confession declares that such globalisation is analogous to empire and claims for itself the role of God, a situation that is not acceptable since 'wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor is seen as unfaithful to God and responsible for preventable human suffering and is called Mammon. Jesus has told us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon'.

CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICA AREA COUNCIL (CANAAC) is a regional expression of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in the region of the Caribbean, USA, and Canada. See www.canaac.org

CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICA COUNCIL FOR MISSION (CANACOM) is a mission partnership of churches in the Caribbean and North America. It has an office in Jamaica.

CONFESSION generally refers to a faith statement or faith articulation of a church or denomination in response to teachings and or conditions that are considered to be a seriously distorted version of the Christian message. The Accra Confession, for example, is a response to the toxic implications of the current economic system for human life and creation. It states that such a system, which claims for itself the role of God, is distorted and must thus be challenged and changed.

COVENANT is a fundamental self-understanding of the essence of Christianity in biblical times. According to the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 12:1) God entered into a mutually binding agreement with God's people. Church tradition asserts that God covenanted first with the patriarchs and with the entire people of Israel as they promised to be obedient to God's commandments and in return promised to give them land and descendants and to make them a holy nation, for example, in the covenant at Mount Sinai.

DEREGULATION is a process that aims at removing obstacles to the global movement of capital and the accumulation of goods produced in the north. The primary institutional agents of economic globalisation are the transnational corporations and governments of the north as well as multilateral institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the super-rich individuals or families (for example Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Warren Buffet, et cetera) generally located in the countries of the north.

ECOLOGICAL DEBT refers to the debt accrued by northern, industrial countries toward third world countries because of resource plundering, environmental damage and the occupation of environmental space. It is a term that attempts to redefine 'who are the debtors and creditors; serving as a counter weight to external financial debt, sets priorities straight and offers a framework for transforming power relations between the South and North'.³⁰

ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION involves, among others, a set of economic processes in which production, marketing and investment are increasingly integrated across borders and between firms.

30 Mshana, Rogate and Peralta, Athena K. Ecological Debt: the Peoples of the South are the Creditors.

The emergence and facilitation of a well-coordinated or single market for goods, capital, technology, services, information, as well as limited mobility for labour is created in order to consolidate the monopoly of the market. Economic globalisation encompasses the rapid integration and structuring of national economies into the global capitalist economic order through trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation. Its aim is to remove the obstacles from the global movement of capital and production of goods that have accumulated in the north.

EMPIRE is defined by WARC as the convergence of economic, political, cultural, geographic and military imperial interests, as well as systems and networks, for the purpose of amassing political power and wealth. Empire typically forces and facilitates the flow of wealth and power from vulnerable persons, communities and countries to the more powerful. Empire crosses all boundaries, strips and reconstructs identities, subverts cultures, subordinates nation-states, and can marginalise or co-opt religious communities.

FREE MARKET ECONOMY/POLICIES refer to general economic arrangements that allow private actors in the economy, particularly corporations, the freedom to make economic decisions based on profit, free from government restrictions and regulation. This has meant a decreasing role for national government in setting economic policies with regards to the opening up of the economies of the poorer countries/nations to foreign trade investment and the economic restructuring policies mentioned above.

GENDER describes socially constructed (and often unequal) roles, responsibilities and expectations culturally and socio-politically assigned to women and men and the institutional structures that support them. Unlike biological sex, gender is learned and can be transformed. Throughout history gender roles and expectations have been changing.

GENDER ANALYSIS is a tool that seeks to understand social, religious and cultural processes that create and maintain gender differences - in order to design informed responses of equitable options. It involves the examining the different roles women and men play in society and the differential impacts of policies related to politics, economy, social relations and religion on these roles. Extending from the idea that gender differences are based more on social, cultural and religious defined values, than on biology, this type of analysis recognizes and challenges the value systems which are responsible for the different (and unequal) impacts and benefits experienced by women and men of any given society.

GLOBALISATION is a process whereby the economic, political, social and cultural links between different countries, industries and individuals of the world are increasing; some commentators regard it as the 'usurping of state power by powerful transnational companies and international financial institutions', while others define globalisation as an advance of human freedom in which individuals are ever freer to lead lives of their own choosing. However, in this study, globalisation refers to transnational flows of money and or goods while ideas accompanied by an increasingly liberal international order in capital flows, goods and services are unhindered.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) The International Monetary Fund was founded in 1944, and then called the International Bank of Reconstruction. The basic aim behind its founding was to establish and regulate exchange rates regimes in the post-World War II economy and to provide balance of payments in order to enable countries not to opt for protectionist mechanisms.

LIBERALISATION refers to the process of opening an economy to the market and reducing the role of government. This includes the diminishing of government regulation and decision-making processes or involvement in decisions relating to areas such as trade, finance, currency and investment.

MACRO-ECONOMIC POLICY refers to a set of economic policies, which nations promulgate at the national and international levels that affect the overall functioning of a nation's economy and the

way it interacts with the international or global economy. Such policies include the national budget, tax decisions, interest rates and monetary policy, trade, currency, investment, employment and social policies. Micro economic policy, by contrast, refers to the decisions made by the actors within an economy, including individuals and companies. It may also refer to economic activities at the local level.

OIKOS is a term that can be etymologically traced to Greek. Its usage in theology refers to a household. As a theological metaphor oikos describes the worldwide household of God. According to the South African theologian, Russel Botman, a detailed understanding of oikos supersedes the narrow vision that perceives history as the only or central category of interpretation. It reminds us that story is bound up with community, webs of relationships, belonging and life lived together. The oikos is a 'God given space for living. It enables relationship, evokes neighbourliness and living for the other rather than for mere greed and self-interest. It has an ecological structure that displays boundary and openness, independent and relationship, the familiar and the alien and movement'.

OUKOUMENE is the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, God's household of life; since the word oikos means house or household, economy concerns the ordering of the household and ecology, its logic.³¹

PRIVATISATION refers to the conversion of public property or assets to private wealth. This takes place through a variety of activities, including the sub-contracting of state functions and withdrawal of government from active ownership or business. It is a process based on the neoliberal ideological reasoning that private property or wealth is the most efficient method or process of managing wealth.

PROCESSUS CONFSSIONIS refers to a process of recognition, education, confession and action regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction. It is a living commitment towards a confession of faith concerning economic and ecological justice.

STATUS CONFSSIONIS is an official theological position, which is a confession of faith in a situation where the integrity of Christian faith is at stake. The Reformed faith, by means of the Ottawa declaration, asserts that a status confessionis occurs in a situation in which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardizing the integrity of the churches' common confession. It implies that there cannot be a plurality of views within the Christian community with regard to a particular theological concern. The opposite views or positions are seen as being heretical or a betrayal of the Christian faith, mission and praxes.

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES (SAPs) refer to the policy prescriptions and conditionalities imposed on countries that borrowed money from the World Bank and IMF. They include, among others, the following: deregulation, privatisation, liberalisation of the economy, cut-backs on government expenditure, transfer of public assets or property into private property, sub-contracting, 'flexibilisation' of the labour force (i.e. hiring and firing of labour with ease), the market economy over and above all values, including development and ecological sustainability. SAPs conditionalities were imposed in Africa during the 1980s.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD refers to the factors necessary for people to obtain their rights to food, housing, education, health and an adequate standard of living through benefiting from an adequate, sustainable means to life.

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION (TNC) is also referred to as an international corporation, which operates in more than one country or nation at a time. TNCs have become some of the most

31 WCC/WARC, *The Island of Hope: An Alternative to Economic Globalisation* 2001: 5.

powerful economic and political entities in the world today. Many of these companies have far larger budget than many nation-states and far more power than the nation-states across whose borders they operate. While global in reach, the home bases of about ninety percent of all transnationals are concentrated in the northern industrialized countries. More than half come from just five nations: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and the United States. The British East India Company and Dutch East India Company were expressions of such corporations.

TRIPS - AGREEMENT ON TRADE RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS - governs international intellectual property rights (IPR) regimes related to trade in the global economy. There is a growing debate on how IPR regimes such as TRIPS affect ecology or biodiversity, access to medicines, food, agriculture, human life, north/south relationships and poor communities.

WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WARC) is a fellowship / community of more than 200 churches with roots in the 16th-century Reformation led by John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli and many others, and in the earlier reforming movements of Jan Hus and Peter Valdes. It comprises member churches from the Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United traditions. Many member churches live and witness in the southern hemisphere and often constitute minority faith communities in their countries. In June 2010 the Alliance will merge with the Reformed Ecumenical Council to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

WORLD BANK (WB) was founded in 1944 around the same time as the IMF. Hence the two are commonly known or referred to as the Bretton Woods Institutions, originally founded to assist in the post-World War II reconstructions. It later focussed its mandate and promoted neoliberal reforms as part of the conditions for lending money to nations, including African countries or states. It continues to provide loans for infrastructural projects, such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project in Lesotho in southern Africa. It also grants loans to poor countries for development (most of these loans are contested as uprooting rather than as improving the livelihoods of most of the citizens in Africa).

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO) This organisation was established following the Uruguay round of negotiations, which took place under the auspices of GATT, which began in 1986. The GATT round table resulted in the introduction of new trade related multi-lateral agreements including those of intellectual property rights; as well as trade in services, investments and capital. The WTO therefore governs and administers multilateral agreements and ensures that they are legally binding and are complied with by all the member states or affiliates of the WTO. In addition, dispute settlement mechanisms are embedded in its governance and agreements, meaning that if a member state lodges a complaint against the conduct of another country, the WTO can investigate, monitor and pass judgment on the complaint. It also possesses powers to enforce inter-state or bilateral agreements.



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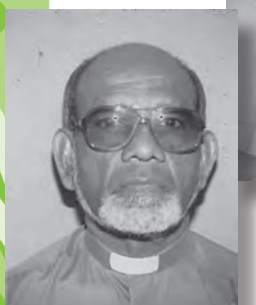
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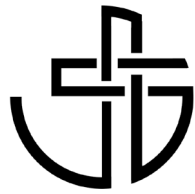
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World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)



**World
Communion
of Reformed
Churches**

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) are uniting to form a new body representing more than 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide. This united body will be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

WARC has 75 million members in 214 churches in 107 countries and REC has 12 million members in 41 churches in 25 countries.

The historic union will be launched at the WARC/REC Uniting General Council under the theme, "Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace" and will take place from June 18 to 26 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. For more information, see <http://www.reformedchurches.org/council.html>



Dr Puleng LenkaBula with Archbishop Desmond Tutu
(Cape Town, August 2009)

Challenged by the cry of the people who suffer and by the groaning of creation, Reformed churches embarked on a journey of faith that led to the 2004 Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth.

The Accra Confession puts justice at the heart of faith and urges Christians to be a disturbing element in society by resisting all forms of injustices, thus denouncing the power of mammon and affirming the sovereignty of God! WARC is advancing the process by encouraging churches and their communities to seek alternative vision, working to build just communities which put people at the centre and honour creation.

Choose Life, Act in Hope is a resource book on the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth. It is based on the theological conviction that political, social, economic and ecological justice and redemption are integral to our faith. The author, Puleng LenkaBula a South African theologian invites churches and partners to journey with the Accra Confession and to commit to the tenets of peace, justice and redemption that have long been pillars of the belief and practice of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

“Where God is known, there humanity is also cared for”

John Calvin

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CHOOSE LIFE, ACT IN HOPE

African Churches Living out the Accra Confession
A Study Resource on the Accra Confession:
Covenanting For Justice in the Economy and Earth

Puleng LenkaBula


World Alliance of Reformed Churches



CHOOSE LIFE, ACT IN HOPE African Churches Living out the Accra Confession - Puleng LenkaBula - World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Choose Life, Act in Hope is a resource book on the Accra Confession. It is based on the theological conviction that political, social, economic and ecological justice and redemption are integral to our faith. The author, Puleng LenkaBula, a South African theologian invites churches and partners to journey with the Accra Confession and to commit to the tenets of peace, justice and redemption that have long been pillars of the belief and practice of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

It is available at WARC.



Power to Resist and Courage to Hope is about the struggles and hope of Caribbean people in times economic crisis and climate change. It is written by the Reformed faith community of the Caribbean, who in addressing these critical life issues, call for a radical transformation of the logic undergirding the prevailing economic system and the degradation of the earth.

The book issues a call for a spirituality of resistance and transformation, which draws from the history of resistance of ancestral revolutionaries. It underlines the urgency for a vision, which puts people at the centre, supporting social well being, racial, ethnic and gender justice, exercise of freedom and cooperation among people and which honours creation.

"I trust that my use of the words such as 'capitalism', 'imperialism', and 'neo-colonialism' will not be deemed as a cover for sinister intent. My indulgence in those terms is aimed at opposing a system which is barbarous and dehumanising – the one which snatched me from Africa in chains and deposited me in far off lands to be a slave beast, then a sub-human colonial subject, and finally an outlaw in those lands."

Walter Rodney, December
1969

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