

## ALWAYS A THEOLOGY OF THE PEOPLE: THEOLOGY IN THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN

### Abstract

Anglophone Caribbean theology is a theology of the people, developing autonomously from the theology of the people developed by Argentine theologians. Their idea that a people's concrete, day-to-day practice of their religious faith carries the authentic culture of a country, is an authentic source of Christian wisdom, yields true insights of God's presence and activity in the world. This faith of the people, contextualized but not suppressed within the life of the Church overall and tapped into by its theologians, serve to evangelize a country and its people by calling a country and its people to a conversion to who they ought to be, a people of God who incarnate the Christian faith according to their unique genius, and share the fruits of the wisdom drawn from the lived experience of Christian faith by participating in the Church's evangelizing mission. This idea finds affinity with the mission of the Caribbean theological project: cultural liberation from colonialism and neocolonialism which brings about a sense of inferiority and dependency by the people of the Caribbean toward global social and political powers. Instead, Caribbean theology seeks to build a unique Caribbean identity which fulfills the full humanity of the people of that region.

**Keywords:** Caribbean theology, cultural liberation, evangelization, missionary, popular religion, theology of the people

Anglophone Caribbean theology has always been, at its core, a theology of the people. Since the 1970s, in ways which carry parallels to the work of Argentine theologians, Caribbean Christians and their theologians have been exploring ways by which their popular beliefs and practices of the Christian faith can reveal the presence of God and evangelize their culture. Core to the Anglophone Caribbean theological project is their effort to give voice to their people's practice of the Christian faith. These practices help to inform Anglophone Caribbean theology (which I will call Caribbean theology for a convenient short-hand), to become an indigenous body of thought which grapples with the social-political reality of the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean.<sup>2</sup> Through its goal of

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2 The theologians who pioneered it, for the most part, came from those islands which developed ecclesiastical, seminary, and uni-

forging a uniquely Caribbean theology, fully inclusive of the voices and popular Christian religious practices of the people they serve, they evangelize the culture of the Caribbean, helping to develop a unique Caribbean cultural identity not defined by its former colonial master, nor any other social-political hegemonic power. It is a project, ultimately, of cultural liberation.

This essay shall focus on one decisively important strand of the theology of the people as articulated by Pope Francis and other theologians from Latin America, specifically the idea that a people's concrete, day-to-day practice of their religious faith carry the authentic culture of a country, is an authentic source of Christian wisdom, which therefore yields true insights of God's presence and activity in the world. This faith of the people, contextualized but not suppressed within the life of the Church overall and tapped into by its theologians, can serve to evangelize a country and its people. Specifically, the theology of the people can call a country and its people to a conversion to become whom they ought to be, a people of God who incarnate the Christian faith according to their unique genius, within their unique social and cultural context, and share the fruits of the wisdom drawn from the lived experience of Christian faith by participating in the Church's evangelizing mission.

To begin, I shall sketch out this strand of the theology of the people, which understands the people of God as possessors of authentic culture and theological wisdom. They, in turn, as the members of the Church evangelize their culture, and their nation. What follows is a historic summary of the development of Anglophone Caribbean theology since its beginning in the 1970s. There, I will show how that theology developed as a theology of the people, and how it continues to draw from the popular faith and religious practices to help develop a Caribbean identity. The development of Caribbean identity, by the people who make their lives there, is an act of cultural liberation. Historically, Caribbean identity was something not developed by Caribbean people. It was an identity imposed from without, first through the European colonial powers who used the islands and their people as generators of wealth for the ruling metropolitan power, and later North Americans and Europeans, too many of whom viewed then (and still view now) the region as one long beach, ignoring the people and their identity. Moreover, Caribbean development of the theology of the people, though an autonomous effort, was not done independently of the rest of the Americas. Catholic Caribbean dioceses hold membership in CELAM. Participation in CELAM by the region's Catholics, and the use of their documents from Medellin through Aparecida by Catholic and Protestant Caribbean theologians in their scholarship demonstrate knowledge of the developments of theology in Latin America, in-

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versity infrastructures which helped them develop and sustain this work of political theology: Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, and Belize. Guyana and Belize are the sole continental members of the Anglophone Caribbean, whose people, culture, and theological concerns resemble its island cousins more than its Latin American neighbors.

cluding the theology of the people.<sup>3</sup>

The theology of the people emerged from an initiative begun by the Roman Catholic bishops of Argentina after returning from the Second Vatican Council. In 1966, these bishops created the *Comisión Episcopal del Pastoral*, charged with developing and implementing a national pastoral plan for the Church in Argentina at every level, diocesan, regional, and national.<sup>4</sup> At that time in Argentina's history, the country was under a military dictatorship fighting "The Dirty War". That dictatorship suppressed the Peronist opposition, and its supporters in labor groups, university students, and professors, often to the point of employing torture and murder. Guerrilla groups were being formed in opposition to the military government. The Church attempted to place itself in a constructive position relative to all sides of this national polarization, by placing distance between themselves and liberalism and Marxism.<sup>5</sup> Their alternative was to turn to Latin American and Argentine history, and extract categories unique to their country and continent and free from outside political, economic, and social domination. It was an attempt at cultural liberation where Latin Americans can begin to trust their native genius and resolve their own problems constructively.<sup>6</sup>

Key to this was their developing understanding of "the people". One of the participants in the development of the bishop's pastoral plan, Justino O'Farrell, pointed out a demographic fact about the Church in Argentina, that "popular Catholicism and 'folk' Catholicism form more than fifty percent of the Argentine population. The majority of this population consist of internal migrants and the marginalized of urban society and vast rural sectors."<sup>7</sup> This developed into the theology of the people's definition of what constitutes "the people" in actuality. While it can be understood to mean the entire people of a nation, the theology of the people shares with liberation theology the idea of the preferential option for the poor. Therefore, "the people" can also be understood to "designate the lower classes and popular social sectors that compromise a nation."<sup>8</sup> There is nothing either romantic or sentimental about this preference. If the theology of the people wanted to achieve cultural liberation for Argentina and Latin America, it had to find the place in society where much authentic Latin American culture in general, and Argentine culture in particular, resides in its most intact form.

3 For example, see *Justice and Peace in a Renewed Caribbean: Contemporary Catholic Reflections*, Perkins, Anna Kasafi, et. al. (eds.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, a collection of essays by Catholic Caribbean clergy, lay ministers, and theologians.

4 Politi, Sebastian, *Teología del Pueblo: Una Propuesta Argentina a la Teología Latinoamericana 1967-1975*, San Antonio de Padua, Ediciones Castañeda, Buenos Aires, Editorial Guadalupe, 1992, pp. 186, 193.

5 Scannone, S.J., Juan Carlos "Pope Francis and the Theology of the People," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 77, No. 1, Santa Clara, 2016, p. 120.

6 Scannone, pp. 120-121. Intellectual attempts such as this one are not new to Latin American history. For example, in Peru one finds the thought of José Carlos Mariátegui, who though formed in Marxism, sought an independent way for Peruvians and Latin Americans to think apart from intellectual domination from outside the region, including European Marxists. Example of his thought can be had in *Amauta*, the journal he founded and edited, and his most famous work *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, translated by Marjory Urquidí, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1971.

7 Politi, p. 192. [Translation mine.]

8 Scannone, p. 121.

Jesuit theologian Juan Carlos Scannone argues that the urban and rural lower, popular classes are where such manifestations of culture can be resourced. They “in practice retain the very culture of their people as a structuring principle for everyday life and common life.”<sup>9</sup> This is in direct contrast to a wealthy resident of Buenos Aires or another major city, who because of their ability to dialogue and encounter persons and cultures from around the world, may have a diluted understanding of their native culture. According to Scannone, “the simple and poor, at least *de facto* in Latin America and probably also *de jure*, are the ones who best preserve a common culture, its values and symbols, even religious ones because they alone have their human dignity and common culture without the privileges of power, possession, and knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the preferential option for the poor coincides with a preferential option for culture, because the poor possess it best.<sup>11</sup>

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, no retrieval of culture can be had without retrieving the popular religious practices of the people who generate and practice that culture. Aparecida, the Latin American bishops conference whose theology of the people Pope Francis, as Cardinal Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio, played a decisive role in articulating in its concluding document, articulates an understanding that the practice of the religion of the Latin American people is an expression of the Catholic faith so deeply inculturated into the region’s culture, that it is a feature intrinsic to it.<sup>12</sup> These religious practices are so rich and diverse, that theologians and scholars across different fields of study have difficulty agreeing on what to name the phenomena. Duncan Wielzen observes “in the scientific discourse authors employ a variety of related, though overlapping, terminology to address its complexity, such as: popular religion, folk religion, popular belief, religiosity of the people, and popular religiosity. When employed in a Catholic-Christian context, notions such as popular piety, popular devotion, popular Catholicism, or popular Christianity (Puebla 1978) are used.”<sup>13</sup> Aparecida employs many of those same terms, as it identifies practices as diverse as “patron saint celebrations, novenas, rosaries, the Way of the Cross, processions, dances and songs of religious folklore, affection for the saints and angels, solemn promises, and family prayer.”<sup>14</sup> Pilgrimage, too, is highlighted as a popular religious practice, to underline the missionary nature of all Christians who do this work in

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9 Ibid.

10 Scannone, 122.

11 Scannone, 121.

12 Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Concluding Document, Aparecida, 13-31 May, 2007*, Bogota, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, CELAM, 2008, p. 258.

13 Wielzen, Duncan, “Evangelization for a New Caribbean: A Renewed but Ongoing Reflection,” in: *Justice and Peace in a Renewed Caribbean: Contemporary Catholic Reflections*, Anna Kasafi Perkins, Donald Chambers, and Jacqueline Porter, (eds.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 103-104.

14 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, p. 259.

a community that transcends family and municipality, namely the Church.<sup>15</sup>

The Church is the very context which distinguishes individual and collective practices of popular religion from an exclusively spontaneous exercise of “mass spirituality”. The individual’s practice of the faith is finally unique to “the personal existence of each believer.”<sup>16</sup> But, this individuality is neither obliterated nor in competition with the Church community. Popular religion is “an indispensable starting point,” which is where person daily encounter God’s presence, receive supernatural wisdom as a gift of God’s grace, as they celebrate life’s joys and grapple with its struggles<sup>17</sup> with others in their Church community. This encounter motivates believers to work understand better the fruits of this encounter through the Church, done through “a more direct contact with the Bible and greater participation in the sacraments...the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, and express even better the service of love”<sup>18</sup> to God and neighbor. Individual and collective practices of the faith inform and enrich each other.

This fact brings us full circle. Popular spirituality, incarnate in the Church in Latin America, is not only an authentic expression of the Catholic faith, but of Latin American culture too. To practice one is to practice the other, or what Aparecida calls a “cultural historic originality”<sup>19</sup> of a unique incarnation of Christian faith. This is why the people can evangelize culture. They know and practice their culture best, precisely because faith already embedded in it as a source for that culture’s regeneration through evangelization.

The Caribbean is no different than Latin America in the embedded practice of popular religion as an authentic expression of its culture. This is a region where atheism, historically, did not exist in any significant way until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has always been a spirit-filled region even before the arrival of Christian missionaries. Their arrival, with the waves of European immigration and the forced importation of slaves only added to that region’s religious makeup.<sup>20</sup> Wielzen goes so far as to argue that religion is so deeply rooted in the Caribbean people, the Africans’ ability to overcome slavery and the East Asians’ (i.e., people from the Indian subcontinent) ability to overcome indentured servitude is a testimonial to the presence of the Spirit of Christ in them long before either group encountered any Christian missionary.<sup>21</sup> However, a Caribbean theology of the people, though deeply rooted in the region, received voice only in the emancipatory voices for the liberation of persons from slavery and servitude,<sup>22</sup> and more systematically

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15 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, pp. 259, 260.

16 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, p. 261.

17 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, pp. 261-263.

18 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, p. 262.

19 *Concluding Document, Aparecida*, p. 264.

20 Bisnauth, Dale, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, Kingston, LMH Publishing Ltd., 1989, pp. 1-10, 82-83.

21 Wielzen, 106.

22 Among a few examples of this, the black Jamaican Baptists, led by preachers like Samuel Sharpe, who preached and agitated for the emancipation of slaves on that island, which precipitated a major slave revolt in 1831-32 known as The Baptist War. A summary of

after Caribbean political independence was achieved. Only then, could Christians have the space to turn to cultural liberation which is core to their theology of the people. It is to this history we now turn.

Anglophone Caribbean theology began as a response to the political revolution which swept through the British Caribbean colonies in the years following the First World War. It gradually brought to those who were black, mixed-race, from the Indian-subcontinent, and Chinese, greater political and economic enfranchisement. It ultimately brought the region political independence. Today, these Caribbean lands are still working out what it means to be independent in the realm of culture. Key to this cultural self-understanding is how they articulate and practice the Christian faith.

Politically, the people who led the Anglophone Caribbean to independence wanted to break the colonial oligarchy's grip on the islands and enable all the people in the Caribbean to participate fully in the social, political, and economic life of the Caribbean. How they went about it was not revolution as we know it: an armed struggle followed by the exile or killing of the losing side. The Trinidadian labor leader Clement Payne put it best when he told an audience of workers that their aim should be "to educate, to agitate, but not to violate."<sup>23</sup>

This was revolution conducted as movement for reform, with the representatives of the disenfranchised majority using British law, civil and political institutions, authorities once used by the local oligarchy to secure its power, but now used to enfranchise all the people.<sup>24</sup> This social and political movement melded the rhetoric and actions calling for revolutionary change from the colonial status quo, with the rhetoric and actions of parliamentary reform to achieve independent nations. The reason for this was that Caribbean independence leaders recognized the benefits of British governance, despite its many flaws. Many Caribbean leaders were educated in British universities, often in law or economics, and served as officers in the British armed forces. They recognized that the British colonizers, in the words of Barbados' Prime Minister Errol Barrow "built better than they knew." The British Caribbean, in fact boasted some of the oldest, most representative forms of government in this hemisphere, for its day. The problem was they represented, with one small exception (Dominica), a white plantation and merchant elite. This rule was based on a colonial economy based on sugar and spices, whose labor was supplied by the most degrading forms of slavery and indentured servitude in the history of those dread institutions.

Caribbean theology followed suit by seeking a revolution in theology by developing a uniquely Caribbean way to do theology. This is part of a larger project

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Baptist opposition to slavery in Jamaica can be found in Russell, Horace O., "Sam Sharpe and the Meaning of Freedom," *American Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Atlanta, 2015, pp. 32-45.

23 Hoyos, F.A., *Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution*, London: Macmillan, 1974, p. 59.

24 The trade-union movement was the favored means to achieve these ends. Over the decades, these trade unions gave rise to political parties which campaigned for greater political autonomy, and then independence from Britain.

to develop a uniquely Caribbean self-identity through developing a uniquely Caribbean incarnation of the Christian faith. But, the means by which Caribbean theology goes about this task is neither via a schismatic break from the universal Church nor the whole sale tossing aside of the missionary Christianity it inherited in a quest to become a Caribbean-centric sect. The European influences that inform Caribbean identity and theology would continue to be an influence, but it would no longer be the *only* influence. It would be subject to the same critical appraisal as any other theological source. Nor would it have an automatic veto over these other influences, in particular the African roots of Caribbean religious practice.

Under colonial rule, with few exceptions, Christian clergy worked to justify the rule of the “plantocracy” and the paternalistic necessity of their rule over the lower classes. The latter were mostly persons of color, descended from African slaves or indentured servants from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>25</sup> This clergy brought what Caribbean theologians call “missionary Christianity”. Caribbean theologians have consistently spoken of how the majority of Caribbean peoples came here as forced labor. To keep the underclass placated, the churches here employed missionary Christianity, developing a theology to deculturize, dehistoricize, and depoliticize them. Missionary Christianity has a focus on the transcendent alone, the promise of eternal life (if the people behaved), which stripped the people of any sort of roots or sense of self or location to give oneself a sense of dignity. These persons were comprehensively incapacitated to think and act for themselves, to the point that the assumption in the Caribbean was they could never think for themselves. Therefore, they must be utterly deferential to their white masters who would do the thinking for them. The consequence is a theology that did not engage the challenges and suffering faced by the people of the Caribbean, and “which assumes the inherency of the non-European’s incapacity for the undertaking of tasks deemed to be outside the capabilities of races other than the Caucasoid.”<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the main goal of Caribbean theology, according to William Watty,<sup>27</sup> is “primarily and essentially a liberation of the mind, both from self-depreciation and imitation on the one hand and from dreaming the impossible dream on the other hand.”<sup>28</sup> This follows the vision of mental liberation, which was and remains a theme spoken by political leaders in the Anglophone Caribbean throughout the decades, before and after independence was won. For example, as early as 1938, Sir Alexander Bustamante<sup>29</sup>, in a speech to dock workers, stated flatly his

25 Included, too, were poor whites from other impoverished corners of the British Empire, notably Ireland and Scotland.

26 Smith, Ashley, “Mainline Churches in the Caribbean: Their Relationship to the Cultural and Political Process,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Kingston, 1988, pp. 28-30.

27 A Methodist minister and theologian from Dominica.

28 Watty, William *From Shore to Shore: Soundings in Caribbean Theology*, Kingston, Golding Printing Service, 1981, p. 49.

29 Trade union leader, founder of the Jamaica Labour Party, and first prime minister of independent Jamaica.

cause: "This is not a military revolution – it is merely a mental revolution."<sup>30</sup> Liberating the Caribbean mind was a constant theme in Dr. Eric Williams<sup>31</sup> speeches. A major motive in his launching his "University of Woodford Square" in 1955 was "the principle of intellectual freedom [for] the cause of the West Indian people."<sup>32</sup> In his Chaguaramas Declaration speech, given in 1970 before a People's National Movement party conference, Williams argued that "the supreme revolution that is needed in the Caribbean today is a psychological revolution."<sup>33</sup> He argued that national sovereignty "is perhaps most critically compromised and suppressed by the residue of metropolitan values and values handed down to us by centuries of colonialism and by our willingness to import ever new forms of values and ideologies from the outside." Then Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, in a speech to the 1975 World Council of Churches Assembly declared that liberation must "begin within the mind itself so that we may perceive our present situation clearly and conceive of future which is not a mere variation of the past."<sup>34</sup> He thought that customs and habits practiced uncritically are "polite terms for the unconscious brainwashing of the historical process."<sup>35</sup>

The goal of this mental emancipation was to decolonize the Caribbean mind and develop a new Caribbean identity to match their political independence and (to a degree) their economic independence. Caribbean theology works to play a central role here. Lewin Williams writes that Christians must engage in "a critical evaluation to missionary theology" with the end that "it develops its own indigenous pathway."<sup>36</sup> He calls it nothing less than "a new project of enculturation", whose "special focus is indigenization."<sup>37</sup> Idris Hamid<sup>38</sup> identifies the product of this process as the development of the new Caribbean man (and woman). To undo the effects of colonization, Caribbean peoples must learn to realize that God loves them for their unique identity that "is not typically Western, not African, nor Eastern."<sup>39</sup> These people have suffered from a basic abuse, namely that the "European powers could not make up their minds about Caribbean man" but "were not prepared to treat Caribbean people as human"<sup>40</sup>. The consequence is that Caribbean people possess the wounds of having been a subject people

30 Bustamante, Alexander, *The Best of Bustamante: Selected Quotations 1935-74*, Red Hills, Twin Guinep, LTD., 1977, p. 93.

31 Oxford educated historian and first prime minister of independent Trinidad and Tobago.

32 Ryan, Selwyn, *Eric Williams: The Myth and the Man*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2009, p. 74.

33 Williams, Eric E., "The Chaguaramas Declaration – Perspectives for the New Society," in: *Eric E. Williams Speaks: Essays on Colonialism and Independence*, Selwyn R. Cudjoe, (ed.), Wellesley, Calaloux Publications, 1993, p. 302.

34 Manley, Michael, "From the Shackles of Domination and Oppression," *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 28, No. 1, Malden, 1976, p. 57.

35 Manley, Michael, *The Politics of Change: A Jamaican Testament*, revised edition, Washington, D.C., Howard University Press, 1990, p. 80.

36 Williams, Lewin, "Wherefore Caribbean Theology?" *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Kingston, 1991, p. 36.

37 Williams, Lewin, *The Caribbean: Enculturation, Acculturation and the Role of the Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1996, p. 1.

38 A Trinidadian and Presbyterian minister and theologian credited as the founder of Anglophone Caribbean theology.

39 Hamid, Idris, "Theology and Caribbean Development," in: *With Eyes Wide Open*, David I. Mitchell (ed.), Port of Spain, CADEC, 1973, p. 127.

40 Ibid.



unable to define their own identity, chiefly “aberrations in their personalities and communities, such as the internalizing of the oppressor’s values and loss of self”.<sup>41</sup>

Key elements of this Caribbean theological project include, but are not limited to, the following features. First, there must be a new theological hermeneutics. Theresa Lowe Ching argues that missionary theology should be read with “hermeneutics of suspicion [which] is applied to the interpretation of Scripture and the theology which bolstered the colonial oppressors and was aimed at keeping the oppressed in placid submission, waiting for salvation in the life to come. A new interpretation of Scripture is then sought to affirm and validate a new way of experiencing and living the Christian message of God’s liberative intentions for the people of the Caribbean region.”<sup>42</sup> Second, this critical reading of missionary theology is paired with a critical retrieval of long-held Caribbean traditions which help develop Caribbean identity. Gerald Boodoo speak of how “art, images, and performance may depict in authentic ways our Caribbean reality and identity” in ways that historical writing and historiography do not.<sup>43</sup> (This is compatible with the pre-Tridentine Christianity the Spanish brought to the region). Third, a critical retrieval of the African roots to Caribbean Christianity, with the caution to not press it so much that the contributions of other groups get marginalized. This retrieval is a huge challenge given the aural nature of African religion. Fourth, Caribbean theologians are engaged in a critical reassessment of syncretism. During the colonial period, Christian churches purged Christianity of popular religious practices because they were reflexively seen as pagan, eliminating even those elements of their original religious commitments which could be compatible with Christian faith. Caribbean theologians today view such practices as an attempt by the colonial rulers to deculturize, dehistoricize, and depoliticize the people to make them servile. Discussions of syncretism are giving way to discussions about inculturation, both good and bad, so that the evangelization of Caribbean culture brings about a new creation of a truly incarnate Christian faith.<sup>44</sup> Fifth: a call to reject the missionary Christian dualism where the spirit is serviced to the neglect of the body. This allowed churches to avoid social criticism and focus on the life to come. Caribbean theology argues that eternal salvation must include a message of cultural, political, and economic liberation now if God’s promise is to be revealed as valid. Sixth: a preferential option for the poor. Despite the fact that Caribbean nations such as Barbados and the Bahamas have attained developed status, multiple forms of social exclusion and marginalization remain to be

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41 Ibid.

42 Ching, Theresa Lowe, “Method in Caribbean Theology,” in: *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, Kingston, Canoe Press, University of the West Indies Press, 1995, p. 26.

43 Boodoo, Gerald M., “Eucharist and Hospitality: Reflections on *Stewardship and the Revitalization of Parish Life in the Caribbean*” in: *Justice and Peace in a Renewed Caribbean: Contemporary Catholic Reflections*, Anna Kasafi Perkins, Donald Chambers, and Jacqueline Porter, (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 185.

44 Wielzen, 112.

identified and confronted.<sup>45</sup> Seventh: the need for authentic national, social, and regional solidarity. Many Caribbean people today see the Parliamentary system inherited from Britain as an imposed system which has yet to fulfill its promise of shared governance of their respective countries.<sup>46</sup> Regional cooperation remains a concern. Eighth: a rejection of the theological idea that faith and salvation is simply a matter of a relationship between the redeemer and the redeemed. Ninth: Caribbean theology is ecumenical and open to interreligious dialogue. Here it seeks to overcome the privileged state of some churches under colonial rule<sup>47</sup>, all to harness Christian solidarity as a catalyst for Caribbean social solidarity. Gerald Boodoo views both ecumenical and interreligious dialogue not as a gateway to religious relativism. Instead, it is an “accommodating resistance”. One shows true hospitality to one’s non-Catholic or non-Christian neighbor, share life together over a meal, a game or cultural event, and engage in dialogue that will yield truth and justice, without resorting to violence and oppression of the other.<sup>48</sup> Tenth; ecology has become a major concern for a region especially sensitive to global climate change and the meteorological instability it will bring.<sup>49</sup> Lastly: Anglophone Caribbean theologians seek to establish sustained dialogue with other Caribbean theologians, particularly in the Spanish-speaking islands. Dialogue already exists with the French<sup>50</sup> and Dutch islands, all for pan-Caribbean cultural solidarity, and constructing a life together with God as Church.

All of these elements constitute a theology of the people for the Caribbean, because they all plumb the depths of the popular religious practices and wisdom of the people of those islands. From that, the Caribbean people are seeking to achieve nothing less than becoming themselves as a people, with their own distinctive cultural identity, defined by no-one other than God and themselves. Pope Francis speaks of a people no longer seeing themselves as mere residents, but as citizens.<sup>51</sup> Citizens “enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be.”<sup>52</sup> Citizenship is just the first step, one the people of the Anglophone Caribbean, with few exceptions, attained upon independence from Britain. Pope Francis then speaks about what it takes to become a people. He describes that in a way

45 Rodrigues, Malcolm, “Justice and Peace in a New Caribbean’ Revisited” in: *Justice and Peace in a Renewed Caribbean: Contemporary Catholic Reflections*, Anna Kasafi Perkins, Donald Chambers, and Jacqueline Porter, (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 65-67. See also, Peter Bunting and Danielle Roper, “Principle of Subsidiarity,” in: Perkins, et. al, pp. 120-124.

46 Rodrigues, 67.

47 Moseley, 236.

48 Boodoo, “Eucharist and Hospitality,” 193.

49 Christopher Llanos, “Caring for the Earth and Plutonium Shipment,” in: *Justice and Peace in a Renewed Caribbean: Contemporary Catholic Reflections*, Anna Kasafi Perkins, Donald Chambers, and Jacqueline Porter, (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 218-231.

50 Bunting and Roper, 117-119.

51 Scannone, 127.

52 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Washington, D.C., United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013, paragraph 220.

befitting the multiracial origins and reality of the Caribbean itself, “the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.”<sup>53</sup> The pontiff articulates four criteria to measure progress in developing a people and a cultural marked by the qualities of peace, justice, and fraternity. We conclude with how Caribbean theology would articulate these criteria.

Pope Francis’ first criteria, that time is greater than space, is something readily apparent to the people in the Caribbean. The region’s constant geopolitical challenge is, as Kortright Davis pointed out is too much water and too little land. Their need to cooperate in such close quarters opens the people of the region to continue their project of building a people, and, as Pope Francis put it, initiate processes by which they are opened to living more meaningful lives.<sup>54</sup> However, the people of the Caribbean will not set aside the issue of land in its entirety. Its very scarcity has been amplified by who possesses it, be it the plantocracy of the past or how land and other property is owned and employed today. Land, even today, decisively impacts the project of developing Caribbean identity.<sup>55</sup>

This example of the social and economic pressures and the quest for justice facing the people of the Caribbean underscores the fact that the Caribbean has been a community of difference since colonial times. Its greatest challenge today is a social fabric being torn by gang violence, which, in an echo of its colonial past, seeks to exploit those differences for the private gain of a few.<sup>56</sup> Caribbean theology and the Church’s efforts at social justice and reconciliation, where the diverse persons and groups of the Caribbean realize their identity as one people, resonates with Pope Francis’ second criteria, a call for people to address conflict constructively. He sees the inevitable conflicts in a diverse society as an opportunity for an encounter with the other, and to recognize their God-given dignity. This leads to the development of a reconciled diversity, where people seek to fulfill the will of Jesus Christ that all will be one. This unity does not obliterate difference, but harmonizes the diversity of persons into a mosaic of a united culture.<sup>57</sup>

Christian faith in the Caribbean, it can be argued, has a thick pre-tridentine quality. The popular practices of the faith incarnate in the region are given greater priority than the development and articulation of theological ideas. This is not anti-intellectualism, but the acknowledgement that the former reality makes theology possible. It fits Pope Francis’s third criterion that reality is more important than ideas. Popular religion keeps theology anchored in the life of God mediated through the people of God, sparing it from the intellectual traps Pope Francis

53 Ibid.

54 Pope Francis, *EvangeliiGaudium*, paragraphs 223-224.

55 See Davis, Kortright, *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology*, Eugene, Wipf and Stock, 1990, pp. 2-4.

56 United Nations Development Programme, *Gang Violence Take Rising Toll in Lives, Threatens Caribbean Economies*, says UNDP. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2012/02/08/gang-violence-takes-rising-toll-in-lives-threatens-caribbean-economies-says-undp.html>

57 Pope Francis, *EvangeliiGaudium*, paragraphs 226-230.

warns against, “angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, [and] intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom.”<sup>58</sup> The Caribbean has grappled with its share of puritanism with its harsh ethical codes, the moral relativism found among the educated classes, the temptation to nihilism among the youth attracted to the easy profits and empty community of gangs, political posturing instead of substantive policy making, fundamentalist forms of Christianity, and the temptation to blindly follow academic trends which begin elsewhere due to a residual bias which perceived any ideas from Europe or the United States as automatically worth considering. The qualities of Caribbean theology continually assure people of their own wisdom, communicated in practice as well as theory, to critically evaluate their lives and world.

Lastly, Pope Francis speaks of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. A constant struggle in the Caribbean is to remember that the good of the whole community of any one island is greater than its constituent groups, and that the good of the whole Caribbean community of nations is greater than any one island. Pope Francis warns against a parochial vision where people are not open to new ideas and wisdom God places beyond the borders of any one nation. On the other hand, he warns, too against becoming enamored of the glamour of the world beyond,<sup>59</sup> a remnant of the colonial mentality that anything brought in from Europe or North America is intrinsically superior to anything produced in the Caribbean. The Caribbean itself has a cultural and theological vision which can develop into a unique Caribbean identity whose insights can benefit the world and the Church universal, beyond.

The people of the Caribbean have, for the past forty years sought to forge their own identity independent of those imposed by their former colonial masters in Europe, and the hegemonic power of North America. The Argentine bishops, including Pope Francis who emerged from their ranks to shepherd the Church universal, articulated a theology of the people to help their own people realize their innate wisdom and knowledge to forge their own culture and identity as a people. The people of the Caribbean have been practicing this theology all along, instantiated to attain the same overall goal Latin Americans also seek, a cultural liberation where they see themselves as a people of God, defined by no outside dominate force or group. The Caribbean people hope to see themselves as, truly, a people who not only occupy but have agency under God over the continued development of their island nations and region.

58 Pope Francis, *EvangeliiGaudium*, paragraph 231.

59 Pope Francis, *EvangeliiGaudium*, paragraph 234.

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**УВЕК ТЕОЛОГИЈА НАРОДА:  
ТЕОЛОГИЈА АНГЛОФОНИХ КАРИБА**

**Сажетак**

Англофона теологија Кариба је теологија народа, која се независно развијала од теологије народа аргентинских теолога. Њихова идеја јесте да конкретна, свакодневна религиозност народа у себи садржи и аутентичну културу земље, што је извор хришћанске мудрости и указује на истинитост Божјег присуства и активности у свету. На тај начин, вера народа, развијена у контексту и ослобођења притиска Цркве и теолога, служи евангелизацији земље и народа, позивајући људе на конверзију у оно шта они желе да буду. Божји народ који развија хришћанску веру у складу са њиховом јединствености, у исто време делећи благодети мудрости настале из искуства хришћанске вере тако што учествују у црквеној еванђеоској мисији. Ова идеја је блиска мисији карибског теолошког пројекта: културно ослобођење од колонијализма и неоколонијализма који доводе до осећаја инфериорности и зависности народа Кариба према светским друштвеним и политичким центрима моћи. Уместо тога, карибска теологија има за циља да изгради јединствен идентитет који испуњава народ тог региона.

**Кључне речи:** карибска теологија, културно ослобођење, евангелизација, мисионарење, народна религија, теологија народа

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