TABLES OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Biblical, Theological, and Intellectual Foundations for Aristide's Political Theology

Chapter Three: Toward a Politico-Theology of Relationality and Justice as Solidarity

Chapter Four: The Calvary of Blackness for Humanity:
             Critical Anthropology and Ethics

Chapter Five: The Hope of Black Theological Anthropology and Ethics:
             Reconstructing Black Personhood and Humanity

Chapter Six: Ubuntu as a Humanism of Love and Interdependence:
             Aristide's Theology of Love and Relationality

Chapter Seven: Viv Dechoukaj, Long Live Uprooting! Aristide's Politico-Theological of Violence, and the Ethics of Necklacing and Gangsterization

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: Rethinking the Meaning and Implications of Aristide and Theology for the Global Culture in the 21ˢᵗ Century

DECLARATION

"I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not

previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university."

SIGNED   *………………………………………………………….*

(by Celucien L. Joseph)

DATE   *February 16, 2017*

PLACE   ***UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA***

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Many people, whose names shall remain anynomous here, have contributed enormously to the completion of this doctoral thesis. They have provided both their support and encouragement to me—from the beginning phase of this intellectual project to its last phase. I'm forever thankful for their assistance, and even to those friends of mine who thought it was not a wise decision to pursue a second PhD—given my colossal responsibilities as a father, husband, full time professor, and Christian missionary to Haiti, etc. Arguably, these individuals understood the process of getting a PhD takes commitment, passion, dedication, discipline, and hard work.

On the other hand, I have always wanted to get a PhD in theology because my underlying goal was to be more equipped academically in the discipline of Christian theology and ethics so I could be more usefuly to serve the church, the people of God, and humanity as a whole. Yet, in the process of working toward this degree, it has become more than an intellectual exercise for me; it was a journey of radical spiritual transformation, as both Theology and Ethics, I would argue also, must engage in the enduring process of achieving human peace, reconciliation, unity, and socio-political progress and transformation toward human flourishing for the common good. A better understanding of the interplays between Theology and Ethics is very promsing and pivotal in achieving these goals. It is my conviction that faith is an important human phenomenon in shaping people's ethical choices and decisions, worldviews, and human and social interactions in the world. In particular, from a Christian perspective, Jesus has commissioned his followers to be "the

light and salt of the world;' in the same of reasoning, the greatest commandment given to followers of Christ besides loving God with all their heart, soul, and strength, and correspondingly, to love one's neighbor with all one's heart, soul, and strength. It is both biblical and theological conviction that the call to practice justice, to do good, and walk in solidarity with the weak, the poor, the oppressed, and the disheartened in this world, and defend their rights to exist, work, and grow is a central theme of the Biblical narrative and the libertarian message of the Gospel and the Triune God of the Christian faith. It remains my conviction that followers of Jesus Christ in this world are called to live to a higher ethic and an alternative Christ-exalting, God-centric, and human-senstive lifestyle in this world.

Furthermore, I'm convinced that the life of the mind and the life of the soul should not be divorced. To put it simply, scholarship and service shall not be separated. My first PhD (2012) at the University of Texas at Dallas (Texas, United States of America) was in (English) Literary Studies, with an emphasis in African American Literature, African American Intellectual History, and Caribbean Culture and Literature, has allowed me to teach English composition and literature in my current institution and facilitated the intellectual resources for academic writing and scholarly research in my areas of teaching and research. The academic formation or training that I have gained has also provided me with the tools, resources, and the venues to interpret my scholarship as a work of social activism, public intellectualism, and cultural criticism.

Correspondingly, I have pursued this current doctoral degree with an emphasis in Dogmatics/Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics with the goal to conduct further research on the combined academic discipline and hopefully in the future, I will be able to teach in these respective academic fields of study. Ultimately, my commitment to social justice, the radical transformation of the individual and civil and political societies, and

certainly, my love for God and my commitment to love and serve people has also been the driven-forces in the fulfillment of this dream and intellectual project.

I would like to thank my doctoral supervisor Dr. Vuyani Vellem who has responded positively to supervise my subject of research when I first made the inquiry to him three years ago. His first impression about my academic interest to study with him and under the auspices of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria (Pretoria, South Africa) the theological ideas and moral vision—that is the relationship between theology and ethics—of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was very encouraging to me. Jean-Bertrand, a former Catholic Priest and President of Haiti, and Liberation Theologian, has spent many years living in South Africa as a President in exile—after he was forcefully removed from his first presidency in Haiti, in September 29, 1991. Having been the victim of two presidential coups in Haiti and lived as an exiled President in the United States of America, in 2004, he and his family were sent to exile in South Africa and lived in Pretoria for many years. Interestingly, the President-Theologian would pursue doctoral studies at the University of South Africa, the sister institution of University of Pretoria, where Dr. Guyana Vellem currently serves as Professor of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics and Director of the Centre for Public Theology. Eventually, he received a PhD in African languages in April 2007, at Unisa. Consequently, Professor Vellem was thrilled when I expressed my desire to work with him on Aristide's theology and ethics.

Professor Vellem has accommodated my situation—given the fact that I currently live and work as a full-time Professor in the United States of America, and concurrently wanted to pursue a PhD in Pretoria, South Africa. Relocating to the other side of the Atlantic in South Africa to pursue doctoral study at UP was not possible for me and my family. Dr. Vellem has provided constructive, insightful, and intelligent comments and feedback to

ix

enhance both the argument and language of this important study; his professionalism, demeanor, and commitment to my success are praiseworthy and beyond reproach. The process was not easy for me, as the task was considerably overwhelming as my responsibilities are/were numerous.

I'm also appreciative to the staff of Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria who have accommodated my needs and worked with me to complete the program. They understood the difficulty one may encounter in pursuing the PhD degree as a non-residential and international student. In the same line of thought, I'm appreciative to both internal (C. J. Wethmar) and external readers (E. Anderson-Rajikumar and R. Hewitt), and GJ Steyn (Chair of the defense) and M. Sukdaven (additional member) who have provided constructive comments to make this intellectual project more rigorous, reader-friendly, and eventually, an academic success.

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To the glorious praise of the Triune and Eternal God!

x

DEDICATION

I dedicate this intellectual project to the three most wonderful women in my life: Katia, my lovely and long-suffering wife, and Emily and Abigail, my two amazing daughters and princesses. You have graced my life with laughter, tenderness, kindness, and patience. I will never stop loving you.

ABSTRACT

FAITH, HOPE, AND THE POOR:
THE THEOLOGICAL IDEAS AND MORAL VISION OF
JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE

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The objective of this research is to examine the theological ideas and moral vision of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and to explore how his theology (and theological hermeneutics and ethics) has influenced his politics of solidarity and social activism on behalf of the oppressed and the poor in Haiti in particular, and the wretched of the earth, in general. Through the use of the postcolonial, decolonial, and Liberation Theology paradigms as hermeneutical and theoretical methods of investigation, the project seeks to answer a threefold question: what is the relationship between theology and social activism and transformation in the thought and writings of Jean-Bertrand Aristide?   What is the place and function of the community of faith, the poor, the oppressed, hope, and human liberation in the political theology of Jean-Bertrand Aristide? What is the place of (defensive) violence in Aristide's theology? Our goal in this scholarly investigation is an attempt to provide an answer to these daunting questions above and to explore more fully and intelligently the theology of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

This present study considers Aristide's democratic and social justice projects and theological reflections and theological intersections in the disciplines of theological anthropology, theological ethics, and political theology, as he himself engages all four simultaneously. The doctoral thesis locates Aristide's thought and writings within Black intellectual tradition both in continental Africa and the African Diaspora. It establishes shared intellectual ideas and strong ideological connections between Aristide and his contemporary interlocutors such as African American thinkers James H. Cone, Anthony Pinn, Dwight Hopkins, Emile Townes; Caribbean thinkers Leo Neol Erskine, Idris Hamid, Kortright Davis; African theologians Laurenti Magesa, John S. Mbiti, Benezet Bujo, and Desmond Tutu; and finally, with African philosophers D.A. Masolo, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, and Kwame Gyekye. On one hand, Aristide's intellectual ideas and political activism should be understood in the context of the struggle for democracy in Haiti; on the other hand, it is suggested the intellectual articulations and propositions of these Black and African thinkers aim at a common vision: the project to make our world new toward the common good.

While we do not undermine the problem of violence in Aristide's theology and political program in the context of Haitian history, the doctoral thesis argues that Aristide's theological anthropology is a theology of reciprocity and mutuality, and correspondingly, his theological ethics is grounded in the theory of radical interactionality, interconnectedness, and interdependence, and the South African humanism of Ubuntu. It also contends that Aristide's promotion of a theology of popular violence and aggression in the Haitian society should be understood as a cathartic mechanism and defensive violence aimed at defending the Haitian masses against the Duvalier regime and their oppressors.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

We have entitled this current research or dissertation "Faith, Hope, and the Poor: The Theological Ideas and Moral Vision of Jean-Bertrand Aristide." Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1953-Present) is a Haitian Liberation Theologian and Politician. He was a Former Catholic Priest of the Salesian order and was elected twice as the President of Haiti (1991, 2001), the first Black-ruled and independent nation-state in the Western hemisphere. The project seeks to answer a twofold question: what is the relationship between theology and social activism and transformation in the thought and writings of Jean-Bertrand Aristide? What is the place and function of the *community of faith*, the poor, the oppressed, hope, and human liberation in the political theology of Jean-Bertrand Aristide? This present study considers Aristide's theological reflections and theological intersections in the discipline of theological anthropology, theological ethics, and political theology, as he himself engages all three simultaneously.

1.2. CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Current scholarship (i.e. Dupuy, 1997, 2007; Hallward, 2010; Wilentz, 1989; Greene, 1993; Fatton, 2002) on Jean-Bertrand Aristide has focused exclusively on Aristide's political life and Aristide as a politician. Few studies have examined Aristide as a (political) theologian, and those that do often ignore how Aristide has intertwined the biblical data and secular humanist tradition to develop a robust theological discourse on human anthropology and human ethics. Current studies on Aristide's political theory and political theology have not explored his

1

enormous circles of influence which bring in dialogue the rhetoric of the Black Atlantic Radical Tradition and Africana Critical Theory, and the logic of anti-colonialism and postcolonialism. Correspondingly, contemporary scholarship on Aristide has not explored how the South African philosophical system of Ubuntu has transformed his latter writings and radically improved his intellectual and theological imaginations. Finally, existing works on Jean-Bertrand Aristide have not investigated the intellectual, ideological, and theological parallelisms, connections, and linkages which he ideologically shares with other Black diasporic and African intellectuals and theologians.

1.3. RESEARCH GAP

Evidently, there exists an intellectual void that neglects an important aspect of the man—his theological vision and imagination, and how his theology has influenced his politics and social activism on behalf of the poor and those living on the margins of modernity. Subsequently, our chief goal in this project is to study precisely Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a political theologian. This approach will allow us to explore more directly and fully the theology of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, resulting in a better understanding of Aristide among the theologians and his contributions to theology as an intellectual discipline. Hence, while our analysis on these significant issues is interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary, our project is limited to the politico-theological inquiry and moral vision of our subject of research.

Furthermore, we are conscious that we cannot separate the theologian from the politician; to do theology is inevitably to engage the realm of politics. It is impossible to conduct a critical theological reflection on Aristide without deeply engage in his political life and political activism. It is from this distinct perspective that we shall attempt to engage critically and intelligently the

theological discourse (s) of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. On the other hand, we foresee that our theological investigation will inevitably crisscross or intersect with Aristide's politics.

1.4. MAIN ARGUMENT

Through the use of the postcolonial, decolonial, and Liberation Theology paradigms as hermeneutical and theoretical methods of investigation, the doctoral thesis argues that Aristide's theological anthropology is a theology of reciprocity and mutuality, and correspondingly, his theological ethics is grounded in the theory of radical interactionality, interconnectedness, and interdependence, and the South African humanism of Ubuntu. It also contends that Aristide's promotion of a theology of popular violence and aggression in the Haitian society should be understood as a cathartic mechanism and defensive violence aimed at defending the Haitian masses against the Duvalier regime and their oppressors.

Aristide's theological anthropology and ethics, and the intersections of faith, human hope, and the poor in his works are deeply rooted in the theological tradition that men and women are created in the image of God, as well as in his theological conviction that the Christian God is the God of liberative presence, hope and faith; accordingly, this same God speaks through the poor, inspires hope and faith in them, and ultimately calls them to an emancipative life of freedom and wholeness. As he remarks, "Whenever the poor are heard and respected, the face of God is illuminated. The gift of Christ is his humanity, his presence among the living, among the poor. Jesus is not only the God of glory; he is the God of suffering" (Aristide, 2000:73).

Aristide's theological imagination and creativity in the tradition of liberation and constructive theology/theologies has profoundly shaped his understanding of God and the social order and theology and politics. His theological anthropology and valorization of human dignity

is grounded in God's solidarity with the poor, his decisive commitment to pursue justice, and restore shalom in our broken world (s). In his autobiography, he affirms that "Every person is a human being" (Aristide, 1993:28). As he acknowledges the uniqueness and plurality of the human being, he is convinced that "speaking of God and other people is often a synthesis" (Aristide, 1993:40). Aristide delineates a close relationship between God and the *anthropos*; and because God is not silent, and, often, speaks on behalf of the poor, the theologian should be the voice of the oppressed and the mute. This position, however, does not undermine the agency of the oppressed. In fact, in the context of the Haitian poor, Aristide affirms their self-agency when he remarks, "The starving themselves spoke of their hunger, often uneasily and without eloquence, but they spoke" (1993:46). While affirming their collective subjectivity, he also compares the life condition and suffering of Haitian poor to those of the historical Jesus, "Like Jesus, we spoke of our own reality, and we poured out all the words of Christ in light of our own situation of suffering and injustice" (Aristide, 1993:66).

In addition, he speaks profoundly about the importance of solidarity in suffering for collective liberation, "Each person participated in the misfortune of the other; a profoundly biblical expression turned all the faithful against oppression. That word was quite naturally anchored in our human condition" (Aristide, 1993:66). Aristide maintains that the poor are actors and agents of their own liberation, "…That the poor themselves should also be actors. In a theology of liberation, the poor people themselves should speak for all their brothers and sisters. This pedagogy, this reality makes sisters and brothers of all of us" (Aristide, 1993:53). Furthermore, Aristide notes, "I never felt obliged to love men and women because God had ordered me to do so. I was part of other: in each person I discovered a little of myself, and in myself I found a little of the other" (Aristide, 1993:53). Aristide's theological anthropology is a theological anthropology

4

of reciprocity and mutuality, and correspondingly, his theological ethics is grounded in the theory of interactionality, interconnectedness, and interdependence. Arguably, it could be justifiable to sustain the proposal that whole of Aristide's theological corpus and theological discourse champion the transformative ethical values and practices of the South African humanism and worldview called Ubuntu.

Aristide believes that theology has a performative and active role to play in society and in God's universal project of human liberation and his determination to give meaning to human existence in a life characterized by despair, suffering, evil, false hopes. In other words, a theology that is rooted in God's love and care for humanity and its total freedom is restorative, active, and transformative. It is in this sense that Aristide does not separate theology from politics, God from society, and does not belittle the role of theology in the public sphere. It is also in this aspect that we can call him a Public theologian. For him, the theologian is the servant of the people, and must protect them from harm and violence. His theology should be a tool to transform the social order and get rid of the evil among us. The words below summarize our conviction, highlighting the reciprocal role of theology and politics leading to human freedom and social transformation:

> Shall I be a priest or the president? One shades easily into the other. But as head of state and of the resistance, I have to walk the tightrope, sometimes playing one role and then the other. I have never experienced difficulties in living this convergence of theology and politics. The theological juices feed a life in the service of others. We have given a voice back to those who had none. I am fighting for them to keep that. Politics leads me to serve, to protect, and to transform the promise of dignity into living dignity on the daily level. (Aristide, 1994: 148)

Hence, theology and politics are inseparable in Aristide's conception of the relationship between theology and ethics, theology and anthropology, God and society. By the phrase, "Jesus is the God of suffering"—as noted above—Aristide seeks to communicate the concept of "a preferential option of the poor" in the tradition of Liberation Theology. This option of the poor, as

5

he states elsewhere, does not "mean an option against the rich…The preferential option for the poor is preferential, not exclusive" (Aristide, 2008: xxiii). It is in this sense he articulates that

> Liberation theology finds in the Bible a flat rejection of the exclusion of the poor. Jesus answered John the Baptist, "Go and tell John that the good news is preached to the poor" (Matt. 11:5). Henceforth all were compelled to demonstrate a commitment to implementing God's directive: "You will love your neighbor the way you love yourself" (Lev. 19:18). From this it follows that, if you do not want to be a slave, you must not enslave your neighbor. These words from the gospel contains the seeds for the emergence of a new society, in which human relationship are rooted in respect, equality and dignity—a way forward from slavery to freedom, from social exclusion to inclusion. (Aristide, 2008: xxiii).

Aristide's theological ethics is a theology of radical relationality and generous inclusion because it is grounded exclusively in the God of Life and God the Liberator who does not reject anyone, but invites all to himself. Aristide maintains that liberation theology as a discourse about God and his relationship with the outcast and disheartened in our communities is a liberative discourse: "We know that the innocents are still perishing in the flame of violence, but we do not fall into the sea of despair because God continually frees us with the miracle of life" (Aristide, 1993:68-9). Such theology fosters hope and faith in the midst of poverty, human oppression, life disappointment, and tragic faith. This is where exactly Aristide brings theology and social activism together. As he notes elsewhere, "I call liberation theology the Christian impulse that does not separate belief from action, that exasperates conservatives, and annoys so many people on the left who dream of realizing the happiness of others…without the others" (Aristide, 1994:103).

Aristide is a theologian of revolutionary and transformative hope. He believes the role of theologians in culture is to inspire hope to the hopeless and nurture their faith in God. He writes, "For hope is always there, even in the darkest times, even in the most obscure places, as long as you and I have the energy and the commitment to search for it, and then to bring it forward, to

6

share it" (Aristide, 1990:48). For him, we need to understand hope in its positive aspect; as a tool of survival, it sustains life and looks forward to the future: "Hope is there no matter how heavily the boots of the Army tread upon it, in their effort to stamp it out. Hope is there like a smoldering fire that cannot be extinguished…That is our work, to fan the fire of hope and turn it into a tool for the people" (Aristide, 1990:65). In a similar vein, he also insists on the role of the theologian to be with the people and to work among them. He observes, "We are working among a people who believe deeply in God. So we create an approach that does not reject their faith. Our work is rotted in this faith and the faith illuminates the experience. We are building a community of faith. And because of this we can go quickly" (Aristide, 1990:65). He presents himself as "the theologian of the people," the theologian who accompanies the oppressed, and the one who is in solidarity with the poor:

> We speak the words that the spirit of the poor breathes into us. That is our humble role, a simple role, one that requires no learning, no pride, no soutane, no miter. It requires faith only, and of faith we have plenty. It requires a willing to serve the people, and no machete, no fusillade of rocks, no bullets or riffles or Uzis, no tear gas or bombs, will ever dissuade us from that willingness, from the faith. We are unshakable. Like the poor, we will always be with you. Kill one among us, and we rise us again a thousand strong. (Aristide, 1990:46)

1.5. RESEARCH GOALS

It is my hope that this research will accomplish the following objectives. First, it will sharpen our understanding of the theological sensibility and moral vision of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Second, the project will inevitably shed some light on the interplays and connective forces of faith, anthropology, and hope in Aristide's theological and political writings. Third, it will illuminate on the importance of theology as a public discourse to facilitate constructive conversations among people of different social and economic status, ethnic and racial, and educational backgrounds—without ignoring the poor, the oppressed, and the underrepresented

individuals and families. Fourthly, this intellectual research will underscore the importance of public theology as a catalyst for cultural transformation and renewal, and as a symbolic beacon to foster optimistic future possibilities toward the common good of all individuals. Fifthly, because the subject of our inquiry is a Haitian-born-Caribbean thinker, the project will establish the significant intellectual contributions of Haiti and the Caribbean in the advancement of (international) conversations on human rights, equality, justice, imperialism, neocolonialism, and democracy in contemporary (public) discourses and the modern history of ideas in the West and intercontinentally. Sixthly, it is the aim of this study to establish intellectual, ideological, and theological convergences, confluences, and connections in the writings of Caribbean, African, and Black Atlantic thinkers and theologians. Finally, this study will contribute to a more exact appreciation of Aristide's place on the spectrum of Developing World Theologians of Liberation and his manifold contributions to the disciplines of Caribbean studies, critical race studies, theology, anthropology, ethics, history, and postcolonial and cultural studies.

1.6. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

If this project is successfully executed, it would have a substantial influence on various interdisciplinary studies such as Christian ethics, political theology, liberation and constructive theologies, cultural studies, ethnic studies, Caribbean studies, and other cognate areas. Therefore, the dissertation will provide a clearer understanding on the development of Aristide's theological thought and his engagements with Christian ethics and the political systems. What does Aristide think about God, Jesus, and God's relationship to the oppressed people of the world and the systems and structures that oppress them? What does he say about the intersections of faith and human freedom? This dissertation will seek to shed some light on these critical issues.

1.7.METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach that will be used is interdisciplinary and intersectional, with a liberative intent. Particular attention will be given to the intersections of historical literary criticism, postcolonial theory and criticism and postcolonial theology as tools of analysis to engage the subject of inquiry meaningfully and to assess critically the usefulness and validity of each embraced model and paradigm in order to achieve freedom, cultivate self-agency, and champion human dignity of the oppressed, the poor, and those living on the margins of modernity. This project also gives consideration to the Caribbean context in which Caribbean theology of emancipation and hope is emerged. There exists convergences and confluences, as well as ideological parallels and connections between Aristide's political theology and Caribbean theology of freedom and hope. Aristide's anti-imperialist approach to theology, for example, is similar to the works of Anglo and Franco-phone Caribbean scholars.

The historical literary criticism methodology will involve two simultaneous levels of reading: (1) the textual analysis of selected theological texts, sermons, social essays, and historical documents within the established literary conventions, and (2) the hermeneutical process of practicing close reading of texts and their authors within their historical milieu. This particular approach emphasizes the importance of reading intertextually and historically in light of the socio-cultural contexts of production. Within this framework, we consider the historical period of the written document while being conscious that the act of reading texts is also the act of engaging the past. The real center of inquiry is concurrently text and context. The text itself creatively embodies various intersections of discourses of history and is also written testimony, the living voice of claims and ideologies of the historical past.

Fernando Segovia (2000: 119) argues that all reconstructions of history are dependent upon reading strategies and theoretical models, suggesting that all such strategies and models and the resultant recreations and reconstructions as construct on the part of real readers. Hence, hermeneutical interpretation demands reconstruction and recreation of the text and the historical past. The "postcolonial optic" paradigm, as Segovia framed it, "concerns a view of real or flesh-and-blood readers as variously positioned and engaged within their respective social locations, with a further view of all such contextualizations and perspectives as constructs on the pare of real readers as well" (2000:119).

Furthermore, Segovia outlines four ideas embedded in the postcolonial optic:

First, "The task of interpretation is viewed in terms of the application of different reading strategies and theoretical models—whether produced or borrowed—by different real readers in different ways, at different times, and with different results (different readings and interpretations) in the light of their different and highly complex situations and perspectives. Second, a critical analysis of real readers and their readings (their representations of themselves as well as their representations of the ancient texts and the ancient world) becomes as important and necessary as a critical analysis of the ancient texts themselves (the remains of the ancient world). Third, all recreations of meaning and all reconstructions of history are in the end regarded as representations of the past—re-creations and reconstructions—on the part of readers who are themselves situated and interested to the core. Finally, given the paradigm's overriding focus on contextualization and perspective, social location and agenda, and thus on the political character of all compositions and texts, all readings and interpretations, all readers and interpreters, its mode of discourse may be described as profoundly ideological" (Segovia, 2000:119-20).

The postcolonial optic forces the writer, reader and the text itself to engage critically in the process of "emancipation" and "decolonization," considering the social structures that jettison cultures and dehumanize people. By *postcolonial*, we mean

ideological reflection on the discourse and practice of imperialism and colonialism from the vantage point of a situation where imperialism and colonialism have come—by and large, though by no means altogether so—to a formal end, but remains very much at work, in practice, as neoimperialism and neocolonialism. Thus, the postcolonial optic is a field of vision forged in the wake of imperialism and colonialism but still very much conscious of their continuing, even if transformed, power. (Segovia, 2000:126).

Sugirtharajah remarks that "Colonialism is not simply a system of economic and military control, but a systematic cultural penetration and domination. Most damaging is not the historical, political, and economic domination, but the psychological, intellectual, and cultural colonization" (1998:126). V. Y. Mudimble complements that colonialism or colonization means to "organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs… [it also promotes] the domination of space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into Western perspective" (1988:1-4). It is in this framework that Aristide (2011) in his new book *Haiti-Haitii? Philosophical Reflections for Mental Decolonization* and his doctoral dissertation (2006)— *UMOYA WAMAGAMA (THE SPIRIT OF THE WORD)*— completed at the University of South Africa, made a clarion call for the mental and ideological decolonization of the Haitian psyche, as well as for the de-Westernization of Haitian culture and worldview. The history of the Haitian and Caribbean people have been marked by colonial domination and subjugation, imperial hegemony, and alienation and humiliation.

Aristide's theology can be characterized as Caribbean, postcolonial, liberative, and indigenous. He has called to link Haitian cultural practices and traditions to their African roots, making his work in close conversation with African theology that affirms African cultural identity and the relevance of indigenous way of life for doing contextual African theology and creative postcolonial practice, within the African worldview and context. Drawing on indigenous culture's focus on solidarity and reciprocity, Aristide called for an ethic of solidarity that can inspire popular economics and social development and transformation. In his theo-political discourse, he champions the causes of the poor and the idea that the poor and oppressed of the world should achieve a life of emancipation and shalom. He is also aware of the imperial and neocolonial

exploitation of the the Caribbean region, and the common history of suffering and slavery the people of Haiti and the Caribbean share.

> Sisters and brothers of Jamaica, Barbardos, Trinidad, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique: our past struggle colonialism has led us inevitably toward the establishement of deepr ties in the course of our long march toward the democratic table. A new social contract at the Caribbean, Latin American and international level is clearly necessary for us to join together one day, all of us, around the democratic table. (Aristide, 1993: 202)

One one hand, Aristide's clarion call for regional solidarity against future unwarranted political and economic interventions of American and European forces in the Caribbean demonstrates his collaborate spirit to create a new alternative future for the people in the Caribbean. On the other hand, he articulates the necessity to foster new forms of international solidarity and alliance in the process to resist the lure of American and Western economic capitalism and neoliberalism. As Noel Erskine reiterates:

> The Caribbean falls within the ambit of Third World countries and as such shares a common history with these countries—a common history in which the European search for expansion of empire and religious freedom brought Third World countries under political, economic, cultural, and religious domination by European people. The European zeal to "Christianize" and "civilize" the world often provided a rationale for Third World Oppression. (Erskine, 1981:2)

Aristide's democratic vision, framed within the discourse of political theology, is a direct repudiation of absolutism, totalitarianism, and imperialism. It is within these wide-ranging and transnational contexts one must also investigate the development of Aristide's political theology.

Theology is always born out of a particular social reality and cultural context. Aristide's theological discourse and framework is primarily located within the *Sitz im Leben* of his native land. Aristide's theology must also be discussed in relation to wider Caribbean theological discourse. Yet, his politico-theological articulation must be seen within the tradition of Liberation Theologies and freedom movements, as well as the struggles of oppressed nations, peoples, and

"minority races" and "ethnic groups" to resist Western epistemic and cultural hegemony, colonial imperialism, White supremacy, and the politics of globalization and theory of economic dependence. In an important passage, Argentinian philosopher of Enrique Dussel (2013) in his groundbreaking and interdisciplinary work *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* describes in specific term how Western domination and Eurocentrism works closely:

> In the context of modernity, the European variant of ethnocentrism was the first 'global' ethnocentrism (Eurocentrism has been the only global ethnocentrism thus far known in history: with it, universality and European identity became fused into one; philosophy must be liberated from this reductionist fallacy). Under such circumstances, when the philosopher belongs to a hegemonic system (be it Greek, Byzantine, Islamic, or medieval Christian, and particularly in the modern period), his or her world or ethical system has the claim of presenting itself as if it were equivalent to or identical with the epitome of the human 'world'; while the world of the Others is that of barbarity, marginality, and nonbeing. (2013:41)

On the other hand, Western civilization has made remarkable contributions to the histories of cultures and civilizations of the modern world. Mignolo cautions that "But, it by no means should be taken as the point of arrival of human existence on the planet…The fact that Western civilization was the most recent civilization in human history doesn't mean that it was the best, that the rest of the world should follow suit" (2011: xiv). Hence, this project will consider some of these moments in modern history and history of ideas in the West, as we engage critically Aristide's postcolonial options and decolonial convictions.

We are particularly interested in the postcolonial optic approach—being in active conversation with Caribbean theology, liberation theology, political theology, and the field of cultural studies—because these methodologies are very promising, as they not only affirm the Haitian culture and history, but also engage the Haitian context as well as the global context in which Aristide theologizes and converses with his interlocutors and the oppressed. Although Aristide's theology, which has its root in both Caribbean and Latin American Theologies, was

framed in the context of a Marxist social theory of a class struggle narrative and Haiti's political totalitarianism, "was created out of the political struggle to close the gap between the rich and the poor on that continent" (Cone,1981:x). Aristide's theology is also grounded in the Caribbean experience with American and European colonial forces and imperial powers. It is a theology that vindicates the political sovereignty of the Caribbean societies, crusades for the economic independences of the Caribbean, and strives for the cultural integrity of the Caribbean people.

Both liberation and postcolonial theology focus on revolution, the vitality of indigenous culture and tradition, the understanding of the poor as history's driving force, the emphasis on capturing state power—in order to open space for the implementation of new sociopolitical, economic and cultural mediations, as well as a new revolutionary humanism (Petrella, .2008:5). Similarly, Caribbean theology focuses on the project of emancipation and anti-imperialism in the Caribbean Region. Aristide's theological corpus is a rich blend of Caribbean theology, liberation theology, and postcolonial theological imagination, and what Liberationist Theologian Ivan Petrella phrases "a combination of particularity and global vision" (2008:2). For example, in *Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization*, Aristide (2008) cultivated a theo-political sensibility from a global perspective, and from the standpoint of the poor and the victims of Western slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism, slavery, imperialism, economic dependence, labor exploitation, and globalizatio*n*.

By bringing liberation theology, Caribbean theology, and postcolonialism in close conversation in our examination of the subject matter, our aim is to employ smart strategies, intellectual imagination and creativity , and to find constructive means to practice "liberation" and "decolonization" in the most deliberate way in the postcolonial moment. On one hand, Aristide's theological discourse condemns the crimes of colonialism and neocolonialism, challenges the

oppressive ways and tricks of Western imperial domination and control, and the politics of globalization; on the other hand, Aristide's (contextualized and constructive) theology seeks to valorize the Afro-Haitian cultural traditions and religious practices and spirituality. This particular position is especially transparent in his doctoral dissertation (2006) and his recent book (2011) mentioned above. It could be said that Aristide, the theologian of the Haitian poor, works within both traditions simultaneously: Liberation Theology and Postcolonial Theology. We must remember, however, the *postcolonial subjects* are "people whose perceptions of each other and of economic, political, and cultural relationships cannot be separated from the global impact and constructions of Western/Modern imperialism, which still remain potent in forms of neocolonialism, military arrogance, and globalization" (Dube, 2000:16).

The postcolonial model will be found useful to readers, as it welcomes direct and indirect engagement and dialogue with Caribbean theology, political theology, constructive theology, Christian ethics, and cultural studies, as they pertain to Aristide's theological worldview and ethical demands. The promise of the postcolonial method and decolonial paradigm is that they "counteract the oppressive dualisms and hierarchies of imperialism" (Dube, 2000:105). In other words, the decolonizing method seeks to cultivate new spaces of liberation and new zone of agency. The underlying idea of the postcolonial optic is the engagement of the human condition that has been affected by violence and human-orchestrated oppression and dehumanization. Hence, both liberation theology and postcolonial theology as models and theoretical tools of analysis will be implemented strategically in order to be able to restore the *imago dei*, foster emancipative future possibilities, and orchestrate post-western futures. The ultimate goal is to fashion a new revolutionary humanism, to paraphrase Frantz Fanon (1963), and correspondingly, to create a decolonized condition so the human person can flourish and live in complete shalom.

In bringing liberation theology, political theology, postcoloniality, and decolonization in close conversation, this project emphasizes human hope and eschatological wholeness in the present order as the ultimate objective of an ethics of liberation and cosmopolitan communism. We contend that it is a false dream to conceive hope as simply an historical change in the pattern of life; rather, we promote a revolutionary hope and comprehensive liberation that will inevitably lead to "a radical renewal of the present system with a view to an historical liberation movement as a true sign of eschatological advance" (Dussell, 2003:33). As Walter Mignolo puts it brilliantly, "there is a horizon to explore beyond capitalism and communism: decolonization. Decolonization is the horizon of thinking and being that originated as response to the capitalist and communist imperial designs" (2010: xiii). The decolonial option is not only an attempt to dispel the myth of universality grounded on theo-and-ego-politics of knowledge; it also seeks to decenter it from its modern/colonial configurations, which is limited to its regional scope (Mignolo, 2011: xvi).

The postcolonial method also challenges Western hermeneutics and construction of meaning, rooted in the colonial logic and the imperial culture and hegemony of Western powers and societies. Theology in North American and Western countries has prioritized the white middle class and its experience; it is constructed to affirm its values and cultures, while ignoring the poor, the oppressed, ethnic minority groups, and the economically-disadvantaged. Western theology is also a racialized discourse that champions white version of global history and the achievement of whiteness in modernity. Poscolonialism seeks to challenge these sets of false presuppositions. The postcolonial model requires a new "hermeneutic circle" (to borrow a phrase from Juan Segundo, 1982) and calls for cultural independence, political sovereignty, and economic freedom. Postcolonialism as a hermeneutical tool looks deeply into the indigenous cultures as source for inspiration, creativity, and imagination. It also assists us in the project of creating new

16

hermeneutical models of liberation, freedom, and decolonization that valorize our humanity and champion the cause of our own existence.

The idea of "hermeneutic circle" as methodology of liberation considers the biblical narrative, the lived experience and reality of the oppressed and the poor, and the relationship between theology, social praxis and change. Segundo stresses the importance of this methodology by crafting this definition:

> It is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal. "Hermeneutics" means 'having to do with interpretation.' And the circular nature of this interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly, and then go back and reinterpret the word of God again, and so on. (1982:2)

Segundo states that two preconditions must be met if the hermeneutic circle is going occur in theology:

> The first precondition is that the questions rising out of the present be rich enough, general enough, and basic enough to force us to change our customary conceptions of life, death, knowledge, society, politics, and the world in general. Only a change of this sort, or at the very least a pervasive suspicion about our ideas and value judgments concerning things, will enable us to reach the theological level and force theology to come back down to reality and ask itself new and decisive questions. (1982:8-9)

The first precondition sets the context relationally if we are to understand the second one. As he remarks, "If theology somehow assumes that it can respond to the new questions without changing its customary interpretation of the Scriptures that immediately terminates the hermeneutic circle. Moreover, if our interpretation of Scripture does not change along with the problems, then the latter will go unanswered; or worse, they will receive old, conservative, unserviceable answers" (Segundo, 1982:9). With a word of caution, he articulates the following warning:

It is most important to realize that without a hermeneutic circle, in other words, in those instances where the two aforementioned preconditioned are not accepted, theology is always a conservative way of thinking and acting. It is so much because of its content but because in such a case it lacks any here-and-now criteria for judging our real situations. It thus becomes a pretext for approving the existing situation or for disapproving of it because it does dovetail with guidelines and canons that are even more ancient and outdated. (1982:9)

Finally, what are some of the possible benefits or advantages in merging these different theoretical methods, approaches, systems, and schools of thought, as we attempt to construct a meaningful project and liberative discourse on Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his political theology? We would like to bring to the reader's attention some important key insights outlined in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (2004) to validate our judgment:

(1) We have found insight for this practice within the discourses of postcolonialism, and particularly of postcolonial theory. Indeed, this theory helps us to figure out not just what to do-but who we are. It helps us, as liberation theology, has, to identity our social location in terms of power relations: Who is oppressor, who is oppressed? But it is especially highlights the multiple and often contradictory elements of who 'we' are. Our colors are cultures, our sexualities and nationalities, crisscross each of our identities, forming complex mazes of power…Postcolonial theory offers guiding insight into the mazes: zones of mixture and confusion, threat and discovery. (Keller, Nausner, & Rivera, 2004: 3)

(2) Postcoloniality involves the once-colonized "Others" insisting on taking their place as historical subjects...Postcoloniality is a critical enterprise aimed at unmasking the link between ideas and power which lies behind Western texts, theories, and learning. Postcolonial discourse is not about the territorial ejection of imperial powers or about learning, Caliban-like, the art of cursing the evils of empire. Rather, it is an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects. (Surgirtharajah, 1998: 17).

(3) Postcolonialism is concerned with the question of cultural and discursive domination. It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, and imperial attitudes and to their continual reincarnations in such wide fields as politics, economics, history, and theological and biblical studies. Resistance is not simply a reaction to colonial practices, but an alternative way of perceiving and restricting society. (Surgirtharajah, 1998: 17).

In the same line of thought, Caribbean theology is a postcolonial and deconolonial discourse in which Caribbean theological thinkers and scholars are chiefly concerned with a new theological paradigm grounded in the Caribbean landscape toward the radical transformation and liberation of Caribbean societies and the betterment of the Caribbean peple. What is then Caribbean Theology in which to situate geographically and regionally the theology of Jean-Bertrand Aristide? At this juncture, it will be important to explore what constitutes precisely Caribbean theology from the writings of selected Caribbean theologians and thinkers.

First of all, there is not a unified Caribbean theology as the Caribbean landscape is religiously, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse. The Caribbean society is not homogeneous, so its theology. Although the Caribbean people share a common history of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, poverty, and alienation, there are sharp distinctions between the corresponding societies. For example, in Haiti, Cuba, Martinique, and Dominican Republic, Roman Catholicism is a major religious tradition; whereas, in Jamaica and Antigua, Protestant Christianity plays an important place in the everyday experience of the people. Vodou is practiced in Haiti; Obeah in Jamaica; Santeria in Cuba; the Orisha religion in Trinidad. Nonetheless, the common thread of all of these Afro-Caribbean societies and Afro-Caribbean religious traditions is the African element and impact. Therefore, we should speak of Caribbean theologies, not Caribbean theology as it is a monolithic or homogeneous narrative. Caribbean theology should give thoughtful attention to the way in which Caribbean peoples organize their lives and construct their spiritual worldview; equally, Caribbean theology should not be an antagonist to Afro-Caribbean cultures, but should work to maintain its integrity (Davis, 1977: xviii).

Martinican Literary theorist and philosopher Edouard Glissant (1989, 2000,) construes the Caribbean life as a poetics of relations. As he (2000:89) has observed, "We are not prompted solely

by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well—the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations." Dominican scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant (2006) contends that the people of the Caribbean have suffered a long history of exclusion from Western historiography and from the human metanarratives the winners of history (the West) produced. Torres-Saillant (2006:17) refers to the Caribbean as the "historical center of colonialism" because its plantation economic system was the most prosperous and successful industry in Western society—from the middle of the seventeenth through the end of the eighteenth century. He proceeds to describe both the historical quandary of Caribbean societies and the contemporary plight of the people in the Region:

> Split into several distinct colonial domains—with the same territory at times changing colonial hands more than once—the region has housed all the races, religions, cultures, and desires of the globe. The colonial transaction broke this part of the world into imperial blocs and caused the various societies there to look in the direction of different metropolises abroad. Linguistically and politically the Caribbean comes from a history of fragmentation. Most societies in the region today exist as independent nations, but some territories remain colonially attached to foreign policies. (2006:19)

Haitian-born novelist Myriam Chancy (1997:5-7) states that the human condition in the Caribbean, particularly that of Haitian women, implies an awareness of the cultural modes of production in which the Caribbean people understand themselves within the cultural and epistemological framework that define their identity, societal function, and future destiny in the Caribbean. Chancy suggests a feminized reading of Caribbean history as a valid approach to acquire better understanding of the people; it gives the impetus to or accentuates the voice of Caribbean women who have contributed enormously to Caribbean societies and changed Caribbean intellectual landscape. Chancy (Ibid: 5) proceeds to elaborate that the life and self-definition of women in the Caribbean, women of color in the United States, as well as women in the Developing World "reveal that the creation of identity in the face of imperialist and colonial

oppression begins with the transmutation of the personal into the creative, into modes of self-empowerment that in and of themselves create a theory of self-definition." She insists that the Caribbean experience is pinched profoundly by a sets of historical memory and cross-cultural connections; in the case of Haitian women, she notes, "it is a complex history of sexist oppression at the hands of white and black, at the hands of French, Haitian, and American men whose identities cross racial lines" (Chancy, 1997:19). From this angle, paradoxically, Caribbean memory also "serves as the paradigm survival transhistorically; it is not a claim to an evasion of history, but rather a challenge to remember that cultures are shaped by what survives from one generation to the next" (Ibidi:11). Chancy maintains that the history and experience of Caribbean Women can provide us with a penetrating insight into Caribbean societies and of the intersections of history, memory, sexuality, and gender.

To complement Chancy, Haitian-born novelist and short story writer Edwidge Danticat (2010) has characterized Haitian history as a narrative that is obsessed with memory (of the past). In the Haitian psyche, historical memory never goes away; it functions as an invisible scar on the Haitian soul. Memory as a marker of the human experience in Haiti bears both tragic remembrances and historical events that stimulate Haitian resistance and Haitian proud in time of despair, exile, and alienation. According to Danticat,

> We have, it seems, a collective agreement to remember our triumphs and gloss over our failures. Thus, we speak to remember our triumphs and gloss over our failures. Thus, we speak of the Haitian revolution as though it happened just yesterday but we rarely speak of the slavery that prompted it. Our paintings show glorious Edenlike African jungles but never the Middle Passage. (2010:64)

In addition, Danticat explains further the uneasiness of the Haitian people to confront their historical past—a past that was shattered by slavery, colonialism, forced labor, American military occupation, dictatorship, etc.; as a result, she pronounces that "our shattered collective psyche from

a long history of setbacks and disillusionment" (Ibid:64). As other people in the Caribbean, Haitians find different mechanisms to create alternative meanings and cope with their painful history. As she puts forth, "we cultivate communal and historical amnesia, continually repeating cycles that we never see coming until we are reliving similar horrors" (Ibid). Haitian society like other societies in the Caribbean is fragmented, disorientated, and in the words of the Cuban novelist Antonio Benitez-Rojo (1996:2-3), the Caribbean space is

> the union of the diverse…and that the Antilles are an island bridge connecting, in 'another way,' North and South America…Since within the sociocultural fluidity that the Caribbean archipelago presents, within its historiographic turbulence and its ethnological and linguistic clamor, within its generalized turbulence and its ethnological and linguistic clamor, within its generalized instability of vertigo and hurricane, one can sense the features of nan island that "repeats itself, unfolding and bifurcating until reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected designs.

> In addition, Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé in an interview conducted in December

2, 1992, affirms both

> the diversity of the islands as well as their common problems…We saw the differences between the various linguistic zones we've mentioned. We reached the conclusion that within their diversity, unity existed among the Caribbean islands, the affirmation of a personality that was neither African, nor American, nor European…This personality was based on a common history and rather similar social and political evolution, and evolution that was more social than political. (Pfaff, 1996:109)

Hence, Caribbean theology must integrate the memorial experience of the Caribbean people and highlight the agency of Caribbean women, as the Caribbean experience is particularized through a range of relations and identity politics: gender, class status, memory, racial difference, polarized religious beliefs, etc. Secondly, there is a great divorce between Anglophone Caribbean, Francophone Caribbean, and Hispanophone Caribbean, as the matter pertains to theological articulations and theological reflections on the Caribbean life. The theological

22

narrative of each Caribbean Region is contextualized and nationalized. Interestingly, theologians and biblical scholars from Anglophone Caribbean—especially from the country of Jamaica—have gained prominence in this particular aare of study and contributed enormously to a theological identity of the Caribbean world that is both regional and trans-regional, particular and universal. Because of linguistic difference (i.e. Creole, Spanish, French, English, Dutch, and Portuguese) and ideological conflict between Caribbean thinkers, theologians from the Caribbean shores do not interact with each other's work and often overlook the contributions of their West Indian/Caribbean interlocutors. Consequently, the promise of theological ecumenism in the Caribbean which Edmund Davis (1977), Idris Hamid (1979), Noel Leo Erskine (1981), Kortright Davis (1990), Howard Gregory (1995), Fritz Fontus (2001), Jean Fils-Aime (2007), Jules Casseus (2013), and many others championed never came to fruition in Caribbean theological program.

Hamid (1979) was probably correct to refer to "Caribbean perspectives in theology" rather than "Caribbean theology;" he articulated a fourfold vision of Caribbean theological tradition (s)

(1) The ways in which Caribbean people have experienced God over the years should be analyzed, structured, and clarified, so that "the power of intellect [will] make that experience persuasive to the rest of the community, and keep it alive. (2) The deeply rooted understanding of freedom and dignity in Caribbean people must be fully expressed. (3) The experience of the consolation of God among Caribbean people, because of their suffering and pain, also must be expressed. (4) The cumulative effect of these experiences on our people should be carefully and clearly analyzed and expressed. (Qtd in Davis, 1990:95)

Haitian Theologian Jules Casseus (2013) enunciates a Caribbean perspective of theology from the Haitian experience in which he makes a clarion call to Haitian theologians and thinkers to reimagine a contextual theology that embodies the Haitian way of life. In order to develop an authentic theology that communicates Haitian values, Haitian Christians must reinterpret the Biblical text creatively and contextually "without being the hostage of a North American or

European Orthodoxy" (2013:25. He summons Haitian churches and ecclesiastical leaders to reassess the imported Christianity which they received uncritically from Western missionaries, as well as to reconsider the relevance of "foreign hermeneutics and exegesis" which demonizes Haitian cultural practices, philosophy of life, and defies Haitian Christian experience. Toward a contextual Haitian theology, according to Casseus, the content of an acceptable Haitian theological discourse will incorporate the following elements:

> The gospel we are preaching in Haiti should be clothed with Haitian values. Our understanding of God, our interpretation of his word, our ecclesiology, and our practical Christian lives should reveal the positive aspects of Haitian culture…The Haitian theology will embrace all the provinces of the Haitian Christian life. It will help us take off our western masks so that we can present ourselves in the presence of God-the Great Master (*le Grand Maître*), with our emotions, our feelings as true Haitians and as true Haitians at the same time. This Haitian theology will be contextual, dynamic, liberating, transforming, and truly Haitian. (Casseus, 2013:25-6)

Another Haitian theologian Fritz Fontus has also proposed that Caribbean theology from the Haitian worldview must not replicate the American-European theological hermeneutics. In other words, the experience of the Haitian people with God should not be "a carbon copy of the ones held in American and European churches" (2001:3). He writes convincingly that

> When one remembers the great difference which exists between Western culture and Haitian culture—in spite of some similarities—one can understand the interest the tension between the two has created among missionaries, national pastors and Christian leaders. They realized that the cultural conflict, we have just described, has consequences for the life of the individual Christian, the vitality of the churches, and the existence of the national culture. There is no doubt that such a conflict can disorganize the latter so much that it leads to what a Haitian cultural anthropologist has called a process of *deculturation* (2001:3-4)

Both Cassesus and Fontus imagined a Caribbean theology that continues to interrogate the grammar and logic of colonial theology and simultaneously, they advance a theological project that is postcolonial, decolonial, and pro-Caribbean values and cosmology. On the other hand, both

Casseus and Fontus envisioned a Haitian theology that is contextual, dynamic, pedagogical, and relational, and concurrently, a theological project that could radically transform the economic and political conditions of the Haitian people. In the same line of thought, Noel Leo Erskine (1981), who writes theologically from a Jamaican point of view, proposes a Caribbean theology of freedom and hope that integrates the theological reflection, the postcolonial experience, and the socio-economic aspect of the Caribbean people. He theories a Caribbean theology that gives prominence to the relevance of the Afro-Caribbean community systems and promotes the significance and values of the family in the Caribbean life.

Correspondingly, the Jamaican theologian Edmund Davis (1977:115) asserts that the notion of "Caribbean theology" is a discourse that seeks to vindicate the Caribbean people, and it establishes "the attempt to find points of similarity and of peculiarity between the nature and the experience of 'the Caribbean man' [the Caribbean woman] and that of the European culture from which the expatriate ministry sprang." Davis explores the definitional element of Caribbean theology as "an emotive phrase and because of this it is easy to forget the significant questions hover about its use" (Ibid). He points out three components of Caribbean theology: theological motivation, theological methodology, and its relevance to Caribbean society. The theological motivation of Caribbean theology is an effort to merge or bring in conversation the constituents of Christianity with the "socio-cultural and psychological heritage of the Caribbean" (Ibid). The underlying purpose of Caribbean theology is corrective and vindicative, in view of the colonial history of the Region and the colonial theology that degrades Afro-Caribbean religion and culture. The methodology of Caribbean theology is an alternative to Western Christian theology's focus on the doctrine of God. Accordingly to Davis, Caribbean theological method

is a product of the open predicament? Moreover, a theological audience is also a product of such a predicament. If theologians and their clientele both self-consciously exist in the stream of world history, how can a theology which focuses exclusively or even predominantly on traditional world be considered either fully Caribbean or fully adapted? (Davis, 1977:115)

Consequently, Caribbean theology, as an expression of the world and traditional habits of the Caribbean people, must critically confront the Caribbean predicament in a meaningful and responsible way. The charge of the Caribbean theologian is to interpret the Christian faith from the world of the Caribbean people and concurrently to reflect upon the social and intellectual history and the development of Caribbean societies to the postcolonial moment (Davis, 1977: 116). On one hand, Casseus, Fontus, Erskine, and Davis endeavored to particularize and contextualize the Christian experience of the Caribbean people and summoned Caribbean theologians and religious leaders to be masters in their own households and to speak the language of their people; on the other hand, Emund Davis recommends that Caribbean thinkers need to go beyond the open predicament of the Caribbean. By this notion, he seeks to convey that Caribbean theology

> cannot be limited to a dialogue with the intellectual and social history of the Caribbean alone. To do such a thing would place the theological task in the Caribbean in too narrow a context. The universal as well as the particular must be maintained in the development of theological education. (Davis, 1977:116)

Furthermore, in 1973, the Caribbean Conference of Churches held a historic conference in Jamaica, resulting in the publication of a collection of seminal essays entitled *Troubling of the Waters*, edited by Idris Hamid. According to Erskine's evaluation,

> This is perhaps the most significant theological work to have appeared in the Caribbean in the last decade… The book's main task is to indicate the common search for identity among Caribbean people. *Troubling of the Water* is not a search for roots, but an attempt to indicate areas in which further research is needed in Caribbean history and spirituality. (1973:11-12)

In the paragraph below, Hamid succinctly summarizes the various perspectives of Caribbean theology expressed by the assembled Caribbean theologians and church leaders in that writing:

> The view as expressed that Caribbean theology has to be intuitive and symbolic, and while saw the need for an emerging architectonic framework within which to do our theologizing, it was felt that insight is what is more important. Many thought that we should move along tentatively in our search rather than await some new philosophical framework. (1973:9)

In a complementary note, Antiguan theologian Kortright Davis (1990:88-104) insists on a Caribbean theology that focuses on the emancipation of the Caribbean people. The components of a Caribbean theology of emancipation include theological self-reliance, theological praxis, theological ecumenism, interreligious dialogue with the Afro-Caribbean religions in the Region, and the liberating function of the Caribbean churches as a vanguard of change and human flourishing. For Gregory (1995:80), Caribbean theology must first begin with the human experience (method: theology as a "first act") of the Caribbean people, and then one can formulate a theological discourse (as a "second act" of theology) about the collective world of the individuals in the Region. It is in this manner that the human experience and God's revelation come in proximity in theological dialogue. According to Gregory (1995:81), Caribbean theology should not only signify the articulation of the new; its purpose is to serve, to confirm, to correct, to echo earlier experiences of the Caribbean people, and ultimately to allude to the contemporary life of the Caribbean people. Gregory interprets the role of Caribbean theology as the promotion of constructive and relevant theological education toward the long-term and holistic development of the Caribbean (79-100). He construes theological education in the Caribbean as a vehicle leading to the economic progress, and socio-political transformation of Caribbean societies; equally, he argues that Caribbean theology should redefine ministerial formation "beyond the narrow

'spiritual' categories" (Ibid: xi). For Gregory, "A Caribbean theology must involve emancipation from the impact of [these] oppressive forces in the life and experience of Caribbean peoples" (Ibid: xvii). Finally, he avers that Caribbean theology must be able to respond to the challenges of globalization in the Caribbean societies and should appropriate its advantages to benefit and liberate the Caribbean people.

Similarly and finally, like Caribbean theology, a liberation theological hermeneutics seeks to pursue a "'tri-focal critique (1) of the oppressive powers of state, economy, and culture; (2) of how the church has absorbed, justified, and benefited from these powers; and (3) also of the ways the people, the poor, the oppressed (often but do not always considered as Christians) have themselves internalized oppressive patterns, requiring hence a process of conscientization, a 'pedagogy of the oppressed'" (Keller, Nausner, & Rivera, 2004: 3; Freire, 1970). Our interest is ultimately to promote an ethics of life, and for life. In the same manner like Dussel (1988, 2003, 2008, 2013) and other theorists of liberation (i.e. Fanon, Cabral, Senghor, Cesaire, Du Bois), Aristide (1990, 1992, 1994, 2000, 2006, 2011), does not divorce theology, politics, ethics from anthropology and ethics of communal reciprocity and coexistence.

> The abolition of the political is the negation of human life, not just as naked existence but as collective, communitarian, dialogical, communicative freedom. Without others, without the other, there is neither ethics nor politics. Without others, without the other, there is no politics as the horizon of the possible—the possibility of continued existence. It is this continued existence as coexistence, as surviving and flourishing with others, that is the source of the political. (Dussel 2008).

Finally, theological anthropology as imagined in the postcolonial theological framework "imagines subjectivities that resist the homogenizing and divisive tendencies of racial and ethnic labels, normative appearances, or religious and national tendencies (Keller, Nausner, & Rivera, 2004:19). This point is very important in Aristide's theological anthropology. Comparatively, "Theology can rethink its understanding of the *imago dei* with the help of theories of the split

subject-as the embodiment and internalization of colonizing ideals, but also as the site of *spirited* resistance" (Keller, Nausner, & Rivera, 2004:17). It is good to point out at this juncture that

> the engagement of postcolonial theory by theology is incoherent outside of the effects of liberation theology. The liberation theologies of the Americas have been the ones to thematize 'liberation' in the biblical tradition, to lift the tradition of exodus and its prophetic replays into Christian prominence. Indeed, it is liberation theology that has made us conscious that the church is political by default if it is not political on purpose—and has fostered solidarity among groups as diverse as base Christian communities all through Latin America, black churches in the U.S., Minjung movements of Korea, and throughout North American and European Christianity. (Keller, Nausner, & Rivera, 2004: 17)

1.8. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The scope of our research is to explore the politico-theological ideas and moral (Theo-ethical) vision of Aristide. Our examination is also limited by selected contours and aspects of Aristide's theology (in his theological corpus)—that is his theological anthropology, theological ethics, and political theology— which current studies have deliberately ignored. This research considers the written political and theological texts of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Where political texts are used to advance a theological agenda or goal or vice versa, we will examine these connected documents. We will give preference to written documents that articulate a politico-theological discourse. While some references will be made to selected political speeches and sermons, the project does not focus on his sermons.

Consequently, the thesis consists of seven chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and two appendices. Chapter one offers a compelling argument for researching this vital project, and justifies the thrust of the argument articulated in the pages of this dissertation. Chapter two establishes the biblical and theological foundations, and the intellectual premises and reasonings for Aristide's theology of relationality and theology of the poor, which Chapter three executes in

great detail. In other words, in the second chapter, we are concerned about Aristide's spheres of influence, which are pivotal for the development of his theological corpus and intellectual life as a public intellectual, cultural critic, and political theologian. The latter chapter considers how a politico-theology of relationality, grounded in the grammar of justice as fairness and democratic participation, will serve and benefit the poor, the oppressed, and the underrepresented individuals and families. It compels the reader to embrace an ethics of justice and solidarity in order to relate to and empower those living in dire poverty and on the margins of society. Because in Chapter three, Aristide contends that slavery, globalization, economic imperialism, and other forms of human oppressions and systems have created existential poverty in the world, Chapter four explores other forms of human subjectivity and repressions that have desecrated particularly black lives and dehumanized black humanity.

Consequently, we begin the chapter by studying the interplays between academic study of anthropology, race, culture, and theology by focusing on the theological writings of six Black diasporic thinkers and theologians: James H. Cone, Anthony B. Pinn, Idris Hamid, Noel Leo Erskine, Kortright Davis, and Emily Townes. The ultimate goal here is twofold: (1) to excavate how these theologians have expressed their own individual discourse about black theological anthropology and black theological ethics, and (2) to demonstrate possible theological, intellectual, and ideological parallelisms, connections, and ties between their writings and those of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. It is in this framework we can declare that Chapter four offers the diagnosis to the predicament of blackness in modernity, and Chapter five ventures the possibility of reconstructing a rigorous and constructive black humanity and dignity by bringing together both Black diasporic and African theologians and thinkers in conversation on these vital matters.

Toward this goal, we first study the South African humanism of Ubuntu and secondly, contemplate upon the African concept of the personhood and its relations to the community and the individual. This method is very useful for our analysis, as it could assist us to correlate Aristide's theological ethics and theological anthropology with those of his black and African interlocutors, as well as to establish intellectual rapport with the theoretical concept of Ubuntu, which he himself favorably writes about in Chapter six. Aristide's deployment of Ubuntu as a humanism of love and human interdependence implicates the possible development of a theological anthropology as a theology of love and relationality to cure the black soul that has been devastated by the demons and damaged by the evils of modernity. Chapter seven examines the use of defensive violence in Aristide's theology and political program in the struggle for democracy in Haiti. The final chapter of the dissertation recapitulates the major claims of this project and offers suggestions for future scholarship.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ARISTIDE'S POLITICAL THEOLOGY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

"The poor" not only plays a major role in modern Biblical exegesis and Theological reflection but also an important linguistic category in Liberation Theology. The phrase is also a central motif in Aristide's intellectual discourse and theological corpus. In the tradition of Liberation theology, Aristide accentuates that God is committed to the liberation and freedom of the poor and the oppressed, and therefore the community of faith is required to "remember the poor." God seeks the integral liberation of the poor, the exploited, and the marginalized.

"The poor" is prominently feature in Aristide's political philosophy, his idea of democratic equity and social justice, within the context of the Haitian poor majority whom he has called "the people of God." For example, in two important works, *Théologie et politique* (1992), and *Nevrose vetero-testamentaire* (1994), Aristide articulates what might be called "theological nationalism" and "theological ethnocentrism," two concepts that need to be explored in further chapters of the dissertation. Aristide re-appropriates theologically and politically the Exodus event in the content of the Haitian experience of the poor, the marginalized, and the masses. In his rereading of the Exodus narrative (Ex. 3:1-22), Yahweh is no longer the God of the Israel, but the God of the Haitian poor majority who guides and orients the general masses to future possibilities and an optimistic life absent from oppression, poverty, and political totalitarianism. God understands the reality of the Haitian poor, his people, and therefore is fully committed to their absolute freedom and emancipation.

To understand these themes in Aristide's political theology and theological rereading of the biblical narrative of liberation, in the second part of the chapter, we shall explore the Judeo-Christian tradition and imperative to "remember the poor." Focus is given particularly to the literature of the Old and New Testament, including selected texts in Second Temple Judaism. This chapter also sets the context for Chapter two, in which we will examine in greater detail the concept of the poor in Aristide's theology of relationality. For the reader who is not familiar with the name Jean-Bertrand Aristide—our subject of inquiry—and his writings, in the first part of the chapter, we shall provide a brief account of his entrance into Haiti's political scene. Finally, we examine how Aristide reappropriates and contextualizes some of the texts mentioned in the second part of the chapter and the biblical discourse of emancipation to fit the Haitian context. This chapter argues that Aristide should be regarded first as a theologian—not a traditional and orthodox politician—whose political ideas and democratic actions have been influenced deeply by the biblical narrative of freedom and emancipation; this brief account will help us understand his entrance into Haiti's political scene. Therefore, we show exclusively the biblical and theological basis for his political rhetoric and theological worldview.

Correspondingly, Aristide has been influenced by a wide-range schools of thought, intellectual traditions, and prominent historical figures. This chapter also consider the intellectual foundations of Aristide's political theology. In brief, this chapter is concerned with the biblical, theological, and intellectual circles which had shaped Aristide's theology and political philosophy.

2.2. ARISTIDE: THE THEOLOGIAN OF THE (HAITIAN) POOR

Relationship is the essence of the Christian faith and the idea that members of the Christian community—the body of Christ—belong together and share a life in common in Christ. This

principle is articulated as Jesus establishes in precise terms the relational aspect of the central message of the law and the prophets: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:36-40). The Christian life is a life relations and relational reciprocity. Therefore, good theological exegesis gives special attention to the plight of the poor, the oppressed, and those who had been left out the meganarrative of human history and Western theological discourse.

After the fall of the hereditary Duvalier regime in February 1986, Jean Bertrand Aristide became the first democratically elected Liberationist Theologian-President of the Caribbean nation of Haiti (and perhaps in the Americas) in the free elections of December 16, 1990, with an overwhelmingly vote by the majority of the Haitian population (Chomsky, 2002:158). Aristide's prophetic political vision and revolutionary theology of liberation had contributed enormously to a promising democratic future and social transformation in Haiti. Participatory democracy, justice and social equality for the poor marked Aristide's presidential campaign rhetoric and strategy. His early presidency was also marked by active social interaction with the poor and political activism on behalf of the general masses. With the tremendous support of the ecclesiastical grassroots movement known as *Ti Legliz* ("Little Church") and Haiti's underclass majority, Aristide was able to foster and articulate an alternative vision of Haitian politics and civil society which was post-dictatorial, post-macoutism (a reference to Duvalier's military regimes and Haitian totalitarianism), anti-imperialist, and anti-oppression. Aristide was deeply influenced by the ideas and promises of Liberation theology.

Aristide employed liberation theology as a mechanism to mobilize the Haitian poor and the underclass workers and peasants. The tenets of liberation theology facilitated a wide range of

34

future possibilities for the President-Theologian; the historic movement of liberation theology in Haiti resurrected a people who were seeking for life, hope, and guidance. As Aristide (2000) himself states:

> What weds the movement within the Church to the movement within Haitian society as a whole is liberation theology, which has filtered into the youth of our country, which invigorates them, which purifies their blood…It is liberation theology that is lifting our children up against a corrupt generation, against a mentality of the Church and the society which sees corruption as the comfortable norm. (Wilenz, 1989:113)

Haitian liberation theology may orient us to an understanding of human history as a dialectic between alienation and solidarity and the possibility of creating collaboratively a quality of social interaction conducive to the flourishing of a vibrant community of life across Haiti and the world (Sturm, 1998: 11).

Jean-Bertrand Aristide was born poor and black in July 15, 1953 in Port-Salut, a poor village in the south of Haiti. As a seminary student, he distinguished himself academically and intellectually. He went to study aboard and completed doctoral work in Biblical Studies in Israel as well as in psychology in Canada. Aristide holds a Ph.D. in Literature and Philosophy from the University of South Africa, an M.A. in Biblical Theology from the University of Montreal, and a B.A. in Psychology from Haiti State University. He is a prolific writer and eloquent speaker.

Aristide was ordained a Catholic priest on July 3, 1982. A proponent of Liberation theology, he was the priest of St. Jean Bosco Catholic Church. As an eyewitness explained,

> Father's Aristide Sunday masses were attended by thousands of the Haitian black poor who lived in nearby La Saline, one of the slums in the capital. His sermons were broadcast across the country on Radio Soleil, Catholic Church radio. The slightly built priest would remind his parishioners of the Haitian proverb *Tout moun se moun* (every human being is a human being), instantly transforming the deliberating pain of his individual parishioners into a galvanizing new summons to purpose for millions of the poor. (Robinson, 2007: 29)

In various instances, Aristide had escaped several assassination attempts by the Haitian army and militia who tried to murder him for his radical philosophy and preferential option for the poor. Eventually, in 1987, Aristide was removed from the Salesian Order for using his pulpit to preach politics and liberation theology, which challenged the Catholic Hierarchy in Haiti. He became the first democratically elected President of Haiti on December 16, 1990. Aristide's victory was a victory for the Haitian poor, the general masses, and for the country that had been oppressed by years of dictatorship and social violence. As Aristide explains,

> The emergence of the people as an organized public force, as a collective consciousness, was already taking place in Haiti in the 1980's, and by the 1986 this force was strong enough to push the Duvalier dictatorship from power. It was a grassroots popular movement, and not at all a top down project down by a single leader of a single organization. It wasn't an exclusively political movement, either. It took shape, above all, through the constitution, all over the country, in many small church communities or *ti legliz*. It was these small communities that played the decisive historical role. (Robinson, 2007: 32)

Alex Dupuy (1997:72) states that "Aristide had emerged as the single most important symbol of resistance to the ignominious, larcenous, and barbaric neo-Duvalierist dictatorships" in Haiti. Peter Hallward (2010:19) reasons, "If in 1986-87 Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide emerged as the leading figure in the popular mobilization it is because he understood the nature and depth of this antagonism as clearly as other members of the *peuple* ("the people") themselves." Robert Patton (2002:77) argues that Aristide entered the political race to "stop reactionary forces from legitimizing their continued hold on privilege and to empower the marginalized poor majority." It is good to note here, after his ordination as a priest in July 1982, Aristide had already shown concern for Haiti's marginalized poor majority uncommon among Haiti's ruling classes by establishing *Lafanmi Selavi* ("Family is Life"), a foster home for homeless orphans and street children (Girard, 2010: 117-8). Aristide's historic entrance into Haiti's politics was a challenge to Haiti's bourgeois class, the oppressive Church hierarchy, the international community (i.e. United

36

States, Canada, France, England, etc.); nonetheless, the Aristide turn in Haitian politics symbolized promises of hope, democracy, equality, inclusion, as well as a better future for the poor majority in the nation and the opportunity for the nation's underclass people to integrate fully into the mainstream society. Aristide's historic candidacy and ultimately Presidency was a powerful statement on behalf of the suffering Haitian masses.

The force of Aristide's theology of resistance and theological sensibility had allowed him to inspire sustaining hope and prophetic faith to the Haitian people in their struggle against abject poverty, despair, social injustice and evils, and oppression. Jean-Bertrand Aristide presented himself as a theologian of the poor and a theologian of hope correspondingly to the community of faith in Haiti and those living on the margins of modernity.

One of the most historic moments and most compassionate socio-political actions in Haitian politics occurred during Jean-Bertrand Aristide's first presidency. The Liberationist Theologian-President held a banquet at the Presidential "Palais National" (the "National Palace") and invited the poor in the slums across the country, street children, street vendors and merchants, beggars, and factory workers, as well as the peasant majority who heard him on Radio Haiti-Inter and Radio Soleil, and those living in the "popular zones" in the capital city (Port-au-Prince) to dine with him and Haiti's highest governmental officials. Aristide's gesture of solidarity with the poor was symbolic; the Haitian poor majority were treated with the highest human dignity and incredible worth as important and equal citizens in Haiti's civil society and culture. As Aristide himself remarks, "The simple fact of allowing ordinary people to enter the palace, the simple fact of welcoming people from the poorest sections of Haitian society with in the very center of traditional power—this was a profoundly transformative gesture" (Robinson, 2007: 31). Aristide's radical action made a substantial impact on the national conscience. Nonetheless, it was Aristide's

radical philosophy and preferential option for the scandalous poor that would lead to two coup d'état during his presidency. Aristide was perceived as a threat to the powerful political, economic, and religious class at the local and regional levels, which contributed to a chain reaction against him eventually leading to his overthrow twice as President of Haiti.

By opening the gates of the National Palace to the poor and holding a "banquet of the poor"—as he called it—, Aristide went in public to acknowledge the significant role of Haiti's underclass in making important political decisions for their country. The poor are agents of and shapers of history. Aristide defines the meaning of democracy and a politics of inclusion in the following words:

> Women, children and the poor must be the subjects, not the objects of history. They must sit at the decision-making tables and fill the halls of power. They must occupy the radio and airwaves, talking to and calling to account their elected leaders. Their participation will democratize democracy, bringing the word back to its full meaning: *Demos* meaning people, *Cratei* meaning to govern. (2000: 41)

The misery endured by Haitian poor majority made a profound impression on the Liberationist Theologian-President. In his politico-theological writings, Aristide presents himself as the champion of the cause of the poor and the voice of the voiceless. Aristide's "preferential option for the poor" led to "the unfolding of the connecting thread of a theological view which surely brings one back to the one God, that of the excluded, manipulated by the more privileged to maintain an ancestral domination of the poor" (Dupy, 1997: 72). Amy Wilentz (1989:112) reports that "Like other Liberation theologians in Latin America, who use Jesus' teachings to raise the political consciousness of the poor, Aristide tried to make connections between the struggle of the Haitian people for freedom and what liberation theologians see as the struggle of Jesus for the

liberation of Jerusalem." Christopher Wargny makes a poignant observation about Aristide's intimate relationship with the Haitian poor:

> His abiding and exclusive concern for the marginal, what liberation theologians call the preferential option for the poor, has changed him into a spokesperson for the dammed of the earth—the eighty percent in Haiti who live below the threshold of absolute poverty…He has slowly built up a power without any structure, alongside a great many structures that are utterly lacking in power. (Aristide, 1997:7)

It is good to note here in September 1991, just seven months after Aristide's inauguration, supported by the United States government, Canada, France, the resentful Haitian bourgeois class overthrew Aristide in a bloody military coup. As a result, the abrupt demise of Aristide's political party (*Lavalas*) and Haitian prophetic Liberation Theology movement—that was made up of various ecclesial-base communities—ended. For some individuals, Aristide's overview occurred because of his closeness to the poor and those longing for change who had voted for him. Furthermore, it is also reported that the army, police, and militia terrorized the country and Aristide's supporters, and those who were supporters of Liberation Theology.

> About 5,000 people were murdered and 400,000 went into hiding. Civil liberties, press freedom, trade unions, and peasant organizations gave way to censorship and military dictatorship under civilian puppets. To force the putschists to relinquish power, the United Nations and the Organization of American States imposed an economic embargo on Haiti. Trade sanctions did little to dislodge the military leadership and their allies, who obtained their merchandise through contraband from the Dominican Republic. Worse, these sanctions had the unintended effect of further worsening the economic conditions and health problems of the impoverished Haitians. Exiled in Caracas, Venezuela, and in Washington, D.C., Aristide tirelessly searched for a political accord that would reinstate him to power. (Florival, 2011: 179)

After several years in exile, on October 15, 1994, Aristide returned to Haiti to resume his Presidency. Elected president in 2000, Aristide was again deposed four years later by former members of the disbanded army, sponsored by Haiti's business class, Canada, France, and the United States government. Aristide stated that he was abducted with his wife to a French military base in Central African Republic and then to South Africa where he found refuge. Aristide's

journey to Central African Republic was via Jamaica (which denied refueling because of failure by the United States of America to declare the passengers on board) and Antigua that belonged to the CARICOM (The Caribbean Common Market) for which Haiti is a member. The United States and its allies showed no respect for a democratically-elect President, for the Community, and their disagreement with is removal resulting in political instability and mass protest and violence in Haiti. Similar to the 1991 coup, Haiti returned to illegality. Harsh political reprisals were carried out against the poor, Aristide's supporters, and government officials.

On 17 March 2011, Aristide left South Africa for Haiti. The permission was granted to him by the new elected Haitian president Michel Joseph Martelly and the international community. Aristide arrived in Port-au-Prince on Friday 18, March 2011; he was warmly greeted by the Haitian people and the former *Lavalas* supporters who had been waiting impatiently for his return. However, some have recently argued that his political party would participate in Haiti's future presidential elections. It is good to point out here, at the departure of Aristide, the Haitian Liberation theology movement had lost the major influence it once enjoyed in Haitian politics and civil society; however, various grassroots and popular movements had emerged since Aristide's return to Haiti. These movements are non-church affiliated or related.

To move our conversation forward, it is noteworthy to inform the reader that current scholarship on Jean-Bertrand Aristide has focused exclusively on his political life and Aristide as a politician (Dupuy 1997, 2007; Fatton, 2002; Hallward, 2010, Girard, 2010; Wilentz, 1989; Abbott, 2011; Deibert, 2005). Evidently, there exists an intellectual void that neglects an important aspect of the man—his theological vision and imagination, and how his theology has influenced his politics and social activism on behalf of the Haitian poor and peasants. The chief goal of this chapter is to study precisely Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a theologian. This approach will allow us

to explore more directly and fully Aristide's theological discourse as a theology of the poor, resulting in a better understanding and appreciation of him among the theologians and social activists. Hence, this present essay intends to be a theological reflection on Aristide's deployment of "the poor" as a concept, with some implications for social transformation and social activism.

2.3. "REMEMBER THE POOR": THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The imperative to care for the poor is not only found in early Christian writings, it is also central in the sacred and theological writings of Judaism. The admonition "remember the poor" is a central focus in Pauline theology and Paul's own understanding of the theological and practical dimensions of Jesus' teachings and social preaching (Matthew 3:7-12, 11:2-6, 18-19, 26:11; Mark 2:18-20, 14:7; Luke 2:14, 7:18-23, 33-34; John 12:8). It has also been an interesting topic of research in biblical and theological scholarship which take into account the social and political aspects of Jesus' teaching and preaching (Hendricks 2006; Thurman 1976; Storkey 2005; Yoder 1994; Lindberg 2007; Borg 1988; Crossan 2011, 2007. This important phrase is first mentioned in Galatians 2:10, as Paul enunciates "*They only asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do." This particular Galatian text alludes to Paul's collection activity in the Jewish Diaspora on behalf of the poor, "the miserably poor" (*ptochoi*) among the Christians in Jerusalem. The historical context was the devastated famine mentioned in Acts 11:27-28. The majority members of the Jerusalem early Church community were between "absolutely poor" and "relatively poor" (Stegemann and Stegemann, 1999:232). Christians in the early Church movement came reasonably from the lower-stratum groups, were probably not property owners, and could afford also the minimum existence. The abandonment of socio-economic ties by Jesus and his followers, as well as by post-resurrection Christian communities meant participation in the

41

fate of the poorest in Jewish and Greco-Roman society, and thus dependency on external support (Stegemann and Stegemann, 1999:187-232). For example, the underclass, slaves, and day laborers were among the miserably poor (Jeremias 1969; Hengel 1981).

In Pauline scholarship, the expression "remember the poor" is interpreted both as a practical and theological concept in Paul's theological praxis, social ethics, and "social preaching." The phrase is connected to the work of social transformation and social consciousness of the Jesus-Movement in first-century Christianity, with a special focus on the poor and the economically disadvantaged and exploited who suffered material poverty. For example, the story about a certain poor widow of Jerusalem is well documented in Mark 12:41-44, and Luke 21:1-4. The most recent studies on this important topic is voluminous (Longenecker 2010; Dunn 2003, 1975; Carter 2000; Dunn, Luckensmeyer, and Cross 2009; Longenecker and Liebengood 2009; Betz 1979; Horsley 2009; Keck 1965; Georgi 1992; Horsley 2000)

Many religious and Biblical scholars, and theologians have supported the thesis that "Care for the poor was integral to Jesus' proclamation, and presumably to his own activities and those of his entourage." The scholarly literature on the subject matter and associated ideas to the Jesus-Movement in the first century seeks to resituate Jesus, his followers, and their social activism on behalf of the most vulnerable and disinherited; such studies are extremely helpful as they pay closer attention to the religious, historical, cultural, economic, and political settings and backgrounds to the Jesus-Movement (Crossan 1994, 1993; Green and Turner 1994; Goulder 1999; Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen 2002; Stegemann and Stegemann 1999; Richardson and Hurd 1984). James Dunn (2003:519) suggests that Jesus, having brought up in a relatively small and not very well-to-do family and village, "would not have experienced destitution but would certainly have been familiar with poverty." Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann in

their brilliant social history text about "The Jesus Movement" and the Mediterranean world articulate that the overwhelmingly majority of Jesus' disciples and followers came from the "rural lower stratum"; they belonged to the social stratification classified relatively as "the absolutely poor" (*ptochoi*) and the "the absolutely poor" (*penetes*).

John Dominic Crossan argues that not only Jesus was a Jewish peasant but his (and family's) life was marked relatively by economic disadvantage or insecurity, as it were the common condition for those belonging in the lower rural stratum—in a world in which the "economic systems were configured in ways that generally promoted the interests of the elite and secure, often to the ensuring disadvantage of the poor and the economically insecure" (Longenecker, 2010: 120). Jesus' own attitude toward and relationship with the poor and the oppressed groups and, his teachings about the rich, wealth, anxiety, and poverty are reported overwhelmingly in great detail in numerous passages in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 6:220-33; Mark 10:21-23, 14:3-9; Luke 6:20-25, 12:12:22-34, 16:13; Stegemann and W. Stegemann, 1999: 203, 232). E. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, also note that "members of the upper stratum, however, did not belong to the group of followers but at most to the circle of sympathizers (Joseph of Arimathea)" (Ibid).

His social preaching aimed at inciting social consciousness about the deplorable life condition and dehumanization of the poor and exploited majority, which was not accepted in the sight of God the Liberator. Almost three decades ago, Liberation Theologian and Mystic Howard Thurman (1996: vi) posed this provocative question: "What the teachings of Jesus have to say to those who stand at a moment in human history with their backs against the wall…the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed." The author of the Gospel of Matthew reports Jesus' response to the imprisoned John the Baptist, after he inquired about the nature of Jesus' public ministry: "Go

and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5).

A similar passage to the Matthean text is also recorded by the author of the third Gospel, "The Theologian of the Poor," in Luke 7:18-23. The parallel text in Luke 4:18-19 is more telling:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind and set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Arguably, the key phrase in the previously-referenced biblical passages (The Pauline, Lukan, and Matthean texts) is the Greek word *ptochoi*, which can be translated as "the absolutely poor," or "the miserably poor." The expression is a subject of great importance in Jesus' manifesto, which sets the context for understanding his messianic vision and his unreserved devotion to the oppressed, the weak, and the masses in his immediate environs, instead of the noble, powerful, rich, and the esteemed. James Dunn helps us understand the Hebraic setting of the *ptochoi* in this useful observation:

> Behind the Greek term *ptochoi* stands a number of Hebrew terms, particularly '*aniyyim*. The Hebrew terms denote material poverty in its various aspects and consequences. Of these consequences the most important were the social responsibility thereby laid upon the Israelite community (to relieve poverty) and what today would be called "God's option for the poor." (2003: 517)

Dunn also cites the following references: *ani* ("poor, afflicted, humble"); *dal* ("crushed, oppressed"); ebyon ("in want, needy, poor"); *anaw* ("poor, afflicted, humble, meek); *rosh* ("in want, poor). Jesus remembered "the poor" by preaching to them the saving good news of God's decisive liberation from the hands of their oppressors; this divine deliverance pervades all existential realms, incorporates both social and spiritual salvation, as well as interrogates all forms

of human domination. "The blind," "the lame," "the deaf," the dead" (or the dying), and "the poor" were socially-deprived economic groups; they were alienated from the greater Jewish and Greco-Roman society; these group of individuals belonged to the lower social stratum.

The poor and the oppressed were the social outcast and the disdained in the Jewish and Greco-Roman social and religious hierarchies. Not only they were a class of individuals who were unable "to maintain their inherited honor standing in society because of misfortune or the injustice of others," (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 1989:48) the poor also suffered from material deprivation and economic depravity, and had substantial "needs of a variety of kinds" (Dunn, 2003:119). David A deSilva (2000) has contributed enormously to the idea of honor and shame and how it was related to wealth and poverty in the Mediterranean world. The absolutely poor and those belonging to the lower social stratum shared a life in common and had a common social-political life. These people lived at or under the level of minimum and exhibited a fundamental lack of all or some of the goods necessary to achieve subsistence (food, clothing, dwelling) (Stegemann and Stegemann, 1999:71). In his corresponding letters to the Corinthians, Paul's precise language to describe the social, economic, and political status of early Christians provides further elucidation. He informs us explicitly that the Corinthian Christians were among the despised in society (1 Cor. 1:28), were socially weak and the unknown, and among the have-nots (1 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 6:9-10). They did not have the power, privilege, and prestige nor did they have property, political power, and influence, as these factors were characteristics of their society's unjust system of distribution (Stegemann and Stegemann, 1999:61).

The relationship between "the poor" and "poverty" is worth exploring in the subsequent paragraphs. Poverty is a social condition, and there is no poor without poverty; oppressive and systemic structures and cruel social hierarchies may lead to all kinds of oppressions including

45

poverty as a social phenomenon. The phrase "the poor" is intimately associated with material poverty. Below, I engage various important studies that are relevant to our understanding of the phrase "the poor," which will also shed light in our analysis of the use of the rhetorical concept in Aristide's theological outlook.

In the context of Judeo-Christianity, the poor were those "who lacked a secure economic base. Like widows, orphans, and aliens, they were in an especially vulnerable position, without any means of self-protection" (Dunn, 2003:518). Poverty denotes a social phenomenon and the condition of the people within it which might include suffering or misery (Zohar, 2010:205). It also bears the idea of "limited good;" and as Malina and Rohrbauch (2002:48) report, poverty also meant "lack of material goods, but honor, friendship, love, power, security, and status as well—literally everything in life." Those reflecting on the social dynamics of the Mediterranean world, one writer make the following remark:

> The material possession of personal and real property conveys, on the other hand, a form of power (namely, influence), but is, on the other hand, an (essential) part of the *privileges* that members of the upper stratum enjoy…On the basis of their considerable wealth, they could exercise power in the form of influence on leading political figures and also command their own sometimes large staffs. Furthermore, their income enabled them to lead a privileged lifestyle, which was fundamentally different from the choices open to the masses of the populace. (Stegemann and Stegemann, 2001: 64, 59)

New Testament scholar James Dunn situates the historical context and social dynamics of first-century culture as pertaining to the plight of the poor:

> Poverty…was a social condition, with social causes, often the result of greed and manipulation on the part of others. The poor were vulnerable before those members of society who controlled economic and political power, and who were willing to use that power ruthlessly, consequently, the poor were also the downtrodden and oppressed, often pushed by circumstances to the margin so society. (Dunn, 1997:60-1; Longnecker, 2010:120)

46

E. Stegemann and W. Stegemann (2001:88) add that "the masses of the people were characterized not only by low birth and the concomitant lack of political power, but also by their poverty. For them, the struggle for material existence and the bare means of survival determined their daily work… The nature of the life of the *ptochos* (the absolutely poor) is to have nothing." Dunn complements that

> Material poverty left the poor vulnerable to economic exploitation. Poverty was by no means always the result of individual fecklessness or slothfulness, of natural disaster or enemy action. It was also a social condition, with social causes, often the result of greed and manipulation on the part of others. The poor were vulnerable before those members of society who controlled economic and political power, and who were willing to use that power ruthlessly. Consequently, the poor were also the downtrodden and oppressed, often pushed by circumstances to the margin of society. (2003:518)

As noted in our previous discussion, the poor were a social phenomenon and poverty was a social crisis in the Mediterranean world and the communities of the Jesus-Paul-Movement were among the poor majority. However, the precise meaning of the expression "the poor" has been a subject of a wealth of scholarly research; Religious specialists in the discipline of Judaism (including Rabbinic Judaism) and Christianity, as well as Liberationist theologians in particular have written voluminously about the category. Some writers have wrongly equated both phrases "the poor" (Matthew 11:5) and "the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). Robert Mounce (1991:103) makes an interpretive error when he writes that 'the poor in spirit' are "those fully realize their spiritual poverty." Warren Carter (2001:131) contends that "The poor in spirit…. are those who are economically poor and whose spirits or being are crushed by economic injustice." R.T. France suggests that the 'meek and 'poor in spirit' is a reference to "those who are in fact disadvantaged and powerless." Elsa Tamez (2006:192) adds that "The poor in spirit are the poor of Yahweh, that is, they are the poor and oppressed who acknowledge their poverty, and who stand before God as poor people. In other words, they are not the kind of poor people who think, and try to live, as

members of the bourgeoisie." In Jesus' beatitudes, "the poor in spirit" are clearly linked to "those who mourn," and "the meek." While the meek refer to those who had their lands stolen and protest against the fact (Psalms 37), the poor and those who mourn protest the presence of social evil around them (1 Cor. 5:1-2), and have no power to social and political power to alter it (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2002:48). Bruce Longenecker makes the sharp distinction between "the poor in spirit" in Matthew 5:3 and "the poor" in Matthew 11:5 when he asserts that these two expressions

> should not be conflated…"the poor in spirit" has a broader reference than simply economic depravity, while "the poor" generally has an economic reference as its primary reference, unless the context suggests otherwise…And in this case the context is such that a non-economic reading of "the poor" is difficult to sustain. This is because…Jesus' words seem intended to resonate with the Isaianic narrative triumph, and in Isa 61:1 "the poor" are most likely the economically deprived, and perhaps even the economically oppressed. (2003:119)

Longenecker continues by observing trenchantly that

> In the agrarian context of first-century Judea and Galilee, this is not whole surprise. In that context, economic systems were configured in ways that generally promoted the interest of the elite and secure, often to the ensuring disadvantage of the poor and economically insecure. The system was so entrenched that Jesus himself is remembered to have said "the poor you will have with you always" (Mark 14:7; Matt 26:11; John 12:8). (2003:120)

It is in this context that R. T. France (2007:424) could articulate the idea that , "The visible activity of Jesus thus conforms to the scriptural blueprints for God's eschatological deliverance, whether in his own person or through an anointed Messiah…Isaiah 61:1 is about the good news to the poor and oppressed." Given the fact that the Synoptic writers and the Jesus-Movement may have lived the reality of poverty, they associate the poor and the oppressed with the blind, the lame, lepers, the deaf, and the dead (Matthew 11:4-5; Luke 14:13, 21; Mark 12:42-43). God's kingdom and eschatological blessing upon the poor through Jesus the Messiah-Liberator, and his moral convictions "focused on and favored in a special way socially marginal groups in Israel (the poor, prostitutes, tax collectors, children, the slaves, etc.)" (Stegemann, 2002:47). Consequently, it

seems exceptionally practical that Paul would continue the Jesus-Movement with a preferential option for the poor and by "remembering the poor seriously as an integral part of his apostolic mission" (Segal, 1990:193). Suffice it to restate this text: "*They only asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do" (Gal. 2:10).

2.3.1. Old Testament Antecedents

Furthermore, the switch from *us* to *I* is quite telling and rhetorically forceful, indicating Paul's profound devotion to and preferential option for the poor and the oppressed. It is noteworthy to point out that both Jesus and Paul were following a well-established tradition in Judaism. In various passages in the Psalms, the psalmist presents God as the champion of the poor (Ps. 9:18; 10:14, 17; 12:5; 14:6; 22:24-46; 35:10; 40:17). In Psalm146:-7-9, the psalmist is persuaded that God's care for the poor is explicit and his commitment to social justice and equality on behalf of the poor is limitless:

> who executes justices for the oppressed,
> who gives food to the hungry.
> The Lord sets the prisoners free;
> the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
> the Lord loves the righteous.
> The Lord watches over the sojourners;
> he upholds the widow and the fatherless…

The psalmist is convinced that God despises those who oppress the poor. Divine help is promised to the most vulnerable and oppressed in society: "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your own towns. You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun set (for he is poor and counts on it), lest the cry against you to the Lord, and you be guilty of sin" (Deut. 24:14-15). Yahweh is very concerned about social and economic justice issues and therefore warns

49

his people to treat the poor and the oppressed with dignity and fairness. In this passage, he sides himself with the poor by defending them against possible oppressors. As Zohar (2010:206) states, "A presumption of divine empathy toward, and affinity with, the poor is expressed in God's commandment in one of the earliest biblical sections, the so-called Book of the Covenant:" "You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn… If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him" (Ex. 22:22, 25).

Bruce Malchow (1997:22) tells us that "There is a development of concern for justice to the oppressed" the so-called The Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26) in the Hebrew Bible. It is stated in the book of Tobit, "Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor and the face of God will not be turned away from you.... For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High" (Tobit 4:7, 10-11). The Essene community in the Second Temple Period (hence, Second Temple Judaism) who inhabited the Dead Sea region expressed a radical perspective towards the dominated, old, and new Jewish upper classes who pursued after riches at the exploitation of the poor and lower classes, a phenomenon that was typical of the period before and after the Maccabean revolt. It should also be pointed out that The Essenes' rejection of money and wealth, and the voluntary acceptance of material poverty was probably motivated by what Hengel (1981: 131-152) has termed "an anticipation of the eschatological time of salvation;" Jeremias (1969) and Saldarini (1988) have provided some of the most detailed accounts and analysis on the life of the Essenes and the sect's engagement with the social, religious, and political life in the pre-Gospel tradition and beyond.

While in his social and prophetic preaching, Ben Sira rejects the self-incurred poverty and beggary, which is hateful and shameful to him; he warns of the dangers of acquiring a lot of wealth unjustly and admonishes the rich to cultivate a merciful social attitude toward the poor and the oppressed, which corresponds with the will of God (for further studies on this issue, see Hengel, 1981: 218-254). Two important texts are provided here: "Do not set you heart on your wealth, nor say, 'I can acquire it'" (5:1), and "My son, deprive not the poor of his living, and do not put desperate eyes to shame (4:1). The divide between the poor and the rich is substantially wide, and the metaphorical rhetoric describing the relationship is radically striking:

> What fellowship has a wolf with a lamb?
> No more has a sinner with a godly man
> What peace is there between a hyena and a dog?
> And what peace between a rich man and a poor man?
> Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions;
> Likewise the poor are the pastures for the rich.
> (Ben Sira 13:15-20, 4:1; Hengel, 1981:137-142)

The mistreatment of the poor and the oppressed is an important discourse in the social criticism and prophetic tradition of Judaism. It is a grave moral issue in Judaism and against divine law. God will vindicate the cause of the poor and the oppressed. The oppressor will not go unpunished. The poor can expect divine support and compassion, because God's solidarity with them is unwavering. Nicolas Wolterstorff (208:79) states that "Israel's religion was a religion of salvation, not of contemplation—that is what accounts for the mantra of the widows, the orphans, the aliens, and the poor. Not a religion of salvation *from this earthly existence* but a religion of salvation *from injustice* in this earthly existence." Hence, it is only correct for the God of Israel to reason, "For there will be no poor among you…Therefore, I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and the poor, in your land'" (Deut. 15:4, 11). These sets of divine commands prohibit oppressive actions toward the oppressed, the needy, and the poor.

51

They reveal Yahweh's high ethical sensibility in not only providing total justice for people easily misused—the sojourner, the widow and fatherless, the poor and oppressed—but also in calling for equality with and love toward them (Malchov, 1997:23). The imperative is an urgent appeal to practice social justice and equality; it also a clarion "call for positive deeds toward the deprived" (Ibid) and this social group of individuals. Substantially, Gildas Hamel writes

> Jewish texts leave one with the impression of a greater respect for the poor. The reason for this…is that God stood out most clearly in the Hebrew Scriptures as the protector of the poor…Century after century, Israelites were reminded that it was incumbent upon them to take of widows, orphans and people fallen into poverty; that one is not to cheat, grab property, abuse slaves, hoard grain, tamper with weights and measures. (1990: 201-, 213-214)

Hence, God's solidarity with the oppressed stands out unequivocally in the Judeo-Christian tradition; his decisive liberative commitment to defending, liberating, and preserving them, as well fighting their oppressors is unreserved. Because they are helplessly exploited in society and vulnerable, the poor and the needy are dependent solely and completely upon God for help—since they could look nowhere else. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is the source of all justice (Aristide, 1993:70). As Aristide puts forth, he is actively committed to the happiness of everyone, the integral liberation of the oppressed, and the release of all prisoners (Ibid). We shall now consider how Aristide re-appropriates and re-contextualizes these theological themes and ideas in the Haitian context.

2.4. HAITI IS THE "LAND OF GOD'S PEOPLE": CREATIVE THEOLOGIAL RE-APPROPRIATION AND RE-CONTEXTUALIZAITON

In many instances in his work, Aristide equates the poor with the suffering Haitian masses, the people, and the less privileged social class in Haiti's civil society and political life. He uses the people and the poor interchangeably. He posits that the Haitian poor are "the people of

God," and the "church of the poor" is the "church of God." If "Haiti is the parish of the poor," as Aristide states, and the church of the poor is God's church, therefore Haiti is also the "land" of God's people. Aristide as other Liberationist theologians rejects the divide binary: the sacred and the profane. The love and freedom of God knows and national or political boundaries. God is inclusive in his outreaching and providential care. The analysis below draws respectively from sermons he delivered at St. Jean-Bosco parish, Aristide's home church where he served as pastor-priest-theologian.—" Walking in the Light of Christ" was delivered on August 23, 1988; "We Have Come From Far Away" was broadcast on *Radio Soleil* three weeks after his church was burned to the ground and his congregation was massacred in September 11, 1988 by some individuals who received money from the Port-au-Prince mayor Franck Romain and a section of the Haitian Army, led by the then-president, Gen. Henri Namphy" (Aristide, 1990: 102). We also allude to another important sermon by Aristide: "Let the Flood Descend," which was broadcast on *Radio Haiti-Inter* in November 1988. All of these referenced sermons can be found *In the Parish of the Poor*.).

Since the birth of the Haitian state, the Haitian government has officially recognized Catholicism as the only official religion of the state (Greene 1993); thus, Catholicism was given many privileges, such as the power to oversee the country's education system and train young Haitians in the teachings and values of the Church, which other religious traditions in the country had not enjoyed. Roman Catholicism in Haiti has always been a political religion, and those of the dominant class were undeniably confessional Catholics. In this manner, from this association, the Haitian elite and ruling class could benefit both ecclesiastic privileges and political privileges. Both the State and the Church had become the adversary of the Haitian masses by means of labor exploitation, human rights violation, and the censorship of freedom of speech. The Catholic

Church in Haiti was divided by class, economic status, and political power. It controls the people through its theology of deceit, colonialism, and resignation. As Aristide (1993:67) has remarked, "The colonial mission system, having disappeared from all the continents, endures in Haiti. Theology serves to "zombify" the people's spirits in order to subjugate them more reading to traditional sovereignties." The Catholic Church of Haiti still bears the stain of colonial theology. For Aristide, a grassroots movement of emancipation should be come forth from the common people in order that they make decolonize the Church hierarchy and deliver themselves from false religion toward a new path to national unity and reconciliation.

> We no longer desire to be associated with these hierarchical structures, in which the orders Must always come from above downward to us below; but since our mission consists in opening the eyes of those at the bottom, the people of God, to listen to what the people say, to live the peoples' troubles, to share their anguish and their hopes, we have little interest tin those who are at the helm of church affairs, halfway between the summit and the bottom. (Aristide, 1993:67-8

The traditional or institutional church failed to give priority to the poor and those who were the victims of the Duvalier regime and Macoutism. Aristide denounces the dishonest priests who were openly walking in solidarity with the Macoutists and Duvalierists while oppressing and denying the poor the daily bread. In a Jeremiad, he condemns the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church hierarchy:

> There were also some bad priests who accepted everything and who happily joined in social sin and in collaboration. They pointed out the poor sinners, those who stole bananas or were unfaithful to their spouses, while losing their eyes to the overall structures of corruption. They inweighted against trifles and made a covenant with the devil. Consciously or not, they placed the authority of the church in the service of evil. (1993:44)

In the historic era of 1980s, it had become common for high-class ecclesiastic authorities and Priests of the Catholic Church to be associated with the Duvalier regime and Macoutism. The Church was very supportive of the dictatorial government and worked very closely with the

54

Duvalier administration to crush anyone who opposed the political power or anyone who was perceived as a threat or rebel. Hence, the oppression of the Haitian people had a dual source: the Catholic Church and the Duvalier government. It was a common practice for Church authorities to turn in radicals and leftists to the government to be punished, incarcerated, even to the point of death. The Catholic Church has failed the Haitian masses and the poor it was supposed to care for, love, and protect. Aristide launched a clarion call to resist the Catholic Church because of its failure to defend the Haitian people; or as he stated elsewhere, "when a bishop blesses the cannon or when he supports generals who murder liberty, he commits a crime" (1993:105).

Aristide, who was a Priest of the Salesian order, denounced publically both the popular violence and mass killing committed by high-official church authorities and Haiti's ferocious military forces. As he pronounces, "Bishops and Macoutes walked arm in arm, defending the same causes, but using a different vocabulary to mask their collusion for the benefit of the oligarchy, the banking bourgeoisie without ideals or principles whose profits were invested outside Haiti" (Ibid:46). At his Parish in St. Jean Bosco and through his weekly program at Radio Soleil and Radio Cacique, he preached revolutionary theo-political sermons that aimed at awakening the Haitian masses of their social condition and fostering collective conscientization among the poor, the illiterate, and oppressed. Aristide alerted his parishioners and the Haitian masses to make a sharp distinction between "the church of the poor" that constitutes the "real people of God," and the "bourgeois church" that oppresses the church of the poor and the Haitian people (Aristide, 1993:89). He (1993: 88) informed the people that it is the will of God for the Catholic Church to be controlled in part by the majority of the Haitian population that is by the Haitian masses. Aristide informed his parishioners that God has rejected the bourgeois church (that is the institutional church) and favored "the church of the poor," "the people's church" (Ibid: xi). He also

warned the young people to flee the institutional church because God has preferentially chosen them to tie their fates to the fate of the poor and the oppressed, and that it is them who will empower the weak and enable the church of Haiti to bear the name of the popular church (ibid).

He also reminded the Haitian poor that they are the real people of God and that God walks in solidarity with them everyday; he reiterated that "The poor have sacrificed for this church, the church of Haiti, and so it is normal for them to speak loudly about it, it's normal for them to cry out" (1990:84). For this reason also, the people's church must stand against oppression, and resist the corrupt administration and American imperialism.

> The Lord says to me today: The Haitian people, the church of the poor, the popular church, they are all risen. Continue the battle! The church of the poor is under the protection of the flag of liberation theology, which cannot be disconnected in Haiti from the nationalist courage that manifests itself in actions, good actions, and in the origination that brings those actions to pass" (Aristide, 1992::90)

As observed above, Aristide's ecclesiology is not divorced from his political theology. According to him, the popular church or the church of the poor is the liberating church and the embodiment of divine presence. The people's church promotes the growth of every aspect of the human person (Aristide, 1991:112). Unlike the bourgeois church noted above, the vision of the church of the poor leads the oppressed "to attack misery, to denounce spiritual acridity, and to condemn the social sin embedded in the structures of public life" (Ibid). In other words, the church of the poor is a prophetic church that promotes both spiritual and social transformation. Implying a process of contagious change, the church of the poor embraces "an anthropology whereby no-one is isolated or marginalized" (Ibid: 113). The first example is in the context of a prayer he uttered.

Aristide's theological imagination and theological rhetoric of the poor should be construed as a total engagement with the plight of the Haitian poor in the based-community

56

churches (*Ti Legliz*) in particular. This critical dialogue is chiefly concerned also with the suffering general masses and their relations to God, politics, economics, social development, democratic freedom and justice, and "indeed worldly things" (Parratt, 2004:167). On the other hand, in his theological corpus, Aristide has successfully managed to transcend theological ethnocentrism and theological nationalism. One of the clearest statements of Aristide's attempts to transcend both theological categories to embrace a form of theological humanism and cosmopolitanism is articulated below:

> Too often we hear of people fighting against one another in the name of God. We say hunger has no religion, exploitation has no religion, injustice has no religion. What do we mean when we say God? We mean the source of love; we mean the source of justice. We mean woman and man, black and white, child and adult, spirit and body, past and future, that thing which animates all of us… (Aristide, 2000:63)

The emphasis on God's radical inclusion of the poor and the international outcast is a central characteristic in Aristide's own theological expression.

2.5. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRIVILEDGE OF THE POOR

The epistemological privilege of the poor means the "God-poor encounter" (Hopkins, 2005:166). It is a liturgy pleasing to God. In this mystical exchange, Aristide suggests that God anthromorphizes so the poor could theomorphize (Aritisde, 1992: 20). God reveals Godself especially to the poor; he tabernacles especially among the oppressed and exploited to struggle with them and to actualize their emancipation. Patricia McAuliffe (1993) notes that the poor understands the promise of good news best and of Christ's Gospel of liberation, most realistically, because it is they who experience the bad news most concretely, and it is to them that Jesus has intended his message of integral freedom. Because of the poor, Jesus imagined "the new world, the kingdom of God, as a place where poverty is absent… In his proclamation of the kingdom of

57

Israel's deity, Jesus is remembered saying 'Blessed are the poor" (Longnecker, 2003:125). The revelation of God the Liberator in Jesus the Messiah-Liberator was biased in favor of the poor and the marginalized; Jesus' Gospel of Liberation and practice of goods news of integral freedom was directed especially toward the poor, the oppressed, and the cast-down people (McAuliffe, 1993:52).

The epistemological privilege of the poor also means that God has always taken sides (Aristide, 1994: 69) ("*Donc celui pour qui Dieu a toujours pris parti.*") with one group (the poor, the oppressed, the exploited) and against another (the rich, the oppressor, the exploiter). In being in solidarity with the poor and the outcast, God also empowers them to pursue justice, freedom, equality, wholeness, as well as to protest against their poverty—as a call: the call of the negative contrast to both poor and rich and the oppressed and the oppressor to rebel against the acute deprivation and oppression of the vast majority of humans (McAuliffe, 1993:52). Patricia McAuliffe also posits that "God is especially in the powerful resistance the poor can make against their oppression, especially powerful because the poor are especially suffering and understand their suffering best…It is through the poor, in their need and their own protest and practice for justice that God draws the rich to join in solidarity with the oppressed in order that we all will find God and our own salvation. God's revelation in Jesus was biased in favor of the poor" (Ibid). This God, Aristide insists, who lives the reality in the present without forgetting the past orients and guides the poor toward a better future, a post-oppression life and destiny: "*Le Dieu qui vit la réalité au présent sans oublier le passé, oriente vers un futur meilleu*r" (Aristide, 199:20). Hence, we speak of a God *fo*r the poor and a God *with* the poor.

To move the conversation forward, we would like to return to an important Biblical passage we discussed earlier, chiefly Luke 4:18-19. Our goal here is to critically engage Aristide's thought on Jesus' proclamation of the inauguration of the year of Jubilee:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind and set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

John Howard Yoder (1994:60), who has written brilliant and creatively about the Lukan passage in particular in the context of the Jubliee year, forcefully argues that the Gospel writers present Jesus as fulfilling all the four prescriptions of the Jubilee year or the Sabbath yearn: "(1) leaving the soil fallow, (2) the remission of debts, (3) the liberation of slaves, (4) the return to each individual of his family's property." On the other hand, Aristide acknowledges the difficulty for theologians to come to a consensus about the exact meaning and significance of this passage:

> *Voilà un texte qui a souvent été l'objet des vives discussions entre les extrémistes, c'est-à-dire ceux qui, d'une part, y voient une libération uniquement spirituelle et ceux qui, d'autre part, y découvrent un programme de libération simplement matérielle.* (1994:66)

> [Here's a text that has often been the subject of lively discussion between extremists, that is to say those who, on one hand, see it as a purely spiritual liberation, and those who, on the other hand, have discovered a program of material liberation.]

Aristide has already contended that Jesus' proclamation of the good news to the poor evidently ranked at the forefront of his conception of his messianic mission (Dunn, 2003:517). In this case, Aristide comes to agreement with many biblical scholars such as James D.G. Dunn, Richard Longenecker, Joel Green, etc. Jesus' preferential option for the poor is demonstrative of his unrelenting pronouncement of his first beatitude/first blessing upon the poor, "Blessed are the poor…" (Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20). Aristide (1994: 67) asserts that this Good News is the very source of the Gospels ("*Cette Bonne Nouvelle constitue la source même des Evangiles*"), and,

59

through Jesus' program of liberation, the preferential option for the poor is rooted in God's unconditional love for his children, and, always [God] "is moved by the sufferings of humanity, especially the sufferings of the weakest, the little ones, the most despised" ("*Il vibre aux souffrances de l'humanité, particulierement aux soufrances des plus faibles, des plus petits, des plus méprisés*") (Ibid). As a result, Aristide (1994:69) maintains that to exploit the poor is to declare war against God ("*Exploiter le pauvre, c'est déclarer la guerre à Dieu*").

Aristide's Christology possesses an emancipative intent. He sees theological parallelism between Christology and "the Gospel of liberation" Jesus announces to the poor. He puts forth the idea that a Gospel of resignation and consolation would not (or cannot) be the Gospel of Jesus-Christ, which is a Gospel of liberation ("*Un Evangile de résignation et de consolation ne saurait être L'Evangile de Jésus-Christ qui est Evangile de Libération.*") (Aristide, 1994:68). John Yoder (1994:32-33), having giving a cosmic and transcultural context of Jesus' Gospel of liberation, affirms that "The prophet's [Jesus'] reference to the captive and oppressed can thus not refer to Israel or Judaism at large as collectively oppressed; the liberation is too wide for that. The New Age is for all, and the hesitance of the Nazarenes to believe will only hasten its wider proclamation." This sense of the universal and transnational content of Jesus' message resonates well with Aristide's theology.

Aristide has subscribed to a missionary Christology of freedom. Jesus is God's agent of human emancipation, and as a divine emissary, *Jesus the liberation* provides to the poor and the oppressed what Aristide has termed exclusively "integral liberation," what they could not do for themselves. In Aristide's theological framework, both phrases "integral liberation" and (Jesus' felicitous pronouncement) "to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18; Is. 61:1) seems to converge and communicate the notion that Jesus' liberative program intends to interrogate (even

60

protest against) the oppressive Roman imperial culture and the theology of servitude and alienation imposed by Judaism upon the poor and the people of God (Aristide, 1994:69). The Gospel of Liberation of Jesus to the poor is total and revolutionary; it fiercely attacks every fabric of the cultural, social, and political order: the oppressive structural systems embodied in the imperial politics and repressive mechanisms, as well as the Jewish religion, the theological dogmas of the day, and the psychology of the people. Aristide reiterates that because the God of Jesus is the source of all justice, he is completely free and committed to the freedom of the captives and the poor against the powerful, the exploited Jewish Elite class, and the Roman oppressors (Ibid:70). Aristide not only contends that the poor were the victims of Roman imperialism but were also victims of theological violence instituted by Judaism at that time (Ibid: 69). Consequently, Jesus was against the social and religious hierarchies, the dominant ideologies of his time. In other words, Aristide sees both the Roman Empire and the Judaism of Jesus' era as systems of oppression.

The religious Elite and the powerful of Judaism in Jesus' days used religion as an instrument of oppression or as a technique to oppress the people of God, the collective poor. The Judaism of the influential religious authorities seemed to become a betrayal of the poor by emphasizing the imperative of law observance and the continuity of cultural traditions, while neglecting the emancipative message of love and the promise of hope of God the Liberator to the oppressed Jews and Gentiles. Aristides (1994:70) argues that Jesus disrupted the religious scene, the priestly theocracy— which suffered what he has phrased "*une spiritualite pathologique*" (spiritual pathology) so the oppressed and the people of God could be delivered from serving a despotic God ("*de la servitude d'un Dieu despotique*")—an unpleasant liturgy to God.

In diagnosing the religious dilemma of Judaism and the inhuman colonial structure of Roman imperialism and their psychological effects and violence on the poor and the people of God, Aristide harks back to the Exodus event in order for the reader to learn about the liberative character of Yahweh's radical turn in Israel's story. Aristide finds an instructive analogy in the God of the Exodus, the God of the Slaves, and Jesus' inaugurating messianic Gospel of liberation:

> *Si YHWH s'est révélé contre tout esclavage, comment peut-il exiger un culte qui rendrait l'homme esclave? Ce dieu qui rend l'homme captif défend les intérêts de la haute classe juive et des oppresseurs romains. Il joue le rôle d'une projection ou encore, d'un substitut de leur volonté de domination…Or le Dieu de Jésus est al la source de toute justice. Il était temps d'abandonner certaines assertions traditionnelles pour faciliter une meilleure approche de Dieu qui s'engage pour le bonheur de tout un chacun et la libération de tous les captifs…Jésus fait briller une nouvelle façon d'interpréter la Parole, il suscite une prise de conscience*. (1994:70-2)

> **[**If YHWH is revealed against all forms of slavery, how can he demand a cult that would make man a slave? The god who makes man his victim defends the interests of the Jewish high class and the Roman oppressors. He plays the role of a projection or a substitute for their desire for domination… But the God of Jesus is the source of all justice. It was time to abandon some traditional assertions to facilitate a better approach to God who is committed to the happiness of everyone and the release of all the captives ... Jesus shines a new way to interpret the Scripture; he raises collective consciousness.**]**

Aristide depicts Jesus as the one who comes to liberate the oppressed consciousness. The mental liberation of the scandalous people is only possible through a self-realization and the collective awareness of their social reality of the religion that tyrannizes and alienates them from their God, and the Empire that terrorizes them and reduces them to nonbeings. Specifically, he sees Jesus as the new Moses, the liberator-emissary, whose ultimate goal is the absolute liberation of the oppressed against the systemic violence and religious fundamentalism. He relentlessly fought these systems because they enslaved and dehumanized the poor, the people of God, by forcefully placing them in a state of alienation from God and from each other. As Aristide (1993:71) maintains, "His intervention for the liberation of the oppressed constitutes implicitly or explicitly a protest against oppression" ("*Son intervention pour la libération de l'opprimé*

constitute implicitement ou explicitement une protestation contre l'oppression.”) It is imperative that the oppressed are set free, Aristide insists (“*Il faut absolument que les opprimés soient mis en liberté.*”) (Aristide, 1993:72)

Furthermore, for Aristide, Jesus' Gospel of liberation to the poor is set out to revolutionize the existing social order with implications to radically transform this present social order. Jesus seeks to renovate relations between men and women, the poor and the rich, the oppressed and oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited. The thrust of the matter pertaining to the irruption of the Kingdom of God is social justice, social equality and emancipation for the poor and the oppressed.

Another equally important text that expresses liberative theme for Aristide is Matthew 11:4-5, which we have already introduced in the first section of the essay. Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1993:72) suggests that Jesus' announcement was both prophetic and emancipative, signaling the swift penetration of God's kingdom in human history on behalf of those who have been under “the threat of profound social and psychological displacement.” He describes this singular messianic phenemon in these striking words : “*Ecrasés sous le poids du désespoir, ces pauvres ont enfin rencontre le Fils de David en sa Personne…En lui agit L'Esprit de Dieu. La libération des aveugles, des boiteux, des malades, annonce l'arrivée du Règne. L'axe libérateur est désormais tracé*” (“Crushed under the weight of despair, these poor have finally encountered the Son of David in his person...In him, the Spirit of God was active. The liberation of the blind, the lame, and the sick announces the arrival of the Kingdom. The liberator axis is now drawn.”) (Aristide, 1993: 59-60).

Aristide's inference brings us to the possible conclusion that Jesus intended his message to be directed specifically to the socially-oppressed and the socially-marginalized groups, and the

63

cast-down people. It is a preferential message for the poor to whom the good news of God through Jesus the Messiah-Liberator is addressed in fresh and creative ways. Because all evil is projected upon the oppressed community, whenever Jesus' spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage and muster up resistance to oppression; for he announced the good news that fear, alienation, hostility, self-hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need to have to no dominion over them (Thurman, 1996:29). Therefore, the coming of the Son of David in the flesh also means that the oppressed will experience

> a veritable resurrection of the self and a violent exorcism of the demons of self-hatred and self-destruction which have possessed them and the resurrection of autonomy and self-esteem, as well as the discovery of a new power and possibility of community with their own brothers and sisters in suffering. Through anger and pride the oppressed community receives the power to transcend self-hatred and recover a sense of integral personhood…In their revolt against [the oppressive system], they can thus become the prophetic community, which witnesses against the false empire of the "beast" and points to "God's Kingdom." (Ruether, 1972:11).

Aristide's critical commentaries on these aforementioned passages (Matthew 11:4-5; Mark 12:42-43; Luke 4:18-19, 14:13, 21) are critical, which might suggest a hermeneutical consensus on the rhetoric ("the poor") between biblical scholars and Liberationist theologians. He reasons that Jesus has not only called his disciples "to remember the poor," he himself has voluntarily walked the road of the martyr for the liberation of the oppressed. Theoretically, he has termed this liberative act of the Christ-event "evangelical violence." He could also declares, "By evangelical violence, we hear this incredible courage bringing Jesus to consciously take the path of martyrdom for the liberation of oppressed" ("*Par violence évangélique, nous entendons ce courage inouï qui porte Jésus à prendre consciemment le chemin du martyre pour la libération des opprimés*.") (Aristide, 1994:72). Aristide's conclusive deduction leads us to think more deeply and critically about the social ethic and social agenda of the Messiah-Liberator for the socially unfortunate and

socially vulnerable, as well as for those who were without honor and social prestige. By implication, Aristide may have hinted that the life, deeds, and the supremely liberating significance of Jesus' resurrection was one singular historic option for the poor; through this triadic-Christocentric event, God in Christ was actively seeking the liberation of the oppressed (Boff and Boff, 1988:7).

There is a sense to say that the resurrection—the final act of in the Christological triad—of Jesus has now become God's active commitment to liberation and historic option for the poor. Jesus Christ (Aristide, 1994:81-2). As Leonardo Boff (1986: 67-8) reminds us the fundamental attitude of Jesus is freedom, and as Aristide (1993: 53) maintains, "The cross of Jesus Christ is a cross of liberation." Persistently, he continues to remind us that the Bible is God's good news to the poor and the marginalized; more than ever a message of liberation, it proclaims loudly liberty for those who are oppressed and those who are deprived of it.

Furthermore, Aristide prompts us to remember that Jesus' liberative project on behalf of the most vulnerable and miserably poor transcends his personal goals. Aristide pursues his emancipative rhetoric of liberation theology by stressing forcefully the epistemological privilege of the poor in the Kingdom of God: *"Good News. For the Poor, it is a message of joy, peace, love, in short, a message that can make them happy. For them, the proclamation of this Good News marks an evolutionary step"* (1994:67). If the poor were the primary target of Jesus' liberative preaching and teaching, then they must have been his friends and support groups, as well as the subject of Jesus' history and special recipients of his prophetic word. As Aristide (1993:109) pronounces, "Always present in the biblical tradition, the poor became, in company of Jesus, not an object of charity but a subject of his history" *("Toujours présent dans la tradition biblique, le pauvre devient, en compagnie de Jésus, non un objet de charité mais un sujet de son histoire.")*.

In other words, in the divine economy and revelation, God has given priority to the oppressed and the less-privileged in society.

For Aristide (1992:24, 34), the voice of the poor is the very voice of God; he insists that the poor are mediators of divine revelation: "God speaks through the poor. Listening to the voice of the poor is in fact to fill oneself up with God himself" ("*Dieu parle à travers les pauvres. Plus on écoute la voix des pauvres, plus on se remplit de Dieu*"). Since God's presence is always active and omnipresent in the reality of the oppressed, Aristide tells us that God also continues to burst on the human scene through the poor; and this phenomenon explains the whole of the Biblical narrative: "From the Old to New Testament, we never cease to find this God in the heart of life of the poor… The God of Jesus Christ continues to burst onto the human stage through the poor" ("*De l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament, nous ne cessons de retrouver ce Dieu au cœur de vie du pauvre…Le Dieu de Jésus-Christ continue de faire irruption sur la scène humaine, à travers le pauvre.*") (Aristide: 1992: 88). If God so dwells in the humble state of the poor and in the fragility of their life, then it is not a stretch for Aristide to presuppose that the collective humanity is made bigger and could be better understood through the dramatic experience of the poor. Reciprocally, this divine closeness and the active and omnipresence of God allow God himself to "understand the greatness of man through the poor (*"de comprendre la grandeur de l'humain a travers le pauvre"* (Ibid). Here Aristide is not advocating the inherent goodness of humanity nor is he suggesting that man and woman are intrinsically great; rather, he is saying that we can achieve greatness only and if we participate in the fellowship of God mediated exclusively in the experience of the oppressed.

Aristide's own expression of a theology of social activism and a theology of economic redistribution because of the fact of the suffering poor is also communicated through this particular

theological framework: the God-poor encounter. "The poor who welcome the spirit of God is light for every man and every woman wrapped in the thickness of an economic wealth" ("*Le pauvre qui s'ouvre à l'esprit de Dieu se fait lumière pour tout homme et toute femme enveloppés dans l'épaisseur d'une richesse économique"*). (Aristide: 1992: 88). He sees the rich being blinded by economic greed; therefore, they are unable to understand the reality of the poor and hear the voice of God through them. I want to reproduce in full Aristide's statement so the reader might get a better understanding of this form of theological rhetoric and advocacy, as well as Aristide's serious engagement with the reality of the poor and the reality of the rich:

> *Dieu fait irruption à travers l'homme qui se sacrifie par amour pour lui. L'homme pauvre habite par dieu devient riche. L'homme riche qui se sacrifice pour s'approcher du pauvre devient riche. Cette proximité lui permet de comprendre la grandeur de l'humain à travers le pauvre. Et le pauvre qui s'ouvre à l'esprit de Dieu se fait lumière pour tout homme et toute femme enveloppé dans l'épaisseur d'une richesse économique.* (Aristide, 1992:88-89)

> [God broke through the man who sacrifices himself lovingly for his sake. The poor man who is open to the spirit of God is light for every man and every woman wrapped in the thickness of an economic wealth. This proximity allows him to understand the greatness of humanity through the poor. And the poor who opens to the spirit of God is light for every man and every woman wrapped in the thickness of economic wealth.]

> *C'est une épaisseur de richesse matérielle qui empêche les yeux du riche de transpercer le matériel pour découvrir le spirituel. Certes, nous ne voulons établir aucune dichotomie entre le matériel et le spirituel, mais nous sommes persuadé que celui qui s'accroche à l'argent, aux richesses matérielles, sans les placer sur échelle de valeurs, pour grandir comme le pauvre en s'ouvrant aux valeurs de justice, de liberté et d'amour, bien pauvre se fait celui-là. Le sacrifice à offrir consiste à reconnaitre ses limites, s'accepter comme un être limité pour capter la voix de Dieu à travers celle du pauvre.* (Aristide: 1992: 88).

> [It is the thickness of material wealth that prevents the eyes of the rich to transcend the material in order to discover the spiritual. Certainly, we don't want to establish any dichotomy between the material and the spiritual; however, we are persuaded that whoever clings to money and material riches, without placing them on a scale of values, and to grow as the poor by embracing openly the values of justice, liberty, and love, does exactly that. The sacrifice to offer is to recognize his limitations and accept himself as a limited being who is unable to capture the voice of God through that of the poor.]

Those who fellowship with the poor, Aristide reports, are blessed because the poor themselves are blessed and the Kingdom of God is for the poor ("*Heureux sont ceux qui communient dans les pauvres car ainsi ils transforment le sacrifice en fait…Oui ils sont heureux les pauvres et le royaume de Dieu est à eux*") (Aristide, 1992:89, 91). Daniel Levine (1988:245) remarks through the lens of a hermeneutical position, "The poor have something of special value for theology and for religion generally…the basic interlocutor of liberation theology is therefore the poor…Liberation theology commits itself to listening to the poor and learning about the world as they see and experience it."

It is in respect that Aristide could argue forcefully that the school of the poor is the chosen zone of divine revelation, and God discloses himself fully in the manifold experiences of the oppressed: "The school of the poor is a privileged site of the revelation of God, historical subject of that struggle for the integral liberation of humanity" (Aristide, 1993:192). He also underscores that "Through their voice, God continues to take human form in order to denounce injustice" (Aristide, 1994:88). As he states elsewhere, "When the people are there, God is there. God speaks through the people's voice," that is the voice of the poor" (1990:89). The will of the people is also the will of God. The people are the poor, and the poor are the people of God. Or as he states elsewhere in a sermon directed to the Haitian poor and the oppressed class, "I see you speaking for the Lord. I hear the Lord's voice in your voice" (Ibid: 102).

In Aristide's politico-theological writings, the unfortunate and underrepresented individuals are portrayed as agents of liberation. Their role as activists and custodians of human dignity and human rights in global history and the narrative of human freedom is strikingly magisterial and heroic. While his circle of influence on this matter is many and cross-disciplinary, Aristide's writings on the subject of humanity has been influenced heavily by the biblical teaching

on creation theology that the individual is a special creation of God. As already demonstrated in previous analysis, he has identified with the Latin American movement of liberation theology. He puts accent on the transformative role of Scripture in society and in the life of the individual. Aristide's intellectual work seeks to achieve holistic peace and improve both civil and political societies in Haiti toward a more just democratic egalitarianism and communitarianism. In writing his autobiography in 1992, he confirms his affinity and enthusiasm for the Christian Scriptures in this passage:

> As for the Bible, I have read it through thirty-some times. The first reading is mixed up in in my mind with learning to read. I return to it always in response to a thought, or a   search, and I am engulfed by it. It is as if each time I am reading for the first time. I even take pleasure in comparing translations, especially since my period of residence in Israel. With each translation a new approach is born. (Aristide, 1993:41)

The Bible was the central book in Aristide's life, as it has equally shaped the mind of the faith and life of the soul. Aristide asserts the transformative power of the Biblical text in this language: "The gospel in its raw form could act like a stick of dynamite" (Ibid: 43). Through the message of the Bible, Aristide was creating both the imagined community and the experiential community. In his understanding of the family, Aristide's idea goes beyond the biological family to embrace an inclusive community of individuals constituting the natural members of his own family, distant relatives, friends, and even strangers—revealing his practice of *Ubuntu* on the Haitian soil.

> Our lodgings were always more properly a household than a house. We never lived alone, just we three, a mother and two children. We were never less than ten people under one roof: family members, cousins (sometimes quite distantly related), but for the most part friends peasants from the hill country in search of a roof for the night, a month, or even longer. The house was full. It was there that I found the sense of, or rather the taste for, community I feel even today that brotherhood and sisterhood are something authentically biblical. (Aristide, 1993:41)

As will be observed in subsequent chapters on the African concept of the person, the biblical influence on his understanding of the collective self is the embodiment of the community; grounded on a revolutionary Christology, it is indicative in this language below:

> When Jesus defined his sisters and brothers not as those who came from the womb of his Mother, but as his companions, I felt myself molded by those words, immersed in their practice. They were all my brothers and sisters, just as my companions in struggle would later be, both the young intellectuals and the starving people from the slums. (Aristide, 1993:41)

In his well-researched study, *The Historical Jesus the Life of A Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, prominent New Testament scholar Dominican Crossan discusses in great detail Jesus' inclusive orientation to different groups of people meaning his leaning toward radical egalitarianism, open commensality, and generous tolerance toward all individuals of different social and economic stratum. Aristide (1993:51) himself has declared that "The Bible, more than ever a message of liberation, proclaimed liberty for those who are deprived of it." The Christological premise for Aristide's argument here is based on the exemplary life, and practices of Jesus. The historical Jesus he had modelled for his followers radical love and the importance of relationship, mutual reciprocity, selflessness, and walking in fellowship with the community of faith.

Another strength of theological power lies in its basis in community, which goes far Beyond individuals or a single people. We see in the Bible the community's ability to share life and thereby make life better; and we see the same reality in Haiti, where the community is trying to improve life, to change the current situation so as to give a direction to history. Jesus did that in his life. Common people met with Jesus in the practice of community. This was not a community in theory, but in practice; people were actively living that which was in their blood, in their minds, in their hearts. (Aristide, 1993:166)

2.6. ARISTIDE'S INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

In addition to the Biblical text, Aristide's affinity to the secular humanist tradition has radically transformed his theological outlook and theological anthropology. This particular information is key to this project as we seek to better understand some of Aristide's intellectual descents which had impressed his intellectual life and theological reflections. Because of its compatibility of the Judeo-Christian faith, Aristide subscribes to the virtues of liberalism and the standard liberal commitments, which James T. Kloppenberg has aptly summarized here:

> The liberal virtues of law abidingness, honesty, and moderation, for example, echo certain of the commandments handed down through Moses. The liberal virtues of tolerance, respect generosity, and benevolence likewise extend St. Paul's admonition to the Colossians that they should practice forbearance, patience, kindness, and charity. One might argue that even the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, which Christians understand with reference to their deity, bear more than a faint resemblance to the liberal virtues of trusting others, resolutely resisting cynicism, and attempting to find ways to help others flourish. (Kloppenberg, 1998: 6)

It is probable that some individuals would argue that liberal virtues are secularized Christian virtues, and therefore, include the academic study of theology in any inquiry into modern thought. Others would contend that while Judeo-Christianity and Liberalism share some parallel ideas, their origin or source differs greatly from each other. Some individuals may even have suggested that evidence in the Coffin and Pyramid texts, and early writings of the Egyptians and Sumerians reveal a pre-Abrahamic tradition. Our conviction is that the Judeo-Christian God claims to be the ground of morality and ethical values. Human morality is originated from God who is both Triune and Eternal. That does not mean, however, there were/are not existing parallel ethical systems in various religious traditions and cultures. The question, however, we must respond to is this: who is the source of morality? Who is the source of all moral goodness? We concur that all moral goodness and ethical virtues have their ultimate source in the Judeo-Christian God. Since

71

the objective of this chapter is not to investigate the source of human morality, let us now return to further Aristide's intellectual circles.

Arguably, Aristide's circle of influence is numerous and encompasses both Western and non-Western, Christian and non-Christian sources. In his autobiography, he admits the incredibly intellectual effects of the cosmopolitanism of Haitian radical thinkers Jacques Roumain and Jacques Stephen, and the influential Haitian poets Etzer Vilaire and Oswald Durand on his own intellectual development (Aristide, 1992:41); the political theory and theistic humanism of Blaise Pascal and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "Pascal and Jean-Jacques Rousseau left their mark on me" (Ibid: 30-40); the humanistic and philosophical theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; the experimental and religious psychology of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud (Aristide, 1994:19-23; 2008:xxv-xxvi) (In particular, he notes that the writings and ideas of Freud had assisted him in deeping his knowledge of liberation theology [Ibid:50]); in his reading of Latin American literature, he disovered both a philosophical worldview and theological system, and further became aware of the antagonism between the exploiter and the exploited, and the ambivalent dynamics between the colonized and the colonizer, the Developing Nations and the Developed Nations (1993:41). About these notable thinkers, he asserts candidly: "I found an atmosphere that allowed me to understand and to be reborn" (Aristide, 1993:40). Following Rousseau's philosophical reasoning on the human nature, Aristide (1993:30) confirms, "The human being is good within his or her limits and sometimes puts a foot on the bad side—tentatively, always tentatively." Furthermore, of particular interest, he recounts his intellectual journeys which had also radicalized his theological anthropology and humanistic philosophy:

> After leaving the seminary I devoted more time to philosophers and theologians. The thought of Gabriel Marcel, who affirmed that the human being in his or her body and soul, responded to my theological vision, which was itself enlightened by Leonardo Boff, Ruby Eres, and so many Americans. (Aristide, 1993:41)

Furthermore, Aristide covets the nonviolence philosophy and collective resistance theory of charismatic leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. He dubs these civil and human rights advocates "remarkable people, genuine prophets of struggle" (Aristide, 1993: 107). He has deep admiration for Fidel Castro, Salvador Allende, Jean-Marie Djibaou, Che Guevara whose wisdom and determination were instrumental in leading their people to independence from Western imperialism and whose popular demands involved "the promise of bread, justice and respect" for their people (Aristide, 1993:125-6). Aristide (1993:126) champions human virtues such as "the values of beauty, dignity, respect, and love," exemplified in the lives of these corresponding individuals. In addition, about Aime Cesaire of the Negritude movement, he pronounces, "rarely had a politician, also a sage known to all, made such an impression on me" (Aristide, 1996:90-1). (In his early tenure as a president of Haiti, Aristide (1996:91) visited Martinique to meet with Aimé Césaire, the political leader of the country. He spoke with great admiration of Cesaire in these words, "I had long been imbued with the work of this singer of Caribbean negritude and impressed by fifty years of political combat in the service of his own and so many other oppressed peoples. The young president found himself face to face with one of his masters.")

In addition, Aristide confirms the historic role of other leading thinkers of the French Revolution of 1789 such as Maximilien Robespierre and Abbe Gregoire, whose vision about human liberation was global and transnational. For Aristide, not only Martin Luther King advocated the value of human freedom and agency, he used nonviolence strategy as a revolutionary force to mobilize black and white Americans to fight for the civil rights of all Americans and to demand racial justice and equality. As he remarks in his autobiography:

One of the principal forces at work, when one uses nonviolence, consists in its strange

power of transformation, transforming individuals who accept this discipline and find
themselves invested with a mission whose scope surpasses their own vision. They become,
for the first time, somebody and that they have, for the first, the courage to be free.
(Aristide, 1996:92)

Like Martin Luther King, Aristide believes in the ability of the individual and the
community to work together to enact radical social change and, correspondingly, to alter their
destiny and chart in the present a new course of future possibilities toward the common good.
Nonetheless, the most influential person in his life and the one who has taught him to value and
love people, to love justice and peace, and be relational to all individuals was his maternal
grandfather, an illiterate and a land-owning peasant in the Haitian society. He informs us that this
man "shared his life and lands with those who had none…insisting that everyone should work and
sacrifice to make the land fruitful: a land that everyone had ardently cultivated and whose fruits
everyone, whether an owner or not, could share according to his or her needs" (Aristide, 1993:27-
8).

It seems that Aristide has embraced the promises of socialism and perhaps Marxism. He
denied that he was a Marxist or communist, but does affirm that he was partly influenced by the
ideas of Marxism.

I have certainly been accused of being a bad Catholic (priest) or a demagogic politician, one
Who praises communism. I respond quite simply that Marxism is not a source of inspiration
for me. Instead, the texts of Marx constitute one tool among others to which I may have
recourse. To flee from or ignore any philosophy is prove onself a cretin. (1993:68)

Elsewhere, he asserts that Marx's idea of a class struggle since the beginning of human
history is a social reality in the Haitian experience: "I did not invent class struggle, no more than
Karl Marx did" (1993:106). However, Aristide's socialist leaning, influenced Marxist philosophy,
is well-established. Early in his upbringing, Aristide had already adhered to the idea of
communitarian existence and later on in his years of exile in South Africa, he subscribed to the

74

philosophy of Ubuntu. The maternal grandfather had instilled in the young Aristide the value and promise of democratic socialism, communitarianism, and democratic idealism, as well as representative populism. As he himself testifies:

> He was working the land with the others, a land he shared with those how had none. Although he never heard and, consequently, never used the word, he behaved like a socialist. This respected man played the role of justice of the peace. They brought to his house people who had been arrested, sometimes bearing the marks of blows. Their crime? They had stolen a potato, a banana. That same evening, at the risk of looking bad in the eyes of the oppressors, he would release them, saying "They too the potato because they were hungry; they have a right to it." My grandfather wanted to be certain that everyone in the hills of Port-Salut ate at least once a day. He knew that the real thieves were not the ones who were brought before him. This humanist was revolted by injustice, whether of birth or of life I did not have to look far for the sources of my inspiration, the feeling of revolt that began to move me when my conscience was stirred during my adolescence. (Aristide, 1996:27)

Comparatively, it is noteworthy to bring to the reader's attention that Aristide has also learned from his heroic maternal grandfather the importance to strive for moral justice and social equity for all. To be truly human means to practice justice, live righteously, and to despise oppression and injustices. The political climate in Haiti, characterized by totalitarianism and authoritarianism, "consisted in reducing human beings to a sub-human status" (Aristide, 1996:59). This is a helpful hint for us to grasp the significance of the social and political milieu in which Aristide's politico-anthropological discourse was birthed, developed, and even transformed. To be truly human, according to Aristide's logic, is to love and always seek the interest of others, and the public good. These things are foundational markers of Aristide's anthropological ethics and philosophy.

> The word "justice" was constantly on his lips. My grandfather did not know how to read or write, but he expressed moral and transcendental values better than the greatest books. His love for others shone in his eyes when he left fly at me, while shaving himself in the morning: "You cannot count the hairs in my beard, but you can count the people here who are suffering from injustice…" (Aristide, 1996:27)

In this vantage point, family life is about community; it is also a life bound by love and generous compassion, as well as characterized by serving and sharing with others belonging to the community. This ethics of relationality, the longing to be interconnected and interdependent, and the desire to be *in* the community and *with* the people in the community—the very practice of *Ubuntu*—is exhibited in this rhetorical language: "I cannot conceive myself in any way but as filled by others. I must have other people beside me. Even more: I need for them to be within me. Communion with others means entering into them in their totality. Communion is communication" (Aristide, 1993:39). Even in the realm of political diplomacy, he enunciates a parallel approach for the interdependence of the nations and the cooperative affiliation among peoples and cultures in the world; such attitude transgresses geographical territorial borders, and conventional politics:

> We are all of us involved in the relationship of civilization. If one person suffers somewhere, it matters little where he or she is, for it is all humanity that suffers. If we are concerned to establish a relationship with that person, we do not speak of assistance, but of sharing, of cooperation. The one who suffers has something to bring me, something to teach me. The contribution of the one matches the contribution of the other and excludes any kind of Superiority complex. In giving, you receive; in receiving, you give. (Aristide, 1993:145)

On the other hand, giving the rhetorical force of the statement below, for many people, Aristide's sense of secular humanism or humanistic anthropology, and his strategic approach to cope with life's uncertainties or aggressively engage the fragility of human existence in the modern world would be seen as a forthright denial of theistic humanism.

> The unity of a people on behalf of justice is a power that cannot be conquered forever. Human beings, on the other hand, are mortal. I have often said that the people should not rely on miracles; there is not magic wand or wonder-worker who can create plenty. The only miracle is the raising of the people's consciousness of their own power, and the taking of their destiny into their own hands. We have to take what the privileged few want to keep for themselves alone…The miracle is the responsibility of women and men to take control

76

of their future; it␣s never the simple waiting of a people who are resigned. (Aristide, 1993:86, 121)

We would like to propose an alternative reading of Aristide's dictum. Aristide's anthropological humanism should be best understood within the framework of the theory of retributive justice and democratic egalitarianism, which would ultimately lead to collective solidarity efforts for the sake of ending human oppression, violence, and social evils. Aristide's language is a rhetoric of empowerment, and an expression of political resistance to the despotic force. Elsewhere, in his influential text *Dignity*, he relays this conviction against popular cynicism and political death, and authoritarian totalitarianism that described both the Haitian civil and political societies in the era of the Duvalier regime. His objective was to mobilize the Haitian people toward collective self-agency, determination, and political liberation:

> Progress is the progress of humanity. Through education and love. I love, therefore I am. There is no force superior to humankind. You do not hide, you do not resign when attacked. You resist. This is the way chosen by the majority in the Haitian church, priests and Laypersons, so many others. Those in the *tilegliz* do not accept the law of science. Through their voice, God continues to take human form in order to denounce injustice. (Aristide, 1996:88)

In this particular passage, Aristide was denouncing a list of political transgressions and social sins that had kept the people of Haiti from advancing toward social progress and the democratic life:

> Everything that constitutes a violation of the human person, like mutilation, physical and moral torture, psychological constraint; everything that offends the dignity of man, like subhuman conditions of life, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution— all these practices and their analogues are in reality infamous. (Ibid)

Moreover, Aristide sees such violations of human rights as the very denial of the principles of human interconnectedness and interactionality. When an individual oppresses another individual by inflicting pain and suffering, he/she fails to practice the spirit of Ubuntu.

77

2.7. ARISTIDE'S MINISTERIAL FORMATION OR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Aristide's close companions in struggle consisted of the post-Duvalier emerging Haitian intellectuals, left-ring radicals, and the starving and oppressed people from the slums of the capital city of Port-au-Prince, whom he regarded as his true brothers and sisters. For him, these individuals who made up of different communities in the Haitian society were the real fighters for Haiti's emancipation from both the Duvalier regime and Western imperialism. Aristide learned about to care for the poor and to be in solidarity with the oppressed, and to defend the rights of those who are weak, powerless, the disadvantaged, and the economically- disenfranchised people from his seminary education which he received according to the Salesian order. Catholic theology and its social teachings have significantly shaped Aristide's theology of the poor, his ethics of governance, and political vision. His early theological formation as a priest may have impacted his later theological development or his political theology. Aristide received theological formation in four different geographical locations: Haiti, Canada, Rome, and Israel. Each of these locations has expanded his theological contours and molded his politico-theological conviction. Aristide's theological formation and ministerial training can be summarized in one representative phrase: "a concern for others," which he called "a priestly virus" (1993:28). At the seminary, he had learned about the value of community and how the notion of brotherhood and sisterhood has a strong biblical basis (31).

Aristide was five years old when he was enrolled in *Fondation Vincent Salésien de Don Bosco*—a preparatory school of the Salesian brothers for the priestly vocation. While the student body was predominantly Haitian, the faculty body was chiefly composed of men (Fathers) from

France, Belgium, and Italy, who served as both priests and educators (33-4). Aristide would remain there until the age of fourteen. Aristide's theological education and ministerial formation can be summarized in these key concepts that have profound (value on) life application, social interactions, and human relations: community, self-denial, solidarity, brotherhood, unity, and service to the poor.

The future priests were inculcated in a rigorous pedagogy and constructive curriculum that taught them the importance of civic participation as a mark of good citizenship leading to human flourishing and social betterment. The ultimate goal was to prepare the students to live meaningfully both as good Christians and citizens of the country. The students received a broad education that was not limited to "intellectual knowledge, but was open to the surrounding milieu" (34). Although the Fathers-Teachers avoided politics in their daily teaching and conversations with the priestly-students, in their homilies/sermons, they routinely addressed the social problems the country and the Haitian people were confronting. While students were forbidden to engage in Haiti's political topics, the Fathers taught them to live in solidarity with one another and encouraged them to be (future) protagonists of social transformation in the Haitian society. One should not understand that political speech was considered subversive at the seminary; as Aristide clarifies, "Political or social allusions were never direct, but *sotto voice*" (34). For example, the name of Duvalier was not overtly spoken in conversations. By contrast, Aristide also informs us that some of the teachers preached unreservedly against the Duvalier regime; as a result, "Fathers Desir, Simon, Volel, and undoubtedly were threatened for raising their voices…They called from the pulpit for a movement toward the solution of social problems" (34-5). Catholic theological teaching interprets lottery (*borlette*) and any games of chance as immorality and contributing

factors to social problems; for the Fathers, "they masked deeper injustices.'Lord Jesus, deliver us from the cyclone borlette!'" (34)—a common prayer from the lips of the Fathers.

Aristide entered the Salesian seminary at Cap Haitien—the second largest city in Haiti—in 1966. Aristide describes the social interactions in the seminary between the students and the Fathers and the students as that of a community bonded together in love, unity, service, and sharing. Aristide construes [this] life of communion "with others means entering into them in their totality" (39). Mutual reciprocity and interdependence are fundamental characteristics of Aristide's seminary life. The strength of an authentic theological education and ministerial formation lies in the power of the community, which transcends Western individualism.

> With the Salesians we were comrades, and we lived like fathers, sons and brothers. There was a rapport that was friendly, fraternal, and familial, and a feeling of sharing throughout every day the things that were most true. In short, it was a very Christian reality in the biblical sense. (Ibid: 37)

The biblical faith fosters a community in which people from different sectors of society come together, under the banner of Christian solidarity, to do life together, and be able "to share life and thereby make life better; and we see the same reality in Haiti, where the community is trying to improve life, to change the current situation so as to give a direction to history" (Ibid: 166). The Salesian theologian-teachers promoted the life and deeds of Jesus as an exemplary model to follow. The ultimate objective for these seminarians is to reflect Christ's character in their conduct, everyday interactions with each other, and ultimately in their social interactions beyond the walls of the seminary. They were to imitate Jesus in all things as to improve the human condition in the society in which they live: "Jesus did that in his life. Common people met with Jesus in the practice of community. This was not just a community in theory, but in practice; people were actively living that which was in their blood, in their minds, in their hearts" (Ibid). These

young seminarians were taught to materialize Jesus' ministry model in the context of Haiti's civil and political society.

As a politician, Aristide attempted to implement the moral vision and ethical deeds of Jesus into the political life and governance. He would incorporate the values of Jesus and Catholic theology of justice and liberation into his grassroots movements and the ecclesiastical based-communities in Haiti. Aristide links Jesus' self-sacrifice ethics to the self-giving life of the Haitian people who have been slaughtered by thousands by the Duvalier regime for the cause of justice.

> Though there are 2, 000 years separating us, the Haitian community today follows the same movement, the same communion, as Jesus' community. We saw death in Jesus' time, too. Then, they killed people who thirsted for justice. They do the same in Haiti today. "They" refers to those who control the political keys without showing how strong the theological keys are. (1993:166)

Fundamentally, Aristide's ministerial and theological education was reduced to the basic idea of community and serving the needing and the poor. The Fathers taught the seminarians about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood or common humanity of all people, entailing the biblical imperative to bear one another's burden (Gal. 6:2). As Aristide reflects:

> It is God's will that we share with the poor. It is God's will that children should love and help their friends. These simple lessons drew me toward those who were hungry, with whom I could share. Here was a theological strength that allowed me to grow up without being totally crushed by the silence of the dictatorship. (1993:36)

A life characterized by human solidarity and compassion and acts of generosity, self-denial, and care for the poor is a life that God honors. The priestly life at Notre Dame secondary school in Cap-Haitian marks an important journey in Aristide's ministerial and spiritual formation, demanding the following routine:

> What did that mean? There were conferences, Mass every evening, the director's daily talk "the evening word," which, either encouraging or critical, completed our formation. In short, it was a family life shared by about twenty or thirty Haitian novices. (38)

81

Notheless, emphasis on charity was the catalyst of the seminary education authenticated by the deliberate pursuit to encounter and serve the poor; in the Salesians order, the seminarians are particularly instructed to be sensitive to poverty, as John Bosco, its founder, devoted his life to caring, serving, and educating street children, destitute youth, and juvenile felons (Ibid:38). At the seminary, Aristide and his classmates were inclined to imagine the poor as "starving vagabonds than outsiders who have lost everything but their dignity—although these latter make up the majority of Haitians" (ibid). Thinking about the poor in such a broad category will later inform Aristide's theology of the poor.

Because of his academic success and intellectual aptitude at the Seminary, in the summer 1979, the Salesian superiors recommended Aristide to go to Israel to deepen his ministerial education in Biblical studies. In Israel, Aristide would learn Biblical Hebrew and Arabic, and conduct research in the fields of Biblical archeology, linguistic, and biblical research. He completed three years (1979-1982) training in biblical studies for a doctorate in theology. In his careful observation of the ambivalent interactions between Jews and Palestinians and the violent clashes between these two communities, Aristide's political theology would encompass the violence and consequences of imperialism, colonialism, and racism, on a global scale. He concludes that Jews, Palestinians, and Haitians shared a common denominator: they suffered under the same forces of oppression (1993:47). In that summer 1979, Aristide had reflected upon two challenging questions, which would modify his later theological development and (political) governance, as well as his position on popular violence and defensive violence: "How can we identify the oppressors without turn them against us? How can we respond to violence with nonviolence?" (Ibid: 47).

Upon his return to Haiti in 1982, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Romelus on July 3, 1982 and would subsequently appointed provisionally as the new Pastor of the St. Joseph parish in Port-au-Prince (Ibid: 48-9). The Salesian authorities recommended Aristide to a pastoral institute in Canada for pastoral reorientation and theological reprogramming, as both were specializations at the institute. According to Aristide, the Canadian society suffered three great social problems: class, race, nationalism—which would also inform his theological discourse: "Quebec seemed to me to be a society of very obvious social classes. National antagonism played a major role, and this was sometimes translated into a feeling of superiority towards blacks" (49). From Aristide's point of view, the state of the Catholic Church in Quebec was somewhat comparable to the role of the Catholic Church in Haiti. However, the Quebecois Catholic Church was moving progressively toward radical secularism—the enemy of theism:

> The Catholic Church was in a genuine state of collapse: there were no young people at Mass, and only few old people. Meanwhile, the church basements were converted into bingo halls overflowing with people! I thought of my teacher's denunciations of the immorality of the lottery. Here, the cyclone borlette had almost replaced the Eucharist, and within the very temple itself…In that society, the church has finally succeeded in killing God. (49-50)

Finally, the ministerial and theological curriculum of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's seminary would have included the classic texts of Catholic Social Doctrine (also known as Catholic Social Teaching). These cardinal principles of the Catholic Church were universally accepted by global Catholicism, and were used as a manual for the priestly vocation. The universal catholic social teaching is divided in seven broad categories: (1) Life and Dignity of the Human Person, (2) Call to Family, Community, and Participation, (3) Rights and Responsibilities, (4), Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, (5) The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, (6) Solidarity, and (7) Care for God's Creation. This body of teaching is prevalent in Aristide's theological and political

writings. They form the basis for Aristide's "Ten Commandments of Democracy" and his entire politico-theological worldview. Aristide's theological corpus incorporates these categories conservatively and concepts such as human dignity, rights, duties, education, community, church, development, economic justice, work, peace, social justice, and the option for the poor are fundamentally associated with the universal Catholic social teaching. According to John T. Richardson (2015:vii), these sets of teachings serve "as an invitation to delve deeper into the vast and growing treasury of writings on social justice…[and] invite a personal acceptance of the values of the documents, deeper than an intellectual understandings." Nonetheless, "concerns of justice and care for people in need always constituted an important concern for the church throughout its history" (Curran, 2002:3).

The emphasis on "teaching" as the title of these documents indicates accentuates the significance of transmitting (the value of) this body of texts to the subsequent generation, as well as preserving this rich heritage of the Catholic Church toward the spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and moral development of Catholic Christians and ministers. These rich textual documents embody the articulation of Catholic theological anthropology and Catholic theological ethics. Catholic social teaching and Catholic social ethics have their foundation in the Biblical tradition; while the Bible is the founding source for the Catholic Social Doctrine, it is not the only source. For example, the work of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) have substantially shaped this body of work; as Curran (2002:3) remarks, "Aquinas provided a lasting orientation for Catholic teaching through his dialogue with and incorporation of many Aristotelian perspectives, especially the anthropological basis for social ethics."

As previously mentioned, in 1958, Aristide was only five years old (He was born in July 15, 1953 in Port-Salut.) when he was sent to *Fondation Vincent Salésien de Don Bosco* to be prepared

84

for the priestly vocation. At an early age, before adolescence, he was introduced to the universal Catholic Social Teaching to the last day of his ministerial formation when he was ordained in 1982. Consequently, the papal documents on social teaching Aristide would have been acquainted with and which would have shaped his ministerial and theological education dates from 1891 to 1981. The first official document on Catholic social teaching was released in 1891 by Pope Leo XII; it is entitled *Rerum Novarum*: "The Conditions of Labor." The final official document on the subject matter, before leaving seminary, which Aristide has informed Aristide's theological corpus was written by Pope John Paul II; it is entitled *Laborem exercens*: "On Human Work." In Appendix I, we have provided excerpts and key passages from the classic documents of Catholic Social Teaching that have informed Aristide's political theology, theological anthropology, and theological ethics. We have organized the Appendix thematically to demonstrate possible textual connections and parallels, as well as convergences and confluences with Aristide's own writings on similar subjects. The extracted texts date from 1891 to 1981.

2.8. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Aristide's close companions in struggle consisted of a post-Duvalier emerging Haitian intellectuals, and the starving and oppressed people from the slums of the capital city of Port-au-Prince, whom he regarded as his true brothers and sisters. This chapter has argued that to care for and feed the poor, the needy, the orphan, the alien, the homeless, and the widow is an integral aspect of the Judeo-Christian ethics and human solidarity. The command is inherent in the biblical narrative of God's active commitment to restoring humanity, the broken-hearted, and the oppressed, and is also a pivotal aspect of the social ministry and theological activism of the (historical) Jesus of the Gospel. Early Christian writings have clearly demonstrated how the early

followers of Jesus Christ were also committed to the cause of the most afflicted and the underclass in their society; they actively engaged their culture by caring for the least among them, and defending their rights to exist. This Judeo-Christian tradition has substantially influenced Aristide's theology of the poor, theological ethics and anthropology, and his unrelenting activism for the welfare and integration of this excluded group in society. Consequently, we have demonstrated the biblical premise for Aristide's own theological development. The next chapter considers more fully Aristide's theology of relationality and reciprocity, and ethics of human co-existence.

Also, the chapter has explored Aristide's theological and ministerial formation which has shaped his theological discourse. Comparatively, the chapter has traced Aristide's intellectual foundations which has altered in his thinking as a public intellectual, cultural critic, and public theologian. Aristide's ministerial formation, intellectual circles, and biblical and theological foundations have served as an ideological force and rhetorical premise for his political and democratic vision, and theology of relationality.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARD A POLITICO-THEOLOGY OF RELATIONALITY AND JUSTICE AS SOLIDARITY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter two, we provided the biblical and theological foundations, and ministerial and intellectual bases for a theology that gives emphasis to the plight and life condition of the poor and oppressed. We also demonstrated how Aristide has re-contextualized and re-appropriated the concept in the context of the Haitian experience in modernity. Building on the previous analysis, Chapter three argues that Aristide's theology of the poor should be construed as a robust theology of relationality; it calls for an ethics of participation and collaboration in the plight of the poor. In this sense, we situate Aristide's theological discourse not only in the liberation theology framework but also in the politico-theological and democratic tradition, what Douglass Sturm (1998) has termed "a politics of relationality."

A theology of relationality focuses on the horizontal relations between the poor and the theologian-activist. The horizontal aspect defines and shapes the ethics of democratic participation and collaboration by cultivating a dynamic alliance with the poor and fostering a genuine bond between the poor and theologian-activist. Hence, a theology of relationality promotes democratic values, rights, freedom, and the welfare of the oppressed and poor. This participatory approach to theology of liberation might be the zone for active collaboration with the collective poor, oppressive communities, and Developing Countries. This chapter examines the concept of "the poor" in Aristide's theological discourse and explores Aristide's theology of relationality.

In the first part of the chapter, we explore briefly the relationship and dynamics between a politics of relationality and a theology of relationality. Further elaboration on this theme is reserved

for the final part of the chapter. The second part of the chapter explores the relationship between the poor and poverty as an existential condition in Aristide's thought. Aristide is deliberate when he posits that the poor are made poor because poverty exists as a devastating form of human oppression; it threatens human existence and our pursuit of shalom and integral liberation. Working in the tradition of liberation theology, Aristides contends that the oppressed community and the outcast of this world are victims of historical oppression and poverty as a painfully inflicting-human tragedy. The final section of the chapter is a careful study of the relationships between Aristide's theology of the poor, politics of relationality, and theology of relationality. Aristide's politico-theology of relationality considers the oppressed community and suggests that we should come together with a sense of participation, collaboration, responsibility, and the conviction that everyone counts.

The goal of this current chapter is to study Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a theologian and not as an orthodox politician. This approach will allow us to explore more directly and fully Aristide's theological discourse as a theology of the poor. It is intended to be a critical theological reflection on Aristide's deployment of "the poor" as a concept, with some implications for social transformation and social activism.

3.2. PROLEGOMENA TO A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONALITY AND AN ETHICS OF SOLIDARITY AND JUSTICE

Jean-Bertrand Aristide's felicitous Haitian Creole explosive declaration "*Tout Se Moun*" refers to the self-evident and egalitarian principle that "Everyone is a Person." Everyone matters in Aristide's theological inquiry, including the poor and those living in the margins of modernity. "The poor" not only plays a major role in modern social ethics and modern theological discourse but also an important conceptual category in liberation theology. The phrase is a dominant theme

in Aristide's theological discourse and social preaching. He uses the concept both as a rhetorical code and theological trope (or strategy) in his theological imagination—as he expounds on God's relationship with the world and history, and his active engagement with the social and political order. More importantly, the phrase is deployed to elaborate on the God-poor encounter in history and in the biblical narrative. Aristide has given special attention to material poverty as a tragic condition defining the precarious existence and experience of the world's poor.

We have already argued in the Introduction of this project that current scholarship on Aristide (i.e. Dupuy, 1997, 2007; Hallward, 2010; Wilenz, 1989, Greene 1993; Fatton, 2002) have failed to recognize and engage Aristide's articulation of a theology of relationality rooted in a robust liberating theological anthropology and the radical idea of justice as solidarity based in the Biblical narrative. Hallward has wrongly misconstrued Aristide's affirmative and egalitarian principle *tout moun se moun* ("Everybody is a Person")—the idea that everyone matters and that "everyone is endowed with the same essential dignity" (Hallward, 2010:21). Hallward has contended that this particular aspect in Aristide's anthropological vision is not "dependent on any sort of supernatural domain" (Ibid). Further, Hallward portrays Aristide explicitly as a political scientist rather than a theologian-politician whose political worldview and theory are deeply influenced by a particular theological school of thought. By contrast, Aristide's Christian anthropology is based on the notion of *imago dei*, the image of God which humans are said to be created. The idea of imago dei has shaped Aristide's theology of relationality and his Christian commitment to articulate a justice theology of care and solidary with the poor and the oppressed. Accordingly, theological anthropology is dependent on our understanding that God as Trinity is a social or relational being, and as relational beings, human beings are called to fulfill the imago deity in them and that the character of our lives are evolved and developed within the communal

matrix of life. As Carol C. Gould (1990:105) states, "Individuals act fundamentally in and through social relations. The individuals are therefore ontologically primary, but the relations among them are also essential aspects of their beings. However, these relations do not exist independently or apart from the individuals who are related. Rather they are all relational properties of these individuals."

Dupuy (2007:105) depicts an Aristide who was hungry for power like his predecessors, and that he "had betrayed the trust and aspirations of the poor majority." He provides a careful analysis of Aristide's liberation theology; yet, his analysis is limited to a Marxist reading of Aristide's political commitment. He fails to notice that Marxism was used simply as a tool of analysis by Latin American Liberationist Theologians including Aristide. We maintain here that Aristide is not fully committed to Marxism and to historical materialism. His circle of influence incorporates various traditions and schools of thought including the Biblical Prophetic Tradition, Liberation Theology, Post-colonialism, Decolonization, Radical Enlightenment Intellectual Tradition, Black Radical Tradition, etc. Dupuy is unable to see the intersections of Aristide's liberating theological anthropology, the idea of justice as solidary, and relational reciprocity in Aristide's thought. Finally, like Hallward, Fatton does not take Aristide's theological ideologies seriously. He has given scarce attention to the interplay between Aristide's theology of relationality and politics of relationality.

By merging these ideas almost as one, Aristide's theology of relationality has substantially influenced his politics of justice as solidarity and social activism on behalf of the poor and those living in the margins of modernity. This chapter is an attempt to reframe Aristide's thought and writings as a "theology of relationality" and an "ethics of mutuality and reciprocity," with an emancipative intent.

90

This present chapter makes an attempt to correct the aforementioned misunderstandings and shortcoming about Aristide scholarship. It also proposes that the kind of relationality Aristide distinctively theologizes is that of liberation and justice as solidarity with the poor. Aristide's theology of relationality and justice as solidarity with the poor, the hungry, and the naked is critically important, as it pertains to the role of theology within the confinement of the public sphere and social order. By considering Aristide's thought on this important subject and the existential issues mentioned above, contemporary Christian Churches may be able to develop a theology of care, sacrificial giving, and justice as solidarity—considering the plight of the poor , the orphans, the immigrant, and the life condition of the outcast and the disheartened in their own communities. For example, in his excellent text, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*, Timothy Keller (2010), makes several important remarks about how contemporary Christian culture and churches in North America and Western societies generally have continued to nurture a life that disregards social justice and concern for the poor and the needy. They have also failed to establish and cultivate genuine relationships with them on a human level. Hence, there are many existential reasons for the urgent practice of a theology of relationality in contemporary Christianity. As Keller observes,

> The youth culture in Western countries have imbibed not only an emotional resonance for social justice, but also a consumerism that undermines self-denial and delayed gratification. Popular youth culture in Western countries cannot bring about the broad change of life in us that is required if we are to make a difference for the poor and marginalized…While many young adults have a Christian faith, and also a desire to help people in need, these two things are not actually connected to each other in their lives. They have not thought out the implications of Jesus's gospel for doing justice in all aspects of life. In the twentieth century, the American church divided between the liberal mainline that stressed social justice and the fundamentalist churches that emphasized personal salvation. In the mind of many orthodox Christians, therefore, 'doing justice' is inextricably linked with the loss of sound doctrine and spiritual dynamism. When the Spirit enables us to understand what Christ had done for us, the result is life poured out in deeds of justice and compassion for the poor. (2010: x-xiii)

91

Recent research has repeatedly shown that the probability of being poor follows racial, class, ethnic, and gender lines (Petrella, 2008; Sen, 2000; Sachs, 2006; Collier, 2008; Wilson, 1979, 1997; Rank, 2004). It is from this perspective Aristide has relentlessly argued that the drama of the life of the poor necessitates God to be in loving solidarity with the poor and earnestly seek their integral liberation. This essay argues that Aristide's theology of the poor should be construed as a robust theology of relationality; it calls for an ethics of participation and collaboration in the plight of the poor. In this sense, we situate Aristide's theological discourse not only in the liberation theology framework but also in the politico-theological and democratic tradition, what Douglass Sturm (1998) has termed "a politics of relationality." Because we perceive a strong correlation between a theology of relationality and a politics of relationality, we reference some of Sturm's ideas in his excellent study, *Solidarity and Suffering: Toward a Politics of Relationality* to help us articulate an ethics of relational reciprocity and communal collaboration. This rapport is also valuable for us since Jean-Bertrand Aristide worked/works primarily as a theologian-politician; subsequently, the merging of his politics and theology is inevitable in his thought and life of liberation.

At the heart of the politics of relationality is a "principle of justice as solidarity" (Sturm, 1998:7). By the political, we refer to fundamental idea, basic structure and content of our interaction and engagement with other individuals, as Sturm (1998:211) remarks, "Which may or may not assume the character of a power struggle. They key political question is not so much, Who gets what, when, where, and how? As it is, How shall we live our live together? Politics is the designed structure of our togetherness" (Sturm, 1998: 211). Sturm defines the politics of relationality as a "form of communitarian theory…a communitarianism that is consistent with a

robust pluralism and an inclusive public forum whose aim is the conjunctive participation of us all in a unity of adventure."

The politics of relationality, when perceived rightly and practiced with gentleness, kindness, and mutual respect (or respect of other), could be a remedy even a threat to human annihilation, solitude, and isolation. In the same vein, a theology of relationality, when practiced rightly with the poor and the needy in mind, could potentially be a threat to social injustice, the life of meaningless and anxiety, which arguably defines modern societies and human interactions in the West.

Sturm defines outlines the principle of relationality in these words. First, he observes that "The principle of relationality within whose dynamics life is a continuous dialectic between participation and individuation provides us with an alternative that is more fitting given the urgent needs of our time" (1998: 231-2). Second, "Our identity is determined in no small part by the coming together of all these relationships. We are, in this sense, members of each other, located on a grid that is in constant motion, that extends far and wide, embracing an entire ecosphere" (Sturm, 1998:232). Third, "We are participants in the community of life as it is configured at this historical moment and cannot be adequately understood independently of that community" (Ibid). Fourth, "Each of us, on the other hand, is, to some degree and within some circle of influence, a creative agent, making our own way through the concourse of these interrelationships. We do something with our inheritance. We place our own individual stamp on the flow of life" (Ibid). Finally, he asserts, "the dialectic between participation and individuation is, within this worldview, a constant of our life. But the quality of that dialectic is not a constant, it is a matter susceptible to manipulation and transformation. The quality of relations may be refined or impaired; it may be redirected or radically altered" (Ibid).

93

A theology of relationality focuses on the horizontal or rhizomic relations between the poor and the theologian-activist. The horizontal aspect of theology defines and shapes the ethics of democratic participation and collaboration by cultivating a dynamic alliance with the poor and fostering genuine bond between the poor and theologian-activist. Hence, a theology of relationality promotes democratic values, rights, freedom, and the welfare of the oppressed and poor. This participatory approach to theology of liberation might be the zone for active collaboration with the collective poor, oppressive communities, and Developing countries.

The argument of this study is that a theology of relationality is deeply rooted in the idea of (biblical) justice as solidarity (with the poor). For him, true justice is to be in companionship with the poor, which entails an ethics of rights and ethics of care. That is, to avenge their rights and defend their cause. As Yahweh proclaims himself to be, "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows" (Ps. 68:5). God is the defenders of the poor, the vulnerable, and the outcast in our midst. He is "Who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin" (Ps. 146:7-9). This biblical tradition that informs Aristide's theology of relationality and life, and an ethics of care for the poor and the needy is amplified in God's character and relationship with the oppressed of the world: "The LORD your God…defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the immigrant, giving him food and clothing (Deut. 10:17-18)

Working within this tradition, Aristide postulates that genuine theology must engage the social order and fosters social change. A theology of relationality seeks to remedy the problem of individual and collective alienation. In other words, the kind and quality of relationality we

cultivate may reduce greatly the level of individual and communal solitude and social annihilation. As Sturm (1998:10) puts it, "In Stressing our dependency on that nexus of relationships that constitutes our matrix and that is part and parcel of our very selves, I do not mean to detract from our creativity. What each of us feels, what each of us thinks, what of us does make a difference in the world." The poor, the needy, and the immigrant live a life of intense suffering—which includes discomfort, alienation, annihilation, deprivation), and "in large part, that suffering is a consequence, directly or indirectly, of patterns of human interaction" (Ibid:8). As Aristide (2011:19) himself observes, "A person is a human being through other people. People become persons through the community. A person is a human being when he or she treats others well."

Sturm defines a politics of relationality as a "form of communitarian theory…a communitarianism that is consistent with a robust pluralism and an inclusive public forum whose aim is the conjunctive participation of us all in a unity of adventure" (Sturm, 1998:15). In Aristide's politico-theology of relationality, the singular attention is given to the community of the poor, the needy, and the oppressed, in which the faith community and the state work collaboratively and actively to engage scrupulously the social order, which may also involve economic relations and development in order to promote and sustain justice as solidarity. Aristide's politico-theological of relationality and ethics of life and care emphasize justice, compassion. It confronts the entire life of the human life and community and more particularly, every aspect of the life of the poor community. This basic principle engages social and structural oppression, and is against forces, ideologies, powers, movements that exploit the poor if not annihilate them from the social life. This particular philosophy is a commitment to life.

Relationship is the essence of the Christian faith and the idea that members of the Christian community—the body of Christ—belong together and share a life in common in Christ. This

principle is articulated as Jesus establishes in precise terms the relational aspect of the central message of the law and the prophets: ""You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:36-40). The Christian life is a life relations and relational reciprocity.

Aristide contends that the Exodus event was the pivotal manifestation of "God's preferential option for the poor," in which Yahweh had made himself known clearly as "the Slave God" who had rescued the enslaved Israelites from Egyptian oppression and Pharaonic imperialism. In the same line of thought, Aristide posits that the irruption of the Kingdom of God on the human scene through the messianic work and charismatic leadership of Jesus was a watershed moment for the poor and the wretched of the earth. Jesus intended his revolutionary message and social preaching exclusively for the poor and the oppressed, which shows God's taking sides with the most weak and the marginalized in history. Aristide (2004, 2008) underscores that God's commitment to be in solidarity with the most vulnerable and the most excluded in the world is intentional and based on his unmerited love graciously extended to them. Yet, Aristide (2008: xiii, 68) clarifies that God's option for the poor does not "mean an option against the rich…The preferential option for the poor is preferential, not exclusive."

To provide a sense of intellectual orientation to the reader, below I summarize five general themes characterized Aristide's theology of the poor. Foremost, Aristide makes the theological claim that poverty is a crisis of faith. This assertion is based on Aristide's deep moral conviction that poverty is an evil to God the Liberator; as a result, God deliberately seeks the integral liberation of the poor and the oppressed whose lives have been dehumanized by poverty. Seeing poverty as a theological conundrum, Aristide has called our attention to the biblical text in

96

Proverbs, "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him" (Prov. 14:31). In other words, while those who exploit the poor commit a grave sin against God of the oppressed, those who favor the poor make a preferential option for the needy. Second, Aristide argues that poverty is an unacceptable human condition which reduces the poor to nonbeings. Therefore, being in solidarity with the poor in their suffering entails a theology of rationality and ethics of compassion. Third, Aristide traces poverty in the modern world and the intolerable state leading people in being poor and oppressed to transatlantic slavery and colonialism. He underscores that slavery and colonialism as forms of oppression and social evils exploited the production of the enslaved workers and colonial subjects. Like the master, the colonialist became exceedingly rich through the economic exploitation of the laborers; like slavery, colonization demonized people, produced social death and objectification, and ultimately reduced them to nonbeings. The exploitation is double: economic and ideological. In the context of colonization, Achille Mbembre remarks:

> Of the subject of the colony, he or she is nothing but an appearance. He/ she has a body. The colonizer can seize, harass, lock up the native, compel forced labor, make him or her pay taxes or serve as cannon fodder… The colonized belongs to the *universe of immediate things*—useful things when needed, things that can be molded and are mortal, futile and superfluous things, if need be… To colonize is to put the two-faceted movement of destroying the creation, creation to create, and destroying to destroy. (2001: 186-9)

The unholy trinity of neocolonialism, global capitalism, and modern slavery as forms of oppressive structures and systems treat the poor and international workers as objects and commodities, what Aristide (2000:10) has phrased rightly "a market exchange, and a human exchange." Aristide interrogates the very logic of globalization and economic capitalism. He argues that as transnational schemes or systems, they make false promises to people and poor nations and failed to carry out those promises. Notably, he remarks, "Globalization, the integration

97

of world markets, has promised to 'lift all boats,' rich and poor, to bring a global culture of entertainment and consumer goods to everyone—the promise of material happiness" (Ibid).

The final characteristic of the poor as a conceptual category in Aristide's thought is articulated as a theological claim; it is originated in his interpretation of the irruption of the Kingdom of God on the human scene through the mediatorial works of Jesus. Aristide puts for the idea that the messianic vision and intervention of Jesus was emancipative and designed to bring integral liberation to the poor Jews and Gentiles who had been oppressed by Imperial Roman and the Jewish religion (Judaism). He links Jesus' preaching of a "Gospel of Liberation" to the poor with the Exodus narrative in which Yahweh's revolutionary move in history to deliver a colonial subject (The Hebrew slaves) from Egyptian bondage. Israel's Deity and Jesus his Messiah are clearly portrayed as anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-oppression, and anti-oppression. It is from this angle that Aristide reconstructs and reappropriates both the Exodus event and Jesus' liberative message in the context of the Haitian poor majority and the marginalized peasants. Yahweh the God of the Slaves then became *le Dieu pauvre* of the Haitian poor, and the Haitian people became the people of God. Hence, Haiti is "the land" of God's people, the poor. Aristide's intellectual precision and exercise can be conceived as a form of political theology. Aristide's political theology is chiefly narrated in his book *Theologie et politique*. The reenactment of the Exodus in the context of the Haitian reality is clear and deliberate in Aristide's political theology:

> We are working among a people who believe deeply in God. So we create an approach that does not reject their faith. Our work is rooted in this faith and the faith illuminates the experience. We are building a community of faith. And because of this we can go quickly… The struggle is transcendent; it crosses borders of time and place. As the Exodus is transcendent, we are ever crossing the desert, moving from Egypt to the promised land. (2000:.65)

Giving our emphasis on Aristide's politico-theological of relationality, this chapter also explores the meaning of and various ways Aristide employs the concept of "the poor" as a rhetorical and theological motif or category in his theology. It also considers how the phrase is linked to an existential condition, chiefly poverty. Aristide's theological imagination and his engagement with the poor and oppressed are rooted in four complementary traditions or schools of thought: the Biblical Prophetic Tradition, Prophetic Tradition of Liberation Theology, Black Atlantic Radical Tradition, and the Secular Humanist Tradition. Aristide's theology of relationality is always in conversation with the poor, the needy, the outcast, and the oppressed. It engages their life condition and refuses to exclude them from the political and theological life.

3.3. POVERTYAS AN EXISTENTIAL AND THEOGICAL CRISIS

A clear understanding of Aristide's theological method will assist us in discovering the precise meaning of "the poor" as a rhetorical device and conceptual category. Two factors are fundamental in Aristide's theological method: the socio-political reality of the written Word (the Bible) and the social context of theological method and interpretation. First, Aristide establishes the dynamics between Biblical exegesis and theological discourse, and the *Sitz im leben* that shape both phenomena. In other words, all theological methods, conceptualizations or formulas, and theological traditions are social constructs. Aristide presupposes that theological reflection must first begin with a critical and responsible evaluation of the life condition of the poor and the phenomenon of poverty as a harassing social reality.

Aristide reasons that if the Word of God was proclaimed in a particular social context and that God revealed himself exclusively to the poor, then it is an imperative that the social world of the poor must be the litmus test of the liberation theologian and true theology. Aristide (1993:51,

53) posits that the Bible is God's good news to the poor and the marginalized; more than ever a message of liberation, it proclaims loudly liberty for those who are oppressed and those who are deprived of it.

Aristide proposes two theoretical formulations. He called the first one "the presence of a theological consciousness" as the first act of theology; he phrased the second one as the event of "theological reflection" as the second act of theological thinking. The former makes sense only within human reality—that is the everyday experience of men and women. Hence, there is a sense one can speak of theological emancipative praxis as the necessary result or ingredient of a robust theological consciousness and rigorous theological reflection.

> The reality of infra-human misery described previously is the first act from which emerges the second act, which we call theological reflection. Far from being abstract, it is an articulated response directed to social and political reality, here and now. This approach is within the biblical tradition. (Aristide, 1994:108)

The cultivation of a critical theological imagination is imperative in the constructive stage of a liberative theological method. For Aristide, liberation of theology is rooted in a deliberate theological awareness of the existential condition of the poor and the oppressed, and thinking theologically from the perspective of the poor describes the very task of liberation theology. Almost in the same line of thought, Gutierrez communicates a parallel view:

> Discourse about God comes second because faith comes first and is the source of theology…The first stage or phase of theological work is the lived faith that finds expression in prayer and commitment. To live the faith means to put into practice, in the light of the demands of the reign of God… The second act of theology, that of reflection in the proper sense of the term, has for its purpose to read this complex praxis in the light of God's word. (1971: xxxiii-xxiv)

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff find a way to bring together theological method and theological praxis in the process of liberation:

100

Before we can do theology we to "do" liberation. The first step for liberation theology is pre-theological. It is a matter of trying. It is a matter of trying to live the commitment of faith: to participate in some way in the process of liberation, to be committed to the oppressed…So first we need to have direct knowledge of the reality of oppression/liberation through objective engagement in solidarity with the poor. (1987:22-3)

What Aristide calls "a presence of theological consciousness," the Boffs name it "pre-theological," and Gutierrez "the lived faith that finds expression in prayer and commitment" (or "reflection" in the proper sense of the term); these three ideas complement each other in the theological work of liberation and the liberation of theology. This liberating task works concurrently with the active commitment to be in living solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. It is from this particular worldview that Aristide (1994:108) articulates these words of admonition: "The orientation of the theological thought must involve this point of engagement and thus avoid any attempt to flee its responsibility." Moreover, Aristide contrasts the theological methods and approaches of two dominant theological schools or systems: Traditional Theology (Western Theology) and Liberation Theology. The concentric target and subjects of interest of each theological tradition differ greatly from each other.

Traditional Theology and Liberation theology insinuate themselves with different ways of doing theology or/and thinking theologically. Theologians working in these traditions have articulated competing discourses dealing with theological doctrines, socio-political and cultural issues, and other phenomena such as God, Jesus, sin, redemption, humanity, history, human systems, identity, race, gender, sexuality, poverty, human suffering and oppression, economics, wealth, and the social and political order. For example, according to Aristide (1994) Traditional theology gives special attention to the Christian and the Atheist. It seeks a way to explain the revealed truths, as interpreted as so. The methodology of traditional theology its methodology relies heavily on the philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas. Traditional theology tends to evoke a

101

God falls from the sky for the salvation of man (Ibid: 108-9). By contrast, Liberation theology gives special attention to the oppressed, the rejected, the exploited, the marginalized, the *anawims* of Yahweh, and the human person who is reduced to a mere object and trash. In this school of thought, the preferential option for the poor—without any pretension to exclude the rich—is valorized and central. Liberation theology begins with the human experience (from below), the praxis of the poor (the privileged theological site) to discover the face of God revealed in Jesus, the true prototype of man (Ibid: 108-110).

The consensus among Liberation theologians is that modern theology "has been a class-bound discipline of interest primarily to the bourgeois, middle-class audience which had been chiefly responsible for fostering the Enlightenment in the first place" (Rubenstein, 1986: 43). In other words, Traditional Theologians put the poor and the oppressed in the back seat in their lofty theological discourse and reasoning. By contrary, Liberationist theology maintains that the true subjects of Christian theology are not the educated bourgeoisie, but the uneducated poor, the marginalized, the social outcast who have been made nonpersons by the forces of a bourgeois-capitalist order and repressive structures of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism (Ibid: 44).

Liberation theology rejects bourgeois Christianity and the socially class-ordered society that oppresses the poor and those living on the margins of modernity. Jose Miguez-Bonino describes Liberation Theology as a new theological discourse that was born in a new post-bourgeois Christianity in the struggle to find meaning and construct a postbourgeois society in the world (Bucher, 1976:520). Aristide (1994:109) underscores that the goal of the Liberationist theologian is therefore to muster up the courage "to reject the reign of injustice established through time... This process reserves a special place for the poor" and to construct an ethics of liberation.

Summarizing the main tenets of Liberation theology, Aristide reiterates that as an enterprise, Liberation theology rejects any system of sin such as capitalism and neocolonialism and a conception of the reign of God without dichotomy: the above and the below, the profaned and the sacred, the spiritual and temporal. Similarly, Liberation theology as a prophetic socio-political movement does not divorce practical faith from the political life while following Jesus. Intellectually, Liberation theology is interdisciplinary and cross-sectional in content and form; it draws inspiration from the disciplines of social sciences and humanities and modern social theories (Aristide, 1994:109).

Elsewhere in an article entitled, "The Church in Haiti—Land of Resistance," Aristide (1991) argues that the birth of Liberation Theology was a "turning point" in human history, in which members of the progressive Church (ecclesial-based communities) opposed the despotic state and the church hierarchy that oppressed the poor. He also explains that, following the Second Vatican Council, with the historic conferences of Catholic Bishops at Medellin, Columbia in 1968, and Puebla, Mexico in 1979 (Gutierrez, 1984:25-124), the Catholic Church in Latin America articulated "an ecclesiology from those at the bottom, rising from the world of the poor" (Ibid: 110). From the perspective of this watershed moment, Aristide (1991:110) prioritizes the irruption of the poor in history: "The poor were no more considered the object of charity, but rather, the subject of history. In the voices of the poor, theologians learned to discover the voices of God. In the struggle against misery, hunger, exploitation and slavery, they found Jesus Christ." Miguel A. De La Tore (2004:15) is correct to affirm that "The Church of Jesus Christ is called to identity and stand in solidarity with the oppressed. The act of solidarity becomes the litmus test of biblical fidelity and the paradigm used to analyze and judge how social structures contribute to or efface the exploitation of the marginalized."

Aristide (1990:5, 8, 3) explains that Liberation Theology is a new theology and the search for a new beginning, liberty, democracy, human rights, and a new way of life. Liberation Theology also means "the force of solidarity at work, a recognition that we are all striving toward the same goal and that goal is to go forward, to advance, and to bring into this world another way of being" (Ibid 4). He reinforces that

> Liberation theology finds in the Bible a flat rejection of the exclusion of the poor. Jesus answered John the Baptist, "Go and tell John that the good news is preached to the poor" (Matt. 11:5). Henceforth all were compelled to demonstrate a commitment to implementing God's directive: "You will love your neighbor the way you love yourself" (Lev. 19:18). From this it follows that, if you do not want to be a slave, you must not enslave your neighbor. These words from the gospel contains the seeds for the emergence of a new society, in which human relationship are rooted in respect, equality and dignity—a way forward from slavery to freedom, from social exclusion to inclusion. (Aristide, 2008: xxiii)

Aristide's (2008:14-5) prophetic Liberation theology involves an active engagement with critical issues such as human rights, the right of the Haitian marginalized peasants and poor—their right to eat and feed themselves and their children—and the right to life. These rights are fundamental to human existence. Aristide's theology of the poor promotes holistic human care and inclusive democracy. Giving the precarious life of the world's poor and the material deprivation the oppressed community continues to suffer without the fault of their own, Aristide could argue that we must democratize democracy. On the democratization of democracy, Aristide (2002:35-6) writes, "Democracy asks us to put the needs and rights of people at the center of our endeavors. This means investing in people. Investing in people means first of all food, clean water, and education and healthcare. These are basic human rights. It is a challenge of any real democracy to guarantee them." These are the demands of democracy and the idea that justice means the active engagement with the poor in their suffering and pain.

The Priest-Theologian champions the dignity of the poor and international worker by reminding us that "The theology of liberation started from the day-to-day life of the people, seeking to discover the real face of God in their midst, revealed through Jesus Christ present among them" (Aristide, 1993: 110). The intellectual and practical role of Liberation Theology is then to give way to the liberation of traditional theology and to incite collective consciousness on a grassroots popular level (Aristide, 2006). Aristide could also argue that Jesus Christ is the liberator of the oppressed/poor consciousness. For Aristide, the focus on Christocentric emancipation of the poor, the disfranchised, and the economically-disadvantaged incorporates both material and spiritual freedom; this Aristidian theological project is also entrenched in his democratic program that champions rights to life, the right to eat and work, and the right to self-agency and determination, especially on behalf of the poor and the oppressed.

In his short book, *Eyes of the Heart,* Aristide (2002) explains that Globalization as a transcultural and transnational phenomenon. Aristide rejects the idea that globalization means human progress and that it is "an automatic process inherent to natural capitalist dynamics" (Petrella, 2012: 21). By contrary, he argues that globalization has become "a machine devouring our planet" (Aristide, 2002: 6) and the world's poor and underdeveloped countries are its victims. They are forced to make a choice between life and death. While the Developed Nations are experiencing rapid economic growth, Developing Nations are declining substantially and millions of individuals continue to undergo both social and physical death as a result of dire poverty in the collective and global sense. Aristide insists that globalization is a system that puts the market before the individual; as a system of global order and market exchange, the poor are dumped in zones of social abandonment. Petrella (2012:9) defines the zone of social abandonment as "the place where those who have no one and nothing wait for death—a place in the world for

populations of 'ex-humans… To be dumped like trash is to be socially dead; society declares you dead before your biological death. Insofar as you are socially dead yet biologically alive, you've overextended your lease on life. Your future is dead, yet you live on." In this age of globalization and the so-called human progress, the poor face death every day and they lack the means of living and actual opportunities of living (Sen, 2000:253).

Aristide (1994:69) recognizes that the magnitude of the global problem of poverty in the world is truly enormous. He defines poverty as a social condition and the consequential result of oppressive systems: "Whether someone is poor or poor of heart because he is the victim of an oppressive system, it remains what he is: poor." He claims that the poor are the ones who are abused, weak, mistrusted. Alone, they are weak; together, they are strong, and together they are the flood (Aristide, 2002:90, 104). They are also forced to live in "a system of social apartheid…and face death and death every day" (Aristide, 2012:44, 20). Aristide reports that

> Today, as many as two-thirds of the world's population is marginalized because of their social condition… Day after day the poor are becoming poorer. In a clear rupture with the pattern over previous decades, global inequality has increased sharply since the 1980s, while global economic integration has grown. This expansion of extreme poverty coincides with an explosion of wealth…Today the poor still bear the cross of marginalization, racism and misery. (Aristide, 2012: xxxiii-xxiv)

Poverty here is described as a socio-economic and political dilemma, which makes the World's poor poorer. Furthermore, Aristide traces the historic causes or roots of modern and ongoing poverty and the social stigmatization of the poor to colonialism, transatlantic slavery and capitalism. Aristide also links the abject poverty in the modern world to white violence and oppression, white supremacy, institutionalized racism, and Western imperial hegemony in the world. Poverty is also rooted on the mistreatment and exploitation of a group people, the weakest

106

in society. Having shown that poverty is a crisis of modernity, Aristide describes it in its multilayered dimension:

> Poverty is deeply rooted in colonialism, neoliberalism and globalization. The colonialism project and those who led it prioritized financial capital over human capital; centuries later, neocolonialists remain motivated by this same interest. for the most part, this motivation, reflects an obsessive whose roots extend back to transatlantic slave trade, a crime against humanity of immense magnitude and incomparable suffering. Institutionalized racism became embedded in Western society; it generated social pathologies and schizophrenic economics in the colonies where slavery flourished. (2012: xxviii-xxix)

Poverty is not only a crisis of faith, as Aristide underscores, but it is also a threatening occurrence in the modern life in Western and postcolonial societies. Liberation theologist Gustavo Gutierrez (1971) is correct to insist that the poor and the exploited are the crucified people in history; "it is a slow but real death, caused by poverty, so that the poor are those who die before their time" (Sobrino, 1999:.254). Jon Sobrino speaks of the "Crucified Peoples" in the manner:

> "Crucified Peoples" is useful and necessary language on the factual level. "Cross" means not only poverty but death. And death is what the peoples of the Third World suffer in a thousand ways... It is swift and violent death caused by repression and wars, when the poor decide simply to escape from their poverty and live. And it is indirect but effective death when poor peoples are deprived even of their own cultures, in order to subjugate them, weaken their identity and make them more vulnerable. (Ibid: 254)

How do then oppressed communities and the poor around the globe cope with uninterrupted social deaths and zones of social abandonment? Could they be hopeful? Aristide (1990:90) reasons that the poor are courageous because they maintain their human dignity in the midst of incredible suffering and social evil. In addition, they hang on to life because "We know that the Lord created us in his image." So *the Imago dei* in the poor has enabled them to resist oppression and find existential meaning in God himself. The *Imago dei* is that which gives the poor hope because God is the Champion of the Oppressed; God regards them as equal members in society: "We are poor, it is true, but we are people nonetheless" (Ibid: 90). Aristide prompts us

107

to consider further that the collective poor are bound together under the banner of collective solidarity and a politics of relationality. As individuals, they strive to find creative ways to resist oppression and foster collective hope and create emancipative future possibilities: "Must deprivation, misery, insecurity, and despair find their refuge in resignation, emigration, hatred, or warfare? (Aristide, 1996: 120).

In the socio-political and economic context of the Haitian poor and peasants, in a sermon, Aristide (1993:22, 104-7) identifies the poor generally as the people, the slum-dwellers, poor peasants, poor soldiers, the poor jobless multitudes, the hungry, the masses, the workers, the market women, the street children of the Church, and the powerless. Elsewhere, Aristide (1993:107) employs the Fanonian (2008: xii) language, "the wretched of the earth" to identity the non-being, the downtrodden and the marginalized in society. Lamenting on their social condition, he declares, "The experience of the poor, not only in Haiti, but around the world, is a kind of museum of humanity" (Aristide, 2002: 6). He moves on to stress that the poor have been affected by "the detritus of the deadly economic infection called capitalism" (Ibid: 5-7) resulting in material, ideological, structural and historical poverty.

Because (material) poverty can be dehumanizing, resistance is the most natural way subjugated people and nations respond to this form of repressive domination, a relationship between the powerful and the powerless, the oppressor and the oppressed, the colonizer and the colonized. Affirming the economic and political content and nature of poverty, Gutierrez (1988:163) notes that "social classes, nations, and entire continents are becoming aware of their poverty, and when they see its root causes, they rebel against it." As Pierre Bigo (1977:19-20) comments, poverty is "a phenomenon of migration in every country but the third world as a whole is marginal. Cut loose from its customs by new modes of existence, it still lives on the margin of

industrial society. It is not just a poor relation; it is the stranger at the gate." Within the Marxist

framework, Enrique Dussel recapitulates in strong metaphorical language the dynamics between

the poor and poverty, the rich and the poor, the oppressor and the oppressed:

> Poverty is a dialectical concept, embracing several terms which mutually define each other.
> Just as there is no father without a child, and the child is defined by its father, so the poor
> are defined by the rich and vice versa. Poverty is in no way a pure case of someone lacking
> something…The oppressor belongs to very substance of the concept of being poor. There
> are no poor people without the corresponding rich. Nor is there any absolute poverty in the
> face of God. There are real poor people in God's sight, since there are real oppressors
> confronting God, who make the poor what they are: oppressed and lacking their proper
> possibilities in life, deprived of the product of their work. (2003: 90)

To recapitulate our analysis, in the tradition of Liberation theology, the poor constitutes a

social class, a group whose destitute circumstances are the product not of chance misfortune, but

of systematic exploitation and oppression (Engler, 2000: 354). They are the member of the

proletariat struggling for the most basic rights; they are also the exploited and plundered social

class. One can also speak of the poor countries struggling for independence and liberation from

neocolonial forces. In Aristide's thought, both the collective poor and poor countries struggle for

the same goal: human rights, the right to life, and freedom from repressive structures and

domination. Victoria Araya (1987:115) posits that not only the poor live in the hard reality of

material poverty—what Liberation theologians have phrased "a subhuman situation" and "a

scandalous condition"—the poor and the oppressed also suffer the unjust burden of real, historical

poverty; the poor are truly "the crucified of history, condemned to a slow death before their time

by reason of oppressive structures, and a more rapid death by reason of repressive structures."

The international poor and Developing Nations continue to struggle against the hegemony

and neoimperialism of the Developed Nations in the form of exploitative first-world economic

policies. To challenge this global predicament, Liberation theologians employ the rhetoric of

human rights and democratic freedom to respond to the demands of the oppressed and exploited people in the world. Liberationist action is the only possible action available for the poor and the Liberationist theologian. Hence, one could contend that the goal of the liberationist theologian is to critique thoroughly the oppressive social structures and social inequality, which deepen the suffering and poverty of the oppressed. In his useful remark, Araya (1987:23) infers that "If poverty is a destructive, structural, material reality to be fought, and if the poor are poor, not individually but as a collective subject, then the option for the poor leads unfailingly to the world of the political, and to the logic, the reasoning, peculiar to that world." Liberation theologians remind us that God is the God of the Oppressed and, as their Liberator, he has willingly committed to their freedom. Aristide has prompted us to ponder upon the idea that God has a preferential love for the poor and the poor are not individuals being punished by God (Gutierrez, 1993:40). Aristide (2002:20) rejects the idea that "the poor are poor because they are stupid" or lazy, as traditionally believed. He also repudiates the belief that "poverty will come from those who are poor" (Ibid: .20-1) but reminds us that poverty is everyone's struggle who concerns about justice, equality, and a better world.

Aristide insists that poverty is a crisis of faith and modernity has failed the poor and the oppressed. We already stated that he perceives poverty as the result of oppressive capitalist systems, imperial globalization, and economic exploitation and the poor are the victims. Aristide describes *the Sitz in Leben* of this human dilemma and the dynamics between the poor and the socio-political order provocatively:

> Behind this crisis of dollars there is human crisis: among the poor, immeasurable human suffering; among the others, the powerful, the policy makers, a poverty of spirit which has made a religion of the market and its invisible hand. A crisis of imagination so profound that the only measure of value is profit, the only measure of human

progress is economic growth. We have not reached the consensus that to eat is a basic human right. This is an ethical crisis. This is a crisis of faith. (2002:6)

Poverty is a theological predicament in the sense that it is "an evil and therefore incompatible with the Kingdom of God, which has come in its fullness into history and embraces the totality of human existence" (Gutierrez, 1988: 168). Elsa Tamez (1986:190) judges that poverty as a theological conundrum because it challenges "God the Creator; because of the insufferable conditions under which the poor live, God is obliged to fight at their side." Persistent poverty and enduring suffering of the world's poor is the most serious challenge to their belief in the God of love and life. Aristide (1994) declares that there is a common consensus on poverty when it comes to addressing the issue from the moral vision of Scriptures, Jesus' Gospel of liberation, and Liberation Theology. He argues that poverty is anti-Gospel and inhuman by declaring "We also know that for Jesus, as it were for the Bishops assembled in Puebla, poverty itself is not desirable. In solidarity with the poor, we condemn as anti-evangelical extreme poverty that affects many social sectors of the continents" (Ibid: 68).

Aristide (2002:3) reiterates that the God of the Poor brings abundant comfort to the oppressed community and is present with them along the way in the struggle. God accompanies the poor in their pilgrimage, allowing them to feel joy throughout their journey and battle for existence. In *Théologie et politique*—an important work on the relationship between faith and politics, and the intersections of theological praxis, politics, and social activism—Aristide is more blunt describing the plight of the global poor and the impoverished majority; he expounds on the puzzling relationships between the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited:

> Life reveals a politics that does not look for the common good, but which is based on the relations between the exploited and exploiters. The exploiters justify and legalize the exploitation of a majority by a minority. From this human reality emerges a negative force;

111

because it does not respond to the common good and is opposed to justice; there also emerges an opposing force. Hence, we have the strength of a politics in which the weak is exploited by the strong, and the divine power from which the weak rises to restore the balance of justice. (1992: 17)

Using Marxism as a tool of analysis and social theory, Aristide highlights the socioeconomic organization of the capitalist order, whereby some (the workers) are subjugated, while others (the peasants, the ordinary people, the suffering masses, the underemployed, and other marginalized peoples) are excluded from the production altogether . Alex Dupuy (2006:79) echoes that "This exploitation and exclusion result in denying the poor access to adequate food, housing, health care, an education, as well as respect for their personal dignity, self-expression, and freedom."

Liberation theologians tell us that the poor suffer as the collective poor and the popular masses, and their suffering is multilayered and multidimensional. On the social level, the collective poor suffer collective expression, collective exclusion, and collective marginalization. On the cultural level, the culture and traditions of the collective poor are marginalized and ridiculed. On the socio-economic level, the collective poor are exploited and abused. On the political level, the collective poor are alienated from political decision and right, and have no say in the political future of their country. They are deprived of basic human rights and the right to breathe as members of their own community and human race. On the religious level, the collective poor are victims of social sinfulness and religious oppression, contrary to the plan of God the Liberator and Creator and "the honor that is due to him" (Boff and Boff, 1987:3) finally, on the psychological/mental level, the collective poor and oppressed community

internalize the negative image projected upon them by the dominant society. They cower before the masters, but are also filled with a self-contempt which makes them self-

destructive and fratricidal toward their fellows within the oppressed community. Typically, the oppressed turn their frustration inward, destroying themselves and each other, not the masters. (Ruether, 1972:12)

While Aristide has given special care to the material aspect of poverty—its socio-economic frame—he has also defined poverty multidimensionally and insisted that the sufferings and exploitations of the poor and oppressed affect their whole being and shape (and reshape) their existence. His treatment on poverty as an existential human condition has social, cultural, ideological, political, psychological, religious, theological, and gender dimensions or ramifications. To reiterate, Aristide speaks of the "integral liberation" of the oppressed; hence, the "socio-economic poor," the socio-cultural poor, and the new poor of industrial societies who are deprived of basic necessities needed to live a life of dignity also need integral liberation (De La Torre, 2004: 90). It is from this context Aristide could invoke and advocate a robust theology of relationality and an ethics of collaboration with the poor.

3.4. TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONALITY FOR THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED

What is then the relationship between the Liberation theologian and the oppressed community in Aristide's theology? Aristide articulates what we might call a theology of relationality. Once again, we believe Sturm's politics of relationality is effective and meaningful in reframing Arisitde's thought and life as a theology of relationality. Thus, this study is indebted to Sturm's language here. We attempt to articulate what a politics of relationality means theologically in Aristide's theology of the poor. A theology of relationality stresses the significance of *Imago Dei* for cultivating effective and productive human relations and common understanding. Human beings including those who are made poor are created in the Image of God to pursue collaboratively the common good and the welfare of humanity. We are made for each

113

other, and we are successfully when we are and work together. The ethics of *caritas* and reciprocal solidarity—the ability to sympathize and identity with the pain and sufferings of others—are important markers of a theology of relationality. This thought is particularly expressed in Aristide's words below:

> Too often we hear of people fighting against one another in the name of God. We say hunger has no religion, exploitation has no religion, injustice has no religion. What do we mean when we say God? We mean the source of love; we mean the source of justice. We mean woman and man, black and white, child and adult, spirit and body, past and future, that thing which animates all of us…We begin with what is in front of us. I cannot see God, but I can see you. I cannot see God, but I see the child in front of me, the woman, the man. Through them, through this material world in which we live, we know God. Through them we know and experience love, we glimpse and seek justice. (2002: 63)

James Gustafson (1984:219), admitting that it is an intractable problem that human sufferings will not go away, admonishes us that "one needs no sophisticated argument to sustain some sense of obligation to persons and communities that are in such straits. Third, a theology of relationality accentuates the importance of valorizing the humanity of every individual including the poor at every circumstance of life and championing the subjectivity of each human agent to construct a better world. Fourth, a theology of relationality acknowledges that the *imago dei* also means—what Sturm has phrased—"the thick interdependency of our lives." Sturm explains the expression brilliantly:

> We cannot be what we are, we cannot do what we do, we cannot accomplish what we accomplish apart from one another. Perhaps more than we can ever fully discern, our lives are but expressions, albeit creative expressions of a communal matrix that sustains us, inspires us, and constitutes the origin of our dreams and yearnings, our obligations and our rights. We are members of each other. We belong together. That is the source of our joy in life, although that is, as well, the source of tragedies of life, the dark side of our history, which, on all too many occasions, makes us shudder and anxious about our destiny. (Sturm, 1998: 7)

At the center of the theology of relationality is the principle of caring for others—especially the poor, the needy, and the oppressed—and walking in solidarity with them; practically, these are

114

genuine acts of love and human compassion—with the needy and the oppressed. A Theology of relationality that practices an ethic of hospitality and dialogue can encourage constructive encounters with otherness and the disinherited, developing compassion, insight, and the courage to risk revising our boundaries outward (Daloz and Parks, 1996:228). Consider the following words from Aristide:

> There are many kinds of hunger. Those who have enough to eat may be crying out from spiritual hunger. During the past few years I have traveled and spoken to groups around the world: to students at dozens of U.S. universities, at conferences in Europe, Latin America and Asia. Each time I address a new group I am struck—the same questions, the same hunger for spirituality, for morality in politics, for recognition of the humanity and dignity of each of God's beings. In Japan, speaking to a group of university students I said, "When someone is hungry, I am hungry; when someone is suffering, I am suffering." And there, through translation, across culture, I saw the unmistakable flash of recognition in their eyes. (2002: 69-70)

Elsewhere, Aristide establishes the dynamics between the politics of relationality and the theology of relationship. He also emphasizes an ethics of care for the poor and the needy and the needy in this politico-theological vision. Yet, he informs us that theology is pivotal in his enunciation of a politics of freedom and life, and human rights. He does not divorce the political and the theological:

> Shall I be a priest or the president? One shades easily into the other. But as head of state and of the resistance, I have to walk the tightrope, sometimes playing one role and then other other. I have never experienced difficulties in living this convergence of theology and politics. The theological justices feed a life in the service of others. We have given a voice to those who had none. I am fighting for them to keep that. Politics leads me to serve, to protect, and to transform the promise of dignity into living dignity on the daily level. I am what I am in order to be what I shall be. And what I am is not different from the priest celebrating the mass in the service of his brothers and sisters. For the respect of their elementary rights. I am helping them go to school, receive medical care, meet, face the criminals who have taken over the country. (1996: 147-8).

Such politico-theology of relationality moves individuals to exercise compassion, empathy, and compel them to be participants and agents of social transformation. The objective here, as Aristide expresses it, is not simply for individuals to move by compassion but to plant

lasting acts of kindness and become actors of change and individuals who will actively engage the public sphere and fight against structural oppressions and forces of poverty, as clearly pronounced in the words below:

> At the beginning of 1994, dozens of Haitians left their country, in spite of surveillance on the high seas, and perished by drowning. Tragedy within a tragedy; one woman, whose child had died of illness on board ship, jumped into the sea rather than be repatriated. It is as if she were perpetuating the three-century-old tragedy by which our people resist slavery. Always striving to live a human existence. If that is not possible, then death. How could I not be shaken by such a drama and exasperated by the slowness of political solutions that would reduce the horror? How can I endure the prolongation of the unbearable? (1996: 144)

Moreover, we stress the connection between Aristide's politico-theology of relationality and the principle of justice as solidarity. As he remarks, "I was asking myself what I could do to protect their lives. How can I show solidarity? How can I go at this pace? Thanks to a system of connected vessels! I draw energy from the wellspring of the Haitian people and redistribute it as I can" (Ibid: 145, 147). The clarion call to cultivate relational reciprocity, an ethics of care and service, and self-giving or self-denial is more expressive in these words:

> Now the boat is sinking. Every effort can be made to piece it back together and to prevent it from sinking forever, body and soul. I appeal to all people of goodwill to conceive of every possible measure, all means of keeping it afloat. Give the salvage operation any name you want. I acquiesce, I applaud. Let us define as well as possible the Haiti that we want to keep afloat. Let us use the help of all men and women with expertise and ideas. That is, all Haitian men and women. The agronomists form the mountains, the doctors from the hills, the fishermen from Port-Salut, the peasants from the Central Plateau, the rise growers of the Artibonite, the *tap-tap* drivers, the *madanm Sara*, the workers from the mountains factories, the industrialists. These people and all the movements with which they identity. (Aristide, 1996: 153)

After all, for Aristide, that is what justice as solidarity looks like in real life. Complementarily, Aristide's theology of relationality is also informed by the African concept of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is a Zulu word that can be translated as humanity. As Aristide explains it cogently:

116

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* is embodied in three key words: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,
which mean:
A person is a person through other human beings.
A person becomes a person through the community.
A person is person when she/he treats other well.
In the philosophy of Ubuntu there is no room for selfishness or egocentricity.
A person's existence is intertwined with the community. (2011: 16)

Aristide postulates that "In the philosophy of Ubuntu, there is no room for selfishness or

egocentricity. A person's existence is intertwined with the community" (Ibid). Aristide contends

that a theology of relationality and ethics of care is "grounded in solidarity, cooperation, unity,

respect, dignity, justice, liberty and love of the other other" (Ibid: 17). Take for example, this

important renouncement of injustice and violence against the human family:

One lone injustice, one lone crime, one lone illegality, especially if it has been officially
registered and confirmed; one lone insult to humanity, one lone insult to justice and the
law, especially if it is universally, legally, nationally, and comfortably accepted—one lone
crime destroys and suffices to destroy the social pact, the entire social contract; one lone
felony, one lose disgrace suffices for losing honor, for disgracing an entire people.
(Aristide, 1996:158)

Therefore, Aristide (1996:158) challenges us that "We must honor debts and promises.

Pride? Respect? And what term dignity?" Although Aristide's theology of relationality embraces

a form of theological cosmopolitanism and humanism, we should not forget that the preferential

option for the poor is at the heart of Aristide's theological reflection and discourse. A theology of

relationality can be connected to the three levels of Liberation Theology: professional, pastoral,

and popular. Aristide speaks about being on the side of the poor and being in a compassionate and

loving solidarity with them—what Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1987) have classified as the

"pastoral level" of Liberation Theology. According to Aristide, the Liberation theologian should

struggle with the poor, love the oppressed, fight for the disinherited, and sacrifice for the

marginalized. In the "professional level," the first of the three levels of Liberation Theology, the

Liberation theologian learns from the experience of the poor. Aristide (1994:109) testifies that "At the school of the poor, the theologian learns to discover the path and the voice of the God of Jesus Christ fighting against poverty, hunger, exploitation, slavery…" This pedagogical lesson is crucial and instructive because the poor are actors and artisans of their own liberation and "should speak for all their brothers and sisters" (Aristide, 1993: 53; 1996: 94). Aristide accentuates. He moves on to elucidate how he has applied the third level of Liberation theology in the context of the Haitian poor majority:

> I spoke words of Jesus then…preached food for all men and women…I have participated in many struggles in my life, but none has pained me so greatly as the struggle within our Church over the depth of that Church's preferential option for the poor of our parish. There are those of us, usually younger and eager for change, who believe that the commitment should be total, unrelenting, and intransigent. There are others, often with grayer heads and more comfortable with the ways of the world, who do not mind conciliating the powers that sit around the great table, who believe that collaboration and compromise are a valid means in taking up our preferential option for the poor. (2002: 15-18)

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, working in the tradition of Liberation Theology, presents himself as "the theologian of the people." He accompanies them in their everyday struggle in the process of creating a promising future world and a new humanism. On the Professional level, Aristide thinks about the faith in solidarity from the vantage point of those living in the margins of history. While on the Popular level of Liberation theology, the theologian gives emphasis to the liberative function of the spoken word (orature/orality)—hence it is a spoken theology—on the Pastoral level, the theologian inspires the poor and the church for liberation in their own lives and communities. As the Boffs (1987:17) underscore, Pastoral Liberation theology "is a theology in its own right: it follows the same basic line as liberation theology as it is generally known. They both share the same root: evangelical faith; they both have the same objective: the liberating practice of love." In the words below, Aristide attempts to attain this singular goal by bringing in conversation both Pastoral and Popular levels of Liberation Theology.

We speak the words that the spirit of the poor breathes into us. That is our humble role, a simple role, one that requires no learning, no pride, no soutane, no miter. It requires faith only, and of faith we have plenty. It requires a willing to serve the people, and no machete, no fusillade of rocks, no bullets or riffles or Uzis, no tear gas or bombs, will ever dissuade us from that willingness, from the faith. We are unshakable. Like the poor, we will always be with you. Kill one among us, and we rise us again a thousand strong. (1990: 48)

Aristide's (1993:176) "spoken theology" is more pronounced and noticeably defined in his homilies. He emphasizes that the role of the theologian is to be with the people: "I have always lived among the dispossessed…I may consider myself to be a privileged poor man living in the midst of the poor." In the statement, Aristide attempts to show how theology of relationality works in practice. By living among the poor, his goal is to provide "theological enlightenment of the community on its pilgrim way" (Boff, 1987: 19) and to help effectuate integral freedom. It is also a commitment to cultivate justice in the midst of injustice, and hope in the midst of despair and desolation. In an interview with political philosopher, Peter Hallward ("One Step at a Time: An interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide," 2006), Aristide declares, "For me the people remain at the very core of our struggle. It isn't a matter of struggling for the people, on behalf of the people, at a distance from the people; it is the people themselves who are struggling, and it's a matter of struggling with and in the midst of the people." By this statement, Aristide seeks to convey that his goal is to accompany the people, the impoverished, not to replace them. Aristide's (2011:17) relational theological approach is grounded in the philosophy of *Ubuntu* which celebrates, as Aristide reminds us, "solidarity, cooperation, unity, respect, dignity, justice, liberty and love of the other."

Aristide (1993:46) highlights the importance of collective self-agency and subjectivity of the poor: "The starving themselves spoke of their hunger, often uneasily and without eloquence, but they spoke." He does not see the theologian as the voice of the oppressed community; rather

the Liberationist theologian, as Aristide insists, works in solidarity with the collective poor to achieve holistic freedom: "Like Jesus, we spoke of our own reality, and we poured out all the words of Christ in light of our own situation of suffering and injustice" (Ibid:66). This declaration should be understood in the context of Aristide working among the Haitian poor, in which he compares the suffering poor with the historic suffering of the historical Jesus. Liberationist Theologian Juan Luis Segundo is correct to declare that "when the poor start to talk, when they become the voice of their own voice, we begin to see a theology of liberation" (Aristide, 1993: 110). Finally, a theology of rationality accentuates the need for radical inclusion of the poor in the public discourse and theological creativity. The emphasis on God's credulous inclusion of the poor in the grand narratives of human history is a central distinctive in Aristide's theology of the poor and theology of relationality.

3.5. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The poor as a rhetorical force and category in Aristide's theology of the poor is associated with God the Liberator who is totally committed to the radical freedom and welfare of the poor and the oppressed communities in the world. His theological outlook focuses on the idea that suffering people who are poor are created in the image of God. This God of life and of freedom speaks through the poor; he inspires hope and faith in them, and ultimately calls them to a life of freedom, meaning, and shalom. As he (2002:73) remarks, "Whenever the poor are heard and respected, the face of God is illuminated. The gift of Christ is his humanity, his presence among the living, among the poor. Jesus is not only the God of glory; he is the God of suffering." By the phrase, "Jesus is the God of suffering," Aristide seeks to inform us that Jesus's sufferings are relative to the sufferings of the world's poor majority. It also communicates the notion that God has intentionally sided with the poor and has a plan of integral liberation for them. God has not

abandoned the poor; hence, Aristide's theology of relationality encourages an ethics of inclusion and participation grounded exclusively in God's radical love and active solidarity with the oppressed of this world. God does not reject anyone; yet, he shows special favor to the poor, the oppressed, and the wretched of the earth.

Aristide maintains that liberation theology as a discourse about the God-poor encounter and his relationship with the outcast and disheartened in our communities is a liberative discourse: "We know that the innocents are still perishing in the flame of violence, but we do not fall into the sea of despair because God continually frees us with the miracle of life" (Ibid: 68-9). The practice of a theology of relationality fosters hope and faith in the midst of poverty, human oppression, life disappointment, and tragic faith. This is where exactly Aristide brings theology and social activism together. As he (1994:103) notes elsewhere, "I call liberation theology the Christian impulse that does not separate belief from action that exasperates conservatives, and annoys so many people on the left who dream of realizing the happiness of others…without the others," and the commitment to the preferential option for the poor should be "total, unrelenting, and intransigent." (Aristide, 1990:18).

Aristide's theological outlook and the rhetoric of the poor is clearly identified with the struggle of the Haitian poor and suffering masses, in particular, and the socially oppressed classes in the world, at large. His pastoral work prioritizes the poor and insists that we take into account the reality and life condition of the wretched of the earth by giving careful consideration to their socio-economic context. Aristide's Liberation theology is a theology committing to the transformation of the social order and the emancipation of the poor. God's undivided commitment to the freedom of the oppressed in the world and to the creation of a new humanity (New creation theology) is clearly affirmed in Aristide's theology of the poor. Inspired by the revolutionary

actions of God Liberator and rooted in the prophetic traditions of the Biblical narrative and Liberation theology, Aristide maintains that the socially mistreated and disinherited of this world are agents of revolutionary change in the world. The Gospel of the historical Jesus and the Jesus of Faith is a message of integral liberation from oppression. It is a prophetic message about social transformation, democratic justice, and social newness. For Aristide (1993:51, 53), the Bible is God's good news to the poor and the marginalized; more than ever a message of liberation, it proclaims loudly liberty for those who are oppressed and those who are deprived of it. One thing that should learned and appreciated from Aristide's theology of the poor is the sense of prophetic hope and the urgency to care for and remember the poor and the wretched of the earth. This is not an individual project but a collective one; being in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed of this world is an everyday process that is worth pursuing. It has communal, societal, and ultimately cosmic value within the logic of his democratic and social justice project.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide's theology of relationality is a prophetic vision for justice, freedom, love, peace, and healing, with special attention given to the plight of the cast-down people and marginalized majority of this world.

We conclude this analysis with some memorable words Aristide delivered in a speech in December 16, 1993:

> *Tan an move, li mare minn li. Se vre. Men soley delivrans la kouche. Li pa mouri*—'The horizon is somber and the sky is dark. It's true. But the sun of deliverance is only hidden. It is not dead. They can count on no other silence except a deafening and boiling silence that can be heard to the four corners of the Earth. Tomorrow, we shall be free. (1996: 156)

To advance our conversation forward and explore another facet of our analysis, it is important to inform the reader that Aristide's theological anthropology and theological ethics can

be situated within the global intellectual trajectories of both African and Black Diasporic theological anthropology and theological ethics. Aristide and many black thinkers, scholars, and theologians in continental Africa and the Black Diaspora share a wide range of confluences of ideas and ideologies in regard to the plight of the Black people in Black Africa and the Black Diaspora. Respectively, in the next two chapters (Chapters 3 and 4), our attempt is to locate Jean-Bertrand Aristide among other African and Black theologians, and underscore some ideological similarities, parallelisms, and linkages, which will become more evident in our further analysis in chapter 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CALVARY OF BLACKNESS FOR HUMANITY: CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHICS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to establish the intellectual trajectories and transnational context of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's theological anthropology and theological ethics. It appropriates the theological work of Aristide within the intellectual discourses of Africana critical theological anthropology and black theological ethics. While the focus of this chapter is not specifically on Aristide's writings, it provides the background framework to make sense of his theological imagination and reflections—from a global context. In other words, this chapter seeks to situate Aristide among the theologians and critical thinkers of the Black Atlantic, as well as places him in conversation with African and Black theologians and public intellectuals. The logic of this methodological approach is due to the incredible similarities and parallels in the (theological) writings of Aristide and the selected interlocutors of this chapter.

In the first part of the chapter, an attempt is made to examine the intersections of anthropology, race, and culture. In the second part, we attempt to understand how the discipline of anthropology can be of service to the discipline of theology. The third division of the chapter studies the social forces, bundle of human despair, and bundle of white terror—slavery, lynching, white supremacy, racial violence, etc.—that deconsecrated black lives and dehumanized black humanity. We engage the writings of three African American theologians and thinkers: Anthony B. Pinn, James H. Cone, and Emily M. Townes, and three Caribbean theologians: Idris Hamid, Leo Noel Erskine, and Kortright Davis. We document their response to these acts of violence and terror toward black people in modernity. These scholars—both groups writing from two different

geographical landscapes yet on the same American continent—provide complementary perspectives about historical memory of slavery, colonialism, economic capitalism, and the plight of black people in the so-called New World.

Along this same line of thought, we evaluate their proposals as they seek to reconstruct a more promising black personhood and humanity as well as an optimistic and rigorous black theological anthropology and ethics. In addition to these three intellectual figures, we bring three other interlocutors: first, three Black philosophers: Frantz Fanon, Cornell West, and Lewis Gordon; second, two black theologians James H. Evans, and Dwight N. Hopkins—to this complex conversation.

Because the dehumanization of black people and deconsecration of black lives reflect a serious intellectual misstep in Euro-American scholarship as well as the Western misconception of the person and his or her function in the community and society, the following four African theologians and scholars serve as our corresponding interlocutors: Laurenti Magesa, John S. Mbiti, Benezet Bujo, and Desmond Tutu to this conversation. To strengthen our stated claim, we invite three African philosophers: D.A. Masolo, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, and Kwame Gyekye. This fine African team sheds tremendous life on the African communitarianism theory (Ubuntu) and the theological and philosophical basis for the notions of being/the person and the community. The ultimate objective here is to gain abundant intellectual insights and wisdom from Africana theologians and thinkers on the reconstitution of black humanity, the maintenance of black dignity, and the preservation of black lives in the modern world.

Consequently, this chapter provides a critical analysis of the intersections of race, culture, slavery, and lyching in the writings of the note Black thinkers. The aim of this chapter is threefold: first, it investigates how the noted black theologians and thinkers--both in continental Africa and

the black diaspora—have responded to Western negative thinking about black humanity, resulting in the enslavement and lyching of black people, and the desecration of black life in the discipline of anthropology and philosophy; second, the chapter attempts to demonstrate how these thinkers cope with black suffering and the pain of black history. Toward this goal, they categorically reject modern construction of race that undermines black humanity; correspondingly, they interrogate the racial and ethnic boundaries of Western theological anthropology. Finally, on one hand, these black scholars and theologians have deconstructed Western view of black humanity by (re-) integrating the black individual and black people into the category of humanity and the human race; on the other hand, some of these thinkers have appealed to the moral system, ethical values, and the promise of Ubuntu to mend the black wound and recreate a holistic black humanity that is more promising, emancipatory, and humanizing.

It is noteworthy to point out that generally, there are five major forces in modernity that have shaped Africana critical discourse and reflection on black anthropology and black theological anthropology. Black and African scholars both in continental Africa and the Black Diaspora have responded to (1) modernity's exclusion of the black perspective on the study of the human nature and human identity; (2) they have responded to black theodicy and the collective suffering of Africans and people of African descent; (3) Africana thinkers have denounced Western colonialism, civilizing mission, and Western imperialism; (4) they have also challenged anti-black racism in American and Western societies, and confronted the culture of alienation; and (5) Finally, black people and religious scholars have relied on their religious sources and cultural traditions to cope with the terror of racism and white supremacy, and the tragic drama of American and Western dehumanization of black lives.

Toward the goal of the process of deconstructing whiteness and reconstructing the black life, Black thinkers in the Diaspora and continental Africa have turned to the African source and ancestral virtues, and African moral tradition to overcome both the evils and demons of the modern life (This perspective is also treated in the subsequent chapter.). Also, these thinkers—both in the Diaspora and Africa—"wanted to reaffirm their culture, derogated and nearly destroyed by Westernism, slavery, and colonialism. The black race had to heed to a redefining, redefinition, and reproclamation of itself" (Masolo, 2010: 3).

4.2. ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE DISCOURSE ON CULTURE AND RACE

Generally, the academic discipline of anthropology is the study of human beings in the context of the culture and social groups which they live and experience. Anthropologists observe what Clifford Geertz (2008:58) calls "the general features of social life" of the group studied. Anthropologists have expressed competing definitions to what they mean by culture. In this chapter, we will concentrate on a few helpful cultural concepts, as they pertain to the objective of this chapter. Anthropology is arguably linked with race, culture, and ethnicity, which modify the nature of human dynamics and define the general features of the social life of a group of people.

Culture is a vital phenomenon in social interaction. It is connected with human identity and dignity and the historical trajectories that form human relations and social relations. Culture encompasses all human lived-experiences and lived-worlds. Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of cultural anthropology, defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Qtd in Hamada, 2009:199). Clifford Geertz interprets culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed

127

in symbolic forms by means of which men [women] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attributes toward life" (Qtd in Scupin, 2000:6). In his influential ethnographic text, *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford (1988: 10) writes about the ambivalence of "culture as a deeply compromised idea that I cannot yet do without." He complains that since 1900, "'mankind' have become institutionalized in academic disciplines like anthropology and in museums of art or ethnology" (Ibid: 12). The problem of this "inclusive collections of mankind," according to Clifford, is that "history defines which groups or things will be redeemed from a disintegrating human past and which will be defined as the dynamic, or tragic agents of a common destiny" (Ibid: 13). In the context of the so-called New World characterized by racial violence and death, colonial savagery, and anti-black racism, colonists and slave owners undermined the culture of enslaved Africans because they "demeaned black people's sacred tales, ridiculing their myths and defining their sacred rites. Slavery was both racial and economic. Their intention was to define humanity according to European definitions so that their brutality against Africans could be characterized as civilizing the savages" (Cone, 1972: 23-4). (The enslavement of Africans was determined by economic factors that legitimized the transatlantic slave trade because of the need for large, cheap, and available labor force. The degradation of the black body during slavery and the racist attitude of Western writers towards the African also confirmed that the enslavement of Africans was also determined because of the color of their skin. Scientific racism legitimized that African and people of African descent belong to the lowest racial hierarchy, and that their culture, language, and tradition were far less inferior to those of the Europeans.)

In interpreting Frantz Fanon's critical analysis on culture, history, and human bigotry in the colonial order, Kenyan philosopher D. A. Masolo writes:

According to Fanon, history is a process within which cultural ideologies abolish each

other through alienation. In this sense, cultures are usually defined on the basis of discriminatory categories like race or other social units such as ethnicity or class. But race, ethnicity, class, and similarly discriminatory classifications are themselves ideological concepts whose contents shift with the variables of required alliances and targets in social relations. (1994:9)

Culture is not biological, but a refined social construct. Culture is not something one inherits "through our genes in the way we inherit our physical characteristics such as eye color or body build. Instead, we obtain our culture through the process of what is called *enculturation*. Enculturation is the process of social interaction through which people learn and acquire their culture. Humans acquire their culture both consciously through formal learning and unconsciously through informal social interaction" (Cone, 1972:23-4). Rather, it is something that human beings define, cultivate, experience, and transform over the years.

Claude Levi-Strauss in his classic work, *Structural Anthropology,* offers a holistic and integrative approach to cultural anthropology. He interprets the discipline of anthropology, for example, "in the broader sense, as the study of man, past and present, in all his aspects—physical, linguistic, cultural, conscious, and unconscious. In his elaboration of Mauss's concept of 'the total social phenomenon,' he is concerned with relating the synchronic to the diachronic, the individual to the cultural, the physiological to the psychological, the objective analysis of institutions to the subjective experience of individuals" (Levi-Strauss, 1974:xi). In the same line of thought as Levi-Strauss, Scupin (2000:7-8) clarifies that "The human capacity for culture is based on our linguistic and cognitive ability to symbolize. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation through symbolic learning and language. Culture is the historical accumulation of knowledge that is shared by a society….Culture consists of the shared practices and understandings within a society." In *African Culture and the Christian Church*, Aylward Shorter (1974:1) provides the most basic

definition of anthropology as "the study of man—not man as an isolated individual, but man in his own community, mans as the product of his society."

On the other hand, like society, culture undergoes social transformations. Culture is no longer understood as "an expressive totality, every aspect reinforcing all the others by virtues of their following the same structures or principles" (Tanner, 1997:52). The same writer also adds that "Culture is never independent of social processes, and social interactions never occur apart from cultural interpretations; but culture and social interactions fall out of sync with one another, at the very least because of a time lag" (Ibid).

Interestingly, Western anthropology was constructed on the notion of racial difference and hierarchy, which the Haitian anthropologist and intellectual Joseph Auguste Anténor Firmin studied in his 1885 monumental study, *De l'égalité des races humaines* (*The Equality of the Human Races*). By consequence, anthropology is also implicated in the discourse of race in modernity and the racialization of peoples, geographical spaces and locations, and human history in the modern world. Since its inception as a discipline of study in the eighteenth century, Western anthropology "has been the science that takes the explanation of race and culture as its central charge" (Baker, 1998:3).

In the case of the American society, anthropologist Lee D. Baker has demonstrated how anthropological ideas have shaped human transactions and been used as a machinery to construct racial categories and create an American society that is based on the idea of racial difference and racial inequality; as it is observed, "the anthropological discourse on race feeds into the larger discourses out of which it is itself constructed. For example, lawmakers have used anthropology to write legislation shat shapes public policy, and journalists have used it to produce media that shape public opinion" (Ibid:3-4). For example, African American theologian James Cone

(1972:20) informs us that "The black experience in America is a history of servitude and resistance, of survival in the land of death. It is the story of black life in chains and of what that meant for the souls and bodies of black people." African American theologian J. Kameron Carter (2008:80) adds that the modern nation-state was predicated "on a new type of anthropology, which had at its core a discourse of race (replete with a logic of racism) that was itself tied to how Christianity came to be 'rationally' repositioned within the framework of modernity's political economy."

The question about cultural anthropology is somewhat correlated with the notion of human dignity and the discourse on human nature. Western intellectuals including philosophers, political scientists, humanists, theologians, and moralists of the Enlightenment era have divided over what constitutes exactly the human nature. Who is a human? What is a human? These questions of anthropology were central in the writings of Enlightenment thinkers. They equate human nature with freedom, equality, natural rights, and virtues. In other words, there are very specific and universal characteristics that distinctively human and cross-cultural. Some of these thinkers including the French encyclopedic Denis Diderot held that human nature is a universal phenomenon and that "it determines everything that matters in human behavior; science must therefore govern ethics and politics" (Qtd in Todorov, 1993: 20). For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "What is common to human beings is not any particular trait (in this sense it is pointless to wonder whether man is good or evil, moral or immoral), but their freedom, their capacity to transform themselves (potentially for the better)" (Todorov, 1993: 21-22). For Condorcet, "all men are equal in rights, for they share the same nature; the rights of men are the same everywhere" (Ibid: 24). Philosopher David Hume who has written candidly about the human nature and the common humanity all human beings share make this declaration:

> our moral life, our necessary willingness to respond to the inclinations and sentiments, the desires and demands of others, is the natural outcome of the 'sympathy' that all human

beings possess by the simple virtue of their humanity…As all human beings share a common nature, they are all experience pleasure and pain in much the same way, and we never remark any passion or principle in others of which, in some degree or others, we do not find a parallel in ourselves. (Qtd in Pagden, 2013:144)

Hume also stresses that

It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations…Similarly, the distribution of human characteristics seems to have been discernible pretty much everywhere across the various peoples of the world, so that stature and force of body, length of life, even courage and extent of genius, seem hitherto to have been naturally, in all ages, pretty much the same. (Pagden, 2013:163-4)

Contrary to Hume's thesis, Immanuel Kant has divided humanity into four racial categories and hierarchies "with the Europeans at the top and the Africans at the bottom" (Ibid: 168). He argued that the "Americans and Negroes cannot govern themselves. Thus they serve only as slaves, and that whites are the only ones who always progress toward perfection." (Qtd in Pagden, 2013:168). Nonetheless, Kantian anthropology would have played a tremendous influence on modern theology and theological anthropology. Contrary to Kant's proposition of the natural superiority of the white race and the natural inferiority of the black race, in *Equality of the Human Races,* which he published in 1885 as a rebuttal to De Gobineau's *The Inequality of the Races*, Haitian anthropologist and lawyer Joseph Antenor Firmin has argued brilliantly to understand human nature and culture according to their social milieu and geographical environment. Having rejected all the modern definitions of anthropology that are premised on scientific racism, Firmin (2002: 10) defines anthropology merely "as the study of man in his physical, intellectual, and moral dimensions, as he is found among the different races which constitute the human species." Through cogent reasoning and irrefutable claims, Firmin has brilliantly demonstrated that all the races and peoples are ontologically equal and possess same intelligence.

132

Moreover, Firmin has concluded that human nature was very malleable, and from the anthropological context, normal variations in human nature were fundamentally incommensurable. Similarly, In *Patterns of Culture*, anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1961:25) has remarked that "geographically separate societies may be integrated around different aspects of human nature, giving these societies a distinctive character…Societies must be understood on their own terms, not on some single scale (where, of course, 'we'—whites—always come out on top). In creating their own 'pattern culture,' other societies, other civilizations, have avoided some of the problems Western civilization faces, and created their own." Firmin explains further the root of the problem of the doctrine of the inequality of the races and how it has changed academic disciplines in the West and the intellectual life. He makes the following observations:

> The division of humanity into distinct races, classified on the basis of the principles of the natural sciences, took roots as an intellectual notion only with the birth of ethnographic science. While ethnographic notions appear in flashes in serious works of history, the concept of race assumed its definitive meaning only with the works of eighth century naturalists. In this case, it is not absolutely inaccurate to suggest that the idea of the original inequality of the human races is one of the oldest and most widespread opinions, especially when race is understood in the sense attributed to it by modern science? (2002:140)

By inference, scientific racism is the motivation behind the proponents of the aforementioned doctrine of racial inequality. The pivotal problem with scientific racism is that it has separated the (one) human race into different human races and fostered a climate of intense fear (xenophobia) of the other and profound psychological anxiety in social interactions. Scientific racism, as one of the greatest human failures in the West that globalizes race, has also caused a deep wound in Western societies that can't effectively be cured; it deferred the joy of interracial friendship and genuine cross-cultural human dynamics. One of the dire consequences of the doctrine of racial inequality is the dehumanization of black life and the resistance by some individuals to affirm black dignity. As Cornell West has observed:

133

The notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West. The idea of black equality in beauty, culture, and intellectual capacity remains problematic….The Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of white supremacy, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving conditions. (West, 1982:47)

Racism as practiced and maintained in most Western countries is a serious threat to the collective progress and spiritual advancement of the human race. Race as a false category operates within the realm of culture, culture, language, taste, and human identity. It also penetrates the sphere of the public and private life, the individual and the collective, the particular and the universal.

Race, then, operates in a globalizing moral frame, assuming a public outlook that projects the social into the natural world. Within this mythic imagination, the racial-conceptual schemes serve to sanction social values. Just as the moral virtues are made more tangible and forceful by personalizing them, so are the unacceptable acts made more fearful by attributing them to personal beings (Eze, 2001:31, 33)

Theologian Howard Thurman (1971), who has sustained the idea that human consciousness is in essence a motive and a product of community, also put forth the notion that racism undermines the possibilities for actualizing community or bringing about the fulfillment of communal goals and collective objectives in the world. Moreover, in *An Essay on Human Understanding,* philosopher John Locke affirmed that the almighty God who created the world was also the creator of having endowed him "a special status marked by the great and inestimable advantage of immortality and life everlasting which has above other material beings" (Israel, 2009:592). On the other hand, this same Locke who believed that all humans were spiritually equal denied the social equality of all men. As Jonathan Israel has remarked about Locke:

Locke speaks of spiritual equality while simultaneously upholding a society of ranks, indeed even slavery slavery—he was an investor in the Royal Africa Company and the Bahamas Adventurers Company, both major slaving concerns, as well as, late in his career, commissioner of the London Board of Trade. (Israel, 2010:93)

French philosopher Francois Voltaire, a racial determinist, denied Africans of having any civilization or history. He also rejected the idea that blacks possessed the same nature as the white race:

> If their understanding is not of a different nature from ours, it is at least greatly inferior. They are not capable of any great application or association of ideas, and seemed formed neither for the advantages nor the abuses of philosophy. (Qtd in Harris, 1968:87)

Similarly, the polygenist and racial determinist David Hume, like Georg Hegel, denied blacks of having any intelligence, human nature, or civilization before their encounter with white Europeans; accordingly, the Africans were less than human beings with no beauty, no reason, goodness, no talent, and that they had not made any meaningful contributions to universal civilization according to the European standard:

> There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacture among them, no arts, no sciences…Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. (Qtd in Harris, 1968:88)

As already outlined above, Immanuel Kant who had established that "Negroes and Whites are the base races," argued forcefully for the uniqueness of the white race (Qtd in Carter, 2008:90). Carter insightful comments on the repercussions of Kant's racial ideals, and the dramatization of race in modernity is noteworthy:

> If the white race exemplifies humanity on its way to perfection, the black race embodies the departure and failure to attain this perfection. In the Negro race, white flesh observes a race so mired in its particularity as never to be able to speak with universal force and, therefore, as never positioned to be an analogy or index of the universal. Black flesh lacks universal gravitas. It is trapped in its particularity in such a way that it always needs to justify its existence before universal white flesh. In short, the particularity of black flesh reflects an aesthetics, which for Kant is an ethics and a politics, of excess and imbalance— the excess of bodily particularity over rational universality: the imbalance between law and freedom. (Carter, 2008:90)

135

Marvin Harris (1968:88) has aptly summarized the crisis of Western anthropology with the rise of racial determinism and scientific racism in the eighteenth century: "All the development of racial determinist in the nineteenth century was rooted in the previous century's concern with progress, and this same preoccupation with broadly concerned aptitudes for creating, acquiring or reaching 'civilization' continues to characterize the popular racism of the mid-twentieth century." It is also important to note here most Western thinkers and writers who had embraced the racial determinism theory also rejected the theological premise for the unity of all human beings, the concept of shared human nature, and the idea that all people and races shared a common ancestry with Adam and Eve—the doctrine of monogenesis—as recorded in the Genesis account in the Bible. The question we should now pursue is this: what is the relationship between anthropology and theology in recent scholarship?

4.2.1. ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

The literature of the relationship between anthropology and theology is voluminous. For convenience, this section of the chapter shall focus on a few selected insightful studies valuable to the theme of this chapter. The goal here is to seek understanding on how anthropology could assist the theologian to foster a robust and consistent theological discourse that is not divorced itself from culture, ethnicity, and other important social dynamics. Kathryn Tanner (1997:40-56) has interrogated the traditional view or the consensus that cultures are (1) internally consistent wholes, (2) as a principal of social order, (3) as the primacy of cultural stability, and (4) that cultures are sharply bounded or self-contained units. She construes theology as an essential part of culture as culture is a fundamental aspect of anthropology. She writes lucidly:

136

The most basic contribution that an anthropological understanding of culture—postmodern or not—makes to theology is to suggest that theology be viewed as a part of culture, as a form of cultural activity…Theology is something that humans produce. Like all human activities, it is historically and socially conditioned; it cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of human sociocultural practices. In short, to say theology is a part of culture is just to say in a contemporary idiom that it is a human activity...Saying that theology is part of culture becomes a way of talking about theology in terms of what it means to be human. (Ibid: 63-64)

Hence, theological anthropology is a form of cultural interaction, and correspondingly, theological anthropology explores what it means to be human theologically, and live within the confinements of social norms devised to defining the idea of humanity or personhood. In interpreting Gordon Kaufman's position on the dynamics between theology and humanhood, Tanner brings us closer to the inevitable relationship between theology and anthropology and the interconnecting thread between theology and culture:

[That] the anthropological idea that culture is a human universal, a defining feature of human life. As a result, the meaning and significance of theology are primarily assessed with reference to the general features of some universal cultural enterprise, one that proceeds along much the same lines in all times and places. Thus, according to Kaufman, human beings always face the task of constructing a life-orienting worldviews for themselves. Theology is a particular version of this search for meaning, for a pattern of fundamental categories that will, as cultures do, orient, guide, and order human life. (Ibid: 64)

As theology searches for meaning and wisdom, culture is served as a guide to arrive at the desiring goal or objective. Tanner, who has questioned Kaufman's basic thesis, brilliantly reinterprets the role of anthropology and theology in a specific-cultural context. In some degree, she invites us to think more critically about constructed theological narratives and the grand stories of anthropology as a discipline in search of better understanding of human beings, their ideologies, and worldviews. She explains clearly that

An anthropological approach theology will not, then, naturally encourage the formulation of human universals into which the practice of theology can be fit. To the contrary, anthropology tends to deflate claims about human universals made by other disciplines. An anthropological idea of culture encourages theologians to develop a primary interest in the

particular….Theology from an anthropological point of view would be something like what nineteenth-century scholars called a "positive science." Thinking about theology as a part of culture would mean thinking about theology as a part of some specific, communally shaped way of life, with all the full-bodied and concrete comprehensiveness that the expression "way of life" conveys from an anthropological point of view. (Ibid: 67)

As a consequence, a theological doctrine or system is sourced in a very cultural milieu or framework. Theological propositions are sometimes formulated as a response to cultural problems such liberation theology, black theology, womanist theology, etc. As we reflect theologically upon the culture in which we experience life as members of a given community, we need to remember the tremendous interplay between culture and theology in the cultivation of human character, the construction of values and virtues, and in the formation of Christian discipleship. Not only our faith is influenced by culture, our theological conviction is transformed by cultural practices, traditions, and ideologies. Reciprocally, theology has a tremendous impact on culture. The relationship between faith and culture is mutual; hence, "as faith seeks to influence and transform a culture, so too does theology. Theological understandings, therefore, both have an impact on the culture and are affected by the culture" (Schineller, 1990: 45). Further, anthropology can play a substantive role as a messenger in assisting the theologian to reach a better conclusion about the meaning of culture, and to reappropriate and contextualize our theological formulations and discourses.

Franz Boaz (1911:38), one of the founding fathers of American anthropology, in his important text, *The Mind of Primitive,* states that anthropology "could free a civilization from its own prejudice;" for contemporary theological anthropology, the discipline of anthropology could be perceived as a "giant rescue operation" (Watson, 2001:278) to show the relevance of culture in theological discourse, but also to demonstrate the interesting intersections of theology, culture, race and anthropology in modern theology. Perhaps anthropology could help liberate modern

theological practice in the West from ethnocentrism and to be more open to non-Western and cross-cultural theological conversations. Anthropological theory is particularly useful for theology as it can provide valuable information to the theologian to grasp the nature of culture, the religious sensibility or the theological impulse of the community of faith or individuals who live in it (Overholt, 1996:3). As will be observed further in this chapter and the subsequent one, the interweaving link between theology and culture is an essential element in forging a robust theological anthropology based on the values and philosophy of Ubuntu and the interactional model of anthropology.

Consequently, the discipline of anthropology studies the individual—not as an isolated person—in the context of his/her community since the individual is the product of his/her society. Theological anthropology is also concerned with theological ethics or moral theology. Nonetheless, the issue between the two disciplines pertains to how people live (which is the function of social or cultural anthropology) and how they *should or ought to live* in this world. To truly understand the human condition, it is critical that people are studied in all dimensions and from an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary angle. Hence, theological anthropology must engage the social sciences and other disciplines in the humanities. In the words of Swailem Sidhom:

> There is no doubt that the pattern of life within any given society is an expression of a particular view of man held by that society. The shape of political life, for instance, rests on a particular view of man. The practices of religion are as much the outcome of its doctrine of God as of its estimate of man. There is a sense in which the doctrine of God can be viewed as an expression of a certain view of man. Evidently, wherever we may turn, the question of who man is cannot be avoided. (Magesa, 1997: 30-1)

The reality of this perspective is that theological interpretation is radically shaped by the theologian's vision of society, culture, and life in general. Theology in this sense should be construed as a commentary on culture. At the heart of biblical theological anthropology and

theological ethics lies these puzzling questions: Who are we? Whose are we? Who is my neighbor? How shall I treat my neighbor? How shall one then live in this world? What is the goal of life? Does life have any meaning? The definition of what it means to be human "conceived in relation to both God and one's neighbor" (Evans, 1992:11).

The God-human relationship affirms some basic aspects about this rapport. According to the biblical narrative (Gen. 1:26-27), man and woman were created in the image of God, and they are objects of divine concern. All people regardless of their race, color, gender, ethnicity, and language are equally endowed with the likeness of God. Before God, all persons are equal and precious in his sight; the argument for the unity of the human race is based upon this premise: all humans, no matter what rank they occupy in life, belong to the same kind, the same extended family because all are the progeny of one man (Adam) and one woman (Eve). According to Thomas Aquinas, because the individual is created in the image of God, he is an ethical subject; in the same vein, to be created in the image of God means that the human person is a rational being who imitates God's exemplar:

> Since … we are told that the human person is made in the image of God…; after speaking above of the exemplar, viz., of God…, it now remains to consider his image, i.e., the human person, in view of the fact that he himself is the origin of his works, since he has free will and the power over his own works…The human person is considered as formed after the likeness of God in that he has a spiritual nature. He is formed in the highest manner after the likeness of God, thanks to the fact that the spiritual nature can imitate God in the highest manner. (Bujo, 2001:79)

Evidently, Aquinas' understanding of the image and likeness of God is problematic. To be created in the image of God is to rule and have dominion over all things on earth. We will return to this important concept in the next chapter. Abraham Herschel aptly summarizes the relational dynamic between God and humanity in these memorable words:

> Reverence for God is shown in our reverence for man. The fear you must feel of offending or hurting a human being must be as ultimate as your fear of God. An act of violence is an

140

act of desecration. To be arrogant toward man is to be blasphemous toward God…The future of the human species depends upon our degree of reverence for the individual man. And the strength and validity of that reverence depend upon our faith in God's concern for man. (Herschel, 1959:234-7)

To sustain Hershel's thesis, the institution of slavery and colonial system were terrific acts of human desecration and degradation.

4.3. THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF COLONIAL CHRISTIANITY: THE DECONSECRATION OF BLACK LIVES AND DEHUMANIZATION OF BLACK HUMANITY

Slavery and the colonialism were the most savaged human systems in modernity. They have contributed immeasurably to human suffering and the violent death of millions of enslaved Africans and other people in the world. Unfortunately, Christianity was complicit with the so-called *mission civilatrice* ("civilizing mission"), and equally Christianity in the New World supported the institution of slavery and the selling of African flesh to bring financial dividends to the institutionalized church and state-sponsored institutions and private companies. Colonial subjects and missionaries misinterpreted the ethical teachings of Jesus about the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, which resulted in the de-consecration of black lives and the dehumanization of black humanity. Correspondingly, Christianity collaborated with the colonialists to annihilate and demonize the cultural and religious traditions of both the enslaved African population and the indigenous people. Christian theology was instrumental in the way European colonizers have reordered the human dynamics and the social arrangements. As Enrique Dussell has noted:

> Sin on the level of culture, of which the church itself cannot be exonerated, having de factor identified itself over the course of many centuries with Western culture alone (the phenomenon of *Christendom*), is the domination of one culture by another... The modern European Christendoms, Catholic and Protestant alike, proclaimed to the human history of the Third World the witness of an obliteration of aliens cultures, the annihilation of the neighbor, of the other, in the name of Christianity. (Dussel, 1988:200-201)

To complement Dussel, anthropologist Lee D. Baker makes a similar observation:

> The antecedents of contemporary notions of race are found not in the science of race but in the theology of heathenism, the saved, and the damned. Although many attempts were made by early North American colonialists to "save" the souls of indigenous people, the ensuing conflicts quickly changed the image of Native Americans from noble to ignoble savages. Religious doctrines inspired both colonization and malicious destruction of indigenous people's lives, land, and culture. (1998:12)

European colonialists who came to the Americas believed that Western culture and civilization were fare more advanced than any other contemporary cultures and civilizations they had encountered; they also deemed those civilizations and cultures barbarous and far less inferior than theirs. Their goal was not only to conquer but also to introduce the Western way of life to the colonized. Enrique Dussel has written prolifically to counter this false ideology, and the propaganda that the non-Western people had no thriving culture, no civilization, no history, or religion before their encounter with the West. In *Ethics and Community*, he writes the following statement:

> At least from the sixteenth century onward, Spanish and Portuguese culture, and later English, French, and Dutch, and finally North American, engulfed the peripheral cultures by conquest and colonization. Aztec, Inca, Bantu, East Indian, Chinese, and other cultures were dominated and annihilated, or relegated to the supposed status of barbarism, savagery, and bestiality. Their gods were demons, we heard, their symbols sorcery, their traditions ignorance and falsehood, their dances indecency and immorality. (Dussel, 1988:201)

For Europeans colonialists and slave masters, the enslaved Africans had a subordinate status as human beings. They also thought that the Africans were inferior in cultural and religious traditions. Colonial Christianity operated in the French and Anglophone Caribbean, and correspondingly, American colonial Christianity collaboratively justified the institution of slavery on the ground that it facilitated the process of Christianizing, civilizing, and humanizing the Africans. New World slavery not only suffered an anthropological conundrum but also a theological crisis. As some Christian ministers of that era had unapologetically confessed, "Slavery

142

was the good and merciful way of organizing labor which Providence has given us…That the relation betwixt the slave and his master is not inconsistent with the world of God, we have long since settled… We cherish the institution not from avarice, but from principle" (Noll, 2006:2). Theologian Philip Schaff who had unashamedly contended for the legitimacy of slavery in the United States of America asserted that "The neqro question lies deeper than the slavery question" (Ibid:51) The Swiss-born Protestant theologian and church historian saw black humanity as a threat and problem to white civilization.

Additionally, White masters and proslavery Christian advocates publicized that the enslaved Africans had no soul, were subhumans, uncivilized, and are a lower species of humanity (Anyabwile, 2007:101). Therefore, for many New World colonists, the enslavement of the Africans in the Americas had strong "biblical precedence and divine sanction" (2006:4). Theologian Anthony Pinn who writes prolifically about black theodicy and theological anthropology explains the theological misunderstanding of human nature and black humanity in particular in this remarkable paragraph:

> For many slave owners, slaves had no need for religion because they had no soul to save. In this respect, enslaved Africans were considered of no more importance or value than cattle. They were chattel. Some colonists understood themselves to be responsible for spreading the Gospel, yet this did not translate into effective work with enslaved Africans…Others argued that Africans were not intellectually capable of understanding the scripture and church doctrine. (Ibid: 5)

Comparatively, theologian James Cone voices his own critique against American Christianity for deviating from the Christian message of peace, reconciliation, and hospitality. According to Cone (2010:14), "The essence of the gospel of Christ stands or falls on the question of black humanity, and there is no way that a church or institution can be related to the gospel of Christ if it sponsors or tolerates racism in any form." Thabiti Anyabwile's (2007:101) view on the subject matter is noteworthy: "At their heart, these arguments betrayed historical Christian tenets

143

regarding the nature of man." By affirming the equality and worth of black people before God, he also debunks the counter-gospel narrative and anti-black racism in New World Christianity:

> In the historical Christian doctrine of man, God constituted man with both a physical body and an immortal soul. God created humanity "in his own image" and endowed him with certain faculties uncommon to the rest of the created order. However, man corrupted himself through sin and fell from his original state. Early Christian debates centered on how the Fall affected the freedom of man's will and the relationship between man's will and the grace of God…Nearly all of the controversies from the early church fathers through the Reformation concentrated on the spiritual nature of man and rarely focused on the kind of ethical applications of anthropology relevant to the experience of Africans in America. (Ibid)

The great paradox of this theological conundrum lies in this noted problem: "Many of the early defenders of African humanity stopped well short of extending their theological position to an ethical conclusion entailing the social and civil equality of Africans with whites" (Anyabwile, 2007:102) The doctrine of the racial inferiority of blacks and Africans was the missing link between anthropology and theology, as it had "supplied the missing term to many of the arguments that defended American slavery by appeal to Scripture" (Noll, 2006:56). Many of these thinkers of the slavery period were reluctant to expand the doctrine of the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God to Africans and blacks, and native Americans. However, it was "the language related to God—*theology*—that served to rationalize avarice, and ambition, not vice versa. It was religion that attempted to sacralize political dominion and economic exploitation" (Rivera, 1992: xv). Sidney Mintz and Richard Price (1992: 3) concur that "enslavement was a primary device for securing the labor necessary to consolidate such colonization." As Willie Jennings (2010:4) has inferred, Christianity was operated "out of a history of relations that exposed a distorted relational imagination."

African American Philosopher Cornell West laments over the tragic predicament enslaved Africans experienced in the Calvary of New World slavery:

144

The trauma of the slave voyage from Africa to the New World and the Euro-American attempt systematically to strip Africans of their languages, cultures, and religions produced a black experience of the absurd. This state of "natal alienation"—in which Africans had no right to their past or progeny—prevented widespread transmittance of tradition to American-born Africans. (1982:161)

At this juncture of our conversation, we shall inquire about how black theologians and thinkers have responded to the problem of slavery, lynching, and the dehumanization of black life in modernity. We shall turn our attention to our first conversation partner Anthony B. Pinn and discuss his thought about these social evils that reduced the black person to a nonbeing. We shall focus on Pinn's brilliant study, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion*—an important text about black theodicy and the historical suffering of black people in the United States and modern history.

4.3.1. ANTHONY B. PINN

Anthony B. Pinn (2003:12) has listed several contributing factors resulting in the dehumanization and desecration of blacks in North America. Socioeconomic needs, psychological comfort of whiteness, and the desire to rule and dominate have all contributed to the ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority. Complementarily, cultural, philosophical, theological, and physical arguments added to the discourse of human nature and racial distinction. Pinn clarifies how slavery degrades black humanity and renders them nonbeing:

It is not that Africans were always considered animals—nonhuman in this sense—but that a consistent assumption existed that blacks should have a restricted and determined identity. One can question whether colonists believed enslaved Africans were actual beasts, but one thing is certain: Africans were determined fully by their chattel status. Slavery entailed a system of relations and experience—direct and violent—namelessness and invisibility, personal violations of many kinds and dishonor that whites were not subjected to. In essence, slavery became the answer to all questions about their humanity. It spoke to their nature and their status. (2003:13)

145

More explicitly, Pinn reveals the black wound and social death defies black lives in New World slavery. The strength of slavery and white supremacy not only fortified whiteness but also defied black subjectivity and humanity:

> Slavery's power lies in the eradication of Africans as subjects and the manner in which the enslaved African is re-created in the context of the New World as an object, depersonalized, a nonbeing. As such, enslaved Africans occupied a strange space in which that they existed outside the recognized boundaries of human community while also being a necessary part of the same community—a workforce and as the reality against which whiteness was defined. These factors, when combined with physical darkness, resulted in the state of social death that defines slavery and the slave. Slaved had the physical form of the human but because of their social death possessed none of the attributes, rights, and liberties associated with being human. (2003: 16)

New World slavery was not only a human rights violation, it transformed individual slaves to tools of production and machinery. It also contributed to the psychological break down of the individual slave and enslaved population. Slavery crushed the slaves' spirit. The definition of black slaves as property, non-persons, and objects would shape the discourse of black theological anthropology, and the doctrine of ontological difference between black and white people as early as in the eighteenth-century. As Anthony has remarked:

> Nonhuman status was expressed in a variety of ways, all meant to reinforce to the African and to larger society the distinction between persons with honor—white people—and blacks as property slaveholders believed that maintaining this boundary between persons and their black property was necessary to maintain their social world and avoid chaos… Defining the slave by status as property is only adequate if it is also argued that the slave is not conceived as being a person in the same sense as the master. (2003:16-7)

This particular view (slaves as their masters' property) was also held by Christian slave masters and anti-abolitionist apologists for slavery. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Psychiatrist and theorist Frantz Fanon has brilliantly articulated the plot of black folk in the Western world and the white gaze that disvalues their humanity and betrays blackness in a world scripted by whiteness and the colonial logic. He informs us how blacks are not allowed to define themselves (black ontology) but are defined by others.

146

I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomies, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro! (Fanon, 1967:116)

The decisive action to legally sell black bodies in New World slave marketplaces, and lawfully define the African person as a property was an absolute act of the banality of evil, and the absolute desecration and dehumanization of human (the black) life. In addition to slavery, black lynching was one of the cruelest methods of defaming black humanity and undermining the personhood of black people in the Americas. Pinn provides detailed information about the historical terror accompanying the slave auctions as a ritual of reference:

> The status imposed on enslaved Africans—as objects of history—requires actions such as auctions to reinforce this status. Therefore, slave auctions were a ritual by which the slave system enforced and celebrated the dehumanization of Africans. I refer to this ritual as a ritual of reference: it is repeated, systematic activity conducted in carefully selected locations that is intended to reinforce the enslaved's status as object…It is through this ritualizing that the slave's status is given social force and meaning because it makes explicit the re-creation of the slave as a "thing." Auctions, as a ritual of reference, are important in that they made explicit through humiliation—and elaborate through display— the nonbeing of the African and the existential superiority of the European. The auction becomes something of a ceremony through which the making of the negro as historical material is accomplished. It is through the display of the black body on the auction black that the African in the New World became a new substance. (2003:49)

The signification of the slave auction—as both a dread and terror event—is that both black individuals and the larger enslaved African community lost their common humanity and shared dignity: "It is a loss of humanity held in common by all blacks and addressed on the level of both the individual who stands on the auction block and the community that experiences the individual's loss as its own" (2003:48). The full passage is as follows:

> This terror results from how the auction block strips away early self-perceptions and meaning, imposing in their place 'otherness' and historical irrelevance. Drear or terror in this sense is profound in that it forces the slave to confront his or her helplessness, isolation, from the familiar, and submersion in absurdity. But this dread is not restricted to the individual; rather, the slave auction had implications on the communal level in that it had something to do with a despised otherness attached to both black individuals and the larger

147

black community. There is a tension between individual and community with respect to this dread. It is a loss of humanity held in common by all blacks and addressed on the level of both the individual who stands on the auction block and the community that experiences the individual's loss at its own. (Ibid)

To reiterate, the chief objective of the slave auctions as a ritual of reference was to reduce the African to the status of non-being (in the Fanonian sense) and to publicly shame the black body and demonstrate that the African was not equal to the white. Comparatively, black lynching should also be construed as a ritual of reference, whose central aim was also to publicly dishonor the black body and to debase the sense of personhood in the black victim.

4.3.2. JAMES H. CONE

James H. Cone, in his stimulating work, *The Lynching Tree and the Cross*, writes provocatively and descriptively about slavery and lynching as the most terrified moments in American history. He reads the lynching of black people as a theology of atonement akin to the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

> The sufferings of black people during slavery are too deep for words. That suffering did not end with emancipation. The violence and oppression of white supremacy took different forms and employed different means to achieve the same end: the subjugation of black people…At no time was the struggle to keep such hope alive more difficult than during the lynching era (1889-1940). The lynching tree is the most potent symbol of the trouble nobody knows that blacks have seen but do not talk about because the pain of remembering—visions of black bodies dangling from southern trees, surrounded by jeering white mobs—is almost too excruciating to recall. (Cone, 2011:2-3)

The brutal death of African Americans through the ritual of lynching was to be understood as an example of social salvation and a ritual of racial cleansing. Many white people believed that the purification of the American soil lay in the total annihilation of black lives through the instrumentalization of pre-arranged lynching ceremonies. Hence, the lynching of black people as a sacrificial atonement brought about the redemption of white folk from the presence of Black folk

within their midst. Unlike the atoning death of Christ that bears a universal application and salvific effect for the redemption of all people, the lynching of black—a particular racial group or people—Americans as a theology of atonement, in the Calvinistic logic, is particular and limited. Black lynching as a ritual of reference is a clear affirmation of a pivotal moment and an existential crisis of American anthropology and the country's misapprehension of the human nature, and more importantly, the collective refusal to affirm and embrace black humanity:

> Lynching was the white community's way of forcibly reminding blacks of their inferiority and powerlessness. To be black meant that whites could no anything to you and your people, and that neither you nor anyone else could do anything about it…
> It was a family affair, a ritual celebration of white supremacy, where women and children were often given the first opportunity to torture black victims—burning black flesh and cutting off genitals, fingers, toes, and ears as souvenirs. (Cone, 2011:9)

The memory of (Black) lynching to black people in the American society is cogently expressed in Cone's (2011:9) uneasy language: "The possibly of violent death was always imminent… African Americans knew what it means to make the best of a bad situation—to live 'under a kind of sentence of death,' not know [ing] when [their] time will come, it may never come, but it may also be any time." Black lynching establishes the ambiguous relationship between history, memory, and race in American social history. It involved the collective imagination, shared participation, the performance of the American people, and the wickedness of white America. Ultimately, the lynching of black Americans was a devastating demonstration of America's "sick soul":

> Postcards were made from the photographs taken of black victims with white lynchers and onlookers smiling as they struck a pose for the camera. They were sold for ten to twenty-five cents to members of the crowd, who then mailed them to relatives and friends, often with a note saying something like this: "This is the barbeque we had last night." Spectacle lynchings attracted people from nearby cities and towns. They could not have happened without widespread knowledge and the explicit sanction of local and state authorities with tacit approval from the federal government, members of the white media, churches, and universities. (Cone, 2011:9)

Furthermore, Cone construes black lynching as a serious theological problem rooted in a distorted theological narrative and biblical worldview about black people:

> The claim that whites had whites had the right to control the black population through lynching and other extralegal forms of mob violence was grounded in the religious belief that America is a white nation by God to bear witness to the superiority of "white over black." Even prominent religious scholars in the North, like the highly regarded Swiss-born church historian Philip Schaff…believed that "The Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-American, all modern races, possess the strongest national character and the one best fitted for universal dominion…Cole Blease, the two-time governor and U.S. senator from South Carolina, proclaimed that lynching is a "divine right of the Caucasian race to dispose of the offending blackamoor without the benefit of jury. (2011:7)

Both the slave auctions and black lynching as ritual of references have incalculably contributed to the predicament of blackness in the modern world resulting in the crisis of black theodicy which had impacted the discourse of anthropology and black theological anthropology. Black theological anthropology must respond critically to the calamity of black theodicy (The phrase "black theodicy" here pertains to the divine intervention or God's seemingly absence and the persistent problem of evil in black life), the pain of black history, and the Calvary of black suffering in the modern world. James Cone himself has deliberately acknowledged the uneasiness of black conscience and black faith in the midst of black suffering and the seemingly absence of the "Black God" in the plight of his (Black) people:

> The cross places God in the midst of the crucified people [black people], in the midst of people who are hung, shot, burned, and tortured…No historical situation was more challenging than the lynching era, when God the liberator seemed nowhere to be found…Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans continued to struggle to reconcile their faith in God's justice and love with the persistence of black suffering. (Cone, 2011:27-8)

Cone's uneasiness to make sense of the ostensibly divine absence in black suffering and the lack of God's presence in black lives is troublesome. In her attempt to address the moral evils in this world, which are expressed, according to Anthony Pinn (1995:13), in "oppression, injustice, inequality, and the resulting psychological and physical damage," and the "tridimensional

150

oppressions" channeled through race, class, and gender, Womanist theologian Stephanie Mitchem interrogates the very possibility of the promise of salvation and redemptive suffering in Christian theology:

> Suffering in itself is not salvific. It is redemptive only in that it may lead to critical rethinking of meaning or purpose, as might nay life crisis. Such reexamination is part of the process of human maturation. However, suffering is a distinctive staring place for thinking about salvation as it bring into sharp focus humane experience with God. (Qtd in Whitted, 2009:10)

Like Pinn, Mitchem denies the possibility of redemptive suffering in God's economy of salvation and providence in history, and in the same manner Womanist theologian Emily Townes engages the question of the commodification of black women's body, and the problem of evil and suffering in society.

4.3.3. EMILE TOWNES

Emile Townes (2006:6) in her dazzling study, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* offers an engaging and insightful commentary on black theological anthropology with a special attention on the various forms of structural evil, and constructed cultural stereotypes about black womanhood. She underscores five representational stereotypes of black women which embody the manifestation of evil as a cultural production in the American society; these negative labels not only deprecate the black woman's body, defame black womanhood, they also identify the black female as property and commodity, and the subject of white gaze—as it were in the time of black lynching (Cone) and slave auction (Pinn).

> New interest in blackface stereotypes involves historical, political, and aesthetic implications that are more complex than allowed by the debates over positive and negative images. Every stereotype emerges in the wake of pre-existing ideology that deforms it, appropriates it, and naturalizes it. The blackface stereotype, by deforming the body, silences it and leaves room for white supremacy to speak through it…Black identity has been made property and it should leave a sickening weariness in the pit of our collective stomach for property means things owned, possession. (Townes, 2006:42-3)

Townes correlates the notion of property/commodity with black lives resulting in the selling of black flesh as part of the Western capitalist order and economic exploitation of black bodies in New World slave marketplaces.

> The modern conception of property considers it an economic resource, deems it friendly to money making, and regards the demands of the state as a drain on resources and a threat to a person's right to do as he or she will with their property. Implicit in this is an understanding of liberty as noninterference from the state. Ownership, then, means rights over resources that the individual can exercise without interference. (Townes, 2006:43-4)

Townes' evocative rhetoric of the commodification of black flesh can be construed as the process of devaluing black humanity. This remark is on par with Cone and Pinn's candid observation about the lynching of black people. As pointed out earlier, the misrepresentation of black flesh as non-human was a shared ecstatic moment between white families and their friends; it also functioned as an economic transaction in Southern United States:

> The commodification of bodies mutated into the commodification of identity—Black history, Black culture, Black life—Black identity. Black identity as property means that a community of people has been reduced to exchange values that can be manipulated for economic gain—but rarely by the members of the community themselves. This manipulation includes merging race with myth and memory to create history. It includes caricaturing Black life, and in some cases Black agony, to sell the product. (Townes, 2006:44)

To a broader and transnational understanding of black history, it is observed that the issue of black suffering and the hurt of the black experience in modern history has been addressed by both black diasporic and African thinkers. Lewis Gordon (2000:9) contends that "The racial problematic for Africana people is twofold. One the one hand, it is the question of exclusion in the face of an ethos of assimilation. On the other hand, there is the complex confrontation with the fact of such exclusion in a world that portends commitment to rational resolutions of evil." Race, black suffering, and theodicy inevitably converge and shape the content of black religion and

152

theological anthropology and ethics. In a different passage, Gordon explains more clearly the predicament of blackness and black existence in the modern world:

> U.S. slavery was a concerted dehumanizing project. It is this dimension that gardened its peculiarily *antiblack*, *racist* characteristic. The tale itself reveals much about racism. Racism, properly understood, is a denial of the humanity of a group of human beings either on the basis of race or color. This denial, properly executed, requires denying the presence of other human beings in such relations. It makes such beings a form of presence that is an absence, paradoxically, an absence of human presence. (Ibid: 61)

Not only slavery had deformed black lives, divded African families, altered African retentions in the Black diaspora, African women were raped and as their male counterparts, their black flesh was publically humiliated. Both male and female slaves experienced cultural alienation and physical death as a result of the horrors of slavery. In the Caribbean, Africans were not only subject to the institution of slavery and plantation economic system, after emancipation in 1848, former British colonies (i.e. Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbado, Bahamas, Antigua & Barbuda) and former French (i.e. Martinique, Guadeloupe) colonies in the Caribbean were subject to another orderly system: (neo-) colonization, as it were in many African societies. Although New World slavery in the Americas accompanied colonization, the colonial system in the Caribbean was different than that of the United States and Latin America. Most contemporary Caribbean societies—Francophone, Anglophone, Hispanophone—share the same colonial history, but colonization in each respective linguistic and geographical region was different by structure, organization, and objectives, as well as by language, taste, and culture. Therefore, African slaves under the French, Spanish, British, and Dutch colonial empires did not necessarily share the same story.

With the exception of the Republic of Haiti that declared its independence from France in 1804, through the political activism and efforts of West Indies Federation, the former British colonies achieved their independence in the second half of the twentieth-century. It should be noted

that not all Caribbean countries have become sovereign and independent states—even in the twenty-first century. For example the Caribbean countries Turks and Caicos, Anguilla, Montserrat, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, and Cayman Islands are *still* British overseas territories and economically dependent upon Great Britain for survival. Both Martinique and Guadeloupe are French overseas departments; citizens of these islands have full French citizenship. Similarly, Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are three island territories of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Citizens of these islands have full Dutch citizenship. The bond between these Caribbean islands and overseas departments is arguably American and European domination and economic exploitation. The majority of the people in the Caribbean also share the African ancestry and the African heritage in the Caribbean. Racial slavery is another former constituent of these peoples, but neocolonization somewhat remains the hyphenated identity they commonly share.

It is from this angle we turn our attention to three influential thinkers from the Anglophone Caribbean to reflect upon the predicament of blackness and the plight of the Caribbean people in the age of globalization, postcolonialism, and neoliberalism. We are primarily concerned about their standpoint on racial slavery, colonial theology, economic capitalism, Christianity in colonial Caribbean, and their thought on the current state of the Caribbean societies.

4.3.4. IDRIS HAMID

Trinidadian theologian Idris Hamid (1971, 1973, 1977), a founding father of Caribbean (Anglophone) theology, posits that the history of the Caribbean people is stamped by a series of violent historical events and human interactions, and vicious practices including the system of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and economic dependence. In particular, he gives considerable attention to the nature of colonial theology and Christian teachings that have marked Caribbean

identity, social relations, and Caribbean diplomatic relations with American and European countries. These powerful encounters occurred when Western colonialists, supported by western missionaries, brought Africans to the Caribbean to work in the slave plantation economic system. He identifies four characteristics of colonial Christianity and colonial theology in the Caribbean. First of all, Western missionaries taught the Caribbean people and their enslaved ancestors that God was only concerned about their spiritual freedom and that other kinds of freedoms should be anticipated in the eschatological or future time. Therefore, Caribbean Christians were encouraged to fortify their spiritual life with God, and that Caribbean churches should not strive for political independence and economic freedom as part of their responsibility (Hamid, 1971:6). Hamid believes that this particular colonial theology constructed a false dichotomy between the body and spirit. It assumes that the soul of the slave was more important than his physical health or well-being.

Secondly, colonial Christianity was predominantly concerned about the advancement of the spiritual life of the Caribbean people. The ultimate objective of the Caribbean Christian was exclusively to attend to the inner needs of his or her soul while undermining the physical needs of the body. Colonial Christian mission puts accent on the imperative to save the soul of African heathens and pagans because in the eschatological time, the slaves were taught that Christ will resurrect and redeem their brutalized body. As Hamid remarks, "So that one could send and support priests and missionaries to save souls, and yet benefit from the brutalities on the bodies of people" (Ibid: 6).

Thirdly, colonial Christianity rejected the social teachings of the Christian faith that promotes the common good of society and the community. It jettisoned the value of community and its biblical basis in the contribution of an effective and beloved community of faith in

155

Caribbean societies and in the Caribbean life. Correspondingly, colonial Christianity undermined the fellowship of slave Christians and how they could equally use their gifts and talents to strengthen the Christian community in the colony. Colonial theology maintained that the Christian faith was personal not communal. The message of the Gospel applied to the individual not the community as a whole. The paradox of the Christian life in colonial Caribbean Christianity is that it created a false dichotomy between the personal and the community, the individual and the collective, personal care and communal care, individual-oriented goals and community-oriented goals, etc. it is from this angle Hamid could reflect upon the dilemma of colonial Christianity in the Caribbean:

> An individualistic oriented gospel set man against his brother. Each individual must see that his soul is saved. The concern for the community and the social health of society was largely ignored. It made man unconcerned for the needs of his neighbour. This militated against community mindedness. This individualism was further entrenched by sectarianism, so that individuals and groups were set against each other. (1971:6)

The last component of colonial Christianity Idris Hamid identifies is the false eschatology embedded in colonial theology ensuing a false hope to the slaves. Hamid (Ibid: 6) terms this phenomenon "an opiate." As it were the case in the United States of America, slave masters, both Christians and non-Christians, encouraged Christian slaves and non-Christian slaves to embrace slavery as it was ordained by God in order that the African slaves might receive the light of the Christian gospel and the gift of Christian salvation. Because the institution of slavery is linked to the birth of Western capitalism, Christianity teaching was used as a contagious opiate and an economic incentive by three major imperial forces (Spain, France, and Britain) in the Caribbean to maintain the institution of slavery in the Region; colonial Christianity was also instrumental in preserving the economic resources of the colonies. Christian Colonial historian of the British Caribbean Thomas Coke proclaimed

156

It is to the gospel that the Great Britain, in all probability, stands indebted for the preservation of many of her richest colonial possessions, even to the present day: that her swarthy subjects have not revolted like those of a neighbouring island; and committed those deprecations on the white inhabitants, which humanity shudders to name" (Qtd in Goveia, 1980: 91)

In addition, the Caribbean people were taught to accept their suffering and pain, and the evils and oppressions of the colonial life as they were divinely ordained to share that fate. Colonial Christian missionaries warned Caribbean slaves that to reject the teachings of colonial Christianity is to reject the message of the Gospel and to dishonor God himself. Colonial missionaries instructed African slaves that their individual and collective suffering was redemptive and salvific—a notion which Pinn, Towners, and Aristide rejected—and that they will be liberated from human oppression when Christ culminates his kingdom on earth and put an end to the problem of evil, death, and pain in the world. As Hamid confirms, "People were taught to look to the after-life for a correction of the injustices and deprivations of this life. There the poor will be rich and the rich will never enter. This teaching took on easily as the hopeless social condition facilitated it" (Hamid, 1971:6). In summary, colonial Christianity had hindered the economic development, political freedom, cultural liberation, and spiritual growth of Caribbean societies; arguably, the impact is both individual and collective.

Elsewhere, Hamid (1973:4) refers to this Caribbean dilemma as "the curse of fragmentation" which comprises all the spheres highlighted in the previous paragraph. What the Caribbean societies experienced in colonial time and the neocolonial present bears significant implications upon the religious life of the Caribbean people and contemporary theological reflections in the Caribbean. Hamid describes the theological crisis, which we may call the "colonial trap," which the Caribbean people experienced in these forceful words:

What we had was overdoses of theologies rooted in an alien culture and experience transported, without being transposed, to us. The result is that Churches in the Caribbean

have, by and large, been extensions of the Churches from overseas. Their theologies quite naturally reflect the experiences of Europe and North America. Their governance, organizations, liturgies, and theologies yield little to the ecology of the faith of the Caribbean people. (Hamid, 1973:7).

4.3.5. FORTRIGHT DAVIS

In the same line of thought, Antiguan Theologian Kortright Davis reflects critically on how colonialism and slavery supported by Christianity have degraded black lives. As a politics of colonial alienation, Christian colonial missionaries and ecclesiastical authorities rejected anything that was Africa (Africanisms) in the colony and interpreted African religious practices and cultural rituals "as manifestations of a heathenism that had to be suppressed if not totally obliterated" (Davis, 1990:60). Not only colonial Christianity contributed to social segregation, it created the pattern for social segregation in contemporary Caribbean societies between different social classes, and skin color. Davis remarks that discrimination in church in colonial times "served to reinforce the attitudes against Negroes and all that they represented to the ruling classes in Caribbean society" (Ibid: 61).

According to Davis (1990:17), colonization is "the principal fact of Caribbean social history." He describes the nature of Caribbean societies as specific zones that were created not for social life but for production to benefit Western colonial powers and improve the lives of Europeans. To the enslaved African population, the colonial and slavery systems not only engendered cultural alienation, existential solitude; they also produced social death and psychological fragmentation. Observably, Davis expounds upon this idea:

> Colonization went hand in hand with the plantation, for two pivotal factors were operative in both systems—exploitation and domination, or control. Colonies had to be exploited for the benefit and prosperity of the European overlords, who would achieve prosperity only by getting the most out of the land and those who worked on it. Prosperity could not be

assured without social order and control, for all the productive energies had to be channeled in the direction of the crop. Thus, every social institution, every form of organization and management, every principle of order and mobility had to be related to the reinforcement of the plantation system. (Davis, 1990:18-19)

Hence, depended upon the economic exploitation of African labor, Caribbean societies prospered through the plantation system economy which bears severe economic (economic dependence and high unemployment level) implications for contemporary Caribbean societies. Economic dependence in the Caribbean is evidently correlated with the lack of political sovereign in contemporary Caribbean nations. Because of the lack of political autonomy and economic freedom in most Caribbean societies, Caribbean people have to leave their homeland to seek employment opportunities and better life in the countries of the people who once enslaved and ruled them. In the age of neoliberalism and globalization, Caribbean workers continue to produce only to be exploited by other people. Davis (1990: 32) highlights six major crises that have marked Caribbean societies and redefined the human condition in the Region; they include the following: "(1) persistent and structured poverty, (2) migration, (3) cultural alienation, (4) dependence, (5) fragmentation, (6) narcotics."

Global capitalism channeled through the institution of slavery, the colonial enterprise and imperialist domination in the Caribbean Region have resulted in structural poverty, abject dependency, and imitation. The economy of Caribbean societies is dependent upon the global market and heavily reliant on the Developed Nations as sponsored countries. Davis (1990:81) characterizes this form of economic dependence "as a built-in characteristic which cannot be removed by the formal creation of sovereign states or by the perfunctory admission of small territories to the conclaves of international discourse and decision making." The problem is so severe that political sovereignty and cultural integrity in the Caribbean are "often compromised by

the need to translate it into economic advantage, and in most cases the power of transnational corporations grossly overwhelms the genuine national priorities of local political directorates. In other words, they who pay the piper still call the tune" (81). This type of economic reliance is a form of bondage that regulates the Caribbean body, Caribbean experience, and ultimately, Caribbean life and societies. The urgency in the post-slavery moment is for the Caribbean people to emancipate themselves from these systems and structures of domination and subjugation. Jamaican Theologian Noel Leo Erskine claims that the Caribbean people must first emancipate themselves theologically from the yoke of (neo-) colonial theology toward a constructive decolonized Caribbean theology of hope and freedom. Comparatively, he avers that the Caribbean people must fight against the challenges of neoliberalism and the politics of globalization in the Region.

4.3.6. NOEL LEO ERSKINE

In his groundbreaking study, Erskine establishes dynamics between the dialectics of slavery and colonial theology. He (1981:1) explains that in colonial Caribbean societies, the God who was introduced to the Caribbean people was never the Protagonist of black freedom; rather, the God the Christian missionaries presented to the Caribbean people "was an extension of the European and the North American experience." The European Deity could not relate to the experience of the African slaves; he was a distant God who was not in solidarity with the oppressed population. The problem of colonial theology is its inability to humanize the painful history of the Caribbean people and acknowledge their historical struggle toward freedom and self-agency. Like Hamid and Davis, he reckons that the missionary zeal of European Christians was to save the soul of the African slave and not to be concerned of his or her welfare in society. Erskine (1981:69) outlines two main reasons for this theological ideology: "(1) If slaves were made Christians they

would be more industrious; their new faith would lessen the possibility of their running away; (2) the Christian slave would produce a more human master, as long as the slave worked diligently, for there would be no need for the master to brutalize an industrious slave."

The Christian church in colonial Caribbean societies played a significant role as a regulating mechanism and moral agent to regulate morality and labor in Caribbean societies. The church was pivotal in Caribbean slave economy and capitalist structure. It reinforces absolute obedience and subjugation to slave masters and colonialists. Erskine (1981:71, 75) could pronounce that "The task of the church as moral agent as of critical importance if the economy of the island were to be maintained. Black people had to be taught the virtues of hard work…Many of the missionary churched had viewed black people as a slate that they could wipe clean of the last vestiges of black religion."

Contrary to Erskine's position on this matter, questionably, Jamaican historian and theologian Edmund Davis (1977:7) contends that the colonialists that brought Christianity to the New World were not authentic Christians; he labels them "secular Christians" who immigrated to the Americas with their religion, culture, colonizing zeal, a hunger for wealth, for expansion of European Empire (i.e. French, Spain, British, Dutch). This is a debatable perspective; in the case of the French colonies in the Caribbean, the Christian missionaries were confessional Christians and theologically-trained Catholic priests who were appointed by their Superior in the Metropole to take the gospel to the Indians and Africans; their vicious actions toward the enslaved African population—for example, Catholic missionaries in the French colonies supported slavery, and some of them even owned slaves—however, makes us doubt the authenticity of their Christian faith. As a matter of disagreement with Davis on this matter, it is incorrect to lump all of them into the "secular Christians" basket. Davis vindicates himself when he writes convincingly:

161

Many estate owners began to use the Christian faith as a weapon for keeping the laboring class in the subordination of slavery. Christianity was used to further the economic interest of the planter class within a capitalist system. Work was encouraged as something good for the soul and as something to be pursued, not as a creative occupation leading towards social mobility. Money was condemned as intrinsically evil, and violence was regarded as contrary to the Christian ethic. (1977:13)

The great clash of colonial Christianity in the American continent (i.e. Caribbean, North, America, and Latin America) corresponds to a Christianity that supported economic capitalism at the expense of the exploitation and brutalization of Indian and Black bodies in the slave plantation industry, and the theological preaching and texts of Christian preachers and theologians that sustained the biblical imperative to unreservedly love thy neighbor as an authentic mark of true Christianity and one's deliberate love for God. As Erskine has remarked:

Colonial theology did not critically reflect upon the need for change in the social and economic strata of society because that theology reflected the colonial experience. It was unable to speak from the Caribbean experience. In many ways colonial theology related the gospel to the horrors of oppression in such a way that the gospel became the justification for oppression. Theology became one method by which the ruling class ensured that black people were kept in bondage. Black people were taught that it was God's will that they remain slaves and, further, that God in his wisdom and providence had made them "to make a crop." Even where colonial theology did not explicitly advocate human bondage it was difficult for that theology to be the means of human freedom for the oppressed. (Erskine, 1981:116)

In addition, Erskine points out that because colonial theology focused on the individual experience, it changed family dynamics, separated each family member from one another, and ultimately, slavery and colonial Christianity collaboratively destroyed the solidarity of the African family in colonial Caribbean societies.

4.3.7. CONNECTIONS WITH ARISTIDE

As demonstrated in previous analysis, colonial Christianity and colonial theology have played a historic and decisive role "as a chaplaincy to the plantation establishment, and thus functioned as an engine of social control and agency for social benefits as were grudgingly allowed the poor classes" (Davis, 1990: 45). While colonial Christianity has played a major role in the historic enslavement and colonization of the African people in the Caribbean, progressive Christianity has been used as a medium to liberate the Caribbean people from totalitarianism and dictatorship, such were the case in Haiti in the era of the Duvalier regime in which church-based communities were instrumental in disposing the Duvalier administration, as Haiti was transitioning from dictatorship to democracy. As previously observed, Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his grassroots movement Fanmi Lavalas were the protagonists of this emancipatory and historic event in Haiti, what Aristide dubbed "Haiti's second independence."

On the other hand, according to Aristide, the predicament of colonial anthropology lies on the miscarriage of justice and the application of an inclusive Christian love and tolerance toward those deemed different and savaged. In light of the conundrum of colonial civilization, Aristide could enunciate brazenly, "To Love and to kill in the name of God were incompatible" (Aristide, 2006:340). As a Christian theologian, Jean-Bertrand Aristide is very critical about the work of Western missionaries in both Haiti and Africa—particularly the strategic methods they used to announce God's message to the Africans and Haitians. In fact, his doctoral dissertation is a condemnation of Western colonization and colonial Christian mission; in short, it is powerful and elegant anticolonial and antiimperialist intellectual discourse. One of the first transgressions the missionaries committed against the Haitian people, according to Aristide, was the imposition of a foreign God and the attempt to erase African cultural traditions and practices in the New World and continental Africa: "These missionaries decided to impose their God, their way, using their

163

language ignoring the fact that the slaves had their own linguistic and theological references. The same happened in Africa each time African indigenous knowledge was classified as inferior or simply denied" (Aristide, 2006:262). This was a serious theological crisis. Aristide denounces the grievous consequences of the missionary action leading to the misuse of the divine name to exploit and enslave the Africans:

> Since the first interactions with the missions, and the subsequent race to convert the Greatest possible number of slaves to Christianity, a metaphysical and theological dilemma arose. Slaves were asked to reject their African religious beliefs in order to serve one God named *Gran Met la* or *Bon Dye*. This required a complete rupture with the African Ancestors and with Africa the Mother Continent. Obviously the issue was far more complex than a simple conversion to monotheism; it presented an existential dilemma. How could one "agree" to sever, in effect, the life line to the place where he or she is spiritually, culturally, theologically, and anthropologically rooted, in order to please missionaries, whose interests were not much different from those of the colonists? In fact, this form of "mental suicide"—requested supposedly on behalf of *Gran Met la*—made it difficult to address important issues such as death and life. (Aristide, 2006:275)

Aristide reckons that the missionaries undermined the mother tongue of the Haitian people and the Africans in their announcement of the Christian Gospel. Arguably, they were denying the dignity and values of these people—as their language and religious traditions are intertwined with their communal identity. As he writes, "In order to establish meaningful communication there must be, in addition to a linguistic understanding, respect for a people's culture and system of beliefs. This critical point was missing in the interactions between missionaries and Haitians" (Aristide, 2006:263). Besides, another quandary of missionary theological crisis is the promulgation of a pseudo theology of the soul and not a theology of holistic care that engages both the human body and soul: "The theological message transmitted in religious song and/or sermons reveals the extent to which the salvation of the soul, rather than that of the body, is at the center of their mission" (Ibid: 343). A sound and biblically-centered theology of missions cannot neglect the function or place of theological anthropology in the human experience and encounter.

Unlike the theology of the soul, which was the sole focus of missionary activity, Aristide calls for a renewed and transformative theological anthropology that responds to the quotidian need of the individual and the community, and the struggles of the present. "Although missionaries are devoted to charity work in areas that involves health, education, and generally meeting the community's daily needs, the theology espoused is much focused on the soul and the after-life" (Aristide, 2006:343).

Moreover, Aristide creatively reinterprets the famous text of Genesis 2:20, which reads "So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals," by asserting that "The creation story in Genesis does not present the human being as an object. The foundations of theology, in light of this narrative text, view humans as existential subjects or the subject as evaluating, deliberating, deciding, acting, constituting the world, constituting himself of herself" (Aristide, 2006:266). Accordingly, from a proper theological reading of this text, the expression image of God implies "ownership and control." Aristide finds the performance of colonial missionaries knotty and dehumanizing as they attempted at "ownership (of the slaves' body) and control (of the slaves' mind)." European colonialists changed the names of the Africans and African descendants, subjecting them to plantation labor, and enchaining them as animals or objects. As a result, Aristide (2006: 263, 266) could write plainly "It, is one thing to will ownership and control, and quite another to succeed in reducing a human being to the status of a thing or possession." The missionary doing was a deliberate act of dehumanization and the objectification of the African/African-descendant individual. Love of others was a serious lack of the colonial Christian mission.

Evidently, Aristide denounces the colonial order because of the absence of Ubuntu in its cultural fabric and the failure of European colonialists to practice Ubuntu toward the enslaved population and the colonized people.

> The colonial mind is filled with infatuation and obsession with self to the exclusion of the other. Self-interest is placed at the core of actions. Therefore, violence, crime, genocide are all necessary and acceptable means used in the names of self-interest. Such pathological behavior, as a result, paves the way for anomic societies, disruptive socialization processes, social exclusion, and the sustainable development of schizoid cultures rather than sustainable human development. (Aristide, 2006:227)

Jürgen Osterhammel's definition of colonialism both as a system and mindset clarifies some of Aristide's negative criticisms:

> Colonialism is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule. (Oterhammel, 1997:17)

Aristide condemns the colonial order for vehement acts of dehumanization and obliterating the *Imago Dei* in the enslaved population. He also dooms colonialization for carrying out unconceivable human suffering and death among the colonized peoples and nations in the modern world. Similarly, Aristide highlights some of the most negative consequences and pitfalls of colonialism, what he has phrased a "language of violence":

> The victims in such a social environment may emerge on either side of the demarcating class line possessing the perception of the colonizer or that of the colonized…Language of violence can be considered as a form of brutal force as well…Certainly, the every-day colonial orders to invade regions, impose inhuman working conditions, extra wealth, fell within this category and constituted a language of violence. But additionally, the colonial practice of talking to the colonized and not with them also reflected that violence. (Aristide, 2006:227-8)

In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Negritude poet and anticolonialism intellectual Aime Cesaire voices a flagrant critique of Christianity's active participation in the colonial venture and the

166

civilized mission of Western colonizers. Foremost, Cesaire (2000:32) disagrees with defenders of Western colonization that claims colonization was an evangelization program and a philanthropic enterprise. On the contrary, colonization should not be understood as a project that "push [ed] back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law" (Ibid). He writers with greater force and brilliance about the vicious effects of colonization upon its victims:

> The chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity=civilization, paganism=savagery*, from which there could not be ensue abominable colonialist and racist consequences, whose victims were to be the Indians, the Yellow peoples, and the Negroes…They proved that colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial request, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like *an animal,* and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out…Truly, there are sins for which no one has the power to make amends and which can never be fully expiated. (Cesaire, 2000:33, 41-2)

Colonialism has failed because of forced assimilation and Christian conversion (Memmi, 1965:73). The religion of the colonizer is presented to the colonized as the authentic religion, and the God of the colonizer is introduced as the true and only God. Because of the exclusive claims of Christianity, the religion and culture of the colonized were deemed less inferior than those of the colonizer, and the Christian. Not only Christian conversion has come with violence to the world of the colonizer, correspondingly, the cost of assimilating in the culture and way of the colonizer resulted in psychological trauma and identity crisis, the devaluation of the former cultural traditions and practices, and the rejection of the former way of life of the colonized.

Cesaire registers the delusion of European colonialists and Christian colonial missionaries in this conspicuous and authoritative rhetoric of contrast and difference:

We've made progress: today it is the possessor of "The Christian virtues who intrigues—with no small success—for the honor of administering overseas territories according to the methods of forgers and tortures…I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures, trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out. They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks…I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo Ocean. I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life—from life, from the dance, from wisdom…They talk to me about local tyrants brought to reasons; but I note that in general the old tyrants get on the very well with the new ones, and there has been established between them, to the detriment of the people, a circuit of mutual services and complicity. (Cesaire, 2000:43, 47)

To put it simply, colonialism as a system supported by Western Christianity was an arrangement without human soul, without conscience, without human compassion, and without Ubuntu. "Therefore, humanity is within an individual. Some human beings do have Ubuntu some don't. That's why we talk of heartless, self-centered people, etc.…" (Gade, 2012: 495). It is within this framework and line of thinking we return to Aristide's evaluation of the colonial system in light of Ubuntu. Aristide also explores the absence of Ubuntu in modern world systems and political organizations, which have led to (1) catastrophic economic dependence and distress in the Developing Nation-states, and (2) the pitfalls of Western imperialism, globalization, and capitalism. Aristide has candidly observed these vital issues:

Of course the reasons for colonialism lie in the wealth of the Mother Continent; this constituted a permanent pole in the attraction. Groups who behave as colonialists possess a fertile psychological field for narcissistic growth, material and self-aggrandizement…The continued marginalization of Africa reflects new patterns of colonialism. Economic globalization empowers those who reinforce the structure of exclusion. More and more rich, but less and less sensitive to human suffering, neo-colonialists have fallen in love with their neo-liberal agenda." (Aristide, 2006:227)

Certainly, the economic exploitation of individuals, their countries and communities is a tragic form of dehumanization—in the sense that the neocolonial thief comes to rob the colonized and teal the life-resources that nourishes his body, sustains his life, and fortifies his soul. No individual, community, or people can live without food, water, and the natural resources that

maintain their existence. Freedom means the protection of, access to, and preservation of life, as well as the access to food and the safeguarding of a community's or people's natural resources. Furthermore, the colonial system constructed a false anthropological hermeneutics and pseudo-philosophy that reversed the proper understanding of human relations and the place of men and women in society and in the world. Arguably, colonialism is the antithesis of Ubuntu.

4.4. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (2004:231) rightly diagnoses the crisis of Western anthropology and the question of human nature in the history of relations between black and white people: "The disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved. The disaster and the inhumanity of the white man lie in the fact that somewhere he has killed man." Consequently, we should be asking is there a solution for the plight of African people and descendants of African people in the African diaspora? The predicament of blackness, as seen in this analysis, is not only cultural, economic, it is global, transnational, trans-hemispheric. Evidently, it is anti-human and anti-democratic values and virtues.

In addition, each one of the critical issues addressed (i.e. slavery, lyching, colonization, economic exploitation, cultural alienation) in this chapter has altered the human condition in the Caribbean, the Black Diaspora, and contributed to the plight of the Caribbean people.

The next chapter will explore the promise of black and Africana theological ethics and anthropology in the reconstruction process of black humanity and black dignity. We will also venture how the discourse of black intellectual inquiry and black theological imagination could serve as a catalyst to foster human flourishing and improve the democratic life in the modern world. Black response to modernity and black intellectuals "writing back" to the distractors of

black people should always be construed as a reaction to the destructive interruption of whiteness and white supremacy in the modern world. Whiteness and white supremacy as a system and mindset have radically dehumanized black lives and reduced African and black people to the status of non-being in the modern world through the invention of the institution of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, and correspondingly, through Western hegemonic domination and control through the system of colonization and economic capitalism, and certainly through disparaging intellectual discourses that elevated the white race and the white narrative of human history.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HOPE OF BLACK THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHICS: RECONSTRUCTING BLACK PERSONHOOD AND HUMANITY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

As a sequel to the previous chapter, against the backdrop of our preceding analysis, this present chapter explores the rhetoric of hope or optimism in the writings of four black theologians who actively engage the field of black theological anthropology and ethics. We shall also highlight their collective efforts to reconstruct a strong black personhood and humanity. We will investigate the thought of Anthony Pinn, James H. Cone, Dwight N. Hopkins, Idris Hamid, Noel Leo Erskine, and Kortright Davis. While the first three wriers write from a North American context, the last three writers provide a Caribbean perspective on this critical matter. Our goal here is to excavate their proposals as they seek to reconstitute black personhood through theological resources and imagination, and other forms of intellectual engagement. Second, in light of our previous interaction with the writings of Pinn and Cone on slavery, lynching, and suffering, and Hamid, Erskine, and Davis on colonization, colonial theology, and cultural alienation in the Caribbean, we shall also endeavor to demonstrate their attempt to articulate a robust and optimistic black theological anthropology.

How do these black theologians and thinkers respond theologically to the conundrum of black dehumanization? How have the historical humiliation and alienation of enslaved Africans as nonbeings shaped the discourse of black theological anthropology and ethics? How has black suffering impacted their discourse on the relationship between God and black folk? In the words of Philosopher Lewis R. Gordon (2000:4), "How might the peoplehood of dehumanized people be

affirmed?" To these questions, we shall turn below. We begin this conversation with a focus on Pinn's thought on the subject matter.

5.2. WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT BLACK PERSONHOOD AND HUMANITY

In this section, we give attention to the six theologians mentioned above. We shall examine their work in regard to the possibility and project of improving black personhood and humanity toward holistic freedom and shalom. Equally, we are also concerned about how to use the intellectual resources and ideas of these black thinkers to improve black lives and the communities which they live. One of the objectives of Africana theological anthropology and ethics is to confront directy the structures and systems that have denigrated the black personhood and humanity. These black thinkers address these pivotal matters in the light of their own cultures, traditions, geographical locations, and experiences with colonialization, white supremacy, racial violence, economic capitalism, and imperialism.

5.2.1. ANTHONY B. PINN

Foremost, Pinn (2003:106) has posited that black theology and womanist theology as alternative modes of theologizing about the God-human interplay have decentered the traditional theological discourse of Euro-American scholars in that both theologies have shifted the theological paradigm and framework "in which whiteness is no longer the primary symbol of humanity and connection with divinity." He interrogates the monolithic voice of the theological representation of the human being in Western theological anthropology. Pinn also understands both theological perspectives have contributed to a more constructive and liberative discourse

about black humanity in Western traditional theological anthropology. Also, they have simulated black consciousness to a new level to affirm black subjectivity and for black emancipation; both black liberation and womanist theologies articulate a new black epistemology grounded on the lived-experiences and lived-worlds of black people and black women.

Conceiving black theological anthropology as a facet of black liberation theology, Pinn (2003:108) has advanced the idea that black thinkers and theologians have used black theology of liberation creatively to humanize black people, and to "construct modes of activism that seek to free blacks, to forge new roles by which they become full citizens with all the accompanying rights and responsibilities." Yet, the ethos of black theological anthropology is more than the articulation and the pursuit of freedom premised on black subjectivity and self-agency; black theological anthropology also engages the political sphere and compels the black individual to fulfill his civic engagement and responsibilities as a citizen of the land. Consequently, black scholars use theology as a method for political activism and resistance to white oppression and supremacy.

Pinn's theological anthropology seems to be ambiguous considering a close evaluation of his writings on the subject of black theology and black theodicy. His theological writings are based on the standard theological anthropology found in black theological tradition of the "Black Church" in America. More recently, his theological anthropology is sourced in the nontheistic humanist tradition; he accentuates the body—both material and cultural creation and production—as the focus of theological imagination (Pinn, 2012: 7). In his brilliant and controversial work, *The End of God-Talk: An African American Humanist Theology*, Pinn articulates a vigorous argument about the validity of black nontheistic anthropology. In defense of the nontheistic option, he utters this striking statement: "The theological anthropology undergirding African American nontheistic humanist theology promotes a sense of the human as embodied self-known not through stories

173

found in sacred texts (e.g., *imago Dei*)" (Ibid:45). Having rejected the traditional perspective and the theocentric framework, he specifies that "To the extent it can be known, it is through the workings of science and through the development culturally bound discourse" (Ibid). It is not that Pinn no longer covets theology as an intellectual source for theological reflection; his shift to atheism has allowed him to prioritize science over theology, atheistic humanism over theistic humanism, man over God.

Comparatively, in his powerful text on black theodicy, *Why, Lord? Suffering and Evil in Black Theology*, he challenges the Christian doctrine of redemptive suffering because, according to Pinn, it does not offer any optimistic future for victims of racial violence and human-inflicted pain and oppression. As he posits, "In spite of what Black theologians have traditionally argued, Black experience does not suggest teleological certainties" (Pinn,1995:92). Pinn finds the nontheistic humanist-atheistic tradition more promising than the theistic humanist tradition. In his recent book, *Writing God's Obituary: How A Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist*, he concurs that Black people cannot rest their hope in a God who does not exist or in a deity who has is or has been absent in their suffering. Pinn believes that God is a social construct. God is not real, as Richard Dawkins has debated in his polemical book, *God Delusion*. In explaining his intellectual journeys toward atheism, he writes the following words with greater conviction:

> It wasn't that God was dead. This would have assumed God had been at some point alive, Somehow present and "real." My conclusion was more fundamental than that: God never existed but has always been nothing more than a symbol, a piece of language and culture constructed by humans. To say God is dead, for me, would have been the equivalent of saying that language dies, that words die rather than simply falling out of use. (Pinn, 2014:164)

Pinn rejects the notion that God is the moral or ethical compass that determines ethical values and principles leading to the amelioration of human life, relations, and progress in the modern world. In fact, he pronounces, "My ethics and morality came [come] from human sources

174

as opposed to coming from a phantom figure and its magical book" (Pinn, 2014:161). As a result, he cold posit that the good in the world can be explained through the efforts of humans, and that "Everything [is] pointed back to human activity in the world, without any appeal to extra-human forces at work in the world" (Ibid:163). Pinn relies heavily on the resources of non-theistic anthropology to construct a more promising and anthropocentric black anthropology. Yet, it is a system that affirms a hermeneutics of risk and promotes the notion of strong humanism; however, he apprises that it is better than the biblical theological anthropology and Christian vision of redemptive hope.

> Strong humanism seeks to combat oppression through radical human commitment to life and corresponding activity…Part of this platform involves an increase in humanity's importance which makes impossible the location of a space for God. Strong humanism operates according to an "ethic of risk" and pragmatic principles: it would rather lose God than human value. There is no evidence of God's existence (no progress humans cannot easily take credit for and no suffering they are incapable of fostering), but on the other hand, there is no doubt that humans exist (ironically, moral evil and suffering cream this existence). Strong humanism considers theistic answers to existential questions simplistic and geared toward psychological comfort without respect for the complex nature of the human condition. (Pinn, 1995:142-3)

Furthermore, the hope Pinn's (non-) theological anthropology offers to Africana critical theological anthropology includes vulnerability, genuine relationships, and human wholeness.

> African American nontheistic humanist theology does promote a sense of wholeness or fullness in relationship to the signifier of community, consistent with the nature, meaning, and resolve of the embodied self….Wholeness or fullness does not constitute the reward or gift given through community as a consequence of moral and ethical standard met. Rather, wholeness or fullness is a push on the part of humans to recognize their possibilities and embodied importance but in light of an awareness of incompleteness—the "and…"— generated as a humbling effect of the signifier community. Rather, it amounts to a form of awareness that both limits and frees. (Pinn, 2012:64)

Finally, he also envisions a reconstruction of black humanity that will embody the following characteristics and human virtues: self-understanding, self-agency, self-evolving, subjectivity, vulnerability, freedom, and completeness.

Humans search for self-awareness and self-understanding. This is our lot. To be human is to continuously seek a better understanding of humanity even as humanity is ever changing, ever evolving…To be human is to be aware of and involved in this tangled endeavor—this clumsy desire for embodied life meant as the geography of our subjectivity. It is our nature to want fullness, robust life meaning in line with the quest for subjectivity…Knowing this, however, does not prevent a sense of purpose because a sense of human will and identity is processes and not a wearable outcome. (Pinn, 2012:56-7)

On a different note beyond Pinn's atheistic humanism, African American Theologian James H. Evans in his well-received text *We Have Been Believers* highlights the intersection of race, culture, theology, and anthropology from the perspective of the "black" individual. Like Kathryn Tanner, he sees the validity and merits of Christian theology to engage the social sciences and humanities: "The question of the nature and destiny of humanity is one that theology shares with the other human sciences…'People of African descent in Europe and North America have not been able to address the question of what it mean to be black" (Evans, 1992:99) He goes on to explain the predicament of blackness and the dehumanization of Africans and people of African descent in Euro-American history of ideas and theological discourse: "The true nature of black humanity has been veiled by a litany of stereotypes endemic to western European culture. People of African descent have been described as inferior, savage, profane, and invisible; they have been called outsides, intruders, interlopers, and subhuman beasts" (Ibid: 100).

These negative portrayals, fueled by cultural misrepresentations of black folk, have also made their way in Euro-American theological discourse. Hence, "The theme of the nature and destiny of humanity in African-American religious thought is, understandably, dominated by the issue of racism" (Evans, 1992: 100). In other words, theology is intrinsically implicated in modernity's discourse about race. Evans laments that Christian theologians have not only failed to defend the dignity and humanity of black people; they are also involved in the desecration of black

176

life. The Christian church has been silent on black suffering and the pain of the black experience in the modern world.

> It is unfortunate that, historically, the European-American Christian church has accepted and employed these negative images of people of African-descent in its own theology. Even in an enlightened society on the verge of a new millennium, the question of the humanity of black people and others is shrouded by racist associations. (Ibid)

Evans has reasoned that modern theological anthropology must confront the question and meaning of black existence: "A theological anthropology that would speak to the humanity of people of African descent in the contemporary world must also address what it means to be black" (Ibid). How should then contemporary theological anthropology respond to the plight of black and African people, and their pain and suffering? Let's now turn our attention to the works of James H. Cone.

5.2.2. JAMES H. CONE

Arguably, James H. Cone is the most influential Black Theologian working in the tradition of Black Liberation Theology in the United States. His point of departure for theological inquiry is the experience of the oppressed community and the African American people in particular, and their ambivalent relations with white supremacy and white power in the American society. Cone also relies on African ancestral religious traditions of the enslaved African population in the United States.

Beyond the black experience in the United States that informed Cone's theological, the ideological presupposition of Cone's theological anthropology is premised on the race concept. His race-based theological inclination and hermeneutics has marked his understanding of the human nature and black existence in the modern world. He affirms unapologetically that "Black theology emphasizes the right of blacks to be black and by so doing to participate in the image of

God" (Cone, 2010:92). Cone's (1969:117) assertion on the essence of blackness as a racial category is plainly conveyed in this language: "To ask them to assume a 'higher' identity by denying their blackness is to require them to accept a false identity and to reject reality as they know it to be;" his associated claim that black is beautiful is grounded on the theological logic that black people like other people in the world are participatory agents of the *imago Dei*. In other words, the black race exists out of the divine will because God has created black people so they could participate in his life. Nonetheless, slavery and violence fueled by racial hatred have dehumanized the image of God in black people.

Furthermore, James Cone, in his admirable works, *God of the Oppressed,* and *The Spirituals and the Blues*, affirms the African sources of black culture and the religious ethos in the New World, which had served as mechanisms of survival and existential hope in the era of slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow (racial segregation):

> That American black people have a tradition of their own that stretches back to Africa and its traditional religions. We are an African people, at least to the degree that our Grandparents came from Africa and not from Europe. They brought with them their stories and combined them with the Christian story, thereby creating a black religious tradition unique to North America. African culture informed black people's perspective on Christianity and made it impossible for many slaves to accept an interpretation of Jesus story that violated their will for freedom. The passive Christ of white Christianity when combined with African culture became the Liberator of the oppressed from sociopolitical oppression. (Cone, 1975:105)

African ancestral cultural practices and religious traditions assisted the slaves to reject the God of their masters. They believed in a God who was not their oppressor but their Liberator. Moreover, from a Barthian logic, Cone also explores what constitutes the human nature and the ontology of being:

> The question about the human person is not answered by enumerating a list of properties; a person is not a collection of properties that can be scientifically analyzed. Rather to speak of the human being is to speak about its being-in-the-world-of-human oppression

with the reality of human suffering as our starting point. (1975:87)

While Cone regards suffering as an important phase of the human experience, he does not

equate suffering with existence. He is concerned with the meaning of black suffering in the United

States, which shaped the black experience, and God's response to black theodicy in modernity.

Cone, who does not divorce Black liberation theology from Black theological anthropology, goes

on to explain the function of Black liberation theology in the representation and vindication of

black humanity against white supremacy, racial violence, and the triumph of whiteness in modern

history:

> Black Theology must take seriously the reality of black people—their life of suffering and
> humiliation. This must be the point of departure of all God-talk which seeks to be
> Black-talk. When that man is black and lives in a society permeated with white racist
> power, he can speak of God only from the perspective of the socio-economic and political
> conditions unique to black people. Though the Christian doctrine of God must logically
> precede the doctrine of man, Black Theology knows that black people can view God only
> through black eyes that behold the brutalities of white racism. (1969:117)

Cone affirms how social dynamics have influenced theological hermeneutics and human

dynamics in society. He ventures to articulate a complementary objective of Black theological

anthropology within the logical framework of Black Theology:

> The task of Black Theology is to analyze the black man's condition in the light of God's
> revelation in Jesus Christ with the purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity
> among black people, and providing the necessary soul in that people, to destroy white
> racism…Because Black Theology has its starting point the black condition, this does not
> mean that it denies the absolute revelation of God in Christ. Rather, it means that Black
> Theology firmly believes that God's revelation in Christ can be made supreme only by
> affirming Christ as he is alive in black people today. (1969:117-8)

Having argued that the black individual bears the divine image and likeness, Cone

emphasizes the value of freedom as a ground of being. For Cone, freedom is the most fundamental

virtue of being human.

> The biblical concept of image means that human beings are created in such a way that they
> cannot obey oppressive laws and still be human. To be human is to be in the image of

179

God—that is, to be creative: revolting against everything that is opposed to humanity…The image of God refers to the way in which God intends human beings to live in the world. The image of God is thus more than rationality, more than what so-called neo-orthodox theologians call divine-human encounter. In a world in which persons are oppressed, the image is human nature in rebellion against the structures of oppression. It is humanity involved in the liberation struggle against the forces of inhumanity. (2010:93, 94)

Not only Cone has disavowed the traditional and conservative definition of the "image of God" as God's bestowing upon humanity reason or relationality, human responsibility, and the freedom of the mind, he creatively contextualizes the concept to address the historical suffering and the imperative of freedom on behalf of the oppressed, and the black people in the United States. Cone also attempts to correct a great misstep in Euro-American Christian theology, and projects that both American and European theologians have failed to link existential freedom and the notion of God's image; as he remarks, "The inability of American theology to define human nature in the light of the Oppressed One and of particular oppressed peoples stems from its identity with the structures of white power" (Cone, 2010:86). He also elaborates this theological crisis with greater clarity and precision in the paragraph below:

> Modern theology, following Schleiermacher's unhappy clue to the relationship of t theology and anthropology, forgot about Luther's emphasis on human depravity and proceeded once again to make appeals to human goodness. The nineteenth century is known for its confidence in the rational person, who not only knew what was right but was capable of responding to it. The image of God in human nature was the guarantee that the world was moving in desirable direction. It never occurred to these "Christian" thinkers that they had missed some contrary evidence: this was the period of black enslavement and Amerindian extermination, as well as European colonial conquests in Africa and Asia. (Ibid: 91)

What Cone is postulating here is that Western thinkers have never attributed rationality to black folk. Kant, for example, has argued that rationality or reason is a mark of genuine humanity, and that to be human means to be a rational being. In his attempt to explain Cone's relationship between freedom and human existence, Evans (1992:110) claims that "This image is essential to humanity because it is the image of God pressed upon the human being in the moment of creation.

180

When God set out to make humanity in God's own image, freedom became the guiding in human existence." Cone's (2010:87) thesis is grounded on his interpretation of the meaning of the Gospel, which is arguably human emancipation, and the application of Jesus' message of freedom in the lived-experiences of the individual and the collective: "If the content of the gospel is liberation, human existence must be explained as 'being in freedom,' which means rebellion against every form of slavery of everything creative" In the words of Lewis R. Gordon (2000:7), "Problems of existence address the human confrontation with freedom and degradation."

It is apparent that in our analysis that the history of people of African ancestry has been a search for holistic/emancipative freedom and cathartic healing—both at the personal and collective level—from the catastrophic events of slavery, Jim Crow, and "New World wounds," as well as from the awful conundrum of black suffering originated in anti-black racism and white supremacy. In response to the plight of black people in modernity, Cornell West (1982:162) has identified three dimensions of freedom found in the Black expression of Christianity: the existential, the social, and the eschatological.

> (1) Existential freedom is a mode of being-in-the-world which resists dread and despair. It embodies an ecstatic celebration of human existence without affirming prevailing reality;
> (2) The social dimension of the freedom predominant in black Christianity does not primarily concern political struggle but rather cultural solidarity…Yet the cultural practices of the black church embody a basic reality: sustained black solidarity in the midst of a hostile society;" and
> (3) The eschatological aspect of freedom in black Christianity is the most difficult to grasp. It is neither a glib hope for a pie-in-the-sky heaven nor an apocalyptic aspiration which awaits world destruction. Rather, it is a hope-laden articulation of the tragic quality of everyday life of a culturally degraded, politically oppressed, and racially coerced labor force. (West, 1992:162-4)

In the midst of the condemnation of blackness and the desecration of black life in contemporary Western societies, it is important to reiterate the optimistic vision of Cone's Black

theological anthropology. He also links Black theological anthropology and a Christology of redemptive suffering and sustaining hope:

> [Black Theology] it calls upon black people to affirm God because he has affirmed us. His affirmation of black people is made known not only in his election of the oppressed Israel, but more especially in his coming to us and being rejected in Christ for us. The event of Christ tells us that the oppressed blacks are his people because, and only because, they represent who he is. (Cone, 1969:118)

Elsewhere, Cone associates theological anthropology with a Christology of symbolic representation and relationality. For cone, Jesus' humanity is more meaningfully to the liberation of the oppressed than that of other heroic narratives in global history.

> Jesus is not a human being for all persons; he is a human being for oppressed persons, whose identity is made known in and through their liberation. Therefore our definition of the human being must be limited to what it means to be liberated from human oppression. Any other approach fails to recognize the reality of suffering in an inhuman society. (Cone, 1975:85-6)

Cone's Christ is the one who works determinedly and sovereignly to liberate the oppressed from the sociopolitical oppression and economic power of this world. Cone's (1975:105) Christ affirms brazenly the humanity and dignity of black people: "In every case, Christ is the otherness in the black experience that makes possible the affirmation of black humanity in an inhumane situation."

Yet, the challenging query about black ontology remains both an inevitable and existential phenomenon in Cone's (1969: 11) rhetoric of blackness and theological anthropology: "The crucial question, then, for the black man is, 'How should I respond to a world which defines me as a nonperson?" He attempts to answer his own question but he fails miserably: "But when he attempts to relate as a person, the world demands that he respond as a thing. In this existential absurdity, what should he do? Should he respond as he knows himself to be, or as the world defines him?" (Ibid).

While Cone accentuates Christ the Liberator and the meaning of Christ's suffering and power to reconstruct an optimistic Black theological anthropology, prominent African American Theologian Dwight N. Hopkins appeals to the work of the Spirit of Liberation (in black folk) to renew the discourse of black theological anthropology in modern scholarship.

5.2.3. DWIGHT N. HOPKINS

Foremost, like Kathryn Tanner we engaged in earlier analysis, Hopkins (2005:3) establishes the convergence between theology and culture; as he has pronounced, "We find the human and the sacred meeting in culture. In a word, culture itself must be defined as the first condition of possibility for speaking about the texture of human being as it is implicated with spirit. One needs to understand culture before understanding theological anthropology." Secondly, he acknowledges the instability or flexibility of culture as an on-going event that is shaped by various forces from different locations. In this regard, theology or discourse about God is also influenced by a number of external forces outside of ourselves.

> Culture itself emerges from the fluid creative play of a community (the selves) framing the formation of an individual (the self). Human beings and human being are the constituent part out of which cultures are forged. Without collective selves and the individual self, one could not build a culture. Consequently, we must plunge into murky waters to explore the ebb and flow of the community (the selves) with the individual (the self), a prior conceptual from which the notion of culture flows. Otherwise state, selves/self are the current below the surface of culture. (Hopkins, 2005:4)

Thirdly, Hopkins turns to the discipline of theology as a source of inspiration to show the relevance and meaning of black life in modernity. He forges his discourse of black theology and black theological anthropology out of the horrifying experiences of the slaves in America, and their self-understanding about who they were in God's eyes. According to Hopkins,

> Theology and anthropology merge into conversation about normative claims and cultural location. Because all arguments asserting basic principles surface from the contextual location of the writer or speaker, black theology (for example) embraces its African

183

American context as a starting point for dialogue with other starting points. All thoughts about God and being human reveal the limited autobiography of the thinker and, consequently, invite discussion with other particular reflections on theological anthropology. (2995:2)

As it pertains to the relationship between Black theology and theological anthropology, he explains both the difference and comparison:

> Theology is critical reflection about the God-human relationships, and anthropology is rational inquiry into an understanding of human beings in culture. Black theology then is critical reflection about the relationship between black humanity and God in culture…. Black theology inquiries into the God-black human relationship wherever black women and men find themselves. The social construction of race has a negative impact on black people globally and therefore is a central category in black theology's analysis of God-human relationship. (Ibid: 1)

Also, Hopkins excavates theological ideas from African American slave narratives and the Spirituals in order to create a constructive discourse of theological anthropology of black optimism and dignity. These stories that painfully chronicle the black experience in America also proclaim the humanity of black people because of the omnipotence of God's presence in the midst of the oppressed enslaved community:

> Slaves' language, thought, and practice show us how God presents God's particular self In the constrained, marred lives of a faith-freed, beautiful, black people. In other words, our search for seeds and resources in the slave story tells us that God dwells among the most unimportant and despised "citizens" in the USA…The slaves' faith in freedom never died, even in the face of an apparent everlasting evil. The slaves maintained their humanity with a steadfast hope in liberation as their ultimate concern. (Hopkins, 1991: xvii)

Moreover, he concurs that while "White people continued to brand enslaved Africans as biologically subhuman, culturally uncivilized, and religiously heathen….The slaves distinguished their humanity from the white slave master. For blacks, God and Jesus called them to use all means possible to pursue religiously a human status of equality" (Hopkins, 1991:2-4). Hopkins develops a robust black theological anthropology in his creative reading of the so-called "slave theology." Not only does he examine the doctrine of God in slave theology, he gives careful attention to the

epistemological context and theological anthropology rooted in the traditional African religious sensibility and worldview: "The theological framework shared by enslaved Africans in the "New World" also included a belief in theological anthropology—what it means to be God's created humanity" (Ibid:6) What is then the relationship between traditional African religion and black theological anthropology in Hopkins? We shall give attention to four important observations Hopkins makes on this important rapport.

First of all, Hopkins establishes the connection between the humanhood and the community as it is rightly pertained to African thought:

> African traditional religions shared a belief in a dynamic and interdependent relation between the individual and the community. The latter defined the former. Individualism Proved anathema. To be human meant to stand in connection with the larger community of invisible ancestors and God, and of course, the visible community and family. Africans recognize life as life-in-community. (Hopkins, 1991:6)

The intimacy between the person and the community is intertwined and interconnected. Our second observation accentuates the rapport between the community and the individual in traditional African religious anthropology. He argues the latter counters Euro-American Christian perspective of humanity and the place of the individual in the world:

> African religions gave rise to a dynamic interplay between community and individual. Whatever happened to the communal gathering affected the individual, and whatever Happened to the individual had an impact on the community. Such as theological view of humanity cuts across bourgeois notions of white Christianity's individualism and "me-first-ism." (Hopkins, 1991:7)

Thirdly, Hopkins notes that traditional African theological anthropology promotes collective solidarity and the symbolic connection between God, the ancestors, the community, and the immediate family:

> It seeks to forge a group solidarity and identity, beginning with God, proceeding through the ancestors to the community and immediate family, and continuing even to the unborn. One cannot be a human being unless one becomes a part of, feels a responsibility to, and serves the community. To preserve the community's well-being (through liberation) in

African religions is to preserve the individual's well-being (through salvation). Thus salvation and liberation become a holistic individual-collective and personal-systemic ultimate concern. (Hopkins, 1991:7)

Finally, Hopkins expresses the continuity of ancestral link with the anthropo-theological vision of the African people:

> In this theological anthropology, African traditional religions also accent the role and importance of the ancestors. The ancestors are connections to the past religious traditions and practices. They are the glue to the sacredness of culture or way of life. Oftentimes one would have to placate the ancestors in order to reach the High God. So connectedness (or lack of connectedness) to those who hold religio-cultural deposits has grave implications regarding one's relation to the Divine…The memory and presence of the ancestors helped preserve and teach the cultural heritage of the community. To be human-in-community necessitated a cultural dimension in African traditional religions. (Hopkins, 1991:6-7)

As James Cone who has conflated black existence with freedom, Hopkins, in the same line of thought, links black humanity with liberty in God and Christ, and the Spirit of liberation: "Perceptions of God and Jesus paved the way for the slaves' notion of a God-given humanity; they knew they were created in freedom. White theology and white Christian ethical practices notwithstanding, black folk maintained they were not livestock but infused from inception with inherent human attributes fashioned by divine hands" (Hopkins, 1991:29; 1993:35).

The character of God as Liberator of the oppressed becomes for the slaves the very ground to vindicate their humanity and quest for freedom. The slaves also believed that "God could make a way out of no way for those who dared to claim their genuine humanity" (Hopkins, 1993:38). Further, Hopkins insists that the idea of the image of God ensures to the slaves that God was working for them:

> Because God created them, slave had faith that their very being contained deposits of divine presence; this faith compelled them to use the act of self-defense to preserve these life-giving deposits from the finger of God…To attach slaves, then, equaled a demonic attach on God within them. One could not allow Satan's earthly devils to prevail over that which belonged to the Kingdom of God. (Hopkins, 1993:39)

186

The African slaves understood clearly they were engaged in a spiritual war for their soul and life. Accordingly, the vindication of black humanity and dignity by the enslaved and oppressed African community is based on the theological logic that like their white oppressors, they were also wonderfully made by God their Maker who had endowed them with equal human faculties. This inner conviction is expressed externally, as the slaves themselves "employed both individual and collective courage to pursue their God-given free humanity through the resistance of politics against the wickedness the slavemasters" (Hopkins, 1993:41). African slaves also affirmed that Black lives mattered and their life had great importance before God the Liberator. As a result, they disavowed distorted theological teachings proclaimed both by Christian masters and proslavery gospel-preachers.

> Thus in the very definition of black humanity, the yearning for liberation burned liked a prairie fire, swift and wide. And nothing, neither white supremacy nor theological heresy, could put out this flame sparking slaves to achieve their God-intended full creativity…
> Black folk felt deeply about their God-given humanity; they sought to be liberated persons…They knew that humanity spells liberty. Hence slaves constantly had to struggle with unravelling the false theological consciousness existentially imposed by white definition (the slaves' temporary predicament) and the natural primordial gift from God (the slaves' created humanity). (Hopkins, 1991:30-1)

Hopkins supports the notion that the slaves defined their humanity because of the divine conscience in their hearts. How does Hopkins's theology shape his anthropological imagination? How does his anthropology transform his theological imagination? How does Hopkins conceive the idea of humanhood and personhood?

> I claim that one become a human being by gearing all ultimate issues toward compassion for and empowerment of people in structural poverty, working-class folks, and the marginalized. And, through the spiritual and material healed-being of these exploited strata, all human communities, inclusive of oppressors, perpetrators, and victimizers, become similar to those who were formerly oppressed, perpetrated against, and victimized. Diminishing emotional demons and removing the structures of practical control of one group over another birth true sisterhood and brotherhood in harmony. (Hopkins, 2005:7-8)

In Western societies, we triumph individualism and the freedom of the individual over the community and the collective freedom. Niebuhr (1944:54) interprets this way of life as dangerous to human flourishing precisely because "community is required to support the individual…The individual's dependence upon the community for the foundation upon which of his uniqueness and special forms of his vitality are created is matched by his need of the community as the partial end, justification and fulfillment of his existence." Niebuhr goes forward to sustain the idea that the self-sufficient individual lives a life of solitude, which is healthy for social bond:

> The ideal of individual, self-sufficiency, so exalted in our liberal culture, is recognized in Christian thought as one form of the primal sin. For self-love, which is the root of all sin, takes two social forms. One of them is the domination of other life by the self. The second is the sin of isolationism. The self can be its true self only by continued transcendence over itself. This self-transcendence either ends in mystic otherworldliness or it must be transmitted into indeterminate realizations of the self I in the life of others.
> (Niebuhr, 1944:54-55)

In this last phase of our conversation, we shall explore another dimension in Hopkin's (2000: 237) black theological anthropology, which is "the purpose of humanity—what has God created and called oppressed people to be and do?" We should reiterate that Hopkin's promising propositions below should be understood in the context of the historical conflict between the slave religion of Protestantism and American White Christianity. Foremost, Hopkins associates the human nature with the work and purpose of the Spirit of liberation to emancipate black humanity from all types of human oppression, exploitation, and enslavement.

> To be a human is to work with the Spirit of liberation within us on behalf of the oppressed, in contrast to working with the legion of demonic spirits within us that would turn us away from God's new humanity and new Common Wealth and toward selfishness. To be free in oneself means that one is a human being who transforms macrosystems of inequality. Therefore, the fundamental purpose of the Spirit of liberation in us is to work in us to help constitute the new self and the new Common Wealth. Oppressed humanity's purpose is to think, speak, and practice freedom with the spirit of liberation in them. (Hopkins, 2000: 238-9)

We shall now list the key theological propositions of Hopkins, in which he emphasizes the work of the Spirit of liberation to empower the oppressed and community of faith and provide orientation, guidance, and enablement in time of despair and disappointment. The Spirit of liberation has whispered in their ears to walk together in solidarity with other individuals in the community of faith so that they can act in compassion and with empathy and love. Hopkins introduces these principles of the Spirit of liberation and presents them as the very promise of black theology and theological anthropology, whose overarching theme is human freedom and shalom. In other words, the discourse of black theology is powered by the prompt and impulse of the Spirit of Liberation. We have identified seven major themes in Hopkins' theology of the Spirit (pneumatology): creation as existential freedom, communitarianism, micro-resistance, self-creation, racial cultural identity, language, and spiritual inspiration; all of them are associated with the work of the Spirit of liberation and *Imago Dei*. He articulates eleven propositions pertaining to the work of the Spirit in creation and in relation to the oppressed community (Hopkins, 2000: 239-270.

First of all, according to Dwight Hopkins, the Spirit of Liberation has called the community of faith to be in solidarity with the oppressed because it is this same Spirit of Liberation who empowers and indwells the oppressed for liberation from the evils of this world. Because of this common wealth—"The Spirit of the Liberation"—whom the oppressed and the defender of the oppressed share, they all can live together according to the impulse and orientation of the liberative Spirit. Therefore, the true test of humanity is to fight for the oppressed against any form of systemic violence and subjugation. The Spirit of Liberation has called the community of faith to identity and share life with the individuals who are suffering, exploited, and abused by the demons of this world. The Spirit has also made a clarion call to comfort those who live in despair and fear. It is

the Spirit who gives members of the community of faith the capacity for empathy, altruism, and compassion. He enables the members of the community to enter into communion with the weak, the disheartened, and the dispossessed. "The Spirit of liberation implanted in humanity at creation and fostered by nature in each generation can enable the oppressed to achieve unimagined feasts if the oppressed will take the risk and allow the fullness of the inspiration to blossom forth. To be human is to heed the benefits and blessings of spiritual intuition and sacred stimulation" (Hopkins, 2000: 270). Hopkins has pointed out, at creation, through the mystery of the Spirit of Liberation, freely and graciously, God has imparted freedom upon humanity in order that people could relate to him and one another. To be human means to be subservient to the will and voice of the Spirit as he is enabling the community of faith to achieve wholeness and lead the people of God to an abundant life of freedom and self-agency. In this sense, freedom is construed as a birthright from the Spirit of Liberation.

> We are created to be free. "In the original creation of humanity, God breathed the Spirit of liberation, the Spirit to be free, into the very act of creation itself…As an act of grace, God creates through divine freedom women and men by giving them the freedom and liberation inherent in God's own self...The existence of this Spirit of liberation within human beings had defined implications for human beings' relation to the divinely created order or that which belonged to God" (Hopkins, 2000:239).

In summary, while Dwight Hopkins gives primacy to the work of the Spirit of liberation in black folk, James Cone focuses on God and Christ in the process of black emancipation. Like Cone, for Hopkins, the question of the ontology of blackness and its relationship to the social world is still an important matter to wrestle with in the twenty-first century, as he interrogates: "What does it mean to be black and Christian for a people situated in the midst of American racism and called by God to be fully human beings?" (Hopkins, 2004:4). Like James Cone, Dwight Hopkins envisions an optimistic existence and future for black folk— a hope that is rooted in a Trinitarian

perspective with an emancipative intent. Hopkins's candid observation about the nature and goal of black theological discourse, whose goal is human empowerment and restoration, and the reconstitution of the *Imago Dei* in black humanity, is noteworthy:

> Black theology believes that God has created African Americans to be free—to reach their full humanity without obstacles blacking the goal of becoming human beings who can freely do God's will. And through Jesus Christ's liberation message and presence, God has provided a way for the church to move toward that freedom. Similarly, God today continues to offer a divine Sprit to enable and sustain black folk on their journey toward a liberated humanity. (Hopkins, 2004:4)

In the previous pages, we have gained insights, intellectual resources, and wisdom from the writings of Cone, Evans, Pinn, and Hopkins in the process of constructing a more rigorous black theological anthropology and ethics, as well as to establish a thick and holistically black personhood and humanity. The values they have brought to the subject matter and the contributions they have added to the disciplines of theological anthropology and theological ethics is communicated from the experience of African Americans. Consequently, we can infer that they articulated a black theological discourse from the African American experience. In the subsequent analysis, we shall examine the contributions of three Caribbean theologians, who write theologically, informatively, and intelligently from the *Sitz im leben* of the Caribbean experience. In other words, Cone, Evans, Pinn, and Hopkins communicated an African American perspective in theology; whereas, Hamid, Erskine, and Davis share a Caribbean perspective in theology. African American theology and Caribbean theology converge and confluence in considerably numerous ways.

Before we engage in this vital issue, we shall first prioritize the issue of method in Caribbean Theology.

5.3. METHOD IN CARIBBEAN THEOLOGY

191

A possible point of contact or linkage between Jean-Bertrand Aristide's theology and the theolog of his Caribbean interlocutors is methodology. That does not mean points of difference and variation do not exist. These thinkers are predominantly concerned on how to use theology as a method of analysis to address the pressing needs of the Caribbean people. For example, Korthright Davis (1990:88) suggests that Caribbean theology must articulate new methods that are grounded "within the context of local communities, to respond to current pressures: the need for more formal training of women, the growing inability to sustain appropriate standards of living (economically) among their clergy, the revolution of ethical perspectives and rising expectations in the Caribbean, and the inevitable imperatives of ecumenism."

He proposes "theological self-reliance" as a mode of thinking theologically and doing theology within the context of the Caribbean experience.   He makes an appeal to Caribbean theologians to reject the theological dependence from the metropolitan North from which they imitate theological forms and methods (Ibid: 89). Davis calls into question North American and European theological methodologies into question because they "appear to offer a ready-made set of solutions to complex theological problems, so that the temptations to import them is strong than the will to seek new and indigenous ones" (Ibid: 89). Davis articulates a radically and innovative theological methodology that is rooted in the Caribbean spirit and that which embodies the experiences, the needs, religious beliefs, and plight of the Caribbean people. From Davis' groundbreaking text (1990), *Emancipation Still Comin*,*'* we have identified six distinctive traits on how to do theology within the context of the Caribbean people.

Foremost, Davis (1990:89) offers the suggestion that Caribbean theologians and thinkers should provide "a radical assessment of the needs of the Caribbean constituency which is attempting to interpret the meaning of the Gospel of emancipation in the Caribbean context."

192

Secondly, he interrogates the traditional way of doing systematic theology or moral theology in the Caribbean, which focuses on the writings and ideas of Western white theologians—whose cultural experiences and economic-political context differ than those of Caribbean theologians. He contends within the milieu of the Caribbean life, Western moral theology and systematic theology "need not continue to be the basis for contemporary theological and moral insights" (Ibid: 89). Thirdly, he places a clarion call upon Caribbean theologians to return to their own sources and to construct theological paradigms and categories by using "Caribbean folk wisdom and cultural history" (Ibid: 90). Fourthly, he suggests Christian theologians in the Region to establish dynamic rapport with the Afro-Caribbean religious traditions and indigenous rituals that "had long been a source of spiritual and cultural power for the underclasses of Caribbean societies" (Ibid: 90). Fifthly, Davis emphasizes the urgency of theological praxis (Practical theology) in order for Caribbean theology to respond responsibly and empathetically to the pressing needs of the Caribbean people.

The new Caribbean theological vision should give serious attention to the economic life, political distresses, and the socio-historical circumstances of Caribbean societies. In other words, practical theology and theological formation executed within the life-experiences and lived-worlds of the Caribbean people "must take place in the midst of congregational life social and political witness and the actual hands-on-situations of ordinary people who struggle on the margins of poverty and frustration" (Ibid:90). In particular, Davis makes a burning request to Caribbean male theologians and churches to allow greater participation of Caribbean women in the life of Caribbean churches, theological dialogue, and theological education.

> Women are by far the more dominant sector, numerically, in the life of the church in the Caribbean just as they are in other areas of the Christian world. The lifeblood of the church would be seriously malnourished if women were to withdraw their full participation and support. Yet church leaders in the Caribbean continue to be ambivalent and hesitant about

the significance of such participation and about the value of women in the leadership structures of the Christian movement. (Davis, 1990:90-1)

The Haitian saying, "*Fanm se poto mitan*" (Women are pillars of society), affirms the centrality of women in Haitian society and religious life. The final distinctive mark of the new Caribbean theological discourse is the importance of ecumenism. The new theological method should strategically and intentionally promote "ecumenical sharing and ecumenical engagement" (Davis, 1990: 92).

> Realistic and serious dialogue between groupings of different persuasions is required, as Well as formal opportunities for fellowship and mutual learning between Christian and non-Christian bodies. Caribbean theological formations must seek Christian unity at all levels of the church, as well as Caribbean unity at other levels. The unity of the Christian church and the unity of the human family in the Caribbean cannot be maintained in separate compartments. The emancipation we seek cannot afford to be at the expense of human division and religious bigotry. (Davis, 1990:92)

Furthermore, Erskine argues that Caribbean theology cannot ignore the world of the Caribbean people in which they struggle to create meaning and to reclaim their humanity. Caribbean theology must consider the sociological context and historical trajectories that shape the Caribbean experience. "As the church in the Caribbean decolonizes theology, it must be willing to put aside a timeless, universal, metaphysical theology and become existential as it seeks to relate to the living history of blackness" (Erskine, 1981:45). Likewise, in an important chapter book entitled "Method in Caribbean Theology," Jamaican theologian Theresa Lowe-Ching (Gregory, 1995) articulates some relevant propositions pertaining to the method, meaning, and message of Caribbean theology. She begins her critical analysis by asserting that American and European imperialist intervention in the Caribbean is fatal and hinders the human spirit in the Caribbean in the search for wholeness and freedom. She denounces colonial powers and missionary Christianity in the Caribbean for equating Christianity with civilization. She advances that the Caribbean

194

people must reject the theology of imposition that was forced upon them by Christian colonialists. Western imperial forces supported by colonial Christianity have denigrated the conquered population and destroyed their collective identity and self-esteem (1995:24-5). Lowe-Ching projects that the Caribbean people must not only discard the "European sources" that shaped their theology, social and intellectual life, and Christian practices, they must reclaim the main sources of Caribbean theology, which she lists: "the Bible; the history of Caribbean people; the writing of certain Caribbean sociologists and economists and the history of the Church in the Caribbean and statements of conciliar and ecumenical bodies in the Caribbean" (Ibid: 25). She also lists non-religious but influential Caribbean women, intellectuals, poets, cultural critics, and public intellectuals—e.g., V.S. Naipaul, Bob Marley, Marcus Garvey, Derek Walcott, Walter Rodney—as possible sources for Caribbean theology. In the Francophone Caribbean, we should also consider Toussaint Louverture, Joseph Antenor Firmin, Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Jacques Roumain, Rene Depestre, Aime Cesaire, Jane Nardal, Paulette Nardal, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant, Maryse Conde, Marie Chauvet,Cleante Desgrave, Annie Desroy, Nadine Magloire, etc., as potential sources for Caribbean theology. These individuals symbolize Caribbean experiences in various ways (Ibid: 110). Lowe-Ching, however, has failed to consider the African heritage which has substantially defined the Caribbean religious life and cosmology.

Furthermore, Lowe-Ching affirms that Caribbean theology, like its Latin American counterpart, gives preference to orthopraxis; prioritizes preferential option for the poor and the cause of the oppressed and marginalized; aims at uprooting oppressive structures and systems that hold the poor captive; maintains that the Black experience as the hermeneutical base of Caribbean theological conversations and reflections (1995:24-5). She advises that Caribbean theologians should rigorously and dynamically engage with other disciplines in the Humanities and

concurrently enter in constructive dialogues with social scientists and professionals in other academic fields of knowledge; the advantage of cross-disciplinary engagement is that it will strengthen Caribbean theology and assist Caribbean theologians to creatively reread the Bible and Christian symbols scientifically (Ibid: 27) and from different angles. Lowe-Ching reiterates a common practice among Caribbean thinkers and Developing World theologians: "The dual challenge confronts Caribbean theologians to not only express their understanding of option for the poor and oppressed in theological categories, but also to engage more seriously in a spirituality of liberation involving actual participation in the struggles of the poor and oppressed" (Ibid: 28). Finally, she infers that a major deficiency of Caribbean theology is the woman question that is Caribbean male theologians have failed to incorporate "the feminist agenda in Caribbean theological reflections" (Ibid).

The matters outlined above are critical in the articulation of black theological anthropology and black theological ethics. We should now explore the ideas of Idris Hamid in the project of reconstructing black personhood and humanity.

5.3.1. IDRIS HAMID

First of all, Jesus's solidarity with the poor and the economically-oppressed individuals is Hamid's point of departure for theological inquiry and reflections. Secondly, the Caribbean milieu is critical for his theological development. According to Hamid (1971:3), in the incarnation, through the person and work of the historical Jesus, God became identified with humanity and took sides by establishing friendship and fellowshipping with the poor, the sick, the disadvantaged, and the underclass. According to Jesus, for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God, he/she "must identity with and the minister to the imprisoned, the naked, the sick, the hungry, (Matt. 25:31-

196

46)—and we may add, the unemployed, the brutalized, the dehumanized…To follow Jesus means therefore to identity with the liberating forces and to imitate such forces" (Hamid, 1971:3). Hamid does not believe that Christian salvation is possible unless one deliberately partakes in the life of the poor and the sufferings of the oppressed. If anyone desires to be saved and become Jesus' disciple, he/she must actively involve in the lived-experiences and lived-worlds of disfranchised individuals in society, and intentionally walk in solidarity with them resulting in caring and serving them, and sharing in their sufferings.

For Hamid, the hope of Caribbean theology is decolonization. In other words, decolonization is the departing point to think through black personhood and humanity intellectually and theologically. Decolonization as a project may lead to decolonial praxis and contribute to a life of anti-colonial and anti-imperial practices.

Hamid construes the decolonization process of Caribbean societies from the yoke of economic dependence and cultural imperialism of the U.S. A. and European countries as full emancipation. This emancipation encompasses the sphere of the religious experience of the Caribbean people. Hamid suggests that the Caribbean people must search for a new theological orientation and political vision that is based on the historical experiences of the Region and "the future to which God calls us" (1971:7). The Caribbean past has been an exploited past, and the people have been dehumanized and denigrated by various colonial and imperial forces. Slave masters and colonialists have thoroughly robbed Caribbean people of their labor, production, and resources. Western colonialists have undermined African retentions in the Region and denigrated Afro-Caribbean identity and cultural practices. Like the colonialists, Western missionaries have devalued the African-derived religions and spirituality of the Caribbean people. According to Hamid (1971:8), Western missionaries introduced a God who was "foreign" to the Caribbean

religious experience, and that in the religious imagination of the Caribbean people, God is construed as "a benign white foreigner—'an expatriate.'"

This white God has not walked in solidarity with the Caribbean people, has not involved in their history, and has not empathized with them nor shared in their sufferings. European missionaries catechized the Caribbean people to worship God through somebody else's lived-experiences, and lived-worlds that is those of the European Christians. To achieve theological emancipation, the Caribbean people must reject the foreign and white God, and embrace God who can sympathize with them in their sufferings and shame. A healthy doctrine of God will lead to a healthy theological anthropology. The transformation and future of Caribbean societies should be understood in God's love for and promise to the Caribbean people. Hamid seems to imply that God has been silent in the historical plight and sufferings of the enslaved Africans in the Caribbean; as a result, he challenges the Caribbean people to ask God honest, what he has termed "unholy questions" including the following: Where hast Thou been in our history? What meaning can there be to all this—genocide, slavery, indentured labor, poverty, colonialism? Why, Why, Why?" (1971:8). At this point, Hamid puts God on trial to answer the most pressing issue in modernity; the problem of black theodicy in the Caribbean and in the world.

As previously encountered in the theological writings of Anthony Pinn, Idris Hamid interprets the interplays between God and the Caribbean people as divine abandonment and black theodicy. Because God has intentionally distanced himself from the Caribbean experience, the Caribbean past, according to Hamid

> has been a defuturised past. Hopelessness reigned. We were the ploy of other people's future. We had to peg our future on a beyond for we could find no future here. Ours was an existentialised transcendent future, not a historically imminent one. Our lives and communities were ordered to benefit and stabilize the future of others. While they gained

198

a future, we lost ours... In our religious training one is hard put to find any attempt to see God operating in our former cultures and in our Caribbean history (Hamid, 1971:7)

For Hamid, the question of black theodicy is more than a theological issue. It is an anthropological, a moral issue, eve an existential crisis—consideirng God's seemingly hiddenness from the Caribbean people in the triumphal era of slavery and colonization. Where was God? Hamid supposes that it is inconceivable to theorize an operative and healthy black theological anthropology and ethics if God is/has been absent in black lives. The clarion call is for God's drastic reintervention in the Caribbean experience leading to renewed hope and radical divine closeness.

The question of Caribbean future is a central characteristic in Hamid's Caribbean theology of emancipation and decolonization. He links Caribbean theology to Caribbean identity in which the Caribbean people is recommended to search for alternative modes of thought, new expressions, new ways to exhibit their self-agency, collective will, and collective determination. In Hamid's vantage point, Caribbean perspectives in theology should enrich Christianity in Caribbean societies as a result of critical retrospective on Caribbean anthropology and the Region's historical past. Caribbean theology of emancipation should also contribute to more dynamic Caribbean cultures and human relationships, and improve infrastructures and the human condition in Caribbean societies; correspondingly, Caribbean theology should contribute to projects of development in the light of God's promises for the Caribbean people (Hamid, 1973:4).

In the search for a new theological orientation in the Caribbean landscape, Caribbean theologians should seek to ameliorate the future of humanity in the Region. In order to create an inventive Caribbean theological discourse and orchestrate a more promising Caribbean humanism, the Caribbean people must deconstruct the theology that was imported and integrated in their

cultural matrix. In order to be fully emancipated, Hamid puts forth the idea that the Caribbean people must decolonize the "foreign way of life" and the irrelevant theological categories that do not reflect their cultural fabric and native experiences (Ibid: 8). The emancipation of Caribbean societies will involve a series of radical interventions and progressive actions in the realm of politics, culture, economics, health, ethics, human and social interactions, and the religious life:

> We must break loose and seek one which will not threaten our future creativity. This acceptance of responsibility for our future is far reaching. It goes far beyond responsibility for our political life and the search for new cultural forms. It involves the value system of a new society, the life-styles of our people. It involves rejecting the cultural imperialism and life-styles and values which are now inflicted on us through the printed word and the mass media. (Hamid, 1971:8)

Hamid is persuaded that the role of the Caribbean church in Caribbean societies should be "essentially creative and militant" (Ibid: 8). The next three issues that pertain to the church's civic engagement in Caribbean societies are as follows: development, unemployment, and education. Hamid understands development as the collective work of the Caribbean church and Caribbean government. Development in the context of Caribbean societies implies the radical transformation of systems, power relations, human dynamics, and structures that have hindered development and societal reformation, as well as those that have blocked human flourishing. If development entails total change, it must also encompass serious changes in Caribbean churches, Caribbean theology, and the social and political societies in the Region (Hamid, 1971:18). Effective development in the postcolonial Caribbean societies must engage the field of education with a decolonial outlook. The ultimate goal of education—both secular and theological—in Caribbean societies is to enrich the lives of the Caribbean people, strengthen Caribbean societies, and to contribute to holistic change.

Hamid laments that the (neo-) colonial education in the Caribbean remains most alienating to Caribbean students; he points out two central shortcomings of the education program in the Caribbean.

> First, from the very first day in school the child is confronted with "A for **Apple**". His Education begins and continues with reference to a point from outside. This education system has been extended to cater for more people, but not transformed to any effective extent to produce suitable people…Secondly, it alienates people. One of the ironies of the system is that it purports to train people to be of service, but in acquiring that education it alienates from the people to be served. It is elitist in character. (Hamid, 1971:17)

The education system must be decolonized to reflect the values, attitudes, culture, worldview, and thought-process of the Caribbean people. A decolonized education should give primacy to the native tongues (Creole, Jamaican English) of the Caribbean people as the language of instruction. Caribbean students should cultivate a sense of respect for their primary language as it is often the case for the langue of the colonizer: English, French, Spanish, and Dutch. The Caribbean people must reimagine an alternative source of educational epistemology and pedagogy that is both liberative and sensitive to Caribbean needs. A decolonized education program would consider the achievements of Caribbean men and women in Western civilization and universal civilizations. In the educational curriculum, Caribbean students need to be acquainted with the works or writings of Caribbean heroes and heroines, poets, painters, musicians, thinkers, politicians, inventors, engineers, educators, historians, philosophers, religious figures, etc. Education in the Caribbean must always elevate the collective and not the individual; it should also aim at national progress and the common good in Caribbean societies. A decolonized education program in the Caribbean would focus on the nurturing of the Caribbean mind and the nurturing of the Caribbean soul toward both individual progress and collective success; it should promote national consciousness and be community-oriented.

In the case of Caribbean churches, Hamid (1971:17) insists that "The Christian education programme of the churches which emphasizes hard work for individual success as a reward for personal holiness will have to be altered so that "success" is viewed in terms of community service and human development." In other words, Caribbean Christianity must commit itself to the permanent and holistic development of Caribbean societies, and that Christian intervention in the Region is "necessary for development, for social justice and the liberation of our people, even more necessary is the deep thought and theological reflection which enable the Caribbean man [woman] to find his true itself" (Hamid, 1973:5). The decolonial education project in the Caribbean has also a spiritual dimension if it is going to be authentic and comprehensive development.

In the same line of thought, Caribbean societies must reject the capitalist economic model that are characteristic in Western societies and detrimental to the Caribbean life. The new economic model in the Caribbean should seriously consider both the nature of Caribbean societies and the destiny of the Caribbean people. Caribbean economy must give primacy to human relationships and the improvement of people's lives and communities in the Region. According to Hamid (1971:15), transformative economic activity in the Caribbean must accentuate human commitment to the success of the society; it should incorporate the role of religion in promoting and contributing to a human-centered economic model. Ultimately, the core goal of a successful and effective economic model is to stimulate the good life and better social and human relationships. An economic model that does not use humans as commodity would not also treat work as a commodity to be shared by all people in the Caribbean.

Caribbean economic model must not emulate the free trade model of Western societies that exploits the resources and productions of the working class and the disadvantaged. Similarly, job should not be the end of life and relationship; the improvement of human relationship and social

interactions should be a directive force for employment. A fair distributive economic system bears considerable implications for equal employment, distributive work, and wealth distribution. Work must be shared among the Caribbean people. In the paragraph below, Hamid provides a practical example on this matter:

> If there is limited work, then it must be shared. This would mean that instead of having three men work full time and one totally unemployed, that work be so distributed that all four men work nine months of the year, with the salaries so adjusted that it would be the same during the "off" period shared by all, to be sued for leisure, rest, hobbies, studies, creative and cultural activities, etc., and catered for bye special services of government. (Hamid, 1971:16)

Finally, education as holistic development and decolonization project lies in a new Caribbean self-understanding, a reexamination, and reinterpretation of Caribbean history and experience in the postcolonial context and era of globalization and neoliberalism (Hamid, 1973:6). Hamid's political theology forestalls a dynamic and resourceful black theological anthropological and ethics. Hamid sees Caribbean churches as protagonists and agents of these democratic promises.

5.3.2. KORTRIGHT DAVIS

Similarly, Kortright Davis (1990:47) suggests that the Caribbean Church must become the catalyst and "the social conscience" for Caribbean societies by mobilizing the Caribbean people to organize themselves toward self-determination and self-agency; the role of Christian churches in the Caribbean is to become fully engaged in the Caribbean drama and regional developmental efforts, and to reclaim political sovereignty, cultural renewal, economic dependence, and the unification of Caribbean societies. Davis is convinced that the program of Caribbean emancipation must also "be realized in all its dimensions and structures, not merely as a political or economic

203

objective of history but also as a concrete manifestation of the work of a Divine Emancipator. Change and renewal, liberation and maturity" (Ibid).

Davis presents God as the one who has willed the economic success of Caribbean societies; the divine presence in the Caribbean ensures the human partnership and an optimistic future: "The focus on economic growth through imaginative creativity and resourcefulness finds it religious motivation in the fact that God, and in the meaning of God's assured and favored presence in the Caribbean condition" (Davis, 1990:80). He gives prominence to human self-efficacy and resilience in the Caribbean, and presumes that the Caribbean people will persevere through challenges which will increase the likelihood of development and sustainability. Through the ethic of self-reliance and determination, and through communal collaboration, the Caribbean people will achieve economic dependence and political sovereignty

> Caribbean people need only to match the making of their own 'bread' with their understanding of the making of children as instance of divine-human collaboration; and the theological implications and imperatives for economic growth and creativity, productivity and self-determination will cry out for articulation. The ethical imperative here is clearly the need for moral persistence…The emancipatory ethic of persistence is therefore enjoined at this point. (Davis, 1990: 81)

Economic freedom and national sovereignty require moral consistence and resistance to both disruptive internal and external forces. The ethic of moral consistence includes "consistency with local values, realities, and priorities; with long-term goals and objectives; and with the highest ideals of national prestige and human self-esteem. The popular will must insist on such moral consistency instead of the political norms of expediency and the principle of the zigzag" (Davis, 1990: 82). Davis bases his premise about Caribbean future and economic success on the analogy of the consistency of Christ's faithfulness to God; similarly, Christ will be faithful to the Caribbean people. He encourages the Caribbean people to model their self-determination after this

204

Christological motivation (Ibid). The role of Caribbean Christianity and political government is to warn the Caribbean people and ensure that they "are no longer for sale and that their dues have already been paid, not only by their ancestors in slavery but also by their brother Jesus-Christ."

Not only economic freedom will enhance black lives in the Caribbean and the Black diaspora, belonging to a community will also increase the individual's life toward sustainability, sociability, and interdependence. In the previous analysis, we have pointed out that Davis identified alienation in Caribbean societies as a devastating effects of colonialism. Davis proposes the African concept of community as a mechanism to cure the problem of individual and collective alienation. Observably, the colonial life not only orchestrated cultural alienation, it also engendered human alienation. Caribbean people came to embrace Western individualism which challenges the community life, which has sustained them during the time of slavery. The conundrum of cultural alienation according to Davis is that it

> encouraged Caribbean people to become mutually contemptuous and to accept patterns of self-contempt, sometimes as a means of social progress or acceptance by others. That which was foreign was good; that which was local was not good. So people were alienated from each other inducement. They were also alienated from their natural cultural endowment (race, color, language, belief systems, relationships, entertainment and leisure, work schedules, family mores, personal aspirations) and from their rightful corridors of power, influence, and social classes. (Davis, 1990:83)

Jean Price-Mars (1928) in his innovative book, *Ainsi parla l'Oncle*, made a smilar remark about the Haitian society that it has suffered from "collective bovarisme," a form of cultural alienation and psychological anomaly that forces the Haitian people to question the relevance of African cultural values and practices in the Haitian soil. Haitian cultural alienation as a powerful phenomenon in the Haitian society makes the Haitian people depreciate their maternal tongue (Creole) and undermine the African culture of Haitian peasants. As Davis (1990:83) has remarked,

"The imposed forms of alienation have tended to decimate the people's communitarian sprit, by pitting neighbor against neighbor and class against class."

To remedy the enigma of cultural alienation in Caribbean societies, it is suffice for Caribbean people to return to the African system of communal living. Through the community, the Caribbean people would be able to collaboratively create social institutions and communities that are strong and effective, which would respond adequately to the needs of the individual and the community. The community encourages collective solidary and communal life; it also helps maintain an orderly life that promotes full personhood in Caribbean societies. Life in community will enable the Caribbean people to find a common solution to a shared problem and allows them to "participate together in the sociopolitical and cultural processes of the region" (Davis, 1990:83). Finally, Davis highlights additional benefits of the community that could fortify black personhood and black humanity:

> The virtue of community involves not merely collectivity but, more particularly, the rights and obligations of communicating and sharing; the responsibility to resist fragmentation in all its forms, as a continuing regional crisis; and the need to contribute to the creation of a more wholesome generation of self-affirming, self-accepting, de-alienated young people, whose pride in their heritage would render the return to alienation an impossible dream. (Davids, 1990:83).

In a similar note, Noel Erskine interprets the African concept of community as the place that enables the individual to become more fully human. Erskine interprets the African concept of community as the place that enables the individual to become more fully human. Nonetheless, in slavery, the African people in the Caribbean were forced "to live outside the indigenous community" (1981:36), which was detrimental to their collective growth or communal progress.

5.3.3. NOEL LEO ERSKINE

206

Erskine conceives the freedom of the individual only within the (collective) experience of and harmony with the community. He asserts (1981: 36) that "with this understanding of being-in-community, one ceased to experience a brother or a sister as the limit of one's freedom but, rather, as the possibility through which the search for identity and meaning was [is] more fully realized. Existence-in-relation sums up the pattern of the African way of life."

Consequently, it is through the community the individual develops his agency and it is the community that makes life meaningfully or worth living. Life outside the community is not productive or effective. In the African tradition, to live independently from the community is to defer the success and happiness of the individual. Within the community, suffering and joy are shared collectively, and that men and women become social beings. This idea of African corporate personality insists that

> the individual discovers herself or himself in terms of duties, privileges, and responsibilities to self and peers…An important feature of this corporate relationship is the demand on the individual to engage in a lifestyle that will enhance the well-being of the community. One way to achieve this is for the individual to fulfill his or her destiny in the context of the community. (Erskine, 1981:36).

In this way, African anthropology is framed within a theological framework. The life in the community is not only preconditioned by social sanctions; it is also directed by God. It is both God and individual members of the community that mutually shape individual's life in the community. The success and freedom of the individual and the community is determined by both entities. While Erskine deduces black theological anthropological from the African experience as a life of freedom and sustainability in the community, he reads black theology from the Caribbean context as the pursuit of freedom and hope, and social transformation.

Like Hamid, Erskine (1981:118) sustains the idea that while the task of Caribbean theology should include the promotion of social change, optimism, and freedom in Caribbean societies, it "must guard against imports… [because] an imported theology would not be able to address this need with specificity and clarity." Hence, Caribbean theology reflects both the historical experience and existential struggle of the Caribbean people towards radical change, emancipation, decolonization, self-agency, and disalienation. A major characteristic of Caribbean theology Erskine suggests is hope. Caribbean theology projects the idea of redemptive hope, but denounces all sources of human oppression. In Erskine, Caribbean theology seeks to establish the dynamics between hope and freedom. When one hopes in God the Liberator, freedom becomes the vision of this liberating trust because God himself is the ground of human hope and freedom; he will not disappoint the oppressed and poor who take refuge in him. The freedom of God is a radical critique of the society and a confrontation of people who have the power and influence to create systems and structures of oppression and subjugation. Hope firmly rooted in the freedom of God provides satisfying optimism in the most hopeless human situation. Jesus has shown himself to be the Protagonist of hope and the paramount Agent of human freedom; his testimony to John the Baptist substantiates this claim: "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:5).

Erskine, who pronounces a Caribbean theology of hope and freedom, claims that hope is not only one of the most prized aspects of Christian theology; Christian optimism reveals an intrinsic divine attribute.

> This question is central to Christian theology because, if hope does not mean struggle for freedom in history, then it is the opium of the oppressed. For Christian theology to talk about hope without relating it to the struggle of the oppressed for freedom in history is for

it tacitly to sanction the structures oppressions, which deprive the oppressed of their dignity. To hope, then, is not merely to plan the future. Hope is more than anticipation of freedom. It gives both form and content to human freedom. (Erskine, 1981:118-9)

Hope is situational and contextual. By nature, it is a reactionary human emotion to certain forces or phenomena—both internal and external. Suggestively, we should understand Caribbean theology of hope as a reactionary and corrective theology to the insufficiency of colonial theology that failed to portray God as the Emancipator of African slaves. Another equally valid problem is that missionary Christianity in the Caribbean has also failed to denounce the bondage of slavery and to establish the rapport between divine freedom and human hope in slavery. Rather, colonial Christianity approved of the institution of slavery and the colonial order, and their cruel structures and systems of domination in the Caribbean landscape.

In addition, Erskine (1981:119) has posited that the contemporary Caribbean church, entangled with neocolonial mentality and practices, often neglects its role as a liberating force in Caribbean societies and belittles its own responsibility "to slums and shanty towns, which destroy black family deny children their future. The inaction and unconcern of the church is due to its failure to discern God's liberating work in the word of human bondage." In contemporary Caribbean societies, Caribbean churches can no longer disregard its social setting, the unfavorable human condition of the Caribbean poor and disfranchised families, as well as the Caribbean experience which continues to shape its content, message, and rhetoric.

Furthermore, Erskine sees continuity between his Caribbean theology of hope and freedom with the rhetorical language and theological vision of the historic meeting of the Second General Assembly of the Caribbean Conference of Churches, held in Guyana in 1977, in which Caribbean ecclesiastical leaders and theologians declared that "God is the basis of human rights and freedom

for black people" (1989: 120); together, they affirmed their conviction about the significance of upholding Human rights in the Caribbean:

> In our journey of struggle for rights through self-reliance, we resolve that our rights nature have their foundation in our God and in his faithfulness. And while this might be a difficult principle to uphold in a characteristically cynical, scientific age, with not many dramatic examples of "the God who went before his people, winning their battles and demanding justice for them," there is a latent and indefatigable confidence that he sees "our condition" and "struggles" with us in our determination to change the present order. (Qtd in Erskine, 1981:120)

Because the Caribbean people are also created in the *imago dei,* they are eligible to live freely and have conclusive human rights. God's decisive execution to endow sustaining breath and life upon the people in the Caribbean is linked to his "commitment to the ordering of a new society" in the Caribbean (Erskine, 1981: 120). Caribbean theology is premised on the possibility of an alternative future and emancipative society in the Caribbean because it is the will of God. Caribbean theology is an enterprise that involves the collaborative partnership between God and the Caribbean people as artisans of new historical trajectories and agents of transformation and emancipative future in the Region. Toward the goal in engineering this new Caribbean community and Caribbean humanism, Erskine accentuates the responsibility and contributions of Caribbean Christians and churches to challenge and reject the current social order characterized by unequal distribution of wealth, abject poverty, hunger, political conflict, economic dependence, imperial domination, and the conflict between social classes. However, he ascertains that God's dedication to social equality and justice, and humanization in the Caribbean is deliberate, transformative, and intentional.

> God's freedom ensures the determination to realize his justice in the world. With divine freedom as the basis of human freedom, Caribbean Christians affirm the Kingdom of God as the kingdom of free humanity. The understanding that the Kingdom of God has

everything to do with the social and political responsibility of Christians in the world is upheld by Caribbean Christians. (Erskine, 1981:120)

From Erskine's perspective, a Caribbean theology of freedom and hope must incorporate the hope of decolonializaiton and the logic of decoloniality. Like Hamid, he deduces that a shortcoming of colonial theology is that a link was not forged between saving black souls and redeeming black bodies; colonial theology deliberately divorced the economic productions by enslaved Africans and their material or physical needs to be economically self-sustained. Colonial theology upheld a false consciousness between the spiritual need and the bodily need, the heavenly realm and the earthly realm; such pseudo theological discourse maintained the idea that "While the soul belonged to God, the body belonged to the master" (Erskine, 1981:120). In other words, the African slave planted, the master reaped; the slave produced, the master consumed the production. Consequently, Erskine could assign two central characteristics of the decolonization (theological) project: spiritual and political, an important feature in Aristide's political theology.

> The decolonization of theology would require "a form of spiritual rebirth and not merely an external political process. It connotes change in the relationship between peoples resulting from a transformation." For the dominated people, that would mean a consciousness of their own status as human beings, their strength to bring an end to their domination and subjugation; their ability to decide on the quality and direction of their future." The call, then, is to affirm that to be Christian is to be free and that to be free for the Kingdom of God is to be Christian. To be Christian is to be human, because the locus of freedom is the Kingdom of God. (1981:120)

From the viewpoint of Caribbean political theology and Caribbean theology of decolonization, the purpose of the kingdom of God relates to the project of radical humanization of the oppressed and outcast, and the incontestable proclamation of their emancipation, which necessitates the freedom of the mind, socio-economic freedom, and political freedom. The program of a theology of decolonization converged with a Caribbean theology of hope and freedom anticipates the social and political activism of followers of Christ as a way to effectuate

(or share) the values and benefits of the Kingdom of God in Caribbean societies. Human agency is paramount in this decolonial project as it aims at deracinating zones and sources of domination and subjugation. In a nutshell, Caribbean theology is a discourse that champions the democratic life and the ethics of human interconnectedness.

5.3.4. CONNECTIONS WITH ARISTIDE

The connections between Aristide and the works of the Caribbean theologians and thinkers named above are numerous. The relevance of Aristide's articulation of a black theology from the Haitian perspective relates to the Caribbean condition and the Black experience in the United States and throughout the Black diaspora. These connections have been drawn for many reasons.

> First, the geographical proximity (Cultural proximity in regard to Africa) of the Caribbean and the United States is significant in terms of social development. Second, during slavery black people were often taken from the Caribbean islands to the United States; as they came they brought important elements for black American culture. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, black people in the Caribbean and the United States share a common experience, which may be characterized as the search for freedom in history. (Erskine, 1981:2)

A pivotal shared historical moment between Caribbean religious experience and African American experience in religion pertains to "the experience of faith as it was fashioned during slavery. This experience was one in which much exchange took place between Caribbean and black American peoples" (Ibid). Black perspectives on theology from the Caribbean, Black America (U.S.A.), and Africa, as well as Developing Countries have many convergences and confluences; we should also be aware of their differences.

For example, like Hamid, Erskine, and Davis, Aristide's political theology is orthopraxis that calls for cultural renewal, sustainability, better education system and economic progress in the

212

Caribbean region. It is a public theology that seeks to resist cultural alienation and simultaneously is concerned with the welfare and emancipation of the Haitian people and those living in the margins of society. Emancipation is anticipated from economic indepdence and political dictatorship. Aristide seeks to foster a decolonization of the mind in the Haitian society by rejecting the vestiges of colonialism in the Haitian society. Caribbean theology argues for a fair and equal distribution of wealth and job access in the Region.

Aristide's theology is simultaneously, anti-colonial, anti-imperial, postcolonial, and decolonial. Aristide's political theology addresses the pressing needs of the Haitian society such as free access to public education, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and free healthcare for all Haitians. As Aristide (1993:198) points out Haiti is a country where "85 percent of the population, crushed under the weight of economic violence, is still illiterate: illiterates who are not animals." Aristide, however, is very optimistic that together we can help

> these victims to read…You who are our friends, do not be observers. Be actors, inasmuch as you are citizens of the world. Together, let us participate in a campaign for literacy….All cooperation at this level testifies to a willingness to struggle against economic violence through active nonviolence." (Aristide, 1993:198-9)

In the language above, Aristide demonstrates both the necessity of regional and international solidarity and alliance to find a common solution for Haiti's economic woes and educational crisis. Another common issue that threatens the human condition in the Caribbean is cultural alienation and imitation, which Hamid, Davis, and Kortright brought to surface. Aristide's ninth commandment of democracy, which insists on "fidelity to our culture," should be understood as a campaign against the tragedy of cultural alienation and imitation of foreign habits in Caribbean societies. He pleads that the people of Haiti and the Caribbean must resistance cultural alienation which will guarantee "the psychological health of the democratic issue. In fact, every kind of cultural suicide results in deviance in the social body and inevitably threatens the democratic cells"

213

(Aristide, 1993:200). For Aristide, in order for the people to create the democratic life, they must reject cultural alienation. He insists that the democratic life demands for the people to preserve their own cultural traditions and practices because "To live, and to live fully, also means nourishing oneself at the sources of one's culture; it means plunging the roots of being into those sources…No truly deep change can be accomplished democratically without an articulation of the indigenous values that are closely linked with any genuine socio-cultural fabric" (Ibid: 200-201).

Comparatively, Aristide emphasizes the role of the Haitian church as harbinger of hope and freedom in the Haitian society to work collaboratively with the Haitian government and the private sector to increase employment opportunities and improve Haiti's infrastructures problems.

In the paragraphs below, we shall focus on Aristide's democratic vision, which coincides with the politico-theological program and the pressing needs the above theologians carefully discussed in our previous analysis.

In his speech delivered at the General Assembly of the United States in New York in September 25, 1991, Aristide articulated ten propositions which he christened "the ten commandments of democracy," which transcend territorial and geo-political locations and zones and the politics of the nation-states.

1. "The first commandment of democracy: liberty or death.
2. The second commandment of democracy: democracy or death.
3. The third commandment of democracy: fidelity to human rights.
4. The fourth commandment of democracy: the right to eat and to work.
5. The fifth commandment of democracy: the right to demand what rightfully belongs to us.
6. The sixth commandment of democracy: legitimate defense of the diaspora, or tenth department.
7. Seventh commandment of democracy: No to violence, yes to Lavalas.
8. The eight commandment of democracy: fidelity to the human being, the highest form of wealth.
9. The ninth commandment of democracy: fidelity to our culture.
10. The tenth commandment of democracy everyone around the same table. (Aristide, 1993:189- 205)

214

Aristide's democratic vision consists of an amalgam of various traditions: the Haitian Revolution (commandments one, two, and three), Judeo-Christian Tradition (commandments three, four, and eight), universal Catholic Social Teaching (commandments three, four, eight, and nine), African communism (commandments five, nine, and ten), and Western Democratic Tradition (commandments three, five, and ten). Aristide informs the international audience that his democratic vision emerged from the democratic praxis of his administration. The first two commandments of democracy are grounded on the radical rhetoric and activism of the Haitian Revolution in which Haitian revolutionaries—both heroes and heroines—such as Jean-Francois Makandal, Dutty Boukman, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Toussaint Louverture, Cécile Fatima, Suzanne Belair, Catherine Flon, Marie-Jeanne Lamartiniére, Victoria Montou, Marie Claire Félicité Guillaume Bonheur, and Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile, and the maroon communities made a decisive commitment to each other to live free, independent, and as abolitionists then to die under the yoke of Western slavery, colonization, and imperialism. The collective pledge of the African slaves at Saint-Domingue-Haiti to live free then to live under the helland horrors of slavery began in Africa when African anti-slavery revolutionaries fought valiantly against European slave merchants to stop the slave trade. This commitment was renewed with Makandal, a radical religious leader and freedom fighter, who in collaboration with other slaves, in 1757, poisoned 6,000 white oppressors in the colony. As a charismatic leader, Makandal inculcated a sense of

communal solidarity among the slaves in their struggle to fight colonial oppression. He also

developed an extensive cross-plantation network of resistance and mobilized the enslaved population toward cathartic violence, decolonization, independence, and abolitionism (Joseph,

2012). In this manner, the Haitian Revolution is historically and should be understood as a Makandalian revolution that predates the French Revolution of 1789.

Thirty-four years after Macandal's violent death by colonial oppressors, Dutty Boukman, his successor, would continue the same vision and talk about freedom in a comparable manner. The religion of the slaves and Makandal's preaching independence as a theological conviction strategically helped to unite Saint-Dominguan slave population against slave masters and the institution of slavery (Joseph, 2011:1-33). As his project of black liberation and decolonial imagination through cathartic violence will be carried out by another influential religious leader, Dutty Boukman, Makandal's rhetoric of reversal of slavery and the colonial system in Saint-Domingue-Haiti would foster a spirit of liberation and a spirit of resistance in the new generation of black revolutionaries who had sworn to declare their humanity and reclaim their human rights (Joseph, 2012:29-30). Boukman's clarion call for "liberty or death" was bodly announced in the night of August 22, 1791 in which he summoned the mobilized enslaved population to

> throw away the symbol of the god of the whites
> who has so often caused us to weep,
> and listen to the voice of liberty,
> which speaks in the hearts of us all. (Joseph, 2011).

Furthermore, the motto for "liberty or death" was expressed through various means of collective resistance against the unholy trinity of slavery, colonial imperialism, and white supremacy in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. For many enslaved Africans in the colony, the process of marronage was parallel with the very idea of freedom, in which they became the author of their own freedom, a practical liberty "from below." The desire for freedom was central

216

to slaves' daily experience and marronage provides that catalyst. Freedom in the sense of independence and the eradication of the institution of slavery has always been the expression of the enslaved in the colony. Slaves at Saint-Domingue manifested the aspiration for freedom in various forms of resistance to slavery including marronage, infanticide, consistent slave insurrections, religious superstition or sorcery, on -going abortions among slave women; slave committing suicide in large numbers, slave nurses poisoning newly-born babies; slaves poisoning their masters and their children, and the decimation of livestock by deliberate sabotage (Joseph, 2012:7; James, 1989:14-20). The Haitian Revolution was the most democratic revolution in the Western world. It is the roots of the declaration of human rights and the basis of universal emancipaiton in the West.

In the third commandment, Aristide reiterates the promise of the Haitian Revolution in which human rights are projected as the most sacred rights that should be defended and preserved by the community of faith and by laws. The third commandment of democracy is premised on the dignity and equality of every human person, and as Aristide has categorically declared, "Every human being is a person." For Aristide (1993:192-3), "fidelity to human rights" simply means not only the protection of those inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and American Consitution put it; the third commandment of democracy makes a clarion call to to legally guarantee those indefeasible rights so individuals could live a socially-and equally -ust, economically-free, and politically- self-governing nation-state. Fidelity to human rights is a tremendous responsibility that involves the sacrifice and collaboration of the individual, the collective, and the nation-state to ensure that human rights are always respected, maintained, and not violated. The premise of the third commandment of

democracy categorically affirms that every person has rights and duties towards one another and toward the common good, a better democratic social order, and on-going human flourishing.

The fourth commandment of democracy enunciates Aristide's social justice project and his anti-economic capitalism and globalization philosophy. The fundamental democratic right applicable to every person is the irrevocable right to eat. Developed Countries not only regulate the international market, the free trade enterprise, worldwide food distribution, and the (means of) production and resources of international workers from Developing Nations; their hegemonic control over the free trade economy incorporates access to employment, job distribution, and salaried employees transcends their own geo-political spaces. International workers and the working class become the victims of the politics of economic capitalalism and globalization. For example, "In Haiti, the victims have difficulty eating because they themselves are being eaten by the international axes of exploitation" (Aristide, 1992:193). Aristide declares elsewhere that

> We are not against trade, we are not against free trade, but our fear is that the global market intends to annihilate our market. We will be pushed to the cities, to eat food grown on factory farms in distant countries, food whose price depends on the daily number game of the first market...We are still moving from misery to poverty with dignity…The dilemma is, I believe, the classic dilemma of the poor; a choice between death and death (2000:10, 13, 16)

In other words, global suffering and global poverty have their roots in unequal distribution of wealth and a lack of (international) social justice. The existential conundrum is never about food or the lack of food for everyone. The underlying thesis of the fourth commandments maintains that "the hunger of one person is the hunger of humanity itself" (Aristide, 1993:194). The increase in food distribution and employment opportunities worldwide will warrant the promise of democratic justice and international collaboration to alleviate poverty, hunger, and human suffering in the

word. Thousands of people die daily simply because of hunger and poverty, and regulated oppressive systems and structures that hinder free access to eat and work for everyone are "causative demons and woes" to this international crisis.

Finally, Aristide's fourth commandment of democracy alludes to the biblical and theological mandate to care for the poor, the laborer, the stranger and the economically-disadvantaged. This particular commandment and commandments eight and ten have strong biblical and theological antecedents in the Judeo-Christian ethics and anthropology, and social justice project. The author of Proverbs gives a fair warning, "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him" (Proverbs 14:1). To humiliate the poor and exploit the labor and resources of those with dire material needs is to scorn God himself. To act in such an ungodly manner toward the poor and oppressed is to ignore the biblical mandate to treat all people with care, dignity, and respect. When one honors the poor, God is honored; when one mistreats the needy, the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow, God is mistreated. This verse in Proverb prioritizes the material needs of the poor, while not undermining their spiritual needs. To give preference to the poor and the needy is to have a God-entranced worldview, and to celebrate the supremacy of God in all things.

The same author of Proverbs insists, "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor" (Proverbs 22:9). From a biblical perspective, one is counted "blessed" and "happy" because he prioritizes the material needs of the poor and does not withhold his goods from him. Comparatively, the author of Leviticus draws a parallel between the poor and the stranger/immigrant, "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong" (Lev. 19:33). The idea here is to treat both the poor and the immigrant with dignity, because it is simply the will of God. The love for the immigrant and the needy is predicated upon

one's love, and affection for God: "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself… I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 19:34). One's spiritual devotion to God is displayed in one's treatment of the poor, the needy, and the stranger/immigrant among us.

The concept of caring hospitality and generous relationality, and exceptional love toward the immigrant, the needy, and the poor is rooted in God's idea of inclusive justice and God's generous lovingkindness toward all people (Joseph 2016). It is more pronounced in Deuteronomy. "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore… (Deut. 10:18-19). Finally, in chapter five, we will allude to African communal system and cosmology to establish linkages and parallels with Aristide's ninth commandment of democracy. Correspondingly, in chapter six, we will make connections between Aristide's theology of Ubuntu and his tenth commandment of democracy.

Evidently, Aristide's ten theses on democracy are connected to Black and Caribbean political theology of development and emancipation. The fundamental crisis here is how to use theology as a mechanism or tool of analysis to foster hope in the midst of despair, and to give life in the midst of social and existential death, and economic violence. One should always remember that "All thoughts about God and being human reveal the limited autobiography of the thinker and, consequently, invite discussion with other particular reflections on theological anthropology" (Hopkins, 2005:2).

5.4. TOWARD A BLACK AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

We have come to the final section of the chapter in which we will explore the value and relevance of *Ubuntu* in the process of rethinking Black theological ethics and Black theological anthropology. We shall attempt to learn from the work of three African theologians: Laurenti Magesa, John S. Mbiti, and Benezet Bujo. We believe their theological claims and insights would be both advantageous and favorable to Black diasporic theological anthropology and ethics. The aim of this comparative analysis is to highlight the importance and implications of Black theological anthropology and to articulate a model that is theologically sound and human sensitive and emancipatory. We shall investigate in their theological writings the intersection of culture, personhood, community, and Ubuntu as an African humanism. The selected African thinkers give the impression that the African perspective of humanity is more promising, liberating, and dignifying than the Western viewpoint of humanity. As will be seen in the writings of Aristide in the subsequent chapter, the theological anthropology of Magesa, Mbiti, and Bujo prizes interconnected human relations and interactional social dynamics that are based on the values and practice of *Ubuntu.* It is our hope that their work will counterpart our foregoing analysis on the subject matter.

5.4.1. LAURENTI MAGESA

We begin with this conversation with Laurenti Magesa who helpfully outlines for us the central themes of African cosmology, which also coincide with the religious sensibility and values of the African people:

> [The] African view of the universe contains the following major themes: the sacrality of life; respect for the spiritual and mystical nature of creation, and, especially, of the human person; the sense of the family, community, solidarity and participation; and an emphasis of fecundity and sharing in life, friendship, healing and hospitality. Created order other

than humanity must be approached with care and awe as well, not only because of its communion with God, but also because of its own vital forces and its mystical connection with the ancestors and other spirits. (Megesa, 1997:52-3)

African moral theology or religious ethics are community—oriented which involve primarily four entities: God, the individual, the ancestor, and the community. The ultimate objective of these moral codes is to safeguard the community and to hinder individual transgression that could jeopardize the welfare and fellowship of the community. More importantly, the preservation of life is the *raison d'etre* of these censored principles and social mores. Consequently, when someone sins or transgresses against a particular tradition, he/she acts against the will of the community, and therefore, damages communal fellowship and shalom. As Magesa has pointed out:

> In African Religion, wrongdoing relates to the contravention of specific codes of community expectations, including taboos. Individuals and the whole community must observe these forms of behavior to preserve order and assure the continuation of life and its fullness. To threaten in any way to break any of the community codes of behavior, which are in fact moral codes, endangers life; it is bad, wrong or "sinful." (Magesa, 1997:166)

While some individuals have suggested that the moral vision of the peoples of Africa is predicated upon the taboos, beliefs, and the narratives or stories the people had created, their sense of sin or transgression ultimately orients them toward the one God who sees and knows everything. In the passage below, E.A. Adegbola presents God as the ultimate source of morality, and implies that God keeps a record of human conduct, and that he is also a vigilant watcher of evildoers

> Everywhere in Africa, morality is hinged on many sanctions. The most fundamental sanction is the fact that God's all seeing eyes scan the total areas of human behavior and personal relationships. God is spoken of as having eyes all over "like a sieve" (*Al'oju-k'ara bi-ajere*). Those who do evil in the dark are constantly warned to remember that God's gaze can pierce through the darkness of human action and motive. (Adegbola, 1995:116)

Consequently, a possible aim of traditional African religion is to reconcile the transgressor with God, as well with the ancestors, the spirits, and the community. One must always remember

that "Existence-in-relation sums the pattern of the African way of life. And this encompasses within it a great deal, practically the whole universe…The African is full conscious of the wholeness and cohesiveness of the whole creation of God, within which interaction is the only way to exist" (Sidhom, 1969:102,104).

In the context of theological ethics or the moral vision of African religion, in the worlds of Laurenti Magesa (1997:46), "God stands as the ultimate guardian of the moral order of the universe for the sole, ultimate purpose of benefitting humanity. Humanity, being central in the universal order, is morally bound to sustain the work of God by which humanity itself is, in turn, sustained. Humanity is the primary and most important beneficiary of God's action." The function of ethics is thus to assess a way of life on the basis of certain guided theological, religious, and moral principles (Ibid: 29).

Because religion pervades every dimension or aspect of the African, therefore, there is no contradiction between the secular and the religious. All is executed within the boundary of the community. Magesa has contended that any system—secular and/or religion—should be able to provide a plausible response to the purpose of human existence and the meaning of life in this world. In the African world, the human experience and the purpose of human existence are integral to the life of the community.

> For any religious orientation, the most important principles that determine the system of ethics revolve around the purpose or goal of human life. Within this horizon African communities shape and direct their manner of living in terms of what is or is not acceptable to them. Human experience and responsibility are judged in light of this goal, which does not change. From the dialectic between the established goal and human responsibility to realize it existentially and experientially arise values and norms of behavior, what Africans would general call "customs," in the most morally-laden sense of the word. These customs help the community and individuals within it to keep the goal of life in sight, to strive toward it, and to have a basis with to deal their shortcomings in this endeavor. For African Religion, all principles of morality and ethics are to be sought within the context of preserving human life and its "power" or "force." (Magesa, 1997:31-2)

On one hand, Magesa posits that the transformative aspect of the Christian Gospel "makes explicit the absolute value of the individual person. Created in the image and likeness of God and imbued with divine breath, a person has value in and for him—or herself. One's value and dignity as a human person are not given by nor do they flow from one's community. They originate from God's own self….People cannot begin to grow toward the full stature of their dignity as the image of God unless it leads them to community" (Magesa, 2004:194). On the other hand, Swailem Sidhom helpfully explains that human conduct is patterned after invented social norms. There is a sense to say that like religion, human morality is a human invention or social construct:

> There is no doubt that the pattern of life within any given society is an expression of a particular view of man held by that society. The shape of political life, for instance, rests on a particular view of man. The practices of religion are as much the outcome of its doctrine of God as of its estimate of man. There is a sense in which the doctrine of God can be viewed as an expression of a certain view of man. Evidently, wherever we may turn, the question of who man is cannot be avoided. (Sidhom, 1969:113)

What is undeniably clear in Magesa's theological anthropology is his focus on the sanctity of life and the urgency placed upon us to uphold the dignity of the person within the life and context of the community. Magesa's emphasis on the imperative of the community in defining the life and well-being of the individual is shared by other African theologians, such as John S. Mbiti. (In subsequent paragraphs and chapter, we shall return to Magesa in our discussion of the South African moral system of *Ubuntu*.) Mbiti develops this central thesis about African theological ethics and theological anthropology in two important volumes: *African Religions & Philosophy*, and *Introduction to African Religion*.

5.4.2. JOHN S. MBITI

In the writings of John S. Mbiti, the critical reader may arrive at the conclusion that that the African understanding of humanity is more promising and dignified than the Western

perspective of man. The understanding of man in the African cosmology is linked to the religious sensibility of the African people and their theological viewpoint about the God-human-relationship. The African anthropology is deeply rooted in the theological premise that God created both man and woman, male and female for relationship, community, and mutuality. While Africans believe that God is Creator of everything including the universe, nonetheless, "of all that created things man is the most important and the most privileged" (Mbiti, 1991:32). The belief of the supremacy of man over everything else is by virtue that God has created him/her as the pinnacle of creation, and as Mbiti (1991:79) has cogently reasoned, man "was the perfection of God's work of creation, since nothing else better than man was created afterwards;" therefore, man is the center of the universe and the link between earth and heaven. Mbiti writes informatively about the religious universe and the place of man in it:

> Man, who lives on the earth, is the centre of the universe. He is also the priest of the universe, linking the universe with God its Creator. Man awakens the universe, he speaks to it, he listens to it, he tries to create a harmony with the universe. It is man who turns parts of the universe into sacred objects, and who uses other things for sacrifices and offerings. These are constant reminders to people that they regard it as a religious universe. (Mbiti, 1991: 36)

This passage is critical because it provides a better interpretation of African theological anthropology, and the dignity of man as God's special creation according to this tradition. The doctrine of man in African cosmology is associated with his special function or role in the universe, as so ordained by God himself.

> In the African view, the universe is both visible and invisible, unending and without limits. Since it was created by God it is subsequently dependent on him for its continuity. God is the sustainer, the keeper and upholder of the universe…As the Creator of the universe, God is outside and beyond it. At the same time, since he is also its sustainer and upholder, he is very close to it. Man, on the other hand, is at the very centre of the universe. (Mbiti, 1991: 35, 38-9)

In his groundbreaking study *Die Stellung des Meschen im Komos* (1928) translated in English as *Man's Place In Nature* (1961), German phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler employed the phrase "openness to the world" to recognize the unique place of human beings in the domain of animal life, and to encapsulate the relationship between humans and the universe, and their place in the cosmos; for Wolfhart Panenberg (1970:3), openness to the world means to expound on "the unique freedom of man to inquire and to move beyond every regulation of his existence." The philosophical implications and the theological underpinning (or motivation) of this dynamic is explained lucidly by Pannenberg in the theoretical language below:

> This relation is implicit in the awareness of the contingency, conditionedness, and transcendibility of all finite contents…This means that the relation of human exocentric existence to the infinite unconditioned is always given only through the mediation of a finite content. But it may be said conversely that every human relation to finite objects implies a relation to the infinite and therefore has in the final analysis a religious foundation and that from the transcending of all finite realities it always return to the reality given in each instance…It is also true that this infinite is always given in the context of the moment's experience of finite reality, whether it is given merely implicitly or in explicit religious thematization but then always in relation to contents derived from finite experience. The way of human beings to the (divine) reality in which they can ultimately ground their exocentric existence and thereby attain to their own identity is thus always mediated through the experience of the external world. This is especially true of the relationship with the other human beings, that is, with beings whose lives are characterized by the same question and experience. (1999:70)

Like Mbiti in his referenced passage above, Pannenberg presupposes this web of relations, which characterizes the human experience in the world, has a divine origin. Complementarily, Stanley Grenz stresses the theological significance of the openness to the world concept and the spirit of interdependence that marks the relationship of human spirit and life to God and other individuals. He deploys the idea of "infinite dependence" to make sense of this viable bond; hence, he could write the following stunning words:

> The connection between "openness to the world" and "infinite dependency is obvious. Because we have no niche in the biological framework, we simply can find no ultimate fulfillment in any one "world" or environment we create for ourselves. This human

incapability to be fulfilled by any structure of the world, in turn, drives us beyond the finitude of our experience in a never-ending quest for fulfillment. We are, therefore, dependent creatures. But our dependency is greater than the finite world can ever satisfy. (Grenz, 1994:131)

He goes on to underscore the centrality of God in human quest for meaning, joy, dignity, and satisfaction in this world of uncertainty:

Infinite dependency readily points in the direction of God as the final answer to the human quest….In short, anthropology itself suggests that our existence as humans presupposes an entity beyond the world upon whom we are dependent and toward whom we directed for ultimate fulfillment…We are designed to find our meaning and identity in relation to, and only in relation, God. (Grenz, 1994:132)

In the same manner like Mbiti and Magesa, Grenz advances the notion that God is the telos of human existence, and it is he who gives human life meaning and makes life in this world of anguish worth living. He declares that "The affirmation that God is the origin of our essential humanity means that God is the source of value for all creation. Neither other human beings nor the human community has the ultimate prerogative to determine the value of anyone or anything that God has made" (Grenz, 1994:142-3). At face value, it appears that Grenz's theocentrism undermines the value and important role of the community as God's foundational design to serve as a channel of optimism, grace, and faith in this world, as well as a tangible venue to achieve human fulfillment and foster meaning in this life. On the other hand, Grenz highlights the value of the community in making the individual more complete and sociable. He upholds the belief that it is God's design for the individual to experience life in fullness within the context of the community; the community completes the individual as God has intended it to be. In other words, to refuse to do life together within the community of faith is to reject God's plan and underlying goal for the individual and the Christian community.

God designed us to enter into relations with others—to participate in the community of God. This divine intention is that we live in harmony with creation, that we enjoy fellowship with one another, and that we participate in the divine life. Through community,

227

we in turn find our identity as children of God…As we live in love—that is, as we give expression to true community—we reflect the love which characterizes the divine essence. And as we reflect the divine essence which is love, we live in accordance with our own essential nature, with that for which God created us. In this manner, we find our true identity—that form of the "world" toward which our "openness to the world" is intended to point us. (Grenz, 1994:207, 180)

African theological anthropology is best understood in terms of being in close proximity with the universe, God, and the ancestors, leading to a better appreciation for the human life and to the community in the world; it also compels us to treat the land with gentleness and sensibility, and care for the environment in which we live. As Mbiti (1991:38) explains, "Because man thinks of himself as being at the centre, he consequently sees the universe from that perspective. It is as if the whole world exists for man's sake. Therefore African people look for the usefulness (or otherwise) for the universe to man. This means both what the world can do for man, and how man can use the world for his own good."

In our previous conversation, we have already pointed out the idea that the universe is deeply religious—from the perspective of the African people. We have also illustrated that in the African worldview, there is no division between the religious and the secular. Everything is relational and integrated. The bond between the African and the universe may be construed as a relationship of reciprocity and interdependence. Giving the religious or theological motif that undergirds his rapport to the universe, the African exploits the universe and makes use of it "in physical, mystical, and supernatural ways" (Ibid: 39). Mbiti expounds further on this dynamic:

> He sees the universe in terms of himself, and endeavor to live in harmony with it…The visible and invisible parts of the universe are at man's disposal through physical, mystical, and religious means. Man is not the master in the universe; he is only the centre, the friend, the beneficiary, the user. For that reason he has to live in harmony with the universe, obeying the laws of natural, moral and mystical order. If these are unduly disturbed, it is man who suffers most. African peoples have come to these conclusions through long experience, observation and reflection. (Ibid)

This African anthropocentric perspective on life and about man's place in the world is built upon a theocentric explanation of humanity. It is in this context, Mbiti could make this valiant declaration: "Man is at the very centre of existence, and African peoples see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. God is the explanation of man's origin and sustenance: it is as if God exists for the sake of man" (Ibid: 90). He rectifies his idea about God's providence, divine nurturing, and the mothering function of the first created individuals (Adam and Eve) in this language: "He [God] was the parent to them and they were his children. He supplied them with all the things they needed, like food, shelter and the knowledge of how to live…God supplied them with cattle, or other domestic animals, fire and implements for hunting, fishing or cultivating the land. God allowed or told them to do certain things but forbade other things" (Mbiti, 1969:79-80).

God's presence among his people is what constitutes the good and happy life in African traditional theology (Ibid: 96). African theological anthropology begins with God and ends with God; without excluding God's other creations, man is primarily the recipient of divine blessings since the African people "believe that even though individuals are born and die, human life as such as no ending since God is its Protector and Preserver" (Mbiti, 1991:44). Stanley Grenz (1997:127) supports Mbiti's conviction when he writes: "At its core the human identity problem is religious [and theological] in nature." Moreover, in African theology, the doctrine of God lies in the absolute sovereignty and lordship of God over all things and human history.

> God rules over the universe. In this aspect he has names like King, Governor, Ruler, Chief, Master, Lord, Judge and Distributor. In their prayers people acknowledge God to be the Ruler and Governor of the universe…To speak of God as the Ruler of the universe means that there is no spot which is not under his control; nothing can successfully rebel against him or run away from him. (Mbiti, 1969:46)

John Mbiti's view of God has been criticized by both Western and African thinkers. His critics have contended that he has imposed Western categories and concepts into African indigenous theology and African doctrine of God. For Mbiti, the theological categories have previously existed in the oral stories and languages of the African people before they made their way into Western theological texts.

Moreover, another equally important feature of black African anthropology is the idea that God created the community for individuals to belong and share life together. As we have observed in our previous conversation, the nature of the African community is essentially linked to the human nature as defined by God; in African theological view of humanity, it is also true that the role and destiny of the individual is within the structured life and framework of the community. As our previous conversation partners (Hopkins, Masega, and others), Mbiti admits that the life of the individual becomes meaningful and worth living within the life of the community he or she belongs. The individual exists corporately, and "owes existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group" Mbiti (1969:106). The notion of "social man" or "corporate individual" can be applied implicitly and efficiently here as the individual recognizes whose he/she is, and fulfills his or her responsibilities to the community. It is only in this manner can he or she be deemed a genuine and living being in the African outlook of the corporate person.

> Only in terms of other people does the individual becomes conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people…Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man. (Mbiti, 1969:106)

Mbiti summarizes this mysterious phenomenon in two dependent clauses: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." The concept of the "collective person" (Ibid) is also convenient here. It bears the notion of human solidarity and the responsibilities and duties due from the individual toward the community. This philosophical perspective on social anthropology is grounded on the concept of solidarity and sharing. Max Scheler provides a supportive standpoint here on the dynamic between the collective person and his role in advancing the cause of the community:

> "Collective Person" is the deepest and the most profound level of community. To a certain extent, it is the evolutionary outcome of both the life-community and society. What most distinctively characterizes the collective person is its sense of solidarity. Each member of the community is not only fully responsible for his or her actions, but is also co-responsible for the actions of others and of the community. In contrast to the life-community, each member is self-aware of him or herself as an individual, as a fully realized person. Yet, in contrast to society, the individual is caught up in a network of relations with others. The sense of solidarity in the collective person is that of an "unrepresentable" solidarity. Every member of the collective person is absolutely unique. No one can stand in for anyone else and each bears responsibility for others and for the group. (Zachary Davids, and Steinbock, Anthony Steinbock, 2014)

Scheler also posits that solidarity is a pivotal characteristic and virtue of the communal life, which the collective person must sustain for the best interest of every member of the community:

> Solidarity assumes two distinct types of responsibility: a responsibility for one's own actions and a co-responsibility for the actions of others. Co-responsibility does not compromise the autonomy of the individual. Every person is fully responsible for his or her actions… Solidarity assumes the manner in which we have shared our lives and feelings with one another in a community, but also the necessity for a person to act to end evil and injustice. The presence of evil in one's community demonstrates that every member ought to love more fully and act so that evil is not possible. At the level of the collective person, this call to responsibility is felt uniquely by each person, revealing the uniqueness of one's role in and for the community… Sharing a community with others and sharing the responsibility for the community with others is the context in which the person is formed and realized. (Zachary Davids, and Steinbock, Anthony Steinbock, 2014)

In *Things Fall Apart,* brilliant Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe chronicles the fall of the ambiguous protagonist Okonkwo, a member of the Umuofia village, who acts outside of the will

and design of the community. As a result, he has isolated himself from the fellowship and life of the community, and his life has become empty and ineffective. He even challenges what is deemed sacred and religious by his clan members; as the narrator reports:

> His life had been ruled by a great passion—to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. Then everything had been broken. He had been cast out of his clan like a fish onto a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or *chi* was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his *chi*…Okonkwo had yielded to despair and he was greatly troubled… Okonkwo's gun had exploded and a piece of iron had pierced the boy's heart. The confusion that followed was without parallel in the tradition of Umuofia. Violent deaths were frequent, but nothing like this had ever happened. (Achebe, 1994:124,131)

The religious sensibility of the community is put in perspective against the crime of Okonkwo. The violation of the moral and ethical codes of the community is accentuated in this passage in the novel:

> The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land….That night he collected his most valuable belongings into head-loads. His wives wept bitterly and their children wept with them without knowing why…And before the cock crowed Okonkwo and his family were fleeing to his motherland. (Achebe, 1994:124)

As seen in both passages above, in the African worldview, a life of solitude and isolation is not a fulfilled life. The religious and communal significance of the life of the individual to the community is stretched and desirable. It is from the vantage point of the religious tradition and the communal life we should grasp Mbiti's (1969:106) important thesis about the vital connection between the individual, the community, and God: "Just as God made the first man, as God's man, so now man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or social man. It is a deeply religious transaction." On a complementary note, theologian James H. Evans correlates God, the ancestors, the community, and the individual to emphasize the imperative of existential solidarity:

> The cultural matrix of the African tended to affirm the infinite worth of the African as a human being in relation to other human beings and under the auspices of a benevolent

creator God. The community (the no longer living, the living, and the yet to be born) was affirmed as the basic social unit and the social framework in which the individual was defined. All creation, including nature, was seen as infused with the spiritual presence of God. (1992:5)

This profound orientation toward life and human and social dynamics is best translated in the South African concept of Ubuntu.

5.5. THE VALUES AND PRACTICE OF UBUNTU

In African cosmology and *weltanschauung*, the idea of human community and the essence of being human is expressed in the African concept of Ubuntu. It is closely translated as "A person is a person through other persons." In South Africa, when the concept refers to human beings, the word *abandu/batho* is used; when the reference pertains to the way of life, human values, norms, and traditions, *Isi-ntu/sitsu* is used. As a linguistic tem, *Ntu* is used in a number of words such as *Unbuntu*, (PI) *Aba-ntu*, *iSi-ntu, Ubun-tu.* It is equated with the ancient Egyptian word for primordial substance. Africans peoples, however, developed variants of nu-and gave it the following forms: *du, nbo, -ni ntfu-, -ntu, -nu, -mwu, -so, -tho, -thu, and –tu, e.g. Swazi muntfu; Sotho: motho; Xhosa umntu; Zulu umuntu. Xitsonga vhuthu*. Generally, the concept of Ubuntu bears a positive connotation or value; however, some critics (Magadla & Chitando, 2014:12) have associated it with the patriarchal system in African society that it is responsible for the sustenance of the "deep-seated patriarchy throughout sub-Saharan Africa and its indifference to the insensivity to gender justice."

In his book, *God is not a Christian*, South African theologian Desmond Tutu (2011: 23) provides a succinct but critical reflection on the nature of *Ubuntu.* He writes, "We need other human beings for us to learn how to be human, for none of us comes fully formed into the world. We would not know how to talk, to walk, to think, to eat as human beings unless we learned how

to do these things from other human being is a contradiction in terms." He informs us that the individual needs other human beings in order to be fully human, and to grow both socially and spiritually:

> The completely self-sufficient human being is subhuman. I can be me only if you are fully you. I am because we are, for we are made for togetherness, for family. We are made for complementarity. We are created for a delicate network of relationships, of independence with our fellow human beings, with the rest of creation… To be human is to be dependent. (Tutu, 2011: 23)

Tutu goes forward to link theology and anthropology in light of the teachings and symbolic meanings of Ubuntu. For him, the principles and virtues of Ubuntu have deep roots in religion and theology. Hence, *Ubuntu* is a virtue someone has or possesses in the same manner someone can love and be moved by compassion or *Ubuntu*.

> Ubuntu speaks of spiritual attributes such as generosity, hospitality, compassion, caring, sharing…Ubuntu teaches us that our worth is intrinsic to who we are. We matter because we are made in the image of God. Ubuntu reminds us that we belong in one family—God's family, the human family. In our African worldview, the greatest good is communal harmony. Anything that subverts or undermines this greatest good is ipso facto wrong, evil. Anger and a desire for revenge are subversive of this good thing. (Tutu, 2011: 22, 24)

He explains further of the place of Ubuntu in traditional African society, and interprets Ubuntu as an ethical system or philosophical worldview that has shaped social interaction, and communal dynamics in the African world:

> Ubuntu was coveted more than anything else—more than wealth as measure in cattle and the extent of one's hand. Without this quality a prosperous man, even thought he might have been a chief, was regarded as someone deserving of pity and even contempt. It was seen as what ultimately distinguished people from animals—the quality of being human and so also humane. Those who had Ubuntu were compassionate and gentle, they used their strength on behalf of the weak, and they did not take advantage of others—in short, they cared, treating others as what they were: human beings. (Tutu, 2011: 22-3)

Renowned American ethicist and public theologian Reinhold Neibuhr in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* delineated some human values parallel to the desirable virtues

234

of Ubuntu. He posits that the individual is bound to the community and that it is the prize of freedom and mutual accountability that glues the individual to the community. He sees freedom as that which links the community and the individual, and interprets freedom as an essential virtue that sustains the existence of both the community and the individual.

> Actually the community requires freedom as much as the individual; and the individual requires order as much as does the community. Both the individual and the community require freedom so that neither communal nor historical restraints may prematurely arrest the potencies which inhere in man's essential freedom and which express themselves collectively as well as individually. It is true that individuals are usually the initiators of new insights and the proponents of novel methods. Yet there are collective forces at work in society which are not the conscious contrivance of individuals. (Niebuhr, 1944:4)

By contrast, in the African thought, the freedom of the individual is not prized or proclaimed; rather, if the community is free, it categorically and naturally transmits in the experience of the individual. The founder of the Negritude movement and poet Leopold Sedar Senghor complements our claim by underscoring the liaison of mutuality and reciprocity between the individual and the community, and the shared solidarity between these two entities. In Black African world, he observes:

> Negro-African society puts more stress on the group than on the individual, more on Solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. Ours is a community society. This does not mean that it ignores solidarity, but the latter bases this solidarity on the activities of individuals, whereas the community society bases it on the general of the group. (Qtd in Masolo, 2010: 231)

In the same line of argument, Kenyan Philosopher D. A. Masolo (2010: 231-2) infers that "Senghor attributes the African communitarian tendency to a way of life that is rooted in the individual's experience of the world: it is the way a person feels and thins in union not only with all other people around him but indeed with all other beings in the universe: God, animal, tree, or pebble." The obligations of the individual to the community are designed to enrich the life of the

individual as a collective person whose life is dynamically converged and confluence to the communal life.

> The order of a community is, on the other hand, a boon to the individual as well as to the community. The individual cannot be a true self in isolation. Nor can he live within the confines of the community which "nature" establishes in the minimal cohesion of family and herd. His freedom transcends these limits of nature, and therefore makes larger and large social units both possible and necessary. It is precisely because of the essential freedom of man that he requires a contrived order in his community. (Niebuhr, 1944: 4)

To reiterate our perspective, the non-African theologian and ethicist Niebuhr avows that the individual's life is meaningless apart from the community:

> The individual is related to the community (in its various levels and extensions) in such a way that the highest reaches of his individuality are dependent upon the social substance out of which they arise and they must find their end and fulfillment in the community. No simple limit can be placed upon the degree of intimacy to the community, and the breadth and extent of community which the individual requires for his life. (Niebuhr, 1944: 48)

In the previous analysis above, we inferred that the idea of community is the foundational concept in African anthropological ethics, in Western worldview, the individual is favored. In the African concept, the community constitutes four entities: God, the ancestors, the community, and the individual. The community includes both the visible (the living) and invisible members—the deceased ancestors. African American Theologian James H. Evans construes this African dynamic in the light of the Biblical notion of corporate identity and existence:

> This emphasis on the group's role in the formation of the individual is a radical departure from the individualism that has marked European-American theological anthropology since the time of Augustine. However, it should be noted that the corporate understanding of the human person in African traditional thought is very similar to the understanding of the human person in the Hebrew writings of the Bible and may shed some light on why enslaved Africans found the biblical writings both familiar and compelling. (1992:102)

The corporate unity defines the essence of humanity both in the African and biblical world. What does it mean to be human in the African worldview? According to African theologian Benezet Bujo (2001:3-4), "To be human always means sharing life with others in such a way, as

Ratzinger puts it, 'the past and the future of humanity are also present in every human being.'" The emphasis is always on the relationship of the individual to the community or the interconnectedness between the community and the person. Consequently, the demise of the individual is contingent to his/her rapport to the community.

5.5.1. THE QUESTION OF "BEING": THE PERSON IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

The African thinking on the person or the concept of personhood counters the Western traditional thinking on the notion of being. African Theologian Benezet Bujo (2001:88) explains clearly that "The person is not defined as an ontological act by means of self-realization, but by means of 'relations.' This means that the human person in Africa is from the very beginning in a network of relationships that constitutes his inalienable dignity." In Black African anthropology, individualism is not favored above the community nor is it that which delimits the telos of file. That does not mean, however, the individual or personal subjectivity is absorbed into the community. Nonetheless, as Bujo (2001: 90, 93) points out, "Life in the community demands alertness and the maintenance of one's own individuality…The individual can enrich in the community only when he is made a person by its individual members, so that he is in his turn can share in the process by which others become persons. No one is dispensable in this process; the individuals are not exchangeable." It is also from this angle Magesa (2004:182) could write firmly, the "African worldview is that life, relationships, participation and community are holistic realities, blending the spiritual and the material organically." Accordingly, in the African worldview and religious cosmology, the community plays a substantive role in the life of the individual person. Magesa goes forth to underscore the rewards in living and acting as a corporate person:

Apart from their community, African people are not fully persons. A person's personality and individuality are guaranteed only insofar as the individual is integrated into the community on the other hand, and the community serves and strengthens the individual on the other. So, the individual does everything in view of assuring the whole community's health and survival. Individuals may not be conscious of this as they work for their family, discipline it, and make sure no taboos are broken; or when they refrain from emotions that might disturb the community… The imperative of building relationships and community is instilled in the individual from birth to death. (2004:193)

From a theological standpoint, Magesa (2004: 194) sustains that the Christian Gospel "makes explicit the absolute value of the individual person. Created in the image and likeness of God and imbued with divine breath, a person has value in and for him—or herself. One's value and dignity as a human person are not given by nor do they flow from one's community. They originate from God's own self….People cannot begin to grow toward the full stature of their dignity as the image of God unless it leads them to community." The essence of human's being derives directly from God so he can have fellowship or communion with him. God himself is the ground of all that exists. Consequently, "from the point of creation, in the very act of creation, the seal of the Maker, the seal of God's self-disclosure, has been stamped all over the face of the created order" (Idowu, 1974:54). Based on an exegetical reading of Genesis 1:26 and 2:7, many Christians make the claim that God has equipped man and woman with intelligence, will, reason, a sense of purpose, and a sense of community. This divine presence in people makes them addressable, responsible, and accountable to God. African theologian E. Bolaji Idowu clarifies the implication of the divine revelation in these words:

The significant point here is that revelation presupposes personal communication between the living Being who reveals and the living person to whom revelation is made. It would appear that man is a necessity in this situation; for, without a personal mind to appreciate and apprehend revelation, the whole process would be futile. (Idowu, 1974:55)

In his brilliant work, *Self and Community in a Change World*, Masolo puts forth the sharp contrast between being a person and being human in African philosophical thought. He also

elaborates on the interconnecting process by which a human achieves personhood. In other words, in African thought, a human being is not naturally born a person; one becomes a person after undergoing a series of community--established obligations and rituals. The idea of a person is social construct as it in Western postmodernist definition of gender and sexuality. The theory of dependence and interdependence probably best describes African communitarian philosophical ethics. In the paragraph below, Masolo offers rational illumination on this conceptual phenomenon.

> Being a person and being a human being are not the same thing. We are human beings by virtue of the particular biological organism that we are. Our biological type defines us as a species among other living things, and it involves, among other things, having the kind of bring that we possess and all the activities that this kind of brain is naturally endowed to perform…This process of depending on others for the tools that enable us to associate with them on a growing scale of competence is the process that makes us into persons. In other words, we become persons through acquiring and participating in the socially generated knowledge of norms and actions that we learn to live by in order to impose humaneness upon our humanness. (2010:154-5)

According to this view, "Being' is a related category in the sense we recognize that the biological constitution of humans as a necessary but not sufficient basis of personhood, because human beings require gradual sociogenic development to become persons. This relational condition circumstantiates not only the physical existence of things and our development into persons but also our cognitive and moral experience of the world" (Masolo, 2010:156). Immanuel Kant had also demonstrated through reasonable philosophical arguments that the idea of the person is the ultimate question in anthropology and that which underscores and leads to other questions and relations; by contrast, in African anthropology, as previously observed, the community is the starting point and underlies everything the person is and does (Masolo, 2010:135). The person is the product of the community. In his famous article, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," Nigerian Philosopher Ifeanyi A. Menkiti has brilliantly discussed the

239

(processual) nature of being or personhood in the African worldview; as he has summed up the

logic of this communal ritual in this passage:

> The fact that persons become persons only after a process of incorporation. Without incorporation into this or that community, individuals are considered to be mere dangers to whom the description "person" does not fully apply. For personhood is something which has to be achieved, and is not given simply because of human seed…As far as African societies are concerned, personhood is something at which individuals could fail, at which they could be competent or ineffective, better or worse. Hence, the African emphasized the rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules by which the community lives, so that what was initially biologically given can come to attain social self-hood, i.e., become a person with all the inbuilt excellencies implied by the term. (Menketi, 1979:172-3)

Consequently, it is apparent that "Human beings are not only individuals belong to the

same specifies; they also belong to specific and various groups within which they are born and

act" (Todorov, 1993:385). The value and virtues of Ubuntu is communicated through the African

system of community.

5.5.2. CONNECTIONS WITH ARISTIDE

As a philosophy of African humanism, Aristide explores the triumph of the spirit of Ubuntu

in universal civilization, and the demands of *Ubuntu* upon us to foster a life of peace,

interdependence, and reciprocity towards the preservation of the community. Ubuntu as African

humanism provides robust optimistic values and promising ideals to individuals partaking in the

harshness and desolation of the modern life:

> Whoever is empowered by the spirit of *Ubuntu*, Black or White, African or foreigner embraces the vision of social inclusion and of a non-racial society. There is no doubt that Ubuntu has its reciprocal concept in other languages. However, a groups that advocate social exclusion and a racial society echo the language of the colonists, regardless of whether this is conscious nor not. (Aristide, 2006:228)

Toward its humanistic orientation, the spirit of Ubuntu tries to rehabilitate the collective

self and reinvent the SELF (EGO) and the SUPER EGO that have been victimized and disrupted

by the colonial Super Ego. As inferred in earlier analysis, the ideals of Ubuntu are the antithesis of human oppression and colonization. To heighten the paramount importance of the Aristidian proposition of the triumph of human solidarity and selflessness in the philosophy of Ubuntu, we turn our attention to a critical passage in his dissertation that summarizes the thrust and gist of Ubuntu.

> Good neighbors live in harmony and are ready to come to the assistance of one another. Despite the caricature of violence so often used against Black people, African and African descendants are essentially peace lovers animated by the shared principle of Ubuntu, the seed for the globalization of solidarity. Impoverished by the globalization of the economy, they shall overcome through the globalization of solidarity. Hence economic growth rooted in human growth. Contrary to the colonial system that secretes a classist neurosis *Ubuntu* inspires concrete expressions of solidarity among literate and illiterate people…These concrete expressions of solidarity clearly justify the claim that Ubuntu generates a social self, or a social love rooted in brotherhood. (Aristide, 2006:251-2)

. Ubuntu builds bridges of solidarity and not walls of separation. This particular attitude toward life and people can be construed as a unifying force that helps individuals to cope with and even dispels human anxiety, isolation, and hostility. In Aristide's (2006: 258) thinking, Ubuntu "is the unifying features that generates a social 'self' or a love story rooted in brotherhood… The psychology of Ubuntu demonstrates how the concept stands in opposition to the principles of colonialism." Ubuntu provides the empowerment and resources to both Africans and descendants of Africans to create a community of love rooted in African humanistic values and religious traditions. In chapter six, we will elaborate further on Aristide's application of the concept of Ubuntu in his articulation of a robust theological anthropology and constructive theological ethics.

5.6. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

To bring this analysis on Africana theological anthropology and ethics to conclusion, we wish to highlight a few more insights from Benitez Bujo originated from his influential work,

Foundations of an African Ethic. Secondly, we will close with a brief comparative reflection on Cone, Hopkins, Pinn, Marega, and Mbiti. As a way of recapitulation, we turn to Bujo's summarized ideas about Black African theological ethics and anthropology.

First, he accentuates the value of the community to the individual and their relationship with God:

> It must be recalled that African ethics does not define the person as a process as coming into existence in the reciprocal relatedness of individual and community where the latter included not only the deceased but also God. This means that the individual becomes a person only through active participation in the life of the community. It is not a membership in a community as such that constitutes the identity: only common action makes the human person a human person and keeps him from becoming an "unfettered ego." (Bujo, 2001:87)

Secondly, he emphasizes the importance for the members of the community to work in solidarity for the preservation of communal life and integrity, as life in the context of the community is foundational in African ethics.

> The main goal of African ethics is fundamentally lie itself. The community must guarantee the promotion and protection of life by specifying or ordaining ethics and morality…The life which issues from God becomes a task for all human beings to accomplish: they must ensure that this initial gift of life reaches full maturity, and this is possible only when people act in solidarity. Each member must be conscious that his actions contribute either to the growth in life of the entire community or to the loss or reduction of its life, depending on whether they are good or evil. Each one who commits himself to act in solidarity for the construction of the community allows himself to be brought to completion by this same community, so that he can truly become a person. (Bujo, 2001:88)

Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye strengthens the preceding passage about the communitarian nature of African societies when he proclaims forthrightly:

> A harmonious cooperative social life requires that individuals demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and interest of others, if that society is to be a moral society. The reason is that the plight or distress of some individuals in the society is likely to affect others in some substantial ways. If social arrangement is to maximize the good for all, then that arrangement will have to include rules the pursuit of which will conduce to the attainment of communal welfare. In this connection, such moral virtues as love, mercy, and compassion will have to be regarded as intrinsic to satisfactory moral practice in the communitarian society. (Gyekye, 1997:72)

242

As previously noted in our analysis, the African communitarian society is linked to its religious ethos. This view on theological anthropology is accentuated in the writings of Hopkins, Magesa, Mbiti, and Bujo; by contrast, it is absent in the thought of Cone and Pinn. Hopkins is more Afrocentric in his theological method and imagination than both Cone and Pinn. Similarly, Hopkins, Magesa, Mbiti, and Bujo have demonstrated "the dynamic and interdependent relationship between the individual and the community" (Hopkins, 1993:95); whereas, both Cone and Pinn do not sustain this positional claim. In *Shoes that Fit our Feet*, Hopkins himself avows:

> African religions gave rise to a dynamic interplay between community and individual. Whatever happened to the communal gathering affected the individual; whatever happened to the individual had an impact on the community. Such a theological view of humanity cuts across bourgeois notions of white Christianity's individualism and "me-first-ism." It sees to forge a group solidarity and identity, beginning with God, proceeding through the ancestors to the community and immediate family and continuing even to the unborn. One cannot be a human being unless one becomes a part of, feels a responsibility to, and serves the community. To preserve the community's well-being (through liberation) in African religions is to preserve the individual's well-being (through salvation). Thus salvation and liberation become a holistic individual-collective and personal-systemic ultimate concern. (Hopkins, 1993:95-6)

Hopkins presents the Spirit of Liberation as the remedy to unhealthy Western Christianity and Western theology. Hopkins draws a tremendous contrast between "bourgeois" Christianity, which is arrogant and not salvific, and African religious dynamism, which is communal and cathartic. It is also this same Spirit of Liberation who empowers the oppressed community to effectual shalom and freedom.

Cone conflates personhood and humanhood, which contradicts the African concept of personhood and humanhood. Bujo, Magesa, Mbiti, and others differentiated both entities. As to their engagement with *Ubuntu*, this concept is not prevalent in the writings of Cone, Pinn, Townes, etc., but it is an important theological feature in the writings of Mbiti, Magesa, and Tutu. What remains true about the philosophy of Ubuntu is its theological foundation that it is God's desire

and ultimate goal to establish relational community with human beings whom he had created for the sake of human flourishing. In his fascinating text, *Theology for the Community of God*, theologian Stanley J. Grenz makes an insightful observation about the theological understanding of humanity in relationship with God the Creator:

> Christian anthropology is an extension of the doctrine of God. In our doctrine of humanity we speak about human beings as creatures of God. We may encapsulate our human identity as God's creatures in three postulates: We are the good creation of God, we are marred through our fall into sin, but we are the object of God's redemptive activity…God created us with great value, for he designed us for community. And he desires we reflect his own image. (Grenz, 1994:125)

Complementarily, ethicist, David Tracy asserts that the telos of the individual or human being is the search of a "common good, a common interest in emancipatory reason and a common commitment to the ideal of authentic conversation within a commonly affirmed pluralism and a commonly experienced conflictual situation" (Qtd in Hopkins, 2005:17). From an Augustinian framework, in his reflection on the doctrine of God, Paul Tillich accentuates relational love as the underlying virtue that defines God, and man to man relationship—an important theme in Aristides's theological anthropology to be explored in the subsequent chapter. As Tillich has remarked:

> We are, we know that we are, and we love this our being and knowing. This means we are self-related and self-affirming. We affirm ourselves in knowledge and in will. On the other hand, love and knowledge transcend ourselves and go to the other beings. Love participates in the eternal; this is its own eternity. The soul has transtemporal dimensions. This participation is not what is usually called immortality, but it is the participation in the divine life, in the divine loving ground of being. (1968:121)

In the next chapter, we will consider Jean-Bertrand Aristide's theological anthropology as a theology of love conceived as relationality and interdependence; we will also study his theological ethics within the moral framework and ethical vision of the South African concept of Ubuntu.

CHAPTER SIX

UBUNTU AS A HUMANISM OF LOVE AND INTERDEPENDENCE: ARISTIDE'S THEOLOGY OF LOVE AND RELATIONALITY

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the comparative analysis on Africana critical theological anthropology and ethics executed in the previous two chapters, the objective of this present chapter is to focus on the theological anthropology and theological ethics of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. It suggests that Aristide's theological anthropology should be construed as a theology of love and relationality; it also proposes that his theological ethics is shaped by radical humanist-secular tradition and his creative interpretation of *Ubuntu* as a humanism of love and interconnectedness. This chapter should also be understood as a continuity of our previous chapter—with a special devotion to the intellectual works of Aristide. This chapter will also underscore ideological, intellectual, and theological parallelisms, connections, and linkages in the writings of Aristide and his interlocutors—both directly and indirectly—whose works we introduced in the preceding analysis in the two chapters.

Particular attention is giving to the exegetical analysis of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's doctoral dissertation, "Umoya Wamagama" (The Spirit of the Words), which he defended at the University of South Africa, in 2006. Aristide's doctoral dissertation is a brilliant polemical work that denounces the colonial system and unveils its vicious anthropology and ethics buttressed by the colonial Christian mission. The colonial order promoted a pseudo-humanitarian and Christian-inspired ethical system that rejected the full humanity of enslaved Africans and the colonized. The colonial order also promulgated a destructive anthropology that disvalued black lives and the lives

of the colonial subjects. Correspondingly, as an extension to our previous analysis in the preceding chapter, this chapter is equally concerned with the institution of slavery which dehumanized the enslaved African population and challenged their dignity. Not only slavery and colonialism brought about alienation and hostility, they contributed substantially to the triumph of whiteness and the success of racial violence against the victims. The greatest failure of both systems, according to Aristide, lies in the absence of Ubuntu and relational love from slave masters to the enslaved, from the colonized to the colonizer.

Consequently, the goal of Aristide's anticolonial and anti-imperial work (his dissertation) was to deconstruct colonial anthropology and reconstruct a robust, consistent, and practical theological anthropology and ethics premised on the metaphor of "God is love," an overpowering movement and relational phenomenon, and the principles of Ubuntu. Toward this goal, this present chapter articulates a threefold argument as follows: (1) Aristide's theological anthropology and ethics are grounded in three theoretical models: interactionality, interconnectedness, and radical dependence and interdependence; (2) Aristide's moral theology (theological ethics) is predicated upon the ethical virtues and practices of the African humanism of Ubuntu; and (3) finally, Aristide's theological anthropology is also sourced in the doctrine of God's love, as well as the African concept of the person and the community—an important topic we explored in the former chapter.

The chapter is divided in five parts: (1) Divine Encounter, (2) love as justice or the justice of love, (3) Aristide's relational anthropology, (4) theological anthropology and the spirit of Ubuntu, and (5) the spirit of Ubuntu, and the optimism of black religion and the reconstruction of black humanity.

246

6.2. DIVINE ENCOUNTER: THE SOUL OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF HUMANITY

Love is the most beautiful virtue that describes the life, actions, and experience of the Triune and Eternal God. The divine essence is naturally love. The commitment to love defines all that God does. To make sense of Aristide's theological anthropology, it would be profitable for us to study his doctrine of God. He establishes an intersecting connection between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of humanity is consistent in Aristide's theological discourse. Aristide's underlying thesis predicates on a theology of love that characterizes the being and nature of God. As he puts forth, "From the various names given to God—in the Tanakh, through the Tetragrammaton—the name of God emerges as Love. God is Love, 1 Jn 4, 8. This love encompasses not just a world, but a semantic field, a theology of love" (Aristide, 2006:347-8). He correlates divine love with divine power, and defines Ubuntu as relational and interactive love: "God is love. And this love gives great power. Where there is love, there is also Respect, Tolerance, and Comprehension" (Ibid: 345). To think about God is to submerge oneself in the beauty and aesthetic of God's love. It is this love in its horizontal aspect that urges the community of faith to compromise, respect and embrace one another.

In his book, *Nevrose vetero-testamentaire*, Aristide (1994:91) concurs that God's most excellent and governing attribute is love. This divine virtue is that which premises all of God's actions and interaction with God's creation. Because God is love, God's reign is branded by sovereign love. Because Love of God and neighbor form an indivisible unit, the anthropological field becomes the privileged place where this law of Love is rooted. To substantiate this claim, Aristide cites three important biblical passages:

> "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."
> (Leviticus 19:18)

"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
(Matthew 22:39)

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'
(Matthew 25:35-40)

Generally, these texts promote a theology of love stemmed from a deep theocentric (the 1st passage) and Christological (the 2nd and 3rd passages) vision for humanity, and God's profound concern to care and provide for the hungry, the stranger, the immigrant, the naked, etc. They also make an urgent case for all of us to be concerned with the welfare and interest of our neighbor and those living on the underside of modernity. These noted texts do not presuppose a social gospel theology as a plan of the "Christian Church;" instead, they predicate upon the idea that biblical and genuine theology that is grounded on the divine love and providence must interrupt transformatively the social life and experience of individuals with concrete and practical "social and material needs." Loving God and one's neighbor is fundamentally a revolutionary attitude toward life itself. Loving God also entails a radically caring act toward one's neighbor, as well as a relational approach toward the weakest individuals among us and in the community of faith.

Since God's unsettling love pervades both realms: the divine and the human, Aristide (1993:48) could project that there should not be a divide between human history and divine history. To put it another way, there are not two histories: the sacred and the profane. "I am more convinced than ever there is only one history: that of human beings, that which helps us to explain the struggle for humanity." The previous chapter argued that distinction is not necessary in the African cosmology and anthropological worldview, as for Africans, "it is impossible to define the human

person in purely secular or purely religious terms, since he/she is both at once. Where one of these two dimensions is lacking, one can no longer speak of the human person qua human person; and this means that one cannot speak of 'autonomy' and 'theonomy' in the Western sense. The human person can become fully a human person only by combining the secular and the religious in his/her thinking, and behaving accordingly" (Bujo, 2001:95, 102-3). Black African anthropology does not divorce the sacred and the profane, or the earthly (secular) and the religious (sacred). Yet, Aristide would argue it is the phenomenon of divine love that gears human history toward its telos, and God's ultimate destination. This love is supreme and all-encompassing. David Bentley Hart expounds on this divine quality with a remarkable linguistic aesthetic and precision when he writes stunningly:

> When Scripture says God is love, after all, this is certainly not some vague sentiment concerning the presence of God in our emotions, but describes the life of God, the dynamism of his substance, the distance and the dance; the unity of coherence, but also the interval of appraisal, address, recognition, and pleasure. And if the descent of the dove at Christ's baptism reveals that every act of God, it reveals also that God's love is always entirely sufficient in itself: as the third, who receives and returns the love of Father and Son, and so witnesses, enjoys, and perfects it, the Spirit is also the one in whom that love most manifestly opens out as sheer delight, generosity, and desire for the other (Hart, 2003:175).

God also relates to humanity in love; without this concept, on can't fully grasp Aristide's theological anthropology or political theology. In his work, *Théologie et politique,* which is a short treatise on political theology, Aristide establishes the proximity between God and man, theology and anthropology in a way to articulate the divine reality in humanity and God's interpenetration in the soul of man. This rapport is significant because it invites us to think more profoundly about Aristide's theological method in theological discourse.

> *Le divin n'existe pas en dehors de l'humain. Le « divin » doit être, simplement, interprète dans le sens de l'existence de Dieu et l' »humain » dans la perspective de la vie de l'homme. Chacun avec ses propres attributs. Je ne parlerai pas seulement d'un Dieu qui a créé l'homme. Je dirais aussi que Dieu, certes, crée l'homme à son image (Genèse 1,27) et il n'y*

aurait pas de contradiction à dire également que l'homme a créé Dieu a son image. (Aristide, 1992:16)

[The Divine does not exist outside of the human being. To put it simply, the "divine" must interpreted in the sense of the existence of God and the existence of man [woman] in the perspective of human life. Each entity possesses his distinctive attributes. I will not speak only of a God who created man [woman]. I would also state that God certainly created man in His image (Genesis 1:27), and there would be no contradiction to say also that man [woman] created God in his [her] image.]

In Aristide's theological anthropology, it seems that it is inconceivable for God to exist outside of the human whom he has created. In the same line of thought, God's work in the world is always done in partnership with human beings. Reciprocally, the life of man is meaningless lest it is grounded in the life of God. Is it possible to conceive the life of the divine apart from the life of man? Aristide does not hold this position, as he clearly affirms "I will not speak only of a God who created man. I would also say that God certainly created man in His image (Genesis 1:27) and there would be no contradiction to say also that man created God in his image" (See the French original above). God is not a human being, as each individually possesses distinctive attributes. God is aseity; man is created by God, according to his image and likeness. God is spirit, man is material. Nonetheless, "The God who is spirit is also love. God's essence is spirit—God's character is love... God is love refers to the inner life of God" (Pinnock, 1996:29-30). Complementarily, Aristide could remark:

> *L'humain perçu dans ses attributs révèle des valeurs, telles que la justice, l'amour et la liberté. Dans la mesure où ces valeurs sont divines, de l'humain surgit le divin, de l'homme surgit Dieu. L'homme aurait créé Dieu à son image. ..Telles sont les valeurs qui nous permettent de situer l'homme à partir d'une vision anthropologique pour mieux le comprendre, et la compréhension de cet être nous empêche de nous enfermer dans ce qu'on appellerait les limites humaines sans en même temps transcender les deux mondes, à la fois humain et divin. C'est à partir de ces valeurs que nous parlons de théologie en faisant référence à Dieu…L'une n'exclut pas l'autre; l'une complète l'autre en tant que concept.* (Aristide, 1992:16)

[The human, perceived in his attributes, reveals certain values such as justice, love and freedom. To the extent that these values are divine, the human emerges from the divine, and God emerges from humanity. That man [woman] would would have created God in his [her] image. These are the values that allow us to locate the man [woman] from an anthropological vision for better understanding, and understanding this prevents us from being shut ourselves in what we would call human limits without simultaneously transcend both worlds, both human and divine. It is from these values that we could talk about theology in reference to God ... One does not exclude the other; one complements the other as a concept.]

According to Aristide, God's most loving act was the creation of both man and woman, male and female in his image in order that they will represent his reality in the world. In the previous chapter, both Dwight Hopkins and James Cone associated the "image of God" with freedom and self-agency. While the implications of the image of God do in fact entail the idea of human freedom and self-agency, this rendering may not be so in the cultural and textual context of the phrase. The theological meaning of the "image of God" is polyvalent, and there is no consensus among theologians and biblical scholars. Let us summarize below some of the underlying meanings of the expression image of God.

1) "The capacity of personal agency is part of what it means to be made in the imago Dei. God has created humans to be able to act freely in a way analogous to God's freedom, but since humans are created, and sinful creatures to boot, human freedom is conditioned by contingent, finite and spiritual factors that limit but do not annul it" (Johnson, 2007:274).
2) "The divine image refers to the mental and spiritual qualities that man shares with his creator.
3) The image consists of a physical resemblance.
4) The divine image makes man God's representative on earth.
5) The image is a capacity to relate to God" (Gentry, 2008:23-4; Brueggemann,1997: 451-454)

Old Testament scholar Peter J. Gentry rejects the traditional meaning (# 2) which most Christians embrace and all the above definitions because they are not culturally sensitive to the way the concept *Image of God* was understood and used by the Israelites and in the ancient Near Eastern cultural and linguistic setting. He also adds that "the traditional view is not the result of

251

grammatical and historical interpretation of the text. Rather, it is based largely on a kind of reasoning from systematic theology" (Gentry, 2008: 24). Gentry understands the image of God as the divine order given to Adam to represent God in the world and to make his reality known among God's creation. He suggests that interpretation according to the Ancient Near Eastern background,

> commonly associated with the image is the notion of conquest and power…the image of God would have communicated two main ideas: 91) rulership and (2) sonship. In the ancient Near East, since the king is the living statue of the god, he represents the god on earth. He makes the power of the god a present reality. The king is the image of god because he has a relationship to the deity as the son of god and a relationship to the world as ruler for the god. We ought to assume that the meaning in the Bible is identical or at least similar, unless the Biblical text clearly distinguishes its meaning from the surrounding culture. (Gentry, 2008:27)

> On the contrary, Walter Brueggemann (1997: 452) has put forth the thesis: "The notion of humanity in 'the image of God' plays no primary role in the Old Testament articulations of humanity; it does not constitute a major theological datum for Israel's reflection on the topic." G. K. Beale's interpretation is parallel to that of Gentry. He proposes a functional aspect of the image of God which enables

> Adam to carry out the particular parts of the commission. God's creation of Adam in his image as the crown of creation is probably to be seen as the content of the "blessing" at the beginning of verse 28. The "ruling" and "subduing" "over the earth" expresses Adam's kingship and is plausibly part of a functional definition of the divine image in which Adam was made. This functional aspect is likely the focus of what it means that Adam and Eve were created in God's image…When ancient Near Eastern kings were conceived to be images of a god, the idea of the god's subduing and ruling through him are in mind, and this appears to be the best background against which to understand Adam as a king and in the image of God in Gen. 1:26-28. (Beale, 2011:30-1)

In the same manner, John H. Walton in his magnificent study, *The Lost Word of Genesis One*, has not only defined the functional aspect of all God's creation, he has also attributed the performative element of the expression "the image of God" relating to Adam. He offers this supportive analysis of the passage as in follows:

252

The difference when we get to the creation of people is that even as they function to populate the world (like fish, birds and animals), they also have a function relative to the rest of God's creatures, to subdue and rule. Not only that, but they have a function relative to God as they are in his image. They also have a function relative to each other as they are designated male and female. All of these show the functional orientation with no reference to the material at all…Among all of the functional elements referred to in Genesis 1:26-30, the image of God is the most important and is the focus of this section. All of the rest of creation functions in relationship to humankind, and humankind serves the rest of creation as God's vice regent. Among the many things that the image of God may signify and imply, one of them, and probably the main one, is that people are delegated a godlike role (function) in the world where he places them. (Walton, 2013:68)

What makes the human special and distinctive among God's other creations is God's decisive action to impute his life in the soul of man (Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."), that is, some of God's communicative and shared attributes—such as dominion, rulership, management, wisdom, justice, love, freedom, etc., these human qualities are important to rule and have dominion, as well as to represent God in the world.—are incorporated in his life in order that he may functionally represent God in the world and carry out the divine commission to (1) "be fruitful and multiply," (2) "fill the earth," (3) "subdue it," and to (4) "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). As Aristide writes, "To the extent that these values are divine, the human emerges the divine, the man appeared God" (see the French original above).These "divine values" have become the very catalyst for us to construct an effective anthropological vision that is sourced in creation theology and contingent upon the doctrine of God. It is in this sense Aristide could project that the discourse of theological anthropology is best understood when it is conceived from the perspective of God.

On one hand, the doctrine of God establishes the limits and contours of theological inquiry and anthropology; on the other hand, the doctrine of God facilitates open theological discussion

and imagination so as to bring in proximity our thinking about God and our thinking about man. This important encounter engages simultaneously both the human sphere and the divine sphere. The former does not exclude the latter; rather as relational concepts, they complement each other. This particular Aristidian theological worldview about the dynamics between theology and anthropology, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man, is also complicated in Aristide's political theology—which we will examine more closely in the final chapter. We should also accentuate that "God is not an isolated individual but a loving, interpersonal communion, to which we owe our very existence" (Pinnock, 1996: 29).

God meets man in the phenomenon we call life. In his book, *Eyes of the Heart,* Aristide connects his theological understanding of God and God's revelation with the existential reality of individuals in their daily experience; it is where the transcendence meets the immanence. He begins by posing a puzzling question about who God is and how he relates to the world:

> What do we mean when we say God? We mean the source of love; we mean the source of justice. We mean woman and man, black and white, child and adult, spirit and body, past and future, that thing which animates all of us. Something that we cannot touch, yet we feel something that we cannot listen for, yet we hear. Behind the words, whatever words we choose, is a transcendence that is known to all of us. (Aristide, 2000:63)

In his reply, Aristide establishes that God's invisibility is made visible in the everyday experience of humanity (John 17:21). God is the one who embodies himself in us; we are his representation and his incarnated presence.

> We begin with what is in front of us. I cannot see God, but I can see you. I cannot see God, but I see the child in front of me, the woman, the man. Through them, through this material world in which we live, we know God. Through them we know and experience love, we glimpse and seek justice. The kind of struggle in which we are engaged requires a connection to this transcendence. Some may call this faith, some may call it theology, some may call it values, principles, love, justice. (Aristide, 2000:63-4)

Through the miracle of the incarnation—God-enveloping himself in human flesh and weakness, Philippians 2:7—God's love interrupts human history and invades every aspect of the

254

human experience on earth. Aristide interprets God's love as a (a relational) movement and overpowering life-force in history that empowers the weak and the oppressed to affirm their humanity and worth; this unstoppable life-force also generates sustaining faith in the dispossessed to resist human oppression and subjugation. God's love in the Aristidian logic is that which enables the people of God to counter or dismantle all threats to human life and all that contradicts love itself. This is akin to how Hopkins Dwight discusses the acts and movements of the Spirit of Liberation on behalf of the oppressed—as discussed in the previous chapter. The Spirit moves the people of God forward to strive for a common cause.

> The name is not important. What is important is that we have it. In order to struggle we must be solid rock. This machine we are facing is not a small one. Its arsenal of capital, of words, of logic, seems to be an unstoppable force. If we are not rooted in faith it will overwhelm us. Among the poor we see this so clearly. They would not survive without their faith. Let us be clear. We are not talking about a motivation or a faith based in fear, in a fear of God. We move from love. And this love gives greater power. It is the power that energizes our Church, St. Jean Bosco, and it is the power that today energies our cooperative. (Aristide, 2000:64-5)

Equally, for Aristide, it was this overpowering life-force of God that inspired unfailing conviction in the Haitian people and correspondingly, in Aristide's parishioners at St. Jean Bosco, where he formerly served as Priest, to resist Duvalier's totalitarianism (which Aristide and the people of Haiti dethroned in the democratic presidential election of 1991), American cultural imperialism, and Euro-American economic capitalism. Aristide also posits that God's love supplies the strength and resources to the Haitian people to endure Western neo-colonialism and any form of human oppression—such as poverty, suffering, pain, trauma, drought, diseases, and the uncertainties of this life—that hinders human thriving and blocks their progress toward to the good life. As Aristide (2000:73) has pronounced: "In the darkest moments the people create signs of light which sustain them… This is too God's presence among us. God does not wait for us to build a peaceful and just world, but is present with us along the way in the struggle, accompanying

our pilgrimage, allowing us to feel joy throughout our journey." Aristide presents God as the one

who continually and faithfully feeds his people with the miracle of life and causes them not to fall

into the sea of despair and nihilism (Ibid:69). Aristide reckons that God makes all these divine

benefits possible through the gift of Christ's humanity. He espouses a Christology of relation, a

principle of interaction and interconnectedness that has massively determined the contours and

scope of his theological anthropology; it is through the gift of Christ's indwelling presence in the

people of God that God has chosen to bestow freely his divine comfort and consolation in the midst

of suffering and desperation.

> The gift of Christ is his humanity, his presence among the living, among the poor. Jesus is not only the God of glory; he is the God of suffering. He is quiet dignity in the face of misery, children who still smile, mothers who give love even where there is no food, the capacity to see hope through excruciating pain, acts of courage in the face of violence, determination in the face of impunity. (Aristide, 2000:73)

As the Scripture testifies, the divine love was manifest fully in the life and death of Jesus

Christ (Rom 5:8; 8:32; John 3:16), whom Paul hails "The Radiance of the glory of God and the

exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:2). God's love is supreme. It is this understanding of God in

Christ, and his care for humanity that leads Aristide to articulate a stout theological anthropology,

that endorses such virtues as human care, love, reciprocity, mutuality, justice, and solidarity:

> There are many kinds of hunger. Those who have enough to eat may be crying out from spiritual hunger…Each time I address a new group I am struck—the same questions, the same hunger for spirituality, for morality in politics, for a recognition of the humanity and dignity of each of God's beings. When someone is hungry, I am hungry; when someone is suffering, I am suffering. They express this same hunger for spirituality and a human world. We are also encouraged by their solidarity…"Beyond class, beyond color is the human being. (Aristide, 2000:69-72)

The God of Aristide is the one who walks in solidarity with his people because he is love,

justice, and peace. Elsewhere, Aristide (1993: 36) informs us that an accurate apprehension of the

God of the Bible would result in this conviction: "It is God's will that we share with the poor. It is

256

God's will that children should love and help their friends." He brings greater clarification about the divine inclusion and openness in this language: "God is also a woman. Wherever women are heard and respected, the face of God is illuminated. Wherever the poor are heard and respected, the face of God is illuminated" (Ibid: 72). Aristide's feminist perspective about God (thus feminist theology), as Elizabeth A. Johnson has brilliantly argued, suggests

> a reflection on God and all things in the light that stands consciously in the company of all the world's women, explicitly prizing their genuine humanity while uncovering and criticizing its persistent violation in sexism, itself an omnipotent paradigm of unjust relationships. In terms of Christian doctrine, this perspective claims the fullness of the religious heritage for women precisely as human, in their own right and independent from personal identification with men women are equally created in the image and likeness of God, equally redeemed by Christ, equally sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Johnson, 1992:8)

To say that God is inclusive in his relational approach to individuals means that God always accompanies them in their struggle: "This too is God's presence among us. God does not wait for us to build a peaceful and just world, but is present with us along the way, in the struggle, accompanying our pilgrimage, allowing us to feel joy throughout our journey" (Aristide, 2000:72). Aristide calls this wondrous event a theological synthesis: the proximity between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man; God's demands of us to magnify the other person reflects this relationship of reciprocity and interconnectedness, and mutual interdependence

> As for theology, speaking of God and of other people is often a synthesis. I never felt obliged to love men and women because God had ordered me to do so. I was part of the other: in each person I discovered a little of myself, and in myself I found a little of the other. The human being is, at one and the same time, unique and plural…I often saw these children on the main street of Port-au-Prince not far from our house at St. Jean Bosco. Their presence had challenged me for a long time: how could we speak of God and leave God wandering in the streets? It was all the more poignant because these children, innocents subjected to every kind of corruption just to survive. What could we do with these children—with them, and not for them. (Aristide, 1993:40, 68)

Along the same train of thought, Theologian Clark Pinnock (1996:30) has candidly observed that "We are persons who depend on one another in order to be ourselves. We are distinct

257

from other persons but realize ourselves in and through them. Persons are individuals in relationship and common, not in isolation."

6.3. LOVE AS JUSTICE OR THE JUSTICE OF LOVE

In his celebrated *Theology of the Old Testament*, prominent Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann prizes the love of God as that which is relational and compassionate toward his creatures.

> Yahweh is not hostile toward humankind and does not work in enmity, but positively inclined to sustain, heal, and forgive. Human persons are, by the very inclination of Yahweh, provided a sure life-space in which to exercise freedom, power, responsibility, and authority, in order to use, enjoy, and govern all of creation…Yahweh's profound commitment to fidelity and compassion generates life-space for wondrous human freedom in the world, freedom to eat and drink and exult in a world of goodness. (Brueggemann, 1997:456-7)

Because God has intentionally decided to express his love toward humankind in this manner, he expects humans to love him by way of practicing justice, doing good, and maintaining righteousness in the world. As Prophet Micah declares, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,   and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8). God himself loves by doing justice to all so that he could preserve his creation, and man should live harmoniously and relationally with each other.

> The practice of justice, in concrete ways, is the enactment of Yahweh's *sedaqah*, whereby the cosmos can be ordered for life, and whereby the human community can be kept viable and generative. In doing of justice, the role of humanness is not simply the keeping of rules, but consists in the venturesome enactment of positive good, whereby human solidarity is maintained and enhanced…The practice of justice, which is a core human vocation, concerns not nonhuman creatures primarily, but the enhancement of the human community by mobilizing social power, especially the power and recourses of the strong for the well-being of the whole community. (Brueggemann, 1997:461)

Moreover, Aristide appropriates the doctrine of the love of God as the celebration of justice. To put it another way, to say God is love as a metaphor explains precisely what it means to say that God is just and righteous. The very nature of the divine love compels God to act in righteousness and punish the oppressor, the exploiter, and the abuser. In a speech delivered in September 11, 2002 to commemorate the 14th anniversary of the Jean Bosco massacre in Haiti, the Theologian-President underlines this facet of the divine love by directing the attention of his Haitian audience to James Cone's provocative thesis: "God is black."

> A great theologian wrote an important book. The title of the book is: "God is black." Some people are shocked when they see such book, because form them God cannot be black and the thesis of the book is: "When God is between two groups of people, and one group acts as the oppressor, the other is a victim, because God is love, because God is justice, he will stand with the victims." (Aristide, 1993:43)

To say that God is black is to affirm that God sympathizes and loves those who are oppressed because of the color of their skin, and that he walks continuously in solidarity with the oppressed blacks. Aristide rationalizes the "God is love" thesis, which he also associates with divine retribution, by linking four important historical landmarks: the death experience of the Israelite slaves in Egypt, the St. Jean Bosco massacre and Coup d'état of September 11, 1988, the death of the prominent pro-democracy peace-activist Antoine Izmery in September 11, 1993, and the terrorist attack on the United States of America in September 11, 2001.These historical events bore local, international, and global effects. They resisted brotherly love and deferred human compassion.

> The same way, when God was between the Jews and the Egyptians, because back then the Egyptians were oppressing the Jews, God stood with the Jews. If today God had to choose sides in September 11, 1998, he would stand with the victims. If he had to choose sides in September 11, 1993, he would stand with Antoine Izmery and all the victims; if he had to choose sides in September 11, 2001, he would stand with the Americans and the other nations who were victims. (Aristide, 2010:43-4)

To declare that God has chosen sides and stood with the victims is another way of speaking about God's keen interest, and loving solidarity with the innocent. Theologian Clark Pinnock (1989:36, 45) has regarded love as God's preeminent characteristic; yet, because God is love and justice, "God's justice requires all the disobedient to be punished…The rejection and contradiction of God's universal love is the strangest, most inexplicable of all human actions; but it remains a possibility." Nonetheless, to stand with God is to stand on the side of love and justice, and with the victim of injustice in this world; to do otherwise is to betray love and justice. In the words of Aristide,

> Does that mean God hates the oppressors? He does not hate them because God is love; he loves all of his children; the ones who are good and the ones who are bad. If we do not have justice for all the victims yet, it is because we have some people who do not take their responsibilities seriously, who do not do everything that they have to do. Today, September 11, 2002, as we remember the victims, we are inviting everyone who has responsibilities to do a little more; everyone within his or her own capacity, so together we can allow the light of justice to shine more. (Aristide, 2010:43)

The Theologian-President reiterates to the Haitian people that it is the love of God that always drives God to stand on the side of justice and in solidarity with the innocent and exploited. He also links human love for God with the deliberate pursuit of human freedom and self-agency: "To love God is to love the human beings whom I see. My respect for them forbids me to think or decide for them…To have reverence for humanity, and even more for women, means to respect their freedom, and even more the freedom of the children yet to come" (Aristide, 1993:152). Aristide's feminist theological sensibility here is a reinforcement of the prophetic voice and spirit of womanist and feminist theologies that claim the experience of all women needs to be incorporated into and transformed our current theological discourses; the underlying objective here is to make constructive spaces for women's faith expressions, thought, and culture to be an integral aspect of the mission of Christian churches and religious institutions—in their commitment to

260

justice and equality for all people, especially for black and minority women in their midst (Williams, 1993:xiii). This is what love looks like in the sacred and public spaces. On the other hand, when love is translated into principles and dogmas, it will lose its momentum and be perverted into an instrument of power and exploitation (Aristide, 1989:53).

The power of love, however, is what converges political power and theological power. Love enables us to challenge the political power and the totalitarian state that defers the promise of democracy. Therefore, love that transforms political power and the political society toward the common good and safety of all citizens involves consistent activism on behalf of others: "This is the capacity to realize that each of us is part of the other. If we can deeply empathize with the way another feels, we become stronger. This capacity empowers us to defy patterned responses and automatic reflexes…Our identification and empathy provide us the power not to obey the traditional voice to hurt others" (Aristide, 1993:167).

Moreover, Aristide does not define (God's) love in the traditional sense as an intellectual concept or just a sentimental feeling; rather, as already mentioned above, divine love is relational empowerment and an invincible life-force about connecting with others resulting in collective freedom and solidarity, and a relationship of reciprocity and mutuality. He urges that the people of God to imitate God in the manner he loves. Consequently, he could deduce love as "a force that one gains because one is open to it, because one has the seeds of one's blood…The more the seeds develop inside one, the more one will be able to feel the way another feels" (Ibid). By comparison, elsewhere, he admits the difficulty to love unconditionally those who have failed to love in return or sown seeds of evil to annihilate other individuals; nonetheless, he prompts us to believe that "every man is worthy of love, and that loving one's enemies is the true manifestation of conscience and charity"(Aristide, 1996:102). In his closing speech at the 1992 Conference in Rio, the

President-Theologian of Haiti, though optimistic about the state of the future of the nations, addressed the Brazilian people and political authorities about the plight of dispossessed communities cross-culturally and the international poor: "The cries of 1.2 billion poor reach our ears. Diogenes with his lantern, in plain daylight, was seeking a man. By the light of Rio 92, we are looking for men whose strength comes from the heart—in order to inaugurate a civilization of love" (Aristide, 2010:160).

Aristide is reluctant to separate love from truth, justice, beauty, and solidarity. For him, these human are virtues intrinsic to the Christian life and faith, theological anthropology, and the Christological understanding of humanity. They're necessary ingredients for the work of democracy, peace, and reconciliation in the modern world. In Aristide's theological corpus, love is also associated with human solidarity—the catalyst of Ubuntu. In a homiletical rhetoric, he brings the words of comfort to his Haitian audience, "I have come to tell you: I love you, too. Because I love you, I must tell you the truth. Truth and love are the same. Truth and love are Jesus in the midst of the poor" (Aristide, 1990:103). Walking in the light of Christ is equated with walking with Christ in love and truth. It is that self-giving and divine love that guides and enlightens the path of the believer in the wasteland, in the valley of death, and in the labyrinth of despondency and disheartenment; it is also that Trinitarian love that engenders relational and social solidarity. Relational love ensures the people of God and the poor of the church that it is possible to find the God of life and hope in the wasteland. And the hills of despair.

> Thus would God have us walk through the valley of death and find ourselves, our voyage at an end, at the sunlit crossroads of life; so would God have us travel nightmarish highways of rain and gloom and murder only to pull into a carefree village at sunrise in our exhausted car with its four flat tires; so would God have us fight for life in battlefields of blood and entrails, and harvest life from fields of bone and ashes. There in the wasteland where you had not thought to find life, you will suddenly find the signs of God's renewal, blooming and flowering and bursting forth from the dry earth with great energy, God's energy. In the

262

driest month, you will find on the branches' tips new shoots of life. Under the rock in the desert will sprout a flower, a delicate bud of the new life. (Aristide, 1990:64)

Aristide interprets the Christian faith and theological activism in the light of the imperative call to love and practice justice, and God's energetic participation in political history and the affairs of men (This is an articulation of Aristide's political theology which we will analyze later). We should be reluctant not to separate Aristide's theological anthropology from his theological or social ethics.

6.4. ARISTIDE'S RELATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In our analysis above, we have first demonstrated that Aristide's theological anthropology should be properly construed as relational love and love as solidarity. These are twin ideas that should be seen as a unified theological ideal in Aristide's theological corpus. Relational love or love defined as solidarity is the most significant concept that undergirds Aristide's theological vision and theological ethics. It is omnipresent in both his political speeches and theological writings, as he himself reports, "Our common struggle reaches across political borders, across mountain ranges, across vast bodies of water. Across the wide spaces of our hemisphere, we hold one another's hands in a long and unbreakable chain of solidarity" (Aristide, 1990: 47). In summary, Jean-Bertrand Aristide's view of anthropology should be read as an anthropology of relations.

At the very basic level, what does Aristide believe about humanity? In our previous chapters, we have already investigated this aspect in Aristide's politico-theological hermeneutics, and explored the notions of the person and community in Africana critical theological anthropology and ethics; nonetheless, we would like to consider some insightful parallel

263

commentaries he articulates in other writings, which would balance our preceding analysis. To learn more about Aristide's anthropological sensibility and his philosophy of man and human values, it is suggested to read four of his most important works: *In The Parish of the Poor* (1990), *Tout Homme est Un Homme* (1992), *Jean-Bertrand Aristide: An Autobiography (*1993), and *Dignity* (1994), which chronicle in great detail and precision his civic engagement and activism on behalf of the Haitian masses, the poor, and the oppressed communities in Haiti and the world at large. They also reveal his cosmopolitanism, egalitarian ideology, and his active engagement with the world of ideas.

For Aristide, the human person is the highest form of wealth and the peak of God's creation. He believes in the collective duty of the individual to contribute to the progress of society, and that commitment to human flourishing and success is a collaborative task of the individual and the community. The life of every individual is sacred, and the worth of a person is not measured by one's wealth nor the social status and educational pedigree. Aristide warns us about the pitfalls of elevating materialism and wealth over people; the consequential risk is that it may lead to the oppression and exploitation of individuals or the cultivation of a feeling of arrogance and superiority. As he has remarked in his autobiography:

> Wealth, financial superiority, and arrogance all end in making one certain that one Possesses the truth, and they generally predispose people to use repression or to compromise with dictatorial regimes. The wealthy have often become what they are by virtue of exploiting others…We are living on top of a permanent and ongoing extortion directed at the most impoverished. (Aristide, 1993:179)

We have already underscored in previous discussion that Aristide's doctrine of man is rooted in democratic egalitarianism, and his bold thesis that every individual is a person ("*tout moun se moun*")—regardless of race, nationality, gender, class, etc. Aristide promotes an ethics of care and relationality toward the collective self. He prioritizes human life over material success

or wealth. As he remarks, "The object of every action is the human being..," [and that] the hunger of one person is the hunger of humanity itself" (Aristide, 1993:178, 195). Aristide maintains that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity because, no matter how poor and uneducated, every person is a human being. He is persuaded that the goal of Christian theological discourse, and theological anthropology in particular is to convince the people of God to shelter, protect, and defend the poor, the weak, the innocent, and the least among them (Is. 58:6-7, 9-10):

> We must not be swayed to collaborate and conciliate, but must stay firmly in the camp of   the poor. Yet our home is in the Church. If we do not like what we see in the Church,we must work to change that, work in the ways we see fit. We must make sure to build that descent, poor man-s home—our Church—in the parish of the poor, for that is its only roper neighborhood. Yes, we must be the workers, the slum-dwellers, the peasants, the market women, the street children of the Church. We must work from dawn till dawn to make our home brighter, cleaner, and more blessed. (Aristide, 1990:21-2)

6.5 THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE SPIRIT OF UBUNTU

In *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, Christian ethicist James Gustafson points out the inadequacy of Western theological anthropology and the crisis of human interaction in Western societies. In Western societies, the focus is on the individual and his/her freedom at the expense of the life and progress of the community and society. He also criticizes Western misconception of the human nature and the function of the individual in society.

> Our views of the nature of human beings are affected by the selection of a dominant metaphor or analogy for understanding social relations. Social theory in Western culture tends to be divided, in this respect, between an organic analogy and a contractual view of human interrelations. Of course, there are combinations of these; the family emerges as a result both of a "contract" of marriages and the natural bonding between the couple and children. As a more or less natural (organic) unit, the family shapes our natural duties; parents do not make contracts with their children that define their obligations to them. In professional life and business transactions the contractual relationship is dominant; we consciously undertake obligations that are specified, and are bound to meet them. (Gustafson, 1992:292)

The contractual model hinders social bond and human ability to properly relate to and sympathize with each other. For Gustafson, it is a tragic problem of human selfishness which is motivated by the yearning desire to elevate the self above the interest and good of the collective and the community.

> The individual is seen primarily as the outcome of the processes of life as a whole, and his or her "autonomy" is underestimated. In morality it is easy to claim, from this perspective, that the good of the whole body is of greater importance than the good of its individual parts. "Surgery," the denial of life and liberty to an individual "organ," is more readily justified. (Gustafson, 1992:292)

The priority that it is given to the self and not the collective also directly damages the growth and success of the individual. Gustafson laments on how the primacy of individual freedom and morality could bear disastrous consequences on the process of achieving human flourishing, and societal improvement.

> The contractual model rests strongly on the primacy of individuals. Their being is implicit if not explicitly judged to be of prior significance to the "whole." The agency of the individuals has a more central role; society is seen to be more the result of the actions and choices of individuals, or of contractually bound groups, than as the outcome of "natural" processes….The autonomy of individuals is highlight respected, and with this comes a moral stress on the respect for the autonomy and rights of individuals. In situations of conflict between the rights of individuals and benefits for a social group, the presumption is always in favor of the former. It is more difficult to make a case for restraints and denials of liberty and life for the sake of the well-being of a whole. (Gustafson, 1992:292)

What is the proposed alternative? In Aristide's anthropological model, he emphasizes the values of Ubuntu to mend fragmented human relations and to restore shattered individuals and communities. Aristide accentuates the imperative of the interactional theory to improve dynamics between individuals and social groups. Like the principles of Ubuntu, the interactional model prioritizes the needs and values of society and the community instead of those of the individual or the person. It categorically rejects individual autonomy and personal isolation for the preservation of the community. Both of these proposals (Ubuntu and interactional model) complement each

266

other, in their attempt to sustain a robust, consistent, and practical theological anthropology. It is noteworthy to mention here that the biblical understanding of human persons stand "at a critical distance and as a critical protest against all modern notions of humanness that move in the direction of autonomy" (Brueggemann, 1997:451). Prominent Old Testament Walter Brueggemann has written insightfully on the biblical philosophy of the individual.

> The human person has vitality as a living, empowered agent and creature only in relation to the God who faithfully gives breath. Thus the human person is to be understood in relational and not essentialist ways… The human person is not, and cannot be, sufficient to self, but lives by coming to terms with the will and purpose of the One who gives and commands life…Human persons are commanded, by virtue of their very creatureliness, to live lives for the sake of the well-being of the world. (Brueggemann, 1997:453-4, 456)

Gustafson further expounds on the interactional approach to the notion of humanness:

> An interactional model of society takes into account what is valid in each of the other two models. It can account for the priority of society in the sense that we are the "products" of it to a large extent, and our initiatives are always in response to what exists and to the actions of others upon us. It recognizes that individuals and even most groups do not have the power to create or to recreate their large societies. Novelty takes place within the development of social life that are beyond the control of individual and corporate actions. Yet it recognizes the individual and corporate capacities for action. The processes of social change are not mechanically or organically construed; the exercise of powers does alter social orders and the course of historical events; it affects the development of culture. An interactional view provides no simple way of deciding in hard cases whether the individual's autonomy should be curbed for the sake of a larger good any more than it simply sustains the "good of the whole" over against the claims of individuals. (Gustafson, 1992:293)

Perceptibly, it has been a tradition in modern history of ideas in the West for major thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Karl Marx, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, W. E. B. Dubois, Frantz Fanon, Arendt, Aime Cesaire, Jean Price-Mars, etc. to attempt to salvage humanity and the individual from their own plight. These thinkers longed for a redemptive community in modernity in which, in Jürgen Habermas's words, we could repair "'new forms of damage life' we have created, and to find effective ways to "sustain a moral community in the face of rampant individualism" (Qtd in Watson, 2010: 837, 845). The African humanism of Ubuntu is

267

associated with holistic character ethics and development within the context of the community. At this point in our analysis, we would like to turn to Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gusheen for some insights on this matter. Both ethicists have suggested that "It takes community to shape a person with integrity of character…When you cut yourself off from your roots and your community and become an autonomous individual on the make, you lose your moral compass. Recovery of character requires confrontation by community" (Stassen and Gushee, 2003:56).

Secondly, they also set out some useful principles for character ethics, which should be nurtured by the community. As they observe, "Character ethicists say integrity of character is shaped when we see ourselves, our lives and our loyalties as *part of a larger drama* that shapes our community…The drama of autonomous individualistic climbing divorces us from what character ethicists call *the good,* or the *telos,* or the larger human purpose of life" (Stassen and Gushee, 2003:56). Thirdly, they establish the correlation between the significant role of the community and character formation: "Character is formed not by self-made individuals, but by the shaping, encouraging and correcting influence of community. Thus we must seek to develop the types of communities that form compassionate character" (Stassen and Gushee, 2003:57). Finally, Stassen and Gushee insist that the "Community and character depend on knowing that we are participants in a larger history, larger drama" (Ibid).

Furthermore, in *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, Gustafon develops the theory of radical dependence and interdependence of human life, which are essential to cultivate healthy relationships and productive social interactions and dynamics between individuals and groups. Gustafson's theory is very constructive as it holds great promises for sound theological anthropology; it is on par with our critical reflection on Aristide's appeal to the ideals and necessity

of *Ubuntu* as an African humanism that promotes an ethics of care and love, and a politics of relationality and reciprocal mutuality.

According to Gustafson (1992:282), "Radical dependence on human life on the rest of the natural world: not merely contemporary dependence, but also the historical and biological dependence upon the processes that brought our species into being." Secondly, he delineates the possible rapport between his theory and theology: "A theology that highlights radical dependence is coherent with a biological interpretation of radical independence" (Ibid). Human beings are also dependent upon history, society, culture, and any force that shapes the human condition. "Dependence does not imply enslavement; it requires acknowledgement of limitations and of the possibilities for human imitative and development" (Ibid). What is then the nature of that radical dependence and interdependence since human beings are radically interdependent and dependent? Below, we share three essential constituents of both approaches to theological anthropology:

1. "Interdependence reflects more the interactive relationship between human life and actively and the rest of the world" (Gustafson, 1992:282).
2. "Dependence and interdependence point to the limits of human capacities to affect courses of events in accordance with intentions" (Ibid).
3. "No human activity would be possible without what is received or given, and all human activity is interaction in specific contexts" (Ibid: 284).
4. "Interdependence communal as well as individual" (Ibid).

Complementarily, Stassen and Gushee in their seminal work *Kingdom Ethics* resist the temptation to divorce the life of the individual (Christian) life from the life of the community of faith. They submit that Christian ethics is more meaningful and constructive when it incorporates the values and wisdom of the community of faith.

> Because Human beings are not isolated individual decision-makers but instead members of groups, communities and societies in which they are embedded and to which they tend to be quite loyal. Thus, they respond to what they perceive to be happening from within the frame of reference provided by these contexts, not as isolated individuals weighing rules or principles, as if in a vacuum, moment by moment. That is a factual claim, but here is a normative one: Christian ethics must and should be done in the context of our faith-

269

communities, and our faith-communities must do Christian ethics in the context of the theological narrative found in Scripture—in particular, the reign of God inaugurated in Jesus Christ. (Stassen and Gushee, 2003:114)

On a similar note, they imply that the interactional model makes the Christian life more productive for the individual when it is done within the context of the faith community. Not only a relational model is necessary for spiritual development and growth, it is imperative for character formation and maturity, and the fellowship of the people of God:

> Christian ethics needs to focus on several kinds of contexts: the personal faith context that shapes us and our ethics, understood as "the story of my life" as a Christian person; the church context in which we together live out our Christian lives; and the community/societal context, which shapes our perceptions, attitudes and practices in myriad ways and within which ethical issue arise. We need acute insight and honestly to be able to name all of these contexts and correct them where needed, on the basis of the normative theological narrative that is to be foundational for our ethics as Christians. (Stassen and Gushee, 2003:114)

African Theologian Laurenti Magesa, whom we interacted with in the previous chapter, defines four fundamental concepts of human interaction against the backdrop of the Ubuntu worldview or system.

1) "The realization of sociability or relationships in daily living by the individual and the community is the central moral and ethical imperative of African Religion. Relationships receive the most attention in the adjudication of what is good and bad, what is desirable and undesirable in life. Not only is the view of the universe at the service, but relationships make possible the continuing existence of the universe" (Magesa, 1997:64).

2) "The life of the individual… [can only be] grasped as it is shared. The member of the tribe, the clan, the family, knows that he does not live to himself, but within the community. He knows that apart from the community he would no longer have the means of existence" (Ibid: 64-5).

3) "Bondedness is the key to the understanding that what falls on one, falls on all. In such a relationship, the issue is the re-establishment of community, the re-establishment of the circulation of life, so that life can go on transcending itself, go on bursting the barriers, or the intervals, the nothingness, go on being superabundant" (Ibid:65).

4) "The moral through of African Religion becomes clear through the understanding of relationships. The refusal to share is wrong. It is, in fact, an act of destruction because it does not serve to cement the bonding that is required to form community" (Ibid).

By comparison, in his doctoral dissertation, "Umoya Wamagama" (The Spirit of the Words), Jean-Bertrand Aristide studies Ubuntu as an integrated philosophical system that enables individuals to think cross-disciplinarily, intersectionally, and interdisciplinarily. As an African humanism, Aristide explores the implications of Ubuntu in the areas of politics, economics, philosophy, theology, religion, gender, etc. He also interprets this African system of thought and value from an international, transnational, and cross-cultural perspective. Yet, he appropriates the particulars where they seem fit, and the universals where they deem appropriate and relevant. For example, in exploring the political aspect of Ubuntu in Western canonical political texts such as the French Constitution of 1789, Aristide argues that the French governmental authorities and guardians of French ideals have failed to appropriate the benefits of this groundbreaking document of human freedom and equality to enslaved Africans. Consequently, he remarks, "When in 1789 the French revolution claimed *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* without recognizing African slaves as human beings that did not prevent the slaves from spreading their message—in Kreyol—across the country. The slaves proclaimed: *tout moun se moun* (every person is a human being). So, *Libete, Egalite pou tout moun* (liberty and equality for all people)" (Aristide, 2006:56). For Aristide (2006:152), the spirit of Ubuntu is the "spirit of freedom, solidarity, justice, dignity and peace."

Aristide also bases his philosophy of *Ubuntu* on the biblical notion of universal brotherhood and Christianity's direct rejection of colonization and dehumanization. In a homiletic tone, he declares apologetically, "Christian religion does not want colonization. The Bible says we must love one another. The Bible says we are all brothers. We are brothers and sisters" Aristide (2006:154-5).

Ubuntu is presented to us as a theology of love and relationality. In Aristide, the concept of Ubuntu, which consistently epitomizes African values, could "help address issues like narcissistic behavior, schizoid disorder, obsessive neurosis, pathological narcissism, autartic cultures through social groups" (Aristide, 2006:223), he maintains. From a psychological perspective, Aristide appropriates the self in relation to Ubuntu by writing:

> [It] generates a psychological Self which is quite different from the Premium or the Self…Embedded in a collective Self or a collective Ego, the psychodynamic of *Ubuntu* goes straight to the well-being of the community. Self-interest and common interest are inextricably linked. *Amathe nolimi. Izandla ziyagezana.* (Saliva and tongue. The hands wash each other.) In other words, *Ubuntu* generates a social love story rooted in brotherhood…Within this specific framework, the use of the word Ubuntu both categorizes an experience and contributes to promoting brotherhood among the members of the community. (Aristide, 2006:224)

The exact meaning of the concept of Ubuntu in both Western and African scholarship is both complex and polyvalent. Generally, there is not an established consensus among African scholars and thinkers to what the term conveys. As Christian B.N. Gade (2012:487) has observed in his important article, "What is Ubuntu? Different Interpretations among South Africans of African Descent," "There is no agreement on what 'ubuntu' itself means." Let us now consider some of its general meanings or definitions, which Gade aptly discusses in his excellent aforementioned article:

1) Ubuntu as an African humanism or worldview.
2) Ubuntu as an African philosophy.
3) Ubuntu as an African ethical system.
4) Ubuntu as a moral quality of a human being /person.
5) Ubuntu as a governing principle of life or lifestyle.

Gade delineates two important aspects of Ubuntu based on his empirical research among the South Africans of African Descent (SAADs): Ubuntu as an inclusive concept, and Ubuntu as an exclusive concept.

Inclusive ideas about the nature of ubuntu: Ideas according to which *ubuntu* is (a) a moral quality of a person that may potentially be possessed by *all Homo sapiens* since *all Homo sapiens* are persons, or (b) a phenomenon according to which persons, understood as *all Homo sapiens*, are interconnected.

Exclusive ideas about the nature of Ubuntu: Ideas according to which *ubuntu* is (a) a moral quality of a person that may only be possessed by *some Homo sapiens* since only *some Homo sapiens* are persons, or (b) a phenomenon according to which persons, understood as *some Homo sapiens*, are interconnected. (Gade, 2012:498)

To put this another way, it is possible for some people not to have or cultivate Ubuntu—giving the watershed historical events that have altered the human condition and social dynamics in world history such as ongoing wars between the nation-states, South African apartheid, Western colonization, anti-black racism, and white violence against Africans and people of African descent in the Black diaspora, and non-European people. Nonetheless, Ubuntu is not an intrinsic moral quality only found in traditional African cultures; it is also known by different names in different societies. It is possible for an individual or group of people to acquire Ubuntu and live according to its principles and imperatives. Gabe provides a fascinating contrast here:

The inclusive ideas could be interpreted to mean that all South Africans—even the worst apartheid perpetrators—might potentially (in the future) be subjects of the moral quality of Ubuntu, and that all South Africans, irrespective of what they have done in the past, are part and parcel of the interconnectedness between persons…*The exclusive ideas*, could, on the other hand, be interpreted to mean that there are groups in South Africa whose members will never be part of the interconnectedness between persons, simply because they are not persons. (2012:499)

The implications of Gabe's research on the subject of race relations in post-Apartheid South African society could be beneficial to the people in the United States as the level of Police brutality against Black Americans has heightened, as well as anti-black racism, and the mass incarceration of young black males, and race relations have worsened in the last two decades. What is missing in the aforementioned societies and among peoples and cultures in the world today is precisely what Lovemore Mbigi has written about the spirit of Ubutu: "The heart and soul of

ubuntu is the solidarity principle, group conformity and care in the face of survival challenges, based on unconditional group compassion, respect, dignity, trust, openness and cooperation" (Qtd in Gabe, 2012:499).

Rightly conceived Ubuntu as an African humanism, South African poet and public intellectual Es'Kia Mphahlele outlines some of the key principles of African humanism:

> The African is a believer in the Supreme Being, whom the human being represents. When you commit a wrong against others you are hurting *yourself, your own soul*…The soul is one's spiritual life, and it is this that the person violates within himself/herself-the divine in themselves. Life is held sacred, and this makes the African a religious person…Traditional African Humanism provides its own ways, including ritual and other forms of communal involvement, of alleviating despair and anxiety… The African's strong sense of community helps contain anxiety and social conflicts. Moral wrong is not, for the African, explained as a "sin" against some authority, but rather as a violation of social relationships—a wrong against someone or against the family or community. The breakdown in social relationships lead to serious troubles. (Mphahlele, 2002:146, 151)

> The African begins with the community and then determines what the individual's place and role should be in relation to the community. These are features of African humanism. It is a communal concept, and there are no individual heroes within the world it encompasses. Man finds fulfillment not as a separate individual but within family and community. No one is made a saint because he was a great humanist. (Mphahlele, 2002:147)

When Africans affirm the religious root of Ubuntu, they are referring to these values indicated above, and they are also asserting that Ubuntu is "a community way of life as lived by the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa" (Mangena, 2016:6) as well as in Black Africa. This way of life fosters awareness of the community or group and 'promotes social cohesion between members, groups and/or communities' (Ibid); thus, when speaking of the Ubuntu community, a vital aspect of African ethics, the reference points to the living, the ancestors, and the community whose life is influenced by theological and humanitarian beliefs: God as Creator, God as Vital-Force of life and human existence, an attitude of connectedness, and a relationship of mutuality

and reciprocity. "All these premises lead to the conclusion that religion forms the basis of African ethics" (Ibid). Hence, we can speak also of the traditional African humanism as "a religious state of mind producing moral action; attachment to the soil; social relationships; the art of healing; the sense of community and its welfare; and a sense of organic unity or oneness in the universe in which man is the principal participant, and which is a process permeated by the Supreme Being" (Mphahlele, 2002:154).

Aristide (2011:16) also acknowledges the African origin of the concept when he avers: "If we speak of Mother of Africa, we are speaking exactly of the mother of a philosophy called *Ubuntu*." In our previous chapters, we have made scattered references to Ubuntu as an African humanism. For example, we have pointed out that

> In the philosophy of Ubuntu, there is no room for selfishness or egocentricity. A person's existence is intertwined with the community. So that the philosophy of Ubuntu is the source of all philosophy grounded in solidarity, cooperation, unity, respect, dignity, justice, liberty and love of the other… There, in Ubuntu, Africans found an unmatched strength to resist slavery. The children of Africa were certain that all people were possessed of dignity and so no one should treat anyone lie an animal. (Aristide, 2011:17)

When someone has Ubuntu, he or she prioritizes the interests and concerns of the collective and the community. Ubuntu encapsulates the whole of African worldview and African ethical system. It places an urgent call upon all to civic responsibility toward the common good. As Aristide's thesis implicates, Ubuntu strives to get rid of self and collective narcissism. Because Aristide stresses the linguistic aspect of Ubuntu and its relations with anthropology, we need to turn to some of his ideas in order to gain further insights on how to strive against forces of human alienation, despair, coercion, and dehumanization. More importantly, Aristide turns to this African notion to construct a new humanism that is both anti-[neo]-colonialism and anti-imperialism.

Ubuntu also provides the material and intellectual capitals for Aristide to think through and formulate a more robust theological anthropology in which the poor, the oppressed, the

disheartened, and the disfranchised communities are giving equally the same opportunities to venture their full potential and humanity. This philosophical idea can be seen as a tool for human empowerment and stimulation. It also fosters means to achieve collective awareness and wholeness. From the perspective of linguistics, Aristide has brilliantly demonstrated in his doctoral dissertation that African descent people in Haiti share the psycholinguistic ideology of Ubuntu. Likewise, he claims that the values of Ubuntu embedded in the Haitian Creole served as a catalyst for the enslaved to resist white supremacy and dismantle Saint-Dominguan slavery.

> In fact, this learning process centered on the dual properties of language, at a collective level continues to empower African communities who suffered under colonialism and refused to abandon their indigenous languages. *Ubuntu,* as such symbolizes African values transmitted and shared within the communities. Because sociolinguistics focus on the effects of society on language, the more that is known about the suffering of the Bantu speaking peoples under colonialism, the better our understanding of their capacity to protect their languages and how this resistance is a collective rooted in *Ubuntu*. This observation is true of African speakers of isiZulu as well as African descendant speakers of Haitian Kreyol. In Africa and throughout the African Diaspora the cognitive process stimulates a degree of collective awareness which reinforces the collective Self and the chain of solidarity. (Aristide, 2006:225)

For Aristide, Ubuntu also means resistance to the demonization of black cultures, languages, and traditional African religion and derived-African religions in the African diaspora. "In Africa, our Ancestors spoke their mother tongues, spreading *umoya wobuntu*, the spirit of *Ubuntu,* and shared community life which empowered their villages to resist colonialism…Clearly Ubuntu and colonialism were diametrically opposed to one another. To those who would insist on the so-called 'civilizing' mission of colonialism one could simply note how Ubuntu opposes the *prazo* system" (Aristide, 2006:225-6). In praise of the virtuous character of Ubuntu, Aristide penned these notable words:

> *Ubuntu* is not only a humanistic orientation towards life, community, and individuals, it implies a remarkable civilization. Ubuntu epitomizes an African origin of civilization and way towards a civilization of peace…As archetype of psychic harmony, balance and wholeness, the collective of self-*Ubuntu* opens ways towards a civilization of peace, love

276

and respect for every human being. There is neither a superiority nor an inferiority complex attached. *Ubuntu* requires both truth about our collective history and truth about the collective self. Expressing a very high level of consciousness relative to human values, Ubuntu can be classified as a common trait of African cultures.

So when someone says: Homo homini lupus,
An appropriate reply could be: Homo homini *Ubuntu.*
In the past, Descartes (1641) said: Cogito, ergo sum. (I think, therefore I am)
Today, we say: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("I am because we are"). (Aristide, 2006:241-2)

6.6. THE SPIRIT OF UBUNTU, AND THE OPTIMISM OF BLACK RELIGION AND THE RECONSTRUCITON OF BLACK HUMANITY

Aristide appeals both to the ethical values of Christianity and the African-Haitian religion of Vodou rooted in the principles of Ubuntu to push for a more promising and constructive anthropology. Aristide puts emphasis both on the humanistic character of these religious traditions: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("I am because we are"), as well as on their liberative theological components. He proclaims that "the Haitian belief system, in which the names of the Ancestors play a central role in affirming their existence, is deeply rooted in oral and religious tradition" (Aristide, 2006:262). He goes on to explain the positive aspects of the Vodou religion in the Haitian society:

> Haitian-African religion is founded on community life. Pain, joy, hope, and bread must be shared in family. And this spirit of family, including the spirit of the Ancestors, is eloquently expressed in the following proverbs: (1) A cooked meal has no owner; (2) when the hands are many, the load is light; (3) Hands helping each other; and (4) Just give the people food. (Aristide, 2006:250)

Aristide (2006:346) contends that in the night of August 1791, in which the Haitian Revolution began, "The slaves did not turn to the religion of the colonists," culminating in the declaration of Black liberty. Two hundred years later, these religious roots still draw from the same ethical and African sap: Love of freedom, liberty and life." To accentuate this underlying thesis,

he promulgates the idea that "To free themselves from the bonds of slavery, our forefathers turned to the Ancestors in the ceremony of Bois Caiman, in August 1791. In other words, to become free, the slave prayed not to the God of his master but to the God of Ancestors" (Ibid: 345). It is for this reason he could declare overtly that "African religion or African Ancestor's religion is deserving of equal respect on Haitian soil" (Ibid: 344).

On one hand, Aristide denounces the demonization of traditional African religion by the colonists and Christian missionaries; he deduces this act of religious demonization and cultural devalorization as an attack on the human dignity and identity of the African people and their descendants in the Black Diaspora. On the other hand, he interrogates the strategic methods and approaches used both by Western colonists and Christian missionaries to invade, dominate, Christianize, and rule the African people. The crime of the colonial administrators and Christian colonizers and imperialists defies the discourse of Christian anthropological imagination. The second predicament in the colonial world was the very question and understanding of God. What was the colonizers' doctrine of God? How did God relate to the colonists and the African slaves? Aristide's response to these central questions about God and the colonial order is noteworthy to discuss below.

> The social environment of late fifteenth century Haiti (post-Columbus) was dominated by conquest and repression, with religion used to justify and facilitate imperialist aims. The colonists said that the slaves possessed an evil spirit, the so-called *esprit du cheval* (the spirit of the horse) and the missionaries had come to exorcise them of this spirit through Baptism…These early manifestations of religion in Haiti, in the light of this explanation of the word "love," raise several theological questions:
>
> 1. The god of the colonists, is he the same God the Father that Jesus speaks of?
> 2. The god of the colonists, can he be both God the Father of colonists and of slaves?
> 3. Is the creator of the new world order where man is dominated by man? (Aristide, 2006:340-1)

We have mentioned briefly in preceding pages that Aristide has contrasted two deities: the God of the slave masters, who worked in their favor, and the God of the enslaved Africans whom Aristide calls the "God of love," who worked toward their emancipation. Aristide links the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man. He sees an intimate correlation between the two, and maintains the belief that a proper doctrine of God would eventually lead to a proper doctrine of man, and a disingenuous theology of God would categorically engender an ambiguous theology of humanity. Aristide attempts to provide a plausible response to his threefold questions as noted above by referencing three key texts from the Bible. These passages shed tremendous light on the biblical notion of humanity, human values, and dignity. Aristide considers these texts central in the formulation of a theological anthropology proper; they dismiss the erroneous view of humanity held by the colonizers and Christian missionaries. The texts are as follows:

> Then God said, "Let us make man[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1, 26-28)

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> because he has anointed me
> to proclaim good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
> and recovering of sight to the blind,
>   to set at liberty those who are oppressed… (Luke 4:18)

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
> because the Lord has anointed me
> to bring good news to the poor;
> he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives,
> and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (Is. 61, 1)

Since we have already commented on the Genesis passage, we shall not return to it; rather, at this juncture of our conversation, we shall discuss briefly the implications of the other biblical texts. Christian colonial mission and colonial authorities have miscarried the message of these noted texts, which bear the missional and evangelistic responsibility to care for the poor slaves and to let them loose of human bondage and oppression. Brueggemann has insightfully commented on the social obligations and relational aspect of these biblical passages:

> Thus elementally, human obedience means to care for the community, to practice rehabilitative hospitality, to engage in responsible stewardship, and quite concretely: (1) to share your bread with the hungry, (2) to bring the homeless poor into your house, and (3) to cover the naked… The disciplines of hearing and responding in obedience constitute a powerful rejection of autonomy that predictably issues in destructive coveting, and that sets individual gain over against the community and its needs. The obedient human agent is a creature deeply embedded in and with and for the community. (1997:464)

From a theological outlook on human relations and biblical theology of hospitality, the colonial mission of civilization and Christianization has failed because the colonial subjects have not succeeded in engaging in acts of kindness and loving compassion toward the enslaved Africans. It is from this perspective Aristide could draw a sharp distinction between the God of the slaves, who planned their emancipation, and the God of the colonist, who maintained the enslavement of the African population.

> Whereas the god of the colonist reduced man to slavery, the God of Jesus reveals himself as a liberator, and Jesus himself declared: "The Spirit of God is upon me…" This is also what we also find in Is. 61, verse 1… From this theological vision emerges the image of a God of Love and Liberty—diametrically opposed to the god of the colonist. Real love implies both: The people and the nation. Hence, a clear expression of theological consciousness. (Aristide, 2006:341)

Colonial theology projected a defective view of humanity and of God. Colonial anthropology is the antithesis of God's universal love for humanity, and the contrast of Ubuntu. In Aristide's theology, however, the "God is love" metaphor becomes the theological basis of Ubuntu. Love as a signifier is associated with the very ontological identity of God himself and

280

what the name of God represents for people. To summarize his detailed theological and linguistic analysis of the nature and name of God as appeared in the first chapter of Genesis, we discuss his rational interpretation here:

> Beyond *ipsum ens*, the existential subject has often been referred to as a supreme being identified as both a source of creation and as a source of happiness. From there the uniqueness of the being (*esse*) is inextricably linked to its multiplicity. The existential subject, "*ani-ngi-mwen*" inevitably refers us back to the multi-faceted being. To exist, and to exist in community stands at the heart of happiness. This enlightening synthesis is *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*. Literally, a person is a human being through other people. Said otherwise, you exist through the community. And according to Africans this community cannot exist outside the world of Ancestors in which *uNkulunkulu* is the greatest. Whether this supreme being is called *uNkulunkulu* or the supreme Ancestor, or *Umwelinqangi* or the One who was at the origin, the window to existence is wide open on *ta meta ta physika*. (Aristide, 2006:273)

Blending theology, analytical linguistics, and the philosophical meanings of Ubuntu, Aristide enunciates a specific theological anthropology that prioritizes human transcendental values and virtues:

> If the central object in metaphysics is the being, in its complete and whole sense, what meaning does *ntu* take on in this philosophic context? The African being exists beyond the visible. From a linguistic point of view, the stem *ntu* refers to people. The definition of Ubuntu implies a *substrat qualitative* (essence). Humans incarnate a crucible a transcendent values. From this philosophy of *ntu* emerges an ethic rooted in a supreme being. Beyond all scientific knowledge, for those who believe, there exists an existential source in which the roots of *ntu* are planted. In other words, *ntu* embraces the anthropological essence and *substrat qualitative*. We must also conclude that *ntu* is the sap of the human genealogical tree. (Aristide, 2006:73-4)

The telos of the divine love throughout human history and God's salvific economy is to humanize and reconstitute those individuals who have been subjected to slavery, dehumanization, colonization, hunger, poverty, and economic deprivation. Aristide defines love as a fundamental quality of God's essence, which he relates to individuals and the community of faith. In the same line of thought, he sees love as an essential value for creating a biblically theological

anthropological discourse. It is that kind of love the colonists and oppressors failed to demonstrate towards the Africans and the enslaved African population in the African Diaspora.

> The name of God is love…As a metaphor can be conventional, poetic, conceptual, mixed, we could also ask whether or not the word "love" is part of a theological metaphor through the sentence "God is love." Seen in its biblical and sociolinguistic context the word "love" covers a sematic mapping that extends from human to transcendental values. The biblical God who freed slaves is called "Love" (Ex. 3, 7). The same God, expressing concretely the strength of his love for those suffering in slavery, continues to focus on love by stating:

> You will love your neighbor
> The way you love yourself
> Lev. 19, 18.

> He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love
> 1 John 4, 8. (Aristide, 2006:337)

Theologian Richard Rice makes this insightful observation about the nature of the divine love:

> Love is the most important quality we attribute to God, and love is more than care and commitment; it involves being sensitive and responsive as well…So the statement God is love embodies the essential biblical truth. It indicates that love is central, not incidental, to the nature of God. Love is not something God happens to do, it is the one divine activity that most fully and vividly discloses God's inner reality. Love, therefore, is the very essence of the divine nature. Love is what it means to be God. (Rice, 1994: 15, 19).

It is the God of love who stimulated the enslaved Africans in the Americas (i.e. Haiti) to resist the unholy trinity of whiteness: slavery, colonization, and white supremacy—and reclaimed their dignity in the midst of white oppression and white death, and fought for their full emancipation. God the Liberator also led them to reclaim their human rights in the labyrinth of social alienation and physical death. Aristide (2006:338) could assert, "In fact, what could be seen as a theological metaphor: 'God is love,' became a theology of love in the collective mind of Africa descended people; it was expressed in their opposition to the colonization of the mind." To expound his argument, Aristide brings in close conversation a theology of love, grounded in the

biblical narrative, and the principles of Ubuntu, sourced in African humanism and cosmology. His

observation on the subject matter is poignant:

> From these transcendental values identified by the exegetical approach, people who believe in that God must demonstrate how human values are expressed through love. Hence the core questions relative to the name of the God proclaimed by the missionaries in Haiti: Was *Gran Met la* acting to free the African slaves, revealing himself as the true God of Love? How could a true God of love demand that Africans slaves sever their existential roots with Africa? (Aristide, 2006:338)

Accordingly, when a person dehumanizes another individual, he emphatically rejects God

who is the ground of being and love. The failure to express love toward "The Other" is

categorically tantamount to the failure of loving God.   Elsewhere, he renounces religious traditions

whose love is too cold to alter the human condition and whose empathy is not strong enough to

disband human alienation and nihilism. As he remarks fully, "Those who denounced religion as

an opium for the people actually helped religion. It cannot be anything other than a battle against

resignation; otherwise religion itself must be resisted. When religion does not defend human

beings, it must be resisted" (Aristide, 1993:105). Aristide not only vindicates God's love, he

deplores the false piety of the religious colonists for their lack of love and compassion:

> This determination to deny traditional African culture in the name of God began when Columbus first arrived in the Ancestors. Columbus' expedition was sponsored and financed by the Catholic Spanish monarchs Isabelle 1st and Ferdinand II. He presented himself to this financiers as a missionary of God. Immediately upon Columbus' arrival he planted a cross on Haitian soil as the symbol of the mission conferred by him by the Catholic monarch…Empowered by his religion and protected by his God, Columbus was mesmerized by the wonderful new country. He loved it. But, this love did not extend to the people: the indigenous Taints, Caribs or Arawak who were viewed and treated as sub-human; nor the Africans, forced into slavery considered savages in need of civilizing. (Aristide, 2006:338-9)

He interrogates on the colonial ban on the practice of African religions; instead of

guaranteeing the freedom and protection of all religious traditions, "African belief systems have

been denigrated when described as animism, fetishism, superstition, sorcery" (Aristide, 2006:344).

The preservation of a people's or cultural traditions is intrinsic to their sense of identity and place in the world. Aristide does not divorce culture and identity, personhood and tradition. He is very close to commit the sin of essentialism and biological determinism. On a positive note, Aristide's theological anthropology is an interdisciplinary discourse that takes seriously the social concerns, the lived-worlds and the lived-experiences of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed communities. For him, theological anthropology should be used as a tool to transform culture leading to social change, and the radical regeneration of the individual and the collective self. Anthropological theology should also be at the service of the marginalized groups and the masses. Aristide's anthropological theology seeks (1) to empower the poor and marginalized communities to find their hope in God their Savior and Liberator, and (2) to stimulate individuals toward the reconstitution of their community and the innovation of human relations. Our inference is based on this passage:

> For the while colonist every person is not a human being….After operation kidnapping the colonists clearly demonstrated through unprecedented violence that for them, every person is not a human being. A slave is a beast or an item possessed by the colonist. Therefore it is the consent of the colonist—and only his—that means anything. On this unbalanced, lopsided scale of justice the will of the colonists weighs more than any massive boulder; the will of the slave means nothing. When we say every person is a human being, the colonists reply not every person is a human being. (Aristide, 2011:37)

Moreover, it is good to remark that the (Christian) colonists endorsed a distorted view of theological anthropology and the nature of man, which in turn challenged the very humanity of the enslaved and the meaning of black existence; on the other hand, the Africans sustained a higher notion of humanity or black anthropology that was biblically rooted and far more superior than that of their Christian slave masters. Their understanding of human life and human nature give considerable important to their collective history of suffering, trauma, and death, as well as sense

of belonging to the a community of faith that sustained them and stimulated eschatological hope

and shalom:

> The slaves knew of real love and valued life. There was no confusion in their civilization between their humanity and inanimate objectives to which slavery sought to reduce them. Long before the invention of scientific apparatus our Ancestors had not difficulty in recognizing living entities as distinct from inanimate objects. They resisted efforts to be reduced to objects. The slaves drew a distinction between soul and body. The African ancestral vision was not too different from the earliest Hebrew conceptions of human nature. The early Hebrews, like all the other Semites, regarded man as composed of two elements, *basar,* or flesh *nefesh*, or breath. The *basar* was that material element that at death returned to dust…The *neflesh* or breath was an ethereal substance that inhabited the *basar*. The communion with Ancestors was so deeply rooted that the African slaves believed they would return home to Africa after the death of the *basar*. This belief was part of a faith that inspired the African slaves to continue to worship based on their tradition as others have done throughout history. (Aristide, 2006:339)

Religion is a paradoxical phenomenon. While Aristide stresses that the slaves relied on

ancestral religious sources to cope with the system of slavery and gain liberation, by contrast, the

colonists used religion to enslave the Africans and keep them in bondage.

> Religion would be the ready instrument of the colonists for this civilization process. However the Africans did not need the imposed religion of the colonists/missionaries or the scientific inventions of the West to understand what made people human beings. Drawing on their African system of beliefs, they refused to be objectified. No matter what name one gives to God, if one believes God is love and attempts to act from God's power, one has discovered God. (Aristide, 2006:339)

As James Cone has remarked about the indignity of slavery and the dehumanization of

black lives by slave masters and Christian slave masters:

> The logic of liberation is always incomprehensible to slave masters. From their position of power, masters never understand what slaves mean by "dignity." The only dignity they know is that of killing slaves, as if "superior" humanity depended on the enslavement of others. (2010:10)

6.7. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

In this recapitulation, we shall briefly summarize five major themes discussed in this chapter: relational love, existential hope and freedom, Ubuntu as love, the individual. and the community. What differentiates Aristide's theological anthropology to that of other black theologians (Pinn, Cone, Townes, Dwight, Magesa, and Bujo) we have examined in the previous chapter is Aristide's accent on the metaphor: "God is love" as the ground to construct a robust discourse of theological anthropology. Secondly, he is convinced that the philosophy of Ubuntu has stimulated hope leading to a life of freedom and independence for the enslaved Africans and descendants of Africa in Haiti. Aristide reconfigures Ubuntu as an ethics of care and love in the same sense he grounds his theological anthropology in the very idea that God is love. This notion of Ubuntu as a theology of love is absent in the writings of Hopkins, Cone, Evans, Magesa, and Bujo, we examined in the previous chapter. Aristide (2011:17) has suggested that "The philosophic thread that dominated the theology of the first Christians was a love that resembled very much the philosophy of Ubuntu." The "professed love" of the first Christians was relational and originated in their understanding of the Trinity as relational community. As Pinnock beautiful describes this wondrous phenomenon:

> The divine unity lies in the relationality of Persons, and the relationality is the nature of the unity. At the heart of this ontology is the mutuality and reciprocity among the Persons. Trinity means that shared life is basic to the nature of God. God is perfect sociality, mutuality, reciprocity and peace. As a circle of loving relationships, God is dynamically alive. There is only one God, but this one God is not solitary but a loving communion that is distinguished by overflowing life. (1996:31)

Next, Aristide's emphasis on the community not the individual is akin to the theological ideas we find in Magesa, Bejet, and Bujo. Reinhold Niebuhr in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* writes about the relationship between the community, individual, and freedom:

286

Man requires freedom in his social organization because he is 'essentially free, which is to say that he has the capacity for indeterminate transcendence over the processes and limitations of nature. This freedom enables him to make history and to elaborate communal organizations in boundless variety and in endless breadth and extent. But he also requires community because he is by nature social. He cannot fulfill his life within himself but only in responsible and mutual relations with is fellows. (1944:4)

In the previous chapter, both Pinn and Dwight used freedom as a signifier to understand the creation of man and the metaphor that man and woman were created in the Image of God. By contrary, Aristide defines the concept in its cultural and linguistic context to convey the notion of "rulership" and "dominion." Further, we have demonstrated that Aristide has appropriated the philosophical humanism of Ubuntu in his theological imagination to establish the relationship between God and man, man and his neighbor. We have noted his emphasis of these values: relational love, radical dependence, interdependence, community, human solidarity, justice, care, etc. Aristide, however, unlike other diasporic black theologians and thinkers examined in the last and present chapters, has argued for a theological origin of the concept of Ubuntu. This idea of community is also found in Hopkins, Magesa, and Masolo.

David Tracy asserts that the telos of the individual or human being is the search of a "common good, a common interest in emancipatory reason and a common commitment to the ideal of authentic conversation within a commonly affirmed pluralism and a commonly experienced conflictual situation" (Qtd in Hopkins, 2005:17).

In summary, in his theological anthropology, Aristide gives primacy to the community without undermining the importance and contribution of the individual to the collective progress and welfare of the collective self and the community at large. He interprets the African moral and humanist system of Ubuntu as relational love that facilitates interconnection, interdependence, and interactionality between individuals and communities, and promotes an ethics of care and mutual reciprocity. For him, Ubuntu simply means love. It is in this perspective we have identified his

287

doctrine of God and theological anthropology as a theology of love and relationality. Yet, Aristide seems to limit God's mission primarily to human bound activity, and in so doing, he failed to consider the role of God as God of all creation in the theology of salvation. For example, Haiti has suffered enormously from environmental degradation, and that a critical interpretation of Aristide's theology should also take in consideration the implications for the environment and God's plan for cosmic redemption or the ecomological dimension of salvation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VIV DECHOUKAJ, LONG LIVE UPROOTING!
ARISTIDE'S POLITICO-THEOLOGICAL OF VIOLENCE, AND THE ETHICS OF NECKLACING AND GANGSTERZATION

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters of this thesis, we have not addressed the political ambiguity that has marked his two presidencies, 1991-1996, and 2001-2004. Aristide overwhelming won the popular votes in the 1990 presidential election. He came to power in February 7, 1991; after seven months of governance, he was overthrown by a military coup on September 26, 1991. He was restored to power in 1994 to 1996, by the US government and International community. His second presidential administration lasted from 2001 to 2004. In both presidential elections, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won the popular vote, about 70% in 2001. For the second time, Aristide was ousted in 2004 in a coup d'état, and eventually was forced to exile in South Africa.

Many ardent critics of Aristide have characterized Aristide's political leadership and actions during his second administration as an era of intense popular violence, gangsterization, and chimèrization. Consequently, the goal of this chapter is twofold. First, it analyses these complex relationships and sensitive-ethical issues by interacting with the current scholarship on Aristide. Emphasis will be given on three vital issues: Jean-Bertrand Aristide's seemingly affiliation with the gangs of chimères, the deadly method of necklacing (Père Lebrun) which he ostensibly advocated, and violations of human rights his second administration carried out. Secondly, the chapter examines Aristide's first politico-theological treatise, *100 Vèsè dechoukaj. Va t'en Satan!* published in 1986 –at the fall of the Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier—to study whether he has formulated or articulated a theology of violence and aggression that will later shape his

political leadership and actions during his second presidential administration. It is evident in this early text, Aristide has perfected a rhetoric of bellicosity, framed within a particular theo-political hermeneutics and discourse, to damn the Duvalierists and Macoutes, and uproot the oppressors and distractors of the Haitian people. In other words, this chapter argues that the popular violence and gangsterism associated with Aristide's second-term presidency and his Fanmi Lavalas (FL)—his political party—supporters have deep roots in Aristide's theology of retributive justice; yet, such theology was constructed as a response to the Duvalier regime and to redeem the Haitian people from their oppressors and preserve them from future state-sponsored violence and aggression. Ultimately, this chapter argues that "defensive violence" is integral to Aristide's (political) theology and biblical theological hermeneutics.

There's certainly a tremendous divide between Aristide's theology and political administration. Undoubtedly, there exists a wide disunity between his theological ethics and political activities during his second presidency. For example, if the allegations against Aristide are true, then Aristide's promotion of a theology of love and mutual reciprocity in the public sphere somewhat denies his many political interventions as the former Head of the State of Haiti. One the other hand, we must be careful not to equate propaganda with reality—as both elements pertain to Aristide's religious faith and presidency.

As we have previously demonstrated in the preceding analysis, contemporary studies on Aristide not only leave many of his theological ideas unexplored, they have not given serious consideration to his theological ethics and anthropology—with the exception of the works of Dupuy (2007) and Hallward (2007) who examined his theological discourse in passing . Dupuy and Hallward have left so many holes and unconnected threads. Additional studies (i.e. Sprague, Nesbitt, Achille, Wilentz, Abbot, Girard, Saint-Paul, etc.) on Aristide Aristide put great accent on

Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a politician and President of Haiti. These important studies have contributed enormously to our understanding of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a president-activist on behalf of the Haitian poor and the disfranchised, but there remains an intellectual void to investigate the subject matter as a politico-theologian activist, which has been one of the central objectives of this doctoral thesis.

Aristide's political actions and affiliations have dismayed or demoralized many Aristide supporters, scholars, and particularly the Haitian masses who were faithfully committed to his leadership vision during his second administration. It will not be an exaggeration to declare that there are two Aristides: Aristide the theologian, and Aristide the President. Both figures are scandalous and irreconcilable. The person and works of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a Theologian-Priest, and President-Activist embody a high level of ambiguity, incoherency, and to some extent, have fostered a life of terrific political disorder and terror in the Haitian society. As one fervent Aristide's supporter has remarked, "Aristide always has a double-face, a double-game, at every juncture...He looks at the moment to see how to act so he can use it to his advantage and make political capital from it (Qtd in Abbot, 2011: 375).

The goal of this chaper is not to demonize Aristide and reconcile Aristide the Theologian with Aristide the President. The Aristide phenomenon is representative of the indecisive nature of human nature, which Aristide's curious personality embodies. We take into consideration that individuals do evolve and progress with time and change, and that the chronology of one's life and circles of influence may impact their ideas and choices. Of course, in the struggle for democracy in Haiti, President Aristide made some extremely difficult choices and unfortunate decisions as he came to a better understanding of the Haitian reality and the struggle to lead a people, who have

been starved, oppressed, and abused by various powerful forces, into a more promising economic future and democratic life.

As compared to previous administrations, the Aristide administration was very progressive and forward-looking. Aristide has supported and invested in many social programs, and provided substantial resources to alleviate poverty and improve the country's literary level. He campaigned to ameliorate the living condition of the Haitian poor and working class and incessantly crusaded for income distribution and job creation in the country. For example, in his first presidency and partially in his second term, Aristide championed the cause of the Haitian poor and the oppressed majority, and his idea of justice not only implied retributive justice and defensive violence; in Aristide's political theology, justice also bears the notion of relationality and solidarity with the poor (Joseph 2014). The accomplishments of the Fanmiy Lavalas Party in Haiti are well documented and attested by various sources (Auguste 2003).

Nontheless, like his political predecessors, his ardent critics have consistently demonstrated that Aristide's second administration has contributed massively to a disastrous climate in the Haitian society including political terror, human rights abuse and violation, popular violence, money laundering, government corruption, and political totalitarianism and authoritarianism—which have radically transformed Haiti's civil and political societies. In this chapter, we are also interested in commenting on these vital matters, as well as to reinterpret aforementioned studies that depict Aristide as an angry-power leader, a murderer, human rights violator, and the President-Activist who has used his power to exploit the Haitian masses whom he claimed to dignify, humanize, and protect.

As previously mentioned in the introduction, Aristide received a massive support from various segments of the Haitian population in his second presidential election in 2001. Nonetheless, the ruling class and local elites contested his mandate. Many of these individuals were empowered by the American to strategically destabilize the country and overthrow any critics of the dominant order. Aristide's advocacy of dechoukaj, necklacing, and chimerization should be understood in the context of his participatory democratic and retributive justice projects aiming at protecting the perilous nation of Haiti that was under attack by the Duvalierists and Macoutists or the people's oppressors. Hence, Aristide's support of popular violence is retributive and vindicated.

On the other hand, many have argued that his famous "*Père Lebruns*" speech which he delivered in Creole in September 27, 1991 (See, "Did Aristide support violence and pe lebrun in Haiti? - Speech - Sept. 27, 1991") in which he advocated necklacing was misunderstood and mistranslated in English, and that his words were twisted by CIA operatives (Ridgeway 1994). Interestingly, in the speech, Aristide's playful Creole metaphors and evocative images were clearly understood by the Haitian people; the intent of his message was not ambivalent nor have the Haitian people misunderstood what he wanted them to carry out. Historically, necklacing was a common method that anti-Duvalierist and Macoutist opponents—supported by the general Haitian masses who have been terrorized by and were victims of the Duvalier regime—used to slaughter Haiti's boogeymen and Duvalierists.

This deadly method became popular in Haitian society at the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc") in 1986—through the popular uprising of the suffering Haitian masses. Necklacing was interpreted as an act of vindication and retributive justice from a people who have refused to suffer from the hands of their oppressors and abusers; they were determined to reclaim their

humanity and venture emancipatory future possibilities in the post-Duvalier era. From the fall of "Baby Doc" in 1986 to the ascension of Aristide in presidential power, necklacing was practiced nationally in every major city and town in Haiti to end the injurious reign of Macoutism and Duvalierism and to exterminate any potential oppressor or associates of the Duvalier regime in Haiti.

We have listened numerous times to the famous "*Père Lebruns*" Creole speech and concluded that President Aristide was not alluding to Haiti's Constitution, as many have traditionally claimed, as the catalyst to assess the activities and deeds of the Macoutists. It is clear that he was unequivocally promoting necklacing as a vengeful mechanism to cleanse the land from the fearful terror of Macoutism and the poisonous regime of Duvalierism. Aristide did not invent the necklacing death-penalty method in Haiti; he simply reinforced it in his punitive justice campaign. It is important to point out that for many decades in Haitian history, under the ferocious leadership of both Duvaliers (Francois and Jean-Claude Duvalier), Haitian Macoutes and Duvalierists had slayed thousands of innocent people and imprisoned those individuals who were perceived as anti-Duvalier. As many thinkers and critics have maintained, both the dechoukaj and necklacing methods linked with Aristide's second administration were therefore used by the Haitian people as self-defense. Others have put forward the idea that the the Haiitian people tried to shield their communities from paramilitary terrorists armed by Haiti's elite minority and Dominican military; therefore, one should not lump all Lavalas militants in together as criminal thugs for they were trying to stop the mass killing of poor and innocent Haitians (Sprague 2012.

Therefore, Aristide's unfavorable political actions did not occur in a vacuum. His failure not to cooperate with business interests and conservatives who dismayed his left supporters and radical FL movement or his various interventions to make peace between gangs in the Cite Soleil

may have angered Aristide's enthusiastic critics, Haitian elites, and the ruling class in the country (Griffin 2004).

7.2. ARISTIDE AND THE PRACTICE OF PERE LEBRUN (NECKLACING), AND GANSTERIZATION (CHIMERES)

Nonetheless, during his two presidencies, Aristide has used inflammatory speeches to fuel popular protest and violence against the bourgeoisie class, the political dominant class, and to unify the masses against the wealthy and elite minority in Haiti, which eventually led to national disunity and the animosity between the poor and the rich, the mulatto and black and brown-skinned Haitians. In addition, Aristide encouraged his supporters to use the deadly method of necklacing to annihilate his political opponents and the *Macoutes* (bogeymen; macoutism was a paramilitary/armed forces which Francois Duvalier created with the goal to maintain his political power and totalitarianism.). In a powerful speech he delivered to the Haitian people, Aristide deployed the rhetoric of violence to motivate the Haitian masses to practice the necklacing (*Père Lebrun*) method and to threaten his political foes. He called upon his Fanmi Lavalas (FL) followers to give the *Macoutes* "what they deserve," and named the deadly device, necklacing, "a nice tool," and "a nice instrument:"

> If you catch someone who does not deserve to be where he is, do not fail to give him what he deserves. Do not fail to give him what he deserves! Do not fail to give him what he deserves! Do not fail to give him what he deserves….*Macoutes* are excluded from the political game. *Macoutes* are excluded from the political game. Do not fail to give them what they deserve. Do not fail to give them what they deserve….
>
> If we watch one, do not fail to give him what he deserves. What a nice tool! What a nice instrument! What a nice device! It is a pretty one. It is elegant, attractive, splendorous, graceful, and dazzling. It smells good. Wherever you go, you feel like smelling it. It is provided for by the Constitution, which bans *Macoutes* from the political scene. Whatever happens to them is their problem. (Qtd in Girard, 2010:128; "Aristide's 'Pe Lebrun' Speech…")

Aristide's notorious *Pere Lebrun* speech was quickly translated in English by Raymond A. Joseph, the chief editor of *Haiti Observateur*. The full English text is found in Appendix II. In another speech (July 1991), Aristide called for popular violence against his foes, as he warned the Haitan people: "When you are in your literacy class, you are learning to think about 'Père Lebrun,' it's because you have to know when to use it, and where to use it. And you may never use it again in a state where law prevails" (Qtd in Nesbitt, 2013:218). According to Robert Fatton (2002:84), "When Aristide made his famous 'Pere Lebrun' speech on September 27, the speech in which he rhetorically extolled in front of a huge crowd the virtues of necklacing his *Macoute* enemies, he had already lost the battle. The speech was a desperate attempt to prevent the army and the bourgeoisie from striking down Lavals" (Fatton 2002:84). Dupuy's harsh criticisms of the Aristide administration is worth noting below.

> As President, it was Aristide's ultimate responsibility to uphold the rule of law and human rights, "to refrain from any statement that could be understood to support *Pere Lebrun*, and to speak out firmly and consistently against this barbaric practice." Aristide failed to do so because he became deluded by his own charismatic powers and believed that, with the masses behind him, he was invincible and that he could rule without respecting the law and without winning over the bourgeoisie, the parliament, or the army. This was his greatest mistake. The error that Aristide made in all these instances, where popular violence was used or threatened with is explicit or implicit encouragement, was political and not moral. It stemmed from his failure to distinguish between democratic rights and violent and illegal threats to democracy (and his presidency). (2007:130)

Evidently, for many Haitian nationals, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was "the spiritual father of the Haitian state" (Saint Paul, 2015:64), although his pitfalls are numerous. He has failed to condemn the threat and use of necklacing by his supporters. He even recommended it as a tool to annihilate anyone who opposed his power or administration, and as a way to emancipate the Haitian people and cleanse the land from the vestiges of Duvalierism, Macoutism, and political totalitarianism. For him, Duvalier's *Macoutes* have kept the Haitian people in perpetual bondage

296

and terror. Necklacing is cathartic violence for the President-Theologian almost in the same way Frantz Fanon (1961/1963) has endorsed the use of cathartic violence toward decolonization and post-colonial independence. Toward this goal, he used the gangs of the *Chimères* to pacify the country and maintain political leaderhip. Jeb Sprague has provided a counter perspective that these events and affiliations must be studied within the context of "years of economic and political destabilization launched as part of the hyper militarized post-9/11 Bush-regime and the country under attack with the police force unable to protect itself—that at this last moment in the last few weeks some supporters were mobilized to halt the paramilitary invasion" ("Correspondence with the author," January 2017; Sprague 2012). On the other hand, in his "Foreword" to Dupux's (2007) excellent study on Aristide, *The Prophet and Power,* Frank Laraque reiterates the significance of Aristide's liberation theology to overthrow the Duvalierist regime and take over the leadership of the popular movement (Fanmi Lavals). According to Laraque (2007: x), Aristide has achieved both objectives, "mainly through the politization of religious faith: the Christian faith, with its teaching of miracles, divine intervention, and the infallibility of the word of the messiah or prophet, and the Vodou faith, with its 'power of the point,' which, when given by a *hougan* (Vodou priest), allows the receiver to disappear and be invulnerable to bullets." In Chapter two, within the backdrop of Liberation theology, we have remarked that it is historically true that Aristide's political messages bears a messianic overtone aimed at the emancipation of the Haitian masses and the poor; on the other hand, unless one was an eyewitness, it is very difficult to know how he had used precisely the power of the Vodou religion to ascend to political power.

Aristide's charismatic messianism and prophetic rhetoric, framed within the logic of liberation theology, has been used to fortify and unite various base ecclesiastic groups in the country and Haitians of all social classed and education background. The force of Aristide's

political theology and his religious approach to political activism and social issues have produced tremendous psychological effects on the Haitian masses—toward collective agency, communitarianism, and civic engagement. One can even speak of a particular Haitian liberative psychology associated with the era of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Unfortunately, only seven months in his first presidential term, the Haitian military, supported by the Haitian bourgeoisie and elite class, the United States, France, and Canada, overthrew the first democratically-elected President. Consequently, would Aristide abandon participatory democracy, democratic communitarianism, and radical egalitarianism he once promoted?

During Aristide's second and final presidential term, his administration became shunned and increasingly totalitarian because after his return to Haiti in October 1994, his main objective was "to monopolize political power for himself and his Lavalas Family (FL) party to create what Robert Fatton aptly called 'a presidential monarchism bent on suppressing any alternative, independent power" (Dupuy, 2004:59). According to Dupuy (2007: xv), President Jean-Bertrand Aristide "relied on armed gangs, the police, and authoritarian practices to suppress his opponents, all the while cultivating a self-serving image as defender of the poor." As Jeb Sprague (2012:290) has interpreted, for Dupuy, "Political violence is depicted as if it was perpetuated equally by sectors of the ex-military (aligned with the bourgeoisie) and urban gangs (alined with Lavalas)— two heads of the same coin—where extralegal groups carry out violence for politicians hungering for state power."

Aristide's controversial administration and bipolar personality created confusion among those who have committed to his democratic ideals and campgained with him during his first presidential oeperation in the early 1990s:

On the other hand, Aristide, Aristide preached class conciliation, and the entire social democratic project of his government was based on forming a broad consensus and a class alliance among the bourgeoisie, the working class, and the peasants. On the other hand, he threatened to unleash popular violence against and expropriate the bourgeoisie when the latter refused to go along with his program. He preached respect for the constitution and the rule of law, yet he sanctioned the use of force if necessary to achieve his vision of justice, even when that contravened the law. He declared his adherence to the democratic process and the separation of powers, yet he disdained all established political parties, sought to bypass the National Assembly and the judiciary, and even encouraged his popular supporters to harass and intimidate parliamentarians and the justices who opposed him or sought to exercise their independent functions. (Ibid: 133)

Interestingly, this same Dupuy could conclude his assessment on Aristide with this balanced and sympathetic statement: "For all his political errors and even the abuse of his powers as president, the human rights record under the first Aristide government showed dramatic improvement, compared favorably with the record of any of his predecessors, and certainly paled in comparison with the reign of terror that followed his overthrow" (Ibid: 131). Aristide's second presidency would be marked by a zeal for revenge, self-protection, and the annihilation of his opponents. Correspondingly, Aristide was more concerned about the threats of globalization, the Haitian dominant and bourgeois classes and their international allies than unifying the people and bringing together various divided segments and groups in the Haitian society.

The rise of gangs of *Chimères,* an internal terrorist group in Haiti which many individuals associated with Aristide's second administration, is well documented by critics:

It is important to note, however, that well before his reelection, Aristide and other Lavalas officials were using the *chimes* as a force de frappe against his opponents. Many acts of violence and a number of killings occurred between 1999 and May 2000 elections, including the assassination in April 2000 of the renowned journalist Jean Dominique, a onetime supporter turned critic of Aristide. In March 1999 gangs of chimes used violence and demanded the dismissal of the electoral council over a dispute with President Preval on the dates for the new elections. Five people were reported killed in fights among criminal gangs. In April 2000 and on the day of Dominique's funeral, some chimes burned down the headquarters of the *Espace de Concertation* and threatened to kill Evans Paul, leader of the *Konfederasyon Inite Demokratik* and former ally of Aristide in 1990… The creation of armed groups that would become the chimes, however, goes back to 1995 after Aristide had abolished the Haitian Army and a new Haitian National Police was created

299

with help and training from the United States, France, and Canada. Aristide understood the need to control that force and placed trusted allies in its command. It was then that the link between Aristide and the chimes was formed. The director of the police, along with the minister of interior and the chief of presidential security, served as the liaison with the gangs, who received cash and weapons for their operations. (Dupuy, 2007: 144)

Apparently, Dupuy seems to lump all supporters who organized to halt the coup together, and implies that they're criminals and violent individuals. He has overlooked the historical trajectories and social contexts that led to the emergence of Haiti's Chimeres and the close relationship they enjoyed with Aristide's administrations. The atrocious practices and crimes of this terrorist organization in the Haitian society is well-documented by many critics:

> The *Chimères*, along with the police, would attack and kill members of the opposition, violently disrupt their demonstrations, burn their residences and headquarters, intimidate members of the media critical of the government, and engage in countless other human and civil rights violation and impunity…Some leaders also became a force in their own right by forming criminal gangs that acted autonomously, turned their neighborhoods into wards under their control, engaged in drug trafficking and other criminal activities, and even requisitioned the government itself. (Fatton, 2002: 145)

Robert Fatton, a fierce critic of Aristide's government, has made similar remarks as those by Dupuy. He perceived Aristide's administration as a continuity of Haiti's ineffective governance and political despotism: "The rise of its *Chimères,* its absolutist rhetoric, the alarming levels of governmental corruption and incompetence, the emergence of a 'narco-state,' and the political magouilles (fraud) of its leaders bode very poorly for a successful Lavalasian democracy" (Fatton, 2002:121). Aristide's administration has resulted in the decline of Haitian democracy and the destabilization of Haiti's civil and political societies. Aristide and the associated Chimères have become a serious threat to Haiti's democratic progress, and national peace and unity.

> Old Duvalierists are not the only menace to democratic governance, however. The Chimeres, which are closely linked to Fanmi Lavalas, have also contributed to a climate of insecurity by threatening and indeed using violence against political opponents… While their slogan "Aristide or death" and veiled appeals for more "Pere Lebruns" have worsened social polarization, they should not mask the reality that well-known supporters of the murderous military regime have gone unpunished pursuing their political activities. In fact,

300

the moral dilemma of seeking national reconciliation while at the same time establishing the rule of justice has remained a Gordian knot. (Fatton, 2002:152-3)

Many individuals have established striking parallels ad connections, and similar practices between Duvalier's "*Tonton Macoutes*" (bogeymen was a paramilitary/armed forces which Francois Duvalier created with the goal to maintain his political power and totalitarianism.) and Aristide's Chimères (Saint-Paul, 2015: 87-102). The historical alliance and bond between Aristide and Chimères can be explained as a Patron-Client relationship. "Clientelism is an "alternative means for integration where coercive power is not sufficiently coercive to command widespread compliance and where conceptions of legitimacy are as yet too weak or circumscribed to produce consensus" (Fatton, 2002: 181). Aritide depended considerably on the *Chimères* to frighten and pacify his antagonists and enforce his political vision. He would, however, "prefer a consensus through compromise rather than violence… Always lurking in Haiti's shadowy politics and always on the verge of activation, the *Chimères* constitute Aristide's weapon of deterrence (Ibid). How have the Haitian people responded to the political violence and the climate of terrorism and fear in the Haitian society?

The collective reaction of the Haitian people was puzzling. A great majority of Aristide's supporters who have been wih his movement since its inception distrusted his ability to govern and unite the country. Other supporters have left the Lavalal political party. The Haitian people feared for their life and of family members, relatives, and friends. Haitians wanted safety in their neighborhoods and to live in peace and harmony with each other; some were distressed that the Aristide administration was not acted swiftly to protect them and their family. They wanted justice to reign supreme in the Haitian society. The Haitian people "wanted justice, that most elusive of conditions. They wanted Aristide to resign, or they wanted him to stay and honor the dimmed promises that once shone so brightly, instead, they got relentless insecurity, terror and

301

bloodshed"(Abbott, 2011:414). 2003 was the year of terror, death, considerable inseruity, and exceeding fear as the Chimeres and associated violent gangs marched aggressively in the streets and neighborhoods of Haiti's major cities and towns to intimated Aristide's oppositions and terrorized the people to death. "Although several changes of human-rights abuses have been leveled against the turbulent second Aristide administration, which lasted from 2000 until he was overthrown in 2004, none has been proved" (Abbott, 2013:213). How did the the Aristide administration respond to these allegations and the cri de coeur of the Haitian people?

The administration failed to act effectively and positively to these charges nor was it successful in ending popular violence and deadly gang activities in the strets. By contrast, "Aristide fought back, urging those of his still-loyal *chimères* to retaliate, attack, shed blood, save his presidency…They beat, raped and killed, including by decapitation…Aristide armed these people and he can no longer control them" (Abbott, 2014:416-7). Paradoxically, Aristide's second administration has contributed to some of the most historic changes in Haitian history in the sphere of politics, culture, education, economy, and Haiti's relaitons with the Intertional Community.

> To placate Haiti's millions of vodoun practitioners, he [Aristide] issued a decree recognizing vodoun and permitting its *houngans* to officiate at weddings, baptisms, and funerals. He also increased the minimum wage to 70 *gourdes d*aily, although the plunging exchange rate between *gourde* and U.S. dollar made this gesture ineffectual. He initiated a two-week Christmas of Solidarity Program which, at a cost of $ 1.6 million, offered hundreds of poor Haitians bowls of soup, gifts and free concerts, and gave out 20,000 fifty-day jobs. Aristide also sent the French government a bill for $ 21, 685, 135, 571.48, the equivalent (he calculated) of the 90 million gold francs France had exacted in reparations from Haiti after the 1804 Revolution. Radio and television spots declared, "Hand over my dollars so I can celebrate my independence!" France declined to hand over a single cent. (2011:414)

As observed in our analysis above, the Aristide phenomenon and the pursuit of a democratic life in Haiti are complex issues to understand fully. In 2007, philosopher Peter Hallward (2007) published the controversial and significant text, *Damming the Flood: Haiti and*

302

the Politics of Containment, to chronicle Aristide's journey to the presidency and how the international community opposes his administration and suppresses Haiti's steps toward progress, under Aristide's leadership. Hallward also wrote his text to counter many claims made by Alex Dupuy; he articulated an alternative view favorable to Aristide's presidential leadership and democratic abd justice projects in Haiti. Similarly, Jeb Sprague's (2012) groudbreaking book, *Paramilitarism and The Assault on Democracy in Haiti* contains an appendix in which he critically assesses the claims made both by Dupuy and Hallward. Undoubtedly, Sprague is on the side of Hallward, and has downplayed the shortcomings in his work. Finally, Nick Nesbitt's (2013) seminal text, *Caribbean Critique* provides a succinct but critical evaluation of Dupuy's work while condemning his major claims against Aristide's administration. He, like Sprage, vindicates Hallward's preferential treatment or evaluation of Aristide. In the subsequent paragraphs, we would like to provide an overview of this complex conversation between Dupuy, Hallward, Nesbitt, and Sprague. It is clear in their critical assessment of Dupuy's work, Hallward, Nesbitt, and Sprague articulate a positive attitude toward Aristide's presidency while challenging Dupuy and other critics regarding the administration of the Theologian-President.

First of all, Sprague (2012:290) postulates that while Dupuy has faulted Aristide and the Fanmi Lavalas (FL) movement for the disintegration of democracy in Hiti. Hallward claims that Aristide's supporters and the Lavalas movement have been subject to political violence throughout Aristide's presidential terms. As Sprague infers, "Though not mythologizing Aristide, Hallward seeks to combat the demonization of this widely misunderstood figure and the political projects he helped found" (Ibid). Nesbitt, who draws considerable parallelisms and differences between the texts by Hallward and Dupuy, highlights that both writers

> are highly critical of the role of American foreign policy and its systematic attempts to undermine the process of democratization in Haiti. Each is fundamentally supportive of the

303

promise Aristide represented to open the political terrain to the excluded Haitian multitude, and both describe the degree to which North Atlantic neo-liberal policies in the era of globalization have undermined economic and political autonomy in Haiti. They agree as well on the close relation of these policies with the extension of US imperial hegemony, the intensive coalition of the US and the Haitian elite in the attempt to undermine Aristide's progressive social and political reforms. (2013:216).

Furthermore, Sprague blames Dupuy for ignoring the perspective of the Haitian masses and the poor, and Aristide's support-base: Fanmi Lavalas. He posits that Dupuy's study is heavily dependent on "the dominant narratives of well-heeled NGOs, corporate media, the organizations such as the Organization of the American States (OAS)" (Ibid: 290). He disagrees with Dupuy's conclusion that Aristide's chief goal was to cement his own personal power, and equally rejects Dupuy's thesis that "Aristide went down the same path as his dictatorial predecessors" (ibid). Sprague also discounts the allegations that FL partisans have carried out mass killings during the period of Aristide's second term, which Aristide himself never condoned. By contrast, he believes that Hallward's careful investigation about human rights issue in Haiti during Aristide's second administration or presidency leads to contrary conclusion.

> In fact, the vast majority of political violence during the second Aristide administration, just as throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, was carried out by armed groups backed by elites, not "mobs" backed by corrupt FL bureaucrats. The argument is made plausible only by ignoring the victims of rightist political violence and taking at face value the narrative presented by the corporate media…The fact that participants in this popular demonstration set fire to a few homes and office buildings owned by opposition elites is further justification of Dupuy's thesis: FL was overcome with a violent mob mentality, intent on cracking the skulls of the opposition. But, as it turns out, the claims made by Lavalas had been correct on two accounts: (1) the December 2001 assault *was* an attempted coup d'etat; and (2) elites in the opposition were in fact bankrolling the paramilitaries. Defensive violence, as Peter Halwlard calls it, was at times the only proven method the poor had to defend themselves and their communities against the return of the military and paramilitaries and preserve their few gains after years of struggle against the country's deeply entrenched social order. (Sprauge, 2012:291-2)

In regard to Dupuy's claim that Aristide has deployed gangs of *Chimères* to arouse fear and appease the Haitian masses, and to silence the political opposition, Sprague acknowledges

that the weeks before the second overthrow of Aristide, popular organizations, gangs members, and militants associated with Aristide's FL "mobilized against the paramilitary 'uprising'" (Ibid:293). For Sprague, the violence and crime committed by Aristide's supporters could "hardly support the sweeping claims made by Dupuy and others that Aristide had an informal army of gangs under his direction" (Ibid).

In the same line of reasoning, in his appraisal of Dupuy's work, Nesbitt arrived at a similar conclusion. Hallward, Sprague, and Nesbit maintain that Aristide's deployment of "defensive violence" to eliminate his opponents was in the context of self-defense and protecting the nation. Aristide has not always tried to unity the people, seeking reconciliation and peace between various segments of the Haitian population, until the last moment he was ousted from poler. For Nescitt, Aristide's promotion of peopular promotion of popular violence may be compared to the vicious nature of the Haitian Revolution, in which (1) enslaved Africans overthrew the atrocious colonial system, (2) abolished slavery in the island, and (3) founded the first Black Republic in the Western world so that they could live free and free of their masters' oppression and humiliation. As Nesbitt avers:

> The inherent, foundational relation between violence and democracy lies at the center of this debate. In defending this limited use of popular violence, I would argue that Aristide in fact remains faithful to one of the primary lessons of the Haitian Revolution… The popular violence of the Haitian Revolution was rightful insofar as the situation of plantation slavery was, in the political language of the period, precisely a state of nature prior to any imaginable social contract between a slave and master. Thus, in the case of slavery, the necessarily violent imposition of a novel political order escaped any ban on revolutionary violence. (2013:218)

One must acknowledge the difficulty and multifaceted dynamics between popular violence and the collective effort of individuals to actualize democratic ideals in society; in other words, democracy is not always equated with sustaining peace and tranquility. Democracy like freedom is always a process, an on-going event, and contingent to both internal and external forces that

305

could alter or reorient its course in society. In some cases, defensive violence and distributive justice will be necessary for the triumphal of the democratic life. The work of democracy is the antithesis of human oppression, political totalitarianism, and the politics of alienation.

In justifying the "defensive violence" theory, Aristide's supporters interpreted the use of popular violence by the Aristide administration substantiated by vicious Lavalas militants to be necessary in order to orchestrate a new political process and democratic life in Haiti. To put it simply, Aristide's partisan have failed to interrogate the use of cathartic violence because of the justifiable reaon to prevent Haiti from failing into a state of (chaotic) disorder and preclude further mass killing of innocent Haitians.

> There exist no absolute, categorical criteria to determine when a democratic order is threatened in its very existence and popular violence thus justified. For any fragile democracy, from those of the French revolution in the early 1790s, to that of Haiti in the years after 1804, and the Weimar Republic in 1933, such a decision will always remain an intensely political process of reflection, discussion, and negotiation in reference to universal democratic norms of equality and freedom. (Nesbitt, 2013:218)

As a word of caution, we should not, however, characterize all Aristide's supporters as brutal militants who believed that redemptive violence was the best solution to achieve national peace and unity. In a historic interview, Peter Hallward conducted with Jean-Bertrand Aristide in July 20, 2006 (See Appendix III), Hallward has asked the former Haitian President about the place of violence in his governance, his association with the *chimères*, and how he has maintained political order and power during his presidency.

Clearly, in his response above, Aristide dismissed any affiliation with the *chimères* nor has he affirmed any personal support of popular violence and that his administration was relied on armed gangs to stir collective fear among his enemies and in order to maintain his political power. Aristide interpreted these allegations as false, unhistorical, and detrimental to his character and

306

(presidential) leadership ethics. He accused Haiti's elite class, the United States, France, and Canada for creating these pseudo narratives that have no historical basis, and that they also supported fabricated media coverages.

> In as many press press conferences as his South African hosts permitted, and in interviews and the occasional article, he expressed no remorse about his corrupt, chaotic and violent regime. In his version of events he had been sinned against but had ever sinned; he had been a blameless president with many important accomplishments, albeit one who confessed to not being a good politician. His opponents and critics, he declared, must be in the thrall of white men. (Abbott, 2014:416-7)

The historical reality of these transpired experiences is that the Aristide administration attempted to stop continuous paramilitary violent attacks, and it was successful—even if it were through popular violence and vindictive retaliation.

7.3. VIV DECHOUKAJ, LONG LIVE UPROOTING! A THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

Beyond what is discussed above, Aristide's hermeneutic of violence is rooted in a constructive (re-) reading of the Biblical text; it is particularly evident in his inflammatory prose articulated in his Creole text, *100 Vèsè dechoukaj. Va t'en Satan*. The paradox is that Aristide was unswervingly committed to a rhetoric of peace and unity, and relationality and mutual reciprocity which is also sourced in the Biblical narrative (Joseph 2014). Aristide wrote this text to empower the Haitian masses, the poor, the peasants, and Haiti's grassroots movements to radically uproot the Duvalierists, the Macoutes, as well as the powers and institutions that oppressed and exploited the Haitian people. Historically, the text came to us in a tragic moment in Haitian history in which the Duvalier regime was terrorizing the Haitian people, slaughtering them by thousands, and torturing in prison innocent prisoners and anti-Duvalier suspects.

It is a text of radical protest in the search for human justice and shalom. In this book, Aristide employs a politico-theological pedagogy to provoke the Haitian people to protest against

their oppressors and even exercise popular violence toward them. A possible rendering of the Creole text can be translated as *100 Verses of Uprooting: Go Away Satan*! The word "dechoukaj" (uprooting) in the title signals violent symbolism. He published this text within the historical context and trajectories of Jean Claude Duvalier's ("Baby Doc") (1971-1986) ruthless dictatorship and political aggressive authoritarianism; the text also appeared in the era of Macoutism and paramilitarism associated with the Duvalier regime. The pedagogical strategy used in this book includes three basic elements: shocking images, biblical references, and short commentaries that creatively reinterpret both the scriptural references and the illustrated images. This revolutionary text is written in Haitian Creole and supplemented by evocative photos based on the biblical data; it clearly implies that Aristide was written a political theology of demonstration in which he envisioned the collective Haitian masses as his audience. In this forceful politico-theological text, Aristide wrote with boldness, force, clarity, and precision to stimulate sustaining faith and equally to call the suffering Haitian masses to decisive action against their political exploiters and oppressors.

While we understand that in some liberation circles, the term "political theology" is problematic and that some Liberation Theologians often dissociate it with the intellectual traditions of the West as they argue their epistemology provides an alternative paradigm and intellectual framework. Some even employ the phrase "political praxis" as a substitute. For the sake of clarification, we want to qualify what we mean by the concept of political theology before moving forward with our exegetical analysis on Aristide's text.

What is Political theology?

Traditionally, political theology is an attempt to establish the link between political action and the Christian faith. While the concept of "Liberation theology" can be traced to the mid-sixties

and with the publication of Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, "'Political theology,'
on the other hand, is as old as the threefold stoic division of theology into natural, mythical and
political (Lakeland, 2012: 224). Proponents of political theology believe that faith is an essential
ingredient to the political order of modern societies. Many Christian thinkers have traced the birth
of political theology to the Hellenistic beginnings and the Greco-Roman contexts of the new
religion called "Christianity," in which the first early Jewish-Christians attempted to reinterpret
the political order of the day from a theological conviction and lens; with great zeal, they also
ventured to impose on their culture the moral vision and theological values of their religion in hope
that they would be used as tools for cultural renewal, and progressive social and political change.

> What engenders political theology is the accession of Christianity, the segregation of
> church and state through the "two kingdoms" dualism that Augustine pioneered and Luther
> enshrined. It is so much that Christianity, as commonly supposed, decanted the "spiritual"
> from the political. It is that Christian otherworldliness gave a superordinate impetus to the
> values of charity and forgiveness, which was never an ingredient in the formulation of the
> theory of the ancient polis. Even since that time Christian "politics" has always had a
> superpolitical purpose and the coming of democracy (or perhaps the democracy to come)
> embodies this tension. (Rasche, 2008:108)

Having noted this important remark above, many thinkers have attributed the origin of the
concept of "political theology" to Carl Schmitt; in *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the
Concept of Sovereignty*, Schmitt attempts to establish close links between Western liberalism,
political governance, and the Judeo-Christian Theo-political arrangement. Famously, he declares:

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological
> concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred
> from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became
> the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure…Sovereign is he
> who decides on the exception (1988:36).

Nonetheless, Paul W. Kahn is cynical about the logical reasoning and credibility of
Schmitt's perplexing thesis:

The claim of a theological origin for political concepts stand against the widely accepted belief that the turn away from religion by figures such as Locke, Hume, and Smith—not to speak of Machiavelli and Hobbes—laid the groundwork for the modern theory of the state. The social contract, not the divine covenant, is at the center of modern political theory. The localization of sovereignty in a single subject who decides is similarly inconsistent with modern beliefs about the rule of law, separation of powers, and judicial review. Today, we are more likely to ask "what exception?" rather than who decides on it. How, after all, can we reconcile Schmitt's definition of sovereignty with that class line of American jurisprudence, "extraordinary conditions neither create nor enlarge constitutional power"? In a system of popular sovereignty, we do not know a "he" who can claim to be the sovereign; in our system of constitutional law, we do not know a state of exception. (2011:1-2)

On one hand, in the context of the American society, for example, Kahn acknowledges the great hall of divide that sets apart the realm of the religious and the sphere of the politics; on the other hand, he concurs:

If sovereignty remains a concept necessary to constitutional law and to our practice of American exceptionalism, then we are not yet released from the burdens of faith. America, of course, remains a land of religious faith, while Western European has become a largely secular society. Faith in one form or another is a deep part of our political culture and of our political psychology. While law might be a product of reason and thus move easily from a national to a transnational discourse—the discourse of reason always claims universality for itself—self-government is a master of will, which is always particular. (2011:17)

As Kahn has written, "Political theology cannot ignore claims of justice"—there must still be a content to one's laws—but it explores the fundamental categories of the imaginative construction of self and other that are at stake in our political life" (2011:20). He goes on to provide some helpful insights about the interplays between politics and religion as they pertain to the field of political theology. He makes the following observation:

Political theology understands politics as an organization of everyday life founded on an imagination of the sacred. Both politics and religion share a rhythm of movement between the ordinary and the extraordinary—between norm and exception. Approaching politics from the perspective of the exceptional demand for killing and being killed, which has

310

characterized the most intense moments of Western political experience, we can see that organized religion is just one form in which the experience of the sacred is named and embodied. The political formation of the experience of the sacred is the subject of political theology. (2011:23)

Contrary to Schmitt who locates the beginning of the modern state to the Judeo-Christian tradition, Mark Lilla (2007) locates the genesis of the modern nation-state in the secular tradition of Western history. He insists that "understanding begins when we place the state against that tradition" (Kahn 2011:18). Lilla (2007:3) interprets Political theology "as a primordial form of human thought and for millennial has provided a deep well of ideas and symbols for organizing society and inspiring action, for good and ill." Acknowledging the great intellectual break between the theological (or the religious) and the political at the dawn of Western modernity and Enlightenment, Lilla avers that modern societies in the West no longer in need of the Christian theological tradition, that once shaped human life and worldview in pre-Enlightenment era and provided orientation and guidance in matters of ethics and political decisions or governance.

> Our complacency is partly understandable, given that Western liberal democracies have succeeded in creating an environment where public conflict over competing revelations is virtually unthinkable today…. Yet there is a deeper reason why we in the West find it difficult to understand the enduring attraction of political theology. It is that we are separated from our won long theological tradition of political thought by a revolution in Western thinking that began roughly four centuries ago. We live, so to speak, on the other shore. (2007:4)

He expounds on the historic disruption between religion and secularism by commenting on the "worldview battle" between these two competing traditions in the West. He demonstrates a tremendous contrast between the specific goals of political theology of the Christian tradition and the political philosophy of the secular tradition (He would also contend that both of them are modernist constructs):

> Modern political philosophy is a relatively recent innovation even in the West, where Christian political theology was the only developed tradition of political thought for over

311

a millennium. The first modern philosophers hoped to change the practices of Christian politics, but their real opponent was the intellectual tradition that has justified those practices. By attacking Christian political theology and denying its legitimacy, the new philosophy simultaneously challenged the basic principles on which authority had been justified in most societies in history. That the decisive break. (2007:5)

Like Lilla and many other Western thinkers, Mark Juergensmeyer explains this historic divide between the theological and the religious, the sphere of the sacred and the sphere of secular, and the eventual demise of the Church's authority in modern history in the West:

> Enlightenment modernity proclaimed the death of religion. Modernity signaled not only the demise of the Church's institutional authority clerical control, but also the loosening of religion's ideological and intellectual grip on society. Scientific reasoning and the moral claims of the secular social contract replaced theology and the Church as the bases for truth and social identity. The result of religion's devaluation has been "a general crisis of religious belief…" This has been a problem not just for believers but for society as a whole, for it has undercut the public's ability to rely on public symbols." (2000:225)

Moreover, Lilla admits the intellectual challenges political theology has posed to Western thinking, political philosophy, and liberal democracies in Western societies. He is sincere about the substantial impact of political theology in the history of Western civilization and our experience with modernity. He defines political thinking as a way of thinking, a habit of the mind and that the conundrum of modernity is not institutional, but intellectual; political theology makes us aware of the human consciousness fostered by political ideas, and another kind of human consciousness generated by religious beliefs (Ibid: 8). Within the sphere of political theology, religion is not divorced from politics, God not from his human creation. What is then the good or merit of political theology for contemporary societies in the West? Lilla provides this offering in asserting both the strengths and weaknesses of political theology:

> Even if political theology is not powerful enough to dislodge those institutions, it is always capable of distorting our thinking about them…In the West people still think about God, man, and the world today—how could they not? But most seem to have trained themselves not to take the last step into politics. We are no longer in the habit of connecting our political discourse to theological and cosmological questions, and we no longer recognize

312

revelation as politically authoritative. This is a testament to our self-restraint. That we must rely on self-restraint should concern us. (Ibid: 7-8).

As seen above, Kahn, who has explored both the nature and workings of Political theology, also comments precisely on both the advantages and disadvantages of Political theology, as in follows:

> Political theology does not just challenge a particular configuration of legal institutions, as if the question were on of scaling down the wall of separation between church and state it challenges the basic assumptions of our understanding of the meaning of modernity, the nature of individual identity , and the character of the relationship of the individual to the state….Modern political theory began by imagining the state as the expression of a social contract that was the product of reasonable agreement among a group of individuals trying to escape danger and privation…Political theology represents a challenge to this whole lien of theory. Politics does not put the security of always in place of the violence of the state of nature; rather, it brings sacrifice in place of murder. (2011:18-19).

Not only Kahn has sustained the idea that political theology like the modern concept of nation-state is intrinsic to the project of Western modernity, he has written candidly and optimistically that "A political life is not a life stripped of faith and the experience of the sacred, regardless of what we may believe about the legal separation of church and state" (2011:19). To move the conversation forward, we shall try to understand the interplays between Liberation and Political theologies, which may supply additional intellectual antecedents for the basic claim of this current chapter.

It is evident that Liberation theology and Political theology share many points of confluences and convergences, as their differences can also be noted. For example, Paul Lakeland highlights points of contact or similarity:

> Both are theologies of social involvement. Both consider that social and political concern must go beyond mere participation to a radical transformation of the process. Both believe that the gospel at its heart is a call to the transformation of the social order, and consequently both assert that the claim to faith, to love God or follow Jesus Christ, is an

313

empty claim if it does not emanate from a people deeply committed to justice. They are not merely varieties of moral or practical theology however, and certainly not simply appeals for a social ethic. Although important to both, ethics is subordinate to a deeper self-understanding in which they are new ways of conceiving the enterprise of theology or religious reflection. The primacy of praxis in both theologies, though some may question it, definitely constitutes more than cosmetic alterations in the fabric of theological method. (2012:224-225)

For the proponents of political and liberation theologies, the Bible bears a socio-political revolutionary message. Political theology is grounded on the sociopolitical context of the Biblical narrative, and seeks to understand the movement of God throughout human history such as God's active participation in the political realm and the affairs of the nations. The Bible is not simply a political text, it is an effective catechism on political ethics and theory that rejects social injustice and political oppression. For political theology and liberation theology, political action and theological activism are necessary for the engaged faith and to usher in the new creation and alternative community God is seeking to create through human partnership. However, the sources of Liberation theology and Political theology are also intellectual. As Lakeland has noted, "Today's political theology, for one thing, could not have existed before the writings of Marx or the combined impact of the masters of suspicion, Freud, Nietzsche, Feuerbach, and the sociologists of religion such as Weber and Durkheim" (2012:225).

While political theology has a strong foundation in Western intellectual history of ideas, liberation theology is linked primarily with "popular religion and traditional devotions on the other hand, and its strong adherence to an often simplistically interpreted scripture on the other hand, give it a surprisingly conservative and even evangelical from some vantage points" (Ibid). Both theologies share many things in common by taking in consideration social class dynamics, the plot of the poor and the working class in society, the workings of the government, the dynamics of the

political and civil society, and popular participation in both the religious and political sphere. Political and Liberation theologies different in many accounts. For example,

> Geographically, culturally and even religiously, political and liberation theologies emerged from different worlds. The latter is indubitably in its origin a Latin American phenomenon, while political theology can be traced almost exclusively to Germanic roots…Liberation theology is to be found throughout the so-called Third World, and among oppressed minorities in the most affluent countries (for example, among blacks, Hispanics and women in the United States). The wider impact of political theology is harder to discern, but present nevertheless wherever Christian-Marxist dialogue or radical social ethics are under discussion….Political theology in our sense of the term emerged out of Germany in the late fifties and early sixties. Europe in the mid-twentieth century and since has been characterized by a prevailing culture of secularism, even of atheism, and by the kind of all-pervasive spiritual apathy whose dominant emotion is mild depression. Such an ethos could not but affect the churches of Europe, which have in any case never been notable for standing against the currently established order. (Lakeland, 2012: 226)

It is evident that Aristide works within both traditions and schools of thought: Political theology and Liberation theology, and this present work we are examining in this chapter deploys both the language and ideological worldview of both theological frameworks. Since Aristide attempts to reach and engage the Haitian masses in *100 Vese Dechoukaj* and critique both Haiti's civil and political societies, Aristide is not only interested in theo-political ideologies, equally, he employs the common language of the Haitian people to produce psychological effects and collective awareness.

The linguistic preference is the Creole language, the mother tongue of the Haitian people, which is spoken by all Haitian—both educated and uneducated. Nonetheless, the working class Haitians are more proficient in Creole than French—given the fact that only 10% of the Haitian population can express itself effectively in French. The other group Aristide writes for is the illiterate population who may not be able to understand the written word in the Creole language, but inevitably, they will comprehend the meaning of the messages communicated through both

simple and complex (symbolic) images. This pedagogic practice and strategic method was used immensely by Latin American Marxist and socialist thinkers, theologians, and educators such as Paulo Freire, in the first half of the second-half of the twentieth century.

The word "dechoukaj" is used more than 25 times by Aristide in the 100-page book. The the word "uproot" ("dechoukaj") can mean to remove completely, to pull something totally from from its roots, or to make an individual leave his/her place of residence (i.e. home) and transfer to a different locale or zone. As a transitive verb, to uproot something carries the idea of removing completely as if by pulling it; it also implies to pull it up by its roots. To put it simply, to remove someone is a form of radical displacement from a country or traditional habitat. Like a plant that can be eradiated from the roots that sustain it, a person can be uprooted from his/her job, country, and position of influence or power. A tree can be uprooted by an earthquake or storm. Taking a job in a non-familiar place could also mean to uproot one's family from the familiar location. Uprooting could also means a non-voluntary displacement, even a force away (exile) from a country or a traditional home to a host or strange country. The question we should now be asking *who* should be uprooted? *What* should be uprooted? What are the circumstances to uproot someone from his/place traditional location? Also, what are the specific circumstances to uproot something from its habitual place?

In Aristide's perspective, "dechoukaj" not only carries a symbolic image, the concept has an empirical value in that it becomes clear it is a religious-political practice that is framed with an ethical framework and moral demand (Achille, 1998: 9). For Aristide, "dechoukaj" can be construed as a categorical imperative in the Kantian logic, as its goal aims at retributive justice and mandatory violence—even if it entails the murdering and complete annihilation of the enemy, the opponent, or foe—rendered to the oppressors of the Haitian people. Aristide believes that

316

"moral suasion is not sufficient to combat social injustices, especially when they are buttressed by corporate and state power" (Juegensmeyer, 2011:25). Aristide upholds that "righteous force is sometimes necessary to extirpate injustice and subdue evil within a sinful world, and that small strategic acts of violence are occasionally necessary to defer large acts of violence and injustice" (Ibid: 26).

In the context of the Haitian society, when a political leader/ authority (i.e. macoute, duvalierist) or an individual associated with the political hegemony that oppresses and exploits the people is uprooted, protesters would break into that person's home, vandalize the property, and steal the belongings. It is a complete disaster, a chaotic moment to witness. Dechoukaj almost always accompanies the violent death execution called necklacing (*Pere lebrun*); this torturous method or practice is when the protester takes a rubber tire, places around the victim's neck, fills it with petroleum, and sets fire on the victim. As previously mentioned, the Dechoukaj (and sometimes accompanied by necklacing depending on the status of the victim) was a public spectacle practiced in all major cities and towns of Haiti.

100 Vèsè dechoukaj. Va t'en Satan is intended to be read as a theo-political catechism with its valiant assertion: "Viv Dechoukaj!" ("Long Live Uprooting!") (Aristide, 1986:32). Moreover, in the text, Aristide literally draws vivid and descriptive images of ferocious dogs, horses, and pigs, shotguns; sharp machetes and knives; Haitian peasants attacking political authorities (tonton macoutes); people burning at stake; people in shackles; people disguised as animals; closed and open Bibles; scales of justice; protest groups; Haitian politicians fleeing the scene with bags of money with the U.S. dollar sign; protesters stepping on animals' heads; protesters launching gunshots at political authorities; individuals holding the "Liberty" sign; individuals holding the "Long Live Uprooting" sign; individuals holding upward the sign of the Christian cross;

individuals kneeling down praying, protesters holding the "Life or Death" ("*Libete ou lanmo*") sign; broken hearts signs; happy hearts signs; protesters confronting Tonton macoutes; protesters holding hammers to crush the oppressors' heads; heavily armed Tonto Macoutes; protesters holding rocks to stone the oppressor; and political authorities disguised as monkeys and vicious beasts (Aristide, 1986: 1-3, 15, 3, 33, 37, 44, 48, 56, 57, 61, 64, 68, 72, 73, 76, 78, 84, 86, 87, 91, 94, 97, 98). All of these illustrations and images are linked to very specific biblical references to justify their intent.

Through this theo-political catechism, Aristide envisions the complete reconstitution of the Haitian psyche and Haitian nation, and the radical renewal of the Haitian civil and political societies; as he himself declares that he has no tolerance for the oppressors of the people: Let uproot them! ("Long Live Dechoukaj! *Aba Sitires!*") (Ibid: 77) because without justice, there is no peace ("*San jistis, pa p' gen lape*") (Ibid: 49).

The various images and symbols outlined above have a didactic objective whose basic function is fivefold: (1) to diagnose the human predicament in Haiti's political and civil societies, (2) to raise collective consciousness about the political crisis, (3) to offer the prognosis to Haiti's ills and woes, (4) to orient the people toward the path of national healing through the strategic use of cathartic violence, and (5) to serve as a systemic manual (*100 Vèsè dechoukaj. Va t'en Satan*) toward the rebuilding of the Haitian civil and political societies. Written from the perspective of Haiti's lower classes and the country's disfranchised groups, *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* is presented to us, what we may call a discourse on instantaneous death of the oppressor; in the sphere of theological and biblical studies, we may phrase it a theological hermeneutics of aggression and violence. In these pages, Aristide utters some of the most shocking and destructive imperatives, and makes some of the most fearless claims and outrageous declarations:

1. *Lanmo pou mechan*: Death to the wicked.
2. *Adye Defen Kochon:* Farewell to the deceased Pigs!
3. *Si n' te dechouke yo, Yo pa t'ap gen tan dechouke ou*! If we had uprooted them, they will not have the time to uproot you!
4. *Lavi pou pwofet*: life for the Prophet.
5. *Yo deja mo red!* They are already down dead.
6. *Ale di Makak la n'ap dechouke res ke a*: Go tell the Monkey, we will strip the rest of the tail.
7. *Laperez se pwason. Si ou pa touye l', lap touye out!*: Fear is poison. If you do not kill him, he will kill you.
8. *Gen lanmon ak lanmo!* : Many are the forms of death!
9. *Wi, gen twop makout degize nan mita nou*: Yes, there are too many macoutes (boogeymen) disguised among us.
10. *Si n' pa kontinye teke, Y'ap remonte kouran an:* If we don't continue striking, they will overcome us.

The text is written in a homiletic style and diction of an eloquent and authoritative preacher-activist. Theodore Achillle (1998:17) interprets the book as an important work of Aristide's subversion strategy. In all of its content, the text interrupts the political consensus of the country, in which Aristide the preacher speaks in discursive rhetoric to disqualify, uproot, and to stun the dominant political class in the country; in the interpretative reconstruction of the speech the author realizes a disclosure, that is to say, a diversion of morality in the service of politics (Ibid), and in the best interest of the most wretched and those living in the margins in the Haitian society. Achille's excellent study on the book provides a comprehensive linguistic categories and rhetorical strategies according to their original intent followed with insightful exegetical commentaries (Ibid: 48-81).

The noted book is composed of short, pity sayings, and sometimes abridged biblical references followed by Aristide's succinct and revolutionary theo-political interpretation of the given scriptural reference. In many instances, Aristide rewrites the original text of the Bible to achieve the desired goal: the complete uprooting of the Duvalier regime and its allies. There's a clear indication of a hermeneutics of violence in his translation of the Biblical data and the meaning

imposing on it. The underlying themes of *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* include a series of dialectics— good vs evil, God vs Satan, the people vs their oppressor, the Haitian masses vs the ruling class—and key words or concepts such including uprooting, divine retribution, human corruption, social sins, political identity, cultural identity, destruction, suffering, adversary, the poor, the wicked, justice, money, guns, people, weapons, macoute (boogeyman), etc.

7.3.1. THE SYMBIOTIC FUNCTION OF THE BIBLE IN *100 VESE DECHOUKAJ*

The function of the Bible in *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* is both modest and multifarious. In its simplicity, the Bible is used as a weapon of mass destruction launching at the oppressors and opponents of the Haitian people, which may include the Duvalier regime and its macoutes, the international community (i.e. the United States, France, Canada), the oppressive capitalist system, Haiti's bourgeoisie class and the political elite minority. The Bible is also used here as a corrective device to both reveal and denounce the sins of the oppressors, and as a liberative vehicle, it is referenced to mobilize the Haitian masses and foster collective political consciousness about their plight and condition. The Bible is also deployed to challenge Haiti's social class division and hierarchy, and to dismantle the great divide between the poor and the rich, and the mulatto and black skinned Haitians. Further, the Bible is interpreted as a mechanism of hope for the Haitian poor, the homeless, underrepresented families, and the marginalized in the Haitian society in the pursuit of human dignity, human rights, justice, retributive justice, holistic healing, and shalom. The Bible is called upon to challenge the luxurious lifestyle and destructives actions of the dominant political class and ecclesiastical authorities—the people's oppressors and enemies—in the Haitian society.

Aristide articulates a biblically and theologically-sensitive hermeneutics whose goal is the total uprooting and annihilation of the people's oppressors. In the rhetoric of the Prophetic tradition, Aristide insightfully brings the Biblical narrative to light to deepen the faith of the Haitian people in God, alleviate their shared suffering and poverty, and ultimately to orient them toward unrelenting trust and dependence to God their Liberator and Righteousness. In addition, Aristide writes in the "Preface" of his book that "The Bible is a weapon. A big gun. One of the biggest weapons to uproot Satan. When you use it effectively, you have two chances: if you use hold it correctly, you are good; if you hold it wrong, you will break." Below, we reproduce the original words in the Creole language:

> *La bib la se yon zam*
> *Yon gwo zam*
> *Youn nan pi gwo zam pou dechouke satan*
> *Le ou ap seve ave l'*
> *Ou gen 2 chans :*
> *Si ou kenbe l' byen, ou bon.*
> *Si ou kenbe l' mal, ou chire.*

Aristide goes on to declare that the thesis of the book succinctly: "*Va T''en Satan* is a weapon. A weapon of impeachment or uprooting. Uprooting Satan."

> *Va T'En Satan se yon zam*
> *Yon zam dechoukaj.*
> Dechoukaj Satan.

There are a number of political figures and institutions that personify Satan in the book. According to Aristide's perception, the political organization of Duvalierism and Macoutism, social evils, the small cadre of Haitian elite who oppressed the people, and human-inflicted oppression and pain are all personifications of Satan in the Haitian society. Consequently, the clarion call to deracinate them is a necessity for human flourishing and for the triumph of participatory democracy in the Haitian society. Aristide's summon to impeach the corrupt political

authorities and those of the dominant class should be construed as a phenomenon of radical deracination; as he concurs, it is an ethical responsibility that fulfills a divine sanction: "*Dechouke sa ki mal. Se goumen pou syel la*" ("To eradicate what is evil is to fight for heaven") (Aristide, 1986:56). His interpretation is based on Matthew 11:12 (*Matye 11:12*, "*Se moun kin konn goumen Ka' p rantre nan syel la*.") Anyone who threatens to divide the "religious-politico community" is worthy of being uprooted; in the same way, those who seek to divide the nation should be uprooted (Ibid: 42). At this juncture, Aristide is campaigning for national unity and group mobilization.

In the noted text, there are few references made about God. The book is anthropocentric, not theocentric. However, God is portrayed as a witness in the Haitian drama; Aristide informs his reader that God is on the side of the Haitian people, who are the victims of the violence of the Duvalier regime and the social sins of the Macoutes. The imminent destruction of the wicked, the Macoutes, and the Duvalierists is the collaborative work of God and the Haitian people; both entities strive toward retributive justice, land cleansing, and social renewal. As Aristide has declared, "We strike high, but God strikes higher" (Ibid: 97). Aristide wishes his adversary tragic death and total displacement (*dechoukaj*) from the Haitian society; he could thus invoke the harsh language of the imprecatory verse of Ps: 58: 8, "May they be like snails that dissolve into slime, like a stillborn child who will never see the sun." The impending danger awaiting the peoples' oppressors will inevitably occur—as Aristide himself gives a severe warning to the Haitian masses: shall they refuse to defend themselves through the available weapons, eventually, they will be defeated by the enemy: "If we don't continue striking, they will overcome us" ("*Si n' pa kontinye teke, Y'ap remonte kouran an.*") (Ibid: 95). Because of lack of resources, the Haitian people have failed to create an effective defensive system against their oppressors and to permanently demolish the abusive country's army system that slaughtered daily the Haitian people; and as many

Aristide's supporters have maintained, the Haitian peoople were unsuccessful in establishing "a defensive well-trained militia to hold off the neoFRAPH campaign." It is evident in the language of this imperative that Aristide is urging the Haitian people to "arm and guard themselves" with weapons of mass destruction like valiant soldiers rushing to the battlefield. Yet, Aristide could comfort the "suffering people" that they have already won the victory, as the Psalmist himself, in this imprecatory verse, both wishes and celebrates the impending annihilation of his enemy: "May they disappear like water into thirsty ground…" (Ps. 58:7). Aristide directly cites this verse as a theological justification for his call of defensive violence and retributive justice. His objective is compelling: to join hands in intentional unity and collective solidarity: "We all will join hands together. They are already dead red!" (*Nou tout Nap join Kay Rad…Yo déjà mo red!*) (Ibid: 93). Reform is always a possibility for these individuals if they turn away from their evil ways; if not, they will be placed in prison or suffer retributive justice.

Moreover, Aristide is very particular in his inflammatory tone, and the colorful language he deploys to characterize and depict the Macoutes and Duvalierists as persecutors of the Haitian people. He achieves this goal by way of comparing and contrasting the politics of difference, the politics of alienation, and the politics of emancipation. Aristide calls the people's tyrants wicked (*mechan*), sinners (*peche*), liars *(mante)*, monkeys (*maka*y), pigs (*kochon*), and he associates each one of these derogatory term with specific supporting biblical references. These vivid stereotypes should be construed as "identity markers" to designate the innumerable functions or roles this peculiar group plays in the Haitian civil and political societies. The corrupt political class and its allies have performed "wicked deeds" in their ambivalent interactions with the Haitian masses, the underclass, and the poor. We now turn our attention to additional supporting biblical metaphors and images to which Aristide alludes in the text:

"These wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way" (Ps. 58:3).

"They are fat and sleek, and there is no limit to their wicked deeds" (Jeremiah 5:28).

"In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money" (2 Peter 2:3).

Furthermore, he warns the Haitian people to be aware of their oppressor-thieves who disguised themselves as good citizens in order that they may rob them and throw their bodies away. ("*Vole degize, Kote kochon nou yo? Kote, ote…*") (Ibid:89) By contrast, using precise biblical attributes applied to the people of God and those who are bound in a covenant with Yahweh, Aristide identities the Haitian people as "the righteous," "the just," and even "those who have given their lives in order to preserve lives" (Ibid:86). This form of atonement theology does not directly benefit the oppressor or the Macoutes. Paradoxically, the idea of collective atonement here means that many valiant individuals from the Haitian society have deliberately surrendered their lives to horrendous suffering, excruciating pain, daily dehumanization and humiliation, and abject poverty in order they could achieve ultimate redemption for all. Their atonement is substitutionary only to the degree that it will serve its decisive goal to those who belong to the suffering and subjugated population. They share a common history of collective suffering and alienation under the Duvalier regime, Macoutism, and American-European imperialism.

According to Aristide, the underlying matter with the people's oppressors lies in their politics of trickery and deception: "They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace," alluding to Jeremiah 6:14. Their malicious intention is compared to the individuals described in 2 Peter 2:3, "In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money" (Ibid: 10). As the devil in the flesh, they will not live long because "we will impeach them;" "we will uproot them" for "the devil will not last forever" ("*Satan pa avi*") (Ibid: 85); Aristide orders them to "Respect the rolls of

324

impeachment/uprooting" ("*Respekte Woulo dechoukaj!*") (Ibid: 84). Here, Aristide is addressing the marginalized Haitian population who have been affected by globalization and capitalist greed. These individuals have been economically exploited and abused by Haitian capitalism; their resources and goods have been taken away from them by the heartless and unsympathetic ruling class. Aristide's ultimate goal is to mobilize the working class and the poor to strive collectively toward progressive causes and democratic justice. Through the resistance of the Lumpemproletariat and the masses, Aristide is very optimistic they could create an alternative Haitian society for the common good.

In various instances in Aristide's book, the ensuing death of those of the dominant class and the people's tyrants is both in the present and in the time to come; hence, the imminent destruction of the wicked has both present and future eschatology, a common notion in New Testament and Biblical theology (ies). In one hand, present eschatology is dependent upon the people's urgency to "uproot them" ("*Dechouke yo*"); on the other hand, future eschatology in this context is not that pressing issue because it is contingent upon divine eschatological intervention to judge and destroy the oppressors and emancipate the Haitian poor. Citing 1 Peter 2:12, Aristide assures the Haitian people that undoubtedly they will be delivered from their foes: "Like animals, they will be destroyed," (Ibid: 86), and that the Duvalier regime will also lose strength and eventually decline: "His own Kingdom will not survive" (Matthew 12:26) (Ibid: 85). According to Aristide, the Haitian predicament is that the Haitian people are not just fighting corrupt individuals; rather, their fight is also against a dysfunctional institution, a destructive system, class exploitation, and a totalitarian regime. Aristide goes on to list a number of infractions, and the crimes and violences of the oppressors:

(1) "building castles on our backs!" (Ibid: 79).

(2) "uprooted you" (Ibid:78).

3) "They persecuted the righteousness" (Ibid).

(4) "They took money from the weak" (Ibid).

(5) "they prevent the poor to get justice in the courts" (Ibid).

(6) "They cheat the poor" (Ibid: 10).

(7) "They refuse to provide justice to orphans" (Ibid: 12).

(8) "They deny the rights of the poor" (Ibid).

These noted charges are appropriated within Aristide's creative theological rereading, contextualization, reappropriation, and reinterpretation of four biblical passages: Jeremiah 5:12, Jeremiah 5:18, 1 Corinthians 6:8, and 2 Peter 2:3. Finally, Aristide, working in pattern of the Prophetic tradition, comforts the people to always hope in God because it is he who will give them justice, freedom, and eventually annihilate "the wicked" and the "evil people" in their midst (Ibid: 79). Not only are the Haitian people actively engaged in the *dechouka*j activities, God, working on their side and walking in solidarity with them, is actively participating in this collective mission. Yet, they must be both vigilant and confrontational. As God has sent Moses to Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves from the Pharaonic regime and Egyptian slavery, God has called the Haitian poor and underclass, and Aristide the Haitian Moses to emancipate God's people from the Duvalier regime and the Macoutist yoke. The ultimate ruin of the oppressor and the wicked will inevitably take place in order that God may usher in the new age in Haitian history:

(1) "Go tell the Monkey, we will strip the rest of the tail:" "*Ale di Makak la n'ap dechouke res ke a*") (Ibid: 1).
(2) "How could we not uproot them, Let all liars be doomed!" *Pou n' pa dechouke, Fok manti kaba"* (Ibid: 10).
(3) "Long Live Uprooting!" (*VIV DECHOUKAJ!)* (Ibid:12)

326

Finally, our goal in the concluding chapter is not to reproduce the associated images with the associated biblical references and Aristide's interpretations therefore; however, we will create one illustrative charts below in which selected biblical references are illustrated.

Biblical Text (Creole)	English Translation	Aristide's interpretation	English Translation
Som 58:10 *Anvan mwen konnen sa k'ap rive yo,* *Se pou yo boule tankou raje.* *(Aristide, 1986:97)*	Ps. 58:8 May they be like snails that dissolve into slime, like a stillborn child who will never see the sun	*Nou teke fo. Bondye teke pi fo.*	We strike high, but God strikes higher.
Som 58:8a *Se pou yo disparet Tankou dlo lavalas k'ap koule desann.* *(Ibid:95)*	Ps. 58:7 May they disappear like water into thirsty ground…	*Si n' pa kontinye teke, Y'ap remonte kouran an.*	If we don't continue striking, they will overcome us.
Som 58:4b *Moun k'ap bay manti yo* *Gen madichon depi an vant manman yo.* *(Ibid:93)*	Ps. 58:3 These wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way.	*Nou tout Nap join Kay Rad…* *Yo déjà mo red !*	We all will join hands together. They are already dead red!
1 Korentyen 6 :8 *Okontre mwen we se nou menm k'ap fe lot lenjisti,* *K'ap piye yo…* *(Ibid:89)*	1 Corinthians 6 :8 Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers	*Vole degize,* *Kote kochon nou yo?* *Kote, ote…*	The thief is disguished, Where are our pigs? Where…?
Matye 10 :39 *Moun kap chache konseve lavi l'* *la pedi li,* *men moun ki va pedi lavi l'*	Matthew 10 :39 If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life	*Pawol Bondye* *Chapo ba pou mas pep la !* *Li bay lavi l' pou gen lavi.*	The Word of God Hats off to the masses! It gives life so one can have life.

327

poutet mwen, *Va jween li anko* *(Ibid : 86)*	for me, you will find it.		
Matye 12 :26 *...Pouvwa Satan an* *pa la pou lontan* *(Ibid :85)*	Matthew 12 :26 …His own kingdom will not survive.	*Satan pa avi.*	The devil will not last forever.
2 Pye 2 :12 *...Yo gen pou yo peri* *Menm jan ak bet.* *(Ibid:84)*	2 Peter 2:12 …like animals, they will be destroyed.	*Respekte Woulo dechoukaj!*	Respect the rolls of impeachment/uprooting!
Jeremi 6:14 *Yo pa pran male* *Ki rive pep mwen a* *pou anyen.* *Y'ap plede di:* *"Tout bagay ap mache byen pa gen danje".* *Epi manti!* *Anyen pa p' mache.* *(Ibid:80)*	Jeremiah 6:14 They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace	*Adye Defen Kochon* *Si n' te dechouke yo,* *Yo pa t'ap gen tan dechouke ou !*	Farewell to the deceased Pigs! If we have uprooted them, they will not have time to uproot you!
Jeremi 12 :1 *...Men Granmet, ou pa nan patipri…* *Poukisa zafe mechan yo mache byen konsa ?* *Poukisa tout moun malonet alez konsa?* *(Ibid :79)*	Jeremiah 12 :1 Lord, you always give me justice when I bring a case before you. So let me bring you this complaint: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy?	*Ampil chato bati sou do nou !*	Lots castles have been built on our backs!
Som 5 :12 *...Nou pesekite moun serye,* *Nou pran lajan nan men moun* *K'ap achete figi nou.* *Nou enpoze pov malere yo jwenn jistis nan tribinal.* *(Ibid : 78)*	Psalms 5 :12 They persecuted the righteousness. They took money from the weak. They prevent the poor to get justice in the courts.	*Se pou sa yo dechouke n'!* *Si se konsa, y'ap dechouke n'!*	This is the reason they uprooted us! If so, they will uproot us!

Lik 13 :32 ...Ale di chat mawon an... (Ibid :1)	Luke 13 :32 … Go tell that fox…	*Ale di Makak la n'ap dechouke res ke a.*	Go tell the Monkey, we will strip the rest of the tail.
2 Pye 2 :3 Nan kouri deye lajan, Yo pral esplwate nou Ak yon bann manti. (Ibid:10)	2 Peter 2:3 In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money.	*Pou n' pa dechouke, Fok manti kaba.*	How could we not uproot them, Let all liars be doomed!
Jeremi 5 :28 Yo gra, po figi yo klere ak gres Yo pa gen limit nan fe sa ki mal. Pou yo ka rive, Yo krase tout moun anba pye yo Ata timoun san papa, Yo pa defann koz malere. (Ibid:12)	Jeremiah 5:28 They are fat and sleek, and there is no limit to their wicked deeds. They refuse to provide justice to orphans and deny the rights of the poor.	*VIV DECHOUKAJ!*	Long Live Uprooting!

.   Table 1. Selected Scriptural Verses from *100 Vese Dechoukaj*.

Biblical Text (Creole)	English Translation	Aristide's Interpretation	English Translation
Som 57:8a Se pou yo disparet Tankou dlo lavalas K'ap koule desann. (Ibid : 4)	Psalm 57 :8a May they disappear like water into thirsty ground.	*Bondye ak Satan se let ak sitwon !*	God and Satan are like milk and lemon!
Som 58 :8b Se pou moun kraze yo anba pye tankou zeb sou gan chimen. (Ibid :5)	Psalm 58:7 May they be like snails that dissolve into slime, like a stillborn child who will never see the sun.	*Traka pou makout !*	Trouble for the Macoute !
Ezekiel 11 :20 ...N'ap touye moun kip a merite mouri. N'ap sove moun ki pa merite viv anko,	Ezekiel 11:20 …They murder the people who deserve to die. We will save those who do not	*Kouman pou n' fe pa dechouke?*	How do we do not uproot them?

329

N'ap bay pep mwen an yon ban manti... (*Ibid:18*)	deserve to live anymore. They are lying to my people…		
Jeremi 9:13 *…Sa rive konsa* *Paske pep mwen an pa kenbe* *Tout sa mwen te montre yo.* *Yo pa koute m'* *Yo pa t' fe sa mwen te di yo fe.* (*Ibid : 30*)	Jeremiah 9 :13 This has happened because my people have abandoned my instructions; they have refused to obey what I said.	*Yo te sitire makout.*	They tolerated the Macoutes**.**
Ezekiel 7:23 *Tout bagay pral tet anba.* *Peyi a plen asasen k'ap touye moun.* *Nan lavil la,* *Moun ap kraze brise.* (*Ibid :33*)	Ezekiel 7 :23 Prepare chains for my people, for the land is bloodied by terrible crimes. Jerusalem is filled with violence.	*Wi, gen twop makout degize nan mita nou.*	Yes, there are too many Macoutes disguised in our midst.
Filip 3:19 *Bondye yo se vant yo.* (*Ibid:36*)	Philippians 3:19 Their god is their appetite	*Sispann souse pep la!*	Stop exploiting the masses!
Filip 3:2 *Veye ko nou* *Ak moun k'ap plede fe sa ki mal yo.* *Veye ko nou ak bann chen sa yo…* (*Ibid :40*)	Philippians 3:2 Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.	*Rete!* *Apa Sen Pol rele yo chen!*	Listen! Even Saint Paul call them dogs!
Filip 1:2b *Pa kite okenn lenmi* *Kaponnen nou…* (*Ibid: 41*)	Philippians 1:2b Do not let your enemy fool you.	*Satan di: li la pi red.* *Nou di: dechouke l' pi red.*	Satan said: he is still here. We say: Let's eradicate/uproot him!
Pwoveb 17 :22 *Ke kontan bay lasante* *Ke sere zo kou'w long.* (*Ibid:46*)	Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.	*Ke l' Kase* *Makout bay ke sere* *Ke li kase, ke nou konta* *Ke n' kontan*	His hear is broken. The Macoutes cause broken hearts. His heart is broken. We have a joyful heart. We are happy.
Lik 14:12 *…Le w'ap fe yon fet,*	Luke 14:13	*Yo souse san malere* *Yo jete ko a.*	After they suck the peoples' blood, they

330

Envite pov yo, enfim yo, *Moun k'ap bwete yo,* *moun aveg yo…* *(Ibid:50)*	..When you put on a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.		throw away their body.
Matye 11:12 *Se moun ki konn goumen* *Ka'ap rantre nan syel la.* *(Ibid :56)*	Matthew 11 :12 It is only the people who know how to fight who will go to heaven.	*Dechouke sa ki mal* *Se goumen pou syel la.*	To eradicate/uproot what is evil is to fight for heaven.
Pwoveb 29 :2 *Le se moun serye ki chef Pep la kontan.* *Yen, le se yon mechan k'ap gouvenen, Pep la nan lapenn.* *(Ibid : 76)*	Proverbs 29:2 When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan.	*Kole yon Pep, se dife loray* *K'ap boule tou chef kriminel.*	The anger of the people is like the thundering fire that keeps burning all (political) criminals.

Table 2. Selected Biblical Verses from *100 Vese Dechoukaj*.

100 Vèsè dechoukaj is a foundational text in Aristide's articulation of a robust politico-theological discourse, which encapsulates his theological ethics and theological anthropology. However, after the decline of Duvalierism and Macoutism during Aristide's first presidency, Aristide's theology would be more refined and less robust or radical. We suggest that this essential text represents Aristide "raw theology," and should not be classified as a fine-tuned academic track; rather, Aristide has intended it to be a popular book with the general Haitian masses—both illiterate and literate population—in mind. The text was not written in the tranquil season of the life of a mature politico-theologian, in which every biblical interpretation is constructively and cogently presented. It is a text that expresses the righteous anger of a theologian in crisis because of the historical turmoil suffered his people.

100 Vèsè dechoukaj came to us from the early dawn of a revolutionary religious-political movement, Fanmi Lavals (FL) in the 1980s in Haitian history when Aristide first conveyed the

basic tenets of his theological ethics and theological anthropology under the tutelage of political theology, liberation theology, and socialist Marxism. *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* initiates a radical trajectory in Aristide's theological discourse; along the same line, it articulates his revolutionary theological principles, and a theological discourse shaped by its time, historical context, and cultural environment: the political turmoil of Duvalierism, the reign of terror of Macoutism, the moments of collective suffering and anger, national alienation and paranoia, and the impending (social and physical) death of the Haitian masses. It is the intense *cri de coeur* and passionate appeal and complaint of a theologian-activist and a militant Marxist public intellectual. We should keep in mind that theology is always shaped by the cultural fabric and historical trajectories it inhabits, and in the same vein, theology and culture are mutually dependent. This is precisely what we observed in Aristide's theo-political commentaries on the cultural, economic, and political issues in the era of Jean-Claude Duvalier and Macoutism (1971-1986).

Theology in this way is subservient to culture or vice versa (In other words, theology is a product of culture, and culture impacts theology.) Hence, *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* as both cultural and theo-political criticisms on the political dominant class and the elite minority group was written in a specific context, in a specific era, and for a specific generation in Haitian history. The periodization of (Haitian) history, from a theological understanding of transpired historical events and the Haitian experience, came to inaugurate one of the most eschatological events in Haitian history—the decisive fall of Jean Claude Duvalier in 1986, Haiti's most enduring and lasting dictator, and authoritarian government. If Aristide published *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* in 1986, the same year Baby Doc was expelled from power, it simply means that this politico-theological text ironically inaugurates a new moment in Haitian history and offers new hopes and dreams for that generation, and new future possibilities to the Haitian people.

On the other hand, *100 Vèsè dechoukaj* does not promote pacifist theology nor a theology of reconciliation and unity; rather, it endorses popular bellicose violence and radical *deracinemen*t (uprooting) by the re-appropriation and contextualization of the Biblical text. Given the force and brilliance of the rhetorical strategy used in the text and what Aristide violently advocates, it is difficult to reconcile Aristide's "moral imperatives" crafted in a theological hermeneutics of violence with the pacifist and non-violent principles of Jesus, the Sermon of the Mount, and the New Testament. This early work of Jean-Bertrand Aristide challenges his pastoral ministry and homiletic addresses at the St Jean Bosco Parish. It defies the early public image of the President-Activist during his first administration as the unifier and spiritual father of the Haitian people. At this juncture of our conversation, we should also be asking is defensive violence always necessary in the process of imagining a sustainable future and creating an effective governance system that would promote the interests of the poor and the working class, and champion human rights, justice, equality, beauty, truth, and unity? On the other hand, we do recognize that "The Bible treats revenge as both an appropriate desire and a threat to communal stability…Vengeance is identified as a divine attribute in the OT (Ps. 94:1; Nah. 1:2)… The tendency in biblical texts, however, is to curtail and discourage revenge" (Couey, 2011:682). In addition, as Mark Douglas has commented on this complex relationship between violence and the non-violence in the Bible:

> Scripture describes a wide range of violent actions beginning with Cain killing Abel (Gen. 4) and ending with the judgment of the dead (Rev. 20). These actions are bookended by visions of a peaceful kingdom: the Garden of Eden before sin and the new Jerusalem after the final judgment. Between beginning and ending, violence is sometimes commanded, sometimes permitted, sometimes discouraged, sometimes prohibited, and sometimes observed. In general, violence is far less accepted in the NT than in the OT, but with all generalizations, this one does not hold in all instances…Whether one can build a compelling argument that the NT ethic forbids violence is still a point of debate within Christian ethics.at the very least, there is a strong presumption against violence that not only grows out of Jesus' and Paul's teachings (e.g., Matt. 5; Rom. 12-13) but also is evinced by Jesus' actions, especially leading up to and including his crucifixion, and by the actions of members of the early church, such as Stephen, who endured martyrdom. (2011:810)

The protest language embedded in Aristide's treatise is nothing short of a theology of protest and an apologetic vindication of the Haitian wretched class; it is also a living theology or a theology under fire in which Aristide makes frequent appeals to the five books in Scripture: The Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Peter. Aristide is particularly interested in the imprecatory passages of the Bible, and he specifically quotes from individual Psalms that seek "to show that between those bounds there is a drama of faith and life, of suffering and hope…[to] present human persons in situations of regression: when they are most vulnerable in hurt, most ecstatic in naïve joy, most sensitive to life, driven to the extremities of life and faith, [and ultimately] deal with those who lives, for whatever reason, have disintegrated (Brueggemann, 1995:xvii, 5, 7). Also, he has selected imprecatory verses from the Psalms which speak of the multifaceted of the human experience and the problem of evil and theodicy in society; these experiences may include "those dangerous and difficult times of dislocation and disorientation when the sky does fall and the world does indeed come to an end" (Ibid: 8); these imprecatory verses call for the doom of the dominant political class and the oppressors of the Haitian people. Suggestively, this attitude toward human life is the antithesis of Aristide's theology of relationality and theology of love framed within the "God of love" metaphor and the practical and interrelational aspect of Ubuntu. It also defers his clarion call to the Haitian people for national unity and reconciliation, as it were in his first presidential administration.

7.3.2. DYNAMICS OF RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

At this juncture in this conversation, the question we should now be asking is Aristide's conscious method of endorsing popular retributive vengeance and violence justified with claims made in Scripture? As previously observed, Hallward, Nesbitt, and Sprague maintain that violence

was a necessary means for Aristide to sustain political order and advance democracy in Haiti during his second presidential term. By contrast, both Fatton and Dupuy condemn Aristide's seemingly promotion of popular retaliation and alliance with the gangs of Chimeres. Interestingly, when one looks intently at Aristide's first politico-theological book (*100 Vèsè dechoukaj*), it becomes evident that the crime his administration and FL supporters would be carried out during his second presidency is premised in a theological hermeneutics of aggression and violence.

We have no interest in justifying any form of violence or human oppression because this disposition categorically defies our non-violent attitude toward (the sacredness of) life and pacifist philosophy. From this standpoint, we reject the consensus on defensive violence that unifies Hallward, Nesbitt, and Sprague with their representative interlocutor: Jean-Bertrand Aristide. We also question the historical credibility of Dupuy's "selected reports" on Aristide's cooperation with the gangs of Chimeres and FL supporters to proliferate fear and widespread violence in the Haitian society. On the other hand, we shall not overlook the primacy of violence in Aristide's theological rhetoric, and his political program. It is good to point out that religion usually accompanies violence, and in the modern world, criminals are not shunned from using religious violence as a means to achieve political agendas. Also, the link between religion and political violence is common in modern day politics and in the discourse of religious nationalism. R. Ruard Ganzevoort (2006) establishes this important correlation between religion and violence:

> The connection of viewing violence and religion is not coincidential…Watching violence has a certain ominous quality that appeals and appalls. It seems meaningful to understand violence as a dimension of the Sacred in its life-giving and destructive shapes… A second direct connection between watching violence and religion is found in the violent images and stories that characterize the religious traditions. Literal violence appears in the stories of the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the crucifixion, and the last judgment. It is also present in certain religious practices like (animal) sacrifice, initiation rituals (like circumcision) or religiously inspired terror. On the symbolic level, crucial rituals like the Eucharist (sacrifice) and baptism (drowning) express metaphorical violence.

On a comparative note, John R. Hall (2001: 2, 7) has brilliantly argued that "religion and violence are hardly strangers…In geopolitics, religion can be used to sanctify violence and to crystalize and legitimate what Hungtinton (1996) calls civilizational struggles, dangers of which, he argues, have now displaced the bipolar Cold-ward Conflict." In other words, for some individuals, it is not possible "to separate out religious from economic and political motives in such a way that religious motives are innocent of violence" (Cavanaugh, 2007:1). In addition, Steve Bruce (2005) in an important study of the use of religious violence in Protestant Europe concludes that "In almost all national wars involving Protestant majority states in the twentieth century, churches, denominations and sects supported the use of armed force" (18). Bruce argues that "apocalpyticism" or "the expectation of impending apocalypse" is one of the driven forces that persuades religious zealots "to encourage or legitimate violence" (19). As he remarks, "We can certainly note that there erupt from time to time, and in a wide variety of contexts of social despair, movements based on the belief that the world is about to end and that violent attacks on some group or class will help hasten the end" (Ibid). In the case of the Haitian people, as examined above and elsewhere in this project, the end of the Duvalier regime was the apocalyptic moment for the Haitian people. Political-religious movement such as Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas was instrumental to hasten the new dawn.

As previously seen, the period of Duvalierism and Macoutism was one of the most traumatic and violent moments in the history of the Haitian people. Aggressive political speeches and actions, framed within the discourse of Liberation theology and the defense of religious violence as seen in *100 Vese Dechoukaj*, were critical strategies to reverse the dehumanizing political social order in Haiti. As R. Ruard Ganzevoort (2006) has remarked "violence is not only

336

present in behavior, but also in structures, texts, and so on. It is no coincidence that religion, myths and literature have often described violence, or evil, as being superhuman, supernatural."

Mark Juergensmeyer (2000:7) is particular useful for our analysis on theology, religion, and violence in this chapter. I found his particular study quite informative in the context of Haitian politics and the rise of popular violence leading to the decline of Duvalierism and Macoutism; this was a pivotal era in Haitian history which the Haitian experience was characterized by social death, cultural isolation and violence, political corruption, and economic oppression. Juegensmeyer studies public acts of violence and the justification, motivation, ideology, and the worldview associated with religion and violence. He explains the intricate relationship between religion and violence by writing:

> Within the histories of religious traditions—from biblical wars to crusading
> ventures and great act o martyrdom—violence has lurked as a shadowy presence.
> It has colored religion's darker, more mysterious symbols. Images of death have never been
> far from the heart of religion's power to stir the imagination. (2000:6)

He goes on to inquire about the underlying motif of religion to use violence: "Why does religion seem to need violence, and violence religion, and why is a divine mandate for destruction accepted with such certainty by some believers?" (Ibid). He explains that "the forces that combine to produce religious violence are particular to each moment of history… What is strange is the idea that religious warfare exists in the most modern of twentieth-century societies. Also surprising, at least to some, is that terrorist acts have been justified by principles" (7, 19). In his research, Juergensmeyer has discovered certain shared ideologies between radical religious movements associated with Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism that use violence as a means to accomplish their goals.

> What they have in common are three things: First, they have rejected the compromises
> with liberal values and secular institutions that were made by most mainstream religious
> leaders and organizations. Second, they refuse to observe the boundaries that secular

337

society has imposed around religion—keeping it private rather than allowing it to intrude into public spaces. And third, they have replaced what they regard as weak modern substitutes with the more vibrant and demanding forms of religion that they imagine to be a part of their tradition's beginnings. (2000:221)

Moreover, he could write about the intimate dynamics between Christianity and violence, comparable to other religions that use violence:

It is good to remember, however, that despite its central tenets of love and peace, Christianity—like most traditions—has always had a violent side. The bloody history of the tradition has provided images as disturbing as those provided by Islam or Sikkism, and violent conflict is vividly portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The history and these biblical images have provided the raw material for theologically justifying the violence of contemporary Christian groups. (2000:19-20)

Juegensmeyer notes that what some Christians regard as immoral in society, as they pertain to the interplay between the forces of evil and good, have deep theological justifications—although "the theological justifications for these acts are varied" (20). This is exactly what we have examined in Aristide's *100 Vese Dechoukaj* and his promotion of popular violence and defensive violence.

7.4. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Aristide's philosophy of deracination should be understood within the framework of his politico-theology of defensive violence in the struggle for democracy in Haiti, and in the light of the complexity of Haitian politics and civil society, and Haiti's puzzling relationships with the International Community. His second administration has suffered significantly from economic embargo, political instability, and violent attacks against his government. As previously examined, given the various historical and social contexts of fhis second presidency, defensive violence was probably necessary for Aristide to sustain political leadership in Haiti.

By contrast, in the post-Duvalierist era, Aristide's subsequent "written cultural criticisms" and politico-theological texts would be more refined and almost include no promotion of popular

violence or justification for widespread aggression. His popular texts such as *Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization*, *In the Parish of the Poor: Writing from Haiti, Dignity, Aristide: An Autobiography,* and *Théologie et politique* would emphasize cross-cultural friendship, human solidarity and relationality, international solidarity, participatory democracy, communitarian ethics, cosmopolitanism, and a politics of mutual reciprocity and interconnectedness. While his sermons delivered in the early 1980s at the Saint Jean Bosco Parish in Port-au-Prince are seditious in content and stimulated popular protest and violence, Aristide's post-Duvalier literary productions are more mature and ironically-minded or engaging. Aristide's subversive language was intended to expose the wrongdoings of the Macoutes and denounce the Duvalier regime.

Finally, we should reiterate that theology is always contextual and written as a response to specific religious, cultural, economic, and political phenomena at a specific time in human history. Aristide's theo-political text, *100 Vese Dechoukaj*, should be interpreted within this standpoint; such perspective is not meant to rehabilitate Aristide in Haiti's civil and political spheres. Our approach to this sensitive matter is not intended to offer an apology for Jean-Bertrand Aristide nor provide a legitimate defense of the probable "gangster affiliation," and his crime and human rights violations—if he has committed any? We remain skeptical and are willing for further exploration.

On the other hand, when one looks meticulously into Aristide's political actions and presidential administration during his second term, and the multiple accusations thereof in the light of the theology of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence which he promotes in his post-Duvalierist writings, one could possibly infer that he has not fully integrated the spirit of Ubuntu and the moral vision and sound theological teachings into his political leadership and

presidency. Aristide may have fallen from grace, given his reputation as an acclaimed religious leader and the beloved Priest of the Saint Jean Bosco Parish in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

While some indviduals would agree that followers of Christ could use defensive violence in certain circumstances for self-preservation and the protection of family and country, we maintain that violence is not always the answer to foster peace, unity, and reconciliation. As Aristide declares in the Seventh commandment of democracy: "No to violence, yes to Lavalas" (1993:198).

> Schooled by the poor, the pedagogy of active nonviolence and unity triumphed over institutionalized violence…The pedagogy of nonviolence may support a collective raising of consciousness with regard to our country of nonviolence…Where the cannon of violence are roaring, that is where the sun of nonviolence is shining, "l*avalassement*." (Aristide, 1993:198.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING THE MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS OF ARISTIDE AND THEOLOGY FOR GLOBAL CULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

8.1. RETHINKING THE MEANING OF ARISTIDE

The goal of this doctoral thesis was to examine Jean-Bertrand Aristide's theology with an emphasis on his political theology, theological ethics, and theological anthropology. This intellectual project has made a substantial contribution to the areas of interests, and concurrently to the fields of theology, ethics, cultural studies, anthropology, peace studies, Haitian studies, Caribbean Studies, Black Diaspora studies, and their cognates. The premise of our choice in this thesis was to fill the intellectual gaps in contemporary studies on Aristide, and Black theological anthropology and ethics—as specifically observed in chapters five and six. Nonetheless, as observed in our previous analysis, when one looks meticulously into Aristide's political actions and presidential administration, and the multiple accusations thereof in the light of the theology of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence which he promotes in his writings, one could possibly infer that he has not fully integrated the spirit of Ubuntu and the moral vision and sound theological teachings (see Chapter six) into his political leadership and presidency, as shown in Chapter seven.

There's certainly a tremendous divide between Aristide's theology and political administration. Undoubtedly, there exists a wide disunity between his theological writings and political activities. For example, if the allegations against Aristide are true, then Aristide's promotion of a theology of love and mutual reciprocity in the public sphere somewhat denies his many political interventions as the Head of the State of the Caribbean nation of Haiti. One the

341

other hand, we must be careful not to equate propaganda with reality—as both elements pertain to Aristide's religious faith and presidency. As observed in Chapter seven, Aristide's political actions and the articulation of a theology of violence denies the theology of love and the ethic of care he zealously championed. If defensive violence is integral of Aristide's political praxis and biblical theological hermeneutics, Aristide has fallen from grace and brought dishonor upon himself as an acclaimed religious-political leader of the Haitian people and the beloved Pastor-Priest of the Saint Jean Bosco Parish in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Consequently, Black (public) theologians, ethicists, and thinkers in the Black Diaspora and Africa should not pattern their theological anthropology and ethics in the pattern of barbaric European colonization of yesterday and the "life-killing civilization of Empire today." First, we must reject at all cost Western anthropology of conquest and domination, as well as Western hegemonic control and epistemology of conquest that are associated with "I think therefore I am" reasoning—a self-centered ideology that defers the ethical practices and humanitarian dimensions of Ubuntu. Secondly, the institution of slavery, the colonial system, and the neo-colonial order and the Empire of conquest and domination of today associated with Western modernity promote a conflicting and disastrous humanism whose ethical system and worldview consists the denial of life and the dehumanization of the weak, the oppressed, and the disinherited. Thirdly, as we have observed in Chapters three six and six respectively, Liberation Theology as an alternative form of epistemology and as a different way of "being in the world" and for the community of faith to "doing life together" in these times of despair, uncertainty, and fragility must always challenge and reject contemporary nation-state models in the West whose power figurations and totalitarian interventions encourage collective violence, terror, and collective death. As Aime Cesaire has denounced the workings and practices of Western civilization:

342

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent Civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to is most crucial problems is a stricken civilization a civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization. The fact that the so-called European civilization—"Western" civilization—as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that European is unable to justify itself either before the bar of "reason" of before the bar of "conscience"; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive…What is serious is that ["America'] "Europe" is morally, spiritually indefensible. (2000:32-33)

On a different note and on the other hand, what remains puzzling in Aristide's theological ideas and moral vision is Aristide's association with religious violence at the popular violence, and equally, his promotion of the method of necklacing and chimerization in his project of cultural and political renewal, and the alienation of the Haitian Duvalierists and Macoutes. As seen in Chapter seven, Aristide perceives the Macoutes, Duvalierists, the political class of Haiti, and the oppressors of the Haitian people are enemies of God. His justification for violence and clarion call to uproot these individuals and political leaders was justified because he was following the will of God. The interesting dynamic between religion, violence, and the public life in Aristide's theology of aggression is that "violence has accompanied religion's renewed political presence…since public violence is a display of power, it appeals to those who want to make dramatic statements and reclaim public space" (Juegensmeyer, 2000:248). As noted in our previous analysis, the 1980s was an era of cultural and political transition, as well as religious rebirth in Haiti; in these historic moments, popular violence was exploited instrumentally by the Haitian people and supported by religious leaders like Aristide to hold both "political currency and religious meaning" (Ibid). As Juegensmeyer has remarked that violence "can be used to remind the populace of the godly power that makes a religious ideology potent, and it can be used to render divine judgments. It can create

man-made incidents of fear on heaven's behalf, as if its perpetrators could discern the mind of God" (Ibid: 242).

8 .2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

First, further studies on Aristide should investigate more fully the relationship between Aristide's liberation theology and the liberationist interpretation of the Gospel, and his challenge to Western capitalism during his Presidency in Haiti. Aristide's preference for a socialist government during both presidential terms, especially in his first presidential administration, is evident in his political speeches and the social development projects he advanced. In fact, this choice predates his presidency, as he was actively involved in socialist programs through the "Fanmi Se Lavi" organization that provided social, medical, and educational care and resources, as well as religious teachings to the underrepresented families, and poor and street children in Port-au-Prince. In a sermon delivered in 1986, Aristide not only encouraged the Christians of his parish to overthrow the government of "Baby Doc" (Jean Claude Duvalier), he revealed his ultimate goal in this pronouncement: "Part of our mission is to destroy the capitalist system. Socialism is closer to the Gospel than either capitalism or communism" (Qtd in Abbott, 2011: 342).

We have alluded in Chapter two that he had opened the door of the presidential house to the poor, the homeless, and street children to eat lunch with him. As he declared to the Haitian people: "If there's enough for the rich, then there must be enough for the poor, too. If the National Palace was formerly for the rich, today it's for the poor" (Qtd in Sprague, 2012:55). Not only he attempted to break the great divide between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the non-privileged Haitians, in his first presidential term, he was totally committed to radical solidarity with the poor and the homeless, and the welfare of the least among the Haitian population; this

344

revolutionary act, for Aristide, was a call to obedience to Jesus' gospel of grace and to place the poor first in the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, further research should be done on Aristide's perspective and interpretation of the Vodou religion, its ethics, and its practical meaning for Haitian cultural identity and nationalism. It is important to investigate how his promotion of Vodou would correlate with his commitment to the Christian faith or Christian orthodoxy? Jean-Bertrand Aristide was the first elected President to official recognize Vodou as a religion in Haiti. As Kate Ramsey has reiterated:

> On April 2003, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide signed a decree granting official recognition to the Vodou religion for the first time in the nation's two-hundred-year history. Describing Vodou as an "essentially constitutive element of [Haitian] national identity," the decree authorized religious leaders to register with the government and become licensed to officiate at civil ceremonies such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals. (2011:13)

Thirdly, it would be important for researchers and Aristide scholars to do a comparative analysis of Aristide's first theo-political text, *100 Vese Dechoukaj Va T'en Satan*, produced in 1986 in the Duvalier era, to the theo-political language and ideas in his post-Duvalier literary productions. Such study has the potential to clarify substantially the development of Aristide's theological ideas and his maturity as a theologian-activist. This rapport is largely ignored in contemporary scholarship on Aristide (Hallward 2007/2010; Deubert, 2005, Dupuy, 1997, 2007; Nesbitt, 2013; Robsinson, 2008; Sprague, 2012; Achille, 1998, Fatton, 2002, Saint Paul, 2015, Girard, 2005/2010). Fourthly, few studies have examined the neurological basis of religion and religious violence. For example, is there a biological connection between violence and religion? (Ganzevoort 2006). Finally, Aristide's sermons preached at Saint Jean Bosco Parish and elsewhere are left unexplored. It would be found meaningful for further studies to research and compare his homiletics with political speeches.

345

As we have expressed in the "Introduction" of this doctoral thesis, we hope this intellectual project has now accomplished the stated objectives: (1) to sharpen our understanding of the theological sensibility and moral vision of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, (2) to shed some light on the interplays and connective forces of faith, anthropology, and hope in Aristide's theological and political writings, (3) to illuminate on the importance of theology as a public discourse to facilitate constructive conversations among people of different social and economic status, ethnic and racial, and educational backgrounds—without ignoring the poor, the oppressed, and the underrepresented individuals and families, (4) to underscore the importance of public theology as a catalyst for cultural transformation and renewal, and as a symbolic beacon to foster optimistic future possibilities toward the common good of all individuals, (5) to establish the significant intellectual contributions of Haiti in the advancement of (international) conversations on human rights, equality, justice, imperialism, neocolonialism, and democracy in contemporary (public) discourses and the modern history of ideas in the West and intercontinentally, (6) to establish intellectual, ideological, and theological convergences, confluences, and connections in the writings of African and Black Atlantic thinkers and theologians, and (7) finally, to contribute to a more exact appreciation of Aristide's place on the spectrum of Developing World Theologians of Liberation and his manifold contributions to the disciplines of critical race studies, theology, anthropology, ethics, history, and postcolonial and cultural studies.

As could be observed in our analysis, we have endeavored to make sense of the human condition in modernity, people's place in the cosmos and society, and the relationships between God and individuals—with a particular focus on the writings and ideas of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and their implications for contemporary debates on human rights, cultural studies, ethic studies, political theology, theological ethics, theological anthropology, and the doctrine of God, as well

346

as for contemporary societies as we seek to promote human dignity, universal peace, international solidarity, and build a more sustaining project of human interdependence, interconnectedness, and relationality. On the other hand, in contemporary societies in the modern world, we understand that social evils and human-inflicting pain and suffering could manifest themselves in the form of aggressive economic capitalism, globalization, Western hegemony and control in the world, imperialism, neocolonialism, modern day slavery, poverty, water shortage, incurable diseases, and economic dependence. We must not lose heart; rather, we should strive toward the finish line until we reach the stars. We need to remember the (plight of the) poor and maintain sustaining solidarity with them. As Jean-Bertrand Aristide has encouraged us toward this aim of life—toward future hope and future emancipative possibilities:

> The dilemma is, I believe, the classic dilemma of the poor; a choice between death and death. Either we enter a global economic system, in which we know we cannot survive, or, we refuse, and face death by slow starvation. With choices like these the urgency of finding a third way is clear. We must find some room to maneuver, some open space simply to survive. We must lift ourselves up off the morgue table and tell the experts we are not yet dead." Jean-Bertrand Aristide. (2000: 16-17)

9. APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

Selected Documents of Universal Catholic Social Teaching

Document	Author	Year of Publication
Retrum Novarum: The Condition of Labor (RN)	Leo XIII	1891
Quadragismo Anno: After Forty Years (QA)	Pius XI	1931
Mater et Magistra: Christianity and Social Progress (MM)	John XXIII	1961
Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth (PT)	John XXIII	1963
Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS)	Second Vatican Council	1965
Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples (PP)	Pope Paul VI	1967
Octogesima Adveniens: A Call to Action (OA)	Pope Paul VI	1971
Justitia in Mundo: Justice in the World (JM)	Synod of Bishops, 1971	1971
Laborem Exercens: On Human Work (LE)	Pope John Paul II,	1981

Text Selections

PACEM IN TERRIS

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE JOHN XXIII
ON ESTABLISHING UNIVERSAL PEACE IN TRUTH,
JUSTICE, CHARITY, AND LIBERTY

APRIL 11, 1963

*http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-
xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html*

ORDER BETWEEN MEN

'Any well-regulated and productive association of men in society demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual man is truly a person. His is a nature, that is, endowed with intelligence and free will. As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable.''(*PT* 9)

Rights

"But first We must speak of man's rights. Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill-health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood." (*PT* 11)

Rights Pertaining to Moral and Cultural Values

"Moreover, man has a natural right to be respected. He has a right to his good name. He has a right to freedom in investigating the truth, and—within the limits of the moral order and the common good—to freedom of speech and publication, and to freedom to pursue whatever profession he may choose. He has the right, also, to be accurately informed about public events." (*PP* 12)

"He has the natural right to share in the benefits of culture, and hence to receive a good general education, and a technical or professional training consistent with the degree of educational development in his own country. Furthermore, a system must be devised for affording gifted members of society the opportunity of engaging in more advanced studies, with a view to their

occupying, as far as possible, positions of responsibility in society in keeping with their natural talent and acquired skill." (*PT* 13)

Economic Rights

"In the economic sphere, it is evident that a man has the inherent right not only to be given the opportunity to work, but also to be allowed the exercise of personal initiative in the work he does." (*PT* 18)

MATER ET MAGISTRA

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE JOHN XXIII
ON CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

MAY 15, 1961

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html

Human Solidarity and Christian Brotherhood

"Finally, both workers and employers should regulate their mutual relations in accordance with the principle of human solidarity and Christian brotherhood. Unrestricted competition in the liberal sense, and the Marxist creed of class warfare; are clearly contrary to Christian teaching and the nature of man." (*MM* 23)

On Socialism

"Pope Pius XI further emphasized the fundamental opposition between Communism and Christianity, and made it clear that no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism. The reason is that Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time and takes no account of any objective other than that of material well-being. Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority." (*MM* 34)

Factors Determining Just Wage

"We therefore consider it our duty to reaffirm that the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. Other factors too enter into the assessment of a just wage: namely,

the effective contribution which each individual makes to the economic effort, the financial state of the company for which he works, the requirements of the general good of the particular country—having regard especially to the repercussions on the overall employment of the working force in the country as a whole—and finally the requirements of the common good of the universal family of nations of every kind, both large and small." (*MM*71)

The Demands of the Common Good

"What are these demands? On the national level they include: employment of the greatest possible number of workers; care lest privileged classes arise, even among the workers; maintenance of equilibrium between wages and prices; the need to make goods and services accessible to the greatest number; elimination, or at least the restriction, of inequalities in the various branches of the economy—that is, between agriculture, industry and services; creation of a proper balance between economic expansion and the development of social services, especially through the activity of public authorities; the best possible adjustment of the means of production to the progress of science and technology; seeing to it that the benefits which make possible a more human way of life will be available not merely to the present generation but to the coming generations as well." (*MM* 79)

"The demands of the common good on the international level include: the avoidance of all forms of unfair competition between the economies of different countries; the fostering of mutual collaboration and good will; and effective co-operation in the development of economically less advanced communities." (*MM* 80)

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PASTORAL CONSTITUTION
ON THE CHURCH IN THE
MODERN WORLD
GAUDIUM ET SPES
PROMULGATED BY
HIS HOLINESS, POPE PAUL VI
ON DECEMBER 7, 1965

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

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THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

"But God did not create man as a solitary, for from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential." (*GS* 12)

"For God has called man and still calls him so that with his entire being he might be joined to Him in an endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption. Christ won this victory when He rose

to life, for by His death He freed man from death. Hence to every thoughtful man a solidly established faith provides the answer to his anxiety about what the future holds for him. At the same time faith gives him the power to be united in Christ with his loved ones who have already been snatched away by death; faith arouses the hope that they have found true life with God." (*GS* 12)

FOSTERING THE NOBILITY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

"The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Hence Christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life, and by which parents are assisted in their lofty calling. Those who rejoice in such aids look for additional benefits from them and labor to bring them about." (*GS* 47)

THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE

"Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature. Wherever human life is involved, therefore, nature and culture are quite intimately connected one with the other." (*GS* 53)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

"In the economic and social realms, too, the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For man is the source, the center, and the purpose of all economic and social life."(*GS* 63)

Economic Development

"Today more than ever before attention is rightly given to the increase of the production of agricultural and industrial goods and of the rendering of services, for the purpose of making provision for the growth of population and of satisfying the increasing desires of the human race. Therefore, technical progress, an inventive spirit, an eagerness to create and to expand enterprises, the application of methods of production, and the strenuous efforts of all who engage in production—in a word, all the elements making for such development—must be promoted. The fundamental finality of this production is not the mere increase of products nor profit or control but rather the service of man, and indeed of the whole man with regard for the full range of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life; this applies to every man whatsoever and to every group of men, of every race and of every part of the world. Consequently, economic activity is to be carried on according to its own methods and laws within the limits of the moral order," so that God's plan for mankind may be realized." (*GS* 65)

"Economic development must remain under man's determination and must not be left to the judgment of a few men or groups possessing too much economic power or of the political community alone or of certain more powerful nations. It is necessary, on the contrary, that at every level the largest possible number of people and, when it is a question of international relations, all

nations have an active share in directing that development. There is need as well of the coordination and fitting and harmonious combination of the spontaneous efforts of individuals and of free groups with the undertakings of public authorities." (GS 65)

"God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.(8) Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others." (*GS* 69)

"Christians who take an active part in present-day socio-economic development and fight for justice and charity should be convinced that they can make a great contribution to the prosperity of mankind and to the peace of the world. In these activities let them, either as individuals or as members of groups, give a shining example. Having acquired the absolutely necessary skill and experience, they should observe the right order in their earthly activities in faithfulness to Christ and His Gospel. Thus their whole life, both individual and social, will be permeated with the spirit of the beatitudes, notably with a spirit of poverty.

Whoever in obedience to Christ seeks first the Kingdom of God, takes therefrom a stronger and purer love for helping all his brethren and for perfecting the work of justice under the inspiration of charity." (*GS* 72)

THE LIFE OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

"Men, families and the various groups which make up the civil community are aware that they cannot achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts. They see the need for a wider community, within which each one makes his specific contribution every day toward an ever broader realization of the common good.(1) For this purpose they set up a political community according to various forms. The political community exists, consequently, for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy. Indeed, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection." (*GS* 74)

THE FOSTERING OF PEACE AND THE PROMOTION OF A COMMUNITY OF NATIONS

"Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice.

353

The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly. Moreover, since the human will is unsteady and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant mastering of passions and the vigilance of lawful authority." (*GS* 78)

Setting Up an International Community

"In view of the increasingly close ties of mutual dependence today between all the inhabitants and peoples of the earth, the apt pursuit and efficacious attainment of the universal common good now require of the community of nations that it organize itself in a manner suited to its present responsibilities, especially toward the many parts of the world which are still suffering from unbearable want." (*GS* 84)

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DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS
PROCLAIMED BY
HIS HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html

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The Meaning of the Universal Right to an Education

"All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education (5) that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, (6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good." (*GE* 1)

POPULORUM PROGRESSIO

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PAUL VI
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES

MARCH 26, 1967

http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-
vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

Development

"The development We speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man. As an eminent specialist on this question has rightly said: "We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is man—each individual man, each human group, and humanity as a whole."" (*PP* 14)

Basic Education

"We can even say that economic growth is dependent on social progress, the goal to which it aspires; and that basic education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself. Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit. When someone learns how to read and write, he is equipped to do a job and to shoulder a profession, to develop self-confidence and realize that he can progress along with others. As we said in Our message to the UNESCO meeting at Teheran, literacy is the "first and most basic tool for personal enrichment and social integration; and it is society's most valuable tool for furthering development and economic progress." (*PP* 35)

Development, the New Name for Peace

"Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy. As We told the Council Fathers on Our return from the United Nations: "We have to devote our attention to the situation of those nations still striving to advance. What We mean, to put it in clearer words, is that our charity toward the poor, of whom

there are countless numbers in the world, has to become more solicitous, more effective, more generous." (*PP*76)

OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS

APOSTOLIC LETTER
OF POPE PAUL VI

May 14, 1971

http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html

For greater justice

"There is a need to establish a greater justice in the sharing of goods, both within national communities and on the international level. In international exchanges there is a need to go beyond relationships based on force, in order to arrive at agreements reached with the good of all in mind. Relationships based on force have never in fact established justice in a true and lasting manner, even if at certain times the alteration of positions can often make it possible to find easier conditions for dialogue. The use of force moreover leads to the setting in motion of opposing forces, and from this springs a climate of struggle which opens the way to situations of extreme violence and to abuses." (OA 43)

ENCYCLICAL LETTER
CARITAS IN VERITATE
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI

http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

"Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because, as Saint John teaches (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16) and as I recalled in my first Encyclical Letter, "God is love" (*Deus Caritas Est*): *everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it*. Love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope." (*CV* 2)

356

APPENDIX II

English Translation of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's famous Pere Lebrun Speech (Sept. 27, 1991)
Translated from the Haitian Creole by Raymond A. Joseph, Chief Editor of *Haiti Observateur*.

Brothers and sisters who are born in the bourgeoisie in Haiti and who would not like to see the bourgeoisie fighting the people, and you the people who would not like to fight the bourgeoisie, but who know that the bourgeoisie must conform (play) according to the rules of the democratic game, today it's in the name of this people, I come to tell you: **YOU** who have money yet who would not like to go live outside this country of Haiti, you who would like to live in the country, when you die, you won't take the money with you.

Put people to work. You must invest your money any old way, so that more people can find work, for: if you don't do it, I am sorry for you! It's not my fault, you understand!?

That money in your possession, it is not really yours. You earned it in thievery, you carried it through bad choices you made, under an evil regime, an evil system, and in all other unsavory ways. Today, seven months after February 7th, in this day ending with the numeral 7, I give you a chance, because you won't get two, nor three chances. it's only one chance that you'll get, Otherwise, things won't be good for you! [*Shriek from people*].

If I speak to you in that way, it's because I've given you seven months to conform, and the seven months are up to the day. If I speak to you in that way, it's not because I have forgotten that in days of justice (free wheeling justice), they could have put all these thieves to rout and grab whatever they now have, and which isn't theirs anyway. If you don't understand what I meant I invite you to understand. It's Creole that I am speaking, Creole should be understood.

Now, whenever you are hungry, turn your eyes in the direction of those people who aren't hungry. Whenever you are out of work, turn your eyes in the direction of those who can put people to work. Ask them why not? What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for the sea to dry up [*He actually made a play on words, rhyming "Tann" with "Pwa Tann" which means waiting for tender beans to mature*]. Why don't you start? It's time for you to start, because the country needs you, the country needs us economically, so that we can do better, twice as much.

Whenever you feel the heat of unemployment, whenever the heat of the pavement begins to make you feel awful, whenever you feel revolt inside you, turn your eyes to the direction of those with the means. Ask them why not? What are you waiting for? Why this long wait? Are you waiting for the seas to dry up [*the same allusion as above*]?

And if you catch a cat [*the slang in Creole for thief*], if you catch a thief, if you catch a false, Lavalassian [*followers of the President*], if you catch a false... [*he stopped right in the middle of the word*], if you catch one who shouldn't be there, don't he-si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - deserves [*staccato for effect and repeated twice, and his voice rising in a crescendo*].

Your tool in hand, your instrument in hand, your constitution in hand! Don't he - si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - deserves.

Your equipment in hand, your trowel in hand, your pencil in hand, your Constitution in hand, don't he-si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - deserves.

The 291 [*Article of the Constitution banning the Tontons Macoutes from political life for 10 years*] is in the middle of the head where there is no hair [*an allusion to Roger Lafontant*], and says: Macoute isn't in the game. Macoute isn't in the game. Don't he-si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - deserves. Three days and three nights watching in front of the National Penitentiary, if one escapes, don't he-si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - deserves [*Repeated twice*].

Everywhere, in the four corners, we are watching, we are praying, we are watching, we are praying, when you catch one, don't he-si-tate - to - give - him - what - he - de-serves.

What a beautiful tool! What a beautiful instrument! What a beautiful piece of equipment! It's beautiful, yes it's beautiful, it's cute, it's pretty, it has a good smell, wherever you go you want to inhale it. Since the law of the country says Macoute isn't in the game, whatever happens to him he deserves, he came looking for trouble.

Again, under this flag of pride, under this flag of dignity, under this same flag of solidarity, hand in hand, one encouraging the other, one holding the other's hand so that from this day forward, each one will pick up this message of respect that I share with you, this message of justice that I share with you, so that the word ceases to be the word and becomes action. With other actions in the economic field, I throw the ball to you, you dribble it, you shoot, shoot from before the penalty box, shoot on the goal adroitly, because if the people don't find this ball to hold it in the net, well, as I told you, it's not my fault, it's you who will find what - you - de-serve, according to what the Mother Law of the country declares.

One alone, we are weak,
Together we are strong. Together together,
We are the flood. [*Frenzy ... !*]
Do you feel proud!) [*yeah ... !*]
Do you feel proud! [*yeah ... !*]

APPENDIX III

Below is the reported interview between Jean-Bertrand Aristide and British philosopher

Peter Hallward, which he conducted in July 20, 2006.

> **PH:** *Perhaps the most serious and frequent that was made by the demonstrators, and repeated by your critics abroad, is that you resorted to violence in order to hang on to power. The claim is that, as the pressure on your government grew, you started to rely on armed gangs from the slums, so-called "Chimères," and that you used them to intimidate and in some cases to murder your opponents.* (Hallward, 2010:363)

> **JBA:** Here again the people who make these of claims are lying. As soon as you start to look rationally at what was really going on, these accusations don't even begin to stand up. Several things have to be kept in mind. First of all, the police had been working under an embargo for several years. We weren't even able to buy bullet-proof vests or tear-gas canisters. The police were severely under-equipped, and were often simply unable to control a demonstration or confrontation. Some of our opponents, some of the demonstrators who sought to provoke violent confrontations, knew this perfectly well. The people also understood this. It was common knowledge that while the police were running out of ammunition and supplies in Haiti, heavy weapons were being smuggled to our opponents in and through the Dominican Republic. The people knew this, and didn't like it. They started getting nervous, with good reason. The provocations didn't let up, and there were some isolated acts of violence. Was this violence justified? No. I condemned it. I condemned it consistently. But with the limited means at our disposal, how could we prevent every outbreak of violence? There was a lot of provocation, a lot of anger, and there was no way that we could ensure that each and every citizen would refuse violence. The president of a country like Haiti cannot be held responsible for the actions of its every citizen. But there was never any deliberate encouragement of violence, there was no deliberate recourse to violence. Those who make and repeat these claims are lying, and they know it.

> Now what about these *chimeres*, and the people they call *chimeres*? This is clearly another expression of our apartheid mentality, the very word says it all. Chimeres are people who are impoverished, who live in a state of profound insecurity and chronic unemployment. They are the victims of structural injustice, of systematic social violence. And they are among the people who voted for this government, who appreciated what the government was doing and had done, in spite of the embargo. It's not surprising that they should confront those who have always benefited not surprising that they should confront those who have always benefited from this same social violence, once they started actively seeking to undermine their government.

Again, this doesn't justify occasional acts of violence, but where does the real responsibility lie? Who are the real victims of violence here? How many members of the elite, how many members of the opposition's many political parties, were killed by "chimeres"? How many? Who are they? Meanwhile everyone knows that powerful economic interests were quite happy to fund certain criminal gangs, that they put weapons in the hands of vagabonds, in Cite Soleil and elsewhere, in order to create disorder and blame it on Fanmi Lavalas. These same people also paid journalists to present the situation in a certain way, and among other things they promised them visas—recently some of them who are now living in France admitted to what they were told to say, in order to get their visa. So you have people who were financing misinformation on the other hand and destabilization on the other, and who encouraged little groups of hoodlums to sow panic on the streets, to create the impression of a government that is losing control.

As if all this wasn't' enough, rather that allow police munitions to get through to Haiti, rather than send arms and equipment to strengthen the Haitian government, the Americans sent them to their proxies I the Domiican Republic instead. You only have to look at who these people were—people like Jodel Chamblain, who is a convicted criminal, who escaped justice in Haiti to be welcomed by the US, and who then armed and financed these future "freedom fighters" who were waiting over the border in the Dominican Republic. That's what really happened. We didn't arm the "chimeres," it was they who armed Chamblain and Philippe! The hypocrisy is extraordinary. And then when it comes to 2004-2006, suddenly all this indignant talk of violence falls quiet. As if nothing had happened. People were being herded into containers and dropped into the sea. That counts for nothing. The endless attacks on Cite Soleil, they count for nothing. I could go on and on. Thousands have died. But they don't' count, because they are just "chimeres," after all. They don't count as equals, they aren't *really* people in their own right. (Hallward, 2010:363-5)

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363

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