

Theological and Historical Report (THP)

Caribbean Theology

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Introduction- Theological and Historical Themes for Caribbean Theology

Psalm 137: 4 states, “ How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?” This presents a very interesting question to be considers for all people groups who feel displaced or as foreigners in their present context. As one strives to acquire insight into the current dynamics in regards to particular people, places or things, this often requires exploring the history of the matter. One must take the time to research the trajectory of events which precipitated what one presently sees. By engaging in such activity one can possibly unearth both potential positive and negative factors as part of the preceding sequencing of events related to the present position or perspective. This is the case as one explores the subject topic of Caribbean Theology. The purpose and premise of Caribbean Theology is to highlight what has and is occurring in the lives of Caribbean people and to assist them with achieving a greater understanding via theological reflection and interpretation.

“The more things change, the more they stay the same” is a phrase that became popular by Jean- Baptiste Alphonse Karr a French writer. Some might view the statement as a resolve to moving forward whether evident by time or setting but still operating the same as in the past or by recent course of action. There are those on the other hand, who would view the statement as a determination and commitment towards advancement and progression but still maintaining some integral components or foundational elements. Numerous political, economic, social and religious challenges have occurred at different points in time throughout history. In retrospect it can be noted that in some scenarios, resolution in association to the different instances were quickly resolved. Then there are those scenarios which require a longer period of time to achieve some level of resolution and progress. However, there also exists occasions when progression to resolution is still a work in progress. When one localizes the focus area, applicable discussion, and steps toward progress as it pertains to that of Caribbean people context, then certain factors and outlook must be included in the discussion.

One of those key historical points is that of the impact and influence of the African heritage on the Caribbean society and cultural attributes. There is a richness of African tradition and cultural influences which are engraved into the Caribbean way of life including social and religious frameworks. This helps to resonate the sentiment of the connection between the Caribbean and its connection to “Mother-land” Africa. A second key point however involves the problematic impact of the African to Caribbean regional relationship forged by slavery and colonization as well as decolonization. This resulted in political, economic, and social injustices which were solely historical in nature but their ripple effects still exist today.

The third key point which must be discussed centers on the theological component as it related to the Caribbean theology equation. It becomes necessary to focus one’s attention to the biblical theology aspect of the gospel message, which was brought and shared by others to those in the Caribbean. The religious oppression which transpired must be explored while taking into consideration what is the true gospel message which should be shared to all of God’s people.

The fourth key point is that of the contextual theoretical basis of Caribbean theology. This introduces into the discussion the importance and necessity for freedom to exist to promote, embrace, share and express the connecting points of their various historical complexities with their present day struggles even as to religious expression here in North America. As a result of this, those of Caribbean descent whether indigenous to the Caribbean region or as diasporas in North America must persist in galvanizing around what is ascribed by Caribbean Theology. Even though at times they are viewed as foreigners by others, there is strength and stability via Caribbean Theology as the middle ground between African and North American theological perspectives whether they are home or abroad.