

Toward a ministry of Economic and Spiritual Development:
Sustainable Agriculture at the Crossroad of Spiritual,
Economic Development and Social Justice for Haitian Migrant Workers

by

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Abstract

Toward a Ministry of Economic and Spiritual Development: Sustainable Agriculture at the Crossword of Spiritual Development, Economic Development and Social Justice for Haitian Migrant Workers

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Project under the direction of Professor Robin Gottfried

The purpose of this project was to explore the plight of reported mistreatment of Haitian Migrant workers in the Dominican Republic, and to create and implement a God-centered model of ministry in order to alleviate, and possibly eliminate, the problem. The mistreatment of the workers took the form of overt racism, and sub-standard social and economic conditions. The primary reason for the migration of workers is the poverty that exists in Haiti. The objective of the God-centered model, to be implemented in Haiti, would be to improve economic and spiritual conditions of the workers there. This would reduce migration of migrant workers to the Dominican Republic and enhance the spiritual capabilities of those workers, who migrated, to resist mistreatment in the Dominican Republic.

The background to the migration of Haitian workers to the Dominican Republic is described by explaining the history of Hispaniola, which is made up of the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The history of Haiti traced the French colonial exploitation of slaves, overt racism, discrimination against dark skin members of the population by those members with lighter skin, social and economic exploitation, environmental problems, and ineffective

government programs. These contributed to abject poverty among the majority of the population and the migration of workers from Haiti to the Dominican Republic to better their economic conditions. The history of the Dominican Republic related the racist overtone of “Anti-Haitianismo” perpetuated by two national leaders, resulting in the massacre of scores of Haitians in 1937, and the instilling in the popular culture the notion of the inferiority of Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

The God-centered model was proposed to alleviate poverty in Haiti, with the premise that an improved economic standard of Haitians should reduce migration to the Dominican Republic while those who migrate may find that their stronger spiritual state should help them resist traditional exploitation. The tenets of the model would be strong Christian ethics for spiritual development and sustainable agricultural development projects implemented within the parameters of cooperative economic development funded by loans based on the Yanus micro credit lending model. There is a detailed description of the roles of economic theories, the Haitian educational system, and a theological framework focusing on economic and spiritual development of Haitians.

The thesis next explores the potential of the model. The description focuses on the anticipated spiritual revelation of God's love to the people of Anse-a-Pitre in Haiti, where the model is proposed to be implemented. The agricultural, economic, social, and spiritual aspects of the program are all interrelated. The anticipated success of the project will serve as a testament to God's love for his people. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the Christ-centered work will be an invitation to those people who have listened to the spirit of God and to those who understand the reality of the Gospel. It is anticipated that those people will use their vocation and gifts with accountability and excellence.

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Chapter 1	
Introduction	

The plight of the Haitian migrant worker has always been a thorn in the relationship between the Haitian and Dominican governments. As I was growing up, I heard of people in a Haitian community in Cuba who went to cut sugar cane for the growing Cuban sugar industry. This migration happened around 1920. In any event, this population has now blended well in the life of modern Cuba. But, this may not be the case in the Dominican Republic. The

Haitian workforce is still well sought there to provide help in the sugar cane plantations. They are recognized and admired for their work ethics, since most of the Dominican population are not be interested in working under the sun cutting canes. This is considered menial work, and the Haitian migrant workers are categorized in that way.

Injustice and mistreatment of Haitian migrant workers are quite normal in this society, where greed and corruption thrive on both sides of the border. This situation has always concerned me, as I could not understand the rationale. As a Christian, I knew that this situation was not just, so I began to study the reasons for it. Failed leaderships have driven the Haitian population away, risking their lives in order to put to good use their God given talents. I found that the lack of jobs in Haiti was at the root of this situation. In turn, this desperate need made it a fertile ground for all type of predators to take advantage.

I came to the conclusion that there must be a way to approach this wrongful situation. In truth, there are plenty of natural resources in Haiti. They are part of God's creation, as well as the people who have disregarded them.

As a result, I started pondering and meditating on ways to address this problem. "Opening the Book of Nature", a class taught by Professors Gottfried and MacSwain at Sewanee, has helped me respond to the many theological questions of relationship between creation, environment and sustainability. God is the maker of the universe and everything belongs to the creator. The people of Haiti are part of God's creation. They have been entrusted with this part of the universe, but they have not been good stewards of its resources, because they have not developed their own agriculture. Through the lectures, the readings, and the exchanges in class, I came to realize that a focus on the potential in the land is the first step to address the

plight of the Haitian migrant workers. The beginning of a project started to take shape in my mind: A new model of ministry.

This new model will take into consideration the application of sustainable agriculture in the economic, social, and spiritual contexts of a small town in Haiti, with regard to social justice and migration to the Dominican Republic. I will explore in this project some of the characteristics of a ministry of sustainable agricultural development.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter presents a review of the literature pertinent to the historical background of Haitian migrant workers to the Dominican Republic. The presentation begins with

information about the island of Hispaniola, which is made up of the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The review continues with information about the political and socio-economic conditions in Haiti, which led to poverty and the need for migration to the Dominican Republic. Then, the political conditions and attitudes of the government of the Dominican Republic are addressed. Finally, there is the conclusion about the relative conditions in both countries that led to migration of migrant workers from Haiti, and perceived injustice and mistreatment in the Dominican Republic, the receiving country.

Hispaniola

The island of Hispaniola is home to two different nations: the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As a result of colonization, each nation has inherited different customs and social norms from their ancestors. Both countries manage to live peacefully with only sporadic conflicts taking place. Tensions have happened many times because of the presence of Haitian migrant workers. Hence the influx of Haitian migrant workers crossing into the Dominican Republic has been the result of people looking for work. Some of them have crossed the border illegally and others came legally under contract and have overstayed their visas. In any event, their living conditions and unjust treatment have been a concern to many people. This is my reason for wanting to shed some light on this situation. To that effect, let us explore the history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Haiti: A History

The island of Haiti, Quisqueya, was inhabited by several Indian groups, especially the Tainos. When Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the island of Haiti, it was clear that he did not come just to visit. His main purpose was to grab land for the Spanish kingdom. This

quest led the Tainos, who naively welcomed him, into a struggle for survival. It came to be called “Hispaniola”, meaning Little Spain. The Tainos were all decimated except those who fiercely rebelled and took to the mountains.¹

The greed of Columbus did not end with the “aboriginal Haitian holocaust”. It went full speed with the introduction of African slaves at the suggestion of a Spanish monk, Las Casas². These Africans were kidnapped and transported to French Saint Domingue against their will to labor as slaves of the European colonial empire. As Eduardo Galeano puts it,

Transforming Saint Domingue into the richest colony of the eighteenth century for France’s benefit, the unpaid labor of the Africans created a mortal prosperity.³

Indeed, Haiti became a prized colony, whereas different colonial powers of the time were fighting to conquer it. All this prosperity was acquired by the sweat of the African slaves who overthrew the imperial “plantation system with its dehumanizing corollaries of structural inequality and class exploitation.”⁴

As a result, the poor continue to struggle against the same sort of oppression they had before the 1804 Haitian revolution (that led to Haitian independence.) The oppressors are

¹ Francine, Jacobs, *The Tainos: The People Who Welcomed Columbus*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s sons, 1992, p.69.

² Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*. Evanston: Harper & Row, 1970, p.33.

³ Eduardo, Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America. Five Centuries of the pillage of a Continent*, trans. Cedric Belfrage. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997, chapter 2.

⁴ Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008, p.34.

different, but the conditions are much the same. This is an ongoing socio/economic and political conflict that is reflected in the daily lives of modern Haitians. Skin color and class struggle are keys to understanding what is going on in the plight of the people of Haiti. In Haiti, we still have the peasants (those of African features, living in the countryside, speaking a creole language, and believing in voodoo) fighting against the domination of the ruling elite (those claiming French culture, and language, following Catholic faith, and living in urban areas). It is the same thing being claimed over and over by the peasants: fairness in social welfare, equal access to education, equitable land distribution and justice for all. Haiti is a land always in turmoil with political instability, and economic bankruptcy, “Boat people” came to signify the Haitian people.

This independence was acquired in the battlefield by a group of former slaves determined to regain their freedom in 1804. The United States did not recognize Haiti as an independent nation until 1862. Haiti had to pay a huge indemnity to be recognized by France. This debt was another form of slavery and had since crippled the economy of Haiti.⁵ Peter Hallward adds that “France only re-established the trade and diplomatic relations essential to the new country’s survival after Haiti agreed, in 1825, to pay its old colonial master a compensation of some 150 million francs. The bottom line is that this debt has crippled Haiti’s economy up to this day and re-enslaves it”.⁶

This was the background under which Francois Duvalier came to power in 1957. His experience as a medical doctor in the countryside allowed him to speak hope to the need of

⁵ Roland Wingfield and Vernon J. Parenton, *Class Structure and Class Conflict in Haitian Society, Social Forces*, Vol. 43, No. 3, March 1965, pp. 338-347.

⁶ Peter Hallward, *Option Zero in Haiti*, *New Left Review* 27.June 2004. <http://www.newleftreview.org/A2507>

the peasants.⁷ Unfortunately, Francois Duvalier turned out to be the worst dictator Haiti has ever known. He cleverly used Black Nationalism to consolidate and cling to power, at all cost, until he died. In fact, he really had the country under his control and could have changed the lives of the peasants. However, this Black Nationalism ideology was a ploy that kept them more in poverty. He did not have a well thought proposal to tackle Haiti's problems of poverty, injustice, and inequalities. The fact is that the situation of the people of Haiti worsened at that time because Duvalier was concentrating all his energy to get rid of the opposition. Consequently, the majority of the intellectual elite went into forced exile to avoid certain death.⁸

President for life François Duvalier remained in power until he died in 1971. His son, Jean Claude Duvalier, took over the reign. He pledged to bring about an "economic revolution," which was the implementation of neo-economic policies imposed by the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the International Monetary Fund(IMF).⁹ This liberalization of the economy did not bring any significant changes for the poor people of Haiti. The same brutal regime was still in place, with only some cosmetic change under pressure from the Carter administration's foreign policy, based on respect for human rights. Likewise, the visit by Pope John Paul II emboldened the spirit of

⁷ Elizabeth Abbott, *The Duvaliers and their Legacy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988).p. 64

⁸ François Duvalier, *Oeuvres Essentielles*, Vol.3. *La Revolution au pouvoir, Premiere Partie*. Port-au-Prince, Presses Nationales d'Haiti, 1967, pp.3-6.

⁹ Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: An Insider's History of the Rise and Fall of the Duvaliers*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988, pp.101, 152.

the underground opposition.¹⁰ This overt opposition brought more repression from the regime, but eventually led to Jean Claude Duvalier, family, and friends, to flee to France amid general protest.¹¹ In December 1990, the people of Haiti in a landslide victory elected Jean Bertrand Aristide to the presidency.¹² He was the hope of the poor and called for major reform in public institutions. He invited all sectors of the nation to a dialogue that can lead to true national reconciliation and integration.¹³ In his speech to the 46th United Nations General Assembly, he condemned the exploitation of Haitian migrant sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic.¹⁴ As a result, the president of the Dominican Republic responded by deporting scores of Haitian workers back to Haiti in order to destabilize Aristide's regime.

Discussion

The poor continue to struggle against the same sort of oppression they had before the revolution. The oppressors are different, but the conditions much the same. In any event, European nations such as France and England fought during a long period of time over this

¹⁰ Marx V. Aristide and Laurie Richardson, *Haiti's Popular Resistance, The Haiti Files:Decoding the Crisis*. ed. James Ridgeway. Washington, D.C: Essential Books, 1994, pp.64-71.

¹¹ Elizabeth Abbott, *Haiti: An Insider's History of the Rise and Fall of the Duvaliers*. New York: Simon& Schuster, 1988),p.148.

¹² Kim Ives, *The Lavalas Alliance Propels Aristide to Power, Haiti: Dangerous crossroads*. Ed. North American Congress on Latin America. Boston, Massachussets: South End Press, 1995 pp. ,41-45.

¹³ Gerard Pierre Charles and Margaret Low, The Democratic Revolution in Haiti, *Latin American Perspectives*, vol.15, No.3, Summer 1988, pp. 64-76.

¹⁴ Jean Bertrand Aristide, *Névrose Vétéro-Testamentaire*. Montreal: Editions du CIDIHCA,1994, pp. 131..

conquered Island. Indeed, the conflicts between these colonial powers led to the division of the island into two parts: Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In any event, it is clear that as the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the island, they also have a shared history. Slave revolts drove French colonial forces out of Haiti in 1804, while the eastern part was still occupied by colonial Spain. The whole island was unified for 25 years under the government of President Jean Pierre Boyer.

According to Laurent Dubois, Haiti became the first independent republic of people of African descent in the Caribbean. This victory came at a heavy price since many of the island's fields, towns and sugar mills were in ruins and its population reduced by more than half. The United States did not recognize Haiti's Independence for fifty years.¹⁵ Likewise, France in 1825 insisted that Haiti pay compensation to the French owners for their plantations. It was a huge sum that has crippled the Haitian economy for many decades. This new fragile nation, in order to save itself, had to borrow a lot of money to fulfill its obligation to the French. More importantly, paying the interest on the loan itself consumed a big percentage of Haiti national budget. Indeed, Haiti became a free nation but remained ruined and financially enslaved over the years. The colonial powers at that time continued to wage a trade war with the weak new nation, which did much damage to its economy.¹⁶

Haiti: Socio-economic condition

¹⁵ Laurent Dubois, *The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Henry Holt, 2012, p.5.

¹⁶ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 2-25.

The economic situation in Haiti is very depressing. As reported by the World Bank,¹⁷ Haiti's gross national income per capita is US \$660, about half the total for Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Americas. The daily living cost of a Haitian home is Haiti's Socioeconomic condition less than US \$2 a day, and more than half live in extreme poverty with less than US \$1 a day.¹⁸ In rural areas, the level of poverty is extreme, as over two-thirds of the labor forces do not have formal jobs.¹⁹ A United Nations study conducted in 2004 stated that quite a few children die at birth and never see their first birthday. Those who survived are for the most part malnourished.²⁰ Consequently, this situation leads to a shorter life expectancy, 61 years. Education is an area that should have been given priority, but a large number of children are not enrolled in school, due to lack of government effort.²¹

Half of the children less than five years old are malnourished and over 7% of children die at birth.²² It is a grim situation, because the state has failed the children. Those who are fortunate enough to attend primary school will not make it to third grade, and many more will abandon school before sixth grade.²³ It is obvious that the education of these children does not seem to be a priority to the government, let alone its quality. Many of the non-public schools

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http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/06/19/000333038_20120...

18 Institut Haitien de Statistique et D'Informatique *et al.* 2001. <http://www.ihsi.ht>

19 *Institut Haitien de Statistique et D'Informatique et al.* 2001. <http://www.ihsi.ht>

20 *UNDP Human Development Report 2004.* <http://www.hdr.UNDP.org>

21 *World Bank 2009.* <http://www.Worldbank.org>

22 *CIA World Factbook.* <http://www.CIA.gov>

23 *UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2008.* <http://www.Unicef.org>

are not accredited and few of the teachers have basic teacher qualifications. This lack of adequate training is also carried over into other areas such as lack of electricity, potable water, and libraries.²⁴ It is fitting to add that the teachers are not well paid. Some of them go for months without receiving their meager salaries. Parents are not being able to buy uniforms, books, and materials for their children. Likewise, they also cannot afford the tuition. As a result, the illiteracy rate is very high in Haiti when compared to the rest of Latin America.²⁵

In September 2000, United Nations adopted eight development goals following the Millenium Summit. These Millenium Development Goals were to address: poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, gender inequality, quality of education, and inattention to environmental sustainability.

These goals were meant to help improve the lives of the poorest people throughout the world. They are a vision for the welfare of people worldwide who are struggling and at the same time, a social contract between the world's leaders and the people.

In that regard, Haiti has reached the target for reducing the prevalence of underweight children under 5 years to 3 years, for the target date of 2015. The percentage of children under 5 years of age with moderate or severe underweight decreased from 27.5% in 1995 to 11.4% in 2012, a 58.5% reduction. Although Haiti is still far from the international standard for a well-nourished population (2.3% of underweight children), and from the average of 3% in

²⁴ World Bank 2007, *Haiti-First Phase of the Education for All Project, Report# 38600, Project Appraisal Document*. <http://www.worldbank.org>

²⁵ UNDP Haiti Rapport National Sur Le Development Humain, 2002.[http:// www.hdr.UNDP.org](http://www.hdr.UNDP.org)

Latin America and the Caribbean, it is a major success in terms of progress towards the MDGs target.

According to the World Bank, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Haiti was last recorded at \$473.30 US in 2013. The GDP per Capita in Haiti is equivalent to 4 percent of the world's average. The GDP per capita in Haiti averaged \$481.49 US from 1991 until 2013, reaching an all-time high of \$599.80 US in 1991, and a record low of \$435.77 US in 2010 GDP per capita in Haiti, as reported by the World Bank. Economic growth in Haiti picked up in 2013, illustrating that it is recovering from the devastating 2010 earthquake. Recently, the IMF concluded its eighth and final review under the 2010 Extended Credit Facility arrangement, stating that the economy is on track to record 3.0–3.5% growth for fiscal year 2015. Meanwhile, large-scale demonstrations have been held in reaction to the government's delay of legislative elections.

Haiti's economic freedom score is 48.9, making its economy the 156th freest in the 2014 Index. Its overall score has increased by 0.8 point since last year due to notable improvements in investment freedom and labor freedom. Haiti is ranked 24th out of 29 countries in the South and Central America/Caribbean region, and its overall score is far below the regional average.

Over the twenty year history of the Index, Haiti has advanced its economic freedom score by nearly 6 points. The overall score improvement has been relatively broad-based, driven by improvements in six of the ten economic freedoms including investment freedom, monetary freedom, and financial freedom.²⁶

Haiti: Environmental Problems

²⁶ www.Heritage.org/Index/country/Haiti.

Natural disasters also play a major role in the daily lives of Haitians who are at the bottom of the echelon. Deforestation is a big cause of the erosion that depletes the land of good soil for agriculture.²⁷ This depletion in turn leads to low production. Indeed, the lack of environmental leadership by many governments has created a sort of ecological chaos.²⁸ It has been said that President Francois Duvalier has ordered the cutting of acres of trees in “Forêt des Pins,” Kenscoff- Haiti, so as not to provide cover to opposition guerillas fighting his regime. Environmental policies have been enacted by the lawmakers to address this ecological anarchy, but they are not enforced for various nebulous reasons. As March Lacey stated, “Haiti seems defenseless against natural disasters as demonstrated by the hurricanes and tropical storms (Fay, Hanna, Ike, and Gustav) of summer 2008 that devastated communities, killed thousands of people and livestock, thereby increasing misery and hunger.”²⁹

On January 12, 2010, an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 (on the Richter scale) hit the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, leveling much of the city and killing hundreds of thousands of people. Among the damages were nearly all Government infrastructures, the nursing school, and the General Hospital. In the days that followed, patients were treated in tent clinics with minimal resources. In the months that followed, progress seemed to be minimal despite

²⁷ Carol J. Williams, *Haiti Can't Gain Ground on Erosion*, Los Angeles Times, 17 November 2003. www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/445.htm. See also Elizabeth Bryant, *Haiti: Environmental Degradation Deepens*, Earth Times News Service, 8 July 1996. www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/257.html.

²⁸ Jacqueline Charles and Trenton Daniel, *Mud and Misery Rule Storm-Ravaged City*, The Miami Herald, November 2, 2008. www.MiamiHerald.com.

²⁹ Marc Lacey, *Meager Living of Haitians Is Wiped out by Storms*, The New York Times, September 10, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/11/world/americas/11haiti.html>

billions of dollars promised by the international community. In October, a cholera epidemic claimed thousands more lives, as if the people had not suffered enough.

So much has happened and been said about the situation in Haiti. The blame must go partly on the shoulders of the dominant classes. They are the ones who cannot seem to understand their responsibility to the masses of Haiti. Hence, it must be said that bad politics, corrupt and dysfunctional Haitian régimes, misguided opposition, and cynicism of the international community are all reflections of the plight of Haiti.³⁰

Enough will never be said about the reason for the ecological disaster that affects Haiti, but here are a few that need to be highlighted. The peasants are left to fend for themselves, and they resort to cutting trees for cooking and making charcoal. Charcoal is a lucrative business in Haiti and will remain as such, as long as this lack of vision in the energy sector persists.³¹ This erosion is further aggravated by poor farming techniques and minimal agricultural knowledge. Another compelling reason is overpopulation, which is exacerbated by the high illiteracy rate among the peasants.³²

It must be said, however, that the deforestation of Haiti began during the colonial period, according to Nathan C. McClintock, and was intensified when coffee was introduced in 1730.³³ Upland forests were cleared and, fifty years later, a quarter of the colony's land was

³⁰ Declaration of the Jesuits working in Haiti. http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/docs/Haiti_ENG.pdf

³¹ Emmanuel W. Vadrine, *Haiti and the Destruction of Nature*. <http://www.harford-hwp.com/archives/archives43a/254html>.

³² Ernest H. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma. A case study in Demographic, Development and U.S Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996., pp. 34-37.

³³ Nathan C., McClintock: *Agroforestry and Sustainable Resource conservation in Haiti: A case study* .2003 . [http:// www.works.bepress.com/Nathan_mcclintock/14/](http://www.works.bepress.com/Nathan_mcclintock/14/)

under coffee. Following the revolution of 1804, the government was forced to export timber throughout the nineteenth century to pay off a 90 million franc indemnity to France.³⁴ Likewise, Alex Dupuy argues that “soil erosion results from the commercialization of wood The problem, therefore, is not the use of trees by peasants as a source of fuel, but the export of wood by the wealthy, combined with the agrarian structure that prevents replanting of fast growing trees, that could be used for charcoal[while] rejuvenating the soil and providing a source of cash flow for peasants.”³⁵ As noted above, the deforestation of Haiti has many causes; among them, disparities in land ownership, economic dependence, foreign debt, unemployment, political instability, lack of vision, and corruption.³⁶ In any event, poverty and environmental neglect are big factors in working conditions of the people of Haiti. But, the sociopolitical history of Haiti needs also be taken into consideration.

Discussion

In any event, I have tried to shed some light on the root cause of poverty in Haiti, its social and economic context, and how the conditions in the different sectors resulted in misery, degradation, and corruption. The reality of work in Haiti is so poignant that one cannot describe it. One has to go deeper and probe why these degrading conditions of work should only apply to one group of people, namely the peasants. The Haitian work force is abundant even though it lacks education. It has a work ethic that is above that of many countries in the world. The manufacturing and agricultural sectors employ mainly lower-class people, and,

³⁴ Paskett, C.J and C-E. Philoctete, 1990. Soil conservation in Haiti. *Journal of Soil and water conservation*. Vol.45, No.4.1990. pp.457-459.

³⁵ Alex Dupuy. *Peasant Poverty in Haiti*, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol.24, No.3.1989, pp. 259-271.

³⁶ Paul, Farmer. *Haiti's Unnatural Disaster*, *Living on Earth*, September 12, 2008. <http://www.loe.org>

they have to face working conditions that are reminiscent of slavery. Women workers, especially in the manufacturing industry, are most of the time sexually exploited. Salary is very low. The question remains why should Haitians in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors face so much discrimination, prejudice, and exploitation at the hands of their own.

Nothing seems to have changed since the time of slavery. A small group of people is using the work force composed of the peasants, at very low wages. They are considered an inferior class just like the slaves. They are stripped of their dignity, exploited, excluded, and given no regard for their health. All this abuse can lead to low morale and poor health and will certainly have a debilitating effect on the degradation of the environment.

Indeed, Michel-Rolph Trouillot is of the same idea that the class system led by the bourgeois/mulatto elite is the main culprit of Haiti's poverty. This elite has devised an economic and social structure to marginalize and to keep on exploiting the peasants. This terrible plan, without a doubt, Trouillot continues, comes directly from imitating the foreign masters. He adds also that "any solution to the Haitian crisis must face the peasant question. It must find its roots in the resources of that peasantry, the very same resources that have contributed to the fortunes of thousands of Haitians and foreigners during a century and a half of unbridled exploitation. And to do this, Haitians must create institutional channels through which all sectors within the peasantry can participate in a political debate from which they have been too long excluded."³⁷

³⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation. The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990. pp. 229-230.

There is another aspect in Haiti's poverty that is often overlooked, women rights and issues. Mireille Neptune Anglade points out that these are worldwide concerns; women are not treated the same way as men even in the most civilized countries. Yet, the condition of women in Haiti, as members of the workforce, is one of abject exploitation.³⁸ The women work long hours, and must perform domestic duties when they return from work. They are usually paid less than their male counterparts and they can also be sexually harassed by the manager at the factory.³⁹ Hence gender inequality, injustice, discrimination, exploitation, and male domination are just some of the ills contributing to poverty in Haiti. In addition, the ecological degradation of the ecosystem is not to be overlooked.

In the same vein, Renée Cho points out that

when tropical storms regularly hit Haiti, rainfalls ravage crops,

bring flooding and wash more topsoil into the sea.

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake in January 2010 added new dimensions of suffering and urgency. And Haiti's government, which has been chronically weak for decades, has not been able to provide sustainable solutions to the problems.⁴⁰

It is obvious that poverty and ecological destruction are making it harder to address the chronic economic failure of Haiti. Moreover, Cho says that "the political challenge is to work

³⁸ Mireille Neptune Anglade, *L'autre Moitié du développement: A Propos du Travail des Femmes*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1995.

³⁹ M.Catherine Maternovska, *Reproducing Inequities. Poverty and the Politics of Population in Haiti*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006, p. 65

⁴⁰ Renee Cho. *Restoring Damaged Ecosystems: The Challenge of Haiti*. New York: Columbia University. 2011

with locals to see what they want so that their long term cooperation is assured.”⁴¹ It is true that there have been numerous programs attempting to deal with restoring the ecosystems in many parts of the country, but they all have been unsuccessful so far. Lessons have been learned and different approaches have been considered. More importantly, the inclusion and participation of the peasants in any long-term restoration of the ecological system in Haiti is of the utmost priority. Renée Cho goes on to say, “Marc Levy, deputy director of the Center for International Earth Science Information Network, said that the goal is to put forth comprehensive ways to improve the income and food security of the Haitian people, and to restore the ecology. Because these issues are inextricably linked, strategies to restore the ecosystem must be tied to increasing income for farmers and creating incentives for them to adopt agricultural production with both short term and long term benefits.”⁴²

Dominican Republic

According to the U.S Department of State Background Note, the island of Hispaniola, of which the Dominican Republic forms the eastern two thirds, and Haiti the remainder, was originally occupied by the Tainos, an Arawak Indian tribe. The capital, Santo Domingo, was founded in 1496. It is the oldest European settlement in the western hemisphere. Spain ceded the colony to France in 1697, and the island was unified under Toussaint Louverture in 1801.

Rafael Leonidas Trujillo ruled the country for more than thirty years. He designed and imprinted on the soul of the population an ideology known as “Anti- Haitianismo”.⁴³ This

⁴¹ Ibid,

⁴² Ibid,

⁴³ Ernesto Sagas, *A case of mistaken identity: Antihaitianismo in Dominican Culture*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida,1993.

ideology has an overt racist overtone because it is directed solely toward the Haitian migrant workers. This policy culminated in the 1937 massacre of scores of Haitians, ordered by President Trujillo. This conflict, which was handled on the diplomatic front, was continued actively by one of his closest associates, Joaquin Balaguer. Indeed, President Balaguer continued to implement this racist ideology, wherein the people of Haiti were considered to be inferior to the Dominican population. As such, it was of the utmost importance to protect the country from the threat of Haitian invasion. The Dominican elite encouraged this brainwashing of the population under the cover of nationalism. This type of negative discourse still permeates the conscience of this nation. Hence the two nations are trapped by historical circumstances that cause any event on one part of the island to have eventual impact on the other side.

Chapter 3

Model of Ministry to Address Poverty in Haiti

This chapter presents the methods and procedures of the God-centered Ministry Model which I propose to address poverty in Haiti. Before the introduction of this new model, I describe the essential characteristics of the secular-based models that have been introduced by the government in Haiti over the years to address the poverty of Haitians, many of whom became migrant workers in the neighboring Dominican Republic. From the literature, it will be noted that the characteristics of the government-based models lacked of the spiritual motivation of the God-centered Ministry model.

Government-based Models for Alleviating Poverty

<http://www.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/misctopic/dominican/antihaiti.htm>

Economic-based

Michael N. Azefor, in his book, *La Pauvrete in Haiti*, is of the opinion that investing in economic growth, education, and fair and transparent management are keys to eradicating poverty in Haiti.⁴⁴ Frank Laraque to the contrary, states that the policies and dictates of the international community are directly linked with the chronic poverty in Haiti.⁴⁵ He proposes instead that the marginalized peasants being subject to all kind of exploitation should be included in the radical changes to transform their lives. He advocates policies that will involve direct peasant participation such as land reform, intensive literacy programs, health care, protection of the environment from degradation, and political education. As Professor Robert Gottfried has noted, “The people represent the human capital which consists of improvement in health, education, and skills that make humans more productive. The people are using natural capital to produce manufactured capital (consists of long lasting, manufactured resource used in the production and distribution of other goods and services”⁴⁶.

To that effect, many economists have argued for an alternative development program to tackle this ever-continuing cycle of poverty in Haiti. Camille Chalmers, a professor at the State University of Haiti has proposed a different approach. It is one based on Haiti’s productive and most marginalized economic sectors. Chalmers proposes to take into consideration the will and desire of the peasants. He considers them as the agent for change.

⁴⁴ Michael N. A. Azefor, *La Pauvrete en Haiti: Comment lutter contre ce problème*, L’Avenir de la Lutte contre la pauvrete en Haiti. Port-au-Prince, Haiti: L’Imprimerie Centrale, 2000, pp.10-30.

⁴⁵ Frank Laraque, *Defi a la Pauvreté*. Montreal, Canada: Les Editions du. CIDICHA, 1987.

⁴⁶ Robert R. Gottfried, *Economics, Ecology, And the Roots of Western Faith*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1995. pp.70-75.

Finally, these forever forgotten peasants will have a voice in formulating their own strategies to promote economic growth and sustainability⁴⁷. It is a radical approach, which seeks to promote self-sufficiency using the country's own economic strengths rather than those imported neo-liberal programs. In this study, Camille Chalmers argues that Haiti must depend on its people and vibrant economic assets to foster long term sustainable development. He asserts that the capitalist economic model is unsuitable for a country like Haiti, crippled by decades of greedy imperialistic policies. These policies and prescriptions engineered by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank need to be replaced by those policies of the people by the people. Finally, the main goal of his proposal is to valorize the indigenous assets aimed at bringing radical transformation for the benefit of the peasants.

Chalmers intentions are clearly spelled out: “These reforms and structural adjustment policies which require massive sacrifices but which yield no benefits in return are just a fool’s trap. They have proved to be a total failure. It is time for us to switch to a development policy that is based on a different logic and that is geared to the promotion of local markets and local production. A development policy that takes advantage of the knowledge and skills of our small farmers in Haiti, and from there we will be able to stimulate export production.”⁴⁸

The main focus in Chalmers proposal is of an economic and political liberation of the peasants. It will be an attempt at sustainable prosperity and independence against neoliberal tyranny. This will also require a recalibration of Haiti global policies, those policies that can

⁴⁷ Camille Chalmers, *The Impact of Haiti’s structural Adjustment Program. L’ajustement Structurel et les Programmes de Lutte contre la Pauvrete en Haiti*. Port-au-Prince, Haiti. L’imprimerie centrale. 1979.

⁴⁸ Camille Chalmers, *The Neoliberal Agenda In Haiti. Interview with Camille Chalmers*. Haiti Progres, Vol. 20, No.16- July 2002.

give priority to the sectors of the national economy where peasants, women and children have been excluded.

By the same token, the proposal by Camille Chalmers reveals clearly the need for respect and inclusion of the marginalized. It also brings to the forefront the lack of wisdom of the neoliberal agenda. The neoliberal sector failed to understand that the life of the Haitian peasant is intertwined with the environment. The peasants do not think of themselves as a separate entity from it. They know about the interconnectedness of our ecosystems and its direct and indirect impact on their lives. Neoclassical economists think in terms of maximum yield. They think that the goal of agriculture is to increase productivity at all cost. We need a different mindset. As such, Professor Robert Gottfried reflecting on the Economics of the Garden states that: “ Neoclassical economists view the economy as a clock, the mechanisms of which can be discovered in natural laws such as the law of supply and demand...Neoclassical economists only have to discover how the clock works to know how to control the economy.”⁴⁹ It will only take a little bit of listening for the Neo-classical economists to understand what the creator wants for the creation. In other words, the best approach for Neo classical economists is to encourage programs with direct participation of small farmers who can produce a variety of cash crops. “....Garden Economists realize that motivations and relationships with the Creator matter greatly. Grasping for control brings destruction, whereas letting go of control brings life and shalom.”⁵⁰ Hence, these senseless and selfish programs can only bring destruction to the landscape and more poverty to the

⁴⁹ Robert R. Gottfried, *Economics, Ecology, And The Roots Of Western Faith*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, pp.140-143.

⁵⁰ Ibid, Robert R. Gottfried.

people. Harmony and balance in creation are only when we try to be mindful of the Creator's ways in the universe. As a reminder Fred Bahnson and Norman Wirzba also tell us that "God's first love is the soil. This is how it has to be, because without healthy soil and the fertility and food it makes possible, there would be no terrestrial life of any kind."⁵¹ Small Haitian farmers live in close proximity with the soil. They understand that it is a gift from God and therefore they heed God's call to reconcile with creation.

In any event, the empirical study proposed by Professor Camille Chalmers is quite exhaustive when it comes to exposing the true causes of poverty in Haiti. It brings out in the open the strangulation of Haiti's economy, due to the imposition of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank policies in 1980. There are many causes to this never-ending situation of poverty, but the reality has to do also with the failure of the Haitian political elite to valorize its human and natural assets. Likewise, global capitalism can care less about preying on structure that allows Haiti's indigenous labor force to be qualified as cheap. Hence, this lack of vision is profitable to a small elite Haitian group whereas the majority is starving and excluded.

Discussion

It is a fact that Haiti is the first Black independent nation in the western hemisphere. It is now also one of the poorest nations in the world. This situation of chronic poverty seems to be a curse. In the seventeen century France and other colonial powers used to be dependent upon the natural and agricultural resources of Haiti. This wealth was acquired through the imported African slaves' labor. Thus, a class system came about in this society. The African slaves

⁵¹ Fred Bahnson, and Norman Wirzba , Making Peace with the Land. Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2012.

were the backbone and at the lower echelon of this wealthy colonial system. Thus, the Haitian revolution took place as soon as the slaves became aware of their economic and moral values. They recognized that their abject situation was the result of greed and it was morally wrong. Therefore, the Haitian slaves decided to correct this injustice. They knew that they were made in the image of God as John Paul mentioned. They were just exercising their God given rights and inspired by the ideals of liberty, equality and justice of the seventeenth century philosophers.

It is important to note that the new nation of Haiti inherited a debt that was imposed on them by desperate greedy colonial masters. It is a debt that is still crippling the economic structure of Haiti. One must expect that this victory was not going to stay unchallenged as even the United States of America considered it a threat. As such, the U.S did not recognize the independence of Haiti until late in the century.

It must also be said that the new nation has made a lot of mistakes throughout its history. These trials and errors for Haiti were to be expected. At the beginning, its priority was of survival and the obvious imperative to distance itself from the system that was keeping them in bondage. In any event, there is so much to be said about the root cause of poverty in Haiti. However, it must be said that some of Haiti's causes of poverty reside among its very own citizens. Politically, Haiti is a sovereign and free nation, but it seems to be struggling to overcome this slavery mentality among its citizens. In Haiti, there is a class system. Those who are rich are socially at the top. They control the economic system. They are mulattoes, with fair skin, who are a mix of European descent and blacks. They are educated. Conversely, the majority is Black and uneducated. In between, there is a middle class but they are in the brink of extinction since the poverty has increased so much. Those who are

rich are mostly in favor of alliances with those with a neoliberal agenda. The majority of those who are kept uneducated feel that the mulattoes are a threat to Haiti's sovereignty. Corruption plays a large role in this situation of poverty in Haiti. It is to be considered a national threat, since those who are powerful can use millions of dollars to coerce those who are in positions of power. Lately, many people are seeking political positions because it is the quickest and surest way to swindle money and become rich. The story of the dictator Jean Claude Duvalier and his wife is just one example of corruption at the highest political level in Haiti. Corruption is sin and it seemed to be a way of life in this society.

By the same token, we have mentioned earlier that the cause of poverty in Haiti is both national and international. The Neo colonial forces are preying on the greed and decaying moral in the Haitian society to continue to foster confusion and division within the society. They continue to exacerbate this division by appealing to the dark side in every human being. Some people believe that one of the mistakes made by the Haitian founding fathers was to give the French responsibility in the area of education for the new nation. Therefore, the mulattoes feel that they are superior to those who are black, because they speak French and they can afford to go to school. Hence, in Haiti there is a minority, which is rich and living in urban areas, and a majority, the peasants who are poor and uneducated. They live in the countryside where there is plenty of fertile land.

Haiti- Educational system

The educational system, modeled on the French system, has conditioned the citizen to believe that farming is for those who are uneducated. Therefore, parents want to send their kids to the city, away from the countryside. It is in this backdrop of structural injustice and

corruption that the majority of the Haitians strive. Those who are able to finish high school face a quagmire. They hope for a friend or a family member well acquainted in the public sector to offer them a job. Those who can't find this opportunity are condemned to seek a better life by migrating to other countries. In a just and democratic society, education for all must be a priority. Once the majority is given access to education, they will no longer be blind to the forces that are keeping them illiterate. This widespread illiteracy is at the cause of many ills and misery in Haiti. If the people have access to education, they will be able to understand and defy their exploitation by those who aspire to perpetuate the neo colonization of Haiti.

Moreover, I believe it is morally wrong to create conditions and a system to keep the peasant majority in Haiti illiterate. I believe that those unjust conditions are permeating the Haitian society and are feeding ground for those seeking a better life. Some people assert that low investment and the inability of the majority to secure loans, low saving, and the ever present needs of the population are the main causes of poverty. Some others believe that it is in the inability of Haitians to govern themselves, and that Haiti is a failed state. Indeed, Haiti is still struggling against neo liberal financial forces. Haiti may be perceived as a moral threat to the rest of the world because it is a pioneer in freedom and liberation from oppression. Likewise, many young people are desperate to leave and go to anywhere they can offer their time and talents. I also believe that God created all human beings free and has provided enough abundance for all to enjoy. Therefore, a society which is supposed to care of all its citizens, cannot continue to ignore the plight of the majority. This attitude of prejudice of the Haitian elite toward the peasants, is one of the reasons why we must be sensitive to the needs

of the peasants. Any serious effort to address poverty in Haiti, must also take into account a revalorization of their spiritual and cultural beliefs.

Finally, I believe that we must attempt to provide some solutions addressing the causes of poverty; we must revisit those ideals of unity, equality and justice for all. These ideals are values embedded in the love of God for his creation. As such, we must strive to create conditions that will uphold the dignity of our brothers and sisters, who are less fortunate. The task of helping one another out of this condition of oppression is to love one another as God prescribed it. We must no longer create conditions that will categorize our brothers as cheap labor. This is an invitation to greed and exploitation of our own brothers. It is also an invitation to sin. As the Dominical prayer says, do not be the one to lead others into temptation. A responsible nation must take the fundamental needs of its citizen into consideration. Haiti is still struggling to unite its citizens. The union between blacks and mulattoes which led Haiti to its independence, must be brought forth at this time. “United We Stand” was and is still the slogan that reflects the pride of Haiti and its citizens. As a nation, Haiti must create conditions to enable the people to find decent jobs and better living. Therefore, there will be no excuse to migrate and face humiliation when seeking economic opportunity. Haiti must invest in agriculture, infrastructure and education. Haiti must invest in its citizens. This is a sacred responsibility. When this happens, the people of Haiti will no longer be subject to the greed of its own politicians. They will no longer accept exploitation as modern slaves. Their talents and labor will be recognized and put to good use in rebuilding their country. This is why I believe that a new model of ministry is possible based on these principles of love of creation, unity in diversity, dignity and justice for everybody, and on the importance of ecology and human labor for a better society. However, it will be necessary to

consider the input of the theology of work if we are to see clearly the spiritual dimension of the reality of poverty. Therefore, this theology will help guide and inform my recommendations for possible new solutions.

God-centered Ministry Model

The presentation of the God-centered Ministry Model is introduced by a discussion of the concept of work by two theologians in a theological framework, followed by the description of a ministry of economic and spiritual development. The description of the model follows along with an explanation of the proposed application of the model in Haiti. Then, the economic, social, and spiritual aspects of the model are described.

Theological Framework

I will consider the work of two writers on the theology of work: John Paul II and Miroslav Volf. I will introduce these two authors, and explain the reason why I chose them.

I chose Miroslav Volf because he was born in Croatia and is a member of the Episcopal Church. Volf's doctoral dissertation was about Karl Marx's understanding of work, which Volf later expounded upon when he wrote *Work in the Spirit, Toward a Theology of Work*. On the other hand, John Paul II was a Roman Catholic Pope. Therefore, I wanted to contrast their views on the theology of work seen and influenced by the traditions of two different Christian denominations.

Pope John Paul II's theology of work and the person can be found in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) published in 1981.⁵² He sees the person as a subject having dignity, free will, and the capacity to act toward his own fulfillment. He goes on to say that "A human person is a free and reasonable being. He or she is a knowing and responsible subject. He or she can and must, with the power of personal thought, come to know the truth. He or she can and must choose and decide."⁵³ He also states that the subjective dimension of the human experience of the divine enables all believers to reach toward their self-realization and to know God on a deeper level.⁵⁴ Therefore, he came to the conclusion that the absence of freedom, morality and truth in the life of a person can be an impediment to human dignity.⁵⁵ Hence, John Paul II's theology of Work, *Laborem Exercens*, is fully influenced by the Roman Catholic social tradition. It gives precedence of the human being over material objects. In his opinion, work is truly where the person can find fulfillment and participation in God's creative action.⁵⁶ Moreover, the pope stated that it is Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (*Condition Of Labor*) that led him to write (*Laborem Exercens*) (*On Human Work*). Additionally, John Paul tried to articulate a universal principle of justice where the church must consider and uphold the dignity of every human being. He also wants the church to

⁵² Fergus Kerr, *Karol Wojtyla Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1007, p.163.

⁵³ Msgr. William Murphy, *The Person, the Nation and the State. Vatican City: Texts of John Paul II* October 1978- January 1980, 1980,p.12

⁵⁴ Karol Wojtyla, *Doctrina de fide apud S. Ioannem a Cruce .The Doctrine of faith According to St. John of the Cross*. San Francisco: Ignatus Press, 1981.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptor Humanis*. Redeemer of Man. March 4, 1979, No.15 Cf. see also his *The Acting Person*. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, p.172.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*. On Human Work, 1981, Nos. 5, 12, 25. Peter J. Henriot et al., *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), pp.75

protect the rights of workers. Finally, he wants the church to get involved in social justice, which will benefit both society and the workers.⁵⁷

Moreover, John Paul II feels that the importance of human work is embedded in scripture. In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, he maintains that work is clearly intertwined in all aspects of human lives. He points out that work is designed to serve the person and nothing else. Human being is the beginning and the end of work.⁵⁸ Likewise, Richard McCormick points out, “Hence the evil dimension of any system that reduces the person to a mere instrument. Work should bring about growth and a sense of accomplishment in the human person. It is, therefore, not primarily what is done by the person doing it (work in the subjective sense) that is primary.”⁵⁹

For John Paul II, work can be both subjective and objective. The objective aspect of work includes machinery, land and capital, which are considered factors of production along side with labor. This aspect is based on the book of Genesis where humans subdue the earth. The subjective aspect of work is about a person using means of production to manufacture and provide goods and services.” Humankind must subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the image of God, he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself with a tendency to self-realization. As person, man, is therefore the subject of work.⁶⁰

The Pope continues to say,

⁵⁷ Ibid, no.1. See John Paul II, *Constructing a more Just Society*, Origins 16, 1985, pp.160-163.

⁵⁸ John Paul II, *On Human Work*, No.4

⁵⁹ Richard McCormick- *Notes on Moral Theology*: 1981, Theological Studies 43, No. 1, March 1982, p.94.

The sources and dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one.Work is not only good in the sense that is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say: Something that corresponds to man's dignity that expresses that dignity and increases it. ..work is a good thing for man- a good thing for his humanity-because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as human being; and indeed, in a sense, becomes "more of a human being."⁶⁰

In this encyclical, the pope also demonstrates the importance that work plays in shaping the individual by instilling values and self- worth. This in turn, contributes to shaping society and the family by providing for their welfare.

Hence, the rights for workers were very important for Pope John Paul II. Again, in *Laborem Exercens*, he stresses that "Respect for this broad range of human rights constitutes the fundamental condition for peace in the modern world..."⁶¹ Indeed, humans have a right to employment, which is a moral obligation. This stems from the obligation to fulfill their needs and from the mandate in Genesis to subdue and dominate the earth. Fair compensation, social benefits, the right to rest, and the right of the workers to form labor unions, are to be expected as tools for achieving social justice. John Paul II adds the principle of the priority of labor over capital. In this process labor is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the

⁶⁰ Ibid, Nos.5-6

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, No. 16

whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause. The importance of human beings takes precedence over the other factors of production.

Bishop Jan P. Schotte writes that John Paul II destroys any rationalization for the opposition between labor and capital, and asks us to go beyond the ideological systems constantly oppressing each other in today's world. The reasons for his appeal are not of a tactical nature. He does not propose a "third way" between liberal capitalism and Marxism. He asks us to go beyond, to push further and deeper, in order to reach human persons while respecting the destiny assigned to them by God himself. In the debate between capitalism and communism, he offers elements for a critique of both systems, elements that enable each system to check and correct itself in order to respond to the full demands of human dignity."⁶²

It is clear that John Paul II, in his Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, has given the church's position on the matter of labor over capital. The people, in order to survive, sell their labor force to a small but powerful group, which controls the factors of production. The workers living in bad conditions are underpaid and overworked because the owners want to maximize profits. This is injustice and John Paul II is of the view that this can be corrected if we uphold the principle of the priority of labor over capital.

Another renowned theologian, Miraslov Volf has also shed some light on human work. In his *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, Volf, the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale, and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, thinks

⁶² Jan P. Schotte, *The Social Teaching of the Church: Laborem Exercens, A New Challenge*. Review of Social Economy, Vol.40, 1982, p.349.

that the Christian life is a life in the Spirit.⁶³ He feels that work is just one dimension of the Christian journey in the spirit. He continues to explain that work in the spirit does not represent an all-out attack on the vocational understanding of work. Rather, it seeks to draw on its strengths, while avoiding what he considers to be its serious weaknesses. In other words, Volf thinks that work in the spirit is the ideal but it may have its limitations in an imperfect world. For example, it would be perfect for people to find work that fits their specific Spirit given gifts. In reality, there are a lot of qualified people who are denied employment because they lack experience or other subjective factors.⁶⁴

Volf has elaborated three objectives in his *Theology of Work*. First, he feels that the vocational dimension of work is worthless when considering industrial and service oriented societies. This vocational aspect cannot prevail in a constantly changing society. Second, Volf thinks that the concept of divine calling is immune to the degeneration and alienation in work. If this deficiency is to be accepted therefore, Christians would have no reason to stand against worker's deplorable condition. Finally, he is in favor of a theology of work based on charisma, which can be relevant to both the divine and the secular world. Volf believes that people are entrusted with Spirit- given gifts. As such, people are called to use these specific talents to bring forth the new creation in Christ. In his charismatic understanding theology of work, Volf brings forth the importance of eschatology, Christology and the trinity within the

⁶³ Miroslav Volf, Curriculum Vitae. WWW.Yale.edu/divinity/CV/MVolf

⁶⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. pp.VII-VIII.

framework of a political theology. In other words, it is a theology that looks for categories that do not serve to illuminate the conscience but to form and transform it.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Volf thinks that work is a collaborative effort between God and humankind in order to transform the world in favor of the new creation. Work is an essential aspect of the human life. It is what shapes human identity. It is what gives meaning to our existence in society. He also mentions that work in itself has gone through a lot of changes through advances in technology in the industrialized world. A theology of work for Volf must find solutions to address the problem confronting workers in the agricultural, industrial and technological sectors of society. He states that "a Christian theology of work is developed on the basis of a specifically Christian soteriology and eschatology, essential to which is the anticipatory experience of God's new creation and a hope of its future consummation."⁶⁶ This is what gives the Christian faith an edge over non-Christian thinking on work. He adds that the validity of a theology of work stands on its capacity to propose a vision of what work ought to be and a path to what work will be in the new creation, fundamental change.

Hence, Volf argues that

"The transformative function of a theology of work demands that, in developing it, we not only attentively read its sources (biblical revelation on work) and carefully analyze

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 6

⁶⁶ Ibid,p.79

the nature of the object of study (the contemporary situation of work), but also reflect critically on the praxis that can follow from the formulations produced by a theology of work.”⁶⁷

He also thinks that we have to consider potential propensities for distortion, which is inherent to the sociocultural location where that theology took shape. Volf continues to say a theology of work that encourages change in the reality of work must do away with any “evolutionist” interpretation of social phenomena. As such, he wrote: “A truly new creation can never result from the action of intrahistorical forces pushing history toward ever superior states”⁶⁸.

The concept of new creation plays an important role in his theology of work. He tries to make a connection between the actual world and the new world. The new world, he contends, will not break into existing historical reality in a direct fashion. To him, this notion of new creation serves as a gauge to evaluate actual human progress and the novelty of God’s impending creation, without resorting to utopia. Volf’s theology of work is intertwined with the notion that new creation must deal with the relationship of work with God, humanity, and the environment. This broad frame of reference used by him can attest to the importance bestowed on the reality of work. He also thinks that a proper interpretation of work must involve the purpose of history: the arrival of a time when God, humanity, and the entire creation will enjoy abiding peace. That is to say, Volf’s theology of work is as broad as to

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.83

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.84

include the welfare of the entire universe. This is why he embraces eschatology rather than anthropology, to build upon his theology of work.⁶⁹

Above all, Volf thinks that Christian moral life is charismatic. Here he quotes Kaseman who argues that the whole ethical existence of the Christian, the “*nova obediencia*” is charismatic.⁷⁰ However, Volf asserts that charisma should not be defined so broadly as to encompass the whole sphere of ethical activity by Christians.⁷¹ In essence, Volf’s theology of work is that Christian living, including human work, is life in the spirit because of the new creation⁷²

The new creation is central to Volf’s theology of work. Love, justice and all the attributes of a new creation form the foundation from which Volf draws his ethical guidelines on work. These guidelines must conform to what God desires, namely democratic tenets such as freedom. To Volf, God’s spirit is part of every Christian activity, including work. Work for him, is an essential condition of the Christian life. It is one aspect of the Christian journey in the spirit. Every activity of a Christian happens under the guidance of the spirit. Moreover, he states that there is no hierarchy of the different duties that a Christian performs. That is

⁶⁹ Ibid pp.91-92

⁷⁰ Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p.184

⁷¹ Miroslav Volf, *Human work, Divine Spirit, and new creation: Toward a pneumatological Understanding of work*. P.111

⁷² Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: on the ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

regardless of the nature of the contribution of a Christian, each holds identical nobility.⁷³ This is the spiritual basis of his theology of work.

In any event, I must point out that there is no significant difference between Volf's and John Paul II's theology of work, when it comes to the spiritual and moral aspects of work. Volf stresses the centrality of the spirit as the driving force between work and the environment. He rightly thinks that integrating nature into humanity's decision making is bound to bring spiritual and social transformation in people's lives. Volf's theology of work is in favor of a top-down approach, when it comes to the life of the workers. Ethically, he fails to understand the subjective aspect of work, and the possibility of the oppressed workers not accepting their plight.

John Paul II, on the other hand, emphasizes the person who must stand up against dehumanizing forces of injustice. It is a human rights issue. Likewise, he tries to follow the scripture when he puts the person first over material possessions. He is in favor of structural economic change as one of the solutions toward social justice.

Finally, I would like to add that John Paul II and Volf take sin and new creation into account in their theology of work. Particularly, John Paul II singles out and pays special attention to the women's struggle. Above all, John Paul II and Volf are not too different in their theologies of work. The real difference is in the deductive methodological approach favored by Volf.

⁷³ Ibid,pp.124-125

Discussion

In light of John Paul II's and Volf's theologies of work, I share in the perspective that the person is central in the economy of salvation. After he created the universe, God felt it was necessary to create human beings made in his image. God then put this person in charge as steward of his creation. More importantly, the breathing of His spirit over the person He created out of the dust tells us that it was a major act. Also, it was to make plain the supremacy of the spirit over material. In terms of my theology of work, I do believe that the human being must be given special consideration, since God in his omnipotence deemed it necessary to create us. As stewards of creation, humans disobey God and stray from nature. This disobedience causes God to sentence humankind to work hard. Nature was the resource God made available to humankind for our survival. All humans wanted to do was to destroy the universe. They turned against each other and against God. In any event, work is an integral part of human life. Therefore, a person without the opportunity to work and provide for his or her family is bound to lose his dignity and respect. A society that cannot create structures to allow its citizens to be productive members is bound to be underdeveloped. Many third world countries have fallen into that trap, and they are still struggling to get out of the cycle of poverty, despite their best efforts.

The people of Haiti are eager to work, and they are very industrious. However, its leaders have a different agenda. They quickly forget that they are servants of the people. It would have been wise for the Haitian leaders to heed the call of John Paul II,

The Lord does not just act negatively, eliminating sin, but recreates sinful humanity by means of his life-giving spirit: he places in the human

person a new and pure "heart", namely, a renewed conscience, and opens to him the possibility of a limpid faith and worship pleasing to God⁷⁴.

Also in Genesis 1:28 it is said that,

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."⁷⁵

This was a command. However, humankind did the opposite by alienating itself from nature. Humankind embarked on a campaign to destroy the natural order of things in a quest for modernization.

Similarly, nowhere did God say humankind had to oppress and enslave one another for their own profit. This misinterpretation and disobedience of the scriptures has caused such misery. I believe that the return to the mandate of God for a pre-flood attitude toward the universe is the key to bringing peace on earth among humankind.

The positioning of the Holy Spirit in the heart of humankind is what can lead to a new creation, a new creation that understands that God is in control of everything, and humans care for creation as God does. However, God did not say that we are the owners of creation or

⁷⁴ *Pope John Paul II's Commentary/Meditation on Psalm 51(50).*

<http://www.thedivinelamp.wordpress.com>

⁷⁵ *King James version Bible*

that we have the right to make decisions that are contrary to the mandate of loving one another.

There must be a change of heart for the situation of the Haitian migrant workers to get better. The traditional philanthropic handouts are expressions of love for humankind, but they have not worked. It will continue as long as there is no transformation in the hearts and the minds of the leaders. There must be a new kind of leader who is able to recognize that he or she is part of the problem. It will require a new consciousness, a new creation that will stand in solidarity with the less fortunate. This state of sin must be acknowledged, and the leaders must be encouraged to stop in this sinful way.

Toward a Ministry of Economic and Spiritual Development

I am proposing a new model of development, based on the fact that the economic, social, and spiritual are all interconnected.

Description of the New Model

The model that I am proposing is a God-centered view of ministry. It is based on a few Christian principles.

I started this new model with a vision for a better life for the people of this town in Haiti: that they are to be empowered to apply their God given gifts and talents to transform resources available to them. Therefore, they can turn chaos into order, be self-sufficient, and be agents for change in their own town. My faith in Christ (see Hebrews 11:1) convinces me that it can become a reality, that the people can start living as human beings made in the image of God with a sense of joy, peace, dignity and love.

There is going to be resistance to bring this new life around, but I will press on because it will be to the glory of God. The implementation of this vision needs a strong faith to make it a reality. Likewise, the people of the town will be encouraged to participate and must be willing to develop their abilities to be entrepreneurs. They will have to understand that there is one God and creator of the human race. As part of the human race, they are called to be good stewards of creation, by using their God given gifts to use those resources rightly at the service of others. This effort will not be possible without a desire for the people to contemplate a new and better life. That will require a change in mentality.

We are called by God to love our neighbor, and the people of Haiti are persons made in God's image. The central power in Port-au-Prince forgets that government exists under God's authority to promote good and to restrain evil. Oppressing the people is tantamount to living in a generalized state of sin. As John Paul II said in his reflection on sin,

The third term the psalmist uses to speak of sin is *pešhá*. It expresses the rebellion of the subject toward his sovereign, and therefore an open challenge addressed to God and to his plan for humans.” The pope continues to say that “Sin damages our relationships with others and all of creation. Thus, sin is never a purely individual affair and has social dimensions.”⁷⁶

The ministry that I am proposing will emphasize promoting self-respect in order to counter the negative effect that living under oppression has on the people. This ministry intends to

⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, No. 15.

address this lack of confidence in themselves, lack of a vision and lack of hope for a better life.

So far, the government has failed in its responsibility to create a structure that can provide education and employment for its citizens. Therefore, this is a lack of respect for the dignity of all unemployed in Haiti. Indeed, a father and/or a mother who is/are unemployed will not be able to provide food and education for their children. This in turn will create an imbalance in the family, and whereas the parents may be seen as dodging their responsibilities. Most likely, this pattern will be a bad example for the family's well-being, and for society in general. The children who are not accessing basic social knowledge, will eventually become a feeding ground for the ills of society, such as gang violence, robbery, etc.

This project will be initiated to bring the awareness that it is a human rights issue not to take care of the people. In that sense, the church must be more forceful in addressing the issue of unemployment as a human rights violation. As John Paul II said,

The church must protect the rights of workers, if it is to uphold the dignity of every human being. At the same time, it is also a biblical imperative for the church to honor the calling and the gifts that God has entrusted with everyone. Indeed, God calls everyone to become united with him in every aspect of life. And God also calls his people to participate in his redemptive work in the world through justice, compassion, healing, reconciliation, etc.⁷⁷

In 1 Timothy 2: 4, it is said,

⁷⁷ John Paul II, *On Human Work*, No.4, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981.

All things work together for good for those
who love God, who are called according to
his purpose.

Likewise, employment has the potential to enable a person to develop their God-given talents. It is also a social justice matter as it will serve society in general and the workers in particular. As mentioned in Jeremiah 29:7,

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile,
and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find
your welfare.

Christ's work of redemption goes hand in hand with the work of creation that God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, we are commanded by Christ to participate in both works of creation and redemption to make the world what God always intended it to be.

This project is geared toward meeting the needs of the people and will be a model of Christ-centered entrepreneurship. These Christian entrepreneurs will be a new breed of Haitian citizen who want a change from poverty. They will want a new and better life. Poverty is a problem, and they will be working toward a solution. They will think outside of the box in order to pool resources. Therefore, they will organize the people and create a system to eradicate poverty in the town. A system which will teach them how to fish, metaphorically speaking.

The project will be a sustainable development one, working directly with the people and for the people on their specific needs. As the United Nations World commission on

Environment and Development reported: “Sustainable development is termed as” development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”⁷⁸ This project will aim at implementing strategies in order to take advantage of the water cycle, soil fertility, and crop productivity. It will strive to conserve the natural resources, minimize waste production and damage to the natural systems. As such it will seek to produce uncontaminated food, where synthetically developed fertilizers and other harmful chemical pesticides are not used. It will be a project with a concern for the environment that will help encourage economic growth and improve quality of life in this town.

Likewise, this project will give the people access to education and encourage the people to implement sustainable agriculture methods into their production. This educational component will emphasize core Christian values, and vocational/literacy curriculum. It will give them a voice in the community as the people will seek to bring social justice and create a just society. By the same token, I would emphasize that the educational aspect of the project is very important in a town where the illiteracy rate is very high. Education is a bridge to employment and entrepreneurship. The future entrepreneur will need to know how to read, write, and do some bookkeeping. In other words, education will open the door for the people to have access to better employment with private, as well as government institutions. It will become easier for the people to be able to read instructions in order to maintain equipment. Finally, education will give the people access to the internet where they may find important information on healthy lifestyle. It will in turn increase their opportunity to earn a living.

⁷⁸ *Our Common Future, by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development-Brundtland Report.*

Moreover, the project will require direct participation of the people of the town organized as a cooperative organization where resources are collectively managed. In fact, the cooperative business model is owned and controlled by the people who use or deliver their services. It will be democratically run by the members and will not be profit oriented.⁷⁹ The cooperative model rather than a small business model is best suited for its affirmation of human rights and as an anti-poverty strategy. It is not driven by profit at all cost, and it is aimed at empowering the people to use their God given talents as potential entrepreneurs. Consequently, they will become agents of change for a better life in their communities. The co-op model is also preferred because it is from the same school of thought as *micro-credit lending*, which aims at transforming the daily life of the poor. As such, the educational component of the project must include learning on how to manage a co-operative organization as well. This knowledge will enable the people to efficiently manage and teach to others about micro lending groups, and fish/agricultural co-ops.⁸⁰

Finally, this project ministry will be the entrepreneurial entity working with the people to empower them for a brighter future enabling the people to tap into their inner and external resources. This process will also enable them to work individually and collectively to help themselves out of poverty and will recognize the worth of each individual and the importance of the people of God working as a community.

In addition, there will be an explicit effort to form the people spiritually in the Christian faith. That is crucial not only for their own spiritual well-being but also for the success of the

⁷⁹ <http://www.cooperativenetwork.coop>

⁸⁰ *International Co-operative Alliance*. <http://www.ica.coo>.

overall project. That success is changing people so that they are concerned about their community and the welfare of all. They will then act morally and honestly in order to create social capital that is necessary for the functioning of any economy and society.

Applying the model in Haiti

This new model of ministry is to be implemented in a Haitian border town, Anse-a-Pitre. It is a town adjacent to the border town of Pedernales in the Dominican Republic. On one of my visits, I observed that there are many Haitians who buy goods in the bi-national market located on the Dominican side and later resell them in Anse-a-Pitre. Others cross the river at certain points of the border in pursuit of illegal contraband. It stands to reason that there is a lot of economic opportunity to share on both sides of the border. Apparently, the need is greater in the Haitian town of Anse-a-Pitre. In terms of natural resources, there is a side of the town of Anse-a-Pitre open to the ocean, and there is also a lot of unused public land. The project will use the sea and some vacant public land as natural capital. There is also a fishermen's association trying to help the local fishermen, but it lacks support from the government. The fishermen complained that they try to fish, but it is sometimes not worth it. The fish that they catch go bad in a few hours, because they do not have adequate appliances to store it. No electricity is in the town, except for a few well to do people who can afford an electric generator. My plan is to seek donated commercial fishing boats in the US and organize a fleet to catch fish. The fishermen will be able to get employment. The fish will be stored in the freezer on board of the boat until the electricity problem can be addressed. At the same time, there will be fish available to sell to the people of the town.

Another idea is to use part of the land to build a hydroponic farm that also will raise tilapia fish. The aquaculture system operates in such a way that nothing is lost. The fish will be raised in a tank filled with specially purified water. There will be a pipe system where the water will run and be recycled back to the tank. Different kinds of vegetables will be grown through an opening on top of the pipe. As the water exits through the pipe, it will use the waste of the fish as fertilizer. This project pilot intends to employ people from the fisherman's association. This type of fish also has the benefit of producing offspring very rapidly. Furthermore, all the proceeds will go to fund and build other ministries.

In short, my plan is to start working with some of the common people of Anse-a-Pitre and organize them into a cooperative organization. At the beginning, I will gather the people and start the educational aspect of the project. A few sessions are to be devoted to explaining the reason for the project. A timetable is necessary for the fish/agricultural cooperative to include gradually a micro-credit lending unit.

Once land is awarded and the fish/agricultural project are underway I hope that the people will understand enough about the life-changing experience this project can be for the town. By the same token, I am hoping to get the cooperation of the officials of the town, so that the project can go on smoothly. Change cannot happen overnight, and it will take a lot of effort to educate the population about the new model. Therefore, applying the model in Anse-a-Pitre- Haiti, will begin with strategies to ward off resistance from the system already in place. I hope that through intensive communication the "cell groups" (see below) can get on board and buy into the project. Gradually, the fish/ agriculture project will be in place, providing employment to the people. The cell groups will continue to meet in order to educate the people about the interconnection between the economic, social, and spiritual. Once the

fish/agriculture project starts, the people will be employed. There will be monetary circulation in the town and the people will have money to buy goods and services. Hopefully, the people will have the opportunity to get educated on the importance of basic Christian principles in their lives.

Economic Aspect of the Project:

This fish/agricultural project can be the start of a new beginning for the town of Anse-a-Pitre. If there is employment, many will stay with their families and work. Consequently, once the population is working, there will be production of goods and services. This situation, in turn, will create monetary circulation in the town.

Land reform comes in at this point. Land is a very valuable and natural resource. It is also a moral obligation to consider. it in this situation. I realize that there is plenty of public land available. Unfortunately, many people do not have access to these vacant lands. As such, it is a critical issue for the people to have access to this resource that will empower them to start any agricultural ventures. On the other hand, the central and local governments lack the vision to create opportunity leasing the land to a private entity. This reason is what led me to present a proposal to the local municipal leaders to grant my organization the use of a few acres of land. This request was granted through collaboration with a local grassroots' organization.

Moreover, this project will produce revenue available to the people. This revenue can be invested in other individual projects that will help satisfy the needs of the people. Hopefully, the central government will encourage these efforts (creation of restaurants, places of entertainment, hotels, etc.) by working on the infrastructure, such as with building better roads

and services for the town. There will be an influx of people moving in to take advantage of the new economic opportunity.

In the same vein, one of the other strategies I would like to offer to the people of the town is access to micro-credit loans. This strategy has been inspired by Muhammad Yunus. In *Banker to the Poor*, Yunus spells out his method of micro credit lending to the poor. He believes that the people in poverty want to have a better life. They have strong hope of breaking that barrier if given the opportunity. They may have the gift of entrepreneurship, and given the opportunity, they will use it to change their condition.⁸¹ Yunus also argues that it is a basic human rights issue to allow the poor to have access to micro credit. This strategy has the good fortune to unleash their potential and bring dignity to their self-worth.⁸² Yunus thinks that oppressive laws and systems are preventing the poor people from gaining access to universal abundance. He believes that small loans, not charity, can transform the lives of the poor people. He feels that a small amount of capital lent to women can have the power to transform their household. As Yunus states,

If the goals of economic development include improving the general standard of living, reducing poverty, creating dignified employment opportunities, and reducing inequality, then it is natural to work through women. Not only do women constitute the majority of the poor, underemployed, and the economically and

⁸¹ Muhammad Yunus, *Banker to the poor*.48-150

⁸² Ibid,pp.163

socially disadvantaged, but they more readily and successfully improve the welfare of both children and men.⁸³

How does Yunus micro credit lending bank operate?

Yunus states that it operates in rural areas in Bangladesh. He provides the loan to an individual in a group with low interest rates and uses a system of trust instead of collateral. No one else in the group can get a loan until that person pays his/hers back. So, peer pressure causes the loan recipient to pay back. Also, the group members self-select who can be in the group. In that way, they already have strong social relationships that make breaking trust with the other members difficult. Furthermore, he goes to the house of the borrowers and organizes them into groups and helps them participate in social programs.⁸⁴

This system of trust tends to place confidence in a person by making that person the nominal owner of property to be held or used for the benefit of one or more others. It is an honor system that appeals to the good nature and character embedded in every human being at birth. It values the person, first and foremost, as someone worthy of the image of the creator. However, this system has an element of risk and vulnerability, if it is not well understood. The core principle of this trust system is based on Matthew 7:12 “So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you.”⁸⁵ As mentioned before, this system of trust recognizes that we are born with natural gifts that are too often ignored by a materialistic

⁸³ Ibid,pp.72-73

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp.62-87

⁸⁵ New International Bible Version

society. In poor countries like Bangladesh or Haiti, it is very hard for the people to come up with collateral.

Likewise, this system based on trust may bring back to the people their sense of self-worth stripped away by a materialistic society.

This endeavor may seem risky since the credit system is not available to the peasant in Haiti. Indeed, loans from the traditional banks in Haiti are easily made available to those who are in the business sector or politically well-connected. Conversely, micro-credit lending strategy that I will be using for the people in Anse-a-Pitre, allows the people of the town to have small capital available to invest in a small venture. It is a reality that the majority of those who are living in poverty in Haiti or in Latin America do not have the capability or the means to get small loans from banks.

Moreover, this strategy of capability awareness and micro-credit lending has also been endorsed by Indian economist Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.⁸⁶ As a matter of fact, Sen thinks that poverty can be the result of a lack of opportunity and capability for people to enjoy a better life. This position contrasts with the easy access to the resources enjoyed by the rich minority class. In his book *Development as Freedom*, Sen said: “Development can be seen....as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”⁸⁷ That is another way of allowing justice to flow in a society with easy access to opportunity for all. This justice will lead necessarily to economic, spiritual, and social transformation whereas the people will

⁸⁶ Amartya Sen, *Utilitarianism and Welfarism*, The journal Of Philosophy, Vol. 76, No.9. September 1979, pp.463-489; Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993

⁸⁷ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. New York: First Anchor Books, 2000, p.3

have the choice of a better life. Lastly, Sen asserts that a truly developed society is one where “freedom rings” for the people to reach their true potential.⁸⁸ He goes on to say that it is the responsibility of a society to put in place real opportunities for its citizens such as a health care system, and quality education, so that the people can bring about transformation into their lives. This degree of freedom available and enjoyed by the people may also be extended worldwide.⁸⁹

This approach by Sen comes as a support for those sectors in favor of a radical change. It is trying to offer something of a practical nature with a direct participation of the people. Likewise, it will be incumbent upon society to create infrastructure, institutions, and opportunities. This degree of freedom in society will allow its citizen to benefit and reach their full potential. In any event, we can venture to say that change cannot happen just by denouncing the ills of society. A practical approach, which must involve a transformed people, must be implemented to attack the root cause of the problem.

Social Aspect of the Model

The new economic boom will have the effect of bringing a new and positive consciousness to the people and to the town. It may lead them to think that this better life they have been looking for in other places can happen here, too. Hence, there will be no need for people to continue to cross the border for a better life. They may choose to visit as a tourist, but will not be tempted to overstay for employment.

⁸⁸ Martin Luther King jr., *I Have A Dream Speech*, August 1963.

⁸⁹ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. New York: First Anchor Books, 2000, p.157

Furthermore, the grassroots organization (same as the lending circles) already has a core group of 120 people. We will divide them into ten groups made up of twelve people each. Each group will meet each week for literacy class because most of the people do not know how to write and read. This literacy class is mandatory. The members must learn how to write and read first, in creole since it is the native language. These classes will be extended also to the family of the new member since entire household do not have the luxury to go to school. This is one of the requirements of belonging to the group. It will be emphasized throughout that a contract will be signed by each member to complete the literacy class before moving to the next level. There will be a cost associated with the literacy class in terms of volunteer time to be determined by working extra hours in the different socially oriented economic projects. By the same token, some religious activities will occur in these meetings. Those activities will be discussed more in the next section. More importantly, it will be easier to allow more time and space for the people to learn, be monitored, and adapt to new concepts and new way of life.

All ten groups will meet once each month for worship and evaluation. It will also be an opportunity for each group to interact with each other through entertainment, seminars on any relevant topic about leadership issues, or reflecting on similar setbacks. The meeting for all ten groups will allow each member to get to know each other and create a bond and trust that is vital to any community. In any event, it is important to understand that the core groups are allowed to register new members. These new members will have to go through a period of discernment before admission. This process is not in place to weed out people. Rather, it will explain what this new community stands for as people are free to come and go. Moreover, this

core group will be the first step in planning the church that will be established in the community. It will be a church by the people and for the people.

Spiritual Aspect of the model

Some people have advised us to start with building a church to start the project. However, I believe that the spirit has been moving in and around the people of Anse-a-Pitre. In other words, the church is wherever the people are. The building itself is a place of worship, and the emphasis is to be put on the person. Bible study and group worship is to take place at every group meeting. These spiritual activities will be necessary to foster fellowship and provide teaching and learning opportunities about the righteousness of God in the community. It is also an opportunity for each member to know, love, teach, and exhort each other in building the body of Christ. In that sense, having the people worship together in small groups may affect and enhance their effectiveness in meeting the other goals of the group. As the scriptures says in 1 Corinthians 6:19,

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself⁹⁰.

I believe that it is one of the biggest mistakes in evangelization to avoid investing in building up the people. It is essential that they must be exposed to more loving and positive ways of life. The people will need to be exposed to the righteousness of God, if they are to be the agents of change and play a central role in this project. A regenerated people can be a powerful force in bringing about change. It will be a new kind of people aware of the

⁹⁰ *Bible New Living Translation*

opportunity to be transformed to their full potential. As such, the church will be a place where the people transformed by the spirit of justice, love, and compassion will meet for worship and community meetings to share the Good News of their liberation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, I am advocating a grassroots approach instead of a top-down one for this project so that the people participate in the decision making process of the project and their voices are heard.. As a consequence, this new approach will affect their understanding of what the church is truly about, as a beacon of hope for each person. It will engage them in seeking peace, harmony, and greater connection with God and with one another. The end result will be a message of love and salvation spreading among the people. A new era of light over darkness will dawn as people will get to unleash their potential for living with dignity and happiness. Then church growth and planting will spread like wildfire because of their transformation and new awareness of Christ's message.

Analysis of the potential of the Model

Educating and sharing the truth with the people of Anse-a-Pitre as being children of God will be a revelation to them. They will probably understand for the first time that they are loved by God, and they are to live according to God's intention. They are born with God's gifts and these gifts are to be used to the glory of God. They have been kept in darkness and prevented from developing and educating themselves. They have been lied to, and they have been exploited. The agricultural, economic, social and spiritual aspects of my project are closely linked with each other. It is important for the people to reconnect with their spirituality to help awaken them. This awakening will be necessary for them to make an

inventory of their gifts and other natural resources. At this stage, the agricultural, economic and social ministries will begin strengthening and complementing each other, in order to bring the better life that God intended for each person to enjoy rightfully.

I do consider that everything we do is a contribution toward the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The universe was created by God and everything belongs to the creator. We have been called by God to be part of his plan of salvation. Therefore, everything that we do is really a ministry where God inspired us to work and put our gifts at the service of others for his own glory and the happiness of mankind. Hence, Christians are to glorify God through the ministry of the Word in addition to also using their gifts and vocation. This work, this ministry, is supposed to be a way of life for the New Creation, as people are called to join in the program of what God is doing to liberate the world: i.e , the renewal of the whole creation. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God shows us that not only does He want to save our souls from eternal damnation, but He is also longs to free the captives, those who are facing hunger and oppression. As mentioned earlier, this Christ centered work is an invitation to those who have listened to the Spirit of God and who understand the reality of the gospel as affecting all that we do. People who share in that vision of a transformed world for Christ tend to use their vocation, and gifts with accountability and excellence. The gospel leads us to bring healing to God's creation and reminds us that all that we are and have are undeserved gifts from God.

Finally, I would say that my new understanding of ministry is for the tenets of love, compassion and justice to be alive and well in the midst of the community. It is a ministry where people sharing a new birth in Christ are willing to work for justice and peace. It is a ministry that will apply this commandment: 'Love your neighbor as yourselves" (Leviticus

19:18). It will emphasize repentance and Christlike living with the social and political structures to making room for the poor and the marginalized.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

This project proposes an alternative to the plight of the migrant workers crossing sometimes illegally from Haiti into the Dominican Republic to find work. It will be a new way of addressing this dilemma from a theological perspective. The aim is to bring to the forefront the Christian view on work and try giving back dignity to those seeking employment.

Haiti has been struggling with this problem for a long time. In 2013, the Dominican Republic government enacted and implemented an immigration law to deport Haitians indiscriminately. This law ruled that people born between 1929 and 2010 in the country to non-citizen parents did not qualify as Dominican citizens. This desperate law has just made it more complicated to find a solution.

In any event, it is a fact that those desperately seeking work are not able to find it in Haiti. It is even a nightmare when they are employed because of the conditions of exploitation and abuse they are facing. These degrading conditions are stripping them of their dignity, making them even poorer. It is also an ecological threat when the environment is being destroyed. Haiti must look seriously at its internal failure due in part to failed leadership. This project is

largely in agreement with the proposal of Camille Chalmers, Renee Cho, and Michel Neptune Anglade for the economic and political liberation of the Haitian peasants. All those who are traditionally excluded must regain their respect and dignity (i.e women and those most vulnerable in society.)

The project also puts emphasis on the fact that the spiritual and ethical aspect of work must not be overlooked. Too often, we just want to stay focused on the right of the Haitian migrant workers to find labor. We must also look at the inhumane conditions in which they are being kept and wonder at what God would have to say about it. Indeed, Pope John Paul II has a lot to say and offer when it comes to the exploitation, abuse and impoverishment of the Haitian workers. I also believe that it is a proactive Christian stance to denounce the root cause of this situation.

Also, I believe that it must not stop there. This ministry project must look at practical ways to attack this problem. For instance, it may provide tools that can empower the peasants to be free of those barriers imposed by those who set the conditions to borrow. If the peasants can have access to socially-oriented programs that provide access to micro loans at an affordable rate, then it will open the door for them to grow their agricultural ventures. By the same token, the small loan must have a mentoring component aimed at educating the peasant borrower of the importance of trust within the group for the simple proposed ministry to work. The implementation of the step by step plan will guarantee their success. Indeed, the purpose of the loan will no longer be based solely for the peasant borrower to make a profit. It will rather be a way for the knowledge that will set them free. It is just like the Chinese proverb; show them how to fish, so they can eat for a lifetime. People, in general when given the

chance, would love to stay in their birth place. They want to work, live in a nice place, and provide for their families. They want to live in a just society where none are excluded.

Similarly, we also must consider work in the context of a healthy ecological system. Those who are being disenfranchised must not be part of the problem by destroying the environment. As such, it is important to take a look at a strategy to help the voiceless understand the need to protect the environment. Haiti's reforestation is a major issue for any government. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti has seen a lot of unnecessary loss of lives because it is not a priority for the government to protect the environment. There may be laws in the books against cutting wood for cooking but they have never been enforced. This project also aims at making the workers know of the importance of a healthy environment as the key to true sustainable development in Haiti. For instance, the parliament can pass laws to get the schools and University of Haiti to include in its curriculum required courses community reforestation programs for the student to graduate. At best, this educational reforestation can even start at a younger age. Likewise, the Haitian Army/Police can also be used as part of a nationwide program to assist the agricultural ministry. Other laws by parliament can be enacted to switch to the use of natural gas, instead of charcoal, with the help of intense media education, and by providing free efficient cooking stoves and other incentives to the population. Unfortunately, I doubt that the people can depend on the central government on the issue of reforestation. Hopefully, I believe that part of empowering the people will eventually get them to act on it.

Finally, I believe that the Haitian migrant workers will have a better future through this project. They will no longer need to live at the margins of society. Compassionate and spirit-filled leaders will be educated to help more people to be in charge of their own destiny.

Leaving the country will no longer be a necessity. It will be time to confront the evil of oppression and injustice. Haiti has more than enough resources for its citizens to live well. Corruption, greed, and prejudice by Haiti's elite have caused the people to live in misery. As I have mentioned earlier, a serious look at engaging the local elite in repentance and spiritual renewal can only start to put a dent in this problem. I propose that that this elite group is to be approached with compassion, in order for them to realize that they are the same as the people they are oppressing. The implementation of this project can and will be a source of pride for the people (oppressors as well as the victims) to know that they are children of God. They are not cursed to live in degrading conditions for the rest of their lives. God has provided enough resources for the people of Haiti. If we are to be serious about the welfare of the Haitian migrant workers, then we need to keep redemption and restoration in mind. Redemption encourages those who have gone astray that they are redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is no longer necessary to continue to live in a state of sin by oppressing those who are less fortunate. We are to forgive and call to repentance those who are creating structures that destroy the people and things around us. We are also called to restoration, so we can start living as agents of change seeking to restore the ecosystem, because we have been redeemed. The ambitious aim of this project to bring the reality of the kingdom of God into the experience of chronic poverty for the people of Haiti.

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