



Religion, Culture, and
Tradition in the Caribbean 

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Chapter 9 

Identity and Subversion in Babylon

Strategies for “Resisting Against the System”
in the Music of Bob Marley and the Wailers¹

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Jah! Rastafari! is an exclamation of enormous evocative power, as anyone who has spent much time with Rastafarians can attest. Often accompanied by a wild shake of dreadlocks, this exclamation, which is part praise to the Creator and part self-identification, communicates a positive, energy-charged, leonine roar of assertion.² Indeed, it constitutes a counterassertion, a claim to dignity and power boldly made in the face of other claims in this often dehumanizing world—claims, and a world, typically characterized by Rastafarians as “Babylonian.” Counterassertion has always been central to Rastafari. From its origins as a millenarian cult of the black underclass in Jamaica during the 1930s, Rastafari has been a powerful movement of protest against the oppressive status quo. But its protest has not been simply negative. On the contrary, Rastafari has from the beginning attempted to subvert the status quo by proposing an alternative consciousness and identity for black Jamaicans. Today, Rastafari has developed into a vibrant spiritual vision and social force for black dignity throughout the world. A major carrier of this vision was reggae songwriter and musician Bob Marley who, together with Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston³ (originally known as the Wailers), communicated in song the power of the Rastafarian vision to many in North America, Europe, and Africa, especially in the 1970s.⁴

The burden of this chapter is to examine the lyrics of representative songs of the three Wailers, in order to elucidate their strategies for “resisting against

the system,"⁵ that is, for maintaining an alternative consciousness and identity in the face of the dehumanizing worldview of the dominant order. I will highlight two main strategies of resistance found in the Wailers' lyrics. The first is the appeal to historical memory, specifically to a macro-narrative of resistance, beginning with the Bible and continuing into the present day, and the second is the appeal to God's intent from the creation of the world as an alternative to the status quo. Particularly in connection with the latter strategy, I will address theological differences between Marley, Tosh, and Livingston—differences that are not ethically neutral—and will conclude by grappling with the issue of what constitutes appropriate subversion and identity-formation in "Babylon."

Speaking anecdotally, although I am, by training, a biblical scholar and not an interpreter of popular culture or music, I have been de facto applying my hermeneutical skills for years to both biblical texts and popular music, including reggae.⁶ Besides utilizing popular music for the past 20 years in lectures and presentations on the relevance of the Bible for contemporary culture, I have experimented recently with a course on the spirituality of popular music. In the music of Bob Marley and the Wailers I find my interest in the function of biblical narrative, Old Testament creation theology, and especially my research on humanity as *imago Dei* (image of God) in Genesis 1, coming together with my love of reggae, which seems to pulsate naturally through my Jamaican blood. But it is not just reggae music as a genre or a cultural idiom that interests me here. As a white Jamaican Christian of British and Sephardic Jewish ancestry migrating from Jamaica to Canada in 1977, a migration "fueled" by the economic hardship of the oil crisis in the mid-1970s, the content of Marley's music (the lyrics, rhythm, and melody fusing into a unified complex) has helped me to clarify my own identity, both culturally and religiously, in the Caribbean diaspora. So there is a sense in which these reflections constitute my coming to terms with an important part of my own heritage.

Apart from the fact that biblical scholars do not usually engage in popular music analysis, it may seem more unusual for an academic essay to be so personally revealing. Here I think it is important not simply to accept the hegemony of North Atlantic paradigms of what constitutes good scholarship, but to continually press and tease the boundaries of our disciplines. Thus, I am unapologetic both about "debordering" biblical studies to include popular music analysis and about "locating" my own interests and motivations in an academic exercise. Not only are these moves quite appropriate—contrary to the idea of "pure" disciplinary distinctions and the myth of objectivity—but they are necessary moves in my case, since two of the major influences on my religious consciousness in the late 1970s and early 1980s were biblical creation theology (especially the notion of human-

ity as image of God [*imago Dei*] in Gen. 1:26–27) and the music of Bob Marley and the Wailers. These influences together empowered me to resist the dehumanization of North American consumer capitalism into which I was thrust and the Western progress myth, which beckoned me to join at the altar of mammon. And the flipside of that resistance is that I was empowered to sustain an alternative identity as *imago Dei*, with its gift of human dignity and its call to responsible action for justice and blessing in a world that belongs to Jah.

A Sociopolitical Reading of *Imago Dei* as Ideology Critique

It was because of the importance of the Genesis *imago Dei* text for my own worldview that I was led, as a biblical scholar, to reflect over the past several years on what it means to be created in God's image. One strand of that reflection consists in a literary-rhetorical reading of Genesis 1, which explores the model of divine power portrayed in the text and inquires into what sort of human power (in God's "image") the text's portrayal of God might authorize.⁷ More relevant for our purposes in this essay, however, is a sociopolitical reading of the *imago Dei*. Here it is crucial to read the notion of image together with the mandate to rule (Gen. 1:26–28). Starting with the scholarly consensus that Genesis 1 (technically 1:1–2:3, which is a single literary unit) has its origins in the Babylonian exile, I have come to read the *imago Dei* text as making a counterideological claim. To understand that claim and the ideology that this text was countering, three sets of data are crucial. The first is the near unanimous testimony of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Sumerian creation myths that the overarching purpose of human beings is to serve the gods, by which is meant the obligation of cultic and financial upkeep of temples (with their elaborate rites) and the entire temple economy.⁸ This involved providing sacrifices as food for the gods to be offered daily before their various cult statues—in which the gods were embodied—and, of course, repairing the temples when necessary and sustaining the livelihood of the priests. The mass of humanity were thus viewed as something like indentured laborers on the temple estates of the various deities, to whom they owed obligation.⁹

The second set of data is that in the ancient Near East, kings (and sometimes priests) were described as the image of a god.¹⁰ While the idea is well-attested in Egypt over many centuries, it is less well-attested in Mesopotamia, and in fact the extant Mesopotamian texts are of Assyrian, rather than Babylonian, provenance—although one text is written by a Babylonian priest describing an Assyrian king. This designation of kings as image of Amon-Re, Horus, Enlil, Shamash, Marduk, etc., is part of the pervasive royal ideology of the ancient Near East, legitimating the divine right

of the monarchy as an institution of the gods, serving to bring order to the chaos of political and social life. As image of god, the king (and, by extension, this could be applied to priests) functioned as the divinely authorized mediator of blessing from the gods, enacting the divine will on earth.¹¹

The third relevant set of data for our purposes constitutes the Babylonian myth sometimes called the "Epic of Creation," also known by its first two words in Akkadian, *Enuma Elish*.¹² In the sixth century, this particular epic functioned as the charter myth of the neo-Babylonian Empire. Two facets of the *Enuma Elish* are particularly important for interpreting the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1.¹³ The first facet is that the creation of the cosmos is effected by a violent act in primordial time. The young heroic god Marduk slays Tiamat, the old mother goddess *cum* sea monster (who represents the forces of chaos), and constructs the universe out of her dead carcass. Paul Ricoeur, among many others, has discerned how this primordial violent act of cosmos-making becomes the mythic legitimation of Babylonian imperial expansion, since the king, standing in for Marduk (image of Marduk) vanquishes the enemies of Babylon, who are regarded as the historical embodiments of the chaos monster, and thus reestablishes the social and political cosmos in historical time, in imitation of the god's establishment of the broader cosmos in mythical time.¹⁴

The second facet of the *Enuma Elish* that is relevant for our topic is that while the myth agrees with wider Mesopotamian creation theology that humans are created to serve the gods, it puts its own particular spin on this notion. According to the *Enuma Elish*, after Tiamat was defeated and the cosmos created, Marduk decided to alleviate the burdens placed on the defeated (and demoted) deities who had supported Tiamat, these burdens being precisely the upkeep of the temple economy. But instead of simply setting them free from the burdens of their labor with a full pardon, so to speak, it is decided that Tiamat's consort, the god Qingu, who had also opposed Marduk, would be killed, and from his blood humans would be made in order to take over the workload of the captive rebel gods. Not only, then, are humans created as indentured servants of the (higher) gods, but they are created out of the spilt blood of a deity who is, in effect, regarded as demonic and certainly an enemy of Marduk, the patron god of Babylon.¹⁵

This entire ideological complex of royal ideology and creation myths, especially the *Enuma Elish*, thus represents a worldview that would have been antithetical to the Yahwistic faith of the Judean exiles in the sixth century. For not only did it portray a god besides Yahweh as supreme, but it portrayed the world in essentially dimorphic or dualistic terms, such that order or righteousness or cosmos is imposed on (or wrested from) chaos or evil, by an essentially violent act—which is quite different from the portrayal of creation in Genesis 1. And it further portrayed the mass of Babylonian hu-

manity—and especially any conquered and captured peoples, like the Judean exiles—as of inferior status vis-à-vis the king (and, in practice, the royal and priestly elites of Babylon), who alone stood *coram Deo* (before the face of God) and who mediated the presence and blessing of deity to the masses on earth. Genesis 1, then, and especially the notion of humans as the image of God, granted royal power in the world, is meant to resist and subvert Babylonian ideological claims about the subservient status and function of humanity. It does this by its counterclaim that God granted a royal identity at creation to all humanity, male and female (exiles included).¹⁶

The Importance of Alternative Consciousness in Bob Marley and the Wailers

In light of this analysis of the meaning of the *imago Dei*, it is intriguing that Peter Tosh, in the *Red X* tapes—which he recorded as his autobiographical reflections—appeals to the biblical notion of humanity as the image of God, precisely as a mode of resistance against the dehumanization of racism. Tosh recounts his exposure to the Christian Church of his youth.

Then they started to teach me of the devil, and Satan, and hell. They teach me of the Christians. But they made sure that they teach me that Jesus, the son of God, was a white man. When I ask why am I black, they say I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity. One of the main songs they used to sing in church, that makes me sick, is "Lord, Wash Me and I Shall Be Whiter Than Snow."

In my search, I heard of the name "God." I go to church and they say God made man of his own likeness and image. If I make a doll in my image it is quite obvious that the doll must look like me. Yet still I am faced with the ignorance, lost into fantasy, seeking to find the reality in what they taught me of this religion, of God.¹⁷

In the midst of this spiritual confusion and search, it was the "image of God" notion that provided the initial breathing room for the adolescent Tosh in a stifling, oppressive context, by evoking a sense of dissonance from the anti-black rhetoric and theology he found in the Christian Church.

But resistance to the dominant worldview is not limited to Tosh's autobiographical reflections. It is found extensively throughout the music of Marley, Tosh, and Bunny Wailer. One of the clearest examples is located in Marley's unforgettable words in the second stanza of "Redemption Song."

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
Cause none of them can stop the time!¹⁸

Although concrete social and economic oppression—including the threat of nuclear war between the superpowers—is very real for Marley, he is aware that without an alternative consciousness with which to resist the “mental slavery” of the ideology *behind* the social and economic reality of oppression, it would be impossible to survive this reality (this “shitstem” or “shituation” as Peter Tosh liked to call it). So in the song “Exodus,” where Marley appeals paradigmatically to the biblical memory of both the Exodus and the Babylonian exile (superimposing one on the other, as is typical among Rastafarians), he focuses not only on social and economic bondage and liberation, but also on this *inner* bondage (or mental slavery) and calls the listener to self-awareness and spiritual liberation.

Open your eyes and look within
Are you satisfied
With the life you're living?
We know where we're going
We know where we're from
We're leaving Babylon
We're going to our Father's land¹⁹

Bunny Wailer, too, in “Moses Children,” uses the exodus/bondage metaphor to describe his own present circumstances and highlights the importance of alternative consciousness.

My burdens—sweating like a slave
to live another day
My burdens—if I didn't follow my mind
I would be gone astray²⁰

This emphasis on resistance by means of “following your mind,” that is, an internalized alternative consciousness, surfaces in many other songs. Thus in “Could You Be Loved,” Marley sings:

Don't let them fool you
Or even try to school you, oh! no
We've got a mind of our own
So go to hell if what you're thinking
Is not right²¹

So in “Ride Natty Ride,” he says:

All in all you see wa g'wan
Is to fight against the Rastaman

So they build their world in great confusion
To force on us the Devil's illusion²²

Marley thus sees a spiritual battle taking place, a battle of ideologies. And in “Ambush in the Night,” a song referring to both literal and ideological ambush, stanzas one and two contrast the claims of the Babylonian system with Rastafarian claims, by a change of only a few words.²³ First the lines from verse one:

They say what we know
Is just what they teach us
We're so ignorant

But in the second verse Marley sings in counterpoint to that claim:

Well what we know
Is not what they tell us
We're not ignorant, I mean it²⁴

This false attempt by the system to teach or educate the masses, and the need for them to resist, is an important theme for Marley. Thus the opening words of “Babylon System” are:

We refuse to be
What you wanted us to be
We are what we are
That's the way it's going to be
You can't educate I
For no “equal opportunity”
Talking about my freedom, people
Freedom and liberty²⁵

And the chorus appropriately calls on the listener to “rebel, rebel.” This rebellion or resistance is celebrated in “One Drop,” a song highlighting the distinctive reggae drumbeat (the third beat on the snare drum) and likening it to the pulsating of the heartbeat that sustains life.²⁶

So feel this drumbeat
As it beats within
Playing a rhythm
Resisting against the system

And a little later in the song the ideological or spiritual choice is made clear as Marley sings:

Give us the teachings of His Majesty
For we no want no devil philosophy

And, of course, the Christian Church does not get off scot-free on this analysis, but is viewed as a part of the problem (participating in the “devil philosophy”). Besides the fact that Tosh indicts white Christianity in the *Red X* tapes, we have those powerful lyrics of protest from Marley in “Crazy Baldhead.”

Build your penitentiary,
We build your schools,
Brainwash education to make us the fools.
Hate is your reward for our love,
Telling us of your God above.
We gonna chase those crazy baldheads out of town.²⁷

Here it is crucial to realize that the operative word in the line that summarizes the content of the “brainwash education” is “above.” It is the Christian teaching about a God “above”—who is disconnected from this world of suffering and blackness—that Marley protests.

An interesting commentary on this traditional religious language of transcendence and “height” is found in the first verse of “Get Up, Stand Up,” a song cowritten by Marley and Tosh.²⁸ What follows is Tosh’s version from his 1977 *Equal Rights* album, not only because I think it is better musically, but also because he adds a line about “duppy,” which Marley’s version does not have. By use of this term, which means roughly “ghost” (with a hint of the demonic), Tosh relegates Christian preachers to the realm of the dead.

You preacherman, don’t tell me,
Heaven is under the earth.
You are duppy and you don’t know
What life is really worth.

“Heaven is *under* the earth”? Is that what Christian preachers say? Tosh’s implicit point is that it makes as much sense to say that heaven and God are “under” the earth as “above” it. Both notions are equally absurd. And the absurdity is expressed lyrically by using the more atypical formulation.²⁹

That this absurdity is, in fact, the point, becomes explicit in the second verse, which mocks the fundamentalist Christian doctrine of the “rapture,” the return of Christ to take believers out of the world. Again, this is Tosh’s version.

Cause you know, most people think,
A great God will come from the skies,
And take away every little thing
And lef’ everybody dry.
But if you know what life is worth,
You would look for yours
Right here on earth
And now we see the light,
We gonna stand up for our rights.
Come on! Get up, stand up

So it becomes clear that this ideological battle, focusing on an inner liberated consciousness, is not meant as an escape from the harsh realities of the external conditions of life (as it might be in some varieties of Christianity that counsel escape from the world), but, on the contrary, is meant to focus us resolutely on this world (on earth), while giving us power and hope for living in this world, even when we have to go against the dominant order of things.³⁰ How does this alternative consciousness give us hope? How does that actually work? I want to suggest that it works in two main ways. It works by appealing either to historical (especially biblical) precedent or to God’s “creational” intent.

Appeal to Historical Memory to Fuel Alternative Consciousness

It is quite clear that for Marley, Tosh, and Bunny, the central historical precedent appealed to is the biblical complex of exodus and exile. That complex views the present world order as “Babylon,” a system of bondage and oppression that represents everything from the West African slave trade to colonial and neocolonial class structure, racism, economic deprivation, police brutality, as well as ideological bondage or “mental slavery.” In contrast to “Babylon,” there is “Zion,” Ethiopia, or Africa generally, which Marley calls “our Father’s land” (in “Exodus”), to which Jah is guiding his people in a new exodus/return/repatriation, led by various prophetic figures.³¹ “Give us another brother Moses,” sings Marley in “Exodus.” But in addition to Moses, Marley’s lyrics mention biblical heroes like Solomon, whose lineage leads to Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie I (in “Blackman Redemption”); the Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace (in “Survival”); David, who slew Goliath “with a sling and a stone;” and Samson, who slew the Philistines “with a donkey’s jawbone” (in “Rastaman Live Up”). And, although not explicitly naming him, Marley also alludes to Joshua when he sings “it remind I of the days in Jericho,” likening the ritual

procession around the city to Nyabingi dancing at a groundation ceremony (“Jump Nyabingi”).³²

But Marley not only retells the biblical story, citing paradigmatic biblical characters and events, he updates the story to include the black struggle against slavery, racism, and oppression in the post-biblical epoch. In “So Much Things to Say,” for example, he mentions, as parallel examples, the historical marginalization of Jamaican national heroes Marcus Garvey and Paul Bogle, along with the crucifixion of Jesus (pronounced Jess-us to distinguish the Rasta understanding of the Messiah from the Christian Jee-zas). He then encourages his listeners not to ignore their own history, which includes these leaders and their stories. For Marley, this historical memory is crucial to both his own and his listener’s identity.

I’ll never forget, no way
They crucified Jess-us Christ
I’ll never forget, no way
They stole Marcus Garvey for rights
I’ll never forget, no way
They turned their backs on Paul Bogle
So don’t you forget, no youth
Who you are
And where you stand in the struggle³³

Likewise in “Rat Race” Marley appeals to the resources of historical memory as a means of sustenance in the rat race of life, full of “political violence.”

Don’t forget your history
Know your destiny
In the abundance of water
The fool is thirsty
Rat race³⁴

What is going on here in this appeal to biblical-historical memory is, I believe, two-fold. On the one hand, and more generally, is the well-known fact that identity is narratively formed. That is, it is by the conscious “in-dwelling” of a larger story of meaning, a story larger than the individual self, and beyond the confines of the dehumanizing present, that we find meaning for our lives and come to a sense of self-identity, in a manner that enables us to resist the dehumanization of a world system undergirded by its own large story or metanarrative. So memory shapes identity.³⁵ And counter-memory shapes alternative identity. But, secondly, and more specifically, what we find is that this larger story of redemption, stretching from the exodus to Marcus Garvey and beyond, constitutes a series of paradigmatic

examples of protest, resistance, and redemption, which by their paradigmatic or precedent-setting qualities, can motivate us also to protest and resist the dehumanizing present and to work—in hope—for redemption in the present. That is, we are motivated to participate in the ongoing story. This illustrates very well the famous dictum of communitarian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, articulated in his book *After Virtue*. MacIntyre writes: “I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question, ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’”³⁶ Both identity and ethical action are narratively shaped.³⁷

Appeal to God’s Creational Intent to Fuel Alternative Consciousness

But appeal to historical precedent is only one strategy to generate a hopeful alternative consciousness and way of life. The other strategy is by appeal to creation, specifically to God’s creational intent from the beginning, which can call into question the status quo, that is, the present unjust order of things.³⁸ Thus we have Marley’s famous song, “One Love,” which, in my opinion, is probably the best song Marley ever wrote.³⁹ The power of a creation theology to sustain hope is evident in these lines found in the very center of the song:⁴⁰

As it was in the beginning (One Love!)
So shall it be in the end (One Heart!)
All right!

Notice how different this is from the *Gloria Patri*, which is often sung in liturgical churches: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.”⁴¹ Those lines absolutize the status quo as God’s eternal will, with no hope of change, whereas Marley’s lyrics assert that this world (of present injustice) will one day again manifest God’s creational intent—it certainly does not do so now. But “One Love” is even more profound than this. The phrases “One Love!” “One Song!” and “One Heart!” which are repeated throughout the song, constitute a reiterated call to reconciliation, even with “hopeless sinners.” Marley speaks of fighting a spiritual battle (an Armageddon) for the unification of the human race and for reconciliation with God, because he does not want anyone to have to face judgment at the eschaton:

Let’s get together to fight this Holy Armagiddydon (One Love!)
So when the Man comes there will be no, no doom (One Song!)
Have pity on those whose chances grow thinner
There ain’t no hiding place from the Father of Creation⁴²

But perhaps the most profound lines of all come in the first verse, where Marley's creation theology leads him to challenge those who, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, are scandalized by the radical forgiveness the Gospel offers to sinners.

Let them all pass all their dirty remarks (One Love!)
 There is one question I'd really love to ask (One Heart!)
 Is there a place for the hopeless sinner
 Who has hurt all mankind just to save his own?
 Believe me: One Love. . . .

Like Bob Marley, Bunny Wailer also appeals to a creation theology, with fascinating consequences. And just as Marley's appeal to creation suggests that the Creator cares for *everyone*, even self-serving "hopeless sinners," so Bunny's appeal to creation opens up the boundaries of his perceptions of God's concern. Thus, in "Wanted Children," a song permeated by creation theology, Bunny evokes God's concern and care for two categories of persons not typically addressed in mainstream reggae music.⁴³ The first category is children. The song affirms, at the outset, that there are ultimately (from God's perspective) no unwanted children.

I see wanted children,
 Crying from the backbone of their fathers.
 Wanted children,
 Longing for the bosom of their mothers.

The children are wanted precisely because God is their Creator. And the first verse goes on to tell the story of the creation of the cosmos, using the language of Genesis 1. The point it makes is that the created order (which manifests God's creational intent) is "originary" or primordial, and therefore exerts a normative claim on our lives.

These creations were here from the beginning
 So accept them for what they're worth

And Bunny hints, in the last line of the first verse, at the ultimate direction the song will take: "As the freedom of a raging storm/ let the little children born."

In the second verse we find a continuation of the creation story focusing on the creation of humanity, who are granted dominion and the power to be fruitful and fill the earth. Since children—the outcome of human fertility—are thus a gift from God, verse two ends with this poignant challenge:

So who are you to try them, price them, and sell them?
 Who are you to slave them, and to kill them before them born?
 Who are you to hunt them down, run them down, and gun them
 down?
 Who are you to judge them, and to put them to shame and scorn?

And this concern of Bunny with the well-being of children surfaces also in one of the subtle changes he makes to the lyrics of "Get Up, Stand Up," in his own recording of that song. Whereas Marley's version says twice "So (And) now you see the light/ (you) stand up for your rights," and once "So now *we* see the light/ *we* gonna stand up for *our* rights, and Tosh's has "we" consistently, Bunny's version is quite different. This is what he sings:

Now that the children have seen the light
 They're gonna stand up for their rights⁴⁴

But Bunny Wailer makes another significant, even more subtle, change in the lyrics to "Get Up, Stand Up." In the third verse (which is quite different in all three versions), one line is almost identical in the version of both Marley and Tosh. Marley sings,

We know and we understand
 Almighty God is a living man⁴⁵

In Tosh's version this reference to Selassie is similar. He says, "Almighty Jah is a living man." Bunny, however, makes two significant changes to this line.

We know and we've got to overstand
 That the Creator is a living one

Besides the playful use of "overstand," the two crucial changes are that (1) God is identified explicitly as Creator and (2) we have what seems to be an intentional case of inclusive language. Now, lest it be suggested that on this last point I am being overly subjectivistic—reading my own biases into the song—let me point out that in the second verse of "Wanted Children," in which he recounts the creation of humanity, Bunny intentionally mentions both sexes twice. Not only is it explicitly "male and female" that Jah created, but "to man and woman he gave all dominion/ over all creatures that lived on creation." This inclusivity was quite unusual in male Caribbean consciousness during the 1970s.⁴⁶ I want to suggest, therefore, that here we find manifested a concern—rooted in an appeal to God's creational intent—for children and for women, both of whom are typically undervalued by Caribbean (and Rastafarian) males.

But Bunny goes further still. For he has what is, to my knowledge, the first reggae song that is concerned about ecology. On the 1977 album *Protest*, we find the song "Scheme of Things," which speaks of the pollution of the world in both spiritual and physical senses, and asks:

What are you doing toward the scheme of things?
What are your works to your brother beings?⁴⁷

In other words, the alternative consciousness generated by appeal to creation, in these songs by Bunny Wailer and Bob Marley, involves seeing others in a new light, since they also are created by God and therefore have dignity and worth. Creation theology, in other words, can empower you to stand up and speak out on behalf of, and fight for the rights of, others different from yourself. It can even cause you to love your enemies. But none of this is strictly necessary. It does not work quite this way with Peter Tosh. Take, for example, two songs by Tosh that appeal to creation. "Creation" and "Igziabher (Let Jah be praised)" utilize language from Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 respectively.⁴⁸ Both songs, though beginning with language echoing biblical creation texts, go on to quote various psalms describing God's sustenance of the psalmist in the face of opposition. This reveals quite clearly Tosh's strategy. For him, in these songs, creation functions to legitimate the justice (and victory) of his own cause, in the face of his enemies. That is, Tosh portrays the Creator as fundamentally on *his* side, aiding him in the battle against his opponents.

Now this is all quite legitimate, up to a point. A problem surfaces when this legitimate sense of God used to support one's own cause begins to resemble the Babylonian ideology represented in the *Enuma Elish*. It is quite ironic that underlying many of Tosh's songs is a worldview in which Tosh himself has appropriated the stance of Babylon towards its enemies, a stance that both in Babylonian times and in Tosh's lyrics claims divine legitimation for the favored hero and destruction of the opponents. Something of Tosh's aggressive "Babylonian" stance begins to surface in "Stepping Razor," a stance that is, however, tempered by the song's humorous undertone.

If you eat asphalt
You better treat me good
If you drink lead soup
You better treat me good
I'm like a stepping razor
Don't you watch my size, I'm dangerous
...
If you wanna live you better treat me good

Cause I know say bluntly you don't go through one fifth
of the tribulation whe' I go through
Like all now, only your name would be here to represent you⁴⁹

Especially if placed in the context of the movie *Rockers*, where this song is used ironically in a crucial scene (depicting the showdown between the sufferers and oppressors), its sense of humor can be appreciated, whatever the author's explicit intention. But the song "I'm the Toughest" is an entirely different matter.

Anything you can do, I can do better
I'm the toughest
And I can do what you can't do
You never try to do what I do
I'm the toughest⁵⁰

This song embodies what could only be described as a puerile attitude. It reeks of schoolboy one-upmanship. But this attitude is transformed into something more than puerile in Tosh's militant "Equal Rights," which contains the following lines:

What is due to Caesar, you better give it unto Caesar
And what belong to I-an-I, you better give it up to I⁵¹

Note what identity Tosh appropriates for himself here. In a powerful call for "equal rights and justice" he cites a text that recurs in three of the Gospels in which Jesus contrasts coins with Caesar's image, which therefore belong to the emperor, with people, who are stamped with the image of the Creator, and thus belong to God.⁵² But Tosh places himself syntactically not in the place of the *image* of the Creator, but directly in the Creator's own place by his use of the first person singular pronoun. The alternatives are drawn not between Caesar and God, but between Caesar and Tosh himself. And yet a certain ambiguity is introduced by the use of both "I," which is singular, and "I-an-I," which can be either singular or plural, thus allowing for the possibility that Tosh is claiming a divine identity not simply for himself, but on behalf of the entire Rastafarian community (or possibly all oppressed people).

There is no such ambiguity, however, in "I Am That I Am."
Don't underestimate my ability
Don't defamate my character
Don't belittle my authority
It's time you recognize my quality, ye-ah
I said: I Am That I Am—I Am, I Am, I Am⁵³

Here Tosh appropriates nothing less than God's self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 3:14 in order to assert his own *unique* identity *over against* that of the listener, who is constantly exhorted in the song to acknowledge and recognize Tosh's importance and significance.

By attending to the large number of songs in Tosh's repertoire about being alienated, estranged, misunderstood, and opposed on all sides and also to the contours of his own life story—the *Red X* tapes are quite informative here—the fact becomes clear that Tosh lived with a constant sense of outrage at the injustice and oppression he felt he received, which led him to an essentially adversarial stance towards others.⁵⁴ "I Am That I Am" simply gives (inappropriate, even idolatrous) theological formulation to that stance, not only by claiming the meaning of the tetragrammaton as the content of his own self-identity, but by defining this (divine) identity in opposition to everyone else. It is thus quite paradoxical that someone who appeals to the notion of "Babylon" to describe the dominant oppressive order should assume an identity that essentially recapitulates the very self-understanding of historical Babylon and especially of the Babylonian monarchy. According to this self-understanding, Babylon (and the king as the image of God) stands in a unique, privileged, divinely authorized (we might say self-righteous) opposition to the enemies of the empire, who represent the forces of chaos and evil.⁵⁵

In this connection, it is significant that liberation theologian Pedro Trigo has warned that oppression can lead not only to disempowerment, which is very common, but also to a stance of vengeful self-assertion, which absolutizes those on the side of liberation while demonizing the oppressors. It is even more significant, in light of Bunny Wailer's creation theology, that Trigo also claims that a biblical faith in God as Creator can be a powerful antidote both to disempowerment and to vengeful self-assertion in the face of oppression.⁵⁶

What sort of resistance to evil, then, might a commitment to God as Creator of all (including the oppressor) engender? One example is Marley's radical proclamation of forgiveness even for the "hopeless sinner" in "One Love/People Get Ready," appealing to creation ("as it was in the beginning") as a guide for fighting "this Holy Armagiddyon." This attempt to not demonize those who embody historical evil is also found in "So Much Things to Say."

I-an-I no come to fight flesh and blood,
But spiritual wickedness in high and low places.
So while they fight you down,
Stand firm and give Jah thanks and praises.⁵⁷

With these words, Marley echoes the Pauline admonition in Ephesians 6 to stand firm and pray in order to resist the devil. This admonition functions

as an important alternative to either acquiescence in the face of evil or the enactment of human violence in response to evil.

In Bunny Wailer's case it is his song "Amagideon" (this is his spelling) that illustrates his own, alternative mode of spirituality and resistance to evil, even in apocalyptic times. The song paints the story of the world with large strokes, from creation to eschaton, and describes the historical struggles we experience in the present, which lead to the final judgment.

I see light fighting against darkness
Righteousness against evil
Right battling against wrong
Here come bondage struggling for freedom
But have patience I-Idren, have patience
Don't be burdened by reasons of tribulations
But have patience I-Idren, have patience
Remember the call of redemption
It says, Blessed are the poor
They shall inherit the earth
Blessed are the meek
They shall have new birth
Them that hunger and thirst after righteousness
Them alone shall be called blessed
In this ya Woe-de Woe-de Woe
It's the Amagideon
Taking place in-a Iration
In-a Iration⁵⁸

Drawing on language from Jesus' beatitudes and from the book of Revelation, Bunny counsels patient endurance and the humble pursuit of righteousness in the face of an apocalyptic battle of good and evil ("Amagideon") taking place in creation ("Iration"). The contrast with Tosh's use of creation theology could not be starker. Whereas Tosh believes that he is naturally aligned with the Creator and the forces of right in his battle against evil (in effect—though not necessarily in intention—relegating Tosh's enemies to the outer darkness, outside the legitimate realm of creation), Bunny is willing to stand back and allow the battle to unfold, trusting the victory (and the judgment) to God alone.⁵⁹

Having described various strategies for "resisting against the system" in the Wailers' music, and particularly the divergence of ethical stances with regard to the function of creation theology, it remains to note that this divergence raises the important question of the ethical legitimacy of various ways of resisting evil, a question that is existentially pressing for anyone engaged in emancipatory praxis in a world of real, historical oppression.

Without answering this question in any definitive way, I would suggest that there are pertinent biblical resources for addressing both our existential resistance to evil and our alternative identity-formation in "Babylon."⁶⁰

Let me, in conclusion, make a final comment about the subjectivity of my thesis. As a biblical scholar attempting to formulate and articulate interpretations of Wailers' songs that I have been living and working with at an implicit level for a number of years, I have noticed a significant convergence between my reading of how biblical texts—whether liberation narratives or creation theology—participate in, and resist, ideology, on the one hand, and my reading of similar strategies in the music of Bob Marley and the Wailers, on the other. My initial sense was that my biblical scholarship, in particular my research on the sociopolitical function of the *imago Dei*, must have influenced my interpretation of this music. But, of course, that isn't usually the way it works. It is life that most fundamentally affects scholarship, and not the other way around. This, taken together with the fact that I was listening to Marley's music long before I ever began graduate biblical studies, leads me to ask whether my reading of the *imago Dei* as ideology critique might not itself have been significantly shaped by the music of Bob Marley and the Wailers. Not only does this seem to be the case, but it is quite appropriate that it should be so.

Notes

1. A paper presented to "The Bible in Caribbean Culture and Tradition Consultation at the Society of Biblical Literature," San Francisco, CA, November 21, 1997.
2. On the significance of power and dignity of the African lion for understanding the Rastafari posture vis-à-vis the world, see Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987), p. 99. Campbell's analysis is developed by Adrian Anthony McFarlane in "The Epistemological Significance of 'I-an-I' as a Response to Quashie and Anancyism in Jamaican Culture," ch. 6 in *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlane (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), esp. 114–6 on "The Lionhearted Response."
3. Bob Marley was born Nesta Robert Marley, Peter Tosh was born Winston McIntosh, and Bunny Livingston (now known as Bunny Wailer) was born Neville O'Riley Livingston (the writing credits for his songs are usually attributed to Bunny O'Riley).
4. Although there have been many biographical and journalistic accounts of Bob Marley's life and career, none can match the historical depth and cultural sensitivity of Timothy White's portrait in *Catch a Fire: The Life of Bob Marley* rev. ed., (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).

5. From the song "One Drop," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979). One of the problems for the citation of popular music lyrics, which is especially true for reggae (and which will be encountered in future citations in this chapter), is that song lyrics may change significantly from one recorded version of a song to another (indeed, I will cite some of these changes as important data for my analysis). A further problem is that sometimes the copyright date of a song is considerably later than known recorded versions of the song, not to mention ambiguities about authorship. This complexity is simply to be expected in Jamaican culture, which is still largely oral in nature, and it leads Marley's biographer Timothy White to comment that compiling an accurate discography of any Jamaican musical group "would try the patience of anyone but Jah Rastafari himself" (White, 393). I will, nevertheless, consistently endeavor to give the standard copyright information for each song along with relevant information on the version I am actually quoting.
6. I have also explored (with Brian Walsh) the musical vision of Bruce Cockburn, one of Canada's premier singer/songwriters, in a coauthored article, "Theology at the Rim of a Broken Wheel: Bruce Cockburn and Christian Faith in a Postmodern World," *Grail: An Ecumenical Journal* vol. 9, no. 2 (June 1993): 15–39.
7. J. Richard Middleton, "Creation Founded in Love: Breaking Rhetorical Expectations in Genesis 1:1–2:3," in *Sacred Text Secular Times*, ed. Leonard Jay Greenspoon, *Klutznick Studies in Jewish Civilization*, 10 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).
8. As far as scholars can tell, this understanding of human purpose is universal to all the cultures of Mesopotamia. Some of the better-known Mesopotamian myths that articulate this purpose include the *Enuma Elish*, the *Atrahasis* epic, *Enki and Ninmah*, the *Myth of the Pickax*, and *Cattle and Grain*.
9. According to H. F. W. Saggs, Mesopotamian creation myths did not simply propound abstract ideas. Rather they constituted "an explanation of a particular social system, heavily dependent upon communal irrigation and agriculture, for which the gods' estates were primary foci of administration" (Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* [London: Athlone Press, 1978], 168).
10. The most comprehensive study of the sources is Edward Mason Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984). For accessible essays that summarize the relevant references, see Phyllis A. Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them': Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981) 2: 129–59; D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53–103; and Jeffrey H. Tigay, "The Image of God and the Flood: Some New Developments," in *Studies in Jewish Education and Judaica in Honor of Louis Newman*, ed. Alexander M. Shapiro and Burton I. Cohen (New York: KTAV, 1984), 169–82.

11. Since I am proposing a sixth century Babylonian context for Genesis 1, something needs to be said about the underrepresentation of Mesopotamian (and especially Babylonian) references to kings as image of god in the extant archeological record. This is not the place to discuss the matter fully, except to note the paucity of manuscript finds in general from Mesopotamia from approximately 1500–1000 B.C.E. (when most of the Egyptian references occur) and especially during the sixth century in Babylonia. As Saggs cautions, "It is self-evident that the random nature of archaeological discovery may result in gaps in the evidence and false emphases" (*Encounter with the Divine*, p. 18). Another factor is that it is extremely perilous to limit the reconstruction of a worldview from textual sources alone, as if every influential idea in a people's cultural life must find written attestation, especially in a predominantly oral culture. In the case of Babylonian kings as image of God, although the archeological record is spotty, this notion fits well with what we know of the Babylonian worldview and social order.
12. English translations of the *Enuma Elish* include E. A. Speiser, "Akkadian Myths and Epics," *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. with *Supplement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 60–72; Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), ch. 1: "Enuma Elish"; and more recently Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), "The Epic of Creation," 228–77.
13. For a very helpful commentary on the *Enuma Elish*, see Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), ch. 6, which bears the unwieldy title: "Second Millennium Metaphors. World Origins and World Order: The Creation Epic."
14. Ricoeur's analysis of the *Enuma Elish* is found in *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1969), part II, chap 1: "The Drama of Creation and the 'Ritual' Vision of the World."
15. The creation of humans out of the blood of Qingu is recounted in tablet VI of the *Enuma Elish*.
16. Further references to particular points in the above analysis may be found in the notes of two essays in which I have previously sketched a sociopolitical reading of the *imago Dei*. These are J. Richard Middleton, "The Liberating Image? Interpreting the *Imago Dei* in Context," *Christian Scholar's Review* vol. 24, no. 1 (1994): 8–25 and J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), ch. 6: "The Empowered Self." I am presently working on a monograph on the *imago Dei*, which will contain a more extended exploration of the sociopolitical background of Genesis 1 and humanity as God's image.
17. From the *Stepping Razor—Red X* video documentary, © 1992 by Bush Doctor Films, Inc., directed by Nicholas Campbell.
18. "Redemption Song," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Uprising* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1980).
19. "Exodus," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Exodus* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1977).
20. "Moses Children," by Bunny O'Riley, © 1977 by Solomonic Music/Island Music (BMI). Released on the *Protest* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1977).
21. "Could You Be Loved," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Uprising* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1980).
22. "Ride Natty Ride," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979).
23. Marley survived an assassination attempt on December 3, 1976, which was clearly ideologically motivated.
24. "Ambush in the Night," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979).
25. "Babylon System," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979).
26. "One Drop," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979).
27. "Crazy Baldheads," by Rita Marley and Vincent Ford. Released on the *Rastaman Vibration* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1976).
28. "Get Up, Stand Up," by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. Released on the *Burnin'* album by the Wailers (Island Records, 1973), on the *Equal Rights* album by Peter Tosh (Columbia Records, 1977; live version released on the *Captured Live* album by Tosh, EMI, 1984), and on the *Protest* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1977).
29. This ironic turning of language on its head is also part of the well-known Rastafarian playfulness with words in general to make a worldview point, such that "oppression" becomes "downpression" and "understanding" becomes "overstanding." Or, in what is perhaps the best-known example, the object pronoun "me" (which is used in Jamaican patois as both grammatical subject and object) becomes consistently "I" (in both subject and object situations), thus replacing the traditional objectification of the speaker with a perpetual grammatical subjectivity (furthermore, "me" is sometimes replaced with "I-an-I," an ambiguously singular/plural expression, which renders the speaker intrinsically part of a community, thus countering modern isolationism and individualism). Other examples of Rastafarian wordplay that are dependent on the significance of "I" include "Idren" for "brethren" and "Iration" for "creation." Although the significance of "I" for Rastafarians may have originated in a simple misreading of the roman numeral in the throne name of the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, this "misreading" has turned out to have powerful subversive potential.
30. Brian Walsh and I have critiqued the unbiblical character of this escapist, otherworldly Christianity in *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian*

- World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), especially chs. 6 and 7. The contours of a fundamentally this-worldly Christianity, rooted in Scripture, are sketched in chs. 3–5.
31. On the significance of Babylon for Rastafarians, see Ennis B. Edmonds, "Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resitance and Cultural Revitalization." ch. 1 in Murrell et al.
 32. "Survival" by Bob Marley. Released on the *Survival* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1979). "Blackman Redemption," by Bob Marley and Lee Perry, "Rastaman Live Up," by Bob Marley and Lee Perry, and "Jump Nyabingi," by Bob Marley. Released (two years after Marley's death) on the *Confrontation* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1983). "Blackman Redemption" previously released as a single (Tuff Gong, 1978).
 33. "So Much Things to Say," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Exodus* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1977).
 34. "Rat Race," by Rita Marley. Released on the *Rastaman Vibration* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1976).
 35. Brian Walsh and I have explored this function of narratives—and of the biblical narrative in particular—in *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, chs. 4 and 5.
 36. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: An Essay in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 216.
 37. The biblical scholar who has been most formative in developing this analysis concerning the function of Scripture to shape identity and action is James A. Sanders. See his seminal essay, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 531–60, reprinted in James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).
 38. This is the basic argument of J. Richard Middleton, "Is Creation Theology Inherently Conservative? A Dialogue with Walter Brueggemann," *Harvard Theological Review* 87/3 (1994): 257–77. This paper was presented at the 1992 annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* in San Francisco, CA.
 39. Significantly, it was continual listening to this very song in the days before the 1992 *Society of Biblical Literature* annual meeting which gave me the existential courage to stand before an audience of over 200 biblical scholars at that meeting and critique so renowned a scholar as Walter Brueggemann on his largely negative opinion of creation theology.
 40. "One Love," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Exodus* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1977). Note that an earlier version of this song, entitled simply "One Love," was released on *The Wailing Wailers* (Studio One, 1965), credited to Marley alone.
 41. This traditional second century hymn is found in a number of different musical settings in many hymnal traditions. For example #805–807 in *The Worshipping Church: A Hymnal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1990); #577–579 in *The Presbyterian Hymnal: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990); #622–623 in *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Waco, TX: Word Music, 1986); #538 in *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: National Baptist Publication Board, 1977).
 42. The spelling "Armageddion" is phonetic for Marley's patois pronunciation of Armageddon in the song.
 43. "Wanted Children," by Bunny O'Riley, © 1977 by Solomonic Music/Island Music (BMI). Released on the *Protest* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1977).
 44. "Get Up, Stand Up," by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. These lyrics are from the *Protest* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1977).
 45. "Get Up, Stand Up," by Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. These lyrics are from the *Burnin'* album by the Wailers (Island Records, 1973).
 46. For recent analysis of the role of women in Rastafari, see Maureen Rowe, "Gender and Family Relations in Rastafari: A Personal Perspective," and Imani M. Tafari-Ama, "Rastawoman as Rebel: Case Studies in Jamaica," chs. 4 and 5 in Murrell, et al.
 47. "Scheme of Things," by Bunny O'Riley, © 1977 by Solomonic Music/Island Music (BMI). Released on the *Protest* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1977).
 48. "Creation," by Peter Tosh, © 1988 by EMI Records Ltd. Released on the *Bush Doctor* album by Peter Tosh (Rolling Stones Records, 1978). "Igzialber (Let Jah be praised)," by Peter Tosh, © 1976 by Sony Music Entertainment Inc. Released on the *Legalize It* album by Peter Tosh (Columbia Records, 1976).
 49. "Stepping Razor," by Joe Higgs, © 1977 by CBS Inc. Released on the *Equal Rights* album by Peter Tosh (Columbia Records, 1977).
 50. "I'm the Toughest," by Peter Tosh, © 1978 by EMI Records Ltd. Released on the *Bush Doctor* album by Peter Tosh (Rolling Stones Records, 1978).
 51. "Equal Rights," by Peter Tosh, © 1977 by CBS Inc. Released on the *Equal Rights* album by Peter Tosh (Columbia Records, 1977).
 52. The contrast is implicit only, since Jesus does not explicitly mention what it is that belongs to God. The text is found in Matthew 22:15–22, Mark 12:13–15 and Luke 20:20–26.
 53. "I Am That I Am," by Peter Tosh, © 1977 by CBS Inc. Released on the *Equal Rights* album by Peter Tosh (Columbia Records, 1977).
 54. The interviews, news conferences, and autobiographical reflections in the *Stepping Razor—Red X* documentary vividly illustrate the depth and intensity of Tosh's alienation and outrage.
 55. This taking on the image of the enemy is what some psychologists have described as a "reaction formation."
 56. Trigo makes this argument in *Creation and History*, trans. Robert R. Barr, part II: "From Chaos and Cosmos to Faith in Creation" (Maryknoll, NY:

Orbis, 1991), 69–108. A similar argument concerning the theological and ethical significance of beginning the biblical story of liberation (centered around the exodus) with an account of creation is made in Middleton and Walsh, ch. 5. This framing of liberation by creation is also central to James Sanders's previously cited essay, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," and to Terence E. Fretheim's *Commentary on Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991). This emphasis on creation is a relatively new departure for Old Testament studies, which has tended to be suspicious of creation themes, while valorizing liberation or deliverance themes. On the reasons why this has historically been the case, see Walter Brueggemann, "Response to J. Richard Middleton," *Harvard Theological Review* 87/3 (1994): 279–89, esp. 281–3.

57. "So Much Things to Say," by Bob Marley. Released on the *Exodus* album by Bob Marley and the Wailers (Island Records, 1977).
58. "Amagideon," by Bunny O'Riley, © 1976 by Solomon Music/Island Music (BMI). Released on the *Blackheart Man* album by Bunny Wailer (Island Records, 1976).
59. Lest it be thought that I am unambiguously recommending Bunny Wailer's stance here, there is a significant complication that needs to be noted. Although I am impressed by much (though not all) of Bunny's musical vision represented by his first two solo albums (*Blackheart Man*, 1976 and *Protest*, 1977), it is well known that after these albums he underwent a significant shift, beginning with *Dub Disco Volume I* (Solomonic Music, 1978), and moved from producing socially critical or religiously profound songs to turning out rather superficial dancehall music (almost 20 albums in the past 20 years, about half of which is new material, the rest being dancehall versions of older songs). This is not an absolute distinction in Bunny's repertoire, since he has produced some "conscious" music in these 20 years, but it does represent a significant change of emphasis. This seeming abdication of moral responsibility has been commented on by chroniclers of the Jamaican music scene as well as by reggae musicians and Rastafarians including Peter Tosh who was quite outspoken about the matter (to which Bunny typically responded by saying that the youths need to let off steam and he is simply providing the music for this). It might also be noted that Bunny quite astutely aligned himself with a commercially successful musical trend and thereby preserved a market for himself in present-day Jamaica, where "conscious" reggae has become a rarity.
60. This is not to suggest that the Bible is unambiguous on these matters. I have taken to heart Walter Brueggemann's continued warnings about the oppressive ideological potential of creation theology in the Old Testament to simply legitimate the status quo, warnings which he continues to sound, despite his acceptance of my critique and his appreciation of the new work being done on creation in the Old Testament. Brueggemann's warnings suggest a critical question, which cannot here be answered, concerning the relationship between Bunny Wailer's theological/ethical stance rooted in creation

and his dancehall "turn." Are these in some way connected to each other, such that creation theology can serve to relativize the struggle against oppression? Or are there other factors to be taken into account, since neither Marley's nor Tosh's appeal to creation seem to have led in this direction? Relevant factors in Bunny's case include his well-known elusive, reticent personality and his back-to-nature, isolationist tendency, which caused him to disappear to his farm for long periods of time, remaining out of touch with the wider world. Finally, what is the connection between Bunny's avoidance of political topics, his theological/ethical stance, and his quite legitimate desire to simply stay alive? Six months after Tosh's brutal killing in 1987, Bunny commented in a newspaper interview (possibly recalling also the 1976 assassination attempt on Marley and that Marley was also dead, of cancer in 1981): "Me nuh inna nuh sacrifice business. Me have ta be here ta see the victory of good over evil" (Balford Henry, "I Will Not Be a Reggae Martyr, Says Bunny, Last of the Wailers," *Sunday Gleaner* [March 20, 1988]). But these are questions, perhaps, for another essay.