

Abstract

This study is an investigation of the role of Churches, both European and Afro-Jamaican, and how their theologies and cosmologies influenced the growth and development of Jamaican colonial society. The organizational structures, policies, and theologies of the Anglican and Missionary Churches are important areas of understanding for this thesis. Even more important to the overall theme of this enquiry, however, is how the instructions of the three European churches reflected their culture, philosophy, ethics and the basis of their socio-cultural analysis of reality, and influenced the outcome of their encounter with Afro-Jamaican cultural traditions and values in a process of creative synthesis and refinement. The investigation is also an attempt to understand the interplay between the socio-cultural assumptions and values of the dominant planter groups and those of their African or Afro-creole (alternatively used for Afro-Jamaican) workers, and the persistent problems that resulted from the clash of such competing value systems.

The study is concerned with the watershed developments of 1823 that emanated from the Wilberforce and Buxton parliamentary manoeuvres to ameliorate slavery based on moral and ethical principles. It surveys the nature of the problems that were thus generated, as well as the power

struggle that escalated in succeeding decades and concludes with an assessment of the culmination of that vastly conflictual process, which exploded in the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865, that was led by Native Baptists. It also recognizes the emergence of Afro-creole norms as creative adaptations of missionary Christianity to those African derived values, customs and ways of perceiving reality.

A certain recognizable theological viewpoint is operative in the analysis and interpretation offered. However, the main theme for which the first chapter provides background and the other chapters, examples, illustrations and evidence, is the growth and development of Afro-Christian Church life, its leadership, values and strategies as part of the dialectical process of creative response to both European missionary church leadership and planter hegemony, their values, assumptions, priorities and procedures. The process as Brathwaite emphasizes, is notably not one of Black acculturation but rather one of dynamic interculturalization between the African traditions and those of Europe which kept striving for dominance in an ongoing interplay of rivaling and often contradictory value systems that never attained ultimate harmonization.

While neither the above assumptions or issues highlighted may be original or unique to this writer, the approach to the research that has gone into this study has offered both a new focus on well established data and

brought to the surface a great deal of material and information. These include personal journals, missionary and other correspondence, church histories, reports and journals plus major commission of enquiry reports which have been buried in both British and Jamaican Church archives, museums, record offices and research institutes. The writer believes that this vast repository of Jamaican history which has not previously been adequately or completely researched, is being looked at here, with special focus on the nature and purpose of European missionary relations with Afro-Jamaican groups, both in and outside of their churches. Also examined is the role of the contributing factors of culture, colour and race and the development of Native religious expressions in relation to traditional missionary and other religious groups.

The study is indebted to the foundational work of Philip Curtin and those he inspired, to explore the role of religion as a key idea in the unfolding drama of conflict and crisis between the two Jamaicas, African and European. This study might thus be seen as an expansion of Curtin's concern for exploring the role of religious ideas in general, to a more focused consideration of three traditional Churches' roles in colonial Jamaica and the outcome of the intercultural process of relations between its leaders and the Native Church groups that emerged. One of the scholars whose work is in this train is Mary

Reckord/Turner. Her important contribution to the understanding of the key role of European missionaries is acknowledged and extended into the post-emancipation period, which Dorothy Ryall reviewed from a very traditionalist viewpoint but is more insightfully analyzed by Robert Stewart. Stewart's concerns are parallel to those of this study and he helpfully continues the dialogue of Afro-cultural emphases in religion with Monica Schuler and Edward Brathwaite. This study amplifies Stewart's very generalized philosophical themes and focuses on specific church groups and individual representatives of those groups, who were involved in the explosive clash of cultural norms, cosmologies and theologies and made significant contributions to the ongoing process of Jamaica's socio-cultural development.