

## Anglican Identity in Today's Caribbean

by

Professor Patrick Bryan

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I have divided this lecture into three parts. The first will present my understanding of the historical identity of the Anglican Church; the second will focus on twentieth century Caribbean realities that have posed challenges to the Anglican Church. The third, brief section will offer some conclusions.

Modern Caribbean history, of which Anglican history is a part, began with the first wave of globalization in 1492. Led by a militant Roman Catholic Spain, the rest of Europe sailed into the Caribbean with ammunition, investment, and Protestantism. In violent and bloody competition and confrontation with each other, Europeans created the Atlantic Economic and Social System, which was characterized by a plantation system that linked the African continent to Europe and the Americas, destroyed or traumatized Amerindian civilization in the Caribbean, and Central America, all in the interest of the extraction of profit in gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, rum to enrich Europe. Christian Churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, formed a part of this grand enterprise. This expansion was accompanied by the exercise of social authority, and lack of it, wealth, and lack of it, based on skin colour. In cultural terms, the coloured work force of Arawaks, Mayans or Africans- those who survived epidemic, war, and export to other areas- were redefined as barbarians or as a sub-human species.

The Roman Catholic Church, through the *patronato real*, partnered the Spanish Crown, in an enterprise in which the ideology of evangelization and conversion often concealed baser materialistic motives. The historical identity of the Anglican Church in the Caribbean never had the militancy of the Spanish Catholic Church, and entered the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, as a part of the nominal cultural baggage of Englishmen in the tropics. The Church had its roots in the idiosyncrasies of sixteenth and seventeenth century English politics, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth century protest against Papal claims to theological and ecclesiastical universality. It had the unique feature of appointing the English King, a secular authority, as head of the Church. Transferred to the Caribbean by English settlers, the Anglican Church became associated with the aroma of sugar and rum, allied with the white slave owners, and initially opposed the extension of the Gospel to the African population : Firstly, to teach the Gospel to slaves would barbarize the gospel. Secondly, since Christians should not enslave other Christians, a Christian education endangered the system of slavery itself. Thirdly, teaching the Gospel would arouse unwanted expectations among slaves that their freedom was warranted by God. It was inevitable, under the socio-economic circumstances of the Caribbean that the Anglican Church should have become the 'white man's church' though the pews were generally empty. The state financed the Church, and through the municipal

councils (the Vestries) the Anglican Church assisted in the secular administration of the colonies.

The identity of the Anglican Church, like general Caribbean cultural identity is a product of conquest and colonization, of slavery, of the system of colonial administration, and to some extent of the continued benign relationship with Canterbury and Lambeth. The identity of the Anglican Church was strictly English, bearing at first no particular adherence to the reformist movements of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. The identity of the Anglicans was also English, not British. Scotland was, in any case, Presbyterian, and Ireland was Catholic. For some time the Anglican Church did not even depart significantly from the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, perhaps not until the formation of King Edward VII's Prayer Book.

The Anglican Church fitted neatly into the British Caribbean area as the official church, and propped up the social authority of whites in a region whose majority populations were enslaved Africans. The theological orthodoxy of the Anglican Church in the Caribbean co-existed with autonomy from the Bishop of London, who in theory had overall jurisdiction of the Caribbean (indeed the colonial) Church. The local Church, adopting the view that African slavery made democratization of the Church impossible, openly defied the wishes of the Bishop of London to bring the Christian Gospel to African slaves. All this, in my view, stamped an identity on the Anglican Church – an identity that made it a stalwart defender of an oppressive status quo- that has been difficult to shake off. We assume that identity is not only how we see ourselves, though that is important, but how others see, and have seen, us.

An aspect of Caribbean religious life that has received much emphasis is the long history of religious toleration, and one of the principles of the Elizabethan epoch was that the Church should not make a "window in men's souls". While there is a lot of truth in this, it must be emphasized that for a long time, this religious toleration was extended exclusively to religious expression within the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It was not extended, not entirely anyway, to African religious traditions, or later, in the nineteenth century, to Islam, and Hinduism. The tendency of the colonial authorities to forbid the open practice of African religions failed, however, to prevent the perpetuation of beliefs in the spirits of the ancestors, ritual dancing and ritual feasting, drumming and in a creolized form of African animism (manifested in particular at funerals); nor did it eliminate the belief that the soul returned to Guinea. Secondly, religious toleration, insofar as it existed, in the Caribbean coexisted with racism, discrimination and ethnic particularism because both toleration and racism were functional in daily life. Both religious toleration and racism were critical components of social control, and social prejudices are not necessarily over-ruled by the concept of Christian brotherhood. Early Anglican identity must be explained as a mirror of the colonial enterprise, in which religion was extended to the Caribbean as a part of the institutional transfers that took place in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

In his discussion of identity Stuart Hall has this to say: "Identity is not only a story, a narrative we tell ourselves about ourselves; it is a set of stories that change with historical circumstances, and identity shifts with the way in which we think, hear and experience them. Far from only coming from the still small point of truth inside us, identities come from outside; they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognition others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition." The two points that stand out in this definition of identity is that identity is changeable, and secondly that identity is a mirror image of ourselves and of the image that others have of us. Identity has to do with how we define ourselves with respect to others- a kind of 'we-group consciousness'.

The defining characteristic of the Anglican clergy was not the theology – because there were few competing denominations except for the few Catholic Irish in Montserrat, the exclusive Jewish mercantile community, and a small and discontinuous group of Quakers. Jamaicans (i.e. Jamaican Englishmen) like Virginians "were not passionate about religious dogma, for the simple reason that they often knew nothing about it." (Boorstin, p. 157) The definition was rather a predominantly social one, related to the maintenance of white social authority. The definition had less to do with theology than with the temporal or secular face of the Church. (Daniel Boorstin, (*The Americans: Vol. 1 The Colonial Experience* Harmondsworth, 1965, p.151). Belice's aroma was logwood and mahogany. The British West Indies (like Virginia) had no Bishops, and ecclesiastical discipline probably depended as much on personal as on institutional commitment. Two-thirds of "all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were members of the Established Church." (Boorstin, p. 154) They did not seek the authorization of the Bishop of London.

The first true religious confrontation between the Anglican Church and the non-European population took place at the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, and probably demonstrates the historical flexibility of the Anglican Church. This confrontation was reactive. It was reactive, firstly, to the fact that competing churches and missionary organizations had opened up a missionary front in the Caribbean, and secondly to a change in orientation by planters who shifted their position to see the gospel not as a threat to slavery but rather a means of control through the dissemination of ideas of obedience, thrift, and industry. Planters, reversing their old stance, now agreed that evangelization could be a source of slave/worker control. Religion could now become a "work discipline"<sup>1</sup>. This in effect meant that evangelization was to be just that. It was not to be accompanied by teaching literacy (though a handful of Anglican missionaries disobeyed) lest the slaves become aware of the subversive teachings of the French and the Haitian Revolutions. Several planters volunteered land and buildings for the teaching of the Gospel, provided that the preachers and teachers were Anglicans. They genuinely believed that Anglican

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, 1977, p. 395.

teaching would be less subversive of the social order than that of the Baptists or Methodists. London gave ecclesiastical sanction to the change of heart of the planters. Meanwhile in Jamaica and Barbados dioceses were established to ensure greater ecclesiastical discipline.

One of the most striking features of this phase of evangelization is that their very success startled the Anglican missionaries, who were soon to discover that the “converted” slaves were doing little more than tacking Christianity on to their traditional beliefs. The consequence was not, however, a complete change of identity, but rather a duality; one in which Anglican missionaries sought conversion, while traditional clergy stuck to the original purpose of the Church- to be a representative of the white planters. Nevertheless, it was an important development, which as I have noted brought the Anglicans, doctrinally, face to face for the first time with a non-European population. The dispatch of missionaries was, also, a response to stimuli coming out of England itself. The religious revival in England in the eighteenth century spurred the Anglican Church to the work of evangelization, so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Anglican Church had a visible missionary presence in the Caribbean. This missionary wing consisted of priests recruited from social groups distinct from traditional clergymen and was committed to the preaching of the Gospel to slaves. The missionaries co-existed uneasily with the traditional creole clergy, which had unquestioned loyalties to the slave-holding planter class. For a time then the Anglican Church had two faces, one looking back to the days of planter supremacy, the other to a period marked by the integration of slaves into the Christian church. The presence of Anglican missionaries, despite their alienation from the traditional clergy, did not succeed entirely in changing the identity of the Church, however. This was partly because of the restrictions placed on their activity. This is hardly surprising since for two hundred years African slaves had indulged their own religious expression. Christianity, a few missionaries in Jamaica claimed, was viewed as additional protection against obeah, for example. The experience of these young enthusiastic missionaries brought to the fore the challenges faced by a missionizing zeal that assumed that the African mind was a *tabula rasa* on which Christianity could simply be stamped. This idea was not confined to the Anglican Church. It was a feature of all European missionary teaching and thinking. It was a feature of the colonial enterprise. The end result, however, was that following Emancipation in 1838 the religious landscape became more complex, partly because of the syncretism between African religious and Christian norms, and later and especially in Guyana and Trinidad the introduction of a large Indian population of Hindus and Muslims.

The Caribbean was to generate its own religious expression. African myalism made a strong input into Christianity to create revivalism. Later, Rastafarianism emerged, combining Judaism with African reclamationism and strong social protest. In addition, Afro-Christianity- revivalism, kumina, pukumina- has been a major force in some Caribbean societies, incorporating aspects of Christianity,

which it subtly merges with African religious traditions.<sup>2</sup> In Central America the Maya also continued to maintain the cult of the saints and to retain as much as possible of the Mayan Cosmos within the general practice of Roman Catholicism that sought to eliminate their gods.<sup>3</sup>

In a 1995 article sociologist Barry Chevannes issued a challenge to “missionary thinking” by the Church: “It (the Church) needs to learn to respect the culture of the region and to lose itself in it. Otherwise it cannot find itself.” Chevannes goes on: “It is my understanding that African-Caribbean peoples place a greater emphasis on the experience of God as a normal part of human life than they place on dogma. African-Caribbean peoples place great value on integrity of body, mind and spirit... It shapes an attitude to life which places a premium on fulfillment and achievement in the here and now, rather than postponement to an ‘after life.’”<sup>4</sup> The missionaries did not “perceive that the concrete situation of individuals conditions their consciousness of the world, and that in turn this consciousness conditions their attitudes and their ways of dealing with reality.”<sup>5</sup> Anglican identity continued after the abolition of slavery to be associated with the status quo and even racial thinking. In this, as we will shortly see, they were accompanied by other non-Anglican missionaries. That the Anglican identity had not substantially changed is illustrated by the appointment of Bishop Reginald Courtenay whose orientation was hardly conducive to the participation of black Jamaicans in their own religious salvation: “[Blacks are] without instruction, without external control, unintellectual, immoral- the baser impulses of human nature are indulged without restraint either from a sense of shame or religious obligation.”<sup>6</sup> Even the Baptists were coming to adopt the racist discourse, which is elaborated on by Catherine Hall in her recent work *Civilizing Subjects*. People, who had opposed slavery, now that slavery was abolished, recognized that they did not, after all, believe in equality. By the 1850s, Hall argues convincingly, missionaries tended to “fall back on a racialised understanding of African character which stressed natural indolence and absence of civilization.”<sup>7</sup> The social thought of the Anglicans was no longer distinct from that of other Christian denominations. The controversy became part of the larger issue of native ministry. It would not be allowed that black congregations be permitted to construct their own theology, since it was assumed that African religious expression was based on ‘superstition’. Black congregations were eager to run their own religious affairs without the supervisory interference of whites. The Baptists could not, would not, allow that. Nor would the Anglicans. The Anglican

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<sup>2</sup> Holger Henke, *The West Indian Americans*, Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 8

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Farris, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Barry Chevannes, “Our Caribbean Reality” in *Caribbean Theology* ed. Howard Gregory, Kingston: Canoe Press, 1995, pp. 66-71.

<sup>5</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p 111

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Robert Stewart, *Religion and Society in Post Emancipation Jamaica* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 245.

Church in Jamaica, under Reginald Courtenay's leadership actually broke with the CMS over the question of establishing an effective, functioning native clergy. Christian missionaries of all denominations despaired at the way in which Africans, slave and free, introduced their own theology into Christian practice. The Anglican Church, like all other mainstream Christian Churches, exhibited considerable prejudice against Afro-Christian religious expression. In St. Vincent, for example, and certainly in Jamaica, Afro-Christian religious practice was seen more as a public nuisance than religion. Shakerism in St. Vincent was described by the Governor of the Windward Islands as "a degrading practice followed at Meetings which are more or less disorderly and in that account a Public Nuisance." Rev. Horace Scotland noted the "gross anthropomorphism... in regard to religious convictions or conjecture among the non-European races of Jamaica". It was difficult, according to Scotland, to "divest our people in the West Indies of the idea of materiality in regard to the Divine attributes."

The identity of most Christian churches became, then, closely associated with what Charles Mills has called the "global racial system"<sup>8</sup>. It was not a specifically Anglican thing.

There is, however, a third period in the changing Anglican identity that comes into being after its disestablishment in most of the Caribbean after 1871. Disestablishment forced the Anglican Church in Jamaica, at least, to be more self-reliant, though it maintained strategic alliances with the SPG and SPCK. More important the Church, especially under Bishop/Archbishop Enos Nuttall, strongly endorsed imperialism and favoured a process of Anglicization (some would argue 'deculturalization') of black congregations. (His view was that the African world view was based upon his religious orientation.) Underlying this commitment was recognition of the importance of creating black Englishmen through an educational system that fostered loyalty to empire, respect and admiration/adulation of the King or Queen, dedication to academic excellence measured by the Cambridge Examinations, and the dispatch of black missionaries to the Pongas mission on the African continent. Archbishop Enos Nuttall insisted that imperialism could "uplift subject peoples." This period of the Anglican Church's history saw great expansion of its mission stations and educational institutions – elementary and secondary schools, and even attempts at tertiary education. It was not only the Anglican Church, however, that saw missionary fields in Africa as important. Other denominations did the same thing. I only wish to emphasize that in a new imperialist phase, the Caribbean Church responded faithfully to metropolitan guidance. The local Church had bowed to metropolitan pressure with respect to ecclesiastical discipline – with the establishment of Dioceses in the Caribbean; it had bowed to disestablishment – except in Barbados- in the 1870s. And now at the end of the nineteenth century, with the creation of the myth of the superiority of Anglo-Americanism, and the

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998, p. 130.

urge to spread Protestant civilization a la Anglo-Saxon practice- the creole Church moved into high gear.

All this, however, needs to be understood within the framework of the broader perception that Nuttall had of his African-Jamaican congregations. The main difference between Nuttall and his predecessors is that he used the concept of culture rather than of race in analyzing the conduct, and the potential of African Jamaican congregations; though his thoughts about culture take him close to neo-Lamarckian tendencies of cultural determinism. Africans were no longer a *tabula rasa*. What was imprinted on the African mind now had to be exorcised. Nuttall was not free of adopting prescriptive methods. But he was not a prisoner of Anglican sectarianism, either, and concluded that each race (culture) had specific contributions to make to the development of *universal Christianity*. This universal Christianity would be a product of the combined input of all the races of mankind. The Indians he viewed as philosophical, abstract and idealistic, the Africans as practical, realistic, and deeply imbued with the concept of God in daily life- a view that comes very close to Chevannes whom I quoted above. As Nuttall observed, "The Church which does not exhibit the brotherhood of Christians will have little prospect of real progress among black people."<sup>9</sup> "Nuttall's "belief that the Christian should demonstrate in daily life the impact of the Lord on personal consciousness found affirmation in Afro-Jamaican religious perception of the power of God in all nature, in all life, in all circumstances.' "What [one race] emphasizes and another neglects will, as time passes and intercommunication increases, tell upon the whole body of Christian thought, defects will be remedied, excrescences removed, and Christianity will tend more and more to become a perfect expression of the whole of the Divine teaching as interpreted by the thoughts, experiences and needs of the whole human race." Emotional religious outbursts Nuttall simply considered as comparable to the behaviour of the more "ignorant sections" of the "advanced races" and in the working class districts of England. The revivalist movement of the 1880s he saw as 'vital religion' But "I see", declares Nuttall, that "we are all so in danger of guarding against the evils of enthusiasm in religion as these develop in this county, that we are in greater danger of losing the power of vital religion."<sup>10</sup> Nuttall, in short, believed that Christendom would be strengthened if the contributions of all races/cultures were accommodated, so long as they did not conflict with *basic doctrine*. It needs to be said, however, that not all Anglican clergymen agreed with Nuttall's views. Nuttall was also deeply concerned about the temporal work of the Church. In the Archbishop's mind temporal and spiritual things were related. People "will respond none the less, but all the more to our efforts for their spiritual welfare, if they know that in a time of stress and strain... we have cared for their temporal things." It is not altogether surprising, therefore,

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<sup>9</sup> Enos Nuttall, "Characteristics of the Negro," in Rev. J. Ellison (ed.) *Church and Empire*, London: Longman, 1907, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> National Library of Jamaica, MS 209a, *Bishop's Letter Book, Vols. VI-VII*, Nuttall to Rev. Panton, April 14, 1883, and Nuttall to Rev. Ramson, 28 August, 1883.

that Nuttall dedicated considerable attention to educational policy, the organization of teachers, the organization of farmers (the J.A.S.), of charities such as the KCOS (Kingston Charity Organization Society), which he founded (or re-founded); established, starting with the Deaconess system, the nursing profession in Jamaica; and encouraged the Jamaican government to consider the development of agro-industries in Jamaica.

Whatever its dedication to imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, or the racist discourse in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the Anglican Church at the end of the nineteenth century was a rather different institution from what it had been one hundred years earlier. The constancy of Anglican identity lies in its theology, not in its socio-religious orientation, which has changed with time and with changing political, social, economic and cultural realities in the Caribbean.

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Caribbean, which was once part of the largest Empire the world had ever known, now lies geopolitically within the colossal shadow of the world's largest economic and military juggernaut ever, which happens to share significant portions of the Caribbean's historical experience. The centre of the Anglican Empire radiated from an easy-going and tolerant Canterbury and Lambeth. Empires tend to determine, whether by the imitativeness arising from admiration, or from fear of sanction, regimes of truth. It is still an open question the extent to which the direction of Episcopalianism in North America will have an impact on the very source of the Episcopal Church and, by extension, the American Empire, to which the Caribbean is now attached by a relatively benign client status. In addition, the Caribbean peoples have been migrating to North America for economic and educational opportunities. Migration has affected, in a profound and often negative way, the Caribbean family structure. This is a challenge for religious bodies. It has been positive in terms of remittances sent back to the Caribbean. Internet and Cable have ensured that the global village is not a question of the future, but is already here as a major force for the internationalization of United States culture.

The religious mosaic has therefore been enriched (or complicated depending on point of view) by a cultural Americanization that has brought to the Caribbean "Southern-based religious organizations such as Baptists, Methodists, and Seventh Day Adventists"<sup>11</sup> North American evangelicalism mirrors not only

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<sup>11</sup> Franklin Knight, "United States Cultural Influences on the English Speaking Caribbean during the Twentieth Century," in Blanca Silvestrini (ed.) *Politics, Society and Culture in the Caribbean*, San Juan, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1983, p. 22.

religion *per se*, but a North American way of life. As Europe, exhausted by World War II, and paralyzed by religious cynicism and/or *ennui*, retreated from the Caribbean politically and economically, United States culture advanced. Along with Corn Flakes, Hamburgers, Coca Cola, Superman, Film and Music, came religious expression, all facilitated by growing communication and contact between the Caribbean and the United States Mainland, through investment, trade and tourism. Indeed, United States evangelism has pushed traditional churches into more evangelical mode, including “televangelism”, in which theology and “prosperity gospel” go together with a choreographed marketing of the Gospel in an atmosphere of theatre. The North Americans seem to have established that the free market culture and evangelism are compatible. There is probably, with respect to the United States, a linear connection between the personal and individual salvation of the self-made man or woman in a land of opportunity and the search for personal salvation in Christ.

The Atlantic System, with which I started this lecture, continued into the twentieth century. In the 1930s the Atlantic system, based on the principle of free trade competition, and on the ability of the market to make impersonal decisions, was dashed by the great Depression. Liberalism went into disarray, and the world experimented with the welfare state. Along with that went the formation of labour unions (to reduce the harsh features of competitive capitalism), and the introduction of state sponsored welfare. This new trend expressed itself at its most extreme by the communist system of the USSR. But there was another response to the social crisis – the more eager establishment in today’s Caribbean of a variety of institutions and organizations which are dedicated to voluntary work, social services, NGO’s which are created by concerned citizens. These organizations range from human rights organizations, organizations designed to assist HIV/AIDS victims, environmental organizations, associations for child welfare and for the aged, organizations for the welfare of women and children, homes for the aged, and for orphaned children. Individual acts of charity abound. The growth of these organizations was sometimes facilitated by Caribbean states. The religious bodies of the Caribbean supported these trends, and starting from the nineteenth century were responsible for the establishment of hospitals (in the Anglican case in Jamaica the Nuttall Hospital), and schools.

## POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

The racial and cultural cosmopolitanism of the Caribbean was subordinated to British metropolitan culture. Political independence provided the stage for the creation of a national identity. In some countries the African heritage and variations of the African religious and cultural heritage have received emphasis. In plural societies such as Guyana and Trinidad “Indian power” coexists with “black power”. In Belice, there is evidence of the assertion of Mayan power. The cultural contradictions had remained largely under control because of the determination to impose a British metropolitan culture. The Caribbean region remains one of Christians of all denominations, of Hindus, Muslims, Jews; of whites, blacks, Mayans, Arawaks, and any mixture of these. The Belizean experience seems to make it, according to Nigel Bolland, a Central American nation. That would place Belize closer to Guatemala and Yucatan than to the Anglophone Caribbean islands. The Caribbean, in truth, is a cultural sea without frontiers.

Before and after political independence, the fragmented nation states of the Caribbean, once unified by membership in the British territorial empire, have sought rather uncertainly to find the philosophical, economic and cultural principles to provide the region as a whole with an identity in the contemporary global order. The slow advance of CARICOM is proof enough of the challenge faced by a multi-cultural region, and one with competing rather than complementary economies, to create a common front. The massive cultural, racial and even religious contradictions within the Caribbean, partly concealed by the British imperial umbrella and the cultural hegemony of Britain, and by dedication to a distant white British King or Queen, have been pitifully exposed by post-war nationalism. “No single cultural section has taken the hegemonic place of the British.” <sup>12</sup>(Bolland, 283) Contentious ethnicity is an aspect of Guyanese and Trinidadian life. Migration into Belice has increased Catholicism, boosted US based evangelism, and Mayan culture is being reasserted. Establishing cultural identity in a region that consists of a variety of races, religions and cultures, has proven elusive since, for the most part, local ethnicity has often linked itself with a larger international ethnicity. With culture and race becoming identical in some places (such as Guyana and Trinidad) national culture itself has become disputable terrain. The contradictions exist not only between Caribbean nation states, but within Caribbean nation states. In Belice, for example, “Cultural revivalism is also stirring in Maya communities, often in response to Creole and Mestizo characterization of “Indian” culture as backward and primitive.” (Bolland, p. 282) but partly in response to a new Mayan ethnicity emerging within nations such as Guatemala and Mexico.

Starting from the late nineteenth century the demographic structure of Anglican congregations changed as membership tilted towards coloured congregations. Despite the fact that the Anglican Church had been disestablished, however, it

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<sup>12</sup> Nigel Bolland, p. 283

was still viewed as the Church that was favoured by colonial administrators. It was perceived as the established church in all but name. The membership of significant portions of the elite in the Anglican Church confirmed that view. "The Anglican Church, though disestablished, was by consent of government always accorded the place of honour at all civic and social functions. It reinforced a caste mentality in the colonials... Anglicanism was a fortress whose strong walls the Catholic Church could not breach, for it was protected by colonial governors and others in high positions in the colony." (Osborne: 379-380)

In addition to the demographic change in congregations there was the extremely important establishment of an indigenous clergy and soon indigenous Bishops, as the Caribbean Dioceses became more closely identified with the congregations they served.

The Anglican Church interfaced more and more closely with the communities it served. This was inevitable since the nature of Anglican congregations changed with the coming of Emancipation. The Anglican Church has responded to changing social, economic and political challenges in the past, and sometimes so gradually, that historians and denominational rivals have been only too inclined to view the Anglican Church as exclusively a supporter of the status quo.

The nationalism that emerged after World War II arguably limited itself to the principle of assuming 'national' control of what had been metropolitan institutions and facilitated the indigenization of clergy and to a limited extent of liturgy. Indigenization was not, at first, intended to mean indigenization of theology. The post independence era has also seen some measure of ecumenism, culminating in Jamaica's case with membership in the JCC (Jamaica Council of Churches). In his history of the Catholic Church in Jamaica, Father Osborne notes the excellent relationship between the Anglican and Catholic Communities. (p.436) including the establishment of the Church of Reconciliation, "intended to be a sacred edifice to be used jointly by both communities... Both communities share the same worship space and engage in joint spiritual, pastoral, social and fundraising activities." (p. 437)

Now globalization has induced a crisis. Changes in the Anglican Church and in other Christian Churches, were traditionally impelled by influences from outside our borders, and it would be most unlikely, if past history is a guide, that post-Christian ethics will not reach us in one way or the other, if only because we consciously and unconsciously accept that imitation of the industrial societies is the way to modernization– of everything, including Religion.

In some Caribbean territories, the incidence of violent crime, and particularly crimes against the person, has increased, sometimes associated with the international drug trade. An unintended consequence of globalization, facilitated by rapid air travel, is the globalization of crime and violence, from which the Caribbean has not been immune. This is now part of the Caribbean reality of

today. Understandably, the state has responded mainly by counter-violence. The long-term solution is values.

Whatever the economic benefits of globalization – some have quoted increases in production – there has been a growing polarization in the control of wealth, greater marginalization and therefore greater discontent. And indeed this is the lesson we learn from the fundamentalists – especially within Islam. They have turned very vigorously and aggressively to social programmes that ease the poverty of their members. With the shrinking of the revenue bases of governments in the Third World there is a growing need for the expansion of philanthropic organizations, and philanthropic activity on the part of the Church. The efforts of West Indian migrants to the United States is instructive. West Indians through the Episcopal Church have embarked on a social programme that involves setting up of savings banks, centres for the homeless, gymnasiums, programmes to fight crime and drugs, indigenous music and instruments within worship. The success of these immigrants rested not so much on dogma but on the positive role the Church can play in the community – not “bawling out” (a sure indication of despair) but methodically stretching their hands out in Christian brotherhood and sisterhood.

While I would not deny the continued importance of spiritual welfare, there is an awful reality of growing poverty and despair.

There is another area of Caribbean culture which goes beyond culture conflict, and which provides the Caribbean with enormous opportunities, and I am referring here to a system of jurisprudence, a tradition of constitutionalism, and political democracy, which though defective in some respects, permit the existence of the rights of citizens in law, and the right to challenge the abuse of citizens. The Caribbean also enjoys a **free** press, freedom of speech within the law, freedom of assembly. These rights should never be taken for granted, because they provide the possibilities for action. There is a network of educational institutions ranging from primary through to tertiary education, which despite limited resources have produced some remarkable students and citizens. The Churches of the Caribbean can pride themselves on having helped to create, nurture and develop many of these institutions.

In the late twentieth century, the Anglican Church, cognizant of the revised definitions of the role of women in society, began the ordination of women. This positive decision was probably made partly in response to the international feminist movement, yet another influence coming from the metropolis, has ordained women. It was again an indication of the flexibility of the Church.

The last forty years have witnessed more than one revolution. Probably the most serious has been the collapse of values into a sea of relativity. Christian and Victorian morality seem to have merged and then collapsed together. This collapse into relativity has been accompanied by search for individual rather than

collective redemption. In turn, individualism by helping to atomize society has generated the new demand for community. This vacuum is being filled by fundamentalism as people seek the psychological, spiritual and material, security which they think they find in fundamentalism, and which they believe they cannot find in traditional religious bodies. A major challenge faced by the Church in the Caribbean today is increased poverty, the decline in the ability of the state to provide welfare. In some countries, the challenge has been taken up by fundamentalists who offer cradle to death facilities to their members, offering schools, clinics, university level institutions (Rapley: 129) Fundamentalism is a feature of both Islam and Hinduism. Within Christianity, the fastest-growing movement today is pentecostalism, with its emphasis on personal salvation and – when coupled with the so-called faith gospel – the material gain that can come to an individual (not a community) through personal redemption. As with other cultural innovations, pentecostalism seems to have immense appeal to young people, and often speaks to their material concerns more effectively than do the traditional churches...[I]n nominally Christian cultures...the collectivist doctrines of traditional churches do not correspond to the material realities of a more atomized society. In the industrial democracies, meanwhile, one sees a similar trend in the growth of so-called New Age religions, as well as an adapted Buddhism, which are united in their quest for a personal development that frequently writes the community – and with it any obligations to its other members, in particular its less fortunate ones – out of the picture. Such religions, one could say, represent the religious face of neoliberalism: no more or less materialistic than the other religions, but far more individualistic.” (p. 67)

*“Rather, the principal distinction between neoliberalism and its predecessors is that the former sees the material gratifications as being wholly individual, rather than collective. Hence it is no accident that as modernism and nationalism went into decline in Christian societies, so too did the traditional churches that laid great stress on collective salvation.*

*“Pentecostalism, especially the Church of God, gained many converts among the African people because of its capacity to accommodate many of their customs—drumming, dancing, singing, [spirit] possession and glossolalia*

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And finally, there is the assertion of homosexual liberties, the demand for acceptance, and the demand for homosexual marriages. Globalization is not reluctant to place pressure on countries or sectors within those societies that are more reserved about endorsing the homosexual life-style. And I have pointed out, before, that our Churches have often been reactive to overseas pressures rather than to the internal dynamics of our own societies. This is an extremely sensitive issue. Clearly, there is the view that the Church must respond to these issues, and the difficulty is the extent to which these issues may constitute a violation of basic doctrine as enunciated in the Gospels and the Epistles.

I argued in the earlier section of this paper that the Anglican Church more than once in history responded flexibly to secular rule and authority. The danger that the Church will then proceed to establish its identity in terms of perceived relevance is a very real one. In this respect, the warning of Kortright Davis is relevant.<sup>13</sup> “The church, in its current attempt to make itself more visible in the world, has become less capable of discerning its own identity. It seeks unwittingly to be given a fresh identity and role by the powers of secular rule and authority.” Davis goes on to note the emphasis on professionalism rather than on “its stewardship of the sacramental life... Some Christian pastors prefer to be regarded as scientific counselors rather than as spiritual partners in human suffering and the struggle with Christian morality.”

There is a need, however, to recognize that the increased secularization of societies, within Christendom, poses a serious challenge to the Anglican Church, a question raised as early as 1939 by T.S. Eliot:

“In its religious organization, we may say that Christendom has remained fixed at the stage of development suitable to a simple agricultural and piscatorial society, and that modern material organization... has produced a world for which Christian social forms are imperfectly adapted.”<sup>14</sup> “To speak of ourselves”, he argues “as a Christian society... We mean only that we have a society in which no one is penalized for the *formal profession* of Christianity; but we conceal from ourselves the unpleasant knowledge of the real values by which we live.” In summary we were Christian societies in name, but not in substance, and in our formal definition of ourselves, rather than in our actions and witness. We were not defining our beliefs, or our conduct in daily life in terms of Christian teaching. Eliot was also couching the problem in the larger framework of values. Eliot sees a contradiction between the demands of modern industrial society and the desired “unified religious-social code of behaviour” required by a Christian organization of society, by which he means a society in which “the natural end of man – virtue and well-being in community – is acknowledged for all, and the supernatural end – beatitude – for those who have the eyes to see it.”<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, I suggest that Anglican identity in today’s Caribbean does not lie only within the theological norms of the Anglican Church –insofar as those are separate from the norms of any other religious body – but also within the wider social, religious, cultural and to some extent political-administrative history of the Caribbean. I suggest, secondly, that the Anglican Church has, in the Caribbean, acted with a flexibility that has enabled it to respond to changes in Caribbean society, without, however, surrendering its relative social and cultural conservatism. This approach has enabled the Church to undertake work of enormous social importance, but has left, without intending it, a perception that

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<sup>13</sup> Kortright Davis, *Serving with Power: Reviving the Spirit of Christian Ministry*, New York: Paulist Press, 1999, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> T.S Eliot, quoted in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* Harmondsworth, p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224-5

the Anglican Church has kept itself aloof from the Caribbean cultural zone within which it functions. I suggest, thirdly, that the latter perception, even if true for the Anglican Church, is also true for other religious bodies, whose actions bear out the assumption that 'missionizing' has also been a 'civilizing' function, whose ultimate purpose is social control, rather than a system of interaction between congregations and Christian leadership in search of **Meaning**- the meaning of life, of God, of community, of family. Fourthly, the Anglican Church, no less than other religious bodies, has been reluctant, and probably will continue to be reluctant, to identify with religious expression in the Caribbean that forms part of a broader culture of resistance. Cultural identity in the Caribbean is often inseparable from mass culture.

Finally, within Christendom, the collapse of values and the retreat into relativism, the atomization of society, the removal of the moral and ethical anchors that held communities together has created a new social crisis, new and deeper polarizations and more despair. Not only is there, therefore, a search for identity but a renewed search for community.