Chapter 12: The African Diaspora in the Caribbean and Europe from Pre-emancipation to the Present Day

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Caribbean history of Christianity can be divided, with overlaps, into four main periods: the rather monolithic form of Spanish Catholicism from 1492, and of the Church of England from 1620; the arrival of the Evangelicals or non-conformist missionaries, Moravians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians from the mid-eighteenth century; consolidation and growth of various European denominations in the region in uneasy tension with the proliferation of independent black Christian groups and African religions in the post-emancipation era from 1833; the contest for political, economic and religious independence after 1870, including the shift from British Imperial intervention and influence to those from North America, and national independence after 1962.

Contemporary studies in anthropology and sociology of religion speak of *'religions on the move'*, or the process of transmigration and transculturation, as it refers to dynamic, reciprocal, transitory and multidimensional creations in shaping a 'poly-contextual world'. This implies that religions have to be regarded as cultural and spiritual phenomena whose 'taken-for granted' essence[1] has resulted from transcultural and transnational processes of mutual

[1] Klaus Hock, University of Rostock, abstract for an essay on the African Christian Diaspora in Europe, January 2002 (unpublished); R. Stephen Warner, and Judith G. Wittner (eds.),

influence, interaction and continuous adaptation to new environments, developments and encounters. The emphasis here is on 'a new model of understanding religion which emphasizes process and practitioners over form and content': Religions, including different forms of Christianity, respond to ever changing circumstances and play a role in constructing and re-constructing cultural and national identities.[2] The continent of Africa, with its traumatic experience of the transatlantic slave trade as an unprecedented mode of forced exile, and the development of accelerated intercontinental African migration in the context of globalisation in the second half of the 20th century, is a case in point. Today, the western world is faced with the arrival of indigenous religions in cross-fertilisation with contextualised Christian interpretations on its own shores. Moreover, it is compelled to acknowledge that these current manifestations are *not new* but have had precursors in a multi-faceted history. Here the Caribbean region between the gulf of Mexico and the Latin American continent, often overlooked in both historical and theological studies which would give credit to its unique experience, is a case in point. For three hundred years these islands were politically, economically and denominationally the 'hunting ground' of the European powers, particularly Spain, England, France, Denmark and the Netherlands. Yet, the oppressed communities on the grassroots of diverse islands, both indigenous and imported from Africa and Asia, in resistance and struggle for survival and human dignity, exercised as much influence on the shaping of people's

Gatherings in Diaspora: religious communities and the new immigration (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1998), 15.

[2] Carole D. Yawney, 'Introduction to Part II', John W. Pulis, *Religion, diaspora, and cultural identity* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999), 185.

experience, expressions and negotiation of identities as the main European established and non-conformist missions who tried to keep them under social control. Hence the complexity of *contemporary* transmigratory processes must be considered in the light of this past, especially of western colonial expansion and the western missionary movement; and vice versa this turbulent history can be seen as facilitating a worldwide transformation of modern Christianity in the South, not only in the Caribbean, but also in Africa and Asia. Cross-cultural transplantation from either side in the transatlantic cycle, and the capability of Christianity to re-interpret faith in diverse contexts, have forged an understanding in which traditions and activities overlay one another, overlap, blend, create new forms on the margins and therefore challenge the validity of all boundaries, exclusivist doctrines and centres.

The concept 'African Diaspora' has become, at least for those once forcibly removed from their homelands, and their descendants, a viable instrument of *empowerment*, based on the biblical imagery of Exodus and the history of endurance, survival and perseverance of human values. Some European academics question the term because of the historical difference between a past enforced exile and present voluntary migration from Africa; and also because the concept can exegetically and linguistically provoke negative connotations of persecution in Jewish history. Yet, we give priority to the *self-expression* of blacks who, inspired by liberational biblical stories, for centuries identified with Israel seeking the 'Promised Land' and developed physical, cultural and spiritual means to resist bondage. For the slaves, in

particular with the development of strong Ethiopian ideas in the Caribbean and North America in the 18th and 19th centuries, the concept *African Diaspora* confirmed *continuity in variations*; it granted them access to alternative interpretations of power and destiny; and can therefore be used as the description of past and present processes. Significantly, African and Caribbean youths on both side of the Atlantic today are increasingly guided by similar concepts and values spelt out in Pan-Africanism and Afrocentricity.

Spanish Catholicism, while enslaving indigenous populations and, after their extinction, the imported Africans, at least did not deny their humanity; they taught them a memorized form of 'main truth' called the D*octrina Christiana*, and made steps to secure their baptism. In contrast, Protestant powers, in a capitalist economy compelled by new technologies of the sugar complex, cheap supply of labour, and rivalries with trading competitors, treated African slaves as mere chattel and property. Although the imported black population constituted a large majority in all the islands, they were not to be instructed in literacy or the Christian faith or to be baptized. The Church of England as the church of the plantocracy was the dominating Christian body in Barbados from 1625, in Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat from 1634, and in Jamaica from 1655. Clergy and parishioners, intrinsically tied to vested interests, had no desire to address the appalling conditions of the slaves or include them in civil society. More, as an episcopal church without bishops in the region until 1824[3], and as part and parcel of English society and restorative politics, they perceived themselves as the 'nation at prayer', or mere voyagers across the

[3] Bishop Christopher Lipscomb in Jamaica, and Bishop William Hart Coleridge in Barbados.

Atlantic to virtually uninhabited lands. Humanitarian efforts such as the work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPC: 1701); appeals by individuals such as Bishop Edmund Gibson (London: 1727) or Sir Christopher Codrington, governor of Barbados (1704: Codrington estates bequeathed to SPC in 1703) which were Anglican attempts of moderate reform or 'progressive amelioration'; and the foundation of Codrington College, a quasi-monastic community based on black labour, proved powerless to change the overall system of subordination and cruelty.[4] A few, among them James Ramsey, a Scot in St. Kitts, in a 'courageous duel' with the planters against slave trade and slavery, strongly influenced the abolitionist movement in the pre-emancipation period.[5] Precursors were the Quakers, especially in Barbados (George Fox visiting there in 1671) who acted on a liberational biblical interpretation of human life and thus helped to prepare the ground for the non-conformist missionaries.[6] The striking feature of the period, however, was 'not the failure of the established church to launch a mission for the slaves, but its failure to make any impact on the lives of the free and white members of colonial society.'[7]

Against this background of an ecclesiastical life based on the dominance of European thought, rituals and values and the de-culturisation and de-

[4] Arthur C. Dayfoot, *The shaping of the West Indian Church 1492-1962* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), 100, 107-8.

[5] Dayfoot, *The shaping of the West Indian Church*, 150-1.

[6] Dale Bisnauth, *History of religions in the Caribbean* (Kingston, Jamaica: Kingston Publishers, 1996, 3rd reprint), 61.

[7] Keith Hunter, 'Protestantism and Slavery in the British Caribbean', Armando Lampe (ed.), *Christianity in the Caribbean* (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), 97.

spiritualisation of human beings, there arrived another mission motivated by a personal approach and care for the slaves: The Moravians, ushered in by a meeting between the German Pietist Count Zinzendorf from Herrnhut, and the slave Anthony Ulrich in Copenhagen, in St. Thomas in 1732, and Jamaica in 1754; the African American Baptists, George Liele from Georgia and Moses Baker from the Bahamas in Jamaica in 1783; the Methodists, led by John Baxter and Thomas Coke from London in Barbados and Jamaica in 1787 and 1789 respectively; the Congregationalists from London in Guyana in 1807; and the Presbyterians in Jamaica in 1827. *Coastland and Islands*[8] mentions five strongholds for this Evangelical mission: 1. Places entered by planter invitation, made use of by the Moravians. 2. The significance of free converts, particularly urban freed slaves, starting points for the Methodists. 3. The significance of slave migration, enforced and voluntary, within the Caribbean. 4. The role played by the army, such as in Liele's escape from America to Jamaica. 5. Mission stations opened - besides the *Unitas Fratrum* from 1732 - by various London-based missionary societies inaugurated to shape Christian expansion from 1790: The Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society (1789); Baptist Missionary Society (BMS: 1792); London Missionary Society (L.M.S., mainly Congregationalists: 1795); Scottish Missionary Society (1796); and later the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).[9]

[8] Francis J. Osborne, and G. Johnston, *Coastlands and Islands* (Kingston, Jamaica: United Theological College of the West Indies, 1972), 46.

[9] Robert J. Stewart, *Religion and society in post-emancipation Jamaica* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 6-11.

From a Eurocentric perspective, the Caribbean pre-emancipation movement is interpreted as part of those fundamental changes in human politics, economics and philosophy that emerged in the outgoing 18th century: 'It was only in the 1780s, at the earliest, that colonial slaves began to find a place within the rights-of-man [sic!] philosophy – at least a half-century lag behind similar demands for Europeans.'[10] The slow fall of the plantation complex, a drawn-out process throughout the 19th into the 20th century; economic studies which emphasized the long-term non-profitability of slavery; the democratic revolutions in America (War of Independence: 1776-83) and France (1789) sweeping away old regimes; the Haitian revolution (Toussaint L'Ouverture: 1791) impacting on the West Indies; the Napoleonic wars triggering revolts in the Spanish Caribbean colonies; the Enlightenment emphasizing individual human rights - all these developments strengthened the abolitionists active in the British and Foreign Antislavery Society or Société des Amis des Noirs. Eventually, inhuman coercion came to be morally condemned and legally abandoned. However, as Curtin points out, there was this convenient chronological distinction between two separate Acts, abolishing the slave trade (1807), and abolishing slavery (Britain: 1833; France: 1848; Cuba and Brazil: 1880).[11] When emancipation came, it brought 'freedom' without equality, 'tolerance' without cultural recognition, religious pluralism without basic human respect. The predominance of European socio-political interests remained guaranteed through the industrial revolution, new developments of

[10] Paul Curtin, *The rise and fall of the plantation complex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 150.

[11] Curtin, *The rise and fall*, 174.

technology, food production and international trade. They ensured that the former racist patterns lingered on into the 19th and 20th centuries. 'The antislavery campaign …went hand in hand with *laissez-faire* capitalism.[12]

From the perspective of the African Diaspora, slaves and emancipated slaves, the story must be told differently. From the onset, there was passive and active resistance often fuelled by religion. Harsh suppression did not produce lasting submission nor quench the spirit of freedom and the hope for liberation. Of the more than fifty major slave revolts in three hundred years, besides the Maroon wars, mention be made here of later major uprisings: Rebellions in Jamaica (Tacky: 1760), Berbice and Suriname (1763 and 1772), Belice (1773); and - with emancipation approaching - in Barbados (1804 and 1816), Trinidad (1819 and 1825), Demerara: 1823), and the 'Jamaica Baptist War' (Sam Sharpe: 1831). Without exception they ended in arrests, reprisals and executions. In the midst of inhuman treatment, the Africans held on to their religious world views: 'Uprooted from their homeland, they maintained some of their identity and so filled the vacuum to which the church only paid attention in an inadequate way.'[13]

Imagine the white non-conformist missionaries in opposition to older ecclesiastical traditions would have, if not allied, at least sympathized with non-violent black resistance! Some few indeed did, led by an emphasis on

[12] David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (London; Oxford University Press, 1972), 51.

[13] Johannes Meier, 'The Beginnings of the Catholic Church in the Caribbean', Lampe (ed.), *Christianity in the Caribbean*, 49.

experience, evangelistic zeal, equalitarian beliefs, and practical morality.[14] But primarily, the Evangelical mission was motivated by insider-oriented themes such as religious voluntarism, personal evangelism, and individual freedom. In an attempt to prevent cruelty and eradiate the evils of 'sin', corruption, 'heathenism' and immorality, they concentrated on the personal conversion of the slaves. In an utterly senseless and destructive world, they preached a gospel of salvation sympathetic and meaningful to the conditions and demands of plantation life; they therefore helped the oppressed to arrive at personal integrity and moral conduct. As they did not need 'organized' religion, they turned the converted into effective evangelists for others and spread rapidly. Unwittingly, though cloaked in European cultural values, they introduced an intercultural interface, if not yet synthesis, between biblical and African-creole elements. In this way, they posed a serious threat to the establishment and the planters' interests which would later force them to take an unambiguous stand in the antislavery campaign. For the time being, their understanding of Christianity referred to one's personal relationship to God, and not at all to civil and political affairs. It called people to repentance from 'sin' to be liberated spiritually, not politically: Absolute neutrality, therefore, in the slavery issue was a matter of necessity in mission policy. So the white missionaries tried to turn Africans into even more useful servants, and did not challenge the socio-political system nor called the slaves to rebellion. When in the ensuing years they themselves became engulfed in conflicts and persecution, they still regarded it as irresponsible to encourage violence and advocated only 'amelioration' of the system brought on by constitutional

[14] Dayfoot, *The shaping of the West Indian Church*, 113.

reforms. However, this 'missionary gradualism' on the slavery and injustice issues, the missionaries' ambiguity and ineptitude to engage in earnest cross-cultural encounters, could not satisfy black Christians. The missionaries 'accepted the blacks abstractly as equal, while rejecting the cultural expressions which defined black live.'[15]

As an outstanding example, we concentrate on the mission, strategies and theology of the Black Baptists who entered Jamaica in 1783 (Trinidad: 1812).[16] They recruited the rural and urban masses, became the most critical opponents of the authorities' and planters' attitude and practice towards the slaves, influenced the pre-emancipation as well as post-emancipation periods throughout the 19th century, and introduced a black theology of liberation and interculturation. A key-figure is George Liele (or Lile), often called the 'Negro prophet of deliverance'. He was born a slave in Virginia, but in 1773 set free by his master to exercise his spiritual gifts, ordained and licensed in 1775 to preach and sing salvation to the oppressed. He was, besides the Baptists William Byrd, Andrew Bryan, David George (later in Sierra Leone) and the Methodists Absalom Jones and Richard Allen (founder of the 'Free African Society' in Philadelphia in 1894, organised as the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816), one of the first African preachers and pioneers of independent Baptist churches in North America. His church in Silver Bluff in South Carolina and the Yamacraw Baptist Church in Georgia, were the first in

[15] Stewart, 'Religion in the Anglophone Caribbean', in Pulis, *Religion, diaspora, and cultural identity*, 22.

[16] See among others, Horace O. Russell, *Foundations and anticipations: The Jamaica Baptist story 1783- 1892* (Columbus, GA: Brentwood Christian Press, 1993).

a string of well organized congregations under black leadership along the Savannah River which, distinct from mission stations, schools, or mere permission to attend camp-meetings, became the social and cultural home of thousands of freed slaves after the Civil War. When his master's children tried to re-enslave him, he escaped with 400 white families and 5000 freed blacks and slaves after Independence on an army ship to Jamaica, where he was moved by the plight of his sisters and brothers. While in service to the governor, he obtained the license to preach and founded the first 'Ethiopian Baptist Church' at Kingston Race Course in 1784. In a sermon on Romans 10:1, he compared the fate of the slaves with Israel's bondage in Egypt who needed to be set free, and referred to the God of the Bible as the God of the *African cosmos* who would turn oppression and suffering into victory – a first synthesis of African traditions and historical experience with the biblical message. Thirty years before the arrival of the British Baptists, he laid together with other American ex-slaves, George Gibbs, Moses Baker and Thomas Nicholas Swigle, the foundation for overt African expressions of the Christian faith and the 'freedom of the African soul'. In the '*Covenant of the Anabaptist Church, Begun in America, Dec 1777, and in Jamaica, Dec 1783'* he placed the Baptist work formally under the protection of 'King, Country and Law' and allowed only those into membership of the church who obtained permission from their masters. Swigle soon started a second congregation less dependent on the plantocracy which is understood as initiating the process of further Africanisation. Both Liele and Baker called for support from the B.M.S. in London, motivated by lack of finance, the need to counteract

mounting persecution and tightened legal restrictions (from 1807; Jamaica slave code against licensing non-conformist preachers: 1816), and to channel the mission into more orderly Baptist patterns. The Baptist missionary John Rowe arrived in 1814, followed by Thomas Burchell, James Phillippo, Thomas Knibb, and his brother William in 1825 – rendering assistance not oversight. So Liele, who died in 1828, was intentionally and unintentionally instrumental for three essential developments in the Caribbean: 1. The mainly amiable bond between Black Baptists and British Baptists, among whom particularly William Knibb would became the most outspoken proponent of the abolitionist movement in the British Parliament 1833 - a testimony to the conversion of whites to the black freedom cause, and the impact of African liberation theology on white missionaries. 2. The birth of the Native Baptist movement which facilitated a symbiosis of African indigenous and Christian traditions, culminating in the Jamaica Revival of 1860-61, and leading to a vast proliferation of various African Caribbean religions. 3. Preparation of a fertile ground for the political struggle, inspired by the spirit of Baptist prayer meetings, in the Montego Bay Rebellion (Sam Sharpe: 1831), the campaigns for social reform and justice (after 1838), and the Morant Bay Rebellion (William Gordon, Paul Bogle: 1865) which contributed significantly to the abolition of slavery, the change of island government to Crown colony in 1870, and later independence.

As Liele and his co-workers were protestant missionaries without formal education whose influence spread far beyond the boundaries of their initial

preaching, we note the close connection between the Caribbean and African America. Far from being isolated, the continuing influx of black itinerant preachers from the States, the Bahamas, Santo Domingo and the new Republic of Haiti after emancipation, reinforced religious and cultural networks and created ever new patterns of black Christian protest in various national contexts, long before the emergence of Pan-Africanism.

By 1815, the British government had 'defined two areas of interest requiring cooperation: religious instruction for the slaves and religious toleration.'[17] Against heightened fear and intolerance of the upper classes, the missions intensified their exchange with liberal England and promoted charity and a gradual improvement of the system. In 1824, London established an episcopate in the region, one seat in Barbados, covering the Leeward and Windward Islands, and the other in Jamaica with responsibility for the Bahamas and Honduras. After long delays, it was a serious attempt to free the Church of England from dependence on the plantocracy, yet with little success. Neither the SPG nor the young Church Missionary Society could help to promote a 'native church' and replace the expatriate clergy with one trained on the islands.

The Methodists, in pursuit of 'Christian perfection' and Wesley's stance against slavery as a human 'villainy', recruited initially most converts from among the 'free people of colour' in towns, but also reached white settlers and

[17] Mary Turner, *Slaves and missionaries: The disintegration of Jamaican slave society 1787-1834* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 19.

turned into a church for the mixed-race middle class. By 1824, they were based in St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Barbados, Dominica, Nevis, Tortola, Jamaica, the Bahamas, Anguilla, Haiti, Guyana and Trinidad.[18] Concerned about the violent hostility of the white upper classes, they chose political passivity and pious moderation. Coke wrote: 'However just my sentiments may be concerning slavery, it was ill-judged of me to deliver them from the pulpit.'[19] However, this policy did not shield the Wesleyans from being reputed as an extremely disruptive force by the Jamaican legislature.

Different must be said of the Baptists, both black and white. William Knibb typified 'the approach to slavery…by the British philanthropists William Wilberforce and Thomas Fowell Buxton' who, in 1823, declared in the Commons that 'slavery was repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian religion', and therefore had to be gradually abolished throughout the British dominions.[20] Emancipation would not have come without this shift in the balance of power in England. But more significant in the process were the black Baptists; increasingly, white Baptists were at variance with their radical position. Liele's biblical vision of a new society had fostered a social and political consciousness, but its practical application to the continued oppressive reality, progressive aspirations for freedom and socio-political recognition after the abolition of the slave trade, and the merger of Christian values with African religious practices, led to

[18] Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, 113-4.

[19] Dayfoot, *The shaping of the West Indian Church*, 149.

[20] Noel L. Erskine in Winston A. Lawson, *Religion and Race: African and European roots in conflict – a Jamaican Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), XII.

their departure from the official position of the B.M.S. When British missionaries came to be implicated in the Montego Bay rebellion, Knibb was asked in the Commons whether he saw a distinction between the 'freedom of the soul' and the 'freedom of the body'; he first agreed, but then insisted to act on the 'whole counsel of God'.[21] Many black Baptists began to hold a dual membership - respectable Christians in the missions, and free native Baptists in the backyards of the island.

The 'Baptist War' broke out after a drought, floods, hunger and epidemics at Montego Bay in Jamaica during the Christmas season 1831. Initially, it was organised as a non-violent slave strike by Sam Sharpe, deacon in the Baptist church and charismatic leader. By interpreting the quest for religious freedom as identical with social freedom, it constituted a new form of both religious and political leadership, an 'organised resistance' to an 'organised repression'.[22] Planned without prior knowledge of the missionaries (but claiming them as allies), it used the network of multiple Baptist congregations who, inspired by the Bible and fervent prayer, took affairs into their own hands. After all, the Native Baptists had forty uninterrupted years to develop gatherings outside mission control to come into their own. The insurrection ended in bloodshed, intimidation, martial law, and ruthless retaliation against the rebels, but also against the white Evangelicals accused of collaboration. Sharpe was publicly hanged in May 1832. Missionaries were unsuccessfully charged with treason;

[21] Russell, 'Understandings and interpretations of scripture in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Jamaica', in Hemchand Gossai and Nathanial S. Murrell, *Religion, culture and tradition in the Caribbean* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 104.

[22] Turner, *Slaves and missionaries*, 163.

some left the island. Eventually, European Christians were compelled to take an unambiguous stand. Never again they would work on concessions to slavery and undisputed rights to property. The 'Colonial Church Union', the planters' violent response, short-lived as it was, tried to rid the island of the Baptists' presence and incited the mob against non-conformist chapels;[23] however, in the changing social climate, it was outlawed by the authorities. In August 1833, the British Parliament passed the Emancipation Act. The aims and strategies of the revolt 'pushed Jamaica into the revolutionary mainstream of the time, the struggle for individual liberty sanctioned by law. They made the first step on the long, devious road to universal suffrage and national independence.'[24]

The resistance of Christian black and free coloured converts before emancipation warranted its continuance into the 19th and 20th centuries. August 1, 1834 was without exception celebrated as the 'Day of Jubilee' (Lev. 25).[25] By then half of the Jamaican ex-slave population pronounced themselves Methodists, Baptists, Moravians or Presbyterians. They understood Christianity as protecting basic liberty and equality. The missionary churches seemed to offer them self-respect, 'respectability based on British non-conformist models'[26], much-needed education, assistance in accessing land, and social upward-mobility. Since previous conflicts between

[23] See Shirley C. Gordon, *God Almighty, make me free: Christianity in pre-emancipation Jamaica* (Burton Sankeralli: Trinidad and Tobago CCC, 1994), 101-2.

[24] Turner, *Slaves and missionaries*, 164.

[25] Russell, 'Understandings and interpretations of scripture in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Jamaica', 104.

[26] Gordon, *God Almighty, make me free*, 119.

the denominations had given way to some kind of mutual acquiescence and cooperation, even Anglicans were now accepted as the church able to bestow propriety and political influence on the black and mixed-race middle class. They all expanded. However, when the euphoria had passed, the majority discovered that socio-politically and economically they were not set free; and the assumed intercultural partnership between black and white missions was not to take place. Hope began to fade and gave way to disillusionment. After the period of 'apprenticeship' (1834-1838), perceived by Africans as half-slavery, the plantation owners carried on with their usual techniques in order to keep control of the labour force. The industrial revolution[27] had brought immense wealth to Europe which in turn meant new demand for tropical products. So the European influence in the Caribbean rather increased throughout the 19th century. The import of indentured labour from the Indian subcontinent because of labour shortage, voluntary migration within and between regions including Panama, Cuba and North America, and schemes developed by the British and French for continued (partly coerced) migration from West Africa, all facilitated further exploitation, but also aided more adaptability among shifting populations, granting them access to added, even revolutionary, ideas.

Between 1840 and 1870, the European missions embarked on wide-spread humanitarian and educational programmes, established schools (helped by Parliamentary and other educational grants) and founded theological training colleges (Anglicans: Codrington 1830; Baptists: Calabar 1843). They also

[27] For the following: Curtin, *The rise and fall*, 174-8.

began work in Africa. However, except the Baptists, they dismally failed to develop an indigenous leadership. When, in 1853, the black priest Robert Gordon applied to enter the Anglican ministry in his homeland Jamaica, the bishop urged him to work in Africa.[28] By and large western churches were convinced that authority and governance had to be white; they had to introduce colonial citizens to British culture; and only vigilant supervision, strict moral discipline, and preaching an 'undefiled' Christian gospel would free blacks from 'pagan' rituals and 'superstitions' and thus avert church life and theology from becoming syncretistic. They certainly were eager to 'ameliorate' the conditions of the underclass faced with impoverishment, natural disasters and diseases, but they ignored other forces and remedies at work. Racism, based on colour of skin, cultural superiority and social status, was even to intensify in the second half of the century.

Only the Baptists, particularly native Baptists, followed a different direction. 'Native Baptist', according to Turner, is the generic term for a proliferation of groups in which blacks 'developed religious forms, more or less Christian in content, that reflected their needs more closely than the orthodox churches, black or white'.[29] Led by congregational, non-hierarchical principles, and gathered in hundreds of 'free villages', they developed a local leadership of African 'mammies' and 'daddies', applied a 'class-ticket and leader' system which augmented independent membership, and expressed themselves in often unorthodox styles. Recent studies from 1990 such as by Stewart,

[28] Stewart, *Religion and society*, 96-105.

[29] Turner, *Slaves and missionaries*, 58.

Gordon, Segal, Lawson, Austin-Broos and others[30] have thrown light on this lasting legacy surviving to the present. Stewart speaks of Caribbean Baptist activists and 'Baptist politics' with three objectives: to develop a theology of mission steeped in human affairs; help achieve electoral franchise; and strengthen economic independence.[31] Lawson explores it further: The story, he affirms, 'is one historic example of the unpredictable nature of the struggle between the dynamic social forces of race, religion and politics in any society'[32], be it in the colonies, South Africa, the States or modern Europe. This concurs with the debate, from the mid-20th century, about African retentions in the diaspora anywhere, or what Aleyne has called an 'African continuum in variations'[33]. It confirms two conflicting cosmologies, two cultures, two theologies, one European and one African, in mutual encounter or intercultural interplay which, ever refreshed by ongoing contacts with Africa, introduced a process of cross-fertilisation, allowed for a creative synthesis of different traditions, and made syncretisation in various degrees inevitable.[34] Curtin, for the years 1830-1865, coined the term 'two Jamaicas': Native Baptists had become 'another religion competing with the Christianity of the European missionaries.'[35]

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[30] See notes 9, 20, 23, 44, and 49.

[31] Stewart, *Religion and society*, 16-21; with reference to the English missionary James M. Phillippo.

[32] Lawson, *Religion and Race*, 2.

[33] Aleyne, Mervyn, *Roots of Jamaican culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1988); cp. The American anthropologists Zora Neale Hurston and Melville J. Herkovits.

[34] Erskine in Lawson, *Religion and Race*, x-xi.

[35] Paul Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: the role of ideas in a tropical colony, 1830-1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 34.

Two examples may suffice. One is the existence of *Myal*, a Jamaican version of organized African worship, the first documented African-creole religion.[36] It provided protection against *Obeah*, witchcraft or evil spirits; safeguarded African 'rites of passage', and functioned as a source for medical and healing practices. The other one is the Native Baptist interpretation of *sin* as *sorcery*, 'categorized as the destructive, alienating, and self-centred pre-occupation of anti-social people'[37]. With a sense for reality, black Christians understood sin as interrupting the community, including slavery, injustice, greed, immorality, and double standards manifest in the prevailing system. People would be liberated by conversion, cleansed through baptism, and redeemed by salvation in Christ.

Here we draw a brief comparison between Native Baptist theology and the 'Black roots' of Pentecostalism as well as traits in the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) in the early years of the 20th century. Also Pentecostals and AICs emerged among the poor and migrants seeking a better life. Common elements, akin to oral cultures, can be described thus: - a spirituality of belonging and kinship in hostile and violent societies; - worship as a 'feel-good' event and celebration of life, involving each and everyone as participants; - the incorporation of music, dance, dreams and visions and other ecstatic phenomena[38] into communal life; - a personal commitment to moral standards and 'holiness'; - a healing ministry which responds to the physical

[36] Lawson, *Religion and Race*, 25; cp. Stewart, Religion and society, 196.

[37] Lawson, *Religion and Race*, 28.

[38] Tuner, *Slaves and missionaries*, 57, even refers to 'sects where the spirit spoke in tongues.

as well as social needs of people; - evangelism understood as embracing the whole person, not dichotomizing between the material and spiritual, and empowering to break down barriers of race, gender, class and culture; - doing theology at the grassroots, full of vibrancy and meaning to daily life; - developing networks of mutual support between leaders, congregations and prayer meetings; - and a strong eschatological expectation of freedom and justice in the Kingdom of God, carrying an inherent political potential. Even the fact that black leaders there and then were branded as 'self-styled'[39], found a parallel in the biased reception of Pentecostal pastors by Europe's church and secular authorities hundred years later. From a western point of view they still had no legitimacy.

In 1842 the Jamaican Baptist Association became independent from the B.M.S., opened Calabar College as a training centre for indigenous ministers, and founded the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society. Following the trends of time, they started mission in Africa. However, black membership, discontented with a missionary stance operating on double standards, decreased. After Knibb's death in 1845, Edward B. Underhill, secretary of the B.M.S., can be regarded 'the last progressive English Baptist voice on Jamaican problems'[40]. The early forties saw a revival of Myalism as resistance to further western Christianization. So the erupting Great Revival of 1860-61 came as a surprise. It introduced a process that can be described as a first symbiosis between Christian and African elements. It began among the

[39] Stewart, *Religion and society*, 128.

[40] Stewart, *Religion and society*, 24.

Moravians, spread to Methodists and Baptists, and was inspired by African-creole enthusiasts as much as by white participants. Wilmore calls it the force of folk religion which asserted itself 'to keep body and soul together against every destructive element of the universe – in other words the power to be, the power to survive'[41]. Influenced by the Great Awakenings in America and revivals in Britain, its dramatic impact sprang from the emotional and physical commitment of African Christians. Conversions to the Christian faith, renunciation of sin, prayer, healing and bodily manifestations were constitutive. Hence Evangelicals, who first welcomed the revival, began to fear the 'violent spirit' that possessed the worshippers, in contrast to a spirit of 'inner peace and joy'. Charles F. Parham's repudiation of 'crude negroisms' in the Azusa Street Revival under William J. Seymour's leadership in Los Angeles in 1906 springs to mind. Similarly, blacks and whites there and then perceived events differently. J. S. Tinney for Azusa postulates a 'conflict paradigm', inevitable in the interplay between dominant and subordinate cultures and the survival motifs of the latter.[42] In this respect, too little oral research has yet been conducted on the Jamaica Revival; written reports stem from white-only sources.[43] However, the revival seems to fall in line with similar 'outpourings of the Spirit' with *signs and miracles* (Acts 2:11) in

[41] Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black religion and Black radicalism*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983, 2nd ed), 226.

[42] Roswith Gerloff, *A plea for British Black theologies: the Black church movement in Britain in its transatlantic cultural and theological interaction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), vol. 1, 99-100.

[43] Diane Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis: religion and the politics of moral orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 57, quotes W. J. Gardner 1873: 'The sword of the Spirit has penetrated a multitude of souls, convinced them of sin, and forced them to cryfor mercy.'

Africa, Asia and Latin America *before* Azusa Street, only less publicised.[44] In the Caribbean, it sparked off a Christian renewal, led to a superabundance of Bibles[45], and became the watershed for a great proliferation of African religions in various degrees of syncretisation. It marked the region as deeply religious and established emancipatory ideas and biblical imagery as guiding principles in political and social developments: 'a hermeneutic of Scripture incarnate in Caribbean history.'[46]

This was brought out in the Morant Bay Rebellion 1865, a milestone on the road to change, independence and black nationalism. It also illustrates the alienation between native and orthodox Baptists. The key-protesters integrated spiritual and cultural values as tools for social protest and political liberation. George William Gordon, a coloured landowner in St. Thomas, member of an independent Baptist congregation, entered politics and attacked the Governor Edward J. Eyre over human rights, social justice and land distribution. He also took counsel with Phillippo and felt encouraged by the 'Underhill meetings', a spin-off from the B.M.S. secretary's letter to the Secretary of State in London (copied to the governor) on the desperate situation of the population.[47] The 'Queen's Advice', a colonial response to the petition from 'poor people' in St. Ann to be read out in schools and churches[48], had urged people just to work

[44] See e.g. Tirunelveli 1860-65 ,Travancore 1873-81, and the *Mukti Mission* 1905-07 in India; or the early beginnings of AICs around the turn from the 19th to the 20th centuries.

[45] Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis*, 59.

[46] Leslie R. James, 'Text and rhetoric of change: Bible and decolonization in Post-World War II Caribbean Political Discourse, in Gossai and Murrell, *Religion, culture and tradition*, 147.

[47] Stewart, *Religion and society*, 162-66.

[48] Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis*, 60.

harder and by their 'own industry and prudence' change their circumstances. Paul Bogle, a free African and Baptist deacon, supported Gordon, and in October 1865 led a march to the Morant Bay Court House in protest against the central government. Violence erupted between the demonstrators and officials. Troops and warships were brought in; several hundred blacks, including children and pregnant women, died; the unrest was brutally quelled. Both Gordon and Bogle were arrested, tried by martial law and executed. In modern Jamaica they are honoured, together with Nanny of the Maroons, Sam Sharpe, Marcus Garvey, Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante, as national heroes. Governor Eyre was re-called, yet the incident stirred up a hot debate about the correctness of his actions. The 'Jamaica question', in fear of another 'Indian mutiny' or return to 'barbarism', influenced the pseudo-scientific racial theories that so horribly should influence the 20th century. Segal interprets the controversy between the Jamaica Committee (with John Stuart Mill, Thomas Huxley and Darwin) and the Eyre Defence Committee (with 'rampant racists' as Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson as supporters) in England: 'By the time that slavery was outlawed, this sort of racism had become the conventional wisdom which provided the rationalization for the dynamic of an expanding empire.'[49] Jamaica became Crown Colony like most British Caribbean territories.

By the outgoing 19th century, the surviving elements of African culture had become embodied in a great variety of African-creole religions, some opposed to Christianity, staying relatively intact outside the influence of western

[49] Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 270.

missions; others blending African worldviews with Christian interpretations, potent to find ways of adapting to new life conditions in new social contexts: Convince, Kumina and Pocomania in Jamaica, Shango and Rada in Trinidad, Voodoo in Haiti, Santeria in Cuba, or the Jordanites in Guyana. Genuinely Christian creations such as the Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad, Grenada and St. Vincent, or the Revivalists in Jamaica would have an impact on Caribbean migration to Europe.

From 1870, with the disestablishment of the Church of England, the American ascendancy on the region, and the arrival of a new missionary wave of American evangelism, Caribbean societies changed. Less than one third of the population were Anglicans, often in dual membership. Only in Barbados, the Church of England remained the undisputed authority, 'little England', manifest in later migration patterns. The Anglican Province of the West Indies under Archbishop Enos Nuttall, established in 1893, never stemmed the tide of further proliferation of Christian and non-Christian groups, also in view of the presence of Hinduism and Islam in the Southern regions. It remained 'the white man's church', defined by race and class, and – in tune with Methodists and Moravians – did not support indigenous leadership. European Christian denominations undoubtedly contributed to continued social and racial stratification. For the period between the late 19th century and independence in 1962, we observe four streams in the struggle for self-determination: political campaigns; the religious quest for freedom; the liberational philosophy of Garveyism and Pan-Africanism; and the Pentecostal explosion.

Socio-economically, World War I disrupted the European beet sugar production, so there was a slight recovery of the cane sugar economy after 1919. However, economic hardships between the two world wars made workers vulnerable, caused popular unrest, and threw up trade unions and national labour movements such as organised by Manley and Bustamante in Jamaica and Eric Williams in Trinidad. Sustained development became discussed merely in terms of international relationships and dependency on the 'advanced' 'First World' economies: 'The end of slavery had been followed by the constraints of colonial rule, and the end of colonial rule had been followed by a democracy of floating disillusionment.'[50]

The religious quest for freedom can be observed in the emerging Revivalism which carried redemptionism unto the streets and backyards of Jamaica. 'Zion Revival', desiring to heal self and community, became a blending of central Christian elements with specific African-creole notions. Their healing ministries, 'though abhorrent to the missionaries', drew on biblical practice.[51] My research on the early Pentecostal Apostolic movement in St. Ann, Jamaica discovered inherent revivalist elements such as gifts of healing, dreams and visions, spirit possession, secret languages or 'unknown tongues', songs and dance, prophecy, and baptism by immersion in the sea.[52] In the 1970s, there were congregations with Revivalist features in England, probably now absorbed by Pentecostalism. Differently, the Spiritual Baptists, a synthesis

[50] Segal, *The Black Diaspora*, 185.

[51] Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis*, 62, 79.

[52] Gerloff, *A plea*, 154-5 (50), drawing on Martha W. Beckwith's work in 1929.

between Christianity and Yoruba religion in competition with the Pentecostals, still have large congregations in London. All these movements, including the messianic actions of Alexander Bedward, the father of Revivalism, abandoned organized religion and gave fresh, even unusual, articulations to biblical practice, autonomy 'in the Spirit', and faith in human salvation.

By the turn of the century, new evangelical missions arrived, the Salvation Army, Sabbatarians, and Holiness churches. The Salvation Army in Jamaica under Raglan Phillips turned the 'Light Brigade', and after his death into the International City Mission, a renowned Jamaican Pentecostal church under two women bishops with outposts in North America, the Bahamas, and later Britain.[53] The Seventh-day Adventists, a white American denomination, established in the Caribbean from 1903, transmuted over the years into a genuinely 'Third World' movement, based on the prophetess Ellen G. White's antiracist position, health and educational activities and eschatological teachings, with far-reaching consequences for British Adventism from the 1950s: Black Adventists in Britain foster a theology of empowerment, community- and lay-orientation, and an understanding of evangelism as including social care. The Holiness movements, especially the Wesleyan Holiness church and Pilgrims in Barbados, also came to Britain; theirs, too, was an anti-slavery tradition of working with the poor, non-hierarchical structures and emancipation of women.

[53] Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis*, 87-91.

A theologically motivated philosophy of political liberation developed in Garveyism. Here we observe a similar development as in South Africa where we distinguish between 'Spiritual churches' (Zionists) and Ethiopian churches among the AICs. Marcus Garvey, born in Jamaica in 1887, reared in the Wesleyan Methodist tradition but deeply influenced by Roman Catholicism, was widely travelled. After work in Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador, he came to London in 1912 and became introduced to Pan-Africanism. In 1914, he returned to Jamaica and organised the Universal Negro Improvement Association with the aim to unite all Africans in the Diaspora 'into one great body' of self-government. His black nationalism had a precursor in the 'black theology of missionary emigrationism and racial destiny'[54] of Pan-Africanists such as Edward Wilmot Blyden, also a Jamaican, who with others in African America had established a firm connection between the African 'homeland' and the African diaspora. Garvey's influence on the cultural and political scene in the Caribbean cannot be overestimated, but also religiously he cultivated a biblical vision. Under his auspices, George Alexander McGuire from Antigua founded the African Orthodox Church (with impact on Uganda and Kenya). Importantly, the Rastafari movement in Jamaica from the 1930s began to hail him as one of their foremost prophets. When by 1973 their maxim *'Africa for the Africans*' had been internalised as the 'Kingdom within', Rastafarians also migrated to Europe and invited the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, one of the oldest African Christian churches, to England and the Caribbean. The movement strongly influenced the young British African

[54] Wilmore, *Black religion and Black radicalism*, 109, 116.

Caribbean generations and continues to challenge black Pentecostal theology, not least because now black youths cross over to the Nation of Islam.

The worldwide Pentecostal explosion has long been overlooked as non-respectable by academic theology both in Europe and the Caribbean; and the advent of Pentecostalism in the Caribbean has often been interpreted as an American white importation, insignificant for politics and development. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the wake of the Baptist withdrawal, states Austin-Broos, 'the lower classes were in need of a powerful organisation that would promote re-vitalization of their lives.'[55] My research on the Black church movement in Britain from 1973 marked out Pentecostalism, besides Adventism, as the most powerful force in Caribbean Christian migration. Such findings accord with recent studies on the pentecostal/charismatic churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[56] In 1980, Wedenoja interpreted Jamaican Pentecostalism as a positive force for coping with the radical social and cultural changes after independence: 'techno-economic development, urbanization, increasing affluence and social mobility, new expectations for social progress, expansion of the middle class, more democratic politics and materialism.'[57] World War II had put an end to European domination and forced Britain to dismantle a vast empire, 'to

[55] Austin-Broos, *Jamaica genesis*, 79.

[56] The author is involved in research on this development, with reference to anthropological, sociological and theological studies of the 1990s on the movement in the Two-Thirds-world.

[57] W.A. Wedenoja, 'Modernization and the Pentecostal movement in Jamaica', in Stephen D. Glazier (ed.), *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: case studies from the Caribbean and Latin America* (New York, London: University Press of America, 1980), 42.

facilitate the genesis of new nations from the colonial womb'[58]. Black Pentecostalism can be seen as an integral part of these indigenous struggles to defy and transcend, under widening horizons, former hegemonial powers.

Most Caribbean immigrants to Britain after 1948, ironically, saw themselves as 'children of the motherland': British citizens who had fought fascism in the army, and were now invited by London Transport, the Restaurants' Association and the National Health Service to help rebuild the national economy. This process, caused by unemployment and disasters in the West Indies, was accelerated by the McCarran-Walter Act which closed doors to America. From the onset, though, the new arrivals underwent a culture shock, facing racial discrimination in housing, labour, education and also churches. Pentecostals responded to this experience of rejection by offering people a 'spiritual home', self-respect, life in 'holy' discipline, confidence, and overall protection. Sunday worship became the joyful party before the Lord - a celebration of blessings amidst the hardships during week. Blacks in the established denominations joined independent groups or held dual membership. Essentially, they knew they were part of an expanding movement, kept alive by constant traffic across the Atlantic, and counter to English monoculturalism. They created a symbolic space in which the 'saints' could find an identity, different from the one historically imposed by British society as not derived from particularity but a common humanity.[59] So Black

[58] Leslie R. James, 'Text and rhetoric of change', in Gossai and Murrell, *Religion, culture and tradition*, 144.

[59] Roswith Gerloff, '"Africa as laboratory of the world": the African Christian Diaspora in Europe as challenge to mission and ecumenical relations', *Mission is crossing frontiers*

Pentecostal theology in Britain was never simply an offshoot of American evangelicalism, but a genuine Caribbean creation which had weathered the storms of time.

Main organisations in modern Britain are the trinitarian Churches of God of white American provenance (begun in Jamaica in 1918) and the Church of God in Christ, the largest African-American Pentecostal church, with work from 1952. The Pentecostal Oneness (Apostolic) movement followed from 1955 (as did the AICs in the 1960s). Caribbean evangelists and bishops[60] were held in high esteem. Garfield T. Haywood, a friend of W. J. Seymour and giant among the early African American Pentecostal leaders, was remembered having visited Jamaica in 1931 – a living memory of Azusa Street.[61] Similar to Caribbean Pentecostals who needed initial recognition from the States, also those in England were first closely connected with headquarters there. Soon, however, the process of adaptation to new contexts set in, with congregations desiring autonomy and others separating on racial or gender grounds. Again comparable to Jamaica, where e.g. the Pentecostal Apostolic movement had to free itself from the white supremacy of its American branches[62], also black Pentecostals in England began to contest white American dominance, a still unfinished task. Generally, only those already fully indigenized 'at home', succeeded to consolidate work in Britain. Presently, some elders in the New

(Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2003), 371.

[60] E.g. Melvina and George White (Jamaica), or Bishop Randolph A. Carr (Nevis); see Gerloff, *A plea*, 130-4, 168-174; Austin-Broos, Jamaica genesis, 109-114.

[61] Gerloff, *A plea*, 121-3.

[62] Gerloff, *A plea*, 187.

Testament Church of God (still governed from Cleveland, Tennessee) attempt to overcome the still inherent racism in favour of true 'internationalization' of the organization. Black majority churches all over Britain - some organized in councils of churches, some interacting with the British bodies - include, besides those already mentioned, the oldest African Methodists, Anglo-Catholic Pentecostals, a great variety of AICs (from Nigeria and Ghana), and the growing African charismatic churches, part of the 'third wave' of worldwide Pentecostalism in the context of globalization from 1980.

Bridge-building between African and Caribbean Christians leaves much to be desired. The African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance, sadly repeating history, regards many AICs as too steeped in African traditional religion. Though radical black scholars utilize the African heritage in Caribbean history and theology, they seem to avoid getting involved with contemporary Africans. Dialogue between the English churches and the African diaspora, such as promoted by the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership from 1978, has not progressed as hoped, as culturally and theologically white churches have stayed within their domain, and black churches have begun to imitate western denominationalism. From the 1980s, there is a growing number of both anglophone and francophone African churches on the European continent, mainly of the new charismatic type. Sufficient interaction between Caribbean and African churches across national and language barriers of European countries, such as initiated by the recently founded 'Council of Christian Communities of an African Approach' is still in an embryonic state.

Among urgent issues in future to be tackled are:

- The unity of black theology and black empowerment, as promoted by the Journal of *Black Theology in Britain*, contextual, experiential and working for change.
- The development of an intercultural *theology of hope* across denominational, cultural and racial boundaries, healing the wounds inflicted by slavery, racism, and ineptitude to dialogue.[63]
- The rediscovery of the *emancipatory ideas* that marked Caribbean Christian history, and the revolutionary potential in early Pentecostalism which could help formulate an alternative political theology.
- A redefinition of syncretism, or *contextual approach* to theology (*all* theologies!), a process to be learned by white Christianity including Evangelical-Pentecostal-Charismatic groups tied to fundamentalism.
- The claim by African and Caribbean Christians of a *reverse mission* to the West, expecting to be 'recognized as gifts of the Holy Spirit for today's society', and 'living communities which long for unity in mission and evangelism in today's political world'[64];
- Fostering an *open-ended identity*, exploring the Christian faith as a vehicle for constructing and re-constructing identities in transitory and

[63] Lewin Williams, *Caribbean theology*, Research in Religion and Family: Black Perspectives 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 167.

[64] World Council of Churches' Consultation with African and Caribbean Church leaders in Britain, 1995, quoted in Gerloff, 'Africa as laboratory of the world', *Mission is crossing Frontiers*, 345.

transcultural processes, especially among youths who have to live in a polytextual world.

"The African Diaspora in the and in from Pre-emancipation to the Present Day", *in: The History of Christianity*, Vol.9: World Christianities c.1914-2000, Hugh McLeod (editor), chapter 12, : Cambridge University Press, 2006, 219-235