

**REACHING FOR THE PROMISED LAND: THE ROLE OF CULTURE,  
ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION WITHIN  
BRITISH CARIBBEAN CHRISTIANITY**

**BY**

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A thesis submitted to  
The University of Birmingham  
For the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion  
College of Arts and Law  
University of Birmingham  
February 2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

Caribbean communities in Britain are known for the high religiosity of their people, and yet as 'popular' as the Church appears to be, there is at the same time an over-representation of many in the criminal justice, mental health and social care systems. This thesis takes a new approach to examining the effectiveness of the Church in their lives; rather than examine its belief systems and rituals, it looks at the worship and personal experience of Baptists, the oldest inherited Christian denomination, through the lens of culture. It reveals through practices and experiences, that British Caribbean Christians continue to maintain an allegiance to inherited missionary prejudices against Caribbean culture, enforced by leaders, through a system of social stratification, resulting in self-loathing, alienation and dislocation. They are a people who respect biblical stories and particularly the story of the Exodus, which gives meaning to not just their religious, but social and political lives. This thesis theologically reflects on that story, reframing it to demonstrate that Moses is indeed to be celebrated, but not simply as one who leads God's people out of Egypt, but to the Promised Land; being a successful prototype of a leadership founded on cultural inclusion.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to three particular groups of people. My mother Lynette Maud Morrison, my maternal family, the Lawrence's of Jamaica, and Caribbean saints long past who each in their own way have shown an unyielding commitment to God, and pointed the way to the Promised Land.

*'We are the sum total of all those who have gone before us'.*

Doreen Morrison

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been completed without the assistance of many people:

Firstly, I must say a big thank you to those involved in the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies within the department of Theology and Religion. To my supervisor, Prof Allan Anderson who travelled with me on this journey, in good times and bad, in sickness and at times some very challenging work. Dr Mark Cartledge, who gave me the opportunity to do a 'dry run' of aspects of my research methods, as I assisted him in the completion of a now published book. To my peers, students with whom I sat through monthly seminars, and who placed a critical eye, gave insight, encouragement and assistance, as well as challenged me to develop many ideas further.

I would also like to thank administrative and library staff at the Orchard Learning Resource Centre, to whom I am indebted for their jovial disposition, and support, often notifying or holding resources they considered relevant to my work. Archivists at the Dixon Pentecostal Research Centre, Cleveland, Tennessee, the Angus Library, Oxford, the American Baptist Historical Society, Georgia, and Dr Brenda Haliburton, ABCUSA. Brenda Johnson for her support, assistance and sharing her skills by reading a poem in Patois, thereby bringing an important aspect of this research to life. Special mention must be given to Beverley Stubbs who over the years, provided a shoulder to lean on, pointed the way to much needed academic resources and requirements, which when sick I often overlooked. Dr Helen Ingram,

who allayed fears, shared a passion for animals and provided much needed insight into the process of completing a PhD as a part time student.

The fieldwork aspect of this research could not have been possible without the cooperation of the Pastor and Deacons of Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church (CSMBC), Birmingham. I thank them for opening their church to be the subject of my research. I am especially grateful to all those who I was able to interview as a part of a focus group or in targeted interviews. I thank them for their openness and honesty, and hope that this goes some way in fulfilling their desire to 'make it better for the next generation'.

On a personal level, this research could not have been accomplished without the encouragement of the following, Dr Douglas Sharp and Chaplain G Wyche who simply encouraged me to be. My heartfelt thanks to Mrs Mignott, Mrs Bruce, and Deleyan Smith, and I will forever owe a debt of gratitude to Heather and Ian Loffman, Merryl Grossett, Audrey Jackson and Ralph Foster who have encouraged and offered unceasing support. Last but not least to my dog Bouncer, now gone, who was with me every step of the way, and sat at my feet during every chapter written. His presence meant that I had to get up every day, stayed the course and completed the project.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ABCUSA	American Baptist Churches, United States of America
AOG	Assemblies of God
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BUGB	Baptist Union of Great Britain
CSMBC	Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church
CofE	Church of England
CoG	Church of God
CGP	Church of God of Prophecy
EPC	Elim Pentecostal Church
ESRC	European Social Research Centre
HEBA	Heart of England Baptist Association
HPC	Hockley Pentecostal Church
LCGC	London Community Gospel Choir
LMS	London Missionary Society
NTCG	New Testament Church of God
OHP	Oral History Project
RSBC	Regent Street Baptist Church
SFLB NKJV	Spirit Filled Life Bible New King James Version

## INTRODUCTION

Sacrifice as a concept is something known to Caribbean migrants who have over the years left their homelands, often to make a better life not only for themselves but their children and extended family members at home. During the ten years following the arrival of the SS Windrush in England (1948), it is believed that 125,000 people left their homes to begin a new life in England.<sup>1</sup> When they came they faced great opposition, and were misunderstood as British passport holders, but in looking at the 'greater picture', potential economic and social success, they considered the sacrifice to be worth it.

In their new communities, the Black church was recognised as the one space which, in an alien environment became for them a safe haven. A space where they could meet with their God with like-minded people around them, to make the cold winters seem less cold, and the summer sun brighter than the reality of what was going on around them. Caribbean Christians were therefore often perceived by those outside of their church community as being a strong, triumphant, vibrant community with churches which, in the face of what appeared to be a 'dying' British Church were considered to be a breath of fresh air.

Since their arrival in Britain, they have been commended for their commitment to assimilation, and often acknowledged by members of the host community as being more British than the British themselves.<sup>2</sup> Though relatively speaking it has the greatest number of

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 372.

<sup>2</sup>Ian Bradley, *Believing in Britain* (London: I.B.Tauris and Co Ltd, 2007), 170.

adherents to Christianity,<sup>3</sup> in the 1990s the British Caribbean community came to be known more for the violence within it,<sup>4</sup> than for their faith. If one looks closely at the Caribbean community, one will see glimpses of the tensions within. Black on Black violence,<sup>5</sup> gang membership and the adoption of the fictional term ‘Yardie’ to refer to criminals from Jamaica, each demonstrate and indicate that something is not well within the Caribbean community. Within the Christian community too the disunity within it began to raise its head as leaders within Caribbean Pentecostalism began to go against tradition to, ‘not to share your business outside’, questioning not the levels of church attendance, but the depth of spiritual understanding, lack of growth, and the continued tensions and strife amongst members and leaders, which in some instances has led to litigation.<sup>6</sup>

Such a picture led me to ask the following questions: What is the position of - achieving Caribbean Christians in mainline churches whose voices have yet to be heard and whose contribution to the present state of the British Caribbean community has thus far been left undocumented? Can these churches, many with a majority Caribbean congregation, still be considered ‘havens of rest’, making significant contributions to the wider Caribbean community or do they in fact hold a key to the increasing dysfunctionality which is present in

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 174. ‘seventy-one per cent of blacks saying that they are Christians as against seventy-two per cent of the overall UK population and seventy-five per cent of whites....regular church attendance in the UK is less than ten per cent, among African Caribbean (*people*) it is over thirty percent’.

<sup>4</sup>‘Operation Trident a Metropolitan Police Team dedicated to tackling gun crime within the Black community, begun in 1998 as a response to what are often called ‘black-on-black’ shootings and murders in the Lambeth and Brent areas of London’. Available from [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk) [Accessed 01/12/10].

<sup>5</sup>Black on Black violence appears not to simply be symptomatic of migration and racism amongst Jamaican migrants, but is also to be found in Jamaica, caused by what Erskine described as ‘The self-hate that has been the mother’s milk of slavery makes us devalue ourselves and allows us to boast one of the highest black-on-black crime rates in the world’. Noel Leo Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2007), 159.

<sup>6</sup>B A Miles, *When the Church of God Arises* (Warwickshire: History into Print, 2006), 75.

the wider community and which can be seen for example, in the British Caribbean over-representation within the Criminal Justice and Social Care systems?<sup>7</sup> Has the sacrifice, two generations on, now looking in, been too great?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis will examine one community of faith, Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church (CSMBC) in Birmingham, England, conducting an in-depth examination of its public face and privately-held views through one specific lens, that of culture. Why culture you may ask? The preferred method by which Caribbean Christians have historically expressed their faith is from the perspective of Pentecostalism,<sup>8</sup> the most successful manifestation of the Christian faith in the twentieth century. Its growth and development according to Hollenweger is due to two things; its emphasis on the practice of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit,<sup>9</sup> and the fact that it is able to find expression out of the culture in which it finds itself. Korean Pentecostalism for example, was noted for having the largest church congregations in the 1980s,<sup>10</sup> they were deeply rooted in Korean popular

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<sup>7</sup>Wild, Sheila, *Response of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to the Consultation Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Home Office, 16 October 2008, 7-8.

*Black and Minority Ethnic Families Policy Forum, Discussion Paper 1*, 5. In terms of Social Care whilst Caribbean children are not over represented within the system, those of mixed parentage with one black and one white are. Available from [www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/projects/files/paper\\_1\\_contextsetting.pdf](http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/projects/files/paper_1_contextsetting.pdf) [Accessed 10/01/11].

<sup>8</sup>Allan A Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1. 'The term Pentecostalism is used here in an all-embracing way to include the Charismatic movement and new Pentecostal or "neocharismatic" churches of many different descriptions'.

<sup>9</sup>Walter J Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and developments worldwide* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 14.

<sup>10</sup>Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 137-139.

culture, having selectively integrated their culture into their spirituality,<sup>11</sup> and in India, Pentecostalism became the means by which Christianity became contextualized.<sup>12</sup>

The history of Jamaican Christianity in comparison dates back some one hundred and fifty years, and having experienced its own Revival, 1860-1862, and evidences of speaking in tongues,<sup>13</sup> it was greatly influenced later on by Pentecostalism. Most historians and anthropologists identify Caribbean Pentecostalism as having developed through indigenous leadership, and therefore in theory it should by now have shown itself to be as successful as other expressions of Pentecostalism, which in addition to enabling spiritual growth, are often credited for raising social standards, answering ethical concerns and providing hope.

However a closer look reveals that it has never expressed its faith out of its own cultural identity, reflecting instead English cultural practice and values because of the form of indigenization which was practiced there. For whereas indigenization is commonly understood to be a strategy ‘done by and for a given geographical area – by local people in their area, rather than by outsiders’<sup>14</sup> across the British Empire it took the form of ‘replacing British personnel in colonial government with local leadership’.<sup>15</sup> The personnel were local

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<sup>11</sup>Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and developments worldwide*, 103.

<sup>12</sup>Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 124 quotes Pandita Ramabai its leader who said: ‘Let the revival come to Indians so as to suit their nature and feelings, (as) God has made them. He knows their nature, and He will work out His purpose in them in a way which may not conform with the ways of Western people and their lifelong training... I mean the religious inclinations, the emotional side of the Indian mind. Let them not try to conduct revival meetings and devotional exercises altogether in Western ways and conform with Western etiquette. If our Western teachers and foreignised Indian leaders want the work of God to be carried out among us in their own way, they are sure to stop or spoil it’.

<sup>13</sup>Robert J Stewart, *Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 189.

<sup>14</sup>Robert J Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

but the policies and procedures were an imported interpretation of Christianity, clothed naturally in western culture.<sup>16</sup> Jamaican Christianity to my mind has therefore never been contextualised, and it is primarily for this reason that this research will concentrate primarily on the issue of culture, and its role in enabling the development of British Caribbean Christianity.

By culture I do not mean the classicist notion of culture, such as the appreciation of Bach, Beethoven, Picasso or Renoir, but, an Empiricist notion of culture which believes that, 'Culture is not something out there, but something that everyone participates in already'.<sup>17</sup> The term culture originates in the words, cultura, and colere, which means 'to till or cultivate'.<sup>18</sup> Hoebel describes it as being, 'The integrated system of learned behaviour patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance'.<sup>19</sup> Kraft adds to this description by concluding that:

Each of us is thus shaped in the nonbiological portion of our being by the culture into which we are born. We are shaped by a culture transmitted to us by the adults in our life. Humans thus may be regarded as culture-shaped and culture-transmitting beings. But we not only are shaped by and participate in the transmission of our culture; we also influence it and contribute to its reshaping...It may be looked at as the rules guiding our lives.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 294. Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 243. Stephen B Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 41. Bevens in explaining this strategy defines it theologically as the translational model, whereby 'Experience, culture, social location, and social change, of course, are acknowledged as important, but they are never as important as the supracultural, 'never changing' gospel message'.

<sup>17</sup>Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 11.

<sup>18</sup>*The Oxford Compact English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup>E Adam Hoebel, *Anthropology: The Study of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 6.

<sup>20</sup>Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, Second Printing, 1980), 47.

Niebuhr makes explicit the link between culture and faith, noting that, ‘Christ belongs in culture, because culture itself, without “sense and taste for the infinite”, without a “holy music” accompanying all its work, becomes sterile and corrupt’.<sup>21</sup>

Accepting these facts and given the history of indigenization within Caribbean Christianity I soon realized that in seeking to look at Caribbean culture there is therefore currently no clear agreement as to what British Caribbean culture looks like, and therefore which aspects of it could then be examined for their effectiveness. I turned to Bevans who in his book *Models of Contextual Theology* suggests using the anthropological model as a means to investigate culture particularly amongst a people who have in the past had their culture suppressed. This model seeks to say that God is and was present in a particular culture prior to the introduction of the Christian faith amongst them.<sup>22</sup> However as cultural theology is ideally a means by which one can see how the Christian faith has been interpreted in a particular cultural context whilst staying faithful to that culture, it has limitations for my research which is concerned with Christians who according to Schreiter, ‘For too long, embracing Christ and his message meant rejection of (*their*) African cultural values’.<sup>23</sup> Their own cultural practices used in worship have to a great extent now become peripheral or secondary to that which they have learnt from Western Christianity.

So, given the enforced removal and denial of many aspects of Caribbean culture, I needed firstly to find a method whereby relevant cultural practices could be identified. Sedmak

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<sup>21</sup>Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1951), 93.

<sup>22</sup>Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 54.

<sup>23</sup>Robert J Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), viii.

provided the solution in his book *Doing Local Theology*, in which he states, ‘Culture can be analysed by looking at cultural activities. We can call any identifiable cultural context a cultural game. Cultures can be characterized through their cultural games.’<sup>24</sup> A cultural game is any type of human activity that can be named and described and reproduced’.<sup>25</sup> He developed a means whereby the most popular cultural games can be identified, going on to state that, ‘The leading games can be identified according to the amount of material and money devoted to them, the amount of time and space used by them, and by the number and prestige of people involved in them’.<sup>26</sup>

I therefore sought to identify the cultural games based on activities within CSMBC, those played by the wider Caribbean community, and then marrying them up with notions of culture expressed by present day cultural theologians such as; Vincent J Donovan,<sup>27</sup> Robert Beckford,<sup>28</sup> and Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya.<sup>29</sup> Sedmak states that ‘leading cultural games differ from culture to culture’<sup>30</sup> and so I used the questions he asks of each activity<sup>31</sup> in order to analyse which activities were the most popular, eliminating the least popular. In so doing I settled on six activities which were common to the church and the wider community -

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<sup>24</sup>Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 86.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 87.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 89.

<sup>27</sup>Vincent J Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai* (Indiana: Fides/Claretian, 1978; 2d ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books; reprint, London: SCM Press, 2001). American Roman Catholic Priest who conducted pioneering missionary work among the Masai people of Tanzania.

<sup>28</sup>Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2002).

<sup>29</sup>C Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (London: Duke University Press, 1991).

<sup>30</sup>Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 89.

<sup>31</sup>The questions are *Who plays what cultural games: How are they played? When are they played? Where are they played? Why?’*

language, family, music and singing, personal appearance, leadership - including the positioning of women, and duppies,<sup>32</sup> proverbs, death rituals, food and ancestors.

However, on examining the role of culture within the church, secondary issues of leadership and social stratification,<sup>33</sup> came to the fore, which demanded additional investigation. Leadership concerns were centred in the pastor and the leadership of the church, and how they applied themselves to their biblical mandate to enable growth through obedience to the Word of God.<sup>34</sup> The Baptist church is congregational<sup>35</sup> in nature and yet issues of social stratification came to the fore, and so analysis needed to take place in terms of how it has impacted members and their roles within the church, based on their acceptance of particular cultural values.

The study concludes with a theological reflection, challenging the implicit theology of Moses and the Exodus which forms the basis of Caribbean belief systems. It seeks to argue that the story of Moses speaks positively about the role culture and biblical ministerial leadership can play, in enabling entry into the Promised Land. I conclude by demonstrating the positive effects of cultural inclusion, exemplified in the life of African-American Christians within

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<sup>32</sup>T Banbury, (Rev), *Jamaica Superstitions or the Obeah Book (1894)* (Rector of St Peter's Church, Hope Bay: Portland, 1894), 1. 'Duppies' are restless spirits of the dead that are believed to haunt the living'.

<sup>33</sup>T B Bottomore, *Classes in Modern Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), 15. Bottomore describes social stratification as, 'any hierarchical ordering of social groups or strata in a society...its principal forms being those of caste, estate, social class, and status group'.

<sup>34</sup>1 Tim 4: 13-16. SFLB NKJV. 'Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you'.

<sup>35</sup>Sinclair B Ferguson and David F Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 161.

the American Baptist Churches, United States of America (ABCUSA), who are rooted in the same Baptist tradition, have similar experiences, but have inherited more positive outcomes due to a missionary history of cultural inclusion.

The research questions which this thesis will address are: Are the expressions of Caribbean culture the same when expressed publicly and privately? How is culture expressed in the life of the church, liturgy, sermons, documentation and group structures? What adaptations, if any, have they made, as they have settled as a people in Britain? Does the expression of Caribbean cultural values assist or inhibit their involvement in the church? Is Caribbean culture still relevant, or has it been overtaken by British cultural values? Do the two cultures co-exist or has one become more powerful than the other? What are the consequences for British Caribbean Christians who seek to express Caribbean cultural practices?

## **Definitions of Terms**

### **African Caribbean**

Throughout this thesis, the term African Caribbean is used to describe those who were once enslaved from Africa, but have since become the majority population in the Caribbean islands which they now inhabit. Historically, the term West Indian has been used by those who had colonized the islands, however in modern times, as Caribbean islands have gained their independence, each prefers to be known by their national identities. African Caribbean is therefore not a term used by the peoples themselves, but for my purposes sets the distinction between them, and those of Caribbean heritage who were born in Britain.

## **British Caribbean**

British Caribbean is the term which I have chosen to define people of Caribbean heritage who were born in Britain. ‘Black’, ‘Black Caribbean’ or ‘Black British’ are the most common terms used when referring to people from this grouping, with ‘Black’ being the most used term by British Caribbean people who have in recent times preferred to use it as a means of reclaiming and creating for themselves a positive self-image.<sup>36</sup> However, I choose not to use the term Black as a reference point, particularly as within the area of my study, the city council has ‘co-opted’ the term to refer to all peoples who are not from the ethnic ‘white British’ population. I therefore choose to use the term British Caribbean, as it speaks to a specific people, those of Caribbean heritage<sup>37</sup> who were either born in Britain, or ‘educated’ in the British school system, and have therefore spent all of their lives traversing two cultures, and are therefore both British and Caribbean.

## **Caribbean**

The term Caribbean is used as a generic term where the views of more than one nation is represented or expressed, by or on behalf of people who inhabit the various islands located in the Caribbean region, and therefore represents diverse and different cultural experiences and faith perspectives. I do however acknowledge that like the term African Caribbean, it is not a term which many of them would use to describe themselves, preferring instead to be addressed by their nationality or island of origin.

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<sup>36</sup>Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1999), 27.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 31.

## **Creole**

In Jamaica the term creole is used to describe those people, both black and white, who during the years of enslavement were born on the island. Other than the cultural practices which they were born into, they had no other cultural identity, either British or African.

## **Mainline denominations**

A term I use to describe those churches (Church of England, Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholic, United Reformed), which have their roots in Western Christianity and became the accepted face of Christianity within those contexts.

## **Charismatics**

I use the term Charismatic to speak of those Christians worshipping within mainline denominations, and profess a belief in the expression of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, but choose to remain within the structure of their denomination, rather than join Pentecostal churches. It is a term which can be applied to the CSMBC members, who are the subject of this study.

## **Elders**

‘Elders’ is a term used to refer specifically to those Jamaican people who were born between Emancipation and Independence. They have always lived their lives under British rule, whether during Colonialism or in Independence and therefore have a unique perspective on life. They are the inheritors of a long-gone system of religious practices informed by

Colonialism, which they have been acculturated into, and continue to believe is the only way in which Christianity and true worship of God is to be expressed.

### **Literature Review**

The issue of the contextualization of theology has taken on increasing significance in the world over the past fifty years, as once colonised and developing nations have emerged and sought their own identities. The role, nature and increasing relevance of culture has also come to the fore, as a critical ingredient for the developing of a truly contextual theology resulting in the once pre-eminent Western theology losing its position of power as once colonised nations have come to realise that it is not the sole means by which Christian truth can be interpreted.

The British Caribbean community are a people who have emerged as a social entity since the mid to late 1950s, and as a consequence the constructing and developing of contextual theologies by them, is a very recent happening. Much of the early research into Caribbean Christianity in Britain was undertaken by non-Caribbean, mostly white English academics and theologians who either pastored or went into their communities and told their stories from an ‘outsiders’ perspective.<sup>38</sup> Theologian Roswith Gerloff made the most comprehensive study of black-led, black-established Caribbean churches which concluded with a call for the

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<sup>38</sup>Malcolm J C Calley, *God's People: West Indian Pentecostal Sects in England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Nicole Rodriguez Toulis, *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England* (Oxford: Berg), 1997.

construction of British Caribbean theologies,<sup>39</sup> whilst John Wilkinson, Anglican minister of a majority Caribbean congregation spoke passionately about the need for inclusion and acceptance of other cultural perspectives within mainline churches.<sup>40</sup>

In the past twenty years there have emerged Caribbean and British Caribbean academics and theologians who have begun to tell the story of British Caribbean Christianity. There is now much scholarship by new and emerging scholars, singularly and through compilation, on a variety of topics which concern Caribbean people in Britain, from theology to culture, politics, racism and economics.<sup>41</sup> They have also progressed a greater understanding of Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain, and their role as a part of the greater African diaspora.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Roswith Gerloff, 'A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction' (PhD thesis: University of Birmingham, 1998).

<sup>40</sup>John L. Wilkinson, *Church in Black and White: The Black Christian Tradition in 'Mainstream' Churches in England: A White Response and Testimony* (Edinburgh: Pahl-Rugenstein and Saint Andrew Press, 1993).

<sup>41</sup>Paul Grant, and Raj Patel, eds., *A Time to Speak: Perspectives of Black Christians in Britain* (Nottingham: Racial Justice and Black Theology Working Group, 1990). Joel Edwards, ed., *Let's Praise Him Again: An African-Caribbean Perspective on Worship* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1992). Mary Chamberlain and Harry Goulbourne, eds., *Caribbean Families in Britain and the Transatlantic* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 2001). Nancy Foner, *Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican Migrants in London* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979). Malcolm Cross and Hans Entzinger, eds., *Lost Illusions: Caribbean minorities in Britain and the Netherlands* (London: Routledge, 1988). Michael N. Jagessar and Anthony G. Reddie, *Postcolonial Black British Theology: New Textures and Themes* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007). Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock, eds., *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008). Bertha Ochieng and Carl Hylton, eds., *Black families in Britain as the site of struggle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

<sup>42</sup>Selwyn Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope* (Nottingham: Grove Books Limited, 1992). Mark Sturge, *Look what the Lord has done: An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 2005). Miles, *When the CoG Arises*, 2006. Delroy Reid-Salmon, 'The Caribbean diasporan church in the Black Atlantic Experience: home away from home' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2006). Henley Dwight St Patrick Bernard, 'Themes in Caribbean Theology and their application to issues of pastoral care' (MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, 2007). Beresford Lewis, 'African-Caribbean Pentecostal church leaders and Socio-political engagement' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2008). Janice McLean, 'Living their faith: Identity and Mission among West Indian immigrants in Pentecostal churches in New York City and London' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009).

In terms of the developing of British Caribbean theologies, three theologians have come to the fore in the past twelve or so years, Valentina Alexander, Robert Beckford and Joe Aldred, each one speaking from a Pentecostal perspective. The most prolific of these writers has been Robert Beckford, who since his ground breaking PhD thesis<sup>43</sup> has authored several books defining a new British Caribbean theology from a black liberationist perspective, with the culture of the ‘excluded’<sup>44</sup> at its core. I shall look more closely at each of their perspectives at the conclusion of chapter five, comparing their perspectives to my own findings.

## **Facilitating the Research: Methodologies**

### **Spiral of interpretation**

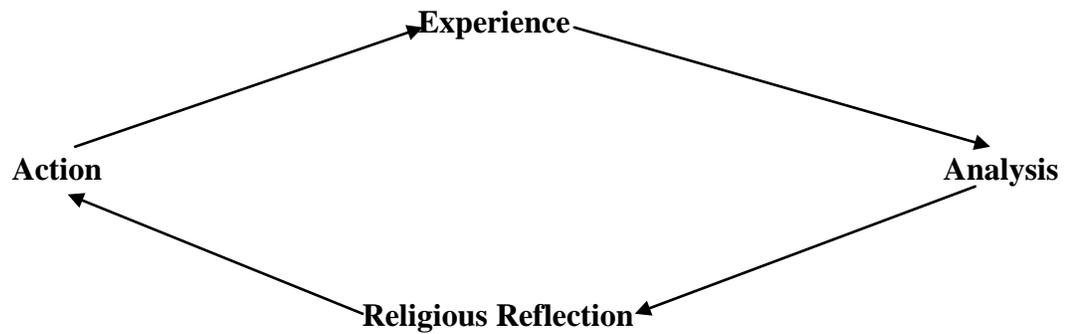
My entire research is grounded in the pastoral approach to theology, known as the Spiral of Interpretation or Spiral Structure.<sup>45</sup> This method is used by various schools of thought, including liberation, Black and practical theology. I used it to complete the work of cultural theology in that through it I am able to ground my method and results firmly in the Bible. There are four main elements to the spiral, as can be seen in the diagram below.

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<sup>43</sup>Robert Beckford, ‘Towards a Dread Pentecostal Theology: The Context of a viable Political Theology within Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain’ (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998).

<sup>44</sup>By excluded I am referring to those who are or have been incarcerated, unemployed or members of the Caribbean subculture of popular culture, D.J’s and dance halls.

<sup>45</sup>Orlando E Costas, *Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1989), 9.



### **Experience**

Experience means that my research will begin by seeking to understand the historical context within which the study was based. That context will be defined both in terms of the historical and present day cultural experiences of Caribbean and British Caribbean people, as expressed through the church.

### **Analysis**

Social analysis as a tool will assist me in making sense of the experiences of the people concerned – the historical, political, philosophical and religious systems which have influenced and directed their choices resulting in the religious expressions which they now display. Their understanding of ministerial leadership and status groups, and the role each has and continues to play in the expression of British Caribbean Christianity.

### **Theological Reflection**

Theological reflection will enable me to take my completed analysis and evaluate it in light of the Word of God. It will enable the analysis in seeking to identify whether cultural

inclusion directed by informed biblical leadership, can have a foundational role in the developing of British Caribbean Christianity.

### **Action**

Within the praxis model of contextual theology action is linked to reflection. Action informs every aspect of the spiral, and it therefore plays its part in showing that theology need no longer be considered as a finished article, but one which always makes room for change.<sup>46</sup> The concluding aim therefore is to let the truth of the experiences both past and present – which I will discover - inform the future development of religious practices within British Caribbean Christianity.

### **Historical Methodology**

Though mentioned briefly in the Spiral of Interpretation, because it plays a significant part of my research, it deserves particular mention here. The focus of this research is principally concerned with Christians from Jamaica and their British descendants. It covers a period of nearly 200 years, but in the realm of historical sociology it is at most only five to ten generations, and so quite recent.<sup>47</sup> I began by using historical methodology to understand the place of culture in the religious foundations of Jamaican Christianity for as stated by Anderson, ‘it can be argued that theology and religion cannot exist apart from history. They are rooted in contexts, and a context includes an historical context’.<sup>48</sup> I therefore sought to

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Nigel Gilbert, ed., *Researching Social Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 8. Historical sociologists view time differently, ‘20 – 25 years as a generation’.

<sup>48</sup>Allan Anderson, *Research Methods in Theology* (University of Birmingham, 19 March 2007), 1.

examine how cultural activity had been recorded during that time and subsequently, following the arrival of British missionaries. I then looked at the historical relationship between religion and culture which was in existence until the active participation of first generation British Caribbean children within the Baptist Church, in the 1980s.

Given the levels of illiteracy and lack of power possessed by African Jamaicans throughout this time, much of my research was therefore gleaned from primary sources contained in denominational missionary archives. I was also able to speak to members of the Caribbean community who had some recollections of the religious, political, economic and social development of society in the Jamaica they left and the England which they came to. I also investigated available artistic sources – written hymns and choruses.

I accessed secondary sources, published materials, held in academic, missionary and denomination archive collections, as well as additionally, periodicals, journals, magazines, and books which recorded the history of the period, and edited material accessed from the internet. I also paid attention to organisations and people groups outside of the established and mainline churches, namely the Revivalists,<sup>49</sup> Alexander Bedward,<sup>50</sup> Marcus Garvey<sup>51</sup> and

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<sup>49</sup>Stanley M Burgess, ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002, 2003), 142. Following the opposition which arose after the great revival of 1860-1862 'Many of the followers left to create a new Creole religion, Zion Revival, which mingled the beliefs and practices of missionary Christianity with that of the Myalists and Native Baptists'.

<sup>50</sup>Diane J Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 86. Alexander Bedward was a Revivalist, however he developed his own crew of followers. 'Bedward's practice is striking for its ambivalence toward the colonial order ...he interpreted the colonial order within his own cosmology and generated a religious response... (*He*) also sought to realize the power of whites through mastering their forms of order. This was demonstrated not only in his tea ceremonial but also in the explanation of fasting that he gave...Like clothes, he proposed, the soul was to be tended in its purification: a day for washing, a day for drying and starching, a day for ironing; so the heart is made clean by the fasts'.

Rastafarianism,<sup>52</sup> in order to understand what popular culture looked like for ‘ordinary’ Jamaicans during that period of time.

## **Fieldwork**

Primary research data for this thesis was obtained through fieldwork conducted in the city of Birmingham, England. The research was rooted in the anthropological methodology, supported by two methods, methodological triangulation research design, and grounded theory analysis. A detailed description of the research methodology and methods can be found in chapter three.

## **The Researcher in the context of the Fieldwork**

I entered this project mindful of the fact that no research method could ever leave the research as a truly objective exercise,<sup>53</sup> and was therefore aware of certain things which, even if only in a small way, may have influenced, my research outcomes.

I am aware that I brought to this research my own bias and hidden agenda, being British Caribbean, and of African Caribbean parents from Jamaica, and educated in the Baptist

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 192. Marcus Garvey was a believer in black separatism. His ‘black separatism conjoined a strong affiliation with Christian religion, in which the life of the Saviour was seen as a model for African struggle, and an equally strong sense of the need to reconstruct Africans as a nation, both procreative and cultural’.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 87. ‘Rastafarians would develop anew Bedward’s Christian critique of the colonial moral order... (they) cut Bedward’s Gordian knot by declaring that God was black and that whites were in fact sources of evil’.

<sup>53</sup>David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, 5th reprint (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 172. ‘As Weber pointed out in the early years of this century, all research is contaminated to some extent by the values of the researcher. Only through those values do certain problems get identified and studied in particular ways. Even the commitment to scientific (or rigorous) method is itself, as Weber emphasises, a value. Finally, the conclusions and implications to be drawn from a study are, Weber stresses, largely grounded in the moral and political beliefs of the researcher’.

tradition. I was one of those who lived through the 1970s, without questioning my cultural identity having imbibed a British cultural worldview. It was not until attending Seminary at the age of 31, and participating in clinical pastoral education and the therapy which that included, that I began to verbalise and forcefully question my understanding of my own cultural identity. I consequently found my voice and admit that I am committed to enabling others to have the same opportunity to reflect upon their cultural identity.

Given the nature of Caribbean society ‘not wanting to get things wrong’, preferring to be imitators of others,<sup>54</sup> I was mindful of being as objective as possible by applying the principle that ‘if the researcher is to obtain an insider’s view of situations, it is vital to maintain an outsider’s perspective...develop self-criticism and self-awareness, if involvement and detachment are to be achieved’.<sup>55</sup> This was difficult at times especially as being an ordained minister I was mindful that ordination brought with it an expectation of being one who holds the truth, as well as one who gives permission, and therefore I needed to seek at all times to withhold any thoughts, the slightest of nods or affirmations, which could be interpreted by those present as giving ‘permission’, indicating clarification, affirmation or determining and influencing answers given.

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<sup>54</sup>Kortright Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 37.

<sup>55</sup>Robert G Burgess, ed., *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 1.

I considered the politics of gender<sup>56</sup> and how this too may present obstacles particularly amongst male participants and women who may have believed that the only objective voice is that of God's male servant or minister. I was therefore concerned that as a result I may not gain the level of involvement, answers or support which would make this research effective. However, as the majority of my focus groups consisted of women, and many men tended to be interviewed on an individual basis, I do not believe that the politics of gender was significantly detrimental to my research.

In conclusion I would say that given all the awareness I had of the situation and the potential obstacles that lay before me, I cannot but admit that in every group situation my presence must have to some degree, either consciously or subconsciously influenced the final outcomes and results of the discussions and interviews undertaken.

### **Outline of Thesis**

Chapter one focuses on the formation of Jamaican society, and the role of social class, cultural identity and leadership within that. It goes on to detail the coming together of a nation in Emancipation, brought about by social engineering through a partnership of Church and State. This chapter details the opposition put forward by the African Jamaican's, their experience of God through the Great Revival, and how they sought to express themselves religiously through the maintaining of their cultural identities. It concludes by detailing the

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<sup>56</sup>What I mean by the politics of gender is that the views on gender construction particularly in the area of Church and ministry, expounds the view that men are the rightful heirs and leaders of the church. That women are consigned to membership, but not leadership, and those who act to the contrary are also acting against the tenets of the faith. Therefore I was aware that my presence could have raised such issues and limited those who would choose to be involved in my project.

diverse Christian communities which evolved as a result, and how each of them have embraced culture as a means to express their faith and gain social acceptance.

Chapter two primarily examines the relationship between migrant middle class Jamaican Baptists, their British counterparts, and African Caribbean Pentecostals. It details the many reasons for migration, issues of assimilation and the social confusion of their children which resulted in the search for, and development of, a new cultural identity, which brought to the fore the relationship between faith and culture, and which eventually led them to question the effectiveness of Caribbean Christianity in Britain.

Chapter three explains the context within which this study is undertaken before going on to detail the research methodology undertaken during my time at CSMBC. It describes how access was negotiated with the gatekeepers of the church and the activities undertaken in order to 'win' the favour of the congregation, together with details of the research questions asked.

Chapter four, based on the concept of cultural games, is concerned with detailing the role of culture within CSMBC and the congregations understanding of it, both publicly and privately as they speak for themselves through focus groups and targeted interviews. It concludes with an open discussion between focus group members and their pastor in regards to a Covenant which they had written in order to express their renewed understanding, and desire for aspects of their culture to be included in their faith experience.

Chapter five focuses on a detailed analysis of the findings achieved through the use of grounded theory. It analyses the role of culture, issues of leadership and social stratification, and how they are experienced in the lives of Baptist Caribbean Christians. It explains how, as a result of Enlightenment thinking, expressed by Christian missionaries, they have ‘adopted’ not just one culture but two. It documents the continuing consequences for the church today, and how such views are maintained and enforced. It concludes by undertaking a critical review of British Caribbean and Caribbean theological perspectives, including the contribution of the three leading theologians in Britain, Valentina Alexander, Robert Beckford and Joe Aldred.

In chapter six I examine the story of Moses and the Exodus, detailing first the implicit theology of Caribbean people, which implies that having been emancipated, each person is then ‘abandoned’ by God with the Promised Land only attainable, if at all, through individual self-determination. I then reflect upon it explicitly and in so doing demonstrate that far from ‘abandoning’ them, God shows compassion and understanding of the human condition of a people once enslaved made free. Moses is guided to emancipate, and then unite them as a nation, with culture being foundational to their development. He re-works their cultural identities as they negotiate similar religious, social, political and ethical issues to those which have historically beset African Jamaican and British Caribbean Christianity, enabling them to reach the Promised Land. The chapter concludes by providing a brief reflective comparison between the development of Christianity amongst British Caribbean Baptists, and African American Baptists within the ABCUSA, and how the latter’s intentional inclusion of their

culture in the expression of their faith has created a very different but contextually relevant Christianity.

Chapter seven summarizes the thesis and states my concluding remarks, including reflections on methods used and what in hindsight I may have done differently. It details suggested areas to be addressed by educators, academics and theologians within British Caribbean Christianity, and the wider British Christian and academic communities. It also uses the results of the research to make suggestions for future research in Britain, and comparative studies between British Caribbean and Caribbean Christianity.

## CHAPTER 1

### SOCIAL STATUS, RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN JAMAICA

*When two worlds collide,  
and one becomes servant and the other master.  
Dare to tell the servant that his life is a better one.  
And masters have no need of correction.*

*Whether missionaries, pioneers or military,  
history repeats itself. We live and we fail to learn.  
Jamaica, Australia, America, South Africa, Myanmar, Tibet,  
All are the same.*

*When two worlds collide,  
and one becomes master and the other made to serve.  
In the agony of years might they not have asked God for freedom,  
but the speedy deliverance of a holocaust instead!*

*When two worlds collide,  
All humanity becomes the poorer.  
Strive to be rich!<sup>57</sup>*

Can the past be a relevant starting point for today? Does past Caribbean history have anything to contribute to a study of contextuality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Surely, it is a story already known and given the numerous apologies made in recent times, particularly at the 200 year anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, why begin your research here? These are questions that have been raised during the researching of my thesis. Theologians Lincoln and Mamiya contend that, whilst ‘religion governs the parameters of culture, culture governs how that religion is expressed’,<sup>58</sup> and so given that Africans were taken as slaves to the Caribbean, and without it they would not have been there, it seems only natural to begin where they began to be formed as a people of faith - in enslavement. I

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<sup>57</sup>Written by Doreen Morrison, 2010.

<sup>58</sup>C Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (London: Duke University Press, 1990), 7.

therefore disagree with Hugh Thomas and many others who would have us believe that it ‘is now such well-ploughed ground that there is no room for any new cultivation’,<sup>59</sup> and that to understand the history of the slave trade, is to understand the history of Caribbean peoples, particularly in regards to the development of their culture, its content and roots. Culture is an aspect of British colonialism which has been little understood and discussed.

I would like to suggest that the cultural history of the British Caribbean and its people is best viewed as a football match. An unknown English football commentator once described the game of football as ‘a game of two halves’.<sup>60</sup> As such, ‘If something’s a game of two halves, it means that it’s possible for someone’s fortunes or luck to change, and the person who’s winning could end up the loser’.<sup>61</sup> My research will therefore look at African Jamaican history as one game in two halves, the first at home in Jamaica, the second away in Britain. Each will be considered, telling of the fortunes of those who played and continue to play the game. I will then conclude with a theological reflection on the final minutes of the game and how it may best be won, by enabling British Caribbean people to develop their own contextual expression of their faith. So, I begin with the first half played at home in Jamaica.

### **1.1 The Class System**

The story of communities within the British colonial territory of Jamaica is a story of status and social class amongst three groups of peoples, the Church and Plantocracy, coloured and

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<sup>59</sup>Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870* (London: Picador, 1997), 11.

<sup>60</sup>It is a commentator’s cliché for which the source is not clear. It was in wide use by the 1990s when it was listed in a posting in the usenet newsgroup – rec.sport.soccer. Available from [www.phrases.org.uk](http://www.phrases.org.uk) [Accessed 06/05/10].

<sup>61</sup>Available from [www.usingenglish.com](http://www.usingenglish.com) [Accessed 06/05/10].

white creoles, and enslaved Africans. Though occupying the same island, each community progressed somewhat independently of the others, maintaining and developing their own religious practices in an evolving society, which was new to them all. However they were all united by one structure, the social class system which determined their place in Jamaica society and defined every aspect of their lives. In order to understand the obstacles towards the development of a contextual Caribbean Christianity, one needs first to understand the formation of the class structure within Jamaican society.

### **1.1.1 Church and Plantocracy**

Britain having found the Caribbean islands to be the ideal place for the much needed sugar production, first recruited a ruling elite, the ‘ruling classes’ who saw themselves only as temporary exiles, working to make their fortunes and then returning home to England with increased power, status and economic capabilities.<sup>62</sup> However, the one difficulty which confronted them all was the fact that they were in a foreign land, with harsh conditions, both climatically and geographically, and in charge of a large enslaved group of people who initially spoke no English.<sup>63</sup> This was not England, and so, in addition to creating economic success in this most lucrative of trades, they had to create a new society, a Jamaican society within which they could all live.

Absentee landowners having established their plantations created a tight system of control based on the English class system, which allowed for the functioning of each plantation in

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<sup>62</sup>Philip D Curtin, *Two Jamaicas 1830 – 1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), x.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, ix.

their absence.<sup>64</sup> Three grades or classes of people ran the plantation for the owner; the planter-attorney, the overseer, and the book keeper.<sup>65</sup> The highest status belonged to the attorney and particular the planter-attorney, in charge of all the legal affairs of the plantation, and who was in many instances in the employ of established law firms in England. Many had no training to speak of, just a willingness to be there, and a desire to achieve a share of the wealth that was to be found on the island.

Next, in the pecking order came the overseer – the manager of the slaves and production. He was the man in charge. However, it is believed that such was the desire of some overseers to maintain their social status that they ‘insisted on dining alone on the estate, banishing the bookkeepers to their own quarters’,<sup>66</sup> rather than be seen to be consorting with a person of inferior standing. They tended therefore to be an isolated minority, few in number with no other overseer living within miles of their own plantation, and likely to be unmarried.<sup>67</sup> The book keeper, the lowest member of the group was simply the clerk, keeping all the records of the plantation.

A clearly defined class system was established, which translated itself into every area of white society, both in war and in peace. For example, it is said that when war arose, they remained faithful to their class, the attorneys becoming the officers, the overseers the

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 46-47.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 47.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 18 ‘The proprietor or the successful attorney might have a wife from England or might have married a creole white, but below this social level the European wife was an extravagance... The bookkeeper was expected to find himself a ‘housekeeper’ from among the slave women, while the overseer could either do the same or find a permanent ‘housekeeper’ from the free coloured class’.

cavalrymen, with horses of requisite value, in keeping with their status, and the bookkeepers were merely foot soldiers, the infantrymen. It was not however a static class system, individuals could move up and down, but this then automatically alienated them from those whom they had left behind.

Outside of this class system stood the merchants, and the doctors. Merchants were resented, considered by the permanent residents to be leeches living in the pleasant circumstances of England or Scotland, whilst benefiting from the work done by those within the colony.<sup>68</sup> They were solely interested in profit, and so would rather have dealt with free labourers than slaves, as this would have been a more profitable arrangement for them.<sup>69</sup> Doctors, on the other hand were accepted as providing an invaluable service - keeping enslaved Africans productive until they could no longer be so, at which time they were responsible for having them taken out and thrown down a gulley where they were left to die. Doctors were therefore clearly a valuable addition to the island and whilst some were trained, many were not. They were assisted by enslaved African nurses who were considered in many instances to have more knowledge than the doctors themselves.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 47-48, 50.

<sup>69</sup>William Knibb, Journal entry of his Journey from England to Jamaica 1824 – 25, Angus Library, Regents Park College: Oxford (November 2007), 23-24. ‘In conversation this morning on the evils attending slavery, the Capt. Informed me, this statement was corroborated by the slave-owner passenger that though the profits on what is exported from and imported into Honduras are immense it is a fact that eleven out of twelve of the dealers in human blood die in a state of insolvency after having spent their existence in an ingenious cline for the purpose of amassing a fortune and many of the merchants are of the opinion that free labour would be more profitable unto them. They way of the wicked shall not prosper’.

<sup>70</sup>James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 141-2. Mary Seacole (1805 – 1881) was perhaps the most famous of these nurses. In 1855 despite government opposition, she took her skills to nurse the soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. Available from [www.maryseacole.com/maryseacole/pages/aboutmary.html](http://www.maryseacole.com/maryseacole/pages/aboutmary.html) [Accessed 27/10/11].

Clearly in such a ‘guarded’ society there were tensions. There was the constant fear of a people who were always in the minority and miles from home, having to deal with a much larger hostile and rebellious enslaved African population.<sup>71</sup> Then there was the tension between, and the fear they had of their own people. Wives were often in conflict with their husbands who at worst had a ‘preference’ for sleeping with enslaved women, and at best had a permanent ‘housekeeper’ (mistress), to tend to all their needs.<sup>72</sup> Increased financial success also brought with it an increased fear on the part of the absentee landlord, that his profits were being pilfered by those who managed his plantation, and so over time enslaved Africans were often preferred to run the estate (being so obviously locatable by the nature of his colour should he stray), rather than any attorney.<sup>73</sup>

Despite these internal squabbles, the economic success which was Jamaica soon meant that the planters became the most powerful of all British businessmen, both at ‘home’ and abroad. Such was their power that policies which originated within Jamaica were not only incorporated into all other Caribbean colonies, but grew to affect British domestic policy.<sup>74</sup> The planters and the plantocracy became the sole purveyors of what was acceptable, in terms of social roles and culture for all inhabitants of Jamaica.

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<sup>71</sup>H O L Patterson, ‘Slavery, Acculturation and Social Change: the Jamaican case’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.17, No. 2. (Jun., 1966), 157 – 158. ‘During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries there was an average of ten slaves to every white person and in the nineteenth century there were thirteen slaves to each white’.

<sup>72</sup>David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 108.

<sup>73</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 51.

<sup>74</sup>Oliver Ransford, *The Slave Trade* (Newton Abbot: Readers Union, 1972), 99. ‘Their immense wealth enabled them to control many parliamentary elections, and when Lord Chesterfield tried to buy a seat for his son in 1769 he learned there was no such thing as a borough to be had now, for the East and West Indians have secured them all at the rate of three thousand pounds at least’.

Into this mix came the Church of England (CofE), formally commissioned by Charles II in 1661, and instructed ‘to discourage vice and debauchery and to encourage ministers that Christianity and the Protestant religion, according to the CofE, might have due reverence and exercise’.<sup>75</sup> They may have been commissioned by the king of England, but in reality were subject to the rule of the plantocracy, who led the Assembly Government. Plantation owners though initially seeing the clergy as possibly their most valuable ally, because they had little if any interest in religion, sought initially to keep the clergy ‘in their place’, fearing that should enslaved Africans become Christians or be baptised, then the next natural step would be freedom.<sup>76</sup> Priests therefore had to ‘bow down’ to the planting class, realizing that to abuse the patronage which they grudgingly received from them would have at best resulted in censorship and at worst, deportation.

In truth the plantocracy had nothing to fear, for the evangelization of enslaved Africans was not seen by the CofE ministers as a part of their remit in the colonies. The prevailing view within Christendom, from the time of the Reformation, prior to the missionary endeavours of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, was that the Church had no mandate to either preach the gospel to, or establish Churches for unbelievers in ‘foreign lands’. Sugirtharajah states that the common wisdom at that time held that it was the duty of Apostles, not pastors, to preach the good news, and since the death of Christ’s own apostles, this role and expectation had died with them.<sup>77</sup> So according to historian Bisnauth ‘the ‘national’ character of the CofE led the

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<sup>75</sup>J B Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica* (Project Canterbury: London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1913), 5. Available from [www.anglicanhistory.org/wi/jm/ellis](http://www.anglicanhistory.org/wi/jm/ellis) [Accessed 10/10/07].

<sup>76</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*, 189. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 48.

<sup>77</sup>R S Sugirtharajah, Seminar Paper (University of Birmingham, 2007).

church to continue its activities only to those who were considered nationals and not only were the blacks in British colonies not nationals, they were also chattels'.<sup>78</sup> They firmly believed that they had no commission to evangelise, rather their duty was to maintain, and to tend the congregations which God had given them, in fulfilment of their scriptural mandate taken from Romans 1:16-17.<sup>79</sup> They could therefore without conscience ignore aspects of the 1696 Slave Code which demanded that, 'all masters and mistresses who owned or employed slaves were to endeavour as much as possible to instruct their slaves in the principles of the Christian religion, to facilitate their conversion and to do their utmost to fit them for baptism'.<sup>80</sup>

The Anglican priest was outside of the class system but sought to maintain it in order to receive the favour of the plantocracy. He saw his role as being chaplain to the 'Christians', and to the plantocracy, looking beyond their faults and failings, giving them instead, the outer trappings of a 'respectable' Christian life, baptizing them, marrying them, and presiding over their funerals.

However, as industrious as the CofE minister proved in undertaking his duties to the plantocracy, they proved themselves to be deficient in many other areas. Clergy were believed to be the cause of much of the vice and debauchery on the island. Churches were more often shut than open, by a clergy often described as 'of character so vile, that I do not

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<sup>78</sup>Dale Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Kingston Publishing Limited, 1989), 199.

<sup>79</sup>'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith'. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>80</sup>Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, 102.

care to mention it; for except for a few, they are generally the most finished of our debauchers', and 'much better qualified to be retailers of saltfish or boatswains to privateers than ministers of the Gospel'.<sup>81</sup> It is believed that there were many amongst them who though sent out by the Bishop of London, and approved by the Governor of the island, had fled to the Caribbean under self-imposed exile from Britain, in order to escape crimes and misdemeanours which they had committed.<sup>82</sup>

So it is no surprise that when approached by enslaved Africans they sought ways of excluding them. Ellis argues that though they never clearly stated their indifference to the enslaved African, their actions, soon made known their views, and exclusion was easy to do, particularly when acceptance was dependent upon money. For example, if an enslaved African sought the 'freedom' gained by baptism, he needed to pay £1 3s 9d,<sup>83</sup> a fee which was impossible for any ordinary slave to raise, particularly given that it was not until the early twentieth century that farm worker's salaries reached 1s 6d per week.<sup>84</sup>

Abolitionist John Wesley, renowned evangelist and well-respected clergyman, went as far as to describe enslaved Africans and their race as 'The servile progeny of Ham'.<sup>85</sup> The

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<sup>81</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 12, 13.

<sup>82</sup>David L Edwards, *Christian England: From the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the First World War*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984), 49. John Wesley's own brother-in-law Westley Hall, 'a fervent preacher... fled to the West Indies with one of his many mistresses'.

<sup>83</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 14.

<sup>84</sup>Cecil Morrison, 'Jamaica Remembered' *Oral History 1914 – 1954*, audio tape, 1994.

<sup>85</sup>John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (Dublin: W Whitestone, 1775), 28. This comment was actually a part of a song which Wesley wrote in 1758 and used in a sermon opposing slavery whilst in North America. The verse states, 'The servile progeny of Ham, Seize as the purchase of thy blood! Let all the Heathens know thy name. From Idols to the living God; The dark Americans convert, And thine in every pagan heart'. Available from [www.books.google.co.uk](http://www.books.google.co.uk) [Accessed 27/12/11].

prevailing belief amongst many clergy at this time went even further than Wesley, believing that the enslaved were there to serve the 'white' man. They were considered to be a people without a soul, without humanity, and therefore suitable candidates for enslavement.<sup>86</sup> Anglican clergy therefore behaved no differently than the plantocracy towards enslaved Africans, and it was therefore not uncommon that they too were owners of slaves.<sup>87</sup> One notorious Anglican priest was indicted for murdering a female African slave named Elija,<sup>88</sup> whilst Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, and CofE minister was paid £12,700 after Emancipation to compensate for the loss of earnings as a result of his having to free his 665 slaves.<sup>89</sup>

### **1.1.2 Coloureds and White Creoles**

Next down on the status ladder were a class of people who are best described as the first true Jamaicans. They were not migrants, but Creoles, white people born on the island, and Coloureds, who quickly became a distinct separate group, being the product of sexual liaisons between white men and enslaved African women.

#### **1.1.2.1 Coloureds**

Coloureds created their own controversy being the cause of much contention between the groups on the island, white males and females, white and mulatto,<sup>90</sup> white and black, mulatto

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<sup>86</sup>Samuel Kennedy Yeboah, *The Ideology of Racism* (London: Hansib Publishing Limited, 1988), 44.

<sup>87</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 190. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel owned slaves on the famous Codrington Estate in Barbados.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>John Danks, *Devons Plantation Owners* (British Broadcasting Corporation, 28 February 2007).

<sup>90</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 24. Mulatto is a word taken from the Spanish 'mulo' meaning mixed breed. It was used initially to refer to the results of breeding a donkey with a horse, resulting in a mule. It was then

and black, and Church and society. This was because they were the obvious result of the 'superior' white male, 'tainting' himself with inferior black genes. In time the issue of colour would become a very contentious one, as the lighter ones complexion, the greater ones social acceptance and therefore increased job prospects within Jamaican society.

Faced with so much opposition, the coloured population grew to define their own cultural identity within Jamaican society, creating a class of their own, but never wavering from their desire to be considered white.<sup>91</sup> Such was their zeal that Curtin argues that they 'worked hard to suppress anything that might imply African origin',<sup>92</sup> and even 'discriminated socially against the darker members of their own class'.<sup>93</sup> Being the 'children' of the plantocracy meant that they were raised as though they were free citizens with minimal limitations. They were given limited rights, education and economic power, and kept as domestic servants rather than having to work in the fields alongside enslaved Africans. They were accepted for baptism within the CofE, even though the same rule did not apply to their mothers. They learnt how to have authority and power, firstly over their African playmates, and as they got older, over all enslaved Africans.<sup>94</sup> They developed a positive self image – a white self image – though they were never officially accepted as such.

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adapted in slavery to refer to Africans who were considered to be akin to animals, monkey and ape being two other terms used as comparisons. Available from [www.encyclo.co.uk](http://www.encyclo.co.uk) [Accessed 03/11/10].

<sup>91</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 43. 'People of mixed ancestry were white by law only after four generations of mating with whites'.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid, 54.

In terms of their relationships with people of African heritage, though, being of African heritage themselves, as slavery came near to an end, they in seeking to 'fit in' learnt to be as prejudiced as their white counterparts, so that when the final drive for emancipation came from England, they had made enemies of the abolitionists, the church, and by then, the British government, as they joined with the plantocracy to fight against emancipation.<sup>95</sup>

Such was the nature of their isolation as coloured people that towards the end of the slave period, they developed a Jamaican culture of their own and aspired to be wealthy, but realized that, because of their colour, their wealth would have to be spent in Jamaica, as they were never going to be accepted in the polite white society of Britain. They therefore determined to get an education, work in white collar jobs and pursue leadership as the most Jamaican of Jamaicans,<sup>96</sup> but still with an unfailing loyalty to their masters. By 1830 as free men with equal civil and political rights to their white brethren, most left the 'land', moving from the country, with its link to slavery,<sup>97</sup> to become townspeople. Then, as educated people made free, outnumbering their white European and creole counterparts,<sup>98</sup> they took over the reins of leadership, and have since become the elite ruling class in Jamaica.<sup>99</sup>

### **1.1.2.2 White Creoles**

White Creoles were considered to have less status than the Coloureds. Yet they sought to carve out a life for themselves between the superior white British, and those who they

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid, 46.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid, 43. Curtin states that many coloured people owned estates prior to the abolition of slavery, legitimizing them, by hiring white managers.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid, 240. The 1844 census states that there were 15,776 whites, 293,128 blacks and 68, 549 coloureds.

<sup>99</sup>The majority of Jamaica's Prime Ministers have since Independence come from this group.

nevertheless considered to be their inferiors, the Coloureds.<sup>100</sup> Creoles developed their own culture and customs, but as a consequence of their not being allowed to marry their European counterparts, they were forced to make ‘unions’ with coloured women which then labelled them ‘loose’ in the eyes of Victorian society. Creole society, and therefore Jamaican society developed believing that ‘unions’ such as these, and permanent ‘partnerships’ made with African ‘housekeepers’ were acceptable.<sup>101</sup> So acceptable in fact that there existed legal contracts which made compensation payable to women when and if, the man in question legally married abroad or left the island.<sup>102</sup> By 1830 Creoles were to become the majority within the white community,<sup>103</sup> yet little can be said of their influence except to say that they spent much of their time in conflict with their European counterparts.

### **1.1.3 Enslaved Africans**

Initially the British transported working class people to the Caribbean; the conquered of Ireland, conscripts, thieves, and migrants from other trading posts. However, due to the harsh conditions of the Caribbean, they looked for another people, a working elite more suited to the equatorial climate, and enslaved Africans were found to be ideal. They were a people taken from their homelands in Africa, to foreign soil, thousands of miles away, by a race of people whose language, culture, mannerisms, customs and expectations they could not understand.

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<sup>100</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 24.

<sup>101</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 45. The ‘housekeeping’ system produced 958 children in 1830 baptized by the CofE, and then born free when emancipation came.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid, 52. He states that by 1830, three out of every five white people on the island were born in Jamaica.

Enslaved Africans had no social status and were placed outside of the class system.<sup>104</sup> A total of nearly fourteen million Africans were taken as slaves to the islands of Caribbean during the entire period of enslavement.<sup>105</sup> It is said that the largest group of enslaved Africans came from various regions within West Africa. ‘The ‘Karamanti’ (rebellious but strong) or ‘Coramantyn’– the Ashanti Fanti people of the Gold Coast...the Ibo (industrious) of the Niger Delta...Mandingo, (peaceable) from the region between the Niger and the Gambia, and to a lesser extent, the Pawpaw’s from Dahomey, Congo and Angola’.<sup>106</sup>

Curtin, an eminent historian of his day, argued that white people did not in fact want to Europeanize the enslaved Africans, beyond getting them to do the work which was necessary.<sup>107</sup> However his views were contradicted by the practices which were undertaken in order to create suitably productive ‘slaves’, and their lives thereafter. Having experienced the torment of the Atlantic crossing many Africans believed enslavement would lead to them being eaten in cannibal feasts, or other such torments. On arrival many therefore threw themselves into the sea rather than take those final steps from the ship into bondage.<sup>108</sup> Dr Cullen another noted historian of his day painted a more realistic and very different picture of enslavement to that of Curtin. He described how on their arrival most slaves were ‘skin and bone, too weak to support their languid forms’, and how those who were too weak to be paraded for sale, were simply left on the docks to die.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>The plantocracy chose instead to create a new class for the enslaved - the labouring classes. Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 18, 36.

<sup>105</sup>Ransford, *The Slave Trade*, 73.

<sup>106</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 24 – 25.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>108</sup>Ransford, *The Slave Trade*, 100.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid, 101.

Once on the island, Africans lost their individuality, being redefined as ‘slaves’,<sup>110</sup> thereby enabling slave holders to deny them their humanity, whilst at the same time making it easier for Europeans to treat their fellow human beings as less than human, and therefore easy to ignore. In order to keep profit margins large, competition low, and in order to enable them to keep control of their slaves, plantations were small and therefore easily policed.<sup>111</sup> As the only expectation of the plantocracy was that a profit would be made as quickly as possible, so that they could leave the islands, enslaved Africans had to be made to work as effectively as possible, and within as short a time as possible. The Plantation owners achieved this through a method known as ‘seasoning’. ‘Seasoning’ was designed to ‘break the slaves spirits and to loosen their links with Africa by judicious separation of tribes, by teaching them to speak only the masters’ language and by the most stringent discipline’.<sup>112</sup> Such was the harshness of seasoning that up to one third of transported Africans were believed to have died in the process.<sup>113</sup>

Yet for Africans this was but the beginning, as they learnt that not only were their lives no longer their own, but that of their children, born and unborn, and the decision as to when, how, and by whom such children should be born.<sup>114</sup> Plantation owners became as ‘God’ to

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<sup>110</sup> The term slave was a social construct, that is, ‘a social mechanism, phenomenon or category created and developed by society; a perception of an individual, group or idea that is ‘constructed’ through cultural or social practice’. Available from <http://racerelements.about.com/od/skillsbuildingresources/g/socialconstruct.htm> [Accessed 22/09/07].

<sup>111</sup> Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 8. Slavery was said to be most prominent on the south coast, with the rest of Jamaica being left ‘ruinate’ or unsettled.

<sup>112</sup> Ransford, *The Slave Trade*, 104

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Between a third and a half of all new slaves were known to have died during the seasoning process.

<sup>114</sup> William Knibb, Journal entry 28 January 1825, Atlantic crossing to Jamaica. ‘A...passenger he has slaves but never favours any but females as they cannot be bought into subjection without it. He is an odious picture of the brutalizing and immoral tendency of this execrable system which calls loudly. I was going to say for the curse of every friend of conscience and decency. He informed me when he could not deny the---which were addicted

enslaved Africans, and expected to be respected and obeyed as such.<sup>115</sup> To emphasise their authority and achieve their goals, various punishments were created, to be meted out to anyone found to be slowing down the means of production. For example in order to deal with routine disobedience, slaves would be whipped until they bled, and afterwards, in accordance with protocol, they were commanded to curtsy and thank their master for the punishment which they had received.<sup>116</sup> No one was immune from punishment, so that even the ‘expectant’ mother if found guilty of resistance, was punished by being made to wear a metal collar around her neck until she gave birth.<sup>117</sup>

No aspect of their life was their own, not their identity, family, customs or culture, which was deemed inferior and heathen. European society failed to seek to understand African cultures, society and worldviews, choosing instead to make value judgments simply based on what they had observed in frightened, ignorant people forced from their homes, communities and culture and separated by the barrier of language. History proves that such views and such judgments were in the main wrong, but for the European, to see enslaved Africans dancing in a way unfamiliar to them, was only to be seen negatively, declaring in one instance that it, ‘consisted of stamping the feet, accompanied by various contortions of the body, with strange and indecent attitudes...and the attitudes and inflexions in which they were made, were

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that he personally knows overseers who employ an old woman to bring them all young females when they arrive at maturity for the purpose of debauchery and crime and in order to divest them of every feeling of modesty. Usually compels them to wash him in a state of complete nudity, and it is no uncommon practice for them to cohabit with female slaves for the purpose of increasing their stock’.

<sup>115</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 38.

<sup>116</sup>Ransford, *The Slave Trade*, 119

<sup>117</sup>Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *Encyclopaedia of Women in North America, Vol. 1* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 116.

highly indecent, the performers being nearly naked'.<sup>118</sup> They were not doing the familiar, a Viennese Waltz or some other identifiable European dance, and when compared to the restraints of eighteenth and nineteenth century British society, such behaviour, however innocent, could easily be seen as not only wrong, but frankly quite debauched, reinforcing the notion that enslaved Africans were an uncivilized people in need of civilizing.

The enslaved often responded by acting out those identities given to them by their masters, becoming the 'fools' and pranksters, 'Quashie'<sup>119</sup> figures, 'playing the fool to catch wise',<sup>120</sup> and the tellers of folk tales in order to survive the oppression of slavery. As a consequence much of the primary culture of enslaved African peoples was lost to them, and what remained were those things which their 'owners' had little or no interest in, but was universal to most African cultures; their belief in God and the supernatural, music, dance,<sup>121</sup> community,<sup>122</sup> folk tales, and a respect for their elders.

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<sup>118</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 28.

<sup>119</sup>Patterson, 'Slavery, Acculturation and Social Change', 162.

<sup>120</sup>Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London: Macgibbon and Kee Ltd, 1967), 174 -181.

<sup>121</sup>Hamid, *Troubling the Waters*, 147. 'Man's song and dance are self-expression but they are also done for others, for the other. It is before God that the dance comes into its own, for it claims to imitate God's own way of creation'.

<sup>122</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 36. 'Freedom for the black person meant a situation in which the self experienced itself in harmony with the community...they become social persons...discover herself or himself in terms of duties, privileges, and responsibilities to self and peers'.

John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Frederick A Praeger Publishers, 1969), 108-109. 'I am because we are; and since we are therefore I am'.

### 1.1.3.1 Worshipping God

Slavers kidnapped Africans of many faiths, including Islam.<sup>123</sup> The enslaved Africans worship of God remained hidden, it being an unexpected practice in a world in which God was rarely or privately worshipped. Yet no matter their faith, for them worship was a holistic experience; there was no separation of persons, or life in general, into body and soul, the spiritual and secular as is common in the West. God to them was ‘almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent, transcendent, a good creator, a God of order, gracious, the source of all life and having all power’.<sup>124</sup> They expected that God would one day enable, or allow them to return home to Africa, either in this life or the next, as a reward for their faithfulness in the midst of their suffering, and in order to make the communities which they had left, complete once again.<sup>125</sup> In fact their worship of God became the one area of life which Africans were unknowingly being allowed to remain African and within which they acquired status and power, not simply among their own people, but their masters too. Occasionally their practices did come into contact with the Church, but were soon dismissed by Anglican clergy who, having filtered their rituals through their own worship practices and context, declared them to be irreligious.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>The Angus Library holds a book written in Arabic by an enslaved ‘Mandigo’ African passed on to a church overseen by a Mr Coultard by an enslaved African Deacon named Brailsford. Sent to the BMS, 11 March 1824, transcript in the hands of the Angus Library. The Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

<sup>124</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 34.

<sup>125</sup>Edward Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: Beacon Books, 1979), 3. ‘Have you ever heard African Negroes speak of their own country? I have heard them speak very much in favour of their own country, and express much grief at leaving it. I never knew one but wished to go back again’. And ‘The slaves also believed that after death, they shall first return to their native country, and enjoy again the society of kindred and friends, from whom they have been torn away in an evil hour’. 9.

<sup>126</sup>Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin’*, 60. ‘The Indians and Negroes have no manner of Religion by what I could observe them. ‘Tis true they have several Ceremonies, as Dances, Playing, &c, but these for the most part are so far from being Acts of Adoration of a God, that they are for the most part mixt with a great deal of Bawdry and Lewdness’. Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 38. He makes the point that ‘To interpret a people apart from their world is to misinterpret them’.

Such was the view of their most notable practices, Myalism and Obeah. To the British, Myalism and Obeah were considered to be one and the same religion, often referring to them in totality as Obeah. The CofE dismissed its practitioners as ‘the agent(s) incarnate of Satan’,<sup>127</sup> practicing a form of idol worship and superstition lacking real power.<sup>128</sup> Despite this Obeah was known to drive fear into the hearts of many because of its potential to galvanize the masses into resistance and possible rebellion.<sup>129</sup> They and their followers were therefore considered to be the ‘enemy’ of the Jamaican Assembly, who on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1781 passed a law against both the religious practices, and practitioners, who once caught, they were tortured if they agreed to reveal their secrets, or faced death by burning, if they would not.<sup>130</sup>

#### 1.1.3.1.1 Obeah

Caribbean historians believe that there was a marked difference between the practice of Obeah and Myalism in Jamaica. Many believed Obeah was either a continuation, not of

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<sup>127</sup>T Banbury (Rev), *Jamaican Superstitions or The Obeah Book (1894)* Rector of St Peter’s Church, Hope Bay, Portland, 7.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid, 6. ‘Obeah or obi is said to be derived from a Hebrew term, (Ob) the name of an ancient idol, and the superstitious practice itself is connected with it’.

<sup>129</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 176. The white population did not know the difference between Obeah and Myalism. Thomas Thistlewood wrote in his diary of 1789 that slaves were flogged for practicing Obeah, which was ‘a form of slave religion; a superstition in the eyes of the whites, not to be compared with white religion (though precious few whites had one). Here was a potent element of Africa transplanted into the Americas’. They were said to be ‘slave priests, able to work magic, to inflict harm and pain...all were feared by the planters for the power they held over the slaves and for the role they seemed to play in a great deal of slave subversion, and the women were observed ‘dancing and whirling round in the middle of an assembly, with amazing rapidity, until they foam at the mouth, and drop down as convulsed’.

<sup>130</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 32. Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 180. Banbury, *Jamaican Superstitions or The Obeah Book*, 6. ‘It is stated that the African obeahman carried his obeah magic with him under the hair of his head when imported. For that reason the heads of Africans were shaved before being landed, or if that was not done, he swallowed the things by which he worked in Africa, before leaving’.

African religion, but of the African practices of witchcraft and sorcery, or a part of African religion which was too remote from white religion to be called religious.

As Africans sought to resist enslavement, Obeah developed into a distinct sect, its followers professing to be able to not only free people from the shackles and rule of slavery, but to kill or cure in the name of 'obi'.<sup>131</sup> Such was its rise to fame that most African men, who saw themselves as powerless, often sought the power of Obeah as the means to counter the 'stealing' away of the affection of their African women by their fellow Africans and members of the plantocracy. To fight for their affections would result in punishment and so they would request the appropriate love potion, as their means of fighting back.<sup>132</sup> Obeah as a consequence gained a reputation for evil and was believed by many as one way in which they could successfully resist the oppressiveness of slavery.

#### **1.1.3.1.2 Myalism**

Myalism on the other hand, was considered to be the antithesis of Obeah, anti-witchcraft and anti-sorcery. Historians consider it to have been the only form of African religion brought to Jamaica,<sup>133</sup> and therefore the best and truest representation of African religion, culture and

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<sup>131</sup>Roger Bastide, *African Civilisations in the New World* (London: C Hurst, 1971), 103.

<sup>132</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 29. Michael M Horowitz, *Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean* (Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1971), 136. 'Most deaths are attributed to the magic of obeah-men, whose services have been purchased by some enemy of the deceased. In addition to causing death, magic may have an effect on the course of a love affair, the well-being of one's crops, one's animals, etc.'

<sup>133</sup>Hilary Beckles & Verene Shepherd *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy – A Student Reader* (Kingston Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1991), 295-296. 'Myalism...is the first documented Jamaican religion cast in the "classical" African mold...It...is a collective groups' acceptance of a new religious form consisting of rearranged existing rituals, symbols, and beliefs combined occasionally with new beliefs. Second, the originator is a charismatic leader inspired by dreams and visions. Third, the aim, is a culture which believes that good can and should prevail, is to prevent misfortune and maximize good fortune for the community'.

customs as could be seen at that time. It developed initially without restraint, being 'hidden' by the more prominent voice of Obeah. Myalism was primarily concerned with the worship of God, practitioners believing in a spiritual world, as well as spirit possession, with followers being instrumental in carrying out exorcisms and thwarting the spells cast by the Obeah man or woman.<sup>134</sup>

Central to their worship practices, and particularly to the ecstatic trances, and spirit possession which was necessary for receiving the revelation necessary to heal and to exorcise, was music in the form of drumming, singing and dancing.<sup>135</sup> Europeans who observed it first hand gave favourable reports, describing the dance for example, as a natural extension of who Africans were as people, and was rather to be admired for, 'nothing could be more light, and playful, and graceful, than the extempore movements of the dancing girls...the precision of their step, and the lofty air of their action, the elasticity of their step, and the lofty air with which they carried their heads'.<sup>136</sup> However, given that the majority of the white population neither believed that Africans had the capacity to undertake any form of religious practice, or that spiritual activities such as exorcism or healing were possible, they

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<sup>134</sup> M Beckwith, 'Chapters on Religion', *Black Roadways* (1929), 142. Leaflet available from the Turner Collection, University of Birmingham. 'In 1774...a stupor was produced by means of a cold infusion of callalu (an amaranthus cooked commonly as greens but poisonous in infusion), which could be dissipated by applying lime juice and vinegar as restoratives'. F Cundall, 'On Myalism', *Journal of the Institute of Jamaica*, Kingston 2(6) (March 1899), 587 – 588. Available from the Turner Collection, University of Birmingham. In it he states that 'The Obeah man must not be confounded with the Myal-man, who is to the former what the antidote is to the poison'.

<sup>135</sup> L E Barrett, 'African Roots in Jamaican Indigenous Religion' *Journal of Religious Thought* 35(i) (1978): 16. Myals performed a dance known as Kumina. It was a dance done whenever there was a birth, at puberty, marriage, death, sickness, calamity or injury. Folks danced until they were possessed by the spirit, and it was in that spirit possession that the cause of illness was revealed directly, or through the spirits of dead ancestors.

<sup>136</sup> Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves*, 11. 'Slaves, as was done in Africa, danced and sang at work, at play, at worship; from fear, from sorrow, from joy'.

simply dismissed it as mere noise, superstition and sexually immoral.<sup>137</sup> In fact, such was their annoyance with it that they banned drumming believing that such a gathering of people appeared to them not be a religious gathering, but rather a people gathering to plan rebellion against white authority.<sup>138</sup>

Yet all this was to change as missionary activity became focused upon them, and religious worship used to challenge the last symbols of their cultural identity.

## **1.2 The Missionaries**

Whilst Europeans, Creole whites, coloured populations and Anglican ministers were concerned about maintaining their social status, newly arrived missionaries were not. Their concern was for the salvation of the African and their deliverance from 'heathen' ways, through their acceptance of Christianity, a Christianity which was clothed in Western culture and its' attending value systems.

Missionary activity in Jamaica took place in three waves, the first led by nonconformist churches (including Moravians, Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, Church of Scotland) each working independently of each other, in the latter years of the Eighteenth Century. The second wave was spearheaded by the CofE, following the passing of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Act in 1807. They were called upon to prepare the African for freedom through conformity to expected social, cultural and political norms. The third and

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 10. Banbury, *Jamaica Superstitions*, iii.

<sup>138</sup> Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves*, 10 -11. Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 259. 'The fear of slave revolt was ubiquitous. Slave-owners often imagined revolt where there was none'.

final wave was a joint push by all church groups after the passing of the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1834, which freed all but those enslaved Africans over six years of age, who were made to work for an additional six years as ‘Apprentices’.<sup>139</sup> In the midst of all these groups came the Native Baptist Church, the first native church, established in 1793 by George Liele, a freed slave from North America. Given the uniqueness of its role, the impact it had on a previously ‘unchurched’ population, as well as on the white population, and the fact that it became the foundation on which was built the largest and most radical denomination to rise up in Jamaica in the nineteenth century, the Baptist Church, it is here that the story of missionary Christianity in Jamaica must begin.

## **1.2.1 Native Baptists and the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS)**

### **1.2.1.1 Native Baptists**

Enslaved Africans in North America were exposed to Christianity from about 1750, during the period of the Great Awakening, in which revival swept through the Carolinas, and the Chesapeake.<sup>140</sup> Similarities in practice enabled them to make the transition from African religious practices of death and the world of spirits, to a Christianity which talked of death, resurrection and the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit. Churches developed which accepted Africans and Europeans as equals under God, though they were required to have a white minister in residence. At the forefront of this movement were the Baptists who

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<sup>139</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 307. ‘Apprentices...had to work for their former owners for upwards of forty hours a week, for nothing, for a period of six years...(its) main rationale was to guarantee planters a continuing supply of labour’.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid*, 185.

encouraged still enslaved Africans to pastor such congregations in place of their white counterparts.<sup>141</sup>

George Liele was one such African American. Born in Virginia he became a Christian in Georgia (1773), before becoming the first African American to be ordained as minister within the Baptist Church, in 1775. He was inducted as the minister of the First Baptist Church in Savannah. In 1778 during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), he was given his freedom by his then ‘master’ Henry Sharp, an officer in the British Army, who was also a deacon in the Baptist Church. Earning his passage, he took his family to Jamaica soon afterwards.

Liele became the first ‘unofficial’ missionary to Jamaica, and as such his very presence challenged the status quo, spiritually, socially and politically. He is believed to have been about fifty years old when he first arrived in Jamaica, and by 1791 he was known to have baptized 400 people, and built up a church membership of 450 mostly enslaved Africans.<sup>142</sup>

Liele, just as he had done in America, transcended ethnic, cultural and societal barriers in one of the most segregated of societies. In fact, such was his popularity that he often preached at the Race Course in Kingston, where people of all races came to hear him, some out of genuine interest, but others from a curiosity borne out of seeing an African man preach for the first time. However, such a ‘spectacle’ during enslavement, soon brought him unwanted

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>142</sup> G G Findlay, and W W Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, vol 2 (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 373.

attention from the authorities. In 1794 Liele was banned from preaching by the Jamaican Assembly, having been charged with ‘uttering dangerous and seditious words’.<sup>143</sup> He was then imprisoned on a totally unrelated matter of an alleged outstanding debt, which many believed were simply trumped up charges designed to remove him from his position. By the time Liele was able to resolve this matter, and gain his release from prison, his church had fragmented into many independent churches.

Liele, perhaps in an attempt to reunite his church and avoid future imprisonment re-launched his church incorporating within his congregation a church covenant (1796) (appendix 1), in which he stressed salvation and a faith worked out in obedience to the slave laws of the day. Despite this further laws were established which forbade all preachers to preach freely in churches and on plantations, without the permission of the Government and the plantocracy. Liele was thwarted, and all that was left for him was to become a less effective itinerant preacher with no church home or supportive congregation. Faithful to his calling, this he did until his death believed to be in 1828.

Liele may have been prevented from ministering, but his work continued despite his imprisonment and death. His ‘heirs’ were his co-labourers Moses Baker, and George Gibb, but whereas Liele had sought to accommodate his ministry to the pre-existing conditions of slave society, they did not. Baker,<sup>144</sup> described as a ‘mulatto’ (coloured),<sup>145</sup> had been raised

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<sup>143</sup>K Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 253.

<sup>144</sup>He also came from North America, New York, where he was a Barber.

in the CofE, but unlike Liele, had shown no initial interest in the Church. He is said to have come to the Christian ministry purely by ‘chance’ through the ministry of one Isaac Lacelles Winn, a Quaker, who was seeking a teacher for his slaves.<sup>146</sup> Winn it was who was responsible for Baker’s conversation to Christianity, but he then chose to be baptized and enter into membership of Liele’s church, in 1797.

When Liele was imprisoned, it was Baker who led the church, a church which by then had no church building of its own, so that its members met in various places in and around their plantations. Yet by 1806, Baker claimed to have 3,000 members who recognised him as the leader, thereby allowing him to embark on a plan to formulate a Christian theology able to reflect the culture of the people.<sup>147</sup> His primary emphasis was on the Holy Spirit, which was easily accepted by Africans, many of whom still had clear memories of ‘home’ and their religious practices in Africa which incorporated the world of the Spirit.<sup>148</sup> Members were required to be ‘possessed by the spirit’ before they could be baptized, ‘possession’ coming through dreams, brought about by a fast, and a visit to the bush, where each member was required to wait for the gift to arrive.<sup>149</sup> Liele may have gone, but now through the ministry of Baker and Gibb the gospel began to be inculturated,<sup>150</sup> with Christian practices being expressed in an African way.

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<sup>145</sup>C V Black, ‘Moses Baker: Living Names in Jamaica’s History’, *Living Names: No. 1*, Kingston: Jamaica Welfare (1943), 1. Available from the Turner Collection, University of Birmingham.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

<sup>147</sup>Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, 254.

<sup>148</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 27.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid, 33-34.

<sup>150</sup>Aylward Shorter, *Inculturation of African Traditional Religious Values in Christianity – How Far?* Available from [www.afrikaworld.net/afre/shorter.htm](http://www.afrikaworld.net/afre/shorter.htm) [Accessed 29/01/08], 1. ‘Inculturation means the presentation and

Just as in Liele's time this new 'dispersed' church is said to have produced significant results amongst Africans, and this was confirmed by one or two Europeans, who acknowledged that all that was taking place was a genuine form of Christian worship.<sup>151</sup> Yet despite this, the majority of European church leaders criticized it describing it as a form of syncretism, with practices akin to African religion which had really nothing to do with Christianity. They sought to diminish its worth by defining it as a practice followed by a people who being unable to read created their own form of heathen religion. To them it 'was not 'worship' or adoration of the Godhead in the European/Christian sense. It was a form of spirit-contact, or possession by the God, in the vodun, shango, pocomania, or West African religious sense'.<sup>152</sup>

Also references made to the New Testament and more particularly the book of Acts, were dismissed, as it was clear in their eyes that it was not a book which could be read or interpreted through any kind of cultural variance, and particularly if undertaken by 'ignorant' Africans. Yet such practices if carried out today, may not appear to be so out of place or different from those practiced by the early Pentecostals of the twentieth century, who themselves were known to hold 'watchnight' services as they too waited for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>153</sup>

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re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. This process results in the reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either'.

<sup>151</sup>Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, 254. Rev. Hope Waddell, a Scottish missionary said, 'The written word was a dead letter. If they could not read the Bible they could do without it, which was as good. The Spirit was sought in dreams and visions of the night... As Christ was led of the Spirit into the Wilderness, his disciples must follow him... To the bush, the pastures, or the cane fields'.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>'Baptism in the Holy Spirit is viewed as a distinctive Christian experience...Since the essential meaning of baptism is immersion, Pentecostals often emphasize that to be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed in the Holy Spirit. This signifies a total submergence within the reality of the Holy Spirit so that whoever is baptized has a vivid sense of the Spirit's presence and power'. Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, 355.

Not to be dissuaded, Native Baptists pressed on, formulating their own Baptist hymn book, and restoring the worship of God as a holistic practice, concerned about the political as well as the spiritual aspects of their lives. Typical of the choruses which they were known to have been sung in those days was the following:

We shall be slaves no more,  
Since Christ has made us free,  
Has nailed our tyrants to the cross  
And bought our liberty.<sup>154</sup>

At the same time, as a means of bringing order to their disparate congregations, Baker and Gibb created a 'Class and Leader' system. As congregational members were unable to meet regularly and in one place, leaders were appointed who would watch over each community of believers. Each 'member' was then given a ticket, which both acknowledged them as members of the church whilst at the same time assisting the church in knowing, and being able to personally name and count the number of members it had.

Curtin not only criticizes this ticket system as a form of fetish, or talisman, a legacy of African religion, but also took issue with the leaders whom he described as using the ticketing system to allow them to be tyrannical in their control of their congregations in that they alone had the power to refuse to baptize folk or expel them from the church.<sup>155</sup> However, what Curtin failed to acknowledge was the fact that at the very same time many European Churches including the Wesleyan Methodists, operated almost identically systems,

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<sup>154</sup>Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, 255.

<sup>155</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 33.

and held similar powers, which in some instances led to the punishment and the excommunication of non-compliant church members, Africans in particular.<sup>156</sup>

He also failed to understand African culture, and the African worldview which saw no difference between the spiritual and the physical, all being God's world. In such a belief system pastors like 'tribal' or 'family' leaders before them, were not only well respected, but were expected to exercise oversight of the whole community, and the activities undertaken therein, unlike that practiced by their European counterparts. Their role was therefore that of a protector, rather than as Curtin suggests, a tyrannical controlling force, and perhaps he knew this as he chose to ignore critiquing the Church Covenant, which formed the basis of Baptist Church unity, and showed a maturity of faith, which he had tried so hard to discredit.

Despite criticism from all areas, Africans continued to join the church, their numbers replenished dramatically by an increased number of newly arrived Africans, brought to the Caribbean in advance of the enforcing of the 1807 Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade Act.<sup>157</sup> However, increased numbers brought an increased fear of the potential threat from a rising African population, and so the Jamaican Assembly passed the 1806 Act which prevented preaching on all plantations.<sup>158</sup> Once again the growth of the only African Christian church was being thwarted by the Establishment, however Baker rather than seek to try and renegotiate the boundaries of his ministry as Liele had done, rather chose quite

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<sup>156</sup>Stewart, *Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica*, 123-4.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid, 24. More Africans were transported to Caribbean islands as slaves between the years 1801- 1807 than had arrived previously.

<sup>158</sup>Black, 'Moses Baker', 1. This act remained in place until 1814.

ingeniously to find a means by which the Native Baptist Church could be legitimized and established for the good of the Africans. He sought to ‘co-opt’ a part of the white church – the Baptist Church – as a partner, through the only established missionary organisation at that time, the British Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).

### **1.2.1.2 Baptist Missionary Society (BMS)**

Baker wrote to the BMS, inviting them to establish a work on the island, which would incorporate Native Baptist congregations. In 1814, John Rowe a student of the founder of the BMS, John Rylands, answered the call, paving the way for the birth of legitimate Baptist congregations all over the island, which for the first time, allowed Africans to co-exist as equals with the CofE. At the forefront of this work were Thomas Burchell, and William Knibb who arrived in 1822 and 1824, respectively, and later became two of the most renowned, and influential missionaries of their time, particularly because of their support for the soon to be free Africans.<sup>159</sup>

Knibb and Burchell succeeded where their missionary colleagues seemed to fail because, rather than impose on African people the ‘imported’ cultural practices of their homeland, they chose instead to incorporate Native congregations into the Church, acknowledging as foundational their existing cultural practices and customs. However, like Liele and Baker before them, they faced their own critics, primarily disgruntled Christian missionaries,<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Letter from M Offard to the BMS concerning charges brought against the Missionaries in Jamaica, 18 January 1842. The Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

<sup>160</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 165. The missionaries complained that they were ‘letting congregations grow beyond the personal supervision of the minister, giving too much power to the leaders...requiring special dreams and

who carried a degree of jealousy against Baptist congregations which were seen to be growing faster than all others.<sup>161</sup> Knibb however walked a very thin line, for whilst on the one hand he defended their work, describing his missionary peers, in the most unflattering of terms,<sup>162</sup> he tried to maintain the Africans obedience to the status quo during enslavement,<sup>163</sup> whilst at the same time in Emancipation, defended members of his congregation who were often persecuted for their church attendance.<sup>164</sup>

Knibb and his fellow Baptist missionaries as a consequence were seen as enemies not just of the CofE, but of the Colonial Legislature for permitting the ‘Africanisation’ of the church through the ticketing system. Such was the anger in Jamaica that the Jamaican Baptist Association in order to defend itself, passed a resolution in January 1842, resulting in the sending of Knibb back to England in order to answer all the charges which had been made

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seizure by ‘the spirit’ as a qualification for baptism, and had made baptism by immersion into a superstitious rite’. The ticketing system identified all who attended church as inquirers, candidates and members, and also logged who had made a financial contribution and who could attend communion.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid, 162. ‘The Baptists jumped from about 10,000 in 1831 to 34,000 in 1845’.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid, 165. ‘I would much rather receive into my house the vilest slave-owner Jamaica has ever produced, than some of the agents of the London Missionary. I feel no enmity to them, but such mean, snake like, crawling conduct inspires my unqualified disgust. Under anonymous signatures, and through the vilest papers they have attacked us’.

<sup>163</sup>During the 1831 Slave Rebellion when African Jamaicans had heard that the British Parliament had agreed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (1807), they wrongly assumed that it also meant the emancipation of the enslaved. They therefore sought to force the issue, Knibb opposed it arguing that, ‘I am pained – pained to the soul, at being told that many of you have agreed not to go to work any more for your owners, and I fear this is too true. I learn that some wicked persons have persuaded you that the King of England has made you free. Hear me! I love your souls and I would not tell you a lie for the whole world; I assure you that it is false as hell can make it. I entreat you not to believe it, but go to your work as formerly. If you have any love to Jesus Christ, to religion, to your ministers, or to those kind friends in England who have helped you build this chapel, and who are sending a minister for you, do not be led away. God commands you to be obedient’. Sam Sharp replied, ‘We have worked enough already and will work no more; the life we live is too bad, it is the life of a dog, we won’t be slaves no more, we won’t lift hoe no more, we won’t take flogging anymore’. Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 49.

<sup>164</sup>William Knibb, (1803 – 1845), by James Culross from *Founders and Pioneers of Modern Missions*, 1899. Available from [www.edintone.com/pageswknibb.html](http://www.edintone.com/pageswknibb.html) [Accessed 03/07/07], 1. On one such occasion, the magistrates ordered that a deacon of his church be flogged and put to work in, chains, for holding a prayer meeting. Knibb stood by the man and actually remonstrated on his behalf, which resulted in the magistrate concerned losing his position.

against the Association.<sup>165</sup> Knibb returned to England that April and defended the work in Jamaica, with one of the notorious tickets in hand.<sup>166</sup> His mission was a success. He dispelled all their concerns, but as a consequence he developed concerns of his own as he witnessed the opposition that there was to the developing of a truly contextual church in Jamaica, and so together with Burchell, made plans to leave the BMS on his return to Jamaica, in order to establish such a church.

On returning to Jamaica Knibb together with Burchell founded Calabar College,<sup>167</sup> but before they were able to develop the native church which they had envisaged, he died in 1845, and Burchell a year later in 1846. With their deaths the church weakened, and despite the fact that they had left a very substantial Baptist legacy - congregations consisting of about half of the island's total African Jamaican church going population<sup>168</sup> - the story of the Native Baptist Church, the first African initiated church on the island came to an ungainly end.

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<sup>165</sup>Resolution passed at 12 Annual Meeting of the Jamaica Baptist Association, East Queens Street, Kingston, 18 January 1942, Letter of instruction to William Knibb signed by its 22 other members. The Angus Library, Regents Park College: Oxford, 2007. 'Tell them. We beg to assure our excellent committee of our undiminished confidence in their wisdom and our heartfelt sympathy with them in their desires to reduce as much as possible the expence of this mission, and our readiness to co-operate with them in effecting so desirable and necessary an object. We conceive however that in carrying out this----it is of great importance that the committee insist on the withdrawment from their friends of those agents whose success bears no adequate proportion to the expence incurred by them and their stations, as well as those whose attempts to lessen the character of the Mission my calumniating the members of our churches, appear more conspicuous than their endeavours to extend the gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ... We remain, dear brother'.

<sup>166</sup>M Offard letter to the Jamaican Baptist Association, April 1842, transcript in the hand of the Jamaican Baptist Association. Available at The Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford. Of Knibbs dramatic defence of the work in Jamaica Mr Offard stated, 'This is the card which Mr Knibb held in his hand while addressing the meeting in E---House in---of his brethren. It was a good illustration of his success of missionaries that he brought away from Jamaica, the card of a member of the same name as his most active opponent (*Edward Barrett*)'.

<sup>167</sup>BMS 'Report of the Deputation to Jamaica. October – December 1909' (London: Alabaster, Passmore and Sons Printers). Calabar College was a project which developed into three separate departments, a Normal school which was used to train school teachers, a Theological school for the training of ministers, and a day school for children.

<sup>168</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 168.

### 1.2.2 Mainline Protestant Denominations

As discussed previously, evangelism to ‘unbelievers’, and particularly to the African, was not considered to be a part of the remit of the Christian Church, however, two things came together which changed their minds; the missionary imperative revealed to them by William Carey, taken from Matthew 28:18-20,<sup>169</sup> and the birth of a particular type of Christian expression, Evangelicalism.<sup>170</sup> Whereas the text in Matthew needs no further explanation at this point, Evangelicalism as a particular type of Christianity needs to be explained as it came to have such an all invasive impact on the Church and how it interacted and sought to influence those it was determined to ‘Christianize’.

Evangelicals placed a particular emphasis on how believers should behave. To them, ‘Right conduct followed right belief, according to the evangelical ethos, just as surely as moral turpitude arose from theological error. Life was a serious business, the anteroom to eternity...judged, if not here, then hereafter’.<sup>171</sup> One of the leading proponents of Evangelicalism was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a renowned Baptist minister. Spurgeon spoke with great zeal of man’s innate evil nature which if, ‘Left unchecked, it produced idleness’ in both the upper and lower classes, which led to physical excess and worse’.<sup>172</sup> To him, and

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<sup>169</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>170</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

<sup>171</sup> James R Moore, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Open University / Manchester University Press, 1992), 192. ‘Right conduct followed right belief, according to the evangelical ethos, just as surely as moral turpitude arose from theological error. Life was a serious business, the anteroom to eternity; all ones deeds must needs be judged, if not here, then hereafter’.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

other Evangelicals, Christianity was a very serious business and therefore they were critical of music, dancing, and drama, but zealously encouraged Christian marriage, and the family as the only means by which a successful society could be progressed.<sup>173</sup> Despite the fact that Evangelicalism was a new movement, it had allies in powerful places<sup>174</sup> and therefore became the face of the Christian Church in the Nineteenth Century. Evangelical missionaries therefore took their mantra of ‘right conduct followed right belief’ to the Caribbean, and it could only end in tears, given the nature of African Jamaican worship to that point.

### **1.2.2.1 The Nature of Missionary Activity**

It is unlikely that the Nonconformist missionaries considered that they would be an obstacle to the advancement of African people in the Caribbean, as, in addition to their evangelical zeal, they were committed to bringing about the abolition of slavery, and the establishing of their denominations as the denominations ‘of the people’.<sup>175</sup> Their natural enemies they knew would be the planters, and the CofE, who saw them as a threat because of their emancipatory intent,<sup>176</sup> however, enslaved Africans were also naturally suspicious of them, not only because they were members of the white ‘ruling’ classes, but because they demonstrated a

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<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Central to the growth of Evangelicalism was the Clapham Sect (1790-1830). Amongst its leaders were Lord Teignmouth, Governor of India, and William Wilberforce, Member of Parliament, credited with leading the campaign to abolish slavery. Available from [www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Clapham\\_sect](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Clapham_sect) [Accessed 27/10/2011].

<sup>175</sup>Franklin W Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 108.

<sup>176</sup>J H Parry, Philip Sherlock, and Anthony Mangot, *A Short History of the West Indies*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1987), 130. ‘The missionaries might not be able - and some of them certainly were not willing - to teach slaves to rest content in their slavery; but they could, and did, teach slaves ways of life which discouraged murderous mutiny’. *A Short History of the West Indies*, 159. ‘As the emancipation movement in England grew more powerful and as the slaves began to grow more restive, the feeling against the missionaries became stronger and more hostile; not only planters, but the clergy of the CofE and some officials made common cause against them’. Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 21.

reluctance to share church leadership with them, maintained the established class system, and excluded them as co-labourers when setting up churches and mission stations.<sup>177</sup> It was therefore difficult for these missionary groups to progress amongst a constituency which would have traditionally been their prime constituents in Britain – the working classes. They were nevertheless determined to succeed.

The Moravians arrived first in 1754, establishing themselves on land given to them within the Bogue Estate plantation, in the Western interior of St Elizabeth.<sup>178</sup> In order to build the mission station which they needed, they used the labour made available to them – enslaved Africans – and perhaps not surprisingly their influence amongst them was initially limited. Also, as was typical of missionaries of the day, they did not assist their cause by failing to seek to incorporate other ways of being Church in this new context, and so often sabotaged the little progress they managed to achieve. For example, after one Christmas Eve celebration service they chastised the Africans for carrying out what they considered to be heathen practices - beating drums, dancing and singing.<sup>179</sup> Such was their single-minded understanding of how faith was to be expressed, and their lack of respect for African customs and cultural practices that they could not identify it as a contextual continuation of the Christmas celebrations, choosing instead to see it as a failure by the people to adopt ‘civilized’ worship practices. The ‘offended’ minister remarked, ‘scarcely was our worship

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<sup>177</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 35.

<sup>178</sup>Jamaican Government, *Religion in Jamaica* (Kingston: Jamaican Tourist Authorities, 1976), 5.

<sup>179</sup>At Christmas slaves all over the island performed in their own John Canoe (Jonkonnu) masked festivals, where men were dressed in various European outfits, with hats of various times and sometimes shaped in various structures such as boats or houses. It involved a parade, a feast, music and dance, aimed at communicating with the spirit world. Beckwith, *Black Roadways*, 151. ‘Pitchy Patchy’, *Jamaican Journal* no 43 nd. (1979):19.

closed, before the heathen negroes on the estate began to beat their drums, to dance, and to sing, in the most outrageous manner...After breakfast...(I)...expressed my surprise that, having heard the word of God for so many years, they still continued their heathenish customs'.<sup>180</sup>

Next to arrive were the Wesleyan Methodists in 1789, under the leadership of Dr Thomas Coke. They, like the Native Baptists arrived in Jamaica with an expectation and acceptance of the reality of the Holy Spirit. Such was their enthusiasm that they were soon seen by the CofE as fanatical, and a threat to the status quo.<sup>181</sup> So, though they had managed to achieve twelve curates in nineteen parishes by 1822, unlike the Moravians, they were not supported by the establishment or given land on which to build chapels or churches, and though they took an interest in the plight of Africans, few Africans were inclined to join them, as they were seen to be not too dissimilar in their worship practices to that of the CofE. This resulted in a Methodist church which gained a constituency of Myal men, who saw the church as a 'haven' which could protect them from persecution,<sup>182</sup> and coloured people who saw it as their opportunity to be linked with an acceptable 'European' church, fulfilling their desire to be considered white, having previously been rejected by their European peers.<sup>183</sup> Methodists in Jamaica ultimately came to be known as 'the coloured sect'.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves*, 13-14.

<sup>181</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 22.

<sup>182</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 33.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid, 24. In Jamaica the following categories of people were constructed, 'Sambo: the child of a mulatto and a black man, Mulatto: the child of a black woman and a white man, Quadroon: the child of a mulatto and a white man, Mustee: the child of a quadroon and a white man, Mustaphini: the child of a mustee and a white man, Quintroon: the child of a mustiphini and a white man, and Octoroon: the child of a quintroon and a white man (his or her position entitled them to have their freedom)'. These were the people who were the result of sexual

There were many other minor denominations which also presented themselves on the island, the foremost being the French Catholic Creoles from Saint Dominguez, and Jews. Both groups were known to own their own slaves and in fact many Jews eventually became planters and merchants in their own right. Also present, but less influential were the Church of Scotland (1819) and the Scottish Missionary Society (1823) who were as rebellious in their opposition to slavery as their Baptist counterparts.<sup>185</sup> The Plymouth Brethren were quite unique in that they came with their conservative attitudes which were in the main, ‘anti-music, anti-woman, anti-amusement...with no doctrinal basis, no organized ministry and no social outreach’.<sup>186</sup> Suffice to say their presence was mostly overlooked.

Each came to make a difference, and make a difference they did, but it could only be achieved with the assistance of the British government, as we shall now see.

### **1.3 Church and Government combine to engineer Jamaican Society**

Up to this point the class system was the priority of the island government and plantation classes, whilst adherence to Christianity was the sole concern of the CofE. However the two ambitions came together to determine, and define, how Jamaican society should be structured as a society, and prepared for the passing of significant pieces of legislation from Britain, which would bring an end to slavery.

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relations between predominantly white plantation owners and managers, and enslaved African women. In time they became a specific social group of their own, ‘coloured’.

<sup>184</sup>Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, 195-196.

<sup>185</sup>Parry, Sherlock, and Maingot, *A Short History of the West Indies*, 130.

<sup>186</sup>L E Barrett, *The Sun and the Drum* (Kingston: Sangsters Bookstore, 1976), 24.

In 1807 the British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Act. It determined that Africans were no longer to be brought to the Caribbean to work as slaves, but stated that the position of existing enslaved Africans would not change. As a consequence of this, the CofE and the British Government had to think again concerning the state of religion on the island, particularly as it affected enslaved Africans. In 1816 the Jamaican Assembly passed an act which brought enslaved African's spiritual needs to the fore. It called upon the Church to 'consider the state of religion among slaves, and to carefully investigate the means of diffusing the light of genuine Christianity among them'.<sup>187</sup> This was followed by the 1823 Slave Code, which redefined the conditions under which slaves were to be kept.

In 1824 the See of Jamaica was incorporated,<sup>188</sup> and Christopher Lipscomb was appointed the first Bishop of Jamaica in 1825 and then on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1834, the Houses of Parliament in England passed the Emancipation Act. However, under the illusion that it was necessary for the British Government to create an ordered society, it declared that freedom could only be given in stages. It was to be given firstly to the coloured population, and those aged below six years of age at the time of Emancipation, concluding some six years later with freedom for the majority Black population,<sup>189</sup> who in the interim were forced into various forms of

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<sup>187</sup>Barrett, *African Roots*, 17.

<sup>188</sup>It consisted of Jamaica, the Bahamas and the settlements in the Bay of Honduras and their dependencies.

<sup>189</sup>The general consensus was that Africans were somewhat lacking in mental ability and therefore would only be capable of being a working class, servant people, therefore they needed to be trained as such. Of them Rev George Wilson Bridges, Anglican Rector of St Ann's Bay, stated, 'The human scale goes downward from the white to the Hottentot, where the gap to the highest of the animals, the orangutan, is not great'. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 41-42. The CofE itself stated that, 'Any drive towards conversion should be tailored towards the slaves' greatly inferior mental capacities. Suitably converted and fed an appropriate diet of quiescent theology, blacks could, it was determined, become perfect slaves; compliant, accommodating and socially calm'. Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 182.

apprenticeships; six years for field labourers, and four years for domestic and house servants.<sup>190</sup>

In an attempt to do the least amount of damage to the wealth of the plantocracy the British Government together with the Church, determined that they had to organise the society which was to develop, for fear of there being an ‘uncontrolled’ African majority, and because as Lord Harris, Governor of Trinidad and Tobago so aptly declared, ‘A race has been freed, but a nation has not been formed’.<sup>191</sup> So, the British Government began by setting up the Negro Education Grant (1835-45), whose aim it was to provide the education necessary to prepare apprenticed Africans for freedom. Since the only education undertaken with regards to African Jamaicans during enslavement, was that which had been provided by religious groups, this initiative was offered to them first. Each denomination was offered a grant of some £30,000 per year per island.<sup>192</sup>

The BMS was the only group which raised any objections to this plan as they already ran many schools on the island, and therefore feared government intervention in their affairs.<sup>193</sup> They wanted to continue to offer an education system which was both, liberal and

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<sup>190</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 307.

<sup>191</sup>Devon Dick, *Rebellion to Riot: The Jamaican Church in Nation Building*, 2d ed. (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004), xv.

<sup>192</sup>Patricia T Rooke, ‘A Scramble for Souls: The Impact of the Negro Education Grant on Evangelical Missionaries in the British West Indies’ *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4. (Winter, 1981): 430.

<sup>193</sup>These were schools began by Liele, and happily maintained by the BMS. Extract of a letter from William Knibb, Kingston Jamaica, March 1825, to Samuel Nichols. Transcript in the hand of Samuel Nichols, The Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford, 2007. ‘Last week I buried a little boy who was formerly one of my brother’s scholars. He was taken ill one day, dead the next, and buried the third...Many of his school-fellows followed, and when I addressed them from the grave they wept profusely. I was much affected’. William Knibb had himself gone to Jamaica to replace his brother Thomas who ran the school in Kingston.

comprehensive, rather than narrow and restrictive as they expected that this new system would be. Having initially turned it down, asking that their concerns be addressed,<sup>194</sup> they changed their minds when the government agreed to honour their concerns, and allayed their fears by reimbursing them for buildings and churches which had previously been attacked and destroyed by the Colonial Church Union.<sup>195</sup>

So began the partnership between the Churches and the British Government, and together they had one aim in mind, that of providing an education for all the children in Jamaica.<sup>196</sup> Central to that education was the Churches belief that religious instruction had to be at the heart of it, foundational as the means whereby they would combat erroneous cultural practices.<sup>197</sup> Many of the teachers were in fact either ordained ministers or missionaries, and as a result saw their primary role as that of an evangelist, rather than an educator, and as a result they assessed their achievement not by academic advancement, but by the gaining of a ‘Christian soul’. Children were therefore taught reading, writing and religion (the study of the Bible), which in fact meant that they spent their time receiving religious instruction, learning

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<sup>194</sup>Baptists wanted agreement that in operating schools with government funds arguing that ‘nothing in the mode of conducting the schools should interfere with the rights of conscience on the part of the parents as to attendance of pupils on public worship, or the enforcement of any particular formulary of religious instruction’. Extract of the BMS Committee meeting, 11 December, 1834, Minutes for October 23, 1824 –November 30, (1837), Vol. 10, 11. Available from the Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

<sup>195</sup>The Colonial Church Union was an organisation formed by Anglican clergy to, ‘Resist by all constitutional means, the encroachments of their enemies...burning non-conformist chapels and attacking missionaries on the theory that ‘to get rid of the rooks you must destroy their nests’. J H Parry, Philip Sherlock, Anthony Maingot, *A Short History of the West Indies* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1987), 159

<sup>196</sup> Knight, *The Caribbean*, 285. ‘The main thrust of public education in the nineteenth and early twentieth century...came from various competing denominations. The CofE, the Baptists, the Moravians, the Wesleyans, the Presbyterians, and the Jesuits’.

<sup>197</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 32. ‘Instruct in the principles of our holy religion all the negro population of the West Indian Islands, the freedom which was intended to be a blessing may prove a curse. A deliverance from the restraint of earthly masters may become the means of licentiousness unless it be attended with such instruction as shall substitute the holy restraints of religion’.

how to read, write and understand Christianity as explained to them through the lens of European Christianity, wrapped up in the garments of English Christianity and expressed through British cultural practices.

From these narrow beginnings education was expanded towards the end of the nineteenth century, but this served only to increase the influence of British and particularly English cultural values in the lives of African Jamaicans. Only British textbooks were used, they enabled the sitting of British exams including entrance exams to British Universities, and continued to use only British educated missionaries and lay preachers as teachers.<sup>198</sup> They neither used nor sought to enhance Caribbean education by including anything taken from the locale - its history, culture, customs or beliefs. Here began the link which determined that future generations came to expect and understand that to be a Christian was synonymous with expressing English cultural values, and that their social class was to be determined not only by the church which they attended, mainline or otherwise,<sup>199</sup> but their ability to read, write and speak English as well as any English person in England.

Creole Africans having always considered themselves to be superior to those who came directly from Africa<sup>200</sup> and, fuelled by the colonial policy of ‘divide and rule’,<sup>201</sup> were glad of

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<sup>198</sup>Ibid, 107.

<sup>199</sup>Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, 202.

<sup>200</sup>Patterson, *Slavery, Acculturation and Social Change*, 155. ‘Newly arrived Africans, and indeed even seasoned Africans, were contemptuously regarded by the creole slaves as “Guiney-birds” or “salt-water negroes”’.

<sup>201</sup>Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin*’, 35. ‘The official colonial policy of “divide and rule” was relentlessly pursued and rigidly woven into the fabric of Caribbean social life. Thus, under a dominant policy that stressed their natural inferiority and the inconsequential nature of their basic cultural heritage, Caribbean people became

these developments and the opportunity to be able to identify themselves as a part of the new and emerging Jamaican middle class. They aspired to leadership positions in the new Jamaica, developing a European identity, with hopes of one day going to the ‘mother country’, and being seen as the middle class British people they ‘truly’ were. This, fortunately for the British, translated into a group who would become the buffer between them, and the Black majority.

These and other experiences served to confirm to the African that there would be no going to, or returning ‘home’ to Africa, and that if they were to achieve either economic or social success and stability, then it would have to be in Jamaica, and so to comply to the social systems of the day was their only means of achieving true freedom. They had to become imitators of ‘Englishness’, in all aspects of their lives; how they dressed, the language used in the public arena and how they worshipped God. The quickest way to achieve this was for all members of the family to, as appropriate, attend schools, and join churches. This they did in their hundreds and thousands until Emancipation (1838) when only the truly determined minority remained, learning new ways, new cultural practices, new belief systems and ultimately took on a second identity, that of the middle class African Jamaican.

The majority of African Jamaicans - the working and peasant classes – fled to live in the hills, far away from white society, and when in 1848 wages began to fall, the ‘rush’ to be

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mutually contemptuous. They began to assume that anything foreign and white was good, whereas that which was local and non white was not good enough’.

converted to the white man's culture declined even further.<sup>202</sup> Many began to rediscover their cultural identities, developed strong attachments to the land, and returned to the only available religious system which allowed them to be themselves, Myalism.<sup>203</sup> Faced with such a 'rebellion' the majority of the missionaries expressed a great deal of disbelief that the majority of African Jamaicans had not 'bought' into their world view, accusing them of '(Having) it all their own way...carry(ing) their independence sometimes too far'.<sup>204</sup> Forever mindful that the eyes of the evangelical Church at 'home' was upon them, and being very concerned about what they deemed to be the moral decline on the island, and the dysfunctional nature of the Caribbean family, they sought to maintain their 'credibility' and consolidate their position by embarking on a new strategy which would firmly challenge and cement together the link between culture, social class and Western Christianity.

No longer was church attendance and conformity to its rules, to be optional, the Church chose to make it a prerequisite requirement for those wanting to receive an education and achieve greater social status. This led to many changes in the life of the African Jamaican, changes which they had little or no time to prepare for, but which by their very nature both challenged and dismissed once again their social and cultural values. For example, having previously barred them from Christian marriage, they now sought to enforce it through the application of some very stringent rules, such as the one which declared that children born out of wedlock could only be baptized in churches on weekdays, whilst those born within a

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<sup>202</sup>Beckles and Shepherd, *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, 298.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid, 297.

<sup>204</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, Chapter 7, 36.

missionary church sanctioned marriage could be baptized on Sundays - the Lord's Day.<sup>205</sup> Unmarried fathers were labelled 'social outcasts' with the right of baptism being refused to any child where the name of both parents could not be provided.<sup>206</sup> Unsurprisingly, rather than produce the desired effect, it simply turned many mothers into liars, so that they desiring a 'respectable' Sunday baptism, and the status which went with it, and not wanting to be considered second class citizens, simply presented other family members or friends, as the father of their babies.<sup>207</sup>

Whatever the spiritual goal, African cultural practices were placed at the centre of the missionaries attack. It seems that it was not enough for African cultural practices and values to be decimated by nearly 200 years of enslavement, missionaries now sought to destroy that which remained. So, the binding of marriage (which for Africans had historically been confirmed when the woman became pregnant, the man and woman having already agreed a union<sup>208</sup>), broken by enslavement, was now subject to a church which determined that marriage had to happen prior to pregnancy, and should a woman become pregnant prior to marriage, then she had to marry the man who made her pregnant. Many men as a consequence, adversely interpreted this rule as a license to abuse women, and gain for themselves a wife, whether there had been a prior relationship or not,<sup>209</sup> and women who had historically been recognised as the 'head' of the household - teaching their children their

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<sup>205</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 75.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid, 76.

<sup>208</sup>Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 107.

<sup>209</sup>Amnesty International, Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Jamaica: 'Just a Little Sex', 22 June 2006. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/44c5f2a24.html> [Accessed 05/07/07].

history, customs and religion, - saw this European Christian marriage, in contrast to their own as, 'a mark of subordination and slavery to the male'.<sup>210</sup>

Knibb recognising the problems which faced African women, once described their position as being the harshest of all peoples.<sup>211</sup> Hounded by both African and European males, who competed with each other, not for their affection, but rather their own self gratification, African women lost not only their identity but their status. They were demoted from being the matriarchs of society to that of a means of production, chattel and possession, shamed and punished for the crimes which were often committed against them, and the children which ensued as a result.<sup>212</sup>

Rather than unite, these policies developed a Jamaica which became an increasingly divided society where the hearts of the majority were no closer to being won than they had been during enslavement, and the Church realizing its dilemma, and the limited funds available to it, became particular, ceasing to be concerned about converting the majority, accepting that a new elite minority, the African Jamaican middle class was the way forward. The coloured population, who had always wanted to be accepted as British, came willingly as did a minority of African Jamaicans, who either bought into the notion of their own black inferiority and British white superiority, or who realized, 'that to be Christian in religion was

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<sup>210</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 25.

<sup>211</sup>William Knibbs recorded his concern in his Journal after speaking to a slaver as he travelled to Jamaica, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1825. Available in the Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

William Knibb, Jamaica, to C Young, St Albans, Near London, 19 December 1839, transcript in the hand of C Young, The Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

<sup>212</sup>B W Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807-1834*, 2d ed. (Kingston, Jamaica: The Press, University of the West Indies, 1995), 365.  
Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 204.

an important criterion for social worth in the society. The fact that the important people in the society, (government officials, school teachers, ministers of religion) were Christians, helped to strengthen that feeling'.<sup>213</sup>

Such was the 'success' of this new missionary initiative that CLR James, renowned Caribbean writer and historian, lamented of his own past that, 'When I left school I was an educated person, but I had educated myself into a member of the British middle class'.<sup>214</sup> Christianity was achieving what politics had failed to do, remove the final vestiges of African cultural identity, replacing it with a British one.

The Church spent the remainder of that century and the beginning of the next, consolidating their position by seeking to eradicate all remnants of anything which was other than a British cultural identity. Their work was made easier by the fact that each mainline denomination had during the formative years of emancipation established their own Bible Colleges, though some were more successful than others. The Methodist College closed after a year, having only managed to attract four students,<sup>215</sup> whilst the Baptist Calabar College, became one of the primary institutions for the training of ministers of all denominations, albeit by recruiting the majority of their trainees, along with the curriculum and tutors, from England.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup>Bisnauth, *History of Religions in the Caribbean*, 201.

<sup>214</sup>Knight, *The Caribbean*, 286.

<sup>215</sup>Stewart, *Religion and Society*, 94. Of the closure of the Methodist College, the administrator stated that it was as a result of the 'spirit of insubordination among the students, encouraged by the radical opinions and prevalent spirit of opposition to things legitimately constituted'.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid.

## 1.4 African Jamaican Resistance

The reality of an emancipated Jamaican society was that for too many African Jamaicans it was a freedom which still left them as second class citizens, vulnerable to European peers who they considered prone to take advantage of them whenever the opportunity to do so presented itself.<sup>217</sup> As a consequence there were obvious divisions which resulted in a new type of resistance, initially led by the very middle class African Jamaicans which the British Government had believed would be the most conforming and obedient to the status quo. It was a resistance later embraced by the working and peasant classes, before being taken over by Revivalist Christians, many of whom eventually looked to North America Christianity, and in so doing, found their means of resistance.

### 1.4.1 The Leadership Challenge

The advancement of the African Jamaican middle classes after emancipation was so profound that they sought to reclaim something of their identities and the roles which in ‘another life’, had been as more than just ‘slaves’.<sup>218</sup> Such was their desire to fully participate in Jamaican society that by the 1840s having become teachers, deacons, pastors, bilingual translators,<sup>219</sup> and missionaries,<sup>220</sup> they challenged for the leadership of their own churches in their own land. Whilst there were white missionary sympathizers such as Thomas Pennock (Methodist), and Thomas Dowson (Baptist), who championed a more egalitarian church,

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<sup>217</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 175.

<sup>218</sup>It is a fact that Africans were often enslaved as a result of ‘tribal’ battles or having been kidnapped directly by slavers. In a ‘previous’ life they came from all walks of life, prince’s, farmers, religious leaders etc.

<sup>219</sup>Shirley C Gordon, *Our Cause for his Glory* (Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998), 72, 74.

<sup>220</sup>Peter A Schweizer, *Survivors on the Gold Coast: The Basel Missionaries in Colonial Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Smarline Publishing, 2000), 50-53. Basle Mission recruited 6 African Jamaican families and 3 bachelors to take the gospel to Akropong in 1842.

Anglican minister Robert Gordon's experience typified the difficult position which the educated middle class Black Jamaican elites found themselves in.

Gordon became a symbol of all those calling for justice for the Black majority denied leadership positions purely because of their colour. He and others of his 'class' soon learnt that he may have developed the skills to become a priest, but would never be allowed to play the cultural game,<sup>221</sup> by being given a mandate to preach and be called priest in his native Jamaica, not just by his own, but also by his white peers. Whereas his future was once determined by the term 'slave', now he was being identified as a Black man, and as a Black Jamaican, no amount of 'seasoning' into Western Christianity would as he hoped, make him equal in the eyes of his white Anglican counterparts.<sup>222</sup>

Gordon was the ideal candidate to work with his CofE colleagues, having been acculturated into the Jamaican middle classes, and alienated from his own culture, believing that the 'native' churches lacked the education, and the appropriate spiritual authority, and therefore should be considered 'less than' those established by European Missionaries. For him, the development of the Black population could only be achieved through attendance at churches

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<sup>221</sup>Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 86-87. 'Cultures can be characterized through their cultural games... Cultural games structure our lives. (*They*)... have rules that determine whether the game is played properly. In order to participate in a certain cultural game, one has to meet specific requirements. Participation in cultural games presupposes (1) a certain type of competence (that is knowing how to do it...) and (2) a certain type of mandate (society's permission or social authorization to play the game)'.

<sup>222</sup>Henry John Dutton, Browns Town, St Ann's, to Mr Giles, Gaunt House, Standlake, Oxon, 28 March 1840, transcript in the hand of Mr Giles, The Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, 2-3. Dutton writing home seeks to 'correct' the prevailing view of many other ministers in regards to the capabilities of African Jamaicans. He stated that, 'To say they are destitute of common sense; that they are deficient in intellect; that they are the connecting link between Ham and ape; is a libel upon their characters, as gross as it is malicious and as wicked as it is gross, a libel which issued from the mouths of the "tyrants" who oppressed them... only education is wanted to make them equal in ever respect to their fairer neighbours'. Stewart, *Religion and Society*, 104.

with an ‘educated’ clergy rather than ‘self-ordained native ministers – who were of the same class as the people whom their presumption made them think themselves qualified to teach’.<sup>223</sup> Yet for all this, though he challenged the status quo for the entirety of his ministry, and had been welcomed as a minister in both Canada and England, he died never having been allowed to minister in the country of his birth.

Significant resistance also came from Alexander Bedward (1859-1930) and Marcus Garvey (1887 – 1940) African Jamaicans who celebrated African Caribbean culture and identity as being God-given. Bedward began his ministry on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1891, inheriting a congregation with rituals similar to Zion Revivalism,<sup>224</sup> but with other rituals drawn primarily from the CofE and British cultural practices.<sup>225</sup> Bedward believed that the best way to conquer the coloniser was to develop a command of their culture, embrace it as their own thereby nullifying any effects it could continue to engender of superiority.<sup>226</sup> Harping back to the days of George Liele he named his church the Native Baptist Free Church, emphasizing Black identity,<sup>227</sup> and preaching against the injustices of the government. This made him an enemy of the Governor of Jamaica who had him ‘sectioned’ in 1895, before imprisoning him

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<sup>223</sup>Ibid.

<sup>224</sup>Austin-Broos, 62. Zion Revivalism emphasised ‘the notion of personal sin as a source of physical affliction and widespread suffering in the world...God presides over all and yet barely engages the Christian believer. God is evoked as the authority on sin but not as the authority who can deal with healing. This role is reserved for Jesus, to who the Revivalist prays and sings, and for the spiritually active Holy Ghost, who mediates between heaven and earth’.

<sup>225</sup>Ibid, 85.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid. Bedward ‘sought to realize the power of whites through mastering their forms of order’.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid, 86. ‘Brethren the Bible is difficult to understand. Thanks to Jesus I am able to understand it, and I, servant of Jesus, will tell you. The Pharisees and Sadducees are the white men, and we are the true people’.

in an asylum in 1921, where he later died of bronchitis (1930).<sup>228</sup> The government flexed its muscles, and a potential national leader was removed.

Marcus Garvey whose social activism began a short time later, could be said to have been a man who lived well before his time. He emphasized Black Consciousness<sup>229</sup> long before it was articulated in the public arena some fifty or so years later, by such people as Steve Biko (South Africa) and Malcolm X (North America). Garvey was a child of Emancipation, and so benefited from the brief period of educational growth, attending school from the age of 7-14 years old. Thoughts of God and Christian formation had therefore always been a part of his developing years, but as an adult he developed his own concepts of God, sin and the humanity of the African Jamaican. One of Garvey's earliest challenges was confronting the Western notion of sin, which for him did not originate in disobedience to authority or sexual promiscuity, but rather, 'Sin for Garvey was the loss of identity by black people'.<sup>230</sup>

Garvey responding to developing Black cultural alienation preached a gospel which encouraged his people to, 'affirm blackness as God's gift to black people, since God had

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<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 63. 'Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realization that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black Consciousness, therefore, takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating them black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life'. Not so different from Garvey who stated, 'Men and women of my race, do you know that the God we love, the God we adore, the God who sent His son to this world nearly two thousand years ago, never created an inferior man? God...created man in his own image, equal in every respect (*and*)...expects you to be the equal of other men'. Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 110.

<sup>230</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 110.

created humanity in his own image'.<sup>231</sup> His resistant reading of the Bible did not lead him to articulate a theological position which respected the status quo, but rather like Bedward, he challenged for a new order.<sup>232</sup> For this he received resistance and rejection, not only from the Colonial Government, but his own people, his peers, the Jamaican middle class who took offence when he used the terms negro and Black, to describe all peoples of African descent. To them it was a term which should only be used to describe those of lesser status and class, and so they rejected his views outright.<sup>233</sup>

Garvey's ideas only took root amongst Jamaica's working and under classes after his death, when his and Bedward's theories were adapted by a new generation of people who re-interpreted them and used them as the basis for what later became the Rastafarian Movement. Ironically Garvey found a warm welcome amongst African Americans, who respected his ideas to such an extent that they have since acknowledged him as one of the 'founding fathers' of the American Civil Rights Movement, which came into its own some fifty years later.<sup>234</sup>

#### **1.4.2 The Great Revival (1860 – 1862) and Revivalist Christians**

The Great Revival can be likened to a form of Pentecostal fervour which in and of itself takes root in communities where there have been social and political upheavals, with people

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<sup>231</sup>Ibid,109.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid.109. 'Garvey organized in Kingston, Jamaica, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League...to unite black people throughout the world for the establishment of their own country and government'.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid, 109-110.

<sup>234</sup>Available from [www.bbc.co.uk/Historic\\_history/historic-figures/garvey-marcus.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/Historic_history/historic-figures/garvey-marcus.html) [Accessed 03/12/07].

suffering from oppression and degradation, and in need of justice.<sup>235</sup> Revival,<sup>236</sup> Anderson argues in his book *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, can serve to bring an end to social and political injustice<sup>237</sup> as demonstrated in the revivals in Azusa Street, in the USA, Mukti Mission in India, and Kimbanguism in the Congo.<sup>238</sup> As I have so far demonstrated, Jamaica was no different in this regard, and so was ready for a revival particularly as change for African Jamaicans was proving slow to be realised. The reason for this it must primarily be said was because of the racist actions of many missionaries who continued to see them as ignorant heathens, who practiced superstition.<sup>239</sup> Those who had built the churches as slaves now wanted to do more than simply worship in them, they wanted instead to be a part of the decision making processes which included the choosing of their ministers. This impasse resulted in many conflicts and it was in the midst of these tensions that the Great Revival came as a whirlwind.

Most mainline Churches at that time argued that the revival had white 'European' origins, being a continuation of the Great Awakening in North America (1858-1859), and revivals which had taken place in both Ireland and Britain in 1859. Others however espoused the alternative missionary view that many missionaries having heard about the Great Revival in

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<sup>235</sup>A F Wallace, 'Revitalization Movement' *Amer. Anthropol.*, 58, 264-81, quoted in Patterson, 'Slavery, Acculturation and Social Change: The Jamaican Case' *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 17, No.2. (June 1966), 163. This view is backed up by many Sociologists who believe that 'outbursts of supernatural fervour (are) both symptomatic of, and instrumental in, the revitalization of disorganized cultures'.

<sup>236</sup>Revival is accepted by Pentecostals to be 'God's quickening visitation of his people, touching their hearts and deepening his work of grace in their lives. It is essentially a corporate occurrence, an enlivening of individuals not in isolation but together'. Ferguson, *New Dictionary of Theology*.

<sup>237</sup>Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 276-278.

<sup>238</sup>Azusa Street had racial division, Simon Kimbanguist colonial oppression of Black people, Pandita Ramabai, colonial oppression of Asian peoples.

<sup>239</sup>Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory*, 67.

North America cried out to God for help.<sup>240</sup> Little consideration was given at that time to the African Jamaican perspective, and though there are no actual records of an African Jamaican perspective, much of what they did and thought, was contained in missionary reports sent home to their sponsors. Accordingly, they too either cried out to God for revival so that Jamaica would walk closer to the God of the Bible, the God who was not too dissimilar from the God of their fathers<sup>241</sup> or, saw it as an extension of the Myal revivals which had taken place in the 1840s and 1850s, aimed at eradicating sin, and ‘clear(ing) the land for Jesus Christ, who was coming among them’.<sup>242</sup>

So to the revival, never was such a joyous occasion the cause for such disunity, leading to increased religious and social divisions, which have remained to the present day. Many missionaries had hoped and expected that revival would begin in April 1860 however most are agreed that it began in September amongst Moravian youth in Fairfield, moved to New Carmel, on to the church in St Elizabeth, before being embraced by the whole island. Initially folk thanked God for answered prayer, saved lives and the turning away from ‘sin’,<sup>243</sup> as church numbers dramatically increased. European church leaders legitimized it, declaring that, ‘Prayer has not been offered in vain, for a Pentecostal shower has come down’,<sup>244</sup> having heard how churches had ‘collected evidence of witnesses particularly of...intelligent

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<sup>240</sup> ‘On the Jamaica Revival 1860’ in *Evangelical Christendom: Its State and Prospects*, vol. 15, N.S.2, (1 January 1861), 31. A former governor of Jamaica said of the island, ‘In short, gentleman, there are just two classes of people in Jamaica, black Christians and white devils’.

<sup>241</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, 218. Available in the Turner Collection, University of Birmingham. ‘The African negroes of the West Indies... whatever superstitious notions they may bring with them from their native country, agree in believing the existence of an omnipotent Being, who will reward or punish us in a future life for our good or evil actions in this’.

<sup>242</sup> Beckles, *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, 299.

<sup>243</sup> ‘On the Jamaican Revival’, 1860, 32.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

men, not credulous or fanatical, or easily imposed upon'.<sup>245</sup> Of his experience of the revival Duncan Fletcher (missionary) happily complained that, 'I had no sooner begun to carry into effect in September last, than the Holy Spirit was manifestly poured out and our prayer meeting were multiplied in number, and greatly increased in attendance.....400 solemnly professed they had been converted in our chapel during one month'.<sup>246</sup>

Services erupted everywhere, and people undeterred by a lack of ministers to officiate, simply organized their own prayer meetings and services - some of which lasted up to five hours at a time - believing that all that was necessary was the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>247</sup> No denomination was left untouched, and no church doubted that God was visiting them in the power of the Holy Spirit. People were being 'slain in the Spirit',<sup>248</sup> and there were surprising unexpected confessions of sin from a people who had so often been considered to be beyond civilising. Phillippo for example reported how during one service:

The building was filled from top to bottom, and soon after the service commenced the greatest excitement prevailed. In one direction were poor unlettered Africans pouring out their supplications in some such language as this, and in the words of one of them with the utmost earnestness, his voice heard above the tumult; 'Lord, save me – me a sinner – me a drunkard, me a tief, me de Sabbat-broker...O Jesus, save me by dy precious blood'.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup>Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>Findlay, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 374. Methodists had an increase of 4,000 members.

Duncan Fletcher, Missionary, LMS Chapleton, Jamaica, WI, Letter to LMS, 19 February 1861, transcript in the hands of LMS, 2, 3. Available from SOAS, University of London, London.

<sup>247</sup>William Alloway, Missionary, LMS, Ridgemount, Jamaica, WI, Letter to LMS, 6 November 1860, transcript in the hands of LMS. Available from SOAS, University of London, London.

<sup>248</sup>Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, 1072. 'A relatively modern expression denoting a religious phenomenon in which an individual falls down, the cause being attributed to the Holy Spirit. The Phenomenon is known within modern Pentecostalism and charismatic renewal under various names, including "falling under the power", "overcome by the Spirit", and "resting in the Spirit"'.  
<sup>249</sup>Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 58.

Reconciliation was reported to be happening amongst husbands and wives, parents and children so that which the missionaries had spent many years trying to force was now being accomplished by the Holy Spirit. London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries reported how the following scenes were repeated at many of their mission stations:

Some were kneeling, weeping and praying: confessing their sins to God, naming them....this they did audibly; sometimes not only specifying and deploring their crimes, but also praying for the companions in guilt, by name...People were weeping and wailing aloud...we had a few extraordinary cases of persons 'stricken' or prostrated and dumb for days and in one or two instances weeks together.<sup>250</sup>

People in the grip of revival fever flocked to the churches to worship God, and there were unusual happenings everywhere as rum shops voluntarily shut down, gambling ceased,<sup>251</sup> and highways and byways were the scene of marriages, baptisms and visitations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>252</sup> It is believed that 37,000 Bibles were sold within the first eighteen months of the revival, the Bible receiving elevated status as people sought to read it themselves.<sup>253</sup>

However after a year many missionaries became increasingly concerned that the African Jamaicans increasingly 'African' response to the revival signalled a return to heathen practices, and more particularly syncretism.<sup>254</sup> They therefore began looking for signs of this, and identified it in such things as the use of 'cologne'<sup>255</sup> and water instead of wine' during the Communion service, and 'dancing in circles...showing signs of possession'.<sup>256</sup> Also, when

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<sup>250</sup> Alloway, LMS, Ridgemount, to LMS, 6 November 1860.

<sup>251</sup> 'On the Jamaican Revival', 1860, 33. Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory*, 87.

<sup>252</sup> Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory*, 90.

<sup>253</sup> Austin-Brooks, *Jamaica Genesis*, 59.

<sup>254</sup> Ferguson, *New Dictionary of Theology*, 670. A term popularised in the nineteenth century to describe 'any religion that was the result of fusing two or more religions'.

<sup>255</sup> Cologne was a local alcoholic beverage.

<sup>256</sup> Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory*, 91.

the people wept with joy at having experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, it caused fear in missionaries who dismissed such outbursts as ‘overstep(*ping*) all bounds of order and propriety’.<sup>257</sup> One can only imagine how African Jamaicans must have felt when as they worshipped in their preferred genre of music, using drums and demonstrating an ecstatic worship style, they were shunned by those with whom they had previously celebrated.

So poorly were their cultural practices received that despite the revival continuing for another year, Missionary Churches took it upon themselves to declare that the revival had come to an end in 1861, accusing African Jamaicans of feigning ‘conversion’, and once again declaring them to be a people who were ‘so emotionally unstable and so steeped in ignorance and sensuality, despite its surface knowledge of Christianity...brought discredit upon the work of God’.<sup>258</sup> A minority of missionaries, primarily the Moravians, did however try in vain to defend the essence of the revival, pleading that:

For some months this memorable revival, which soon affected old and young alike, was disfigured by what the critic may call excesses; and yet, on the other hand, we must remember that those excesses were no worse than those which occurred in England during the Evangelical Revival...in reality the main features were the same; and nearly every incident that happened in Jamaica might be paralleled by something similar in England.<sup>259</sup>

They were however in the minority as the majority white population, filled with fear carried guns for the remainder of the revival, fearing that it would lead to rebellion.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup>“On the Jamaican Revival 1860”, 34.

<sup>258</sup>Findlay, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 374.

<sup>259</sup>J E Hutton, *A History of Moravian Missions (1922)* (The Turner Collection, University of Birmingham, 2007), 226-227.

<sup>260</sup>Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 174. ‘Whenever the Negroes had a noisy prayer meeting or the revival drums sounded from a Negro village, the word was passed around, “The Blacks are drilling”’.

The Great Revival brought to an end any kind of enthusiasm missionaries had for converting African Jamaicans, confirming their belief that they were an ungrateful, unreachable people, who were beyond redemption.<sup>261</sup> They therefore reduced their funds before totally withdrawing from the island in 1865,<sup>262</sup> to begin a new missionary work in Africa. Yet working class people who, having experienced the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in their midst became more resolute than ever to continue to worship God in their own way, identifying themselves as Revivalist Christians following the leading of the Holy Spirit, which they had experienced for two years.

#### **1.4.3 Working Class self-promotion through the Church of God (CoG)**

Revivalist ‘bands’ and Zion Revivalism in particular developed into the leading Christian grouping on the island, having roots in both African religion and Christian worship. However, as successful as Zion Revivalism was, the colonial Government refused it the right to license its own ministers, thereby negating their ability to establish legitimate churches which could serve the needs of the majority of the people. They therefore sought new ways by which they could gain both their religious freedom, and social equality.

Education, missionary activity, and travel to Panama and North America exposed them to the wider world, enabling them to come to the realisation that the British Empire was not the only system of power in the world. They learnt that the United States of America possessed similar if not equal power and influence in the world around them, and so to North America

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<sup>261</sup>Ibid, 172. ‘By 1865...many missionaries developed a sense of frustration and resentment towards blacks who had failed them by being so ungrateful in their moral outlook to those who had saved them’.

<sup>262</sup>Ellis, *The Diocese of Jamaica*, 46-48. The SPG and CMS withdrew its missionaries and funding.

they looked. In 1917 Evangelist J Wilson Bell sent an invitation to the CoG Cleveland, somewhat reminiscent of the one sent by Moses Baker almost one hundred years earlier. The CoG responded by sending evangelist J S Llewellyn to Jamaica in April 1918. However the early years saw little growth for though theologically the CoG emphasized orthodox Pentecostalism, with an emphasis on singing, music, and baptism in the Holy Spirit, similar to that believed by African Jamaicans, they were in fact found to be as conservative, and as exclusive in their cultural practices as their European Christian counterparts. It was therefore not until the Second World War and the period following it that growth came, as they having gone to work in the USA as a part of the war effort,<sup>263</sup> came into contact with white Americans, and became impressed with their generosity towards them, and especially the generosity of the CoG who befriended them in the face of much opposition from members of the African American community.<sup>264</sup>

Having achieved economic success and in many instances being able to return home able to purchase businesses and land, they naturally sought to establish local churches with local leadership, and the CoG was the natural conduit with which to do so, especially as they had declared their commitment to enabling Jamaicans to develop their faith in their own way. The opportunity came when for the first time they were in a position to have their ministers accredited, and so they embraced the CoG, which true to its word provided the necessary

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<sup>263</sup>Cecil Morrison, Targeted interview recorded at Hackney Hospital, London, 1994. The Land Lease Bill 1941 signed between Britain and America allowed the USA to establish military bases in many Caribbean islands, Jamaica included, and as a result many Jamaicans travelled to America to work on eight month contracts. At its height 7,000 men travelled to the USA every week in order to work, and in return secure their financial futures.

<sup>264</sup>Nancy Foner, 'Race and Color: Jamaican Migrants in London and New York City', *International Migration Review*, Vol. 19, No 4 (Winter, 1985), 717-718.

financial backup to either build or complete the building of churches,<sup>265</sup> as well as sending globally recognised healing evangelists, such as T. L. Osborne<sup>266</sup> to encourage them.<sup>267</sup> Such was the enthusiasm and support provided by the CoG that it became the catalyst for a Pentecostal explosion, which according to Glazier resulted in 59% of all Pentecostal Churches being built in Jamaica after World War Two, 40% of them between 1947 and 1965.<sup>268</sup>

In terms of the rituals of the church, the CoG re-introduced clapping, and the use of musical instruments, including drums, into the service,<sup>269</sup> together with such practices as jumping, ‘falling’ or being ‘slain in the spirit’, and being lost in moments of ecstasy.<sup>270</sup> There were healing services, all night prayer meetings, and water baptism which took place in rivers and streams,<sup>271</sup> which converts saw as being a continuation of the ministry of the Native Baptists, Bedwardism and Zion Revival. However, like their predecessors the CoG received a great deal of opposition from other denominations,<sup>272</sup> who sought to discredit them by claiming that it was not a true faith, but a sect or a unholy religion akin to the worst of those which had gone before them. African Jamaicans however were not put off by this, embracing it fully as

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<sup>265</sup>“Foreign Missions”, *The Church of God Evangel*, 24 June 1950, 6.

<sup>266</sup>Though supportive of the work of the CoG in Jamaica, T L Osborne was not himself a member of the CoG denomination.

<sup>267</sup>Programme Sheet for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Island Convention of the New Testament CoG in Jamaica, 6 March to 9 March 1949, Hal Barnard Dixon Jr., Pentecostal Research Center, Cleveland, TN, 24 January, 2007.

<sup>268</sup>Stephen D Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980), 34.

<sup>269</sup>*Church of God Evangel*, 3 October 1923, 2. ‘We have no musical instruments in the churches but the saints are good singers, and they are great on clapping their hands’.

<sup>270</sup>Barrett, *African Roots*, 16. Myals performed a dance known as Kumina. It was a dance done whenever there was a birth, at puberty, marriage, death, sickness, calamity or injury. Folks danced until they were possessed by the spirit, and it was in that spirit possession that the cause of illness was revealed directly or through the spirits of dead ancestors.

<sup>271</sup>Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 118.

<sup>272</sup>*Ibid*, 104.

a movement which they could identify with, and a legitimate form of worship, which was able once again to meet their physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs.<sup>273</sup>

They soon learnt that to be a Pentecostal meant that one believed in holiness, healing and glossolalia, and the world was seen as evil, ruled by the devil and therefore to be shunned.<sup>274</sup>

Identity was determined by adherence to the 29 Bible Truths,<sup>275</sup> the Covenant and a belief in the closed community of the one true church, the CoG. Yet, where possible, Jamaicans unable to fully leave behind evangelical missionary ways, gave it a twist, so that for example where the Bible speaks of ‘these signs shall follow those that believe’,<sup>276</sup> they interpreted it as referring to right living and moral rectitude, rather than healing and deliverance from sin.<sup>277</sup>

This is not to say that there were not tensions between them and their parent church, who introduced covenantal agreements and statements of faith determining church identity, which often came into conflict with African Jamaican cultural identity. Men were deemed to be the natural leaders, and women the ‘weaker’ vessels, in direct contradiction to Jamaican society, where women are considered the backbone and cornerstone of the family, and therefore of the community.

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<sup>273</sup>Ibid, 106.

<sup>274</sup>Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, 144.

<sup>275</sup>Desmond T Smith, *Lives of Service: Obeying God's Call* (Cleveland: White Wings Publishing House, 1996), 40.

<sup>276</sup>Mark 16:17-18, SFLB NKJV.

<sup>277</sup>Austin Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 120-121.

African Jamaicans have since that time continually sought to ‘negotiate’ their existence within the CoG.<sup>278</sup> However this has remained secondary to the most important fact that for them religion had finally come full circle, confirming to them the reality of the Spirit, which they had always embraced as their own. They had become a part of a significant denomination, no longer confined to a pre-determined social class, or religious ‘backwater’, but finding a way to grow and develop with equal status and hope.<sup>279</sup> They had finally not only got themselves a seat at the table, but began to challenge, and eventually redefine not just the seating, but the table itself,<sup>280</sup> encouraging the formation of other Pentecostal churches which identified themselves as such by also using the term CoG in their name, and developing their own Bible Colleges<sup>281</sup> and schools.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The Jamaica developed by the British colonial government began as two societies where social status, religion and identity were dependent primarily upon ones colour, but by the beginning of the twentieth century though there were still two societies, their status could be improved by acceptable church attendance. Those attending mainline churches were considered to be a part of the Jamaican middle class, and those who did not were therefore

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<sup>278</sup>Clifford Smith, *Maine Ridge Jamaica, Church of God Evangel*, 27 May 1922, 115-116. They brought with them not just their money, but their culture, insisting ‘that the choirs be robed and that everything be done in an American way... (whereas)...in Jamaica...if a person came in barefoot to the church and received the Holy Spirit, Jamaicans would praise the Lord for him’.

<sup>279</sup>Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 103. Those who could be termed lower middle class or working class tended to attach themselves to the NTCG, whilst the working and peasant classes favoured the CGP.

<sup>280</sup>Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism*, 39. ‘To Pentecostals, salvation is becoming like Christ. This identity is not only personal, in the psychological sense, but also social and cultural. Being a Christian involves identification with a social status and group, and bears resemblance to clan or tribal affiliation, it implicitly denies or rejects the status of lower-class, black, African, Jamaican or peasant’.

<sup>281</sup>Bethel Bible College was established in 1958 by the NTCG. *The New Testament Church of God, News Bulletin*, (October – November 1958), 1.

deemed to be amongst the working and peasant classes. African Jamaicans could be found in both communities, treated differently, but what united them was the fact that each was agreed that improved social status could only be gained and was dependent upon the acceptance of English cultural values and practices. So each over time, developed two cultural identities in order to fit in and meet their own needs in Jamaican society.

The colonial system of ‘divide and rule’ had achieved its goal, with each group having learnt from the example of Liele, Gordon, Bedward and Garvey, that if they wanted to gain equal status, they had to do it the British way, and that meant to take on British social and cultural values.<sup>282</sup> This resulted in a middle class who became culturally alienated<sup>283</sup> from their own past as they strove for acceptance as British citizens rather than as African Jamaicans,<sup>284</sup> and a working and peasant class, who because of their adherence to the CoG (NTCG, CGP), placed themselves in social isolation from family, community and other Christians in order to achieve their status. When the opportunity arose for them both to go to the ‘mother country’ following the Second World War, neither group had any expectation that to do so would

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<sup>282</sup> Philip Potter former Caribbean General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in 1970, quoted in Walter J Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and developments*, 82. ‘What opportunity had they to think about faith in their own way? If they hadn’t been “good boys” they would never have become church leaders... We have seldom been allowed to think for ourselves. For long enough we have put up with a kind of theological imperialism. I call this racism. Unless we non-Westerners stick rigidly to the precise formulae of Western scholasticism, we are not considered theologians, or bright enough to communicate the gospel’.

<sup>283</sup> Cultural alienation is ‘the process of devaluing or abandoning one’s own culture or cultural background. Places little value on their own or host culture, and instead hungers for that of a – sometimes imposed – colonising nation’. Available from [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cultural\\_cringe#cultural\\_alienation](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cultural_cringe#cultural_alienation) [Accessed 15/12/10].

<sup>284</sup> Patterson, *Slavery, Acculturation and Social Change*, 162. Patterson states that this acculturation was a process which actually took place in four clear stages: disintegration (1655-1730), adaptation (1730-1780), consolidation (1730-1834), and disjunction (1834-1865).

present them with any significant social or cultural difficulty.<sup>285</sup> How African Jamaicans negotiated and adapted to these changed cultural experiences, whilst seeking to establish their families in a foreign land, will be the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>285</sup>Tony Sewell, *Keep on Moving: The Windrush Legacy* (London: Voice Enterprises Limited, 1998), 13. 'West Indians had served in the First and Second World War...There was little, if any, overt racial discrimination in the highly structured military. Outside the barracks, too, the British people, in the midst of war, noticed more the uniform than the colour of the person wearing it'.

## CHAPTER 2

### MIGRATION AND ASSIMILATION IN BRITAIN

*Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie:  
I feel like me heart gwine burs'  
Jamaica people colonizin  
Englan in reverse.*

*By de hundred, by de t'ousan,  
From country and from town;  
By de ship-load, by de plane-load  
Jamaica is Englan boun'.*

*Dem a pour outa Jamaica,  
Everybody future plan  
Is fe get a big- time job  
An' settle in de mother lan'.*

*What a islan! What a people!  
Man an' woman, old an' young  
Jussa pack dem bag an' baggage  
An tun history upside dung!*

*Oonoo see how life is funny  
Oonoo see de turnabout,  
Jamaican live fe box bread  
Outa English people mout'.*

*What a devilment a Englan!  
Dem face war an brave de worse,  
But ah wonderin' how dem gwine stan'  
Colonizin' in reverse.<sup>286</sup>*

Caribbean people, having considered themselves to have fought and won the battle for 'respectability' and equality in Jamaica, moved to Britain with an air of optimism, as demonstrated by Louis Bennett's introductory poem. They were moving to a country and a people whom they believed themselves to be familiar with, particularly as they possessed the same British passports, spoke the same language, and worshipped the same God in the same

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<sup>286</sup>Extract of a poem, 'In Reverse' by Louise Bennett. Louise Bennett, *Anancy Stories and Dialect Verse* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1973), 60-61. By way of bringing this poem to life a spoken narrative (CD) can be found in a pocket at the back of this thesis. It is read by Brenda Johnson. (appendix 2).

way. Not difficult then to see why they believed that apart from the change in climate, and job opportunities which were presented to them, their ‘home coming’ demanded little or no major adjustment or adaptation on their part.<sup>287</sup> However, the challenges which they faced particularly in the early years soon dispelled any such high hopes, as the transition proved more difficult than most of them had imagined.

Though my work is primarily concerned with detailing the history of those within the Baptist tradition, this chapter will seek to explain the challenges faced primarily by middle class Jamaican Baptists,<sup>288</sup> and their Pentecostal working class counterparts,<sup>289</sup> for their worlds intertwined as they sought to put down roots in Britain. It will detail the struggle which took place between 1948 and 2008, as they sought to maintain their Caribbean ‘British’ cultural identities, for themselves and their children, in church and society, which they soon came to realise, was so very different from their own. More importantly it will seek to explain their response to experiencing diverse ways to worship which they had previously come to understand could only be expressed in one of two ways, depending on their allegiance to either mainline or CoG interpretations of the Christian faith. Finally it will document the challenges faced by this migrant community from their own children who, unlike their parents, looked for and demanded a society and church which reflected their cultural identity.

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<sup>287</sup>Nancy Foner, ‘Race and Color’, 714.

<sup>288</sup>Those who had attended Baptist Churches in Jamaica came to England with an expectation to succeed. Many within ten years became property owners, often renting out rooms to those less fortunate, whilst others had professions or were embarking on training to take up professional positions. This was the experience of my own family.

<sup>289</sup>The family of Joe Aldred was typical of the Pentecostal families which had travelled from Jamaica. He stated that, ‘My dad never did buy a house here so we never had the luxury of private accommodation and so when I came to him we were renting in a friend’s house and we lived in the attic. I lived in the attic and then we moved to my brother’s house in Smethwick and then the council gave us this place’. Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Report, St George’s Post 16 Centre, Newtown, 22 August 2006.

I shall begin by looking at those who came to Britain, their reasons for migration to Britain, before examining the issue of church attendance, and how their presence and the host cultures expectations of them, impacted upon that. I will highlight the adjustments and adaptations made by Baptists, in contrast to those made by Pentecostals as each sought to settle into local communities. Finally, this chapter will conclude by looking at the developing tensions between British Caribbean youth and their parents, as played out in the Church, the centre of most Caribbean migrant communities.

## **2.1 Migration -Who Came and Why**

1940s and early 1950s Jamaica seemed to be a country which moved from one crisis to another. It began with The Great Atlantic Hurricane (1944) which decimated the main exports of coffee, bananas and coconuts,<sup>290</sup> culminating in the most devastating of all hurricanes at that time, Hurricane Charlie (1951) which not only caused the destruction of crops and property, but left 2,000 people injured, 25,000 homeless, and 152 dead.<sup>291</sup> This hurricane it would appear was the final straw for many who having been tempted to leave Jamaica following World War II, now believed it to be an economic imperative, if they were going to make any kind of future for themselves and their families.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 84. The coconuts were destroyed by a lethal yellowing disease which decimated the crop for years to come.

<sup>291</sup>Available from [www.family-ough.co.nz/Jamaican\\_Storm.html](http://www.family-ough.co.nz/Jamaican_Storm.html) [Accessed 30/01/2011].

<sup>292</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 153. Bishop Herman Brown, stated, 'After the war things were bad socially, economically and financially in Jamaica – we could not make two ends meet. As a result I came to make myself better off'.

The USA had always been the preferred destination for Caribbean economic migrants, primarily because of its convenient location,<sup>293</sup> historical connections, and the knowledge which they had of job opportunities, having undertaken ‘seasonal employment’<sup>294</sup> during the war. However when in 1952 the USA passed the McCarran-Walter Act which introduced a quota system limiting the amount of migrants able to settle there, ‘based on skill-sets and family reunification’<sup>295</sup> they had no alternative but to look to Britain, as the most obvious, and the most realistic option, particularly as Britain had extended an invitation across the British Caribbean for its citizens to come and help rebuild the ‘mother country’. They were also encouraged by the 1948 Nationality Act which gave citizenship to members of former and current British colonies, and allowed them the right of residency for life.<sup>296</sup> The public sector, namely London Transport, British Rail and the National Health Service were at the forefront of this welcome, sending recruiters directly to the Caribbean.<sup>297</sup> Jamaicans responded in their thousands, looking to Britain with hope, seeing it as not only a job opportunity but a chance to help the mother country recover after the war.

However, whilst they were welcomed by the government, for the ordinary British person who had little or no contact with any person of colour, the arrival of such large numbers in difficult times, came to be seen by them as something of a threat particularly in the area of

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<sup>293</sup>Kingston Jamaica is approximately 600 miles from Miami Florida, USA.

<sup>294</sup>Given the precarious nature of the Jamaican economy and a lack of job opportunities for many of its people, many Jamaicans would often travel abroad to work, helping with the seasonal picking of crops or other situations where extra labour was needed, but only for a specific period of time.

<sup>295</sup>Available from [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) [Accessed 18/12/08].

<sup>296</sup>Peter Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire* (London: Pluto Press, 1988), 373.

<sup>297</sup>Mike Phillips & Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 121-2. Sewell, *Keep on Moving: The Windrush Legacy* (London: Voice Enterprises Ltd, 1998), 21.

employment.<sup>298</sup> Caribbean people therefore received a somewhat mixed and sometimes lukewarm welcome, which forced the government to reconsider its initial offer, and in order to maintain community cohesion it passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962, which limited the number and types of people who could relocate to Britain.<sup>299</sup> But who were these migrants who caused such a stir at the very heart of British society?

The first 'wave' of migrants to arrive came predominantly from the Caribbean middle class. They did not consider themselves to be the non-British, foreigner, whom they were so often presented as being by British society,<sup>300</sup> but rather saw themselves as British Citizens who were simply moving within the great British Empire, to the 'Mother Country'.<sup>301</sup> It was for them, a 'coming home' to the place which they had not only studied at school, but though miles away, celebrated its festivals and significant events, and also received 'daily' news of in the Daily Gleaner, Jamaica's national newspaper.<sup>302</sup>

Only the wealthier person could travel in the first wave of the migratory move, as the cost of travel demanded up to one year's wages.<sup>303</sup> The majority were skilled people,<sup>304</sup> and of the 492 passengers<sup>305</sup> who arrived on the first ship, the SS Windrush, at least 1/3 were ex-RAF,

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<sup>298</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 38.

<sup>299</sup>Foner, 'Race and Color', 709.

<sup>300</sup>Dilip Hiro, *Black British White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain*, rev. ed. (London: Paladin, 1992), 305.

<sup>301</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 57.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid, 61.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid, 18. The cost of their fare was £28.10. The average salary of minister of religion was at that time \$14 USA Dollars. *The Church of God Evangel*, 17 December 1949, 5.

<sup>304</sup>Fryer, *Staying Power*, 374.

<sup>305</sup>Ibid, 372.

and white collar workers such as students, singers and pianists.<sup>306</sup> Sewell in fact goes as far as to claim that 24% of them had professional and managerial experience, 46% were skilled workers, 5% were semi-skilled, and only 13% could be classified as unskilled.<sup>307</sup> This contradicts much of what has in fact been written about these early Caribbean migrants, who were often categorised as poor and uneducated by many historians.<sup>308</sup>

Most migrants were not too proud to take the menial jobs which were available. They became miners, factory workers and bus conductors, just to make a living, jobs which often bore no relation to the skills which they already possessed.<sup>309</sup> Amongst the group were a great many people of faith who also took jobs as labourers and bus drivers, drawing no attention to their religious identity which had in the past seen them occupy leadership positions within mainline denominations, as well as the NTCG and the CGP.<sup>310</sup> Revivalists were the only group who were absent from these new migrants, being too poor to take advantage of the invitation to travel to Britain.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>306</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 7.

<sup>307</sup>Ibid, 35

<sup>308</sup>Foner, 'Race and Color', 709. 'Probably fewer than 10 percent, were white-collar workers at home'.

<sup>309</sup>Oral interview with James Jones, 21 October 2008. He left Jamaica in 1960, though a police officer in Jamaica, he chose instead to travel to England where he became a Guard on British Rail. He stated that on reflection he did not need to move, but as a young man you like to travel and see the world, but then children come, things change and life takes a new direction, as was his situation, he has been in England ever since and is now seeking to continue his retirement back in Jamaica.

<sup>310</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 161. Bishop Dunn is quoted as saying that 'I did not take much note of the community because my aim was to get some money and return to Jamaica... There was a feeling of sadness at the beginning, but because I was living with my own people, it helped to cushion my sadness. However I did miss my church very much and could not see myself staying here too long'.

<sup>311</sup>David G Pearson, 'Race, Religiosity and Political Activism: Some Observations on West Indian Participation in Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Sep., 1978), 347.

However, whether Christians or non-Christians, most believed that theirs would be a short term, temporary economic migration. They were simply passing through, with an expectation of staying no more than five years, time enough to make sufficient money to return home, having secured a future for themselves and their families.<sup>312</sup> There was however a minority of people, mostly the young, who came with long term plans to either take up economic opportunities, wanted to see something of the world,<sup>313</sup> or saw it as a welcome escape route from the strictures of a fairly conservative colonial society.<sup>314</sup> A smaller group came, who if pressed, would admit that they did so because they could not bear to leave their colonial masters, and fearing that ‘native’ leaders would destroy the country, took the opportunity to come to Britain. It was for example more desirable to be a railway worker in Britain, than to be a police officer in an ‘independent’ Jamaica.<sup>315</sup>

## 2.2 The Development of Worshipping Communities

Caribbean Christians arrived in England from various denominations and in sizeable groups,<sup>316</sup> and as they sought to establish themselves in British society, the finding of a church was seen as one of the first steps.<sup>317</sup> However, the churches which they came into contact with, though having denominations familiar to them, were churches whose practices

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<sup>312</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 59.

<sup>313</sup>Oral Interview with Lester Smith in Birmingham, 22 October 2008. Lester left Jamaica in 1960, though a police officer in Jamaica, he chose instead to travel to England where he became a guard on British Rail. He stated that on reflection he did not need to move, but as a young man you like to travel and see the world, but then children come, things change and life takes a new direction, as was his situation, he has been in England ever since and is now seeking to continue his retirement back in Jamaica.

<sup>314</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 12.

<sup>315</sup>Interview with Lester Smith, in Birmingham, 22 October 2008.

<sup>316</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 164. CGP knew of 40 members arriving together. Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 17. The NTCG speaks of ‘large numbers’ – enough to become the nucleus of the pending church.

<sup>317</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 30. ‘African Caribbean Blacks are a people of Diaspora and like any other people, wherever they are dispersed, their culture and religion go with them’.

they found themselves to be less than familiar with. Churches which in comparison seemed to be poorly attended, homogeneous, with unfamiliar hymns and ritual expressions, lacking in faith and quite secular, similar to the society around them.<sup>318</sup>

So, not only did Caribbean migrants find a Britain which presented them with what they considered to be unacceptable Christian practices,<sup>319</sup> but it was within a social context which was unexpected and previously unknown to them in Jamaica.<sup>320</sup> A society demonstrating little regard for God and the Church, and unlike in the Caribbean, did not see the Church as the barometer by which all other social structures, and ones place within society became defined.

### **2.2.1 The Baptist Church an Acceptable Context for Believing**

Jamaican Baptists represented over 20% of the worshipping population of Jamaica who had imbibed English ways,<sup>321</sup> revering England and Englishness,<sup>322</sup> and saluting the Union Jack every morning at the start of the school day.<sup>323</sup> They knew every river, every mountain range and every county, not to mention Shakespeare, and the Kings, Queens and cultural icons of England.<sup>324</sup> They saw themselves as British Baptists who had come to help the ‘mother

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<sup>318</sup>Joel Edwards, *Lord, Make Us One: But not all the same* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 50.

<sup>319</sup>It was acceptable for Christians to not only drink, but smoke cigarettes, and cigars, whilst attending church on a Sunday.

<sup>320</sup>African Jamaicans arrived in Britain at a time when the Swinging 60s was about to take off, and the celebration was Sex, Drugs and Rock n’Roll.

<sup>321</sup>Hiro, *Black British*, 32.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid, 19. ‘I remember in my school in Jamaica, our teacher would ask “what is your mother country?” And we would shout, “England”’.

<sup>323</sup>Ibid. The majority of schools in Jamaica were run by the church.

<sup>324</sup>John M Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 170,182-3. Hiro, *Black British*, 20. ‘When asked in 1960 to name “People most important in West Indian history”, Senior school students in Jamaica chose Wilberforce, Queen Victoria and Captain Henry Morgan (who

country' and worship with fellow believers. Long forgotten by them all knowledge of enslavement,<sup>325</sup> and the founding fathers of Baptist tradition in Jamaica. Migration they now believed, gave them the opportunity, despite the colour of their skins,<sup>326</sup> to become British Baptists,<sup>327</sup> physically, emotionally,<sup>328</sup> spiritually, culturally,<sup>329</sup> and now socially, rather than as they had been, as 'foreign' members in Jamaica.

However, the migrants' experience of British Baptists was extremely disappointing, as not only was racism seen to be present in many churches,<sup>330</sup> but the British proved themselves to be an ill-informed people who in the main considered all Caribbean peoples to be working class, non-English, and non-British. Despite their common religious heritage, they had no idea about the long history of not just Caribbean Christianity,<sup>331</sup> but Jamaican Baptist history in particular, and so offered Caribbean Christians little or no welcome when they arrived. Yet

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was once a pirate)...no mention whatsoever of Christopher Columbus...Deacon Paul Bogle...or Marcus Garvey'.

Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 7-8.

<sup>325</sup>Hiro, *Black British*, 60. 'We heard about slavery in Jamaica but we didn't sort of put it together and put ourselves within it. We didn't think it happened to the people we descended from. We thought it was somebody else or some other people. We didn't know about it. But coming to this country you get to realize that we're part of slavery'. Quote from Dorothy Pearson, a nurse in Slough who was born in the Caribbean.

<sup>326</sup>Ibid, 23-24. Children of the Caribbean would sing, 'If you're white, you're right: If you're brown hang around; If you're black get back'.

<sup>327</sup>Foner, 'Race and Color', 714.

<sup>328</sup>Hiro, *Black British*, 13. 'I remember Christmas pantomime in Barbados where everyone departed for England. That was the happy ending of the plot'.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid, 59-60. Dr Hugh Springer wrote in the Caribbean Quarterly that, 'Our culture is rooted in Western culture and our values, in the main, are the values of the Christian-Hellenic tradition...the Greek ideals of virtue and knowledge and the Christian faith'.

<sup>330</sup>Foner, 'Race and Color', 715.

<sup>331</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 8. They 'were taught at school that we were descended from the primitive and the uncivilized and ungodly until the British arrived and carried us out of the Wilderness'.

despite all these disappointments, and unfamiliarity, most stayed, even after realising that they were at best tolerated, rather than fully included in the activities of the Church.<sup>332</sup>

Migrants visiting many mainline churches reported that, in order to be ‘included’, many churches demanded assimilation calling upon ‘members of the ethnic minorities to give up their cultural baggage in order to be accepted...assimilate into the majority culture (*in order*) to be of any use to the church’.<sup>333</sup> For a people who understood little, if anything about the relationship between religion and culture, it was a hard and often confusing pill to swallow. Dilip Hiro’s description of migrant experiences in the Catholic Church gives a clear example of what they faced. In his book *White British, Black British* he reports that:

In Sparkbrook, Birmingham...there is evidence that West Indian Roman Catholics felt themselves squeezed out of the church to which they belong because of the Irish influence. One parishioner stated, ‘It’s surprising to see how the same doctrine has one meaning for some people and another meaning for others. As a Roman Catholic I don’t feel any nearer to white Roman Catholics, nor they to me. You’re white or black first, and a Roman Catholic afterwards’.<sup>334</sup>

British Christianity as expressed in mainline churches certainly was not what migrants had expected. It was not the seamless transition from one context to another which they and many within the host nation had presumed could be expected.<sup>335</sup> Yet the manner of the response by Jamaican Baptists, differed little from the manner in which they had responded historically to demands made upon them by European Christianity.

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<sup>332</sup>Quote from Brian Payne, Regent Street Baptist Church, July, 2001. ‘When your parents arrived from Jamaica, we didn’t know what to do with you all. We weren’t sure how to treat you, and so we just left you alone to come and go as you pleased. We were a small church with no previous experience of Black people’.

<sup>333</sup>Grant & Patel, *A Time to Speak*, 12.

<sup>334</sup>Hiro, *Black British White British*, 33.

<sup>335</sup>Clifford Hill, *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 5-6.

History speaks of a people who left English churches behind in favour of beginning new ones<sup>336</sup> however I believe that this refers primarily to Pentecostals, of whom I shall speak later. The majority of middle class Jamaicans did not leave, but remained within the Baptist Church, believing that as Baptists, with a strong and glorious history, they would one day convince their white brethren that the church belonged to all of them. Mrs H. expressing her memories of those times explained something of those early days. She stated that:

In the early days it was difficult, but we were Baptists too. We knew we had to give it some time. We tried telling them that we don't drink tea and coffee. For over 30 years we told them and still they ask us why we don't stay after the service. Why we didn't leave? We were Baptists, our friends were here. It's our Church as much as it is theirs. So we stayed hoping things would change. They just believed we would change, but now its 40 years later and it's too late to change...and no we still don't drink tea and coffee.<sup>337</sup>

They stayed because as Baptists with social status, leaving was not an option, as it would have meant going to another mainline church, in order to retain the status which they had achieved in Jamaica. A change would mean failure, and news of failure would, according to James Jones, 'be carried home' and reports told of how they had gone abroad only to lower their status. He stated:

I didn't need to go to England. I was a police officer, but you know I was young and young men want the excitement of travel. I came they wouldn't accept me directly into the police force here, so I went to work for British Rail. Found a Baptist church and just settled. I had to settle there for it was hard to go home and tell them you made a mistake. Children came along, and life went on, but looking back now, I didn't need to come.<sup>338</sup>

They stayed also because history had taught them that in order to progress economically, they had to adjust and adapt, especially if as they had hoped, their children were to stand any

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<sup>336</sup>Ibid, 73-74. Wilkinson, *Church in Black and White*, 79.

<sup>337</sup>Mrs H, retired pensioner attending Regent Street Baptist Church. Interview 9 March 2008.

<sup>338</sup>Interview with James Jones, retired back to Brown's Town, Jamaica, 21 October 2008.

chance of succeeding in Britain. For this to be achieved they had to be attached to a church which encouraged the speaking of the Queen's English, and encouraged as well as celebrated academic advancement.<sup>339</sup> Once again a generation of Jamaicans were willing to sacrifice their own lives, for the social and educational advancement of their children.

So they stayed, divesting themselves of all traits of their cultural identities when at worship. There were no more 'amens' and 'hallelujahs', and 'praise the Lord', just a relearning of what was now acceptable British Baptist behaviour. However, they never truly left their 'roots' behind. Whilst they did not celebrate their culture, being believers in the works of the Holy Spirit, in years to come they would often be found 'visiting' Black Pentecostal Churches, and attending Saturday night revivals in order to get their fair share of 'amens' and 'hallelujahs', and to be a part of that Black community which they now realised they needed and could no longer take for granted as they perhaps done in the past.<sup>340</sup> Whether knowingly or otherwise, they sought and found for themselves, familiar surroundings and a community of people with similar cultural identities with whom they found some freedom.

They stayed and fought back in their own quiet and unassuming way, organising themselves as Caribbean communities within their respective Baptist churches. This helped to ease their frustrations as each church community developed out of groups of people who had either

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<sup>339</sup>Interview with N Foster, Teacher, 9 March 2008. 'My mother always said study girl, if you want to get on you have to study and speak proper English. We don't speak Patois. None of your aunts and uncles speak Patois. Those that do won't get on. You learn Queen's English and how to speak properly. It will take you further in life. You study girl. Not studying was therefore no option for me, and I can see now she was right, but at what cost?'

<sup>340</sup>Interview Mrs Smith, Regents Street Baptist Church. 9 March 2008. 'This is not enough. It's where I have always gone, but I go to Handsworth, Aberdeen Street when I want to worship in freedom. You know they get so excited and the worship is so lively, you feel like you had a good time'.

travelled to England together, established friendships or set up homes in the same neighbourhoods.<sup>341</sup> So, for example, one would find Christians from St Ann's parish attending CSMBC, Handsworth, if they lived in Birmingham,<sup>342</sup> and Regent Street Baptist Church (RSBC) if they lived in Sandwell.<sup>343</sup> Each community knew of the others which were around them, and often, supported each other,<sup>344</sup> socializing together as they had so much in common. It proved a useful link in that together they dealt with the economic and social issues which they faced. So for example, when many new migrants were unable to obtain bank loans in order to purchase a home, they began 'pardner'<sup>345</sup> groups, which would enable them all to buy their first homes. Whilst this failed to resolve the larger cultural issues, it nevertheless enabled them to continue worshipping their God in the tradition and style of their choosing, whilst being able to stay true to their understanding of themselves and how they expressed their faith.

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<sup>341</sup>Interview with Levi Lawrence, 21 October 2008. 'I came over after my sister. She came with her husband, and then they made way for the rest of us. I was originally going to stay with them, but it didn't work out between me and him, so, I went with friends and we rented a room in his other house...It was full of men from Gibraltar. We moved together. It meant that you had company in a strange place...Then when others came, we all lived around the same neighbourhood. We lived around each other, just like we did back home'.

<sup>342</sup>Interview with James McClaren, Deacon CSMBC, 13 July 2008. Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of two people from Gibraltar, a church member stated, 'You know that couple, they grew up with us. We went to the same school, travelled to England together and been at the same church. When one come, made it easier for others to settle in, and we all just settle in together'.

<sup>343</sup>Interview with Mrs Stewart, Regent Street Baptist Church, 24 August 2008. 'Yes, I know them at Cannon Street, we grew up together you know. We is like family. But they move to Birmingham. We didn't like Birmingham. We had family in Sandwell, so we moved here and just stayed'.

<sup>344</sup>Interview with Mrs Stewart, Regent Street Baptist Church, Sunday morning service, 24 August 2008. 'I have cousins who go to Cannon Street, and we keep in touch all the time. We have school friends who go there too. Grew up together you know. We all just got on and made a life here'.

<sup>345</sup>A pardner is a system which works on the principle that each member would place a specific amount of money in the 'bank' every month. After a specific period of time each member would be able to withdraw not only their contribution but the contribution of all members to take care of their specific needs.

### 2.2.2 Caribbean Pentecostals in Pursuit of a Contextual Church

Like their charismatic brethren some Pentecostals (NTCG, CGP), on their arrival in England, first sought out mainline denominations in which to worship,<sup>346</sup> as their denominations were not represented in Britain at that time. However, unlike their Baptist ‘cousins’ their attendance was short lived, as having attended more vibrant and contextually relevant churches at home,<sup>347</sup> they soon complained that churches in Britain were not spiritual enough,<sup>348</sup> were lacking in faith,<sup>349</sup> boring and quite simply, lifeless.<sup>350</sup> At the heart of their concern was their need as Pentecostals to physically demonstrate and express their faith with joy and enthusiasm, and British churches were so obviously different, that they believed that they could not settle within mainline churches.<sup>351</sup>

They also became critical of their Caribbean ‘brothers and sisters’ who chose to remain in those churches, Pentecostal pastors often being at the forefront of challenging them to return to a ‘legitimate’ church. Theologian Robert Beckford, who himself grew up in a Pentecostal congregation, recalled how his own pastor went as far as to preach against modern day

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<sup>346</sup>Terence Thomas Booth, ‘We True Christians’ (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985), 82.

<sup>347</sup>*The Church of God Evangel*, J H Walker, Foreign Missions, Executive Missions Society, 3-5-1949, 14. Of the church in Jamaica he said ‘There are eight hundred or more in attendance each night. Over one hundred are being saved every night. Blind eyes are being opened, the lame are leaping for joy, and the deaf mutes are hearing and speaking’.

<sup>348</sup>*The Church of God Evangel*, Rev & Mrs O A Lyseight. *Tidings from England*, 8 April 1957, 12. ‘The spirituality of the churches was not so high as that with which we were acquainted, and many of our people did not feel free in most of these places’.

<sup>349</sup>Hiro, *Black British White British*, 32. ‘To their utter bewilderment and disappointment they found the British, the very people who brought Christianity to the West Indies, mostly indifferent to religion’.

<sup>350</sup>Pearson, ‘Race, Religiosity and Political Activism’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 29. No. 3 (Sep., 1978), 342. Ira Brooks attended a Methodist church when he first arrived and said, ‘The services seemed lifeless; short and uninspiring sermons, no hallelujahs, no praise the Lord or amen; no clapping of hands and stamping of feet; no nodding of the head and twisting of the body; no guitars, no drums and tambourine nor lively singing, etc.’. Quoted in, Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 39.

<sup>351</sup>Foner, ‘Race and Color’, 720.

‘houseniggers’, those who chose to attend white churches because of their preference for white people, and their desire for, ‘lower moral standards and upward social mobility’.<sup>352</sup> They accused the leaders of mainline churches of presenting a ‘distortion of the Scripture ...theologians... (*who were*)...perverters of the Gospel – those who turned people from the Truth’,<sup>353</sup> and as a consequence they lacked true fellowship.<sup>354</sup> Issues of class and social status had divided these groups in Jamaica, and now in England there seemed to be little change, except for the fact that Pentecostals had gained the necessary confidence with which to articulate their ‘concern’ for their Charismatic Jamaican brethren who were no longer seen as being a class above them.

However, their most ‘public’ complaint was reserved for the racism which they had been subjected to, on entering British mainline churches.<sup>355</sup> I believe that it was primarily this group which lent truth to stories of racism being present in all congregations.<sup>356</sup> They were vocal and they were confident, and as a result gained the most attention, when they later established churches and denominations separate from mainstream British Pentecostalism. Whilst racism was an experience which impacted upon the lives of middle class Caribbean Christians, as was previously demonstrated, they chose to be the silent minority, and their voices were never heard in this regard as they adapted and sought to integrate into British society.

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<sup>352</sup>Robert Beckford, *Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd, 2002), 43.

<sup>353</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 77.

<sup>354</sup>Toulis, *Believing Identity*, 177.

<sup>355</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 38.

<sup>356</sup>Foner, ‘Race and Color’, 720.

Joel Edwards, one of the later leaders of the NTCG and the Evangelical Alliance, argues that though many Caribbean people left these churches as a result of the religious conflicts which ensued, many, because of their CoG faith perspective, would have left anyway.<sup>357</sup> Whilst Caribbean Pentecostals did not see themselves as fitting into mainline churches, perhaps surprising was the fact that they also rejected interaction with British Pentecostalism. I believe that it would not have been too presumptuous to expect that British Pentecostalism would have been the natural first home of Caribbean Pentecostals, for when they arrived, although mainline churches were going through a crisis of confidence, Pentecostalism was expanding.<sup>358</sup> However, early leaders of Caribbean Pentecostalism, such as Sydney Dunn and Oliver Lyseight, stated that whilst they had visited many Pentecostal churches when they first arrived in England, and received a warm welcome, with invitations being accepted to preach in several congregations, they found in them an absence of clapping, as well as unfamiliar songs.<sup>359</sup> Yet as Edwards indicated, there had to be more to it than just an issue of clapping and unfamiliar songs, for present in Birmingham at that time was one of, if not the most vibrant Pentecostal church in England, Hockley Pentecostal Church (HPC), a part of the Assemblies of God (AoG) denomination.

HPC was established in Hockley Birmingham in 1938, a congregation atypical of its day in that from its inception, it was led by two women, a Miss Fisher and a Miss Reeve,<sup>360</sup> and they had a membership which came not just from England, but other parts of the world, including

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<sup>357</sup>Edwards, *Lord, Make Us One*, 50.

<sup>358</sup>Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, xix.

<sup>359</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 38, 39. Oliver Lyseight, *The Founding of the NTCG in Britain*. [article on-line]; Available from [www.ntcg.org.uk](http://www.ntcg.org.uk) [Accessed 12/08/08].

<sup>360</sup>Miss Fisher and Miss Reeve initially received a lukewarm response from the Church, however the success of their ministry in being inclusive and life changing, made them hard to ignore.

India and Italy.<sup>361</sup> Worship was said to be vibrant and expressive, and included speaking in tongues, as well as singing and dancing in the Spirit.<sup>362</sup> Yet despite their having a fundamental belief in the active participation and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer,<sup>363</sup> they too were rejected by both Caribbean Charismatics who though allowing their children to attend,<sup>364</sup> believed it failed to offer them the social status of mainline denominations, and Pentecostals who saw it as different from the Pentecostalism which they had known at home. Terence Booth in his published thesis *We True Christians* highlights one of the most significant issues which separated Caribbean and British Pentecostals, declaring that:

Despite their apparent similarity, the way they went about their religion would not attract them...Each has their own quite different pattern of behaviour relating to the Holy Spirit. For instance, glossolalia – speaking in tongues – is much more frequently practiced and more greatly elaborated in white Pentecostal churches than in black.<sup>365</sup>

In fact tongues and other gifts of the Spirit were rarely if ever, spoken of or practiced in Caribbean Pentecostalism.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>361</sup>H Fisher & O Reeve, *Still it Flows* (Hockley Pentecostal Church, 1993), 34. Available from [www.hockleypentecostal.com](http://www.hockleypentecostal.com) [Accessed 03/07/08].

<sup>362</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>363</sup>Ibid, 55, 68, 69, 70. 'I took the word of God as my instruction manual and the Holy Spirit as my adviser'. 'Lively choruses with hand-clapping', 'Liberty as the norm', 'It stood for the freedom and liberty in the Holy Ghost, the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, and praise and worship in dancing, singing and clapping, and singing in the spirit. We have found that the Holy Spirit also leads us to honour the Word of God, so that in every service, the word is given its rightful place and expanded by dear servants of the Lord from all over the world'.

<sup>364</sup>Ibid, 37. At its height HPC had Sunday Schools in 'Smethwick, Handsworth, Northfield, Farm Street, Lozells, Ladywood, and ...Hockley'.

<sup>365</sup>Booth, 'We True Christians', 82.

<sup>366</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 101.

In terms of the wider worship of the church and the use of hymns and choruses, whilst they may have sung the same songs, differing theological world views and interpretations of scripture, often resulted in a change in words for the same song. For example, a well known chorus sung in HPC was, *I've Found a New Life*, and whereas they sang:

I've found a new life. I've found a new life  
If anybody asks you, what's the matter with you my friend,  
Tell them that you've been saved, sanctified, Holy Ghost filled,  
water baptised, Jesus on my mind  
I've found a new life.<sup>367</sup>

The CGP sang this alternate version:

I'm running for my life. I'm running for my life  
If any ask you, what is the matter with you  
Tell them that you are saved, sanctified, Holy Ghost filled,  
water baptised, I've got Jesus on my mind  
I'm running for my life.<sup>368</sup>

These choruses appear to have had the same root, but perhaps life experiences determined how they came to be expressed differently.

So different but so very similar in fact, but still Caribbean Christians rejected it, responding in a way which was perhaps typical of their response to all British Pentecostal Churches at that time. Sydney Dunn explained their rationale for rejection stating that it could not be considered a truly Pentecostal church, because, 'the sermons and teachings were not what ... (he) was accustomed to'.<sup>369</sup> He was a member of the Apostolic Oneness Church.<sup>370</sup> Lyseight

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<sup>367</sup>Chorus Sheet accessed from Hockley Pentecostal Church November 2008.

<sup>368</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 91. Little is known if these words were adjusted in response to the racism which many experienced.

<sup>369</sup>Ibid, 38.

<sup>370</sup>Bishop Dunn, Bethel United Church of Christ. The Jesus blogger blogging apostolic faith. Available from [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) [Accessed 12/8/08].

on the other hand, accused English Pentecostals of lacking in spirituality.<sup>371</sup> Perhaps the truth was that not only were Caribbean Pentecostals looking through different cultural lenses, which not even a visit to HPC could influence, but they had been taught, and believed that theirs was the one and only true Pentecostalism,<sup>372</sup> as recorded in the Scriptures and directly ordained by God.<sup>373</sup> They saw themselves as an exclusive, close-knit group,<sup>374</sup> chosen by God to lead the rest of the world into this true faith.<sup>375</sup> Consequently, they could not attend any other church – as to do so was akin to apostasy.<sup>376</sup> Their position was confirmed in their minds by the degree with which their denomination had progressed in its reasonably short history, as working class folk, rising up and being able to court the presence of government dignitaries in Jamaica.<sup>377</sup> Such was their resolve that only one of the six English Pentecostal churches which were in Wolverhampton at that time of their arrival, was able to retain a significant Caribbean membership.<sup>378</sup>

Nevertheless Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain began not as specific worshipping congregations, but as a consequence of people who moved by their consciences, independently and indiscriminately set up prayer cells and worshipping centres all over

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<sup>371</sup>*The Church of God Evangel*, 8 April 1957. Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 37. ‘The services were not like those they were used to in Jamaica. When they knelt to pray, they were stared at and not welcomed’.

<sup>372</sup>Grant & Patel, *A Time To Speak*, 70. ‘Black-led Churches have tended to behave as if they were the only ones likely to go to heaven: the most spiritual and holy – the real saints’.

<sup>373</sup>J D Aldred, *Respect: Understanding Caribbean British Christianity* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2005), 59.

Heritage traced from Galatians 1 verse 13 where it states, ‘For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it’.

<sup>374</sup>Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, 144.

<sup>375</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 88.

<sup>376</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 44. Bishop Dunn said of his experience of working amongst other Christians, ‘I would prefer to return to Jamaica without a penny in my pocket rather than worship anyhow or accept another church’s doctrine’.

<sup>377</sup>*The Church of God Evangel*, 2 April 1950. 61. At the stone laying service of a new church in St Elizabeth, a member of the Jamaican House of Representatives for that district was present.

<sup>378</sup>Hiro, *Black British*, 33.

England, in the places which they first called home - houses, bedrooms, bedsits, and even hostels.<sup>379</sup> Like their Charismatic counterparts each church consisted of people who had perhaps travelled in community, but as they were a close-knit group, they related not simply by country of origin, and Parish, but also faith perspective. What developed therefore were not just churches, but social centres, advice centres, support centres and friendship centres, with people choosing to share a separate existence based on common language, faith and culture.<sup>380</sup>

Caribbean Pentecostalism had found itself a home, and a way of being with which they could traverse British society and the world. As churches became established, members wanted them to be a 'place of refuge as they were cut off from loved ones and hopelessly trapped in situations and systems that were unfamiliar and obscure'<sup>381</sup>, but the presence of white members often made this difficult. However, as time passed, white members slowly 'disappeared' from their congregations. It was initially argued that many had left out of choice, but in later years it was admitted that they had in fact been 'forced' out by the Caribbean majority, and more specifically pastors who 'manoeuvred ...whites out of the Church'.<sup>382</sup> The most high profile case was that of Herbert England, a white English leader.

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<sup>379</sup>Booth, 'We True Christians', 83.

<sup>380</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 65. Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 87-88.

<sup>381</sup>Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 18.

<sup>382</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 138.

England had been invited by the leadership of CoG USA to establish its first mission in Britain, and this he did in 1952. He was then appointed National Overseer in 1953,<sup>383</sup> a position which was withheld from black Christians within the denomination at that time. England, unlike his Caribbean brethren, ‘did not believe in the doctrine of “Exclusivity”’,<sup>384</sup> was not ‘against Wearing of Gold for Adornment’ and ‘was not versed in Caribbean culture’,<sup>385</sup> and therefore had difficulty understanding the practices of the believers he was called upon to lead. This led to difficulties as England sought to command the respect of his Caribbean pastors who were in the majority. How he was dealt with made culture and cultural awareness central to the practices within the denomination for the first time, being seen as a necessity in enabling the worship life of Caribbean Pentecostals.

The situation came to a head when in a discussion regarding the practice of ‘washing saints feet’, a practice commonly undertaken during communion within the CoG both in the Caribbean and USA, England interpreted the passage as meaning to show hospitality. He translated it within the British context as that of sharing a cup of tea with each other,<sup>386</sup> which may have been a true cultural and contextual interpretation, but for the majority of Caribbean pastors it simply served to confirm what they believed to be true, that Herbert England was not up to the task, and needed to be replaced by one who knew something of the ‘doctrine

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<sup>383</sup>Ibid, 55-56.

<sup>384</sup>Ibid, 43. The doctrine of exclusivity ‘was coined by James Madison Pendleton and advocated by James Robinson Graves. The idea was taken from Proverbs 22:28...They claimed this ideology goes back to the time of Christ and believed that only Baptist ministers and exclusively Baptist Churches should baptise converts....This doctrine was later adopted implicitly by Church of God of Prophecy, in the first General Assembly of 1906’.

<sup>385</sup>Ibid, 56.

<sup>386</sup>Ibid, 41. What England did would also have been a practice at variance with their white American counterparts also.

and customs of the Caribbean'.<sup>387</sup> England was replaced by an American Overseer with experience of the Caribbean, but it was not until 1988 that they requested and received their first Caribbean Overseer.<sup>388</sup>

Caribbean Pentecostals had finally matured to the point where they came to the realisation that their differences were centred upon differences in culture, which was a part not just of their ethnicity, but their expressions of faith.<sup>389</sup> However, rather than begin the pursuit of redefining their Christian faith out of their cultural experiences, they chose instead to revert back to the learnt cultural practices and familiar sermon topics to which they had been accustomed in Jamaica. With renewed zeal they introduced into Britain the practice of exclusivity, singing of the Banner Hymn, and preached against fornication and sexual immorality, celebrating the one true Church, in the one true way.

For this they received an increasing number of plaudits from many English ministers and denominations, for their apparent faithfulness to God, and the rapid growth of their churches,<sup>390</sup> but they were at the same time developing internal problems of their own – from an emerging and increasingly frustrated constituency – their very own children. Whilst

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<sup>387</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>388</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 57.

<sup>389</sup>Toulis, *Believing Identity*, 165.

<sup>390</sup>*The Church of God Evangel*, 28 October 1957, 15. Of the Church of God, Rev Carter from Nottingham stated, 'These men with the vision of a lost and dying world, who came along from Jamaica with this wonderful Gospel and never rested until the CoG was established in England today'. *The Church of God Evangel*, 2 January 1961, 14. 'One day as one of our sisters by the name of Clarke was riding on the bus, she was reading a Church of God Evangel. An English lady saw it, became interested and asked her if she could come and preach at their church. The sister not being a preacher...told her pastor...who was glad of the opportunity...They were so moved when they saw the inconvenience at the place we rented for worship that they said "We believe we can let you have use of our church"'.

culture was finally seen as having a role to play in the expression of their faith, they never learned the lesson that culture is not static it is always changing,<sup>391</sup> and that to remain relevant, they too had to adapt and change their cultural practices.

### **2.3 British Caribbean Youth Challenge the Status Quo**

‘The period 1970-1981 sees the children of the Windrush generation as teenagers and young adults’,<sup>392</sup> raised and educated in Britain, and most significantly acculturated into British ways. Yet they faced much opposition from a society at a period dominated by racist comments given impetus by such leading figures as Enoch Powell, Conservative MP, whose now famous ‘Rivers of Blood Speech’ was made before members of Conservative party at the Midlands Hotel, Birmingham in 1968.<sup>393</sup> Powell articulated what the majority of white British people were believed to be thinking at that time,<sup>394</sup> declaring to an innocent generation ‘that a West Indian or Asian did not, by being born in England, become an Englishman’.<sup>395</sup> So, rather than simply being British as they had come to understand, British Caribbean youth were suddenly given a new identity, and defined as ‘second generation immigrants’<sup>396</sup> so that overnight they instantly became, ‘outsiders whose potential for lawlessness posed a threat to ‘British culture’ and the British way of life’.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>391</sup>T J Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 5.

<sup>392</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 71.

<sup>393</sup>This hotel is now called the Burlington Hotel, off Stephenson Place in the City of Birmingham.

<sup>394</sup>2,026 workers at Smithfield market signed a petition calling for no more migrants to Britain from the Caribbean and India.

<sup>395</sup>Hiro, *Black British*, 60.

<sup>396</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 72.

<sup>397</sup>Haell Croall, *Crime and Society in Britain* (Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 1998), 163.

The problem facing British Caribbean youth then was how to traverse the two worlds in which they were being raised, having on the one hand been encouraged from childhood to believe that they were now British and would be easily assimilated into British society as ‘British’ Caribbean, and on the other, faced a society which rejected that viewpoint. They knew themselves to be different, and wondered not just how, but where they fitted in. They therefore questioned all areas of their lives, and as a consequence religion integral to their community and lifestyle, naturally came under their scrutiny as they searched for answers about their cultural identity. However, instead of answers and clarifications, it threw up many questions and ambiguities for them, about how their own culture was used as a means to express their faith.

The questioning of parents within Caribbean society is generally frowned upon, children simply being encouraged to respect their parents, learn by observation, and make sure that they are seen and not heard when ‘Big’ people are talking, and to always respect all who were older than themselves. However, as a result of being raised in Britain, a different cultural dynamic came into play as children at school were actively encouraged to develop their enquiring minds by asking questions, and made to understand that respect from strangers was to be earned and not simply determined by age.<sup>398</sup> This in a society where their peers demonstrated levels of social and sexual freedoms which was unknown to them,

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<sup>398</sup> Interview, Meryl Davies, 26 November 2008. ‘I realize now how confusing everything must be for children, as I raise my own. Our parents taught us to respect our elders, you know what that meant, any and everyone who was older than you could tell you what to do and you had to do it. Then when we got to older, or old enough we did the same to those who happened to be younger than us. My children (aged 11 and 7) are always saying, granny always tells us to show respect, but then they don’t show us any. They just say shut up. It’s not fair. They learn at school that everyone should be respected, but that it is earned. Even their teachers say that. No wonder our children get confused, it doesn’t seem fair does it, but it’s not easy to tell your parents to respect your children, they don’t understand, and just say “you children have lost all respect”’.

backed up by television which seemed to bring the ‘sins of the world’ into their living rooms. Conflict was inevitable as young people challenged the Caribbean cultural status quo, both in the church and at home, with the new ideas which they had come to understand.

Caribbean Christianity at this time rather than seeking to establish a truly contextual church, which would enable them to lead the next generation into the twentieth century, chose instead to continue to stress age-old beliefs of moral rectitude and holy living as the means by which they could overcome the obstacles which they faced personally and within the wider society. This became a problem for children who having simply wanted to ‘fit in’ as British citizens with a Caribbean heritage, suffered from increasing cultural confusion<sup>399</sup> about their identity, whilst experiencing increased feelings of social dislocation concerning the world in which they lived.

Toulis in her book *Believing Identity* identifies two issues within Caribbean Christianity which speaks to the conflict which British Caribbean youth were experiencing. Firstly, she reveals a congregation which did not see the ambiguity in praying in King James English, preaching in the Queen’s English, and only using Patois socially when outside of the church.<sup>400</sup> Then secondly, she highlights a faith which whilst being seen by those outside of it

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<sup>399</sup>‘Cultural confusion results from a growing lack of consensus about what is proper or appropriate in given circumstances’. It often occurs in children as a result in being raised by one culture whilst living in another or one race, raised in a completely different one. Available from [www.pileusblog.wordpress.com/201006/29/cultural-confusion](http://www.pileusblog.wordpress.com/201006/29/cultural-confusion) [Accessed 23/12/10].

<sup>400</sup>Toulis, *Believing Identity*, 184 – 187. Mike Storry & Peter Childs, eds., *British Cultural Identities*, 264. ‘Sociologists acknowledge that one of the most significant cultural tradition folks from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands brought with them was Patois’.

as ‘culturally’ engaging and productive for Caribbean migrants living in Britain, failed to speak to the needs of British Caribbean youth who instead saw it as:

entrenched in the old Jamaican style, not looking for change, not challenging social issues or awareness. Christianity pushes aside ethnic identity and because I’m Christian I can’t ignore that side of me. I treasure and value Blackness, but I don’t exist in Blackness. People want a middle-class white ideology.<sup>401</sup>

British Caribbean youth having identified this contradiction, began to challenge their parents and elders to reconsider how they thought about and expressed their worship to God, suggesting that, ‘Thinking about God, like all thought begins with assumptions...It is not possible to start from zero and work inductively; there is no zero point’.<sup>402</sup> Wanting to express a faith which reflected who they were as people, they therefore wanted their parents to admit that their religion had been passed down to them clothed in colonial cultural and social value systems. However, having been socialised and acculturated into believing that this was the correct way to worship, the majority of parents simply saw this as ignorance on the part of children who needed greater understanding of biblical truths. However, instead of backing off Caribbean youth from their respective faith perspectives felt led to consider alternative ways of being and worshipping so that their cultural identities could be fully expressed.

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<sup>401</sup>Ibid, 203. ‘Maybe it doesn’t meet cultural needs enough. It’s entrenched in the old Jamaican style, not looking for change, not challenging social issues or awareness. Christianity pushes aside ethnic identity and because I’m Christian I can’t ignore that side of me. I treasure and value Blackness, but I don’t exist in Blackness. People want a middle-class white ideology’.

<sup>402</sup>Nicholas Cooper-Lewter and Henry H. Mitchell, *Soul Theology: The Heart of American Black Culture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 7.

### 2.3.1 The Plea from Charismatic Youth

British Caribbean youth within Charismatic mainline denominations, were raised by parents who were proud of their British heritage, and were therefore committed to encouraging their children to be the same, striving for success in England. As encouraging as this may have been, in terms of day to day activities and the social stresses they faced, individuals talk of keeping parents ignorant to a degree, fearing that their parents could not deal with the difficult reality of their situation in England. They speak of parents who rarely if ever, spoke of Jamaica, or took them ‘home’ to visit grandparents and other family members. Meryl’s experience was typical:

We were just here in England, just here. The only thing we knew for sure was England, Britain. Parents never really spoke of Jamaica in fact they never really spoke about anything. Occasionally at family get-togethers you would hear something of how they grew up. But our parents spoke in parables they always had sayings to explain everything. You’d really never really understand what they were trying to say until years later, but by then it was too late. They just never spoke. Some people as you grew up, you found out they left Jamaica in disgrace, an unwanted pregnancy, failed or abusive marriage, child and no man. You found out that most of them left with a secret, and perhaps to tell you anything meant sharing that secret, and they were never going to do that. You’d have to work it out for yourself – a date of birth, marriage or something - then it would make sense. They were Christians and some things were just not spoken of.<sup>403</sup>

Those parents who were able often resolved to answer their children’s questions by taking them to Jamaica in their teenage years, when the availability of money was more accessible. However rather than solving a problem it served to create even more confusion within them, as Jamaicans upon hearing them speak, automatically called them ‘English’.<sup>404</sup> This was a term which many British Caribbean youth interpreted as a metaphor for ‘you’re not one of

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<sup>403</sup>Targeted interview with Meryl Davies, British Caribbean, 26 November 2008.

<sup>404</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 107.

us’, ‘you are a foreigner’, or ‘who do you think you are coming here with your posh accent, and airs and graces’. ‘English’ therefore came to be seen by them as a slur, a rejection which they had never imagined or expected to be applied to them as Black Caribbean, albeit British Caribbean people.<sup>405</sup>

They therefore returned ‘home’ to Britain where they endeavoured to make a life for themselves,<sup>406</sup> in schools and universities, which were either ignorant of, or unable to understand their problems, and in churches which preached sermons which neither reflected, nor offered any tangible solutions to them. They were resigned to making the best of the situation, but longing for something of themselves, their African and Caribbean identity to impact upon their ‘English’ world, and particularly their church life.<sup>407</sup> Change never came and so once they reached the age of 16 or 18, many chose to either, leave the church for good, or join white Pentecostal denominations such as Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC) or AOG,<sup>408</sup> which at least, if they lacked cultural diversity, provided them with a greater

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<sup>405</sup>Little did they realise that in fact once a person has lived in Jamaica for about a year, the resident population then considers them to be a Jamaican.

<sup>406</sup>Interview with N Foster, 9 March 2008. ‘It wasn’t what I had expected to go to Jamaica, but as soon as you got off the plane everyone would know you were English. Your accent gave it away, and so everywhere we went – shopping, on the transport minibus – they would just call us English and they never said it quietly. Soon you went out with your cousins and parents, but never said anything. You had to get someone else to buy what you wanted as they always charged more for the English. I couldn’t wait to get back to England, as surprising as that may sound. At least I was used to the racism there’.

<sup>407</sup>Grant and Patel, *A Time to Speak*, 14. ‘Is it too much to ask that the Calypso be seen to be just as credible a medium to communicate truth as Wesley’s melodies and that the steel band be as acceptable as the piano’.

<sup>408</sup>Interview N Foster. November 2004. ‘I left home to go to teachers training college. Tell you the truth it was an opportunity to leave the church. It was difficult at my Baptist Church. I remember when I wanted to get baptized. They said they hadn’t had a baptismal service in over ten years. They just didn’t understand me. When I got into Elim, it was like coming home – the worship, I joined the worship team and the songs were cheerful and uplifting, even hymns which used to sound dull and boring were no longer dull and boring, I enjoyed them. I’m glad I went to them’.

freedom of expression, which included dancing, singing, speaking in tongues and clapping. Few chose to attend Black Pentecostal churches.

### **2.3.2 The Plea from Pentecostal Youth**

For the children of Caribbean Pentecostals, the issues were somewhat different, but ultimately the conclusions were very similar, and often the same. The life lived by their parents in effect sought to isolate children from a world which they considered to be evil and sinful.<sup>409</sup> Children were therefore encouraged to socialise with other children, but primarily only those within the ‘church family’,<sup>410</sup> and though they were encouraged to attend school (it being a legal requirement), interest in academic studies was often neglected,<sup>411</sup> and not seen as a desirable goal once an adult.<sup>412</sup> Church was all that should matter to them, with obedience to God the goal,<sup>413</sup> and so they were encouraged to spend all their time in the service of God. Parents were the example to follow, and when they were not at work providing for their families, their time was spent working for the church, often to the detriment of family life, in particular the needs of their children.<sup>414</sup>

As Pentecostal youth therefore asked questions of their parents, they were indirectly and unknowingly asking questions of their faith, and in turn the church, and to question the

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<sup>409</sup>Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 26.

<sup>410</sup>Those of the same denomination

<sup>411</sup>Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 26.

<sup>412</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project. 2006. 8.

<sup>413</sup>Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 26.

<sup>414</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 94. ‘The demands of earning a living, supporting a family and keeping a roof over one’s head, coupled with the need to serve God, did not always seem compatible with family life. Some of the children became angry with the church because they felt it was not only ignoring their plight but also blinding their parents from seeing their situation, believing what they were telling them, and taking appropriate action. They felt that their parents were giving ‘their all’ to church and very little to them’.

church was to question the foundation of their parents' reason for living. It could only end unhappily.

Yet ask questions they did. To the question of who are we, socially, historically, and culturally, there was just one answer, children of God, called to be holy. If culture as T. S. Elliot once said was something which included 'all the characteristic activities and interests of a people',<sup>415</sup> it was not the answer they were expecting as they sought to understand who they were in the world in which they found themselves, Britain. An increasingly educated youth, challenging in the main uneducated parents received the only response parents could give - talk of God and a Christian identity which was wrapped up in Christ Jesus. To them all else was secondary, and so there was certainly no room for discussions on culture and such evils as alcohol, tobacco, worldly music and the cinema.<sup>416</sup> When the young people responded by accusing their parents of implementing ideas which had no biblical basis, but were more likely based in an old fashioned colonial Jamaican worldview,<sup>417</sup> their parents responded by stating that the sinfulness of British society and white British youth in particular, had led them astray.<sup>418</sup>

A conversation had begun, but this time the children could and would not be silenced, particularly as their parent's responses confirmed to them that the church was a significant contributor to their problems. They questioned the churches moral interpretation of the Bible,

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<sup>415</sup>Mike Storry and Peter Childs, *British Cultural Identities* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

<sup>416</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 72.

<sup>417</sup>Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 27.

<sup>418</sup>Pearson, 'Race, religiosity', 342.

concerning such issues as fornication, dating, marriage, the wearing of jewellery, and the forbidding of the straightening of hair.<sup>419</sup> Parents responded by reminding them of the need to live a holy life. Fornication for example, considered one of the severest of sins was loosely interpreted by the church as applying to anything from pre-marital intercourse, extra marital sex and those seeking to remarry after divorce, no matter the cause.<sup>420</sup> Those who could not hold to these beliefs were not just excluded from the church, but were often told to leave the family home, as such 'obvious' uncleanness it was believed, would prevent the family and the church from being able to be filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>421</sup>

Youth as a result, questioned the submissiveness of their parents, both in church and in a world where racism impacted their lives almost on a daily basis. Parents responded by giving the same spiritual response, stating that this world mattered little, and that they should instead look forward to receiving their greater reward in heaven.<sup>422</sup> So the disagreements went on. When they questioned, the use of the Queen's English when speaking in church, they were told in no uncertain terms that it was the acceptable language for worship,<sup>423</sup> and when they dared to question 'received' interpretations of scripture, they were reminded that interpretation of scripture came directly from God, and was based on the divine guidance of

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<sup>419</sup>Calley, *God's People*, 66. Hair straightening was thought to be an attempt to raise oneself up against God.

<sup>420</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>421</sup>Ibid. 'As it is felt that one impure member in a congregation is sufficient to preclude the presence of the Holy Ghost at services, it is in the interests of each member to see that others do not fornicate'.

<sup>422</sup>Toulis, *Believing Identity*, 180-181.

<sup>423</sup>Ibid, 186-187. 'Many of us are spiritual schizophrenics...when you come to the church, know you just stops, switch and you pray and go on different, and you think in authorized worship language and talk authorized worship and we thee and thou. When we go back in the other world where they hardly say thee and thou, it's as though we become a different person, and it's as though God is not portable'.

God.<sup>424</sup> All in all, children were told that there was only one true way to believe and therefore to live, interpreted for them by their church, the CoG, and documented in its 29 Teachings, and celebrated by their allegiance to the Church flag. It was an alternative worldview with an alternative way of being, but one which was proving itself out of step with the next generation.

What transpired therefore were a people who, according to Robert Beckford had co-opted a white American cultural and religious worldview, in which there was no room for a Caribbean contextual faith, never mind a British Caribbean one.<sup>425</sup> As a consequence many young people were seen as a threat to the holiness of the congregation, and therefore parents who considered themselves to be ‘married’ to Jesus, were encouraged by church elders who considered these young people to be ‘a threat or a plague that needed to be controlled’,<sup>426</sup> to ‘divorce’ their children.

This was not the church which the wider world had come to celebrate, in fact it flies in the face of David Pearson’s analysis which declared that ‘West Indian groups differ from the Asians in that they do not ...as a rule have to bother so much about maintaining a good reputation with relatives and former neighbours in their district of origin, or among their fellows in Britain’.<sup>427</sup> Family was in fact considered to be the glue which holds the

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<sup>424</sup>Calley, *God’s People*, 61.

<sup>425</sup>Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 42. ‘We learned our remnant theology from White American denominations which had encouraged us to dismiss other traditions. In the USA dismissing other traditions was influenced by a history of separation, but in Britain it served other purposes: for example, pastors and elders would dismiss other traditions in order to maintain the loyalty of Black Christians’.

<sup>426</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 96.

<sup>427</sup>Pearson, ‘Race, religiosity’, 351.

community together, and to be shunned by both family and church elders,<sup>428</sup> soon left a group of young vulnerable people lacking the wisdom and guidance of their elders and their community.<sup>429</sup> Alienated from their families, young people created artificial families to meet their needs, these are most commonly called gangs,<sup>430</sup> and single teenage parent families, which have become the cause for much concern in cities and towns around Britain today.

### **2.3.3 Music mediator of a developing British Caribbean Cultural Identity**

Whilst Caribbean Christians in Britain appeared to have no solutions to the issues which concerned their children, and were apparently unable to make an informed contribution to the increasing debate on faith and culture, not all areas of the Caribbean community were silent on the matter, for as young people looked for answers, they soon found them in the unlikeliest of places, Caribbean popular music, and more particularly reggae music.

When Independence came to former British colonies in the Caribbean the winds of change brought a renewed determination by Caribbean peoples to define their cultural identity, as Jamaicans, Barbadians, Trinidadians etc. Rastafarianism, reggae, and particularly the music of Bob Marley, emerged as not only a new spiritual voice, but a political one also,

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<sup>428</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 126.

<sup>429</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 96. 'Concerned to keep out the world's ways of doing things ... Insecurity in leadership was rife... But rather than celebrate and embrace this phase of development, many from the older generation made their young people feel marginalized, resulting in the withdrawal of their commitment and support, and robbing them of the inspiration they might have gained from older members and role models'.

<sup>430</sup>'The psychological aspects of gang life are plentiful. Many youths in the inner city come from broken homes. As a result, these youths may turn to the gang life as a "pseudo" family. The gang, which has a definite family hierarchy, becomes the family for the youth. However, the purpose of a family is to provide support, love and protection'. Available from [www.socalpc.com/Sociology/Deviance\\_In-Gangs.html](http://www.socalpc.com/Sociology/Deviance_In-Gangs.html) [Accessed 08/12/10].

particularly among the dispossessed and downtrodden of the world.<sup>431</sup> In Britain it spoke most vociferously to British Caribbean youth in ways which encouraged them to seek not only their Caribbean, but their African roots, whilst at the same time holding on to their British identities.<sup>432</sup>

Rastafarianism as a religion held no appeal for religious parents who dismissed it as heretical, counselling their children against adopting any of its 'bad' practices and habits.<sup>433</sup> Yet, its political and social philosophy appealed to children, many being inspired by its forthright celebration of blackness, and outspokenness against colonialism and injustice, as they too began to think of themselves as African Caribbean spiritual beings, with distinct and valid cultural identities.<sup>434</sup> Such was the power of Rastafarianism that parts of the British establishment tried in vain to ban it, censoring students who tried to wear dreadlocks,<sup>435</sup> hats and anything seemingly related to the colours of Ethiopia associated with it.<sup>436</sup> They failed,

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<sup>431</sup>Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 116.

<sup>432</sup>Hiro, *Black British White British*, 67. 'For whites there's always been Teds, Skins, Mods, Rockers, Punks; but for blacks there's never been anything they could really identify with that was really culturally theirs, until Rasta's came along'.

<sup>433</sup>Storry and Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, 172. 'Black cultural symbols have become popular in Britain, whilst hated, disparaged by their parents as it reflects Black culture rather than British culture and more particularly Rastafarianism.'

<sup>434</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 79, 83. Of Rastafarianism Linton Kwesi Johnson stated that, 'Though he believed Haile Selassie was no God, he shared the political commitment of the Rasta Movement'. 'As Jamaican generation hated Rastafarians as evil unbelievers – yet here they articulated the Black experience better than anyone. We had wanted to develop a Black British identity, no longer divide and rule – but it was now our own Black parents who in many instances were creating or seeking to create barriers which sought to make us hate ourselves, whilst they were unconsciously siding with white society, white Jesus and whiteness in general'.

<sup>435</sup>Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley*, 105, xiii. Dreadlocks are a distinct hairstyle worn by Rastafarians who see it as a means whereby, 'it differentiates Rastas from those who are committed to the Babylonian way of life...those who have the 'I-and-I consciousness' and experience a rebirth due to their relationality, are open to the new future made possible by the man-God Haile Selassie'. According to Erskine's evidence it was not only utilised by British Caribbean students, but in the USA on campuses where both professors and students used it, 'as a symbol of protest and as a way to remember Africa'.

<sup>436</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 83.

but their actions encouraged the youth to be more determined than previously to explore their own culture and identity, through the medium of reggae music.<sup>437</sup>

The socially active and political lyrics of reggae music became the biggest contributor to legitimising blackness and Black people as a social entity in Britain, and particularly those of Jamaican descent.<sup>438</sup> It challenged the stereo typical picture of the Eurocentric picture of Jesus which most families had on their walls,<sup>439</sup> with thoughts of a Black Jesus, and a Black God, Jah. It became the prime motivator in the search for a truly British Caribbean cultural identity,<sup>440</sup> and then there were no limits as British Caribbean youth chose it as their means of education and enlightenment. However, rather than take on Rastafarianism and reggae as their religious and political home, they chose instead to become increasingly proud as they declared themselves to be ‘British Caribbean’.<sup>441</sup>

This together with the arrival of West Africans who showed no hesitation in practicing their culture and customs in a foreign land, taught British Caribbean youth that unlike their parents, they need not be clones of white culture and white society, but could be themselves

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<sup>437</sup>Ibid, 89. ‘If Rastafarian philosophy was the content of this new movement then its engine was reggae music’.

<sup>438</sup>Erskine, *From Garvey to Marley*, 178.

<sup>439</sup>Interview N Foster, 16 November 2004. ‘Yes, I remember. We had a lot of things in our homes that looking back were just so ridiculous in terms of reflecting us as Black people. The customary picture of a beatific Jesus looking European, with a halo and pink dress. It didn’t matter which home you went into back then you always saw one of those pictures on the wall – it seems to have been part of the compulsory paraphernalia of the Caribbean Christian. In fact I think my neighbours today – who are of that generation – still have such a picture on their wall today’.

<sup>440</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 89.

<sup>441</sup>Bradley, *Believing in Britain*, 177. ‘In the population as a whole, only thirty-one percent said they were British and gave no other answer...Among those from ethnic minorities...fifty-seven percent described their national identity as solely British...it is true that among younger second or third generation migrants, there is evidence of growing identification as in the white population, with Englishness and Scottishness’.

and proud of it.<sup>442</sup> These new cultural experiences were then used to explore other, but just as significant cultural practices. They began to rediscover Patois,<sup>443</sup> other types of music and habits which could now be co-opted and assimilated into their world. They developed a fusion of British and Caribbean culture, expressed through the languages of both English and Patois, and sometimes forming a new language, a new way of speaking, and new dress styles informed by African American culture, which were soon co-opted by the wider British youth subculture.<sup>444</sup>

With great expectations they therefore began to develop a new cultural identity, a British Caribbean cultural identity,<sup>445</sup> and whilst most Black Christian youth admired it from a distance, hoping that it would inform the future direction of their churches, they never embraced it fully themselves, wanting still to be a part of the churches which they had grown up in.

#### **2.4 Fitting in, but not fitting together as the century ends**

A youth in crisis, but as the century concluded and a new one began, to those outside of its communities, Caribbean Christianity looked successful. Relatively speaking whilst they had the greatest number of church attendees, and though small in number compared to the majority population, they impacted the wider community, taking up leadership positions on national and interdenominational levels way beyond their size.

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<sup>442</sup>Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 64.

<sup>443</sup>Storry and Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, 265, 267.

<sup>444</sup>Ibid, 264.

<sup>445</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 82. This 'was not a simple mimicking of the cultural expressions of the Caribbean. They use it to help re-make themselves in a culture that had rejected their presence...influences from America, the Caribbean, and Africa'.

Two leaders in particular came to the fore, Pastor Joel Edwards and Bishop Joe Aldred, who it would be fair to say were atypical of their generation in that they both received a theological education within mainstream Christianity.<sup>446</sup> Joel Edwards, an executive member of the NTCG, attended the ecumenical London Bible College before becoming General Secretary of the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance, and then going on to become the General Director of the Evangelical Alliance UK in 1993.<sup>447</sup> Joe Aldred, on the other hand was a Bishop within the CGP, completing his studies at St John's College, Nottingham (Anglican), before leading the Centre for Black and White Partnership, based at the University of Birmingham, and then taking up the role of Secretary for Ethnic Minority Affairs for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.<sup>448</sup> They brought a great deal of recognition to their respective traditions, from those who looked in from the outside.

Caribbean Christians were also much appreciated for the gospel choirs which they introduced to British society, and this was exemplified in 2002 by the large choir led by members of the Black Church which was given the prestigious position of leading the parade for the Queens Golden Jubilee Celebrations in 2002.<sup>449</sup> Established in 1982, the London Community Gospel Choir (LCGC) is recognised as the leading choir in the Caribbean Church, regularly

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<sup>446</sup>Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church, Oral History Report interview with Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, 22 August 2006, St George's post 16 Centre, New Town, Birmingham, 8, 9. 'They very rarely encourage you to go studying teaching outside, they'd just think it was a deficiency at that time... (*they*) have a history of feeling prioritizing the call above the training'.

<sup>447</sup>Edwards, *Lord Make Us One*, 60.

<sup>448</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project.

<sup>449</sup>Bradley, *Believing in Britain*, 179. The choir consisted of 5,000 from the Metropolitan Police Gospel Choir and churches including Pentecostals, Methodists, Catholics and the Apostolic Church.

providing the 'backing' and entertainment to many artistes and celebrities today.<sup>450</sup> However, like Aldred and Edwards before them, the choirs were not solely the product of the Black Church, even though they too have contributed to giving it respect within wider British society. The LCGC for example whilst now receiving much praise and being popular amongst Christian of all denominations, had to perform their first and founding concert at Kensington Temple, an EPC, as their own denominations believed them to be unchristian in their dress and practices.

A new century now welcomes a new generation of British Caribbean leaders who are busy establishing new Pentecostal denominations. At the forefront are such churches as Ruach, led by Bishop John Francis (a founding member of LCGC), Rhema Ministries led by Pastor Mark Goodridge, and Christian Life led by Bishop Wayne Malcolm.<sup>451</sup> Whilst they signify growth, new British Caribbean leadership, and fresh perspectives, it would be fair to say that whilst their predecessors influenced by colonialism expressed their faith through British and North American cultural lenses, these churches seemingly influenced by globalisation,<sup>452</sup> have chosen to adopt worship practices and belief systems more akin to North American Pentecostalism, particularly those of television healing evangelists, and therefore continue to

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<sup>450</sup>Beverley Knight, James Brown, Amy Winehouse, Jamelia, Lamar to name just a few. Available from [www.lcgc.org.uk](http://www.lcgc.org.uk) [Accessed 17/08/10].

<sup>451</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 18.

<sup>452</sup>Globalisation is the process by which interaction between humans, and the effects of that interaction, occurs across global distances with increasing regularity, intensity and speed...some on the left...argue that authentic indigenous cultures (or religion) developed over many centuries are being replaced by a bland commercialism represented most clearly by the way Macdonald's restaurants and its imitators have usurped traditional diets and put identical tasteless food into billions of mouths across the world'. Fabian global forum. Available from [www.editiondesign.com/.../article007.html](http://www.editiondesign.com/.../article007.html) [Accessed 23/12/10].

fail to present their own culture as having any significant value or contribution to make to their own worship.

Unfortunately despite these innovations and changes, theologically, Caribbean Christianity moved little if at all from the positions which it held since the 1950s and 1960s. In mainline churches with predominantly Caribbean and British Caribbean congregations, tensions between young and old have created exclusion. For example in both New Aston Baptist Church and RSBC, the elders rejected the young peoples request for other instruments to be included in the worship service, in addition to the organ. Paul, a member of RSBC recalled how:

Times moved on. There was a group of us who wanted to introduce drums, guitars and such. They said we couldn't introduce anything. It was the organ and nothing else. He told us he's the minister. Most left, I stayed as I wasn't too bothered then, but now I realise what they were trying to do. It's a shame we could have done so much, and there were so many of us. Now it just seems wasted.<sup>453</sup>

They also continue to demonstrate a preference for white ministers, rather than up and coming British Caribbean ones, believing that no matter the age, health or capabilities, a white minister is always to be considered superior to that of a 'black' one.<sup>454</sup>

At the same time three landmark decisions within the CoG, has called into question its missionary expansion within Britain. At their 88th General Assembly, held in the USA in

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<sup>453</sup>Interview with Paul Stuart, British Caribbean. RSBC, 17 July 2008.

<sup>454</sup>Interview with Rev. Jonathon Jones, a white minister of New Aston Baptist Church, 22 October 2006. The membership is now composed entirely of Jamaican elders. 'I have been here now for six months. I'm loving it. I just do what they want and they don't seem to mind that I can't get around too well, but then I've just retired from the mission field after thirty years, but they don't mind, as long as I let them do the services the way they want. I'll stay as long as I'm able'.

1994, the rule on wearing jewellery was rescinded with members being allowed to wear gold jewellery for the first time leaving those who had rigidly adhered to this policy - often against the wishes of unbelieving spouses - feeling, as one member stated, ‘cheated. (*For*) we were told to take off our marriage rings and now they are saying we are to put them on’.<sup>455</sup> Major church edicts including the 29 tenets were rescinded, the CoG admitting that whilst many edicts, ‘are of moral, ethical and spiritual value for the Church, for the eschatological age and the wider community. Many of them are ...rigid, uncompassionate, cultural and falling short of correct theological exegesis and hermeneutics. Consequently enforcement of these tenets is inconsistent’.<sup>456</sup> Then finally, the exclusivity rule<sup>457</sup> was rescinded, and replaced by the inclusive notion of ‘Turning to the Harvest’, where fellowship with Christians of all denominations was now not only to be encouraged, but celebrated.<sup>457</sup> They took the dramatic decision to redefine themselves as a part of the Christian community, rather than as they had previously led their members to believe – that they were the one and only chosen body of believers.

To many in Britain, it did not seem simply to be a relaxation of rules, but the removing of the very foundations of a faith which they had defended, even against their own families. These less stringent rules, resulted in diminishing congregations, financial difficulties, disputes about ownership of buildings and ultimately led to a great deal of anger and litigation amongst members.<sup>458</sup> As a consequence many lost faith, not only in their church, but in

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<sup>455</sup>Ibid, 127.

<sup>456</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>457</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God Arises*, 75-76.

<sup>458</sup>Ibid, 75.

Caribbean Christianity as a whole. The leadership however remained resolute, unprepared to give ground, emphasising instead that they were in charge, and complaining that today's young people were not as committed as the previous generation had been.<sup>459</sup> They sought to recruit a new generation of leaders who desirous of a long career would learn to conform to their wishes.<sup>460</sup> The youth in turn prayed to God, for the day that this generation of elders would pass the baton on to them, or ultimately pass over to the other side, so that they could begin to develop a church which reflected their cultural identity in its entirety.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Migration had begun with such hope however such is the tragedy of Caribbean Christianity in Britain that by the close of the twentieth century many of the brightest British Caribbean minds left the church of their youth, for other churches. A generation had failed to see the necessity of a reflective cultural identity for their children, in the same way as they had come to recognise it as a need they themselves had, some twenty or so years earlier. After his retirement, Pastor Ira Brooks, a founding member of Caribbean Pentecostalism in Britain, admitted that cultural identity and the lack of it had been a problem for his generation, and the elders of the church, declaring that as a child growing up in Jamaica he 'was not privileged to see either God or goodness directly through my own culture. Everything pertaining to the chief good came to me through a white medium'.<sup>461</sup> Others within both strands of Caribbean Christianity have remained silent on the subject, sacrificing their

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<sup>459</sup>Ibid, 123.

<sup>460</sup>Sturge, *Look What the Lord Has Done*, 96.

<sup>461</sup>Ira Brooks, *Where Do We Go From Here: A History of 25 years of the NTCG in the United Kingdom 1955-1980* (Northamptonshire: New Testament Church of God, 1982), 74.

identity in order to build and populate churches in Britain, which look like those from ‘home’, and unable to forgive an ungrateful and ignorant generation,<sup>462</sup> who are seemingly not prepared to do the same.

Through migration Caribbean Christians and Baptists in particular have seemingly achieved much of what they came for, academic success for the children, whilst Pentecostals have achieved the middle class status they craved to achieve through believing. Although culture was once a central issue to those early settlers, by the end of the century they recognised it only as peripheral to their story, much to the annoyance of British Caribbean youth for whom it became and remains central to their understanding of their identities. Young people from across all denominations were given the ultimatum ‘conform or leave’, and many chose to leave, and the actions of Christians in the West Midlands were replicated throughout the country as youth joined what they considered to be more progressive churches such as the Birmingham Christian Centre (EPC), and the Aston Christian Centre (AOG), which many of their parents had previously refused to join. This has left many mainline and Black Pentecostal churches with few, if any young people within their congregations just sixty years later. Creating the methodology with which to analyse how one such church has developed in terms of its cultural identity, observed and expressed, will be the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>462</sup>Miles, *When the Church of God*, 174. ‘The future of the Church depends on the spiritual quality of the leaders which will incorporate true repentance and an acknowledgement that we made mistakes’.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONTEXT OF STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Ethics

The University of Birmingham introduced guidelines in research ethics for students registered after September 2008. I began my studies before this, in 2006, but I have nevertheless used their guidelines and those recommended by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in Britain, to respond to important ethical issues which arose during my research. Underpinning my desire for ethical integrity was my two-fold desire to have the findings of my research verified, and in order to maintain the honesty which is expected within the discipline, allowing the data to speak for itself, thereby avoiding the charge that I am one who is merely ‘inventing data, lying about the success of their methods, suppressing findings or selectively reporting only those parts that support their particular theoretical position’,<sup>463</sup> thereby discrediting the act of research.

The ESRC’s Research Ethics Framework recommends six ethical principles,<sup>464</sup> and adherence to the Data Protection Act.<sup>465</sup> These are endorsed by such social researchers as

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<sup>463</sup> Geoff Payne & Judy Payne, *Key Concepts in Social Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 67.

<sup>464</sup> 1. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality. 2. Research staff and subjects must be fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails, and what risks, if any, are involved. 3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected. 4. Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion. 5. Harm to research participants must be avoided. 6. The independence of research must be clear, and any conflict of interest or partiality must be explicit’. Economic and Social Research Council, ‘Research Ethics Framework’, Economic and Social Research Council, Swindon, 2005.

Robson,<sup>466</sup> Payne and Payne,<sup>467</sup> and Cresswell,<sup>468</sup> who speak of the necessary rigour involved in social research, which can be assisted by the triangulation of data.

I realised at an early stage, even before the first focus group was undertaken that this would be an ethically contentious piece of work, as indicated by the social issues within the British Caribbean community which I alluded to in my introduction and chapter two. For instance the over representation within the social care and criminal justice system raised the first ethical question, which was, whether this research could be undertaken without causing antagonism, harm and unnecessary stigmatisation to participants, and CSMBC. I concluded that it could be done firstly because the church had waived anonymity in 2006 when completing their Oral History Project (OHP),<sup>469</sup> sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which in addition to interviews undertaken with young people, contained a total of fifty interviews with past and present members and pastors of the church, openly dealing with its cultural transition from a predominantly white English congregation, to that of a British Caribbean one. It is in the public domain. However, the personal anonymity of all participants, regardless of their involvement in the OHP was maintained throughout the research by the use of pseudonyms. Then, secondly I decided it could be done because it had

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<sup>465</sup>Ibid. 'Social Science research often involves the processing of sensitive personal data. Researchers should be aware that the processing of any information relating to an identifiable living individual constitutes "personal data processing" and is subject to the Provision of the Data Protection Act'.

<sup>466</sup>Colin Robson, *Real World Research*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 31.

<sup>467</sup>Geoff Payne & Judy Payne, *Key Concepts in Social Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 68.

<sup>468</sup>John Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 45.

<sup>469</sup>The Oral History Project is a history project sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It holds oral interviews (and their written transcripts), undertaken with past and present members of CSMBC (including ministers). It details the historic cultural transition from being a predominantly white English congregation to that of a Caribbean one. The interviews can be accessed via the church, or limited access is available via the internet.

the potential to provide positive change within British Caribbean Christianity, through the enabling of participants to share their stories. How I addressed the ethical issues raised by this research is addressed in the following pages, where the context of the study and research methodology is explained in detail.

### **3.2 The West Midlands as the context of this study**

Birmingham is England's 'Second City' and for over 100 years was acknowledged as the manufacturing centre of Britain, with significant links with the 'slave trade' - forging the chains which enabled slavers to transport Africans to the Caribbean and the America's. Despite its industrial base, Birmingham is contained within the wider West Midlands, some of which has a rural landscape.

There have been at least three significant waves of migration into Birmingham in the past sixty years. First, was the arrival of Caribbean and Indian people in the late 50s and early 60s, followed by those of Pakistani origin, in the 70s, adding Mosques as high as Cathedrals to the ever changing architectural landscape, and then in most recent times Eastern European migrants, particularly from Poland. There are other significant and long established 'minority' communities within Birmingham, namely the Chinese, a small Jewish community and other groups mostly from East Africa who came either as refugees of war or as a result of ethnic cleansing.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>470</sup>On the 4 August 1972 Idi Amin gave all Asians living in Uganda 90 days notice to leave the country, regardless of what possessions they had. Available from [www.idiamindada.com](http://www.idiamindada.com) [Accessed on 08/12/10].

Whilst Caribbean migrants settled in most areas of the West Midlands, Wolverhampton, Handsworth (Birmingham), and Smethwick (Sandwell) were known to have the most concentrated numbers, and little has changed in this respect over the years. In 2010 Birmingham became the first city in Britain where the minority populations – people of colour – together are now the majority, outnumbering their white counterparts. Yet in terms of public life there is little evidence of this, as this new ‘majority’, who are mostly children and young adults, are under-represented in the jobs market, whilst being over represented in the number of unemployed and those occupying social housing.<sup>471</sup>

### **3.3 The context of this study – Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church (CSMBC)**

CSMBC is situated in the Handsworth area of Birmingham. The area surrounding it has experienced significant changes over the years. Once a predominantly white upper and middle class community of managers, white collar workers and shop owners, it has since post-war migration, developed into a multicultural, multiracial community, in which Gudwaras, Mosques, Churches, and Meeting Houses sit almost side by side. The shops on the main high street reflect the diversity of the community, with saris, wraps and suits adorning shop windows, and music is an ever present sound echoing from shop doorways and cars travelling along the Soho Road. White faces remain, mostly British elderly who are

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<sup>471</sup>‘White children in Birmingham to be a minority – report’, *BBC News Birmingham*, 21 January 2011. Available from [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham) [Accessed 28/01/11]. Sanna Markkanen, ‘Understanding Demographic Spatial and Economic impacts on future affordable housing demand. Paper Five – BME Housing needs and aspirations’, *Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research*, January 2008. Available from [www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/downloads](http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/downloads) [Accessed 28/01/11]. Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, ‘Birmingham (UK): Constructing and Contesting City Spaces’, *School of Social and Historical Studies*, University of Portsmouth, UK. Available from [www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk) [Accessed 28/01/11].

probably either too old or too poor to be able to relocate. There are however new younger white faces belonging to recent migrants from Eastern Europe.

For ethical reasons and in order to maintain confidentiality and comfort, I have agreed with the fellowship that, with the exception of the information already in the public domain through the OHP, whilst I will name the church, to preserve confidentiality I will neither disclose individual names of members or those of the ministers, instead referring to each through the use of pseudonyms.

Respecting these rules, the congregation of CSMBC is a part of the wider Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), a denomination stretching back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in the dissenting tradition.<sup>472</sup> CSMBC was the first Baptist church planted in Birmingham in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1737). Prior to that time Baptist believers like other nonconformist Christians were not allowed to establish churches within city boundaries. In Birmingham adherents previously travelled up to 14 miles in order to attend their nearest Baptist church in Bromsgrove. It has a long and distinguished history of pioneering Baptist work both at home and abroad, particularly in Jamaica where they developed a tradition of allowing their ministers and other members, to be co-opted to various posts, including that of College

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<sup>472</sup>Dissent was a term first used to describe Puritans, and came to be associated thereafter with all denominations which opposed the absolute power of the CofE, churches which ‘had all undergone the same process of conversion. They had found the same Saviour, and essentially the same authority in some combination of the Scriptures and the Spirit without any need of a priest as mediator or interpreter’. David L Edwards, *Christian England: From the Reformation to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, volume 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 436-437.

Principal<sup>473</sup> at Calabar Baptist Bible College, and Calabar High School, Kingston Jamaica. It is one of 48 churches either in membership or fellowship within the local association – Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA), and is one of at least twenty congregations which have within their membership, a majority of Caribbean Christians.

CSMBC moved to its current location in 1930,<sup>474</sup> and at that time as now, the membership reflected the community surrounding it. Prior to the Second World War it had a white English, upper and middle class congregation, with members involved in the running of many of the local businesses, organisations and companies. However, following World War Two, with increased social mobility, and economic empowerment, many members moved to the suburbs, leaving behind an aging membership and young couples about to embark on careers and establish families. CSMBC soon changed as migration brought to the church Christians from the Commonwealth.

Caribbean migrants began to attend CSMBC around 1964, as it offered a denomination and worship style which was familiar to many of them. This resulted in what sociologists have termed ‘white flight’,<sup>475</sup> white residents leaving for the suburbs over the succeeding ten years. Asked why many of them left, the consensus appears to be, of a people afraid of the unfamiliar, and unhappy with the increasing amount of ‘Caribbean’ practices in the church,

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<sup>473</sup>Oral History Project, Interview with Mrs Wendy Wilden, a white English member from 1935 – 1964. Interview by Antony Eddy, 8 August 2006, Edgbaston, Transcript held by CSMBC Oral History Collection, Handsworth, Birmingham.

<sup>474</sup>‘Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church Handsworth’, *Church History Magazine*, (2004), 11.

<sup>475</sup>White flight is a term originating in North America defining what happens as a consequence of black migration into an area. White residents choose to move to the suburbs, taking their economic influence and power with them, often leaving the community the ‘poorer’ – socially and most significantly economically - as a consequence. Available from [www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com) [Accessed 28/11/10].

namely lively music replacing their traditional forms of worship, and the criticism levelled against them for their ‘staid’ and ‘boring’ services. Some also expressed concern that their own children would be raised in Sunday Schools with ‘unruly’ Caribbean children, whilst others simply stated that they were unaccustomed to Caribbean culture, and so went where they felt more comfortable.<sup>476</sup> Yet whether originally from India or Jamaica, as members of the Commonwealth, CSMBC presented a traditional service - pipe organ, familiar hymns and church practices – which many if not all were familiar with and so to them it was seen as a ‘home from home’.<sup>477</sup>

During this study, the congregation of CSMBC had a membership of 326 people (76 men, 250 women), with at least 100 additional persons attending Sunday morning services on a regular basis. Just over 60% of the membership were 70 years and older. The congregation was predominantly of Caribbean descent, most coming from Jamaica. In addition there was one Asian and one African family, as well as six white English members, all but one of whom was married to a person of Caribbean origin.<sup>478</sup> That one individual is unique in that she is the one remaining church member who was present prior to the influx of migrants, and has remained an integral part of the church leadership since that time.

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<sup>476</sup>Oral History Project, Interviews with Pastor Ron Collett, 27 March 2006, CSMBC, Alan Lonsdale, 24 July 2006, Walsall, and Wendy Wilden, 8 August 2006, Edgbaston.

<sup>477</sup>Oral History Project, Interview with Mrs Hannah Hamilton, Handsworth. CSMBC Oral History Collection. Available from [www.search.digitalhandsworth.org.uk](http://www.search.digitalhandsworth.org.uk) [Accessed 13/07/09]. She was of Indian origin. She became a Christian in India, took on a ‘Christian’ name, moved to Kenya before coming to Britain in 1968. She and her family attended CSMBC from 1968 to the mid-1990s.

<sup>478</sup>Church records received from the Administrator of CSMBC. Dates refer to the annual record of church membership, dated 1 January 2009.

### **3.4 Research Methodology**

My contention in this research is that for the British Caribbean church to be an effective witness in Britain it needs to accept the cultural identities expressed by its people. I chose to analyse the congregation through the lens of culture, but as this research was to be undertaken through the researching of living people, within the CSMBC congregation, the specific methodology to be used was therefore my first and only question.

‘Methodology’ is best regarded as the study of different approaches to research within an academic discipline. It offers a more abstract and theoretical exploration of how to carry forward the research. It allows you to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of one method over and against another as well as giving an account of the rationale behind particular methods’.<sup>479</sup> I chose the anthropological model of enquiry as through it the researcher is able to ‘describe(s), compare(s) and interpret(s)’,<sup>480</sup> enabling me to explore the cultural themes chosen, and it lends itself to a variety of methods which I believe will enable this research to be undertaken effectively.

### **3.5 Research Method**

Judith Bell in her book, *Doing Your Research Project*, suggests simply that ‘Methods are selected because they will provide the data you require to produce a complete piece of research’.<sup>481</sup> Given that I was seeking to work with real people, many of whom may have

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<sup>479</sup>Helen Cameron, Philip Richter, Douglas Davies and Frances Ward, *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>480</sup>Ibid.

<sup>481</sup>Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), 50.

literacy and numeracy difficulties - 'walking' with them, and seeking to understand their world - I therefore chose to use qualitative research methods<sup>482</sup> as 'qualitative perspectives are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of their world. They seek insight rather than statistical analyses.'<sup>483</sup> I used two methodologies, methodological triangulation and grounded theory, both being dependent on data gleaned directly from the congregation, and gained through participant observation, focus groups, targeted interviews, documentary and audio analysis.

### **3.5.1 Methodological Triangulation**

Much of the research undertaken to date in regards to Caribbean Christianity in Britain has sought to retell and share the experiences and expressions of faith and worship.<sup>484</sup> In this research whilst I sought to understand the relationship and influence of culture to faith within CSMBC, I did not seek to simply re-tell their stories, but as it were 'get under their skins' to explore both what is seen and what is believed, and whether there was a synergy between the two? Did they believe what they expressed through their worship and activities in the church, or as with past generations in Jamaica and Britain, have they continued to develop two co-existing cultural identities, thereby fulfilling both status needs and personal desires?

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<sup>482</sup>Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 10. It is described as 'any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations'.

<sup>483</sup>Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, 4.

<sup>484</sup>Toulis, *Believing Identity*. Aldred, *Respect*.

Methodological triangulation therefore provided the means by which I could ‘use multiple sources of evidence in case studies (*which*) allows an investigator to address a broad range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues’,<sup>485</sup> whilst at the same time as Yin and Denscombe state, enable the ‘corroborating (*of*) the same fact or phenomenon’.<sup>486</sup> In terms of multiple sources, I used the following sources in order to bring together evidence which in turn enabled me to present this research as fact.

### 3.5.1.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation as a concept has both its supporters and detractors. Detractors argue that in participant observation the researcher is in danger of falling foul to a number of pitfalls; lacking the necessary observation skills, being unable to report private information, being seen by subjects as too intrusive, to the more serious charges of ‘manipulating minor events or persons through the dynamics of the group gathered, members invited to attend or the questions put...and bias’.<sup>487</sup> Kieran Flanagan goes as far as to suggest that participant observation is simply not possible, particularly in the context of Christian worship for ‘we can never fully know what people make of worship because we cannot begin to experience or understand the worship as they do themselves’.<sup>488</sup> As my research is not based solely on experiential factors I rejected this perspective, and despite the earlier possible pitfalls spoken of, saw the benefits as far outweighing the negatives, as it is but one source of many from which this research will be analysed.

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<sup>485</sup>Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 3d ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 98.

<sup>486</sup>*Ibid.*, 100. Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), 85.

<sup>487</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>488</sup>Helen Cameron, Philip Richter, Douglas Davies and Frances Ward, eds., *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 94.

I therefore agreed with supporters of participant observation, such as Burgess and Jorgensen, who argue that a community or people can only truly be studied by being present with them as an insider.<sup>489</sup> Payne and Payne in speaking of its value describes participant observation as, ‘data collection over a sustained period by means of watching, listening to, and asking questions of people as they follow their day-to-day activities while the researcher adopts a role from their setting and partially becomes a member of the group in question’.<sup>490</sup> My ability to be a participant observer was enhanced by my qualifying credentials – that of being a member of the BUGB, a British Caribbean person who was brought up with the same contradictions that beset the congregation of CSMBC, my educational achievements and the fact that I had Jamaican parents who to a large extent shared the same belief systems as the elders. Each enabled me to assimilate with the minimum of fuss, particularly as the nature of the African Caribbean community recognised me to be a daughter, a sister and one who knows and understands the struggles of the African Caribbean community.

I initially committed to spending twelve months within the congregation, but soon realised as Burgess suggests, that in order to build trust and access, it may take much longer.<sup>491</sup> In fact it took two years, the first twelve months spent observing, negotiating access and seeking to receive a mandate from members of the congregation in order to undertake the research. In that time I worshipped with them, attended weekly Sunday services, Bible study groups, church meetings, prayer meetings, baptismal classes, leadership meetings and the weekly

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<sup>489</sup>Danny L Jorgensen, *Participant Observation: a Methodology for Human Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), 12. ‘Through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why – at least from the standpoint of participants’.

<sup>490</sup>Geoff Payne & Judy Payne, *Key Concepts in Social Research*, 166.

<sup>491</sup>Burgess, *Field Research*, 1.

pastoral team debrief held every Monday. The second year involved my being more ‘hands on’ in that not only was I involved in many of the activities which I had previously undertaken during my first year, but I taught classes on the Holy Spirit and ‘Overcoming Fear’ and undertook focus groups and interviews, which I shall describe in more detail later.

### **3.5.1.2 Description**

I have included ‘Rich, thick detailed descriptions so that anyone interested in transferability will have a solid framework for comparison’.<sup>492</sup> Detailed descriptions also served to assist in explaining the reality as I was ‘exposed’ to it during my research. This research therefore seeks to describe attitudes, points of elation as well as tension, in addition to the rich nature of their cultural identity often expressed in proverbs, and sayings.

### **3.5.1.3 Focus Groups**

Permission was sought from each participant, and written consent received before I recorded focus group conversations with a digital recorder. Both the recordings and notes which I took were then transcribed on to paper within the week following the group session, and each recording made was then erased in preparation for the next session. Content analysis was carried out on the deacons meetings which I attended, in order to give insight and analyse meaning in regards to relationships and emotions involved, particularly between males and females.

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<sup>492</sup>Merriam quoted in Cresswell, *Research Design*, 204.

In order to select members of the church for the focus groups, the minister gave a general invitation to the church during Sunday morning services. I was also given the opportunity to introduce myself on one such Sunday, sharing my background and credentials in ministry. I also invited participants who attended my Bible study classes to consider attending, assisting them with session titles and provisional dates for the focus groups. Participants were also asked to express an intention to attend by signing an ‘expression of interest sheet’, which I used to call them and give further details of my research in order to assist their decision-making.

A total of forty participants attended the six focus groups, four men and thirty six women (one eighth of the church membership).<sup>493</sup> Ten of them had previously attended one of my bible study groups. All but one focus group (that which concerned women and leadership) had one male present. The two additional focus group sessions were attended by five members, all women. Of the women in attendance 1% were 18-25 years old, 40% were 40 – 50 years old, and 59% were 65 years and older. The men were each 65 years and older. Participants had been involved in the following occupations: social care, health, criminal justice, youth work, education, engineering and the building trade. 60% were from Jamaica, 37% British Caribbean and 3% from other African Caribbean nations. Targeted interviewees were 10% from Jamaica, and 90% British Caribbean.

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<sup>493</sup>Some chose to attend more than one session.

#### **3.5.1.4 Interviews**

Interviews were necessary, particularly as cultural theology takes its lead from the questions raised by the people or their needs.<sup>494</sup> I carried out targeted, unstructured interviews with members holding leadership positions within CSMBC. Individual targeted interviews were undertaken in order to clarify, and where necessary expand further on the actions and practices of the church. They too were undertaken with the consent of the interviewee, but were transcribed after the interviews had taken place, in order not to distract during the process.

As a participant observer for two years, I gained an understanding of the members of CSMBC, and the situations and incidents which took place within it, and was therefore able to ask relevant questions of key people, from an informed position, which made them relax and not see themselves as ‘telling tales out of school’, but rather clarifying or confirming already known facts.

#### **3.5.1.5 Documentary Analysis**

I was able to access and analyze in house documents. I had access to one primary source, the OHP which contains fifty taped oral interviews, each accompanied by a transcribed written copy. Through it I was able to access an even greater and more diverse group of people who gave their views as to the role culture had played in the church in recent times. I also

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<sup>494</sup>Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 14. ‘Their particular strength lies in beginning with the questions the people themselves have – not posed immediately by other Christian churches...In other words they try to initiate a dialogue with Christian tradition whereby that tradition can address questions genuinely posed by local circumstances, rather than only those questions that the Christian tradition has treated in the past’.

accessed secondary sources such as the weekly news sheets, preaching rotas, member's handbooks, minutes of deacon's meetings, song sheets, and baptismal class notes, each of which spoke to the purpose, intent, life, worship and witness of CSMBC. I compared this information to that which is held on the church and denomination (BUGB) website. Throughout the process I was however mindful of the fact that each document should be assessed bearing in mind 'partisanship, bias, assumption or any other thing which may have led me to question the truthfulness of the document'.<sup>495</sup>

#### **3.5.1.6 Audio Analysis**

I was present at over 90% of sermons preached on a Sunday morning, but accessed copies of all sermons preached in 2008. This was invaluable in giving me the opportunity to analyse in detail each sermon as to their cultural content. It also enabled me to raise relevant questions as I dialogued with the focus groups and carried out targeted interviews, comparing their responses to sermons preached.

#### **Conclusion**

These many sources enabled me to 'Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes'<sup>496</sup> thereby presenting 'facts of the case study...supported by more than a single source of evidence'<sup>497</sup> and therefore enabling a greater degree of accuracy and objectivity. However as helpful as this method was going to be, by its very nature it demands the

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<sup>495</sup>Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, 57.

<sup>496</sup>Cresswell, *Research Design*, 196.

<sup>497</sup>Yin, *Case Study Research Design*, 99.

gathering of data by many different methods,<sup>498</sup> and so I firstly had to gain some knowledge about each method. Fortunately as an ordained minister, clinical counsellor and trained social worker, basic knowledge of many of the skills needed have become a part of my DNA in over twenty five years of practice, however, they each had to be, and were improved upon.

### **3.5.2 Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory enables the emergence of a problem, as well as providing the means whereby the process for resolving it is also discovered thereby creating theory development. Glaser describes it as method which involves, ‘Generating theory by the systematic collection and analysis of data...a very powerful way to bring concepts of reality to a substantive area both to others and subjects in the area itself’, and Cresswell determines that through it, ‘the researcher attempts to derive, general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study’.<sup>499</sup>

Being conscious of the fact that I too am a member of the British Caribbean community, and a Christian within the BUGB, it seemed to me that this method would provide the necessary means whereby I could remain objective, for it is able by process ‘to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved’.<sup>500</sup> This therefore left me expectant that I might in fact achieve the goal of this research project, and discover something new and insightful about British Caribbean Christians, leading to

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<sup>498</sup>Ibid, 100.

<sup>499</sup>Barney G Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1992), 14.  
John W Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2d ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 14.

<sup>500</sup>Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, 75.

greater understanding of how their faith is expressed and interacts with the cultural practices which form a part of their worldview, as well as enables them and their children to interact in the world around them.

### **3.6 The Process**

#### **3.6.1 Preparation**

The process began by seeking permission from the pastor of CSMBC. I presented an outline of my thesis as well as an outline of the research to be undertaken within the context of the congregation. The whole process was placed in the context of Acts 15<sup>501</sup> so that he could see the biblical relevance of my work, thereby making it more acceptable. Having got the project agreed I received my first level of consent, confirmed by the signing of a statement of intent and confidentiality agreement by the pastor on behalf of the leadership of the church, and myself. He was given a copy to keep for his records. (appendix 3)

My attention then turned to the congregation and in order to gain consent and a mandate for participation I preached a sermon during a Sunday morning service. I was at the same time invited to attend the fortnightly deacons' meeting and weekly pastoral team meetings, as well as the various bible study classes, prayer meetings and baptismal class groups. All of these were valuable activities, but I could not be sure that I would be well received, for as Sedmak

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<sup>501</sup>Acts 15 details the conclusions of the Jerusalem Council where the early Church addressed the issue of contextualisation concerning those who were Jews and non-Jews, (Gentiles) but had become Christians. The contention centred on an issue in which Jews wanted their Gentile brothers and sisters to practice their faith according to Jewish cultural practices. The Jerusalem Council made it clear that faith could and should be expressed out of the existing culture of converts, no one culture being superior to any other.

states, permission does not mean a mandate to do.<sup>502</sup> I needed to be sure of gaining a mandate from members of the congregation, so that they might participate in my study.

So, twelve months after being a part of the congregation I wrote and taught a series of six bible study classes, at which the pastor was present for all but one session, giving his ‘blessing’ as it were to my work. My seminar was entitled ‘Understanding and being in relationship with the Holy Spirit’ and this was not only because it fitted in with my study interests, but more particularly because it gave me an appreciation of where the congregation was with respect to their understanding of the subject. The seminars were well attended with an average of forty people per session, with men representing one fifth of the attendance, and on one occasion there were two teenagers accompanied by their parents. This proved to be a most beneficial exercise in that 25% of the adults who attended later participated in at least one focus group.

### **3.6.2 Focus Groups**

Individuals were invited to attend one of six focus groups. Two additional focus groups were added later in the process, as the research raised other issues and created additional insight and confidence in the participants which they wanted to deal with. The first additional session involved members creating their own Covenant, taken from the six previous sessions, and based on a renewed understanding of their culture. The second was instigated so that members could present their Covenant to their pastor, highlighting the issues discussed throughout the focus groups thereby enabling me to gain further clarity, verification and a

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<sup>502</sup>Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 87.

clear understanding of the responses to the themes discussed. The final interview was very different from the other interviews which had taken place in that in having their pastor present, members appeared to be waiting for his direction and guidance, and in some instances sought affirmation of their views from him.

Attendance at each group was restricted to those aged 16 years of age and over, and this was for three reasons. Firstly, it negated the seeking and granting of permission from the parents of children. Secondly, it removed the possibility of any adult suggesting that I was influencing the youth of the church negatively or unfairly, by asking them to discuss issues which they as young people, may previously have been unaware of. Thirdly, and most significantly, there is a Caribbean saying and belief that in the presence of adults, 'children should be seen and not heard' and children should not talk when 'big people are talking', therefore in order to get as honest a response as possible, I thought it best not to create more issues than was necessary as children would be classified as children as long as parents were around, regardless of their age. Furthermore, in understanding that for many people attending, this would be the very first time that they would be in discussion with their peers on issues of faith and culture, and anticipating that it would possibly lead to moments of confrontation, the minimising of distractions was also a goal.

In agreement with the pastor, I was given total freedom to create the questions which I considered necessary, and organise the groups as I judged best. I therefore took the decision to ask the pastor not to attend any of the six sessions, in order to minimize the distraction of 'the' pastoral presence, which I believed would, whether intentionally or otherwise, influence

the direction of the conversation, as it proved to do in the final session. The pastor was invited to attend the final session.

### **3.6.2.1 Method**

Every session was begun and concluded with prayer in order to reinforce within the participants that their discussions on culture were as much a valid theological discussion as any other aspect of faith. It also served to remind participants of their unity of faith, as diverse views and opinions were being expressed. Each of the first six sessions began with my distributing to the group an outline of my thesis, and the topic to be covered. Acts 15 was read as the basis for the focus groups on cultural inclusion. Each participant was then given two forms; the first requesting personal information, (appendix 4) and the second, a participation consent form (appendix 5), both of which needed to be read and completed before we could begin. I informed all participants that should they have any concerns about anything written on the forms, then I would give further clarification of the process, and particularly of the confidentiality agreement. However, for those who could not or would not sign the consent form, they were informed that they would be asked to leave. It was in this way that I gained my second level of consent from all who attended, agreeing in return to give each of them a copy of their consent form by the conclusion of the focus groups.

Administrative tasks apart, each session was planned to last no more than one hour fifteen minutes in order to assist the concentration levels of participants. Permission was requested and received for a digital recording machine to be used at each session. However, it was agreed that once the material was transcribed, pseudonyms would be used in order to both

preserve confidentiality and to gain maximum participation. Each digital recording would be erased within the week in order to prevent voice recognition. I volunteered to provide refreshments; tea, coffee, juice and biscuits each week, which became supplemented by members who attended more than one session, seeing it as a means of creating unity and sharing their favourite snacks with others, as well as a means of creating community.

Ground rules were agreed by all participants at the beginning of each session. At each group it was agreed that nothing discussed within the group would be discussed outside of the group in so far as referring to people by name, thereby removing the possibility of personal identification and any breach of confidentiality. It was agreed that one person would speak at a time, so that each person would know that regardless of their opinion, their view was being respected, and on a practical level it enabled me to record the information shared, as accurately as possible.

The themes covered in the first six sessions were as follows: (1) Language – Patois and English, (2) Family – marriage and children, (3) Leadership - including the positioning of women, (4) Worship – music and singing, (5) Duppies, proverbs, death rituals, ancestors and food, and (6) Personal appearance – hair and clothes. I divided my questions into two categories: cultural activities and the value placed on them, as lived out within their families and the wider Caribbean community, and as expressed in the life of CSMBC. I had specific questions in mind in order to assist the process should there be a lull in the conversation and also in order to illicit a clear understanding of what participants thought. (appendix 6) Not all of them needed to be used.

As Caribbean people have an oral tradition, I allowed for answers to questions to take the form of a story, allowing each member to retell their stories in their way, which as the weeks went by, often negated the need for me to ask too many questions, as they often opened up and led the conversations which took place. Session seven took place without any pre-arranged questions, leaving the group to raise its own questions and create its own church covenant, based on the previous six focus groups. In order to assist the process, I did however recap previous conversations taken from transcripts of those groups. Session eight with the pastor was an opportunity for interested past participants to dialogue with their pastor on the issues raised particularly through the creation of the covenant.

### **3.7 Targeted Interviews**

Targeted interviews were primarily used when there was a need to undertake follow-up discussion concerning issues which were raised within the focus groups. These were informally arranged discussions, on a one-to-one basis with members of the church leadership. Those interviewed had access to the questions used in the focus groups, in order that they gain as full an understanding as possible, of the context of the study. As the pastor had given previous consent on behalf of the leadership of the church, and I had met many of them previously in leadership meetings, it was not necessary therefore to request the consent of persons interviewed in this way.

### 3.8 Analysis

The majority of the analysis was done using grounded theory which reduces subjectivity in that it calls upon the researcher to collate detailed information.<sup>503</sup> Essential to the effective use of this method is the coding of data, which I undertook in accordance with the interpretation given by Kathy Charmaz, who stated that, ‘Coding means that we attach labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about. Coding distils data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data. Grounded theorists emphasize what is happening in the scene when they code data’.<sup>504</sup> I therefore began by coding conversations, and all the materials which I had gathered. Each conversation was rewritten and given a number, the speakers identity logged (in terms of age, occupation, gender, nationality), and a defining theme noted. I then sought to identify key concepts, and any additional themes which the material produced. The key concepts or categories were then listed, and simply by counting how many times each was mentioned, led to the identification of a key concept, and subsidiary categories.

Once I had identified the main concept, and subsidiary categories. I then wrote up the chapter, and sought to test its validity by means of one final group session. Invitations were sent out (by email, note or telephone) to all who had participated in a group or interview, inviting them to either refine or check their comments for accuracy. Interpretation of the analysis remained peculiar to me.

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<sup>503</sup>Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 1.

<sup>504</sup>Ibid, 3.

I also made use, to a very minimal degree, of quantitative research methods, in order to analyse some of the collected data regarding attendance, and the ethnic and gender identities of the respondents.

### **3.9 Authenticity of the Responses**

Jamaicans have a saying, 'Never hang your dirty washing out for others to see'. In the context of their lived experience this means that whatever goes on at home, or within the community, is not to be shared with those deemed to be on the 'outside'. I do not however doubt that the majority of the responses were authentic, for I became accepted in my role as participant observer, to the extent that I was invited to become a member of the church. Two of the elders even graciously recalled after attending a focus group that they knew one or both of my parents' family having grown up with them when young. This information they shared with others, and it together with the fact that I belong to the British Caribbean community, and the BUGB, meant that people generally spoke the truth as they knew that I was more than likely to find them out eventually. Secondly, as one who was present in the discussion groups and interviews, even being a trained counsellor, did not protect me from feeling (though not showing) some emotion for a people who week after week, brought a great deal of anger, sadness, hostility, hurt, laughter and shame to the group, as they shared their stories. It was at times an atmosphere of raw emotion, sometimes aimed at the church, sometimes aimed at themselves, and sometimes at each other in the group.

The younger adults played a significant part in the sessions, in that they often asked questions out of ignorance and a genuine interest in the history of their elders. However, they

understood the rule that there could not be any disrespect shown towards their elders, in order to maintain the unity of the group. This meant that whilst in the larger group they at times abstained from making a point if it challenged an elder, they would either gather as a group after the session ended or asked to phone me afterwards, to clarify further. I recall the need for such discussions after the focus group on language and the inclusion of Patois. After the large group they got together and agreed that it was the very same elders present, who had forbidden them from speaking patois, except in jest. Similar incidents happened around discussions regarding the family, and the use of what was deemed Caribbean ‘secular’ music in worship. I chose to respect their desire not to be openly offensive to their elders.

Yet these were not the only demonstrations of the impact of the research. Every week I saw a people going through a great deal of emotional and spiritual change. In each group over the various weeks were men and women who either had been or were professionals; teachers, scientists, nurses, social workers, care managers and engineers, and yet in the telling of their stories one saw folks wringing their hands, heads bowed down, eyes turned away and voices quieten as they shared out of their pain. They told of times when their comments and wishes were ignored, and their very presence dismissed at one of the most intimate of all Christian moments - whilst assisting others in prayer to God. It was tragic to see such groups of people with heavy hearts, repeat the two most stated mantras which they had been raised to accept as truth, and tried so hard to adhere to, ‘the pastor is always right’ and ‘all leadership is ordained by God and therefore to be respected, no matter their behaviour towards us’.

In conclusion I would say that as each group was voluntary, with no one needing to subject themselves to such probing and emotional turmoil, and the possible consequences if specific statements were relayed out of context to the wider church, it was more than likely to be authentic. They came, and participated, agreeing with one elder who stated that, ‘if it helps the next generation not to make the same mistake as us, then it’s worth it’.<sup>505</sup> I simply became a grateful participant observer, privileged to hear them speak for themselves openly and publicly for the first time, assured that their truths would be told, and their confidentiality maintained.

### **3.10 Verification Procedures**

In order to verify my work at each stage of the process, I undertook the following steps. I kept reflective case notes, within 24 hours of every activity, which defined my own and others feelings, and emotions, as well as my perceptions of the activities which I engaged in.<sup>506</sup> I established a group of individuals, knowledgeable with respect to research and Caribbean religion, culture and history, with whom I consulted as the research progressed, in order to both correct and challenge my understanding of what was being revealed, as well as to ask pertinent questions in order to audit the whole process, for points of clarification.<sup>507</sup> After the completion of the focus groups I allowed participants to listen to the completed chapter, making space for discussion, reflection and correction as to accuracy of statements

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<sup>505</sup>Cousin Biddie, Jamaican senior citizen. She has been a member for over twenty years. 24 June 2009

<sup>506</sup>Perti Alasuutari, *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 179. ‘The first impression one gets of a social environment, incident or test is often insightful’.

<sup>507</sup>Cresswell, *Research Design*, 197.

made. However, they were not allowed to change the content in so far as the direction of my arguments.

In terms of access to my research notes, once transcribed each oral interview was erased in order to maintain the integrity of the interviews and the confidentiality promised. I have kept accurate written transcripts of the focus groups and targeted interviews, which will enable someone from the 'outside' to audit my information should they wish to do so, hopefully then to be able to reach the same conclusions.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This research was conducted ethically, in accordance with the framework for Social Science research, provided by the Economic and Social Research Council, thereby meeting the ethical standards expected of researchers at the University of Birmingham.

My goal for this research was to reveal how much, if at all, British Caribbean culture governs the religion expressed amongst the congregation of CSMBC, Handsworth, Birmingham. In terms of methodological approaches, I used the anthropological model, supported by the two methods, methodological triangulation and grounded theory. Fieldwork was conducted over two years. As the anthropological model is mindful of the fact that 'there is no such thing as a neutral observer: you will always come with your own preconceived ideas, and will have an impact upon the group you study',<sup>508</sup> my first year involved confirming my status as a participant observer and gaining the trust of the membership, to minimise this. The second

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<sup>508</sup>Cameron, *Studying Local Churches*, 20.

year concentrated on focus groups and targeted interviews, revealing and comparing ‘private views’ with that which I had learnt from documentation, observation and involvement in activities.

I asked open questions in order to allow them to frame their answers as fully as possible, in their own way. I also gave time for ‘private’ reflections where to have answered in the focus group, despite the ‘rules’, would have not only challenged cultural notions of ‘respect for elders’, but group cohesion, and therefore the completion of my research. Participants were given a ‘safe’ and confidential space to theologically express their ideas on the relationship between faith and culture. They however understood that final interpretations of their words and experiences would be mine. How and if I was able to achieve this can be seen in the next chapter, as members speak for themselves.

## CHAPTER 4

### SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES: THE PUBLIC FACE AND PRIVATE VIEWS WITHIN CSMBC

#### 4.1 Language

##### 4.1.1 Public Face

Walk through CSMBC on any given day and you will be confronted by a plethora of accents and languages from English to patois, ‘Black Country’<sup>509</sup> to ‘Brummie’,<sup>510</sup> and London to Barbadian accents. Far from being a cacophony of noise, there is laughter and sharing as people interact in the church office, Olive Branch luncheon club and other activities taking place throughout the week. You are therefore just as likely to hear comments such as, ‘If he wanted me to change that, then he should have said so before’, or put another way, ‘if im fi want me to do dat, den im shoulda saiso lang time since, no’. Neither would be a source of confusion nor create confusion in its hearer, for it simply reflects the nature of the congregation. However, when one attends Sunday worship CSMBC becomes quite a different place.

#### Sunday Worship

As the congregation gathers for worship on a Sunday, there is little noticeable difference between them and those who use the church in the week. However once the service begins

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<sup>509</sup>‘Black country’ is a dialect spoken within a certain area of the West Midlands. It originally took its name from the fumes and dust which came from ironwork foundries and coal mines which were known to turn the air, buildings and workers black, hence the name black country. It did not define a precise geographic area in a particular region, but included the areas of Dudley, Tipton, Cradley Heath, Wednesbury and Walsall, but not its near neighbours Smethwick, Stourbridge and Wolverhampton.

<sup>510</sup>A Colloquial term used to describe people born in Birmingham.

language, accents and grammar becomes distinctly monotone and colourless when used by members, and then depending on whether it is being used by a member, visiting preacher or other participant in the morning or evening service, it may express itself differently.

When CSMBC gathers for morning worship, the language used is predominantly that expressed by British Caribbean, English folk with regional accents, or Caribbean folk with accents, ‘trained’<sup>511</sup> for public speaking in English. The exception to the rule is Patois, which, once at worship, becomes a hidden and unacceptable language, which together with the Jamaican accent is only to be heard as one member speaks informally to another. Sunday morning worship is a very formal and structured activity, more akin to the CofE than a Baptist church in that all things presented from the platform are undertaken as if one were reading a book, rather than participating in the warmth of conversational English amongst friends. So for example, when Scripture is read, the reader always concludes by saying, ‘This is the Word of the Lord’ at which point the congregation responds, ‘Thanks be to God’. Announcements given by the church administrator ‘lose’ the warmth of a natural lilting Jamaica-influenced accent, as he reverts to speaking in a stilted formal tone which makes every event seem less exciting than it is. For example, when celebrating the birthday of a member he will formally announce, ‘Is there anyone celebrating a birthday today? We shall now sing happy birthday. Let us begin’.

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<sup>511</sup>By trained I mean that there are those who have quite pronounced Caribbean accents, but in order to be ‘accepted’ in public they have learnt to speak and adopt a formal English style which is more akin to 1950s broadcasting and therefore lacks the fluidity and warmth of conversational English amongst friends.

Children too are not immune from this ‘disease’ as demonstrated when two enthusiastic young teenagers got up to tell the congregation about the family fun day. Any semblance of enthusiasm was removed as they read the following notice which appeared to be a prepared script, it said, ‘We would like to invite you to a family fun day, where we shall have fun, play games and generally enjoy ourselves. We invite you to come and participate with us and have a good time’. Nothing obviously missing, but it lacked the warmth of childhood, and a sincerity of meaning which had been lost through what I presume were adults who filtered their thoughts translating their script into an ‘acceptable’ standard of English. At CSMBC anyone or everyone ‘presenting’ on the platform on a Sunday morning, has to speak ‘properly’.

Speaking ‘properly’ also permeates the hymns and choruses sung. Permissible songs are those which are either European or North American in origin. The *Redemption Hymnal* remains the song book of choice, though songs are occasionally allowed to be sung from *Mission Praise*.<sup>512</sup> Hymns ‘ancient and more ancient’,<sup>513</sup> are sung weekly, most if not all, originating in the 1930s and 1940s, when most of the elders<sup>514</sup> in the congregation were children. In two years of worshipping within CSMBC I experienced little of the Caribbean or British Caribbean culture being expressed through song, the only exception being two vocal contributions from one particular member, sung to a reggae beat, which received a rapturous response on both occasions.

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<sup>512</sup>Peter Horrobin and Greg Leavers, *Mission Praise* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990).

<sup>513</sup>My own terminology.

<sup>514</sup>Elders are those who migrated to Britain from the Caribbean, and are now at least 65 years old.

In terms of the sermons preached, it is noticeable that once again members can be heard to use what is deemed to be ‘proper’ English and ‘proper’ sentence structures, even if at times it results in major grammatical errors, and ‘pregnant pauses’ which have the effect of not only changing the meaning, but the emphasis of the sentences spoken. So for example sermons preached one Sunday stated that, ‘We need to learn to shared responsibility’ and ‘I am concerned about my children and all other children’s’.<sup>515</sup> These were very noticeable errors, but acceptable as they were spoken in what was assessed as ‘proper’ English.

Apart from the minister, exceptions were made, but only for visiting ministers who were given liberty to use either, English, Patois,<sup>516</sup> or both. So for example, Pastor Black<sup>516</sup> a British Caribbean pastor, who having introduced himself in what is best described as a mixture of a British and Jamaican accent, once he started to preach did so in what I can only term to have been an ‘affected’ African American accent. For him the language of heaven was clearly African American, which he used to entreat the congregation to ‘help me praise Him one more time’, and sought a response at every sentence pause by asking ‘Can I get a witness’ or quoted the often used sentences, ‘Can I speak to somebody today?’ ‘I came here to tell somebody’, and ‘Lord have mercy’.<sup>517</sup> Each phrase he repeated at least two times, ‘whooping’ and ‘hollering’ intermittently, in a style typical of African American pastoral preaching.

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<sup>515</sup>Sunday 29 March 2008.

<sup>516</sup>British Caribbean and a member of the CGP.

<sup>517</sup>Sunday 9 November 2008.

Another example was Sister Grace,<sup>518</sup> who as she preached traversed between English and Patois often in the same sentence in order to emphasise her point. It was therefore acceptable for her to state, ‘Boy really workin on de words today man. I don’t know if you are like me when it comes to growing plants. Me wata dem so til dem mash up, but there are other plants like cacti that don’t need much rain’.<sup>519</sup> The congregation needed no interpretation and swelled with pride as much for her command of Patois as the humour contained within the points she so clearly made. A third example was Pastor Andrews,<sup>520</sup> who was affirmed as he sought to explain the mindset of youth who have strayed from God. He used himself as an example declaring, ‘I did all my badness in these areas here. I’m redeemed now but then I was building a bad house. You have to know I’m bad. You don’t mess with me’.<sup>521</sup>

Sunday evenings are somewhat different in that here the rules of propriety do not apply. Here there is no such thing as doing things ‘properly’ and so the Jamaican accent, Patois, and other Caribbean accents predominate. Whilst Sunday mornings appear to be primarily for the educated, Sunday evenings appear to be set aside for those who present as not being so, and most significantly either lack the ability to speak ‘proper’ English, or do not have what is considered to be an acceptable English accent. Here one finds the warmth and humour often lacking in the morning worship, as through Caribbean accents and words, one is reminded of the joy of worship. Sister Duncan<sup>522</sup> is typical of Sunday evening preachers, her sermon included the following sentences: ‘I look at it like this way. They need to do a business ting,

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<sup>518</sup>British Caribbean, evangelist from London.

<sup>519</sup>Sunday 2 March 2008.

<sup>520</sup>British Caribbean, NTCG leader and international speaker.

<sup>521</sup>Sunday 31 August 2008.

<sup>522</sup>African Caribbean, female lay preacher.

and surely they are not wrong' and, 'Do not stood im up. (*God*) He's not your boyfriend, not your girlfriend, do not stood im up'.<sup>523</sup> Unacceptable language for Sunday mornings but well received by all every Sunday evening, for its heart-felt honesty and familiarity amongst the majority of people who speak or understand Patois.

#### **4.1.2 Private Views**

The focus group<sup>524</sup> discussion centred around languages, accents and grammar as spoken at home, socially, at work, and in the church. Initial responses identified two main languages used by the participants in the group, English, and Patois or 'broken' English, as some termed it, with two people (one Barbadian), also able to speak or read French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Hebrew.

Most of the group agreed that certain languages were favoured in certain situations simply because of the context and professionalism required. For example, they agreed that English whether spoken with a Black Country, or a Brummie,<sup>525</sup> accent was the 'lingua franca' of the work environment. The elders in particular believed that it had to be so because they believed that their English counterparts would not understand them if they spoke Patois. However, the younger members who have grown up in multicultural, multiracial Britain stated that though they used English, they believed that most of their work colleagues, understood a great deal more Patois than their elders believed.

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<sup>523</sup>Sunday 6 January 2008.

<sup>524</sup>Focus Group 1, 6 May 2009.

<sup>525</sup>Birmingham accent.

Within the group it was agreed that English tended to be the preferred language spoken at home. Mr Arthur<sup>526</sup> explained why, stating that, ‘In Jamaica families would have spoken Patois, but since arriving in England we try to formalize it and speak more in English’. Patois on the other hand all agreed was the language used when making a joke, or in order to emphasize a point. However, once the group had concluded, the younger generation sought to clarify their perspective, agreeing with Sister Jones<sup>527</sup> who stated that:

My parents - told us, with authority and firmness that there would be no Patois in this house. It had to be English and so they encouraged us to read Shakespeare and Dickens. It is only when we were in fact with wider family and friends, joking about, that it would ‘sometime broke out’, but never in general family conversation – it was not allowed.

English they all agreed was the one and only acceptable language to be spoken when it came to Sunday morning worship, as it was deemed to be ‘proper’ English. Asked to explain how this came to be, the group stated that one of the ways in which CSMBC believes that it distinguishes itself from other Baptist Churches, and primarily Baptist churches which are either Black majority or Black-led, as well as other Caribbean Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is in their understanding of, and use of the English language within Sunday morning worship. Patois was designated as being a form of ‘broken English’, not a language at all, despite views held to the contrary. The elders explained that they had been taught this both by their parents, and teachers and missionaries in the church and church schools which they attended in the Caribbean. Mrs Marsh<sup>528</sup> recalled how, in Jamaica in order to assist students to learn ‘proper English’ teachers would use a strap:

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<sup>526</sup>Jamaican, retired male.

<sup>527</sup>British Caribbean, female.

<sup>528</sup>Jamaican, retired female.

The teacher would stand at the back of the class with a strap<sup>529</sup> and beat you if you got something - a word - wrong. My aunt was a teacher and she would carry the strap on the street for the same reason, and you couldn't tell your parents. To pass English I have to get a 100% mark in pure English and be the best.

Mrs Smith<sup>530</sup> included her experiences of school, stating that:

Well I can say that in school there was no Patois writing in school, it's got to be English, and you go to the churches as well and you didn't have many ministers not speaking English even though they were Black churches. 'Cos even this church my grandmother used to go to the pastor was an English man (CofE), and you have a lot of overseas people used to come and set up churches. So sometimes it's what you see when you are growing up.

To be in England they therefore believed demanded that both they and their children speak English, and they were encouraged in this belief by a church leadership which according to Mrs Marsh, had an 'unwritten' rule which stated that, 'Only those who could speak properly and dress well enough were allowed to lead congregational worship from the platform on a Sunday morning'. This has resulted in what Sister Jones believes is now a group of 'older ladies who speak Patois but have gone so far 'English' that they get the words mixed up. It's hilarious. Trying so hard to be English... whereas if they just spoke...Mrs Wade, I absolutely love her to bits but she cracks me up, the way she talks'.

However, it's not just Jamaican Patois which is restricted at CSMBC. Mrs Brown,<sup>531</sup> who has been a member for nearly 30 years, and has a non-Jamaican Caribbean accent, commented

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<sup>529</sup>This strap apparently had various names in schools throughout Jamaica. Joe Aldred stated that his teacher called it 'Dr Do Me Good'. Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Report.

<sup>530</sup>African Caribbean, retired female.

<sup>531</sup>African Caribbean, retired female.

that she felt rejected by her fellow Christians within CSMBC because of her accent. She declared that:

I am a lay preacher. I go other places, white churches to preach and I tell them I have a Caribbean accent. They don't seem to mind. No one has a problem with me. They come up to me later and tell me thank you for the service. It's only at CSMBC that they have a problem with my accent. This church makes rules which exclude people. I don't have a problem anywhere else but here. People told me, it's my accent that's what stops me from ministry, my accent. The pastor told me people complained. Said they can't understand me. This is not my church I don't belong here. I go everywhere else and no problem.

Sister Green,<sup>532</sup> a recent convert to Christianity and a new member to the church confirmed that she was aware of this unwritten rule, recalling how when she was publicly baptised on Easter Sunday evening:

I made sure that when it was my time to give my testimony that I spoke with 'proper' English. I had made up my mind that I didn't want to embarrass myself when I got up on the platform. But when the evening ended and I was driving home with my sons, one of them said 'mommy why did you speak with such a strange voice when you were up on the platform. It wasn't you'. I didn't know they had listened that intently and looking back on it now, I know that I was doing it because that's what I had come to understand, though no one ever said it to me directly to make sure that I don't speak with anything but a 'proper' English accent. I didn't want to embarrass myself.

Patois is not to be encouraged, not only because it is not considered 'proper' English, but as Mrs Marsh stated, that to use it in church would give the wrong impression to those who observe it from the outside, and 'It benefits the young people coming up if they are taught English here. One has got to be careful because they will say, I heard it in church. I heard it in church and that's it. It has to be English, so others know that we do things properly'.

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<sup>532</sup>British Caribbean, female.

Apart from being permissible at evening services, the group acknowledged that CSMBC allows two other exceptions where Patois may be used in the church, firstly when used for making merry – telling jokes - as exemplified in the annual ‘Caribbean Night’ cultural extravaganza which takes place the Saturday night before Easter Sunday, and when used in preaching by a minister. The annual Caribbean Night is led by Jamaican elders who themselves provide an evening of fun, sketches and jokes, acting out drama and telling tales of Caribbean life as they remember it. Mrs Smith celebrating the use of Patois in this regard declared that:

Jokes sound best in Patois, they could not be told in English because when you are together, when you going to give a joke. If it is not in Patois, don’t give it. Don’t bother...that’s what makes the thing lively. When you sing a song, or a joke in English nobody laughs, but the moment you say it in Patois it finds its place.

The second exception is the minister, who is given license to use whatever language he or she chooses because as Mrs Smith further stated, ‘Sometimes ministers have to do that to wake up the people’. Most in the group then got quite animated as each recalled ministers who use Patois in their sermons, sermons which they continue to remember clearly some years later. Mrs Smith by way of example recalled how Pastor Andrews when preaching described how some people are ‘tunted’ and then turned to the senior minister at that time (who was English), and said in his most proper English accent, ‘You would understand it as suffering from a failure to thrive, Pastor Cromwell’. Everyone in the group laughed at that point, confirming the power of Patois to create joy. However before this celebration continued for more time than was necessary, Mrs Smith interrupted by stating that it should remain a

language only tolerated in so far as it enables people who ‘lacked a proper education to eventually grow out of it with proper education’.

The consequence of such attitudes for CSMBC was easily defined by Mrs Marsh, who in response to being asked if a person who had recently arrived from Jamaica with a Jamaican accent and speaking Patois, would be well received during a Sunday morning service on the platform of the Church, replied simply that, ‘it would make me laugh’. Asked why, she stated that hers was a natural response because, ‘There was a famous Jamaican cricketer on the radio in the 80s and they had to take him off the air. Nobody understood him. He couldn’t speak properly’. Mrs Marsh then with some regret confessed how when she first arrived in England:

To my shame I have to say that I treated my fellow Jamaicans who spoke Patois, badly. As a nurse in the hospital I recall one of my white colleagues asking me to attend a patient who came from what she thought was the same island. I went over to her, heard her accent – she needed to use the bathroom – I pretended that I didn’t understand her, returned to my colleagues and said I didn’t know what she was trying to say. It’s the way it was.

She went on to say that this was not simply her experience but how many of her peers had behaved out of good intent as they sought to encourage such people to change their accents and learn ‘proper’ English. She stated that:

I think that is how you feel when you are growing up – that you should give your best. How can you have your best if you don’t have someone who listens to you, and encourages you. If a person wants to get involved in the church then I try to help them. There was a chap here who was going into training (*ministry*) and every service he preach I would call him aside and say you slipped on your ‘H’ there or over emphasized the ‘S’. He would take it in good faith and improve, now he’s in the ministry full time. It never hurt him.

However, she agreed with Mrs Smith when she admitted that for those with a strong Jamaican accent, ‘Yes, we tend to keep them at arms length, and then hope they leave and don’t come back. I suppose we exclude people because of their class from the church. But it’s not so simple’.

Mrs McIntosh a member of Perry Beeches Baptist Church less than four miles away, when she heard about my research confirmed such attitudes stating that:

I attended CSMBC for a time, but never felt comfortable. They look at how you speak, how you dress. Are you wearing a hat? They look at you as if you are less than them. In the end I came to this church. I’m much happier here. I only go to CSMBC if I have a funeral to attend. I don’t feel comfortable there, and this is a nicer, more homely church.

Sister Jones recalled how growing up in CSMBC:

I have noticed there was a time where education was the buzz word and it was as if people were saying, if you are not educated you could not service lead...People who could speak the best English, people who appeared to have the professional jobs were service leaders. I can name the three people who always led.

Mrs Brown added, ‘When I came here from the Caribbean, I was ‘sent to Coventry’<sup>533</sup> by the Jamaicans. The English understood me, but the Jamaicans would not accept me. Even in the Church now they don’t, but I don’t care’.

I sought to conclude this discussion by playing an excerpt from the Patois Bible.<sup>534</sup> Having listened to it, most people appeared to respond in stunned silence before Sister Green admitted that she had had to ‘listen intently’ being overcome at hearing the Scriptures in

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<sup>533</sup>Colloquialism for being ignored, ostracised by the group.

<sup>534</sup>*De Krismos Stori*, The Bible Society of the West Indies, Kingston, 2003.

Patois. Sister James concluded that from the response around the table the inclusion of Patois or any Caribbean accent in morning worship would not be possible as, ‘Patois has become a comedy – it’s not our native language anymore’. In fact she admitted that she was more likely to use King James English in every day conversation, and she laughed as she recalled how when greeting her mother she often said, ‘How art thou?’

As the session moved on to a discussion concerning the Bible and language, I asked the group to recall any stories in the Bible which related specifically to the use of language or languages. All agreed on two stories, The Tower of Babel<sup>535</sup> and Pentecost.<sup>536</sup> On each occasion the people spoke in different tongues and Sister Green on hearing this, confidently asked the group, ‘If God gave us language how can we say that what he has given us is not acceptable? Isn’t it a part of who we are as people?’ Mrs Smith responded that Jamaican Patois was not in fact a language, it was just bad English, poor grammar and was not acceptable in England, but then added with a smile, ‘They say you can take them out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of them’.<sup>537</sup> It seems even the most ardent opponent experienced a feeling of warmth for Patois, as they recalled personal memories, believing that it was in fact here to stay.

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<sup>535</sup>Gen 11: 1-9. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>536</sup>Acts 2: 1-11. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>537</sup>A translation would be, ‘It is a part of us which will never die’.

## **4.2 Family, Marriage and Children**

### **4.2.1 Public Face**

Unlike language, the family is presented as a significant and foundational element in the life of believers in CSMBC, with events being provided for all its members; male, female, young and old. In any given week the churches concern for family can be seen in weddings, funerals, and the dedication of babies and young children to God. The church operates youth clubs, 'Dads' and Lads' events, and Genesis Family School, a Saturday school to enhance the educational performance of children and young people. Annual events include Valentines', Mothers' and Fathers' Day celebrations, where the ushers and team members will hire appropriate cummerbunds and scarves, to make the event as celebratory as possible.

CSMBC appears to be a family-centred church where not one Sunday goes by without the singing of happy birthday, or the celebrating of a wedding anniversary. I witnessed one such notable anniversary which involved a couple from Jamaica who had been married for some sixty years. They were invited on to the platform and lauded not only for their sixty years together, but for being a model family who were an example for others. They received a specially designed Bible to remember the occasion. Family is also celebrated through social events and 'Fun Days', held by the church and HEBA, geared mostly towards children as participants are encouraged to join in such activities as sponge throwing, face painting and sports events. The posters publicising the events show one male and one female adult, and two children, male and female, examples of the ideal family structure.

In terms of understanding what family, marriage and children means to the members of CSMBC it is best represented through the Sunday worship services and most specifically, the sermons preached. Once a month, on a Sunday morning, a Family service is held and to ensure that all members of the family attend the Sunday school is cancelled. I found that for every two sermons preached, which spoke of the positive nature of the family there were at least five which described the family and children in particular, as problematic. At its most positive children and young people are invited to contribute to the service by declaring something good about their family. The majority of the children were under ten years of age and were most enthusiastic in declaring, that 'I love my mom and dad, my sister. I love everyone in the world' and 'My dad always helps me with my homework'. Such heart-warming responses sent feelings of pride and contentment across the congregation.

More frequent however are sermons which tell of the problematic nature of the family, preached by both resident and visiting preachers, taking their example from both scripture and personal experience. They have expressed the following views: 'He who brings trouble on his family only inherits the wind',<sup>538</sup> 'Today God has called you to face the giants in your life. To face the giants that may be in your families',<sup>539</sup> '*Its getting*)...harder and harder to raise a Christian God-fearing family. God's grace can work in any family no matter how dysfunctional it may be',<sup>540</sup> and, 'so those of you who are praying for your family, your sons and your daughters. Some could be in prison, on the road, but never give up'.<sup>541</sup> Sermons

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<sup>538</sup>Prov. 11:29. SFLB NKJV. Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, 9 March 2008.

<sup>539</sup>Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, 7 September 2008.

<sup>540</sup>Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, 9 March 2008.

<sup>541</sup>Sermon preached by Pastor Andrews, 31 August 2008.

conclude by emphasising the fact that problems within the family are not caused by personal attitudes or experiences, but ultimately by the devil, and each family is therefore challenged to keep on believing for their children, for as one pastor encouraged them, ‘The enemy has not won. He can be defeated’.<sup>542</sup>

There are definite concerns regarding the family, but the problems or the causes of the problems are rarely if ever stated, save to say it is the work of the ‘devil’. Whilst the family is clearly an important grouping within the church, there is a visible absence of those aged between 17 and 40 years old, or the celebration of other models of family, such as single parent families, which are the majority within the wider Caribbean community.

#### **4.2.2 Private Views**

I began this focus group<sup>543</sup> session with the question, ‘What place or what is the importance of the family in the Caribbean community?’ Each member of the focus group gave a hearty yes when Sister Anderson,<sup>544</sup> described family as being broader than the European concept of mom, dad, brothers and sisters. She stated that:

It’s almost like a heartbeat. For every black person family is important even if you have to make your neighbour your family. My husband’s friend comes to the house so often I’ve given him our family surname. You incorporate people into your family don’t you, and I think for black people family is very very important - central to who we are and how we function.

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<sup>542</sup>Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, 9 March 2008.

<sup>543</sup>Focus Group 2, 13 May 2009.

<sup>544</sup>British Caribbean, female.

However, when I moved the conversation on and asked, ‘How is family defined?’ whilst I received strong support for the public stance taken by their church, at the same time, these same people expressed personal views which were markedly different.

The only recognized form of marriage at CSMBC is that which is formalized by the pastor, the church wedding. Other forms of marriage, such as that undertaken in a registry office, are considered ‘less than’ legal, whilst common-law marriages, as practiced by the majority of the Caribbean community, are considered to be of no significance and on a par with fornication. Sister Anderson tried to explain the differentiation, stating that:

As Caribbean people we put marriage up here – on a pedestal. We treat ‘marrieds’ better than anyone else. Everybody else is a second class citizen, even those who marry in registry offices. I don’t think the church thinks that registry office marriage is marriage, and never those in common-law relationships.

Mr Denman<sup>545</sup> further clarified the churches stance, stating that, ‘Registry office marriage is because they are either divorced or common-law, and therefore wouldn’t be allowed to marry in church anyway’. Whilst everyone present acknowledged this to be true, they were equally concerned that on a personal level such a view either affected their own families, or the families of friends, in a very negative way. Mrs Brown<sup>546</sup> initially caused controversy when she accused the church of breaking up families because of its ‘exclusivity’ stance, challenging them to prove that marriage was only ‘proper’ when performed in church. She asked:

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<sup>545</sup>Jamaican, retired male.

<sup>546</sup>Mrs Brown is attending her second focus group, as she enjoyed the first one so much.

Who said church marriage was the only marriage...when Isaac married Rebecca, the Bible said the two became one. That's when the marriage was done, not in church. If the two become one who invented this marriage thing, it's just man made - in the last 200 years...The church blocks people from doing things simply because they live as common-law, but it's wrong. Where in the Bible does it say that people went to church and got married? Isn't common-law more scriptural than legal ones?

After some hesitation, at least half the group admitted to being the product of a variety of family formations in which there were not only birth parents, but step-parents, common-law marriages, half brothers and sisters and step-children. Group members stated that such practices were not uncommon, and were in fact considered normal in the communities in which they were raised. Mr Denman for example told how:

I leave from home to here where all of us grew up together. So I only know that really I grew up with my stepmother and she was a real mom to me and my dad. We grew up six of us. I didn't know four of them were not brother and sister to me until I left (*home*) at twenty two. We grew up good to now. You couldn't find family closer than us.

Mrs Brown added, 'Well, I got a problem here though because my father apparently met my mother and she had two children with him. They could not get on because my mother's a fighter. He decided to marry someone else, someone a little quieter. We had two mothers. We lived with the second mother, but we were all family'.

There followed a discussion around the consequences of the churches stance when having to deal with such families. All agreed that CSMBC either 'blocks' or 'excludes' those who fall short of these rules, and it was a hindrance which subsequently prevented many from becoming fully active and participating members, because of unwritten rules which were not explained to them before-hand. Most of those present knew cases such as the 'sister' who

having been a member for at least four years was refused baptism because she had lived with her common-law husband for over twenty years, or the member who chose to step down from the worship team after her common-law marriage was made public and she was asked to either get married, or leave her partner in order to remain in her ministry position. Many cases were also raised concerning the dedication of children and babies banned during Sunday worship if their parents had not been married in church. Mr Denman spoke for the group who nodded in agreement, when he stated that, ‘Well, I don’t think it is fair for that to happen. What if that person had a family? It could cause a breaking up of the family. But I know that often such decisions were not because the church would not allow it, but because the Baptist Union would not allow it’. Sister Anderson retorted with some anger, ‘But it allows divorcees to become deacons and that’s not scriptural’. Clearly a contentious issue which, regardless of the truth of the incidents spoken of, has left feelings of anger.

Amidst this tension, the elders in the group revealed interesting notions about marriage and divorce which they believed to be scriptural. Mrs Brown and Mrs Morgan<sup>547</sup> dialogued around their belief that only men should be allowed to remarry, because, ‘T D Jakes said in his book for women, that the first man you marry is your husband, and the Bible tells us that they stoned women caught in adultery, but it doesn’t tell us that they stoned the men’.<sup>548</sup> Somewhat incensed by this Sister Silcott<sup>549</sup> asked if this applied to women who had been abused, to which Mrs Morgan retorted, with the use of a sweeping generalisation that, ‘Of

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<sup>547</sup>Jamaican, retired female.

<sup>548</sup>Bishop T D Jakes is an African American independent minister and entrepreneur pastoring a 30,000 member church known as the Potters House, based in Dallas, Forth Worth. Available from [www.tdjakes.org](http://www.tdjakes.org) [Accessed 06/11/10].

<sup>549</sup>British Caribbean, female.

course you have to use common sense. If two people can't live together then they should live apart. That's what the Irish people I know do. They have boyfriends for twenty five years and they don't get married'.

It was stated that members placed in such an impossible situation, chose ultimately to leave the church, rather than leave their families. Sister Green,<sup>550</sup> though she had heard that many rules were unwritten still asked members where in the constitution this was written as she had never seen it. Sister Anderson replied angrily, 'We are a Baptist church. We can make our own rules. It's not the culture of the Baptist Union it is the culture of this church. If you're not married, you can't do anything in this church!' This was a question which I later raised with one of the leadership of the church, Lester,<sup>551</sup> who stated that:

The whole issue of marriage and who can get involved in the church, it's one of the unwritten rules of the church, accepted by all. We used to have lots of them, not just about marriage, but hats and dresses, but most of them are gone now. This one still stands. People find out when they join or come into conflict with it. I don't think it's a rule that will ever be written down.

Joe Aldred in his interview for the OHP confirms this position, reiterating the ethical issues which this raises, as to how a church can maintain integrity, whilst treating those 'within its walls' less favourably than those in the wider community.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup>British Caribbean, female.

<sup>551</sup>Targeted interview 15 May 2009. British Caribbean male.

<sup>552</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project. 18. He stated, 'We were never quite clear about the position of people who were divorced and remarried. We ended up being easier on people who were not members and harder on those who were...So if you come to the church and said that you wanted to get married here and this is your second or third marriage, we'd marry you without too many questions asked, but if you were already in the church and most people they would feel that they couldn't get married in the church so they'd go outside'.

Discussions on marriage then led to a discussion concerning what they understood to be the Caribbean attitude, and responsibilities towards children. The discussion began as the link was being made between marriage and children, most agreeing that often an impending pregnancy, or the birth of a child was the primary reason for any subsequent marriage or partnership. They agreed that generally Caribbean society has, and continues, to define the transition from childhood to adulthood through the birth of children. Views suggested that children were seen by men as either a means by which they achieve full manhood, or a necessary prerequisite test by which a woman's fertility and therefore readiness for marriage is confirmed. For women whilst it also defines their transition into womanhood, it creates an opportunity for forming a partnership with a desirable male. Whatever the motivation, children are the result, but as Mrs Morgan reflected, 'Not every child that is born is a loved child – whether those parents are Christian or not'. This sadly reflected an accepted view that children are the central means whereby Caribbean society proves its transition from childhood to adulthood, but those very children can then become 'casualties' of the process.

Most agreed that it is an aspect of Caribbean life which is hard to discuss, and even harder to confront because as each child is born, the stance of the church particularly regarding children born out of wedlock is one of shunning or rejection. Group members agreed with elders who determined that the system in England was much improved on the practices in Jamaica, even though it still left a lot to be desired. Mrs Morgan explained how, 'In Jamaica if a church going girl became pregnant, then if the family had enough warning she would be sent to stay with a more "compassionate" family member until the baby was born. The family would tell folks simply that she had gone to the "town" or gone to the "country"'. However,

if it came to the attention of the church, such a woman or child would be ‘placed on the back bench’ a position of shame not just for immediate family members, but the extended family also. Mrs Stokes<sup>553</sup> told how:

One poor girl was placed on the back bench having become pregnant. Then her auntie went to her own church – in another district. She found herself placed on the back bench of her church, even though she knew nothing of the impending pregnancy. It often happened, and what could people do, everyone would know their business. They would receive counselling until such time as the minister considered them able to be placed back in the congregation.

Mrs Stokes spoke with such authority that no one doubted the truth of her words, but all were grateful for a more enlightened viewpoint in England.

Mrs Morgan however went on to demonstrate how CSMBC though not as extreme as churches in Jamaica, had often demonstrated the same kind of punitive treatment towards girls, often aged only 16 or 17 years of age. She described how on one occasion:

There was a young girl here who got pregnant and it was the talk of the church, and then I heard this white woman, she stood up and she said ‘she’s only a child’. But the adults here were carrying on as if night should turn to day...I have been in church a long time and seen boys and girls who make mistakes. I don’t forsake them. I have children and I know whatever happens to a child can happen to my children.

CSMBC being aware of this<sup>554</sup> and apparently seeking to avoid such controversy instructs its leaders to look out for such possible behaviour when they undertake home visits of those wishing to become members. However, this can be difficult as Mr Denman pointed out:

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<sup>553</sup> Jamaican, retired female.

<sup>554</sup> Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 21. ‘If a young lady becomes a teenage mother ...the tendency is to chase them away from the church, to make them not feel that they are any longer of value because of the sin they have committed...whilst I was there I certainly dealt with one or two examples where I was absolutely

Over the last eight, nine, and ten years I've been involved in baptisms. I've see some young ones baptized and then met them on the street – expecting a baby. Yet when you visit them, they say no one else lives there and so you hand in your report saying they are ready to take up membership.<sup>555</sup> Then months after you baptize them, they are pregnant. Nothing you can do. Nothing you can say, you just do your best.

Sister Deloris<sup>556</sup> suggested that the majority of today's church-going young people avoided such controversy by simply leaving the church beforehand:

They avoid this embarrassment by staying away from the church during their childbearing years, particularly as there is a shortage of men in the congregation and the only hope of marriage and children is for many to find husbands amongst the non-believing community. They come back when the children are Sunday School age, and then everybody celebrates and says how nice it is to have a large Sunday School!!

I raised this issue with the group and though most agreed with the facts, the majority stated that the absence of young people during their childbearing years, could be put down as much to other transitions in their lives such as leaving for University, returning to take care of elderly parents, or as Sister Deloris stated, to form a family. Most were however agreed that how it came about was often an unconscious rather than a conscious decision, but the failure of relationships often left such young women vulnerable, without support and lacking the necessary skills to make it in the wider world on their own.

Mrs Morgan lamented that, 'It's always the women who bear the burden', and all appeared to agree that there were no such sanctions for men who are equally culpable. Mrs Morgan

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adamant that yes they made mistakes, but they are still God's children...there (*were*) some people baying for blood but it hasn't got so many people baying for blood that it (CSMBC) can't do the kind of things that I know'.

<sup>555</sup>Water Baptism at CSMBC is the prerequisite for membership, which automatically follows.

<sup>556</sup>British Caribbean female.

explained that she had seen many things over the years, including a married man who having got a girl pregnant, was forgiven by his wife, but soon after got a second girl pregnant. She told how he and the girl were referred to their pastor who, 'Pointed his finger at the girl and said we don't tolerate fornication in this place, and told her to leave the church. The man he forgave and said don't do it again...That's Black people for you, we accept what the minister says. Women always bear the burden'. Yet it would seem that pastoral responses over the years were dependent on who the minister was, and how he or she exercised his or her pastoral authority.<sup>557</sup>

Once children are born, all agreed that they were disciplined according to biblical precepts. When asked if there were any scriptural texts or a saying which they could remember being quoted to them as children, all recalled the same Caribbean mantra 'Children should be seen and not heard'. This I came to understand was used in multiple situations, often to inform children that 'Big people were talking' and children were never invited or expected to either respond to, or participate in the conversation which they could hear. Other scriptural references were 'Honour thy father and thy mother' used to correct misbehaving children, and 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' was interpreted as a Biblical mandate permitting parents to physically chastise their children. Mrs Brown recalled that as a child she asked her grandmother for new clothes, and was told, 'Rend your hearts and not your garments'. Sister

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<sup>557</sup>Pastor Ron Collett, Oral History Project, 27 March 2006, 9. He stated that during his period of office, 'Young girls would come with the father, sometimes without wanting to have their baby blessed or christened...some members said well you shouldn't do it in the church, you should do it in the vestry. I worked out a system whereby I asked parents if they were not Christians if they would do their best to be good parents. People came because they knew they wouldn't be treated in any second class way'.

Deloris told how when she asked her father for pocket money, he would always reply, 'Money is the root of all evil'. Families it seems were unable to use scripture exegetically.

Children, the group concluded, are treated as children all of their lives, regardless of their ages. Group members laughed as Mrs Brown recalled how she as a mature responsible adult in her thirties having returned to the Caribbean on holiday came into conflict with her mother. She explained:

I stayed out late – returning home at 9pm. My mother hit me and I thought what is she doing I'm an adult. So I packed my bags and went to my sister's house. She told me to go home and face up to my punishment. So I got on the bus. The bus conductor then asked me where I was going so late with my things, and when I told him, he said 'You don't do that'. I had thought that because I'm in England now, I can stay out as long as I had a mind to. I learned my lesson.

Mrs Morgan confirmed that not only age, but marriage, made no difference when it came to being disciplined by a parent. Mr Denman concluded the discussion on behalf of the elders, stating that for many children in England things have now changed in that, 'We don't beat them as much now. Children today know their rights'. Younger members of the group however had the last word, and there was no disagreement amongst them when they stated that for them, firm discipline and the use of parental authority is preferred to the use of any kind of instrument of punishment which they declared to be a misinterpretation of Scripture.

As the session concluded, all agreed that for the Caribbean family Scripture would always be the final word on how family life was ordered, however, at the same time they found themselves to be objectors of their own church policies, which appeared to them to be

contradictory in many instances. The notion of family and the meaning of family, they agreed remains a contentious issue not just for the members of CSMBC, but the wider Caribbean community, Christian and non-Christian.

### **4.3 Leadership - including the positioning of women**

#### **4.3.1 Public Face**

Being a Baptist church CSMBC has a congregational structure of leadership, whereby the Pastor or Pastors are responsible for leading the church supported by the Deacons, in agreement with the congregation who express their views in the church meeting which plays an integral part in the decision making process. Church meetings at CSMBC take place every two months. The leadership team consists of one pastor, one student pastor, nine deacons and one Administrator, who is positioned between the Pastor and the Deacons, and has organizational oversight for the day to day activities which take place in the church building. He attends deacons' meetings and is a full time member of staff. There are a further seven organisational leaders whose areas of responsibility fall outside of the remit of the leadership and deacons.<sup>558</sup>

Sermons preached on leadership both celebrate the role of leaders, whilst emphasizing the need for all members to respect, obey, inform, but never criticize the leaders of the church. Mr Cross,<sup>559</sup> speaking on a Sunday evening, equated respect for leadership with the respect gained on the street by criminals. He stated, 'Now if you have fear, you got respect and if you

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<sup>558</sup>Choir, Cradle Roll, Drums, Flower Secretary, Ladies Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Missionary Secretary.

<sup>559</sup>Jamaican male.

got respect, you got the main man, you got love. All three go together. If you show him respect you got to love him. If that was going on in the world today it would be a wonderful world'.<sup>560</sup>

Pastor Brown, their current pastor, in one sermon went as far as to remind the congregation of the God-given role of leaders, declaring that, 'Saul had forgotten that you cannot come against God's anointed. I would even go as far as to say it is dangerous to criticize God's leaders, praise God. The Lord your God requires us to honour his anointed servants even though they may even be your own family members'.<sup>561</sup> In so doing, as Pastor Cromwell<sup>562</sup> told the congregation, lies the 'key to overcoming in their lives'. Should the congregation have any doubt as to who these leaders are, Pastor Brown defined them, as all who preach, evangelise, teach, heal, is a prayer warrior, counsellor or leads praise and worship.<sup>563</sup>

The pastor and his wife appear to be deserving of special respect, and though not part of Baptist tradition one visiting preacher, Sister Grace from the CoG, went as far as to call the pastor 'Bishop' and his wife 'Mother' Brown. Hearty 'amens' were heard when she declared that, 'If there was no Mother Brown, there would be no Pastor'.<sup>564</sup> and though the pastor was on the platform, at no time after did he seek to clarify the Baptist position on Bishops and other such 'titles', as having no place in the tradition. As many visiting ministers are from the CoG, it cannot but be the cause of some confusion in the congregation as to how the

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<sup>560</sup>Sermon Sunday evening, 27 July 2008.

<sup>561</sup>Sermon, Sunday 7 September 2008.

<sup>562</sup>White UK minister, and once pastor of the church.

<sup>563</sup>Sermon preached Sunday morning 7 September 2008.

<sup>564</sup>Sermon preached Sunday morning 2 March 2008.

leadership of their church is organised, given that the CoG has a different and more autocratic structure of leadership.

However it is clear that the Pastor's perspective on leadership has not been totally accepted by all the members of the congregation. Mrs Walker<sup>565</sup> preaching on a Sunday evening expressed the opposing view, receiving very loud 'amens', rapturous applause and laughter as she declared:

The seven Churches...They were rebuked because they allowed people with the morals of Jezebel to enjoy the privileges of church membership which they shouldn't have done. Many modern techniques rely on a star image, but we are all important. The world focuses on big names. God says He will pour out His Spirit on His Handmaid... and I advise you don't let your lack of education, your ethnic background, your lowly position, or your low wages silence you in the House of God - just because they are successful in the secular field. Time must be allowed to allow their character to develop. If they are unwilling to wait or to serve in a lower position it may be that they are not mature enough to handle a higher one. I need to emphasise this. Somebody comes in and gets a high place – they are not Christians and will lead God's people astray. How do they come in? They often come in on two feet complete with C.V.<sup>566</sup> and talent!<sup>567</sup>

In terms of the role of women within the congregation, women appear to take the lead and are prominent in most positions except that of preaching. Women at CSMBC fill seven of the current nineteen deacon positions, and thirteen of the seventeen organisational roles. Mothering Sunday – Mothers' Day - is given over entirely to women to lead and preach, and women contributed twenty six of the sixty five sermons preached in 2008. The only dissenting voice heard concerning women during this study, was that expressed by Pastor

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<sup>565</sup>Jamaican, retired female.

<sup>566</sup>Curriculum Vitae.

<sup>567</sup>Sermon preached Sunday evening 13 January 2008.

Jones,<sup>568</sup> a visiting regional minister who stated in the introduction to his sermon that, ‘The only two words a man needs to say in marriage is yes dear’. He received a muted response.

#### **4.3.2 Private Views**

When asked to describe the various church contexts which the focus group<sup>569</sup> had been used to, prior to coming to CSMBC, responses varied from Roman Catholic, CofE, Methodist, to Pentecostal, and Baptist churches. Group members were agreed that in each of their past congregations, they had experienced organized and clearly defined church leadership and structures, which were usually expressed in the roles of pastor, deacons, church council, elders, musicians and singers. However, whilst leadership was to be respected all agreed that in their experience this had often led to members either being abused, or taken advantage of, or both, which in turn has been the cause of many contentious situations, and many unhappy relationships amongst church members. In relation to CSMBC Mrs Marsh reflecting on her own experiences stated that:

I came to this church in the 1960s and got baptized. But there was discipline in the church – you knew where you stood. The leadership they were firm but very good. Even the musicians if they weren’t here at half past ten – if they came at twenty to eleven - them couldn’t play any instruments. It wasn’t allowed... and if anyone went to the leaders and mentioned anything – you couldn’t hear it back and even the children were taught not to repeat things they had heard.

Asked why they thought things had changed Mrs Marsh stated that she believed that the arrival of Pastor Cromwell brought about the change in that he redefined and expanded

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<sup>568</sup>HEBA Regional Minister. Sermon preached 11 May 2008.

<sup>569</sup>Focus group 3, 20 May 2009.

leadership roles, creating a much broader and more 'inclusive' leadership style. She stated that:

Pastor Cromwell just let everybody have their own way, so he is responsible for ultimately what is going on. When I said to him the discipline was bad he said oh, oh, oh. When I talked to him about the deacons, he said oh oh oh. He said they have to work. They need time off. They can't do this, they can't do that. So I said why didn't you tell them before they took up the deaconship that these things have to happen? He never preached on the role of a deacon before the deacon selection, and that's what's wrong with this church.

The issue of Pastor Cromwell's leadership created a very heated debate within the group, much if it centring on his attitude towards the congregation and his subsequent legacy, which all agreed continues to impact the church to the present day. Sister Jones now in her late thirties recalled her early life in the church, when only those who had a certain level of education were allowed to lead, and little has changed since those early days.

Group members agreed that the leadership at CSMBC now included not just the pastor or pastors and deacons, but whoever is able to develop a ministry or project, regardless of their Christian maturity. This they explained was the reason for the diversity and broadness of the leadership, many of whom were not members of the existing deacon board. They stated that, Pastor Cromwell gave leadership roles as much based on educational ability as the 'popularity' of need. Each project was then overseen by the church administrator Simon who in so doing enabled Pastor Cromwell to 'work' from home. Asked to explain what it meant for Pastor Cromwell to work from home and how it related to the leadership of the church, Mrs Marsh stated:

He never learnt how to relate with Black people as his predecessors had done.<sup>570</sup> He never denied it when he was challenged. Simon's appointment allowed him to stay at home perhaps more than he ought to have done. He got busy doing other things, but the day to day management was left to Simon. He would come to the church mainly to preach, and for funerals. Simon did the rest and the people just got on with it.

When asked how the church responded to this, Mrs Marsh said that the majority of the church believed that all could be tolerated because of his one good point, he could preach. She stated, 'We knew that he had problems adjusting to our cultural ways, and that his wife had a full time job, and so had limited time to be around the church during their years of ministry, but he could preach. He could preach a good sermon'. Deleyan Smith confirmed that the role of the administrator was to do everything the minister did not.<sup>571</sup> Asked if they had ever thought of dismissing him because of his attitude, the majority stated that they did not, choosing instead as Mrs Hammond<sup>572</sup> stated, 'We simply left him to God. We did our bit in faith and we just left him to God'. Mrs Brown in his defence stated that 'He's just a man. He's not perfect'.

Most of the group stated that whilst they didn't like his model of ministry, they let him get away with it because he was the pastor. Mrs Marsh concluded, 'That's why people say we as Black folk are stupid. We know what's going on but just let it go'. Others however in support of her stated that it was the way in which they had been brought up, to accept that a pastor

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<sup>570</sup>Pastor Ron Collett, Oral History Project, 27 March 2006, 4. Minister 1967 – 1978. When asked to describe the difference in his role as a minister to a predominantly Caribbean population, Ron Collett stated that, 'I was used as a minister to fill forms for housing, to fill forms in sometimes for benefits, to occasionally draw up a will or something like that and people did rely on the minister of the church rather than the church itself because things were quite confidential'.

<sup>571</sup>Deleyan Smith Oral History Project, (no date listed) CSMBC 2006.

<sup>572</sup>Jamaican, retired female. Member for over twenty five years

can do no wrong, and is always right, especially a white pastor. Such was their love of English people and all things English that they allowed him to remain in post despite these issues.

According to the group, the reality of CSMBC is that because of the poor leadership provided for over twenty years, members have reverted back to a Caribbean understanding of leadership, defined by that practiced within the family, rather than seeking out biblical concepts of church leadership through the study of biblical leaders. Reflecting on the nature of church leadership, the group agreed that a leader would firstly have received a mandate gained through family loyalties, and friendships, and only secondly based on God-given authority, built on Christian maturity. Directing these activities are the ‘elders’, those who are the most senior within the family, and the church community, and who themselves have been raised to believe that there must be total obedience to all authority as it is God ordained, based on their interpretation of Romans 13: 1-2.<sup>573</sup>

The elders are to be respected, and below them each succeeding generation is expected to respect the generation above it, and taken to its extreme even amongst siblings, the younger ones are expected to show deference to their older siblings. The group concurred with the views of Sister Mary<sup>574</sup> who confirmed that:

As youth we were told that we always obeyed. We never questioned authority, be it parents, pastors, teachers, policemen. All were to be

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<sup>573</sup>Rom 13: 1-2 SFLB NKJV. ‘Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves’.

<sup>574</sup>Targeted interview, 16 May 2009. British Caribbean female.

respected. It was seen by parents as disobedience if we failed to respect leaders. So in church we respect the pastor, all leaders and our elders. To do otherwise is to break the rules of the community, and make us different from the rest, and no one wants to be that – it takes guts to stand out from the rest.

All agreed that apart from those involved in Sunday morning worship, CSMBC is a church which is dominated, and controlled by the elders, who make up at least 200 of its 326 membership. Despite their advancing years, they occupy the majority of the organizational leadership roles and are the second level of leadership, often determining the direction of the church. However, such leadership often lacks the necessary skills or the maturity of faith to lead.<sup>575</sup> Sister Angelica<sup>576</sup> by way of example, stated how in seeking to share a new understanding in regards to her own faith in God, she had her confidence shaken by a much respected elder, who simply dismissed her understanding as idealistic. Sister Angelica recalled:

You expect them to be wiser and more knowledgeable about God. I suppose it's my mistake. I just expect them to know more, that's how I was raised, and when they criticize you you take it on board. It can shatter you. They don't always know that much. I have to learn that the rules aren't the same in the Kingdom of God, growth is not based on age, but faith and desire, and I've got loads of both.

In terms of their understanding of leadership roles within the church, Mrs Marsh an elder explained how from her own childhood she had been used to the power of the family being paramount within church structures. She reminisced:

I was brought up in the CofE. My father's mother was CofE. She was a very special lady. She had no official leadership role within the church, but she was well respected. She had her own bench made from mahogany – solid

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<sup>575</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 17. When asked to describe the leadership provided by the elders he described it as being akin to, '1st Century Jews...telling 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians how to believe'.

<sup>576</sup>British Caribbean, female.

mahogany. You couldn't sit on it – not before she sat down. We as children had to wait for her to give permission.

Regarding the power of the 'family', two examples were shared as to how when conflict happens between the pastor and a family group, it is more often the pastor who will suffer as a consequence, rather than a family member. Pastor Stephens<sup>577</sup> for example, was a much respected pastor, functioning in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a man who everyone agreed that in his short time with them, had transformed the church, resulting in increased growth and faith in God. He was in fact considered to be the most effective pastor at CSMBC since World War Two, but when Pastor Harris,<sup>578</sup> his then assistant pastor with no ministerial credentials, demanded more responsibility, to preside over funerals, weddings and dedications, and was refused, it resulted in the departure of Pastor Stephens. Explaining this, Simon stated, I don't know why he left, but he liked to be in charge of everything. The assistant pastor we knew him since he was a child, he grew in the church, but Pastor Stephens always had to control everything, he only let Pastor Harris do visitations and Bible study'.<sup>579</sup>

A similar situation arose when Pastor Francis<sup>580</sup> tried to remove Simon from his position as Administrator, having decided that his clerical skills were somewhat lacking. Pastor Francis's error was in his failing to understand that Simon was seen as an integral part of the leadership

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<sup>577</sup>White British male.

<sup>578</sup>Pastor Harris, British Caribbean male.

<sup>579</sup>Unbeknown to Simon and other members of the congregation, though having undergone training, Pastor Harris at that time continued to lack the ministerial credentials necessary to preside over weddings and funerals, and so was limited in his ability to function more fully within the church.

<sup>580</sup>Jamaican male.

team of the church,<sup>581</sup> with much family support. The struggle for change resulted in the departure of Pastor Francis after less than two years. Of the incident Simon stated, ‘I know how it is. I have “my people” who are watching my back. Pastor Francis soon realized this when he tried to do something. I’m still here, and he’s not’.

This structure of leadership within CSMBC means that at times ‘leaders’ will demand respect no matter who they upset in the process. The group relayed three telling incidents as to how things can go badly wrong, particularly when conflict happens within the Sunday morning worship service, observed by many in the church. In the first incident, the leader of the worship team refused to yield the ‘floor’ to the choir, informing them (in front of the congregation) that ‘You can sing next week’. Not only was this insensitive according to the group, but it showed a lack of respect on the part of the worship team which consists primarily of young adults, whilst the choir is predominantly made up of ‘elders’.

In a second incident members told how on the previous Sunday, Sister Angelica accompanying a friend up to the altar in order to pray, having arrived there was seen being physically ushered out of the way by the student pastor, who insisted on praying with the lady in question herself. It was an event observed by the majority of the leadership and worshipping congregation in the balcony. However, as is the norm at CSMBC, it was family members rather than the pastor and deacons who ‘confronted’ the offending student pastor.

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<sup>581</sup>Simon was appointed directly in response to a request from a previous minister and assistant minister. They approached him to become involved in the church, giving him the position of Administrator, with the instruction that, ‘everything the Pastor doesn’t do the Administrator does’. Deleyan Smith, Oral History Project, 11. Those who came to the church some years later, not knowing the history simply saw an Administrator, with no perceivable administrative skills. Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 16.

Family members left the student pastor in no doubt that though they held a leadership position, she had now lost the mandate of a significant section of the congregation, and was advised to simply ‘stay out of our way’.<sup>582</sup> Despite the intervention of the leadership, as I observed them, these relationships were never repaired.

The third incident concerned elders who once held positions as deacons. They spoke of their dismay at how Pastor Francis, a member of a Pentecostal church had been unofficially appointed as associate pastor to Pastor Cromwell, without the necessary protocols, including the congregation being a part of the decision making process. Mrs Marsh explained how:

Pastor Cromwell had spent two years negotiating with Pastor Francis and appointed him before we even knew about it. He told us afterwards that they had been in discussion for two years before the church even knew it was in the offing. We were just told he’s coming, and that was that. He’s the pastor what could we do?<sup>583</sup>

Not only did this highlight the leadership style of Pastor Cromwell, but it also showed the ignorance of Pastor Francis with respect to Baptist polity. He failed to recognise that there would be an issue in regards to his appointment within the Baptist church, which unlike Pentecostal churches where most if not all pastors though appointed within their respective congregations, are chosen solely by existing leaders who see their potential.

When asked their opinion with respect to women and leadership all were agreed that whilst within Caribbean society, women are the backbone, the natural nurturers, within the church, most are overlooked as leaders, whilst holding many unofficial leadership positions through

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<sup>582</sup>African Caribbean female.

<sup>583</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 2006.

which most churches function. The women present agreed with Mrs Marsh that within CSMBC 'It's a man's world'. Asked to explain, Mrs Marsh<sup>584</sup> stated:

In the early days Rev Stephens wouldn't let women lead. He said that he had discussed it with the West Indian men, our husbands and they didn't like their women to be in leadership positions above them in the church. He therefore never let it happen until near the end of his time with us. Then he allowed women to preach at both services on Mothering Sunday.

The group stated that since that time the women in the church have sought and found alternative ways to lead. They have become lay preachers within the BUGB, as well as gaining leadership oversight as deacons. Mrs Brown a lady with theological training forcefully stated that, 'Having been given a calling by God, no one was going to hold me down. I didn't preach at CSMBC, but I preached in a lot of other places. They never stopped me from preaching'. There ensued a heated debate as to whether Mrs Brown was simply in denial, or refusing to admit the truth that she had been 'ignored' and overlooked in terms of pastoral ministry within CSMBC simply because she was a woman and because, in her own words, which she stated the previous week:

The church makes a lot of rules that I don't understand. I don't say a lot. Take for instance by rights I have nearly as much authority as a pastor. I went to Bible School. I should have been allowed to do marriages, burials and things, but I don't do anything. When I asked why, Pastor Cromwell told me that because I trained in the Pentecostal church I couldn't lead in the Baptist Church, but then Pastor Francis came, and he's a Pentecostal just like me. Why is that? But I don't complain. No one can keep me down.

Mrs Marsh sought to encourage Mrs Brown to be honest with herself and the group, by admitting that, 'He kept you down. Don't put yourself down', to which Mrs Brown responded that it wasn't the fault of the minister, rather it was the people who influenced

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<sup>584</sup>Retired Jamaican.

him, preventing her from leading. She then became increasingly agitated as the debate continued, finally walking out after declaring to Mrs Marsh:

You Sister need to get rid of that Spirit. I'm not putting myself down. The people stopped me. They told me. It was my accent. They couldn't understand it. They would complain to him. He was scared of them. I didn't complain. No one ever stopped my ministry. No wonder the Spirit doesn't come here. With everybody knowing better than the leadership. As Christians everything should be done, according to scripture 'in decency and in order'<sup>585</sup> that's why there is a ministry team. You can't just let anybody jump in, it won't work.

After the departure of Mrs Brown the group stopped for a while as they spoke of the enormity of the task they were undertaking, and how as a people they were not used to holding reflective sessions where voices of dissent could be heard. There was a prayer for Mrs Brown's healing of damaged emotions and her return to the group at some stage. The session concluded with all declaring that as there was now a female student pastor occupying a significant leadership position, they were optimistic that it was now a new season of ministry, with new leadership, and hopefully new possibilities for them as women, in fulfilling their God-given potential.

## **4.4 Worship – Music and Songs**

### **4.4.1 Public Face**

Sunday morning worship is considered to be the public face of worship within CSMBC and its importance is signified by the two regular groups which sing during the service, the Choir and the Praise and Worship Team. The Choir is seated on both sides of the platform at the front of the church, whilst the Praise and Worship Team sit within the body of the

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<sup>585</sup>Pertains to a Scriptural reference taken from 1Cor 14:40. SFLB NKJV.

congregation, taking their place on the platform only when they are involved in leading worship. Both groups have available to them the musicians who play a variety of instruments (African drums, drum kit, two guitars, organ, electric piano) and who sit within the body of the congregation in an alcove to the left of the platform.

In terms of leading worship, the Praise and Worship Team, though being one of two singing groups, are acknowledged by most attendees as the leaders of worship within CSMBC. Their average age is forty years old, and members tend to be either related through friendship or family ties. They alone are listed on the weekly church announcement sheets, and are always accompanied by the musicians. At least 70% of the hymns and choruses which they sang in 2008 were those written by popular British Christian writers. 15% were of American origin, 10% were those remembered from colonial times, and the remainder I was unclear about. Usually they lead the congregation by singing two and at most three songs, each repeated at least five times. When time is limited they will never have their programme terminated, whereas other aspects of the service, including the sermon, can be impinged upon, and if necessary cut short.

The Praise and Worship Team appear to be respected by leadership both within the church and other local churches. In addition to leading worship at CSMBC they are a significant part of the evangelism team, singing in prisons, residential homes, at public events and fundraising activities. They often receive accolades and ‘words of knowledge’ from visiting pastors, one such pastor encouraged them to accept that, ‘as worship leaders you have the responsibility to usher in a type of spiritual framework for worship – ministering to the

people'.<sup>586</sup> They are therefore considered to be an integral part of the leadership team of the church and expect to be respected as such.

The Choir on the other hand consists mostly of elders, who having formed as young adults in the days of Pastor Stephens have now aged, but are a very visual choir, still retaining their unique choir robes and outfits. They always sing prior to the opening of the service, usually a cappella as the musicians are rarely assembled before the opening greeting. Their role during the service is to perform one hymn or chorus, usually taken from the Redemption Hymnal,<sup>587</sup> during the collecting of the offering. They do take an active part in other aspects of the worship but occupy a secondary role, following the lead of the Praise and Worship Team.

There is always an opening hymn, as well as a concluding hymn or chorus during the morning service. Of the thirty one hymns and choruses sung during Sunday morning and evening worship (many often repeated) in 2008, twenty were drawn from the Redemption Hymnal, eight from Mission Praise,<sup>588</sup> and only one which had been authored since 1990. Members of the congregation rarely clap during the service, the exception being the twice yearly Baptismal service, at which they bring tambourines, and most if not all of the songs are drawn either from the Redemption Hymnal, or songs from Jamaica which they have memorised. Baptismal candidates are however at liberty to request one song, or musical

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<sup>586</sup>Sermon preached Sunday morning 31 August 2008.

<sup>587</sup>*Redemption Hymnal* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications), 1951. It is a hymn book containing popular songs from the early twentieth century.

<sup>588</sup>Horrobin, *Mission Praise*.

interlude to express what being baptized means to them, and on such occasions, the majority are drawn from contemporary African American gospel songs.

#### 4.4.2 Private Views

As with questions about the family, when asked about the place and significance of music within the Caribbean community, the group<sup>589</sup> agreed with Sister Anderson that, ‘Music is at the very heart of Black culture. I mean it is ever since I danced as a little girl to our parents’ music, but not only that, it’s a universal language’. Yet not just any music would do, for them music was not music unless it was accompanied by instruments which engendered feeling. There was resonance with Sister Anderson when she stated that ‘I love praise and worship but yet if I went to a (traditional) CofE church I would probably be bored silly listening to the organ’ and yet they also agreed with Mrs Draper<sup>590</sup> when she stated that they had become a people who:

Sing the same hymns and the songs we have always sung. Often we don’t always understand them or accept what we are singing. For example we sing take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold, and worldly pleasures are forsaken, but you look in the church it’s all there, we’ve given up very little that’s why we don’t say amen anymore after a song. We wouldn’t mean it. It’s an old fashioned thing, but people don’t think before they sing.

Simon, the church administrator is also one of the church musicians and he added extra insight about the role of music within the church, when he declared:

You don’t totally understand about the musicians, until you understand that the church doesn’t look at music as being important, except for the keyboard – the organ. Musical instruments were introduced by Pastor Stephens. When I first started they complained that the church was becoming like Top of the Pops! They don’t mind paying for the organ, and they pay Richard the

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<sup>589</sup>Focus Group 27 May 2009.

<sup>590</sup>Jamaican, retired female.

organist to play on Sunday. He isn't a member of CSMBC, but he's the leader. The older folks have always been willing to pay for the organ. Other musicians have to buy their own instruments, bring their own instruments, and they don't get paid. They (*the congregation*) wouldn't mind if there were no other instruments, as long as they have the organ. I've tried introducing new choruses, but I think they have only accepted five CD's in the twenty years I have been on the music team, and each one I have had to buy myself. They won't throw out the red book.<sup>591</sup>

Clearly a degree of resentment has built up in a group who show enthusiasm by buying their own instruments, but believe their contribution to be opposed and unappreciated, particularly by the elders.<sup>592</sup> It has to be managed sensitively.

Having agreed the importance and passion which the group has for music, I asked them if there were forms of music which were more acceptable than others and which can or cannot be played in church. Sister Anderson in her response began a heated debate about the place of reggae music within the church, when she stated:

My children listen to grime... it's really fast and everything...it does your head in...funny how the words were 'we're going to party hard, and I changed it to we're going to praise the Lord'. That's this generation, but I think that for Black people it's very much reggae isn't it. Sometimes I think in the church we don't have enough of it.

Mrs Taylor<sup>593</sup> made the group laugh as she responded by stating that:

Sometimes the musicians do play it, but mostly they don't. I remember last year there was a song they were going to sing and it was all in reggae. They held the usual practise on the Friday, then it didn't happen, the musicians changed it. I wore my flat shoes to dance...because when someone tells you what's going to happen on Sunday you get excited and you come ready for

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<sup>591</sup>The red book is a colloquial term used to refer to the *Redemption Hymnal*.

<sup>592</sup>This is clearly not a new issue. Pastor Stanley Woods in his interview for the Oral History Project, 4 August 2006, 4, said of his time there that, 'There was the accusation that we were singing outside the Baptist hymn book and it was more like Top of the Pops...when all we were doing at that time, was singing songs from the (book of) Psalms'.

<sup>593</sup>Jamaican retired female.

it. But of course it didn't happen. They are so used to the hymn in the same old tune.

Sister Pauline, a member of the Praise and Worship Team defended the congregation as she stated that it was not just a congregational decision not to play songs in reggae, but it was one supported by the majority of the worship team. She declared that Caribbean culture was not reflected more in their music because:

We are a Baptist church...we have taken on the modern day - the English praise and worship. It goes back to our days of slavery and what we perceive as correct. The fact that reggae is seen as lesser music, Black music, so you don't bring Black music into the church. Because I know that a couple of weeks ago we were all asked to bring a CD of music so that we can learn new songs. I brought this reggae CD but no, it wasn't taken up. I was told it was because it was reggae. They chose European songs and we've adopted a European style of worship.

Mr Davenport<sup>594</sup> added that it was more than just an issue which was related to their enslavement, it was he believed as much about how as young adults they grew up understanding reggae music. He stated:

As you grow up it's usually reggae in the dance halls. So they think reggae then is something for the world, not for the church. That is a belief in a lot of people. They're not looking at it that it's music that can edify, and it's the words you put to that reggae music that change it. It was the churches music originally, now people think it's the world's music, even though we brought someone here to teach them about it. They don't accept it and when it's played in church as a special number, some people don't like it, and they get their way.

Mrs Taylor concluded the session by stating that she believed that nothing would change, even if many people wanted it to because, 'We don't say anything even if we disagree

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<sup>594</sup>Jamaican, retired male.

because I think sometimes people just don't like to offend people, and so you just leave it alone – don't say anything'.

#### **4.5 Duppies, Proverbs, Death Rituals, Food and Ancestors**

##### **4.5.1 Public Face**

Duppies and Proverbs are never reflected upon in the public face of CSMBC, except during the annual Caribbean Night Easter event, in purely comical terms, whilst funerals are undertaken on a regular basis, averaging two per month during 2008. CSMBC makes no distinction between funerals undertaken for members and those of persons either living in the local community, or friends and relatives of a member. Each is announced within the church so that all who wish to may attend, in a similar way to the reading of the Banns prior to a wedding service in say the CofE, and as friendship is the only link needed, being a friend of a friend of the deceased means that they are usually well attended.

Food is an issue never discussed within the Sunday worship of the CSMBC. However, as one walks through CSMBC from Tuesday to Friday, central to the activity of the church is the Olive Branch luncheon club. The food there is strictly Caribbean, including dumplings, soup and the usual curry goat, fish and chicken dishes. It has been in existence since the late 1970s serving those who live and work in the community around the church. It is a very successful enterprise, and the most profitable of all the churches activities.

The issue of ancestors was only raised during one Sunday service where it was linked to spiritual conflict, oppression and sins which were named as the spirit of lust, rape and

murder, caused by the generational sins of said ancestors. Ancestors are therefore presented as negative beings, and by way of defining their role one preacher relayed how:

I had a spirit that went way back to slavery days – freemasonry – I coughed so it was there even though I didn't know it. Let us make a public confession. I and my forebears have sinned and broken your laws. We have done this in thought word and deed, and in particular by involvement in whatever the family have been involved in. I forgive my forebears for the consequences of their sins that have visited into my life. I take responsibility for the ways in which I have repeated their sins and I repent before you and ask for your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus that you have redeemed me and loosed me from the curse of generational iniquity and that in you I have chosen to identify myself wholeheartedly with God's family and thereby inherit every promise and blessing that comes from him.<sup>595</sup>

There were no exceptions, all ancestors were deemed to be equally sinful and therefore equally culpable, but the sermon concluded with the expectation that having confessed the sins of ancestors, the problems and sins visited upon the current generation would now be removed.

#### **4.5.2 Private Views**

When this group<sup>596</sup> was asked for their understanding about duppies, the response was minimal, with only two significant comments being made. Mrs Moore<sup>597</sup> recalled a proverb which she had heard as a child in Jamaica, which said, 'Duppy know who to frighten'.<sup>598</sup> Sister Mary on hearing this added, 'I remember my mother said that her mother told her of a time when they heard somebody was sick and dying. They had disagreed. They had to go and make it up with them before they died, so that they didn't die with that person inside them or

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<sup>595</sup>Sermon preached pm 13 July 2008. Linda Kay, British Caribbean female member of CSMBC.

<sup>596</sup>Focus Group, 3 June 2009.

<sup>597</sup>Jamaican, retired female.

<sup>598</sup>Translation. 'A person will only fear duppies if they believe in them'.

carry them with them to their grave'. Most agreed that they had heard such views as children, but no longer believed them as adults.

In terms of Jamaican 'proverbs' or 'sayings', whilst most agreed that they could not consciously think of any proverbs which might influence their daily living, each could easily recall at least one proverb which they believed expressed long held beliefs or views about daily life and living within the Caribbean community. The following are a selection of those shared. 'Hard ears pickney will spread them bed twice'.<sup>599</sup> 'Hard you ear bum boy will feel'.<sup>600</sup> 'What sweet you sour you'.<sup>601</sup> 'Don't hang your basket higher than you can reach it'.<sup>602</sup> 'Take what you get, til you get what you want'.<sup>603</sup> 'A no one monkey wan wife'.<sup>604</sup> 'Every pot have to sit on its own batty'.<sup>605</sup> Then there were some directly taken from Scripture, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child'.<sup>606</sup> 'Rend your hearts not your garments'.<sup>607</sup> Each were recalled as proverbs used in daily life when children, but were now simply happy reflections of life once lived.

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<sup>599</sup>'If you don't do it right the first time, you will have to do it again until you get it right'.

<sup>600</sup>'If the ears don't hear, the bottom will feel'.

<sup>601</sup>'What sweet you will run your belly – make you sick'.

<sup>602</sup>'Live within your means'.

<sup>603</sup>'Be satisfied with what we can give you, until the day you can get the things you want yourself'.

<sup>604</sup>'You can't expect us to believe that you only had sex once. You're pregnant and you can't get pregnant after having sex just once'.

<sup>605</sup>'You can't rely on anybody else to do things for you'. Similar to, 'you can't tek medicine for sommade else'.

<sup>606</sup>This was translated to mean, 'If you fail to smack your child for wrong-doing, they will grow up spoilt and with no manners or respect for others'.

<sup>607</sup>'Clothes are not as important as a heart given to God, so don't object to wearing an outfit I picked out for you'.

Concerning funerals, when asked to describe the rituals undertaken during a Caribbean funeral, all were agreed that this is the one practice which CSMBC carries out according to culture. There was a general amen following Sister Alison's<sup>608</sup> statement that:

Funerals are looked on as a celebration. From the moment somebody dies your house is full and you're catering for people. It's neither good nor bad. It's just whatever up until the time that that person is buried. There is a strong sense of community, of keeping together. You get that unity. It is so strong and then when the person is buried it's finished.

Mrs Moore added:

That's one thing about a Caribbean - West Indian funeral - people make sure that they are there. They have this sense of duty to pay their respects whether it is at the house during the nine nights<sup>609</sup> before the funeral, or even at the actual service itself. Basically what people say is that this shouldn't be the only time that we get together – at weddings and funerals – where you haven't seen someone for a long time...Everyone makes a point of attending.

The group however made it clear that such practices were not carried out in all Caribbean islands, for as Sister Nardia<sup>610</sup> stated:

My mother-in-law is Barbadian. She doesn't believe in it at all, especially the nine nights. She didn't see the need for it. She is more familiar with what they call a wake. There are lots of tears, people crying. In fact they have official mourners, and you cry with them. You still go to the house every night. You didn't eat during the day coz you know you going to get something at the house.

At the mention of food, everybody laughed as Mrs Moore added, with some humour:

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<sup>608</sup>British Caribbean, female.

<sup>609</sup>Nine Nights refers to the social gathering of people for a period of nine nights before the funeral takes place. It is an old tradition existing since enslavement when slaves believed that the spirits of the dead took nine nights to return home to Africa, and join their ancestors thereby making life's circle complete. There is an expectation that in so doing the Spirit (Duppy) of the deceased will enter the grave and be at rest. In modern times nine nights allows time for family and friends to gather from all corners of the world in order to say goodbye. *Burial Practices in Jamaica*, Available from <http://www.gttp.org/docs/casestudies/2006/jamaica2006.pdf> [Accessed 25/01/12].

<sup>610</sup>British Caribbean, female.

Songs are sung, prayers said especially on the ninth night when you give God thanks for the persons' life. However, 'Where bones are provided, dogs are invited' - Everybody knows it's going to be a free night for all. You didn't have to invite anybody but you would tell close members of the family, church sisters and brothers, but everybody just gate crash and they accepted it. 'Coz it's better for them to be there rather than you be there on your own.

Sister Alison went on to describe the rituals which take place at the grave side:

Ah, with the English they don't bury their dead. We bury them to the very end, don't we? From the time the coffin is lowered members, mostly male, some female members as well now actually fill the grave. The help you have from the local authority is just to shovel the earth closer so you don't have to travel to get it. You fill it and then you put the flowers on, and then there's singing, always singing around the grave until it is all done. They don't do that in English funerals.

All agreed as Sister Victoria<sup>611</sup> concluded, 'It's one of the glues that hold us together. I've always said it's one good thing which no one will ever take away from us – funeral gatherings - It's a thing we hold dear'.

The issue of food was discussed directly after discussions regarding funerals and death rituals, and intentionally so, as the conversations often overlapped, and all agreed with Sister Victoria that as Caribbean people they are in love with their food, and will use 'any excuse, any occasion to provide food, even when they just bring refreshments – it has to be the full works'. However, they also agreed that within the church, Jamaican food had been privileged above all else. Mrs Stewart<sup>612</sup> recalled how:

Sometime ago we were to bring food and I brought souse pork – it's one of the specialities...you know who took (*ate*) it – Mary Smith – she was white.

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<sup>611</sup>British Caribbean female.

<sup>612</sup>African Caribbean retired female.

But others didn't take it. So, when they had something again at the town hall and they said to bring something I said no, but I was persuaded to bring something and everyone came along and ate every other dish except mine.

There followed a discussion and an apology particularly from the Jamaicans present who admitted that because it was pale looking most unknowingly thought that it had been undercooked, and because it was unfamiliar food, it suffered as a consequence. Unity was soon restored as they spoke of the Olive Branch luncheon club, originally set up to be an advice centre, but members insisted on introducing food, which eventually became the main focus of the club. It is run entirely by the elders, and Sister Alison appeared to speak for the whole group when she stated that:

I think ...food is some people's love language. If they can feed you, they can give you food then that's what it's about. Because for me at funerals I'm not bothered if I eat yes or no, but at the same time somebody has put that food on for you, so it's nice to eat it. It's a lot of things. It's how they can show those that come that they are part of us. I love all the food because then you get to speak to people as you sit around together.

The group was hesitant to comment on the notion of ancestors, until Mrs Moore stated, 'I admit I used to pray to God and ask Him to give my children help and help me look after them. I would ask that if my forefathers did anything wrong forgive them'. Sister Victoria added, 'My family and I always confessed that our ancestors motivated us to strive to do well'. James<sup>613</sup> recalled, 'I once heard a woman say on TV when talking of Black on Black violence 'our ancestors wouldn't like it'. I thought how interesting. It's not just about us, but them, those who went before us, and I thought, it's true. We have to live up to what they did for us, and are we?' Though not spoken of on a daily basis, everyone agreed that they had

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<sup>613</sup>British Caribbean, male.

heard and were used to their ancestors being considered as an integral part of the family.

There were hearty ‘amens’ as Sister Alison concluded the session telling how:

There are times when people die and people say they saw mom, auntie etc. coming to speak words of comfort and revelation to them. I recently did a family history and what I’ve got for my children is all the names and all the surnames, all our ancestors since the days of the plantation and slavery. My grandfather lived on a plantation. My children will have it and they can read it. Their ancestors will be real to them.

## **4.6 Personal Appearance - Clothes and Hair**

### **4.6.1 Public Face**

Attend CSMBC on any given Sunday and one is presented with a membership dressed in its Sunday best. Male and female senior citizens often attend in hats, women in dresses, skirts or smart trouser suits and the majority of men in suits. Hair is well groomed, but for the majority of women wigs or hair extensions are the order of the day.

The members of CSMBC seem to take great pride in their appearance, and this is highlighted even more during two special occasions within the church calendar, Mothers’ and Fathers’ Day. On Mothers’ Day female ushers and members of the Praise and Worship Team wear identical scarves, whilst on Fathers’ Day the male ushers and worship leaders can be found in matching bow ties and cummerbunds. On each occasion it is quite a spectacle only equalled by the weekly dress code worn by the Choir who alternate between choir robes, co-ordinated blouses, skirts, trousers, and for the women, hats.

Once a year there is the annual Autumn Fundraising Ball at which the whole congregation is given the opportunity to ‘dress in their best’. It is usually held at a prestigious local

conference centre and ball gowns and tuxedo are the order of the day. Such is the excitement about the event that an annual shopping trip to London takes place weeks before, so that women in particular can buy suitable attire. The event is always well attended.

Despite appearing to place a positive emphasis on personal appearance, when it is addressed within the sermons preached it is presented as having quite negative implications for the spiritual life of members. Sermons vary from, ‘God is not the car I drive or the clothes that I wear. It’s not wrong to want to wear nice clothes and go to nice places, or have the latest gadget, but it becomes wrong when these things become a barrier between you and God’.<sup>614</sup>

To:

Age sixteen growing up I began to have the desire to wearing certain designer clothes. I just liked to look good. I wanted to dress right, but I just didn’t have the right parents. What I mean is my mom say to me, ‘You want to wear that you have to pay for it yourself’. So I had to get myself a part time job – paper round...Anything you want cost you something.<sup>615</sup>

And:

Now all of us are in church here today on a Sunday putting on our clothes, coming here looking good. Looked in the mirror - brushed the hair. Thinking yes, I’m looking good. We walk to church...If I’m a Christian you should know that. My spirit should tell you. It’s not the way I’m dressed, but just my spirit should tell you I’m a Christian by my actions...Don’t think because we’re good looking, we’re educated, we have a car, we have our children. That don’t mean Jack if the devil comes and you haven’t got spiritual stability in your life.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>614</sup>Sunday morning 30 March 2008.

<sup>615</sup>Sunday morning 27 July 2008.

<sup>616</sup>Sunday morning 31 August 2008.

And, finally, ‘Stop just being cute with your nice hair and your fingernails. That’s good but somebody is looking for a hero’.<sup>617</sup> The message appears to be dress fine, and we as leadership encourage it, but at the same time be aware that we are watching you just in case your personal appearance becomes more important than your relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### **4.6.2 Private Views**

The issue of personal appearance, clothes worn and hair care amongst church members, led to a very heated discussion within this group.<sup>618</sup> Two particular issues came to the fore, the first being the minority view held by Mrs Brown, a long standing member, and lay preacher who criticized members who themselves criticize visitors who fail to dress as they see it - appropriately. She explained her concern, with this example:

I was sitting beside someone and you know we had a dedication and those people were dressed ...off the shoulder and the woman sitting at the side of me was furious and I was going to get up because I was glad to see these people in church. I didn’t care what they were wearing. I liked to see them in church. I always say church is come as you are and when you hear the word, then you will change...sin cause us to dress up for when Adam used to walk with God daily he was naked and because of sin he covered himself. Why do we have to dress up to come to church?

This view was strongly opposed by Mrs Marsh, who expressed the prevailing view of the church, ‘I think everybody should dress in their best when they are coming to worship God, because all you have is God. You should look good, but at the same time you should dress in a way that if Christ should come He will not be ashamed to walk with you’. Asked to define what ‘best’ looks like, she went on to explain:

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<sup>617</sup>Sunday morning 9 November 2008.

<sup>618</sup>Focus Group, 10 June 2009.

We were brought up that way. When you going out dress your best, it's just tradition but you should look good...When Pastor Stephens was here, didn't he say that people should be dressed prepared to do anything in church...if he needed you to do something...properly is so that if anyone comes into the church, they must be able to say that person is presentable. Don't wear shabby clothes. Don't wear anything that makes you look horrible. Just dress sensibly – co-ordinated. That's what I mean by properly.

Participants concurred with this view stating that there was in the minds of many an 'unwritten' dress code by which members of CSMBC and Caribbean Christians per se believed that they could identify the difference between those who were believers, and those who were not. Sister Angelica stated that as young as she was (in her late thirties), she remembered that the church used to have a dress code, and those who adhered to it could be identified because they looked 'churchified' and their children looked 'churchified', though she admitted this happened to a lesser extent today than previously. The group agreed that parents today were more inclined to allow their children to wear their best jeans and trainers instead of formal attire, drawing the line at t-shirts and football shirts and other such 'casual' looking clothing.

Asked if the Caribbean Church had always placed an emphasis on dress and personal appearance, Mrs Marsh stated that there was a difference between mainline churches and other less affluent ones. She stated that:

People walk bare foot to church and many people come to church Good Friday, bare foot and nobody used to turn them out because they have no shoes to wear. They even wear the same suit or clothes they wear in the week. However, the expectation was different for others. You could not go into church if you were a man without a jacket, and if you were going to Court as a man you had to wear a jacket. Women had to have a hat, and if

they didn't have one, they had to get their kerchief<sup>619</sup> and make a little thing on the top of their head. Men made a fortune out of hiring out jackets.

Sister Sharon<sup>620</sup> admitted that she and her family once chose not to join a particular church because of its dress code. Then further examples were given of Pentecostal conventions (which many of the group also attend) where people often dressed 'like them going to Ascot' and weddings where 'you think they were going to see the Queen'. They acknowledged that often the perpetuation of such views came directly from the minister or pastor of the church, who as Mrs Brown<sup>621</sup> recalling an experience, told how she had on one occasion to correct a minister who criticized her for wearing a gold necklace when she visited his church, whilst he at the very same time could be seen wearing a gold tie pin and cuff links. The rules were seemingly not the same for all.

Though such rules are no longer officially sanctioned, it was nevertheless agreed that they remained in the minds of the 'churched' and the 'unchurched'. Mrs Brown gave two examples of incidents, one which highlighted such rules as unsustainable and the other in which a member of the community, as a result of these rules was seemingly reluctant to attend church. Of the first instance she stated:

Sunday, because there was a dedication, there was a lady sitting in front of me and I looked and I thought I know this lady...When I got her attention I said do you go to church then. Oh no she said I only go to christenings, funerals and such. She slept right through the service, waking up when the

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<sup>619</sup>Handkerchief.

<sup>620</sup>British Caribbean female.

<sup>621</sup>Mrs Brown returned to the group the following week, apologising to those present and stating that she sometimes gets frustrated by the action of others, though realising that they meant no harm. The group welcomed her back and those who had been present the previous week previous similar apologies to her. The group celebrated their unity with drinks and snacks and much thanksgiving to God for relationships renewed.

message finished. She looked the part, hat and everything. She 'looked' like a Christian, so if you are looking at looks, she would be it, but she wasn't.

Then her second example concerned a man she met on the street:

Whenever I'm coming to church, I don't care who it is passing me, I will invite them to church. One day I come and this man said to me, 'I'll come next week 'coz I'm not dressed for church'. He looked better than some people who are already in the church. I said come in, clothes don't matter. He said no and he wouldn't come in. He said he was not appropriately dressed. The next week he couldn't come even if he wanted to, he was ill.

Mrs Marsh despite this evidence was insistent that there was a need for members to dress 'properly'. She determined that it was the failure of Pastor Stephens to uphold Caribbean cultural values, in terms of his reluctance to enforce dress style, in a multicultural congregation, which contributed to his eventual resignation. She described how:

Girls started to wear trousers. I had a word with him because somewhere in Deuteronomy it said women should not wear anything pertaining to men and I thought it meant trousers, but he said to me what should the people from India do, they wear the same thing, that's how they were brought up to dress. So, what can you do and I think that's where he melted down.

The group concluded by agreeing that the issue of personal appearance was more a decision based on cultural preference, rather than faith, which was typical of not just their church but most other Caribbean churches in and around Birmingham.

The issue of hair like clothes presented as a somewhat contentious issue for the members. When asked about the issue of hair and being well groomed, the immediate response by Sister Mary was, 'I love my wig, I bought it and I paid for it and I change it every two weeks'. Asked why they all appeared to be on the defensive, Mrs Marsh spoke for the group who agreed that their experience had been of a Caribbean church which 'scorned wigs,

straightening of hair and anything that was not natural'. It seemed to matter little to them that none of the examples given involved the Baptist Church, but rather Caribbean Pentecostal churches, and their visiting ministers who as frequent guest speakers to CSMBC were beginning to significantly influence the belief systems within it. Here again was a cultural practice based more on tradition than belief, with most members knowing preachers who preached negatively about Black hair from the pulpit. There was agreement by the group with Mrs Marsh who described such preachers as hypocrites, stating cynically:

Come on take your glasses off. These ministers are always married to women with the best hair in the world. Many of the CoG ministers – the women that they marry haven't got to straighten their hair. Pastor Murray at Anderson Street he was half Indian, his wife was also half Indian. Come on, she wasn't meant to straighten it and didn't need to. But he can preach on the members as his wife hadn't got to do it. So when he was speaking of members have to do this and that and the other, his wife was free from it. He and other ministers, their wives didn't have picky picky hair. In Jamaica they would say of her 'she has a good head of hair'. Have you ever seen a minister whose wife wears a wig? Come on.

Though the members of the group stated that they felt free to be as they chose, most however were agreed that as a people peer pressure placed a great deal of emphasis on looking good, whether living at 'home' or within the diaspora, no matter the expense. All agreed that no matter the level of income, young girls today whether in Birmingham or the rural Jamaican hillside, would not be seen out and about on any occasion, without three necessary items - a mobile phone, painted nails (hands and feet), and the obligatory well groomed hair. The women of CSMBC admitted however that they were no different.

#### 4.7 Religion and Culture: A Group Covenant

Having concluded the six focus groups it was agreed that there would be a final group session in two weeks, giving time for past participants to consider a way forward for themselves and CSMBC. On their return<sup>622</sup> the group agreed that the most suitable way forward for them to express themselves, would be in the writing of a Covenant, in a similar vein and reminiscent of the first Native Baptist Covenant written by George Liele in 1789.

They worked together and completed the following statement:

As Caribbean Christians we have an undying belief and acceptance that our faith, our religion, governs the parameters of our community. However, at the same time we have come to believe and accept that the church walking in the footsteps of the early church (Acts 15) needs also to honour our culture as the glue which defines how our religion is expressed. We believe that to deny our culture as being not only significant but relevant, is to deny God's gift to us, and God's very expression through us. To that end we affirm the following, concerning the basic tenets of our faith and culture:-

1. Language
  - a) People's mother tongue should be honoured – recognising everyone's heritage.
  - b) Each person should be encouraged to have confidence in how they speak - whatever the style or accent.
2. Family, Marriage and Children
  - a) There should be a discussion as to the 'acceptability' of all established relationships having equal status within the church.
  - b) Children should be nurtured to develop and fulfil their roles within the church - as a part of the worshipping community of the church.
3. Leadership - including the positioning of women
  - a) All leadership should be Spirit-filled and there should be evidence of this.
  - b) All new leaders should be subject to a trial period.
  - c) All leadership should operate under the subjection of God's Word.
  - d) The congregation should be 'enabled' so that they may participate fully in church meetings.
  - e) There should be the opportunity for all to regularly discuss, give feedback, views and opinions.
  - f) There should be no difference between men and women when it comes to leadership – all should be treated equally.

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<sup>622</sup> Focus Group, 24 June 2009.

4. Worship – Music and Songs
  - a) All worship should be Spirit-filled and there should be evidence of this.
  - b) All cultures represented should be honoured in our worship and music.
  
5. Duppies, Proverbs, Death Rituals, Food and Ancestors
  - a) We uphold these things as being a part of our culture.
  
6. Personal Appearance - Clothes and Hair
  - a) Non-Members ought to be accepted within the congregation as they are.
  - b) It is expected that all members will be in relationship with the Holy Spirit who will then lead them to dress in decency and in order.

In conclusion then I would say that if religion is the body – muscle, bone and tissue – culture is for many who have experienced this process, the ‘skin’ within which it is protected and thereby enabled to function.

#### **4.8 Discussion with the Pastor<sup>623</sup>**

Having created a Covenant document for the church, group members then agreed to come together one more time, to discuss their findings with their pastor. This was our final group meeting and the euphoria of previous weeks was nowhere to be seen as Pastor Brown settled into a seat around the table. Rather than participate with the enthusiasm which they had shown in all previous warm up exercises, the group was unnaturally quiet, made little eye contact with each other, and spoke in muted tones very similar to those which I had experienced in the first two or three sessions. The scene was set and it was agreed that each covenantal agreement would be read by a member of the group, the rationale for it explained to Pastor Brown, before inviting him to respond in the form of a discussion which would probably follow.

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<sup>623</sup>Focus Group, 1 July 2009.

**Sections 4.8.1 to 4.8.6 are not available in the digital version of this thesis**



#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The acceptance of aspects of Caribbean cultural practices within CSMBC is best described as minimal when assessed in terms of the affirmation it is given in the worship experience of the church. Rejected outright, as second class in comparison to English cultural practices is Patois, Caribbean accents, the family in its various forms and music, particularly reggae, whilst attitudes pertaining to dress and hair appear to be learned behaviours, somewhat reminiscent of evangelical missionary teachings, which people feel under continued pressure to conform to. Accepted is Jamaican food, proverbs, sayings and funeral rites, whilst in the area of leadership and the positioning of women, given the pastors final comment, it appears to be supported more as ‘lip service’ rather than outright acceptance, as I had previously presumed from the presenting picture.

Yet through it all despite the pronouncements of rejection, even the most ardent supporter of doing things ‘properly’, reverted easily to their mother tongue - Patois - when wanting to clarify a point, express anger, or make a joke or share an experience. They ultimately expressed an acceptance of Caribbean cultural practices, such as reggae music, common-law relationships, a concern for single mothers, and to a limited degree, ancestors, all of which were frowned upon by the church. So, Caribbean culture has not been forgotten, it continues to influence the life of middle class Caribbean Christians, but is submerged during worship, as denial is demanded by the leadership of the church. Why this is and how after nearly two hundred years of Christian experience it continues to be maintained, will be the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND OTHER THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

*A theology that is not somehow reflective of our times,  
our culture, and our current concerns  
- and so contextual - is also a false theology<sup>625</sup>*

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reflects on the issue of culture as experienced publicly and privately by the members of CSMBC, dealing with three major issues, how historically Caribbean cultural values became secondary to that of English cultural values, the role of leadership within that, and how it continues to be maintained through social stratification, before briefly summarising the consequences of a culture denied for the members of CSMBC. It then concludes with a comparative look at perspectives on culture as expressed by both British Caribbean and Caribbean theologians.

#### **5.1 CSMBC One People but Two Cultures**

Bevans, in his book *Models of Contextual Theology* speaks optimistically of the ability of a people who having experienced the denial of their culture during colonial times, in freedom, use it as the prime means by which to develop contextual theologies.<sup>626</sup> However, he warns against thinking too highly of culture, as the danger will be:

a kind of cultural romanticism – of basing one’s theology not upon culture as it is today but on what African theologian John Pobee calls a ‘fossil culture’, a

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<sup>625</sup>Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

<sup>626</sup>Ibid, 25.

culture that did not exist before colonization but that after colonization and contact with the western world does not exist except in some people's romantic fantasies.<sup>627</sup>

This research provides information which indicates that though the controlling power of colonialism no longer directly controls the lives of Caribbean and British Caribbean Christians, they do not as yet possess the freedom with which to contextualise their faith.

Presently there are two cultures vying for attention within CSMBC and now as in colonial times, unfortunately more emphasis is placed on being critical and discouraging of their own cultural practices, rather than in encouraging them.<sup>628</sup> A colonial mentality remains which encourages the rejection of Caribbean culture as a 'second class' culture, in favour of English cultural practices, however, whereas in the past it was the missionary church which demanded their conformity, now it is Caribbean Christians themselves, both Jamaican and British who expect conformity. Little has changed today from that which was experienced by Jamaicans in mainline churches a hundred or so years earlier, which were so controlling that they were content with an obedient minority rather than being concerned about the disenfranchised majority.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>627</sup>Ibid.

<sup>628</sup>There was just one sermon which encouraged cultural expression, preached by a visiting minister on Racial Justice Sunday morning, 14 September 2008. However, there were many which were critical of many aspects of their own culture; Sunday mornings 9 November 2008, and 24 February 2008, Sunday evenings January 13, 11 June 2008, and 13 July 2008.

<sup>629</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 79. Caribbean mainline churches 'attacked concubinage, drumming, dancing the Christmas festival and Sabbath breaking. The establishment was especially strict in respect to marriage and discouraged baptism of illegitimate children. This meant in practice that at least 70 per cent of the population was barred from the church'.

Given the professional status of the majority of the members of the congregation, their educational abilities and attainments, and the confidence possessed by the younger generation, the question has to be asked as to how such a situation of oppression continues. Through the use of Grounded Theory, I was able to determine that the most significant contributor to the rejection of a Caribbean cultural identity were the leaders of CSMBC. However, it would be grossly unfair to lay all the 'blame' solely at their door. They are the products of history, the Enlightenment and missionary thinking which I believe has played, and continues to play a significant role, in that which now remains.

## **5.2 Missionary Leadership and its Role in the Destruction of Native Cultures**

When seeking to understand the role of leadership within the context of the Church, the natural response is to expect that Christian leaders would be educated according to the biblical model for leadership, possessing the following abilities and characteristics, 'The biblical pattern is for him (*or her*) to be the one who trains the body for ministry',<sup>630</sup> or 'Whether appointed as prophets, priests, or kings, they are not to lord it over God's people but to serve them...The role of the leader is to help God's people discover their gifts, find opportunities to develop those gifts and use them for the growth of the body of Christ',<sup>631</sup> and 'The business of leadership is precisely to enable, encourage, and sustain the activity of all members...ministerial leadership is, and finally discipleship'.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup>Eph 4:11-16 SFLB NKJV. Jack Hayford, *Hayford's Bible Handbook* (Nashville Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 705.

<sup>631</sup>Gottfried Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders, Theological Perspectives in Africa* (African Christian Press: Achimota, Ghana, 1990), 9, 12.

<sup>632</sup>Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (SPCK: London, 1989), 235, 241.

However, when the Church took its place on the mission field, during the Enlightenment biblical principles were secondary to Enlightenment beliefs which they had imbibed, and which emphasised the superiority of the West, rather than the superiority of God. The West was considered to be the centre of world events, in all areas, whether scientific, technological or theological. For them, 'there was no attempt to distinguish between religious and cultural supremacy...*(for)*...Just as the West's religion was predestined to be spread around the globe, the West's culture was to be victorious over all others'.<sup>633</sup> Christianity therefore became synonymous with western culture, and consequently missionaries embarked on a course of action which saw the colonizing of not just peoples, but the Christian faith itself.<sup>634</sup>

This position was bolstered by Hegel, who argued that in the history of the world's progress, power was moving, 'from 'childhood' in China...to 'adulthood' in Western Europe. Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning'.<sup>635</sup> In this new world order many believed that the majority of people in the non-western world lacked a culture of their own,<sup>636</sup> and were simply waiting for the West to fill the vacuum which existed in their lives. Christian mission which began in the nineteenth century, developed with this understanding in mind, well into the twentieth century, resulting in actions whereby, 'culture was taken for granted as a single, universal normative criterion, and Christianity in its European, Latin

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<sup>633</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 291.

<sup>634</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>635</sup>*Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>636</sup>*Ibid.*

form was deemed to be the perfection of this culture of humanity. No allowance was made for factors of cultural diversity in doctrinal or ritual controversy'.<sup>637</sup>

The Western church as a consequence believed itself to not just be culturally superior to those whom their governments had colonised, but possessors of the perfect culture, ordained by God to use it to civilise the heathen. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*, argues that they undertook this task, 'blind to their own ethnocentrism...They were, therefore, predisposed not to appreciate the cultures of the people to whom they went...developing them according to Western standards and suppositions',<sup>638</sup> and as a consequence the enslaved were treated as ignorant children,<sup>639</sup> needing to be 'trained', rather than able to be trusted with responsibility.

This resulted in the developing of a people who not only adopted the behaviours which they had seen and heard, but ultimately became imitators of missionaries, their practices, beliefs and culture,<sup>640</sup> becoming a people who according to Zairian theologian Oscar Bimwenyi, 'Pray to God with a liturgy that is not theirs...live according to a morality which is not the conversion of their own previous morality...are ruled by a Canon Law which is not a law

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<sup>637</sup>Ed James, A Scherer, and Stephen B Bevans, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 56.

<sup>638</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 294.

<sup>639</sup>Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 243. Henry Turner, a Pentecostal Spirit Filled missionary and a product of the Azusa Street Mission, wrote to supporters at home regarding Africans in South Africa stating that, 'readers should never forget 'that the natives are only, after all, 'grown-up children' and require much training and instruction, even after they become Christians'.

<sup>640</sup>Bengt Sundkler, 'The Christian Ministry in Africa', in John W De Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis: A South African Perspective* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1987), 22-3. 'If the Westerner largely represented the minister to be an efficient administrator, or an ordained school inspector or an excellent and painstaking accountant, or an interested master-builder and architect, or again, an impressive combination of mechanic and preacher, these patterns will influence his younger African colleagues and to some extent determine their conception of the ministry'.

born from the conversion to Christ of social and juridical realities inherent in the universe to which they belong'.<sup>641</sup>

As they displayed their faith out of this new adopted culture, their own culture became increasingly displaced, and seemingly irrelevant. This position was further solidified through the theological education which was offered to them, through Seminaries and Bible Colleges whose curriculum was as previously seen in Jamaica, developed solely in the West, and administered by Western academics and theologians. These institutions became, and have in many instances continued to be a vital link in the maintenance of a Western theological worldview in once colonised nations.<sup>642</sup> They are possessed of an inability to speak to the needs of the present generation of 'native' students and therefore continue to be the 'enemy within' as they maintain a Eurocentric theological status quo,<sup>643</sup> which according to William Burrows, is the main hindrance to the developing of a contextualised local theology.<sup>644</sup>

In conclusion then, the West during the Enlightenment created a situation which left colonised peoples believing that their own culture was at best second class, and at its very worst, of no value at all, when placed in the shadow of western culture. They came to believe that the culture of the West, and the culture of the coloniser in particular, was superior to

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<sup>641</sup>James, Scherer and Bevans, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3*, 57.

<sup>642</sup>Howard Gregory, ed., *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead* (Kingston: Canoe Press, University of the West Indies, 1995), xiv-xv.

<sup>643</sup>Jagessar and Reddie, *Postcolonial Black British Theology*, 43. '(David) Muir suggests that while a few theological colleges were having short courses on 'racism awareness', and even flirting with titles like 'liberation' or 'Black Theology', the majority remained culturally insular and theologically Eurocentric'.

<sup>644</sup>William R Burrows, *New Ministries: The Global Context* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 24. It is, 'One of the key factors that will help or hinder the process of a local church's coming to a self-conscious, mature independence. It is our argument that the clergyman model of ordained ministry may well be a negative influence, perhaps the major way in which cultural imperialism remains alive in the church'.

their own and therefore to be privileged as the only true conveyor of the Christian faith. Such views, as was seen in my field report, persist within Caribbean Christianity to the present day, and much of it is encouraged by the minister, the leadership team and the elders. How this is expressed in the life of the church I will now examine and critically reflect upon.

### **5.3 Leadership Privileging English Cultural Values within CSMBC**

My research demonstrated quite vividly the views of a people who have inherited the missionary imperative first vocalized nearly two centuries ago, continuing to believe that their culture is second class, and that English cultural values are to be privileged. Independence and a life now lived in the freedom of the West, England, has not shaken their resolve, and the question I asked was why?

Richard Niebuhr when speaking of culture stated that, ‘culture cannot be maintained unless men devote a large part of their efforts to the work of conservation’.<sup>645</sup> The work undertaken by the Church and British Government just prior to, and following Emancipation was clearly seen to have been fairly intense with a great deal of effort made to change a significant minority into ‘British’ citizens. In two generations the work was done, however African Jamaicans did not just adopt English cultural values, but the process created in them, a transference of what I term their ‘spiritual compasses’.

What I mean by this is that whereas the purpose of a compass is to show the direction of magnetic north and identify bearings from it, one’s spiritual compass shows the direction to

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<sup>645</sup>Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 38.

Jesus Christ, and how to find him. Unfortunately for Caribbean Christians the ‘Word of God’ presented in the King James Bible was according to Sugirtharajah not designed to be used as a means for spiritual growth, but as tool for the expansion of the Empire.<sup>646</sup> He argues that in its creation and purposes it ‘came to be seen as the quintessence of Englishness, and as a measure of human character’.<sup>647</sup> It was this text which was then used not only to convey interpreted Biblical truths, but as ‘a disguise for the moral improvement of the natives’<sup>648</sup> and to ‘introduce values such as law and order, and obedience’.<sup>649</sup>

This theory seems plausible and goes some way to explaining why all members of the focus groups could share scriptural texts used within their families to maintain order, but why in most instances those very texts were often misquoted or taken out of context by parents who knew no better. Such interpretations were perhaps never their own, but rather texts designed to engender obedience and conformity by missionaries, in a people who though outnumbering their captors, learnt to trust, believe and obey God’s servant, the minister, hence the popularity of the Romans 13 text,<sup>650</sup> which though a text defining secular leadership, has been and continues to be used, in the Black Church primarily to demand obedience to spiritual leaders.

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<sup>646</sup>R S Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 67.

<sup>647</sup>R S Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 135.

<sup>648</sup>Ibid, 146.

<sup>649</sup>Ibid, 149.

<sup>650</sup>Rom 13:1-2. SFLB NKJV. ‘Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves’.

Such was the forcefulness of colonialism that it used all the means available to it, to ‘attack’ those who were once enslaved, in order to maintain obedience and conformity to the Empire. A Jamaican middle class was the aim, and the achievement, but the by-product was the development of a people who unconsciously transferred their allegiance from one master, the God of the Bible, to a new earthly master, the missionaries and those who came in the same guise, English people.<sup>651</sup> Each generation afterwards then adopted this new means by which they could find spiritual acceptance by God and social and political acceptance by the British regime who ruled over them, which would then lead to their salvation. They imitated white people, adopted many significant aspects of their culture as their own, and privileged it above their own, which in and of itself no longer had any social or spiritual value. They had a new spiritual compass, a new God to worship, and the establishing of their faith became their goal.

Over the years with this new spiritual compass in place successive generations of Caribbean Christians have reinterpreted how the Christian faith should be expressed culturally in their own context, particularly when at worship. At its most basic level it changed the way they spoke and interpreted their own identity as Caribbean people, for example using the Standard English lexicon in which ‘Black’ for them is now a term associated with and used to describe

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<sup>651</sup>Why English people? Primarily because as stated in the second chapter it was the English education system, English State Church – Anglicanism, English cultural practices, and religious practices which were used as the base on which Jamaican society was to be formed. Other nations within Britain were themselves at that time merely spectators as they themselves were subject to English disciplinary actions, whether that was the enslavement of the Irish and Scottish dissenters, or the transportation of criminals to Australia. One adherent to Christianity in Jamaica even went as far as to state, that he chose to follow a Western missionary as the means by which to become a Christian because the missionary ‘was just like his portrait and all the paintings we have of Jesus...the very innocence of his face...That was the only gospel that was preached that morning’. Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*, 99.

anything bad, whilst 'white' is used to describe those things which are good, positive, affirming and beneficial.<sup>652</sup>

According to Fanon such a response was not atypical of missionary church congregations in which, 'The Church in the colonies (*was*) the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know in this matter many are called but few are chosen'.<sup>653</sup> So, that which now exists at CSMBC are firstly a generation of people who having grown up with this compass written on their 'hearts', are now in the majority, they are the elders, who supported by their families and friends, continue to not only enforce but spread this belief system to a younger generation, conforming in order to fit in.

The elders are a unique group of people who were born and raised in colonial times, between Emancipation and Independence arriving at CSMBC in the 1960s. The then minister, Christopher Reeves acknowledged that they needed a new minister who would enable them to worship God in ways which they were accustomed.<sup>654</sup> When he left, many of the white members left also, so that his replacement William Stephens was able to, in a very supportive

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<sup>652</sup>Fryer, *Staying Power*, 135. 'Blackness...stood for death, mourning, baseness, evil, sin and danger. It was the colour of bad magic, melancholy, and the nethermost pit of hell. People spoke of black arts, blackmail, and the Black death. The devil himself was black. So were poison, mourning, sorrow, and forsaken love. When bad people were ostracized, they were blacklisted: when they were punished, their names were entered into a black book; When they were executed, a black flag was hoisted...white, on the other hand, was the colour of purity, virginity, innocence, good magic, flags of truce, harmless lies, and perfect human beauty'.

<sup>653</sup>Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 32.

<sup>654</sup>Ron Collett, Oral History Project, 27 March 2006.

way, encourage them to contribute their cultural perspective to the worship experience of CSMBC.<sup>655</sup>

This they did until their idea of church conflicted with his, which resulted in his leaving after just two years, being replaced by Francis Cromwell who because of his ministry style went one step further than his predecessors, allowing them to totally reorganise the church in ways which suited them best. Each change resulted in a people who increasingly sought to, 'find the type of worship they enjoyed and which provided them with spiritual strength and stability...Quite naturally, the worship experience took the form of the culture from which they came'.<sup>656</sup>

They were able to 'return' to the colonial church, determined then to maintain the faith as they had learnt it, which as stated in the focus groups, meant the privileging of English cultural practices, which they defined as doing things 'properly'.<sup>657</sup> Once again it was a worship experience which was more concerned with excluding those who could not easily reflect 'Englishness' and English cultural values as they understood them. The casualties were many, including Pastor Stephens, the most successful pastor in post-war times, because he would not enforce 'learned' colonial rules about the correct dress style for women.

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<sup>655</sup>Mr Alan Lonsdale, Oral History Project, 24 July 2006, 2. Of William Stephens' time at CSMBC he stated, 'He let them have their heads and the services became more and more suited to them'.

<sup>656</sup>Len Anglin, 'The Interaction between Culture and Worship', in Edwards, *Let's Praise Him Again*, 96.

<sup>657</sup>Focus Group 6, 10 June 2009.

The elders who having once been the young pioneers of a new migrant congregation, are now the senior citizens and holders of unelected power, and the fact that they now make up at least two thirds of the membership, makes them a very powerful grouping with the power to influence decision-making in the church, and this they do in order to maintain the church which was handed down to them and through which their salvation will one day come.

Written on their hearts are prohibitive rules about marriage, co-habiting, music, language, the role of women, and personal appearance including dress and hair. Ironically, many though knowing the 'rules', did not themselves originate from amongst the Caribbean middle classes, and so lack the social graces with which to successfully demonstrate the English cultural values which they are seeking now to enforce. They therefore appear to others around them as flawed in their own abilities, as they try to speak English, using poor grammar, sentencing structures, and words which could only have been made up as a consequence of listening to others, rather than through having a thorough understanding of it themselves.

Yet the elders are not the only ones who possess this spiritual compass, the maintenance of Caribbean cultural exclusion, and therefore the privileging of English cultural practices and whiteness is a two-pronged attack, supported by the deacons, led by the minister. This new and younger British Caribbean leadership gained its spiritual compass in one of two ways, either from their parents, the elders, or from interaction in the wider British society. Pastor Brown is a good example, trained as a minister at a Baptist Bible College, which encouraged

congregation-based learning,<sup>658</sup> which he undertook within CSMBC. He is therefore a pastor who has no experience of ministry outside of his own church context, learning mostly from his observations of previous and visiting ministers to CSMBC, who in the main have encouraged the status quo.

When I had the opportunity to challenge various members of the Diaconate and the minister himself, about the privileging of English cultural values and the exclusion of Caribbean culture, I received many similar comments which can be summarised as follows, ‘We are in England now’, ‘I raised that subject and nearly got lynched’, and ‘you have to choose your battles’.<sup>659</sup> Yet having made such a firm stance, their spiritual compass appears not to be as fixed as those of the elders. I say this because when the issue of personal appearance, and how people dress to attend church, particularly for baptisms, dedications, weddings and funerals, was raised, Pastor Brown, despite the enormous opposition which he received from church members, chose instead to go against their demand that he give clear and direct guidance to potential attendees, choosing instead to do nothing. He chose to continue to allow all visitors to ‘come as they are’, and therefore it can be argued that he chose to adhere to modern British cultural expectations, rather than old colonial ones. Perhaps their spiritual compasses are not as fixed as the generation above them.

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<sup>658</sup>Congregation-based learning means that the trainee minister is allowed to remain in his or her local congregation, more than likely the one who encouraged them to enter into ministerial training. This therefore limits their education in terms of ministerial training to a specific congregation and a specific people and no other. This can depending on the congregation be either good or bad.

<sup>659</sup>Focus Group, 1 July 2009.

Yet, as significant as these experiences have been in demonstrating the privileging of English cultural practices, it is in the way in which this privileging has taken on almost biblical proportions which is most intriguing. They have a clear understanding that the theological identity of Black people is best expressed through whiteness, and in the early days of their time at CSMBC they undertook deceptive practices in order to maintain this. There is a saying within the Jamaican community, which has prevailed since the days of enslavement, ‘play fool to catch wise’.<sup>660</sup> What this means is that whatever the agenda of past pastors, the elders in particular had their own agenda which they were masters at putting into place, by deception if necessary. The agenda was to privilege English cultural values and English people, and so systems were put in place by which this could be seen to be done. My research uncovered the buying of choir robes to enable a visible difference to be seen between the chosen and those who were not.<sup>661</sup> Once such foundations had been established they turned their attention to uplifting Englishness and reinforcing English cultural practices.

There is a belief and a view which says that in the mind of every Black person who has ever been ‘colonized’ is the thought that ‘I do not simply live my life thinking, what shall I do today, but I live my life thinking how will white people interpret what I shall do today? I therefore live my life with them in mind, still influencing and unconsciously controlling all

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<sup>660</sup>To ‘play fool to catch wise’ is a term used within the Caribbean community, understood by all to have originated in the days of enslavement. The enslaved would behave one way in public, in front of the master, but operate quite another agenda right ‘under their noses’ as it were. The master simply took their public face as their real intent. The enslaved used the term therefore to signify how much smarter they were than their ‘masters’ gave them credit for.

<sup>661</sup>Of that time Pastor Stanley Woods reported it in his Oral History interview as, ‘We had an ordinary choir, yes...They asked about uniforms, which I haven’t been into and gowns, so we talked about it and we came to [an] understanding of “OK go ahead”, so they for the first time had gowns...they paid for it themselves’. Pastor Stanley Woods, Oral History Project, 4 August 2006, 5.

my actions'.<sup>662</sup> Those who privilege English cultural values seem to demonstrate similar beliefs about spiritual things, for in almost every Caribbean Christian home could at one time be found a picture of a blue-eyed, brown haired Jesus Christ next to a plaque containing the following text, 'Christ is the head of this house. The unseen guest at every meal. The silent listener to every conversation'. There is a belief that God is always present, and for the members of CSMBC God is represented in the form of a white person, the English.

The most effective way they therefore sought to privilege English cultural practices was in terms of their language. They have sought to use scriptural language and particularly parables as a means of privileging English culture and by association, white people. Yes, the elders are a generation who learnt to read mostly by reading the Bible, but the language they use sounds almost biblical, as members speak of doing things properly in case 'they' come, which sounds not unlike such texts as Luke 12:35-48 and 19:11-27 which speaks of being faithful until the master returns. When I actually asked group members who 'they' were, I was informed that it was the wider society, and more particularly those outside of their own community, those in the majority white community, the English.<sup>663</sup>

Members often made such comments as, 'We have to correct them in case when they go out, *they* say, they learnt it at church', and 'We must speak properly in case *they* come and so *they* can understand' and 'it's only right to dress properly in case *they* come'. 'They' are the unseen guest at every service. So, to a community of Caribbean Christians English cultural

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<sup>662</sup>Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education: Urban Mission Conference, Chicago, 1991.

<sup>663</sup>Focus Group 1, 6 May 2009.

values and English people continue to hold power, and through its maintenance they hope to receive their salvation.

British Caribbean Christians suffer from what the author W. E. B. DuBois called ‘double-consciousness’,<sup>664</sup> seeing themselves as tasked to both maintain and protect that which the master has placed into their hands, until the master returns, which is only possible by being faithful to that which the master, the English, have taught them. Yet the ‘English’ can be anyone from within English society, including church members, visiting ministers and members of the BUGB which ultimately confirms to them that they have been recognised as possessing the right credentials with which to be considered equal partners. Privileging whiteness therefore comes with the expectation that despite CSMBC now being a Black majority congregation, white people will one day return and take their rightful place as leaders. In this they are not atypical of the majority of Baptist Black-led congregations around them, Hamstead Road and New Aston Baptist Churches to name but two. In both instances members have in the past demanded that they have a white minister, he or she being the only acceptable face of leadership for the church.

This desire to establish a truly English church, is however an unrealistic position to hold, and one which is unlikely to happen, given that modern day English Christianity bears little resemblance to its missionary predecessors, in that they tend to be more ‘laid back’, and as

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<sup>664</sup>W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903. ‘It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity’. [article on-line]; Available from [www.bartleby.com/114/1.html](http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html) [Accessed on 24/03/11].

Joel Edwards suggests are, unlike their Caribbean counterparts, ‘busy getting on with what they were doing rather than defining what they should not be doing’.<sup>665</sup> Yet in the world which Caribbean Christians have created, it is a day which will come, the pastor and elders having the delegated responsibility until that time, to oversee the effective enforcement of that which has been given to them by the master. They must keep their compasses alert, and where and when necessary, correct errors which direct the people away from what they perceive to be English cultural values, encouraging them to listen to their minister who is ‘always right’, and leaders who too stand in the stead of the master.

I believe that these realities explain the conflicted position which many in the final focus group with Pastor Brown found themselves in. Whilst they may have come to believe in the merits of giving equal honour to their own culture, given to them by God, their past and present experiences in church have led them to believe that to honour and to privilege Englishness is a theological imperative ordained by God, confirmed by their elders and the ministry team. To disobey is to go against a scriptural imperative, the earthly consequences of which will be the focus of the next discussion.

#### **5.4 The Maintenance of Cultural Exclusion through Social Stratification**

I could write of resultant anger, jealousy and feuding, or the frequent disagreements caused by frustration and resentment as leadership seeks to privilege English cultural values. However, though significant, they are in fact only symptoms of a greater obstacle which encumbers the congregation, that of a people having their lives ordered by a system of social

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<sup>665</sup>Edwards, *Lord, Make us One*, 25.

stratification. Social stratification is a way of being which was first defined by Durkheim, who according to sociologist John Scott, ‘saw the conscience collective of a society as defining a ‘social classification’, a public status hierarchy that derives from the valuation of social positions and activities, that defines people’s legitimate ambitions and aspirations, and that makes them content to pursue only those goals that are held out to them by the values of their society’.<sup>666</sup> A more recent and workable definition is that given by T B Bottomore who describes social stratification as, ‘Any hierarchical ordering of social groups or strata in a society...its principal forms being those of caste, estate, social class, and status group’.<sup>667</sup> As a theory it fell out of favour in the late 60s and early 70s, some sociologists believing that such a ‘phenomenon does not exist’.<sup>668</sup> However, it has since found renewed purpose, and though to some it remains controversial, others see it as a significant contributor to the discipline of sociology.

The leadership of CSMBC maintains Caribbean cultural exclusion, and advances the ‘worship’ of English cultural values, through the imposition of one specific type of social stratification, which Max Weber called status groups. Sociologist Bryan Turner states that the term status originated in, ‘The Latin for ‘standing’ and relates simply to one’s position in society’, or ‘The rights and obligations related to a position in society’.<sup>669</sup> That position turns into, ‘A system of “estates”, whereby a society (particularly a feudal system) is divided by legal, social and cultural privileges which generate separate distinct, caste-like

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<sup>666</sup>John Scott, *Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, Status and Command* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>667</sup>T B Bottomore, *Classes in Modern Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), 15.

<sup>668</sup>Lloyd A Fallers, *Inequality: Social Stratification Reconsidered* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 3.

<sup>669</sup>Bryan S Turner, *Status* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), 2.

groups...protected by custom, religion and law'.<sup>670</sup> They are, 'dependent crucially upon the maintenance of a lifestyle that is exclusive and directed towards the preservation of certain cultural monopolies.

Status groups seek to 'reproduce themselves...in order to prevent the social mobility of outsiders and to emphasize their exclusiveness and particularism'.<sup>671</sup> Rex and Tomlinson similarly state that they allow 'distinctions (*to be*) made between people, who as a result of these distinctions, live within relatively distinct cultures and societies, between which mobility is restricted'.<sup>672</sup> Ultimately then, status groups by their very nature are divisive groups, privileging some, at the expense of others. Within the congregation of CSMBC those who have kept what has been committed to them by the missionaries, though they will not get their reward until the master returns, have in this system found themselves a means by which they can get some of that reward now.

Status within CSMBC is determined purely on the grounds of cultural expression, the ability of members to demonstrate the characteristics of conformity to English cultural practices be that through language or accent, worship style or dress. Length of Christian service is of no consequence amongst leaders who are looking for those able to demonstrate an acceptable accent, to an acceptable standard, enabling them therefore to be deemed worthy of

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<sup>670</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>671</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>672</sup>John Rex and Sally Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: A Class Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 3.

involvement in all areas of the church, the most 'prestigious' of which being the Sunday morning worship service.

Others, who on the other hand express themselves out of what is assessed to be aspects of a Caribbean cultural value system, particularly language, accent, family lifestyle and music, are deemed to be of lower status, and therefore to be restricted in their involvement in the church as a consequence. Such members are 'relegated' to oversight and participation in the Sunday evening worship service, and the informal groups which they themselves may organise within the church. So, for example, though there are no official house groups within the church at present, unofficial ones are known to exist, established by the 'excluded' who gather together in homes to pray and worship God.

In this hierarchical system those who are privileged can do no wrong, and therefore can and do at times demonstrate disrespectful attitudes and responses to those in the 'lesser' group. They are impervious to correction, but if they find themselves challenged, they are always supported by members of their status group. At the top of the 'tree' as it were, is the minister, to be obeyed and honoured, and believed by the 'lesser' group to be only removable by God from whom it is also believed he takes his instructions.<sup>673</sup> He is then supported by the elected deacons, and though this circle of the included may appear small in such a sizeable church, the group is able to rely without question on their wider circle of supporters, family and friends, who by the privilege of association have become a part of the superior status group.

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<sup>673</sup>Focus Group 3, 20 May 2009. Sermons preached Sunday 7 September 2008, 'You cannot come against God's anointed. I would even go as far as to say it is dangerous to criticize God's leaders, praise God'. Sermon preached Sunday 25 May 2008, 'We must maintain unity and strengthen each other. We must obey our leader'.

Though the elders have been instrumental in recreating and upholding the requirements for these status groups, many now, because of their accents or limited language skills, are slowly being replaced by a British Caribbean generation, and so they now find themselves, if they lack the necessary family support, being demoted and relegated to the ‘excluded’ group.

So how are these status groups maintained? When for example, potential members have completed baptismal and/or membership classes and then formally request to become members, visitation team members undertake their vetting. The visitation teams’ role appears as much to be about determining their cultural ‘pedigree’ as it is about assessing their level of commitment to Christ, and their understanding of the role and responsibilities of membership. Such is the zeal of visitation members in pursuing the ‘truth’ that they have been known to make acute observations of not just the candidate, but the décor of the home, and family structures as they are known.<sup>674</sup> New members are given their position within the system primarily based on the vetting undertaken by members of the visitation team.

These rules like those concerning cultural conformity and expression are neither written down or visible to the visitor and the non-member, written once again only on the hearts of the members, and whether a person meets the criteria necessary is left – after visiting team members advice - solely to the discretion of the pastor and leaders. They alone determine the level of involvement that members may have within the fellowship, but new members instantly become subject to correction by members of the favoured group, who are constantly on the look-out for those who breach the acceptable cultural rules. My research tells of

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<sup>674</sup>Targeted interview, 15 August 2009.

members who have been allowed to raise objections particularly with respect to other members' language skills and accents as they sought to participate in various aspects of the worship life of the church. This has resulted in the said member either having their project rejected, or being prevented from taking up new ministry positions within the church, forcing them therefore to remain in their allocated group.

However, such is the nature of the enforcement of these rules that once again they are known not just by the church but by the wider community, who in many instances when approaching the church in the pursuit of an enhanced status be it through Baptism or membership, try to keep any such negative information about themselves secret, for fear of becoming one of the excluded. Such is the desire of Caribbean people to want to conform to English culture that one could argue that the Christian imperative to welcome the outcast and the excluded,<sup>675</sup> takes on a lesser meaning when presented by a church which demonstrates little, if any, pastoral care for people who find themselves defined as being in the lesser group.

Members know however that though transferring to the higher status group is difficult, there is one sure way of doing so, and that is through the changing of their Caribbean accent for that of an English one.<sup>676</sup> This is a very common practice within CSMBC, and the reason why Sunday morning worship takes on a very formal structure, as the 'included' seek to present themselves in the best possible light as they stand before the church, confirming why they are a part of the 'included'. However 'mistakes' are frequently made, as many people in

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<sup>675</sup> Matt 25: 35-40. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>676</sup> Focus Group 1, 6 May 2009.

an effort to speak 'Standard English', drop their own relaxed tones, in favour of an accent and speech pattern alien to them and which when spoken by them, appears at times to seem quite foolish. Yet, many would prefer to be looked upon as foolish, but solidifying their positions within the church hierarchy, rather than not be included at all. Such is the importance of these things that members of the focus group had no hesitation in declaring, and affirming with confidence, that even members of the Jamaican cricket team, no matter their popularity, would never be allowed to make a presentation before the members of CSMBC if they had very strong Jamaican accents.

The enforcement of status groups is a policy which is left uncontested within the church, and when I asked for the reasoning behind this, most responded in one of two ways. It was either stated that it is the way things have always been in the Black church, or, because it is understood that the pastor is always right, to go against him would be to go against God, a position totally contrary to their nature as Christians.

White ministers have in the past unknowingly played a significant part in the maintenance and consolidating of this system. William Stephens for example despite there having been no history within the church of choir members wearing robes, agreed that the choir could have robes, thereby enabling them to reinforce their sense of being amongst the privileged, and therefore superior to others. Francis Cromwell on the other hand allowed some members to determine who was acceptable and not acceptable, included and excluded, based on their accent and language, irrespective of their gifts and greater involvement as lay preachers in the wider BUGB. He allowed pastoral leadership to be redefined, away from gifting and

God's leading<sup>677</sup> towards that of popularity and English cultural expression. Mrs Brown commented on this in the field study, stating how members had complained to the pastor about her accent, and the fact that they could not understand her. This resulted in her ministry within the church being curtailed as a result.<sup>678</sup> This fact could not be substantiated, for it is also possible that her crime was that she came from a different island, and this was merely 'inter-island jealousy' - most of the included being Jamaicans - yet whatever the reason the result was the same, she was excluded.

So the notion of being allocated to a specific status group is a very serious matter, which often causes insurmountable tensions and disagreements within the church, as members are constantly competing or seeking to find new ways in which to be 'included' into the most prestigious group. However such a system according to Rex and Tomlinson typically produces these tensions as, 'Each group shows partial resentment of, and partial adjustment to the system so long as it lasts'.<sup>679</sup> There is nevertheless one exception to this rule, the Administrator, Simon appointed by a previous minister.

All who know the rules acknowledge that Simon is not one who is considered by the present leadership team to be 'cultured' enough to be holding such a position, and yet he does. Only he and the pastor hold full time paid positions within the church. He was appointed by a previous minister, to be a part of the pastoral team, and describes his role as that of doing,

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<sup>677</sup> Acts 15: 28. SFLB NKJV. 'It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>678</sup> Focus Group 3, 20 May 2009.

<sup>679</sup> Rex and Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants*, 3.

‘everything the pastor does not do’.<sup>680</sup> He clearly speaks with a British influenced Jamaican accent, and openly demonstrates enthusiasm for Caribbean cultural practices, especially its music. The fact that he has no known qualifications which would make him competent in this position is a source of angst for many members. He has however been in his current position for over twenty years, and though ministers have tried to side-step or remove him, he has managed to ‘beat the system’ in a way which continues to engender much frustration, and annoyance.<sup>681</sup> To the majority however, despite the resentment he receives (which many consider typical of their experiences in the wider world), he has shown the triumph of a strong family connection over entrenched status groups. This serves as a beacon of hope inspiring others to believe that one day they too will prevail and return to an ‘inclusion’ based on Christian maturity and experience alone.

Yet for all its influence within the church, the enforcing of status groups, also impact upon how such Caribbean Christians are perceived by those outside of the church. There is for example, a popular misconception amongst non-Caribbean people that Caribbean peoples living in England are more enthusiastic about their ‘Britishness’ than other communities, preferring to use English and English cultural values.<sup>682</sup> However, the reality for many as my research demonstrates is that as a result of an enforced conformity, the price to be paid if one is to avoid exclusion and being a part of the ‘excluded’, is to demonstrate an allegiance to where the power lies. The church therefore rather than being a cohesive and celebratory

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<sup>680</sup>Deleyan Smith, Oral History Project, 2006.

<sup>681</sup>Pastor Joseph tried to have him removed during his period as Associate minister, but failed.

<sup>682</sup>Bradley, *Believing in Britain*, 176. ‘A report published by the Office for National Statistics in 2004 found...eighty per cent of African-Caribbean’s...identify themselves as British ...the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities found...that there is a weakening of the hold of religion the longer that immigrants have been in Britain and exposed to secular culture.’

group, encourages and rewards the ability to imitate Englishness, thereby giving in many instances, a false understanding of British Caribbean people.

Status groups within CSMBC, like social class in the days of enslavement, continue to enforce Caribbean cultural exclusion and therefore disunity within the congregation, at the expense of enabling spiritual growth. Whilst those interviewed admitted that they had failed to rebel against such policies, they nevertheless felt conflicted, because they either knew, or were related to, people who found themselves being placed in such situations. Yet they stay. Why? They stay because despite its flaws, being a member of CSMBC brings with it status and prestige for them,<sup>683</sup> in belonging to the largest Caribbean majority mainline Church in Birmingham.<sup>684</sup> They stay because the majority know of no other way to be church, and so what takes place within CSMBC seems normal, particularly when compared to other Black majority congregations around them, whose members have no input whatsoever in formulating policies and procedures. They stay because they have not heard God tell them that they can leave, and therefore fear angering him.<sup>685</sup> Ultimately, they stay because they have invested time and effort in becoming members, their families and friends are there, and so it is now the social centre of all their lives.

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<sup>683</sup>Scott, *Stratification and Power*, 31. 'In its purest form this social estimation of honour expresses a conception of the prestige that is associated with a particular style of life. Status then, is a quality of social honour or a lack of it, and is in the main conditioned as well as expressed through a specific style of life'.

<sup>684</sup>It is often considered to be the 'parish' church of the Caribbean community. This was seen most particularly when two girls; Charlene Ellis and Letitia Shakespeare were murdered by gang members in Aston in 2003. Though having no prior relationship with CSMBC the church became the venue for one of the funerals.

<sup>685</sup>Anonymous interview with Mrs Blank, Oral History Project, 14 November 2006, CSMBC, 7. Of her current feelings towards the church she stated that, 'The pastoral team they don't see me...they just drop me...now I could find a fellowship somewhere. I would go, but then again I got to hear from God, because I don't want to hurt god. You hurt him and he can hurt you...Sometimes I feel like crying. I don't say anything'.

There have nevertheless been attempts to change the church. However those seeking to use the Bible to challenge the exclusion of others, have found themselves opposed by a group of people who it may be argued have long since forgotten the purposes of the church, and what membership of the Christian faith-community means. This results in a people whose only understanding of God is as one who has favourites, and supports the exclusion of the many in favour of the few. The focus group seemed to be the first opportunity for many to discuss these issues in a safe and non-judgemental environment, and many seemed to change their positions as a result.<sup>686</sup> Yet they were realistic enough to understand that whilst the world may appreciate the 'saleability of Caribbean culture',<sup>687</sup> their church leadership does not, its spiritual compass having changed through many years of being in positions of privilege.

The use of status groups to enforce Caribbean cultural exclusion ultimately speaks of a church in which a great many more hours are spent in the preservation of English cultural values, than in the worship of God. Status groups are enforced by a leadership which makes its number one priority, the maintaining and the privileging of English culture and Englishness, whilst relegating those who express Caribbean cultural values to a lower status as 'less than'. For a people who have generally found themselves rejected and discriminated against in their dealings with the wider society, it is unfortunate that within the church, amongst their own people, they continue to subject each other to the very same treatment.

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<sup>686</sup>See Covenant document recorded in chapter 4 and the resultant discussion with the Pastor also in chapter 4.

<sup>687</sup>Glyne Griffith, ed., *Caribbean Cultural Identities* (London: Associated University Press, 2001), 51. 'Japan has taken to reggae as well, with young Japanese admirers even adopting the Rastafari hairstyle'.

## 5.5 The Consequences of a Culture Denied

This research has proved that for many Caribbean Christians in Britain there is a lack of understanding of the need for the Christian message to be rooted in their own cultural context, it being the only way to enable it to find its full meaning, but thwarted by the pastor and leadership who command so much respect but who are the obstacle to this. This is exemplified in the comments made by Pastor Brown who when challenged about implementing change, responded by stating that his role was solely, ‘To preach the gospel, and not to get drawn into such issues’.<sup>688</sup> In this respect Mercado’s comments and concerns about Filipinos steeped in Western tradition can so easily be translated and applied to Caribbean Christians. He states that, ‘Although Western theology has its merits, the Filipino who is steeped in Western categories will find himself a prisoner. A knowledge therefore of Filipino and other Oriental categories will help him in theologizing with the people’.<sup>689</sup>

What Pastor Brown failed to understand was the fact that the discussions were themselves, as Gutierrez contends, an act of theologizing,<sup>690</sup> for, ‘It is within human culture that we find God’s revelation – not as a separate supracultural message, but in the very complexity of culture itself, in the warp and woof of human relationships’.<sup>691</sup> Pastor Brown failed to see that culture is a part of the human experience, contributing as much to divine revelation as the preaching of scripture and the ritual practices of the church.

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<sup>688</sup>Focus Group, 1 July 2009.

<sup>689</sup>Leonardo N Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1975), 15.

<sup>690</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, *Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 13. Gutierrez describes theology as a ‘critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God’.

<sup>691</sup>Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 56.

Culture denied therefore means that the church has become deficient in its understanding of the Christian faith, and this is demonstrated perfectly when one contrasts the public and privately held views within CSMBC. The public face of CSMBC privileges British cultural practices through the maintenance of many historical church practices introduced by missionaries in the nineteenth century. It continues to celebrate the organ, little or no clapping, and such liturgical pronouncements as ‘Thanks be to God’, at the conclusion of the reading of scripture. It seeks to encourage its understanding of British cultural practices, with members understanding and accepting unwritten rules, which invite those who speak with a ‘proper’ English accent to participate in the main Sunday morning worship service, whilst relegating those with any kind of Caribbean accent to the evening service.<sup>692</sup> The *Redemption Hymnal* of 1951 and songs written by British artistes are prioritised over every other, including, African American gospel music. Though popular amongst members, all music which indicates any kind of linkage to the Caribbean is never promoted as having anything to offer a people who, either believe or are being led to believe that they are firmly ensconced in British society, and have no need of a ‘second class’ culture.

Private views demonstrated the fact that though rejected by the church, Caribbean cultural practices remain very much the core of who they are, and how they interpret the world around them. Most focus group members were however aware that not only had it been given second class status, but by extension considered second class status by them also. They

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<sup>692</sup>The services held and sermons preached morning and evening during 2008 showed the trend that only those members who demonstrated an English accent to an acceptable level were allowed to preach Sunday mornings. The only two exceptions to this were two visiting ministers – Sunday 2 March, Sunday 31 August – who used Patois as an integral part of their sermons. Sunday evenings as a time set aside for those members who either have a Jamaican accent or speak some words of Patois were recalled in the Focus Group held on 6 May 2009.

confessed that they too had once been happy to see it ‘relegated’ to Sunday evenings, and the Easter Caribbean Night social event, though many demonstrated that there had been attempts to change the system. For example, music which though rejected did not prevent individuals from seeking to bring such songs and tunes, knowing that it was likely to be rejected if publicised before hand. However their final session with Pastor Brown highlighted the continuing struggle within them to renew their minds in this area, demonstrating that beliefs cannot be changed overnight.

Yet, if one looks at Jamaican proverbs and sayings which are such an integral part of Caribbean cultural life, whilst they can seem superficial and frivolous, they often hold deep biblical truths which have been passed on from one generation to the next. For example, the proverb, ‘Tek what you get til you get what you want’ I believe bears a remarkable similarity to the instruction given by Paul in Philippians 4:11, ‘For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content’.<sup>693</sup> Both are saying the same thing – learn to be content with what you have, and yet, the former spoken in Patois to a Caribbean congregation, would I contend bring a greater reality and richness, because of the natural passion and ‘colour’ which is to be found in the language, by those who understand it, whereas it loses something of its power when conveyed to them in their second language - English.

Not only the translation of the English language but the understanding of the English language itself, have been and continues to be problematic. One of the most contentious of all

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<sup>693</sup>SFLB NKJV.

Scriptures is that taken from Proverbs 13:24 ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’.<sup>694</sup> Many families have accepted this as meaning that God sanctions not just discipline but the physical abuse of their children, regardless of age. Little reflection is placed on the fact that it is the same word, rod, used in Psalm 23:4, ‘Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me’.<sup>695</sup> Clearly then as the English language does not provide them with an appropriate translation, there needs to be an emphasis of teaching which encourages them to go to the original language or access appropriate concordance’s and bible dictionaries, with which to enable them to overcome this ignorance. British Caribbean families in their ignorance have chosen instead to adapt the texts according to their own understanding, and now speak of using their God-given authority, to discipline their children.<sup>696</sup> Were it not for the very clear child protection rules operating in England,<sup>697</sup> and the willingness of British Caribbean children to have them enforced, the practice is likely to have continued.

In terms of Caribbean music, it is criticized by many Christians as being dance hall music, and therefore the purveyor of evil itself, and yet to hear the music, or in anticipation of hearing worship brought in this way, one pensioner was encouraged to come to church in her ‘dancing shoes’ as the thought of the music alone brought her joy. This is an indication that whether folks are happy or sad, music and aspects of Caribbean music in particular is a

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<sup>694</sup>SFLB NKJV. This text is often linked with Proverbs 13: 24. ‘He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly’. Their false interpretation is then interpreted as an imperative which must be done by parents who wish to remain obedient to the Scriptures.

<sup>695</sup>SFLB NKJV.

<sup>696</sup>Focus Group 2, 13 May 2009.

<sup>697</sup>‘Under current law it is illegal for a parent to hit a child if it leaves a bruise. However a lighter smack or reasonable chastisement is allowed’. The Daily Mail, 1 August 2009. Available from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1203506> [Accessed on 25/01/12].

means whereby Caribbean people can lift their spirits.<sup>698</sup> Not too dissimilar a view I believe from days gone by when Catholicism was pre-eminent, and it was understood that the gospel could be conveyed not just through the written word, but in other aesthetically pleasing things like music and art.<sup>699</sup> Caribbean and British Caribbean Christians need to develop an appreciation and understanding of diverse Caribbean Arts, as a viable means by which to enhance their worship.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there are presently two cultures vying for attention within CSMBC, and now as in colonial times, unfortunately more emphasis is placed on being critical and discouraging of their own culture, as they choose instead to encourage and privilege English cultural activities.<sup>700</sup> Sometimes this criticism can take on offensive proportions as was seen in the discussions which took place in regards to hair and Caribbean hair in particular which was referred to in the negative, as ‘picky picky’ hair.<sup>701</sup> There is an appreciation in the wider world for the creativity of the Black community as providers of

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<sup>698</sup>Since its introduction into Europe, Caribbean music has influenced other cultures and genres of music, as well as making itself central to the life of other communities. One has only to listen to the music of the Police, a popular band of white English men in England in the late 1970s. They became a global success, their music being influenced by punk, jazz music and reggae. Available from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) [Accessed 29/11/10]. Also, the introduction to the popular British Broadcasting Company’s programme QI is also based on a reggae foundation. Available from [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) [Accessed 29/11/10].

<sup>699</sup>The Reformation introduced and allowed access to the Bible for all Christians and not just the educated. However as a consequence it also caused the destruction of religious imagery, Iconoclasm. Tara Hamling and Richard L Williams, eds., *Art Re-formed: Re-assessing the impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 2.

<sup>700</sup>There was just one sermon which encouraged cultural expression, preached by a visiting minister on Racial Justice Sunday morning, 14 September 2008. However, there were many which were critical of many aspects of their own culture; Sunday mornings 9 November 2008, and 24 February 2008, Sunday evenings January 13, 11 June 2008, and 13 July 2008.

<sup>701</sup>Griffith, *Caribbean Cultural Identities*, 41. ‘Some of the idiomatic commonplaces of Caribbean English: black and ugly, black and stupid, black and ignorant, black and lazy, black and wutless (worthless)...Hair is qualified as bad hair or good hair, hard or soft, tough or light, knotty or straight, and so on. These and many other such terms, and many more linguistically generated concepts persistent in our daily lives, shape the Caribbean identity’.

innovative and pioneering practices in the field of hair care, introducing to the women of other communities various methods of styling their hair, straight, plaited, curled, and extensions or cane rows, and yet within the church little has changed.

Self-loathing permeates every aspect of their being, producing a people who are debilitated by their need to conform to the edicts of CSMBC and the wider Caribbean church community. This is another consequence of the rejection of Caribbean culture, which ultimately prevents an articulate, professional and academically successful people from fulfilling their potential as Christians.

## **5.6 A Critical Review of Caribbean Theological Perspectives**

### **5.6.1 British Caribbean and ‘Caribbean British’ Perspectives**

This review will examine the work of Valentina Alexander, Robert Beckford and Joe Aldred, the three leading British Caribbean and Caribbean theologians working in Britain today. Uniquely, all three have a close relationship with the West Midlands having either, lived, studied in, or used it as the context for their own research. I shall examine how their work regarding the inclusion of British Caribbean Christian identity and culture, relates to my own findings. However, as the people involved in my research, straddle two regions, with origins in the Caribbean as well as the UK, I will also dialogue with resident Caribbean theologians, as to how they have adapted and developed in terms of cultural inclusion since Emancipation.

In her PhD dissertation of 1996, ‘Breaking Every Fetter: to what extent has the Black-led church in Britain developed a theology of liberation?’ Valentina Alexander seeks to answer

the question, has the Black church developed a theology with which to break the fetters of oppression in Britain? Much of her research confirms my findings in terms of the privileging of 'whiteness',<sup>702</sup> and the disabling effect which this has had on the establishing of contextual British Caribbean theologies. She argues that British Caribbean churches have an 'unwillingness to merge the real interests of oppressed Black people...with the theological articulation of the gospel'.<sup>703</sup> However, where our understanding diverge is that she believes that, 'it would not be accurate to restrict the identity of the church to the articulation of its explicit theology'<sup>704</sup> as she believes it to have a predominantly passive radical theological identity, 'one which is manifested through a holistic and contextual liberational spirituality'.<sup>705</sup>

Whilst I respect her work in that she gives considerable insight into forms of opposition which exist in the preventing of the development of a theology of liberation, such as the privileging of whiteness by those in leadership positions, her work cannot speak to the people who were the subject of my research. Alexander in affirming that whilst the people do not demonstrate an active liberation theology, and speaking of them as having developed a 'liberational spirituality which though not visible, has mentally decolonised theology for Caribbean peoples'<sup>706</sup> is I believe going a step too far. In arguing that there is a knowing by experience, even though this knowing fails to produce any action, she challenges the church

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<sup>702</sup>Valentina Alexander, 'Breaking Every Fetter: to what extent has the Black led church in Britain developed a theology of liberation?' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1996), 348. 'Principally the desire to accommodate theological whiteness inhibits the expression of an explicit contextual theology in all five of the denominations explored'. She is here referring not just to colour, but culture also.

<sup>703</sup>Ibid, 349.

<sup>704</sup>Ibid.

<sup>705</sup>Ibid.

<sup>706</sup>Ibid, 346.

to enable its public face to merge with its private views, but then concludes by declaring that as yet the church has not developed a means by which to do so.

Whilst this position may apply to Caribbean Christians with a Pentecostal background, it flies in the face of my experience with members of CSMBC who have not decolonized theology and have in fact embraced colonization fully, to the extent that they see their own cultural identities as flawed, problematic and therefore unacceptable to God. In fact my work goes as far as to contest her assertion that many Caribbean people, both British and Jamaican, are in a position to resist, as she fails to address the fact that much of their cultural oppression is forcefully reinforced by the leadership within churches.

Unlike Alexander I contend that what is now needed amongst Christians in mainline churches is not an active radicalism, but the developing of a contextual theology in which a cultural identity is seen as the prime ingredient. The Covenant completed by members of the focus groups, demonstrates that British Caribbean people can move from passivity to activity once they renew their minds and come to understand the role of culture as the translator of the message of God, and informer of the works of God in their present and past experiences.

Robert Beckford, the most renowned of all British Caribbean theologians to emerge today, admits to having ‘piggy-backed’ on the work of Alexander. He uses it as a foundation stone for his own PhD research which suggests that now that British Caribbean people are free, they should pursue a liberational theology, and as Black Pentecostalism, ‘represent the largest group of African Caribbean Christians and also because Black Pentecostals have been

the most effective African Caribbean Christian tradition in Britain to date',<sup>707</sup> it is the most appropriate vehicle for change.

Whilst I agree with Beckford that there is much potential in Caribbean Pentecostals seeking to develop a theology out of their own faith context, it is for these very same reasons that I believe that it would have only a limited effect on members of CSMBC and other Caribbean Christians in similar mainline churches, whose religious and social histories are different from that of Pentecostals. They do not as he indicates, 'share a common history, theological perspectives and functions'.<sup>708</sup>

Caribbean Pentecostals were a part of the lowest social class in Caribbean society, and this enabled them as a consequence, to develop an increased acceptance of their cultural identity, which their counterparts in mainline churches have not yet done. I believe that Pentecostals have as a result developed a resistance to conformity and assimilation, which is demonstrated by the comments of Beckford's own father, of whom he said, 'My father never 'left' Jamaica despite being in England for over thirty years. I once ventured to ask him why he had made such little effort to settle in England. He responded by saying that it was not that he made no effort, but that he realized that England would never accept him as a Black man'.<sup>709</sup> Unlike Mr Beckford Sr., the Christians of CSMBC left Jamaica behind mentally, many years

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<sup>707</sup>Robert Beckford, 'Towards a Dread Pentecostal Theology: The Context of a viable Political Theology within Black Pentecostal Churches in Britain' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998), 5.

<sup>708</sup>Ibid, 292.

<sup>709</sup>Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain* (London: SPCK, 2000), 14.

before they had left it physically, and so their struggle is now primarily concerned with being included, more so than being accepted.

Beckford speaking out of his context tells of a people who are oppressed, discriminated against, a people who attended comprehensive schools and have often found themselves excluded by society.<sup>710</sup> He therefore positions his theology in oppression as the norm for Caribbean people, liberation then being the goal which is best developed through an Afrocentric world view. He argues that:

In order to counter the harmful effects of European thought, people of African descent must construct an alternative way of thinking, believing and doing. In other words Afrocentricity advocates that the best way of empowering Black people is by developing their own epistemologies for analysis of the social and political world.<sup>711</sup>

He has since gone on to develop a contextual British Caribbean theology which speaks out of this context, going as far as to use British Caribbean culture, its language and icons within the arts, as well as artists to develop a theology of liberation.<sup>712</sup>

Beckford's work is therefore applicable mainly for a certain constituency, those who can clearly identify with the experiences of which he speaks, those who are not only on the periphery of the church, but on the periphery of society; offenders, the unemployed and members of gangs. However, these are not the majority of people whom I have been

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<sup>710</sup>Ibid, 95.

<sup>711</sup>Ibid, 137.

<sup>712</sup>Books later published by Robert Beckford include, *'Jesus Dub'* (London: Routledge, 2006), *'God and the Gangs: An Urban Toolkit for Those Who Won't Be Bought Out, Sold Out or Scared Out'* (London: DLT, 2004), *'God of the Rahtid: Redeeming Rage'* (London: DLT, 2001), *'Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain'* (London: SPCK, 2000), *'Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain'* (London: DLT, 1998).

researching. They are a people for whom, Black culture and their very own blackness is despised, possessing a self-loathing<sup>713</sup> which cannot simply be overcome by declaring an Afrocentric identity as the most appropriate vehicle for personal and community development. Members of CSMBC have in the main succeeded and found educational and economic success, and therefore for them it is not the external world which presents them with their greatest challenge, but the Church, the centre of their social world, which has taught them that to deny their Caribbean cultural identity, is the way to spiritual success.

Their world is different to those who belong to the constituency on whose behalf Beckford speaks so eloquently. In fact their world finds greater resonance to the world experienced by Black South Africans at the height of apartheid, who came to accept the negative identity which had been given to them by their coloniser, exemplified in the comments of one young girl who stated that, 'I was uglified, being an ugly person was part of my identity'.<sup>714</sup> So, Beckford may affirm that 'speaking to God in Creole suggests that God is a Creole speaker too. Hence, Black-talk reflects God's participation in Black existence',<sup>715</sup> but it holds no sway with those who like the members of CSMBC choose instead to dismiss such notions as ignorant and backward thinking, and it cannot simply be overcome by its being articulated in a book most will choose never to read.

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<sup>713</sup>Rex M Nettleford, *Mirror Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (Kingston: LMH Publishing Limited, 1998), iv, xv, xvi, xvii, xxiii, xxv.

<sup>714</sup>Kimberly Richards, Yegan Pillay, Oliver Mazodze, Alexandra Shungudzo Govere, 'The impact of Colonial Culture in apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia on Identity Development', *TRANS Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissen – schaften* 15. Nr. (Mai 2004), 6.

<sup>715</sup>Beckford, *Jesus is Dread*, 144.

After a decade of academic activity, Beckford's methodology for the creation of liberation amongst the Caribbean Christian community has in reality had little or no impact on the peoples of CSMBC, who have chosen either to ignore most, if not all of his work. Yet, they are not a lost cause for according to psychologists, Richards, Mazodze and Shungudzo, internalized oppression such as they have experienced, is not an immutable position, for 'a positive sense of self-esteem can emerge',<sup>716</sup> as was proved in the clear and unambiguous church Covenant which members wrote themselves at the conclusion of the focus groups. I therefore contend that mental emancipation not liberation from external oppression is the primary need of many at this time, being a necessary precondition to political emancipation.

Finally, I turn to the work of Joe Aldred, a Jamaican born theologian speaking into the British situation. In 2005 he published his PhD dissertation under the title, *Respect: Understanding Caribbean British Christianity*. By way of analysing and critiquing his theological perspective, I believe that I must first refer to his past and present experiences, as they are significant factors and reasons why I will contest his findings and belief that he has at last developed a truly contextual Caribbean British theology which is relevant for the whole Caribbean community.

Joe Aldred spent his formative years in the Pentecostal Church, growing up in the very 'bosom' of colonialism before moving to England in 1969 at the age of 15. He brought with him the 'colonial baggage' typical of his generation, and it would therefore not be unfair to state that like many Jamaican people raised in this way, he too was seeking acceptance by the

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<sup>716</sup>Richards, 'The impact of Colonial Culture', 6.

‘mother country’, respected English cultural values and at the same time had imbibed feelings of inadequacy when faced with white ‘superiority’, hopeful that through conformity and assimilation, equality would be his reward.

This is the Joe Aldred who has written *Respect*, and positions himself through his book as a Caribbean British Christian, rather than as one of the now emerging Black British or British Caribbean theologians. In so doing he says that his main influence is the Caribbean and therefore positions himself in his past, a past which as I have demonstrated in my research has colonized the minds of many Jamaican Christians to the extent that they naturally privilege English cultural values. Aldred, is in fact an example to all, of one of the most successful ‘victims’ of colonisation, who having imbibed the colonial mantra takes it to its full potential in his book *Respect*, showing that he has assimilated to such an extent that the ‘world’ which he describes, bears no resemblance to the world in which the majority of Caribbean people in Britain exist today.

Joe Aldred studied theology outside of his cultural and theological context, as an external student at St. John’s Anglican College in Nottingham. Given his colonial agenda of gratitude, it is therefore not surprising that he chooses to proudly declare to the wider world which has given him increasing support and opportunities over the years, that Caribbean British Christians are ‘not held prisoner by their past, neither do they labour under the burden of inferiority, or lack of identity...the oppressed is not their defining identity’,<sup>717</sup> and that, ‘they insist on a self-identity as free people in God and that such freedom extends to their human

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<sup>717</sup>Aldred, *Respect*, 164.

relationships...It is a freedom that begins conceptually and spiritually in the mind and extends outwards to the rest of life'.<sup>718</sup>

Aldred in his research seeks to add to the world which Alexander defines, in that where as she spoke of the incompleteness in the developing of a Caribbean theology, he speaks now of being in a position of near completeness, just seven years after her research was concluded. Aldred in so doing is speaking of a world unfamiliar to the majority of Caribbean people in Britain, seeking to apply a theological perspective, which if it exists can only be applied to the few, and not to the majority. He is referring only to those who like him have achieved the colonial dream, found acceptance by some, and therefore considers himself to have 'succeeded' in Britain. However, he is now seeking to reach the next and final level which he defines as, 'a paradigm of "Incarnation"...a theology of realized liberty rather than one in search of it'.<sup>719</sup> What the next level may be for others I cannot say, however the next level for Aldred in the historical understanding of the British social order can only mean achieving greater status, a higher social class and thereby finally being considered a full and equal partner by all levels of society and not just a few.

Aldred clearly seeks to develop an explicit theology which speaks of Incarnation, consigning old paradigms such as the Exodus to history, being as he believes limited and redundant.<sup>720</sup>

For this he has received much praise, and yet as recently as 2006, a year after publishing

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<sup>718</sup>Ibid.

<sup>719</sup>Ibid.

<sup>720</sup>Ibid. 'Liberation and exodus bespeaks a negativity that if left unanswered condemns a people to a life of opposition and reaction. It is time to be defined more in terms of reaching the Promised Land than escaping Egypt...Exodus or liberation from oppression then has been set aside as an overarching or paradigmatic theme and in its place comes a paradigm of "Incarnation"'.

*Respect*, he uses the very same Exodus paradigm, which he condemned as being ‘limited’, as the means by which to explain the past suffering, including the delayed mental and emotional developmental experience of Caribbean people in Britain.<sup>721</sup> Clearly it is not as limited as he had previously claimed.

His ‘Caribbean British’ theological perspective, only vaguely reflects the world and experiences described by Alexander, and Beckford, and bears little if any resemblance to the world which I have discovered in my research. He has developed and defined a contextual theology which seeks to dismiss the past, as being too distant and irrelevant to be effective, affirming only the present, as all that matters. His reality which ignores much of the past, and sanitises the present, seems to be his goal, enabling him to perhaps demonstrate to those in the world in which he now finds himself that he is a worthy member, with no ‘hang-ups’ or ‘chips on his shoulders’, unlike so many other Caribbean people in Britain, were believed to have possessed in the past.

Yet the world which Aldred portrays is a world unfamiliar to the majority, particularly the members of CSMBC who in reality are the most likely to be included in his world. They are noticeably ‘successful’ and occupy many professional roles in all strata’s of British society, yet in ignoring their history and deeming their past and present experiences irrelevant, I believe prevents him from speaking to their situation, and cannot therefore speak for them.

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<sup>721</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 2006. 21. ‘Because of old age and so forth that it was important that somehow we capture some of their aspirations for what they feel that their sweat and blood and tears and embarrassment and suffering racism and being told “don’t come here” and all the rest of that were they feel actually you can now build on this and go to the promised land over there. So I think that this project has it in it, the seeds of a very important piece of work’.

To suggest to them that everything is well because they have succeeded professionally in Britain, would receive little affirmation in comparison to the greater ill which they suffer from, in so far as what they need to be addressed are not the acts of omission committed against them, but the ongoing inherited problems which continue to be created amongst them.

### 5.6.2 Caribbean Perspectives

Leading theologians and historians in the Caribbean region have for many years acknowledged that there is a need to decolonize their theologies and make it their own.<sup>722</sup>

The work of such theologians as Idris Hamid, and Winston Persaud,<sup>723</sup> have long spoken to the need to decolonize theology, particularly amongst middle class Caribbean Christians for whom according to Hamid:

The tragedy of colonization and the theology which inspired it is that for all this and because of all this Caribbean man, oriented to Western values, has become a caricature. Few peoples of the world have become so uncreative, unoriginal, unproductive and imitative as the peoples of this area, nowhere is this barrenness of thought and copy-cat mentality so depressingly evident than among the Christians of the Caribbean.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>722</sup>Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology*, 27. 'One of the great challenges facing black people in Jamaica (*and the diaspora*) is to refuse to live in bondage to their world, as they are free to be creative interpreters of their world'. Knight, *The Caribbean*, 276. 'West Indian elites succumbed to the alien notions of European Social Darwinism, dissipating their energies in commercial pursuits and social climbing. To excel according to the criterion of the mother country's culture became the ultimate achievement'.

Philip Potter (Caribbean born, former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches) quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 82. 'What opportunity had they to think about the faith in their own way? If they hadn't been "good boys" they would never have become church leaders... We have seldom been allowed to think for ourselves. For long enough we have put up with a kind of theological imperialism. I call this racism. Unless we non-Westerners stick rigidly to the precise formulae of Western scholasticism, we are not considered theologians, or bright enough to communicate the Gospel'.

<sup>723</sup>Both authors are from the Southern Caribbean region, and the Presbyterian Church.

<sup>724</sup>Hamid, *Troubling the Waters*, 61.

His views are reinforced by Persaud who when speaking of the historical consequences of colonialism, could just as well be speaking of present day Christians within CSMBC. Of it he said:

It is the essence of Colonialism, and indeed of most forms of rule of the many by the few, that the few impose on the many a spiritual yoke which comes to govern their day-to-day actions, more constantly and pervasively, if less obtrusively, than the physical force which lies in the background. Nowhere did this happen more completely than in the Caribbean. Whole societies were persuaded to imitate a way of life that was quite unfamiliar to them, one they had little hope of attaining and not in itself particularly estimable; what was more serious, they came to despise themselves and their own way of life.<sup>725</sup>

One of the most significant consultations in recent times has been ‘The Consultation on Theological Education in the Caribbean’ undertaken in January 1993, which acknowledged that cultural inclusion needed to be foundational if decolonisation was to happen, primarily in Jamaica. Its findings were published in 1995, under the title ‘*Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*’.<sup>726</sup> Present at the consultation were theologians from the academy, the church and the community, who were agreed that despite the leadership of the church having since Independence been transferred into the hands of native leaders, it nevertheless ‘has not brought an automatic indigenous understanding and expression of ministry, but rather, the perpetuation of inherited colonial models’.<sup>727</sup> Highlighted as central to this impasse was the Churches’ disregard for culture, which now needed to be placed at the centre of any agenda for contextualization.

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<sup>725</sup>Winston D Persaud, *The Theology of the Cross and Marx’s Anthropology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 1991), 204.

<sup>726</sup>Gregory, *Caribbean Theology*.

<sup>727</sup>Ibid, xv.

Despite the rhetoric, little has changed, particularly in Jamaica, as theologians continue to suffer from an inherent prejudice, self-loathing and learnt mistrust of anything Black, and therefore like their British Caribbean counterparts, it results in a continued denial of their own culture despite their affirmations otherwise, publicly.<sup>728</sup> There is a reluctance to move on this issue as they affirm their resistance by arguing that such an inclusion would be a somewhat redundant exercise, as the clock cannot be turned back as long-gone are the African cultural values and practices, and importing and reintroducing them from elsewhere have no relevance for them in the present century. However, sociologist, Stuart Hall, counters this claim by contending that cultural identity is not static, and therefore any move towards the development of a relevant Caribbean cultural identity:

is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'...Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery of the past', which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.<sup>729</sup>

Hall makes a very strong argument that new cultural identities can therefore be formed, out of the lived experiences of the present generation.

However to date, progress remains slow as many Jamaican theologians, ministers and academics have sought to undertake a purely academic theological response to the issue, participating in western style philosophical discourse, rather than seeking to use the new methodologies contained in contextual theology, to seek to develop a popular theological

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<sup>728</sup>Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin'*, 43.

<sup>729</sup>Padmini Mongia, ed., *Cultural Identity and Diaspora, in Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: a reader* (London: Arnold, 1997), 112.

response, based on a critical reflection on life, informed by the word of God. Ultimately, they have sought to theologise for, and around the people, rather than with the people as a central force in the developing of relevant contextual theologies.

This hesitation to deal with culture remains a contentious issue in many of the islands' former colonial outposts. The challenge to change is nevertheless there, now coming primarily from the Bible Society of the West Indies who are in the process of completing a project to produce a Jamaican Bible in the people's mother tongue, Patois. They are not in the academic sense theologians, but Bible translators, who realised that to have the Scriptures in one's mother tongue enables greater engagement with, and understanding of the Scriptures. However, many of their most vocal opponents have been members of the Church, and primarily the Jamaican middle class, who see such an inclusion as a 'dumbing down' of the culture, particularly they argue, in the eyes of the wider world. Once again their attention is centred on a concern for what others will think, rather than on that which in creating a means of inclusion and enabling, would prove beneficial to the majority of Jamaican people. Work persists nevertheless, watched by other nations in the region where a Patois is spoken,<sup>730</sup> waiting with bated breath, fear, and an inquisitive curiosity, and wondering if indeed any good can come from such a project.

In reflecting on Jamaica, it is clear that there is a link, a continuation of belief amongst the people of that island and Britain concerning the privileging of English cultural values above their own. There is a great deal of similarity and sameness about how the Church has sought

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<sup>730</sup>Dominica and the Dutch Antilles.

to respond, and minister within mainline middle class churches, and whilst it does not talk of ‘doing things properly’ as in Britain, it nevertheless talks of promoting ‘right living’,<sup>731</sup> with the same evangelical zeal, resulting similarly in the exclusion of many. Caribbean sociologist Barry Chevannes and theologian Kortright Davis for example could so easily have been speaking to members of CSMBC as to their own nation, when they called upon the Jamaican Church to acknowledge its self-imposed schizophrenia about the Jamaican family, which is unworkable, and destructive to the wider community. This is particularly in light of the fact that, ‘the Jamaican state has, in effect, given sanction to common-law, first by the removal of the status of illegitimacy (several Caribbean countries still retain the legal restriction) and, second, by establishing the right of common-law spouse of at least five years to inherit’,<sup>732</sup> and, as Davis stated:

Most Caribbean people believe that being born out of wedlock is better than not being born at all; and, in any case, many of those born out of wedlock were fathered by married men. So sex is not where we need to look for Caribbean sin. We need to look for it in the area of non responsibility for this is the area that touches every class of Caribbean citizenry.<sup>733</sup>

In both places they continue to maintain the prejudices of the past, hearing the voice of culture calling them to include all who would come, but held back, not simply by an inability to make the changes - they are the power brokers after all - but because of inbuilt prejudices caused by minds colonized by systems and people who have long ceased to exist. Consequently the inclusion of Jamaican culture in the life of the church is made to seem a

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<sup>731</sup>Dave Hazle, ‘Facing the Challenges of Ministry to Families in Inner City Jamaican Communities’ in Anthony Reddie, ed., *Black Theology: An International Journal*, Vol. 1 Number 2, (May 2003), 189-207, 192, 206. Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, 109. ‘The crusade for “right living” must confront evils that affect family growth, development and maturity. These include gambling, the use of illicit drugs, excessive drinking and sexual immorality’.

<sup>732</sup>Barry Chevannes, ‘Our Caribbean Reality (2)’, in Gregory, *Caribbean Theology*, 68.

<sup>733</sup>Davis, *Emancipation Still Comin’*, 77-78.

more complicated procedure than it needs to be, particularly when looked at in the light of my research findings which indicate that it can be done, but only if they are prepared to work with the people, and then together develop contextual theologies which are relevant for their lives today.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter was primarily concerned with analyzing the findings gained through methodological triangulation and grounded theory, about the role of culture within CSMBC. It brought to light the presence of not just one, but two cultures, and how English cultural values are being privileged above Caribbean cultural values, and then maintained by status groups, enforced by a people educated and trained by an implicit colonial theology, which has prevailed for generations, to the present day. It highlights the fact that though British Caribbean people are often addressed as one group, particularly the Christians, their experiences in the Caribbean and therefore in Britain are not the same, for whilst working class Pentecostals have made a significant impact on British and British Caribbean societies, middle class Caribbean Christians in mainline churches who have academically and professionally achieved, have nevertheless been left behind in the developing of their own personal and spiritual identity.

Highlighted is the fact that colonial theology continues to show its enduring power, as it continues to affect the Christian middle class and as a result Caribbean Christianity both in England and Jamaica, where a people though separated geographically, nevertheless demonstrated that there is commonality in the issues which confront them. Together they

have not only proved the outstanding ‘success’ of colonialism, but also that the solution to the problem has the same root, cultural inclusion,<sup>734</sup> but how to achieve this has been the issue which Caribbean and British Caribbean theologians have struggled with for many years. Yet it needs to be done soon given the example of the church in Birmingham, and because as Banton states:

a society cannot be a healthy one in which so many people suffer from a constant regret that they are what they are, and do their best to give their children characteristics commonly supposed to be better than their own. The hypersensitivity and ‘touchiness’ attributed ... is according to this argument, due to the fact that a distinctive culture has not yet taken shape, so that the social values are confused.<sup>735</sup>

Central to the pastoral approach to theology is the spiral structure which emphasises theological reflection as an integral part of interpreting research, thereby complimenting the anthropological model which stresses the role of culture alone. So the next chapter will dialogue with the Bible, and the theological response of one denomination, seeking to show how understandings of Christianity by British Caribbean Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, can be enhanced by the inclusion of culture as demonstrated through the ministry of the first Moses and the Exodus experience, and two others like him within the American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA), who have led the way in recent times.

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<sup>734</sup> As I have previously stated it is not a position held by Joe Aldred as was reflected in his book *Respect*.

<sup>735</sup> M P Banton, *The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), 59.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **MOSES, THE EXODUS AND ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF BEING**

*A tree separated from its roots  
will soon die.<sup>736</sup>*

This chapter will examine how the story of Moses and the Exodus has been co-opted as one of, if not the key significant theological tradition of Caribbean people, and what is implicitly believed as a result, before critically analysing and evaluating the same story as a means by which a truly culturally inclusive British Caribbean Church may be established. It will then conclude by looking at an alternative model of Christian leadership taken from the present day, the American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA), in which African American Christians, linked by their united history of enslavement to British Caribbean Christians, were nevertheless able to develop a culturally inclusive and unique faith perspective within a larger multicultural Baptist community.

#### **6.1 Moses and the Exodus as co-opted by the Caribbean Community**

Whether reading literature, listening to music or sermons preached, the one person and the one significant story shared as defining the plight of people, not just of Caribbean, but African descent, is the story of Moses and the Exodus. It is a liberating story which has over a long time found easy resonance with those who have themselves been oppressed. According to Hopkins, African Americans during their own enslavement, used the name of Moses as a metaphor, whereby, ‘slaves throughout the South recognised the name of Moses, the captain of the Underground Railroad...Moses, would come round...(and) she would take

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<sup>736</sup>Written by Doreen Morrison, October 2010.

run-away slaves and get them over near the border line'.<sup>737</sup> In so doing, they were therefore able to speak of freedom without fear when in the company of their oppressors, who understood the name only in its biblical context.

In the countries of Ghana and Jamaica too, political leaders have co-opted Moses as a means of defining their role in independence - to lead their people into their Promised Land - freedom. President Nkrumah of Ghana for example is reported to have declared to the national press that he was 'like a Moses – yea, a greater Moses... (*who*) with the support of all African leaders he will help lead his people across the Red Sea of imperialist massacre and suffering'.<sup>738</sup> Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, on the other hand, though styling himself on the biblical character of Joshua, never neglected the symbolism of Moses in order to win over his audience, and so:

He frequently used a rod, a symbol of the rod of Moses, to stir up his audience in the course of political oration, another display of the juxtaposition of biblical thought and Caribbean political rhetoric. The rod used by Manley on such occasions was given to his father by the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. To the Rastafarians of Jamaica, Haile Selassie was a direct descendent of the Davidic-Solomonic dynasty and divine...By extension Manley's use of the rod ...recalled Yahweh giving Moses a rod as he is sent to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Rasta's believe this same rod was given to Joshua...Manley's use of the rod as part of his political rhetoric therefore cast him in a Mosaic and Joshua role.<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>737</sup>Dwight N Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit our Feet: sources for a constructive black theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 41.

<sup>738</sup>James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 247.

<sup>739</sup>Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, *Religion, Culture and Tradition in the Caribbean* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 149.

A similar analogy is also to be found in the Caribbean diaspora experience in Britain, where Moses' intercessory role and purpose is likened to that of musicians, writers and singers in that:

During liberation...it is the linguist who would perform this ritual with skill, efficacy and eloquence, including the petitioning of the Supreme Being, Ancestors and Deities. Apart from the ancestral lineage, those enthroned as custodians of the people are regarded as being sacred, meaning that their subjects must speak to them through an intermediary, the linguist. This was also the protocol during the Exodus when the Israelites required divine intervention.<sup>740</sup>

Educator Tony Sewell continues this comparison in his book *Keep on Moving: The Windrush Legacy*, using the Exodus journey as a metaphor for migration, settlement and the necessary struggle of each subsequent generation to achieve success in their defined 'Promised Land' - England.<sup>741</sup> Sewell indicates that his understanding of the Exodus has like many of his contemporaries been informed by Rastafarianism<sup>742</sup> and particularly reggae music, in which the Exodus story according to Jorge Giovannetti, 'became representative of the worldview of Afro-Jamaicans. As such the historical narrative in reggae songs has often portrayed dominant elements of the Rasta philosophy such as the perception of Jamaica as Babylon, Africa as Zion, and Jamaicans as Israelites that have to get back to the promised land'.<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>740</sup>Ochieng, *Black Families in Britain*, 286.

<sup>741</sup>Sewell, *Keep on Moving*, 2. 'This book should not be read as a chronological history from 1948 to the present, but rather as a set of common phases that subsequent generations have experienced since the arrival of the Windrush. I call these "landmarks" the Exodus experience: the arrivant's experience and the making of a promised land'.

<sup>742</sup>Gossai and Murrell, *Religion, Culture and Tradition*, 181. It is argued that from its beginnings, Rastafari always offered, 'an alternative consciousness and identity for black Jamaicans'.

<sup>743</sup>Franklin W Knight and Teresita Martinez-Vergne, eds., *Contemporary Caribbean Cultures and Societies in a Global Context* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 218.

Central to the spreading of reggae music was one Bob Marley who himself wrote the seminal song 'Exodus' which many Jamaicans believe exactly expresses their current plight and hopes for the future. Marley through this song, 'appeal(s) paradigmatically to the biblical memory of both the Exodus and the Babylonian exile...he focuses not only on social and economic bondage and liberation, but also on this inner bondage (or mental slavery) and calls the listener to self-awareness and spiritual liberation'.<sup>744</sup> It is worth looking at the song in its entirety in order to see the implicit theology now taken on board by Caribbean peoples and others who consider themselves oppressed. (appendix 7)

The Exodus story according to Marley is the story of a people still on the move, but having to overcome hostility and hatred in order to reach the Promised Land. Such is the power of this interpretation, that even in the Church this implicit theology of personal struggle in order to not only overcome, but reach the Promised Land is encouraged. Joe Aldred refers to it in his oral history interview as a means of encouraging the members of CSMBC to participate fully in the OHP, believing that in so doing it will assist them to make sense of the personal struggles which they have faced since coming to England.<sup>745</sup> So, on whatever level one looks the implicit theology of Moses and the Exodus is for Caribbean people, one of personal struggle as a people seek to overcome the opposition of the world around them in their own strength, then arriving in the Promised Land only as a consequence of their own perseverance and determination.

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<sup>744</sup>Gossai and Murrell, *Religion, Culture and Tradition*, 186.

<sup>745</sup>Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Oral History Project, 2006.

However, I would now like to put forward an alternative view of Moses and the Exodus story, which is perhaps a more relevant interpretation for British Caribbean Christians, who have been disenfranchised by their own history and circumstances. A biblical Moses who out of obedience to God, develops into a leader who not only brings about the birth of a religious movement, unites a once disparate people into a community of faith, but at the same time enables the inculturation of the faith, so that God cannot only be heard, but understood by the people within their own context. I will at the same time demonstrate that much of the personal struggle which took place amongst the people, was not simply a necessary step to their freedom, but was often as a result of their resistance to obeying God's will, and accepting the reframed cultural identity which God was seeking to give them.

## **6.2 Moses and the Exodus**

After Emancipation, Lord Harris, Governor of Trinidad and Tobago, declared that though a people had been freed, a nation had not been formed.<sup>746</sup> My research within CSMBC demonstrates that these words are as true today as they were then, as British Caribbean Christians continue to see themselves as an amalgam of co-existing groups, rather than as one community. The 'seasoning' process begun in enslavement, gained impetus in Emancipation through Evangelicalism, and is now being fulfilled, as the oppressed have become the oppressors, supported by an implicit theology of Moses and the Exodus which presents God as one who, having emancipated them, 'abandons' them to their fate as they seek to reach their Promised Land.

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<sup>746</sup>Dick, *Rebellion to Riot*, xv.

The use of the Spiral Interpretation demands that I undertake theological reflection, and so the remainder of this chapter will address the explicit theology of Moses and the Exodus. As stated previously,<sup>747</sup> Bevans contends that one of the dangers of using culture to construct a contextual theology, is that one is inclined to fall prey to cultural romanticism. So it is my contention that cultural identity is foundational to the development of British Caribbean Christianity. Is this merely a ‘romantic’ appeal to the past, or can the Bible assist in bringing additional insight in this regard? I will compare and contrast the cultural contexts of Moses the Egyptian, and Moses leader of the Hebrew people, demonstrating how cultural inclusion is foundational to God’s understanding of the human condition of a people once enslaved, then made free - paying particular attention to the role of culture as enabler in the uniting of a disparate people into one nation.

### **6.2.1 Literary Context**

The book of Exodus is the second of the first five books of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch.<sup>748</sup> It is believed that the story contained within it was originally three accounts of the same story designed to tell how Israel came to be formed as a nation,<sup>749</sup> and assist in understanding the connection, and the need for the developing of a cultural and religious identity,<sup>750</sup> by providing a grand narrative which showed who the God of the Israelites was,

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<sup>747</sup> Chapter 5.

<sup>748</sup> J D Douglas, ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 360.

<sup>749</sup> James L Mays, ed., *Harpers Bible Commentary* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 1988), 129-130.

<sup>750</sup> Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3, 14 -15. Assmann states that ‘All cultural distinctions need to be remembered in order to render permanent the space which they construct. Usually, this function of remembering the fundamental distinctions assumes the form of a “Grand Narrative”, a master story that underlies and informs innumerable concrete tellings and retellings of the past...if “We Are What We Remember”, we are the stories that we are able to tell about ourselves’.

and how this God enabled the creating of a people whose cultural identity became distinct from the communities around them.<sup>751</sup>

## **6.2.2 Social Context**

### **6.2.2.1 Egypt and the Egyptians**

The Egypt of Moses' day was more prosperous and developed than its surrounding neighbours, and its military and commercial successes boosted its understanding of itself 'as a culturally superior group whose foreign activities were encouraged by their gods'.<sup>752</sup>

The worship of gods was a significant part of Egyptian existence and being a polytheistic people they worshipped idols, crafted often as humans and animals. Each god would have its own temple, priests, servants, estates and whatever else was needed in order to maintain its position,<sup>753</sup> and was then recognised individually as having, 'different personalities and functions, each having one or more main cult centres...many communities had distinctive pantheons dominated by a local form of the chief regional god but incorporating others selected by criteria which varied according to the nature of the community'.<sup>754</sup> One of the most popular gods was Apis who was represented by a bull, known as the Apis Bull. Such was its divinity that not only was the Apis Bull to be worshipped as a god,<sup>755</sup> but on its death,

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<sup>751</sup>George V Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), xviii.

<sup>752</sup>B G Trigger, J J Kemp, D O'Connor, and A B Lloyd, *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 194.

<sup>753</sup>Ibid, 201.

<sup>754</sup>Ibid, 197.

<sup>755</sup>K A Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Wiltshire: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1982), 105-106. Of the bull, Khaemwaset, son of Ramesses II said, 'I have endowed divine offerings for him; regular daily offerings, (lunar) feasts whose days come on their appointed dates, and (annual) calendar – feasts throughout the year, over and above the food offerings which are forthcoming in the (divine) presence, at the

similar to the death of a Pharaoh, it was mummified and interned; ‘A sloping ramp and burial chamber were cut in the desert rock out in the Saqqara cemeteries of Memphis, in traditional fashion, not far from the buried tombs of earlier bulls, each crowned by its little chapel’.<sup>756</sup>

### 6.2.2.2 The Hebrews

The Hebrews<sup>757</sup> or Habiru were a collective term used to describe a people who occupied ‘the entire region from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean and from Asia Minor down to Egypt; it designated those people who had abandoned their home regions and become refugees’.<sup>758</sup>

Though the Exodus tells the story of the Hebrews as a nation leaving Egypt, scholars such as Siegfried Herrmann argue that it is more likely that they were in fact only a community of people, the Habiru, descendants of Jacob,<sup>759</sup> who together with his family were known to have settled in Egypt during the reign of Ramesses II, in the North Eastern region of Egypt,<sup>760</sup> known as ‘The land of Ramesses’ the royal residence of the Pharaoh’s.<sup>761</sup> They moved to Egypt following the enslavement of Jacob’s son Joseph.<sup>762</sup> Joseph rose to a prominent position, but following his death his descendants were enslaved along with those who were conquered and transported to Egypt from the regions of Asia, Syria and Canaan.<sup>763</sup>

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head of the offerings for Ptah. I have assigned to him lay priests, lectors who recite the glorifications ... Remember my name, when decreeing (future such works), reward a good deed with its like’.

<sup>756</sup>Ibid, 103.

<sup>757</sup>R S Sugirtharajah, *Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (London: SPCK, 1991), 236. He describes the term Hebrew as, ‘a designation given to various groups in several localities from Egypt to Mesopotamia. Such people were mercenaries, nomads, rebels; the name denoted the fact that they were not integrated into the broader framework of society, were outside the general rule of law’.

<sup>758</sup>Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 85.

<sup>759</sup>Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 467.

<sup>760</sup>Gen 47:11. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>761</sup>Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 132. It became the residence from about 1300 B.C.

<sup>762</sup>Genesis 39: 1-2. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>763</sup>Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 132.

In Egypt all land belonged to the State, and as slaves they owned nothing and were considered to be ‘the despised, the powerless, the outcasts...the lowest class of people’,<sup>764</sup> living in ‘a strict bureaucracy within which the functions of various classes were strictly regulated’.<sup>765</sup> Though a rural people, they according to Grimal, ‘were employed in the transport of stone for a temple...and it is known that some of them...worked in the quarries of Wadi Hammamat in the time of Ramesses IV’.<sup>766</sup> By the time of Moses, such was their social and spiritual poverty that they had according to Sugirtharajah become a people who were ‘deprived of their humanity...subordinated...completely dominated...reduced to being concerned only with eating the food distributed regularly by the ruler’.<sup>767</sup>

### **6.2.3 Moses God’s Leader in Training**

#### **6.2.3.1 Roots**

It would probably be fair to say that had Moses’ parents presented themselves at the doors of CSMBC or any other present day Caribbean Church, they would have been rejected, as theirs was the story of illegal love,<sup>768</sup> Moses’ father Amran having taken his father’s sister, (his aunt) Jochebed as his wife.<sup>769</sup> Moses’ story then is not simply the story of the raising up of God’s leader, but the story of a leader who has more in common with the majority of Caribbean family structures than most in the church would care to acknowledge. His birth was placed under the threat of death by the State before he was even conceived, as the

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<sup>764</sup>Sugirtharajah, *Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 241, 242.

<sup>765</sup>Ibid, 242.

<sup>766</sup>Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 258.

<sup>767</sup>Sugirtharajah, *Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 243.

<sup>768</sup>Levit 18:12. SFLB NKJV. ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s sister; she is near of kin to your father’.

<sup>769</sup>Ex 6:20. SFLB, NKJV.

Egyptians concerned about the increase in their slave populations, sought to have all non-Egyptian male babies slaughtered.<sup>770</sup> No different in reality then from the periods of enslavement endured by those who were transported to the islands of the Caribbean, and who then continued to suffer from the harshness of a colonial system, which for example in the 1930s, was responsible for the raising of the mortality rate in children under five,<sup>771</sup> by withholding the distribution of fresh milk, to the African Jamaican population stating that, ‘Negroes preferred condensed milk’.<sup>772</sup>

Yet Moses, just like many first generation British Caribbean children now living in Britain was given a way out. His mother and sister in order to protect him placed him in a basket, which led to his being taken to the very heart of the nation which was persecuting his people, the Pharaoh’s daughter.<sup>773</sup> So began the journey of a child of questionable heritage and suspect roots, but whose very name given to him by his new mother,<sup>774</sup> redefined him as an Egyptian,<sup>775</sup> giving him an upbringing which would prove useful later as he enabled God’s people to claim their freedom from the very same Egyptians.

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<sup>770</sup>Ex 1:22. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>771</sup>Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire*, 30. ‘What then, of the children? With the mother debilitated by hookworm, half-starved and vulnerable to waterborne diseases, the infant mortality rate was staggering. For Trinidad it was 120 per 1,000 live births; for Jamaicans 137; for Antigua 171; for St Kitts 187; for Barbados 217; as compared with 58 in England. Of the total deaths in Jamaica in 1935, over 33 per cent were of infants under five years of age. An examination of 12,000 schoolchildren in Kingston revealed that 40 per cent were undernourished’.

<sup>772</sup>Ibid.

<sup>773</sup>James K Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 143. It was not uncommon for foreigners to be taken into the home of an Egyptian princess, for the Egyptians regularly took hostages of other nations’ princes and princesses, ‘to be “civilized” and then returned to rule as vassals’.

<sup>774</sup>Ex 2:10. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>775</sup>Ronald E Clements, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: Exodus Commentary by Ronald E Clements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 15. He states that ‘Moses is an Egyptian word for son, which is found in many well known Egyptian names such as Ramesses and Ahmose’.

### 6.2.3.2 An Egyptian Education

Moses from childhood was raised as an Egyptian aristocrat, ‘educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians’.<sup>776</sup> This was considered to be an exceptional education in that Egyptians at that time were renowned for their knowledge in many subjects, including geometry, history and philosophy,<sup>777</sup> and this together with the best sporting and military training to officer level, gave him the skills with which to not just develop his horsemanship and strength to fight in battle, but plan strategically, and therefore potentially lead one of Pharaoh’s armies.<sup>778</sup> As a member of the royal household, he grew to become a representative of the Pharaoh, overseeing the execution of building plans and it is therefore likely that he would on occasion have come across the Hebrew people.<sup>779</sup>

Acts 7:22,23 tells us that at the age of forty, Moses having received the best that Egypt had to offer, decides to visit his people, and it was as a consequence of this visit that he experienced for the first time the confusion of being raised in one culture, whilst having a heartfelt need to be included in another. Upon seeing the suffering of his own people at the hands of those he had come to respect, Moses responded by lashing out and killing an Egyptian. However rather than be welcomed by his people as he had perhaps hoped, he was rejected as they asked him, ‘Do you mean to murder me as you murdered the Egyptian?’<sup>780</sup> Moses in fear of his life became stateless, rejected by both sides. He knew that he was a Hebrew, but he

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Pixley, *On Exodus*, 7. Pixley adds more particularly that he believes the name to be taken from the word Mesu ‘a particle appearing in the names of Egyptian Kings...from the dominant Egyptian class’.

<sup>776</sup>Acts 7:22. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>777</sup>Ray Bakke, *A Theology as big as the City* (East Sussex: Monarch Publications, 1997), 48.

<sup>778</sup>Rosalind M Janssen and Jac J Janssen, *Growing up in Ancient Egypt* (London: The Rubicon Press, 1990), 134, 139.

<sup>779</sup>Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 143.

<sup>780</sup>Ex 2:14. SFLB NKJV.

neither looked like nor acted like them, as in appearance and attitude he was an Egyptian, but now an Egyptian who had not only betrayed Egypt, but was rejected by his ‘own’. He left Egypt, having had no alternative, for to stay meant death.

### **6.2.3.3 Called and Commissioned by God at Mount Horeb**

Having fled the presence of Pharaoh, Moses finds himself in Midian, where ‘many scholars believe that the origins of Yahwism are to be sought’.<sup>781</sup> The Midianites are considered to be descendants of Abraham,<sup>782</sup> camel-riding nomads but with a mostly sedentary culture, unlike the Hebrews.<sup>783</sup> Here too Moses was presumed to be an ‘Egyptian’, but following an act of generosity to the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, he was invited into their home. He later married Zipporah, Jethro’s daughter,<sup>784</sup> and made his home in Midian.

However just as significant as his marriage to Zipporah, was the fact that in so doing, Moses had unintentionally found himself under the tutelage of Jethro, and began to learn something of their nomadic skills.<sup>785</sup> Scripture often teaches that when God raises a leader, they are often the last one to know, and Moses was no different. After forty years God demanded his attention, and so ‘the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush...the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed’.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>781</sup>Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 134.

<sup>782</sup>Gen 25:2. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>783</sup>David Noel Freedman and David Frank Graf, ed., *Palestine in Transition* (Sheffield: The American Schools of Oriental Research by the Almond Press, 1983), 42.

<sup>784</sup>Ex 2:21. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>785</sup>Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 651.

<sup>786</sup>Ex 3: 2. SFLB NKJV.

Moses met with and received a direct call from God to lead the Hebrew people to freedom. He knew that he had not only found a spiritual home,<sup>787</sup> but a commission from God to not just ‘deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians’, but ‘to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey’.<sup>788</sup> Forty years in his own wilderness and now Moses was being raised up, and neither his past as a murderer or his present role as a shepherd, were obstacles to his being given a position of prominence once again.

However, before he could return to Egypt Moses had to learn two more lessons. The psychologist Sigmund Freud described Moses as, ‘one of the first of the towering “charismatic” leaders’,<sup>789</sup> but he must have been speaking of the Moses at the end of his mission, for the ‘early’ Moses was substantially different. Oswald and Kroeger in their book *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*, choose instead to describe Moses as an introvert, identified through his characteristic initial responses to God,<sup>790</sup> which varied from ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh’,<sup>791</sup> to, ‘They will not believe me’,<sup>792</sup> and ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow I speech and slow in tongue’.<sup>793</sup> Moses early days were therefore the antithesis of a towering charismatic leader. He lacked not only confidence, but eloquence, but this gave him the most

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<sup>787</sup>Ex 3: 5 - 6. SFLB NKJV. God told Moses, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground...I am the God of your father-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’.

<sup>788</sup>Ex 3:8. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>789</sup>Burns, *Leadership*, 241.

<sup>790</sup>Roy M Oswald and Otto Kroeger, *Personality Type and Religious Leadership* (New York City: The Alban Institute, 1989), 31.

<sup>791</sup>Ex 3:11. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>792</sup>Ex 4:1. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>793</sup>Ex 4:10. SFLB NKJV.

necessary character trait, dependence. Moses was dependent upon God, and he needed to be because of his outstanding criminal record in Egypt, and the fact that God told him to return to a people in need of a leader, but who would be reluctant to see him as the chosen one. Yet God reassured him that as long as he remained dependent upon him and had an expectation of the presence and power of God in his life, then the mission would be a success.<sup>794</sup>

Secondly, God showed Moses that weakness was not a flaw, in fact it was an opportunity for the sharing of leadership, using the skills of others in areas where he was deficient. Aaron, Moses' Levite brother was appointed to speak for him,<sup>795</sup> and this according to Pixley, was a master stroke in that it not only took care of practical necessities but, just as significantly acknowledges the need to overcome the cultural differences which would separate Moses and the children of Israel. Pixley argues that:

From the very first literary stratum, Aaron is present, but he is no more than Moses' companion. The key to an understanding of Aaron is precisely his presentation as a Levite. Moses, according to the account, is a Levite, but he is not publicly known as one. Aaron, on the other hand, has lived among the Levites, and no one doubts his identity as one himself. In accompanying Moses, Aaron the Levite confirms his solidarity with the Levite people whom he means to lead to its liberation. Surely, therefore, Aaron is not introduced in reaction to the objection that Moses was not eloquent. His real role is not to speak, but to legitimate the liberator, who has no clear credentials, inasmuch as he has not participated in the suffering of the oppressed.<sup>796</sup>

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<sup>794</sup>Ex 4:2-4, 6-7. SFLB NKJV. 'So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod". And He said, "Cast it on the ground". So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord said to Moses "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand)... Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom". And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again". So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh'.

<sup>795</sup>Ex 4: 14-16. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>796</sup>Pixley, *On Exodus*, 27.

God had thought of everything, and Aaron was the ideal solution, and if Moses needed any further confirmation as to how important understanding cultural difference was, and his need to be able to identify as closely as possible with the Hebrews people, Zipporah his wife showed him. She enabled the circumcision of their eldest son, recognising what he had failed to understand, that it would have been difficult for him to lead, when as the head of their household he had failed to uphold not only a cultural rite, but a religious rite which symbolized the covenantal relationship between God and his people.<sup>797</sup>

Exodus 6, as if to emphasise Aaron's significance as a cultural mediator details his genealogy, and his cultural identity, in addition to Moses' – showing him as the credible link to the Hebrew people.<sup>798</sup> Moses in fact only received the adulation due to him as leader, after the crossing of the Red Sea, when scripture states that 'Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses'.<sup>799</sup>

It is at this point in the implicit understanding of Caribbean peoples that Moses' role comes to an end, a people having been freed and ready to embark on their journey to the Promised Land, dependent solely upon their own initiative. Tony Sewell, reminiscent of the Hollywood movie *Ground Hog Day*,<sup>800</sup> defines life for each generation of Caribbean people in England

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<sup>797</sup>Ex 4: 25. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>798</sup>Ex 6:14 – 27. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>799</sup>Ex 14:31. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>800</sup>Available from [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) [Accessed 31/05/10]. 'A weather man is reluctantly sent to cover a story...On waking the following day he discovers that it's Groundhog Day again, and again and again. First he uses this to his advantage then comes to the realization that he is doomed to spend the rest of eternity in the same place, seeing the people do the same thing. Every day'.

as a continuous succession of ‘doomed’ Exodus experiences with only a hope, rather than any kind of certainty that they will enter the Promised Land. However, I shall now proceed to demonstrate that there was and need only be one Exodus experience, when there is a leader who will contextualize their faith and work in partnership with God whose desire is to free them mentally, emotionally and spiritually, or as the text states, to ‘bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey’.<sup>801</sup>

#### **6.2.4 Developing Faith through Culture**

In terms of enabling cultural identity, the main contention amongst the elders and leads of CSMBC is that in order to practice their Christian faith, the missionaries had taught them that the only acceptable means by which they could do so, was to divest themselves of their own culture in favour of an English one. Could Moses have taken a similar and equally contentious route, expecting the people to simply adapt themselves to the culture of the nations which they met along the way, in the various regions? I believe not. Having God at the helm in the early days of their freedom, rather than as African Jamaicans did, missionary leaders with their own particular agendas, enabled God to bring forward a leader who could so clearly take God’s message to God’s people.

God forbade them from entering either into political or religious covenants with those who they came into contact with,<sup>802</sup> as to do so, would have diverted their mission of reaching and settling into the Promised Land. Moses was therefore instructed by God to tell them, ‘Now

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<sup>801</sup>Ex 3:8. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>802</sup>Ex 23: 20-33, 34: 10-16. SFLB NKJV.

therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel'.<sup>803</sup> Moses therefore knew that he had to enable the building of a community of faith, one people with similar expectations and ambitions, which would unite them to be the Children of Israel, and take their rightful place as inheritors of the promises of God, but how? According to Jan Assmann, in her book *Moses the Egyptian*, God knew that Moses was leading a people who had a confused cultural identity, a people who:

During their long sojourn in Egypt they had become totally assimilated to Egyptian culture. For them, Yahweh was an unknown god in the same sense that he was unknown to Pharaoh. What we today would call their 'ethnicity' or 'cultural identity,' which would set the Israelites apart from their Egyptian host culture, did not yet exist because the construction of this identity was previously the function of the Law...In his infinite benevolence and condescendence, God did not choose to super inscribe his laws above the cultural texts already in existence, culturally treating the Israelites as a tabula rasa. Instead, he chose to translate his legislative system into their cultural background text and to 'accommodate' his truth to their historically and culturally limited and predetermined Egyptian forms of understanding<sup>804</sup>

So God had to unite them by renegotiating their understanding of the historical events in their lives, through the attaching of religious practices to the cultural identity which they were already familiar with.

Moses began by instigating two festivals, before they left Egypt, the Festival of the Passover,<sup>805</sup> and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.<sup>806</sup> Of the Festival of the Passover it is said:

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<sup>803</sup>Ex 19: 5-6. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>804</sup>Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 70.

<sup>805</sup>Ex 12:12-14, 43-49. SFLB NKJV.

A well-known theory contends that the Passover meal, like the Passover blood rite, originated as part of an annual ritual that was secondarily combined with the tradition of the tenth plague. In particular, the meal is said to have originated as a nomadic ritual. Thus it requires no temple or sanctuary of any kind. The paschal lamb is taken from the flock and eaten along with unleavened bread...In the biblical Passover tradition, according to this theory, this annual festival has been reinterpreted as a commemoration of the departure from Egypt and the escape from the plague on the firstborn.<sup>807</sup>

Here God took a well-known feast, and gave it a new interpretation which the people could understand, as it came out of their own cultural context. They were very significant foundation stones in the building of a community of faith, as the elevation of these two festivals had not just historical, but also religious and cultural significance, placing their Exodus experience as an event which was firmly in the will of God. God similarly used many known Egyptian cultural practices as the basis for the expression of their faith and culture, modifying Laws, Festivals and where necessary, instigating new religious rituals to replace those which glorified other gods, as according to Assman:

The most efficient way of erasing a memory is by superimposing on it a counter-memory. This is less an 'art' than a strategy which works on both the individual and the collective level. Hence the best way to make people forget an idolatrous rite is to put another rite in its place. The Christians followed the same principle by building their churches on the ruins of pagan temples and by observing their feasts on the dates of pagan festivals. For the same reason, Moses (or divine cunning or wisdom manifesting itself through his agency) had to institute many dietary and sacrificial prescriptions in order to occupy

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<sup>806</sup>Ex 13: 3-10. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>807</sup>Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, 143. 'A well-known theory contends that the Passover meal, like the Passover blood rite, originated as part of an annual ritual that was secondarily combined with the tradition of the tenth plague. In particular, the meal is said to have originated as a nomadic ritual. Thus it requires no temple or sanctuary of any kind. The paschal lamb is taken from the flock and eaten along with unleavened bread...In the biblical Passover tradition, according to this theory, this annual festival has been reinterpreted as a commemoration of the departure from Egypt and the escape from the plague on the firstborn'.

Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 260. The feast of Unleavened bread was 'no longer (*seen as*) a feast of returning Spring, such as neighbouring peoples celebrated – but as a commemoration of the flight from Egypt'.

terrain held by the Sabians<sup>808</sup> and their idolatrous ways, ‘so that all those rites and cults that they practiced for the sake of the idols, they now came to practice in the honour of god’. The divine strategy was so successful that the Sabians and their once mighty community fell into oblivion.

Three months out of Egypt Moses reached Mount Sinai where he received the final key to the success of the mission, the Ten Commandments, which enabled the people to be able to fully understand and define their distinct religious and cultural identity. It was in the giving of the rules and laws that the various tribes came together and were united as one community, the Children of Israel.<sup>809</sup> So, for example, all people, men women, parents and virginal girls understood how respect in this new community was to be demonstrated to each other, as they read the law concerning violence.<sup>810</sup> At the same time festivals were instigated in response to lived seasonal experiences, such as the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of In-gathering, an agrarian festival, which placed dance as a central feature to their worship.<sup>811</sup>

In terms of religious symbols, adapted and accepted were the Ark of the Covenant<sup>812</sup> and the Tent of the Meeting which originated in one of the tribes who became a part of the children

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<sup>808</sup>Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 58-59. ‘The Sabians were mostly associated or even identified with the Persians, Zoroastrians, or “Eastern Chaldeans”, and their religion was described as astrology and idolatrous worship of the celestial bodies’. 57-58.

<sup>809</sup>Those who came out of Egypt were likely to have been only one group of people later described as the Children of Israel. Worshippers of Jahweh are listed in scripture as being primarily from four different cultural groups, the Midianites (Exodus 3, 18), the Kenites (Judges 4:11, 1 Samuel 27:10, 30, 29, the Rechabites and the Caebites (1 Chronicles 2: 50-55). In his book *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 77. Siegfried Hermann stated that in reality it was not until they met at Kadesh that they finally came together as one people with one vision, to reach the Promised Land.

<sup>810</sup>Ex 21: 12-26. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>811</sup>Ex 34:22. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>812</sup>Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 109-110. ‘If one examines the organization of the Israelite community on its way through wastelands, it becomes clear that what is described is a cultic procession in which a sacred object, the Ark of the Covenant, leads the way, its priesthood is collected in a phalanx about it’.

of Israel.<sup>813</sup> However, where faith and culture came into conflict, the ‘offending’ culture had either to be modified, redefined or rejected outright, as happened in the incident with the Golden Calf, of which I shall speak later. The Ten Commandments then rather than simply being an expression of prohibitive rules, were in fact central to the re-ordering of society and the redefining of culture. For example, the first commandment, ‘You shall have no other gods before Me’<sup>814</sup> according to Pixley, ‘Is not a demand for loyalty to Yahweh, but a prohibition of other gods. It is polemical. Loyalty to Yahweh must be exclusive’.<sup>815</sup> For a people who had come out of a society with many gods, this was therefore not just a defining statement about who God was, but that God who delivered them from Egypt, this God alone would be all that they needed, their God.

In terms of the adaptation of religious practices, God instructs Moses to undertake what Assman calls, ‘Normative inversion’<sup>816</sup> a process whereby there is the adaptation of a nation’s religious symbols, turning them upside down, in order to give them new meaning. This is most clearly seen when Moses calls for the sacrifice of the Lamb, which according to Spencer, ‘Corresponds to the most sacred animal of the Egyptians, the ram, which is the sacred animal of their highest god, Amun... with the bull...the highest gods and the most sacred symbols for the Egyptians’.<sup>817</sup> Spencer argues that in so doing, ‘God wanted to vilify, in his law, those animals which meant the most to the Egyptians...God was right in giving

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<sup>813</sup>Siegfried Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1975), 80.

<sup>814</sup>Ex 20:3. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>815</sup>Pixley, *On Exodus*, 129.

<sup>816</sup>Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, 61.

<sup>817</sup>Ibid, 64.

the Jews a law that was simply the Egyptian custom turned upside down.’<sup>818</sup> Moses therefore was instructed to use the cultural and religious symbols and rituals which the people were familiar with, to create new meaning for the people, with maximum effect but using the minimal means of disruption, which can only be considered a master stroke of contextualization.

This is not to say that there were not incidents of disagreement, the people rebelling against the need for adaptation, and change before finally accepting the will of God for their lives. Perhaps the starkest example of this was the incident concerning the Golden Calf. In the process of waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain, the people having not yet received the Ten Commandments, asked Aaron to create for them a god to protect them. Aaron in response makes them a golden calf,<sup>819</sup> declaring, ‘This is your god, O Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt’.<sup>820</sup> It being comparable to the Apis Bull of the Egyptians cannot be missed, and Moses on his return, and clearly in fulfilment of the second commandment, ‘Thou shall have no gods before me’<sup>821</sup> let it be known that God is not a God of compromise. He destroys the symbol, clearly instructing them that where a cultural practice seeks to take precedence over worship of God, then it will either be removed or destroyed, for to disobey is to delay their inheritance and in this instance, their arrival into the Promised Land, as God shares his glory with no one.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>818</sup>Ibid.

<sup>819</sup>Ex 32: 1-6. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>820</sup>Ex 32: 4. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>821</sup>Ex 20: 3. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>822</sup>Deut 30: 1-3. SFLB NKJV. ‘Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with

### 6.2.5 The Demands and Expectations of Biblical Leadership

In order to develop a people into a nation, Moses had to develop not only trust in God, but the necessary skills with which to lead God's people and do the task before him. His was a difficult task, in that almost as soon as he had left Egypt, the people faced with the unknown, and the unpredictable, complained about the life which they had left behind, which seen through 'rose-tinted spectacles' seemed idyllic. Pixley explains their frustration explaining that:

Life was hard in Egypt. But production structures and food-supply systems were solidly entrenched. There was no extreme want. Now Israel finds itself in a situation in which it has left the old structures behind, but has not yet been able to build new ones. The result is the threat of starvation. It is natural that, in this situation, a nostalgia for the old should have arisen. The old may not have been the best, but it was familiar.<sup>823</sup>

Such was their anxiety that they asked Moses, 'Were there no graves in Egypt that you should have brought us here to die in the Wilderness? See what you have done to us by bringing us out of Egypt. Leave us alone; let us be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the Wilderness'.<sup>824</sup> Moses responded to this taunt by parting the Red Sea which ultimately led to their freedom, and just as significantly led to the people making a declaration of faith in him as their leader. Moses here confirming that rather than having concluded his task at the Red Sea, he had in fact just begun, a lesson which should speak to the concerns of Jamaican and British Caribbean people who have come to believe that there is no God-Given role for

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all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you'.

<sup>823</sup>Pixley, *On Exodus*, 99.

<sup>824</sup>Ex 14: 11-12. SFLB NKJV.

leaders to play, except spiritually, following their own exit from their ‘Egypt’ experience. Moses had not only freed a people but he was also determined to form a nation.

Moses may have overcome a number of obstacles, having taught the people to learn to trust God on a daily basis; receiving the manna from heaven, water from a rock, and defeating the Amalekites, but he faced continual opposition from them throughout his mission. The book of Exodus and other books of the Bible give very detailed accounts of what he went through.<sup>825</sup> Numbers 13 and 14 for example states that as a consequence of their disobedience and rebelliousness against Moses, and therefore against God, a generation of Hebrew children died in the Wilderness. Philip Mohabir in his book, *Pioneers or Settlers*, argues that they are perhaps not untypical of a people who ‘having been oppressed and suffered the humiliation of enslavement and abuse, in their freedom are not only “sceptical and cynical” but fearful (*finding it*)...difficult to trust anyone when faced with problems’,<sup>826</sup> hence the reason for their harping back to Egypt, and those things which were so familiar.

Moses as a result became a leader who believed that if anything was to be achieved then he had to be at the centre of it, whether that was a plan to be executed or disagreements to be resolved. He had to be the centre of it in order to as he thought, maintain order. However in being at the centre of the community meant that Moses controlled everything, resulting in a people whose lives came to a standstill as a consequence of having to wait on him ‘from

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<sup>825</sup>See the books of Joshua, Judges and Numbers - the Old Testament. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>826</sup>Mohabir, *Pioneers or Settlers*, 127.

morning until evening'.<sup>827</sup> Today it may be said that he became a 'control freak', however before he became uncontrollable, Jethro re-entered his life and this time taught him one of the most significant lessons any leader could learn, the art of delegation and the ability to develop new leaders able to share the responsibility of leadership. Urban Missiologist, Ray Bakke, in his book, *A Theology as Big as the City*, stated that Jethro taught Moses 'how to organize and multiply leadership by giving it away...power is merely the ability to get things done, and it is expandable'.<sup>828</sup>

Moses as a consequence did not therefore simply choose the 'brightest and the best' as members of CSMBC are prone to do, but he chose as Jethro had instructed:

Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness: and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens...every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.<sup>829</sup>

He chose men and women who feared God, people like him who would put obedience to God first, being less susceptible to pleasing people, therefore creating less tension and division, a lesson which many in today's church could learn from.<sup>830</sup>

Moses' ministry concludes with Moses and the Hebrew children on Mount Nebo<sup>831</sup> looking towards the Promised Land, he having almost completed his task, but knowing that neither he

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<sup>827</sup>Ex 18: 13-16. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>828</sup>Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*, 51.

<sup>829</sup>Ex 18:21-23. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>830</sup>A desire not to rock the boat, or seem contentious in any way, was expressed during the focus groups. This has more often than not led to an unprecedented amount of inertia within the congregation which simply results in the maintenance of the status quo.

nor those who had been involved in the flight out of Egypt would enter Canaan, due to their disobedience. This serves as yet another lesson regarding the demands of leadership, in that a seemingly ‘successful’ leader can also be a flawed leader. Moses to his credit had taught the people obedience to God, given them a renewed cultural identity and established how faith in God should be expressed. Yet he was disobedient to God, and such was God’s displeasure that he forbade him from entering the Promised Land,<sup>832</sup> instructing him to pass on the mantle of leadership to Joshua who would have that honour.

The story of the exodus concludes with the Children of Israel reaching the Promised Land, their culture reframed by God but Moses, their leader called by God but accepting God’s correction, fails to get there. God in so doing demonstrates an unwavering determination to look after his people, above the preservation of flawed leadership, a lesson which many churches perhaps need to re-learn today. The leadership within CSMBC for example demonstrates clearly that the Church needs to find new ways to appoint and then assess the success of leaders particularly those who work with a membership who may have low self-esteem, a history of oppression, operate out of a different cultural identity to their own, or are affected by being a minority within a majority faith or cultural community, as are the majority of Jamaican, Caribbean and British Caribbean Christians within the BUGB.

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<sup>831</sup>Deut 34. SFLB NKJV.

<sup>832</sup>Num 20:11-12. SFLB NKJV.

## **6.3 Alternative Ways of Being, American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA)**

### **6.3.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes with an example of cultural inclusion - greatly influenced by two modern day Moses figures, Adoniram Judson and Martin Luther King - as demonstrated in the ministry of the ABCUSA. It highlights the potential and possibilities of what could have been, and what may still be achieved through cultural inclusion for any people who have had their own culture denied.

ABCUSA is a denomination which includes not only African Americans, but, Native, Asian, Hispanic, Haitian and European Americans. In 2008 the majority of its members were of African American descent, some 651,122 (46.86%), whilst Euro-Americans were the next most significant grouping totalling 637,284 (45.86%).<sup>833</sup> It is a Baptist denomination which consists of a people with similar histories of forced enslavement, as those experienced by Caribbean and British Caribbean Baptists.

It would not be inappropriate to describe African Americans and African Caribbean people as ‘cousins’, the Caribbean having been the first stop for the dispatching of slaves throughout the colonies. Many Caribbean slaves were often dispatched to the Southern States as a part of the trade, or as a consequence of rebellion, or having committed other criminal acts against

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<sup>833</sup>Many Voices, One People, One Mission, 2008. Available from [www.nationalministries.org](http://www.nationalministries.org) [Accessed 10/08/09].

the British Empire.<sup>834</sup> Furthermore, ABCUSA though an ‘outside’ denomination has had a significant impact on Caribbean Baptist life. As stated in my first chapter, the first Baptist Missionary to Jamaica was George Liele, a freed African, who was also the first ordained African American minister and Baptist missionary to undertake overseas evangelism. Such was his enthusiasm for mission, that he began his missionary endeavours some forty or so years before the denomination had in fact established a missions department.<sup>835</sup>

Having the same root – George Liele – and similar histories, the two questions which I was then led to ask was firstly, ‘Why when so similar, have they developed to be two very distinct and different people in terms of the contextualization of their faith?’ African Americans appear to have evolved into a people who demonstrate confidence, self-esteem and great character, whilst African Caribbean, and now British Caribbean people appear to be lacking in most if not all of the above, including the ability to both understand and articulate their faith in God for themselves. Then secondly, ‘What might have been if the successors of Liele had been able to look ‘West’ towards the USA instead of East to Britain and the BUGB when it sought support to maintain the work in a very hostile environment?’

### **6.3.2 Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Roots of ABCUSA**

It is impossible to talk about how ABCUSA enabled cultural inclusion as a basis for its mission and ministry, without discussing their understanding of mission, which is not just an

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<sup>834</sup>Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 258. ‘The British had become adept at switching large groups of people around the globe to suit their colonial, economic or domestic problems: the Irish to Barbados, Africans to the Americas, “criminals” to Australia, poor London blacks to Sierra Leone’.

<sup>835</sup>The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions was established in 1814.

arm of its evangelistic endeavours, but foundational to all of its ministries at home and abroad. In talking about mission, one has therefore to talk about Adoniram Judson pioneer, ambassador and creator of its mission policy, which was gained over 37 years on the mission fields of Burma.

Judson's experiences became 'a paradigm of missionary service',<sup>836</sup> both within the denomination and throughout the Christian world. Unlike his missionary peers, Judson did not simply accept the commission to go, and choose to be influenced by Enlightenment thinking, rather, he determined a strategy for mission based on Scripture, and experience, gained through trial and error, success and failure. It was in fact in error and failure that he learnt the most, having had to adapt his ministry according to advice given to him by Burmese Buddhist monks who encouraged him to contextualize his ministry, even down to the tone of his voice when evangelising.<sup>837</sup> In this he was quite unique in that he chose to amend his ministry in the most effective way possible, by seeking to work through the culture in which he found himself.

Whilst Judson taught that mission was and should be rooted in the Bible, he was determined to just as significantly stress that it was not enough simply to seek to convert the 'heathen', but that it was necessary to first seek to understand them, as a necessary step to being

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<sup>836</sup>William H Brackney, 'The Legacy of Adoniram Judson', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (2009), 124.

<sup>837</sup>B R Pearn, *Judson of Burma* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1962), 32-34.

understood.<sup>838</sup> He ‘complained against short term missionaries who neither had time to learn the language, or get to know the culture’.<sup>839</sup> He criticized the establishing of Seminaries which trained indigenous ministers in ways which caused them unnecessary work, as they were made to study subjects which seemed to him inappropriate for their context and purposes, such as calculus and metaphysics, rather than enabling them to find a greater understanding of the gospel.<sup>840</sup> As a consequence of such thinking, Judson spent much of his ministry in conflict with the prevailing missionary views around him. However, he eventually won over his detractors by his success, affirming the following beliefs and expectations, as a necessary prerequisite for mission, whether home or abroad.

Judson determined that mission whilst being responsible for initiating training, creating teaching and providing the evangelism materials necessary for native missionaries, at the same time should encourage those who were converted to determine for themselves the content of the materials which were needed in order to convert their fellow citizens, and train future leaders.<sup>841</sup> Foundational to such a task according to Judson was the church, but a church which originated ‘from the actions of its members and not from any other source’. He therefore called for the establishing of a church which set its own agenda, based on the life, experiences, history, and the culture of the people, and which according to Pearn created a model of ministry which was empowering, and ‘constructive and not ...destructive (*believing*

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<sup>838</sup>Ibid, 24. For Judson mission meant adjustment and a willingness to ‘take up a language spoken by a people on the other side of the earth, whose very thoughts run in channels diverse from ours, and whose modes of expression are consequently new and uncouth’.

<sup>839</sup>Ibid, 74.

<sup>840</sup>Ibid, 75.

<sup>841</sup>Brackney, ‘The Legacy of Adoniram Judson’, 122-126, 125.

that) Missionaries should preach the Gospel and not, as he put it, “anti-Buddhism”<sup>842</sup>. Such was his success that upon the conclusion of his ministry in 1850, Judson not only left a Church, but a Christian community which having started from nothing, by its end totalled some eight thousand Burmese Christians.<sup>843</sup>

### **6.3.3 ABCUSA Foreign and Home Mission Policy**

Judson’s success became the basis for American Baptist mission, both at home and abroad, emphasising the fundamental belief that each non-European ethnic, racial and cultural group should be enabled to grow in accordance with their own ethnic and cultural needs, thereby maintaining their own distinct understanding of God, unencumbered by outside influences.<sup>844</sup>

ABCUSA encouraged such churches, paraphrasing Gustavo Gutierrez, to undertake a critical reflection on their own lives, informed by the word of God,<sup>845</sup> whilst the denomination promised to provide the financial support necessary to bring it to pass.

Such was the success of this missionary perspective that by 1911, five hundred bilingual churches had been established,<sup>846</sup> each maintaining its own unique cultural identity. Colleges and Seminaries were also founded within each ethnic group, giving each group the opportunity to cement their identities and define how their faith should be expressed as a result. Notable amongst the institutions began were the Spanish-American Baptist Seminary,

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<sup>842</sup>Pearn, *Judson of Burma*, 76.

<sup>843</sup>Ibid, 93.

<sup>844</sup>*American Baptists: A Unifying Vision – Study Document* (Valley Forge: American Baptist Churches in the USA, 1988), 19-21.

<sup>845</sup>Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 13.

<sup>846</sup>The Christian Citizen, 21. They included, ‘German, Italian, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Hispanic, Asian and Native American’.

in Los Angeles, which served the three million Mexicans who were living in the USA at that time, and Morehouse College, one of twenty seven Black colleges set up for freed Africans<sup>847</sup> after the Civil War, for training in ministry. Notable amongst their alumni was Martin Luther King Jr. martyr and a leading figure in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The mission policy of ABCUSA in assisting all ethnic groups to preserve the various aspects of their culture has enabled them to remain distinct as they interpreted, developed, and maintained their own understanding of God. So for example, Native Americans have been able to maintain their understanding of God as the Great Spirit, together with their lifelong understanding and appreciation of the earth and its natural resources as a gift from God.<sup>848</sup> African Americans on the other hand are noted for the depth and profundity of their worship experience, especially Gospel music which has found prominence not just within the Christian world, but the world of commercial popular music. Women of all cultures and persuasions too, have exercised their freedom to become ordained, and express their faith in ways which increase the mission of the church at home, and most significantly abroad.<sup>849</sup> Given the power of language to control and influence thought, ABCUSA whilst celebrating distinct language groups, has nevertheless encouraged and adopted the use of inclusive

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<sup>847</sup> Available from [www.morehouse.edu](http://www.morehouse.edu) [Accessed 31/10/10].

<sup>848</sup> 'Patterns of Faith: woven together in life & mission'. *American Baptist Quarterly*, Volume V, No. 4 (December, 1986): 342.

<sup>849</sup> Women's Baptist Home Mission Society established, and encouraged mission in all corners of the world.

language throughout the denomination in order to avoid the increase of power or gender inequality.<sup>850</sup>

#### **6.3.4 Still a Work in Progress - Combating Social Stratification**

ABCUSA has achieved a great deal, however this is not to say that this is a completed work, or a denomination which has ‘arrived’ in terms of their acceptance and understanding of the need for the role of culture to be integral to life and worship. It is still a work in progress, as Enlightenment thinking, human nature and a history of segregation,<sup>851</sup> have all impacted on this denomination resulting in the establishing of status groups, just like their British counterparts, with European Americans at the top of the tree handing out favours to all others who were also deemed to be ‘less than’. So, despite seeking and encouraging ‘unity in diversity’, they have recognised in recent times that they have failed to achieve an acceptance of ‘diversity’ in unity. European Americans have found it easy to celebrate difference, as long as that difference happened ‘somewhere else’ and did not directly impact upon their way of life.<sup>852</sup>

Their expectation had always been that groups which had been encouraged to develop their own identity, on coming together as one in public celebration or worship, would subsume their own culture, willing always to defer in favour of Eurocentric leadership and practices.

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<sup>850</sup>*American Baptist Policy Statement on Denominational Inclusiveness*, 7042:6/93. Available from [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) [Accessed 02/06/09], 4.

<sup>851</sup>Available from [www.historyonthenet.com](http://www.historyonthenet.com) [Accessed 17/10/10]. ‘In a bid to stop black Americans from being equal, the southern states passed a series of laws known as Jim Crow (a character used to make fun of black people) laws which discriminated against blacks and made sure that they were segregated (treated unequally) from whites’.

<sup>852</sup>*American Baptist Policy Statement on Denominational Inclusiveness*, 7042:6/93, 3, 4.

Paternalism had been the order of the day,<sup>853</sup> and the challenge now is, to agree that there can be diversity and yet unity, so that all voices and ways of expressing their worship to God can be heard and accepted as being God-inspired.<sup>854</sup>

As a means of achieving this, ABCUSA have since 1972 determined that there should be ‘proportional representation of women, men, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Caucasians, and Indians on the American Baptist General Board, National Programme Boards and Committees’.<sup>855</sup> In addition Caucus<sup>856</sup> have been established whose role is to advocate and educate locally, regionally and nationally, across its own constituency, other groupings, and within the wider denomination.<sup>857</sup> It is indeed still a work in progress.

Deotis Roberts Sr., in speaking of African American peoples stated that full consciousness can only be achieved:

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<sup>853</sup>Whilst for Caribbean Christians they were allowed or expected to provide the funding to establish churches, ABCUSA made it a policy never to allow indigenous leadership to do the same in any of their mission stations and this meant that ultimately only white ethnics understood how leadership worked in its totality, and therefore left ‘minorities...always at the mercy of the majority’. *American Baptist Quarterly*, Volume V, December 1986, Number 4, 338.

<sup>854</sup>‘1972 Study Commission on Denominational Structures began a process of diversification of leadership, ensuring a system of proportional representation throughout the denomination and at all levels of leadership throughout the denomination’. *American Baptist Policy Statement on Denominational Inclusiveness*, 7042:6/93. Available from [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) [Accessed 02/06/09].

<sup>855</sup>*American Baptist Policy Statement on Denominational Inclusiveness*, 7042:6/93. Available from [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) [Accessed 02/06/09], 4.

<sup>856</sup>Each ethnic group within ABCUSA is organized at one level under the leadership of strategists who liaise within the denomination on their behalf. However independent of them are what is known as Alliances or Caucuses. Each ethnic group has its own Caucus which ‘has a place at the general board table’ and sees its role as hosting annual regional meetings on two levels, for the leaders within their constituency – for education, training and continuing ministerial development amongst that constituency, and for the church at large. It maintains and encourages the development of ministry in context. Quote taken from a written interview undertaken with The Revd. Dr Brenda R Halliburton, National Co-ordinator, Intercultural Ministries/Black Churches Strategist, ABCUSA, 20 April 2010.

<sup>857</sup>Written interview undertaken with The Revd. Dr Brenda R Halliburton, National Co-ordinator, Intercultural Ministries/Black Churches Strategist, ABC USA, 20 April 2010.

When we know our identity, have gained our self-respect, and are fully confident as a people, we will be in a position to be reconciled to others as equals and not as subordinates. If we can take our consciousness up into our Christian faith, we will find it not only unmanly but unchristian to be reconciled on less than an equal basis.<sup>858</sup>

I cannot be sure of all the cultural developments which have been maintained by African American Christians within the ABCUSA, but I can be about their having achieved the full consciousness which Deotis Roberts was speaking of, as available for examination are the words of one of the most famous African American ministers within the ABCUSA, and a much loved symbol of his nation, Martin Luther King Jr.

Kings' 'I Have a Dream' speech made on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC, in 1963 (appendix 8), is a living record as to how far they have come. The balance of his argument, the ability to articulate not just the history of African Americans, but America's history, and the deep theological reflection which runs as a seam throughout the piece, speaks of a people who despite the great many difficulties which they have experienced, have nevertheless reached their Promised Land, and were at that point in time calling on the majority of European Americans to join them. King was an African American, a member of ABCUSA, and it was as a Baptist that he and other members of the Civil Rights Movement turned American society upside down, confident that they had something to bring to the table, which was of equal value to all others.

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<sup>858</sup>Deotis Roberts, 'Black Consciousness in Theological Perspective', in J Gardiner and Deotis Roberts, Sr., eds., *Quest for a Black Theology* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1971), 64.

African American Baptists and British Caribbean Baptists are from the same root – Africa, they have had the same or similar experiences of being traded and treated as slaves. Each has found freedom through their faith in God, delivered to them in the first instance by the first African American ABCUSA Minister, George Liele, and yet one group has gone on to significantly change their world, and the other to be majorly changed by the world in which they live. Why? The answer I believe rests in the only visible difference to be seen amongst them, that of cultural affirmation. Whereas ABCUSA encouraged it as foundational to a true expression of faith, Caribbean Baptists were forced to assimilate, acculturated into the one true way in which to express their faith through that of a Colonial British cultural identity.

The experience of African American Baptists within the ABCUSA therefore substantiates my argument that British Caribbean Christians have significantly failed to develop in their understanding of God, and as a consequence are failing in their social relationships with each other, and the world around them, because of their having been denied the ability to express their faith out of the entirety of their culture – being both British and Caribbean.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

I began this chapter by stating that ‘a tree separated from its roots will soon die’ and demonstrated how the story of Moses and the Exodus often told to each other by Caribbean people is an incomplete story when compared to the biblical story wherein Moses committed to developing a new community of faith by maintaining their connectedness to their history, and cultural identity, enabled them to develop their faith in God. I went on to give a twenty first century example of successful cultural inclusion amongst African American Baptists

whose past was similar if not the same as British Caribbean Baptists, but have because of cultural inclusion developed national leaders – modern days Moses – both within the denomination and wider American society, have turned their nation upside down, for the better.<sup>859</sup>

I conclude this chapter by contending that British Caribbean Christians in mainline denominations, born of the same root are however still on their journey, but without culturally-aware inspired leaders, and separated from their roots are close to dying spiritually, culturally and socially. This research has suggested that their theological understanding, like their historical and cultural knowledge is limited and incomplete as they continue to see nothing of value within their history, context and identity. They must therefore learn from those around them, such as the ABCUSA as to how to find new ways of being, identifying and developing their own modern day Moses' able to lead and enable their understanding of whom they are in God. Despite having physically left their 'Egypt' in 1838, the oppressiveness of colonial rule meant that they took the gods worshipped in enslavement with them. They in partnership with creative leaders need to remove these gods from their midst, together with the privileging of many of the acculturated ways in which they choose to worship them, otherwise they will continue to wander in a 'spiritual' wilderness. They need to replant themselves with much love and care, in good soil, with agreed cultural practices at its root. In the next and concluding chapter I shall suggest possible ways forward for them, and for future research in this area.

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<sup>859</sup> Many Americans argue that without the Civil Rights Movement and more particularly the pastoral leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., there would currently be no Barak Obama, President of the United States of America.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### STILL REACHING FOR THE PROMISED LAND

*Doing local theology is like preparing local food.  
Ingredients can be imported,  
but they have to be adapted to the local purpose...  
and the tastes of your guests!<sup>860</sup>*

##### 7.1 Reflections on Research Design

As I concluded this thesis I asked myself whether there are things which I could have, or would now choose to do differently. What follows are my reflective thoughts as to how my research may have been designed differently.

I believe that my methods – using methodological triangulation, and grounded theory - were effective in that they brought a completely different perspective to the study of British Caribbean Christianity. In revealing the presence of two cultures vying for attention, supported by the controlling ‘hand’ of social stratification uncovered new knowledge, in terms of understanding how British Caribbean Christianity expresses and organises itself. However, I now realise that though the focus groups were well attended by members of the congregation, they were not so well attended by those holding leadership positions. This has proved to have had its advantages, however knowing what I now know particularly in regards to the status groups which prevail, I would possibly have spent more time in my first year

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<sup>860</sup>Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, 19.

seeking to talk one-to-one with them, rather than speaking to them only as a group, which I did via the deacons meetings.

In regards to the focus groups themselves, I was happy with the attendance, but if I had my time again, I would make sure to emphasise to the church and particularly the minister, that each was as much a spiritual exercise as their attendance at bible studies and prayer meetings, and therefore could be of benefit to all who chose to attend.

Personally, and finally, I have to say that I as an ordained minister and trained clinical chaplain/counsellor, I found it very difficult to maintain the role as a participant observer in a church with perspectives regarding culture, leadership and forms of social stratification, which were so different to my own experiences of the Church. For the sake of completing my research I had to stay objective, often choosing to simply smile. However, on many occasions participants tried to see my silence as demonstrating a degree of agreement, particularly when issues were contentious or feelings seemed hurt. Fortunately, I learnt to use my training as a clinical counsellor to deflect much of the attention directed towards me, by asking them such questions as, 'How did that make you feel?' 'What do you think you learnt from this?' and 'What might you do differently the next time?' Yet, I suppose this is one of the built-in difficulties of being a participant observer, being present, but remaining detached in order to achieve research goals, when working with living human documents. How far I was able to achieve those goals are contained in the following conclusions, as I summarise my findings, make recommendations for practice and suggested directions for future research in this area.

## 7.2 Summary

This research began by questioning why when faith appears to be paramount amongst Caribbean and British Caribbean Christians, with church attendance relatively greater than amongst other constituencies in Britain, their social and religious experiences in fact demonstrate a people who appear to be somewhat ignorant of what it means to be ‘Christ-like’. Past research has examined the expression of Caribbean Christianity in Britain, through a Pentecostal lens and through the various aspects of their lives; enslavement, faith, worship, politics, and gender. I sought instead to bring to the academic forum insight from a new perspective, examining the role of culture and cultural activities in the development of British Caribbean Christianity through the previously undocumented context of mainline Christians in a Jamaican majority Baptist Church, CSMBC. The following is a summary of my findings.

Chapter one told how a diverse group of Africans, forced together as slaves, left alone to worship God began to develop new cultural identities. It detailed how African Christians led by Liele and those who followed him, began to use the language of their masters to oppose those who sought to keep them not only enslaved, but subservient. It showed how through enslavement and emancipation, they played a significant role in not simply seeking freedom from enslavement, but the freedom to declare that they too were human beings created in the image of God, and able to express their faith in their own distinctive ways. It revealed how two worlds collided during the Great Revival (1860-1862) – acknowledged by many missionaries to be in the very same vein as revivals happening in North America and Europe at that time – and how Western missionaries having brought their Christian message clothed in Western culture, on seeing it being led by Africans and expressed through African lenses

deemed it to be syncretic. It then detailed how the Western Church which remained, came together with the State, to engineer, through 'divide and rule' a co-opted, obedient African Jamaican middle class. Suppressed were their cultural identities primarily in the areas of family and children, music and dress, as they were subject to the 'forced adoption' of English cultural identities. It concluded by revealing how two generations of church-led cultural oppression had achieved what nearly 200 years of 'seasoning' within enslavement had failed to do – the suppression of the remaining foundational aspects of their cultural identity.

Chapter two demonstrated how a people having imbibed colonial, social and cultural values, took their 'fractured identity'<sup>861</sup> to the mother country, England, in the hope of finding acceptance and inclusion as full British citizens. It showed that whilst most experienced rejection - Pentecostals forming their own churches - the dogged determination of Baptists, and others in mainline traditions, to be assimilated into the British Christian community meant that they not only accepted the suppression of what remained of their cultural identity when at worship, but ultimately became the enforcers of their own oppression. This chapter argued that as a result each group became increasingly alienated not only from the other, but most significantly from their children. Children who because of their cultural confusion and the resultant cultural, historical, and social dislocation<sup>862</sup> from their Caribbean heritage,

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<sup>861</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 8, 105-106.

<sup>862</sup> Aija Poikane-Daumke, 'Afro-Germans and the Problems of Cultural Location'. Available from [www.africawithin.com/asante/afrogermans.htm](http://www.africawithin.com/asante/afrogermans.htm) [Accessed 13/12/10]. 'Cultural dislocation occurs when people live their lives on someone else's terms other than their own...the dislocation is reinforced by the culture of the (British) people'.

'Historical dislocation occurs when people do not know to whom they are connected or live their lives outside of the influence of their own intellectual traditions, hence, they live on the fringes of the experiences of others'. That which Aija states about Afro-Jamaicans in regards to social dislocation can be said about British Caribbean people. He stated that 'Social dislocation is sometimes experienced by Afro-Germans because of their colour

rejected the three pronged attack of society, family and the church, which sought to suppress the culture which they had been raised into, demanding instead a holistic relevant British Caribbean cultural identity. The chapter concludes by highlighting not just a people with a fractured identity, but a declining and divided church community, increasingly dislocated from their roots, with the most creative young minds choosing to either leave the church, join white-led Pentecostal denominations which many of their parents had rejected years earlier, or affected by globalisation, establishing new ministries comparable in style and practice, to that of African American Pentecostalism.

In chapter four I identified and demonstrated how not just one but two cultures were vying for pre-eminence, in the life of British Caribbean Christians, somewhat reminiscent of British-led Churches in Jamaica during Colonial times. It explained how the elders conditioned like Pavlov's dogs<sup>863</sup> had been trained to accept the privileging of English culture and particularly the English language, above their own mother-tongue Patois, which was only to be used in church primarily for telling jokes, or to express anger. It revealed how because of learned behaviours, it continues to influence the leaders of the church, and demonstrated why such alienation persists today amongst a younger and more 'educated' generation. A generation who having returned to the church, wanting to 'fit in', and being in the minority, are powerless to implement change, thereby contributing to the maintenance of the status quo.

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and historical origin. Often because they are easy to identify by their complexion the Afro-Germans are marginalized socially if not discriminated against outright'.

<sup>863</sup>Physiologist Ian Pavlov developed a theory known as 'classical conditioning' which demonstrated that dogs (and later human beings) could be conditioned to respond to certain triggers. For many of the elders growing up in Jamaica, the triggers for compliance were often the stick at school, or acceptance in wider society. Available from [www.learning-theories.com/classical-conditioning-pavlov.html](http://www.learning-theories.com/classical-conditioning-pavlov.html) [Accessed 06/01/12].

Chapter five was concerned primarily with analysing the cause of the continued privileging of English cultural values at the expense of their own. It detailed how, central to their alienation and dislocation had been the power of Enlightenment thinking, which has persisted to the present day, carried by missionaries who sought to imprint Western values through the provision of educational establishments and the training of native leadership in Western ways. I analysed how such a belief system has had the effect of redirecting the spiritual compass of African Jamaican people away from the worship of God, firstly to the worship of the missionary, and then Englishness and English cultural values. I revealed how it has been maintained through the establishing of status groups which often create irreconcilable divisions, adding to the alienation of many. The chapter concludes by examining and comparing the opinions of leading British Caribbean and Caribbean theologians to my own findings. Whilst I found amongst them an awareness of the need to be culturally inclusive, because they speak from a Pentecostal perspective, they lacked an understanding of the plight of Caribbean Christians in mainline churches in Britain; their different histories and experiences, and were therefore unable to effectively speak into their situations. A majority of academics, educators and theologians practicing in Jamaica, were also shown to have imbibed the same colonial belief systems as the elders, and inhibited by it, were also unable to assist in the developing of contextual Jamaican Christian cultural identities.

In chapter six I reflected theologically on the implicit theology of Moses and the Exodus as understood by Jamaican people, and in making it explicit showed how the cultural identity of a people became foundational to their understanding of God, and the expression of their faith as they were formed into a new nation. As theological reflection is a process which has been

undertaken by successive generations, the chapter concluded by bringing Jamaican Baptist history full circle, comparing how British Caribbean and African American Baptists, who despite having similar histories of enslavement and the same root in George Liele, the first ABCUSA African American ordained minister, because of a culture denied and a culture encouraged by modern day Moses – Judson and King – created two very different Baptist worlds. Whilst ABCUSA grew and thrived, developing within it many unique cultural identities, British Caribbean Baptists, have become alienated, voiceless, and somewhat powerless still reaching for their Promised Land.

### **7.3 Recommendations for Practice**

This research was undertaken in order to examine British Caribbean Christianity from a new perspective, that of culture, and how it was or was not influenced by it. I believe that it has succeeded in bringing this to the fore, however I also believe that it highlights the fact that the issues which primarily concern many British Caribbean Christians, stem not from issues of exclusion borne of racism, (as is so often stated to be the case), but rather the internal struggle for cultural acceptance amongst themselves, though racism obviously still exists. A struggle caused by a legacy of self-loathing, fractured identities and double-consciousness which began in enslavement through the attack on their culture, and which continues to be prosecuted over a hundred years later by the elders and leaders of the church, mostly first generation British Caribbean, who choose to continue to model this form of Christianity rather than seek to develop a new more appropriate contextual theology of their own.

Their physical enslavement has been replaced by a continuing mental enslavement, and this surprised me, particularly as, though this research was primarily concerned with the largest Baptist church with a majority Jamaican congregation in Birmingham, it appeared not to be atypical of smaller Baptist congregations around them, with similar cultural configurations. It is easy then to understand why British Caribbean Christians have gained a reputation for being more British than many British people, it being easier for them to seek to imitate and dialogue with a people they believe themselves similar to, rather than their fellow ‘Black’ people who they identify as being ‘different’ because of how they express themselves culturally.

It is a position reinforced by British society whose major reference to Caribbean culture and its people, has in the past been the minimal inclusion in education which tells of the slave ‘triangle’ and little of the Caribbean presence in Britain, particularly during World War Two. This therefore reinforces the belief that the presence and culture of African Jamaicans and British Caribbean people as a whole, lacks anything which is noteworthy or to be admired. This is exemplified in the life of one British Caribbean focus group attendee, who having reflected on the experience, admitted to me that she had now come to realise that:

I have no problem with blackness. What I do have a problem with is, understanding that I am black. For as I look around me I cannot see me, except my hands – they are black - but the world around me, the faces I see are white and everything white is positive. Now I see my church, my people who have reinforced this confusion in me, and the confusion I feel about my blackness. I gave a testimony in church recently, telling them I was finally proud of being black, and some in the leadership said I shouldn’t have said it because there were white people in the congregation!<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>864</sup>Sister Jones, British Caribbean. 11 February 2011.

So how then do British Caribbean Christians move forward and what might their future look like? The hope of first and successive generations of British Caribbean people had always been that once their elders had died then the young would ‘rescue’ the church thereby enabling them to be all that they should be. However, not only is cultural alienation a reality for the older generation, but my research suggests that it is being encouraged now by a younger generation simply in order to ‘fit in’, and who are at the same time becoming culturally, historically and socially dislocated from their Caribbean cultural heritage.<sup>865</sup> The missionary burden has been carried by Jamaican and British Caribbean Christians for long enough. It is time that British Caribbean Christians have the entirety of their agreed cultural practices - being both British and Caribbean - celebrated and given their rightful place, as an enabler of their worship of God, and so I make the following suggestions.

Firstly, there needs to be an acceptance that in the twenty first century there remains a legacy of enslavement, an assault on Caribbean cultural identities, which continues to find expression in the inherited faith of Caribbean and British Caribbean Christians. To let this continue unchecked is to not only negatively determine the religious attendance of future generations of British Caribbean Christians in mainline churches, but also creates wider social implications in terms of their alienation and dislocation caused by how they see themselves and are seen as they interact with wider British and European society.

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<sup>865</sup>This was best exemplified in 2007 when churches across Britain celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807. A great and glorious moment in British history it may have been but not for British Caribbean’s and their enslaved ancestors who did not in fact gain their freedom until 1838, and therefore their celebration should have been in 2008, the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Instead it was an historical event which remained obscure and therefore uncelebrated by British Caribbean Christians who know little of their history.

I mention European society given that new migration laws within Britain of lessening migration from the Commonwealth in favour of those from Europe<sup>866</sup> means that with a decreasing minority British Caribbean population, it is imperative that British Caribbean ministers encourage links with the African and Caribbean diaspora, in order to prevent them, from becoming even more alienated, and resentful of other groups around them.

Nationally and locally, change needs to happen, but change which is led primarily by British Caribbean Christian, educators, academics and theologians, who must be at the forefront of rooting the cultural identity of their people in the Word of God. They must unite, and use their skills to develop a relevant contextual theology, thereby strengthening British Caribbean Christians and leaders who need to be empowered to serve. There needs to be greater understanding, teaching, study and analysis of the Word of God in order to engender growth and dispel 'old wives tales' and other belief systems developed through ignorance.

A new creativity of thought needs to take place, so that their cultural identities are no longer seen as alien from the Word of God, but can be celebrated throughout the year, as being a part of the expression of the Church. Cultural practices which found favour in the focus groups, such as the family, music and language need to be incorporated into the worship and ritual practices of the church. The congregational nature of the Baptist church lends itself to

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<sup>866</sup>In 1972 the UK acceded to the Treaty of Rome regulation 1612/68 then in May 2004 they granted free movement to EU citizens from Eastern Europe. This resulted in 375,000 official migrants from Europe and since then the British people have demanded new immigration rules, which will be introduced as of April 2011 resulting in continued free migration from Europe, but restricted migration from non EU countries, primarily the skilled and highly skilled, which will almost certainly disqualify the majority of potential migrants from Commonwealth regions such as Asia and the Caribbean. Available from [www.aboutmigration.co.uk](http://www.aboutmigration.co.uk) [Accessed 17/01/11].

adopting unique practices, local theologies in each congregation, and therefore in a church like CSMBC for example, a deacon committee for cultural inclusion could be implemented. This I believe would enable a greater understanding of God, and development of faith, as they express themselves out of their God-given British Caribbean cultural identities. They must also seek to renew the church, through greater local, regional, denominational and national events, aimed at understanding how their faith impacts, and is impacted by the world around them.

British Caribbean Christians belonging to mainline churches are nevertheless not an isolated or separate group of people, but a part of the wider Christian Church and therefore it is also incumbent on ecumenical groups, denominations, colleges, and seminaries to accept that this is an issue outstanding in their mission history.<sup>867</sup> They, together with universities need to partner with the British Caribbean Christians, and seek to learn about and understand, not only their culture but their social and religious history, as a step towards assisting them in their development. Given that such organisations have ownership of a variety of educational facilities, I challenge them to consider establishing British Caribbean theological, social, cultural and historical departments within their institutions, as well as linking up with similar institutions in the Caribbean region, in order to enable more effective leadership and ministerial development within the British Caribbean community. Also, the inclusion of Caribbean history within mainstream education would perhaps go some way to redressing the

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<sup>867</sup>This argument has been made in two significant and distinct ways, firstly by Roswith Gerloff in her PhD thesis, 'A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic cultural and theological interaction' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1991), and John L Wilkinson, an Anglican Priest in his book, *Church in Black and White: The Black Christian Tradition in "Mainstream" Churches in England: A White Response and Testimony* (Edinburgh: Pahl-Rugenstein and Saint Andrew Press, 1993).

imbalance which exists within the wider British Caribbean community, enabling all of British society to finally confront its joint past, move forward together, recognising that there is more to Caribbean and British Caribbean people than a history of enslavement.

I know that change takes time and so in order to begin the process I suggest that all relevant bodies, should in the immediate future liaise with autonomous British Caribbean organisations, and partner with respected and able theologians, academics and educators who can ably represent the community, and bring new insights. British Caribbean people have long recognised that certain Caribbean theologians are ‘preferred’ by the wider British Christian community. Whether ‘token’ or otherwise, they have not necessarily been a representative presence, and therefore are often considered to be working to the detriment of their own people. It is a necessity therefore that British society and church organisations in particular cease encouraging and giving leadership positions primarily and often only, to those who have been educated in their own institutions, and are as a result acculturated into British society and its values, with little respect for their own.

#### **7.4 Areas for Future Research**

Any future research may want to use the Covenant, and how it was created, through focus groups, as a model for the work ahead. Others may wish to consider undertaking further studies in regards to cultural inclusion and the Jamaican church, including comparative research between British Caribbean and African Jamaican Christians within mainline churches, as well those of other Commonwealth Caribbean islands.

Wider research also needs to take place in regards to the ‘rejection’ of Black identity particularly by Black people of Jamaican descent both in the Church and the wider community.<sup>868</sup> A Swahili proverb states that ‘The beginning of wisdom is knowing who you are’.<sup>869</sup> Unfortunately for members of CSMBC in the construction of their identity, they were told who they were and as a consequence, according to Griffith, suffer from a view of their own identity which ‘is fundamentally negative’.<sup>870</sup> Future researchers might therefore also want to do a comparative study of the identity issues faced by first, second and now third generation British Caribbean people of Jamaican descent, and those Jamaicans who have been raised in the context of an independent nation.<sup>871</sup>

In conclusion then, my hope is that as a result of this combined and concerted effort, British Caribbean Christians will not continue to be a people full of expectation, enthusiasm and desire to grow in God, whilst failing to see their expectations fulfilled. Should these tasks be undertaken, I believe that a truly contextual British Caribbean Christianity will emerge, celebrating both their British and Caribbean cultural identities, enabling their public and private lives to finally come together, so that they may look in the mirror, see their true reflection, and rest in the knowledge that it is God-given.

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<sup>868</sup>Phillips, *Windrush*, 316. Arnold, *From Scepticism to Hope*, 87.

<sup>869</sup>Griffith, *Caribbean Cultural Identities*, 35.

<sup>870</sup>*Ibid*, 112.

<sup>871</sup>Jamaica received its independence on 6 August 1962.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 1796 Covenant of George Liele<sup>872</sup>

1. We are of the Anabaptist persuasion because we believe it agreeable to the Scriptures. Proof: - (Matt.iii.1-3; 2 Cor. Vi. 14-18.)
2. We hold to keep the Lord's Day throughout the year, in a place appointed for Public Worship, in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Mark xvi. 2, 5, 6; Col. iii.16.)
3. We hold to be Baptised in a river, or in a place where there is much water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. Iii. 13, 16, 17; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Matt. xxviii.19.)
4. We hold to receiving the Lord's Supper in obedience according to His commands. (Mark xiv. 22-24; John vi. 53-57.)
5. We hold to the ordinance of washing one another's feet. (John xiii. 2-17.)
6. We hold to receive and admit young children into the Church according to the Word of God. (Luke ii. 27-28; Mark x.13-16.)
7. We hold to pray over the sick, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. (James v.14,15.)
8. We hold to labouring one with another according to the Word of God. (Matt. xviii. 15-18.)
9. We hold to appoint Judges and such other Officers among us, to settle any matter according to the Word of God. (Acts vi. 1-3.)
10. We hold not to shedding of blood. (Genesis ix. 6; Matt. xxvi. 51-52.)
11. We are forbidden to go to law with another before the unjust, but to settle any matter we have before the Saints. (1 Cor. Vi. 1-3.)
12. We are forbidden to swear not at all (sic). (Matt. v.33-37; Jas. v.12.)
13. We are forbidden to eat blood, for it is the life of a creature, and from things strangled, and from meat offered to idols. (Acts xv. 29.)
14. We are forbidden to wear any costly raiment, such as superfluity. (1 Peter iii. 3, 4; 1 Timothy ii. 9-10.)
15. We permit no slaves to join the Church without first having a few lines from their owners of their good behaviour. (1 Peter ii.13-16; 1Thess. iii. 13.)
16. To avoid Fornication, we permit none to keep each other, except they be married according to the Word of God. (1 Cor. Vii. 2; Heb. xiii. 4.)
17. If a slave or servant misbehave to their owners they are to be dealt with according to the Word of God. (1 Tim. i. 6; Eph. Vi. 5; 1 Peter ii. 18-22; Titus ii. 9-11.)
18. If any one of this Religion should transgress and walk disorderly, and not according to the Commands which we have received in this Covenant, he will be censured according to the Word of God. (Luke xii. 47-48.)
19. We hold, if a brother or sister should transgress any of these articles written in this Covenant so as to become a swearer, a fornicator, or adulterer; a covetous person, an idolater, a railer, a drunkard, an extortioner or whoremonger; or should commit any abominable sin,

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<sup>872</sup>Charles W Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 190.

and do not give satisfaction to the Church, according to the Word of God, he or she, shall be put away from among us, not to keep company, nor to eat with him. (1 Cor. V. 11-13)

20. We hold if a Brother or Sister should transgress, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, and he, or she, after being justly dealt with agreeable to the 8<sup>th</sup> article, and be put out of the Church, that they shall have no right or claim whatsoever to be interred into the Burying-ground during the time they are put out, should they depart life; but should they return in peace, and make a concession so as to give satisfaction, according to the word of God, they shall be received into the Church again and have all privileges as before granted. (2 John i. 9-10; Gal. vi. 1, 2; Luke xvii, 3, 4.)

21. We hold to all the other Commandments, Articles, Covenants, and Ordinances, recorded in the Holy Scriptures as are set forth by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ and His Apostles, which are not written in this Covenant, and to live to them as nigh as we possibly can, agreeable to the Word of God. (John xv. 7-14.)

### APPENDIX 3 Church Leadership Form

British Caribbean Christianity: Church Leadership Participation

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw any time without affecting your relationship with any other parties (denomination or university).

The research project aims to explore the understanding of culture within the context of the worship of the church and amongst the members of Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church by means of participant observation of worship, focus groups, targeted interviews and analysis of publicly available church information. At this stage in the research I shall be observing leadership meetings (Deacons and Ministers) in order to hear first-hand what people think and understand about the place of culture in the church, in relation to a number of selected themes. (Language, Family, Church Leadership, Worship, Proverbs, Personal Appearance) I shall also over time be undertaking targeted interviews in order to clarify further or explain information which I have received. During my time in leadership meetings, data will be collected by recording the gender, ethnicity and age of those participating by way of note taking.

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions either before the meeting starts or afterwards. Once it has begun it would be best to let the group finish before raising any further questions regarding the project. I agree to show the results of my thesis to the Pastor on behalf of the Church leadership, before its publication. Apart from that which is already in the public domain, no names will not be associated with research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant be known only to me, the researcher, the pastor(s) and, of course, your fellow participants. I also agree that whatever church matters are discussed at meetings which I attend, will not be written down, discussed, relayed in any way, or used in my research

There are no risks associated with this study.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are that you are able to ultimately gain insight as church members tell their stories about their culture, hear how they relate their experiences to the Bible and the life of the church, as well as participating fully yourself. It is hoped that your participation in this conversation will be an encouragement to the church, and one that deepens your understanding and knowledge of the Christian faith.

Please sign your consent on behalf of the Leadership of CSMBC to participate, with full knowledge of the nature of the project and its procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The Revd. Doreen Morrison  
PhD Student Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology  
Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham

## **APPENDIX 4 Personal Information Form**

### **Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church Study**

#### **Focus Group: Background Information**

For the purposes of understanding the recording of the conversation ( and who said what), it would be really helpful if you would provide the following information.

Thankyou.

Name:

Gender (male or female):

Age:

Marital Status:

Country of Birth:

Nationality:

Ethnic Identity (e.g. Black British, Jamaican, Barbadian etc.):

Occupation (if retired previous occupation):

How long have you attended CSMBC?:

## APPENDIX 5 Participation Consent Form

### British Caribbean Christianity: Focus Group Participants

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw any time without affecting your relationship with any other parties (church or university).

The research project aims to explore the understanding of culture within the context of the worship of the church and amongst the members of Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church by means of participant observation of worship, focus groups, targeted interviews and analysis of publicly available church information. At this stage in the research I am beginning to conduct focus groups in order to hear first-hand what people think and understand about the place of culture in the church, in relation to a number of selected themes. During this focus group, data will be collected by recording the conversation, and me the researcher taking notes.

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions either before the focus group starts or afterwards. Once it has begun it would be best to let the focus group finish before raising any further questions regarding the project. I am happy to share the findings with you once the research is complete. I have already agreed to show the results of my thesis to the Church leadership before its publication. However, your name will not be associated with research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant in this focus group will be known only to the researchers, the pastor(s) and, of course, your fellow participants this evening.

There are no risks associated with this study.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are that you are able to listen to other church members tell their stories about their culture, hear how they relate their experiences to the Bible and the life of the church, as well as participating fully yourself. It is hoped that your participation in this conversation will be an encouragement to you, and one that deepens your understanding and knowledge of the Christian faith.

Please sign your consent to participate, with full knowledge of the nature of the project and its procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

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Print Name

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Signature of Participant

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Date

The Rev Doreen Morrison  
PhD Student Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology  
Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham

## **APPENDIX 6 Focus Group Questions**

### 1) Language – Patois and English

1. What constitutes a Caribbean language? How many languages are spoken in the country you come from? What are they? Can you give an example?
2. Which language do you tend to speak most at home? In work? With friends? In Church? Why?
3. In worship – at Church – do you think any of them are considered acceptable/unacceptable? Why?
4. Which Bible translations have you used? Which do you use today? Why?
5. Are any of the translations considered more acceptable than another? Why?
6. Which language tends to be spoken in Church – to pray, to announce, to read scripture? Why do you think that is?
7. Listen to this reading of the Bible in Patois? What do you think?
8. Is the language you use in any way identified with your status or social class? How?
9. Does the Bible say anything about languages being acceptable and unacceptable? Where? What do you think?

### (2) Family – Marriage and Children

1. How is family defined in the Caribbean?
2. How is marriage defined in the Caribbean? Does it vary from island to island?
3. How are relationships legitimised/approved in the eyes of the community/Church? Are there any differences? Why?
4. Are any considered to be more/less acceptable – Partnerships, Divorce, common-law or serial monogamy?
5. Can you think of any Scriptural references which relate to this?
6. What role if any do babies/children have in legitimising/approving relationships?
7. What is the Churches understanding and response to babies born out of wedlock?
8. Can you think of any Scriptural references which relate to this?
9. Can you think of any sayings used by adults/parents – in raising children?
10. Can you think of any Scriptural references which relate to this?

### (3) Leadership - including the positioning of women

1. What is the Caribbean understanding of leadership?
2. Please explain your experience of what or who qualified to be a leader in your past/present Church e.g.
  - Male/female
  - black/white
3. Has a cultural understanding of leadership ever influenced a decision your or your congregation has made as to who should be a leader?
4. Can you think of any Scriptural references which informed you or your churches decision?
5. What is the Caribbean cultural understanding of the role of women?
6. Has their role/position always been reflected in the Churches which you have attended? Yes/No Why?

7. Which Scriptural references do you think informed you or your churches decision?
8. Have you changed your opinion in regards to who can lead since you changed country, church or denomination? Yes/No Why?

(4) Worship - Music and Singing

1. In the Caribbean Church which you grew up in were there forms of worship and praise e.g. types of music, clapping, instruments – which were considered acceptable and unacceptable?
2. Which forms of worship and praise are used in your church?
3. Are there any types of music, instruments or forms of worship and praise which are considered acceptable/ unacceptable in Church? Which? Why?
4. Do you practise or listen to any form of worship and praise at home which you would not share with folks in the Church? Why?
5. Have you changed your opinion about acceptable/unacceptable music? Why?
6. Have you ever left a church or denomination because of how they worshipped and/or praised? Why?
7. Can you think of any Scriptural references which inform you or your churches decision?

(5) Duppies, Proverbs, Death Rituals, Ancestors and Food

1. How does Caribbean culture see the supernatural – the World of the Spirit – Spirits, Anansi, Duppies, God, Ancestors?
2. Are these views different from the views you hold as a Christians? Why?
3. Have you changed your opinion in any way since you moved country, church or denomination? Why?
4. How does this compare to Scripture? Same or different?
5. How death is honoured e.g. funerals ‘celebrated’ in the Caribbean community? Is it similar or different to how it is done in Britain? Why do you think this is?
6. Can you think of any scriptural reference which defines how funerals are to be carried out?
7. What do you think of Caribbean proverbs? Where do they come from? (Things Momma Used to Say) Do they have a place in Caribbean communities today?
8. Can you think of any scriptural texts to which they are comparable?
9. What is the significance of food in the life of Caribbean people?
10. Apart from at Easter time, are there any other times when Caribbean food is used as part of Church celebrations?
11. Have any types of Caribbean food been incorporated into the worship life of the church? If so, which and when?

(6) Personal Appearance - Hair and Clothes

1. What is the Caribbean understanding of how one should present themselves in Church. Comment on:-
  - ✓ Hair
  - ✓ Clothes
  - ✓ Hats

2. When you were growing up were things different? Yes/No Explain?
3. Were there any unacceptable styles? What were they and what would happen to the wearer?
4. Which Scriptural references do you think informed your parents or your churches decision?
5. Have you ever not gone back to a Church because of its dress code? Why?
6. Has your opinion changed since you got older, changed country, church or denomination? How?
7. Have you done things differently for the next generation? Yes/No Why?
8. Which influences you the most as to how you dress for Church today - Scripture or Culture? Explain?

## APPENDIX 7 'Exodus' by Bob Marley<sup>873</sup>

Exodus, movement of Jah people, oh yeah  
Open your eyes and let me tell you this  
Men and people will fight ya down (Tell me why?)  
when ya see Jah light  
Let me tell you, if you're not wrong (Then why?)  
ev'rything is alright  
So we gonna walk, alright, through the roads of creation  
We're the generation (Tell me why)  
trod through great tribulation  
Exodus, movement of Jah people Exodus, movement of Jah people

Open your eyes and look within  
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?  
We know where we're going; we know where we're from  
We're leaving Babylon, we're going to our fatherland  
Exodus, movement of Jah people (Movement of Jah people)  
Send us another Brother Moses gonna cross the Red Sea  
(Movement of Jah people)  
Send us another Brother Moses gonna cross the Red Sea  
Exodus, movement of Jah people Exodus,  
Exodus, Exodus, Exodus, Exodus, Exodus,  
Exodus, Exodus Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

Open your eyes and look within  
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?  
We know where we're going; we know where we're from  
We're leaving Babylon, we're going to the fatherland  
Exodus, movement of Jah people  
Exodus, movement of Jah people Movement of Jah people  
Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

Jah come to break down 'pression,  
rule equality Wipe away transgression,  
set the captives free  
Exodus, movement of Jah people  
Exodus, movement of Jah people Movement of Jah people  
Move! Move! Move! Move! Move! Movement of Jah people.

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<sup>873</sup>Bob Marley, *Exodus*. Available from [www.onelovepro.ch/Marley-Exodus](http://www.onelovepro.ch/Marley-Exodus) [Accessed 21/05/2010].

## **APPENDIX 8 Martin Luther King Jr., 'I have a Dream'<sup>874</sup>**

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free.

One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.

So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition. In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned.

Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.

So we have come to cash this check - a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.

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<sup>874</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., speech, 'I have a Dream,' Lincoln Memorial Washington D.C., August 28, 1963. Available from [www.presentationmagazine.com](http://www.presentationmagazine.com) [Accessed 18/10/10].

There will be neither rest nor tranquillity in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights.

The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges. But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvellous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" we can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my

four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania! Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado! Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California! But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee! Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

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Sermon preached by Pastor Andrews, CSMBC, Handsworth, 31 August 2008.

Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, CSMBC, Handsworth, 7 September 2008.

Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, CSMBC, Handsworth, 9 March 2008.

Sermon preached by Pastor Brown, CSMBC, Handsworth, 9 March 2008.

Sermon preached by Pastor Cromwell, CSMBC, Handsworth, 7 September 2008.

Sermon preached by Pastor Jones, CSMBC, Handsworth, 11 May 2008.

Sermon preached by Linda Kay, CSMBC, Handsworth, 13 July 2008.