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## **CONFLICTING PLURALISMS IN CARIBBEAN SOCIETY: CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THE OTHER**

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**Abstract.** The Caribbean region is perhaps the most culturally diverse of world civilizations. In this cauldron of conflict and creativity are descendants of the First Peoples, (Caribs and Arawaks, among others) African slaves and free persons, Indian indentured workers, Chinese, Portuguese, Jews, Syrians, Lebanese and Arabs, to name the major groups. Each sector came here with different philosophical beliefs rooted in their cultural experiences and these have persisted over the centuries despite the deliberate efforts by the European conquerors to impose a Western Christian ontology onto conquered peoples and on later settlers. Colonialism was not just economic domination; it was equally the imposition of a value system which denigrated anything that was not European and Christian. In our own time because of their control of the electronic media, these Western values continue to dominate our airspace and our minds. At the same time, the non-European, non-Christian sections of the heritage continue to seek their space, often in direct opposition to the imposed Western systems.

This paper will trace the ideological origins of this cultural clash and its continued salience in our own time. It will trace the growth of the Western, Christian ethic from its early beginnings in Europe to the French Revolution and its separation of the Church from the State. It will also trace the separate origins and beliefs of non-Christian, non-Western immigrants to the Caribbean. Among these were the Africans who brought Islam and traditional beliefs such as Shango, Rastafari and syncretic faiths such as Afro-West Baptist belief. There was also the South Asian connection which brought Hinduism and South Asian Islam. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even in the early twentieth -first century, other versions of non-Christian beliefs were added from North America and the Middle East, adding to the complexity of Caribbean religiosity. The paper will end with an advocacy for a deeper intra-Caribbean appreciation of the religious Other in a predominantly Western Judeo-Christian environment so that many of the tensions which now exist can come closer to a peaceful resolution.

**Keywords:** world, civilizations, peaceful, resolution, Western Judeo-Christian, North America, the Middle East, intra-Caribbean

Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? (Qu'ran 39:9)

A public official should neither request nor accept advice on national policy from religious leaders and ecclesiastical sources. And in turn, no religious body should try to impose its doctrine upon the population, regardless of how noble their intentions may be.

Ryan Hadeed "Separation of Church and State"  
Sunday Guardian. 8 May 2016. P. A23 [1].

### **Introduction**

The evolution of Western, Christian thought can be traced through such events as the fall of Rome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century followed by the Renaissance, Protestant Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution and the French Revolution of 1789 in that order. The major role of Islam in that process of European ideological evolution is most often forgotten or ignored by contemporary leaders of Western, Christian civilization but not by their peers in the Islamic world, to the peril of world civilization. A major current concern of the Western world is its pre-occupation with Islamic fundamentalism characterized by an on-going war against those who are accused of waging war against Western, Christian civilization. With extreme indelicacy American leadership celebrated the assassination of Osama bin Laden during the first week of May 2016 under the title “We got him”. All the agencies of the media, especially those like CNN, Fox News and MNBC repeatedly ran coverage of the this assassination. The more mature European leadership noted but did not openly celebrate Bin Laden’s death. They were aware of the high esteem in which the Osama was held in the hearts of so many of their citizens and refugees. In remembering William Shakespeare, we must recall the bard of Avon’s advice that “the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance”.

All that violence begets is more violence. Drone attacks on Islamic leaders will be met with indiscriminate human carnage as we have seen in France, Belgium and Turkey. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2016 the Western press rejoiced over the drone assassination of Mullah Mansour in Pakistan. The Pakistani government itself led the protest against the strike. Perhaps an understanding of the antecedents of civilizational differences and of the dichotomy between the ecclesiastical and secular works can temper the antagonism between the two spheres.

The barbarian invasions of Europe, culminating in the fall of Rome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, led to the disintegration of European civilization, the burning of books and their authors and the flight of scholars and leaders of thought to foreign lands. Shortly thereafter, from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, there was the rise of the Arab Empire under the religion of Islam. This dynamic religion was able to break out of the Arabian Peninsula one year after the death of Muhammad (u.w.bp) and thereafter it spread like a forest fire to cover most of the Middle East: Syria (635 AD), Iraq (637), Palestine (640), Egypt (642) and the Persian Empire (Iran) by 650. The faith then moved eastwards to India and northwards, crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, moving to Spain, Portugal and France.

Of direct concern to our present discussion is the decisive role played by Islam-sponsored scholarship in the European Renaissance of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. This re-introduction of the ancient classics of Greek and Rome, the humanist tradition and the re-invigoration of European science was due to the protection offered to fleeing scholars and their books as well as the facilitation of further research. Names like Abu Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rasheed (Averroes), al Razi (Rhazes) and their amazing works are well-known. Because of the Islamic belief that the pen of the scholar was mightier than the sword of the warrior, Islamic scholars borrowed mathematical systems from the Hindus and made these known to the Western world, the three most basic tools of Mathematics, namely “Arabic” numerals, the decimal system and the concept of zero. By adding splints (jabbar) to Arithmetic they gave

us Algebra. The Renaissance was made possible by the return of all this accumulated knowledge from Islamic centres in Spain (especially Toledo) and from North Africa. This energized Europe and made possible not only the Renaissance but equally those intellectual movements which followed. The Muslim memory is long. Whilst most of this information is not widely available in the Western world, this legacy has gained much currency in the Islamic Ummah. In 2016, the Muslims of Serbia dived into cold neighborhood rivers to collect the remnants of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century mosque, destroyed in the Balkan War thirty years ago. That ancient material was used to re-build that mosque which was re-opened in May 2016.

## **Description of materials and methods**

### **The secularization of the West**

This article uses a comprehensive literature search method on sustainable development from academic databases such as SCOPUS, Web of science, including articles from recognized research institutions. These data sources provided essential details about resource efficiency, pollution levels, and the current waste management techniques in order to evaluate sustainability efforts of Trinidad and Tobago, the Roman Catholic Archbishop seems not to be caught in this contradiction. It helped identify significant trends, problems, and best practices in Japanese sustainable development.

The research study on sustainable development in Japan is crucial because it sheds light on the efforts made by the country to promote a sustainable future. The study identifies best practices, obstacles, and prospective areas for development by looking at Trinidad and Tobago, the Roman Catholic Archbishop policies, initiatives, and their effects on the environment, economy, and society [2]. Such information can help communities, corporations, and policymakers create effective action plans for achieving sustainable development objectives [3]. The study's results can also help advance international talks on sustainable development, promoting international cooperation and knowledge exchange for a more resilient and sustainable world.

The historical movements mentioned above, namely the destruction of ancient Europe by the barbarians, the Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution and French Revolution pushed Europe increasingly away from theological to secular, rational explanations of natural phenomena and of social relations. From thenceforth everything needed to have a “scientific” explanation. Information had to be provable before acceptance and faith-based beliefs were largely cast aside by “enlightened” thinkers and rulers. Leaders of thought and philosophers such as Locke, Rousseau and Montesquieu advocated the separation of Church from State and such separation was sealed by the French Revolution. Priests were now “ecclesiastical functionaries”, the long arm of the Papacy was shortened and European monarchs could no longer claim to be God’s anointed. These ideas were soon exported Westwards, across the water to early America whose leaders were equally willing to warn churchmen to know their place. One founding father, Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1802 that:

*Legislature should make no law respecting an established religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.* This separation was concretized in the First Amendment to the US Constitution, restricting the influence that either could exercise on the other. In the long period after the American Revolution the debate regarding the sharing/separation of the two spheres has continued unabated and various arguments have been given for and against this artificial separation. Many who support the separation quote Jesus' diplomatic advice that one should render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is His. Western, Christian society is very divided on this issue of separation of Church from State largely because of the illogicality of such a separation. The affairs of State, dealing with temporal matters, cannot, in fact be separated from those of the Church which are spiritual. Each person is composed of logical as well as emotional elements which constantly interact in the person. How then can these attributes be separated in the nation. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Roman Catholic Archbishop seems not to be caught in this contradiction. Therefore he has no problem in speaking out against abortion or freedom for persons incarcerated for victimless crimes. And in modern-day politics persons seeking office have no hesitation, as in the USA, for seeking the votes of Evangelicals or other religious groups. In our nation (Trinidad and Tobago) we see both the major parties making strenuous efforts to court the support of Baptists, Hindus, Muslims and other religious groups whilst loudly proclaiming that religion should not be mixed with politics. Many persons in the Western world are caught in a bind imposed upon them during a particular time and in a different context. And that confusion is reflected in our contradictory reactions.

This evolutionary ideological journey of Western, Judeo-Christian thought, resulting in the doctrine of separation of Church from State, did not take place in the non-Christian world of the Middle East or Asia. Two major faiths which were destined to increasingly interact with the West are Hinduism and Islam whose philosophical premises were developed very differently. Because of their different and separate historical trajectory the separation between Church and State did not take place. Both these systems of belief were based on the premise that life was to be holistically lived; the secular and the spiritual are inextricably bound together therefore human beings and nations cannot live in separate compartments. Against that background the use of mosques and mandirs (Hindu temples) to promote political agendas and social concerns is totally legitimate since these activities lead to the total development of persons and of nations. This conflict between separation and holism is the cause of much conflict in today's world. In France as in Trinidad and Tobago there is the problem of the wearing of the hijab. Eric Williams, Trinidad and Tobago's first Prime Minister as part of the western tradition, was so imbued with the idea of the separation of the spheres that he never understood the Hindu tendency to use their mandirs or festivals for political mobilization. At one stage he even stopped the construction of Hindu schools which he described as "cowsheds" seriously offending a community which regards the cow as sacred.

A Western soldier who goes to war in Afghanistan or Iraq is usually more concerned with his equipment than with God. The Islamic soldier is motivated by

the shout “Allahu Akbar!” (Victory to Allah) since he sees war as a normal part of living and not as a separate activity. In the West there is consternation that a Shia leader like Moktada Al Sadr can be such a powerful political force that he can persuade his followers to dismantle a long concrete barrier in Baghdad, protecting core activities of the State. It is that same holistic Islamic view which motivates Islamic vigilantes in a German town to seek to enforce a ban on drinking and other non-Islamic practices, thereby coming into conflict with civil authorities. In anticipation of such conflict, Austria is constructing its own legal walls to keep out Muslim refugees. Unless efforts are made at social integration in the Caribbean and elsewhere, there will be continuous deterioration of the social fabric.

## **Results**

### **Attractions of the philosophy of the Other**

In both Western and non-Western societies where the youth are seeking new horizons as bulwarks against the materialism of their own environments, both Hinduism and Islam offer what appears to be more viable alternatives. In the Caribbean, Hindu and Islamic culture are in the ascendant in places like Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. In these locations, mosques and mandirs dot the landscape, the food, dress and music are now publicly displayed and India's rise as a world power has increased both contacts and confidence. The universalistic values of both these faiths continue to inspire people in the Caribbean as well as in other diasporic areas such as North America and Europe. During the past few decades intra-Caribbean contacts among adherents of these faiths have significantly increased. All of this activity indicates revival and resurgence rather than absorption into a Christian-dominated Western ethos. In such a situation the separation between Church and State becomes increasingly blurred. There are now distinct Hindu and Moslem media houses which in their own philosophical mode, see life as an indivisible whole and are therefore boldly moving in that direction. Hinduism and Islam have now emerged not only as religions but equally as a social code and a political system, heightening the plurality of existing systems of governance. Western ignorance of this dimension has been the cause of tension in these plural societies whereas that diversity can be the source of inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony. In Hinduism and Islam the religion becomes the culture whilst Christians swing between the two.

Whereas Hinduism has been more pacific and less proselytizing, but no less vibrant, Islam has been more aggressive in its approach to the world. Its assertion of the equality of all believers regardless of race, social or political status has attracted millions who felt ostracized by race, colour or class differences.

## **Discussions**

This explains the large number of African-Americans who have now turned to Islam after centuries of enslavement by Christian planters and open discrimination afterwards. There are other attractive features to the young mind, looking for a sense of identity. The profession of the same beliefs, uttering the same prayers and the turning of the eyes towards the holy city are powerful binders of people. The purificatory fast of Ramadan initiated by Christians for a brief period, was extended by Islam to cover the entire month with fasting limited to the daylight hours. Very

significantly the injunction that each true believer should make haj to Mecca at least once in a lifetime brings together millions on the plains of Arafat in common worship. In this way, the Ummah (Muslim Commonwealth) is solidified and Islam is enormously fortified. In Hinduism, this grand gathering is matched by the Kumbh Mela on the banks of the Ganges where millions gather in similar solidarity. The attractiveness of Islam can be gauged from the fact that recent research has estimated that in 2020 there were 1.6 billion Muslims in 232 countries and this number is expected to rise to 2.2 billion by 2030<sup>i</sup>. At the present time there is friction between the majority population of Sunni Muslims and the minority of Shiites. This division is not new. Rather it dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century when there was divergence regarding the choice of the Caliph. In this debate the Sunnis advocated election to the post whilst the Shiites felt that the post is divinely sanctioned and should remain among the descendants of the Prophet (uwbp). This intra-Islamic conflict has not diminished the over-all impact of the faith globally. The factors that bind are stronger than those which divide. The religion continues to be a source of great hope to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Western civilization does not help the international situation since it constantly sends mixed signals to the world regarding Islam. We have noted the American administration's celebration of Osama's passing. Former President Donald Trump's incendiary remarks about Muslims continues that Islamophobia. On the other hand, there are some Western leaders who often proclaim an admiration for Islam. Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and more recently, Presidential hopeful noted in 2001 that:

*Although we are often unaware of our indebtedness to this other civilization, its gifts are very much part of our heritage. The technology industry would not exist without the contributions of Arab mathematicians. Sufi poet-philosophers like Rumi challenged our notions of self and truth leaders like Suleiman contributed to our notions of tolerance and civic leadership [3].*

In similar fashion, King Charles praised the Islamic contribution to humankind:

The medieval Islamic world, from central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history [4]. The raising of the Islamic bogey during the recent election to the mayoralty of London had added to this ambivalence towards Muslims. Again this underlies the need for a wider and deeper comprehension about Islam. The principles of Shura and Ijma, consultation and consent, a major principle of Islamic ontology, needs to find a greater space in western discourse.

## **Conclusion**

The theory of the separation of spheres between the Church and the State was a drastic solution to a drastic problem which was present in Europe some four centuries ago. It was really a power struggle between churchmen and politicians for control of society. Lay society felt that the church was too influential and sought to

curtail ecclesiastical control. The culmination of this contest for dominance was in the period of the French Revolution. That theory of separation flourished in the Age of Enlightenment when the Scientific Method superseded all other considerations. A good example of this was the new American Constitution, a direct product of the “logical” doctrines of the time, making clear separation between State and Church. Similarly, the separation of powers among the Executive, the Judiciary and the legislative areas of government was a direct result of the new thought. However the Scientific method lacked feeling, emotion and romance, thereby denying all sorts of qualities which are natural to mankind. Enlightenment thinking assumed a mechanistic man, underplaying emotions which are often stimulated by religious feeling. Therefore the separation of spheres between Church and State is artificial and now needs to be re-examined and revised.

Because of a different ideological trajectory, Hinduism and Islam never made the separation between the two spheres. These faiths have therefore continued without deviation along the path of marrying the affairs of Church and of State. In this situation there has been continuous conflict between these two interpretations. In this scenario, the Western notions continue to swing between the two systems whilst the adherents of Hinduism and Islam continue decisively along their different ontology, recognizing the duality of the human person. In plural societies such as we have in the Caribbean, it is essential that we shed some of the colonial baggage which Europe devised for their purposes and which are not necessarily relevant to our cultural reality. The operational methodology employed by these two minority faiths differ considerably but the intent is the same.

Security issues cannot be seen in isolation from cultural considerations. Law and order must not always mean boots on the ground and steel against steel. Statesmanship must mean an appeal to the totality of each human being. This appeal must take into account the different ways of seeing the Other. In this way fundamentalism can be lessened and weakened, Christian and non-Christian, can engage in more dialogue and try to work and collaborate with each other and the neglected sectors of society can be integrated into the larger Whole. The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance.

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**КАРИБ ҚОҒАМЫНДАҒЫ ҚАЙШЫЛЫҚТЫ ПЛЮРАЛИЗМДЕР:  
басқаларға христиандық және христиандық емес көзқарастар**

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**Аңдатпа.** Кариб теңізі аймағы, мүмкін, әлемдік өркениеттердің мәдени жағынан алуан түрлілігі. Бұл қақтығыс пен шығармашылық қазанында алғашқы халықтардың ұрпақтары (карибтер мен аравактар, т.б.) африкалық құлдар мен еркін адамдар, үнділік жалдамалы жұмысшылар, қытайлар, португалдар, еврейлер, сириялықтар, ливандықтар және арабтар, негізгі топтарды атайды. Әрбір сектор мұнда өздерінің мәдени тәжірибелеріне негізделген әртүрлі философиялық нанымдармен келді және олар еуропалық жаулап алушылардың жаулап алынған халықтарға және кейінгі қоныстанушыларға батыстық христиан онтологиясын таңуға арналған әдейі әрекеттеріне қарамастан ғасырлар бойы сақталды. Отаршылдық жай ғана экономикалық үстемдік емес еді; бұл еуропалық және христиандық емес кез келген нәрсені қорлайтын құндылықтар жүйесін таңу болды. Біздің заманымызда электронды БАҚ-ты бақылауына байланысты бұл батыстық құндылықтар біздің әуе кеңістігіміз бен санамызда үстемдік етуді жалғастыруда. Сонымен бірге, мұраның еуропалық емес, христиандық емес бөлімдері көбінесе таңылған батыстық жүйелерге тікелей қарсылық білдіріп, өз кеңістігін іздеуді жалғастыруда..

Бұл мақала осы мәдени қақтығыстың идеологиялық бастауларын және оның біздің заманымызда жалғасып келе жатқан маңыздылығын бақылайды. Ол батыстық, христиандық этиканың Еуропадағы алғашқы басынан Француз революциясына және оның шіркеудің мемлекеттенбөлінуіне дейінгі өсуін бақылайды. Сондай-ақ ол Кариб теңізіне дейінгі христиан емес, батыстық емес иммигранттардың жекелеген шығу тегі мен наным-сенімдерін бақылайды. Олардың арасында исламды және Шанго, Растафари сияқты дәстүрлі нанымдарды және афро-Батыс баптисттік сенім сияқты синкреттік сенімдерді әкелген африкалықтар болды. Сондай-ақ индуизм мен оңтүстік азиялық исламды әкелген Оңтүстік Азия байланысы болды. 20 ғасырда және тіпті ХХ-бірінші ғасырдың басында Солтүстік Америка мен Таяу Шығыстан христиандық емес нанымдардың басқа нұсқалары қосылып, Кариб теңізінің діндарлығының күрделілігін арттырды. Қағаз қазіргі кезде орын алып отырған көптеген шиеленістерді бейбіт жолмен шешуге жақындай алуы үшін негізінен батыстық иудейлік-христиандық ортадағы діни басқаларды Кариб бассейніндегі тереңірек бағалауды жақтаумен аяқталады.

**Тірек сөздер:** әлем, өркениеттер, бейбітшілік, шешуші, Батыс иудей-христиандық, Солтүстік Америка, Таяу Шығыс, Кариб ішілік

## **КОНФЛИКТУЮЩИЕ ПЛЮРАЛИЗМЫ В КАРИБСКОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ: ХРИСТИАНСКИЕ И НЕХРИСТИАНСКИЕ ВЗГЛЯДЫ НА ДРУГИХ**

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**Аннотация.** Карибский регион, возможно, является самой разнообразной в культурном отношении из мировых цивилизаций. В этом конфликте и творчестве основными группами являются потомки первых народов (карибы и араваки и т. д.), африканские рабы и вольноотпущенники, индийские наемные рабочие, китайцы, португальцы, евреи, сирийцы, ливанцы и арабы. В частном секторе и с другими философскими убеждениями, основанными на их собственном культурном опыте, они на протяжении веков упорствовали против преднамеренных попыток европейских завоевателей навязать западную

христианскую онтологию завоеванным народам и последующим поселенцам. Колониализм был не просто экономическим господством; это было навязывание системы ценностей, которая очерняла все неевропейское и нехристианское. В наше время эти западные ценности продолжают доминировать в нашем пространстве и умах из-за своего контроля над электронными СМИ. В то же время неевропейские, нехристианские части наследия продолжают искать свое собственное пространство, часто в прямой оппозиции навязанным западным системам.

В данной статье прослеживаются идеологические истоки этого культурного конфликта и его сохраняющаяся актуальность в наше время. Он прослеживает рост западной христианской этики от ее зарождения в Европе до Французской революции и ее отделения церкви от государства. Он также прослеживает различное происхождение и верования нехристианских, незападных иммигрантов в Карибском бассейне. Среди них были африканцы, которые принесли ислам и традиционные верования, такие как Шанго, Растафари, а также синкретические верования, такие как афро-западное баптизм. Существовала также связь с Южной Азией, которая привела к индуизму и южноазиатскому исламу. В 20 веке и даже в начале двадцать первого века добавились другие версии нехристианских верований из Северной Америки и Ближнего Востока, что еще больше усложнило карибскую религиозность. В заключение доклад призывает к более глубокому пониманию религиозных людей в странах Карибского бассейна, главным образом западных иудео-христиан, чтобы приблизиться к мирному разрешению многих нынешних противоречий

**Ключевые слова:** мир, цивилизации, мир, решающий, иудео-христианский Запад, Северная Америка, Ближний Восток, Внутрикарибский бассейн

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