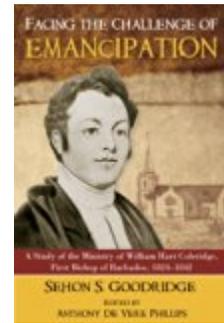


Sehon S. Goodridge, edited by Anthony De Vere Phillips. *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation: A Study of the Ministry of William Hart Coleridge, First Bishop of Barbados, 1824-1842*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2014. xix + 131 pp. \$24.00 (paper), ISBN 978-976-653-014-3.

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The Church, William Hart Coleridge, and Education: The Push for Amelioration

Sehon S. Goodridge's *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation: A Study of the Ministry of William Hart Coleridge, First Bishop of Barbados, 1824-1842* is a brief but in-depth examination of William Hart Coleridge's role and actions as the first bishop of Barbados in the early to mid-nineteenth century. While the author explicitly states that the book is not a biography of Coleridge, nor a synopsis of the history of Barbados in the early nineteenth century, it serves as an excellent resource to situate the watershed moment of emancipation in 1834 in Barbados and British colonial history. Goodridge writes that his book is intended to make a contribution to the study of the "origins and development of the Church in the Caribbean" (p. xviii); however, he downplays his historiographical contributions to the study of race, education, social mobility, and black empowerment in nineteenth-century Barbadian history.

Through an analysis of the creation of the Anglican See of Barbados and the Leeward Islands and the appointment of its first bishop, the author focuses on Coleridge's position as the first Anglican bishop in Barbados. He engages the topics of theological education; catechists; pew rentals and church attendance; parish churches, chapels, and chapel schools; black marriage and polygamy; whiteness and white privilege; and the overall administration of his ministry. However, the significance of Goodridge's book is its place in the broader context of the history of formal education in Barbados, and the importance and

roots of education as means of social progress in Barbados. This cultural attribute continues to be a part of Barbadian national identity. The author's understated activism in pursuit of black progress and social mobility in twentieth-century Barbados is analogous to the overarching purpose of Bishop Coleridge's episcopate in the nineteenth century: the "amelioration and evangelization of the enslaved population" (p. 77).

Facing the Challenge of Emancipation is a short (only 93 pages excluding preface, foreword, appendices, and notes) but concise narrative divided into eight informative chapters, a biographical foreword about the author, and a preface to the first edition. Readers must appreciate Anthony De Vere Phillips's biographical foreword, as it contextualizes the author's bias as an Anglican bishop, a black activist during decolonization in Barbados, and an educator. This inclusion allows the reader to comprehend the significance of Bishop Coleridge and the content of the text as a reflection of the author. There is little ambiguity in why Goodridge's study focuses heavily on the positive influence of the Anglican Church in Barbados. This is shown particularly in the author's emphasis on the benevolence of Coleridge towards blacks and black slaves on the island; his role as the catalyst for their "civilizing" education; and their emancipation from mental and physical slavery in 1834 and the peaceful end of apprenticeship in 1838. The book's length may elucidate the perception of rudimentary simplicity; however, the

author engages with an influential and monumental period in the history of slavery in the West Indies that is often overshadowed by abolitionist political discourse in Britain during this period. Goodridge forces readers to reconfigure their historical lens with respect to freedom: freedom and amelioration may have been won in British Parliament by politicians, but individuals on the island were the true executors of emancipation.

The book opens with an overview of the colonial church in Barbados since the early seventeenth century. Barbados was first colonized by the British in 1627 and remained under British rule until independence in 1966. Chapter 1 provides a concise history prior to the appointment of Barbados's first bishop in 1824. The following chapter provides a biographical sketch of Coleridge from his birth in Devonshire in 1789 through his education at Oxford and appointment in Barbados. The author proceeds with a survey of the conditions of the Barbadian diocese upon Coleridge's arrival, and the British imperial government's desire for him to "give impetus to the outreach of the Church among the slaves" (p. 15). Chapters 4 and 5 are excellent, but yet again short, descriptions of the history of formal education in Barbados and Codrington College. Codrington was arguably the most influential and socially progressive theological and educational facility in the West Indies. Chapter 6 is a needed analysis of whiteness and the role of whites and the church in the destruction, and inception of the nefarious nihilism, of black Barbadian culture and customs that survived the transatlantic slave trade. The book concludes with chapters 7 and 8's overview of social reform during emancipation and amelioration, and the end of Coleridge's tenure as Anglican bishop in Barbados.

Goodridge's extensive research of primary sources, particularly his use of a number of unpublished materials, is a considerable highlight of his work. With the vast amount of resources at his disposal, one wonders why the author chose to write such a short book. I contend that on the surface, the length of the study detracts from its credibility; however, the author's writing is clear, concise, and focused. He does not flavor his writing with unnecessary prose, nor does he resort to lengthy and opinionated polemical statements. The narrative is chronological, clearly organized, and tells the brief but impactful journey of Bishop Coleridge. He presents the book as if it is an incomplete study or an introduction for further reading on the part of the reader. Nevertheless, at times a thorough analysis of a particular topic would have been beneficial.

Goodridge's introduction of the concept of white privilege among poor whites needed further discussion. He writes that "poor Whites prided themselves on their colour and considered themselves on the same social level as the 'first families' of White people of the island," and appeared "too proud to work and required, more than did the Blacks, the ameliorating influence of education" (p. 52). Goodridge could have dedicated a chapter the length of his monograph evaluating Coleridge's position towards poor whites in Barbados. With only a paragraph of discussion, he leaves the reader wanting to learn more. His discussion of black marriage and polygamy in Barbados in chapter 6 is a novel topic, and one that needs further exploration.

Some may argue that the book lacks a definitive theoretical analysis, particularly as the author engages with the contentious content of religion, the church, racial hierarchies, perceptions of black and African customs, and the institution of British slavery in the West Indies. Goodridge could have analyzed Coleridge's motives beyond simply the conversion and amelioration of the impending independence of the black class in Barbados in the name of the Anglican Church. However, I contend that the biographical sketch of the author contextualizes his theoretical and politicized voice, which does not distract from his sound historical analysis of a brief period in Barbadian history. One must be cognizant of the author's intended purpose to provide an overview of Coleridge's episcopate and how he influenced amelioration of the condition of blacks and black slaves on the eve of emancipation. Despite the subject matter, and his brief engagements with social mores and customs of the island, he did not intend for the book to be a theoretical and historical analysis of race and race relations in early nineteenth-century Barbados.

Goodridge's *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation* is an informative, yet brief and concise book on the history of Bishop Coleridge's episcopate in Barbados from 1824 to 1842. The author's focus on the head of the Anglican Church may limit the size and variety of the audience interested in the study. Secondary and post-secondary students, as well as academics interested in the history of the nineteenth-century church in Barbados and the Caribbean will be immediately drawn to this work. Those who are interested in the history of education in the Caribbean, amelioration, and emancipation may also find this book useful. An audience with previous knowledge of early to mid-nineteenth-century Barbados and the Caribbean, and readers who are willing to delve deeper into further study, will find this book in-

formative and useful. *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation* fits well within the historiography and complements works such as Hilary McD. Beckles's *A History of Barbados: From Amerindian Settlement to Caribbean Single Market* (2007) and *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (1989), and Jill Sheppard's extensive analysis of Barbadian poor whites in *Red Legs of Barbados: Their Origins and History* (1977).

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