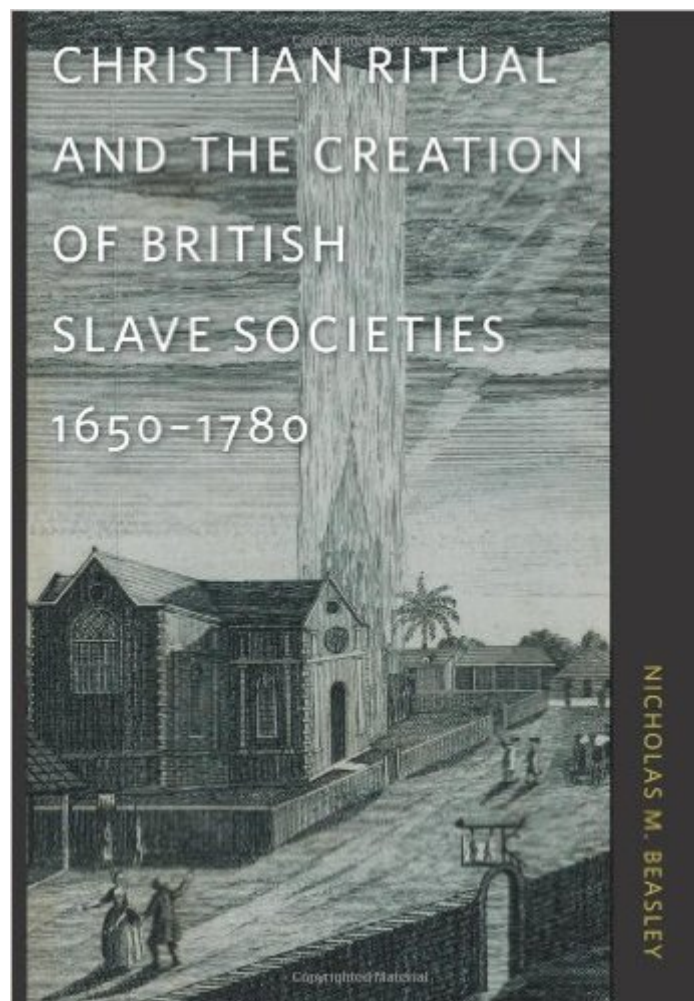


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Christian Ritual And The Creation Of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780 (Race In The Atlantic World, 1700-1900)



Synopsis

This study offers a new and challenging look at Christian institutions and practices in Britain's Caribbean and southern American colonies. Focusing on the plantation societies of Barbados, Jamaica, and South Carolina, Nicholas M. Beasley finds that the tradition of liturgical worship in these places was more vibrant and more deeply rooted in European Christianity than previously thought. In addition, Beasley argues, white colonists' attachment to religious continuity was thoroughly racialized. Church customs, sacraments, and ceremonies were a means of regulating slavery and asserting whiteness. Drawing on a mix of historical and anthropological methods, Beasley covers such topics as church architecture, pew seating customs, marriage, baptism, communion, and funerals. Colonists created an environment in sacred time and space that framed their rituals for maximum social impact, and they asserted privilege and power by privatizing some rituals and by meting out access to rituals to people of color. Throughout, Beasley is sensitive to how this culture of worship changed as each colony reacted to its own political, environmental, and demographic circumstances across time. Local factors influencing who partook in Christian rituals and how, when, and where these rituals took place could include the structure of the Anglican Church, which tended to be less hierarchical and centralized than at home in England; the level of tensions between Anglicans and Protestants; the persistence of African religious beliefs; and colonists' attitudes toward free persons of color and elite slaves. This book enriches an existing historiography that neglects the cultural power of liturgical Christianity in the early South and the British Caribbean and offers a new account of the translation of early modern English Christianity to early America.

Book Information

File Size: 2585 KB

Print Length: 248 pages

Publisher: University of Georgia Press (August 15, 2009)

Publication Date: August 15, 2009

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0030GF64G

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #2,123,238 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #59

inÂ Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Barbados #264 inÂ Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Jamaica #406 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Anglican

Customer Reviews

I am fortunate to have the author as my priest. This is an interesting book which is highly readable. I'd missed his lecture series in Greenwood, SC as I am home-bound but the book made the difference and I'll pass it along to other interested people and "gift it" too!

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