Ethnicity and religion may or may not be related to one another, and their roles in the structure of Caribbean societies, separately or combined, may be dwarfed by the significance played by class, race, colour and non-religious aspects of culture, such as family, education and language. To evaluate the role of these variables in Caribbean societies it is necessary to consider the main social theories advanced to account for colour-class stratification, the assimilation or non-assimilation of racial minorities to that stratification, and the ethnic cleavages that affect the large Indian ethnic groups, based on Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. A typology of Caribbean societies is advanced to reflect the range and variation of the units’ main societal characteristics; explain the role of Christian and syncretic religions in the structuring of societies during slavery; and explore the way in which the indentured followers of Hinduism and Islam created new social segments through their arrival during the post-emancipation period. The final sections of the paper examine the influence of Hinduism and other religions on the ethnic politics of Trinidad and Tobago during the late colonial and early independence periods; and the relationship between religion, colour, race, class and other non-religious aspects of culture in the social and spatial structure of Kingston, the capital of Jamaica at the end of colonialism and the beginning of the independence era. The conclusion argues that it is the way in which Caribbean social stratifications were, or were not, historically associated with slavery, indenture and free labour that creates the significance of the cultural difference as reflected in religion and ethnicity.