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The Origin and Development of the Native Baptists in Jamaica and the Influence of their Biblical Hermeneutic on the 1865 Native Baptist War

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the Native Baptists and the dynamics between their Biblical hermeneutic and the 1865 Native Baptist War. This work outlines, for the first time, the origin, structure and development of the Native Baptists. This study also discerns the main themes of the Native Baptists as equality and justice and their Biblical hermeneutic as a hermeneutic of liberation. The main thesis is that the Native Baptists' interpretation of Scriptures and Scripture-related sources influenced the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War.

To achieve the goals of this study, this writer relied heavily on archival and contemporary documents. One of the major features of this study is that, for the first time, it provides an in-depth analysis of a major original source, which the first Native Baptists wrote about themselves. Another unique feature is the meticulous analysis of Paul Bogle's marked hymns, letter and speech and George William Gordon's speeches in the House of Assembly.

In order to examine and outline the origin, structure and development of the Native Baptists, this writer was informed by the social history of religion approach. And to reflect on their themes and Biblical hermeneutic this writer attributed the use of the Reader-Response approach to the Native Baptists.

Using these approaches, this writer discovered, contrary to the dominant position in scholarly writings on Native Baptists, that the Native Baptists were orthodox, well organized, engaged in marches for justice and desired the liberation of the oppressed and the oppressors. This work gives a more accurate picture of who the Native Baptists were and how their interpretation of the Bible and sacred literature contributed to the way things happened in the 1865 Native Baptist War.

A further study of the Native Baptists needs to determine if there is a co-relationship between the demise of the Native Baptists' institutional structures and the seeming retreat of present-day Baptists from political activism.
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Declaration

This writer declares that this thesis is the candidate’s own work. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.
ABBREVIATIONS

BMS - Baptist Missionary Society
CMS – Church Missionary Society
CO - Colonial Office
IOJ – Institute of Jamaica
JBU - Jamaica Baptist Union
JNBMS - Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society
JIS - Jamaica Information Service
KJV - King James Version
LMS – London Missionary Society
JRC - Jamaica Royal Commission
MR – Micro Reel
UTCWI - United Theological College of the West Indies
UWI - University of the West Indies
INTRODUCTION

A) Rationale for the Study

In 1983, the bicentennial of Baptist witness in Jamaica was celebrated. Appropriately, a celebration was hosted in the environs of the Morant Bay Courthouse, in front of which, a statue, representative of the esteemed Native Baptist leader and National Hero of Jamaica, Paul Bogle, stands. On that occasion, the recounting of the work of Baptists in the struggle for full freedom in the aftermath of the formal ending of slavery in 1834, aroused this writer’s interest and propelled a dedication to the research of that period within Jamaica’s colonial history. This journey climaxes with this foray into examining the Native Baptists’ identity, ideology and the influence of their Biblical hermeneutic on the post-emancipation resistance in the mid nineteenth century.

Unfortunately, there has been no extensive study of the Native Baptists and part of the reason for that was a colonial bias against West Indian historiography. Eric Williams, former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and historian, showed that British attitudes toward West Indian history were prejudiced and British writers made many false assumptions. Elsa Goveia, pioneering West Indian historian, in reviewing this work claimed that Williams paradoxically was guilty of the same bias by giving the impression that historians who write about

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the West Indies only were less interesting and worthwhile subjects of study than those who wrote about the United Kingdom and the British Empire. 2 And Edward Kamau Brathwaite, cultural critic, made the charge that even when the history was written by Caribbean historians it lacked serious and consistent analysis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because they were schooled by the colonizers to research and write in a prejudicial manner against that period. 3 Additionally, historian Swithin Wilmot highlighted the “failure in the historiography of post-slavery Jamaica to include Black Jamaicans’ role in fashioning the politics of the island . . .” 4 Marxist ideology perceived religion as a problem and saw the solution as abolishing religion or at best relegating it to a private matter with no relevance for community life. 5 Some West Indian scholars appeared to be influenced by Marxist thought. For example, Douglas Hall, influential historian, claimed that religion helped to determine the person’s status in society rather than affecting one’s attitude and response toward the status quo of the society. 6 Therefore, religion in general and Native Baptists in


3 Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nanny, Sam Sharpe and the Struggle for People’s Liberation (Kingston: API, 1977) 4.


particular have suffered from the general bias against West Indian history and a peculiar suppression of religion from the affairs of the State.

Native Baptists also suffered from other disadvantages. They were seen as a fringe, disorganized movement and not as one of the recognized church groups and therefore were not deserving of scholarly analysis. Phillippo described the great majority of those involved in the 1865 protest as “connected with no religious society.” He was implying that the Native Baptists were not a religious society. Hall disapproved of the group to which Paul Bogle belonged because it consisted of “break-away” pastors who were “scarcely possessed of other qualifications either to teach or preach.” Hall’s caustic comments were that Paul Bogle was a “dangerous man”, whose “emotional outbursts should be ignored.” A Baptist missionary source depicted Bogle and his leaders as “misguided men” who acted in an “evil hour.” In addition, reported research on Native Baptists tended to ignore what they wrote.

Furthermore, until now, no single study focused on the Native Baptists and what existed on them was at best fragmentary. This is due to the belief by some scholars that there was insufficient material about the Native Baptists to

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8 Hall, *Free Jamaica* 261.
undertake an extensive study on them. Anthropologist Alston "Barry" Chevannes said, "There are no systematic accounts of the ritual of the Native Baptists . . ." 11 Robert Stewart, historian and former Jesuit missionary, broadened the claim and said, "Native religious groups or movements that were not a part of any missionary or European church network did not leave written evidence of their thinking or attitudes." 12 And noted historian Shirley Gordon's position was similar saying, "Native Jamaican Christian groups" independent of the European missions, such as Native Baptists and Independent Methodists, left "no written records." 13 While not disclaiming the existence of records on the Native Baptists, Gordon Catherall, prolific writer on Jamaican Baptist history, thought it would have been a Herculean task to pursue a study on that group of persons, and said that, "A study of the Native Baptist Movement up until the present day is almost impossible." 14 Catherall's position was consistent with that of English Baptist missionary John Clarke who said it would be difficult to make "a just estimate of their [Native Baptists'] labours." 15 However, there was available evidence to disprove the claims of Clarke, Catherall, Chevannes, Stewart and Gordon because there were documents that the Native Baptists have written about themselves,

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15 John Clarke, Memorials of Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica, Including a Sketch of the Labours of the Early Religious Instructors in Jamaica (London, 1869) 221.
their origin, organization, objectives and beliefs, the main one being The First Annual Report of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society. There was also reference to the Native Baptists in colonial documents and various contemporary documents of the nineteenth century. These documents will be examined in this study.

Catherall was one of the first scholars to agitate for a revision of the negative perception of the Native Baptists when he said: "There is sufficient indication to suggest that a picture hitherto presented of a community from which no good could come, needs to be revised..." In another work, he added that the contribution of the Native Baptists was such that "they were prepared to attack the social and political situation and reveal it for what it was..." There have been other scholars, such as Clinton Hutton, a political scientist who specializes in Afro-Caribbean religions, who highlighted that the Native Baptists’ chapels were “the venues for religious meetings... as well as other meetings for airing

16 The First Annual Report of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society; Containing a Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of Several of the Stations Connected Therewith; Together with the Number of Members, enquirers, List of Subscribers, Amount of Collections, etc, N. p. [c. 1841].

17 W. Indies Pamphlets 1823 to 51 in Angus Library, Regent’s Park. The publication date is estimated as 1841 because the second one was to be published in 1842 First Annual Report 30. Therefore, the first would have to be before 1842.

18 Jamaica Almanack 1838, 1840 and Jamaica Royal Commission Report 1866.

19 Catherall, Native Baptist 72.

social, economic and political matters” and added that “the religious, political and organizational influence of the Native Baptist [sic] over the masses of people in St. Thomas— in-the-East was unmistakable.” 21 Gad Heuman, a leading historian, had a favourable view of the Native Baptists, and recognized them as “a religious and political counterweight to the prevailing norms of the colonial society.” 22 It is, therefore, appropriate to revisit the Native Baptists and explore their identity and development and how their interpretation of Scriptures and understanding of God impacted the 1865 Native Baptist War.

**Exploring the Hermeneutics of Native Baptists**

It is an opportune time to study the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists because of some recent developments such as:

- Discovery of more material on the Native Baptists.
- Fresh assessments and appreciation of aspects of African religion. 23

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23 Gilmore writing in 1980s claimed that the writings about West African religions were usually through the eyes of detractors and competitors; therefore it was difficult to get a good understanding of their rites and ceremonies. In addition they were labeled as superstitious: J. T. Gilmore, *Episcopacy, Emancipation and Evangelization: Aspects of the History of the Church of England in the British West Indies*, diss., (U of Cambridge, 1984) 72. Since the 1980s, writings on African religion have improved. See Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures* (Kingston: UWI P, 2003) 138-175.
Emergence and development of Black, Liberation and Caribbean Theologies.

Interest in the ideological determinants that impact revolutionary movements. 24

The missiology of the European missionaries have been re-assessed and found wanting. 25

The celebration of Black History Month since the twentieth century and the USA Civil Rights movement of the 1960s highlighting the achievements of persons of African ancestry.

Many Caribbean persons having gained political independence from Britain, starting with Jamaicans in 1962, have produced a plethora of works examining the history of the West Indies through the eyes of West Indians rather than from the outlook of the colonists.

Revival of interest in indigenous knowledge systems and folk religion.

There has been an epistemological shift in scholarship in recent times in that the source of knowledge and limits of knowledge have moved from the rationalism of the 17th century metaphysicians which only accepted beliefs founded on experience and reasoning and rejected the supernatural to a re-discovery of the supernatural. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), one of the architects of that re-discovery of the supernatural, posited that biblical hermeneutics was


concerned with the nature of the text, the act of reading, the authority of the particular readings of the text, the social character of all interpretations and the relationship between theory and praxis. 26 French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), who is credited as a father of sociology, said, “there are no religions that are false. All are true in a fashion.” 27 And since then many scholars in the latter half of the twentieth century would no longer classify someone’s belief as superstitious but would grant it validity because it is claimed that there were no absolute truths and inspiration was possible to all.

The most significant development from the perspective of this study is a new understanding of the hermeneutical practice of the Native Baptists in bringing their religious faith and understanding of the Bible to bear upon their condition. Judged by the canons of the historical critical method, the hermeneutics of the Native Baptist leaders would be considered primitive or inappropriate because they did not focus on what the authors of the Biblical text might have meant. This was also the fate suffered by the colonized of the Asian, African and Latin American continents whose “interpretative practices were not seen as sophisticated enough to be studied within biblical disciplines . . .” 28 However, in

26 Werner G. Jeanrond, “Hermeneutics,” eds. R. J. Coggins and J. C. Houlden, A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation (SCM, 1994) 282. See also Watson’s treatment of Schleiermacher’s approach. The hermeneutical key for Schleiermacher was the person of Jesus as Redeemer hence his reading of the Scriptures was based on that Christological idea. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection and Second Coming are inessential when compared to the doctrine of his person: Francis Watson, Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 13.


light of the new insights of Reader-Response theory, which places greater emphasis on what the reader takes to the text and the perspective of the interpretative community rather than trying to ascertain what the author of the text meant, the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists needs re-examination. The role of the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists in their self-understanding, and self-expression in worship, work and witness is a major part of this study.

This study investigates the disjointed evidence on Native Baptists and their hermeneutics in order to challenge existing, imprecise and erroneous evaluations of this group and their interpretation of Scriptures, understanding of God and activism. This work offers a new and different assessment of their involvement in the Jamaican society by focusing on their origin, development and their Biblical hermeneutic. The claim is made that one cannot understand the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War without grappling with the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists, which motivated their Biblical prophetic response.

**Thesis Statement**

The thesis is that Native Baptists' Biblical hermeneutic influenced the nature and scope of their involvement in the 1865 Native Baptist War.

In the literature review it is argued that the writings about the Native Baptists and their role in society were generally inadequate (Chapter one). In order to explore this thesis, the methodology relied heavily on archival and primary
material (Chapter two). The Native Baptists are shown to be a well organized and that they developed in reaction to racism experienced in the English Baptist Church (Chapter three). They had orthodox beliefs and practices (Chapter four). They developed in and benefited from a certain religious context and heritage (Chapter five). Some distinctive themes and a Biblical hermeneutic were garnered from the Native Baptists’ writings, sermons, hymn selections, letters, prayers and speeches (Chapter six). That reading the events of 1865 from the perspective of the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists reveals their influence on the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War (Chapter seven). And finally, the conclusion summarizes the salient points in the argument developed throughout the study and also highlights the importance of this research. This section closes with some recommendations for further research (Chapter eight).

B) Context

This study traverses a historical journey from the arrival of American Baptist missionary, George Liele to the arrest and execution of Native Baptist pastor, Paul Bogle in 1865. Liele arrived in Jamaica in 1783, the latter part of British colonial slavery in Jamaica, and established Baptist witness on the island. 29 His was the first successful ministry among the enslaved. The work grew and the pioneers Liele and Moses Baker needed assistance and they sought help in the form of English missionaries and the BMS responded by sending John Rowe in

1814. This was the beginning of a long list of English Baptist missionaries to Jamaica including well-known ones such as William Knibb, Thomas Burchell and James Phillippo. These missionaries facilitated the development of the Baptist work among the enslaved, albeit with a narrow focus of saving the soul, while initially ignoring the conditions of slavery and the political, social and economic underpinnings of slavery. However, the enslaved heard the messages from the missionaries and had a different interpretation. One such enslaved person was Baptist deacon Sam Sharpe who claimed that slavery was inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. Hence, he organized the enslaved, about 60,000 of them from approximately 200 estates. They were agitating to be treated and paid as workers and the protest was in the form of a passive resistance of a strike. As the event unfolded, the reprisals were ferocious and the event became known as the Baptist War. This resistance was the catalyst, which led to the Act of Emancipation in 1833.

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30 Underhill, West Indies 204 and Clarke, Memorials 164.
31 Clarke, Memorials 70, 164.
32 Underhill, West Indies 205.
34 Michael Craton, Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean (Kingston, Oxford, Princeton: Randle, Currey, Weiner, 1997) 316. Bleby also estimated that 50,000-60,000 thousand Negroes were involved in the resistance: Bleby, Caribbean Sea 43.
35 Bleby, Death Struggles 113.
36 Gordon Lewis, The Growth of The Modern West Indies (New York: Monthly Review) 168 and Bakan 4. Reckord puts it milder by stating that it “contributed indirectly to the abolition of slavery” Mary Reckord, “The Slave Rebellion of 1831,” Jamaica Journal 3 (1969): 31. Green stated that “It was the Jamaican rebellion, not the new vigour of the anti-slavery movement, that proved the decisive factor in precipitating emancipation”: William A. Green, British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1976) 112. It was significant that one week after Sharpe’s death on May 23, 1832, the House of Commons established a
The Emancipation Act made provision for the planters to get £20m as compensation for the loss of the services of the enslaved while making all children under six years free and the others to serve a period of six years apprenticeship effective in 1834. The enslaved were disappointed that there would be a period of apprenticeship. No one was sure what was the difference between being enslaved and the new condition of being an apprentice. Of the apprenticeship system it was said, "IN PLAIN ENGLISH, IT IS SLAVERY" and it was marked by atrocities. The attitude of planters was that before apprenticeship ended they wanted to extract "the last drop of blood" and the "last fibre of sinew" from the Africans. Apprenticeship was a continuation of the exploitation of the Africans. The apprentices believed that the houses they lived in and plots of land they cultivated were theirs. However, when Apprenticeship ended in 1838, the emancipated Africans were required by the planters to pay rent or move from houses they had built and plots they had cultivated. It was, committee to look into the best means of abolishing slavery: Sam Sharpe (d. 1832: doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/53650 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography).

38 Studholme Hodgson, Truths from the West Indies. Including a Sketch of Madeira in 1833 (London, 1838) 283.
39 Hodgson 274.
40 David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866) 35. In fact, Cyrus Wallace, an apprentice, claimed that apprenticeship was worse than slavery: Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, The West Indies in 1837 (London, 1838) 253.
41 Sturge and Harvey 257. The Moravians' assessment of apprenticeship (1834-38) was that "whatever else were the consequences, good or evil, or the system of apprenticeship, it was in more than one respect highly favourable to the missionary cause": Jamaica Moravian Church, The Breaking of the Dawn, or, Moravian Work in Jamaica, 1754-1904 (London: Jamaica Moravian Church, [1904?]) 63. They were indifferent to the atrocities and concentrated on the benefits to their missionary work.
42 S. Copland, Black and White; Or, the Jamaica Question (London, 1866) 28.
therefore, left to the missionaries and the Africans to seek alternative economic solutions. The missionaries built Free Villages consisting of houses, churches and schools. These provided economic well-being and facilitated a reasonable standard of living and stable family life. This type of Free Villages did not reach St. Thomas in the East and the persons of African origin established their own Negro settlements sometimes taking possession of lands, which they claimed, belonged to them. This caused tension between the ruling class and the peasants. The situation worsened with problems associated with cholera and small-pox epidemics of the 1850s, drought of the 1860s, economic decline and an oppressive justice system. The people’s protest took many forms, including a Memorial sent to the Queen outlining their distresses. This was rebuffed through the Queen’s Advice. The national blight did not escape the attention of the BMS official, Edward Underhill, who being in communication with the BMS missionaries was aware of the deteriorating situation. Underhill wrote Edward


46 Hall, Free Jamaica 39, 42.


49 Underhill, Life 329.
Cardwell, the Colonial Secretary, who sought answers from Governor Edward Eyre. 50 An upset Eyre decided to distribute the Underhill Circular, thinking that the European class of missionaries and leaders would dismiss the allegations. However, though there was divided opinion about the matter, 51 the persons of African ancestry used the opportunity to register their grievances. Chief among them was George William Gordon and his partner in Christian ministry; campaign manager and business associate Paul Bogle. The Underhill Meeting passed some resolutions and Bogle and his followers marched from Stony Gut to Spanish Town to meet the Governor in order to register the gravity of the situation but to no avail. 52 Subsequently, he and his followers marched to the Morant Bay Court-house to protest continued injustices. They were fired upon and the ensuing melee led to the deaths of eighteen persons of the ruling class and thousands of peasants. 53 This event is referred to as the 1865 Native Baptist War, a major focus of this study, along with the people, the Native Baptists.

This writer will examine relevant aspects of this historical background in more detail.

50 Hume 132.


52 Underhill, Tragedy 56-57.

Jamaica, in the nineteenth century, with its 21 parishes (See map 1) and approximately 4,243 square miles, averaging 190,000 acres per parish was a politically and religiously strategic colony in the British Empire. The importance of Jamaica to the colonial masters may be discerned from the comments that Jamaica was “the richest western jewel in the British crown.” Jamaica garnered much wealth for the British Empire through the slave trade, slavery and sugar.

Jamaica was also the hub from which other West Indian islands took their cue. In the 1840s, James Phillippo, English Baptist missionary, who served from 1823-79, also saw Jamaica’s importance for the evangelization of the world:

> It is to be viewed in reference to the influence it may exert on the neighbouring islands and continent ... Jamaica might indeed become spiritually what she is politically - the key-stone to the possession of the New World - a kind of rallying post for the army of the living God, in its efforts to subjugate the whole continent of South America to the 'obedience of faith.'

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55 Theodore Foulks, Eighteen Months in Jamaica; With Recollections of the Late Rebellion (London, 1833) 21. The topography and climate were lionized as “an island the most fertile in the world” and “blessed with a climate most glorious” Jamaica Tribune 18 Dec. 1865: [4]. Jamaica was also called “the brightest jewel in the British Crown”: A. A., “A Defence of Governor Eyre,” Gleaner 15 Jan. 1866: [3].


Jamaica was significant politically and spiritually to the British.

**Population classifications**

The classification used to stratify the population in the nineteenth century was mainly according to colour, namely "Whites" 58 "coloured or brown" 59 and "Black." 60 The *Jamaica Almanack*, an official document, also used those designations. 61

This study avoids the use of the term "Black" to describe the persons of African origin who came to Jamaica or who were born on the island because many nineteenth century writers used it in a derogatory way. Henry Bleby, Methodist missionary, used "dark," another word for "black," in a connotative sense meaning retarded, backward, evil and stupid when he said that in St. Ann, "The

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61 *Jamaica Almanack* 1838 117. Underhill and Copland had similar divisions: Underhill, *West Indies* 233 and Copland 51. Orlando Patterson, also used a colour coded stratification of colonial society: Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (London: McGibbon, 1967) 48-51. There was, however, one instance of a nineteenth century writer, Copland, having two categories only for the population, namely, Europeans and Africans: Copland 50.
missionary's wife, too, devotes her rapidly increasing strength to the instruction
of these dark children of Africa, - dark in mind, as in complexion . . .” 62 Similarly,
in 1837, Nicholas Gyles, proprietor of Recess plantation, St. Thomas in the Vale
wrote a letter to friend in London in which he said that apprentices could never
be changed or improved “so long as they were black.” 63 “Black” was synonymous
with backwardness. In addition, an unnamed preacher in the 1840s used “black”
to depict that which was unwholesome, “a temper of a mind black and sullen;
black as hell . . .” 64 Moreover, Hamilton Hume, in defence of the reprisals by
Governor Eyre, lambasted those persons who “in their desire to whitewash the
black man, too often blacken the white man.” 65 Hume’s racist symbolism had
“white” representing purity and innocence while “black” represented impurity,
evil and wickedness. And many modern scholars have identified the
burdensomeness attached to being “Black.” British scholar Catherine Hall said
that for the missionaries “Blackness” could mean “Africa, superstition,
heathenism”, which would be in need of transformation. 66 “Black” can also mean
non-white, non-rich, powerless, African or non-human. 67 In post-independence
Jamaica, “black and white” denoted not skin colour but attitudes and status with

62 Henry Bleby, Romance Without Fiction: or Sketches From the Portfolio of an Old Missionary
(London, 1872) 57.

63 Sturge and Harvey 327-28.


65 Hume v-vi

66 Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-

67 Kortright Davis, Emancipation still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology
“black” being a negative. 68 This negative connotation was not confined to Jamaica but as renowned sociologist Orlando Patterson highlighted that in both Latin and non-Latin West Indies there was a “pattern of marrying lighter [skin colour] with upward social mobility.” 69 One sure way of advancing was through a fairer skin colour. “Black” carries the baggage of negativity.

This study also avoids another designation based on colour, namely “coloured.” Bernard Senior, military officer in the 1830s, implied that there was a slur attached to having a trace of “coloured blood.” 70 “Coloured” was associated with inferiority. In addition, “coloured” could mean either someone of African descent or a person of mixed race. 71 It was therefore an ambiguous term.

Designations based on skin colour were often demeaning in the racist colonial society; colour descriptions were often used as an instrument of discrimination. Consequently, colour descriptions have been rejected in this work in favour of the more objective and less pejorative nationality or race. Therefore, the three major groups were the Africans, the Europeans and those of mixed race, the Mulattoes.


70 Bernard Senior, Jamaica, As It Was, As It Is, and As It May Be (1835; New York: Negro UP, 1969) 67.

Historian David Eltis argued that European self-identification was based on anyone “brought up as European.” Europeans defined themselves in terms of the subcontinent of Europe. The colonists called themselves “European” and others saw them as such. The designation European is quite appropriate based on their self-understanding and popular usage.

However, Africa and Africans were terms, which had more meaning to the Europeans rather than the enslaved who tended to define themselves in terms of a narrow geographical area. The enslaved primarily saw themselves in relation to their tribes such as Koromantees, Eboes and Mandingoes which was more in keeping with their own self-identification. Nevertheless, in Jamaica, “African” was a popular designation used by Europeans to describe the enslaved during both the pre- and post-emancipation eras. For the purposes of this study, the

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74 Eltis 224.


enslaved were grouped as Africans, though cognizant that the term was largely a European imposition. By 1817, only 37 per cent of the enslaved population was born in Africa. Therefore, at times, it was prudent to use African derivatives, such as “African origin,” meaning the person was born in Jamaica of African parentage.

In colonial Brazil, Negro included persons who were not accepted either as Europeans or Africans and could apply to those born in Brazil of African or mixed parentage or to those who spoke Portuguese and to the Africans who were neither Portuguese speaking nor native to Brazil. Negro was an all-embracing term with a primary meaning of not being a member of the European ruling class. In the West Indies it carried a similar meaning. Negro was another popular designation for the enslaved. However, it is now not a politically correct word in some situations and hence this word will be used sparingly while the term of preference is “African.”

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80 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 14, 38, 42, Stewart, View 249, 251, Madden Vol. 1 79; “Rebellious State of the Slaves in Trelawny and St. James’s,” Supplement to the St. Jago Gazette,” From Saturday December 31, 1831 to Saturday January 7, 1832 7 in UWI Library x AN. S3; Phillippo, Jamaica 172 and Hinton, Memoir 177.
Then, there were persons of mixed race. There were some who claimed that a Creole was someone of mixed race such as a well-informed clergyman in England who presumed that a lady who described herself as "Creole" was someone whose parents were not both "White" but either the father or mother was "Black." 81 However, Senior emphatically defined Creole as "an individual born in the West Indies, of white parents" and it was erroneous to say that a Creole "must have been born of black or coloured parents." 82 Many eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and residents of Jamaica used "Creole" to mean born in Jamaica, irrespective of nationality or race. 83 Brathwaite also used "Creole" in a similar sense 84 and according to Heuman, Brathwaite used it to mean from a local point of view as opposed to a primarily metropolitan perspective. 85 Warner-Lewis stated that "Creole" was a term first recorded in the 1570s, attributed to Africans in Brazil and signifying an "outsider." 86 Creole is

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81 Senior, Jamaica 67.

82 Senior, Jamaica 67. See also Madden 101.

83 Phillippo, Jamaica 144. See also Long II 416; Gardner 164, 391; Stewart, View 168, 251 and Account 152 and Hume 140.


85 Heuman, Between Black and White xx. Linguist David Decamp said that originally, a Creole was a person of European descent who was born and raised in a colony but later it meant natives and others of non-European origin: David DeCamp, The Field of Creole Language [c. 1967] 4 in UWI Library.

difficult to define and has been used as a “language type, person, style and culture” 87 so this study will not use it to classify persons of mixed race.

J. Stewart, a colonial writer, defined a Mulatto as “the offspring of a white and a black” 88 and though Heuman, recognizing a Mulatto as such, he generally avoided the word Mulatto. 89 However, for this study, Mulatto is the preferred word because it avoids the use of colour designations such as “Browns” and “Coloureds”, which had demeaning overtones. In this context, Mulattoes represent all the various progeny produced from liaisons between Europeans and Africans such as “samboes, the offspring of a black and a mulatto; quadroons, the offspring of a white and a mulatto; and mestees, the offspring of a white and a quadroon.” 90

The terms “slave” and “enslaved” also came in for semantic scrutiny. Preference has been given to “enslaved” because “enslaved” speaks to what was done to the Africans, that is, they were victims of subjugation while “slave” did not sufficiently explain or emphasize the harsh condition of such humiliation. In the very nature of the word “enslaved” is the idea of an enforced condition.


88 Stewart, View 324. For same divisions see also Madden Vol. 1 89, 114. For similar divisions see Phillippo, Jamaica 144; Gardner 97 and Hodgson 60-61.

89 Heuman, Between Black and White ix. Heuman gave no reason for not using Mulatto.

90 Stewart, View 324. For same divisions see also Madden Vol. 1 89. For similar divisions see Phillippo, Jamaica 144; Gardner 97 and Hodgson 60-61.
Most modern scholars now use "enslaved." 91 There was also precedence in the 1800s for the use of "enslaved" 92 and "enslaved brethren." 93 And, according to Richard Panton, Anglican clergyman, the Africans did not appreciate being called "slave". He related an incident to Joseph Sturge in which a visiting clergyman introduced a discourse to the African portion of the congregation by saying, "my slave brethren." They were displeased and said "strange minister too bad" because "when they stood before God in his own house, there was no distinction of condition." 94 Since the enslaved did not appreciate the designation "slave" then it will not be used in this work.


93 Losh 23 and Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 37.

94 Sturge and Harvey 285-86.
### Table 1: Population Figures by Race 1834-1871

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1834</th>
<th>1844</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>15,776</td>
<td>13,819</td>
<td>13,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulattoes</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>68,529</td>
<td>81,068</td>
<td>100,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africans</td>
<td>311,070</td>
<td>293,128</td>
<td>346,377</td>
<td>392,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>371,070</td>
<td>377,433</td>
<td>441,264</td>
<td>506,154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two groups of colonies in the British Empire with one group of colonies having self-government in internal matters similar to Britain such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa where there was a predominance of English settlers. The other group of colonies were located in Africa, the Caribbean and India and they experienced a different type of colonialism which has been defined as direct and overall subordination of one country and a people to another on the basis of state power being in the hands of

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95 Eisner 127. Only the figures for the enslaved population were official. Caldecott had the population in Jamaica in 1833 as 369,000: A Caldecott, The Church in the West Indies (1898. London: Cass, 1970) 263.

96 The total came from Census of Jamaica 1943 2; The breakdown was from Barry Higman, ed., The Jamaican Censuses of 1844 and 1861 (Kingston: UWI, 1980) 3; Hall, Free Jamaica 265 and George W. Roberts, The Population of Jamaica (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957) 65. Copland had the same total, though for 1854: Copland 50, which might be a typographical error for 1844.


98 Curtin, Two Jamaicas 262.

99 Roberts 65.

100 Roberts 65.

101 Census of Jamaica 1943, 2 provided the total and also Roberts, 65.
the dominating foreign power. 102 In this context an English Governor, who as the representative of the Crown, ruled the colonies with the help of a select few who treated the majority subjects as an inferior race. In 1865, an English Governor, Edward Eyre, and a local legislature ruled Jamaica. This legislature, accessible by property qualifications, was heavily biased in favour of the European minority and Mulatto property owners, and excluded the majority of African origin. 103 It was minority rule in Jamaica for the period 1829-71 with a 4% European population in 1834, 4.2% in 1844, 3.1% in 1861 and 2.6% in 1871 always dominating. 104 Based on Table 1 the trend in Jamaica was that the Africans and Mulattoes were increasing while the Europeans were decreasing. By 1865, the ratio of Europeans to Africans had widened to 27 Africans to every European. There was a large base of Africans, then next on the rung being Mulattoes and at the pinnacle a small group of Europeans dominating the society. It was shaped like a pyramid. This arrangement was fraught with danger and led to exploitation, conflict, resistance and reprisals.

And who were the Native Baptists? There were cases when the term Native Baptists was used loosely for local Baptists who were non-Europeans. 105

Phillippo used Native Baptists both as non-European Baptist and also as a


103 For a detailed outline of the political and legislative structure and the role of the local oligarchy see Hall, Free Jamaica 1-9.

104 Eisner 153. Heuman made a similar point that “the Jamaican society was demographically skewed”: Heuman, Killing Time xiii.

105 Underhill, Life 72 and Gordon, Cause for His Glory 4.
distinctive group.¹⁰⁶ Modern historians had a tendency to ascribe the title of Native Baptists to Native Jamaican Christian groups.¹⁰⁷ However, in this study, the Native Baptists were persons who broke away from the English Baptists in response to the discrimination against persons of African ancestry becoming pastors. These indigenous persons took the name Native Baptist and formed their own organization, which was independent of European superintendence. These Natives Baptists evolved over time and formed other clusters especially in St. Thomas in the East. The Native Baptists were persons who essentially identified themselves as Native Baptists and also having acknowledged themselves as Native Baptists helped in identifying others who were Native Baptists or part of their organization. Others were discerned as Native Baptists based on having publicly accepted themselves as Native Baptists, worked closely with others in terms of joint witness and worship and were therefore duly seen as Native Baptists. In this definition of Native Baptists it only included those who were so identified while they were alive.

Native Baptists were, therefore, those persons who were principally of African origin, untrained theologically in the formal setting of a seminary, but nonetheless educated and having their own understanding of the Bible and God. The Native Baptists were indigenous to Jamaica. They felt that they were legitimate ministers of the gospel and were confident that they could do a

¹⁰⁶ Underhill, Life 72, 341.

¹⁰⁷ Gordon, Cause for His Glory 4.
competent job. They also wanted to be in charge of their church property and wanted to have independence from European management.

**Culture of Resistance**

There was a worldwide culture of resistance by oppressed persons to free themselves from degrading colonial slavery. In the sixteenth century there was a series of revolts by the enslaved in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Panama, Carthagina, Honduras. 108 The Palmares, a government of escaped Africans on Brazilian soil, existed from at least 1605. 109 In the 1770s and 1780s, there were Andean peasant insurgencies against colonial oppression in the highland of Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. 110 There were revolts also in the USA. 111 The enslaved Haitian people overthrew the French colonialists. 112 This revolt in Haiti, which led to the declaration of independence from France on January 1, 1804, was described by C. L. R. James, Caribbean Marxist and social activist, as “the only successful slave revolt in history.” 113 In 1812, there was resistance in Cuba. 114 In Barbados, there

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were aborted rebellions in 1649, 1675, and 1692 and a major one in 1816. In Demerara (British Guiana), there was, in 1823, a revolt.

The Africans in Jamaica confronted their experiences of dehumanization in a variety of ways, including showing resistance. Patterson claimed that Jamaica had one of the more impressive records of revolts by the enslaved during slavery's 180-year existence. The first serious revolt in Jamaica was in 1684. Remarkably after each outbreak, according to Copland, the fetters of the enslaved were fastened more firmly and there was increased severity displayed by the oppressors. The people were expecting freedom as of August 1, 1834 but after rejoicing on the holiday, they were bitterly disappointed when they were told to work as before. And many claimed, “Free, no free at all!” And so the resistance continued. There were resistances in the post-emancipation period in the West Indies. In 1856, there was the “Angel Gabriel” Riots in Guyana. John


117 Bleby asserted, “Open rebellion was their daily life”: Bleby, Scenes [vi].

118 Patterson, Slavery and Slave Revolts 246.

119 See Belmore Papers Microfilm 1374 reel 4 for a list of rebellions. Patterson believed that the revolts prior to 1740 were inter-related: Slavery and Slave Revolts 246.

120 Copland 6, 18.

121 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 80.
Sayers Orr, an apocalyptic preacher called “Angel Gabriel” dealt with political and religious subjects. In 1876, there was the Federation Riots in Barbados. The Planters were against the Imperial government’s suggestion of a Windward Islands Federation, inclusive of Barbados. Those of African origin thought it must be a good idea since the planters opposed it and so there was a protest. Michael Craton, social historian, said that there was a dozen riots in Jamaica between 1838 and 1865 but most were localized. In 1851, there was a brief riot between rival Baptist factions in Spanish Town. In 1859, there were serious Toll Gate Riots in Westmoreland with protestors demolishing the toll-gates in the parish and there were also riots over rights to land on the Florence Hall Estate, Trelawny. In none of these protests were any in authority killed although the police killed two women in the Falmouth Riots. In 1864, there was a strong “religious demonstration” of approximately four hundred persons during and after a court sitting in Trelawny involving persons from Sawyers charged with petty larceny. This also did not become violent or bloody.


123 Craton 325. Simmonds said there were “over eighty instances of violent disturbances in post-emancipation Jamaica”: Lorna Simmonds, Post-Emancipation Protest in Jamaica (Paper presented at the Fifteenth Conference of Caribbean Historians, UWI, Mona, Jamaica April 15-20 1982) 1. However, Simmonds did not list those 80 violent disturbances.

124 Hall, Free 248-49.

125 Heuman, Killing Time 86.
There were two epoch-shaping protests in the nineteenth century. One was the Baptist War or Baptist insurrection, so-called because Baptist leaders and members were identified with this resistance to slavery. The other significant resistance in the nineteenth century was not identified as a Baptist War by contemporaries but was rather called an Insurrection. However, there were modern writers who identified it with the Baptists namely Baptist minister, Cyril Clarke who called it a "Baptist revolt" and sociologist Edward Seaga, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, who said, "so firmly was the Baptist Church identified with the ordinary people's resistance of oppression, that the Morant Bay Rebellion was called 'The Baptist War' by some persons." Other modern historians refer to it variously as "a demonstration, a disturbance, an uprising, a

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126 Some nineteenth century designations of the 1831 strike as the Baptist War included: Christian Record April 1832: 95 in Jamaica Tracts Vol. 3 Godw. Pamph. 2665 in Bodleian Library; Foulks 112; Sturge and Harvey 240; H. M. Waddell, Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858 (1863. 2nd ed. London: Cass, 1970) 79, Henry Bleby, Death Struggles of Slavery (London, 1853) 25. However, Afroz believed Muslims led the resistance: Sultana Afroz, The Unsung Slaves: Islam in Plantation Jamaica (The Association of Caribbean Historians 25th Annual Conference 1993) 10–11. Maureen Warner-Lewis, a Caribbean linguist, showed that Afroz's linguistic claims for Muslim presence in Jamaica were weak. And added that no evidence emerged from the court trials or their interviews subsequent to the Baptist War that anyone was a Muslim and "absolutely no mention of Islam was made": Maureen Warner-Lewis, "Jamaica's Muslim Past: Misrepresentations," Journal of Caribbean History 37: 2 (2003): 299-306.

127 "Senior, Jamaica 37, 265.


130 "East Queen Street Baptist Church 200th Anniversary Feature," Gleaner 11 May 2000: B10. Seaga did not identify who were those persons who called it "Baptist War."
revolt, a riot or riots, a land riot, and a rebellion” 131 with the most enduring title being the Morant Bay Rebellion. 132 However, there have been serious doubts expressed from the outset, whether the event was a “rebellion”, with the Commissioners visiting Stony Gut on February 14, 1866 “to gain a better knowledge of the district in which the rebellion, if rebellion it can be called, originated.” 133 Furthermore, the commissioners in their summary did not call it a rebellion but labeled it a “resistance to lawful authority.” 134 And an unnamed contemporary writer in an English Baptist publication said, “It is not unreasonable to doubt whether there has been in Jamaica a rebellion or insurrection.” 135 And as Reckord said, “In 1865, in a period of acute depression, a riot in one of the parishes became known as a rebellion, but the label reflected the scale of the government’s reprisals.” 136 The variety of names indicated the different ways persons have understood the nature of the event. One such name as given by Bev Carey, Maroon writer, was the “Second Rebellion from the


134 JRC Vol. 4 538.


Platform of the Native Baptist Church.” 137 Carey, identifying the resistance with the Native Baptist Church, was accurate, though one could question her use of rebellion. Rebellion has the connotation of an evil act against lawful authority. War is a preferred word because it can be a neutral term dependent on who the aggressor is and who is the defendant. A war can be armed conflict and or protracted struggle not involving arms. Furthermore, there is also the concept of a “Just War,” which outlines the conditions under which war can be justified. 138 Therefore, since “war” is less objectionable than “rebellion” and since most of the protestors were Native Baptists, 139 the 1865 event, in this study, will be called the 1865 Native Baptist War. Identifying a Jamaican resistance, as a “Native Baptist War” is not novel because Mary Turner and others said the 1831 Baptist War should not be called the “Baptist War” but rather “The Native Baptist War.” 140 However, what is new is calling the 1865 resistance, the 1865 Native Baptist War.

Resistance movements have become prime subjects of study and the Jamaican resistance no less so. The Jamaican movements have been examined in relation to what led to these revolutions; what happened, who were the leaders and what


139 Hutton, Colour 172-73 and Heuman, Killing Time 83.

were their religious orientation, motives and objectives. The *Cornwall Courier* claimed a correlation between preaching and protests in the 1831 Baptist War. In reporting on an analysis of the relationship between estates and the intensity of the rebellion, the paper wrote: “Where there has been little preaching there was little disaffection, and where there has been plenty preaching, there was plenty of rebellion.” In addition, an unnamed English Baptist missionary pinpointed the role of prayer and said, “No one doubted the natural relation between these meetings for prayer and the insurrectionary spirit.” The planters concluded that, “the teachers of Christianity have been the instrument of bringing about the late insurrection.” However, one anonymous Methodist missionary attributed the 1831 Baptist War to the leadership of the Africans in Christian ministry allowed by the English Baptists. In spite of the confusion of which group should be credited with the 1831 Baptist War, they all recognized that the manner the Bible was interpreted by the protestors played an important role.

Religion also played a vital role in the 1865 Native Baptist War. The English Baptists blamed the war on the oppression, lack of proper religious teaching from the European missionary denominations and the poor religious background of

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141 *Christian Record* July 1832: 167.


143 *Christian Record* Mar. 1832: 60. See also “Rebellious State of the Slaves in Trelawny and St. James’s, [sic]” *Watchman and Jamaica Free Press* 7 Jan. 1832: 1. See also Bernard Senior, *Jamaica, As It Was, As It Is, and As It May Be* (1835; New York: Negro UP, 1969) 183, 275. He claimed that the favorite texts of these preachers were “If the Son shall set you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36); “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24), “You are bought with a price; be not ye servants of men” (1 Cor. 7:23); “There is neither Greek nor Jew; There is neither bond nor free” (Gal. 3:28) and “Be not entangled with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

the African immigrants in St. Thomas-in-the-East. Governor Eyre blamed it on the “misguided counsel of certain ministers of religion, sadly so-called, if the Saviour's example and teaching is to be the standard.” Colonel T. Francis Hobbs, commander of the 6th Regiment troops in Central District, was more specific, claiming:

> The place swarms with native Baptist ‘chapels,’ their ministers are the leading rebels . . . At the door of those wolves in sheep’s clothing lies the responsibility of all this rebellion . . . Let those who doubt this statement visit ‘Somerset,’ 'Mount Lebanon,' 'Mount Pigsah' - the hotbed of the rebellion, and account for this, in a province of wealth, in any other way than fanaticism.  

Hobbs also added a role for Obeah, saying, “I have now [sic] doubt that ‘Obeism’ and the deepest religious fanaticism had much to do with this rebellion, especially in Somerset, where Wellington bewitched them, he had immense power, and was much dreaded, and persuaded the people they could not be wounded or killed by buckra.” Religion played an essential role in the war.

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148 JRC Vol. 5 1129.
Recent studies show that the Native Baptists played a significant role in the 1865 event. One scholar who recognized their importance was Heuman who observed of the 1865 Native Baptist War that, “since many of the leaders of the rebellion were Native Baptists and some of the meetings took place in their chapels, it is also important to assess the revolutionary implications of native religion.” 

While scholars such as Heuman, Hutton and Beverly Carey claimed that the Native Baptists were integral to the event of 1865, no one has attempted to show how their hermeneutics affected the outcome of the protest. This work gives greater recognition to what Brian Meeks, Caribbean political scientist, calls “ideological factors” which are significant variables in social determination.

This work examines the ideology or the Biblical hermeneutic of the Native Baptists and its role in the resistance.

**Hermeneutical Method**

The word hermeneutics with its roots in the Greek word “hermeneus”, which

149 Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time*: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (London: Macmillan, 1994) 83. The JRC identified four Native Baptist leaders: JRC Vol. 5 157, 246, 1150. Phillippo claimed that the three Native Baptists and the three natives within the BMS were sum total of the number of Baptist protestors involved in the protest. He further said that twenty-six protestors were members of the Church of England and at least thirty were Roman Catholics: Underhill, *Life* 340-41. Phillippo was exonerating the Baptist missionaries from complicity in the resistance and went overboard by claiming that there were 10 times more Roman Catholics than Native Baptists and a similar ratio in respect to Native Baptists and Anglicans.

150 Heuman, *Killing* xv, 83.


153 Meeks 34-35.
meant an interpreter or expounder, one who explains issues, is the art of understanding any written text. 154 It is a quest for meaning. Werner Jeanrond, German theologian, said that the process of understanding a given text was influenced by one's biases and previous experiences and was, therefore, not a neutral activity. 155 Whereas hermeneutics is concerned with the general rules that govern the study of interpretation, a hermeneutic, as used in this study, is a specific interpretative technique used to understand texts.

There are many hermeneutical approaches to reading the Bible. David Jasper, British Anglican priest and theologian, said one can engage with the Scriptures through “hermeneutics of faith,” which is reading the Bible with eyes of faith, believing every word of it. This was the predominant way of reading the text until the seventeenth century. Then there is the “hermeneutics of suspicion” which involves testing every claim. 156 This approach seeks to expose the inherent ideological bias in Biblical interpretation. Juan Segundo, Latin American liberation theologian, is well known for the approach called “hermeneutic circle” which was “the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal.” 157 It meant one examines the situation in light of the Bible and then the

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156 Jasper 9-10.

Bible inspires the action and this new situation is again reflected upon based on the Bible and so the circle continues.

**Reader-Response Approach**

The Reader-Response approach is not a conceptually unified criticism. A Reader-Response hermeneutical perspective is one wherein the reader of the text brings a perspective to the text that relativized the texts and therefore every interpreter has a valid interpretation. Therefore, the approach of the Native Baptists has validity.

Stanley Fish, one of America's leading literary theorists, highlights the importance of the interpretative community. He states that communication occurs only within a "context, or situation, or interpretative community" and the interpretative community determines that understanding achieved by two or more persons. One is constrained by the assumptions and practices of the interpretative community and therefore, there is not an inexhaustible plurality of meanings. In addition, the same utterance in another situation will have another normative meaning. Each community has shared agreement, shared

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160 Fish 307-08.
values, and shared understanding. Beliefs are not “individual-specific or idiosyncratic” but “communal and conventional.” 161 Meaning does not reside solely in the text simply waiting to be discovered through the correct historical critical method but the interpretative community creates meaning. Even when a reader reads alone, he or she is still a member of an interpretative community and is influenced by the mind-set of that interpretative community. In this study, the Native Baptists are an important interpretative community.

This writer reflects on the Native Baptists’ use of a type of Reader-Response approach to ascertain what understandings they brought to the Bible, what meaning they left with after interpreting the Bible and what action followed that reading.

Raymond Brown, Biblical scholar, said that Historical Criticism, which became popular in the nineteenth century, emphasized the intended meaning the author had in mind and required an historical inquiry and reconstruction of the world of the author. Brown also said that Literary Criticism, which became an important method in the mid-twentieth century, was first fashionable in English Literature and then Biblical scholars felt that it could be useful. While Historical Criticism focused on the author, Literary Criticism concentrated on the text itself. It was felt that the text, as an independent authority, was competent to yield meaning of its own that could be separate and apart from what the author intended. The

161 Fish 321. Watson stated that in the interpretative process, persons are dependent on their predecessors whether building on their work or tear down to build a new work: Watson 71.
claim is that one does not have to know what the author intended to derive meaning from the text. One can grasp meaning by exploring the characters, plot and metaphors within the text. 162 General literature also wrestled with the concept of the “death of the author” and “the disappearance of the writer, the autonomy of writing . . . the power of language to organize and orchestrate itself without subjective intervention whatsoever, the notion of intertextualising of all literature.” 163 Therefore, different readers will derive different meanings, which have their own claim of validity without recourse to having to delve into the author’s purpose. There is also a shift in Caribbean social sciences. Meeks departed from the traditional methodological approach to the analysis of data and style of writing, including the behaviouralist/institutionalist traditions of West Indian social sciences and, later, mechanistic Marxist approaches, to embrace “a more transparent approach to narrative” and to make and reveal one’s “own biography as a central and indispensable part of any scholarly exercise of social-theoretical engagement.” 164 In outlining his biography with his orientation and prejudices, it was akin to a Reader -Response approach, which allows the reader, with his or her orientation and prejudices, to be involved. Additionally, a Reader -Response approach is a return to an art form of interpreting the Bible, which predates the time of the Native Baptists. Isaac Watts, who predated the Native Baptists in expounding on 1 Cor 3: 7, in the


164 Brian Meeks, Narratives of Resistance: Jamaica, Trinidad, the Caribbean (Bridgetown, Kingston, Port-of-Spain: University P, 2000) x.
eighteenth century, said, “The effect of the word preached is often different, and sometimes contrary, both to the preacher's and hearers' design.” 165

There are many hermeneutical approaches 166 but this writer is attributing the use of the Reader -Response Criticism 167 by the Native Baptists. This hermeneutical approach of the Native Baptists meant that the important thing in understanding a text was not so much the author (historical criticism) or the text (literary criticism), but rather the reader in his or her interpretative community. While other approaches offer useful insights, it was the reader, or to be precise, the Native Baptists as readers of Scripture, that is emphasized in this study. The Native Baptists as interpretative community did not emphasize what the author meant or what the text meant in its context and instead concentrated on certain texts that were meaningful to their context and how those interpretations expressed solidarity with their hurts, needs and aspirations.

There is, therefore, no predetermined meaning embodied in the text. The reader who is conditioned and shaped by class, race, gender, experiences and previous religious orientation, derives meaning from the text. With this approach there is no attempt to find a single meaning or even the best meaning or a standard

165 Nine Sermons, preached in the years 1718-19, by the late Isaac Watts, D. D.: Now first published from MSS. In the family of a contemporary friend (Oxford, 1812) 127 in British Library.

166 There are other approaches, such as Textual Criticism and Source Criticism: Brown, Introduction 21-23.

meaning. As Jasper articulated, “The idea that a text, least of all a biblical text, may have just one meaning, which, once grasped, remains firm, absolute, and unchanging forever, is a relatively modern concept, and an odd one at that, and would have been alien to an early Christian interpreter.” 168 Francis Watson, Biblical scholar, observed that “finite texts appear to be open to infinite interpretations.” 169 Every text is exposed to a plurality of meanings within the confines and context of the interpretative community.

This study evaluates the Native Baptists and their Biblical hermeneutic in their social context.


169 Watson 71.
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the writings of twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship about the Native Baptists shows how they have been treated, who they were perceived to be, and when they were thought to have been established, what their beliefs were claimed to be and how they were seen to be organized. This overview also examines the works that portrayed the hermeneutics of the Native Baptists and their role in the 1865 Native Baptist War.

In 2003, Lloyd Cooke, Jamaican church historian, in an article in the Sunday Gleaner, denied the existence of Native Baptists, claiming, “The term Native Baptists is then more a pejorative than actually the name of a particular Baptist group of churches.” ¹ An official Baptist publication written mainly by Jamaican-born Baptists, did not deny the reality of Native Baptists, but rather ignored them in the recording of the history of the Baptists of Jamaica from 1783 to 1938. ² Catherall in his post-doctoral work credited the English Baptists with influencing societal changes in 1865 ³ but gave no commendation to the Native Baptists.


³ Gordon Catherall, Baptist War and Peace: A Study of British Baptist involvement in Jamaica 1783-1865 (Liverpool: [c. 1982]).
However, Heuman recognized the significance of the Native Baptists in 1865 and in his book, *The Killing Time*: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica he entitled a chapter “Ideology, religion and rebellion”, ⁴ although he concentrated on the “political agenda” of the Native Baptists. ⁵ This study answers the question about the existence of the Native Baptists by tracing their origin and development and builds on other works, such as Heuman’s, by highlighting the important contribution of the Native Baptists especially in the neglected area of the impact of their Biblical hermeneutic on the 1865 Native Baptist War

**Fictional Portrayal of Native Baptists**

It was essential to get the perspective of novelists and other artists because “the distinction between the literal and the literary truth is extremely difficult to pin down.” ⁶ In addition, fiction captures the views of later writers about the events of the nineteenth century.

De Lisser’s novel, *Revenge*, examined the 1865 Native Baptist War and ignored Bogle’s Native Baptist faith while describing Bogle as “Drunk with blood and fury” and that “underneath the veneer of his [Bogle’s] religion lay deep the superstitions of the African savage.” De Lisser, a member of the ruling class who

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⁵ Heuman, *Killing Time* 85.
served as editor of Jamaica's leading newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*, also said Gordon was “hungry for applause.”

V. S Reid, leading Jamaican novelist, in *New Day*, which began in 1865 with the agitation for betterment and ended in 1944 when a new constitution inaugurated a “new day” for Jamaica, mentioned the main historical characters, such as Paul Bogle, George William Gordon, Governor Edward Eyre, the Maroons and the Custos. He contrasted Gordon, the peacemaker with Bogle the warmonger. Bogle was the “wild one” and the “madding man” who failed to grasp Gordon’s plans. He praised the middle-class, Mulatto Gordon. This was a new day in fictional writing in not condemning both Bogle and Gordon as De Lisser did but it showed the same prejudice against Bogle.

In another novel, *Sixty-five*, Reid narrated the events leading to the 1865 protest and again named the main figures. In this novel “Grandpa Joe” was characterized as “a strong Church of England man” and was the mouthpiece for

9 Reid, *New Day* 8, 68, 92.
10 Reid, *New Day* 26, 90.
11 The entry in the baptismal record said George Gordon about three months, “a Quadroon slave on Cherry Gardens” but other baptisms for December 27, 1815 said some were “Negro slaves on Cherry Gardens” and “Mulatto slaves on Cherry Gardens”: “Baptism in 1815,” *St. Andrew Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1807-1826* Vol. 2 53 in 1B/11/8/1/2 St. Andrew 1807-26 in Island Record Office Jam 88 JA 1B/11 in Jamaica Archives. Gordon was a Quadroon.
the ruling class. He bitterly opposed Bogle while lauding the role of Englishmen William Wilberforce and William Knibb in the fight against slavery. 13 Grandpa Joe stereotypically had Bogle as a “hothead” in contrast to “Reverend Mr. Gordon” who was of “moderate outlook” and wanted to fight “with memorials to the Queen.” 14 There was, however, no mention of the connection between Bogle and Gordon and the Native Baptists.

Derek Walcott, Nobel Laureate, in the play *Drums and Colours*, performed in 1958 to mark the inauguration of the West Indies Federation, depicted the Haitian revolution in the context of a “civilized empire” while overlooking the contribution of the peasant farmer Paul Bogle and the Native Baptists to the Jamaican uprising in 1865 and instead portrayed the middle class businessman and politician George William Gordon as a martyr, 15 having him say:

I risk my life for this; if we ask for these liberties,

We are seeking what is natural. 16

Walcott failed to mention Bogle and the Native Baptists in the uprising. 17

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14 Reid, *Sixty-five* 15, 38.
16 Walcott 260
17 Walcott 259-61.
However, poet Francis Berry in *Morant Bay and Other Poems* said that Paul Bogle was a deacon in the Native Baptist chapel and George William Gordon was ordained in the Native Baptist Church. He also connected Myal to Native Baptists in a poem replete with references to the Native Baptists. He gave a sympathetic treatment of Bogle and Gordon and recognized their connection with the Native Baptists.

A Jamaican government video production (2002) on the life of George William Gordon did not reveal that Gordon was associated with the Native Baptists; it only stated that he had his own church and ordained persons including Bogle. However, in that same series, Bogle was mentioned as a Native Baptist leader. The 1-hour documentary titled *Time of Fury: The Story of the Morant Bay Rebellion* mentioned that after emancipation most of the formerly enslaved became Baptists and that Paul Bogle was a Baptist deacon. George William Gordon was described as an extremely religious man but throughout the entire film there was no mention of Native Baptists. A half-hour documentary on the life story of publisher of the *Watchman* newspaper, Edward Jordon, who operated from the 1820s until the 1860s, revealed that Sam Sharpe was a leader

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19 Berry 2, 6, 14, 16, 17, 21.

20 *Salute to our Heroes*, Jamaica Information Service. Video Cassette. JIS, 2002 viewed at the JIS Archives in Kingston, Jamaica courtesy of Adrian Gordon.

in the Baptist missionary movement, but the film was silent on the Native Baptists.  

British-born Edna Manley, renowned sculptor and founder of Jamaica’s artistic movement, did a statue of Paul Bogle, which was erected in 1965 for the one hundredth anniversary of the 1865 Native Baptist War. Through the statue, (See figure 1) Manley, in the words of Jamaica’s leading art historian David Boxer, “evokes the Crucifixion.” The horizontal stretch of the bent arms reminds one of Jesus on the Cross and Manley blending the cutlass with the cross showed she, daughter of a missionary, understood that for Bogle and his followers, religion

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and politics were inter-related and the use of the machete was not necessarily inconsistent with the claims and aims of Christianity. In addition, Jesus according to the Christian Faith died on behalf of others and Manley in evoking that memory is placing Bogle as a martyr of the Christian Faith. In addition, one of Jamaica's leading self-taught artists, Malica 'Kapo' Reynolds, a Shepherd within the Pocomania tradition, made two significant depictions of Bogle, namely "Paul Bogle" (see Figure 2) and "Paul Bogle and Followers" (see Figure 3). According to art critic, Selden Rodman, Kapo's portrayal of Bogle depicted "a dynamic image of human revolt against injustice. The straight back, the thrust of the neck, the vertical arm culminating in the hand clenched around a stone, convey the importance of the issue and power of the righteous" 24 (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2: Sculpture of Paul Bogle (Kapo: The Larry Wirth Collection)
Documentaries or films on the role of Native Baptists in the Jamaican society are non-existent. And most fictional works have either ignored or maligned the Native Baptists, except, Berry, Manley and Kapo who had a high regard for the spirituality of Native Baptist leader Paul Bogle.
Origin of Native Baptists

Many scholars have claimed that there was an umbilical connection between the Native Baptists and George Liele. Hailing Liele as a founder of the Native Baptists meant that the Native Baptists existed in 1783, when Liele began preaching in Jamaica. Philip Curtin said, “Liele’s chapel was only one variety of Native Baptist congregation [sic]” and that this “was the beginning of the Native Baptist movement.”

Edmund Davis, former General Secretary of the Jamaica Council of Churches, said that the Native Baptist Church existed from 1824 while Patterson argued that the Native Baptists came into being from 1828.

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Some scholars identified Native Baptists as being active in 1831. Many writings identified Sharpe as a Native Baptist, with the implication being that Native Baptists were in existence in 1831. Catherine Hall offered a later date when she asserted "By 1841 Duff, Lyon and others had decided to set up their own Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society to further their cause." Russell in proffering a post 1865 date said that within five years the BMS leadership responding to subtle pressures from the Jamaican government and some of its missionaries in the island, began to distance itself from the events of 1865 by suggesting that the Baptists of St. Thomas were not genuine Baptists and the result was a division within the Baptist constituency and "the formation of the Native Baptist Church with significant branches in Kingston and St. Thomas."


The various dates and the wide continuum of dates stretching from 1783 to 1865 for the origin of the Native Baptists are due to the fact that many scholars have not defined Native Baptists or have loosely defined them or used it as Catherall said in a "generic" sense. The imprecise definitions have played a major role in the proliferation of dates for the origin of the Native Baptists. In addition, by associating certain significant figures as Native Baptists, scholars were inadvertently dating the Native Baptists and got it incorrect. This study seeks to be as precise as possible about the date of establishment of the Native Baptists and also in defining who can be classified as Native Baptists.

**Native Baptists and African Religious Expressions**

Albert Raboteau, one of the foremost specialists on African-American religious history, said, “By the middle of the nineteenth century, African and Baptist beliefs had begun to fuse in the Native Baptist movement.” Other scholars who claimed that there was an intermingling of African and Christian/European beliefs among the Native Baptists included historians, Monica Schuler and Thomas Holt. However, Cooke did not claim an intermingling but rather felt that the predominant predisposition of the Native Baptists was that they held to

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33 Catherall, *Native Baptist* 70.


35 Schuler 34. For a similar position see Lawson 202 and Clarke, *Kingston* 39.

36 Holt 291.
practices that more reflected “the African ancestral religions . . .” 37 Then there are scholars who linked Native Baptists to specific African derived religious expressions such as Myal, Obeah, Kumina, Convince and Revival. These positions will be outlined below.

According to Seaga, Myal was a “purely non-Christian African derived cult” 38 while George Simpson, noted American anthropologist, who did research in Morant Bay and West Kingston (two places in Jamaica known for Myal and Kumina), linked Myal possession to the Kumina ceremony, claiming there was no recorded instance of Myal occurring outside of Kumina ceremonies. 39 Additionally, Myalism was centred on a “special dance” 40 accompanied by “an intense state of spiritual possession.” 41 Furthermore, Myal men “were skilled herbalists” 42 who according to Russell practised “divine healing and the expulsion of evil spirits.” 43 Many writers, including Schuler, 44 Curtin, 45

37 Cooke I10.


40 Patterson, Sociology 186. See also Warner-Lewis, Central Africa 192.


42 Raboteau 35.

Sheller, Beckwith, Raboteau and Chevannes argued that Myal counteracts the evil of Obeah.

Schuler in classifying "Native or Black Baptists" claimed that their "blend of African and European religious beliefs and practices was really Myalist, not [English] Baptist." Linguist Mervyn Alleyne said, "By this time (1831) the distinction between Native Baptist Christianity and Myalism was often blurred and Native Baptists was 'Christianised Myalism'" while Hutton claimed there was "sameness between Myalism and Native Baptism [sic]." Hutton asserted, "This writer's view is that Native Baptism [sic] was the public arm of Myalism." He, however, was engaging in conjecture in asserting such connection because he further stated, "although evidence of a direct link between

44 Schuler 40.
45 Curtin, Two Jamaicas 30.
46 Sheller, Quashaeba 101.
48 Raboteau 33-34.
50 Warner-Lewis claimed that it was spelt "mayaal" though "myal" is the popular spelling Warner-Lewis, Central Africa 190. This writer will use the general spelling to avoid confusion.
51 Schuler 34.
53 Hutton, Colour 150, 167.
54 Hutton, Colour 166-68.
Myalism/Kumina/Convince and Native Baptism [sic] in St. Thomas—in-the-East is so far sparse, it is unlikely that in reality there was no inextricable relations between the two.” 55 For these three scholars, the Native Baptists and Myalism were intrinsically linked.

Another African derived religious expression that was associated with the Native Baptists was Obeah. Findlay and Holdsworth, 56 Barrett, 57 Hogg, 58 Raboteau, 59 Bryan 60 and Bolland 61 described Obeah as being evil. Patterson claimed that Obeah “was essentially a type of sorcery which largely involves harming others at the request of the clients, by use of charms, poisons and shadow catching.” 62 Then he implied that Obeah was more akin to witchcraft than to sorcery when he stated, “the word obeah is derived from the West African witchcraft and not sorcery.” 63 Patterson in outlining contradictory statements about Obeah did not

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55 Hutton, Colour 166-67.


59 Raboteau 34.

60 Bryan 39.


62 Patterson, Sociology 188. See also Olive Senior, Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage (Kingston: Twin Guinep, 2003) 354 and Hogg, Jamaican Religions 6.

63 Patterson, Sociology 186.
elaborate on the difference between witchcraft and sorcery though he intimated that sorcery was worse than witchcraft.

But there are scholars who have a different perspective on Obeah. Brathwaite stated that the obeahman was “doctor, philosopher and priest” and that it was a misunderstanding to associate obeah with “superstition, witchcraft and poison.” 64 Additionally, in the plotting of rebellions, the obeahman guaranteed immunization to the insurgents against the armoury of the Europeans. 65 Other features of Obeah included healing, 66 and preventing, detecting and punishing crimes among the enslaved. 67 Paton outlined an additional benefit of Obeah, which is obtaining justice from superiors. She said that unlike both the colonial court system and the systems of justice associated with the indigenous dissenting churches, Obeah held out the possibility of “gaining redress even in conflicts with the people of superior status, including planters.” 68

Some scholars who have stated their opinions on the relationship between the Native Baptists and Obeah include Turner who said, “The Native Baptist leaders


67 Patterson, Sociology 190.

were defined, accurately enough, as ‘Christianised obeahs,’ whose sects simply compounded error with error,” 69 and Hutton, who in a convoluted way, related the Native Baptists to Obeah through a common link to Myal. 70 Linking the Native Baptists with Obeah is usually an attempt to associate the Native Baptists with the perceived unsavoury aspects of Obeah.

Obeah, like Myal, has been difficult to define. Paton analyzed correctly when she claimed that “Precise definitions of obeah and myalism have proved elusive, in part because of the evidence about them comes almost entirely from outside.” 71 The imprecise definition of Native Baptists and the inadequate definition of Obeah have made it easy for scholars to glibly link both as one and the same. Paton further claimed that Obeah was the name given by Europeans to all aspects of Caribbean popular belief that they found alien and threatening. 72 Since some in authority in 1865 found Native Baptists alien and threatening, it partially explains why Obeah was associated with the Native Baptists.

One more African derived religious expression that was coupled with the Native Baptists was Kumina. Kumina is “an ancestral cult the main object of which is possession by the ancestral spirits through drumming and dancing.” 73 It is also

69 Turner 59.
70 Hutton, Colour 166-68.
71 Paton 183.
72 Paton 183.
73 Patterson, Sociology 199. See also Kenneth Bilby and Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki, Kumina: A Kongo-Based Tradition in the New World (N. p. Cedaf Asdoc, 1983) 4, 6.
known as “the African dance.” In addition, Kumina does not use Christian hymns but has its catalogue of “Koongo-based and Jamaican Creole Songs.”

Kenneth Bilby and Congolese scholar Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki stated that for Kumina or Cumina “the evidence points clearly to a Central African background and a post-emancipation origin in Jamaica.” Only Hutton speculated that there was a link between Kumina and Native Baptists.

Another ancestral cult believed to have influenced the Native Baptists was Convince. Convince or Bongo was classified as an ancestral cult. Donald Hogg visited a Convince meeting and observed that, “Although Convince contains various Christian ritual elements” it had a marked “anti-Christian character.” Hogg added, Convince had “large number of African derived characteristics” with

74 Schuler 71 and Bilby and Bunseki, Kumina 1.

75 Warner-Lewis, Central Africa 147. Warner-Lewis’ spelling “Koongo” is unique.

76 Those who spell it “kumina” included Schuler 71, Seaga, Revival Cults 4, Warner- Lewis Central Africa 15, 17, 76 and Lewin ix, 18. Those who spell it “Cumina” included Patterson Sociology 199-201 and Simpson Religious Cults 167-69. Senior claimed that it could be spelt both ways: Senior, Encyclopedia 270.

77 Bilby and Bunseki, Kumina 2. Patterson claimed that Kumina existed from 1730: Patterson, Sociology 201. However, Bilby and Bunseki quoted the historical, archival research of Schuler (1980) which said Kumina had its origin in mid to late nineteenth century: Bilby and Bunseki, Kumina 2.

78 Hutton, Colour 166-67.

79 Warner-Lewis used the term Convince and Bongo interchangeably: Warner-Lewis, Central Africa 146, 220. Alleyne said that Convince’s other name was “Convince Flenkee” and its members called “Bongo”: Alleyne 93.

features such as “blood sacrifice, worship of ancestral ghosts, violent trance behaviour conceptualized as spirit possession . . .” 81

Alleyne connected the Native Baptists and Convince but later admitted that he found diametrically opposing evidence wherein Convince was linked not to Native Baptists but to the Maroons. 82 Alleyne quoted Moore who said that Convince originated among Maroons and also stated that it was therefore impossible to reconcile that observation with Presbyterian missionary W. J. Gardner’s comment that Convince was known among the “titular Native Baptists.” 83 Hutton ignored Alleyne’s observation and theorized about a connection between Convince and Native Baptists. 84

The final African derived religious expression that the Native Baptists were related to was Revival. Revival was an indigenous African – Jamaican religion, which derived its name from the Great Christian Revival of 1860-61 85 and was made up of two different strands, namely Pocomania and Zion Revival with Zion Revival being the more Christianized form of Pocomania. 86 However, one must

81 Hogg, Jamaican 3, 16.


83 Alleyne 93-94.

84 Hutton, Colour 166-67.

85 For the genesis and growth of Revival read Jamaica Moravian Church 111-18.

86 Senior, Encyclopedia 534.
be cautious when trying to differentiate Pocomania and Revival Zionist and heed Simpson’s advice that, “it is difficult to distinguish between Pocomania and Revival Zionists’ cults.” 87 In the reinterpreted gods in Revivalism there is no reference to Jesus. 88 Raboteau said the Native Baptists were a “precursor of present-day Revivalist groups in Jamaica” namely Revival and Pocomania. 89 Diane J. Austin-Broos, Australian anthropologist, was more emphatic and said “The Native Baptists now called ‘Zion Revivalists’ . . .” 90 Chevannes also spoke about Revival and “its antecedent forms, Myal and Native Baptists” and linked Native Baptists and Revival because he said Revivalists practised fasting and so did George Lewis, whom he claimed was a Native Baptist. 91 However, similarity of practice is not a foundation on which to claim similarity of belief and affinity to same the institution.

Unlike other scholars who claimed that Native Baptists and Revival were in a relationship, Schuler claimed, “Kumina is thought to have given birth to Pocomania.” 92 Warner-Lewis, who, said Revival, Zion and “Pukkumina” were derived from the crucible of Myal, supports this position. 93 Two leading scholars

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88 Simpson, Religious Cults 198.

89 Raboteau 28.

90 Austin-Broos 62.

91 Chevannes, 1842 Myal 2, 13, 17.

92 Schuler 104.

93 Warner-Lewis, Central Africa 190.
did not link Native Baptists with Revival and so raise doubts about the claim by others that Native Baptists and Revival were linked.

The predominant view of most historical writings is that Native Baptists were linked to African-derived religious expressions, though there was little consensus as to which one and hence Native Baptists were linked to African religions and also to Myal, Obeah, Kumina, Convince and Revival. These linkages, if true, would make the Native Baptists one of the most syncretistic religious expressions ever recorded and the Native Baptists would not have had a distinctive identity. Therefore, this study outlines the beliefs and practices of the Native Baptists in order to determine whether such beliefs and practices were African retentions or influenced by European-based Christianity.

**Orthodoxy of the Native Baptists Questioned**

Historian Philip Wright in the introduction to Phillippo’s classic book said, “The Native Baptists were self-appointed spiritual leaders who departed in varying degrees from orthodox belief and practice.” 94 While Catherall claimed, without elaborating, that Native Baptists “tended towards the enthusiastic” and the “religiously unorthodox” and attached to them was a “stigma of illiteracy, fanaticism and superstition.” 95 In addition, British scholar, Colin G. Clarke said

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95 Catherall, *Native Baptist* 70, 72.
Native Baptists resembled “cult groups” rather than orthodox churches. 96 Curtin and Richard Burton articulated the view that the missionaries were the guardians of orthodoxy who had to compete against the unorthodox Native Baptist ministers. 97 Similarly, Austin-Broos, claimed that a line was drawn between “Orthodox Baptists” and Native Baptists concerning the Native Baptists’ worldview that politics and morality merged. 98 Furthermore, Hall said some Native Baptists were “seceders from orthodox congregations” and were “susceptible” to unorthodoxy. 99 Moreover, as recently as 2007, a Jamaican government website declared that the Native Baptists had “superstitious and pagan beliefs.” 100 This official release alleged that the Native Baptists were credulous and unorthodox.

Curtin gave two specific examples of the Native Baptists departure from orthodoxy. The first was “the emphasis on the ‘the spirit’ and a corresponding neglect of the written word.” This spirit emphasis was demonstrated by possession of the “the spirit” which descended upon the follower in a dream. The

96 Clarke, Kingston 117.


98 Austin-Broos 61.

99 Hall, Civilising Subjects 144, 165.

other example was that the Native Baptists believed in “the subordination of Christ as the chief religious figure and an emphasis on John the Baptist.” 101

In addition, Simpson caricatured Native Baptists as “spirit Baptists” 102 implying that they did not emphasize the Bible as much as they did the Holy Spirit or as Cooke puts it they “allow more liberty in the Spirit, and even ‘possession by the spirits.’ ” 103

Holt was subtle in questioning the orthodoxy of the Native Baptists in his claim that they were millenarians. Holt claimed that the Bogle/Gordon Native Baptist alliance had "a strong millennial undercurrent” 104 and gave as an example of Gordon’s “millennial faith” the following statement: “Their plan is to pray to God for deliverance. You may laugh at this and call it cant, but I assure you it is the most effectual plan. If you know the number of ways in which God can, and often does destroy the evildoer, you would agree.” 105 But in fact, Holt had earlier said that Native Baptists’ churches “were venues for fostering community, legitimizing alternative worldviews, and articulating political solidarity” and he further claimed that the “churches were political not in the narrow sense of partisan

101 Curtin, Two Jamaica 33-34.

102 Simpson, Black Religions 52-3. Reid also spoke about “Spirit Baptists” as distinct from English Baptists: C. S. Reid, Samuel Sharpe: From Slave to National Hero (Kingston: Bustamante IPIA, 1988) 52. See also Wright who intimated that the Native Baptists were “spirit Baptists”: Wright, Knibb 78.

103 Cooke I 10.

104 Holt 294. Craton made a similar allegation that the 1831 Baptist War was millenarian: Michael Craton, Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean (Kingston, Oxford, Princeton: Randle, Currey, Weiner, 1997) 316.

105 Holt 295. See also JRC Vol. 4 228.
politics but in the broad sense . . . ” 106 Holt was indicating that the Native Baptists wanted community and political changes in the here and now. Holt’s observations seemed contradictory because he claimed that they were expecting that God would intervene without human agency for a change in their material situation but also said that they were involved in political action to transform the society.

Heuman did not share Holt’s view about the Native Baptists as millenarians and said, “For Native Baptists, religion contained a significant political dimension” and “Bogle also made use of the Native Baptists to support his political and religious ally, George William Gordon.” 107 Heuman added that Gordon’s final letter was “suffused with the mixture of religious and political ideas.” 108 Henderson also said the events that led to protest at Morant Bay in 1865 do not come within the scope of church history but may be properly regarded as “political.” 109 Catherall was more restrained and argued that the Native Baptist group was “semi-political” though he did state that Bogle and Gordon used the Native Baptist Church “for political ends.” 110 Both Heuman and Hutton observed that most of the political leaders were Native Baptist members and preachers. 111

106 Holt 291.
107 Heuman, Killing Time 184.
108 Heuman Killing Time 184.
109 Henderson 107.
110 Catherall, Native Baptist 71.
111 Hutton, Colour 172-73 and Heuman, Killing Time 83.
These observations conflict with Holt's argument about a millennial undercurrent.

In addition, Heuman claimed that the political outshone the religious in 1865:

The oaths taken by the slaves in 1831 and by the ex-slaves in 1865 represented a fusion of religion and politics, but one in which political goals were dominant. Both the Baptist war and Morant Bay rebellion were political movements, but they were partly inspired by Baptist and Native Baptist traditions. 112

Heuman in his epilogue also said that politics was an integral part of the religious faith and expression, - “For Native Baptists, religion contained a significant political dimension.” 113 Heuman in this statement was claiming that for the Native Baptists, their political activism was an outworking of their Christian Faith. Wilmot strengthened that position by highlighting some other Native Baptists who were involved in political activism. For example, John Davis, a Native Baptist pastor in Kingston, who had a chapel in Morant Bay, supported political candidates Mr. Heslop, as well as Andrew Duncan in the 1849 elections. Wilmot further indicated that, “the Native Baptist network in the parish was already politically active before George William Gordon’s campaigns in the

112 Heuman, Killing Time 37.
113 Heuman, Killing Time 184.
In the 1850s, Matthew Lutas, a tailor, freeholder and trustee of the Native Baptist Church in Kingston was one of two of Kingston’s leading political organizers. In addition, Samuel Clarke mobilized small freeholders in St. David for electoral politics. The data suggests that the Native Baptists were not millenarians but were politically active as an expression of their religious faith.

Another way, in which the Native Baptists’ faith was expressed, was its pre-occupation with justice. Hutton, Gordon and Paton highlighted the justice system that emanated from the Native Baptists. Hutton demonstrated that Bogle was a Justice of the Peace and had an alternate justice system based on trial by jury with a structure and terms of reference. The court also issued written summons to people whom it felt violated the laws. Gordon said that many Native Baptist sects established their own courts following the Moses Baker pattern. Paton claimed there was the “existence of a network of popular courts, institutionally based in the Native Baptist Church” in post-emancipation Jamaica for the purpose of “resolving or mediating conflicts” in response to the “unstable”


116 Hutton, Colour 191-93.

117 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 74.
oppressive official courts. Involvement in the justice system was the natural outcome of the faith of the Native Baptists.

**Who were the Native Baptists?**

Turner claimed that “Native Baptist” was a broad term and said it was “clearly a generic term for the proliferation of sects in which the slaves developed religious forms, more or less Christian in content that reflected their needs more closely than the orthodox churches, black or white.” It was a nonspecific term that was applied in a general sense to the enslaved who designed church worship to meet their specific needs.

Gordon asserted, “Native Jamaican Christian groups usually called themselves Baptist, and were referred to as ‘Native Baptists’ by those who recorded their existence.” Gordon highlighted the problem about who the Native Baptists were. So often, writers who record history label persons and groups as Native Baptists rather than trying to ascertain the groups who identified themselves as Native Baptists or accepted that they were Native Baptists.

Marvia Lawes, Baptist minister, labeled all Baptist groups in Jamaica as Native Baptists. She said, “My use of the name Native Baptists is in reference to all

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118 Paton 189.

119 Turner 58.

120 Gordon, *Cause for His Glory* 4.
Baptist groups in Jamaica including and in particular those also served by British Missionaries, but which emerged out of the work of George Liele and Moses Baker." 121 For Lawes, it was an all-embracing term.

In addition, the Native Baptists were often misrepresented by other designations. For Schuler, Gordon and Hall, Native Baptists was synonymous with “black Baptists,” 122 Brathwaite represented Native Baptists as “Spiritual Baptists” 123 but Raboteau located the Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad who interweaved “African customs with a rigidly orthodox Christian creed,” 124 while Patricia Stephens, a Spiritual Baptist scholar, re-inforced that Spiritual Baptists were indigenous to Trinidad. 125 Catherall said the Native Baptist Church was a “synonym for rebellion.” 126 These various designations have made it necessary for this study to ascertain who the Native Baptists were.

Native Baptists and organization

Catherall said, the Native Baptists, unlike the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), had

122 Schuler 34, Gordon, Cause for His Glory 4 and Hall, Civilising Subjects 165.
124 Raboteau 28.
126 Catherall, Native Baptist 70.
“no semblance of organisation.” Gordon supported that statement and said that a feature of Native Baptists and other “Native Jamaican Christian groups” was that they had “no islandwide organisation.” But Gordon appeared to have contradicted herself about no organization when she quoted Jonathan Edmondson, experienced Methodist chairman, who said, “A number of men who could not be employed by us have purchased black silk gowns, etc. and begin to form societies under the denomination of native Baptists and native Wesleyans.’” Surely, to form a society and to be a denomination was an example of church organization. Kortright Davis, Caribbean theologian, also claimed that among the African descendants in the Caribbean there was no “distinctly formed church movement” such as among the African Methodists or the Baptists in the USA. However, Chevannes claimed that the Native Baptist movement “was apparently institutionalized with a structured following.” and Sheller stated that the Native Baptist Church offered organizational resources in the same way that Black Churches did in the United States Civil Rights Movement.

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127 Catherall, Native Baptist 72.
128 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 4.
129 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 72.
131 Chevannes, 1842 Myal 3.
Themes and Hermeneutical approaches

Hutton posited that Bogle's approach was to use the Bible for “political/ideological objectives” in order to “justify Black opposition to the social systems and institutions established on the basis of racist notions of the relationship between Europeans and Africans.” 133 From that hermeneutical perspective Hutton analyzed the marked Psalms in Bogle's hymnal 134 and developed five principal themes.

The themes were:

✓ The equitable use of the earth’s resources,
✓ The need to use violence to destroy the oppressors,
✓ God as the source of justice,
✓ God on the side of the oppressed,
✓ The need of the oppressed to praise God and take their troubles to him. 135

Hutton developed themes from the newspapers’ reference to Bogle's marked hymnbook but he did not consult a copy of the hymnbook, Watts's hymnal and so made the mistake of believing that the numbering in the hymnbook corresponded with the Psalms of the Bible. For example, Hutton saw a reference in the newspaper account that one of the Psalms marked was “115th” and he, therefore,


135 Hutton, Colour 232-34.
examine Psalm 115: 16 in the Bible. However, when Psalm 115 2nd version was
consulted in the hymnal it does not include a verse 16 but has six stanzas and
none has the idea contained in verse 16 of that Psalm in the Bible. In addition,
while this writer had recognized that Watts’s hymnal was not an exact translation
of the Psalms but rather Psalms put to music for Christian worship, he, like
Hutton, failed to realize that Watts’s edition based on the Gleaner’s account
consisted of two main sections namely, Psalms and Hymns and the latter were
not based on a corresponding chronological number in the book of the Psalms in
the Bible. In this Watts’s edition, there were two number 11, one that was based
on Psalm 11 in the Bible and another, which was not based on Psalm 11 but
was identified in this hymnal as, not an Isaac Watts’s composition but, that of
John Rippon, a Baptist hymn-writer. In addition, the marked hymn number
23 had nothing in common with Psalm 23. Hutton concentrated on Psalms
while ignoring all the marked hymns. Consequently, the basis on which Hutton
developed his themes was in instances faulty and inadequate.

Another scholar who examined the hermeneutical approach of the Native
Baptists was Russell, who in a passing reference, said that the Bible was used by

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137 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 65.
139 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 6.
140 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 131.
141 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 172.
Bogle and Gordon “to define the society that was beginning to emerge in their day and led to the peasant uprising of 1865.” However, he concentrated on the hermeneutical approach of Liele and Knibb. He described Knibb’s hermeneutic as “contextual” and at another time “naïve literalistic” based on a “free” interpretation of Scripture. He also claimed, without elaboration, that the hermeneutic of the enslaved at times resembled the “missionary hermeneutic” and at another time its main preoccupation was the defence of freedom. This study will build on existing works on the themes and hermeneutical approach of Native Baptists, especially the significant leaders.

Theories on the 1865 Native Baptist War

Since the late twentieth century, there have been a few authors examining the 1865 event, including Hall, Don Robotham, Hutton, Heuman and Wilmot.

142 Russell, Understandings 112.
143 Russell, Understandings 95, 99, 100 and 103.
144 Russell, Understandings 103-04, 112.
145 Russell, Understandings 110.
148 Hutton, Colour.
149 Heuman, Killing Time.
Hutton claimed that for Jamaica there was a causal relationship between African religious retentions and revolts such as between Obeah and Myal which drove the Sam Sharpe and Paul Bogle movements:

At every juncture in the African's struggle to end slavery and post-slavery oppression the healer/obeahman/obeahwoman and Myal priest/healer/obeahman/obeahwoman led the way. From Nanny, healer/obeahwoman/Queen Mother of Maroonage . . . to Deacon Paul Bogle, post-slavery rebel chief, Obeahism and Myalism were the socio-cultural factors utilized to sue for emancipation and empowerment. 151

Caribbean historian, Patrick Bryan, after claiming that there was an association between the 1865 Native Baptist War and the Great Revival of 1860, said there were religious revivals in Jamaica in 1831, 1840 and 1883. 152 However, in ascribing a causal link between a revival, which is a "spiritual and moral regeneration" 153 and a revolt, it was observed that there were five years intervening between the Revival of 1860 and the 1865 Native Baptist War. In addition, there was a revival in 1840 but there was no revolt. Moreover, Warner-Lewis said there were mass spiritual revivals or outbreaks in Jamaica in 1760s,


151 Hutton, Colour 168.


153 Schuler 104.
And there was no revolt in 1842. There is a discrepancy between Bryan and Warner-Lewis in that the former has a revival in 1840 while the later has a revival in 1842. However, for both dates there was no revolt. This meant that there could be a revival without subsequent protests. The correlation between revolts and revivals is tenuous.

Kenneth Bilby claimed that the Maroons' narratives had it that Bogle's resistance was infused with "Kromanti power." Bilby claimed that some Maroon sympathizers gave Bogle this power which allowed him "to protect himself from bullets" once he refrained from eating "bakra food, sugarcane." The theory was that Bogle became hungry, ate the cane, lost the power and was captured. 155

A popular and predominant view of the 1865 Native Baptist War was that the protestors initiated violence. 156


American scholar, Bernard Semmel said:

Paul Bogle, on the other hand, was organizing small, secret societies whose long-range purpose was to foment rebellion and drive the white man from Jamaica. Reports of illegal drills, of the collection of small arms and ammunition, and of clandestine meetings poured in upon Kingston. Trouble was reported in parishes throughout the island. 157

Semmel made a distinction between Bogle and Gordon with Bogle being portrayed as violent and Gordon as the rational one seeking to resolve conflicts peacefully. He said Gordon collected subscriptions of money to be used to send a deputation to London, which would “present a petition to the Queen, personally, thus circumventing Governor Eyre.” 158 Heuman and Holt claimed that the protestors went to the Police Station to get arms before entering Morant Bay. 159 This sequence of activities was used as an argument that the protestors had violent intentions. Hutton not only said that Bogle and his followers were violent but also said that they found justification for the use of violence in his marked Psalm. Hutton quoted Ps. 143: 3, 12 and Ps. 11: 2, 6 to support his argument that there was a call to destroy the oppressors violently. He said that these Psalms, “justified the use of violence by the oppressed Black peasantry to remove the


158 Semmel, Governor 45-46. Semmel gave no reference for his statements. Robotham substantiated Semmel’s point that Gordon employed peaceful tactics: Robotham 86.

159 Heuman, Killing Time 4, 89, 184 and Holt 297.
violence and oppression of the White Plantocracy and its allies.” 160 Carey also held that Bogle and his supporters committed “acts of violence.” 161 Hall said there was the resolve to “‘kill all the white men and all the black men that would not join them.’ ” 162 There are others who claimed that the 1865 Native Baptist War was violent. Heuman said that at the Underhill Meetings “oaths were taken, some of which contained threats to kill the whites and pay no rent for the backlands. Violence at Morant Bay was now on the agenda.” 163 Heuman also quoted the testimony of William Alveranga who said, “We will kill every white and Mulatto man in the Bay.” 164 In 2000, K. E. Ingram, the editor of the Jamaica Historical Society and a renowned librarian, published, without analysis, the letter of Andrew Hogg, United Presbyterian missionary, which was written twelve days after the protest in 1865, claiming that the protest was violent. 165 In October of 2003, as Jamaica celebrated the achievements of its National Heroes, Martin Henry, University lecturer and newspaper columnist said, “Viscount Ellibank . . . insisted in old age that from second-hand information . . . (that) Negro women sat on the corpses and gashed them with broken glasses. The men opened the skulls, scooped out the brains into calabashes mixed them with rum and drank

160 Hutton, Colour 232.


162 Hall, Free 246.

163 Heuman, Killing Time 184. Heuman also said that some oaths were accompanied by kissing of the Bible and a commitment to truth telling: Heuman 80-83.

164 Heuman, Killing Time 4.

the mixture in the Baptist Chapel . . .” and then Henry seemed to suggest there was some element of truth in the statement when he asked, “Exaggeration and the forgetfulness of old age or some smattering of truth, at least?” 166 Bogle and his fellow Native Baptists were, in 2003, being re-visited and depicted as rum-drinking cannibals.

On the other hand, George Henderson, Baptist pastor, though calling the 1865 event “tragic” claimed that Bogle and his followers were equipped with their agricultural tools and said of Bogle and his followers, “Some had sticks, and some machetes [sic]-the common agricultural tool of every peasant.” 167 He did not believe that the people had violent intent. Another Baptist pastor, Leonard Tucker said the Volunteers fired at the protestors and then the protestors responded by throwing stones. 168 This implied that the protestors were not the initiators of violence but were responding in self-defence.

When the police went to issue a warrant on Bogle and others on Tuesday October 10, Holt claimed that “Bogle told the police that it was too late to go down to the bay that day but that he would come down on the following day for the scheduled vestry meeting. It is not clear whether his initial intent was to submit to arrest or

to file a protest.” 169 Holt did not ascribe any malice aforethought to Bogle.

Wednesday was the most convenient time. Holt claimed that Bogle’s intentions were enigmatic. Holt said, “Its procedural formality and tone, its appeal to redress of grievance, do not suggest violent intent” and he made reference to the testimony of Matthew Cresser who said Bogle went to Morant Bay to post bail. Modern scholar Holt moved away from the majority view of perceiving Bogle’s intentions as violent only to call his intentions “enigmatic” claiming that the procedural formality and the tone of the letter “do not suggest violent intent” but that it was doubtful that Bogle expected “any sympathy from Eyre” and “his military organization and drilling suggested that he was “preparing for a violent showdown.” 170 Holt however, did not claim that Bogle had violent intention, only that he was preparing for a violent confrontation.

Then there is the charge that the 1865 Native Baptist War was not conceptually authentic. Hall, in his seminal work on the economic history of Jamaica from 1838 to 1865, claimed that the protestors in 1865 lacked “any new social, political, or economic philosophies.” 171 Don Robotham, the Marxist anthropologist, agreed with Hall that the Native Baptists, who operated in the 1860s, lacked a “clear ideology.” 172 However, Hutton in disagreeing with Robotham that the Native Baptists lacked an ideology, noted that “He

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169 Holt 296.
170 Holt 297.
171 Hall, Free 250.
172 Robotham 6, 22.
(Robotham) seriously underestimated the ideological aspects of the people's struggle while praising as heroic its physical, political aspects, as if one could be separated from the other" 173 and showed the inadequacies of Robotham's analysis by asserting that, “the Bible played a central role in the direction and development of his (Bogle's) ideological perspective.” 174 Shirley Gordon said, “The events leading up to the Morant Bay riot, and its sequel, demonstrated religious attitudes and the varying religious responses of all concerned.” 175

There were some scholars who ridiculed the Native Baptists. Carey wrote that Bogle engaged in “wishful thinking.” 176 Her theory was that Bogle's plan was idealistic, impractical and imbecilic and he misunderstood Gordon's plan. 177 Bilby also concluded that Bogle's plan was ill - conceived. 178 These scholars have given little credit to the intellectual acumen and spiritual insights of Bogle and his followers.

In addition, Robotham, identified other fatal flaws of the Native Baptists as “their religiosity and naïve monarchism.” 179 Robotham saw their religious faith as

173 Hutton, Colour 7.
174 Hutton, Colour 231.
175 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 99.
176 Carey, Maroon Story 575, 610.
177 Carey, Maroon Story 610.
179 Robotham 6, 22.
fostering subservience to the Queen. However, later in the same publication Robotham glowingly praised religion as a vehicle for “many political ideas of the people” and that “Religion not only attacked the old order but also provided the foundation for the new moral order of emancipated Jamaica.”

Another theory about the 1865 Native Baptist War was offered by Semmel, who claimed that the suppression of the 1865 Baptist War was motivated by racism. To support his argument he quoted the Times, May 20, 1868 which said that one English officer flogged and compelled a Negro to say “God save the Queen, and d... the black man” and concluded from that reference that this was the essence of the insurrection. However, one statement by a soldier should not be used to generalize on the motivation behind the suppression. Richard D. E. Burton, linguist, classified it as a “racial Armageddon” stating emphatically that race was “clearly the strongest” motivation, “if not the only” inspiration. He however, weakened his statement by mentioning that the protestors “spared the lives of many Whites when they deemed to have done no harm.” Heuman position was different. Race was just one of the factors, “For the crowd, the colour of its victims mattered, but so did the class and political allegiance” Shirley Gordon was non-committal claiming, “To what extent the issue was consciously one of

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180 Robotham 79.
183 Heuman, Killing Time 185.
colour it is hard to say.” 184 Douglas Hall stated that it “was not a colour conflict” and citing as his reasons that the composition of the Volunteers and the Maroons included persons of African origin. In addition, the protestors killed persons of African origin. 185 Shirley Gordon noted that “Jamaican blacks felt instinctive solidarity with other blacks, slave or free” and the rallying call of Bogle was for “black solidarity” expressed in their socio-religious communities and used for the betterment in society and to “mobilise support for his protest.” 186

Shirley Gordon claimed that Gardner modified his views about the 1865 Native Baptist War before the end of 1865. Gardner who initially condemned the riot and commended Eyre said that the protestors never saw themselves as rebelling against the Queen and the protestors did not kill even one soldier or sailor. 187 William Clarke Murray, native Methodist missionary, stationed in Bath since 1863, said at the January 1866 District Meeting that “no murder had been contemplated in advance by the rioters.” 188 Gordon noted that the Jamaica Royal Commission “did not recognise or chose to ignore the religious impetus in the district protests of October 1865.” 189 This study addresses that deficiency and examines the Biblical hermeneutic that informed the Native Baptists’ response to the existing conditions.

184 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 110.
185 Hall, Free Jamaica 250.
186 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 99, 125.
187 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 111.
188 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 116.
189 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 119.
There are some theories about what resistance movements inspired the 1865 Native Baptist War. Catherine Hall said the Haitian revolution served as an inspiration.\(^{190}\) Heuman said that the 1831 rebellion and the Haitian revolution served as models of protest. \(^{191}\) Heuman speculated that the Book of Martyrs, which was widely read and circulated, and in which Sam Sharpe was hailed as a martyr, possibly influenced Bogle and the other Native Baptist leaders. \(^{192}\) Sheller said there was little evidence of a Haitian model in Jamaica in terms of a plan for a violent overthrow of the government and expulsion of the Europeans. \(^{193}\)

This study offers an in depth analysis of the motivation behind the involvement of the Native Baptists in the 1865 Native Baptist War.

**Summary**

The Native Baptists have certainly not received their due from most historians over the last couple of decades. There is even the misconception that they did not exist. And then those who claim that they existed have offered dates for their origin from as early as 1783 to as late as 1865. Therefore, this work attempts to settle the origin of the Native Baptists.

\(^{190}\) Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity P, 1992) 282.

\(^{191}\) Heuman, *Killing Time* 40.

\(^{192}\) Heuman, *Killing Time* 86.

\(^{193}\) Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery* 233.
The current historiography on the Native Baptists has propagated erroneous notions about the beliefs of the Native Baptists. If the leading scholars were to be believed then the Native Baptists would be synonymous with Obeah, Myal, Kumina, Convince and Revival. All these assertions could not be correct because all these different religious forms are not homogenous so it would be almost impossible for Native Baptists to be all things to all these various and differing African religious expressions. This study outlines the main tenets of their beliefs and practices.

The historical writings have often either claimed that the Native Baptists lacked a Biblical hermeneutic or if they had one it was unorthodox. The works of many, including historians and writers of fiction, from the early twentieth century onwards have contributed to the perception of the Native Baptists as being superstitious, insignificant, disorganized and violent. Therefore, this survey of modern writers, with the mainly negative comments made about the Native Baptists, has helped to make the Native Baptists' position in Jamaican history, at best, marginal. This study challenges these largely negative perceptions of the Native Baptists while confirming that the few scholars who had positive perceptions were correct. This study demonstrates that the Native Baptists were orthodox in the way they interpreted the Bible and Bible-related sources, which played a significant role in the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War.
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

It is necessary to ascertain who the Native Baptists were and what they accomplished and so this writer researched their existence, their identity, their beliefs and practices, their hermeneutics, their influences and impact on society.

Social history of religion

This study is situated in the field of the social history of religion because it aims to show that the Native Baptists, as a religious expression, had an origin, ideology and distinctive hermeneutical approach, which had an impact on the Jamaican society and was influenced by what was happening in society. Social history of religion looks at “the bases of religion . . . where religion and society can be seen as moulding and shaping one another.” ¹ Locating this study in the social history of religion is not an attempt to reduce the Native Baptists and their beliefs and practices to its social setting only, but it is an acknowledgement that the Native Baptists were unintelligible without it. This research proposes to ascertain the identity and ideology of the Native Baptists and the dynamics between the Native Baptist Biblical hermeneutic and the Jamaican society.

Asserting the dialectical relationship between a religious faith and society is not a novel approach. Many scholars have recognized that religion and society are

interrelated. Durkheim in emphasizing that social solidarity underpinned all religious experiences, stated, “Religion is something essentially social.” 2 James Obelkevich, using an anthropological approach to explore religious phenomena in a rural district in England, asserted that, “the secret of theology is anthropology and, by extension, that the secret of religious history is social history.” 3 Segundo stated that theology “is intimately bound up with the existing social situation.” 4 Vittorio Lanternari, Italian scholar and historian, claimed that a “religious phenomenon may be explained only in so far as it is possible to trace its historical origin and development and to analyze it systematically in relation to concrete secular conditions.” 5 Henderson addressing the Jamaican context (1829-1929) said, “political and religious history were found so interwoven that it was impossible to tell the story [Brown’s Town Baptist history] intelligently without including the emancipation of the slaves.” 6

Therefore, this dissertation using the sociological approach - an attempt to explore religious life in terms of its relationship to other aspects of social structure and culture - analyzes the Native Baptists by probing their social structures and functions. David Clark, sociologist, pointed out that there was a

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6 G. Henderson, Goodness and Mercy (Kingston: Gleaner, 1931) 15-16.
general bias of sociology against religious expressions outside of the official institutions. According to Clark, for many sociologists, religion was amenable to scientific analysis only to the extent that it became organized and institutionalized and where religion became a social fact either as ritual or doctrine. It had to be systematic, well formulated and well structured. Clark suggested that this was a paradox because the central task of sociology was to question official versions of reality. Instead the “sociological study of religion has generally displayed a slavish and uncritical acceptance of officially constituted definitions of religious phenomena.” 7 Though Native Baptists and their interpretation of Scriptures and understanding of God have traditionally been classified as illogical, heretical and underdeveloped, this study, nevertheless, investigates their social class, status, educational levels and economic activity.

Additionally, in this thesis the Native Baptist group is examined anthropologically as to their customs and belief systems. Having not lived among the Native Baptists this writer’s methodological approach is not “participant observation”, an approach that has been criticized for being impressionistic, unscientific, idiosyncratic, non-replicable and for having unquantifiable data. 8 This method is too dependent on the personality of the researcher and his or her ability to interact with informants. The participant observer method works best

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7 Clark, Pulpit and Pew 1-2.

when examining one community but in this case that would not be possible because at the time of the study there were no existing Native Baptist congregations. Therefore, the approach to discerning this information was mainly through the writings of others.

Theologically

The Native Baptists were also evaluated theologically. Theology has always been specific and peculiar to different groups. European theology emerged out of European history, reflection, experience and understanding, and according to J. Emmette Weir, Caribbean theologian and Methodist minister, is informed by a “speculative approach” to doing theology with the purpose of answering what is the nature of the world, while the methodology of Black Theology was based on a belief that God was on the side of the oppressed -“the black poor” in America. It made the oppressed community the centre of theological thinking and discussion. Feminist theology emerged out of gender, wherein Caucasian women felt excluded from theological discourse and wanted to interpret theology through the experience of women while critiquing the emphasis of male domination in church history. It began with a “hermeneutics of suspicion” because of the androcentric bias of all sources -biblical, historical, psychological

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and even linguistic. 11 Later, Womanist theology looked at oppression based on
gender, class and race. 12 Liberation theology was a reflection done by the
economically oppressed in Latin America 13 with Theresa Lowe Ching, Caribbean
theologian, describing it as a theology, “marked by an unusual intensity,
concreteness and particularity to meet the exigency of urgent transformation.
Their entire theological enterprise, therefore, converges around a specific option
for the poor and oppressed.” 14 Lowe Ching concluded that Liberation Theology
“re-reads Scripture from the perspective of the poor to discover new challenges of
the Christian faith; it employs social sciences in collaboration with other
traditional tools in order to free itself and society for liberative service of the
poor.” 15 The Native Baptists’ theology was explored from the perspective of
liberation because they were attracted to texts, which focused on the liberation of
the Africans in Jamaica from their oppressive context.

Primary and Contemporary Sources

This study places great reliance on what the Native Baptists wrote about
themselves. Therefore, the primary document is The First Annual Report of the

11 Gentz 358 - 59.
12 Robert Beckford, Jesus Is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain (London:
13 Weir 43.
14 Theresa Lowe Ching, “Latin American Theological Method and its Relevance to Caribbean
15 Lowe Ching 25.
Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society; Containing a Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of Several of the Stations Connected Therewith; Together With the Number of Members, enquirers, List of Subscribers, Amount of Collections, etc. 16 This document offered a rare and unique insight into their origin, organization, beliefs, hermeneutics and practices. Except for Catherine Hall,17 and historian James Robertson 18 other scholars have ignored this document, despite it being a mine of information. A wealth of information on the Native Baptists was also revealed in John Clarke’s Memorials of Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica, Including a Sketch of the Labours of the Early Religious Instructors in Jamaica as well as in the official colonial publication Jamaica Almanack that was published annually in Kingston from 1751 to 1880. 19

C. L. R. James did not subscribe to the theory that great men were “merely or nearly instruments in the hands of economic destiny” but that “Great men make history, but only such history as it is possible to make.” 20 With a similar understanding of the role of significant persons in historic events, two pivotal characters in Jamaica’s nineteenth century history, namely, National Heroes Paul

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16 This document made no reference to a publisher. This document was found at Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford in W. Indies Pamphlets 1832 to 51.


18 James Robertson, Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000 (Kingston, Miami: Randle, 2005) 370.

19 Some publications in the series are spelt without the “k.”

Bogle and George William Gordon were scrutinized in relation to the Native Baptists. Bogle's views, sermons and speeches were largely ignored in the contemporary newspapers perhaps because he was not a member of any mission agency under European superintendence. Therefore, the major sources from which to glean Bogle's beliefs and practices were his letters recorded in The Jamaica Royal Commission Report (JRC) and a marked hymnbook, which was found on his body after his execution. This was an edition of “The Psalms of David, with the supplementary Hymns by the Revd. Isaac Watts, D.D.” Details of Bogle's markings in his copy were reported in the Gleaner newspaper. For Gordon, preeminence was given to his rarely quoted speeches in the House of Assembly and his letters in the JRC report, which gave insights into his understanding of God.

The main source for the interpretation about the intention of the Native Baptists in the events leading to the 1865 Native Baptist War and the event itself came from their own accounts. This writer attaches great importance to the letter written by Bogle and nineteen others, which sets out Bogle's objective in marching to Morant Bay on October 11. This letter was laid before the JRC and is the only record from Bogle and his followers about the impending event.

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22 These rare speeches were not located at the National Library of Jamaica, Jamaica Archives or Parliament of Jamaica but were discovered in West Indies Collection, UWI. It was discovered under the heading “Jamaica Assembly” (Special Collections X J138. H2).
In addition, much credence will be given to Thomas Harvey and William Brewin, Quakers who toured Jamaica in 1866 and whose findings are recorded in *Jamaica in 1866*. In addition, the discovery and use of H. R.'s two pamphlets, *The Insurrection in Jamaica* and *The Troubles in Jamaica: A Condensed Statement of Facts* challenged the dominant interpretation of the role of the Native Baptists in the 1865 Native Baptist War. Additionally, much credence was given to Underhill's *Tragedy of Morant Bay*, seeing that Underhill who toured the island in 1859/60 had his personal recollections tested and supported by public documents. Whereas Heuman, a leading authority on the 1865 Native Baptist War, relied on the evidence given at the Royal Commission to interpret the role of the Native Baptists in the event, this writer gave greater weight to what the Native Baptist said and wrote and missionary sources which corroborated what the Native Baptists said and wrote.

The missionaries were not a homogenous group and therefore had orientations based on denominational affiliation, class and race. Many missionary texts were "fundamentally and frankly propagandist in nature" with the aim "to inculcate public support for missionary endeavours" and the authors were males who were frequently silent about their partners' activities and perspectives. 23 Also, missionary writings were sometimes "culturally insensitive and destructive" and "provided a moral justification for British expansion." 24

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24 Johnston 2.
missionary to India and missions historian, examined the relationship between colonialism and Christian missions, and conceded, "whatever may have been the beneficial intentions of the missionaries, they were in fact the tools of governments, and that missions can be classed as one of the instruments of western infiltration and control." The missionaries also believed in the superiority of Christianity and its civilizing influence and never supported the protests of 1865, which meant one was careful in the use of those materials that depicted the Africans in a negative and rebellious light. In addition, missionary writings were not always reliable in determining the orientation of Native Baptists because they recorded what accorded with their thinking and not necessarily what was the thrust of the Native Baptists' thinking and actions.

Nevertheless, use was made of the missionaries' writings, such as books, letters, reports, articles, speeches, pamphlets, periodicals, since these are first-hand and often comprehensive and analytical accounts. Many of these missionary writers had long residence in Jamaica, "forty-three years" in the case of Phillippo and were well acquainted with their environment. In addition, Phillippo was one of the few writers of that era who recorded what the enslaved and emancipated people said in their own language. Duncan Fletcher of London Missionary


26 Jamaica Moravian Church, The Breaking of the Dawn, or, Moravian Work in Jamaica, 1754-1904 (London: Jamaica Moravian Church, [c. 1904]) 55.


Society who started his missionary work in 1856 and who was one of the closest friends to George William Gordon had “personal knowledge of Jamaican affairs” and wanted to “give a faithful statement of facts.” 29 Underhill, in recording the biography of Phillippo, described his good fortune in having at his disposal, “almost daily entries of events as they transpired.” 30 The Baptist Reporter (1836-57) and the Missionary Herald (1819-1865), the official monthly bulletin of the Baptist Missionary Society, were valuable sources of data on correspondence and descriptions of the Jamaican mission and its customs. 31 This writer depended on missionary writings up to the end of the nineteenth century.

Rare missionary documents were consulted at the Bodleian and Angus libraries, Oxford University, British Library, Cambridge University library, West Indies Collection, University of the West Indies (UWI), National Library of Jamaica and Spanish Town Archives. These missionary writings produced significant information about how the missionaries perceived themselves and the Native Baptists. The major document that gave an insight into the hermeneutics of the Baptist missionaries from the United States of America was The Covenant of the


30 Underhill, Life iv.

31 Taylor, English Baptist 22. Joseph Winks, a General Baptist, owned, edited and published the Baptist Reporter, which provided insights into the campaign against slavery. The larger Baptist group, the Particular Baptists, who had most missionaries in Jamaica, operated the Missionary Herald. Particular Baptists believed that salvation was limited to those elected by God while General Baptists believed that salvation was for all.
Anabaptist Church Began in America December 1777 and in Jamaica, December 1783.

This study also depends on the copious notes from The Jamaica Royal Commission Report of 1866, which examined 730 persons over two months. However, one was cognizant that some testimonies before tribunals, like Commissions of Enquiry, were biased with witnesses taking the line officials wanted to hear, or what made them look good, or what commended them to those who enslaved them or employed them, hence some there were contradictory testimonies. And it was not surprising that the Commissioners warned that George Lake’s testimony, which claimed Bogle said Gordon supported the rebellion “must be received with reserve.” Furthermore, commissioners sometimes asked leading questions.

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32 JRC Vol. 4 10. Finlason claimed that the purpose of the Commission of Enquiry was to “allow time for the agitation to subside and for good sense to regain its ascendancy”: W. F. Finlason, History of the Jamaica Case (London, 1868) 57. Gordon correctly noted a limitation of the JRC Report that “It is the body of evidence, and not the report itself, which reveals the range of attitudes prevailing in society, and the Christian justification offered for the contradictory points of view”: Gordon, Cause for His Glory 119.

33 William Anderson, a servant of Colonel Hobbs, contradicting himself about not knowing and then knowing when Bogle visited his father: JRC Vol. 5 157-59. Holt also mentioned some of the contradictory testimonies Holt 297 and 459 78n.


35 Rev. Mr. Henderson was asked about the causes of the economic climate, “Did that result from any natural cause, such as the want of rain?” JRC Vol. 5 606 instead of being asked a neutral question such as what was the cause of the economic hardships? Also “Do you agree in what has been said as to the bad effect they had upon the lower orders?” JRC Vol. 5 607 instead of asking what were the effects on the lower orders?
Newspapers and fiction

Another important reference was the newspapers in Jamaica, which were published at least once every fortnight in the nineteenth century. Newspapers were published in all but one or two principal towns in Jamaica. They, therefore, covered a wide area and many major events. They also reflected a variety of political positions, for example, The Kingston Chronicle and the Jamaica Courant, took opposing positions. The editor of the Jamaica Courant advocated emancipation while the Kingston Chronicle was pro-planter. But there was a change in outlook in the Jamaica Courant, which Peter Duncan, missionary, said called for the “blood of missionaries” after the 1865 Native Baptist War. The Watchman was known for its anti-slavery stance and was regarded by the planters as “an enemy.” Some of the editors and publishers used their newspapers to champion their causes. Most Jamaican newspapers gave an understanding into the worldview of the dominant class of the colony and

36 Senior, Jamaica 122.

37 Senior, Jamaica 122.

38 Studholme Hodgson, Truths from the West Indies. Including a sketch of Madeira in 1833 (London, 1838) 196. Hodgson also reported that journals, which advocated the cause of humanity, were denied advertisements and supply of paper: Hodgson 196-97.

39 Peter Duncan, A Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica; with occasional remarks on the state of the society in the colony (London, 1849) 373.

40 Senior said that it was an inferior publication, which received little patronage because it attacked the “respectable part of community”: Senior, Jamaica 122. Duncan said that Jordon, editor of the Watchman and a Wesleyan, fearlessly advocated the rights of all missionaries: Duncan, Narrative 324. Heuman said George William Gordon helped to establish the Watchman in the interest of the peasantry: Gad J. Heuman, Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865 (Westport: Greenwood P, 1981) 163.

41 Duncan 373.
imperial Britain and therefore yielded important information about the planters' interests, orientation and thinking. Some newspaper publications were organs of a particular denomination such as *The Baptist Herald*, which gave valuable information from the perspective of the missionaries. Then there was the *Times* of London, which in addition to repeating extracts from Jamaican newspapers, also had reports from special correspondents and published what the English public thought about what was happening in Jamaica.

Literary works also played an important role in shaping how groups were perceived. Twentieth century literary works by Francis Berry, Derek Walcott, and V. S. Reid were examined to ascertain how they, along with sculptors Malica ‘Kapo’ Reynolds and Edna Manley, portrayed the Native Baptist leaders. Though these works were not in themselves evidence for the historical reality about the subject matter, they influenced perception about the Native Baptists.

**African and Female writers and oral tradition**

Hutton was critical of the methodological approaches of Western colonial and post-colonial intellectual tradition and Caribbean scholarship. He claimed that the dominant view was that philosophy, worldview and ideology were “the product and the purview of a white, male, middle-class western educated and Euro-centric mind” and there was a failure to conceive of Caribbean thought as
"African, proletarian, feminine, non-European or oral." 42 This study consulted African scholars, such as John Mbiti, African theologian, to avoid the mistake of European scholarship that addressed African religious beliefs and practices with insensitivity and superiority, by judging African religious beliefs and practices against European religious beliefs and practices, with the latter being held as the standard. The writings of female scholars were consulted and the activities and spirituality of women were recorded.

Oral tradition and oral testimony are legitimate sources of information. This writer did not discount the value of accounts transmitted orally from one generation to another since most accounts are transmitted orally before being codified. In addition, though oral tradition and oral testimony might not be precise with details, such as dates, it usually provides accurate information about the subject matter under investigation. Because of the respect for oral tradition and oral testimony, this writer visited sites where Native Baptist Churches were once located to obtain information from older residents about their knowledge of Native Baptists of the nineteenth century. Such locations were visited between November 2004 and July 2005. Those who knew nothing about the Native Baptists included community members who lived on Text Lane, Kingston where a Native Baptist Church was once situated, 43 a congregation of 500 persons at


Morant Bay Circuit of Baptist Churches held at Lieth Hall, St. Thomas and 92-year-old Louise Johnson, former leader and organist in the Morant Bay Baptist Church, Rev. Herbert Hall, pastor of Cave Valley Baptist, Veta Spence, senior Baptist member of Clarendon, 90-year-old, Deacon Gladstone Hemmings of Mizpah Baptist, Greta Spence of Rest Square, 97-year-old Ms. Bryan of Elim Baptist and 80-year-old Maud Brown of Hosanna Baptist, Milk River, Clarendon as well as members of Jericho and Ewarton Baptist Churches. In addition, letters were sent to all ministers of the Jamaica Baptist Union (see Appendix 1 for sample letter) seeking information or material about the Native Baptists. This did not unearth any information. There was widespread ignorance concerning Native Baptists. In addition, a visit was made to the Memory Bank of the African and Caribbean Institute of Jamaica in Kingston, Jamaica but there was nothing on Native Baptists.

Limitations

The major limitation had to do with missing data. The First Annual Report of the Native Baptists spoke about additional information that would be in the second

44 Visit and interview was done on 3 Apr. 2005 in St. Thomas.
45 Telephone interview done on 18 Nov. 2004.
47 Telephone interview with Spence, a lady in her 70s, on 17 Nov. 2004.
48 Visited on June 26, 2005.
49 Visited on July 24, 2005.
Annual Report to be published in 1842. However, this writer was unable to locate a second report by the JNBMS.

Another problem was the ambiguous nature of some of the writings when reference was made to Native Baptists. There were references to “native Baptists” which at times could mean those who were part of the organization of “Native Baptists” or just colloquial speech for Baptists who were not connected to the English Baptist mission. At times, one was not sure what was meant.

Summary

This study relied heavily on archival material and primary sources. Locating this dissertation in the social history of religion and examining the Native Baptists sociologically, anthropologically and theologically unearthed valuable information about the Native Baptists and their thinking and operations. To buttress this approach, missionary writings, newspapers of the era and a Commission of Enquiry were consulted. In addition, literary works, the writings of seminal scholars, African writers, women authors, also assisted this study.

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50 First Annual Report 30.
CHAPTER THREE: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIVE BAPTISTS

This chapter examines the origin, organization, and development of the Native Baptists. It will concentrate on the two main Native Baptist organizations.

Were Liele, Baker and Sharpe Native Baptists?

George Liele was referred to as a Native Baptist and or founder of the Native Baptists by nineteenth century writings/writers such as Jamaica Almanack, 1 Panton, 2 the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), 3 and its Secretary, Edward Underhill, 4 H. M. Waddell, Presbyterian missionary, 5 and the Baptist Herald. 6

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1 Jamaica Almanack 1838 69.
2 Philip Wright, Knibb 'the Notorious': Slaves' Missionary 1803-1845 (London: Sidgwick, 1973) 202-03.
3 Baptist Missionary Society 1842 2. The document claimed that the organization founded by American teachers [Liele and Baker] had 6,000 to 8,000 members in 1842 and some of them were called Native Baptists.
4 E. B. Underhill, The West Indies: The Social and Religious Condition (London, 1862) 201, 203-04. Clark in commenting on the same situation said Compere went to Kingston on “the pressing invitation of the Negro Baptists”: John Clark, W. Dendy and J. M. Phillippo, The Voice of Jubilee (London, 1865) 146. Since Underhill’s book was published three years prior to Clark’s then it meant that Clark either interpreted “Native Baptist” to mean “Negro Baptist” or was correcting Underhill. Additionally, it could be that they were quoting two different sources.
6 "The Insurrection in Jamaica," Missionary Herald 802 in Baptist Magazine 1865. It was said that the Native Baptists, “originated in the labours of Mr. George Lisle, an American Negro.”
Liele was born about 1751, in Virginia, USA and died no earlier than 1830. As a member of Matthew Moore’s Buckhead Creek Baptist Church, Liele was accorded “a semblance of equality” including participating in baptism and the Lord’s Supper with “whites.” He was an ordained pastor and while a resident in New Georgia, USA, he established the first Baptist Church in Savannah. He left the USA, after the War of Independence, because he supported the Loyalists

7 John Rippon, The Baptist Annual Register: For 1790, 1791, 1792, and part of 1793. (London, [c. 1793]) 332, 334. Liele was also called George Sharp because his owner’s surname was Sharp and among friends was commonly called “Brother George”: Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 332. In addition, he called himself, “George Liele the Elder” perhaps because his son had the name George Liele: The Last Will and Testament of George Liele 12 June 1830 [1, 3] in Registrar General’s Department, Jamaica. His surname was also spelt “Lisle”: John Clarke, Memorials of Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica (London, 1869) 10 and Underhill, West Indies 195.


9 There was uncertainty about the date of the death of Liele with support for the dates 1750 – 1828: Horace O Russell, Foundations and Anticipations: The Baptist Story in Jamaica 1763-1892 (Columbus: Brentwood P, 1993) 11; However, Russell in another publication speculated it was 1830? Russell, Baptist Witness 111. Gayle’s said “1825?”: Gayle 20, 62. Brown said 1826: Beverly Brown, “George Liele: Black Baptist and Pan-Africanist 1750-1826,” Savacou 11/12 (1975): 58. Clarke said Liele visited England in 1822 and after he returned to Jamaica he died a few years later: Clarke, Memorials 11. There is a Will for Liele dated 1830: The Last Will and Testament of George Liele 12 June 1830. There is no probate document associated with this Will, which could have had the date of the testator’s death. Therefore, this writer would put his death no earlier than 1830 based on the last Will.


12 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 332. He also founded a church in South Carolina: Little 188.
who lost and there were persons who wanted to re-enslave him. Therefore, he
came to Jamaica as the indentured servant of Colonel Moses Kirkland. 13 In
1783, 14 Liele formed a small congregation of four Believers of African ancestry,
who were refugees from USA. 15 By 1793, he built the first dissenting chapel in
Jamaica, the Windward Road Chapel. 16 Several gentlemen of the House of
Assembly made subscriptions valued at £40 toward the church building which
was erected on three acres of land in the eastern end of Kingston. 17 He later
extended his ministry to Spanish Town. 18 Liele also worked for the colonial
government. 19 He also had a "few white people" in the congregation. 20

13 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 334 and Underhill, West Indies 195.

14 The Covenant of the Anabaptist Church Began in America December 1777 and in Jamaica,
December 1783 (London 1796) in W. Indies Pamphlets 1823 to 51, Angus Library, Regent's Park,
Oxford; Jamaica Almanack 1838 69; The First Annual Report of the Jamaica Native Baptist
Missionary Society (N. p. [c. 1841]) 4; "Jubilee of the Jamaican Mission," Baptist Magazine 1865:
57; Underhill, West Indies 190-91. Raboteau claimed that Liele "First preached in Jamaica in
1787": Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South
(New York: Oxford UP, 1978) 28. But he gave a different date later when he said of Liele, "in
1784, he organized at Kingston the first Baptist church on the island": Raboteau 140. Others
claimed that Liele began in 1784: English Baptist missionary Tinson said about 1784: The Report
on the Moral and Religious Improvement of the Slave Population 368 [1832] in National Library
of Jamaica. Liele did write that he started "about September 1784": Rippon, Baptist Annual
Register 334. However, the overwhelming evidence was that Liele began the work in 1783 and the
Covenant said it started in "December 1783" which could be equivalent to Liele's "about
September 1784." Therefore, either date is plausible.

15 Clarke, Memorials 10 and Underhill, West Indies 195.

16 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 31; Clarke, Memorials 10; Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 336;
Underhill, West Indies 195-97. Knight said this first church was located at the corner of Victoria
Avenue and Elletson Road: R. A. L. Knight, ed., Liberty and Progress: A Short History of the
Baptists of Jamaica (Kingston: Gleaner, 1938) 1.

17 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 336. Another account said "white gentlemen" gave "liberal
aid" toward the erection of a chapel: Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 31.

18 An unnamed member of Liele's Church introduced the gospel into Spanish Town: Underhill,
West Indies 210.

19 Underhill, West Indies 199 and Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542.

20 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 334, 337.
Liele and his congregations were of "the Anabaptist persuasion." 21 Liele utilized the Anabaptist’s Covenant, 22 which had a big influence on his spiritual outlook. Anabaptist was a nickname given to the group that disagreed with Infant Baptism. The European Anabaptists of the sixteenth century influenced the Free Church movement in England and also America. They believed in the separation of church and state meaning that the state should not interfere in matters of religion. In addition, they upheld religious liberty, wherein people should be free to practice their religious beliefs. 23 Underhill said Anabaptist was a term of "reproach" 24 and for Liele to have applied this term, which was perceived as demeaning, showed that Liele was of strong conviction and firm belief.

Liele was also comfortable with the English Baptist tradition and was in correspondence with Dr. John Rippon, who later served as president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. 25 He sought and received financial assistance from the Baptist Societies in England to complete a church building in 1793. Liele’s group saw them as "our father, friend, and brother." 26 He also reported to

21 The Last Will and Testament of George Liele 12 June 1830 [2]. See also Underhill, West Indies 197 and Covenant of the Anabaptist.

22 Covenant of the Anabaptist. Russell has in the title "begun" instead of "began" Understandings 97. See Underhill for a summary of Liele’s articles: Underhill, West Indies 197-98.


24 Underhill, West Indies 197.

25 Underhill, West Indies 203. Little said Liele was in close connection with American Baptists Little 197. He gave no reference or example to validate his assertion.

26 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 336-37.
Rippon on the size of the membership of the congregations. In 1822, he visited England. There was a fraternal relationship between the Liele group and the English Baptists.

In 1816, Lee Compere, English Baptist missionary, was invited to pastor Liele's large congregation in Kingston. Six years later, another missionary Joshua Tinson received an invitation to assume "pastoral charge of a society of Baptists gathered together by Mr. Liele, and previously connected with the Missionary Society." There was a link between Liele and the BMS. East likened what Liele and Baker did for the BMS as to what John the Baptist was to the mission of Christ. The English Baptists were building on the heritage of Liele and Baker.

There were many contemporaries of Liele who identified the Liele group as Baptists. Dr. Thomas Coke, Methodist pioneer to the Caribbean region, writing six years before the first English Baptist missionary arrived in 1814 said, "The Baptists have had societies among the Negroes of Jamaica for twenty years."

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27 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542.


29 Underhill, West Indies 204 and Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 146.

30 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 174.


George Blyth, founder of the permanent Presbyterian mission in Jamaica, said that Liele and the other pioneers “took the name Baptist.” An English Baptist missionary periodical hinted: “the Baptist mission may be said to have had its beginning with the introduction of George Liele.” Tinson was asked by the committee inquiring into the moral and religious improvement of the slave population since 1823: “Do you know of any class of people called Baptists, who do not belong to your sect?” He replied, “There are persons in the island called Baptists, who are not connected with the Baptist society in England.” He was then asked, “Do you know at what period they came to the country?” and he responded, “I believe they came from America about the year 1784, after the American war.” Tinson was claiming that Liele and his followers were Baptists.

In addition, the 1841 report of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society (JNBMS) and a mural tablet in the churchyard, at the corner of Elletson and Windward Roads, Kingston, which was erected by Independent Baptists made reference to Liele as “the founder of the Baptists in Jamaica.” Native Baptists

33 The Presbyterian Church was the Established Church of Scotland: Watchman 4 Apr. 1832: 2.
and Independent Baptists called Liele the founder of the Baptists and not founder of either the Native Baptists or the Independent Baptists.

The Liele group was also labeled as “American Baptists”, 38 “negro Baptists” 39 and “poor Ethiopian Baptists in Jamaica.” 40 Panton styled the Liele group “original Baptists.” 41 This writer will use the term “Original Baptists” to describe the Liele group, since they were the first Baptists to start a mission in Jamaica.

Liele established the Baptist Church in Jamaica and he was an inspiration to subsequent Baptist work and was the foundation on which the English Baptists built but was never accorded the title of founder of the JNBMS. With the arrival of the English Baptists in 1814, the nineteenth century writings in attempting to make a distinction between the European Baptists and Liele started to retroactively refer to him as a Native Baptist, perhaps meaning nothing more than to claim that Liele was a non-European Baptist. However, Liele was not a Native Baptist and no eighteenth century document referred to him as such. Liele can best be described as an “Original Baptist” who identified with the Anabaptist tradition, used the name Ethiopian Baptist, co-operated with the

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39 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 146.

40 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542.

41 Steane 5.
English Baptists and was revered by the Native Baptists of the nineteenth century.

**Moses Baker**

In 1814, English Baptist missionary John Rowe (1788-1816) visited Moses Baker at Flamstead and preached to Baker's congregation of 500 and in 1821, another missionary, James Coultart (1785? -1836), visited Baker's little chapel at Crooked Spring, a congregation of enslaved and freed persons of 120 children and some adults, which was conducted by the blind Baker. He was described by Coultart thus: “Baker was neither superstitious nor enthusiastic” and of the worship he said, “I have not seen so pleasing a sight in the island.” Baker, who was baptized by Liele, invited English Baptists to supplement his work and the BMS sent Rowe in 1814. There was continuity between Baker and the English Baptists but no evidence he was a Native Baptist.

Moses Baker was born in New York, USA and married to a fellow New Yorker, Susanna Ashton, a dressmaker, on September 4, 1778. In 1783, with wife and

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42 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 139.

43 Clarke, Memorials 29 and Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 47. See also Wright, Knibb 78.

44 Underhill, West Indies 204 and Clarke, Memorials 164. In 1822, Mr. Vaughn, proprietor of Crooked Spring and Flamstead made a request to the BMS for a missionary to instruct the enslaved because of the ill health of Baker: “Salter's Hill,” Missionary Herald Feb. 1840: 130 in Baptist Reporter and Tract Magazine 1841. Another example of continuity between BMS and Baker.

45 Clarke, Memorials 19.
daughter, he went to Jamaica. While in Jamaica Susanna was instrumental in her husband’s conversion and she approached Mr. Winn for a piece of land and eventually Baker started a ministry on Winn’s property. 46

**Sam Sharpe**

In 1831, Bleby said that when Sam Sharpe spoke at the meeting at Retrieve to outline his strategic strike for wages, “he was the youngest of the party, apparently not more that [sic] twenty-five or twenty six years of age” 47 which meant he was born around 1805/1806. 48 While there is uncertainty about the exact date of Sharpe’s birth, there was no doubt about his death, as he was executed on 23 May 1832. 49

Sharpe was a member 50 and deacon within the First Baptist Church, Montego Bay of English Baptist missionary, Thomas Burchell. 51 He functioned as a pastor

46 Clarke, Memorials 20, 22.

47 Henry Bleby, Scenes in the Caribbean Sea: Being Sketches from a Missionary’s Notebook (London, 1854) 17.

48 Lawson said Sharpe was thirty-one in 1831: Lawson 169. Lawson quoted Higman who posited that thirty-one was “the average of the majority of the aspiring Creoles in rural Jamaica”: Lawson 193 90 en. This is hardly an appropriate way to determine someone’s age. Brathwaite stated that Sharpe was born 1801 but gave no reference: Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nanny, Sam Sharpe and the Struggle for People’s Liberation (Kingston: API, 1977) 4. Since Bleby knew Sharpe, this writer will accept his estimate.


50 “Execution of Samuel Sharpe, the Rebellious Slave,” Watchman 6 June 1832: 7; Bernard Senior, Jamaica, As It Was, As It Is, and As It May Be (1835; New York: Negro UP, 1969) 196; Bleby, Death Struggles 118 and Bleby, Scenes 16.
with "several free men," some of whom claimed that "they had been for several years professedly connected with the Baptist Society; but they had never seen a white Baptist minister . . . the only instruction which they had received being that which they had obtained from Sharpe." 52 Sharpe operated as a minister in an outstation. Among the English Baptists, deacons giving oversight to church stations were common. 53 Therefore, Sharpe was not establishing a Native Baptist congregation or even an independent congregation but was operating under the auspices of the English Baptists.

In addition, concerning the 1831 Baptist War, it was well known that "the ringleaders on every estate have been Baptists." 54 And since Sam Sharpe was the leader of the resistance, it meant that Sharpe was a Baptist.

Some scholars associated the title "daddy" with a leadership role within the Native Baptist Church and since Sharpe was called a "daddy" they concluded that Sharpe was a Native Baptist. Reckord argued, "Sharpe, however, was not content to serve simply within the church; he built up an independent connection with


52 Bleby, Death Struggles 120.


54 "Rebellious State of the Slaves in Trelawny and St. James's, [sic]" Watchman 7 Jan. 1832: 1.
the ‘native’ Baptists among whom he figured as a ‘daddy’ or ‘ruler.’” 55 Gordon said, “Sam Sharpe, the leader, and his ‘captains’ were daddies in their Native Baptist groups.” 56 Heuman said that Sharpe was “a leader in the Baptist church as well as a “Daddy” or “Ruler” in the Native Baptist church.” 57 Neville Callam, Baptist scholar, said of Sharpe: “This deacon was ‘Daddy’, or ‘ruler’, in the Native Baptist movement.” 58 In addition, a Jamaican government website said, “Sam Sharpe became a ‘daddy’ or leader of the native Baptists in Montego Bay.” 59 Curtin believed that “Daddy Ruler” was a title indicative that the office holder was a Native Baptist or a myal man. However, he did not believe that Sharpe was a “daddy.” 60 Historian, Richard Hart said that Sharpe as a Baptist preacher was referred to as Daddy in recognition of his authority in the church. 61 Hart was correct based on Bernard Senior, military officer, who said that Sharpe was a

55 Mary Reckord, “The Slave Rebellion of 1831,” Jamaica Journal 3 (1969): 27. Wright defined a “daddy” as a leader who exercised “an absolute sway over the minds and persons of their spiritual children.” In addition, Wright defined a “bush Daddy” as someone who more than likely had been expelled from the missionary church for misdemeanour, or had all along “rejected the white man’s pretensions”: Wright, Knibb 78-79. However, Foulks used the word “daddy” as a stereotypical name for Africans: Theodore Foulks, Eighteen Months in Jamaica; With Recollections of the Late Rebellion (London, 1833) 24.


leader and preacher “in the Baptist church” and was therefore “designated in the
following style, ‘daddy, ruler, general, Samuel Sharp.’” Sharpe was called
“daddy” because he was a leader and preacher in the Baptist church and had
nothing to do with the Native Baptist church. At the court hearings of 1832, no
one accused Sam Sharpe of being a Native Baptist or asked him if he was one. In
addition, there was no evidence that the term Native Baptist was in existence
in 1832. The irresistible evidence was that Sharpe was not a Native Baptist but
was a member and leader serving within the parameters of the English Baptist
denomination.

Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society (JNBMS)

In 1837, John Duff and George Lyon were unable to say how many congregations
had native preachers but knew that there were “seven of us connected together”
and that they occupied 17 stations. In 1838, there were eleven congregations
with six “Native Baptist Preachers.” The six preachers were William Killick, John
Duff, John Davis, William Duggan, George Trueman and George Lyon. In
addition, John Clarke, Baptist missionary, mentioned, “a station was begun by

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62 Senior, Jamaica 184. Senior spelt Sharpe without the “e”.

63 See Colonial Office 137/185

64 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837, Angus
Library, Regent’s Park, Oxford.

65 Jamaica Almanack 1838 69.
Mr. Henry Brown, a Native Baptist Preacher, at Port Antonio, in 1838.” 66 And in an 1840 government publication, Henry Brown and his congregation were listed among the “Baptist (native) Preachers.” 67 These preachers and their congregations were the nucleus of the JNBMS.

The Native Baptists became a formal, constituted organization when the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society was founded. 68 And according to the Native Baptists the formation of the JNBMS began “a new era in the history of Missions.” 69 Indeed, the formation of the first missionary society in the Western Hemisphere within two years after emancipation was an outstanding feat.

**Dating the JNBMS**

Catherine Hall posited that the JNBMS was established in 1841. 70 She, perhaps, came to that conclusion because the Annual General Meeting of the JNBMS was held on June 24, 1841. 71 However, this gathering was “the first annual Meeting of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society”, which implied that the Society

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67 *Jamaica Almanack* 1840 107. JNBMS has his name as “John” and not “Henry” but it appears to be the same person with both sources identifying Brown with Port Antonio: *First Annual Report* 18.

68 *First Annual Report* iii, 1.

69 *First Annual Report* 19


was formed earlier. Furthermore, the document stated "this Society was grateful to acknowledge . . . their increase for the past year being 5,323, making in all 13,687." This demonstrated that the Society was in existence from before "the past year", meaning before 1841. Moreover, the Society had printed "an abstract of the Reports read at our first annual meeting" which meant that this First Annual Report catalogued what had happened in the preceding year.

Additionally, at the 1841 AGM, a resolution was moved requesting that the Treasurer and Secretary be retained. That they were retaining their positions in 1841 meant that they held it previously, at least the preceding year in that said organization. Furthermore, the report on the Spanish Town station said, "Sunday, July 18th, was a day of peculiar interest here. The Chapel connected with the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society . . . was opened for Divine Worship." And since this report was delivered at the 24 June 1841 Annual Meeting which recorded a significant event of the Society on July 18, it meant that it could not be a reference to 18 July 1841 because it would be reporting on an event before it happened. Therefore, that statement meant that the JNBMS was in existence at least from 18 July 1840. In addition, an English Baptist Missionary document confirmed that "In 1840 was formed the Native Baptist Missionary Society." What is more, Rev. George Truman, twenty-five year

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72 First Annual Report 1-2.
73 First Annual Report iii.
74 First Annual Report 2.
75 First Annual Report 21.
76 Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity Pam 286 Ja Pro 95n.
veteran in the JNBMS and an executive member of the JNBMS, 77 in testifying about the Native Baptists said that his organization was “formed in the time of Sir Charles Metcalfe.” 78 Metcalfe (1839-42) arrived as governor and assumed the government on 26 September 1839. 79 Since the JNBMS was formed during the time of Metcalfe’s governorship and since we know that it was in existence in July 1840 then the JNBMS must have been established as an organization between September 1839 and July 1840.

In 1838, the name “Native Baptist” as reference to a distinct group became official when the Jamaica Almanack mentioned it. 80 In addition, since that document was compiled in the preceding year 81 then the term “Native Baptist” could have been applied to Baptists of African ancestry who had formed independent congregations from at least 1837. Apparently, in April 1837, it was not a title that persons of African origin had appropriated to themselves, as two founding members of the JNBMS called themselves Native Preachers 82 and not Native Baptist Preachers. There was also no evidence in the Court Trials of 1831-32 of any enslaved person being classified as a Native Baptist and even the Report

77 First Annual Report 2-3. His surname was also spelt as Trueman: Jamaica Almanack 1838 69.

78 JRC Vol. 5 416.

79 Jamaica Almanack 1846 53. See also Frank Cundall, Chronological Outlines of Jamaica History (Kingston: IOJ, 1927) 32.

80 Jamaica Almanack 1838 69.

81 The data is related to 1837, such as, the House of Assembly members list; a school list; the lists of Properties and Proprietors while the church expenditure was for 1836: Jamaica Almanack 1838 50, 65, 101, 161. There was no list that mentioned 1838.

82 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.
on the Moral and Religious Improvement of the Slave Population investigating
the enslaved from 1823 and which had an examination of John Clark on the 15
November 1832, did not mention Native Baptists among the enslaved population.
Therefore, these documents show that the term “Native Baptist” was not in
existence in 1832. The word “Native Baptist” came into being at earliest, late
1837 while Native Baptists became an organization, as the JNBMS, around
1839/40.

The establishment of the JNBMS about 1839/40 was a major feat because the
English Baptists in Jamaica did not establish an independent missionary society
until 1842 83 and the Church of England only established the Jamaica Home and
Foreign Missionary Society in 1861 for the purpose of ministering to persons who
lacked a church and to support a mission to West Africa. 84

The date when the JNBMS ceased to be is shrouded in mystery. The First Annual
Report spoke about additional information that would be in the second annual
report to be published in 1842 85 but this writer, with the help of many librarians,
could not find it. In addition, apart from Underhill who mentioned “the Native
Baptist Association, in 1841” 86 and an English Baptist Missionary document

83 Russell, Foundations 48. See also Arthur Charles Dayfoot, The Shaping of The West Indian

84 “Ecclesiastical: Church of England” Ecclesiastical Index 5/1/6 [1/6] in the Jamaica Archives,
Spanish Town, Jamaica.

85 First Annual Report 30.

86 Underhill, West Indies 232.
which stated that there was “the Native Baptist Missionary Society” 87, this writer was unaware of any other contemporary document that spoke about a Native Baptist organization.

In 1862/3, the House of Assembly made a financial grant to the Native Baptist chapel on Text Lane, Kingston. 88 This chapel was affiliated to the JNBMS. In addition, Truman of the JNBMS 89 testified before the 1866 Commission of Enquiry that he was “a minister of that division of the Baptists called Native Baptists.” 90 These references demonstrate that some JNBMS congregations were in existence in the 1860s.

Founders/Leaders of the JNBMS

Catherine Hall, avowed, that “Duff, Lyon and others” established the JNBMS. 91 This was a reasonable claim based on the letter Duff and Lyon wrote to the BMS in 1837 bemoaning the refusal to permit persons of African origin to become pastors. 92 However, the JNBMS First Annual Report does not state explicitly who was the leader(s) or founder(s) of the JNBMS, though H. P. Bethune, Esq.

87 Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity 95n.
88 Votes of Assembly 1862-3 131.
89 First Annual Report 3.
90 JRC Vol. 5 416.
91 Hall, Civilising Subjects 143.
92 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.
chaired the meeting. This position of chairman was not an executive one; it was apparently ceremonial. The two offices of the JNBMS mentioned were those of treasurer and secretary, which William Killick and John Duff filled respectively. Nevertheless, Killick appeared to be the leader based on his name being at the top of the list of the executive committee members and above Duff’s and since “All communications must be addressed to the Rev. Wm. Killick, Native Baptist Missionary House, Kingston, post-paid” 93 and not to the secretary as to be expected, then it probably was indicative that Killick was the *de facto* leader.

**Significant denomination**

A time of religious fervour preceded the birth of the JNBMS and was also concurrent with the establishment of these congregations. There were overflowing crowds attending many churches in celebration of emancipation on 1 August 1834. 94 Church attendance and membership experienced growth in Moravian 95 and English Baptist churches 96 in the aftermath of emancipation. People walked miles to church. 97 The Africans built a chapel in Recess, St.


95 Jamaica Moravian Church 64.


97 *Baptist Reporter, and Tract Magazine* 1843: 116. It was not unusual for the people to travel three to four miles to church “Jamaica: Kingston,” *Missionary Herald* May 1841: 75.
Thomas in the Vale and met every other night for worship 98 and some Baptist deacons spent "five evenings in the week in teaching the young and the old on some of the estates." 99

Under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society, a nondenominational group, a committee was formed on 20 October 1830 in Jamaica and by the following year 2,000 Bibles and New Testaments were distributed. 100 In 1834, the British and Foreign Bible Society donated a copy of the New Testament and the book of Psalms to every apprentice 101 and by 1835, 40,000 copies were in the hands of the apprentices. 102 In 1840, a Bible Society official, Mr. Wheeler surmised, "it will soon be thought quite discreditable to any one not to possess a Bible." 103 The Bible played a central role in the life of the African and facilitated them doing their own interpretation of the Bible, separate and apart from what they were taught. This was the context in which the JNBMS flourished.


99 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 83. The surname of one author was spelt differently on page 27, "Narrative by the Rev. John Clarke." It is possible that it was the same John Clarke who wrote another book based on both sources saying the same thing in the same way, that is, that Baker was "neither superstitious nor enthusiastic": Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 47 and Clarke, Memorials 29.


101 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 73.

102 Clarke, Memorials 84.

The Native Baptists developed also in the situation where there was a growing awareness that it was necessary to develop an indigenous pastoral ministry, which incorporated persons of African ancestry. Phillippo, in a letter dated 14 July 1831 to John Dyer, first Secretary of the BMS, said he was “convinced that there needed to be the employment of native labourers” because he believed they would be “far more efficient than Europeans” in the “interior of the country.”  

In 1839, the Presbyterians thought of confining them to serve in Africa. The Moravians saw a wider role and recognized that after churches were established among the Africans, they should, “as soon as possible, be presided over by men of their own nation and colour.” The JNBMS was the pioneer.

**Membership**

Shirley Gordon categorically said, for the Native Baptists “their statistics are nonexistent” and “it is impossible to quantify their membership.” However, reports showed the Native Baptists having 8,264 members (see Table 2).

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Table 2: Estimated Membership of Main Denominations 1830s –1860s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>1839</th>
<th>1840s</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1865</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Baptist(^{109})</td>
<td>21,337</td>
<td>33,658</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>19,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Baptist(^{110})</td>
<td>8,264</td>
<td>13,687</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists(^{111})</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>22,884</td>
<td>18,478</td>
<td>16,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravians(^{112})</td>
<td>1,738</td>
<td>15,000 *</td>
<td>4,182</td>
<td>4,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglicans</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>42,000 *</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>31,638 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These are not members but attendance at church or influence of church

Table 2 also revealed that the Native Baptists was a significant denomination based on membership. This was a phenomenal achievement when it was factored that the Native Baptists, unlike English operated denominations, did not receive

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\(^{109}\) For data for 1838, 1842 and 1865 See Edward Underhill, The Jamaica Mission, in Relations With the Baptist Missionary Society From 1838-1870 (London, 1879) 3, 16. For contrary figures See Freedom in Jamaica (London, 1838) 23, “Tabular View of the Churches in Connexion with the ‘Jamaica Baptist Association’ for 1842,” Baptist Herald 1 Feb. 1843: [1] and Blue Book, for the Island of Jamaica, for the Year 1865 T11. This writer accepted the data from Underhill because he was an official of the BMS. For data on 1865, See Emancipation in the West Indies (London, 1861) 31 but Phillippo said 15,682 (1859): Underhill, Life 299.


\(^{112}\) Sturge and Harvey lxxv. Jamaica Moravian Church, Breaking 185-86. However, Buchner had different figures: Buchner 153. This writer accepted the official figures for 1853 and 1863.


\(^{115}\) Underhill, Life 362 n. Figures related to average attendance in 1869.
financial help from England. In addition, all the other listed denominations had a head start over the Native Baptists with the Anglicans arriving in 1665, the Moravians in 1754, the Methodists in 1789 and the English Baptists in 1814. 116

During a 1859-60 tour of Jamaica, Underhill observed the decline of the English Baptist controlled churches while noting the growth of the Native Baptists. He stated that, “There appears to be a gradual drifting away of the black population from the European clergy and ministers, to the ministry of men of their own colour; and as black men become better educated and intelligent teachers, this tendency is likely to increase.” 117 He further stated that in Kingston there were six or seven thousand churchgoers of all denominations with 13 places of worship and estimated that there were 5200 persons as regular attendants. Added to that he speculated that there were five Native Baptist congregations, three having “about 1700” another having “over a thousand members”, and another having 640 members. 118 For the Native Baptists to have approximately 3340 members compared to 7,000 churchgoers and 5200 regular attendants in all other denominations reveal strength of numbers.

116 Underhill, West Indies 194, 202, 204.

117 Underhill, West Indies 190-92. See other accounts of English Baptists decline and Native Baptists increase in Underhill, Life 299; John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837 and Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity 95n.

118 Underhill, West Indies 190-91. Underhill's figures appeared credible because in 1841 the JNBMS recorded that there were 4,200 Native Baptists in Kingston: First Annual Report 6.
Generally, the congregations of the JNBMS were of significant sizes with twenty congregations having one hundred and fifty members or more (Table 3). This phenomenal growth could be attributed to the people identifying with leaders of their own colour, the use of language that was easily understood and dealing with issues that were relevant to them.

The growth in membership among the Native Baptists was, however, outstripping the supply of pastors and there was a need for a pastor for the Marley Station, St. John's which had 105 members and for the 416-member Hayse's Savannah Station. ¹¹⁹ Because of the shortage pastors, Lyon, John Turner, Peter Messias and John Mamby had three stations over a large area while Duggan and Robert Blackwell had four stations each. ¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ First Annual Report 6-7, 10.
¹²⁰ First Annual Report 6-7, 13-17, 21-25.
Table 3: Size of JNBMS Congregations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th># of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pleasant Hill, St. Mary’s</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pilgrim’s Cottage, Clarendon</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gethsemane, St. John’s</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bella’s Gate, St. Dorothy’s</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Zion’s Hill, Manchester</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Port Antonio, Portland</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Present Hill, St Mary’s</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Paradise, St. Dorothy’s</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Croft’s Hill, Clarendon</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gravel Hill, Clarendon</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Burry’s Hill, St. Thomas in the Vale</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Prospect Hall, St. Andrew’s</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Grant Hill, St. Andrew’s</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Unison Park, St. Dorothy’s</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Marley Hill Station, St. John’s</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Bethlehem, Vere</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Mamby View, St. Andrew’s</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Station, Old-Harbour Bay</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Milk-River Station, Vere</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Mount Olive, St. Thomas in the Vale</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Buff Bay, Portland</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Bethany Chapel, St. David’s</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Station at Chapelton, Clarendon</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Sandy Bay, Vere</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Bullard’s Chapel, Clarendon</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Knight-Street, Kingston</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Station, Morant Bay</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Zion’s Hill, St. Thomas in the Vale</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Bethel Chapel, Morant-Bay</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Half-way Tree, St. Andrew’s</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Rest Station, Clarendon</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Hayse’s Savannah Station, Vere</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Hillsyth, Clarendon</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Marley Station, St. Mary’s</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. West-Street, Kingston</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Highgate, St. Mary’s</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Text-Lane Chapel, Kingston</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Windward Road Chapel, Kingston</td>
<td>3700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: First Annual Report 4-25
Table 4 shows that the maximum number of stations the JNBMS had was 38.

The Native Baptist churches were numerous. 121

Table 4: Number of Stations in the Top Five Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>1838</th>
<th>1841</th>
<th>1859</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Baptist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Baptist</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyan</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Kingston figures only.

The JNBMS was located in nine of 14 parishes 127 (see Map 2). It was said that the people in the parish of St. Mary's knew little about the people in Trelawny and there were thousands of people who have never passed from one parish to

121 Clarke, Memorials 221 and Jamaica Tribune and Daily Advertiser 20 Dec. 1865: [4].

122 Jamaica Almanack 1838 69, First Annual Report 2-24 and Underhill, West Indies 190-91. Underhill's figures for 1859 were for Kingston only.

123 Freedom in Jamaica 23, Jamaica Almanack 1843 61, 91-93, and "General Summary," Missionary Herald 331 in Baptist Magazine 1866. The last reference was for the West Indies but most would be in Jamaica.

124 Minutes of the Jamaica District Meeting Begun in Kingston January 19th 1837, Jamaica Almanack 1846 102 and Minutes of the Annual District Meeting Begun in Wesley Chapel, Kingston, Thursday January 27, 1853 96.

125 Jamaica Almanack 1843 61, 91-93 and Buchner 153.


127 "A parish in Jamaica, in proportion to the size of the island, is equivalent to a county in England": Sturge and Harvey 170 n.
the other, although they were not fifty miles apart. It was therefore, quite an achievement for an indigenous organization such as the JNBMS to be so large when communication within the island was so inadequate.

Table 5: Number of Preachers/Pastors in Selected Denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>1830s</th>
<th>1840s</th>
<th>1850s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Baptists</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Baptists</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravians</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyans</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


129 Jamaica Almanack 1838 69. First Annual Report 2–24. This related to 1841.


131 Minutes of the Jamaica District Meeting Begun in Kingston January 19th 1837 in District Book: Minutes 1830 to 1837; Jamaica Almanack 1846 102 and Minutes of the Annual District Meeting Begun in Wesley Chapel, Kingston, Thursday January 27, 1853 96 in District Meeting Minutes.

132 Phillippo, Jamaica 290 in 1831; Jamaica Almanack 1843 61, 91–93 and Phillippo, Jamaica 290 and Buchner 153.

Map 2: Locations of Native Baptist congregations in 1840

Source: First Annual Report 4-25.
Organization

Some modern writers assert that Native Baptists were disorganized (see pages 70-71 above) and it appeared that this assertion was based on the comments of some missionaries who claimed that the Native Baptists lacked organization. Clarke declared: "There does not appear ever to have been any organization among them [Native Baptists]." 134 William Teall, experienced English Baptist missionary, differentiated Native Baptists from English Baptists by implying that the Native Baptists were disorganized. 135 However, Chevannes and Sheller stated that the Native Baptist Church was organized (see page 71 above), and they were right. The sophistication of the JNBMS was discerned through its five rules. It had objectives "to set apart and ordain, persons of known piety, for the important work of the ministry" and to admit into the Society congregations that were fit and proper. 136 These regulations gave the impression that the JNBMS had sanctioning authority over those persons who would be ordained and those churches that could be admitted into the JNBMS. In that sense, the JNBMS had some authority over congregations that constituted the Society. However, in the other three rules, the members within the JNBMS behaved as a free association of congregations with ability to inspire action rather than to mandate it. So, it

136 First Annual Report 3. For a contrary view see Gordon, Cause For His Glory 106. She believed that the first attempt at a collective Native Baptist Church with rules was in 1860s.
had the role to “stimulate and encourage each other” in preaching in Jamaica and when funds permitted to send missionaries to Africa; another feature was to “promote” the Christian education of the young and finally to “maintain the unity of the spirit” and work with similar institutions. 

While it was the JNBMS, which approved ordination, it was based on the testimonials of the congregations claiming that the candidate possessed “suitable talents.” There was, therefore, co-operation between the JNBMS and the congregations on the issue of ordaining suitable candidates. The JNBMS appeared to be an association of autonomous congregations in which the Society had the authority to decide which congregations would be accepted as new members and who were appropriate candidates to be ordained as pastors. They may also have had criteria to guide them, which were not stated in the Annual Report. However, from the report, it can be garnered that the JNBMS had an elaborate, flexible and clearly defined organization.

The JNBMS was so well organized that it had schools for the promotion of education and religious instruction among the young. Shirley Gordon claimed otherwise that the Native Baptists did not offer schooling immediately following emancipation. However, the JNBMS Annual Report of 1841 highlighted the

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137 First Annual Report 3.

138 First Annual Report 3.

139 Gordon, Cause For His Glory 4. Carl Campbell stated, “Shirley Gordon found one or two native Baptist schools, one being at Mount Zion in Clarendon . . .”; Carl Campbell, “The Abolition of Slavery and Education in Jamaica 1834-1865” Jamaican Historical Society Bulletin 11 (2001): 165. This assertion was not referenced. However, Gordon claimed that the Native Baptist day school at Mount Zion could not be the only one: Gordon, Cause For His Glory 75. This was a school in existence by 1843, which Gordon interpreted as late post-emancipation.
Native Baptists’ Sunday and Day Schools at Rest Station in Clarendon; Croft’s Hill, Clarendon and at St. Dorothy’s Bella’s Gate, and at the latter station the Society employed a “Master” to teach the 50 scholars. 140 This indicated that the central body had assigned resources and that there was centralized planning for education.

The JNBMS also had an executive committee operating the Society, with a chairman, secretary and treasurer and a Missionary House to which subscriptions, donations and all correspondence should be addressed. 141 It was also reported that the land for the Mount Olive station was “generously given to the Native Baptist Society.” 142 This indicated that the JNBMS had the capability to accept land and was a legal entity in order to receive and own land.

In the 1840s and 1850s there was political networking done by the Native Baptists (see pages 67-68 above). This also was indicative of some level of organization.

The JNBMS was a properly organized, distinctive Christian community with a significant membership. The pastors were screened to ensure they were capable

140 First Annual Report 11, 15-16.
141 First Annual Report 2, 34.
142 First Annual Report 23.
to discharge pastoral duties. The Native Baptists were willing to co-operate with other Christians for the spreading of the gospel in Jamaica and in Africa.

**Reasons for the JNBMS**

Catherall in attempting to explain the development of the Native Baptist group said, “The very nature of the Baptist concept of the church made it easier for independent groups to be formed, owning no allegiance at all to the B.M.S.” 143 Any group of persons can form a church and call itself “Baptist” without receiving any official blessing from an existing Baptist group.

However, in spite of the nature of the Baptists, the first group to attempt a non-European independent ministry was the Methodists, through a schism in the 1830s, led by Edward Jordon, Mulatto politician and newspaper publisher, who with others formed the “Independent Methodists.” They solicited Thomas Pennock, English missionary, to join their group, who acceded and resigned in 1834 as Chairman of the Methodist District. 144 After Jordon and Pennock joined forces the new body, which had a rival synod in September 1834, was known as “the Jamaica Wesleyan Methodist Society.” 145 The Roman Catholics also experienced the development of an independent congregation when Father Edmund Murphy refused to recognize the authority of Father Benito Fernandez

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143 Catherall, Native Baptist 70.


145 Curtin, Two Jamaicas 166.
and early in 1833 opened a chapel at Jasper Hall on High Holborn Street, Kingston. 146 The Methodists and Roman Catholics had independent groups although they had a governance structure that differed from the Baptists.

The answer for the development of the Native Baptists lies not in the church polity of the Baptists but in other reasons as outlined in the document the First Annual Report. One of the reasons given for the establishment of the JNBMS was that some Baptists of African origin felt that “we have not been treated by the Missionaries sent to this Island with Christian charity” 147 and on assessing the ministry of the founders of the Baptist mission in Jamaica by their ancestors there was not the appreciation of the work and worth of their forefathers. And there was support for that allegation. The English Baptist missionaries produced a document in 1833 that said that the Baptist mission commenced in Jamaica in 1814. 148 The Committee of the BMS also said, “The Baptist Mission in Jamaica was established in 1813.” 149 The English Baptists gave the impression that Baptist work started when they arrived. But Baptist work had begun three

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147 First Annual Report i.

148 See The Baptist Missionaries, A Narrative of Recent Events Connected With the Baptist Mission in the Island, From its Commencement, in 1814, to the End of 1831 (Kingston, 1833) 1 in Jamaica Tracts Vol. 3 Godw. Pamph. 2665 in Bodleian Library.

149 Baptist Missionary Society Jan. 1842 2 in W. Indies Pamphlets 1823 to 51 at Angus Library, Regent's Park. This BMS document got both dates wrong, regarding the start of English Baptist missionary work in Jamaica and also when Baptist work in general was established in Jamaica. Other claims that English Baptists were founders of Baptist work in Jamaica can be seen in: Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 16.
decades before, through the instrumentality of Liele and later Baker, who started Baptist work in western Jamaica in 1788. In fact, when the BMS missionary arrived in 1814, there were 7,000-8,000 Baptists. The pioneers of Baptist work in Jamaica, who were of African origin, were not getting their due recognition.

In addition, in Jamaica, at the Jubilee celebration of the founding of the BMS in 1864, the English Baptists invoked the names of Carey, Fuller, Rowe, Wesley, Luther and Paul as part of the festivities. They mentioned Luther and Wesley, two non-Baptists, but failed to mention even one missionary of African ancestry, not even Liele. The Native Baptists were justified in charging that the English Baptists were disrespectful.

It also appeared that the English Baptist missionaries made it unnecessarily difficult for those of African origin to become members. Concerning questions asked in the 1830s of the Africans as preliminary to being accepted as a member of the English Baptist congregations, Phillippo admitted they would have been offensive if asked of someone under similar circumstances in England, such as

“Are you in debt? – Are you married? – if not married, do you live with any one

150 Wright, Monumental 34.
151 “Jubilee of the Jamaican Mission,” Baptist Magazine 1865: 58. It was also claimed that he requested the BMS to come to Jamaica “Crooked Spring –Jamaica,” Missionary Herald in Baptist Magazine Mar. 1868: 189. This claim has support in Handbook of Jamaica for 1894 (Kingston, 1894) 352. Clarke said Liele baptized Moses Baker: Clarke, Memorials 10.
152 Clarke, Memorials 69-70.
according to the old customs of the country?" 154 That these Africans found it hard to gain membership appears to be borne out by the high number of inquirers, that is, those under instruction waiting to become members. For example, in 1837, the record showed that there were 16,820 members and 16,146 in the Inquirers Class in the Western Union. 155 The numbers of inquirers and members were almost equal. These requirements frustrated and estranged persons of African ancestry.

Moreover, congregations became part of the JNBMS because of perceived maltreatment by the English Baptists. The West -Street station, Kingston, was established in 1838 as a result of the alleged arrogant treatment by Francis Gardiner of the members of his congregation. In addition, the formation of the Haye’s Savannah Station, Vere can be attributed to tyrannical behaviour by another missionary H. C. Taylor which was resisted by one of his deacons on the matter of the “subject of subscription”, which subscriptions the deacon considered was “contrary to the usage of the Baptist churches in England.” 156 Subscriptions can be for a specific reason such as “for the purpose of building a temple for the worship of the most high” or it can be for the general support of the JNBMS. 157 Apparently, Taylor was collecting subscriptions and sending it to

154 Phillippo, Jamaica 327.
155 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 100.
England while the church building remained unfinished for lack of funds. Duggan parted company with Phillippo because of unreasonable financial demands made by Phillippo on him to relinquish his business and give full-time service without even getting travelling expenses. Duggan also claimed that Phillippo “severely rebuked” him “for standing up to instruct my class-people” and had to endure “much misrepresentation and slander.” Duggan felt humiliated. These types of conflicts led to separation.

Another reason for the founding of the JNBMS was to redress the sidelining of male persons of African descent who could augment the pastoral ministry. Lyon and Duff outlined their grievances in a letter to the BMS:

When Mr. Angus one of your Committee [members] was in the island, it was proposed that some of the useful leaders should be sent out, by their pastors as helpers among that number was John Duff of Kingston and William Duggan of Spanish Town, but was rejected by a Body of your missionaries meeting at St. Ann’s Bay without any just reasons assigned, and ever since it was held [ ] that we should be sent out, but has from time to time put off, waiting as they say for answer from your committee. 

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159 First Annual Report 21.

160 Phillippo, Jamaica 313. In the 1840s, there was an unnamed “respectable female of colour, who has been for many years the leader of a class of females connected with the Baptist Church in Spanish Town.” The JNBMS was not agitating for females becoming pastors.

161 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.
The authors of the letter were frustrated, confused and felt that the BMS had gone back on a decision and that the missionaries were less than candid. The English Baptist missionaries had reneged on a decision to use persons of African descent.

In addition, Duff and Lyon felt hurt that after being instructed by missionaries for twenty years, missionaries had to travel 4,000 miles from England, at great cost, to preach the gospel in Jamaica while there were persons of African ancestry on the island who could be mandated to preach to the people. 162 This showed that the missionaries had little regard for the ability and spirituality of those of African origin to be preachers.

The formation of the JNBMS was due to the obstacles placed in the way of persons of African origin becoming pastors. They said:

We cannot but lament the many discouragements that have been from time to time thrown in their way, and which has continued till very lately to retard the progress of others of our countrymen - men of zeal and piety, who would willingly 'spend and be spent' in the service of the Divine Redeemer. 163

162 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.

163 First Annual Report i. There was once a “Slave Law” in 1810 which prohibited any further teaching or preaching by men of African race: G. Henderson, Goodness and Mercy (Kingston: Gleaner, 1931) 12.
Patrick Bryan has a different view and in unflatteringly comparing Native Baptists to the Black Church in USA stated:

Racism enforced the formation of black churches under black institutional leadership, which led ultimately to greater black solidarity, or reinforced black solidarity. In Jamaica, there was never quite the same experience, in spite of the presence of the Native Baptist Church, which had the closest association with Afro-Jamaican religious perception. 164

But the formation of the JNBMS was mainly a response to racism shown to the Native Baptists by the English Baptists.

The Native Baptists came into being as a response to the prejudice and spiritual snobbery meted out to Baptists of African origin by English Baptist missionaries. Therefore, Hindu practitioners, Laxmi and Ajai Mansingh were incorrect to claim “During the nineteenth century, the Africans fought for the abolition of slavery, but never against religious and cultural colonialism.” 165 Evidently the Mansinghs were not aware of the Native Baptists who fought against religious and cultural colonialism, a reason for the establishment of the JNBMS.

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165 Laxmi Mansingh and Ajai Mansingh, Home Away From Home: 150 Years of Indian Presence in Jamaica 1845-1995 (Kingston: Randle, 1999) 117.
These Africans also perceived educational snobbery towards them and took umbrage and affirmed that, “We doubt not it was under the impression that those only ought to be encouraged to preach the Gospel, who had acquired a classical education.” 166 They believed they were fully capable to execute pastoral ministry. They also claimed that they were in the apostolic line, with Joseph Silva praying that “the Apostolic Spirit may still remain in the Church, so that men will continually be raised up, ‘who will not count their lives dear to themselves’ - that they may preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” 167 While the English Baptists were denying the probity of having persons of African descent as pastors, the Native Baptists were tracing their lineage to the Apostles. The Apostolic Spirit, and not the acquisition of a classical education, gave the empowerment and legitimacy to become a minister of the gospel.

That the Native Baptists were made to feel that they needed a classical education to be a pastor was a paradox because one of the most outstanding English Baptist missionaries, William Knibb, never benefited from a classical theological education 168 and his apprenticeship was in printing. 169 In spite of this precedent, there were many adverse references to the Africans as being unsuitable for

166 First Annual Report i. In 1840s, Knibb in a speech in London asked whether it was necessary to have Greek and Latin to preach the gospel in Africa. He was inadvertently supporting the position of the JNBMS. Knibb’s disdain for a classical theological education could be due to the fact that he went to Jamaica as a teacher and not as a pastor: Russell, Foundations 31, 59.


168 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 213-14.

169 Clarke, Memorials 99.
pastoral ministry because of their perceived lack of education. In 1836, Thomas Burchell (1799-1846), leading English Baptist missionary, who served 1823-46, in arguing that Jamaica was not ready for a native agency, highlighted the difference between the “mental development of the partially educated Hindoos and the utterly untutored descendants of Ham” and asked rhetorically, “is piety the only needed qualification for the ministerial office? Or will piety combined with ability to read the scriptures suffice?” and then proposed a “Jamaica Domestic Mission” instead of a seminary to prepare the natives for pastoral ministry. 170 In addition, Phillippo said of his forty native assistants that they “have not been ordained to the work of evangelists” and “were not eligible for the office of pastor” because “not more than two or three can read intelligibly.” The reasons for the use of these native assistants had little to do with empowerment of the enslaved persons or a belief in their capabilities but was forced upon the missionaries out of necessity “because the overseers of estates regarded with extreme jealousy the visits of strangers to the homes of the slaves on their properties, and because no others could be found.” 171 There was also a widespread belief among all European - controlled denominations that the Africans were less than adequate to execute pastoral responsibilities or manage a mission. 172 Underhill, on his arrival in Jamaica, was advised against placing “the churches under the

170 Burchell 324-26.

171 Underhill, Life 205-07.

government and teaching of black men” because it would produce “manifold evils.” An unnamed writer said in *The Weekly Dispatch*, that, “far from the negroes being converted to Christianity, they have converted Christianity to African idolatry.” That observation was indicative of the fear the European missionaries had about persons of African origin becoming pastors. Therefore, it was not surprising that, one of the motivations for launching the JNBMS was a reaction to obstacles in the path of those who wished to become pastors.

The Native Baptists also asserted:

> And until we can learn from the word of God, at what College the disciples of Jesus derived the supposed necessary qualifications for the faithful discharge of their ministerial duties, we shall be content still to believe that the primary qualifications requisite to be sincere Love to God, and an ardent desire to promote his glory.

This was not a disregard for education on the part of the Native Baptists but rather having a proper perspective as to the value of the education in preaching and the preeminence of the role of the Holy Spirit for effective preaching. In fact,

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173 Underhill, *West Indies* 303. See William Jameson, Presbyterian missionary, who condemned the English Baptists saying, “Evils, many and great, have arisen from employing an ill-instructed native agency”: Robb 199.


175 *First Annual Report* i-ii.
Native Baptists quoted from the “Nine Sermons by the late Dr. Watts, preached in 1718-19.” 176 Isaac Watts (1674-1748), was the writer of 600 hymns, sermons, and works on logic and astronomy, which were used at Harvard and Cambridge Universities. 177 The Native Baptists were not against the use of scholarship in the execution of the gospel. The language of their Annual Report demonstrated, not only that they could read and write but, also, that they were sophisticated in their reasoning and logic and had more than passing acquaintance with scholarly writings. They, who were acquainted with scholarly writings, justified their paradoxical position of familiarity with scholarly sermons and lack of obsession with a classical education as a prerequisite for pastoral ministry by wittily observing:

We are fully sensible of the many advantages learned Ministers possess over others, but we mean to express our firm conviction as to the inutility of displaying the scholar in the pulpit, and whether doing so to our congregations, particularly those in country parts, be not ‘speaking to them in an unknown tongue.’ 178

176 First Annual Report ii. These sermons were delivered from the pulpit based on the easy, plain, unadorned and colloquial forms of expression, which is consistent with apostolic injunction “using great plainness of speech”: Nine Sermons, Preached in the Years 1718-19, by the late Isaac Watts, D. D (Oxford, 1812) iv, v, vii in the British Library. This reference to plain speaking comes from 2 Cor. 3:12. The Native Baptists would later adopt this manner of speaking in which it was intelligible to the hearers.


178 First Annual Report i-iii.
This quote about “unknown tongue” was derived from 1 Cor. 14:2, “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God . . . ” However, the emphasis of the English Baptists was demonstrated in 1843 when Calabar College taught Greek, Latin and Hebrew to the native ministers in training for the pastorate. But Duff and Lyon did not believe that preachers had to be trained in Greek, Hebrew and Latin before he or she could preach. It was foolhardy to believe that a classical education was a prerequisite to preaching and it would be futile for a preacher to speak in a language that the congregation did not know or understand. The Native Baptists defended the use of simple speech, which was not “clothed in elegant language” and “all the graces of diction.” They insisted on “plain preaching” in the pulpit. They affirmed that effective communication, and not erudition and diction, was necessary for the propagation of the gospel.

The creation of the JNBMS was not only a reaction to the bad treatment by the English Baptist missionaries but was out of a deep desire for “the extension of the kingdom of our dear Redeemer, among our perishing countrymen in Jamaica and

179 Underhill, West Indies 296.

180 John Duff and George Lyon to John Dyer, Secretary BMS, 1 Apr 1837.

181 First Annual Report ii-iii. See also John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837. In the 1840s, Robert Graham, “a free man of colour” who left the church at Windward Road, came under the tutelage of Tinson at the Church at Hanover Street. Tinson wished to “instruct him in pronunciation and English grammar” but Graham refused because he “believed Mr. Tinson’s way of pronouncing words was the way in England” and he “was sure his method was the Jamaica method, and the way best understood by the people”: Clarke, Memorials 210.
Africa . . .” 182 The Native Baptists were willing to go to the rural mountainous regions because their main concern was the proclamation of the gospel. Duff and Lyon observed, “your missionaries are only settled in Town places and in the country places . . . while in the high mountains the people are in a state of gross ignorance.” 183 They were willing to go to the outer-most parts of the country and also to Africa.

Another reason for instituting a missionary society was a reaction to non-natives wanting to wrestle ownership of church property from “native Trustees.” William Duffus in relating the history of his church in Grant Hill, St. Andrew’s said:

The remaining people then injudiciously selected a person from America, named Reinshaw, as their Minister, and who continued with them until June 1840, when he evinced a disposition to wrest the premises from the native Trustees, and vest the same in Trustees of his own countrymen, but was happily frustrated in such an attempt. 184

The “native Trustees” wanted to manage and control their church premises. A pious unnamed 100-year-old lady gave a small house on West Street, Kingston to the work of the Native Baptists. 185 The Native Baptists wanted to have control

182 First Annual Report iii.
183 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.
184 First Annual Report 17.
over such properties that belonged to them. In addition, Robert Blackwell, pastor in Sandy Bay, Vere said that his station was formerly under the pastoral care of H. C Taylor but he relinquished the church before 1840 because they did not permit him to “make out the title for the land which they had purchased for the good of the Society, in his own name.” Blackwell saw this as an “injustice” and “in a way utterly at variance with the principles of the doctrines of the Gospel.” They were jealous to protect their rights and were not willing to abdicate their responsibility and privileges. The Native Baptists and English Baptists differed over the rights of the membership and the independence and ownership of the churches.

What's in a Name?

It was significant that the Native Baptists called their organization a “missionary society.” Alexander Robb, Presbyterian missionary, said that the London Missionary Society was “emphatically undenominational,” which was a feature of some British missionary societies. Russell mentioned that the London Missionary Society was inter-confessional in their appeal and was therefore,

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186 First Annual Report 24-25. See also a dispute between Rev. Samuel Oughton, English Baptist missionary and Lagourgue, a Native Baptist leader, over the property on which a Class-house was located; “The Baptist Again,” Falmouth Post 6 May 1845: 8.


188 Russell, Foundations 58. Russell asserted that missionary societies were “inter-confessional in their appeal and structure” but there were exceptions such as the BMS and the Church Missionary Society (Anglican), which were specifically denominational in structure.
funded by London businessmen. He also highlighted that there was a time when Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Quaker business interests supported the BMS. Therefore, by calling its organization a "missionary society", the Native Baptists were probably indicating that they were willing to co-operate with persons from different denominations for the purpose of evangelization and overseas mission and that they were open to financial contributions from persons of different denominational persuasions.

The Native Baptists also perceived their missionary society as similar to other missionary societies: "We rejoice greatly at the success which attended similar Societies in Jamaica." They felt equal to the other foreign-based missionary societies and they also celebrated the accomplishments of the others. The formation of the JNBMS was based on a belief in equality, ecumenism, evangelization and mission.

According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary the word "Native", from the Latin nativus, became generally current after the sixteenth century. The dictionary gave various shades of meaning for "native" including "belonging to, or connected with, a person or thing by nature" and also "connected with one by birth or race." There were examples in the nineteenth century of "Native" being applied as a generic, non-offensive term to indicate one's place of origin,

189 Russell, Foundations 58.

190 First Annual Report iii.

such as Tinson, “a native of Gloucestershire, England.”\textsuperscript{192} It described one’s place of origin. “Native” was also used to signify origin outside of Europe, that is, having West Indian, African or Indian origin.\textsuperscript{193}

In the context of the West Indies, John Gilmore said that “native” was an offensive word to non-white clergy, and they objected to being so styled.\textsuperscript{194} The title “native” was a derogatory word used to distinguish “non-white” Christians from their European counterparts. “Native” carried similar negative connotations as “nigger”. “Nigger” was a demeaning word used to describe persons of African origin who were intrinsically unwholesome. This was the sense in which one Chaplain to the Bishop of Barbados, Richard Hurrell Froude, on a tour of the West Indies between 1833 and 1835, used it of the people in the West Indies. He said, “There is something . . . so unpleasing about the niggers that they spoil the scenery.”\textsuperscript{195} Neither “native” nor “nigger” was a complimentary word. Therefore, when in 1866, John M’Laren was asked if he

\textsuperscript{192} Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 181.

\textsuperscript{193} People of Asian origin were called natives. See Christian Missions in the East and West in Connection with the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1873 (2nd ed. London, 1873) and “Reception of Mr. Knibb and his Companions at Falmouth,” Missionary Herald Apr. 1841: 50.


belonged to “a Buckra Society or a Nigger Society”, it was a query, seeking to ascertain whether he was affiliated to the English Baptist mission (Buckra) or the Native Baptists (Nigger). This was insulting to equate “native” to “nigger.” Even in 1866, the ruling class was not enamoured with the term “Native Baptist.” For them, it was not a title of honour.

“Native” in nineteenth century usage also referred to a second tier leadership, which functioned under supervision within the church, for example, the English Baptists and Moravians who had “native assistants.” And in the Church of England, “native catechists” specifically referred to persons who were deemed to be lower in rank ecclesiastically and paid accordingly. When “native” was associated with ministers of religion, “native ministers,” it would indicate that the person was not properly ordained for pastoral ministry or was “ignorant.” Some missionaries also believed there was a “native Character” which was different and inferior to the European character. “Native” was primarily a negative word.

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196 JRC Vol. 5 246.

197 Buchner 103 and Underhill, Life 205-07.


199 Gordon, Jamaican Church 12, 16.

200 Secretary of Church Missionary Society, D. Coates in a letter dated 28 Nov. 1837, 539 West Indian Records 1818-61. See also Edward Underhill, Life of James Mursell Phillippo: Missionary in Jamaica (London, 1881) 231.
Therefore, when Europeans utilized the word "native", it was mainly as an offensive term to describe non-European, indigenous people who inhabited a colonized place and who were considered inferior because of race and/or religion. The Native Baptists in ascribing the word 'Native' to themselves were creating their own identity. In addition, they were rejecting any negative connotation associated with "native" and re-interpreting it, giving it new meaning and dignity. They were following in the footsteps of Liele who did a similar thing in appropriating the name Anabaptist, which was a name of scorn, and wore it as a badge of honour. The Native Baptists were using "native" in a positive way.

The Native Baptists in using the word "native", which was a term for non-Europeans including Africans, was affirming things African. This Afro-centric declaration in a context where things African were considered second-rate, backward and idiotic, was an outrage to the colonial society and a bold act of defiance. This stance of affirming African heritage was also demonstrated in the urgency and primacy given to spreading the gospel to Africa. It was also a statement that Africa was their homeland and that they had a responsibility to home. The Native Baptists were of African pedigree with confidence in their distinctiveness. This enlightened attitude to Africa was first observed with Liele, who referred to his congregation as the Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica. 201 Both groups were acutely aware of their African heritage and were affirming it.

201 Rippon, Baptist 542 and Russell, Understandings 102.
So the Native Baptists, in ascribing “native” as part of their name and identity, were making a declaration about their race, their heritage, and their pride. The appropriation of the term “native” was a means of describing their uniqueness in the Christian community. They were affirming that they were an autonomous, indigenous missionary group, which was not accountable to any foreign mission agency. It was a statement that they were different from the English Baptists. It was, therefore, an indication of the resolve of those of African descent to establish a distinctive organization when they called it the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society.

Native Baptist Communion

There is little information about the activities of the JNBMS in the 1850s and by the 1860s it was another group of Native Baptists that came to the forefront. This group came to prominence subsequent to the Great Revival 1860-61,\(^{202}\) which revival boosted church attendance.\(^{203}\)

The interaction between the commissioners of the JRC and American-born, Rev. Richard Warren, went thus: “What body you belong to? -The Baptists” and “you

\(^{202}\) The Great Revival started in 1860 in the Moravian Church: Jamaica Moravian Church 117. The Revival was marked by confessions, restitution of stolen property, burning of clothes and jewelry that was obtained as a result of the wages of sin, recommitment to the marriage vows, fasting and all night praying: “Great Revival of Religion in Jamaica,” Baptist Reporter Jan. 1861: 11. See also Underhill, Life 304-18 and Duncan Fletcher, Personal Recollections of the Honourable George W. Gordon, late of Jamaica (London, 1867) 67.

are one of the native Baptists? -Yes.” 204 They also asked Warren if he belonged to the “Native Baptist Communion,” to which he said “yes.” 205 In addition, in the JRC's summary, it stated that George William Gordon belonged to “the Native Baptist Communion.” 206 This writer will therefore, use the name, Native Baptist Communion, to describe the group to which Warren and Gordon were identified and which came to prominence in the 1860s. One of its leaders, Warren, called “Parson Warren”, had responsibilities as “co-preacher in the ‘Tabernacle,’” 207 pastor for congregation at Spring and itinerant preacher at Stony Gut and at Stye-hut. 208

When Warren was asked if Gordon was a member of his congregation, he replied that, “he always attended; he took a general interest in it” and during the interaction between Warren and the commissioners it was revealed that Gordon was the Secretary: “Was he [Gordon] a member of the Native Baptist

205  JRC Vol. 5 1069. The JRC Report identified Native Baptists and Baptists interchangeably. Rev George Truman identified himself as a Native Baptist: JRC Vol. 5 414, but the Commissioners later in the testimony referred to him as a “Baptist minister”: JRC Vol. 5 415. In addition, in the list of witnesses, none who identified themselves as Native Baptists in testimonies was so classified in the list but was instead called a Baptist i.e. Rev. Richard Warren: JRC Vol. 5 1x.
208  JRC Vol. 5 1067. In some nineteenth century documents it was spelt “Stoney Gut.” Warren was also the featured speaker at the opening of Bogle’s chapel: JRC Vol. 5 158.
Communion?” and Warren replied, “He was Secretary.” In a letter dated 25 July 1862, Bogle, Bowie and Clarke told Gordon to contact Warren concerning making arrangements for baptism. This also indicated that both Warren and Gordon had leadership roles in the Native Baptist Communion. If an unnamed critic of Gordon were to be believed, Gordon had an exalted position among the Native Baptists because it was said that the Native Baptists hailed him as “an archbishop or high priest.” An unnamed person gave an unflattering reason for Gordon being a Native Baptist. He said:

Mr. Gordon was not of a disposition to submit to the discipline and government of any regular church or to play second fiddle to any one. He aspired to be a leader and preacher, and this could only be done by identifying himself with the native Baptists and setting up his own tabernacle.

Gordon was a leader within the Native Baptist Communion.

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210 JRC Vol. 5 1150.


Nevertheless, there was confusion about the denominational affiliation(s) of Gordon. Fletcher in his personal reflections on Gordon said that Gordon was “an elder of the United Presbyterian Church at Kingston” who benefited from the
ministry of Gardner 213 but Andrew G. Hogg said of Gordon in a letter dated 23 October 1865 to Dr. Thomas, of Broughton Place Missionary Society, Edinburgh, “he has belonged to all denominations and is now a Baptist preacher.” 214 Eyre also called him a “Baptist preacher” 215 and a “Baptist member.” 216 Gordon was identified as a member of the English Baptist Church because Phillippo baptized him “on Christmas-day, 1861.” 217 However, Underhill wrote that Gordon “continued to maintain his connection with the United Presbyterian Church” while “on various occasions he sought Mr. Phillippo’s advice.” 218 There were others who said Gordon was not a member of the English Baptist Church. In a correspondence to the London Times, S. Morton Peto, treasurer of the BMS, said Gordon “never joined a Baptist church” and lately in a court of law declared himself “a member of the Church of England.” 219 Rev. Mr. E. Blake, a Wesleyan Missionary in Jamaica, said at a meeting at Cirencester, on 28 October 1865, “Mr.

213 Fletcher 53.


216 “The Insurrection in Jamaica,” Missionary Herald 801 in Baptist Magazine 1865. English Baptist missionary, John Bee, quoting from Charles H. Spurgeon’s biography of George William Gordon also claimed that Gordon was a “faithful member of the Baptist Church and a local preacher”: Gleaner 4 Nov. 1960: 4. This writer was unable to locate this biography.


218 Underhill, Life 320-21. Fletcher said that after Gordon’s immersion he did not join the English Baptist Church but nevertheless, he was “coldly treated by Mr. Gardiner [sic]: Fletcher 54.

Gordon was not a Baptist, but a member of the Church of England.” 220 By Gordon's own admission, he was an Anglican, at least in 1863. Gordon at a sitting on 24 November 1863 in the House of Assembly made the distinction between his great and serious objections to the Anglican Church as a State Church while embracing the Church of England in Jamaica. He said he was christened by the Rev. Alexander Campbell, the late Rector of St. Andrew, and confirmed by Bishop Lipscomb, and had communion with the church. He never departed from the principles of the church but when he became older he adopted the principle laid down by Christ and was baptized by immersion. 221 B. T. Williams, a barrister, said the Custos decided to remove Gordon as a churchwarden of the parish on the grounds that Gordon was not a member of the Established Church but “according to our practice, the fact that Gordon went to dissenting chapels would not affect the question, unless he was really excommunicated.” 222 Gordon's membership can only be revoked if he was officially excluded from the Anglican Church and not on the basis of attending other non-Anglican congregations.

Gordon was baptized as a child in the Church of England and became a member and he never withdrew his membership and was never ex-communicated. He

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221 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly. Under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, And Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864 (Spanish Town, 1865) 188.

also had membership in the Presbyterian Church. He was also baptized by
immersion in an English Baptist Church though he never became a member of
that church. He had authority over the Native Baptist Communion and worked
closely with Warren, Bogle and Bowie both religiously and politically. Based on
the evidence, Gordon was a member of the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian
Church and a leader in the Native Baptist Communion. Gordon’s association
with various churches was, likely, due to the fact that while he admired some
aspects of certain denominations, he was most comfortable with the Native
Baptists because it facilitated him using his leadership gifts and wealth to
establishing churches, which based on the Anglican and Presbyterian structures
would not be possible. Furthermore, Gordon, as the political representative for
St. Thomas in the East, would not harm his political fortunes by identifying with
the religious expression of the majority of the masses who were Native Baptists.

George William Gordon (1815-65) was helped towards prosperity by an
anonymous lady who loaned him £1,000. He acquired extensive business and

223 An entry in the Parish Registry for St. Andrew said George Gordon was about three months old
when he was baptized on December 27, 1815 “Baptism in 1815,” St. Andrew Baptisms, Marriages,
Burials 1907-1826 Vol. 2 53 in iB/11/8/1/2 St. Andrew 1807-26 in Island Record Office Jam 88
JA 1B/11 in Jamaica Archives. Lindo posited two other dates for Gordon’s birth, namely 1819 or
1817”: David Lindo, Time Tells Our Story: The History of the Jamaica Mutual Assurance Society
1844-1994 (Kingston: Randle, 1994) 52. Catherall said Gordon was born 1820: G. A. Catherall,
“George William Gordon: Saint or Sinner?” Baptist Quarterly XXVII (1977): 164 while Sherlock
and Bennett said 1815: Philip Sherlock, and Hazel Bennett, The Story of The Jamaican People
(Kingston: Randle; Princeton: Wiener, 1998) 248. This writer accepted the Parish Registry
account. Gordon was hanged on October 23, 1865: “The Traitor George W. Gordon,” Gleaner 28

224 Fletcher 29.
vast properties 225 with estates in many parishes 226 and was “one of the largest landowners in the country.” 227 And wherever Gordon had properties, he tried to establish chapels 228 and to promote the gospel in the parishes in which his property lay. 229 Fletcher said that Gordon, at his own expense, “Superintended and supported a most important and extensive missionary enterprise . . . in some of the most destitute localities where he established churches and schools, with an efficient staff of missionaries and teachers.” 230 Gordon was also founder of the chapel named Tabernacle, at Parade in Kingston. 231 This chapel could have been a Native Baptist chapel, again indicating his attachment to the Native Baptists.

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225 Fletcher 25, 28.

226 JRC Vol. 4 515 and Fletcher 33. See King who argued for Gordon’s commercial integrity: David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866) 7. Fletcher said, Gordon never became “insolvent”: Fletcher 33.


228 Fletcher 51.

229 Underhill, Life 320. See also Fletcher 48.

230 Fletcher 48.

There was not that type of confusion about Bogle's denominational membership as there was about Gordon's. Phillippo testified that Bogle's congregation and Mr. Warren's were called Native Baptists. 232 Bogle was said to belong to the "'Native Baptists,' a sect, so-called as being independent of and distinguished from the London Baptist Mission." 233 Bogle was attached to the Native Baptists. There was no explicit reason given for the establishment of the Native Baptist Communion or when it came into being. The members who constituted the Native Baptist Communion could have been in existence in 1862 based on the contents of a letter dated 23 May 1862, and written by Gordon:

Our visit here is twofold: first, to open a mission station at Bath and Spring, both of which have been done . . . On Sunday, the 18\textsuperscript{th}, services were held at the Missionary Bethel- a temporary place of worship . . . Mr. Warren, late of America, one of those seeking a rest here, is the temporary pastor. 234

In December 1861, Phillippo commissioned Gordon to start an "independent cause." 235 It was after such a mandate that Gordon wrote the above letter. And since Warren was associated with Gordon and he identified himself in 1865 as a

\begin{itemize}
  \item 232 JRC Vol. 5 923.
  \item 233 JRC Vol. 4 527.
  \item 234 Fletcher 51.
  \item 235 Underhill, Life 320-21.
\end{itemize}
Native Baptist, then these mission stations at Bath and Spring, founded by Gordon and with Warren as the leader, were highly likely to be Native Baptist churches.

Furthermore, in 1865, Warren had a congregation in Spring, St. Thomas in the East 236 which was the same one he had in 1862. It could be concluded that he was a Native Baptist in 1862 and the Native Baptist Communion was in place in 1862. In addition, this would mean that Gordon was the founder of the Native Baptist Communion.

Paul Bogle, a close associate of Gordon, was born 1820 237 and was captured on 23 October 1865, and was transferred to Morant Bay on the 24th 238 and hanged on the same day. 239 He was referred to as a “Native Parson” 240 but it was not clear if the newspaper writer meant that Bogle was a Native Baptist pastor or was just an attempt to classify Bogle being an indigenous self-proclaimed pastor.

236 JRC Vol. 5 1067.

237 This was an estimate based on the newspaper report which stated that Bogle “looked 45 years old”: “Paul Bogle,” Colonial Standard 28 Oct. 1865: 2. Bogle was said to be born free but to parents who were enslaved: Salute to our Heroes. Jamaica Information Service. Video Cassette Jamaica Information Service, 2002. However, there was no reference to support this claim or how two enslaved persons could produce a child that was born free.


239 JRC Vol. 5 1136. However, Heuman said it was the following day, October 25, 1865: Heuman, Killing Time 139. Eyre in a dispatch dated October 26 said Bogle would be hanged at 5pm “The Insurrection in Jamaica,” [London] Times 20 Nov. 1865: 9. This gave the impression that he would be hanged at 5pm on the 26th.

240 Gleaner 10 Nov. 1865: [2].
But was Bogle a leader of the Native Baptist Communion in 1862? A Will of 9 March 1862 spoke to Bogle as a Baptist leader, "I James, and Minna Bryan, do give and bequeath to Mr. Paul Bogle, leader of the Stoney Gutt [sic] Baptist class,
one chain of land square for the purpose of building a class house, and for the
benefit of he and his members and followers . . .” This Will showed that Bogle was
a Baptist leader in March 1862 and had a following. However, it is not clear if he
was a Native Baptist leader at that time. Nevertheless, of the six trustees to the
Will, two were George W. Gordon and George B. Clarke, \(^{241}\) who were later
identified as Native Baptists. It is therefore, possible that in 1862 Bogle was
connected to Native Baptists. Furthermore, a letter dated 25 July 1862 to George
William Gordon and signed by Paul Bogle, James Bowie and George B. Clarke
made reference to arranging a baptism at Spring at which Gordon was expected
to attend. \(^{242}\) Bogle was involved with the Native Baptist Communion, at the
latest July 1862.

The Native Baptist Communion experienced church growth as observed by
baptisms in July and preparations for others to be baptized in October 1862 at
the same congregation at Spring. \(^{243}\) It was also remarked that there were many
Native Baptists “in Morant Bay and the neighbourhood” \(^{244}\) and an unnamed
opponent of Gordon said of the Native Baptist Communion churches, “all the
miserable little chapels studding the parish of St. Thomas in the East.” \(^{245}\) Rev.
Mr. D. Campbell, who replaced Rev. Stephen Cooke in the St. Thomas Parish

\(^{241}\) JRC Vol. 4 232.

\(^{242}\) JRC Vol. 5 1150.

\(^{243}\) JRC Vol. 4 233.

\(^{244}\) “The Lesson from Jamaica,” Missionary Herald 383 in Baptist Magazine 1866.

Church, stated that there were “native Baptist chapels” or meeting rooms at every free settlement, such as, at Stony Gut, Honeycomb and Hell Gate. 246 There was also a Native Baptist class-house in Spring Garden, about a mile from Stony Gut and between Morant Bay and Stony Gut. 247 Other signs of church growth included the opening of new chapels at Mount Zion, Sunning Hill District on 1 November 1862 248 and the opening of the Stony Gut chapel on Christmas Day 1864. 249 There was also a chapel at Mount Pisgah. 250 Bogle was also associated with the Mount Lebanon Chapel 251 and Gordon visited the Chapel Highland Castle at Stony Gut. 252 In addition, there was a Baptist chapel in Font Hill that belonged to John M'Laren, father of James M'Laren. 253 It was implicit that when M'Laren told the Commissioners that he belonged to the “Nigger Society” 254 it meant he was affiliated with the Native Baptists, just like his son, James.

Another Native Baptist station would have been “The St. Andrew’s Mission.” 255 It

246 JRC Vol. 5 842.

247 JRC Vol. 5 124, 126.

248 JRC Vol. 4 235. The letter stated that the chapel was opened in November without mentioning a year but Gordon reminded Bogle in that letter about the Voters List, indicating a pending Election. An Election was held in March 1863: Underhill, Life 320. Therefore, the November before the Election would have been in 1862.

249 JRC Vol. 4 235.

250 JRC Vol. 5 126.

251 JRC Vol. 4 515 and JRC Vol. 5 156.


253 JRC Vol. 5 245-46. The surname was also spelt “McLaren”: “Capture of Paul Bogle,” Gleaner 26 Oct. 1865: 2. So sometimes it is James M'Laren and at another time it is James McLaren.

254 JRC Vol. 5 246.

255 Fletcher 51.
is also likely that Thomas McKean's station in Manchionel, St. Thomas-in-the
East was connected to the Native Baptist Communion where Bogle had some
influence. 256

Therefore, the chapels associated with the Native Baptist Communion in St.
Thomas-in-the-East were:

✓ Font Hill,
✓ Bath,
✓ Spring,
✓ Mount Zion, Sunning Hill,
✓ Spring Garden,
✓ Stony Gut,
✓ Honeycomb,
✓ Hell Gate,
✓ Mount Pisgah,
✓ Mount Lebanon,
✓ Manchionel,
✓ Morant Bay.

256 Clarke, Memorials 223.
here were two others in the Kingston area, namely:

- St. Andrew’s mission,
- Tabernacle, Parade

These congregations of the Native Baptist Communion were confined to the eastern end of Jamaica (see Map 3).

There were a few preachers who were identified with the Native Baptist Communion. Cowell 257 was styled as “one of the self-constituted parsons of the Baptist persuasion, who used to officiate in Bogle’s chapel at Stoney Gut.” 258 Bogle had a chapel on his property 259 in which he preached. 260 According to the testimony of William Anderson, James McLaren, “was never a churchman; he was of another society.” 261 But his father said that James, who resided at Morant Bay, preached at the chapel in Morant Bay when the minister did not arrive. 262 This writer will accept the statement of the father over the testimony of William Anderson. The identifiable preachers/pastors within the Native Baptist Communion were Gordon, Bogle, Warren, Cowell and McLaren.

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257 No first name was given.


259 JRC Vol. 5 930 and Vol. 4 527.

260 JRC Vol. 4 509.


262 JRC Vol. 5 246.
The Native Baptist Communion displayed a leadership structure and evidence of being well organized. Bogle's ordination certificate, which was signed by Warren and Gordon as president and acting secretary respectively, said "and in all things to be obedient to the rules of the church." 263 Shirley Gordon said that statement was an indication that the Native Baptists were "growing into a collective church with 'rules'" 264 It was more than growing into a collective church, it was an organization with a president and secretary. The certificate also indicated a central organization because Bogle was not ordained at his Stony Gut chapel but "in the presence of the whole congregation, 'Tabernacle' Kingston." 265 The Native Baptist Communion was a well-structured organization.

Persons associated with this Native Baptist group were also politically active. Both The Times and the JRC recorded that in 1863, at a house in Morant Bay, in a street opposite the Wesleyan chapel, a meeting was held to form an Anti-Slavery Society, which was chaired by Mr. Henry Clyne at which meeting William Chisholm was appointed as agent and Paul Bogle, Moses Bogle, William Bowie and Richard Warren became signatories to the Society. George William Gordon was also present at the meeting. Money was collected and sent to the parent body in London. 266 Warren also signed memorials, that is, complaints or requests, to

263 JRC Vol. 4 30.

264 Gordon, Cause For His Glory 106.

265 JRC Vol. 5 1150. The Tabernacle was a historic and significant church. Fletcher said that the Great Revival began in Kingston in Gordon's Tabernacle: Fletcher 69.

266 JRC Vol. 5 1067-68. The Times said that the house where the Anti-slavery Society was established belonged to Gordon: From Our Special correspondent, "The Outbreak in Jamaica,"
the Custos. 267 The Mount Lebanon Chapel used the building as a meeting place to discuss protest actions. 268 William Bailey, an old Baptist preacher, hosted a meeting at Spring Garden in his meeting-house where the oath was administered just prior to the protest march in 1865. 269 Gordon went to the Chapel Highland Castle at Stoney Gut, where a meeting was held to discuss the issue of the rights of the peasants to back lands. 270 Bogle and his followers gathered at a chapel at Mount Pisgah where a meeting was held on 9 October 1865 to discuss the implications of the fracas at the Morant Bay courthouse. 271 In addition, Bogle was chairman of the Liberal School Society, which was a political movement to support Gordon’s candidacy for political office. In a correspondence dated 25 July 1862, Bogle borrowed money from Gordon with John B. Sterling, James Bowie, Stephen Smith, Joseph Kelly, and George B. Clarke signing as sureties. This loan of £150 was to enable one hundred taxpayers to qualify for the voting franchise and be placed on the electoral roll. They paid back this money quarterly without interest. 272 Bogle in a letter to Gordon on 12 July 1865 wrote, “I have also my title here, which I will send down to you that you may get it record as quick as possible, for I expect to have William upon the list of voters for


[267] JRC Vol. 5 1067, 1069. The Custos was the representative of the Governor in each parish and acted as chief magistrate in that parish.

[268] JRC Vol. 5 156.

[269] JRC Vol. 5 131.


[271] JRC Vol. 5 126.

[272] JRC Vol. 5 1150. It was spelt as “Joseph B. Storling” here but “J. B. Sterling” in JRC Vol. 4 234.
next year.” 273 He mobilized voters. James M'Laren’s testimony at Gordon’s
court-martial was that Bogle always voted for Gordon. 274 After winning a seat as
an Assemblyman in March 1863, Gordon acknowledged the role of the Native
Baptists. 275 The Native Baptists engaged in political activism.

The Native Baptists can also be credited with cementing the political career of
Gordon. Gordon’s electoral victory demonstrated a high level of organization and
strategic planning. In addition, the people were not asking for handouts and
neither did Gordon charge interest. It was a partnership based on respect, hard
work, and no exploitation in order to be politically engaged in society. This
Native Baptist grouping played an activist role in the society.

**Connection between JNBMS and Native Baptist Communion**

William Anderson, servant of Colonel Hobbs testified that, in 1864, he knew Paul
and Moses Bogle as “chapel brothers” as they “always met at the chapel at Morant
Bay.” 276 This chapel was not associated with the English Baptist mission because
an English Baptist periodical identified a Baptist chapel at Morant Bay, which
was not connected to the English Baptist mission. 277 The English Baptists had no

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273 JRC Vol. 4 233.


275 Underhill, Life 320.

276 JRC Vol. 5 157. See another reference to Native Baptist chapel in Morant Bay: JRC Vol. 5 126.

Clarke, a Native Baptist, confirmed “there is not a single Baptist minister in the whole parish,
chapel there. The only Baptist church that was in Morant Bay was associated with the JNBMS and, in 1843, John Davis of the JNBMS was the pastor for that church known as the Jubilee Chapel in Morant Bay. 278 And it was at the Jubilee Chapel in Morant Bay that George B. Clarke, chairman of a group of Baptists, held a meeting on 12 July 1866. 279 Clarke was one of the leaders who arranged with Paul Bogle and Gordon for baptism in 1862. 280 It was also said that a congregation had moved from a church, meeting in a house under the leadership of the said John Davis, 281 to become known as “Killick’s chapel” 282 and Killick was a member and leader within the JNBMS. 283 Davis was not a pastor of two different congregations but was pastor of Jubilee Chapel, which was also nicknamed as “Killick’s chapel.” Therefore, Paul Bogle and Moses Bogle attended and were affiliated to the JNBMS chapel in Morant Bay. Though no evidence was unearthed that there was an administrative link between the Native Baptist Communion and the JNBMS, the JNBMS would have influenced the Bogies when they attended chapel. There was, therefore, more than likely a hermeneutical connection between the Native Baptist Communion and the JNBMS.


278 Jamaica Almanack 1843 93.

279 Baptist Magazine Dec. 1866: 792.

280 JRC Vol. 5 1150.

281 First Annual Report 12.


283 First Annual Report 2, 4.
Some common features of the Native Baptists of the JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion include independence from the English Baptists whether in England or Jamaica. 284 Both groups emphasized the oppression experienced by the people of African descent 285 and both were politically active. 286 And both, as Turner observed, devised interpretation that mirrored their needs for freedom from injustice. 287 In addition, there was no evidence to link the Native Baptists with the use of folk songs; instead both groups used English hymns and both groups utilized the scholarship of Isaac Watts. 288 Furthermore, both groups were once in a relationship with the English Baptists, the JNBMS through Lyon and Duff, 289 and the Native Baptist Communion through Gordon. 290 There were many similarities between the JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion.

Nevertheless, at the JRC Inquiry in 1866, George Truman, member of the JNBMS, made a distinction between the JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion. He said, “I may state that the Native Baptists, as they have been


286 Underhill, Life 320. Wilmot, Stake in the Soil 318.


288 First Annual Report ii; “Hymns Selected and marked by Paul Bogle,” Gleaner, 4 Nov. 1865: 4 and King, Sketch 6

289 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr. 1837.

290 Underhill, Life 319.
called, are not the Native Baptists that I am connected with.” 291 There was an understandable reason for making that distinction. It was due to fear of reprisals from the authorities who might blame the JNBMS for the 1865 Native Baptist War. Some persons, whose only crime was that they were native ministers were blamed, although they were innocent. For example, on 23 October 1865, the authorities captured J. B. Service, native pastor in Port Antonio. 292 Edwin Palmer, native pastor of Hanover Street Baptist, was imprisoned for approximately two months without trial. 293 Twenty native pastors, including J. H. Crole and H. B. Harris, who were part of the English Baptist mission, were accused of complicity with a plot to rebel. 294 Since native ministers not associated with the Native Baptists were experiencing serious persecutions, then persons identified as Native Baptists were more liable to harassments. And there was precedence for such expectation in that in the aftermath of the 1831 Baptist War, the English Baptist missionaries were blamed for it 295 and their chapels were destroyed 296 although they were not directly involved. Therefore, it was natural for Truman to distance himself from the Native Baptist Communion to preserve his property and life.

291 JRC Vol. 5 416.


293 Underhill, Life 335fn.


295 Senior, Jamaica 183.

Independent of the JNBMS and Native Baptist Communion

There were several ministers, at least one independent Native Baptist pastor, at least one pastor of two independent Baptist congregations and many native ministers within European missions who were not affiliated to either the JNBMS or the Native Baptist Communion.

Underhill mentioned an unnamed "black man" who was "the pastor of the Native Baptist Church" in the parish of St. Dorothy who "seceded in 1841, during Mr. Taylor's ministry" from the English Baptists but who "declined to join the Native Baptist Association, in 1841." 297 This was an independent Native Baptist church.

Then there was "the other Baptist Chapel" on White Church Street, which was known as "The Independent Baptist Chapel" and was built by Rev. Thomas Dowson and his followers after the court case with Phillippo in 1846. 298 In 1861, Dowson started another Independent Baptist mission at St. Faith station in St. John, seventeen miles from Spanish Town. 299

297 Underhill, West Indies 231-32. In JNBMS Report, the parish is spelt as "St. Dorothy's": First Annual Report 16-17.

298 W. A. Feurtado, A Forty-Five Years' Reminiscence of the characteristics & characters of Spanish Town (Kingston, 1890) 25. In 1863, an official document said the members of the breakaway church in Spanish Town were called "Independent Baptists" Votes of Assembly 1862-63 86. Clarke said this "Independent Baptist Chapel" could seat 600: Clarke, Memorials 192. Robertson claimed that the name of the church was "the Ebenezer or Independent Baptist Chapel": James Robertson, Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000 (Kingston, Miami: Randle, 2005) 177.

299 Clarke, Memorials 193.
In 1843, Rev. Mr. Collins, a former Moravian missionary, changed his views on the subject of baptism, and practised Believers’ Baptism and became “pastor of a newly formed church in Westmoreland.” One was not sure whether Collins led an Independent Native Baptist or an Independent Baptist Church or just an Independent Church. However, since it was mentioned in a Baptist newspaper it was probably a sign that it was affiliated to a Baptist communion.

Underhill mentioned there were native ministers among the Wesleyans, the Independents and the Presbyterians. There were also native pastors among the Baptists such as Thomas Henry, who assisted John Clark of Brown’s Town and Richard and Joseph Merrick By 1864, there were nineteen native pastors associated with the English Baptist mission, who were trained at Calabar, including Mr. Smith (Mount Angus 1843), Mr. Johnson (Clarksonville 1844), Mr. Fray (Refuge 1847) and Mr. Dalling (Stacy Ville 1848). In all, between 1843 and 1860, thirty-one persons became native ministers in the English Baptist controlled mission.

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300 Baptist Herald, & Friend of Africa 1 Feb. 1843; [1].
301 Underhill, West Indies 303-04.
304 Underhill, West Indies 297, 322.
305 Underhill, West Indies 301. See the Jamaica Almanack which listed three categories of Baptist ministers namely, “Baptist Missionaries”, “Baptist (Native) Preachers” and “Baptist Congregational Churches”: Jamaica Almanack 1843 92-93.
Sociological features

In 1866, according to English Baptist missionaries, the African members spoke “broken English.” They made disparaging comments about the educational standard of the Native Baptists, claiming that, “The Black and Coloured preachers of the Native Baptist churches were generally exceedingly ignorant. Some of them could neither read nor write, and were not even able to utter a single sentence intelligibly.” Rev. Mr. Campbell, Anglican rector in St. Thomas in the East, in a testimony before the Jamaica Royal Commission, said that the preachers of the “native Baptist chapels” were illiterate and “were not competent to teach religion.” A newspaper report said of Bogle and his fellow native preachers that they were “men who can barely spell their way through a passage in the Bible, and who eager for distinction, set up to be preachers.”

However, according to John Clarke, in a letter dated 24 May 1839, “reading is becoming more common” among the Negroes. The JNBMS First Annual Report was a well-argued, well-written report in Standard English. In addition,

306 “From Morant Bay,” Baptist Magazine Dec. 1866: 791. See also Emancipation 33. In 1866, the Commissioners did not understand the answers of the Negroes and they appointed a Mulatto policeman to be an interpreter who would pose a question in the vernacular and translate the answer into “more or less plain English”: From our Special Correspondent, “The Outbreak in Jamaica,” [London] Times 17 Mar. 1866: 9. There was bias against the speech of the people who could not speak their “plain English.”

307 Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity 96n.

308 JRC Vol. 5 842. Hobbs also claimed that the Native Baptist preachers in 1865 were unable in many cases to read or write: JRC Vol. 5 1129. See also Hutton, Colour 174.


Joseph Silva was a teacher with “some education.” 311 Robert Hamilton, who would in subsequent years succeeded John Davis, 312 wrote a thank you letter for the gift of a Bible on the second day of freedom. 313 Furthermore, Underhill described an unnamed Native Baptist pastor as being intelligent but “his knowledge of books was very limited.” 314 Moreover, Robert Madden, a special magistrate administering the apprenticeship system in Jamaica, was pleasantly surprised at the way Killick expounded the word and the “application of scriptural knowledge.” 315 Killick was knowledgeable before he became a Native Baptist.

In 1865, a group of Native Baptists wrote a narrative, which was a fine example of the art of rhetoric. 316 In addition, a knowledgeable reporter said of a district in St. Thomas-in-the-East that “most possessed the ability to read and very many to write” and “in their house might be found the island newspapers, cheap English periodicals, and tracts and religious books of different sorts” and they “were not ignorant of the principal features of the constitution under which they lived, or

311 Clarke, Memorials 223. Clarke spelt Joseph’s surname as “Sylva” however, the JNBMS has Silva so this writer will accept the official report’s spelling First Annual Report 3. Either spelling would be pronounced the same way.

312 Clarke, Memorials 223.

313 Robb 167.

314 Underhill, West Indies 232.

315 Robert Madden, A Twelvemonth’s Residence in the West Indies, During the Transition From Slavery to Apprenticeship Vol. i (London, 1835) 100.

acquainted with the laws by which they were governed." 317 In 1866, another reporter said, "Many of the Negroes seemed intelligent. They read their newspapers in the streets, when perhaps, they should be at work." 318 Twenty-two year old James M'Laren, Native Baptist preacher, attended school in Morant Bay and was literate. 319 Gordon was largely self-taught 320 and was well read and utilized Shakespearean language in criticizing the awful conditions in which the Indians existed, saying, "Every man who has a drop of the milk of human kindness in his breast, must weep at the sad state of the poor Coolies." 321 The claim that the Native Baptist preachers were largely illiterate was overstated.

There were persons who equated the peculiar speech pattern of the Native Baptists and others of African origin with inability to read and write which was inaccurate. Gordon was correct to claim that there were literate Native Baptist preachers and leaders. 322 And the generalization by persons, such as Campbell, that many cannot read and write was counter to the evidence that many were reading their Bibles and newspapers.

317 Jamaica Tribune and Daily Advertiser 21 Dec. 1865: [4].
319 JRC Vol. 5 246.
320 King, Sketch 6.
321 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under The New Constitution Vol. X (Kingston, 1864) 137
322 Gordon, Cause for His Glory 107, 121.
John Candler, a member of the Society of Friends, said “The Baptist (native) preachers are coloured or black men . . .” Clarke described Sylva as “a coloured free man of good parts”; Duff was a “free man of colour”; George Truman was “coloured” and Hamilton was born on a “slave ship.” Clarke in making a distinction between English Baptists and Native Baptists identified Native Baptists as being served by pastors of African extract. The Native Baptist leaders were mainly Mulattoes and persons of African ancestry. In 1835, Madden said of the Kingston congregation of Killick: “all of whom were Negroes like himself.” Assuming that Killick’s church was indicative of the JNBMS churches, then the members were primarily of persons of African origin. American-born, Richard Warren, James McLaren and George B. Clarke, leaders within the Native Baptist Communion were described as “black.” The baptismal record of George William Gordon said he was “a Quadroon slave on Cherry Gardens.” A Quadroon is the offspring of a “white and a mulatto.”

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324 JRC Vol. 5 414.

325 Clarke, *Memorials* 223.


327 Madden 100. Heuman said, “In Kingston, free coloreds comprised half of the membership and two-thirds of the attendance at the Wesleyan missions”: Gad J. Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865* (Westport: Greenwood P, 1981) 12. This was a difference between the Native Baptists and the Methodists.

328 JRC Vol. 5 124, 1069. James’ father, John M’Laren was described as “black”: JRC Vol. 245.

329 “Baptism in 1815,” *St. Andrew Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1807-1826* Vol. 2 53 in 1B/11/8/1/2 St. Andrew 1807-26 in Island Record Office Jam 88 JA 1B/11 in Jamaica Archives. The baptismal record identified a “George Gordon” who was about three months old when he was christened. Gordon’s parents “managed to conceal their precious treasure for the space of three months”: Fletcher 14. This baptism record was about George William Gordon.
The members within the Native Baptist Communion appeared to be primarily of African origin.

Little is known about the economic background of individual Native Baptists but an examination of the annual taxes paid in St. Thomas in the East was indicative of the economic worth of some leaders within the Native Baptist Communion. For example, Moses Bogle had 32 acres at Rhine, Paul Bogle had 500 acres at Dumobbin and George Bassett Clarke had a carriage at Rhine. In St. Thomas in the East, there were only 38 planters who had 500 acres or more. Therefore, Bogle's 500 acres would put him in the top echelons of the society. Moses Bogle paid £1 12s in taxes for that property, while Paul Bogle paid £2 1s and 8d and Clarke paid £3 in taxes. Paying direct taxes to the amount of £3 a year would have entitled George Clarke to be a voter, one of the 1% of the population who could vote. He was, therefore, financially strong.

In addition, Native Baptists paying their taxes was a testament to being law-abiding subjects. And although the taxes were exorbitant and unjust they made every attempt to comply with the taxation policy.

330 Stewart, View 324; Madden Vol. 1 89; Hodgson 60-61 and Godfrey Lagden, The Native Races of The Empire (London: Collins, 1924) 314.

331 Heuman, Between Black and White 119.

332 JRC Vol. 4 234. Underhill said, “carriage is costly”: Underhill, West Indies 231.

333 Hall, Free 2, 177. See also Table 1.
It also appeared that the leading Native Baptists had income or assets above the average person. Bogle was a baker. 334 He also produced cane and sugar 335 and had a boiling house and a crushing house for his canes. 336 Matthew Lutas was a tailor and landowner. 337 James Hill, Native Baptist leader, donated via a “Deed of Gift”, a chapel for the use of the JNBMS at Bethany, St David’s, which had 179 members. 338 In the 1849 Elections, Rev. John Davis was a registered voter. 339 This meant he was one of the 2,235 registered voters 340 out of a population of 377,433 (see Table 1). To be a voter, he had to be a freeholder or a tax paying person. 341 Hobbs said that the peasants who lived in Somerset, Mount Lebanon and Mount Pisgah were wealthy. 342 Though this was an exaggeration, it also appeared that the members of the churches were not the poorest. The cost of the buildings was funded mainly from the pockets of the members, so the size of the buildings signified the depth of the members’ pockets. Liele’s church was built

334 JRC Vol. 5 693. See also Hutton, Colour 226.

335 JRC Vol. 4 235.


339 Swithin Wilmot Stake in the Soil 318.

340 Hall, Free 177.

341 Hall, Free 177. Hall said that in post-emancipation Jamaica, “the right to vote was open to every sane adult male who owned and had paid taxes on a freehold of £6 value, or paid an annual rent of £30, or paid direct taxes to the amount of £3 a year”: Hall, Free 2.

342 JRC Vol. 5 1122. See also Hutton, Colour 174.
on three acres and was 57 ft in length, by 37 ft in breadth. 343 This church became part of the JNBMS under Killick with a membership of 3,700. 344 A place of worship was opened on 27 June 1840 at the Half-Way-Tree station, with 363 members. 345 Duggan of Spanish Town said, “We have recently purchased a large dwelling for £3000, which is converted into a House of Worship.” 346 Underhill described an Independent Native Baptist chapel, which was built in 1842 at a cost of £900 that could seat between 350 and 400 persons. 347 This independent chapel could be used to give an idea of the cost of the Half-Way-Tree station and the seating capacity of the Spanish Town station. Since the independent station and the Half-Way-Tree station had a similar seating capacity, it could be assumed that the Half-Way-Tree station cost approximately £900. And since Duggan’s place of worship cost three times as much as the independent chapel, it was likely that Duggan’s chapel would be able to hold more worshippers. Some of the Native Baptist chapels were substantial buildings, which was an indication that some congregants had wealth. Gordon would have been the wealthiest of them all with properties in many parishes. 348 However, he had acquired most of his wealth before he identified with the Native Baptists. James McLaren, a Native Baptist preacher was a labourer, and his father who was also described as a

343 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 336.
347 Underhill, West Indies 231.
labourer, owned a chapel and was able to send him to school in Morant Bay. 349

As labourers, they were earning a decent wage. George B. Clarke was a carpenter, small landowner and a vestryman of St. Thomas in the East. 350 Clarke said the Native Baptists relied on lower class support. 351 It is highly possible that the members were from the lower classes while some of the leaders had income above that level.

Between 1838-65, the English Baptist missionaries facilitated the establishment of Free Villages in Sligoville, Sturge Town, Kitson Town and Clarkson Town, all within a 10 miles radius of Spanish Town, and Vale Lionel, Porus in Manchester, and at the Alps, Calabar, Clark Town, Granville, Kettering, Hoby Town and Waldensia in Trelawny, Victoria in St. Thomas in the Vale, Bethel Town and Mount Carey in St. James, Clarksonville near Spanish Town, 352 Wilberforce and Buxton in St. Ann, Freedom in St. Catherine and Thompson Town, Clarendon. 353 Others established included Maldon (1840) in St. James 354 and Stephney St. Ann. 355

349 JRC Vol. 5 246.
350 JRC Vol. 5 124.
351 Clarke, Kingston 117.
352 Underhill, Life 209.
353 Phillippo, Jamaica 221-22, Underhill, Life 185-88 and Clark 116.
354 Hall, Free 23.
The map (Map 4) shows the locations of English Baptists’ sponsored Free Villages and the Native Baptists’ church stations highlight that the Native Baptists’ stations were independent of the Free Villages. This meant that Native Baptists did not get support from England in the establishment of their stations or their settlements, which were near to these chapels. The Native Baptists had a different source of income.

Leading members of the Native Baptist Communion, such as Paul Bogle, Moses Bogle, James McLaren and James Bowie, all had Biblical first names. Names were significant to both English Christians as well as to Africans. Stewart said that spiritual gems were displayed through the names given to their dogs and other animals with the Puritans in England naming theirs as “be faithful”; “faint not” and “stand fast on high” as a sign of commitment to God while the Africans would say “Keep what you have, take care of yourself” as a symbol of steadfastness to God. 356 The assigned names signified their dedication to God. Although Paul and James were popular names in English society it seemed more than coincidence that one family named two brothers Paul and Moses. Unfortunately, there was no written material on the parents of the Bogies to verify such a claim but it has already been established that James McLaren’s father, John was a Christian. 357 Therefore, the giving of Biblical names, such as, Paul, Moses and James was indicative that their parents were Christians. It


357 JRC Vol. 5 245-46.
would appear that some of the members of the Native Baptist Communion would
have been reared in Christian homes, and received Christian instructions and be
exposed to Christian lifestyles from an early age.

What happened to the Native Baptists?

Between 1841 and 1843, a medical gentleman in a letter to a friend in England
said:

During the Lord's Day I spent at Sligoville, a party of people came from a
distance to beg Mr. P to go to take possession of a chapel belonging to
some Native Baptists who could not get on alone. These people, about six
in number, came the Sunday previous . . . Mr. P. invited me to accompany
him, and early on the appointed morning we set off, with another medical
man, to the place called the 'Above Rocks' in St. Thomas in the Vale . . .
and went to the chapel . . . 358

A Native Baptist church was indeed at Above Rocks 359 but in mid 1840s there
was only a Baptist church associated with the JBU, which meant that that Native
Baptist church was absorbed into the English Baptist mission.

358 Phillippo, Jamaica 298-300.

359 Clarke, Memorials 223.
John Clarke believed that “as an educated Native ministry” developed then “the
class of preachers we have been noticing will disappear.” 360 Calabar College was
established in 1843 because there were not enough European missionaries to
service the numerous churches. 361 Therefore, Clarke’s desire that a more
educated native ministry through Calabar College would be the demise of self-
constituted preachers and the numerous Native Baptist pastors who lacked
formal theological training was an additional intent. There were some English
Baptists who wanted to use Calabar College to train natives to take over the
responsibility for Native Baptists congregations. This happened in 1852, when
Richard Dalling, a native, trained at Calabar College, began his labours at
Staceyville, Paradise and Shady Grove which it was claimed that, “This station
[Shady Grove] and Paradise were at one time under native ministers not
connected with the Baptist Missionary Society.” 362 And, indeed, in 1841,
Paradise was part of the JNBMS. 363 Lieth Hall station, St. Thomas in the East
was “formerly under Native Baptists” but after the outbreak in 1865 it came
under the superintendence of Henry Bartholomew Harris, a native minister
associated with the English Baptist mission. 364 The Port Antonio station was
founded by Henry Brown in 1838 and was part of the JNBMS in 1843 365 and in

360 Clarke, Memorials 223.

361 Underhill, Life 206. Another related reason was that the BMS was not prepared to fund
additional missionaries.

362 Clarke, Memorials 214-15.

363 First Annual Report 16.

364 Clarke, Memorials 216.

365 Jamaica Almanack 1843 93; Clarke, Memorials 219 and First Annual Report 18.
1855 became part of the English Baptist mission, manned by a native minister, J. J. Porter. According to Clarke, after 1865, “surviving members of the little Native Baptist Churches” were “glad to come under the care of those they had previously shunned [English Baptists].” In 1864, English Baptist missionaries, J. E. Henderson and Edward Hewitt on an island tour preached to a Native Baptist congregation in Morant Bay, St. Thomas and after the resistance in 1865, William Teall preached in a JNBMS building associated with Mr. Killick. This was a prelude to the English Baptists taking over these congregations. A resolution was passed with the support of “the most influential philanthropists of every Christian denomination” that Teall was “to collect the numerous individuals and churches who had been previously under the influence of teachers not recognized by the regularly organized churches in the denomination in connection with the parent society, with a view of instructing them in the ‘way of the Lord more perfectly.’ ” The Native Baptists associated with the Native Baptist Communion at Middleton/Stony Gut said they would join the English Baptists. In the aftermath of the 1865 Native Baptist War, the English Baptists

366 Clarke, Memorials 219.

367 Clarke, Memorials 224.


were absorbing the membership and churches of the Native Baptists in St. Thomas-in-the-East, ostensibly to teach them more properly about God.

The ruling class also wanted the demise of the native churches, of which the Native Baptists was the most numerous and most influential. After Martial Law was proclaimed in 1865, there was an edict to thwart all teaching by all bodies except the Church of England, Rome, Scotland and the Jews in order to preserve the “worship of God from scandalous abuses, superstitious practices, and sedition.” 371 The effect of the bill for the Regulation of Religious Worship would have “closed up all native churches.” 372 The Bill did not become law but the intent was there and there was a clear and present danger to the existence of the Native Baptists. And by June 1866, William Teall reported that “the people had not been able to meet since martial law, and no song of praise had been heard for months.”373 And in a resolution moved by Brother George Stephens and seconded by the general consent of the meeting held at Jubilee chapel, Morant Bay on 12 July 1866, it said, “we have not a single chapel in our midst of worth, or meeting-house to assemble in any of great value, as they have all been destroyed.” 374 The authorities destroyed the Native Baptist chapels, which provided an opportunity

371 Underhill, Life 333.

372 Jamaica Tribune and Daily Advertiser 20 Dec. 1865: [4].


374 Baptist Magazine Dec. 1866: 792.
for the English Baptists to acquire the members of the Native Baptist congregations.

Underhill said of Native or Independent Baptists, “Few of them now remain; they have either been absorbed by the various missionary bodies, or have been beneficially influenced by the increase of intelligence and of evangelical labourers around them.” 375 And in 1874, the official ecclesiastical account did not list any Native Baptist minister but mentioned ministers associated with the English Baptists and one Independent minister. 376 However, in 1882, there was a contrary statement from an anonymous concerned letter writer who noted that the Native Baptists were strong numerically and therefore suggested that the JBU and the Native Baptists co-operate or engage in an organic union with the benefit to the Native Baptists being a more disciplined organization while the Baptist Union would increase numerically. 377 Nevertheless, a year later, in a publication written by representatives of the JBU, it was said, “with the exception of a few small 'Native Baptist' congregations, nearly all the Baptist Churches of the island are now in association with the Jamaica Baptist Union.” 378

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375 Underhill, *West Indies* 201.

376 *Jamaica Almanack* 1895 160-61.


378 *Handbook of Jamaica for 1883* (Kingston, 1883) 284.
Baptist congregations were absorbed into the English Baptist mission and some chapels were destroyed in 1865.

Table 6: State Expenditure on the Anglican Church for 1854-58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ecclesiastical Expenditure (£)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>37,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>36,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>29,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>27,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>25,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Underhill, West Indies 212 n.

In addition, lack of financial resources could have caused the decline of the Native Baptists. This would not have been unique to the Native Baptists because Curtin argued that one of the reasons for the decline of the Native Wesleyans was the lack of financial support. 379 Apart from the general economic malaise 380 that would have affected the Native Baptists they also suffered because they did not have any overseas support like the other British controlled missionary societies and instead were supported by their people. Clarke also recalled one such Native

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379 Curtin, Two Jamaicas 166.

380 Clarke, Memorials 224 and Catherall, Baptist War 206.
Baptist pastor who fell into poverty. 381 There was an unnamed Native Baptist pastor of congregations with 250 members whose income was £40 annually in 1859/60, which previously was £70. 382 This was in stark contrast to the salary of the bishop of Kingston, which was £3000. 383 In 1835, Madden said of Killick, before his congregation had experienced rapid growth “the income of the poor black parson is very scanty, his congregation consists of about one hundred and fifty, each of whom pay him five-pence currency or about one hundred pounds sterling for his own support and the expenses of his chapel.” 384 By 1840, there were 19 congregations with 150 or fewer members 385 and if Killick’s congregation in 1835 was indicative of congregations of that size then half of the JNBMS churches would be in an adverse pecuniary situation. 386 Although the JNBMS got contributions from the State, between 1840 and 1863, which when tabulated amounted to £356, 387 this amount was minimal when compared to the Anglican ecclesiastical expenditure of State funding of £156,526 over a five-year period (see Table 6). The Native Baptists also sought financial assistance from benevolent persons 388 which was also woefully inadequate. It seemed, therefore,

381 Clarke, Memorials 222.
382 Underhill, West Indies 231-32.
383 Underhill, West Indies 211.
384 Madden 101.
385 First Annual Report 4-35.
387 Underhill, West Indies 201; Votes of Assembly 1862-3 131 and Clarke, Memorials 223.
almost inevitable that the JNBMS would not survive. In 1866, in Morant Bay, there was a large decrepit chapel associated with the JNBMS. The Native Baptist Communion was dependent on the financial fortunes of Gordon and so his execution would have adversely affected their financial survival. The economic crunch also affected the viability of the Native Baptists.

Summary

Those who claimed that there were no distinctive groups of congregants called Native Baptists are incorrect. Though it is always difficult to identify and be precise about the origin of many things, and the Native Baptists were no exception, one set of Native Baptists became an institution between September 1839 and July 1840 when it was established as the JNBMS with a structure, buildings, schools, financial base, regulations, membership, quality leaders, clearly defined mission and a central office. There was also another Native Baptist group, referred to as the Native Baptist Communion, to which Gordon and Bogle were affiliated and which operated mainly in Eastern Jamaica, from at least 1862. Both groups of Native Baptists shared significant commonalities.

Native Baptists were those persons who were predominantly of African ancestry, untrained theologically in the formal setting of a seminary, but nonetheless educated and having their own interpretation of the Bible and understanding of

God. The Native Baptists were native-born and native-bred and were specific to Jamaica. They felt that they were rightful ministers of the gospel and were confident that they could do a competent job. They also wanted to be in charge of their church property and wanted to have independence from European management. They were well organized.

The Native Baptists were a social construct born out of a response to discrimination and a desire for equality and justice. The Native Baptists grew from a movement propelled by ideas for a social change to become a well-supported institution. They developed their distinctive forms of worship, they earned, garnered and controlled their funds and were self-governing; developing and implementing their own rules and regulations. This was an outstanding achievement from persons largely of the lower classes.

George Liele established the Baptist Church in Jamaica and his group could be identified as Baptists, Original Baptists, Ethiopian Baptists and Anabaptists but not Native Baptists. He invited the English Baptists and co-operated with them. He gave inspiration and impetus to leaders, who formed the JNBMS. Both the English Baptists and the Native Baptists were bequeathed members from the labours of Liele.

This chapter looked at the origin and development of the Native Baptists and the next chapter will examine their beliefs and practices.
CHAPTER FOUR: NATIVE BAPTISTS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

There were some fundamental characteristics of the Native Baptists' main beliefs and practices which will be outlined in this chapter. Many modern scholars have claimed that these beliefs and practices were African-derived religious expressions, especially aligned to Obeah and Myal (see pages 54-63 above). The relationship between the beliefs and practices of the Native Baptists, as discovered from their writings, sayings and actions, and the allegation that they were African inspired will also be analyzed based on the writings of those in the eighteenth century and those which were contemporaneous with the existence of the Native Baptists.

Obeah

William Burdett, Overseer on a plantation for many years in Jamaica, as well as historians Edwards and Gardner, believed that etymologically Obeah was an Egyptian name for serpent ¹ while Madden argued that Obeah's origin was Oriental. ² In addition, Obeah has been likened to Voudou." ³


² Robert Madden, A Twelvemonth's Residence in the West Indies, During the Transition From Slavery to Apprenticeship (Vol. 1 London, 1835) 101.

³ "Cannibalism in Hayti," Gleaner 17 Oct. 1881 in MST 51 22 in National Library of Jamaica. It can also be spelt “Voodoo.”
Burdett stated that there were many aspects to Obeah, “a somewhat peculiarly harsh and forbidding aspect, together with some skill in plants of the medicinal and poisonous species . . .” Obeah was a means to get revenge for injury or insults, to cure disorders, to punish a thief or adulterer or to predict future events. 4 But some writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Edwards, 5 Burdett, 6 John Henry Buchner, superintendent of the Moravian mission, 7 the JBU, 8 and Barclay, 9 believed it to be or described it as witchcraft, sorcery, black magic or something evil. Along that line, J. Stewart claimed that Obeah has similarity with European witchcraft because of the ingredients used in plying the trade. 10 For clergyman, Thomas Banbury, Obeah was evil personified. He claimed that the obeahman, was “the agent of incarnate Satan.” 11 Obeah was also called a superstition. 12 Writers who claimed that Obeah was evil and that Myal was its antidote, included Gardner, 13 Phillippo, 14 and Buchner. 15

4 Burdett 18.
6 Burdett 18.
9 Alexander Barclay, A Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies (London, 1826) 190.
11 [Thomas] Banbury, Jamaica Superstitions; or the Obeah Book: A Complete Treatise of the Absurdities Believed in by the People of the Island (Kingston, 1894) 5, 7.
13 Gardner 190-91.
Then there were the positive aspects of Obeah. It was said that when a Negro was robbed of a hog or fowl, he applied directly to an obeahman or woman to determine the thief and when a Negro, was ill, enquiries were made of the obeahman to ascertain the cause of his or her sickness and whether it would be fatal. \(^{16}\) Other benefits of Obeah included: protection from danger, \(^{17}\) immunization of the insurgents against the armoury of the Europeans during resistances; \(^{18}\) guard against praedial larceny \(^{19}\) and reason for misfortune. \(^{20}\)

Nevertheless, Edwards said that obeahmen and women pretended to have communication with the devil and evil spirits. \(^{21}\) Long called them, “pretended conjurers.” \(^{22}\) Some, including Long and Edwards, \(^{23}\) Gardner, \(^{24}\) Phillippo, \(^{25}\)

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\(^{15}\) Buchner 138-39.

\(^{16}\) Burdett 20. See also Edwards, *History* 110-11 and Gardner 189.

\(^{17}\) Burdett 16.


\(^{20}\) Madden 96-97.


\(^{23}\) Long II 416-17. Long describes the trick as “The lure hung out was, that every Negroe [sic], initiated into the myal society, would be invulnerable by the white men; and although they might in appearance be slain, the obeah-man could, at his pleasure, restore the body. The method, by which this trick was carried on, was by cold infusion of the herb branched colalue[u]; which, after the agitation of dancing, threw the party into a profound sleep.”

\(^{24}\) Gardner 191.

\(^{25}\) Phillippo, *Jamaica* 248-49.
Burdett, \(^{26}\) Stewart, \(^{27}\) Barclay, \(^{28}\) and Buchner \(^{29}\) asserted that Obeah was a fraud. Then there was Rev. J. E. Henderson, who said that obeah existed in his district, but “I have never been able to understand what it is.” \(^{30}\) Based on the many theories about Obeah, Henderson, and others like him, could not understand the exact nature of this practice.

Obeah was outlawed in Jamaica in 1760. \(^{31}\) In addition, having the tools of obeah was punishable as a crime. \(^{32}\) The tools of the trade included, “grave-dirt, hair, teeth of sharks, alligators, and other animals, parrots’ beaks, blood, broken bottles, feathers, egg-shells, images in wax.” \(^{33}\)

The writers of the nineteenth century, who recorded the features of Obeah, at the time when Native Baptists were numerous, did not outline any feature whether negative or positive that was common among the Native Baptists.

\(^{26}\) Burdett 19. See also Edwards for the exact quote Edwards, History 109.

\(^{27}\) Stewart, Account 257 and Stewart, View 276.

\(^{28}\) Barclay 190.

\(^{29}\) Buchner 138.

\(^{30}\) JRC Vol. 5 607.

\(^{31}\) Burdett 21, 27. Seaga gave a later date for the outlawing of the practice of obeah, that is, 1898: Edward Seaga, “Revival Cults in Jamaica: Notes Towards a Sociology of Religion” Jamaica Journal 3 (1969): 5. However, it was outlawed before that. In fact, the provision outlawing was repeated in 1816 and 1827. See John Lunan, An Abstract of the Laws of Jamaica (Spanish Town, 1819) 123 and The Consolidated Slave Law, passed the 22 [In]d December, 1826, commencing on the 1st May, 1827 (Courant Office, 1827) 28. In 1865, at Bath, St. Thomas, one person was convicted for Obeah practices: JRC Vol. 5 1100.

\(^{32}\) Bernard Senior, Jamaica, As It Was, As It Is, and As It May Be (1835; New York: Negro UP, 1969) 153. See also Edwards, History 112.

\(^{33}\) Burdett 21. See also Stewart, Account 257 and Gardner 187.
Neither did those writers link Native Baptists and Obeah. The linking of Native Baptists to Obeah is a modern phenomenon. The Native Baptists did not have their faith outlawed and the tools of Obeah were never said to be found in the Native Baptist chapels. They were never associated with Voudou or classified as skilled in folk medicine or having the ability to exact revenge or described as witchcraft or consulted to prevent praedial larceny. Its origin was neither African nor Oriental. In addition, whereas Obeah is an individualistic activity, in that it is usually one person visiting an Obeah person for help with no communal ritual or responsibility; by contrast, the Native Baptists would congregate for the worship of God, the study of the Bible and for communal actions. Furthermore, this writer did not locate any record, whether ancient, contemporaneous or modern, to show that any of the beliefs or practices associated with Obeah was named among Native Baptists except that both Obeah practitioners and Native Baptists were accused of being superstitious. Those who claimed that the Native Baptists were superstitious included Mr. Milne, missionary of the LMS, a society that was founded in 1795 and mainly associated with the Congregational Church, who mentioned “cases of superstition among Native Baptists of St. Andrews and Kingston.” 34 The BMS and the Missionary Herald also claimed that the Native Baptists had superstitious practices. 35 This argument will have little weight in scholarly circles because one person’s superstition was another person’s faith. Classifying someone else’s belief as superstitious was a signal of disapproval as was asserted by the English Baptists who stated that “the

34 The Baptist Missionary Society 1842 11. These charges of superstition were widespread 2. This Baptist document did not give the first name of Mr. Milne.

35 Baptist Missionary Society 1842 2 in W. Indies Pamphlets and “The Insurrection in Jamaica,” Missionary Herald 802 in Baptist Magazine 1865. See also Underhill, Life 333.
Church of Rome” practiced “a baleful superstition” 36 and an unnamed missionary calling Islam, “Mahometan superstition.” 37 Superstition is a connotative word often used to discredit the beliefs and practices of opponents.

Myal

Long claimed that myal men and obeahmen co-operated 38 while Gardner and Phillippo 39 said Myal was an offshoot of Obeah. 40 Buchner classified Myalmen as just “another class of sorcerers” 41 while the JBU in a Jubilee meeting in 1864 alluded to the effectiveness of its ministry in combating “the superstitious and wicked practices” of Myal. 42 However, according to Buchner, Myal men maintained that they were “sent by God to purge the world from all wickedness.” They also “had immediate intercourse with God”

36 Baptist Reporter and Missionary Intelligencer Mar. 1855: 85. See also Baptist Herald 5 July 1843: 5. In addition, Protestants charged that the Church of Rome had a “superstitious fondness for their images and relics” British Reformation Society Tracts, The Church of Rome London, [n.d.], 8.

37 William Moister, Memorials of Missionary Labours in Western Africa and the West Indies; with historical and descriptive observations (London, 1850) 170.

38 Long II 416-418.

39 Phillippo, Jamaica 248.

40 Gardner 191.

41 Buchner 138 and Jamaica Moravian Church, The Breaking of the Dawn, or, Moravian Work in Jamaica, 1754-1904 (London: Jamaica Moravian Church, [c. 1904]) 89-90.

42 Underhill, Life 322.
and received divine revelations and made Obeah of no effect. 43 Like Obeah, there was much confusion about the exact characteristics of Myal.

There were examples of Myal practice in the eighteenth century 44 and in the nineteenth century, in 1841, Waddell observed Myal on Flower Hill, Spring, and Ironshore estates 45 and Baptist missionary Walter Dendy was aware of Myal being in St. Mary. 46 Buchner claimed that some persons of African origin started to practise Myal openly in 1842 47 and some interrupted divine Sunday services, including one at Salter’s Hill, a Baptist Church, under the care of Dendy. 48 On 25 December 1842, Myalists entered the worship service jumping on benches and started to speak wildly. The deacons brought the situation under control but at the end of the service, the Myalists returned and injured some members. 49 Some Presbyterian missionaries charged that Myal “prevailed chiefly among Baptist Negroes.” 50 The Jamaican Assembly outlawed the practice of Myal in 1855/56. 51 There were significant differences between Myal and Native Baptists. Native Baptists were never outlawed. In fact, the Native Baptists had amiable and beneficial relationships with the

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43 Buchner 138-39. Edwards said Myal men and Obeahmen were antagonists: Edwards, History 146.

44 Edwards, History 108.


46 Walter Dendy, “Remonstrance of the Presbytery of Jamaica, ” Baptist Herald 5 July 1843: 3.

47 Buchner 138 -39.

48 Banbury 22.

49 John Clarke, Memorials of Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica (London, 1869) 162-63.


51 Votes of Assembly 1855-56 295.
governor, 52 Mayor 53 and other government officials. 54 In addition, while there was record that Myalists disturbed an English Baptist worship service there is no record of a similar occurrence in a Native Baptist worship service. Moreover, the location where Myalists was most active, namely St. James, was not a place where Native Baptists established a foothold. In fact, Native Baptists did not penetrate that entire region of Western Jamaica.

Orthodox

Underhill and the Missionary Herald claimed that the Native Baptists had “fanatical” practices 55 while the BMS alleged that the Native Baptists were given to “impurity” 56 and Panton noted their corrupting influence. 57 An English Baptist publication said Native Baptists were “not recognized by the regularly organized churches in the denomination in connection with the parent society.” 58 The Native Baptists were regarded as “so-called Baptists,” 59


54 First Annual Report 10.

55 Underhill, West Indies 201 and “The Insurrection in Jamaica,” Missionary Herald 802 in Baptist Magazine 1865.

56 Baptist Missionary Society 1842 2 in W. Indies Pamphlets.


and differentiated from the "proper Baptists." 60 Andrew Hogg, a Presbyterian minister in Manchester, wrote in a letter dated twelve days after the outbreak in 1865 that the protestors returned from "the scenes of their atrocities to sing Hymns and, in their own blasphemous language to 'give God thanks for their triumph over their enemies.' " 61 The English Baptists described Stony Gut, the residence of many Native Baptists, as a place of "great spiritual darkness and abounding iniquity" and the people as "spiritual outcasts." 62 These statements about the Native Baptists were indicative that they were not considered orthodox. And many modern writers, such as Wright, Catherall, Curtin, Richard Burton, Austin-Broos and Hall (see pages 63-66 above) took their cue from these earlier writings and classified the Native Baptists as unorthodox.

The word "orthodox" does not occur in the Bible but its Greek derivatives "orthos" having the meaning of "straight; upright, erect" and "doxa" which can mean "promise before God to tell the truth (John 9: 24)" are found in the Bible. 63 Orthodoxy was measured against the Bible as understood and practised in the first century. 64 Orthodox, therefore, has to do with right

60 JRC Vol. 5 842.


64 However, Orthodox can also relate to a denomination, as is the case with Eastern Orthodox. The Eastern Orthodox emanated from the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity resulting in the Roman Catholic Church of the West and the Orthodox Church of the East: See William Gentz, The Dictionary of Bible and Religion (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986) 764. In addition, there is Reformed orthodoxy, Roman Catholic orthodoxy, Greek Catholic orthodoxy etc: See Jackson, Samuel Macauley ed. The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York and London: Funk, 1910) 277. Orthodoxy in those situations means conformity with the prevailing doctrines of the respective denomination.
doctrine and correct beliefs concerning Christianity. When the beliefs and practices of the Native Baptists were explored, such as belief in the Supreme God, the centrality of the Bible, use of Christian hymns and acknowledging Jesus as Lord, they were orthodox.

On one occasion, while visiting estates in St. Thomas-in-the-East, Gordon stayed in Bath until the Sunday morning. But the people of Bath had no early Sunday morning prayer meeting, as he was accustomed to, so he went into the centre of the town and shouted “Fire! Fire!! Fire!!!” and a large crowd responded with buckets of water but found no “fire.” Gordon quoted the Psalms “My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire of devotion burned. The fire is in my heart” and then invited them to prayer. Fletcher said, hundreds were converted, including a minister of religion. 65 Gordon was willing to engage in a pun on the word “fire” in order to get an opportunity to evangelize the inhabitants of the town. Gordon’s method was unorthodox but his message was orthodox.

Gordon bemoaned the spiritual apathy in Kingston whilst the Great Revival was spreading throughout the country and that no minister in Kingston would allow the use of a meeting house “without laying down conditions about the way the Spirit must convince and convict sinners.” He therefore, along with Duncan Fletcher, hosted an open-air meeting with the result that “thousands

were pricked in their hearts." Gordon had a different understanding about the operation of the Holy Spirit when compared to some missionaries. However, in hindsight Gordon’s position could be considered an enlightened view and consistent with Jesus’ explanation to Nicodemus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one born of the Spirit.” (John. 3:8) This statement by Jesus was affirming that no one can dictate the ways in which the Spirit will operate in relation to salvation. The Spirit does move in a mysterious way.

Gordon administered the Lord’s Supper and a personal friend of his, David King, a distinguished Presbyterian minister, said in a reference to Gordon and his ilk, that there were persons, who believed that the celebration of the Eucharist did not require “an ordained ministry.” Whereas in some Christian traditions Gordon’s position would be frowned upon, in others it would be acceptable. In addition, Gordon was not against ordination, as seen by his hosting Bogle’s ordination service and also adding his signature to Bogle’s ordination certificate. Apparently, Gordon and other Native Baptists believed that every Christian, whether ordained or not, could administer the means of grace, the Lord’s Supper.

66 Fletcher 68-69.

67 David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866) 10-11.

68 JRC Vol. 4 30 and JRC Vol. 5 1150.
In a government annual report, Jamaica Almanack, the Native Baptists pastors had the title “Rev,” affixed to their names 69, which was a sign of recognition, and that they were respected figures. 70 It was also a signal that the governing authorities perceived their teachings and practices as orthodox. This was no small feat because, in England at that time, many Anglicans were reluctant to accord this title to ministers of religion of non-Anglican denominations. In addition, a BMS member expressed disgust at the Native Baptists that “They, however, took to themselves and gave to one another the high-sounding title of Reverend.” 71 Indeed, the Native Baptists did accord themselves the title of reverend. 72

Furthermore, in the Moravian listing of missionaries, the one who was an assistant was not given the title “Rev” but was referred to as “Mr. Francis B. Holland, assistant”73 indicating that he did not have full pastoral responsibility and authority over the congregation. According the Native Baptist pastors with the title of “Rev” was an admission that they indeed had full pastoral responsibilities and authority for their congregations. This official recognition was a testimony to the influence, visibility and status of the JNBMS. Moreover, there was evidence that congregants were accepting the

69 Jamaica Almanack 1840 107.


71 Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity 96n. The authorities viewed the preaching of “native Wesleyan and Baptist demagogues” as “inflammatory speeches” who appended “the title “Reverend” to their names” but who like Gordon was a “reverend (!) Imposter” and like Crole “ a “reverend scamp”: “Editorial Topics: The Rebellion,” Falmouth Post 31 Oct. 1865: 1.

72 First Annual Report 1-3 1.

73 Jamaica Almanack 1843 91.
Native Baptists. Duff, who was with the English Baptists for 18 years and Lyon, who after a stint with the Wesleyans, did 20 years with the English Baptists, wrote the BMS and said that the native preachers who are connected “are just as well received by the Natives as your missionaries are.” 74

Increasingly, the Native Baptist pastors were being accepted and respected.

There was also record of the Native Baptists conducting marriages in 1841. 75 This meant the Native Baptist pastors were marriage officers and had official and legal status and a working relationship with the Island Secretary’s Office. They also had equal rights and privileges as other English-based dissenting churches. They were perceived as orthodox.

Another example that the JNBMS had gained acceptance and acknowledgment from the ruling class as being orthodox was that a JNBMS deputation had audience with the Governor, Sir Charles Metcalfe. 76 The Governor by virtue of being the representative of the British Crown was the most powerful politician on the island 77 and the office was the most prestigious, marked with pomp. 78 While the Governor had a stormy relationship with most of the English Baptist missionaries, especially Knibb, 79

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74 John Duff and George R. Lyon, Letter to Baptist Missionary Society, 1 Apr, 1837.

75 Votes of the Honorable House of Assembly of Jamaica in a Session, Begun on the 15th of October (during the Administration of the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine) and ended on the 22nd December, 1844. (St. Jago De La Vega, 1845) 398.

76 First Annual Report iii.

77 Senior, Jamaica 160-61.

78 Gardner 167.

the Native Baptists had access to his parlour, which showed they were highly respected by the "powers that be."

A further sign of acceptance and orthodoxy was the JNBMS receiving financial contributions from influential persons and organizations. The Native Baptists received from Governor Metcalfe, "an exceedingly rich man," £50, which was almost half of the total £116 7s 1d given by the one hundred and eighty-eight contributors. More importantly was the fact that the contribution Metcalfe gave to the Native Baptists was equivalent to the sums he gave to the more established orthodox churches. In 1842, Knibb, acknowledged from Metcalfe "two donations of thirty pounds each." In addition, in 1840, Metcalfe gave £50 toward the stone laying ceremony for the Bethbara Moravian Church. Metcalfe also contributed £50 each to Methodist chapels at Bath and Kingston and a school in Falmouth. Later, he subscribed £100 annually to the Methodist school system.

The JNBMS was also supported by influential persons such as William Rose Esq., a Magistrate, who generously gave the land for the site of Mount Olive station, St. Thomas in the Vale. Other contributions included "a munificent

82 "Jamaica. To the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society," Missionary Herald June 1842: 288.
83 Jamaica Moravian Church 82-83.
84 Peter Duncan, A Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica; with occasional remarks on the state of the society in the colony (London, 1849) 329.
85 First Annual Report 22-23.
grant” from the Vestry; 86 £200, in 1841, from the House of Assembly toward the repair and addition of galleries to the chapel of Killick, plus a grant of £106 from the Corporation of Kingston, and a liberal donation from the Mayor. 87 This mayor was the Honourable Joseph Gordon, who was Mayor of Kingston and father of George William Gordon. 88 Killick reported that “he likewise returns his his [sic] sincere thanks to his honor the Mayor, for his liberal donation of £55 6s 8d.” 89 The Native Baptists asked for aid to erect a chapel and the House approved a grant of £30. 90 In 1862/3, the House of Assembly also granted the Native Baptists £50 to repair their chapel at Text Lane, Kingston. 91 Though the date is not stated, John Duff received a State grant to aid the work at Above Rocks, in the hills of St. Thomas in the Vale. 92 Underhill correctly observed these financial gifts meant, “They would appear to have been held in high esteem.” 93 It was also a sign that they were accepted and recognized as orthodox to be able to access these significant contributions from the State and other influential persons.

86 First Annual Report 10.

87 Underhill, West Indies 201.

88 Fletcher 15-16.

89 First Annual Report 31.

90 Votes of Assembly 1851-2 118, 233, 331.

91 Votes of Assembly 1862-3 131.


93 Underhill, West Indies 201. The esteem was not universal as noticed with Colonel Hobbs placing Native Baptist chapels in quotation marks, meaning so-called chapels: JRC Vol. 5 1129.
Accepting gifts from the State was contrary to the position of leaders of African origin in English Baptist churches. 94 English Baptists held the view that the church must depend on the generosity of members rather than on State support, which they felt involved State control. 95 Perhaps the Native Baptists’ rationale for accepting the gift was similar to that of a Wesleyan minister who accepted government funding on the premise that his members paid taxes and since those taxes funded the Established Church then it was proper to access some of their taxes. It could also be that unlike the English Baptists who had financial friends in England, they had none and had to depend entirely on local sources. It might have just been a practical need. And being able to garner such funds was an expression that their beliefs and practices were seen as authentic.

Persons associated with the Native Baptist Communion had great testimonials. The Commissioners inquiring into the uprising of 1865 asked Clarke, “You are Mr. George B. Clarke that the justice gives such a good character of.” 96 In addition, shopkeeper, John Lewis, who witnessed some of the executions, agreed that Bogle was a “good and industrious man.” 97 Gordon also got glowing tributes from his friends Duncan Fletcher, 98 David King, George Blyth, who spent a lifetime in Jamaica as a missionary, and

94 Underhill, West Indies 321-23.
95 “Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine Jan. 1867: 49.
96 JRC Vol. 5 127.
97 JRC Vol. 5 693.
98 Fletcher 1-23.
Reverend H. Renton. In 1865, Native Baptist ministers were "respected figures." Attributing the label of respectability was usually an indicator of orthodoxy.

**Jesus, God and Holy Spirit**

Curtin’s claimed that John the Baptist was the chief religious figure for the Native Baptists and not Jesus (see page 65 above). However, for Native Baptists, Jesus Christ was the central figure. The Native Baptists’ viewed Jesus as Lord and the only way to salvation was through “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the 1840s, a woman at Mount Regale, who was a Native Baptist, was asked if she thought she could be saved by dreams alone and she answered by relating a story. She said that if she went to the river to wash her clothes and she fell asleep and dreamt that they were all washed would she find them washed when she awakened from the dream? She affirmed that one is saved through the blood of Jesus. They also had a concept of a Supreme Being who they called “Lord Almighty,” or “Almighty God,” or “Almighty” and to whom they sought help. The Native Baptists sought

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99 King, Sketch 7.

100 Gordon, Cause For His Glory.


102 Shirley Gordon, Our Cause for His Glory: Christianisation and Emancipation in Jamaica (Kingston: Press, 1998) 78.

103 First Annual Report ii.

104 JRC Vol. 4 232.

God’s help through prayer and fasting in order to overcome temptations. 107 They also believed in the Holy Spirit possessing the individual, “God has graciously poured out his spirit from on high” on his people. 108 The Native Baptists held orthodox beliefs concerning Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit.

Gordon served as chairman of missionary meetings “in conjunction with all denominations” 109 and many churches “enjoyed his good offices.” Gordon being asked to participate extensively in other denominations showed that he and the Native Baptists were proclaiming sound doctrines.

The Importance of Hymns

The Native Baptists used hymns composed by European Christian hymn writers. There was no evidence that they used Negro Spirituals. None of the Negro Spirituals used by the enslaved in the United States of America was found among the Native Baptists. 110 In addition, while Kumina did not use Christian hymns but used African and Jamaican Creole Songs (see page 60 above), the Native Baptists used Christian hymns and there was no evidence of using African or Jamaican songs. John Turner said it was the pattern of his

107 Clarke, Memorials 9.
108 First Annual Report 16.
109 Fletcher 41, 53.
congregants “to adopt the language of the sweet singer of Israel [David].” 111

The JNBMS used hymns extensively in their report. Despite the best efforts, this writer was unable to ascertain who were the authors of the hymns quoted extensively throughout the report. But that they did not quote folk songs showed that they were traditional in hymn selections. The Psalms were a favorite of the Native Baptists. Gordon 112 and Bogle used hymns composed by Isaac Watts with Bogle’s version of the hymnal being the Psalms of David, with the supplementary Hymns. His favourite selections as indicated by his markings were recorded as:

The Psalms marked are 3rd, Verses 1, 5, 8; 11th, 50th ‘the last Judgment’; (pause second); 115th, 2nd version; 121st, 2nd version; 139, 3rd version and 143rd. Hymns: - 44th, 46th, 136th, 140th. Book 2nd; - 4th, 57th, 89th, 97th, 107th. Book 3rd:- 23rd

There were other Native Baptists who used hymns composed by Watts. 114 Gordon had a relationship with Bogle and he, who was also inspired by the hymns written by Isaac Watts, gave a hymnbook to Paul Bogle. 115 The Native Baptists were attracted to the Isaac Watts’s hymns because of Watts’s emphasis on the here and now. It was a belief in a realized eschatology, in

111 First Annual Report 15.
112 King, Sketch 6.
115 King, Sketch 6.
that there was a cry to experience heaven now or at least have a foretaste now.

It was well known that the Native Baptists were heavily involved in psalm singing. The ruling class lambasted the Native Baptists as “psalm singing apostles of butchery in the name of Divinity” 116 and that “After half an hour spent in psalm singing by those blood-stained wretches, one of their leaders addressed them, pointing to the favour which the Almighty had shown in delivering their enemies into their hands.” 117 They used Christian hymns.

The Bible as the Central Text

The Native Baptists’ central text was the Bible. 118 Although their First Annual Report did not indicate that they were quoting word for word passages from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, the Native Baptists were Bible centred. Their relevant biblical passages were skillfully interwoven into their everyday language indicative that God was in all aspects of their lives. This was evident in the rules of the Society when in speaking about the “principal design of the Society”, they said that they must use “every endeavour to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” 119 which is a statement from Eph. 4:3. Robert Blackwell began his report with, “The Lord has indeed done great things for us, whereof we are glad” 120 which is an exact quotation

116 A Thirty Years’ Resident vi.


119 First Annual Report 3.

120 First Annual Report 24.
from Ps. 126: 3. They also claimed that the correct medicine for an unsaved person was “the sincere milk of the word” \(^{121}\) and according to 1 Pet. 2: 2, young Christians needed to “desire the sincere milk of the word.” These Biblical quotations were not means of using texts as some magical incantations but were means of matching their experiences with commands and teachings from the Bible. These quotations continued the trend of using Scriptures to support their every utterance, which was also a feature of Liele.

Gordon’s every day communication was also saturated with Scriptural passages. At the 24 November 1863 sitting of the House of Assembly, Gordon grounded his objection to a State Church on the command of Christ which said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” \(^{122}\) This was a reference from Matt. 22: 21. Gordon in the normal discourse of writing a letter stated, “God is our refugee and strength a very present help in trouble” which, though he did not say, was from Ps. 46: 1. In addition, Gordon said, at the 26 April 1864 Session, “the first and great commandment is this: “Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord!” \(^{123}\) This was an exact reference to Deut. 6: 4.

\(^{121}\) First Annual Report ii.

\(^{122}\) Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th day of October, 1863, and terminating on the 22nd day of February, 1864 (Spanish Town, 1865) 188.

\(^{123}\) Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 306.
Gordon in establishing Native Baptist churches in St. Thomas-in-the-East said, “We need an assistant teacher, bibles, tracts, hymn-books, and school books.” 124 Gordon also donated Bibles and books to the people who could not afford it. 125 The Bible was an essential aspect of their spiritual formation. In addition, Gordon, who was “mighty in Scriptures”, 126 just before his execution asked for half an hour to read a couple of chapters from the Bible. 127

Bogle also had a Bible in his chapel. 128 He also gave George Lake a Bible for him to take an oath and Lake was told to tell “the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.” 129 The purpose of the oath was linked to truth telling and the Bible was used to confirm the noble intent as binding. It could be argued that the Bible was being treated as a ritual object similar to the way it was used in the law courts but it appeared that for Bogle and the other Native Baptists the Bible was central to their life.

Shirley Gordon admitted of the Native Baptists in St. Thomas-in-the-East, “Most of these communities had built their own meeting houses and some had sizeable chapels, as at Stony Gut ... a large Bible was the centrepiece of their

124 Fletcher 51.

125 King, Sketch 6.

126 Fletcher 47-48.


meeting decor." ¹³⁰ The Bible was a significant part of the worship paraphernalia in Native Baptist churches. John Clarke described the Native Baptists' attitude to the Bible as "A simple unquestioning obedience to God's Word . . ." ¹³¹ Indeed, the Native Baptists were embedded in Scriptures and interpreted their experiences in light of the Bible. Their thinking and actions were Scripture-based. This was not unique to the Native Baptists. The Original Baptists also had the Bible as foundational and the missionaries distributed many Bibles. Nevertheless, it was remarkable that for Africans, whose religious orientation was a religion without book and creed, ¹³² the Native Baptists, who were of African ancestry, became so reliant on the Bible.

**Millenarians?**

Holt claimed that the Bogle/Gordon Native Baptists were millenarians (see page 65 above). It is a fact that George William Gordon expected God to act "soon" in delivering the people from oppression. ¹³³ However, the expectation of God's imminent and decisive intervention did not necessarily mean the person was millenarian. It meant that he or she believed that God was concerned with his or her political issues. For the Native Baptists, politics and religion were inseparable. ¹³⁴ The religious faith inspired political action while

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¹³⁰ Gordon, *Cause for His Glory* 107, 121.

¹³¹ Clarke, *Memorials* 222.


¹³³ JRC Vol. 4 228.

political activism was the outworking of the faith of justice and righteousness. The Native Baptist Communion was not a millenarian group expecting the ushering of a new age of peace and prosperity to fall from the sky and last for 1000 years.

The Native Baptists were involved in political mobilization (see pages 67-68 above). There was no hierarchy between politics and religion for the Native Baptists because for them there was a symbiotic relationship between religion and politics. None was more important than the other. Both needed each other and both supported each other. The religious faith inspired political action while political activism was a manifestation of their beliefs. Bogle and Gordon were bonded together as political and religious allies. The spirituality of Bogle and Gordon included social justice as an integral aspect, which was consistent with the Biblical tradition of prophets such as Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

A better example of millenarian belief would be Christian groups such as Ranters and Fifth Monarchy Men, operating in England in the late eighteenth century, who believed in the "literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation and their anticipations of a New Jerusalem descending from above." 135 However, no such belief existed among the Native Baptists. In addition, the 1831 protest in the United States of America led by enslaved American Nat Turner could be seen more as a millenarian movement because Turner was said to have acted in response to signs from heaven and killed his master's

family. But the 1865 Native Baptist War was not in response to any sign from heaven.

The JNBMS also saw the link between evangelism and education and one of the five rules of the Society was “to promote the education and religious instruction of the rising generation.” The JNBMS actively sought funds “to promote the extension of Native Schools.” The Native Baptists had schools at Old Harbour and Clarkson Town, St. Catherine and Mount Zion, Clarendon and had 50 scholars at St. Dorothy’s, Bella’s Gate, 35 pupils at Croft’s Hill, Clarendon and satisfactorily performing students at Rest Station, Clarendon. This involvement in education was to facilitate social, moral, and religious improvement. The engagement in the educational development of people was a signal that they were not millenarian.

The JNBMS accepting financial gifts from the State to repair chapels was not a feature of millenarian groups. That the Society had no problem cooperating with the political directorate for the advancement of ministry showed that they were not millenarian.


137 First Annual Report 3, 16.


139 JRC Vol. 5 923. Phillippo testified before the JRC that the school at Old Harbour “has lately come under my supervision.”


141 First Annual Report 11, 15-17.

142 First Annual Report 10, 26; Underhill, West Indies 201 and Votes of Assembly 1862-3 131.
Connected to the BMS

The Missionary Herald stressed that the Native Baptists were unconnected to missionary churches. It is true that the Native Baptists were not accountable to the English Baptists whether in England or Jamaica because they were “apart from European superintendence.” The JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion formed organizations that were independent of the English Baptists.

However, Benjamin Millard, Secretary of the JBU, testified about the Native Baptists saying, “some of them were in connexion with our churches, and some have sprung up exclusively.” One cannot be certain whether Millard was speaking about the JNBMS and or the Native Baptist Communion as formerly being connected to the JBU. It could be the JNBMS because there was some link but he could also be speaking about the Native Baptist Communion group since they were the ones on trial at the Commission of Inquiry. Whichever way, some Native Baptists were once in fellowship with the English Baptists. According to the writings of Duff and Lyon and the First Annual Report, the JNBMS sprang from the English Baptists. According to a BMS document written in 1864, “The Native Baptist churches in Jamaica

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144 “The Outbreak in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine 1866: 55.

145 JRC Vol. 5 782.

have rapidly increased of late years. Great numbers of the churches connected
with the Baptist missionaries joined them.” 147

The Native Baptists and English Baptists had other important similarities. An
observer in justifying his call for the two Presbyterians and two Methodists
and the Native Baptists and Union Baptists to co-operate or have an organic
union stated, “their forms of worship, organization and hymns were most
identical.” 148 The Native Baptists and English Baptists had similar liturgy,
sang from similar hymnal and had similar organizational structure.

The Native Baptists also had well structured regular worship services. 149 The
quality of their worship services and the excellent preaching by Killick,
Turner, Duff and Lyon portrayed them in a positive light: “these sacred
services produced a strong and general impression in favour of the Jamaica
Native Baptists.” 150

Summary

The Native Baptists’ beliefs and practices should not to be confused with those

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147 Baptist Missionary Society, Propagation of Christianity 95n. See also Phillippo, Jamaica
294 wherein Phillippo said, “The denomination called Native Baptists are under the teaching
of black and coloured men, who were once leaders in other congregations but have broken
and set up as ministers for themselves.”


149 First Annual Report 1-10, JRC Vol. 5 842, “The Jamaica Insurrection: The Trial of Gordon,”

150 First Annual Report 22.
of African religious expressions. They were steeped in Christian traditions with no evidence of teachings in conflict with the teachings of the Bible. They were orthodox, Christ-centred and European influenced in terms of use of hymns. They were not millenarians, believing that God would change the oppressive circumstances without a role for human beings, but rather believed that political involvement was the natural outcome of their Christian Faith. Though not under European superintendence, the Native Baptists had relations with the English Baptists and both groups used similar Bible and hymnbook.

Having examined the beliefs and practices of the Native Baptists, the next chapter will examine the possible religious influences on these beliefs and practices.
CHAPTER FIVE: RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON NATIVE BAPTISTS

This chapter will explore the possible religious influences on the Native Baptists including the influence of the beliefs brought to Jamaica from Africa and Asia, and by the Original Baptists, Sam Sharpe and the English Baptists.

African religion

The Africans in Jamaica had been uprooted mainly from Central, South, East and West Africa with the vast majority from West Africa. The most numerous and distinguished of the tribes were Koromantees, Mandingoes, and Eboes. Most Africans who came to Jamaica held the indigenous and traditional beliefs of their forebears. The enslaved brought "theological notions" from Africa to Jamaica.


3 It is also spelt as "Coromantyns"


and had “knowledge of religious principles.” 7 African religion is not to be equated with idolatry or animism but African religion is “the ancient non-Christian, non-Muslim, religious beliefs and practices.” 8 There were about one thousand different peoples in Africa and each had its own religious system. 9 Though there were differences in the belief systems, one common pattern was the belief in an omnipotent, Supreme Being. 10

For the religious African, religion permeated all aspects of his life – “whether in the fields, at a beer party or attending a funeral or school or participating in Parliament.” 11 Prominent, in the life of the African, was “a close relationship between the natural and the supernatural, the secular and the sacred.” 12 There was no dualism in the African cosmology. In African religion, there was also “female power.” 13 Women played an integral and equal role as men, so one will

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7 James Losh, Speeches of James Losh Esq., and the Rev. William Knibb, on the Immediate Abolition of British Colonial Slavery: Delivered at a public meeting held in Brunswick Place Chapel, Newcastle, on Wednesday, January 30, 1833 (Newcastle, 1833) 9.


9 John Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (London: Heinemann, 1969) 1. Mbiti used the word “tribes” but there are those who feel that it is a derogatory term since it is applied mainly to non-Europeans. Therefore, “peoples” is a more neutral term.


11 Mbiti 1.


discover that there were obeahmen and obeahwomen. 14 Africans who believed in African religions, had no creed to recite, and had no sacred scriptures to study but only had to live the life. 15 Equally important was that the religious beliefs and practices were not foremost for the individual but for the community because to be truly human was “to belong to the whole community.” 16

Other Religions brought to Jamaica

Afroz speculated that a “good proportion of the millions of Africans forcefully brought to the West Indies were Muslims” and that there were many Muslims in Manchester, Jamaica in 1832 17 but she provided no figures for the size of the Muslim population. Some Muslims came to Jamaica from Africa 18 but they were not numerous. 19 Robert Madden recorded three Mandingoes who could read and

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15 Mbiti 2-4.

16 Mbiti 2.


18 William Moister, Memorials of Missionary Labours in Western Africa and the West Indies (London, 1850) 170; Phillippo, Jamaica 269 and Gardner 199.

write Arabic, and one of them wrote a Koran from memory. 20 And of the few who came, some, such as Mr. Benjamin Cockrane, a successful doctor in Kingston, and three others, through fear “pretended to be what they were not,” that is, not acknowledging that they were Muslims. 21 On the other hand, some became Christians, notably Robert Peart, a Mandingo, who came to Jamaica in 1777 and died in 1845, who became a Christian under the influence of George Lewis. 22

Afroz also said “Islam was no longer practiced in Jamaica until the advent of the Indian indentured laborers” and “the efforts of the crusaders to rid the world of the Islamic faith were greatly successful in the Caribbean.” 23 The Muslim influence was indeed minimal between post–emancipation Jamaica and 1845, which meant that Muslim influence on Native Baptists would have been negligible during that period. Nevertheless, Gardner speculated that “the superstitious regard which so many of the early Christian converts had for that day [Friday], and which the native Baptists in some places still retain, may be traced to the influence of these people [Muslims].” 24 However, the Native


21 Madden, Vol. 1 101-02. See also Farouk Khan, “Islam as a Social Force in the Caribbean,” Conference of The History Teachers Association of Trinidad and Tobago 12th 1987 (Port-of Spain: History Teachers’ Association of Trinidad and Tobago, 1987) 3-4 and Jamaica Moravian Church, The Breaking of the Dawn, or, Moravian Work in Jamaica, 1754-1904 (London: Jamaica Moravian Church, [c. 1904]) 51.

22 Jamaica Moravian Church 50-52. Madden said a Muslim who wrote the Koran from memory converted to Christianity: Madden 101-02, 126.

23 Afroz, Unsung Slaves 19, 23.

24 Gardner 175.
Baptists did not have any superstitious regard for Friday. The Native Baptists did not display a proclivity towards any observance on Fridays. Furthermore, Gardner's use of "native Baptists" might simply mean Original Baptists or Baptists who were not under European charge rather than the groups identified in this study as Native Baptists. The Muslim population was too small and too inactive during the formative years of the JNBMS.

Gordon, in speaking to the Immigration Bill on February 1, 1864, claimed that immigration introduced "Mahomedianism (sic) into the country." There were Muslims in Jamaica in the 1860s but there was no evidence of a link with the Native Baptist Communion. The influence of the Muslims even in the 1860s was negligible.

When the Muslims influenced the revolt in Brazil, though they were in the minority, there was evidence of the use of Muslim symbols, such as Muslim amulets, clothes peculiar to Muslims and prayers and passages from the Koran. In the 1865 Native Baptist War, there was no evidence of such Muslim paraphernalia. In addition, no evidence emerged from the trials, their public hangings, their letters or the JRC Report that anyone was a Muslim and there was also no mention of the word Islam or the Koran. Moreover, there was no

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mosque for Muslims in Jamaica before 1917. There was no evidence of Muslim thinking influencing the Native Baptists.

The East Indian immigration to Jamaica began in 1845 when 261 Indians arrived and by 1863 there were 10,006. The Indians, Hindus and Muslims, celebrated the religious festival of Muharram, which commemorates the martyrdom of the two grandsons of the prophet Mohammed. The majority of Indians brought with them their religious faith of Hinduism. The Chinese migrated to Jamaica in 1854 via Panama with the arrival of 472 nationals. They brought with them their Buddhist and Confucian beliefs. Robert Stewart concluded that the Asian immigrants had little influence on Jamaican religious culture. There was no evidence of Asian religion having any impact on the Native Baptists.


29 Sohal 234.

30 Sohal, 136.

31 Shepherd said that the majority of immigrants were Hindus but some Muslims and Christians were among the immigrants: Shepherd, Transients 150.


33 Chen, Shopkeepers 302-03.

Jews were thought to be on Columbus' ship that arrived in Jamaica, \(^{35}\) so it was not surprising that when England captured Jamaica in 1655, there were Jewish inhabitants on the island. \(^{36}\) In 1840, Chandler, after visiting Jamaica, said that there were 5,000 Jews. \(^{37}\) Initially, Jews were despised because they were perceived as “descended from the crucifiers of the blessed Jesus.” \(^{38}\) But by early nineteenth century, the Jews were integrated into society and seemed to have had a natural and spiritual affinity to the oppressed Africans because Phillippo reported in 1825 that he had in his Day School classes, Jewish children, children of the enslaved and the freed. In the Sunday School, there were 150 scholars, 40 of whom were Jewish children. \(^{39}\)

The Jews were monotheistic and no memory was more strongly imbedded in Jewish consciousness than the story of the Passover Festival of Freedom, through which Israel celebrated its exodus from bondage to freedom. The Passover was also called “the ancient story of the birth of liberty.” \(^{40}\) Far from the Jewish faith influencing the Native Baptists, it appeared that this minority group was more assimilated into the English Baptist tradition. Furthermore, the Jewish faith was

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\(^{36}\) Gardner 90


\(^{39}\) R. A. L. Knight, ed., *Liberty and Progress* (Kingston: Gleaner, 1938) 84.

more a personal faith, into which one could be born or converted to, but aggressively seeking proselytes was never a feature of Jewish religion.

There was no credible evidence that Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism or Judaism influenced the beliefs and practices of the Native Baptists.

**African Spiritual Resistance**

The Moravians noticed a difference between some of the Africans who were converted to Christianity in Jamaica and theirs, claiming that they failed to “grasp the spirituality of the Christian religion” and gave as an example their attitude towards “the Sacraments, especially holy baptism” which “were looked upon by the multitude not merely as a sign of inward grace, but as possessing a virtue in themselves equivalent to the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. 41

Since the African concretized elements of their beliefs rather than spiritualized them, for him or her, the symbol contained the reality. It was not only a sign of inward grace but an indication of possessing a virtue with efficacious ability.

Not only was there a difference in praying but there was also a difference in preaching. J. Stewart said itinerant preachers “instead of inculcating the Christian virtues, directed a long dissertation, to his sable congregation, on slavery, and assimilated their condition to that of the oppressed Israelites, who at

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41 Jamaica Moravian Church 65.
length escaped from the bondage of their unjust task-masters.” 42 The Africans identified themselves as the new Israel in bondage. 43 Those of African origin had their way of preaching which was different from what the authorities expected and wanted.

And persons of African ancestry had their own way of interpreting the Scriptures. Phillippo related a story about a Negro named Quashie who contracted a considerable debt and then subsequently resolved to be “christened” and upon request for payment of debt replied “Me is a new man now me Thomas, derefo Thomas no pay Quashie debt.” 44 He literally applied the passage 2 Cor. 5:17 which states, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Phillippo related a similar incident in which a clergyman asked a Negro servant during catechism of what he was made. He said mud, but the clergyman corrected him and said dust. However, the Negro disagreed and answered, “No Massa, it no do, no tick togedder.” 45 He was claiming that dust couldn’t stick together to form a human being so humans must have been made from mud. The Africans challenged the interpretation given by the missionaries.

42 Stewart, Account 253-54.
43 S. Copland, Black and White; Or, the Jamaica Question (London, 1866) 19.
44 Phillippo, Jamaica 203.
45 Phillippo, Jamaica 202-03.
There were also open confrontations. Stephen Cooke, Anglican clergyman,
tested that while he was exhorting the congregation not to attend the Underhill
Meeting, about 120 persons of African ancestry who were normally attentive to
him, quietly walked out. 46 Robertson also wrote that heckling during sermons
was a persistent nuisance “for all preachers of all denominations over the 40
years since Coke’s visits in the 1790s through to the eve of emancipation.” 47 Mr.
Barr, Wesleyan missionary, expelled James Beard of Bogg estate, a class leader of
many years, for insubordination. On 4 August 1839, Beard inquired of Mr.
Laidlaw, a special magistrate who was visiting the estate, “were the Israelites
made apprentices when they came out of Egypt?” And Laidlaw said no. And
Beard asked the magistrate to swear on the Bible that God has made us
apprentices. He did so swear and when Beard saw that he said, “God has done us
an injustice.” 48 Beard believed that they were the new Israel and that God should
treat them in the same manner as he treated the Israelites. The Christians of
African ancestry were suspicious of the interpretation that the missionaries were
proclaiming.

In 1837, Anglican clergyman Richard Panton related that his congregants of
African descent took offence that he referred to them as “brethren.” The Negroes

46 JRC Vol. 5 781 and Clinton Hutton, “Colour for Colour: Skin for Skin: The Ideological

47 James Robertson, Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000 (Kingston,

48 Dorothy Ann Ryall, The Organization of Missionary Societies & the Recruitment of Missionaries
in Britain, & the Role of Missionaries in the Diffusion of British Culture in Jamaica during the
queried, "whether the minister in addressing his congregation did always say, 'my brethren,' and never 'my sisters.' They were disgruntled that there was no acknowledgement of the women. In proof of which, they quoted the text, "In Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free." They recognized their equality in Christ. This revolutionary idea of equality between brothers and sisters was implied in this query.

There was also a difference in the attitude of the missionaries towards the Indian indentures when compared with the African's. Shepherd claimed that the English Baptists were hostile towards Indian immigration on moral grounds and that influenced "the way blacks came to view Indians and encouraged a hostile attitude towards them even before the arrival of the first batch in 1845." Persons of African ancestry should have been offended by the heavy taxation for the cost of the importation of Indians to replace those same taxpayers on the estates. However, according to Harinder Sohal the Africans did not share the missionaries' attitude that Indians were a threat and instead they gave them gifts of fruits and helped them to settle on the plantations, treating kindly the first arrivals in 1845. The Africans interpreted the arrival differently from the missionaries in that they regarded the Indians, not as rivals for employment, but

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51 David King, *A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica* (Edinburgh, 1866) 9.
as potential customers for their provisions. 52 Sohal’s account seemed accurate in that both he and Shepherd related that there was an absence of major violence between the groups. 53 There was a lack of hostility and instead there was amicable co-existence. Additionally, when Indians wanted to get married and there was no one to perform either Hindu or Muslim rites, some one from a nearby estate “who could recite religious hymns” would perform the ceremony. 54 Not only was the Indian not insistent whether it was Hindu, Muslim or Christian wedding rites, the African who knew hymns would be comfortable in performing the marriage ceremony whether the person was Muslim or Hindu. There was cooperation between the two ethnic groups despite their different religious orientations.

Long claimed that the African mythology concerning creation was: “in the beginning, black as well as white men were created; nay, if there was any difference in time, the Blacks had the priority” and because of greed “to punish their avarice, it was decreed they should ever be slaves to the white men.” 55 The Africans were the chosen ones but due to their sins, they were enslaved. D’Costa and Lalla related a recollection between two Negroes who quizzed the enslaved

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52 Sohal 138-39.

53 Sohal, 140 and Shepherd, Dynamics 16.

54 Sohal 141.

Cynric Williams. It was stated that the devil was black, which the African immediately rejected, claiming “he white,” just like the colour of the European missionary. It was the African who was the favoured race and the European who had pigmentation similar to the devil.

Olive Lewin, folklorist, posited that the enslaved Africans also believed that they were superior to the Mulatto as demonstrated in the pre-emancipation folk song:

Sally was a whorin’ mulatta,
Oh Sally (rep).
Sally dweet (do it) a day,
Sally dweet (do it) a night.

Lewin was describing the practice of the Plantocracy who fathered children with enslaved mothers, then sent the dark-skinned offspring to the fields and kept the light-skinned progeny for service in the Great House. The enslaved field workers considered these girls as, “at the very least, cheap entertainment for great house society and passing guests.” So, while the dark-skinned were supposed to be inferior because of their colour and by virtue of labouring in the harsh fields, they in turn looked down on their lighter-skinned relatives whom they labeled whores.

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57 Lewin 7.

58 Lewin 58.
Persons of African origin had their own hermeneutical approach to Bible passages as evidenced by comments that they “held their peculiar views of religious truth with considerable tenacity” and if their chapels were closed and deprived of their own pastors they would stay home rather “than be forced by the strong hand of the law into a Church, the doctrines and discipline of which they disapprove. They would resist strongly any attempt to make them conform to the doctrines and discipline of the missionaries. They wanted their own church, own pastor and own interpretation.

African spirituality saw God as the primary source of all natural events, God was closely related to nature and God used nature as an instrument of his judgment. John Stewart said of the spirituality of the Africans, “If the winged lightning which flashes across the fields should strike dead an oppressive overseer under whose tyranny they suffered, they would hail the circumstance as a just judgment of the Almighty.” He also claimed that even as “earthquakes and eclipses puzzled them” they considered hurricanes an indication of the “divine wrath.”

59 Jamaica Tribune and Daily Advertiser 20 Dec. 1865: 4. This reference spoke to “native” churches, which were usually Baptists. This meant that Native Baptists would have been numbered among them.

60 Stewart, View 260.

61 Stewart, View 259. See also Stewart, Account 33. Phillippo said the Negroes considered the occurrence of earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes as signal of divine displeasure: Phillippo, Jamaica 269. European poets William Gilbert and William Cowper also held this view: William Gilbert, The Hurricane: A Theosophical and Western Ecologue (London, 1796) 9 and William Cowper, The Negro's Complaint: A Poem to which is added, Pity for Poor Africans (London, 1826) 10-11 in British Library.
There was a particular approach of suspicion and resistance by the Africans who accepted the Christian Faith, whether they were Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists or Moravians. It was this approach that the Native Baptists built on.

**Original Baptists’ Faith and Practices**

The two best-known Original Baptists were Liele and Baker but there were others, such as George Lewis, who worked successfully among the Moravians, especially with missionary John Lang in Manchester and St. Elizabeth and George Gibbs who was assisted by an unnamed “noble spirited free-black proprietress” who offered her house at Constant Spring where persons associated with George Gibbs preached the gospel for years. Another significant one was Thomas Nicholas Swigle.

Russell said Liele believed in submitting all Church teachings to the Scriptural test. He interpreted Liele's use of Scripture as “a manual for living, providing

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65 Clarke, *Memorials* 17.


67 Horace O Russell, “Understandings and Interpretations of Scripture in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Jamaica: The Baptists as a Case Study,” *Religion, Scripture and Tradition in*
for social as well as personal identity” and argued that the Covenant was a “document for the instruction of the membership” and also “an apologia (defense) for the very existence of the Church in its national setting.” 68 He further argued that the Articles of the Covenant were preoccupied with “the ways in which the Church conducts itself” and Article II in making reference to Mark 16 and Colossians 3: 16 supported that argument. He also felt that Liele’s use of Scriptures as in Article XV which quoted 1 Peter 2: 13-16 and 1 Thessalonians 3: 13 was to “regulate the behaviour of the congregation so that there would be less tension between the slave and the Plantocracy.” 69

Carter Woodson, founder of Black History month and distinguished Afro-American author, summarized the situation as one in which Liele acted as a diplomat to soothe the planters while engaging in a ministry to mainly the enslaved. 70 Perhaps because Liele was a slave owner, 71 with “six slaves, a mother

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68 Russell, Understandings 101.
69 Russell, Understandings 98.
71 Russell, Understandings 98. Gayle offered three rationalizations for Liele being a slave owner in that, “The Will provides for the freedom of the slaves on the death of his wife”; “it was common for missionaries then to own slaves” and “slave labour was the only help available”: Clement Gayle, George Liele: Pioneer Missionary to Jamaica Rev. ed. (1982; Nashville: Bethlehem 2002) 74-75.
and her son and four others,” 72 the main thrust of the Covenant was one of restraint.

Phillippo analyzed Liele and other pioneer missionaries’ hermeneutical approach as interpreting Scriptures literally and claimed that was the root cause of their errors in beliefs and practices. Phillippo, therefore, ridiculed the practice of Christians who went into the woods at Christmas among the sheep, “in imitation of the shepherds, to whom the angels announced the birth of the Redeemer, and this under the delusive expectation of being favoured with a similar visitation.” 73 Assuming that Phillippo understood why they went into the bush, it was not necessarily a foolish activity to re-enact the scene of the angelic appearance. It showed that they were appropriating the experience of the shepherds and also identifying themselves with the lowly estate of those shepherds and wanting a special experience from the Saviour.

Another illustration given by Phillippo to show the errors of Liele and his followers was that they anointed the sick with oil. Phillippo claimed that this act was “in imitation of the anointing of the Saviour by Mary Magdalene before his crucifixion. The usual method of its application was by pouring it into the palm of the hand, and rubbing it on the head of the patient.” 74 The description does

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72 File # 26/2006, The Last Will and Testament of George Liele 12 June 1830 in the Registrar General’s Department, Jamaica.

73 Phillippo, Jamaica 271, 274.

74 Phillippo, Jamaica 272. Liele and company had “their belief in the duty of praying over and anointing the sick”: Underhill, West Indies 198.
not fit the anointing of Jesus’ feet because Jesus was not sick. In addition, Jesus’ head was not anointed (John 12: 1-7). The anointing of the sick was reminiscent of a passage in the Bible in the book of James which says, “Is any sick among you? Let him call the elders of the church; and let him pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (5: 14). Other examples given to demonstrate their folly included “dreams and visions constituted fundamental articles of their creed” and their response to the type of hospitality received on a visit to a new neighbourhood wherein if treated with respect then they pronounced a blessing on the house while if treated with indifference then “he shook off the dust from his feet as a testimony against them” (Luke 9: 4-5).

i) Bible was foundational

Hymn singing was an integral part of worship in congregations led by persons of African origin with Liele, in the eighteenth century, beginning his ministry to fellow Negroes, “by reading hymns among them, encouraging them to sing, and sometimes by explaining the most striking parts of them.” 75 The hymns were used as a sort of Biblical text.

Liele’s beliefs had to be “according to the Scriptures.” 76 In addition, The Covenant of the Anabaptist Church Began In America December 1777 and in Jamaica, December 1783 provided insights into the beliefs and practices of the

75 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 333.
76 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 337.
Original Baptists and each article had supporting scriptural texts. Catherall claimed that Liele brought a Church Covenant from America, which he drew up and that Baker's Covenant was an adaptation of Liele's. However, Clement Gayle, Jamaican Baptist historian, said, "Although this Covenant certainly did not originate entirely with Liele, it bears the stamp of his authority." Liele's Covenant had some differences when compared to Baker's Covenant. This indicates that there was not a concretized Covenant but more than likely a template from the USA Anabaptists, with both Liele and Baker making adjustments.

Liele's Covenant clearly showed that for the pioneers of the Baptist denomination in Jamaica, the Bible was the final authority for faith and practice. Article I of Liele's Covenant stated, "We are of the Anabaptist persuasion because we believe it agreeable to the Scriptures ... Matthew, Chap. III. Ver. 1, 2, 3. 2d Corinthians Chap. VI. Ver. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18." Every action had to find justification in the Scriptures and, not surprisingly, after the first article there was the word "proof", followed by quotations from the Bible to prove the point made in the article. The vast majority of the 21 Articles contained the clause "according to the Word of

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78 Gayle 67.
79 Clarke, Memorials 26. This covenant and the account of Baker given by him in the Evangelical Magazine of 1803 were reproduced "without alteration or abridgement" in Clarke's book: Clarke, Memorials 18.
God" or "agreeable to the Scriptures." It was also important to Liele that he was able "to worship Almighty God according to the tenets of the Bible." 81 Liele and their followers were grounded in the Bible.

ii) Protestng Societal Norms

Article II stated "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, Chap. XVI. Ver. 2, 5, 6. Colossians [sic], Chap. III. Ver. 16." 82 Most of Article II is a replica of Colossians 3: 16. However, the case for using the Markan passage could only be to support the designation of "the Lord's Day," which was a statement that the day belonged to the Lord. Therefore, these earthly masters who lord it over the enslaved did not have absolute power and control but must also give deference to the Lord.

Article XVI admonished that in order "to avoid fornication we permit no one to keep each other, except they be married according to the word of God . . . Nevertheless, to avoid Fornication, let every man have his own wife . . . 1st Corinthians, Chap. VII. Ver. 2." 83 Brown interpreted Article XVI as encouraging

81 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 334.
82 Covenant of the Anabaptist 3-4. Baker's Covenant, minus the Biblical references, was the same as Liele's: Clarke, Memorials 26.
83 Covenant of the Anabaptist 10. Baker's Covenant, minus the Biblical references, has a minor difference of capitalizing "Word" when compared to Liele's: Clarke, Memorials 26.
marriage. This was a direct affront to slave society where marriage was discouraged, repressed and illegal. Therefore, this article verified that the enslaved were human beings capable of getting married and raising a family.

Article III stated:

> 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 ... Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be Baptized of him ... and lo, a voice from Heaven saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ... Matthew, Chap. III. Ver. 13, 16, 17. Mark, Chap. XVI. Ver. 15, 16. Matthew, Chap. XXVIII. Ver. 19.

This first passage from Matthew recalls Jesus' baptism and how God was pleased that he did it, while the Mark 16 passage was a commission to the disciples to go and baptize those who believed. It could also be seen as a challenge to the practices of the Established Church that did not engage in immersion, which needed a river but rather sprinkled water on the forehead of an infant or adult.

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84 Brown, George Liele 63. The law was changed in 1835 allowing marriages done by missionaries to be legal: Jamaica Moravian Church 68.


86 Underhill, West Indies 194.

87 Covenant of the Anabaptist 4. The passage capitalized "baptized" and has two different spellings.
Immersion in the river resonated with Africans. However, it did offend Richard Panton who claimed that Liele's followers believed that water washed away sins and therefore they re-baptized often. But Joshua Tinson, a veteran English Baptist pastor, and Abbott said they never witnessed even one case of re-baptizing.

There was another break with religious tradition and challenge to the ruling class in Article VI which said:

_We hold to receive and admit young children into the Church according to the word of God... And he came by the Spirit into the Temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then he took him up into his arms and blessed God... Luke, Chap. II. Ver. 27, 28._

Underhill stated that it was a "curious" practice because it was not baptism but a "special service" and then he speculated that it was similar to the 1860s practice of "native Baptists... becoming sponsors to the children of friends who are christened by the clergy of the Church of England." This was another challenge to the practice of the Established Church, the official religion of the State.

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88 Jamaica Moravian Church 65.


90 _Covenant of the Anabaptist_ 6. Baker does not have this article: Clarke, _Memorials_ 26-27.

91 Underhill, _West Indies_ 197-98.
Underhill was unintentionally indicating a link between Liele’s group and the Native Baptists.

The articles addressed also the matter of gender equality. This equality of genders was also noticed in Articles XIX and XX, “We hold if a Brother or Sister should transgress . . .” 92 Liele’s Covenant in naming brother and sister, did not assume that brother covered all genders. Females were on equal footing with males, having dignity and worth. It is therefore not surprising that Liele had twenty-four elders, 12 of whom were women. 93 That he had twelve female elders meant that Liele determined that the Bible offered a more egalitarian view of male/female relationships, which was contrary to the chauvinistic slave society.

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92 *Covenant of the Anabaptist* 11.

93 *Covenant of the Anabaptist* 2 and Underhill, *West Indies* 197. One of the elders was his wife, Hannah. In 1791, Liele said “my wife was baptized by me in Savannah . . . She is much the same age as myself”: Rippon, *Baptist Annual Register* 335.
It was also significant that Liele referred to his group as “the Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica.” 94 Russell said it was part of their Christian identity and a feature of Christians of African descent in the USA. 95 Liele appeared acutely aware of the Christian heritage from Ethiopia, Africa and was affirming it. This Afro-centric declaration in a context where things African were considered inferior, backward and foolish was an affront to the very foundations of colonial slave society.

In the courts, the sentences were “frequently severe, and sometimes partial and unjust; they consisted in pecuniary fines often exceeding, the means of the party” and “the poorest and most unfriended [sic] of the Negroes had the worse chance of justice from their hands.” 96 This led the Original Baptists to establish their own justice system based on the Bible. Article IX stated:

We hold to appoint Judges and such other Officers among us, to settle any matter according to the word of God . . . Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. Acts, Chap. VI. Ver. 1, 2, 3. 97

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94 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542.
95 Russell, Understandings 102.
96 Stewart, View 262-63.
97 Covenant of the Anabaptist 10.
They established an alternative jurisprudence based on the Bible because of the inadequacy of the colonial justice system.

These articles demonstrated that the Original Baptists challenged the structure of the slave society. They offered a counter culture to the enslaved.

**iii) Pragmatic Restraint**

Article XV stated that “We permit no slaves to join the Church without first having a few lines from their owners of their good behaviour” and to support that regulation they said “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the King, as Supreme; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers” and had the Biblical references as “1st Peter, Chap. II. Ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. 1st Thessalonians, Chap. III. Ver. 13.” These Biblical references addressed the issue of reverence to be given to kings, rulers and potentates. As the first person of African ancestry to preach to the enslaved, Liele probably felt the need to exercise an abundance of caution bearing in mind that both the ecclesiastical and legal authorities could revoke his preaching licence. Furthermore, he had experienced imprisonment on a charge of sedition for a sermon he preached on Romans 10: 1. This passage

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98 Covenant of the Anabaptist 9. Rippon supported that claim that “their owners allow them”: Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 336. Baker does not have this article: Clarke, Memorials 26-27.

99 Underhill, West Indies 199-200. Liele was charged with preaching sedition and was imprisoned: Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 32.

100 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 32.
states, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they
might be saved.” This Biblical reference seemed quite innocuous. It was also
claimed that Liele in showing this Anabaptist Covenant with its Articles was able
to obtain, “the sanction of the authorities and masters of the slaves to his
proceedings.” 101 This was a prudent move because the authorities understood the
Covenant in a certain way not realizing that the enslaved might have a different
interpretation.

iv) Ethical Demands

Then, there were those tenets, which regulated their lifestyle such as Article XX
which maintained that if a member were reprimanded and there was no change
then he or she should be “put out of the Church” and the Covenant found support
for that position in “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of
Luke, Chap. XVII. Ver. 3, 4.” 102 These proof texts addressed transgressions,
forgiveness and reconciliation. The Covenant quoted 2 John 1: 9, 10 and
demonstrated that for Liele and the other members, the Christian faith was
ethical and not merely ceremonial.

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101 Underhill, West Indies 199.

102 Covenant of the Anabaptist 11-12. Baker’s Covenant does not have this article: Clarke,
Memorials 26-27.
There was also Article VIII, which stated, “We hold to labouring one with another according to the word of God. Proof . . . Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven. Matthew, Chap. XVIII. Ver. 15, 16, 17, 18.”

The proof text, Matt 18: 15-18, addressed binding and loosing, unity among members, as well as, a plea for agreement in prayer. In addition, binding and loosing spoke to authority that each Christian has in the church, which was largely denied to the Africans in the wider society. They had power along with authority to engage in this ministry, which was of equal value with that of European missionaries. It validated them as having worth and value coming from God though it was denied them on earth. This was a liberating humanizing experience, which was treasured and accepted joyfully. The Original Baptists ought to be their brothers’ keepers, caring for each other and engaging in Christian ministry. It was also a call to work hard for the Lord as implied by the word labour. It also confirmed that their labour would not be in vain and reiterated that hard work was honourable.

v) Social consciousness

Liele purchased land in Spanish Town to establish a burying ground, which was a ministry for the benefit of his congregation. He also appointed Thomas

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103 Covenant of the Anabaptist 7. Brown and Gayle ignored this article in their analysis: Brown, Liele 63-64 and Gayle 67-68. However, this was a significant stipulation. Baker’s Covenant did not have this article: Clarke, Memorials 26-27.

104 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542. See also Underhill, West Indies 199.
Swigle as "deacon, schoolmaster, and his principal helper" and received books from England for the edification of his congregants. 105 In addition, he "promoted a Free School for the instruction of the children, both free and slaves." 106 This emphasis on education so early in the ministry of Liele was unprecedented in the ministry of other European missionaries. Liele's holistic view of ministry perceived a connection between literacy and spreading the gospel. This was visionary and an achievement in 1791. In 1792, Liele remarked that the enslaved were largely "poor" and "illiterate" but "reading this covenant once a month, when all are met together from the different parts of the island, keeps them in mind of the commandments of God." 107 Liele's commitment to literacy showed social consciousness.

An examination of the teachings of the Original Baptists revealed that these Baptists were ethical, practical, and universal in outlook. They protested against slave society but with restraint, and for them the Bible was foundational. These influences were also strongly apparent among the Native Baptists who emphasized the Bible and hymns, who developed practical ministry especially in education, who accepted government financial help, who had a good relationship with the Governor in the 1840s and who challenged European hermeneutics and the oppression within the church and society.

105 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 542. Swigle had a split with Liele and had his own congregation of 700 in Kingston: Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 33.

106 Rippon, Baptist Annual Register 335.

107 Underhill, West Indies 199.
vi) Universal Outlook

It was said that the Original Baptists displayed “no jealousy” against “European ministers” as demonstrated in 1816, when an English Baptist missionary, Lee Compere was invited to Kingston to build on the legacy of Liele, which consisted of hundreds of members, to become their pastor. In addition, in 1817, Liele and his people facilitated Coultart by granting him Gully Chapel to have his meetings “although many had left his [Liele’s] place of worship” and on the departure of Liele to England in 1822, Joshua Tinson, preached to Liele’s congregation at Windward Road Chapel until Liele returned. Baker shared his congregation with Rowe while Coultart visited Baker and preached to his congregation. In addition, the Original Baptists invited the English Baptists to Jamaica. The Original Baptists were universal in outlook and willing to cooperate with other religious bodies in the preaching of the gospel.

Emphases of Sam Sharpe

Heuman mentioned a book that venerated Sam Sharpe and his followers as Christian martyrs, which was in circulation in 1864, the Jubilee of English Baptist

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108 Underhill, West Indies 204 and Clark, Dendi and Phillippo 146.
109 Clarke, Memorials 75, 83.
110 Clarke, Memorials 70, 76, 164.
111 Underhill, West Indies 204 and Clarke, Memorials 164.
witness in Jamaica. 112 This reflected a widening view of Sharpe as a martyr during that commemoration. 113 Sam Sharpe could have influenced the Native Baptists' thinking in the 1860s.

For Sharpe, the Bible and hymns were of primary importance. And while in prison, his relatives sent to him the chapters and the hymns they read and sung at their domestic worship. He returned to them similar information of his soul’s source of secret life. 114 This is what sustained him in a trying time, the Bible and the hymns. When Sharpe was questioned if he got the idea that he ought to be free from the missionaries he said, “no one minister said such a word. Not one, Sir. But me read it in my Bible.” 115 The Bible was pivotal in his life.

Sharpe from his understanding of the Bible emphasized equality of all human beings irrespective of race, and the right of human beings to be free. He also underscored the importance of non-violent protest and fervently believed that in the end he would be vindicated.


i) Belief in equality/freedom

Sharpe was prepared to be a martyr for the cause of freedom according to Bleby who said, "It was not his purpose to wade through blood to freedom, although he was himself prepared to die rather than remain a slave." 116 On the gallows on 23 May 1832 after the sentencing on 19 April 1832, Sharpe said, "I am going to die because I thought I had a right to be free." 117 Sharpe knew that for the enslaved persons, "freedom is their right and freedom they could have." 118 Bleby said Sharpe believed that liberty was a "natural and inalienable right." 119 Bleby recorded that Sam Sharpe said: "he learnt from his Bible, that the whites had no more right to hold black people in slavery, than the black people had to make the white people slaves; and, for his own part, he would rather die than live in slavery." 120 Sharpe’s belief in the right to be free was radical because even the Anti-Slavery Society did not base their agitation for the termination of slavery on the right to be free or equality of human races but rather on the abuses and evils attendant to slavery as practiced in the West Indies. So at the 12 May 1833 Anti-Slavery Society meeting, chaired by James Stephens, ten evils of slavery were listed as "neglect of instruction, moral and religious, to slaves", "profanation of

116 Henry Bleby, Scenes in the Caribbean Sea: Being Sketches from a Missionary’s Notebook (London, 1854) 51.
117 Clarke, Memorials 107 and Dillon 9.
118 Belmore, Somerset Lowry, 2nd Earl of, Governor of Jamaica, 1829-1832. Northern Island Record Office (UWIL, MR 1371-75; 1432-36) 1.
119 Bleby, Scenes 51.
120 Henry Bleby, Death Struggles of Slavery (London, 1853) 116. See also Bleby, Scenes 18.
Sabbath”, “barbarity of punishment”, “licentious treatment of female slaves”,
“discouragement given to marriage”, “perversion of laws”, “separation of families
by sale”, “rejection . . . of slave evidence”, “difficulties put in the way of a slave
obtaining his freedom” and “the uncertainty of holding liberty when secured.”
In the list there was no mention that all persons were born free and that all
persons were equal.

Bleby recorded Sharpe’s attitude toward freedom:

The last time I conversed with Sharpe . . . He was not, however, to be
convinced that he had done wrong in endeavouring to assert his claim to
freedom. ‘When reminded that the Scriptures teach men to be content
with the station allotted to them by Providence, and that even slaves are
required patiently to submit to their lot, till the Lord in his providence is
pleased to change it,’ - he was a little staggered, and said, ‘if I have done
wrong in that, I trust I shall be forgiven; for I cast myself upon the
Atonement.’

Sharpe had his own interpretation and he rejected the understanding that said he
should passively wait and not claim his right to be free. He was not apologetic
about the struggle for freedom even when Scriptures were quoted in support of
the status quo. His belief in equality for all was grounded in the Bible.

121 Clarke, Memorials 109-10.

122 Bleby, Death Struggles 117.
ii) **Non-violence**

Shirley Gordon, R. A. L Knight and Higman said the 1831 Baptist War was violent. 123 Shepherd concurred with the armed struggle idea, claiming “Sharpe was not averse to making the transition from peaceful sit-down strike to armed revolt.” 124 Reckord claimed that the original strategy involved the destruction of property and armed rebellion. 125 Reckord, in reviewing the evidence, seemed to soften her earlier comments that it was an armed resistance, when she concluded, “there was no hint of a crusade against the whites in their activity. Their attempts at strike action were intended to win freedom with a minimum of disorder and bloodshed. Even the armed rebels fought only those whites who attacked them; whites who offered no opposition met with no harm.” 126

Sharpe because of his “intensely Christian principles and thoughts” disagreed with those who wanted to take up the sword claiming that the Bible said one should not fight. 127 Bleby confirmed that “the plan proposed to be acted upon by Sharpe was that of a passive resistance, and to fight only in the case the ‘buckras’


124 Verene Shepherd, “‘To be Hanged by the neck until Dead’ The King against Samuel Sharpe, April 1832,” Jamaica Journal 29 (2005): 56.


126 Reckord 31.

used force to compel them to turn out and work as slaves . . . the burning of the plantations, and the violence offered to whites, were no part of his design." 128

This story was confirmed to Sturje and Harvey on a visit to a gaol in Westmoreland on 9 March 1837. They met two convicts and one of them; a very old man related his story:

Before the rebellion, he and other negros [sic] agreed, that they would sit down after Christmas, and tell their masters they were free; but that they would willingly continue to work ‘for any small salary.’ They did so but afterwards, some of the ignorant negros, refusing to listen to the more ‘sensible,’ began to set fire to the buildings, and to make war against the white people. 129

This intelligent and credible testimony was in accordance with Sharpe’s stated plan of a strike for wages and freedom. Sharpe thought that every African had the inalienable right to work for pay and to provide for himself a comfortable lifestyle. 130

Bleby contradicted the perception of the Negroes as violent when he concluded, "In no instance was any act of personal violence done to the whites by the

128 Bleby, Death Struggles 113 and Bleby, Scenes 20. See also Clarke, Memorials 107.
129 Sturge and Harvey 238-39.
130 Losh 16.
insurgents, until many of their own number had been put to death.” 131 Peter Duncan, a Methodist missionary, said, “At first it was not the object of the insurgent Negroes to take life, and their moderation was acknowledged, and even eulogized by their enemies.” 132 A newspaper report said, “As yet the loss of life on our part is very trifling.” 133 The 1831 Baptist War led by Sharpe was not violent in intent. It was a strike. According to Copland, writing thirty years after the event, “It was evident that the designs of the Negroes in this insurrection were neither blood, plunder nor revenge, for until after the executions by martial law had commenced, not a single instance of violence had been committed” and added that when it is considered that “50,000 Negroes were more or less concerned in the rebellion, and that no more than twenty of these were known to have committed any outrages, it was marvelous that so much moderation should have been displayed by men who had for years groaned under the yoke worse than Egyptian bondage.” 134 There were only two acts of violence against Europeans while the immense multitude of Negroes “struck for wages.” 135 The Negroes assured Francis Gardner, English Baptist missionary, of his safety as he rode into the protest saying that they had “kissed the book not to hurt any parson.” 136 And

131 Bleby, Scenes 52-53.

132 Peter Duncan, A Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica; with occasional Remarks on the State of the Society in the Colony (London, 1849) 272.


134 Copland 19.

135 Christian Record Mar. 1832: 61.

136 Clarke, Memorials 141.
according to the dispatch from Portland, "the Negroes on three estates in that parish had refused to work, but had not proceeded to any acts of violence." There were similar reports for St. Thomas in the East and St. Andrew. In the same report, island-wide accounts, stated that, with the exception of a wounded militiaman, "no human blood has been spilled by our peasantry." 137

A military officer said an enslaved person told him, "Dem say we no fe shed blood." 138 John Salmon, acting as a spy for Colonel Grignon for the commanding officer of the Western Regiment, claimed that participants were told, "no slaughter would be committed." 139 It was not going to be a blood bath. No violence was planned.

There was no denying that some of the leaders wanted armed resistance because they felt that the Europeans would not peacefully treat them as freed persons and pay them, therefore "We must be prepared to fight -Bukra has sword and gun, and will not let us go." 140 However, Sharpe's idea prevailed and the only concession he made was that they could defend themselves although he would bear no arms. 141 Clarke stated otherwise, “the war party prevailed, and guns were

138 Senior, Jamaica 228.
139 Vindication of the Conduct of Colonel Grignon and of the Western Interior Regiment 1-2.
140 Clarke, Memorials 102.
obtained. Some, however, knew not how to use them . . .” 142 However, the non-use of guns and lack of bloodshed by 50,000 enslaved persons taking part demonstrated that those for armed resistance did not prevail.

iii) Hope/vindication anticipated

Sharpe approached the hangman with confidence and dignity, verifying his lack of fear of death. 143 Another report said his face was bright and his form erect as if he had “achieved some glorious victory.” 144 This lack of fear of death was also evident in the statements of Sharpe, George Guthrie and Edward Hilton who were tried for the 1831 Baptist War. They were assured that if they told “the truth” that Knibb, Burchell or Gardner incited them then “their lives would be spared” but they chose death when they retorted, “we cannot tell a lie upon the Ministers, we had rather be hanged.” 145 They were responsible for their actions and death had no terror for them. Sharpe approached death boldly because he had a firm faith in the atoning blood of Jesus and hope in eternal life. God’s righteous reign was inaugurated through the death of Christ and this gave Sharpe hope in the future, including the immediate future. Martyrdom was a supreme

142 Clarke, Memorials 102.

143 “Execution of Samuel Sharpe, the Rebellious Slave,” Watchman 6 June 1832: 6.

144 By a Returned Missionary, “The Christian Hero: Another Reminiscence of the Insurrection in Jamaica,” Baptist Reporter July 1864: 305. Old Virgil, a Baptist leader of Windsor Lodge, who was executed without trial, inquired of Captain Hylton if he was to be hanged for praying to God. Hylton replied, ‘Yes.’ Then said the old Christian, ‘hang me up at once, that I may go to my Father.’: Clarke, Memorials 161.

act of sacrifice and testimony. It was the powerless demonstrating greater power over the powerful. Martyrdom was also a statement that the powerful will not have things their way because the last desperate act of taking a life becomes a badge of honour that elevated the victim and inspired the other persons who were victimized to have courage and continue the struggle to attain the original objective of the resistance.

Sharpe announced his Christian faith on the gallows, “I don’t know that I am prepared to face God, but I depend on Salvation through the redeemer, who shed his blood upon Calvary for sinners.” 146 He also anticipated the just judgment, “I have transgressed against the laws of the country and Government, and with great violation, and I am come to be a sacrifice for it; but I will soon appear before a Judge that is greater than all.” 147 He appealed to the master of them all. He was in this world but the laws of the land did not bind him if it contravened God’s law. On the surface it appeared as if he was acknowledging that he was a criminal but he was appealing to a higher authority as a Christian. In addition, the use of sacrifice meant that he was seeing himself as dying on behalf of others so that they might be free.

This hope in God made persons of African origin follow in Sharpe’s religious tradition. In 1832, Miss Cooper, “a free person of colour,” and owner of the land

146 “Execution of Samuel Sharpe, the Rebellious Slave,” Watchman 6 June 1832: 6. See also Bleby for a similar quote: Bleby, Death Struggles 118.

147 “Execution of Samuel Sharpe, the Rebellious Slave,” Watchman 6 June 1832: 6.
in St. Thomas-in-the-Vale, on which a little thatched chapel stood, was taken before the magistrate “to answer charges of encouraging unlawful meetings, and for attending them.” She was “undismayed by their threats” and resolved that her land would remain a place of worship. There was much courage in the face of adversity because of the anticipation of victory through God.

Missionaries

It was observed: “The doctrines with which the missionaries have ever endeavoured to inculcate on their hearers are, for the most part, contained in the XXXIX Articles of the Established Church. They do not indeed subscribe to all of them, for then would they cease to be Dissenters, but they do fully and entirely concur in by far the greater number...” The missionaries took their cue from doctrines of the Church of England and though the missionaries were not homogenous, they all shared broad similarities.

The English Baptists rigidly observed the code of conduct of “non-interference with political concerns.” This was consistent with an ancient tradition of Christian interpretations of the Bible in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth

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148 Clarke, Memorials 137. In 1828, on Phillippo’s first visit to Jericho, he preached under a tree on the premises of Miss Cooper: Underhill, Life 72.

149 Christian Record, July 1832: 166.

150 Underhill, West Indies 205. See also Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 55; G. Henderson, Goodness and Mercy (Kingston: Gleaner, 1931) 12; Brathwaite, Creole 258 and Jamaica Moravian Church 63.
centuries to support a quietist approach to political matters and deference to established authority. There was a demarcation between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual world and the physical world. After 1832, the English Baptists under the leadership of Knibb changed their position, so much so that it antagonized Governor Metcalfe, who in 1839, enunciated that religious men, such as the Baptist missionaries, had no right to take part in political debate. And by 1844, the English Baptists led a political organization, which at that time opposed George William Gordon, who had the support of the Wesleyans and the planter class.

One of the features of missionary thinking was that the European clergy in Jamaica believed that they were the chosen race. Shepherd argued that in the 19th century, this theological division of the world's population into heathens and Christians was linked ideologically to the mentality, which associated Europeans with the Israelites and non-Europeans with the Canaanites. In Jamaica, and other territories in the West Indies, the English Baptists, the Moravians, and the


153 Wilmot, Baptist Missionaries 54.


155 Shepherd, Transients 150. See Raboteau who said, “From the beginnings of colonization, . . . White Christians saw themselves as a new Israel . . .”: Raboteau 251.
Wesleyans referred to themselves as “the children of Israel.” The British Christians perceived themselves as the new Spiritual Israel. They were the inheritors of the blessings from God. On the other hand, most European missionaries believed that the lineage of the African race was from the despised children of Ham who were under a “partriarchal [sic] curse.” Phillippo referred to the enslaved as the “oppressed offspring of Ham,” the “poor child of Ham” and the “regenerated sons and daughters of Ham.” The missionaries claimed that Africans were descendants of Ham, who were cursed in the Genesis story of chapter 9. Noah had three sons, namely, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Ham had a son named Canaan. One day Noah became drunk and took off his clothes. In his drunken state, his son Ham witnessed his nakedness and as a consequence Noah pronounced a curse, “And he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.’ And he said, ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant’ ” (Gen. 9: 25-26). It was not clear how the African became a descendant of Ham but this passage was used to justify slavery and the African being placed in a subservient position.

156 Baptist Herald, and Friend of Africa 4 Jan. 1843: 44. See also Henry Bleby, Methodism a Goodly Heritage (Kingston, 1839) 22.


158 William Fitz-er Burchell, Memoir of Thomas Burchell: Twenty-Two Years a Missionary in Jamaica (London, 1849) 329. See also Douglas Lorimer, Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Leicester: Holmes, 1978) 69.

159 Phillippo, Jamaica 211. In addition, the Africans were regarded as descendants of Cain, the murderer: Sohal 139.

160 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 284.

161 Underhill, Life 323. See also Henry Bleby, Romance Without Fiction: or Sketches from the Portfolio of an old Missionary (London, 1872) 57.
Phillippo, describing Jamaica in the 1820s, stated, "at church, if a man of colour, however respectable in circumstances or character, entered the pew of the lowest white man, he was instantly ordered out." 162 Underhill said that even in the church the members of "lighter skin" deemed those of African origin as "an inferior caste" and acknowledged that there was "a strife of colour" within the Baptist congregations. 163 The church was colour prejudiced.

In pre-emancipation Jamaica, the Africans' colour was equated with that of the devil, who was invisible, because he was black and came out at nights 164 while the missionaries called the 1865 protestors "black devils." 165 Many post-emancipation missionary documents were replete with references to persons of African ancestry as superstitious, 166 half-civilized 167 and savages. 168 They were believed to be from an inferior civilization and inferior culture when compared to

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162 Phillippo, Jamaica 143, 148.
163 Underhill, West Indies 192.
164 B. Pullen-Burry, Ethiopia in Exile: Jamaica Revisited (London: Unwin, 1905) 149. The thinking was that one cannot see a black image in the darkness of the night.
167 Gardner 274 and Underhill, Life 231. Underhill recorded that Phillippo called the Negroes half civilized because they voted for Dowson to be their pastor and not him.
the Europeans and wholly “incapable of attaining to the refinement and
civilization of European nations.” The English Baptists perceived Europeans as
superior intellectually and mentally. In 1851, Phillippo, after the lawsuit
involving some African members who wanted Englishman Thomas Dowson as
pastor, approvingly quoted the Greek poet Homer who said that half our virtue is
torn away when a man becomes enslaved and the other half goes when he
becomes an enslaved person let loose. In the 1860s, it was still debated by
some Christians whether persons of African origin were humans. Gordon was
said to be:

Half Negro, half Scotchman, and, of course, mixed in character as in
blood. On the Scotch side he was a shrewd, clever, pious man, who
preached, prayed and schemed. On the Negro side he is accused of having
planned the conspiracy three years ago, organized secret societies, bound
by tremendous oaths-a sort of Celto-Dahomic Fenianism, suitable to dark
skins and low latitudes.

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169 Underhill, West Indies 297; “A Theory of Missionary Effort,” Baptist Magazine Dec. 1866: 786;
Bigelow, Jamaica in 1850 21 and “Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica,” Baptist

170 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 14.

171 Underhill, West Indies 296.

172 Underhill, Life 230.

173 “Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine January 1867 50.

15 Dec. 1865: 2.
Racial prejudice was strong in 1865 and the belief was that a person of mixed race would have mixed character with the African side being inferior and the European side being superior morally and intellectually. Shepherd defined racism as occurring when negative social definition was translated into a political policy through the exploitation of certain races. In the missionary church, race determined one’s status, influence, and the position one could hold in the church so there was racism in the European missionary institutions.

The missionaries also had a dualistic concept of human beings. John Clarke reflecting on the 1865 Native Baptist War said, “Under the influence and teaching of ministers from England, and the Native Pastors connected with them, they would have been more enlightened . . .” and more aware of how citizens endured “heavy taxation” and “oppressive laws” and would not have emphasized the grievances the people were encountering. Not only were the English Baptists adhering to a policy of non-involvement or more precisely encouraging suffering silently, but they also wanted their native pastors, who were trained at Calabar, into thinking and behaving likewise.

On the passing of the Act to abolish slavery in 1833, Christians in England said that the enslaved “should not go out of bondage empty-handed. The British and Foreign Bible Society resolved to give a copy of the New Testament and of the Book of Psalms, in large print and well bound, to every emancipated slave . . .”

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175 Shepherd, Dynamics 15.

176 Clarke, Memorials 223-24.
while the planters got a gift of £20,000,000 and guaranteed labour from the enslaved for six years. 177 As a result of the Act of Emancipation, the physical needs of the planters were catered to while for the newly emancipated only their narrowly defined spiritual needs were addressed.

In addition, Mr. Walcott at the Commission of Enquiry asked David East, president of Calabar: “Did you not in a sermon approve of the Governor’s acts?” He said he did not and only supported “the actual suppression of the outbreak at Morant Bay” and he produced the words of his sermon to confirm this point:

It appears to have been a rebellion against lawfully constituted authority . . . Happily for our families, homes, our churches - happily for the cause of civilization, and for the cause of God in the land - through the vigour and promptitude of our Governor and his executive the rebellion has been crushed. Law and order has triumphed, and the infatuated rebels, with their diabolical leaders, are reaping the awful retribution with which such wickedness is sure to be overtaken. In such times it is for us to betake ourselves to our Bibles, and see what the Bible teaches in relation to sovereigns and their subjects, to governors and magistrates, and those whom they have appointed. 178

177 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 72-73. Even the English Baptists got compensated £11,705 for damages to the chapels in the aftermath of the 1831 Baptist War.

178 JRC Vol. 5 784. Mr. Walcott’s first name was not given.
East in supporting the status quo exaggerated the situation claiming that “all magistrates” were killed. He was against the actions of the Native Baptists calling them “diabolical leaders” while praising Governor Eyre. He believed that Eyre was fighting on the side of civilization and God and found support for his position in the Bible by alluding to Romans 13: 1-3 which states: “Let every soul be subject unto higher powers . . . whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” The Bible was being interpreted to support the rulers.

As part of the development of the enslaved, they were consistently taught by the missionaries to be obedient to those in authority. John Dyer recommended to the English Baptist missionaries, the instructions given by the apostles to those who were enslaved. 179 In his recommendation, he used passages which all highlighted the importance of obedience, namely, Ephesians 6: 5-8, which stated, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters . . .” and Colossians 3: 22 - 25, which declared, “Servants, obey in all things your masters . . .” and 1 Peter 2: 18 -25 which read, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the gentle, but also to the forward . . .” In addition, the English Baptists of Jamaica claimed that they were the most loyal subjects to Her Majesty. 180 The missionaries, in proudly declaring their non-involvement in the “riot of Morant Bay,” declared that the districts, “where Baptist Missionaries labour, were noted for their quietness and order, and the loyalty of the population.” 181 The Africans

179 Underhill, West Indies 205.


were inculcated with the need to be loyal to the British Crown and to behave in an orderly fashion.

In 1865, David East, reflecting on the mission, said, "Christian missionaries did not come to Jamaica to abolish slavery, or to change the political institutions of the country . . . they came that they might shed light on the benighted soul . . ." \(^{182}\) As loyal subjects, they did not plan to disturb the colonial political order.

This thinking was not confined to English Baptists. The Anglican leadership decided to take a side on the issue and they aligned themselves to the ruler, believing that Eyre's action displayed "promptness, decision, and energy" and was "under God's blessings." \(^{183}\) God's blessings imply God's guidance, approval and benediction. Free churchman Goldwin Smith in commenting on the Native Baptist War of 1865 in 1866, claimed "no voice of mercy or pity was heard from the established clergy of Jamaica. Nothing came from them but praises of those who had been the authors of these sanguinary executions." \(^{184}\) The missionaries in Jamaica were in one accord in being obedient to the governing authorities.

The missionaries also perceived evangelism as a tool of the British Empire. Phillippo said that because of the Empire with its "foreign possessions spread

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\(^{182}\) Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 10-11.

\(^{183}\) JRC Vol. 4 484.

\(^{184}\) "Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica," Baptist Magazine Jan. 1867: 50.
over the whole earth,” British Christians had an unparalleled means of facilitating the spread of the gospel. He added that the dissemination of the gospel would preserve the great Empire:

If England would preserve her greatness – if she would be still great, and powerful, and noble – she must not be satisfied with possessing the light of Christianity, but she must give it forth to all the nations of the earth . . . The religion of the Bible is England’s shield, and the God of the Bible must be England’s glory. 

One of the motives for missionary work was the maintenance of dominance of the British Empire. Furthermore, in 1899, on the centenary celebration of Church Missionary Society, the preface recalled:

The expansion of England, the stages of development from the little kingdom of Alfred to the Empire within whose bounds nearly a third of the human race own their allegiance to Queen Victoria, has for us all an absorbing interest. Little less marvelous, even more absorbing, is the record of the steps by which God has led us on our way.

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185 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 310.
186 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 312.
187 Eugene Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, its Men and its Work (Vol. I London, 1899) v. In addition, the Empire was a source of great national pride boasting an area of 14,000,000 square miles, which made it the largest in the history of the world: Godfrey Lagden, The Native Races of the Empire (London: Collins, 1924) xiii.
Credit for the development of the Empire was given to God. Burchell Taylor, a leading Caribbean hermeneutical scholar, claimed that a feature of Empires was that the peoples felt that they were in a particular position because they were "deserving, just and right" and it was achieved because of "divine favour granted for moral superiority and religious fidelity" and was therefore not only an indication of military might but "an indication of national, racial and cultural superiority."\(^{188}\) That was the thinking of the missionary church.

It was the English Baptists who were the pioneers in using hymns in congregational worship in late seventeenth century England.\(^{189}\) Bleby in describing a typical missionary worship service with its hymn singing said, "The hymn of praise is sung; and devout and hearty are the responses of the congregation, while one of the missionaries reads the abridgment of the admirable liturgical service of the Church of England."\(^{190}\) Hymn singing was a central part of the worship and it was done in the context of the liturgy of the Church of England.

If the collection of hymns by English Baptist missionary, George E. Henderson for his church was indicative of the English mission then hymns of praise and

\(^{188}\) Burchell Taylor, "Stepping out of the Shadow of Empire" 2 SWOPE Lecture March 2004 in the University of Puget, USA.


\(^{190}\) Bleby, Scenes 29.
adoration were the dominant type of hymns sung by the English Baptists. Of the 18 selected hymns by composers, such as Charles Wesley, Mrs. Knowles, James Montgomery, eleven had in their first line the idea of praise, such as "Let songs of praise arise," "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" "Glad praises, glad praises to God let us sing," "Rejoice! The Lord is King" etc. 191

There were hymns with other themes. Henry Bleby in the chapter entitled "Prayer Answered" quoted William Cowper's hymn,

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

Bleby in giving the rationale for quoting this hymn said, "So wrote Cowper, in that beautiful hymn, in which the inscrutable wisdom of Jehovah, working out the loving designs of His Providence, is described in strains that have carried with them abundant consolation and hope to many a desponding spirit." In subsequent pages, Bleby outlined this "design" by claiming that the missionary enterprise started with Paul, the apostle then Martin Luther to John Wesley then to wealthy slaveholder, Mr. Gilbert. Gilbert took the gospel to the enslaved in Antigua and was named "Negro parson" for "teaching religion to the Negroes." 192

Bleby displayed in his hymn selection an interpretation that provided a

192 Bleby, Romance 1-9.
justification for slavery claiming that through slavery, the Africans were exposed
to Christianity in the West Indies. However, Bleby’s use of Cowper’s hymn was a
re-interpretation because Cowper was anti-slavery based on his poetic
expressions. The first stanza from Cowper’s poem “Negro’s Complaint” said:

Forced from home and all its pleasures
Afric’s coast I left forlorn,
To increase a stranger’s treasures
O’er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But, though slave they have enrolled me,
Minds are never to be sold. 193

In addition, there was no record that Cowper believed that slavery could be
justified because it led to the broadening of the gospel to include the enslaved.
Phillippo on the occasion of the August 1, 1834 said, that one of the hymns sung
was “one which, as missionaries, had we ever given out before, would have
subjected us to the charge of treason.” And it was sung in a loud chorus, the vast
assembly simultaneously rising up on the repetition of the two first lines:-

193 William Cowper, The Negro’s Complaint: A Poem to which is added, Pity for Poor Africans
Blow ye the trumpet, blow,
The gladly solemn sound!
Let all the nations know
To earth's remotest bound,
The Year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home. 194

By this admission, the missionaries previously avoided hymns that could be misconstrued as offensive and attacking the status quo or giving the enslaved the wrong idea. Hymns selected re-enforced obedience to masters, industry in the fields and avoidance of personal sins. It was not clear what was so incriminating in the hymn that Phillippo and others were reluctant to use it until the whole hymn by Charles Wesley was examined in another publication. Apparently the offending line in “Blow ye the trumpet, blow” was:

Ye slaves of sin and hell
Your liberty receive.195

Wesley was not addressing the issue of physical slavery but the missionaries out of an abundance of caution would not sing a hymn that had the word “slaves” and “liberty” in the same stanza even though the reference was to spiritual

194 Underhill, Life 123. See also Hymns for the Jubilee, Brown's Town Baptist Church 8.
195 Hymns for the Jubilee, Brown's Town Baptist Church 8.
emancipation. The missionaries were mentally enslaved and feared upsetting the rulers and the status quo.

Before the strike by the enslaved in December 1831, Knibb in addressing his congregation on the matter of a protest for wages and freedom said “I entreat you not to believe it, but to go to work as formerly; if you have any love for Jesus Christ, to religion, to our friends in England, do not be led away. God commands you to be obedient, and, if you do not do as he commands you, he will not do you any good.” 196 Knibb also testified before a parliamentary committee in July 1832 that he has never preached from the text “the truth shall make you free.” 197

However, after the harsh reprisals against the English Baptists, Knibb was a changed man. At a January 1833 meeting at Newcastle, Knibb moved away from the official position of non-interference saying “In the word of God it is written, the oppressed shall go free” and nearing the end of the speech he drew upon the Exodus motif when he proclaimed “let my people go free, that they may worship the Lord their God” [Exod. 5: 1] and he called upon the words of the Old Testament prophet Micah and said “we are commanded to do justly, to love mercy and set the oppressed free.” 198 Knibb grounded his opposition to slavery in the Bible.

196 Thomas F. Abbott, A Narrative of Certain Events Connected With the Late Disturbances in Jamaica, and the Charges Preferred Against the Baptist Missionaries in that Island (London, 1832) 2.

197 Hinton, Memoir 176-77.

198 Losh 9, 13, 20-24
Knibb convinced the Committee at the Spa Fields chapel held on 21 June 1832 that “the questions of colonial slavery and of missions are inextricably connected.” He elaborated:

We should still have maintained the silence that had been imposed upon us as to civil and political affairs, however enormous, and cruel, and revolting the evils we were compelled to witness, had they not at last deprived us of the privilege of telling the poor, ill-used, and oppressed slave that he would, if a believer in the gospel, spend an eternity of happiness in heaven. But this they have done and we can be silent no longer. 199

He was no longer willing to separate heaven from earth. Knibb wanted God’s will to be done on earth as in heaven.

Subsequent to the 1834 Act of Emancipation, there was a literal interpretation of Psalm 68:31, “Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand”. 200 In 1839, at Eagle Street, Knibb in interpreting that Psalm proclaimed that to spread the gospel to Africa was a way of compensating for all the wrongs that had been heaped on Africa. 201

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199 Hinton, Memoir 140-47. Slavery was a great impediment to the propagation of the gospel: Missionary Herald Aug. 1832: 59 and Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 67.

200 Freedom in Jamaica; Or, the First of August, 1838 (London, 1838) 12.

201 Russell, Understandings 106-7 and Foundations 46. The Baptists were not the only ones who felt a sense of mission to Africa. In 1846, the Presbyterians sent persons to Calabar, Nigeria: Alexander Robb, The Gospel to the Africans: A Narrative of the life and labours of the Rev.
Furthermore, there was the feeling that slavery was Providence's way of taking Africans out of barbarism. 202 Psalm 68: 31 was a pivotal text, which showed that God cared for the descendants of Ethiopia and was used as another justification for a missionary mandate to Africa. 203 Africa plays a central role in God's plan of redemption. Knibb's zeal for Africa was also demonstrated in his naming his weekly newspaper *Baptist Herald and Friend of Africa*.

There was an Anglican clergyman who had a different attitude than the traditional missionaries. Henry Clarke of Grange Hill, Westmoreland, had a congregation, which consisted principally of "black people." 204 Clarke lamented the fact that not one immigrant was invited to appear before the committee investigating the abuse of Indians. He further questioned the credibility of the committee which was comprised of "the criminals" who "formed the judge and jury to try their own case." He also disagreed with the report, which blamed the Indians' indolence for their condition. 205 Clarke was willing to confront evil. Knibb and Clarke were two aberrations, and were not consistent with the traditional missionary hermeneutics. Russell claimed that the missionary

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202 Falmouth Post 8 Jan. 1840: 5.

203 Moister title page.


205 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 135.
hermeneutic influenced the enslaved (see page 74 above) but it was unlikely that Knibb and Clarke impacted the Native Baptists because of the distance. Knibb and Clarke were active in Western Jamaica whereas the Native Baptists were strongest in Eastern Jamaica and had no station in Western Jamaica.

Africans in the English Baptist Mission

Thomas Knibb, in the context of being disappointed with the brand of Christianity practised and preached by the enslaved, reported that one of the persons at the place where Coultart preached, prayed thus, "'Lord div me sumting more no take from me, and me will set up tree plantane sinkers for a mark!'" and Knibb interpreted the prayer disdainfully to be "as an Ebenezer, I suppose" 206 This person of African origin was claiming that if God blessed him with material goods he promised to plant three plantain suckers as a memorial to God's goodness and provisions. Knibb was correct in perceiving images of Ebenezer as recording in 1 Sam. 7:12, "then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the place Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." God had delivered the children of Israel from their enemies, the Philistines, by destroying them and so the children of Israel built a memorial in honour of God's mighty deed. The African was similarly grateful for God's help and showed it in a tangible form. This showed that the African saw God and prayer in concrete terms and not speculative ones. In addition, there was no division

206 Clark, Dendy and Phillippo 190.
between the secular (plantain suckers) and the spiritual (prayers). Furthermore, the derision shown by Knibb toward the prayer demonstrated that the Africans prayed differently from what was expected of them by the missionaries.

A difference was also noticed in the prayers of the Africans within Benjamin Millard’s large English Baptist Church in St. Ann’s Bay. They treated written prayers with disdain claiming, “Scriptures did not say from the beginning, ‘use Prayer Book’ ” and that “Forms of prayer are not ‘feeling’ prayer.” For them, “prayer must come from the heart.” 207 Not only the content of the prayers were different but also the way the praying was executed.

It appeared that the native ministers within the English Baptist churches were at variance with missionary thinking. While Samuel Oughton, English Baptist missionary, in a letter to the Jamaica Guardian dated 25 February 1865, disagreed with the contents of Underhill’s letter 208 and while many missionaries did not attend the meetings and the few who attended, such as Phillippo, did not participate at the Spanish Town meeting on 16 May 1865, 209 the native ministers attended in large numbers. For example, Rev. J. H. Crole said at the Underhill meeting in Kingston on 3 May 1865, “The Bible says we are not to obey an immoral Government, therefore we are not bound to obey the Government of this

207 Underhill, West Indies 320-22. In 1865, the St Ann’s Bay Church had 1,800 members “Return of Chapels and Stations: Jamaica Baptist Union, for the Year ending 1865”: Blue Book, For the Island of Jamaica, For the Year 1865 T11 in UWI Library.


209 Underhill, Life 327.
country, for it is immoral, and no man should make you do it” and added “you are to obey God rather than man.” 210 The quotation about “you are to obey God rather than man” is from Acts 5: 29 and relates a story about the apostles who defied the orders of the Jewish High Priest and his Sanhedrin Council that they should not preach about Jesus. The apostles felt that they had an obligation to defy the ecclesiastical powers and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Crole found solace in that verse and passage as he was defiant in his opposition to oppression and advocated civil disobedience to a government that had lost its moral authority to govern.

At the same meeting Edwin Palmer said, “the merchants in Kingston would employ none but white or colored men in their stores which was a disgrace and a shame.” He also added that the Flogging Bill was “‘intended only for the black man’” 211 and also said, “The Government only employ white and coloured men in public offices, and the black man is neglected.” 212 The Native pastors within the English Baptist controlled churches were strident in criticizing racism in the society.

James Service was one of the twenty native pastors within the English Baptist mission who were accused of complicity with a plot to rebel. 213 The ruling class

210 JRC Vol. 4 232.

211 JRC Vol. 4 230. Samuel Clarke, Native Baptist leader, made the same observation.

212 JRC Vol. 4 232.

claimed that Edwin Palmer, Rev. J. H. Crole, H. B. Harris, all native pastors
within the English Baptist mission were conspirators in the 1865 Native Baptist
War. 214 The authorities did not perceive much difference between the activities of
the Native Baptists and those native ministers within the English Baptist
tradition.

Mrs. Palmer, wife of Edwin Palmer, quoted approvingly extracts from native
ministers. Her exercise was editorial, so her selections of extracts reflected her
priorities, prejudices, thinking and orientation. She quoted some brothers who
were thankful for financial help consequent on the distress following the 1865
Native Baptist War. Her expressions signified that the brothers’ faith showed a
maturity, which handled sufferings and rationalized the purpose of God in
suffering. Though they were “troubled on every side” they would not wilt. They
confidently declared, “The Lord is still good still, and is faithful to His promise,
that He will never leave nor forsake them who put their trust in him. I trust
moreover that all things both pleasant and painful shall work together for good,
‘as those who love God’ . . . [God was] ‘a very present help in time of trouble.’ ” 215
They were quoting passages from the Bible - Romans 8:28 (those who love God),
Joshua 1: 5 (will never leave), 2 Corinthians 4:8, 7:5 (troubled on every side) and
Psalm 46: 1 (help in time of trouble). They trusted the presence, promises and
power of God as they passed through difficult times. They did not curse God

because of their troubles but increased their faith in the deliverer. They did not engage in a blame game or self-pity but expectantly believed that God would soon liberate them from their oppression. In addition, they did not believe in revenge, even for the “abundance of abuse” heaped upon them. They left vengeance to God believing that he would make it “much worse for them [the oppressors] than us.” They believed that the abuse would recoil and hit the authors more than the objects of the abuse. The faith of the native ministers as outlined was reflective of the faith of Mrs. Palmer. She was a partner in ministry.

It was possible that some of the interpretations by persons of African origin within the English Baptist Church were the foundations on which the Native Baptists built.

Summary

The Native Baptists’ strong belief in an omnipotent Being, the importance of community, the Africans being the chosen race, the holistic concept of the human being and tolerance of other religious faiths could have been influenced by the African religions brought to Jamaica. However, whereas within the African religion there was no creed or anything written, the Native Baptists were a religion of the book, namely the Bible and the hymnbook.

It also appeared that George Liele and the Original Baptists influenced the Native Baptists. This influence would have occurred through Liele’s converts, such as,
Killick, who was a leader within the JNBMS. One also noticed that the Native Baptists, like the Original Baptists, had a high regard for the Bible, protested societal norms and had a faith that made ethical demands.

Since George William Gordon played a pivotal role in the Native Baptist Communion and since Gordon was baptized by Phillippo and commissioned to establish independent causes and co-operated with the English Baptists, it would appear that those Native Baptists were also influenced by the English Baptists. And since the JNBMS was largely a breakaway from English Baptists, the English Baptists must have influenced the JNBMS. Both Native Baptist groups probably took their fondness for the Bible and hymns from the English Baptists.

There was evidence that Sam Sharpe was seen as a martyr in 1864 and his exploits were rehearsed in churches. It is, therefore, highly probable that Bogle and Gordon would have been aware of Sharpe and probably were influenced by his thoughts and actions.

The Native Baptists were the successors to the Africans who had their own interpretation of Scriptures. They also learnt from the Africans within the English Baptist mission. They formed an organization in reaction to European Christianity. They re-interpreted European symbols, teachings, liturgy and history. They also reacted to the racist tendencies, dualism and unquestioned obedience to the authorities demonstrated by the European missions. In addition, they were African conscious, not in the sense of having African religious
beliefs and practices but rather with their emphasis on community, their own forms of worship, use of native language and commitment to proclaim the gospel to their fellow countrymen in Jamaica and Africa. They had influences from different religious expressions to form something uniquely Jamaican with the name of “Native Baptist” and their own particular hermeneutical approach.
CHAPTER SIX: THEMES AND HERMENEUTIC OF THE NATIVE BAPTISTS

This chapter, analyses the Native Baptists' preaching, letters, debates, prayers, hymns and song selections and their faith-practice, and seeks to identify and outline the main themes that seemed to have recurred and were prominent in their thought and action. These themes resulted from or were influenced by the hermeneutical approach or method they employed in relation to the Scriptures and Scripture-related sources. By this, it is anticipated that it will become clear how and what the Native Baptists leaders and their followers came to believe about God and themselves, as well as how they were further led to revolutionary thinking, expression and action in their quest for full freedom and justice.

The Native Baptists had their own hermeneutical approach whereby they read, understood and applied the Bible and other sacred literature, particularly hymns, from a standpoint that was different from those of the preachers and teachers within the missionary churches. Raboteau said that the Negro Spirituals were veiled commentary and criticism of society by the enslaved.¹ And the hymn selections of the Native Baptists were used in a similar way.

An examination of the hermeneutical approach of the Native Baptists reveals that they unearthed two themes that they found to have been of great importance and relevance to their situation. These themes, equality and justice, made a great difference to their self-understanding and their response to the realities of their situation.

Equality

Equality was not a generally accepted concept among Europeans as they related to non-Europeans. And persons of African ancestry were not considered or treated as the equal of the Europeans or even those of mixed race. They were seen as inferior beings. They were also thought to be of inferior character, intellect and culture. Because of their perceived inferiority, it gave opportunity to the ruling class to treat them with impunity and without any moral embarrassment. According to the ruling establishment, the inferior status of those of African origin does not make them deserving of any better treatment. They were not seen as equals in the church or before the law or based on similar human needs. However, the Native Baptists had a different perspective. The theme of equality, as reflected in the biblical understanding of the Native Baptists, challenges the fundamental bases on which they and others like them were perceived by the privileged class of the society. The observed restraint of the Native Baptists in terms of their reaction and response to the treatment meted out to them would not be uninfluenced by their concept of the equality of persons. The concept of equality was deeply ingrained in their spiritual
consciousness. They would, therefore, not readily respond with acts of brutality that would dehumanize perpetrators of evil. Their sense of the common humanity shared with the oppressors was obviously a source of moral restraint in this regard. Paradoxically, the inequality of the status of the Native Baptists as human beings, made the dominant class fear that if given any respite from oppression, those of African descent would act with inhumane brutality in reprisal.

Equality was a liberating factor. It made those who were disadvantaged refuse to accept their status as inferior. It restrained them from violating the humanity of others, even their oppressors. This concept of equality was demonstrated by Sam Sharpe who said that based on the Bible, the Europeans had no more right to hold persons of African origin in slavery, than the Africans had to enslave the Europeans (see page 251 above). It was an option that would have freed the privileged class from their inhumane behaviour if they would embrace it.

What were the features of equality as it was perceived and embraced by the Native Baptists? They were equality in the sight of God, equality in law and equality of human needs.

**Equality in the Eyes of God**

For the Native Baptists all human beings were created in the image of God. This led them to believe that all were created with equal capacity to be communicated with by God, to respond to God and to accept responsibility from God to do his
work. The acknowledgement that they were made in the image of God affirmed the dignity of their humanity. Duff and Lyon criticized the BMS saying: “we conceive the opposition shown to us by your missionaries is from prejudice ... derived from slavery.” The Native Baptists felt that they were not being treated as equals by the English Baptist missionaries (see pages 134-37 above). They resisted the missionary thinking and the rulers who claimed that people of African origin were inferior. They believed that this equality was denied in the institution of slavery. And twenty-seven years after emancipation, an editorial in the *Falmouth Post*, reflecting Native Baptist thinking, grounded freedom in God. It said, “the holding of hundreds of thousands of human beings in bondage, was contrary to the divine will of Him, who ‘made man after his own image.’ ” This editorial grounded belief in the equality of human beings on the Creation Story found in the Bible which stated, “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image’ ” (Gen. 1: 26). This position from a newspaper that normally supported the ruling class reflected the new reality whereby slavery was, in 1865, universally condemned. Therefore, the Bible was being interpreted to support the claim that all have equal right to freedom but this enlightened position was imitating a position previously articulated by the Native Baptists.

JNBMS pastor, William Legge of Rest Station, Clarendon also affirmed belief in the equality of all human beings, when he used a hymn that made reference to

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2 John Duff and George Lyon to John Dyer, Secretary BMS, 1/4/1837 in BMS Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park.

God's blessing pouring, not only on them but "on all mankind" 4 and Lyon understood the same when he quoted a hymn which stated that all, without distinction, needed to glorify God whether they be Indian tribes, sons of Africa or Europeans and wherever they were located, "From East to West, from North to South." He also anticipated the day "'when there shall be but one fold, under one shepherd.'" 5 All races were equal in the sight of God. Silva who had stations in St. Mary's expressed, in the hymn chosen, a similar sentiment:

Till ev'ry color- ev'ry clime,
Shall in his worship meet
And bring their prayers, their praise, their all,
An offering at his feet. 6

This hymn reflected equality at the feet of God irrespective of colour or location. Blackwell also expressed a comparable outlook through his hymn selection, which spoke about "all the chosen race" singing redeeming grace. 7 The European Christians thought they were the chosen race (see page 260 above) but the Native Baptists disputed that thinking through the hymns they quoted. These hymns heralded all as chosen by God to receive his favour and, therefore, reaffirmed the

4 First Annual Report 12.
5 First Annual Report 11. See also Legge of Rest Station, who affirmed belief in the equality of all human beings, when he used a hymn that made reference to God's blessing pouring "on all mankind": First Annual Report 12.
7 First Annual Report 25.
equality of all human beings. This affirmed also that all Christian believers were chosen and therefore all were equal in God’s eyes.

Gordon demonstrated his belief in equality in the eyes of God when he declared in the House of Assembly “‘the voice of the people is the voice of God.’”8 Gordon’s use of this well-known phrase from Latin idiom, vox populi, vox Dei, showed that he was elevating the cries and concerns of the ordinary people as a statement from God. The underlying suggestion was that the people have worth and dignity and their issues were of equal merit with those of the dominant class. The people were God’s children and could speak on behalf of God.

Gordon did not believe that one class of persons was better than another. On the day of the arrival of Prince Alfred of England, many churches cancelled their usual prayer meetings but Gordon’s Tabernacle was not closed.9 This action was based on the belief that at the feet of God all were equal and he and his members believed that their ministry was just as important as that of a visit of a royalty.

In addition to this, Bogle, Gordon, Warren, and other Native Baptists became members of the Anti-Slavery Society, which had its headquarters in London.10

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8 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864 (Spanish Town, 1865) 37.

9 Duncan Fletcher, Personal Recollections of the Honourable George W. Gordon, late of Jamaica (London, 1867) 72.

The identification with the Anti-Slavery movement was affirming their position of universal equality and that none should be enslaved. This commitment to equality led them to have messages from the Anti-Slavery Society read in Bogle's chapel and copies of the anti-slavery *Watchman* newspaper sold there. Moreover, English newspapers, which were favourable to the cause of equality, were "regularly reproduced here and are eagerly looked for. In some cases they were read and commented on in native chapels." Gordon, Bogle and others were part of the worldwide movement against slavery, which was still being practised in Puerto Rico, Cuba, USA and Brazil.

Gordon's belief in equality was also based on there being one God for Christians and Jews. In encouraging the House of Assembly, comprising a significant number of Jews, to censure Edward Eyre, Gordon said, "Whatever the creed, we do acknowledge one Father. I ask every class in this house, the Jew as well as the Gentile . . ."

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12 *JRC* Vol. 4 36. Also Hutton, *Colour* 173.


In addition to thinking that in the eyes of God all were equal, the Native Baptists held the view that all Christians were equal and all Christian denominations were of equal validity. Therefore, it was not surprising that Gordon was chairman of missionary meetings of other denominations. Fletcher noticed this feature about Gordon and said, “Mr. Gordon’s Christian sentiments were very broad and catholic. In a religious sense he was cosmopolitan.” This universal outlook was discernible based on Bogle’s ordination certificate of 5 March 1865, which stated that he was ordained “to the office of deacon in Christ’s church.” The ministry of the Native Baptists was not confined to Native Baptists or Baptists but to the worldwide church based on the fact that all needed salvation equally.

This attitude was also detected in prayers. John Davis said, “We pray that grace, mercy, and peace may be abundantly enjoyed by us, and by all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and that every Christian society may flourish in knowledge, love, and holiness.” Davis and his congregants had an ecumenical vision that all Christians, who truly love Jesus, would prosper in displaying

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17 Fletcher 53. See also Hutton who described Gordon’s “non-sectarian, non-denominational, non-partisan/open-minded view of Christianity”: Hutton, Colour 267. Hutton apparently used the term “non-sectarian” to mean non divisive. However, the use of the word “Sectarian” by the ruling class was usually derogatory, as Phillippo said, “The very term ‘sectarian’ served as a convenient synonyme [sic] for ignorance and persecution”: James M. Phillippo, Jamaica: Its Past and Present State (1843; Westport: Negro Universities P, 1970) 130. Sectarian was usually a term applied by Anglicans to non-Anglicans: George Bridges, The Annals of Jamaica Vol. II (1827; London: Cass, 1968) 297, 300-01.

18 JRC Vol. 5 871, 1150 and JRC Vol. 4 30.

19 First Annual Report 12.
virtues. They also believed that they should extend “a spirit of charity to similar
institutions” which “beareth all things and hopeth all things.” This quotation
was a reference to 1 Cor. 13: 7 which speaks of God’s love, that it “Beareth all
things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The Native
Baptists extended a hand of partnership to all who displayed God’s love.

More specifically, the Native Baptists at Stony Gut attended church services held
by English Baptists. After the 1865 uprising, Teall, freely connected with both
Native Baptist groups as he visited Killick’s Chapel and had a meeting “at the
corner of Paul Bogle’s burnt chapel” which was attended by the widows of Paul
Bogle and Moses Bogle, a “poor woman Livingston” and a man named Clarke. Teall
also preached “in a dilapidated building once occupied by a native
preacher.” This building at Church Corner, St Thomas was “the large
dilapidated chapel of Mr. Killick.” The Native Baptists felt a common identity
with the English Baptists because they were serving one God. All races were
equal in the sight of God.

Another crucial concept in Native Baptist spirituality was “family”. Therefore, at
a service, Teall quoted a man named Clarke as saying, “Fambly! This is a happy

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20 First Annual Report 3.


1866: 453.
day! We were without hope but God is good.” 24 This account reflected the
closeness, brotherhood, equality and oneness Native Baptists embraced. They
were a people of hope in spite of sufferings, because they expected a brighter
tomorrow as they bonded together as a family - both Native Baptists and English
Baptists.

Equality before the Law

The Native Baptists believed that they should be seen as equal before the law.
They believed that everybody has an equal right to a fair treatment before the law.
Having been subjected to discrimination by the law courts, they were exerting
their right to be heard in the courthouses as all others. Gordon felt that freedom
was a right, which was under threat and he proclaimed his entitlement to be
treated equally by law. 25

Samuel Clarke, Native Baptist leader, also agitated for equal treatment under the
law and aired his grievances at the Underhill Meetings. Underhill Meetings, as
they were called, were a consequent of a complaint about “the continually
increasing distress of the coloured people” written by Edward Underhill of the

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25 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General
Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of
October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd day of February, 1864 Vol. IX (Spanish Town, 1865)
143.
BMS to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Right Hon. Edward Cardwell. 26 Eyre invited custodes, judges, clergymen and others to give opinions to this Underhill Circular. 27 This led to the holding of meetings to discuss Underhill’s complaint. Meetings were held on 3 May 1865 in Kingston 28 and one in Spanish Town on 16 May 1865 29 and in Morant Bay on 12 August 1865. 30 At these meetings grievances were aired 31 and the statements of the Underhill Letter were “endorsed” 32 Clarke, at the Underhill Meeting in Kingston, asked, “Isn’t it time for the Negro to throw off his yoke and seek liberty?” He felt the Negroes were treated “no better than a beast” and charged also that the flogging bill was “only intended for the black man not for the white or colored man” and “the magistrates will act unjustly and send up a poor Negro for stealing a piece of cane to be flogged.” He also bemoaned that “taxes were only made for the black man and not for the white, there was one law for the black man and one for the white man, and they never receive any benefits from the Government.” 33 He felt that all persons should be treated fairly under the law.

27 Hume 144-47. Underhill, Life 326
28 JRC Vol. 4 230.
29 Underhill, Life 327.
30 JRC Vol. 4 529-30.
32 Underhill, Life 327
33 JRC Vol. 4 230.
Equality in fundamental needs

The Native Baptists also felt that all, irrespective of race, had the same human desire for salvation. Silva in his report on Pleasant Hill and Present Hill, St. Mary's said that “while compassion is felt for their friends and neighbours here, an equally powerful influence will be directed to the salvation of the poor, perishing, untutored Africa, to whom, according to the flesh, most of them allied.” 34 He felt a mandate to extend the Kingdom of God to all. Lyon, and his fellow Native Baptists, felt a mission to reach all peoples:

Then shall th' untutored Indian tribes,
A dark bewilder'd race, And Africa's unhappy souls
Adore, and feel his grace. 35

The Native Baptists believed that all persons had an equal need for salvation.

Also, Legge and Charles Dabney respectively moved and seconded a resolution, “That the experience of the past year affords fresh and pleasing incentives to fervent persevering prayer, that the God of all grace would crown all the operations of this and kindred institutions with the most success.” 36 These prayers indicated that they perceived themselves as legitimate ministers of the

34 First Annual Report 19.
35 First Annual Report 11.
36 First Annual Report 2.
gospel and they expected that God would honour their work and thereby publicly acknowledge their worth as pastors. Lyon challenged his Society to “pray more earnestly, that the great Lord of the harvest would send forth more labourers into his vineyard, for the harvest is great, but the labourers are few” \(^{37}\) which is a reflection of Matt. 9: 37-38 which states, “the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” The Native Baptists believed that God could use more of them to be ministers of the gospel so that those who needed salvation would obtain it.

Gordon bemoaned the spiritual apathy in Kingston whilst the Great Revival was spread throughout the country. He therefore, along with Duncan Fletcher, hosted an open-air meeting and thousands gained salvation. \(^{38}\) Gordon wanted all who needed salvation to hear the gospel.

**Justice**

Equality demands justice and justice presupposes equality. This understanding of justice was grounded in the biblical perspective with which the Native Baptists operated.

\(^{37}\) First Annual Report 10.

\(^{38}\) Fletcher 68-69.
Justice, or the lack thereof, was a matter of significance in the society of the 1860s. At a hearing of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Rev. Mr. D. Campbell, who became the rector in Morant Bay as of November 1865, said, “the grievance of which they chiefly complained was I think the state of the administration of justice.” 39 Barrister B. T. Williams, who was more concerned with Gordon than the African majority, admitted: “the dominant race in Jamaica has not, we fear, ruled with justice.” 40 The peasants felt they could not get justice in the local Courts on the issue of wages and on the rent they had to pay for the back lands, which they claimed belonged to them. 41 Other issues, which offended people’s sense of justice, included the Custos removing Gordon as a churchwarden of the parish on the grounds that Gordon was not a member of the Established Church. And to add insult to injury, the Vestry voted £250 for the purpose of defending the action brought by Gordon against the Custos. 42 The residents of St. Thomas were being called upon to provide expenses for the Custos, in an action brought against him, for attempting to dispossess them of the services of the churchwarden that they had elected. In addition, on instructions of the rector and the Custos of the parish, the Governor took from Gordon the office of magistrate. 43 Furthermore, Samuel Clarke was unseated from the Vestry by the

39 JRC Vol. 5 842.


41 JRC Vol. 5 842-43.

42 Williams, Case of George 9.

Custos because “he had gone through the Insolvent Court.” 44 Phillippo described this same Insolvent Debtor’s Act as “very arbitrary in its requirements.” 45 An additional grievance was the dismissal by the Governor, on the advice of the Custos, from St. Thomas-in-the-East of Mr. Jackson, Stipendiary Magistrate, who gave the apprentices a fair hearing. 46 The people were yearning for justice and justice was an important issue to the Native Baptists.

God as God of Justice

The Native Baptists were conscious about the need for justice. There was an indication from 1862 that justice was important to Gordon and Bogle. A Bible found in Bogle’s chapel read, “‘Presented by George W. Gordon to Mr. Paul Bogle, with [best] wishes.’ The date is 2 November 1862, and there is a reference to Isaiah xxx. Verse 18.” 47 One usually writes one’s favourite and most meaningful scriptural passage when making an inscription as part of a gift. This text usually reflected the mindset of both the giver and the receiver. Isa. 30:18 states, “And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.” This passage, therefore,

44 JRC Vol. 5 1149.
45 Phillippo, Jamaica 106.
46 Williams, Case of George 7 and JRC Vol. 4 227.
indicated that the God of justice was a significant preoccupation for Bogle and Gordon.

The Native Baptists maintained: God is "just," "true," 48 "righteous" 49 and summons all from south, north, east and west, to "hear his justice and the sinner's doom," and to receive dreadful judgment. 50 This Judge knows all things, and "to him all mortal things are known." 51 Bogle and his fellow Christians knew that they had to appear before the Judge. It was, therefore, very significant that Bogle had marked the Psalm, which states:

When I must stand before my Judge,
And pass the solemn test. 52

This Psalm 50 verse 2 confirmed that all must appear before God and receive his or her judgment. This idea runs through other marked hymns (57, 89, 136 and 140).

Another of the marked Psalms in his hymnbook that was found on him after his execution was Ps. 121, which assured victory over evil. 53 The idea of judgment

49 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 81. Psalm 143 ver. 1.
50 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 29. Psalm 50 ver. 1, 2, 4.
51 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 6. Psalm 11 ver. 3.
was essential. Native Baptists believed that the just God, who judges the world, would dispense fair judgment by rewarding the righteous and taking revenge on the ungodly.

The Psalms, especially those marked, gave expressions to the people’s hope in their time of oppression even as they awaited ultimate vindication from the oppressors. Like the oppressors, they too will have their reward. So that even if the oppressed did not get release in this life as they struggled for justice they will get it from God.

Bogle also felt he was the instrument of the justice of God. He believed God had chosen him so that good would triumph over evil. Bogle saw it as his mission to rescue the people from injustice. On Saturday, 7 October 1865, Bogle and his approximately twenty supporters rescued from the Police, Charles Geoghegan, a man committed to prison by Justices Walton and Bowen for disturbing the Court of Petty Sessions held at Morant Bay. As Geoghegan was exiting the courthouse, a policeman shoved him out of the building. Geoghegan complained and this resulted in a commotion. On Monday, in the Court of Petty Sessions, a man named Lewis Dick was tried for a trespass on Middleton Plantation,

53 Gleaner 3 Nov. 1865: [1].

54 JRC Vol. 4 535.


56 JRC Vol. 5 125 and JRC Vol. 4 509.
adjoining Stony Gut. The people at Middleton had been for many years under the impression that the property belonged to no one, and that they had a right to it. However, W. M. Anderson, Esq. claimed that Middleton belonged to him and the Magistrates convicted Lewis Dick on his own guilty plea. Paul Bogle immediately came forward and told the man not to pay any fine, but to appeal, which he did. 57 The justice issue had to do with who had entitlement to Crown lands.

The issue of rightful ownership of land was a vexed one. Samuel Clarke defiantly told the Honourable W. P. Georges, Custos and member of St. David's Vestry, that he should “give up a piece of land to a Negro” and he supported that position at the Underhill meeting held in Kingston on 3 May 1865 emphasizing that the Custos’ land was not his but “it was God’s land.” 58 The earth was the Lord’s and it was not fair for one man to have a large estate and a Negro was in need of a plot. What also irked Clarke was that Georges “planted canes upon God’s land over the graves of these poor black people.” 59 This act was perceived as an affront to God and insult to the Negroes. The Native Baptists believed that the land belonged to God and each person had a right to the land. Furthermore, they had a right to cultivate Crown lands and live off the produce. They agitated for a just distribution of land.

57 “The Rebellion in Saint Thomas in the East,” Colonial Standard 20 Oct. 1865: 2 and “Royal Proclamation,” Colonial Standard 29 Oct. 1865: 2. George Clarke said the defendant was Lewis Miller, who was deaf: JRC Vol. 5 125. While the Commission was in session in 1866, there was a disturbance at Hartlands, about five miles from Spanish Town concern whether the Negroes had a right to the lands on which they had located themselves: Underhill, Life 348.

58 JRC Vol. 5 1149.

59 JRC Vol. 4 230.
Justice for all

Justice demanded that those whose rights had been violated would be vindicated and the false prophets would be destroyed. Blackwell in giving the report on the station at Bethlehem, Vere, said, “A spirit of prayer has been poured out upon us, which will we trust produce the most happy consequences. The drops are falling, and already ‘there is a sound of abundance of rain.’ ” They believed that there was a relationship between prayer and prosperity of Jerusalem. The quotation relating to the “abundance of rain” was from 1 Kings 18:41 in which the prophet Elijah told King Ahab that prosperity was on its way because the false prophets of Baal had been defeated and killed. Bogle and his followers felt that God had delivered them. Therefore, after the protest on Wednesday 11 October 1865:

They had left for the Baptist Chapel to have a prayer meeting, and to thank God for their successes . . . one of their leaders addressed them, pointing to the favour which the Almighty had shown in delivering their enemies into their hands, and exhorting them to further acts of fanaticism as ordered to them by God for their deliverance. 61

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60 First Annual Report 24.
Though the editorial comment classified their actions as “fanaticism”, which was a prejudicial statement, it was the Native Baptists combining their Christian Faith with every day living.

Gordon consistently advocated resistance to oppressive governance. At the session of 8 February 1864, Gordon said, “If Eyre was [sic] permitted to continue in the colony, he would do still greater wrongs than he already committed, and he (Mr. G.) would heartily join the honorable member for Port Royal (Mr. Alberga), in any movement that would relieve the island of his Rule; but, as he had said before, discretion and time were necessary.” Gordon made that statement because he felt that David Ewart was unfairly dismissed by Eyre. Gordon had dismissed Ewart after the Privy Council examined his case and found no fault with Ewart. Eyre was also disrespecting and undermining the authority of the Privy Council.

When at the 21 January 1864 session of the House of Assembly, Gordon wanted to describe and highlight the “oppression”, “transgression” and “illegality” of Eyre, he used Scriptural imageries and said Governor Eyre’s *modus operandi* reminded him of the time of Herod and Eyre was “a second Nero.”

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63 *Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution* Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 207.

64 *Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution* Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 26, 62. By the 16 February 1864 Session, the entire House of Assembly was flabbergasted by Eyre’s actions: *Parliamentary Debates*
compared Eyre with the oppressive King Herod who in trying to kill Jesus, "sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under . . ." (Matt. 2: 16). Nero was the most hated Roman Emperor who persecuted the early Christians most viciously and murdered his mother and wife. Gordon raising parallels between Eyre, Herod and Nero showed the depth of depravity that Eyre was perceived to have fallen. This was also a comment of significance that Christians were in a struggle with an evil ruler who, in the name of justice, must be resisted.

Gordon also claimed that Eyre illegally appointed Mr. Parry as Colonial Engineer and Architect while Mr. Fonseca, who was legally and constitutionally appointed, was removed to prison. 65 And Gordon on a censure motion against Eyre on 13 January 1864 also expressed the view that Eyre was courting "a second Maroon War." 66 He further advocated that if the people were not heard on the matter of the wicked system of paying taxes for the Established Church from which they did not benefit, then "they will rise up and defend themselves." 67 Gordon

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65 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 207.


67 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864 Vol. IX (Spanish Town, 1865) 93.
supported the use of force under special circumstances. In a speech to the House of Assembly, he said:

Unless he is speedily removed, the country will be thrown into a state of confusion, by reason of his illegal conduct. When a Governor becomes a dictator, when he becomes despotic, it is time for the people to dethrone him, and to say: ‘We will not allow you any longer to rule us.’ I consider the proceedings of Mr. Eyre especially dangerous to the peace of the country, and a stop should at once be put to his most dogmatic, partial and illegal doings... it is time for the people to exclaim –‘Oh, the evil.’ 68

Gordon was advocating the use of force as a self-defence mechanism. This act of civil disobedience to remove the Governor by force was to protect and preserve the peace of the country. In the same speech Gordon gave the impression that the use of force or “open rebellion” was illegal when he said, “If an illegality is permitted in the Governor, an illegality may be permitted on the part of the people.” 69 Gordon could also be claiming that the use of force against an incompetent, despotic and oppressive governor was the lesser of two evils. Gordon was convinced that the use of force was desirable in dealing with the law-breaking Eyre. Gordon said, “If we are to be governed by such a Governor much longer, the people will have to fly to arms and become self-governing.” 70

68 Hume 126.
69 Hume 127.
70 Hume 129.
Gordon saw the use of force as justified in order to establish a just government and for self-governing purposes. Those who have been sullied and threatened have a responsibility to challenge unjust systems so that all can experience justice.

According to reporter George Fouche, Samuel Clarke at the Kingston Underhill Meeting on 3 May 1865, similarly challenged the system and said, “the taxation was a burden; that the Negroes was [sic] trampled under foot and bitterly oppressed by a wicked government and they should not submit to such things.” He also said the Queen’s Advice or proclamation was a “Damned red lie” because those persons had not seen the petition from the people of St. Ann, therefore “if the people had not their grievances redressed there must be a fight.” The Queen’s Advice was purported to be the Queen’s response to the distress of the peasantry in St. Ann. This advice did not deny the existence of dire hardships but it blamed that condition on the lack of industry and lack of prudence by the peasants. In addition, to the broadside on the Queen’s Advice, Samuel Clarke on 28 September 1865 insisted on taking his seat in the Vestry at St. David’s and when the Custos told him that he could not because he had passed through the Insolvent Court he responded, “If I am not allowed to take my seat we will fight for it.” Clarke, like Gordon, advocated civil disobedience.

71 JRC Vol. 5 1149.
72 Underhill, Life 329.
73 JRC Vol. 5 1149.
In fact, Gordon did not rule out an insurrection. Gordon declared, “when her Majesty’s ministers appoint as our Ruler a gentleman who is not capable . . . then it is time to protest.” 74 At the 21 January 1864 Session a Mr. Lewis mockingly stated that the natural follow-up to Gordon’s speech was insurrection. Gordon said “that will be the result. When all our laws are put at defiance, the populace will break out from discontent, and the Lieutenant-Governor will be unable to allay their fears.” 75 Protest was necessary and legitimate when there was abuse and incompetence.

Justice for all was a demand that each person receives what is rightly due to him or her. Justice for all was the fulfillment of the claim for legitimate redress for all.

**Justice as Vindication**

The Native Baptists also affirmed that justice had both a present practical relevance as well as future reference, that is, vindication. Gordon in bemoaning the injustice meted out to Stipendiary Magistrate Jackson and the oppression of the peasants declared, “the wicked shall be destroyed. This is decreed.” 76 There was a great confidence that at God’s command the wicked would be annihilated.

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74 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864 Vol. IX (Spanish Town, 1865) 37.

75 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 62.

76 JRC Vol. 4 229.
In addition, in a letter dated 18 September 1865, Gordon lambasted the lack of accountability in the Executive Committee of government and claimed that “the Lord will soon pluck his hand out of his bosom and so confound the whole band of oppressors. I believe this to be one of their last flickers.” 77 Gordon expected justice in his lifetime. He looked for the time when the Lord would soon scatter the Governor and his custodes like a chaff before the wind. 78 He expected judgment to start in the here and now. He saw God as all-powerful and disposed to dealing decisively with the lightweights who pompously pretend to wield so much political power. His expectation of swift justice made him envision the imminent demise of the rulers.

Gordon also knew God had passed judgment on the legislators who did not want to confront the unjust governor and he illustrated to the House that the writing was on the wall, by quoting “mene, mene tekel upharsin.” 79 This was a quote from the apocalyptic book of Daniel 5: 4, “This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” Gordon was conveying to the legislators

77 JRC Vol. 4 228.

78 JRC Vol. 4 228.

79 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd Day of February, 1864 Vol. IX (Spanish Town, 1865) 96.
that God had already passed judgment on their behaviour and they have already been defeated.

The Native Baptists expected justice in the after-life also. They believed that in the end they would be vindicated and receive a just recompense even if it was denied in this life. They lived in hope. Their vision of the end was glorious. In spite of fears and foes the Native Baptists had hope. Bogle’s marked hymns also spoke to that hope:

O Lord, how many are my foes
In this weak state of flesh
My peace they daily discompose
But my defence and hope is God. 80

This hope focused on the future but not at the expense of the present difficult reality. God was on the side of the oppressed and could be depended upon for liberation, justice, vindication and protection. This was not deferred justice but hope for liberation even in the next life.

80 Psalm 3: 1 see also Hymn 4: 5.
This hope would lead to ultimate vindication:

Hosanna to our conquering King!
The prince of darkness flies:
His troops rush headlong down to hell,
Like lightening from the skies.

Thy victories and thy deathless fame
Through the wide world shall run,
And everlasting ages sing
The triumphs thou hast won.  

The Native Baptists were expecting justice in the end. The forces of darkness and evil will be vanquished and the righteous will enjoy victory.

Bogle's marked hymns also reflected that he did not fear death even in the face of impending danger. This fearlessness in light of death was based on Jesus' victory over death, through his dying, resurrection and eternal reign. The Native Baptists had confidence in God knowing that all would be well in the end because of their unflinching faith. This fearlessness towards death was also a feature of Sam Sharpe and his leaders (see pages 257-59 above).

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81 Hymn 89: 3-4.

82 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 105. Hymn 44 ver. 6 (Part 1). Verse 5 of this hymn said, Jesus had "led the monster death in chains."
The hope they had, as displayed in the marked Psalm 3: 3, nullified the fear of
death, - “Not death should make my heart afraid.” 83 This was also evident when
Bogle, in recruiting followers such as William Anderson’s father of Font Hill,
advised that there was the possibility of death. 84 The Native Baptists were not
afraid to stand up for justice even though their actions could possibly lead to
death. Their apprehension about death was lessened because they anticipated
vindication.

George William Gordon also displayed a lack of fright of death during his court-
martial proceedings when he declared, “If I die I shall die triumphant.” 85 This
bold pronouncement on 21 October 1865 in Morant Bay, in front of his powerful
accusers who had already sent hundreds to their deaths demonstrated a hope in
God. When Gordon was faced with his looming death he claimed Paul’s words as
his own and said, “I can now say with Paul, the aged, ‘the hour of my departure is
at hand, and I am ready to be offered up. I have fought a good fight, I have kept
the faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which
the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me.’ ” 86 The Biblical reference is 2 Tim.
4: 6-8. In the end, God will console his persecuted servants by rewarding them
with eternal rest in heaven. Gordon approached death victoriously with the hope
of getting a just reward.

83 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 3
84 JRC Vol. 5 159.
86 David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866) 13.
Gordon also thought it was an honour to suffer for doing God’s work. He said:

It is, however, the will of my heavenly Father that I should thus suffer in obeying his command to relieve the poor and needy, and to protect, as far as I was able, the oppressed. And glory be to his name; and I thank Him that suffer in such a cause. Glory be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and I can say it is a great honour thus to suffer, for the servant is not greater than his Lord. 87

He could endure suffering and persecution because he expected a resurrection, similar to that which Jesus experienced. Bogle, James Bowie and George B. Clarke, Bogle’s son-in-law all knew of the suffering Gordon was experiencing, and in a letter dated 25 July 1862 to Gordon, they said, “All hearts burnt to hear the way you were treated for our cause. But in suffering there are conciliation [sic] for their [sic] is a rest is provide for those who toil and bear persecution for truth sake in heaven.” 88 Suffering will not last forever and there is a place of rest, called heaven, for all those who were weary from suffering.

88 JRC Vol. 5 1150.
Justice as Holistic

Justice covers all areas of life in individual and collective expressions and relationships. Justice was not only a feature of one's personality trait but ought also to be a trait of social relationships, practice and arrangement. Bogle's select hymn was a testimony to this understanding of justice:

Awake, my soul, awake, my love,
To serve the Saviour here below,
In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels, cannot do.

Awake, my charity to feed
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor:
In heaven are found no sons of need,
There all these duties are no more. 89

Bogle and his followers exercised a ministry that satisfied the material needs of the people, even as they awaited heaven where such needs would be no more. It was just for them to care for persons in need. This hymn selection is reminiscent of the judgment scene in Matt. 25: 31-46 in which Jesus said if you feed the

hungry and clothe the naked then you would have done it as unto him and would therefore be rewarded on Judgment Day.

There were other examples of caring for the less fortunate and vulnerable. After the destructive hurricane in the Bahamas in 1866/7, the Native Baptists collected eight dollars at the close of the service for the victims. They were motivated by "their own personal experience, they themselves having known what it was to be poor and homeless." They drew from their calamity of the oppressive reprisals that made them poor and homeless to express solidarity.

Also, an unnamed Native Baptist said that his church at Shortwood, which was poor, nevertheless gave. A feature of that church and others was that "no change of circumstances ever lessens their liberality." They were concerned for the total welfare of persons. There was Biblical precedent for such behaviour as recorded in 2 Cor. 8: 1-2, "Moreover, brethren, we do to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." They made sacrifices in support of the needy.


91 "Establishment of the Baptist Mission at Morant Bay," Baptist Magazine Dec. 1867: 816. The article mentioned "eight dollars". One would have expected the currency to be "eight pounds". Perhaps the currency used in the Bahamas was dollars.

Gordon closed his store on Port Royal Street while on a three-day prayer and fasting for the sins of Jamaica, and prayed:

Oh Lord, are not thine eyes upon the Truth
Thou has stricken them, but they have not grieved
Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction;
They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. 93

Gordon was exasperated by the hardness of the heart of the people and he realized that God had already spoken to them, but to no avail.

Gordon wanted Jamaica to be a righteous nation and so at the 5 November 1863 sitting, he said, "righteousness exalts a nation but sin degrades it." 94 This citation from Prov. 14: 34 meant that for Gordon right living must be a hallmark of the nation and justice cannot be separated from politics. This affirmation of, and interest in, country indicated God ought to be the foundation on which the nation was built.

At the opening of a new place of worship, the Native Baptists recognized that God ought to be the foundation on which to build. In the JNBMS Annual Report,


94 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd day of February, 1864 (Spanish Town, 1865) 94.
there were four Scriptural texts from which sermons were developed and all were utilized during the opening of a new place of worship in Spanish Town. Killick preached from Hag. 2: 7-8 while Duff took his text from Zech. 2: 10. At the third worship service for the day, Lyon took his text from Ps. 122: 7-8. On the following day, Monday 19 July 1840, Turner delivered his sermon based on Ps. 89: 15 and Duggan said, Turner "delivered a very impressive discourse, founded on the 89th Psalm, 15th verse, when all appeared to unite in the pious prayer of the Psalmist, 'Send now O Lord, we beseech thee, send us prosperity.'" The prayer request was based on a belief in a just God who desired that they prosper and that the churches grow. There was a connection between opening a physical building and spiritual growth. However, the contents of the sermon were not recorded in the Annual Report but since Scriptural texts are succinct indicators of the whole sermon it has been possible to get an idea about what was preached. From an examination of all four texts it was possible to unearth common themes. Ps. 122: 7-8 stated, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be with thee" while the first verse of this Psalm stated, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." David professed happiness for the house of God. The significance for the Native Baptists was that they were happy because they were opening their own chapel and no longer had to be in a struggle with Phillippo about a place of worship. The just God had made it possible for them to worship God in peace and unity.

95 First Annual Report 21-22.
The passage from Hag. 2: 7-8 stated, "And I shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." The book of Haggai was about the children of Israel being encouraged to build the temple unto God and God promising his presence to permeate the building, which would be glorious. The inhabitants of the house of God need not fear because God would terrify the nations, the enemies of God. He was a God whose wrath was poured out against the wicked. And he who has provided a place of worship for the Native Baptists, will protect them against evil persons.

The Biblical text from Zech. 2: 10 stated, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." Chapter 2 highlighted the measuring of the dimensions of Jerusalem and a statement that Jerusalem will be a town without walls and that God will protect the people and their possessions through his presence. The verse under consideration also addressed the issue of God’s presence, which was therefore, an occasion for much rejoicing. The Native Baptists need not fear because the just God will provide his assuring presence. A just God looks after the needs of his people.

Ps. 89: 15 stated, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord in the light of thy countenance." This is a psalm of praise to God for his loving care.

The Report also stated that at the chapel opening at the Half-way Tree, St. Andrew station on 27th of June, Duff proclaimed a favourite dictum, which called
upon God to “send now prosperity.” 96 The Native Baptists were eager for prosperity as reflected in church growth and unity. 97 And they felt that once God was with them then they would experience growth, peace and prosperity. And a just God will deliver on his promises.

The Report also recorded a deputation to Governor Charles Metcalfe. The Native Baptists assured him that their “warm and united prayers shall never cease to ascend to Almighty God, that his life may be long preserved.” 98 They prayed about mundane things such as a wish for long life for a friend. God was not far removed from their concerns and everyday matters. Justice affects all aspects of life especially of those in need.

**Justice as commitment to the rule of Law**

The Native Baptists wanted a better court system and so Bogle, as a Native Baptist leader, established an alternative justice system, at the petty sessions level, with justices of the peace, rules and regulations. 99 This justice system was an option to that which was unjust but still within a commitment to the rule of law.

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97 First Annual Report 12, 14-16, 18-19, 21-25.
98 First Annual Report iii.
99 JRC Vol. 5 1161 and Hutton, Colour 191. See also Heuman, Killing Time 184.
However, Hutton implied that Bogle was not committed to the rule of law when said that the protestors derived validation for the use of violence in Bogle's marked Psalms (see page 77 above). But an examination of the marked Psalm 11 in the Watts edition, and Ps. 11 in the Bible, gave a different impression. Watts’s hymn said:

If government be all destroy’d
(That firm foundation of our peace)
And violence make justice void,
Where shall the righteous seek redress. 100

This verse demonstrated a high regard for authority and for the maintenance of peace. In fact, the verse claims that God establishes governments in order that Christians can live in peace and obtain compensation when they were victims of injustice. This marked hymn was echoing the sentiments to be found in Rom. 13: 3, which states that governments are in place to maintain the peace and to dispense justice by punishing evil persons. Moreover, Ps. 11: 5 in the Bible states, “The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” In addition, the idea for the use of violence was not in the marked Psalm 143 3rd Version. 101 Therefore, there is no justification for the use of violence either in the marked Psalm or Psalm 11 of the Bible. Hence, there would

100 Watts, Psalms, Hymns 6. Psalm 11 ver. 2
101 I. Watts, Psalms, Hymns 81.
be no violent destruction of a government. Bogle and his followers had no intention and no motivation to be violent.

Gordon also displayed a commitment to law. In a letter dated 28 September 1865 that was laid before the Commission by Governor Eyre, Gordon wrote, “We shall have to go before Parliament with a strong petition, and attack the whole colonial system.”\textsuperscript{102} After describing the atrocities of the Eyre administration, on a motion for censure of the Lieutenant-Governor, Gordon called on the people to “protest” these infractions of justice and prudence.\textsuperscript{103} Gordon recognized that the colonial oppressive system was systemic and he attacked this edifice of the race and colour pyramid, which he regarded as inimical to the interests of the majority of the populace. He was also willing to try parliamentary means to accomplish justice.

Gordon used lawful means in challenging the oppressive conditions. Gordon exemplified this in a letter dated 8 July 1862 to Duncan Fletcher outlining his desire for constitutional change. Gordon asked him, in light of the corruption in Jamaica, to get an influential friend or a Member of Parliament to make representations to the Colonial Office.\textsuperscript{104} While Gordon admired the British

\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{102} JRC Vol. 4 229. \\
\textsuperscript{103} Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, Under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 24. \\
constitution and had an exalted estimate of the dignity, rights and privileges of British citizenship, he, however, felt that the local corrupt administration had prevented the majority from benefiting from the fruits of British legislation. 105

On 3 March 1864, Gordon said in the House of Assembly, “I stand up here tonight, as one of the sons of free Jamaica, to claim all the rights and privileges granted to us by the Magna Charter and the Bill of Rights.” 106 Gordon based his claim of freedom on the credentials of legal documents produced within British political history. There were other examples of Gordon attempting the legal route to seek redress against oppression. James Gordon (no relation) testified at the trial of Gordon that Gordon had the intention of sending a letter to the Queen about the peasantry’s distress or going on a deputation to the Queen. 107

Furthermore, an unknown missionary in a letter dated 20 November 1865 said he had read many accounts in the newspapers but he saw no evidence that Gordon was instigating violence and concluded that Gordon contemplated obtaining “redress and alteration by peaceable and legal means.” 108 That was an accurate assessment because Gordon, in one of his last letters to his beloved wife, said, “All I ever did was to recommend the people who complained to seek redress in a legitimate way . . .” 109 Gordon tried legal means to obtain justice.

105 David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866) 8.

106 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th Day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd day of February, 1864 Vol. IX (Spanish Town, 1865) 143. The correct spelling is “Magna Carta”.


109 King, Sketch 12
It was also observed that the Native Baptists attempted to change conditions through the legal, electoral route. After Gordon’s election in March 1863 as a member of the House of Assembly for St. Thomas in-the-East, he told Phillippo that credit for his election should be given to the Native Baptists and remarked “See what the Baptists have done here, the poor native Baptists, by peaceable means; they have raised at last a representative for the Baptists’ people and churches of all classes in this land.” \(^{110}\) The Native Baptists tried for change through peaceful, political representation.

Also at an Underhill meeting in Kingston, chaired by Gordon and with Joseph Kelly of the Watchman as Secretary, a resolution was passed which called upon “all descendants of Africa” in every parish to form themselves into Societies and hold public meetings to air their grievances. \(^{111}\) This shows that the Native Baptists were attempting to use legal organizational groupings as a means to obtain justice.

**Justice as Moral Integrity**

Justice demands ethical and fair behaviour. Bogle through his marked hymns


recognized the importance that "on earth let my example be." He also practiced financial accountability as demonstrated in the Memo of 12 July 1865, which outlined in detail the income and expenditure on Election Expenses. Ethical demands and proper lifestyle living were hallmarks of the Native Baptists. Bogle and others harmonized belief with behaviour.

In addition, Gordon also criticized unjust doctors and the clergy of the Established Church who he charged were "the most immoral men' in the whole island" and re-inforced that allegation at a 4 November 1863 sitting of the House of Assembly, when he claimed that "There are men among them who are living most disorderly, most improperly, and most indolent lives, and who are desecrating their high professions." At the same November sitting, Gordon introduced a Bill to repeal the 19th Victoria, chapter 6 (Clergy Act) because he wanted to abolish the concept of an Established Church, which he claimed was a system of bondage because the people had to pay £40,000 annually to sustain such an institution while the clergy were "not ministering to the necessities of the people, who pay large sums of money to enable them to pursue their sinful

\[112\] Watts, Psalms, Hymns 105. Hymn 44 ver. 6 (Part II).

\[113\] JRC Vol. 4 233.

\[114\] JRC Vol. 4 227.

\[115\] Hume 122.

\[116\] Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica. Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution: Comprising the Session Commencing on the 27th day of October, 1863, and Terminating on the 22nd day of February, 1864, (Spanish Town, 1865) 94.
indulgences.” 117 At the 19 January 1863 sitting, he denounced the rector of St. Mary and also rebuked the Suffragan Bishop for ignoring the wrongs. 118 He also remonstrated confidentially against a brother who was becoming a member of the Presbyterian Church in Kingston. He validated this unpleasant task by use of the scriptural passage; “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” 119 Gordon’s Christian principles led him to challenge religious persons to ethical living.

Gordon’s strictures were not confined to the clergy and doctors only. Immediately preceding the insurrection, Gordon asserted that governors ought to display integrity or be despised. He said, “if a ruler does not sway the sword with justice, he becomes distasteful, and instead of having the respect of the people, he becomes despised and hated.” 120 Gordon grounded that speech in Romans 13, which exhorted Christians to respect those in authority and to concede power to the authorities whom “bear eth not the sword in vain” (13: 4). He perceived the “sword” as a symbol for the proper administration of justice. However, while Gordon believed in respecting rulers, he interpreted Romans 13 with a caveat for

117 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 93-96.

118 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 48.

119 King, Sketch 10.

he believed that rulers could forfeit their right to rule and their right to respect.

For Gordon it was a Biblical duty to proactively defend personal integrity.

At the 13 January 1864 session, Gordon supported the censure resolution against Governor Edward Eyre for unprofessional performance. However, though he wanted Eyre removed and though after speaking at the 8 February 1864 Session, he again called for his removal, he would not do it unjustly. He said that Eyre had been guilty of many wrongs but he could not “act unjustly to anyone.” So he did not support the resolution claiming that Eyre had committed a breach of privilege by preventing Mr. Ewart from producing the correspondence between Eyre and the Colonial Secretary concerning his dismissal. Only Gordon argued that the restrictions on the servants of the Crown were not the act of Eyre but rather the system instituted by the Colonial Secretary when Darling was governor. Gordon also opposed the treatment of Ewart, who apart from being unfairly dismissed by Eyre as Agent-General of Immigration without due process, was unfairly placed in gaol by the House of Assembly for not submitting copies of all his correspondence with Eyre. He was even-handed in his condemnation of wrongs of the Governor and his fellow Assemblymen. For Gordon, religion was not ceremonial, but ethical. Therefore, morality was the outworking of a personal faith commitment to God and he had to act justly.

121 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 23.

122 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing from the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 196-98.

123 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From The Fourth Session of The First General Assembly, Under The New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 187. Hume defended Eyre’s actions as “justified” Hume 117. However, Hume does not supply the data for the basis of that conclusion.
Gordon felt that he should use his political office to “promote truth, righteousness, and piety” and he held that the role of the Governor was for fair administration so that “justice and righteousness, and consequently peace may result from his Government.” Justice demands that politicians be committed to moral integrity.

**Hermeneutic of Liberation**

The hermeneutical approach of the Native Baptists resembled the Reader – Response approach which is not restricted to the historical context of the text and what the author meant then or what the text meant then to an emphasis on what the text means to them in their interpretative community and their understanding of self and their experiences. For the Native Baptists, there was no distance between themselves and the world of the Bible and they felt that their situation and the situation of the Bible was one and the same. Wolfgang Iser called it “the convergence of the text and the reader” in which the reader often feels involved in events at the time of reading. For them, the selected Bible stories related directly to their experiences. They took their issues and realities to the Bible and expected answers from the Bible. The expectation was to garner insights from that interaction between readers and the Bible. This was determined by what comes out of the dynamics between the readers and the text.

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124 Parliamentary Debates of Jamaica, Commencing From the Fourth Session of the First General Assembly, under the New Constitution Vol. X. (Kingston, 1864) 61, 93.

Using this methodology, the Native Baptists were attracted to texts that addressed the themes of equality and justice. This approach interprets passages that address themes of liberation.

The Native Baptists, as an interpretative community, rejected the interpretation of the Bible and other Bible-related texts, which sought to legitimize their oppressive situation and encouraged them to accept their inhumane condition in life as God given. They were suspicious of the interpretations received from the missionaries. This hermeneutical emphasis on equality and justice, in a word, liberation, will be called a hermeneutic of liberation. This designation is to claim that the Reader-Response methodology as exemplified in the hermeneutic of liberation focused on the liberation of the people who were enslaved by inequality and injustices.

The identification of a hermeneutic of liberation is not entirely novel. Erskine identified a similar hermeneutic used by Sam Sharpe and his followers in the 1831 Baptist War. He called it a "hermeneutic of freedom." 126 Erskine did not detail what he meant by a hermeneutic of freedom, but this writer will not use that term to apply to the Native Baptists because, unfortunately, too often freedom is restricted to being perceived as the opposite of slavery only and not to freedom from other injustices. And since the Native Baptists operated in the

post-emancipation era it is better to use another word to describe their hermeneutic, that is, a hermeneutic of liberation. In addition, Burchell Taylor identified a Reader-Response approach grounded in Liberation Theology, which he identified as “Liberation Hermeneutics.” For him, liberation hermeneutics takes place “within community and by community grounded in a shared faith influenced by the experience of the situation in which they find themselves and engaging in Scriptures in shared discussions and reflections.” He differentiates it from the more traditional approach of reading the Bible for personal devotions to develop personal piety through instruction, inspiration, consolation, direction and encouragement. 127 Taylor was speaking generally about the hermeneutics associated with liberation theology and called it liberation hermeneutics. Hence he defined the laws of interpretation associated with liberation hermeneutics. This writer’s use of the hermeneutic of liberation is more specific and was related to the way the Native Baptists explained and interpreted Bible and Bible-related sources to focus on the issue of liberation as expressed through equality and justice.

The Native Baptists were not conscious of that they were using a Reader-Response approach as demonstrated in a hermeneutic of liberation. But in retrospect it is reasonable to claim that the Native Baptists were engaged in a Reader-Response approach as exemplified in a hermeneutic of liberation. As Taylor added, there are critics of this emphasis claiming that liberation

hermeneutics was “guilty of proof-texting, taking texts out of context and using it to shore up arguments.” However, what the Native Baptists were doing was transposing their context to the relevant contexts in the Bible. Therefore, out of the suffering the Native Baptists experienced, they would seek to identify passages in the Bible that resonated with their experiences, hoping that God would help in their quest for equality and justice. This approach is being identified as a hermeneutic of liberation.

The Native Baptists displayed noteworthy hermeneutical freedom. This was neither arbitrary nor careless but rather independent of the dominant hermeneutics, which among other things supported the oppressive conditions under which they lived. Such a hermeneutical freedom was often maligned as misinformed and leading to loose behaviour, superstitious beliefs and practices. However, the Native Baptists claimed their right to have their own interpretation of Scriptures and Scripture-related sources and their own understanding of God and protested those who tried to take it away or prohibit them from exercising their own hermeneutical approach. This hermeneutical method was both subversive as well as liberative.

Using the hermeneutic of liberation approach, it resulted in the Native Baptists opposing the injustices of colonial rule. Their hermeneutics was reflected and articulated in their preaching, debates, hymns, singing, prayers, meditations and events based on their recollection of history and their experience and

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128 Taylor, Liberation Hermeneutics 11.
understanding of God. They displayed resistance, rejecting the idea that they were inferior and claimed equality; they rejected the idea that Africans should be excluded from Christian ministry and affirmed that they wanted to preach the gospel locally and overseas. They rejected the idea that Christianity was merely ceremonial and proclaimed that it was also, and more so, ethical; they did not share the missionary thinking of dividing things into sacred and secular and divorcing social action from preaching and affirmed a holistic understanding of God and countenanced resisting unjust earthly rulers. They were also ecumenical in dealing with other church groups and rejected the narrow exclusivity of the missionaries. They also hoped that they would be completely vindicated. However, this resistance was restrained by a desire to reconcile with the oppressors hence, their willingness to seek a peaceful resolution first based on justice for all and equality of all.

Summary

The Native Baptists were Christians whose spirituality embraced equality and justice for all humans. Though they believed in the Christian hope of a new and better world order they also believed that a foretaste of that hope was possible in this life through the demonstration of equality and justice. They believed that God was on their side, the side of the oppressed and that judgment was passed on the failing order of the oppressors.
This hermeneutic of liberation that was used enabled them to read the Scriptures and Scripture-related sources through the perspective of their own situation and experience of being dominated. It enabled them to envision realities and possibilities that were alternatives to those imposed upon them by the oppressors and sanctioned by the oppressors’ interpretation of Scriptures and Scripture-related sources. The Native Baptists’ hermeneutical approach was deliberate and so afforded insights into their theological concepts and strategies for protest actions. This meant that they read the Scriptures through the lens of liberation.

This hermeneutic of liberation and its influence on the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War will be explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN: PRAXIS AND THE 1865 NATIVE BAPTIST WAR

The hermeneutics of the leaders of the Native Baptists and their followers illustrated how their reflection on their experiences in light of the Bible, as well as Bible-related sources, led to certain significant issues, which have been highlighted under two headings - equality and justice. The themes of equality and justice that were identified in the previous chapter from an examination of their hermeneutical approach formed the basis of inspiration for their major action and defining moment in the 1865 Native Baptist War. This decisive action also reflected the reality they represented.

It is the claim of this dissertation that the themes of equality and justice were played out significantly in the 1865 Native Baptist War. This, however, has been largely overlooked to a considerable degree in the various assessments of the war, - its causes and aims - from the nineteenth century until the present. It is surprising, given the role of religion in the life of the Native Baptists, that such a neglect could have occurred. From the documents, whether written by Bogle and his followers or other contemporary writers, the indication was that the Bible and other sacred literature influenced their deliberations and actions in the expression of their faith and understanding of their situation.

Some contemporary detractors insinuated that the Native Baptists’ involvement in the war might have been influenced largely by their inferior, even ignorant approach to the Bible, and some modern scholars claimed that there was no
discernable impact of a Biblical hermeneutic influencing their response to the events of 1865. These have been the dominant views concerning the conduct of Native Baptists in the 1865 Native Baptist War. Nevertheless, when the testimonies of the Native Baptists and their leaders were examined, their actions and responses, as far as the upheavals were concerned, could be said to have been influenced greatly by their understanding of the Scriptures and Scripture-related sources. This meant that their hermeneutical approach and reflection were inseparable from the practical outworking of their faith. This hermeneutic of liberation led them to resistance and at the same time to hope for reconciliation grounded in equality and justice.

Therefore, this writer justified claims that the Native Baptists' consuming passion was liberation. They viewed issues and events through the lens of liberation. As the Native Baptists engaged in praxis or action, the goal was transformation of the situation through liberation. This hermeneutic of liberation, with a foundation of equality and justice, influenced the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War.

**Nature of the Native Baptist War**

The leadership core involved in the 1865 Native Baptist War were leaders within the Native Baptist Communion, namely Paul Bogle, Moses Bogle, James M'Laren
and James Bowie. ¹ George William Gordon was a leader within the Native
Baptist Communion but he claimed he was unaware of the protest of 1865 and
did not sanction it. ² He was nevertheless an “intellectual force” behind the
protest. ³ In addition, he was a business, political and spiritual partner of Paul
Bogle, the leader of the protest. Furthermore, there is little doubt, that based on
Gordon’s agitation in the House of Assembly; at the Underhill Meetings and on
other occasions, the protestors may have felt that Gordon was supportive of the
protest action of 1865. Moreover, the present-day Jamaican people associate
both Bogle and Gordon as primary leaders and heroes of the 1865 resistance.
Therefore, in this study Gordon is associated with the 1865 Native Baptist War
and along with the other leaders, helped to determine the tone and goal of the
resistance.

Different Methodology

One recognizes that there is no perfect methodological approach in attempting to
ascertain what took place, what were the motivating factors and what were the
designs. Shirley Gordon highlighted an omission in the Jamaica Royal
Commission Report, which “either did not recognize or chose to ignore the

¹ JRC Vol. 5 157, 246, 1150.
1994) 148-49 and David King, A Sketch of the Late Mr. G. W. Gordon, Jamaica (Edinburgh, 1866)
13.
³ Clinton Hutton, “Colour for Colour: Skin for Skin: The Ideological Foundations of Post-Slavery
religious impetus in the district protests of October 1865.”  

A reliance, therefore, on the JRC to reconstruct what motivated the events will lead to an oversight of the religious input. In addition, the Commissioners showed bias toward Eyre and his declaration of martial law when they said, “We have endeavoured therefore to place ourselves as far as possible in the position of the Governor and his Advisers at the time their determination was arrived at.”  

Another major challenge is to decipher what testimonies about the nature of the Native Baptist War were true. Some testimonies were not true (see page 96 above) and some were not corroborated.  

There were many views of the Native Baptist War in the 1860s, from the lurid to the insignificant. Thomas Harvey and William Brewin outlined the challenge in trying to determine the intentions of Bogle and his followers. They said, “It is impossible to ascertain the exact truth respecting the designs of Paul Bogle, and those who consulted and acted with him, since none of them survived . . .”  

Therefore, all that can be done is to derive “reasonable inferences from known facts.”  

These reasonable references about their intentions will be derived, not from their detractors, but mainly from the only known letter written by Bogle and his followers, and Bogle’s speech recorded in the Jamaica Royal Commission

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5 JRC Vol. 4 537.

6 JRC Vol. 5 156, 1037.

7 Thomas Harvey and William Brewin Jamaica in 1866 (London, 1867) 22.
Report that addressed the issue of intention of the protests. Consistent with the approach of this thesis it will place greater weight on what the Native Baptists wrote and said to determine what their intentions were. It seems to this writer that it would be better to rely on the testimonies of the Native Baptists who have, up to this point, proven to be reliable witnesses and trustworthy persons.

In addition, great significance will be attached to an unknown writer whose works, *The Insurrection* and *The Troubles in Jamaica* have been unexamined; to Thomas Harvey and William Brewin, Quakers who visited Jamaica and who wrote *Jamaica in 1866*; to Wesleyan Henry Bleby's *Reign of Terror* and Underhill's classic, *Tragedy at Morant Bay*. Underhill had contacts in Jamaica and supported his statements from official documents. Underhill's perspective must be greatly valued because, as Secretary of the BMS, he would have been in contact with the missionaries concerning what was happening and since the BMS was known for its support of the status quo, any favourable view of the protestors would more than likely be credible. The added value of Underhill, Harvey and Brewin was that they were familiar with Jamaica, having visited the island. Harvey made his second visit to Jamaica in 1866. Furthermore, Harvey and Brewin visited some sites associated with the Native Baptist War. 9 Bleby (1809-

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8 H. R., *The Insurrection in Jamaica* [London, 1865] 3 in UWI Library. This pamphlet was estimated to have been published in 1865 because its concluding paragraph said, “peremptory orders should be sent out instantly to stop the wholesale murders going on under the cover of martial law”: H. R., *Insurrection* 8. And since martial law ended in November 1865 then the pamphlet was written before then. A newspaper account while agreeing with the events as recorded by H. R. provided more details: "Royal Proclamation," *Colonial Standard* 29 Oct. 1865: 2.

9 Harvey and Brewin 11-15.
1882) lived in Jamaica for at least thirty-three years and wrote many books about Jamaica. All five authors provide sober analysis, reasoned judgment and mature reflection on the Native Baptist War and most were written after the Jamaica Royal Commission Report. Four of the authors wrote outside of the time period when passions ran high in Jamaica. And the other author H. R. wrote two pamphlets, which were the first known published attempts at recording the events of 1865, one of which was before the JRC held its meetings. These writings demonstrate that from the nineteenth century there was an alternative view held by a significant minority concerning the 1865 Native Baptist War.

These alternative positions were not an attempt at hagiography of Bogle and his followers, since H. R., deplored the actions of Paul Bogle and his followers as taking “the law into their own hands” and stated that they “ought to be visited with condign punishment.” Bleby also alleged that Bogle and his followers were an “excited and misguided people” who very unwisely resisted the “illegal apprehension without a warrant” and said that they “acted unadvisedly” and took “an unwise course to obtain redress of their grievances” by marching into Morant Bay and eventually resisted “violence with violence.” Bleby also said although

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10 Rev. Mr. H. Renton, leading Presbyterian missionary, whose first name and surname were the same initials as H. R., was a friend of Gordon and while convalescing was a houseguest of Gordon and his wife. He met the Gordons in 1855 and was aware of 1865 Native Baptist War: King, Sketch 7. In 1861, Renton’s station was at Mount Olivet: Fletcher 66. The writings of H. R. fit the tone and sentiments of Rev. Mr. H. Renton. This writer assumes that they are one and the same person.


they were provoked, he “strongly reprobated” them for their “lawless deeds” and “savage violence.” 13 Bleby’s published work, three years after the upheaval, was to counter the widespread “ignorance concerning the disturbances” and “to exhibit the truth in defence of a deeply wronged and slandered people . . . who are meek, longsuffering, and forgiving race, and not the monsters of cruelty and vengeance they have been represented . . .” 14 Pride of place was given to his book because he lived in Jamaica during the 1831 Baptist War and the 1865 Native Baptist War.

Others who gave a different perspective included William Murray, a native Methodist missionary based in Bath (see page 83 above). In addition, even those who claimed that Bogle and his followers had murderous intent were aware that there was an alternative view. W. P. Georges, Custos of St. David, said “It has been stated that Paul Bogle and his accomplices were, on the 11th October, on their way to Morant Bay court house for the purpose of delivering up to the authorities the men which had been previously rescued by Bogle and others.” 15 Also, in 1866, Bedford Pim, leading member of the racist Anthropological Society, was upset that Gordon was described as a martyr and rebuked the “shallowness

13 Bleby, Reign of Terror 44.
14 Bleby, Reign of Terror A2.
15 JRC Vol. 4 93.
and impiety of those who have dared to compare the wretched Gordon with St. Stephen, nay even with our Saviour himself . . . " 16

There has also been a re-think about Bogle in modern scholarship and also additional views about the ways in which protest can be perceived. Holt moved away from the view of perceiving Bogle’s intentions as violent and speculated that one possibility was that Bogle went to Morant Bay either to submit to arrest or to file a protest (see pages 79-80 above).

In addition, Paul Lehmann, theologian, brought the term “militant nonviolence” into the discussion about revolutionary groups. Lehmann, who examined the relationship of Christianity to the revolutionary ferment of the USA in the 1960s, mentioned a shift in policy in “the Black Revolution” from “passive resistance to non-violent protest to militant nonviolence.” 17 This categorization heightens the possibility that the actions of Bogle and his followers could be also seen as “militant nonviolence.” Additionally, Sheller rejected the dualistic categorization of protests as “either violent rebellion or hidden resistance,” and advocated for “a third realm”, called “non-violent resistance” of which the main architects were the churches. 18 Sheller has also opened the possibility for perceiving Bogle and his followers as engaging in “non-violent resistance.”


This alternative view is worth examining again in light of the discovery of a biblical hermeneutic of liberation that informed the response of the Native Baptists. There will be a re-examination of whether the killings were pre-meditated, and whether the protest was motivated by racial considerations and a desire to overthrow the central government.

This alternative view has been over-ruled, suppressed and largely overlooked. Bleby claimed that Eyre “suppressed the petition of complaining Negroes” and made “no mention of it in his official dispatches to the Colonial Office.” Bleby also said that for many months the whole population was paralyzed so that “many persons feared to write to their friends and multitude” and “were afraid to speak upon passing events to each other . . . lest being overheard they should be dragged to prison . . .” Gordon said Murray would have written more freely if he were in England. There was fear on the island. Fear facilitated the suppression of minority views.

**Dominant View**

According to the JRC, “the origin and outbreak of the Disturbances” was not caused because “the rate of wages was low” but due to “the unwillingness to

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labour for more than a limited time” and further added that those who were leaders in the protest didn’t “belong to the labouring class” but were peasants who were in “better circumstances than the ordinary labourer” and desired to obtain “free from the payment of rent” for certain “‘back lands.’” 22 Therefore, it was argued, the grievances of the protestors were groundless.

Furthermore, the colonial appointed Commissioners, H. K Storks, Russell Gurney and J. B Maule, said that the letter written by Bogle and nineteen others was “a manifesto preparatory to and attempting to justify a recourse to violence.” For the Commissioners, “the leaders of the rioters” had a “preconcerted plan, and that murder was distinctly contemplated.” 23 They said, the protestors who “were armed with various kinds of weapons,” cried, “We want blood” especially “‘we want the Buckra men to kill.’” There was also a threat to rape the women, “we don’t want the women now; we will have them afterwards.” 24 The murderous intentions were clear when the “the first thing done was to attack the Police Station, and to obtain possession of the arms” and making an unsuccessful attempt to obtain gunpowder. 25 There was murderous intention even after the initial protest on 11 October when on the 15 October, Bogle told 100 men at the
Mount Lebanon chapel to get “their arms loaded” on hearing that soldiers were coming. In addition, the ultimate goal was to plunder and take control of the country, and the drilling was military training to achieve that purpose. The findings by the Royal Commission have largely informed the predominant view about what was planned and executed on 11 October 1865. Gardner’s *History of Jamaica* echoes the views of the Jamaica Royal Commission and quotes the JRC extensively. The leading British people of letters, such as Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson and Thomas Carlyle supported Eyre while those perceived as radicals such as Charles Darwin, Goldwyn Smith and John Stuart Mill were sympathetic towards the cause of the protestors and Gordon. There were also many contemporary writers who subscribed to the view that Bogle and his followers were violent and had murderous intentions including a host of clergymen, who supported Eyre. In a letter dated 6 January 1866, Jonathan Edmondson, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missions, on behalf of seven ministers including English Baptist Samuel Oughton, Anglican Enos Nuttall and Presbyterian William Gardner, commended Eyre for his “prompt, energetic and decisive measures” that he enacted and blamed “the teachings of ignorant and wicked men” who fanned the flames of “sedition”. They regretted the loss of life and were aware that some innocent persons were killed but

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26 *JRC* Vol. 4 515.

27 *JRC* Vol. 4 513-14.

28 Gardner 474-79.

claimed that Eyre's "general policy" was "absolutely necessary." 30 In addition, the Bishop of Kingston, G. B. Brooks, three Archdeacons, seventeen rectors, forty-one curates wrote to Eyre saying, "We fully share in the conviction general in this Island, that your promptness, decision, and energy have, under God's blessing saved Jamaica from probable ruin." 31

Additionally, many newspapers of the day gave currency to the view that Bogle and his followers were marauding murderous people. 32 Bogle and his fellow preachers were perceived as "a class of men, we admit, who are very much to be despised, who are a source of evil." 33 Bogle and his followers were perceived as evil and brutal. Therefore, with the official colonial inquiry, influential British thinkers, most missionaries and the newspapers supportive of Eyre and perceiving Bogle and his protestors as murderers, it was not surprising that this perspective of the events became the dominant position. Understandably, it is this position that has dominated modern scholarship about the 1865 Native Baptist War. Heuman, for example, "relies heavily on the evidence presented to the Jamaica Royal Commission." 34 Scholars such as Heuman, Hall, Hutton, Semmel stated that the protestors were violent and had violent intentions (see pages 77-79 above). This classic view has stood the test of time with Heuman's

30 JRC Vol. 4 472-73.
31 JRC Vol. 4 484.
32 Bleby, Reign of Terror 44
33 Morning Journal 16 Jan. 1867: [2].
34 Heuman, Killing Time xix.
book as the authoritative text providing “more detail on the outbreak and the spread of the rebellion.” No great work, excepting Holt’s *Problem of Freedom* has since attempted to examine this post-emancipation protest as anything but motivated by murderous intent.

Furthermore, in modern Jamaica, there have been unfair comments about Bogle and his followers. As recently as 2003, Henry accused Bogle and his people as behaving as cannibals (see page 78–79 above). This is not a widespread view among scholars. However, the standard works claim that the uprising was pre-meditated.

**Pre-meditated? Race War? Revolution?**

Part and parcel of this universal view that has dominated how the Native Baptist War has been perceived is the view that the killings were pre-meditated. The charge of pre-meditation was based on the statements mainly given as evidence at the JRC, military type drills, oath-taking, meetings, the visit to the Police Station before the march in order to obtain armaments and the contents of a letter signed by Bogle and nineteen others.

Heuman said Bogle and his followers had violent intentions (see page 78 above) He also added that Bogle’s supporters had “some arms” when they entered

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Morant Bay. These statements tend to strengthen the view that the killings were pre-meditated. The Commissioners believed that some unnamed persons wanted "to kill all the white men and all the black men that would not join them." One newspaper report alleged, "The plan of the rebels is to murder all the whites and coloured men first, then the children; and to keep the women as servants and for their own pleasure." According to this view, murder and rape were on the agenda of the Native Baptists.

However, Harvey and Brewin called the statement about "a general conspiracy" to murder "the white and coloured inhabitants" as "the most alarming rumours" and they even claimed that "the proof before the Royal Commissioners entirely failed." The Baptist Magazine, an English Baptist periodical, seemed to corroborate this statement, saying it was not premeditated, "Except on the first day, there was no fighting or killing on the part of the Negroes: and this was altogether unpremeditated, evidently resulting from the passion and excitement of the moment, when they were fired upon, as they thought illegally, from the courthouse of Morant Bay." Bleby said, "they did not injure, or attempt to injure, any individual, until they were fired upon, and a considerable number of

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36 Heuman, Killing Time 89.
37 JRC Vol. 4 509. See also Gardner 477.
39 Harvey and Brewin 23.
them killed or wounded.” 41 Bleby also said it was not pre-mediated, “The conclusion to which we are brought by a fair consideration of all that has come to light is, that the assembling of the mob, upon the 11th October, was an unpremeditated and ill-judged act, consequent upon the injudicious and culpable proceedings of the local authorities.” 42 These statements challenge the often-held view that the killings were pre-meditated. In addition, the plan to rape the European women was a fabrication. 43

The ruling class tried to depict Bogle and his followers as brutal by naming the influential persons who were killed and also describing the killings as barbaric. The Colonial Standard, a pro-planter newspaper, reported that Rev. Mr. Foote, Wesleyan Clergyman, was killed 44 which was later retracted. 45 Another report stated that the son of the rector, Stephen Cooke, Clerk of the Peace and Dr. Gerrard, surgeon to the district were killed. However, on the same page it stated, “before going to Press we learned that Dr. Gerrard and Mr. Cook [sic] the Clerk of [the] Peace, have not been killed.” 46 Another report in the Colonial Standard said:

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41 Bleby, Reign of Terror 37.
42 Bleby, Reign of Terror 37.
43 “Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine Jan. 1867: 51.
They dug out the eyes of almost every one they murdered, they cut the tongue out of the Rev. Mr. Victor Hershell, cut his throat, and partially skinned him; they also murdered a black gentleman Mr. Price in cold blood, and in the most barbarous and brutal manner, and then ripped open his bowels (this was done by the women;) after which they cut his throat. 47

These allegations were not substantiated. It was also discerned from then that there were attempts to fabricate stories, “there is no evidence to sustain the charge, except such wild rumours as generally gain currency in moments of extreme terror. We take leave, therefore, for the present to suspend our belief as respects the alleged atrocities.” 48 According to H. R., there were similar fabrications by the authorities in the aftermath of the Indian mutiny. There were stories of mutilations and tortures, which later turned out to be “absolutely without foundation.” He added that even Governor Eyre in his dispatches was “careful to note that the alleged barbarities rest on rumours.” 49 In addition, *Siecle*, a foreign newspaper, noted the “looseness of the reports as to the alleged barbarities.” 50 Moreover, professor of history at Oxford, Goldwin Smith,


50 H. R., *Insurrection* 3. See also Eyre who said, “The women, as usual on such occasions, were even more brutal and barbarous than the men”: Bleby, *Reign of Terror* 43.
chairman of the public meeting at the New Road Baptist Chapel, Oxford on 17 December 1866, said:

The vast atrocities which in the first wild paroxysm of alarm were imputed to the Negro, and which formed the pretext for the most dreadful severities, such as drinking the brains of a slain white mixed with rum, were afterwards disproved, and so were the alleged outrages upon women. On the other hand, the worst atrocities imputed to the whites unfortunately cannot be disproved, for they are attested by the damning evidence of their own reports. 51

These allegations of barbaric killings were false. In fact, Bleby said it was the British army who engaged in “revolting barbarities” upon the dead. 52

The killing of Mr. Hire, owner of an estate, after the initial protest has been used as an argument to suggest that there was a plan to engage in a massacre. But Bleby had a different interpretation claiming that it was “ill-disposed persons”

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51 “Mr. Goldwin Smith on Baptist Missions in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine Jan. 1867: 51. Harvey and Brewin said the mutilations of the dead were proven false before the Jamaica Royal Commission: Harvey and Brewin 24. Underhill said the JRC found that the outrages on the dead “has no existence”: Edward Underhill, The Tragedy of Morant Bay: A Narrative of the Disturbances in the Island of Jamaica in 1865 (London, 1895) 52. H. R. said, “no evidence to sustain charges of outrages”: H. R., Insurrection 3. See another denial of those charges: Bleby, Reign of Terror 43.

52 Bleby, Reign of Terror 43. Goldwyn Smith said the same thing.
and "disorderly people" who took advantage of the occasion to retaliate for past grievances. 53 It was not part of Bogle's plan.

The Commissioners seemed to dismiss the faith of the Native Baptists and its role in motivating their actions. The Commissioners juxtaposed "murders" with worship, "It was proved that after the murders Bogle returned to Stony Gut, and that there was a service in his chapel in which he returned thanks to God." 54 The intention, apparently, was to demonstrate that the Native Baptists were informed by a misguided understanding of God and indeed had a murderous intent. It was, therefore, not surprising that some unnamed persons lambasted the Native Baptists as "psalm singing apostles of butchery in the name of Divinity" 55 and that "After half an hour spent in psalm singing by those blood-stained wretches, one of their leaders addressed them, pointing to the favour which the Almighty had shown in delivering their enemies into their hands." 56 They were classified as nothing more than Christian mercenaries. But the evidence was that the Native Baptists' beliefs were genuine and orthodox (chapter four) and that their guiding principles were based on equality, justice and a hermeneutic of liberation (chapter six).

53 Bleby, Reign of Terror 44.
54 JRC Vol. 4 512.
The Commissioners said it was very important to ascertain whether “the killings were premeditated murders” or “an accidental riot . . . when passion was excited in the heat of the contest, by the killing of opponents,” or “a planned resistance to the constituted authorities.” 57 However, in the seven conclusions made by the Commissioners not one said the killings were pre-mediated. 58 This is surprising, and somewhat confusing, as earlier in the summation they claimed that there was “a preconcerted plan.” 59 Of the three things that were very important to investigate only one did they confirm in their conclusion that is “the disturbances in St. Thomas-in-the-East had their immediate origin in a planned resistance to lawful authority.” 60 This conclusion cannot be elevated to mean that the killings were pre-mediated because it is possible to have a planned resistance to authorities without there being a plan to kill persons.

An editorial comment from August 1865 by a pro-planter newspaper said “we are confident that the labouring classes of the population of the island, would not, as a body, resort to force for the accomplishment of any subject in which they were interested.” 61 The people were known for their “traits of forbearance” even in the “very tempest - the whirlwind of passion.” 62 Mr. Heslop, Attorney General, and

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57 JRC Vol. 4 510.
58 JRC Vol. 4 538.
59 JRC Vol. 4 512.
60 JRC Vol. 4 538.
62 H. R., Insurrection 3.
Mr. Anderson, Clerk of the Peace for Portland, both swore that the Africans were not violent persons though they would defend themselves if attacked. 63 This characterization of the African was consistent with the attitude of the eighteenth century Africans for whom “Murder is with most of them esteemed the highest impiety.” 64 The people were known for their restraint and did not have a history of engaging in pre-meditated murders.

There is a credible body of literature that suggests that the killings were not premeditated. Nevertheless, the argument in support of the idea that the killings were pre-meditated was not only based on the testimonies of a few persons but was also based on the meetings that Bogle convened, the drills and the oaths administered. Although Gardner followed the position of the Jamaica Royal Commission, he recognized the dissonance between claiming that the killings were pre-meditated and the reality that it was a very short time between the 7 October and 11 October for there to be meetings and drills which would be preparatory to the march into Morant Bay and plans to engage in pre-meditated murders. Gardner, who relied exclusively on the Jamaica Royal Commission Report, admitted, “whether the events of the 7th precipitated the plans of the leaders will perhaps be never known . . .” and speculated that “there is some evidence to the effect that Christmas time had been spoken of as a period of


action.” The best that Gardner could do was a conjecture. His theory appears to be that Bogle and his followers were planning an attack in December but the October 7 events brought forward those plans.

The meetings held by Bogle and his followers were perceived as ominous. However, Underhill said the meetings were held after the rebuff in August by Eyre. It was to be expected that Bogle and his followers would meet to discuss the problems and the possible solutions after not getting an audience with Eyre.

Semmel said the “illegal drills,” had sinister motives. Heuman claimed that “the well-ordered march to Morant Bay . . . reinforced the view that this was a carefully planned operation.” The theory was that Bogle was drilling an army to engage in violent acts. However, there were examples of drilling in Jamaica that had no sinister motive. Heuman in reference to drilling in Trelawny, Elizabeth, St. Dorothy, Westmoreland, said “much of the drilling . . . seemed harmless in retrospect.” Sheller also mentioned that there were drillings in Kingston that were associated with religious practices. In addition, the official investigation

65 Gardner 477.
66 Underhill, Tragedy 62.
68 Heuman, Killing Time 89, 184. Heuman did not provide any reference to show that drilling was engaged in by Bogle and his allies in order to engage in violence. In addition, no witness before the JRC made any such claim. Therefore, Heuman’s comment is an interpretation.
69 Heuman, Killing Time 108.
70 Sheller, After Democracy 201-02.
claimed that in two or three unnamed parishes, “As regards the drillings it was
found upon investigation at the time that they were wholly unconnected with
illegal objects.” 71

Underhill interpreted the drillings at meetings by Bogle and his followers as
“harmless amusement and well known to the authorities” and that the outbreak
was a spontaneous protest march with short time for preparation. 72 Although
Heuman claimed that the drilling in St. Thomas in the East was different from
what was happening in other parts of the island, based on the comment of
Underhill that Bogle’s drillings were harmless, it is possible that the drillings by
Bogle and his allies were similar to those in other parts of the island that were not
detrimental. Therefore, this writer agrees with the position of Underhill.

Heuman claimed the oaths were accompanied with violent threats (see page 78
above). Paul Bogle administered the oath to George Thomas using a Bible. 73 He
also gave George Lake a Bible into his hand for him to take an oath and Lake was
told to tell “the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.” 74 Bogle
was linking truth telling, the Bible and oath taking (see page 214 above). The
quotation recalled words associated with the oaths within the colonial justice

71 JRC Vol. 4 536.
72 Underhill, Tragedy 135.
73 JRC Vol. 5 1038.
74 JRC Vol. 5 1036 and From our Special Correspondent, “The Outbreak in Jamaica,” The Times
30 April 1866: 9.
system. Bogle was using that which was noble in the colonial justice system to encourage his supporters to be faithful to the cause of justice.

A newspaper reporter speculated that there were two oaths taken by Bogle and his followers, “One of them pledging to secrecy; the other binding to some plan of action, but though many of the Negroes admitted before execution that they had taken these oaths, none would disclose their terms.” Since none of Bogle’s supporters disclosed the content of the oaths, it means that claims about the intention and meaning of the oaths are conjecture and interpretation.

Oaths were binding especially for a noble cause. Bogle and his protestors believed fervently in them and would rather die than dishonour the cause. Based on the oaths administered by Bogle, there was nothing menacing about the oaths. The Commissioners concluded that two or three weeks before the protest oaths were taken at meetings held in houses in the neighbourhood of Morant Bay but the “terms of the oath were not shown” and decided that “All that was proved before us respecting it was that an oath was administered, a pledge of secrecy required, and the names of the persons sworn registered.” Taking an oath outside the government’s justice system was an act of defiance. However, neither the newspaper report nor the JRC provided any evidence of evil intent in the taking of the oath on a Bible. It appears that the taking of oaths was another


76 JRC Vol. 4 510.
demonstration about the importance of the Bible in the affairs of the Native
Baptists, and as Heuman also said oath taking in 1865 was “a fusion of religion
and politics” (see page 67 above).

Another argument used to suggest that they had murderous intention was the
charge that they went first to the Police Station to get arms and ammunition (see
page 77 above). The Commissioners and Gardner also made that allegation. 77
However, H. R. gives a different account, claiming that it was only after the
Volunteers fired on the people that they raided the “police-barracks” and took
arms and ammunition. 78 George Lake who said Bogle forced him to be a member
of his party by threatening to shoot him testified that “I went with him, and when
I went, by the time he was going in past [sic] the station, coming down, I was
obliged to make him a fool.” 79 Significantly, Lake who was traveling beside Bogle
claimed that Bogle went pass the Police Station.

There is conflicting evidence about whether the killings were pre-meditated and
whether certain actions were evidence of intent to kill. This writer sides with
Underhill, H. R., Bleby, Harvey and Brewin who claimed that the killings were
not pre-meditated.

77 JRC Vol. 4 509, 511 and Gardner 477.

78 H. R., Insurrection 2-4.

79 JRC Vol. 5 1037.
RACE WAR?

There were many references in the JRC's summation about "join your colour," "cleave to the black." and "Colour for Colour" 80 Semmel, Burton and Heuman commented on the role of race in the conflict (see page 82 above). However, Douglas Hall and Shirley Gordon did not perceive the Native Baptist War as a race war (see pages 82-83 above). A letter was allegedly found in Bogle's House, and written by E. K. Bailey, a Sergeant in the No. 2 St. Thomas in the East Volunteers. It said "It is time to help ourselves skin for skin . . . Every black man must turn out at once, for the oppression is too great. The white people are now cleaning their guns for us . . ." 81 Bailey's document showed racial pride and a call for solidarity among the oppressed of African origin. They were expecting dire upheavals and they believed that there was strength in numbers and unity.

In addition, the policemen who went to arrest Bogle and who were resisted were of African origin. 82 Furthermore, "intelligent and respectable blacks" of the St. Peter's congregation paid glowing tributes to Eyre 83 and "thoughtful and intelligent black men" regarded the outbreak with "consternation and distress." 84 There were different attitudes by persons of African origin and some, including

80 JRC Vol. 4 509, 511, 514. See also Gardner 478.
82 JRC Vol. 4 509. Constables were of African descent: Harvey and Brewin 24.
83 JRC Vol. 4 485.
84 Harvey and Brewin 26.
the Maroons, fought against Bogle and his supporters. 85 This writer agrees with Hall and Gordon that the 1865 Native Baptist War was not motivated primarily by racial considerations. It might appear as a race war because those who were oppressed were predominantly of African origin and they were the ones who had to engage in resistance. However, it was largely the response of an oppressed people.

After the Native Baptist War of 1865, the Native Baptists congregated at Stony Gut, the location where a Native Baptist chapel stood before it was destroyed by the authorities, and held a worship service at which the English Baptist missionary was the guest preacher. 86 They had no problem listening to a Caucasian. In fact, the Native Baptists were known for their co-operation and cordiality toward other races.

The 1865 Native Baptist War was not a race war.

REVOLUTION?

There was also the allegation that the ultimate goal of the Native Baptist War was to plunder and take control of the country. The JRC said the protestors claimed that the country had "long been theirs" and they were not planning to lose it.


There was also said to be a policy not to burn the houses and trash house on plantations because they were planning to capture the houses and they needed the trash house to produce sugar. 87 However, Underhill quoted Eyre as saying that there was “no organised or combined action.” 88 Rev. A. G. Hogg, whose negative attitude toward the protestors is shown by his claim that they engaged in mutilations nevertheless said that “there is no combined or systematized plan against the whites.” 89 An anonymous experienced missionary said in a letter dated 21 November 1865 that, “Every day that passes tends to increase the feeling that there has been no rebellion . . .” 90 H. R. added, “there was nothing having the smallest appearance of an armed opposition to authority” and referred to the events as the “so-called rebellion.” 91 The Times correspondent supported that conclusion, saying that there was no evidence of an island-wide mass organization among the children of Africa, which was designed to encourage them to rebel. 92 Harvey and Brewin further added that “active resistance” never ceased only “because it never actually commenced” 93 and that the allegation about the “forcible seizure of the lands” was fictitious. 94 Bleby said it was absurd

87 JRC Vol. 4 513-14. See also Gardner 479.

88 Underhill, Tragedy 56, 63. H. R., Insurrection 4.


91 H. R., Insurrection 4.

92 King, Sketch 7.

93 Harvey and Brewin 26.

94 Harvey and Brewin 23.
to refer to “the movement as an attempt at rebellion, or anything more than a sudden riot” and emphatically said it was an “imaginary plot which the Governor’s own cowardice had conjured up.” This writer agrees with H. R., Underhill, the *Times* correspondent, the anonymous missionary and Hogg. The protest was parochial and there was no attempt to overthrow the central government. There was no conclusive evidence of a desire to start a revolution and take control of the country.

**African Religious Expression?**

Some scholars perceived the 1865 Native Baptist War as influenced by African religious expressions such as Obeah, Myalism and Kumina (see pages 53-64 above). The authorities executed Arthur Wellington, who had a reputation among the people of Somerset as an Obeah man, on 21 October 1865. He was shot on the hill on the side of Monklands in order that others could witness his death. A constable severed his head from his body and the head was subsequently placed on a pole. Colonel Hobbs said the execution was to dissuade the people of the folly of their belief in obeah. However, there was no evidence that any African religious expression influenced the leadership or membership of the Native Baptists who led the protests. In addition, as chapter three

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95 Bleby, *Reign of Terror* 37. See also Bleby 45.

96 Bleby, *Reign of Terror* 31. He also said, “no traces of any plot or organization could be discovered”: Bleby, *Reign of Terror* 37.

97 *JRC* Vol. 4 520-21.
demonstrated the Native Baptists were a Bible-centred and hymn singing organization within an institutional structure. They also met in their chapels before and after the protests. 98

Marches For Justice

Under the chairmanship of Gordon, a number of resolutions were passed at the 12 August 1865 Underhill Meeting in St. Thomas and a deputation of six led by Paul Bogle was mandated to seek an audience with Governor Eyre. Underhill described the situation as:

The good faith of the people is made clearly manifest by the fact, that they sent a deputation to Spanish Town to lay before His Excellency the resolutions of the meeting. They trudged the weary forty miles on foot to see him, that they might personally lay their grievances at his feet; but the Governor not only declined to listen, but refused to admit them to his presence . . . He whom, as the Queen's representative, they rightly expected to be their friend, acted as their foe. 99

Bogle and his followers wanted to have an audience with the Governor about their grievances. This was a reasonable expectation based on the fact that in the 1840s, a deputation of Native Baptists had audience with Governor Metcalfe.

98 JRC Vol. 4 535.

99 Underhill, Tragedy 56-57. See also JRC Vol. 4. 529-30.
And in mid 1865, Eyre received a deputation of two Assemblymen from St. David concerning deteriorating conditions in the parish. The Native Baptists believed, perhaps foolishly, that the Queen's representative was legally bound to protect their interests and rights. They marched peacefully to Spanish Town and there was no incident.

It was very noticeable that there was a conspicuous absence from the Jamaica Royal Commission Report of any statement from the Governor or anyone that Bogle and the concerned residents of St. Thomas made a trek to the Governor in Spanish Town to deliver resolutions. There was also no record of the exact date that Bogle visited the Governor. There was no acknowledgement that Bogle and the followers made efforts to resist oppressive authorities through the presentation of resolutions.

The desire for protection from the British Crown and for redress to the injustices were also shown by Bogle and nineteen others who wrote a letter to Governor Edward Eyre, the day before the 1865 Native Baptist War, affirming that they were loyal subjects of the Queen, "We, therefore call upon your Excellency for protection, seeing we are Her Majesty's loyal subjects." They considered themselves as law-abiding subjects who should be protected by the authorities against the injustices in the society. They had a high regard for what they believed to be lawful constituted authority. They desired a resolution of the

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101 JRC Vol. 4 512.
impasse based on dialogue. There was no intention of a surprise attack. Even the Commissioners acknowledged that the letter was laid before them to “show the peaceful intentions of the writers.” 102 They, however, were not convinced. 103 Harvey and Brewin disagreed with the Commissioners and said of the letter, “It may be read either as a last and bona fide appeal against oppression, or as a declaration of war. The Royal Commissioners put the latter construction upon it; we think the other the just inference.” 104 Underhill, who claimed that the protestors went to the Police Station first, and who condemned the killings by the rioters said “that there was no intention on the part of the people to rebel or resist the authorities is clear from the fact that, on Monday, the 9th some twenty persons, including three Bogles, forwarded a petition to Eyre.” 105 Bleby’s interpretation of the letter was that it showed that the intention was to engage in passive resistance. 106

Writing to Eyre, who earlier refused Bogle and his followers an audience, demonstrated that they were willing to go the extra mile in search of a diplomatic solution. They were for community problem-solving and desired dispute resolution. This writer agrees with the Commissioners that the letter was laid before them to show the peaceful intentions of the writers. This writer disagrees

102 JRC Vol. 4 512.
103 JRC Vol. 4 512.
104 Harvey and Brewin 24.
105 Underhill, Tragedy 60, 61, 63.
106 Bleby, Reign of Terror 37-38.
with the Commissioners and agrees with Underhill, Bleby, Harvey and Brewin about the intentions of the letter written by Bogle and his followers.

This letter from the perspective of the Native Baptists showed that they saw themselves as victims of injustices, police brutality, and judicial excesses and that they felt compel to engage in civil disobedience. They saw themselves as longsuffering, having endured 27 years of oppression. They were also expressing disappointment that emancipation had not lived up to their expectations. They saw the events of October 7 differently. They were victimized and they desired justice.

Another protest for justice was displayed on Saturday 7 October 1865. A band of one hundred protestors with their sticks marched to Morant Bay concerning a case involving Lewis Miller. They went in support of Miller because they also saw this case as a test about their rights to land. This protest did not result in the death of anyone.

After this march, there was a disturbance and warrants were issued for the arrest of Bogle and his followers. The policemen went to Bogle and his followers to serve the warrants. Bogle told the policemen that they would be marching down to Morant Bay on October 11. If their intentions were to cause destruction and

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108 JRC Vol. 4 452.
death then it made little sense to forewarn the authorities. This foretelling could be an indication of noble intentions.

Several witnesses testified that when the protestors marched into Morant Bay it was accompanied by music, dancing, singing and merry making. An unnamed Justice of the Peace from St. Mary said he heard bugles, drums and “jesting, laughing and making fun.” The nature of the celebration was not consistent with persons bent on causing murderous mayhem. It would have been foolhardy to make so much noise if one was intent on a guerilla-type attack. The dancing, music, singing, laughing were inconsistent with a plan for a surprise attack and was more consistent with a march for justice or anticipation of victory.

Underhill claimed that the protestors marched to Morant Bay to attend the Vestry “to state anew their grievances.” According to him, their design was to agitate for better governance and better working and living conditions. H. R. also offered an interpretation of the events of that Wednesday and said, “What was their object is now impossible to say . . . they might have intended only to surrender to the warrants issued against them . . .” He added that Wednesday was the day warrants were returnable and the number of persons that

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110 JRC Vol. 4 429

111 Underhill, Tragedy 60. Hardly likely because parish Vestry meetings were held quarterly: Bleby, Reign of Terror 35
accompanied Bogle were needed to bail all those who were issued warrants. 112 H. R., though claiming that Bogle usurped the law, 113 did not perceive any menacing motive. Similarly, Bleby said, "It has never been explained what specific purpose they had in view, in marching into the town as they did; but it was probably nothing more than was meant by the late Reform gatherings in London, which were designed for no purpose of violence, but as demonstrations . . . to assert what they conceived to be their claims to right and justice." 114 Underhill, Bleby and H. R., gave different reasons for Bogle's march into Morant Bay but none said that there was a malevolent motive and all perceived that it had to do with the search for justice.

The Commissioners also exercised their minds on what was the motive of the protestors and after hearing the testimonies of 730 witnesses said:

Mr. Gordon might know well the distinction between a 'rebellion' and a 'demonstration of it.' He might be able to trust himself to go so far as he could with safety, and no further. But that would not be so easy to his ignorant and fanatical followers. They would find it difficult to restrain themselves from rebellion when making a demonstration of it. 115

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112 H. R., Insurrection 2-3.
113 H. R., Insurrection 3.
114 Bleby, Reign of Terror 36.
115 JRC Vol. 4 535.
The Commissioners were discrediting Bogle and his followers of having a great difficulty of executing a demonstration only. Since the Commissioners did not refer to the protest as a "rebellion" but as a "planned resistance to lawful authority," it can be inferred that the Commissioners were admitting that it was a demonstration in intention but because they were ignorant, unlike Gordon, they were not able to restrain their emotions and the demonstration moved from its original purpose and became a resistance to authority.

In addition, Bleby said that it was a march for justice, "They brought no fire-arms with them; for those which they afterwards used they took from the police station, after they found the volunteers drawn up in hostile array to receive them." 117

Matthew Cresser, who was employed by Robert Kirkland, claimed that the day after the Native Baptist War he was forcibly taken to Stony Gut by one hundred men and he heard an address by Bogle, which described the intention of Bogle in marching to Morant Bay on October 11, 1865. Cresser who claimed that the protestors bought gunpowder and had the "determination to kill Mr. Bowen" quoted Bogle as saying:

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116 JRC Vol. 4 538.

117 Bleby, Reign of Terror 36. Bleby repeated that they marched unarmed in Morant Bay, 37.
Well, my friends, the other day, Monday, they sent policemen here for me, but I would not go. On Wednesday I went down to Morant Bay to get bail, and some people go with me, and as I go in the parade they fired on the people, and the people returned it again . . . No one of you to go to any work, and if any man go out to work he is to get dollar a day . . .

Cresser was no apologist for Bogle so this quotation has great credibility. This statement concurred with what H. R. wrote in 1865 about Bogle’s intention. 119 Holt also suggested that this viewpoint was a legitimate possibility. 120 In the words of Bogle, there was no intention to engage in brutality. Bogle claimed that he was going to engage in his civic responsibility to get bail. In addition, he was pre-occupied with concern about low wages and poor working conditions for the labourers.

After the march, Bogle returned to Stony Gut and “there was a service in the chapel in which he returned thanks to God that he ‘went to this work, and that God had succeeded him in his work.’” 121 Bogle believed that he was “appointed instrument in the Lord’s hand.” 122 The prayer after the event and the feeling of

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118 JRC Vol. 4 417-18. Cresser repeated an also identical statement when he testified before the commission JRC Vol. 5 144. See also Holt 297.

119 H. R., Insurrection 2-3.

120 Holt 297.

121 JRC Vol. 4 512, 535.

122 JRC Vol. 4 535.
being an instrument of God were signs that Bogle and his followers were concerned about justice.

The claim that Bogle and his group engaged in a march for justice is based on:

- The tone and contents of the letter they wrote to Eyre,
- The forty mile trek with resolutions to seek audience with Eyre,
- The march on October 7 being uneventful,
- They were not carrying guns and arms on October 11,
- They did not fire any gun,
- The deaths were caused by agricultural tools,
- The contents of Bogle’s speech after the event
- They giving thanks in the chapel after the October 11 march.

**COMPELLED TO RESIST PROVOCATION**

On Saturday, 7 October 1865, Bogle and his approximately twenty supporters rescued from the Police, a man called Charles Geoghegan, who had been committed to prison by Justices Walton and Bowen for disturbing the Court of Petty Sessions held at Morant Bay. 123 A policeman shoved Geoghegan out of the courthouse as Geoghegan was exiting the building and a commotion resulted when he complained. 124 Bogle and those who rescued Geoghegan were served

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124 JRC Vol. 5 125.
with warrants and they wrote a letter to the Governor which expressed disgust at
the "outrageous assault" committed by the policemen against innocent persons
and that they "were compelled to resist." 125 When the policemen took the
warrants to the residences of Bogle and the others in Stony Gut, they were
resisted. 126 Bleby said, "Bogle and his associates resisted the officers, and made
them prisoners; dismissing them, however, after time, without harm . . . " 127 This
was an act of defiance. Harvey and Brewin in analyzing the issuing of warrants
said, "we see the magistrates issuing not summons but warrants for the bodily
arrest of twenty-five or twenty-eight men for the rescue of Geoghegan, making
the worst of the offence." 128 Underhill added "If the resistance to the execution of
the unjust decisions of the magistrates was at all preconcerted, which seems
doubtful, there can be no doubt it was occasioned by the despair of the people of
being treated with justice." 129 Underhill was claiming there were mitigating
circumstances to resisting arrest. Bleby claimed that the attempt to arrest
Geoghegan outside the courthouse was "illegal" because they had "no authority
without a warrant to arrest men out of the court." 130 He became even more
strident about the issuing of warrants against Bogle and others on the charge of

125 JRC Vol. 4 512.
126 H. R., Insurrection 2 and JRC Vol. 4 509.
127 Bleby, Reign of Terror 34-35. A newspaper reported that the police were beaten: "Royal
Proclamation," Colonial Standard 29 Oct. 1865: 2. However, George Fuller Osborne, one of six
policemen who went to serve warrants on Bogle and his followers, did not testify that he was
beaten but said only that he was asked to take an oath: JRC Vol. 4 445.
128 Harvey and Brewin 25.
130 Bleby, Reign of Terror 33.
interfering with the police in the execution of their duty, saying that it amounted "to a declaration of war against the black people" who had resisted "the illegal apprehension of a man without a warrant" and also called it a "provocation." 131 Bogle and his followers therefore called for protection from the Governor and warned that if they were exposed to further abuse they would be "compelled to put our shoulders to the wheel." 132 This statement was implying that they would resist any additional abuse. Native Baptists felt duty bound to resist oppression and felt obligated to continue to resist injustices. Their social protest sanctioned and allowed for resistance to authority.

Bogle and his followers also felt compelled to resist because they “have been imposed upon for a period of 27 years” during which time they have given “due obeisance to the laws of our Queen and country.” For them resisting oppression was not a sign of disloyalty to the Queen or disregard for the laws. Apparently, the protestors felt that having endured 27 years of oppression, they were being reasonable in resisting and seeking protection from central government against the indignities they were suffering. These conditions over the twenty-seven years were provoking a response from Bogle and his followers.

Some of the oppressive conditions endured for twenty-seven years were outlined in Underhill’s letter to Edward Cardwell, Secretary of Colonies. Underhill’s 1865 letter spoke to “starving people” and “unjust taxation of the coloured population”

131 Bleby, Reign of Terror 34.
132 JRC Vol. 4 512.
and “refusal of just tribunals” and the “denial of political rights to the emancipated Negroes.” 133 Eight years later, Underhill stated, “The evidence is conclusive that the Petty Sessions Courts were presided over by partial judges, that the costs were extravagant and the sentences were severe even to injustice upon the labouring class and lenient upon the higher.” 134 For example, in 1865, at the Bath courthouse, there were 186 cases in which the planters were never the defendants, while the labourers were defendants 180 times and the social position of the other defendants was classified as “Other persons.” In addition, 185 labourers were either fined or imprisoned. 135 This was an extraordinary rate of conviction, almost 100%. This meant that once the labourer went to court, he was almost guaranteed a conviction, a problem a planter would never encounter at Bath, based on the 1865 data. The Bath courthouse was associated with injustices.

This bias that was noticed in Bath was also evident in Morant Bay. Walton and Bowen, who were planters, were the two justices who adjudicated on the case on 7 October 1865 at Morant Bay courthouse. 136 This was a conflict of interest because the planter class wanted the peasants to pay rent for the land while the peasants argued that they were entitled to certain lands.

133 Underhill, Tragedy xv-xvi.

134 Underhill, Tragedy 58.

135 JRC Vol. 5 1100.

136 Bleby, Reign of Terror 33.
The Queen's Advice claiming that the peasants needed to work harder was seen as "a mockery of their distress." Rev. Mr. Clarke, curate of Westmoreland, refused to read Cardwell's response to the Underhill Letter claiming, that he "did not consider that His Excellency Governor Eyre and his advisers are free from the guilt of inciting to rebellion." The Queen's Advice and response to Underhill Letter were seen as provoking the people.

In addition, resolutions passed at the Morant Bay Underhill Meeting complained about "the unconstitutional and unprecedented act of the government" in providing £250 to defend the Custos against their duly elected representatives. They also complained that the "arbitrary, illegal, and inconsistent conduct of the Custos was destructive to the peace and prosperity of the affairs of the parish."

The question of who fired first has implications on whether the protestors were compelled to resist or they were the aggressors. Tucker said the protestors responded to the firing by the Volunteers (see page 79 above). While the JRC summation said, "There was some conflict of evidence on the point, whether stones were thrown before the firing commenced", some evidence before the JRC seems to suggest that the Volunteers fired first. George Fuller Osborne, a

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137 Underhill, Life 329.

138 Underhill, Tragedy 168.

139 JRC Vol. 4 250, 530.

140 JRC Vol. 4 509. Underhill also claimed that there was a contradictory evidence: Underhill, Tragedy 62
Maroon and one of the Policemen who went to serve the warrant on Bogle said, “I heard the guns firing, and I saw the Volunteers and people together. I saw about five people put fire to the school-house.” 141 The sequence appears to be the Volunteers fired first and then the school set on fire. Celia Gordon, a resident of Morant Bay, heard guns firing in the parade and saw people running from the direction of the parade. 142 George Lake, who helped the Maroons to capture Bogle, testified that the Volunteers fired in a party, “boom, boom, boom – and I saw a few of the Bogle’s men run back after the others got shot . . .” 143 Gordon and Lake making no mention of the protestors throwing stones seems indicative that the Volunteers fired first. In addition, Bleby questioned the validity of the claim that stones were thrown when “not one person has been brought forward that was hurt or hit by those missiles; and it is probably a fabrication got up to justify or excuse the sanguinary deed which brought on the fatal collision.” 144 There were others who claimed that Bogle and his followers were fired upon. H. R. said, “The volunteers fired into the crowd, doing great execution. It was only then, after they had been fired into and numbers of them killed, that they made a rush on the volunteers . . .” 145 Jonathan East, English Baptist historian, said that the sequence of events was that the Riot Act was read, the Volunteers fired upon

141 JRC Vol. 4 445.
142 JRC Vol. 4 368.
143 JRC Vol. 5 1037.
144 Bleby, Reign of Terror 45.
145 H. R., Insurrection 2. Underhill said the protestors hurled stones first: Underhill, Life 331. Also Harvey and Brewin 24.
the protestors, who then responded. In addition, Bleby claimed that the Volunteers “sent a deadly volley into the midst of the advancing crowd. This was repeated; and between thirty and forty, killed or grievously wounded.” The Volunteers not only fired first but they also fired second too. As Bleby states it, the Volunteers launched a “savage and murderous attack.” Bleby made a valid point that the more sensible thing to do was to fire blank cartridges before proceeding to the “fatal extremity of the rifle ball.” By this action, the Volunteers were inciting a forceful reaction. Indeed, Bleby also felt that the people had a duty to retaliate, “and the people upon whom they ordered the volunteers to fire would have been more or less than men, had they not retaliated in the way they did.” They had to defend their honour and affirm their self-hood.

The Colonial Standard in describing what happened said the protestors tried with “brick bats and sticks to force entry into the Court House.” There was no mention of guns in this first report. In addition, a pro-planter newspaper

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147 Bleby, Reign of Terror 40. See Bleby repeat the allegation that the Volunteers “fired successive volleys”: Bleby 46.

148 Bleby, Reign of Terror 41. See also that Custos performed the first act of violence: Bleby 45.

149 Bleby, Reign of Terror 41.

150 Bleby, Reign of Terror 46.

claimed “there has not been a shot fired at the troops, since they went out to suppress the rebellion” 152 One unnamed writer asked “what a strange and unheard of kind of insurrection is this -in which, when, when once the riot is over, not a single blow is struck nor shot fired on the part of the insurgents?” 153 There was no report of use of firearms by the protestors or that any Volunteer was shot and killed.

The protestors killed approximately eighteen persons. 154 The JRC Report found that there “was not a practice of wholesale killing” or targeting of Europeans. 155 The Colonial Standard reported that Dr. Gerard’s life was spared because “they would not kill the Doctors, because they were needed.” 156 In addition, they “did not intend to injure any women or children.” 157 There was a resolve not to harm women, children and doctors.

A letter was supposedly found in Bogle’s House, and written by E. K. Bailey, whom the newspaper report described as an “arch-traitor,” “base hypocrite” and “perjured scoundrel.” The report also had it as being signed by “Paul Bogle, B.


154 Heuman, Killing Time 14.

155 JRC Vol. 4 510.


Clarke, J. G. McLaren and P. Cameron” who said: “We all must put our shoulders to the wheel and pull together . . . for the oppression is too great. The white people are now cleaning their guns for us . . .” 158 This was a strange document, which, though written by E. K. Bailey, was not signed by him. And William Ogilvie who knew Bailey’s handwriting said the signatures were “all in the handwriting of Bailey.” In addition, there was another witness, William Gabey, who claimed he recognized the handwriting as belonging to E. K. Bailey. 159 Why would someone sign on behalf of this group when three of them were known to be literate? Bogle, McLaren, Clarke and Cameron did not sign this letter, and therefore one cannot be sure if this letter reflected their thinking. The letter was dated 17 October 160 and the outbreak was on the 11 October 161 so there was time for all four to sign this document. Not to mention, Bailey was not a credible witness, based on the newspaper report. In spite of the issue of the authenticity of this letter, there was an expectation of the authorities attacking them. 162 Therefore, even a disputed writing reflected a call to resist those who were perceived as planning to harm them. They felt they had an obligation to resist oppression.

159 JRC Vol. 5 219.
160 JRC Vol. 5 929 and JRC Vol. 5 219.
161 JRC Vol. 4 509.
162 JRC Vol. 5 219 and JRC Vol. 5 1036.
English-born Edna Manley, a sculptor who visited Stony Gut on 19 November 1964 as part of the preparation to build a statue of Paul Bogle to mark the centenary of the Native Baptist War of 1865, met an old lady whose father was Bogle’s great friend and she told her that after Bogle and his followers took the guns from the courthouse, they did not fire them because they could not use them. When it was enquired why they took the guns the old lady replied “‘maybe they took them to keep the soldiers from using them.’” 163 This pragmatic action could also explain why they took guns from the Police Station and did not use them.

The Native Baptists had no guns and no ammunition of their own. 164 One report said that “If they had arms” then it was “probably no more than sticks” and in any case these were “never used.” 165 Some other reports claimed that Bogle and his followers were “armed with sticks” 166 while others said they had cutlasses 167 while still other witnesses said they were armed with sticks and cutlasses. 168


164 JRC Vol. 4 445.

165 “The Baptists in Jamaica,” Baptist Magazine 1865: 784.


168 JRC Vol. 5 414, 1037.
Baptist pastor George Henderson, whose father was a missionary in 1865, though calling the 1865 event “tragic” and the movement “political” claimed that Bogle and his followers were equipped with their agricultural tools (see page 79 above). Heuman also pointed out that sticks found in St. Elizabeth were not as threatening as once believed. He said of the revivalists that there was a “ceremonial use of ornamental sticks” in their rituals. In addition, in Trinidad, the apprentices’ cutlasses formed “part of their equipment” and they traveled with their cutlasses on estates and other places. It was observed that the apprentices do not go anywhere without them. It is possible that the sticks and cutlasses carried by the protestors were not as threatening as once believed and that Henderson is correct in claiming that they were equipped with their agricultural tools. Therefore, it is possible that they carried them to resist provocation.

The Native Baptists carrying their sticks and cutlasses was reminiscent of the days of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah and the people were rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem, they had to protect themselves from enemies and so they had their tools in one hand and their weapons in the other (Neh. 4: 6-19). This was not a sign that they were violent but a pragmatic action based on the need to resist those who wanted to destroy them. The Native Baptists were informed by their hermeneutic of liberation, which desired full freedom from oppression and which allowed for resistance to oppression.


170 Studholme Hodgson, Truths from the West Indies, Including a Sketch of Madeira in 1833 (London, 1838) 280.
Forgiving Violent Reprisals

Bleby commended the protestors for their restraint when they had the town and inhabitants completely at their mercy for many hours. However, the authorities did not display any such restraint. Bleby said that acts of violence were committed against the “unarmed and unresisting people” leaving “a multitude of widows and fatherless children without a shelter.” An English Baptist publication said, “The terror has been universal.” H. R. said the military authorities engaged in a “carnival of torture and slaughter.” It was also reported of the killings: “the soldiers enjoy it.” And the official Inquiry discovered a “tone of levity which is to be found in the letters and the language of some of the officers while engaged in serious and responsible duties.” Edwin Palmer, who witnessed some of the executions during his six months of imprisonment, said:

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171 Bleby, Reign of Terror 47.
172 Bleby, Reign of Terror 49.
176 JRC Vol. 4 40.
Districts once densely populated are now desolate, villages swept clean, townships blotted out. It is stated that from Morant Bay to Monkland, a distance of fourteen miles, including Stoney Gut, York, Middleton, Hillside, Font Hill, Trinity Village, Somerset, &c., there is scarcely a man who has not been catted; and that from Morant Bay to Manchioneal to Portland, there were very few black inhabitants left. 177

Another report said, “The soldiers were let loose in this country, and did their work with savage fury, shooting down the good, bad, and indifferent, spreading death and desolation. The road for miles was said to have been insufferable, from the stench of the rotting bodies of men and women.” 178 Phillippo, in a letter dated 5 January 1866, described the swift punishment of the protestors thus:

Of men wantonly shot down from the roof of their houses when employed in repairing them; of women stabbed, in their huts, with children at their breasts, or in other indescribable condition, the children dashed upon the ground and murdered – of men flogged and then hanged – of numbers paraded through the town to execution, with halters round their necks – and of still greater atrocities perpetrated in the woods and open fields. 179


178 Underhill, Tragedy 51.

179 Underhill, Life 340.
Palmer estimated based on "several witnesses" that there were "between two or three thousand" victims. An old unnamed missionary estimated that 3,400 were killed which was much more than the official estimate of 439.

This "reign of terror" was not unique to Jamaica but was part of the colonial mentality, which reacted with excessive force to protests, which were seen as threatening lives and properties. The New York Times reported "Two Thousand Negroes Killed-Eight Miles of Dead Bodies! ... It was so in all massacres of Ireland and Scotland -it was so in the Indian mutiny, and it was so in Jamaica. They get into panic and they kill, kill, kill." The brutalities were intended to teach a lesson. The newspaper also said that the punishment of the Africans who protested included "smoking with brimstone" which was to give "a taste of hell before they got there."

The violent reprisals were undertaken with relish and executed with wild abandon with the aim of frightening the peasants into never contemplating organizing resistance again, to stifle any ambition about political governance, to

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182 JRC Vol. 4 40.

183 Interesting Letter from our London Correspondent, "Affairs in Great Britain," New York Times 15 Dec. 1865: 1. H. R said "From Long Bay to Manchioneal, the road for eight miles is strewn with dead bodies so that it is difficult to pass": H. R., Insurrection 4.

184 S. Copland, Black and White; Or, the Jamaica Question (London, 1866) 23.
force them back unto working for low wages on the estates and to remind the
governed that the rulers could strike with brutality at any time.

After the 1865 Native Baptist War, Teall went to Stony Gut, the location where a
Native Baptist chapel stood before it was destroyed by the authorities, and held a
worship service. There, an unnamed man related his ordeal to Teall and said,
“Minister them use me very bad. They cut my back, and shut me up for nine days
and nights in a condemned cell. They burnt my house and everything I had in it;
but I thank God, Minister, I don’t feel any resentment. My breast is clear.” 185

Also, at the end of the service, George B. Clarke addressed the congregation,
saying, “‘My friends, all the wrongs which so many of us have suffered unjustly at
the hands of the authorities and soldiers - I know I speak your sentiments as well
as my own when I say we freely forgive, as well as all who have injured us in any
way.’” 186 The Native Baptists displayed a forgiving spirit in spite of the carnage
experienced. The Native Baptists who survived the ordeal of the reprisals met
there and pronounced forgiveness on those who had wronged them. They
showed a willingness not to exhibit any bitterness, hatred, or anger toward those
who had caused the offence. They followed the command in the Bible to forgive
“until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:22). This is perhaps one of the reasons the
Native Baptists were attracted to Isaac Watts’s hymns because he had removed
invectives from them and therefore, unlike the Psalms, these hymns did not
advocate revenge. Abigail Bakan, political scientist and Marxist, said that in the
1865 event, the protestors invariably sought allies in the church and state in order


to legitimize their protest even when the dictates of the church and state were the very objects of protest. Bakan thought the persons who were oppressed were too accommodating to people who were oppressing them. This, however, was a misunderstanding of the role of forgiveness in the lifestyle of the Native Baptists. After the Native Baptists had resisted the injustices and after they had survived the deadly destruction and witnessed the carnage of their family and friends they had the capacity to forgive. They had no intention to exterminate the oppressors but instead forgave them.

Equally important about this service where forgiveness was pronounced was that the Native Baptists did not make any confession of sins. They were the victims and they did not think that they had engaged in pre-meditated murders. They also thought it was a duty to resist oppression. In addition, the English Baptist missionary did not demand that the Native Baptists repent because apparently they were perceived as wronged rather than doing wrongs.

In addition, Gordon did not hold a grudge even toward his greatest opponents. He pitied the Governor who denied him a fair trial, saying “May the Lord be merciful to him” and in his last letter to his wife, Lucy, “Remember me affectionately and forgivingly to all.” The same blessing he craved for his wife was what he desired for his adversaries. He was able to bless those who guarded

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188 King, Sketch 8, 12, 13.
him while in prison and he petitioned that the Lord would bless Brigadier
General Nelson, commander of the troops 189 and all the soldiers. 190 His last
words were to forgive all whether they knew what they were doing or not,
whether they were directly or indirectly involved.

**Summary of the Nature of the 1865 Native Baptist War**

To claim that Bogle and his followers engaged in pre-mediated killings and were
motivated by race war would seem to be out of character for Bogle as the evidence
would suggest otherwise. It would mean that the Biblical hermeneutic of
liberation that was based on equality and justice did not inform their prophetic
response to the situation. It would mean that these deeply religious persons
suspended or abandoned their religious faith when they needed it most. It would
mean that Bogle would have had undergone a total transformation of character
from the time of the first march in August 1865 to the third march in October
1865. But there were testimonials to the sterling character of Bogle. Harvey and
Brewin said that Bogle had “always borne a good character.” 191 This statement
was indicative that Bogle did not change his disposition and was a person of
noble character and actions. In addition, persons associated with the Native
Baptist Communion had great testimonials. The Commissioners inquiring into
the uprising of 1865 asked Clarke, “You are Mr. George B. Clarke that the justice


190 King, *Sketch* 13.

191 Harvey and Brewin 22.
gives such a good character of." 192 The leaders associated with the Native
Baptists were well respected. The Native Baptists' hermeneutic of liberation, that
is, their reflection on their lived experience in the light of the Scriptural teaching
on equality and justice as they understood it, shaped the nature of their practised
resistance. The killings were not pre-meditated. They believed that they were
compelled to resist oppressive conditions that provoked a response. They tried
peaceful means at first, such as the walk to Spanish Town to see the Governor,
but never ruled out resistance. Their understanding of the Biblical hermeneutic
meant that they could respond forcibly if necessary to prevailing conditions.
However, their response was informed by their belief in the equality and justice
for all. Therefore, they could not respond excessively but only with decorum.
Any excess was not sanctioned by Bogle and was definitely outside the ambit of
their Biblical hermeneutic. The glue that held the movement and protest
together was not race or desire for revolution as their detractors tried to make out
and it was not even their innate character as some missionaries implied, but the
religious faith of the Native Baptists, and in particular their Biblical hermeneutic.
There was no widespread killing because justice demanded that punishment
must be commensurate with the crime and they always hoped for reconciliation
with the oppressors. The hermeneutic of liberation demanded that they resisted
oppression even as they were open for reconciliation with the oppressors.

192 JRC Vol. 5 127.
Scope of the Native Baptist War

The hermeneutic of liberation approach employed by the Native Baptists in the 1865 Native Baptist War largely determined the scope of the resistance, which was unique. It was not following the paradigm of the Maroons of Jamaica who fought and won freedom in 1738 and established sovereignty within Jamaica, but only for themselves, while they returned to their masters other enslaved persons who ran away. It was not modelled after the Haitian revolution with its goal of racial sovereignty, the first successful revolt by the enslaved that led to a “Black Republic” in 1804. It was not patterned after the American Christian uprisings by the enslaved in the early nineteenth century. Instead, it was more a replica of the Sam Sharpe led 1831 Baptist War, which was a passive resistance which envisioned the planters working together with the labourers as paid, freed workers. The hermeneutic of liberation is based on mutuality of seeking the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors.

Not Jamaican Maroonage, Haitian or American

Gordon warned that Eyre was provoking a “Second Maroon War” (see page 303 above). However, this was a reference to the principle of resistance rather than an attempt to follow that blueprint in terms of the scope of a resistance movement. In 1738, Maroon Cudjoe, a leader of runaways, after negotiations with English Colonel John Guthrie and Francis Sadler, established the first free
settlement in the British West Indies for the formerly enslaved Africans. 193 The
Maroons fought for their freedom but it was for Maroons only. It was a freedom
that was confined to those who fought for freedom. And there have been
criticisms of that paradigm, with Patterson claiming that the treaty was “a
completely unnecessary sell-out” because Cudjoe “had sealed the fate of future
freedom-fighters” with “no slave could hope to escape the tyranny of his master,
either by running away or by rebellion” 194 and historian Mavis C. Campbell
labeling it “more a victory for the colonial powers than for the Maroons”, because
what the British could not get on the battlefield “they now gained in full measure
over the negotiating table.” 195 It was to the advantage of the colonial authority
and the local plantocracy. 196 In addition, after the treaty of 1738 between the
English and the Maroons, the Maroons helped hunt down runaways in exchange
for tracts of land and self-government within their settlements. 197 The Native
Baptists were more universal in their outlook wanting justice for all, freedom for

193 Edwards said “articles of pacification with the Maroons of Trelawney Town, concluded March
the first, 1738”: Bryan Edwards The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica, in
Regard to the Maroon Negroes (1796; London: Negro UP, 1970) xvi-xvii. However, Patterson has
“On the first of March, 1739, a fifteen-point peace treaty was signed between the Leeward
Maroons and the whites (JHD, Vol. 3: 457)” : Orlando Patterson, “Slavery and Slave Revolts: A
Sociological Analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665-1740” Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave
For the significance of this treaty see Kenneth Bilby, True-Born Maroons (Kingston: Randle,
2006) xiii.

194 Patterson, Slavery and Slave Revolts 273.

& Betrayal (Granby, Massachusetts: Bergin, 1988) 129.

196 Campbell, Maroons 131. See also a clause-by-clause critique of the treaty: Campbell, Maroons
131-37.

197 Barbara Lalla, and Jean D'Costa, Language In Exile: Three Hundred Years of Jamaican Creole
all based on the equality of all. They worked for the upliftment of all Africans. Furthermore, while the Native Baptists respected the British Crown, they were averse to the local plantocracy.

In addition, the Native Baptists were not interested in creating an enclave for themselves but were willing to live among and work with the English also. The 1865 Native Baptist War was not akin to the Maroon model.

Another indication that it was not after the Maroon model was that the Maroons not only did not co-operate with Bogle but also were adverse to Bogle’s mission. It was the Maroons under the command of Captain Fyfe who captured Bogle.\textsuperscript{198} Eyre arranged a reception in Kingston for the Maroons in honour of their “deeds of heroism” in quelling the resistance.\textsuperscript{199}

\textbf{Not Haitian}

Most scholars claim that the Haitian revolution was not replicated in Jamaica though it might have been an inspiration (see page 84 above). However, the ruling class claimed of Gordon, Edwin Palmer, J. H. Crole, James Roach, H. B. Harris: “All of the men thus named, have been scheming and plotting for the overthrow of legitimate government and for the creation of a government of terror like that of the monster Souloque [sic], in the once important, but now

\textsuperscript{198} JRC Vol. 4 431.

\textsuperscript{199} “The Maroons,” \textit{Gleaner} 9 Nov. 1865: 2.
ruined colony of Saint Domingo.” 200 Faustin Soulouque was President, and later
became Emperor of Haiti. Hume claimed that the protestors wanted to emulate
Haiti and create “another Negro kingdom.” 201 However, there appeared to be a
lack of any political strategy that showed an interest in wanting to control the
commanding heights of the economy or wanting to administer the affairs of the
country. Harvey and Brewin said, “We have not found a trace of evidence of any
political element in the movement . . .” 202 Bogle and his followers had no desire
to take over central government. H. R. having quoted extensively from colonial
papers that were supportive of the rulers and their own statements and
dispatches concluded: “the alleged conspiracy to murder white people, and
convert Jamaica into a black republic, there is at present not the smallest iota of
proof,” and the allegations were an attempt by men to justify “one of the most
horrible butcheries recorded in the annals of history.” 203

There was no evidence that Bogle and his followers desired to establish a “Black
Republic” as existed in Haiti. In addition, Gordon “never thought of the
‘revolutionary spirit’ of Hayti, that is, he never once thought its example might be
followed with advantage.” It was further said of him, “This is the man who ‘looks

202 Harvey and Brewin 23.
for a higher source of relief than the example of Hayti.'” 204 The movement’s thinking was not driven by the desire for racial superiority or racial sovereignty.

An unnamed veteran missionary said in a letter dated 21 November 1865 that, there was “no intention whatsoever to be disloyal to the Queen” on the part of the protestors. 205 The protestors loved the Queen and believed in the Queen. Craddock, one of the leaders of the protest said, “The other day you have sent in a petition to our beloved Queen, and the answer came out saying you must work, but I don’t believe it went half way. How many years have you been working, and what have you got?” 206 Perhaps for that reason Robotham stated that one of the deadly flaws of the Bogle movement was its “naïve monarchism.” 207 However, Bogle, like Gordon, appreciated the British Crown and believed that the local authorities were corrupting the good intentions of the Queen. Therefore, they were not agitating for a distinct government, such as in Haiti, but would co-operate with the British once there was good governance.

**Not American Christian Uprising**

The 1865 Native Baptist War was not similar to some American rebellions of the enslaved in the early nineteenth century. In the USA, there was a West African


206 JRC Vol. 4 418.

207 Robotham 22.
inspired Christian armed rebellion led by Gabriel Prosser, who wore long hair like his hero Samson. Samson killed a thousand Philistines with a donkey jawbone (Judg. 15: 8-15). For Prosser, the slaveholders were the new Philistines and he led a rebellion in August 1800 against them in Henrico County, Virginia with the intent to exterminate them. Prosser wanted “a new black kingdom in Virginia with himself as ruler.” In 1822, Denmark Vesey, resurrected the ideas of Prosser in Charleston, South Carolina. He grounded his actions in Luke 11: 23 which said, “whoever is not with me is against me.” He also led a violent rebellion. The followers of the enslaved Nat Turner of the USA expected a new world to be established by divine revelation. Turner acted to what he believed to be signs from heaven on 13 August 1831 and killed his master and the master’s family. David Walker, African American Abolitionist, who was born free to a freed mother and an enslaved father, believed that “a slave was morally justified in taking the life of his master, if necessary, to command his freedom.” Since freedom was the highest human right ordained by God then there was moral legitimacy of armed struggle to overthrow slavery. This appeared to be a dominant position among persons of African descent in America. However, this was not the position of the Native Baptists.


209 Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over* 134.


211 Reckord 31.

The Native Baptists had no desire to replicate a Haitian republic in Jamaica nor to create a closed community similar to the Maroons or lead an armed rebellion such as happened in the USA. Their reading of the Bible from the perspective of equality and justice meant that they were always open to reconciliation with oppressors even as they resisted injustices.

**1831 Baptist War Paradigm**

Heuman believed that Sam Sharpe and the 1831 Baptist War influenced Bogle and his followers (see page 84 above). Rev. Edward Key, Stipendiary Curate for Manchester and St. Elizabeth, testified that he believed that Sam Sharpe and his followers were an inspiration to Bogle and his followers. He claimed he found a book circulating in some Baptist schools:

> Holding up the people who had been condemned in the late rebellion of 1832 as martyrs; naming so and so, and saying what a pious man he was, that he was praying in his house, and the authorities came and dragged him out and shot him, and how he sung hymns as he was led to the execution, making him out to be a perfect martyr. \(^{213}\)

\(^{213}\) JRC Vol. 5 712.
This book was in circulation in 1864, the Jubilee of English Baptist mission on Jamaica and Phillippo wondered if it was a reference to the Voice of Jubilee. This was hardly likely to be the Voice of Jubilee, which was not published until 1865, and more importantly does not venerate Sharpe and his followers as martyrs.

Obviously, the populace heard about the exploits of Sam Sharpe. The English Baptists by the 1860s were claiming Sharpe as their own and perceived him as a “Christian Hero” and he and his followers as martyrs, that is Christians who die for the cause of Christ. There was an unidentified English Baptist missionary who viewed Sam Sharpe and his followers as martyrs based on the title of his article as “The Martyr Brethren: A Reminiscence of the Insurrection in Jamaica” and the content of his article. He viewed their deaths as modelled on Jesus’ crucifixion, thereby making them martyrs. Sharpe and his followers were not only Christians who were killed but were martyrs who died as a result of fighting in the cause of the work and witness of Christ. The mission to obtain wages and freedom was consistent with the mission of Christ.

The 1865 Native Baptist War resembled the 1831 Baptist War in terms of intent and outcome. As stated in Chapter Three, Sam Sharpe did not lead a crusade

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214 JRC Vol. 5 714.


against the Europeans but organized a strike for wages and freedom through the means of passive resistance. The burning of estates and the killing of a few Europeans was not part of Sharpe's plan. The enslaved were "for the most part armed only with a cutlass, (one of the implements of their daily toil,) . . ." 217 Sharpe's inspiration was the Bible, which he said made all persons equal. There was no desire on the part of Sharpe to destroy the Europeans but a willingness to work with them for wages (see pages 253-54 above). Callam speaking of Sharpe and his followers in the 1831 Baptist War said that Sharpe did not desire to destroy their oppressors but wanted to humanize them. The aim was "the emancipation of the oppressed and the oppressor — so that in the end everyone may rejoice." 218 Likewise, Bogle and his followers were not seeking to annihilate their oppressors but rather that both oppressors and oppressed might be liberated and experience justice as equals. They sought the liberation of the oppressed and the oppressors through marches for justice.

There were uncanny parallels between the 1831 Baptist War and the 1865 Native Baptist War. Both were concerned with justice issues. There was no pre-planning to kill the oppressors. In addition, both movements envisioned cooperation between oppressed and oppressors after the protests.

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Liberation of Oppressed and Oppressors

The desire for the liberation of the oppressed and the oppressors led the Native Baptists to resistance and at the same time to hope for reconciliation. It held resistance and reconciliation together in tension, leading to resistance, which was restrained by a desire for reconciliation with the oppressors. The Native Baptists advocated and agitated for equality and justice and desired responsible governance based on that principle. They engaged in resistance while being hopeful of reconciliation. This approach to hermeneutics was first detected in the approach of Liele especially through his Anabaptist Covenant. The Covenant was a prime example of restrained resistance and a commitment to work with the authorities (see pages 245-46 above). It could be said, with much justification, that the rhetoric of the Native Baptists was however, more strident than that of Liele. The resistance motif was very strong and they made a frontal attack on oppression. It was not a subtle request for liberation but a demand for liberation, which was a gift from God and a need in their lives.

Summary

The Native Baptists' hermeneutics affected the tone and goal of the 1865 Native Baptist War. The nature of the resistance was liberative, using the method of protest marches. They were committed to peaceful advocacy, protest and resistance. It might also have been informed by practical considerations such as the military might and superior weaponry at the disposal of the authorities. But
it was nevertheless, a primary commitment to use and exhaust all available non-violent means to show their attitude, to state their case and articulate their beliefs and rights. This hermeneutic of liberation approach did not exclude the use of force as last resort or resistance in order to achieve their goals. If the authorities would not respond to peaceful marches, letter and resolutions, then in the name of justice, they had to act to forcefully bring to the attention of the rulers their suffering. Hardships prevented them from living as human and as a means of self-affirmation they had to challenge the untenable situation by use of civil disobedience. In addition, the primary motive of the Native Baptists was not to murder and destroy but they were willing to die for a worthy cause as agents of change.

The goal of the 1865 Native Baptist War did not imitate the Haitian model, the Maroon example or the American Christian Uprisings but was more akin to the model of Sam Sharpe. The aim of the resistance was not to have racial governance or separated governance but to have a just and caring government, to the benefit of all. There was no intention to wrest power from the constituted authority and to establish their own political system. Instead, it was a quest for change their situations so as to fulfill their own potential for the benefit of all- the rulers and the ruled. This would enable the exploited and the former exploiters to live in harmony. This type of reading of Biblical texts and understanding of God gave them hope for the possibility of reconciliation even after resistance.
The Native Baptists forgave the atrocities experienced during the 1865 Native Baptist War and many joined the English Baptist mission after the destruction of their chapels. The English Baptists, largely had an inferior view of their race, attitudes, beliefs and practices. The English Baptists felt that they had done nothing wrong to the Native Baptists and believed that if they had been ministering in St. Thomas-in-the-East, the 1865 Native Baptist War would not have occurred. They saw themselves as saviours of a people who were led astray by the Native Baptists. They were going to correct the wrongs of the Native Baptists.

The Native Baptists did not ask the English Baptists to repent of the wrongs they had done before seeking reconciliation with them. Furthermore, the Native Baptists did not seek restitution from the authorities for the destruction of their chapels, huts and property and more so the brutal killing of their relatives. They might not have succeeded in gaining compensation but they could have, at least, proposed it as a viable and necessary option. Neither did the authorities offer any recompense for the atrocities. The owners of enslaved persons got compensation; the English Baptists got compensation for the destruction of chapels in 1832 but there was no restitution for the Native Baptists in 1865. Therefore, some of the gains garnered through the formation of the JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion were reversed in a model, which did not insist on repentance and restitution before reconciliation. However, what was not lost was a hermeneutic of liberation, which focused on equality and justice and facilitated resistance to oppressors while being open to reconciliation.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

This dissertation reverses the largely negative and uninformed view of the Native Baptists and their practices by offering a coherent and detailed study of the origin and development of the Native Baptists and how their Biblical hermeneutic influenced the nature and scope of the 1865 Native Baptist War. It discovered that the Native Baptists existed and the Native Baptists became part of the lexicon of the official colonial record in the latter half of 1837 and became an institution between September 1839 and July 1840. They were an important group, which made significant contribution to Jamaica in the mid to late nineteenth century. This study made the Native Baptists central in the history of Jamaica in the mid nineteenth century, demonstrating that they ought to be important subjects of Jamaican history and not merely objects of their own story. This study shifts the focus from the European missionaries and indigenous African religious expressions as critical in the understanding of the 1865 Native Baptist War and suggests that credit instead be given to those of African origin who interpreted the Bible differently, namely, the Native Baptists. These Native Baptists were largely responsible for the 1865 Native Baptist War with their hermeneutic of liberation informing their prophetic response to their context of inequality and injustices.

This extensive interdisciplinary study about the Native Baptists reveals that contrary to the assertion by Schuler, Shirley Gordon and Catherine Hall, the term “Black Baptists” was not synonymous with Native Baptists because the skin
colour was not the most distinguishing feature of the Native Baptists. There were Baptists of African origin who were not Native Baptists such as Liele, Sharpe and Palmer. Neither was the description of “Spirit Baptists” as used by Simpson and Wright an appropriate term for Native Baptists. The Native Baptists did not neglect the Bible at the expense of ecstatic utterances. They were a people who relied extensively on the Bible and were inspired by hymns.

The Native Baptists came into being in response to the prejudice and spiritual snobbery encountered by Baptists of African origin at the hands of English Baptist missionaries. Therefore, Bryan and the Mansinghs were not correct in their claim that the Native Baptists did not respond to racism. Their First Annual Report demonstrated that the JNBMS was established in reaction to religious and cultural colonialism. The Native Baptists became a missionary society in reaction to racism and were leaders in the struggle against racism.

The JNBMS was the springboard from which the Native Baptist Communion developed of which George William Gordon, Richard Warren and Paul Bogle were major leaders. Neither the authorities nor the populace perceived that there was a difference between the JNBMS and the Native Baptist Communion groups perhaps because the Native Baptist Communion evolved out of the JNBMS and both also had a similar way of interpreting the Bible.

It can be concluded that the Native Baptists were:

✔ Untrained in the classroom of a theological institution.
Interpreted the Bible differently from the Europeans.
Not under the auspices of any European missionary society.
Largely self-supporting and self-regulating.
Persons who took the designation of Native Baptist.
Agents for spiritual renewal, political activism and social change.
Politically consciousness based on their interpretation of the Bible.
Native-born and native-bred Baptists.
Predominantly of African ancestry.
Not Obeah practitioners.
Bible-centred and orthodox.
Well-organized.

This study has shown that the Native Baptists refuted the thinking that they were second-class citizens because they were inspired differently by their religious experience. They accepted diversity of interpretations by promoting the idea that any reader irrespective of educational background could give a legitimate interpretation of the Bible. Their recollection of history, their experience and understanding of God and their interpretation of Scriptures often did not coincide with the teachings of the European colonizers. Because of that the Native Baptists with their hermeneutical approach to Scripture and Scripture-related sources, which resembled the modern Reader-Response approach, have left a model which this writer calls a hermeneutic of liberation which is anchored in equality and justice and which facilitated resistance and reconciliation. This model recommends itself as it advocates the use of non-violent protest as a first
option while not excluding the use of forceful resistance as a last option or in self-defence or to engage in self-affirmation. It is a useful model because the Native Baptists, based on their interpretation of Scriptures were committed to forgiveness as the best way of resolving conflict and wrongdoing perpetrated against them. This is so in spite of the fact that forgiveness exacts its own cost from those who forgive as they open themselves to being hurt again. Yet not to forgive is also to bear a burden that gives the upper hand to the wrongdoer.

The ultimate goal of forgiveness is reconciliation. Reconciliation makes community life wholesome and sustainable. In a world that is torn by ethnic strife and wars, a world struggling with racism and economic blight for the majority, and a concentration of power in the hands of the few, there is a need for a hermeneutic that reads the Bible and other sacred writings from the perspective of liberation which is rooted in the belief in equality and justice and holds resistance and reconciliation in tension. This example allows for the oppressed to resist the injustices while being available for co-operation with the oppressor.

The Native Baptists' outlook and emphases are relevant today. In the 21st century there are grave injustices and inequality. The thinking, orientation and actions of the Native Baptist could help with these problems. Racism whether in the Church or the dominant political and economic structures could be defeated if church and society would apply the Native Baptists' hermeneutic of liberation in order to liberate both the racist and the victims of racism. The approach of the Native Baptists was to allow their experiences to shape their interpretation of the
Bible and to use that approach to develop a hermeneutic of liberation, which focused on the Bible and Bible-related texts, in dealing with equality and justice. This liberation was for both the oppressed and the oppressors.

Equally important is that based on the Reader-Response methodology, the Native Baptists were well qualified to teach and preach the gospel of the Christian faith. In addition, the manner in which the Native Baptists originated and developed helped to influence their Biblical hermeneutic and prepared them for societal injustices.

The Native Baptists can also be seen as visionaries. The Baptist Church in Jamaica that is affiliated to the Jamaica Baptist Union was the beneficiary of the Native Baptists’ work. The Native Baptists left a legacy of confidence in local based leadership. So much so that the Baptist Church in Jamaica in 2008 is entirely led and staffed by Jamaican ministers. Though the Baptist mission became independent of the BMS in 1842, and although Calabar College was established to train locals for pastoral ministry, the leadership and clergy was still dominated by English missionaries in 1865. However, after political independence in 1962, many English Baptists returned to England, and the movement toward the Jamaicanization of the leadership and clergy in the Baptist Union gained momentum. This new reality appeared to be a fulfillment of some of the objectives of the Native Baptists.
The Native Baptists were visionaries in that they deliberately rejected the account of the history of the Baptist Church in Jamaica according to the English Baptists. They re-wrote the history highlighting their contribution and their understanding. The Native Baptists were not the first to document what persons of African ancestry accomplished through the Baptist Church in Jamaica. That honour belongs to George Liele. However, the Native Baptists were the first to challenge the official records of Jamaican church by recording their version of the history. In a sense they were pioneers of West Indian historiography.

The Native Baptists established the first local-based, indigenous missionary society, thereby displaying self-confidence. It was also the most significant indigenous organization based on the size of membership and quality of leadership. Their self-confidence was also displayed through their own style of speaking and pronunciation. They provided one of the earliest defences of the value of communication in a language that the hearers could understand rather than insisting on Standard English, which was a foreign language to most church members. They also affirmed the value of what persons would call a dialect or Creole language. Their self-confidence was also demonstrated in that they managed church affairs and did so successfully as evangelists and fundraisers.

The Native Baptists also displayed pride in being “native” and relished their African ancestry. Before, the Native Baptists, Liele demonstrated commitment to Africa and appreciation of Africa by calling his congregation the Ethiopian Baptists. The Native Baptists carried the baton ably by proudly identifying
themselves as Native Baptists and demonstrated a commitment to preach to their fellow countrymen and to peoples in Africa.

The Native Baptists through the development of an extensive network of congregations and the well-organized resistance to injustice in 1865 contradicted the myth that persons of African pedigree could not manage institutions and organize peaceful protests and marches for justice. They also demonstrated that they understood complex issues and discerned when they were being fooled and developed coping strategies to endure and overcome oppression.

However, perhaps the most outstanding contribution of the Native Baptists was claiming their right to preach and interpret sacred literature thereby leaving a legacy that emphasized equality, justice and a hermeneutic of liberation. The Native Baptists understanding of God grew out of their oppressed context. Therefore, they were suspicious of the interpretation the oppressors held of the Bible and instead they selected certain texts which were meaningful to their situation and which gave them hope for a brighter future. They were attracted to texts that addressed the issues of equality and justice.

Except for some work done by Swithin Wilmot the contribution of persons of African origin in fashioning the politics of Jamaica through the Church, has been neglected. This study halts that trend and agrees with Hutton and Heuman who recognized the positive contribution of the Native Baptists to the Jamaican society.
The Native Baptist leaders were law-abiding persons, contrary to those who posited that the killings were pre-meditated. Engaging in resistance was not unique to Native Baptists. There was a history of resistance by enslaved persons from as early as the sixteenth century. And this resistance was similar to the 1831 Baptist War. Both leaders, Sharpe and Bogle were seeking not to obliterate their oppressors but rather that both oppressors and oppressed might be emancipated.

Admittedly, more research needs to be done on the role of persons of African descent in the church and society in the nineteenth century. It could also be meaningful to delve into the reasons for the disappearance of the term Native Baptists to the extent that older generations, in areas where Native Baptists were dominant, were unaware of their existence. In addition, a determination needs to be made of which existing church groups operating in Jamaica is the successor of the Native Baptists in terms of their beliefs, interpretation and political activism. Another question to be answered is: Why have present-day Baptists of African origin retreated from the political activism of the Native Baptists of old?
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Appendix 1

January 5, 2004

Dear colleague in ministry,

All the best for the New Year.

Since September 2003, I have been pursuing the degree of M/Phil/PhD in Caribbean Studies at Warwick University. I am examining the Native Baptists and how they interpreted Scriptures, understood God and the ministry implications.

I am therefore seeking your help with this research. If you or your congregation have in your possession any information (book, paper or oral tradition) on the Native Baptists, I would appreciate you sharing it with me. Please contact me if you have any information or know where I could get information. The information can be sent to me at bbc@anngel.com or fax to 941 1453 or given to me when we meet in General Assembly next month.

This idea to contact you came from my supervisor when I met with him on December 12, 2003 and I hope this is convenient for you.

Thanks in anticipation.

Your brother in Christ

Devon Dick