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(4) THE CARIBBEAN INFLUENCES ON AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

Roderick R. Hewitt

Introduction

Eric Williams, a former Caribbean historian, argues that the role of British historians in writing Caribbean history was, to a great extent, a history that reflected the bias and prejudices of the historians rather than the experiences of the people.[1] The history was written within a colonial environment that did not allow mutual relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. The contemporary Caribbean region constitutes a melting pot and mosaic of blended cultures from Africa, Europe and Asia that have lived in contradiction and co-operation since the devastating effects of Spanish imperial forces under the leadership of Columbus arrived in the region. They were rescued and given hospitality by the indigenous Caribs who were unaware of their true motives.[2] Within a brief period of 163 years (1492-1655) of Spanish colonial military rule, the local population was decimated through enslavement and infections of deadly European transmitted diseases for which they had no immunity. Therefore, the European colonial history of Caribbean people is fatally flawed and calls for a re-reading and reinterpreting of the narrative that takes into account the stories and perspectives of its victims.

The focus of this article identifies and critiques *The Caribbean Influence on African Christianity*. However, the broad scope of this title demands that I limit the focus of the enquiry. First, the use of the concept 'Caribbean' will be limited to the Anglo-Caribbean countries of Barbados and Jamaica which were referred to during the colonial era as the West Indies.[3] Secondly, I will give attention to their influence on African Christianity from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The term 'influence' will be interpreted to mean 'the extent to which the presence of mission personnel from the named Caribbean nations inspired, encouraged, gave guidance to and/or had an impact on the development of African Christianity'. Finally, I will focus on the role and influence of the Anglican, Baptist, Moravian and Presbyterian Churches that sent missions to the West African countries of Sierra Leone, Ghana, Calabar-Nigeria and Cameroon. Caribbean influences on African Christianity must be chronologically located within the phase of European colonization of sub-Saharan Africa and the consequent arrival of the Protestant missionary societies (from about 1860-1960). During this epoch of fast-changing world events is the story of a people from the Caribbean whose missional presence and action influenced the development of the identity, vocation and witness of some churches within the mosaic of West African Christianity.

Displacement and Enslavement

The landscapes of the Caribbean and Brazil have large numbers of people of African descent. Through the human trafficking trade that was well established by the Portuguese, millions of Africans were enslaved and brought to the Americas. They came primarily from the diverse tribal cultures of the West African region that stretched from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, and Bight of Biafra to Central Africa. However, the Bight of Biafra and the Gold Coast offered the most Africans who were intentionally captured and sold as commodities to European smugglers and

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[1] Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964): 234.
[2] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970): 30-45.
[3] The prescribed term 'West Indian' is misnomer used by the Spaniards and adopted by the British to describe the peoples and territories that were conquered or captured from the indigenous peoples in the Caribbean region.

traders.[4] The human tragedy of forcefully uprooting and expelling millions of Africans from their homeland to far unknown lands created severe psychological upheaval and dislocation that was made worse psychologically because they were violently removed from their homes and forcibly sent on a one-way journey to an unknown destination. They took only their memories that retained and informed their oral traditions and human dignity that kept alive their cultural traditions and institutions.

Jamaica became a colony of England in 1655 after the island was captured from Spain.[5] It was the largest British Caribbean colony, and the need to make the island economically viable led to the introduction and development of a slave-based and large-scale sugar plantation economy. This model of economic development required a large, cheap and replaceable labour force.[6] The genocide committed against the indigenous population by the Spaniards and the failure to recruit sufficient numbers of cheap European labour as a replacement led to the adoption of African slave labour. This European-designed military and economic system of colonization created the need for Africans to be violently uprooted from their homeland and be inhumanely transported in conditions unfit even for animals to the Caribbean and the wider Americas.

The desire of plantation owners to get the best productivity out of the enslaved Africans led them to invite or grant permission Protestant and Evangelical missionary societies to send missionaries to Christianize the Africans. The missionaries adopted a mission station model of evangelization through education that led to many Africans in Jamaica becoming Christians. This development laid the foundation that contributed to the emergence of 'West Indian Missions' to West Africa and therefore facilitating a small but significant influence on and advancement of Christianity within Africa.

During the period of their enslavement, Africans throughout the Caribbean engaged in active and passive resistance for their freedom. Some Africans, like the Maroons of Jamaica,[7] succeeded in their revolt and established 'independent territories' in which they established self-rule following memories of governance in their African homeland.[8] They did not regard the Caribbean lands as home but as a place of 'forced exile', and many longed for repatriation in spite of the intentional indoctrination by the colonial authorities and missionaries to present the continent of Africa as a 'land of darkness and evil' from which they had been 'rescued'. The magnetic pull of Africans in the diaspora to return to their homeland remained an indelible mark of their identity.

West African Influences in Caribbean Societies

The religious expressions that were transported and transplanted from their homeland by Africans within the Caribbean included Santeria in Cuba, Shango or Shouters in Trinidad, Voodoo in Haiti, Convince,

[4] Sources used: R. Lapage and D. Decamp (eds), "*Jamaican Creole". Creole Language Studies I* (London: McMillan, 1960): 61-65, 74, 84; Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London, Oxford University Press, 1967): 134-135, 137-9; Bryan Edwards, *The History of the British Colonies in The West Indies*. 2 vols. (London: J, Stockdale1793): 60-80.

[5] Hugh Sherlock, H. Bennett, *History of the Jamaican People*, *the Jamaican People* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers 1998): 77.

[6] S. Hamber and R. Greenwood, *Emancipation To Emigration* (Kingston: Macmillan Caribbean, 1979): 10-15.

[7] L.N.Erskine. *From Garvey to Marley Rastafari Theology* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2004): 130.

[8] According to Abioseh Nico, **"**The first decade of the nineteenth century saw the Maroons being brought as colonists to Sierra Leone. Originally they were mostly Fantis and Ashantis captured in Ghana (then the Gold Coast) and taken to the West Indies. Some of them escaped to the mountains in Jamaica occasionally intermarrying with the local Indians. Their name was probably derived from "Cimarron" (mountain-top) rather than from their skin colour. They fought the British Government for a long time in Jamaica; some were brought to Sierra Leone where they lived in Freetown in an area extending from the Cotton Tree westwards to Wilberforce Village on the mountains".

Cumina, Pokomania and Revival in Jamaica.[9] These contextual expressions of West African religions became fully Creolized in response to the life challenges that the people experienced. Africans in the diaspora picked and used elements from folk religions and also from colonial Christianity in their ongoing search for survival. In Hamid's opinion, what worked was what gave meaning to the people and met their needs:

> … The peoples of the Caribbean and other colonised peoples of the world had not always nor wholly accepted the theology of mission or the instruction of the church. They often picked and chose what was suited to their survival. There was at work, then, a creative selectivity both of the teaching and the opportunities provided by the church.[10]

During the Spanish rule of Jamaica (1492-1655), the Roman Catholic Church was the established church. However, when the British took over in 1655, the Church of England became the established church that functioned like a chaplaincy to the colonists and did not regard the work of evangelization of the working class as a priority. However, when the economic agenda of the colonies demanded the violent abduction of millions of Africans to become enslaved labourers to enrich the Euro-American absentee owners of the economy, it incorporated religion as a tool to legitimize the socio-economic and political (dis)order. The significant shift of millions of Africans from their African homeland to become enslaved labourers also resulted in many of the British West Indian colonies like Jamaica being transformed into a majority African population. The need to ensure effective social control over the population and to condition them for a life of servitude led to strategic relationships with nonconformist evangelical missionaries, primarily from England, Scotland and Wales who engaged in the work of evangelization among the Africans. The European Protestant Missionary Christianity[11] therefore had a much earlier impact on Caribbean colonized societies before their journey into Africa. The Moravian Missionaries arrived from as early as 1760 followed by the Baptists and Methodists. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists came in 1824 and 1836.

Missionary Zeal for a Return to West Africa

The anti-slavery movement under the leadership of William Wilberforce and his evangelical Clapham Sect in England seized the political moment to mobilize for the abolition of the Atlantic Slave trade in 1807 that officially put to an end the trafficking and trading of Africans, treating them as mere commodities.[12] That was followed a few years later by the Emancipation Act of 1833 that put an official end to the enslavement of Africans in all British colonies.[13] The socio-political and economic ramification of this act triggered the latent spirit of Africans within the Caribbean but especially Jamaica to reconnect with their homeland. This vision and desire was best expressed in their mobilization to initiate and participate in the development of the so-called 'West Indian Mission' to Africa. The religious phenomenon of Mayalism[14] in 1841-42 in

[9] Winston Lawson, *Religion and Race* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996): 4.
[10] Edris Hamid, *Troubling of the Waters* (Trinidad: Rahaman Printery 1977): vii.
[11] The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS,1792), The London Missionary Society (LMS,1795), and the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS, 1796) that unite later with the Edinburgh Missionary Society to become Church of Scotland Mission (CSM); and the Glasgow Society and became the Free Church of Scotland Mission (FCSM) and the Methodist Missionary Society (1813), became the leading evangelical missionary organizations.
[12] Williams, *"From Columbus to Castro"*, 280.
[13] Williams, *"From Columbus to Castro"*, 280-327.
[14] Winston Lawson, "*Religion and Race"*, 8. Mayalism was an African-derived religious expression of organized cults that practised a dance ritual of 'death and resurrection' that focus on overcoming the power of evil.

particular and the Revival movement of 1860[15] played a significant role in highlighting the longing of some Afro-Jamaicans for indigenous religious symbols and meaning to inform and converse with their understanding and experience of missionary Christianity. Henry Waddell (1883), a Scottish missionary, had spent time working in West Africa before being assigned to Jamaica and was able to appreciate and appropriate the significance of spirituality that undergirded the Afro-Jamaican Christian faith. He responded to this phenomenon by affirming, challenging and channelling the missional zeal of the people to developing a mission to their ancestral West African homeland.[16]

This missionary zeal for a return to Africa constituted part of a wider socio-religious phenomenon of repatriation that was later popularized by the pan-Africanist Jamaican philosopher, Marcus Mosiah Garvey,[17] who is regarded as the early twentieth-century father of the *Back to Africa* movement and the religio-cultural movement of Rastafari that emerged from his teachings. Repatriation became an ideological form of socio-political resistance especially among Afro-Jamaicans, as a pro-active response to their experience of being forcibly, inhumanely and violently taken from their homeland into exile. The upheaval and displacement from their African context to be enslaved in an unknown world resulted in an African holocaust in which the Atlantic Ocean became the watery cemetery for millions who did not make the journey. For those that survived the brutal journey, the additional experience of colonialism and slavery bequeathed an immeasurable harm to their human dignity. However, the Africans in the diaspora were not passive recipients of the dehumanizing atrocities of European colonialism. Caribbean history, and that of Jamaica in particular, confirms numerous acts of resistance and revolt that bear witness to their non-acceptance of colonial systems of oppression.[18] There was always a strong desire for justice and liberation against oppression.

Although the popular views about African repatriation are associated with the advocacy of the modern Rastafari movement and their message that is communicated through reggae music, this paper argues that the pioneering advocates were the early Afro-Jamaicans who were enslaved on the Anglo Caribbean sugar plantations and embraced missionary Christianity with its gospel message of liberation and justice. Their allegiance to the gospel of freedom energized their desires to reconnect with their African homeland to share the good news of the gospel. The earliest organized African in the diaspora missionary movement to Africa came from the Afro-Americans who had expressed great interest in organizing their own evangelizing mission to West Africa long before the declaration of emancipation was declared in 1833.[19] Black Baptist pastors from Southern USA went to work in 1782 among those Africans who had fought with the British in the 'War of Independence' and were settled in the Canadian colony of Nova Scotia.[20] The British organized the emigration of those that wished to return to Africa, and some settled in Sierra Leone while others went to the newly created colony of Liberia for American 'free people of colour'.[21] It was the missionary enterprise of Black Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal (AME) leadership that

[15] It was the Great Revival of 1860 that brought this indigenous religion into direct interface with missionary Christianity. This interface of Mayalism and Christianity during the Great Revival paved the way for modern Revivalism to find a permanent home in the ministry and mission of North American- founded churches such as the Pentecostal, Church of God and African Methodist Episcopal-Zion.

[16] Henry Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa 1829-1858* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1863), 34.

[17] See Hugh Sherlock, H. Bennett, *History of the Jamaican People*, *the Jamaican People,* 292-315. Garvey continued with the Jamaican revivalist tradition that viewed Africans in Jamaica as a people in exile like the children of Israel in Babylon (Jeremiah 29 & Psalm 137). Africa was seen as the Promised Land to which all Africans in the diaspora should return (Africa for Africans).

[18] Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, 193-200.

[19] J. Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa- An African History 62-1992* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1994): 113.

[20] J. Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa- An African History.*

[21] J. Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa- An African History.*

laid the foundation for the development of Christianity in West Africa and facilitated other missionary initiatives in other parts of Central and Southern and Eastern Africa.

The Baptist Mission to Cameroon

The Baptist church in Jamaica was the product of the Black American Baptist mission through the pioneering work of George Lilse and Moses Baker.[22] They first worked among the enslaved Afro-Jamaican population and empowered the oppressed people with a liberating faith that resisted state oppression. They teamed up with the British Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1814 and in partnership with their missionaries, Thomas Burchell, James Phillippo and William Knibb,[23] they engaged in mass evangelization of the Afro-Jamaicans.[24] The Baptist ecclesial heritage in Jamaica evolved with two distinct missional leadership strategies. The British missionaries employed their 'mission station colonial model' of governance but the local Baptist followers preferred their indigenous 'deacon/leader system'. The mass growth of the Baptist church and its deep affirmation of embodying a strong African identity generated interest in taking the liberating gospel to their homeland from which they were stolen. It was the offerings of these people that sowed the seeds for the journey. Horace Russell argues that mission happened within the context of western economic and political interest on the continent in which Africans were traded as commodities and the consequential post emancipation interest and initiative that propelled Africans within the diaspora in the West Indies and the USA to return to the homeland for missionary work.[25]

An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1841 by the Baptist Missionary Society of Jamaica to begin missionary work among Africans who were previously enslaved at Malabo-Equatorial Guinea. Their first interest was to work in the 'Niger Delta' but eventually stopped at Fernando Po, an island close to the Cameroon mainland. The economy of this island was built on the trafficking of Africans for slave labour and oppression was rife. Their work was however short-lived because of tensions between Britain and Spain which led to the island being unsafe for them to settle there. When the exploratory mission reported to the Jamaican Baptist Church, they mobilized and sent an additional forty-two Afro-Jamaicans 'to regenerate Africa by the Bible and the plough'.[26] The British BMS, being motivated by the words of Psalm 68:32, 'Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God', later decided to support the venture with personnel and financial resources.[27]

The Jamaican Baptist Church through the impact of its mission to Cameroon is recognized as having laid the foundation for the growth of the Church in that country. According to Russell the crisis in the Jamaican economy of the 1840s triggered by the collapse in sugar prices, contributed to the inability of the Jamaican Baptist Church to sustain its support for the mission in Cameroon.[28] In 1852, it gave up control to the British BMS and recalled most of its missionaries and left only a few to work for the BMS.[29] Afro-Jamaicans who had settled at Fernando Po moved and joined the mainland mission station after Spain took over control of the island from the British. They provided the mission with qualified workers, while skilled farmers gave the mission some stability. One of the famous missionaries from Jamaica was Joseph

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[22] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, Exchange Vol. 30.2 (2001), 145.
[23] Hugh Sherlock, H. Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998): 206-211.
[24] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 145.
[25] J. Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa- An African History,* 113.
[26] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 148.
[27] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 148.
[28] Horace Russell, *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church; Jamaican Baptist Missions to West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000): 243-4, 260-262.
[29] Horace Russell, *The Missionary Outreach of the West Indian Church; Jamaican Baptist Missions to West Africa in the Nineteenth Century.*

Merrick. He proved to be an effective linguist who was able to quickly learn the local language and through his communication skills was able to win the confidence of the king who allowed him to build schools and houses.[30] Through his gift with languages, his translation and printing of various books of the Bible in the local language proved to be his lasting legacy and contribution to the church in Cameroon and to African Christianity. He also wrote the grammar for the Isubu language and in addition he received permission from the Bible Society for the translation of the Old Testament through which he gave priority to God's call of justice for the oppressed.[31] Another key leader in the mission was Joseph Fuller, a Jamaican of African and Jewish descent, who worked for forty years as a multi-skilled leader who was a carpenter, bricklayer, farmer, builder and instructor. After Merrick's departure from the mission, he gave leadership and served with great passion, challenging non-life-affirming traditional cultural practices in his quest to protect life.[32] He rallied and got the people in the area where he served to be vaccinated when smallpox broke out in 1877.

Many other noteworthy Jamaicans served the mission to Cameroon until the end came during the German imperial occupation of the country from 1884-1915. The mission strategy employed by the Basel Mission that took over control from the BMS was different from the 'Class system'/deacon local leadership model that was originally employed by the Jamaicans. Their continuing presence was deemed to be troublesome because the local people were taught by the Jamaican mission workers to value their local governance. This unresolved tension influenced the Jamaica Baptist Society to withdraw from Cameroon. The mission model of the Basel Mission and later the Paris Mission that replaced them in 1915, found the Jamaican mission model of giving autonomy to local church groups to be unacceptable because they wished that the entire mission stations would give their loyalty to their European mission station model. It was this competing model of governance between that which was introduced and practiced by the Jamaican mission and the Euro-centric centralized and imperial models of mission understanding and praxis that was practised by the British, Basel and Paris missions that contributed to the disunity that ultimately impacted negatively on the development of the mission work in Cameroon. The departure of the Jamaican mission from Cameroon had a lasting positive impact. Their missional legacy led to the formation of the *L'Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun* (UEBC) and the *L'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun (EEC)* formed in 1957 and The Presbyterian Church of West Cameroon (PCC) in 1957 and *L'Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise (EPC)*.[33] The churches in Cameroon officially acknowledged the significant influence of the Jamaican mission to the development of Christianity in their country in 1995 when they celebrated 150 years of protestant mission in Cameroon. At the celebrations special attention was given to remember the legacy of the many Jamaicans that worked with the local people. As with the contributions of other West Indian missions to African Christianity, the Baptist personnel of African descent that worked among the people in Cameroon offered a mission model that was characterized by a passionate spirit of freedom from oppression that they had experienced through physical and spiritual emancipation.

The Presbyterian Church Mission to Calabar, Nigeria

The Presbyterian Church in Jamaica and Cayman was organised through the work of different British reformed missions – namely, missionaries from the colonial committee of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Missionary Society and, finally, through the missions of the Secession and United Presbyterian Church. The Protestant missionaries brought to Jamaica an evangelical Christianity that emphasised

[30] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 150.
[31] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*.
[32] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 151.
[33] Jaap van Slageren, *Jamaican Missionaries in Cameroon*, 155.

preaching, instruction and observable response in word, moral behaviour and church adherence.[34] Unlike the missions of the Moravians, Baptists and Methodists, which began during slavery, the reformed missions came at the close of slavery. This meant that the issues surrounding the abolition of slavery and the creation of a new society figured highly among their reasons for starting their mission to Jamaica. The missionaries who came to Jamaica were given a model of mission and ministry that had a fourfold division of labour that consisted of teaching doctors, preaching pastors, discipling elders and deacons charged with the administration of charity.[35]

It was due to the passionate interest of the Afro-Jamaican Presbyterian members in 1839, just three years after emancipation from slavery, that one of Hope Waddell's Presbyterian congregations formed their own Afro-Jamaican Missionary Society with the objective of raising funds to finance a mission to Africa.[36] The Jamaican Presbytery passed a resolution in 1841 facilitating a mission to Africa and requested the support and facilitation of the Scottish Missionary Society to achieving its stated objectives.[37] Waddell took the cause of the Afro-Jamaican Reformed Christians and pleaded the cause before the Scottish church authorities. The Jamaica Mission Presbytery endorsed this willingness of the Afro-Jamaican to take the 'gospel back to Africa' and 'initiated a freedom offering' to launch the missionary movement. In 1941 the Jamaica Mission Council (JMC) met at Goshen in the Parish of St Mary and passed the following resolution:

> That the time seems to have arrived, and to be in an eminent degree favourable for introducing the blessed Gospel to Central Africa. That the long-neglected and critical conditions of the inhabitants of that vast country, hitherto sunk in the deepest darkness, and exposed to the deepest darkness, and exposed to all the miseries of the most iniquitous system that ever defiled or desolated the earth, together with the duty which the church owes to the Lord Jesus, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature…[38]

A missio-cultural reading of the resolution text seems to suggest the following: a) The continent of Africa was 'one vast country'; b) A Eurocentric mono-cultural perception of the Africans that regarded their culture as uncivilized and in need of the civilising gift of Christianity that would take the people out of darkness into light; c) People who were different from Europeans with other religions, languages, worldviews, food and political outlook were dismissed as heathens who were living in darkness and therefore in need of the good news message of the church.

The history of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria as told through the lens of the Church of Scotland attributes the founding of that Church to the work of its missionaries. However, from the underside of history, where the powerless workers are not the authors of that narrative, the founding of the Calabar Mission was the vision and impetus of the Afro-Jamaican Christians. The language used to motivate for the mission to Africa reflected the standard perception of the colonial mindset of the Scottish Reformed missionaries. They believed that Africa was a land in spiritual and political darkness and only the gospel that the missionaries possessed could 'save the people'. However, their understanding of salvation seemed to focus on Africans experiencing cultural change by giving up some key African traditional cultural practices and embracing and replacing them with Euro-centric values. Those Africans who were deemed to be Christians would be those that gave up traditional practices such as polygamy, human sacrifices and

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[34] Robert Stewart, "*Religion and Society in Post Emancipation Jamaica"* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1992), xix.
[35] J. M. Barkley. *Presbyterianism* (Belfast: The Tyrone Constitution, 1956): 24-34.
[36] Henry Waddell, "*Twenty-Nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa,* 1829-1859", 160.
[37] Henry Waddell, "*Twenty-Nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa,* 1829-1859", 206-210.
[38] Elijah Obinah, *Bridging the Divide: The Legacies of Mary Slessor, 'Queen' of Calabar, Nigeria*, Studies in World Christianity 17.3 (2011): Edinburgh University Press, 278.

witchcraft. The early Scottish missionaries in Jamaica that supported the mission to Africa embraced an ideology of manifest destiny that implied Africa needed the presence of Europeans to take the leadership role in organising for their social and economic development.

The Church of Scotland officials were not enthusiastic about this proposed mission by the JMC and argued that it represented a case of 'zeal more than judgement'.[39] Their initial rejection of the Jamaican request for support for their mission to Africa was based upon their perceived inferior status as 'a dependent mission station' and therefore would lack sufficient financial and human resources to support such a mission. They also took into consideration their past experiences of the high security and health risks and economic cost for initiating previous African missions.

This negative response of the Scottish church did not kill the desire of the Jamaica Mission Council (JMC) because at their 1841 meeting in Stirling, in the parish of Westmorland, they again reaffirmed their desire and commitment to organise a mission to Africa. However, it was the initiative of two prominent missionaries, George Blyth and Peter Anderson, who lobbied on behalf of the JMC[40] to secure authorisation. Waddell raised further financial support in Scotland and the mission was adopted by The United Secession Church in 1844.[41] A pioneering team including Hope Waddell, Andrew Chisholm a carpenter, Samuel Edgerley a catechist and printer, George Miller, Edward Miller an Afro-Jamaican who was previously enslaved and who served as a doctor's assistant and George Waddell arrived in Calabar on April 10, 1846.[42]

The subsequent support and development of the mission saw Afro-Jamaican lay-leaders under the leadership of the Scottish missionaries working together in Calabar, Eastern Nigeria. The focus of the mission was on evangelism through education. The mission established a number of schools, hospitals, churches and training colleges. One of the institutions that was established was named to honour one of the pioneers of the mission, the Hope Waddell Institute, and for a number of years until close to the time of Nigeria becoming an independent nation, the Institute and other surrounding schools always had on their staff mission personnel of African descent from the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica. A number of Afro-Jamaicans served the mission as head teachers until the late 1950s when the infamous Rev. Henry Ward returned to Jamaica and this marked the end of an era.[43] Although the mission to Africa came eventually under the Scottish missions, the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica has always cherished its role in taking the initiative and offering ongoing support for the work. In order to pay honour to the pioneering role of Jamaicans in the development of this contribution to the emergence of African Christianity, a decision was taken by the mission to always have missionaries from the West Indies (meaning Jamaica) as core members of the mission personnel team in Calabar.

The continuous presence of Jamaican mission personnel on the Calabar staff therefore calls into question what was the nature of their influence and contribution to the development of African Christianity. The leadership of the mission station was unquestionably under Scottish control. Inherent within European colonial culture was the use of *race, economic, social and religious factors* to determine one's status within society. They became factors that divided rather than united peoples. With a built-in

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[39] Elijah Obinah, *Bridging the Divide: The Legacies of Mary Slessor, 'Queen' of Calabar, Nigeria*, Studies in World Christianity 17.3 (2011): 279.
[40] Elijah Obinah, *Bridging the Divide: The Legacies of Mary Slessor, 'Queen' of Calabar, Nigeria*, Studies in World Christianity 17.3 (2011): 279.
[41] The Calabar Mission Station became part of the United Presbyterian Church in 1847 when it became united with the United Secession and Relief churches. However in 1900 the United Presbyterian Church merge with the Free Church of Scotland to form the United Free Church of Scotland which later in 1929 reunited with the Church of Scotland.
[42] Elijah Obinah, *Bridging the Divide: The Legacies of Mary Slessor, 'Queen' of Calabar, Nigeria*, Studies in World Christianity 17.3 (2011): 279.
[43] Francis J. Osborne and Geoffrey Johnston, *Coastlands and Islands: First Thoughts on Caribbean Church History.* Kingston: UTCWI (1972): 172-173.

perception that saw themselves as a superior race and culture, Europeans ranked other people hierarchically. All other cultures were deemed to be inferior and this offered justification for colonization because they viewed 'uncultured peoples' as needing European civilizing enlightenment. The presence of personnel of African descent from Jamaica on the staff of the mission was an important source of inspiration that assured the local people that the mission would one day become theirs, and their own African staff would become leaders of the different institutions that were established. The Caribbean personnel of African descent also communicated an understanding and praxis of the gospel as one that had the power to liberate from all oppression. This empowered the local Christians to be confident in their mission outreach in their communities and to face up to whatever challenges or opposition to the gospel that they faced.

The Anglican Rio Pongas Mission – Guinea and Sierra Leone

Within the British Caribbean, the island of Barbados was regarded as 'the most British' because of its small size and population, and because British influences were much more effective. The Anglican Church within the West Indies was the dominant church in Barbados. Its missional presence and work in West Africa can be traced to 1851 when Bishop Parry of the Barbados Church Society recommended during the celebration of the third jubilee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG)[44] that a new West Indian Church Association be formed 'for the furtherance of the Gospel in Western Africa'.

> I propose in my own diocese, and venture to suggest also to the other West Indian bishops, to commence an African Mission, if only in answer to our prayers and efforts the great Lord of the Harvest be pleased to send forth the labourers, disposing also the members of the West Indian Church to unite in the work, and others in England to assist it. I am fully aware how far from attractive is the missionary field which the Western Coasts of Africa present.[45]

There was a rider that the mission work would be carried out in partnership with the SPG as Trustees of Codrington College, their main institution of training of the clergy for Christian ministry. A sum of money for the education of missionaries and also towards the endowment of a bishopric in Sierra Leone was allocated to finance the work of the West Africa Mission.[46] The motivation for the mission project was linked with the moral dilemma of being a state church that gave its support to the British government's policy of enslavement of Africans to work for the economic development of its colonies. The West Indian Mission to Africa was therefore predicated on the notion that 'Britain owed a debt to the African race for past injustices'.[47] Therefore, the declared motivation was rooted in a quest for justice for the Africans whose ancestors' human dignity had been abused by the life-denying forces of slavery. The mission to Africa became a kind of atonement and redemption for those that benefited from the evil system and they felt compelled to repay a debt and to facilitate a process of healing of a broken relationship.

In Bakary Gibba's doctoral thesis on *The West Indian Mission to West Africa: The Rio Pongas*[48] *Mission, 1850-1963* he argued that The Rio Pongo area was located in the West African state of Guinea. According to Gibba, there were earlier attempts to establish a Christian mission in the area since 1801 but for various reasons, ranging from health concerns to security risks, they were unsuccessful. Success was

[44] This was the Anglican Church's missionary institution within the West Indian region.
[45] SPG Digest, 1898. www.anglicanhistory.org/africa/barrow1900/01.html.
[46] M. C. F. Easmon, *Sierra Leone Doctors*, Sierra Leone Studies New Series No. 6, 81.
[47] Noel Titus "*The West Indian Mission to Africa: Its Conception and Birth*, The Journal of Negro History, Vol 65, No. 2 (spring, 1980): 93-111 published by: Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc.
[48] "Rio Pongo" Portuguese name meaning the mud river.

achieved with the arrival of the West Indian Mission and its contingent of members of African descent who were more adaptable to the climatic conditions of the area than Europeans. The Rev. Hamble James Leacock, a vicar and native of Barbados aged about 60, along with an evangelist, Afro-West Indian John Duport from St Kitts, were the pioneers for this mission to Rio Pongas in 1855. Their mission station model invested in establishing a school at Fallangia that was used to educate and evangelized the local people who expressed interest. The environmental challenges of the areas had a devastating impact on the health of Leacock and a number of other white missionaries that came to replace him. It was the stability of Duport's leadership over a number of years that resulted in the building of the church and the education of a number of local leaders. After Duport's departure due to ill health, he was succeeded by a number of other Afro-West Indian missionaries such as the Rev. J.B. McEwen who arrived in 1871 and the Rev. C.W. Farquhar in 1890.[49] The West Indian missionaries eventually became the main staff members of the Rio Pongas Mission and they were joined by other Sierra Leoneans in their educational project of nurturing local leadership. Their influence was best felt in the area of education where a number of key local personnel were trained at their boarding school at the Isles de Los and later became leaders of key educational institutions within the nation. The Rio Pongas Mission remained part of the diocese of Sierra Leone until the 1930s when political tensions with France led to the mission being linked with the Gambia and it became part of a separate diocese under John Daly. The key influence of this West Indian Mission to the advancement of Christianity within Africa is to be found in the contribution of the schools that it established and their impact on nation-building.

The Jamaican Moravian/Basel Mission to Ghana

Before the slave trade was abolished in 1807 throughout the British Empire, the Gold Coast (Ghana) served as a centre for human trafficking in African labourers to the Americas. Although European missionaries were in the country at that time they had little or no impact because their work was indistinguishable from the traffickers that engaged in human oppression. It was not until the arrival of the Basel Mission from Germany in 1827 that a new era in mission engagement began. However, their work to evangelize Africans in Ghana was thwarted because the people mistrusted their true motives. There was little to show for their twelve years of labour. Illness, death and lack of support from the local population almost led to the closure of the mission. The Chief of the area laid down one non-negotiable requirement for the gospel to be considered and that was that it should be read and interpreted by someone who came from among them. Since no local person had been 'converted', the Basel Mission sought the help of other partner missionary societies. The Moravian Mission in Jamaica had in the development of its mission station model used education as a method of evangelization and had built up a cadre of African educators. A group of twenty-four that included six families of farmers was recruited and sent to be the pioneers in a new evangelization strategy among the Ghanaians with a specific objective:

> They had been recruited purposely to help convince the people of the Gold Coast that the Christian religion was not reserved for Europeans alone. They had also been recruited because it was believed that they could withstand the tropical climate more than the Europeans who too easily succumbed to malaria. This was an experiment which had been tried successfully in Sierra Leone where former African slaves became the principal missionaries to the African population. The Niger Mission had also proved that Africans were best suited for the work of evangelism in Africa.[50]

[49] Titus Noel, "*The West Indian Mission to Africa: Its Conception and Birth*, The Journal of Negro History, Vol 65, No. 2 (spring, 1980): 93-111 .

[50] History of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, www.pcgonline.org/index.php/about-us/history-of-pcg (accessed

They first settled at Osu and later moved to Akropong, a village about 50 km from Accra. Language learning and agricultural instruction became the two key priorities. Through the quick learning of the language by the Afro-Jamaicans, the work of evangelization was advanced. The mission facilitated the translation of the scripture into the Twi language and gave the people their first written lexicon. The Jamaican workers brought agricultural plants with them from Jamaica such as cocoa that developed into a major profitable cash crop for the mission and the local population. Within ten years of their arrival the Jamaican workers in partnership with their Ghanaian converts had succeeded in spreading their mission work throughout the country.

The Basel Mission gained a firm footing in the nation, and its work thrived until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and after a brief respite, it was continued, but followed and interrupted again by World War II in 1945. This led to the expulsion of the Germans from the region by the British. Their work was taken over by the Church of Scotland Mission and the Moravian ethos was changed to Presbyterian and Reformed. With the changing political landscape, the Basel Mission was unable to reclaim the work that it had pioneered before the outbreak of the wars. Through their work, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana had developed into one of the leading and fastest growing churches in the country. The heirs of those first missionaries from the Caribbean are still to be found in the life and work of the church in Ghana today.

Conclusion

This article began by positing that although the Anglo-Caribbean region occupies little attention in the global history of Christianity, the influence of African-led missions from the region to the development of Christianity in West Africa constitutes an immeasurable contribution that has not yet been fully appreciated in the annals of Global Christianity. It further argued that the experience of Africans in the Caribbean of being trafficked, surviving the inhumane transportation to the Caribbean, the ordeal of forced labour, the resistance against enslavement, the embracement of missionary Christianity and the achievement of emancipation equipped those that offered to serve in the different West Indian Missions to West Africa a unique spirituality in their love of justice and freedom that came from the liberating power of the gospel. The acquisition of sound education, excellent teaching skills, farming and carpentry skills, competent evangelists and pastoral leadership made the West Indian mission personnel excellent agents that facilitated effective enculturation of the gospel within West Africa.

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